

deep end

THE DUTCH SEAFARERS MISSIONS MAGAZINE



SOCIAL LIFE ON BOARD



JUST ACT NORMAL



DUTCH PASTRY



SHORE LEAVE REVISITED



IS LIFE ON BOARD STILL FUN?

It is a question – and sometimes a complaint – that we hear regularly in the maritime world. The internet, increasingly international crews, smaller crew sizes and other developments seem to have made life on board less enjoyable.

In this issue of DeepEnd, we explore some positive ways to reverse this trend. We look at both onboard initiatives and the importance and right to shore leave. It turns out that none of this has to be all that complicated. So why does it so often prove difficult in practice?

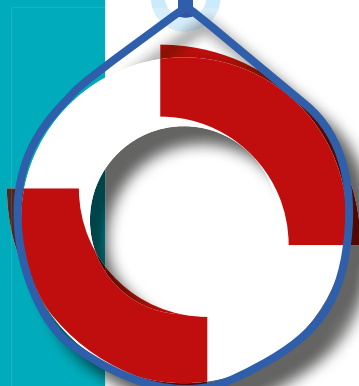
We hope this issue will inspire you to create more fun onboard –and make shore leave easier to enjoy!

P.S. We always appreciate hearing from our readers. If you have comments or suggestions for topics you would like us to cover, please email us at deepend@gmail.com.

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FROM THE EDITORS



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editorial crew

Joost de Bruijn, Astrid Feitsema,
Stefan Francke, Pier Jager, Hans Luesink,
Helene Perfors, Léon Rasser en
Kees Wiersum

address

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The Netherlands

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SEFANJA NODS

THE *Soul* OF A SHIP

by Stefan Francke

There she lies. High on the beach at Aliğa, Türkiye. Waiting for the cutting torches. Soon there will be nothing left of her. *"You are steel, and to steel you shall return."*



It almost sounds like the words spoken over people on Ash Wednesday: *"Dust you are, and to dust you shall return."* A ship, too, is mortal.

Once she sailed proudly through the waves. Her engine had its own familiar sound. The first mate knew exactly how quickly she answered the helm. The engineers worked with her as if they had known her for years. She had her moods and her little quirks. She was reliable—or sometimes she wasn't. Every crew knew her character.

And then there are the stories.

"Do you remember that storm in the Bay of Biscay?"

"The old Captain who was always the first on the bridge."

"The Chief Motorman who could fix anything with a tie-wrap and a hammer."

"The young AB standing his first watch, hanging over the rail with seasickness."

"That Christmas on board."

"That unexpected visit from a pod of dolphins."

"The moment the whole crew couldn't stop laughing."

"Those Filipinos singing wonderfully out of tune."

"That port where we only just made it back before sailing."

Isn't that the soul of a ship?

Not the steel. Not the paint. Not the engine.

But everything people have shared together.

When the cutting torches have finished their work, her steel may become part of a bridge, a car or even a razor blade.

But her soul?

It cannot be melted down.

It will live on in stories.

Perhaps that is what God does with us.

Our lives are finite. Our bodies return to dust.

But nothing that has been lived in love, faithfulness or friendship is ever truly lost.

God keeps it safe. In the beautiful words of Scripture: "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."

Just as an old seafarer may still smile, many years later, when he hears the name of a ship he once sailed on. She lives on in memory. The soul is immortal.



Social Life on Board Today

As a chaplain in the dredging industry, I visit many ships. Whenever I come on board, I try to sense the atmosphere among the crew. Usually, it doesn't take long to notice whether there is tension or whether some people simply do not get along.

by Stefan Francke

or Give Take

As a visitor, I cannot change much. At most, I can start a conversation about it. That is why it is always encouraging to find a crew that works well together and enjoys a positive atmosphere. I especially like it when, after a long day of hard work, the crew still takes time to sit together around “five thirsty” to talk about the day. And for me, one thing is always a good sign: lots of laughter.

Internet has become a normal part of life at sea. Thanks to Starlink, it is now available on almost every ship. But there is also a downside. Many seafarers say that, after their watch, everyone disap-

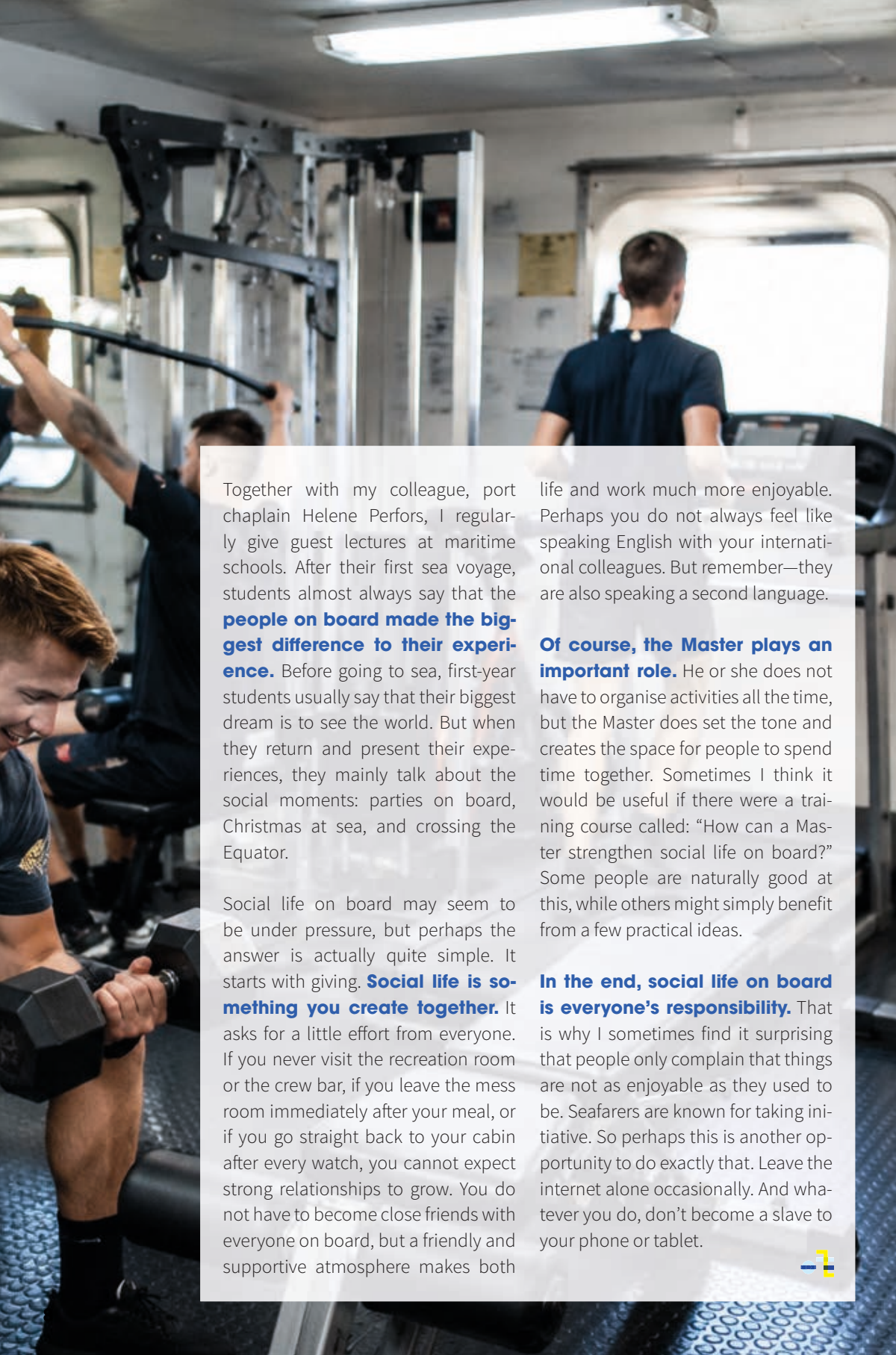
pears straight into their own cabin. Life on board is no longer as sociable as it used to be. People are chatting with family at home, watching series, or even looking at houses online and shopping from the other side of the world. **The distance to home has become smaller, but sometimes the distance between crew members has become greater.**

This decline in social life on board reflects what is happening ashore. In the Netherlands, many clubs and associations have disappeared over the past few years. Sports clubs struggle to attract members because

many young people prefer going to the gym, where the focus is mainly on personal fitness. At the same time, many young people say they are not entirely happy with what we call the “individualization of society.” During the COVID pandemic, many people discovered how important social contact really is. Interestingly, I also see something different on board.

Quite often it is the younger crew members who get together to play computer games, darts or cards. These days they usually play poker instead of traditional card games, but the idea is the same—they enjoy spending time together.





Together with my colleague, port chaplain Helene Perfors, I regularly give guest lectures at maritime schools. After their first sea voyage, students almost always say that the **people on board made the biggest difference to their experience.** Before going to sea, first-year students usually say that their biggest dream is to see the world. But when they return and present their experiences, they mainly talk about the social moments: parties on board, Christmas at sea, and crossing the Equator.

Social life on board may seem to be under pressure, but perhaps the answer is actually quite simple. It starts with giving. **Social life is something you create together.** It asks for a little effort from everyone. If you never visit the recreation room or the crew bar, if you leave the mess room immediately after your meal, or if you go straight back to your cabin after every watch, you cannot expect strong relationships to grow. You do not have to become close friends with everyone on board, but a friendly and supportive atmosphere makes both

life and work much more enjoyable. Perhaps you do not always feel like speaking English with your international colleagues. But remember—they are also speaking a second language.

Of course, the Master plays an important role. He or she does not have to organise activities all the time, but the Master does set the tone and creates the space for people to spend time together. Sometimes I think it would be useful if there were a training course called: “How can a Master strengthen social life on board?” Some people are naturally good at this, while others might simply benefit from a few practical ideas.

In the end, social life on board is everyone’s responsibility. That is why I sometimes find it surprising that people only complain that things are not as enjoyable as they used to be. Seafarers are known for taking initiative. So perhaps this is another opportunity to do exactly that. Leave the internet alone occasionally. And whatever you do, don’t become a slave to your phone or tablet.



Splashes

Tiny splashes of news featuring fresh headlines, eye-catching facts, and nautical oddities.

SEA-CARE EXPLORES MARITIME CRISIS

The European SEA-CARE project is developing a network of trained Maritime Crisis Responders (MCRs): people who support seafarers after high-impact incidents at sea. Funded by the European Union, the project brings together the World Maritime University (WMU) and five seafarers’ welfare organisations from Western Europe. Together, they are developing a shared training programme, a clear role description, and practical guidance on providing psychosocial support at sea.

As part of the project, 306 people from across the maritime sector completed an international survey. Participants included seafarers, ship management staff, maritime crisis responders and crewing organisations. Nearly half of them had experienced a crisis situation at sea themselves.

The survey shows that seafarers want personal support as soon as possible after a traumatic event. Having a crisis responder physically present was the preferred option. When this is not possible, one-to-one online support was seen as a good alternative.

The results also show that seafarers want crisis responders who understand what life and work at sea are really like. They should have basic knowledge of psychosocial support, be good listeners and communicators, and know when someone needs specialist care. Respondents also stressed the importance of respecting different cultures, treating conversations confidentially, and—when appropriate—offering spiritual support or space for personal or religious rituals.

These findings will help shape the SEA-CARE training programme. The first pilot training course is planned for early 2027.



Just Act Normal

Someone recently asked me what exactly makes a ship feel welcoming. You know, the kind of ship where there's a good atmosphere—one you can sense the moment you step over the high doorstep and come on board. What makes one ship such a pleasant place to be while another isn't? There are many ways to improve the quality of life on board and, with it, the overall atmosphere.

I like to think I know the answer: reliable Wi-Fi, a well-equipped gym, a karaoke set, a table tennis table, decent coffee machines, and good food. And last but certainly not least: a reliable relief schedule. Some ships even sail with houseplants, which can be a sign of a certain homely feel. Being homely and good atmosphere are related, but they are not the same. A homely feeling is about a sense of peace and security—a place that feels familiar. You can create that feeling on your own. A good atmosphere, on the other hand, is about the enjoyment and connection you share with others: laughing together, talking together, and working together. Enjoying your work together while working together. I rather like the sound of that.

But how do you create it? What's the secret?

After thirty-three years at sea, my seafarer surely knows what really turns a ship into a pleasant place to live and work. So I ask him. From the sofa, he calls out his answer:

Number one: The crew.

Number two: The crew.

Number three: The crew.

Number four: Nothing.

Number five: Nothing.

Number six: Nothing.

Number seven: Good Wi-Fi, good food, a reliable relief schedule, houseplants, a gym, karaoke, and so on.

In other words, the way people treat each other on board matters more than anything else. So much more, in fact, that after the top three there's a gap. Only then do things like houseplants and relief crews come into focus.

According to the seafarer sitting on my sofa, the chief officer, the chief engineer and the captain together have everything it takes to make—or break—the atmosphere on board. That's quite a responsibility. Any modern captain or chief engineer understands that everyone on board contributes to the ship. And that everyone, regardless of rank, deserves respect for who they are and for the job they do.

So, Captain, if you make a mess, you clean it up yourself. Or you clean it up together. You certainly don't leave it for someone else. In that respect, life on board isn't so different from life at home. Setting a good example is what makes a place feel welcoming for everyone.

And of course, Chief Engineer, you answer questions—whether they come from the chief officer or from a cadet. Looking down on a colleague because they're junior in rank, because they're a woman, or because they're gay should be something of the past.

On the other hand, Cadet, always respect the chain of command. It exists for a reason, so deal with it. It's quite simple: the captain isn't a god, but he or she is in command—and with good reason. "Just act decent and normal around each other!" the man on the sofa shouts.

I can't think of a better way to end it than that. Just act decent and normal. Do that, and life on board will be a lot more enjoyable.

Take care, @strid

by Kees Wiersum

Shore Leave in the port of Amsterdam

Progress on a Long-Standing Challenge

There are finally signs of progress on the issue of shore leave. Although the right of seafarers to go ashore during a port call is firmly established under international law, putting that right into practice often proves challenging. At the same time, there is growing recognition that improving shore leave is not just a matter of regulations, but also of cooperation, mutual understanding and practical solutions.

Each Dutch port has its own dynamics and, consequently, its own challenges. Both Amsterdam and Rotterdam are working to improve access to shore leave, albeit through different approaches. In Amsterdam, a number of concrete measures have been proposed, on which Kees Heavylift shares his views. In Rotterdam, a recent meeting focused on how the various parties in the port can work together to remove obstacles and make shore leave more accessible.

At last, welfare organizations, faith-based missions, services and trade unions have achieved something for seafarers: better access to shore leave. For decades it had become impossible simply to say, “I’m just going ashore for a while,” walk down the gangway and stroll through the port to the nearest café or shop. After 9/11 in 2001 —remember?— ports around the world became heavily secured with gates, barriers, fences, access codes and security guards. The days of freely stretching your legs ashore were over.

Now, in 2026, finally guidelines recognize both the opportunity and the right for seafarers to go ashore. Of course, much is different since 2001. Ships have changed and so have their crews. Almost every vessel now has internet access, and today’s seafarers have grown up in the digital age. Virtually everyone carries a smartphone. Free time is often spent watching films or series,

making video calls home, gaming or endlessly scrolling through social media. Yet one thing has not changed. People still feel the need to get off the ship for a while. They still need shore leave.

Ports have changed as well. During the past twenty-five years, many terminals have moved farther away from towns and city centers. As a result, going ashore has become increasingly dependent on transport. Taxis, shuttle buses provided by seafarers’ centers and other transport services have become essential.

One sentence from the shore leave guidelines deserves special attention:

“Security measures should be applied in such a manner as to cause minimum interference with, or delay to, ships, their personnel and visitors.”

(ISPS Code, Part A, Section 14.1)

The words “minimum interference with ships” are a little

painful to read. In other words, shore leave should never delay the ship’s schedule. During the past twenty-five years, ports have become far more efficient. Loading and unloading operations are faster than ever, and many ports now operate around the clock. As a result, ships spend much less time alongside—a financial advantage for ship owners, but not necessarily good for crews hoping to go ashore. As long as the pressure to reduce port stays continues, the opportunities for shore leave may remain limited.

So, do these new recommendations come too late? Will seafarers increasingly have to rely on onboard gyms, recreation rooms and internet access for the rest and relaxation they need?

Only time will tell.

Seminar in Rotterdam

Despite the best intentions, it is still far from self-evident that seafarers can exercise their right to shore leave. To address this issue, ISC The Bridge organised a seminar dedicated to the subject. On the *Day of the Seafarer*, representatives of 25 organisations from across the maritime sector gathered at the seafarers' centre, including shipowners, shipping agents, welfare organisations, trade unions and other stakeholders. During the seminar, three speakers highlighted the issue from different perspectives.

Stefan Francke, chaplain at SPWO, stressed that shore leave is not a luxury but a basic human necessity. Seafarers often spend months on board, working long hours in an environment that literally operates around the clock. That is precisely why it is so important for them to step outside the confined world of the ship from time to time. This is particularly important after traumatic incidents on board, but equally valuable under normal circumstances. Although communication technology has improved significantly in recent years, nothing can replace the benefit

of temporarily escaping the daily routine. Shore leave contributes to mental health, personal well-being and, ultimately, to safety on board.

Jeaninne Haijemaïje of the Royal Association of Netherlands Shipowners (KVNR) then addressed the legal framework. She explained that the right to shore leave is firmly embedded in international legislation, including the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC). Existing security regulations also provide sufficient scope to allow seafarers access ashore. The real question, therefore, is not whether shore leave is possible, but how it can be organised effectively in day-to-day port operations.

Patrick van Wijland of S5 Agency focused on the role of shipping agents. He argued that young port agents should be made aware of the importance of crew welfare from the very start of their careers. This helps create a culture in which not only the ship and its cargo matter, but also the people working on board. According to Van Wijland, the responsibility of an agency extends beyond

arranging documentation and logistics. Shipping agents are often the first to welcome a vessel on arrival and the last to say goodbye before departure. This places them in a unique position to make a meaningful contribution to the well-being of the crew.

The presentations were followed by lively discussions on both the challenges and the possible solutions. Participants concluded that many improvements are closer at hand than is often assumed—not necessarily through new legislation, but through greater understanding of each other's roles, smarter procedures and a willingness to go the extra mile when needed.

The strength of the seminar lay in the broad representation of the maritime community. The shared conclusion was clear: meaningful and lasting improvements to shore leave can only be achieved when ports, terminals, shipowners, shipping agents, government authorities and welfare organisations work together.



A SHIP THAT FEELS LIKE HOME



In many languages, a ship is spoken of as if she were a woman. In German and French, ships are feminine. It is Die Goethe, not Der Goethe. One old captain once explained why: *“Like a woman, she carries the cargo and waits patiently in port.”*



That is how he has always looked at his ship. But, just like a person, she has a character of her own. You first have to listen carefully if you want to sail well with her. If you ignore what she is telling you, she can punish you. But once you understand her, you know she will take care of you when it really matters. It reminds him of life at home. On board he is the Master, but at home he certainly is not. Sometimes that can be rather exhausting. With a wry smile, he remembers conversations with his teenage daughter and his wife.

“Good morning, Lisa.”

“Hi, Dad.”

“Could you help me pick some apples in a little while?”

“But Dad... that’s work!”

“Well... yes, I suppose it is.”

“Children are supposed to play!”

What can you possibly say after that?

Another time he suggested spending the family holiday in Spain.

“Why Spain?” his wife asked.

“I thought it would be nice to visit somewhere different.”

“I don’t want Spain. I want to go to Greece.”

Whatever he suggests, somebody always has another idea. Over the years he has learned that

it is often wiser to hand over the helm at home. Otherwise, the discussion goes round in circles. At home, the captain is not really in command. On board it is different. If he says, “Make fast the spring line,” the job gets done without discussion. Of course, it is always a joy to return home. But sometimes it is also good to return to the ship.

There she lies, safely alongside. Her headlines and breast lines are tight. The wash from a passing tug gently breaks against her bow and runs along her jade-green hull. Her name stands out in bright white letters, while the Dutch flag flutters from the mast. The wheelhouse stretches from port to starboard and has a warm, homely feeling. Forward is everything needed to navigate safely across the world’s oceans: radar, ECDIS, engine controls, communication equipment and all the other instruments. Aft are the bookcases with pilot books, nautical publications, manuals and folders for certificates and paperwork. On the other side stands a large table, specially built for the ship, surrounded by comfortable leather benches. This is where life on board takes place.

When the cook has finished preparing the meal, everyone helps carry the food up to the wheelhouse. He remembers one passage across

the Bay of Biscay when a whale surfaced close alongside. It blew a great plume into the air before taking another breath. What restaurant in the world can offer a view like that?

He also remembers spending a weekend at anchor in a sheltered bay near Stockvik. New liferafts had been delivered, and the old ones could be used for an abandon-ship drill. There was finally enough time. It was March, and small ice floes were still drifting around the vessel. None of the crew had ever seen a life raft inflate. Everyone gathered on deck. What a spectacular sight it was when the container hit the water and, a few moments later, the raft suddenly burst open and inflated. The pilot ladder was rigged over the ship’s side.

Since he lived in Finland, he had made a habit of swimming in icy water during the winter. He challenged the crew—and, if he was honest, he also wanted to show that the old man still had some courage left. Wearing nothing but his swimming shorts, he climbed down the pilot ladder.

The crew could hardly believe their Master was actually going to enter the freezing water. Naturally, he could not let anyone see that the cold affected him. Calmly, as though it were the most normal thing in the world, he lowered

himself into the sea without showing the slightest reaction.

The crew watched in complete silence. He could almost read their thoughts: *“If the old man can do it, we can do it too.”*

And they did. The Filipino crew members did not want to lose face. Carefully they put one foot into the water, then the other, and finally jumped in. One of the Dutch crew members dived straight off the ladder and came back to the surface shouting from the cold. Everyone burst into laughter. It became one of those moments that stays with a crew for years. The fun. The teamwork. The friendship. The feeling that everybody belonged together. One for all, and all for one.

He is expected to command the ship. But sometimes he wonders whether it is really the ship that commands him. And perhaps she also guides everyone else on board. Old seafarers understand this. That is why they say: *“The Master commands the ship, the crew carries the ship, and the ship carries them all together—a home that gently sails across the sea.”*



THE UNION VISITS ON BOARD!

For many years, Nautilus International has visited ships through its Fleet Visitor programme.

by Peter Jager

Many seafarers have met me during those visits—many others have not. I have been working for Nautilus for more than thirty years. Before joining the maritime union, I spent over eleven years at sea.

During that time I served in the merchant navy, passenger shipping, inland shipping and offshore sand dredging. For many years, I have visited ships almost every working day.

With Rotterdam, one of the world's largest transshipment ports, right on our doorstep, it would be easy to assume that I only visit ships there. However, ships call at many different ports, and some simply never come to Rotterdam. As a result, my area of operation roughly covers the region from Antwerp to Den Helder and from Ostend to Emden. Occasionally, I also visit ships further inland.

The main purpose of these visits is to stay connected with the people on board. As a maritime union, we want to know what is happening in everyday life at sea and what challenges seafarers are facing. Because generally, nobody comes to our office in Rotterdam to tell us. The best way to find out is to go on board ourselves—to see, hear and experience life on board, talk with the crew and get a feeling for the atmosphere.

Ship visits are also an excellent opportunity to explain what the union does. Very often I explain how a collective labour agreement (CLA) is

negotiated. Good wages and working conditions do not happen by themselves. Young seafarers often know little about this, which is perfectly understandable. We also discuss changes in the current agreement, and these conversations often lead to interesting discussions.

Many other topics come up during my visits as well: heavy physical work, early retirement, pensions, living and working conditions on board, and safety. We also talk about how new national and international regulations affect daily life at sea. Sometimes developments within a shipping company are the reason for a visit. A reduction in fleet size, redundancies or a company takeover can all create uncertainty among crews. In such cases, it is important to explain what is happening and answer questions. At the request of colleagues who support Nautilus members during disciplinary proceedings, I also visit ships where an accident has occurred. I speak with those involved, talk to witnesses and, if necessary, inspect the place where the accident happened. During my visits I always pay special attention to cadets. They are an important group because they are the future of our industry. If they have a positive and enjoyable training period, they are





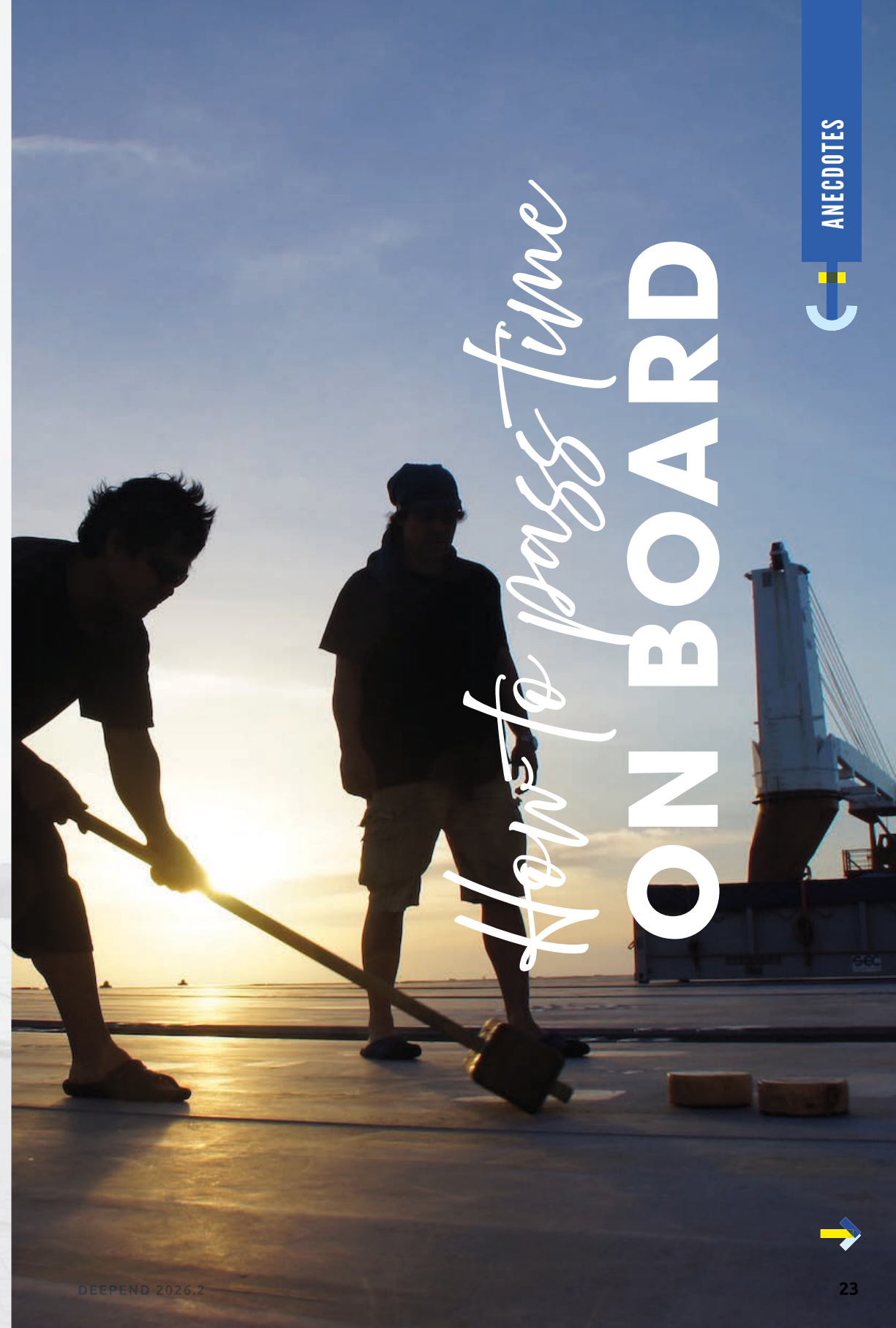
much more likely to choose a career at sea.

Another common reason for going on board is to deal with complaints from crew members. Sometimes these are serious requests for help. Complaints from non-EU seafarers are often submitted through the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), while others come directly to Nautilus. We also receive information through other trusted channels.

If the complaint concerns a Dutch-flagged vessel, an ITF report is usually forwarded to our office in Rotterdam. If the ship is in a Dutch port—or a nearby port, for example in Belgium—I try to visit the vessel as soon as possible. The seriousness of the complaint determines how quickly we act. Sometimes representatives of the shipping company are also present on board. In those situations, it is reassuring for crew members to know that someone is there to represent the employees as well. When you are alone on a ship, you can easily feel isolated. Simply taking the time to listen and show genuine interest often makes a real difference.

Complaints can be made about many different things. There may be disagreements with an officer or the Master, incorrect wages, unpaid overtime, poor food, or even no food left on board. Crew members may not be relieved on time, or they may be sent home early after a conflict. There may also be cases of bullying, harassment or threatening behavior. Today's ships rely more than ever on technology and digital communication. But as long as people work on ships, emotions will always be part of life at sea. If serious problems are not resolved, they can become a heavy mental burden. No matter how large a ship may be, it can quickly start to feel like a very small island.

Perhaps we will meet on board one day. I look forward to seeing you.



How to pass time ON BOARD



DECK GOLF

After dropping anchor, we hear that our berth in the port of Cairns, Australia, is not available. “For a couple of days... maybe ten... or even longer.” For the crew, who has been looking forward to enjoying an Australian beer ashore that evening, it is a real disappointment. Fortunately, the weather is perfect, with tropical temperatures. All the films on board have been watched, and every karaoke song has been sung. So, someone comes up with a new idea: a Deck Golf Tournament! The rules are simple. Take a wooden ice mallet and make a number of thick wooden discs. Draw several circles on the hatch covers and number them from 1 to 10. One by one, the players use their mallet to hit their wooden disc, trying to land it inside one of the circles. Knocking another player’s disc away is perfectly allowed. But if your disc slides off the hatch covers, you must start again. A few days of friendly competition and plenty of laughter are guaranteed!



CONCERT IN THE HARBOUR

During a long-term contract, we regularly spent periods of ten days in St. John’s Harbour, Newfoundland. According to those in the know, St. John’s has the highest concentration of pubs anywhere, with ships berthed just a five-minute walk away. (Crawling back to the ship, however, usually takes at least half an hour...)

It’s hardly surprising, then, that this harbour, located so close to the city centre, is always full of life. We experienced this firsthand when a stage was erected right next to our ship, just outside the dock gate. After making a few inquiries, we learned that a city festival with live music was scheduled for that afternoon. It was a magnificent setting: right on the waterfront, with our large ship providing an impressive backdrop. The decision was quickly made. Much to everyone’s delight, work on board was called off at three o’clock that afternoon. The deck was decorated with flags and garden chairs, our sailors managed to mobilise and invite the Filipino community of St. John’s in record time, the cook prepared a wonderful selection of snacks, and I made sure a few cases of beer were nicely chilled.

Slowly, the area alongside our ship filled with festivalgoers. Around four o’clock, the festivities got underway: local bands and performers from the United States took the stage, while we danced with the Filipino ladies right on the cargo hatch covers.

The next day, it made the front page of the local newspaper: the crew of the Dutch ship had enjoyed the best seats at the entire festival—complete with photographs. The bands themselves received considerably less coverage...





BINGO!

When asked about memorable and enjoyable moments on board, the thing that came to mind—after a bit of reflection—was our Bingo nights.

It must be at least 25 years ago. We were sailing with a multinational crew of Indonesians, Filipinos, and Dutch seafarers. Some voyages were long, and to break the monotony we would occasionally organize activities on board. Bingo was everyone's favourite. We didn't have one of those fancy cages with numbered balls. Instead, we used a simple bag filled with cardboard slips bearing the numbers. The prize pool consisted of items purchased by the crew from the welfare fund, supplemented by promotional gifts donated by the office. It was a wonderful mix of trinkets, "nice-to-have" gadgets, and the occasional collector's item.

Often, I acted as the Bingo Master. I would put on a cap, drape myself in a sari, and call out the numbers from behind a lectern. Each card had three rounds. To build the suspense, anyone needing just one more number had to sit beside a stanchion with the ship's bell attached to it. Instead of shouting "Bingo!", the winner had to ring the bell. It never failed to entertain. Naturally, as Bingo Master, I was the very picture of integrity, ensuring that the prizes were distributed fairly and impartially. However, because of the mix of nationalities, not everyone was equally familiar with English. Moreover, the participants made a sport of trying to give each other a false bingo by calling out numbers that had not yet been drawn.

To create a level playing field, I occasionally put my own reputation on the line. From behind my lectern I had a good view of the room and could see which numbers would complete a full card. So it could happen that I drew a number without calling it or repeated a number that had already been announced.

On one occasion there was a steward who understood very little English. He had never won a prize before. In the interest of fair distribution, I began calling the numbers on his card. Some of them I had to repeat several times before he realized he had them and marked them off. Naturally, this did not go unnoticed. Amid great hilarity, the rest of the crew helped him towards a full card. As proud as a peacock, he finally rang the bell. For me, as the ever-so-honest Bingo Master, moments like these were the real jackpot: **BINGO!**



RECENTLY, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ORGANISE AN EXHIBITION OF MARITIME SURREALIST PAINTINGS IN THE OOSTERKERK (EAST CHURCH) IN HOORN. LOCALLY, THIS CHURCH IS ALSO KNOWN AS THE SAILORS' CHURCH, AS IT STANDS CLOSE TO THE HARBOUR AND FOR CENTURIES SERVED AS THE CHURCH OF HOORN'S FISHERMEN AND SEAFARERS. ITS MARITIME HISTORY IS STILL CLEARLY VISIBLE IN THE SHIP MODELS, MEMORIALS AND OTHER NAUTICAL OBJECTS DISPLAYED INSIDE. WHILE WORKING THERE, I LEARNED THAT ONE OF THE CHURCH'S STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS HAD RECENTLY BEEN DESIGNED BY AN ARTIST FROM HOORN. NATURALLY, I WANTED TO KNOW MORE.



Thomas Franke Fotografie

MARITIME ART SERIES

For centuries, the maritime world has inspired artists to create beautiful works of art. In this series, DeepEnd highlights maritime art from both the past and the present.

THE ART OF STAINED GLASS

Gefanija Nods

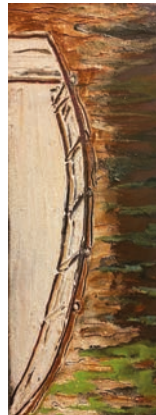
by Kees Wiersum

A friend gave me her name: Sefanja Nods. She was born in the small village of Middelie, about 15 kilometres south of Hoorn. Surrounded by waterways, life in Middelie has always been closely connected to water. Almost everything travelled by boat—even cows, transported on special “cow boats” to the surrounding fields.

As a young girl, Sefanja sailed small dinghies on the canals and lakes. From an early age she learned to respect the water. As children they were often warned: “Be careful! Don’t get too close to the water, or the Krullenboes will catch you!” Later in life, she even lived on a boat herself.

For many years she painted water. Not romantic rivers or quiet lakes, but the water itself fascinated her: the ever-changing surface, raindrops creating magical circles, and the reflections of sunlight and moonlight dancing across the waves. She captured these mo-





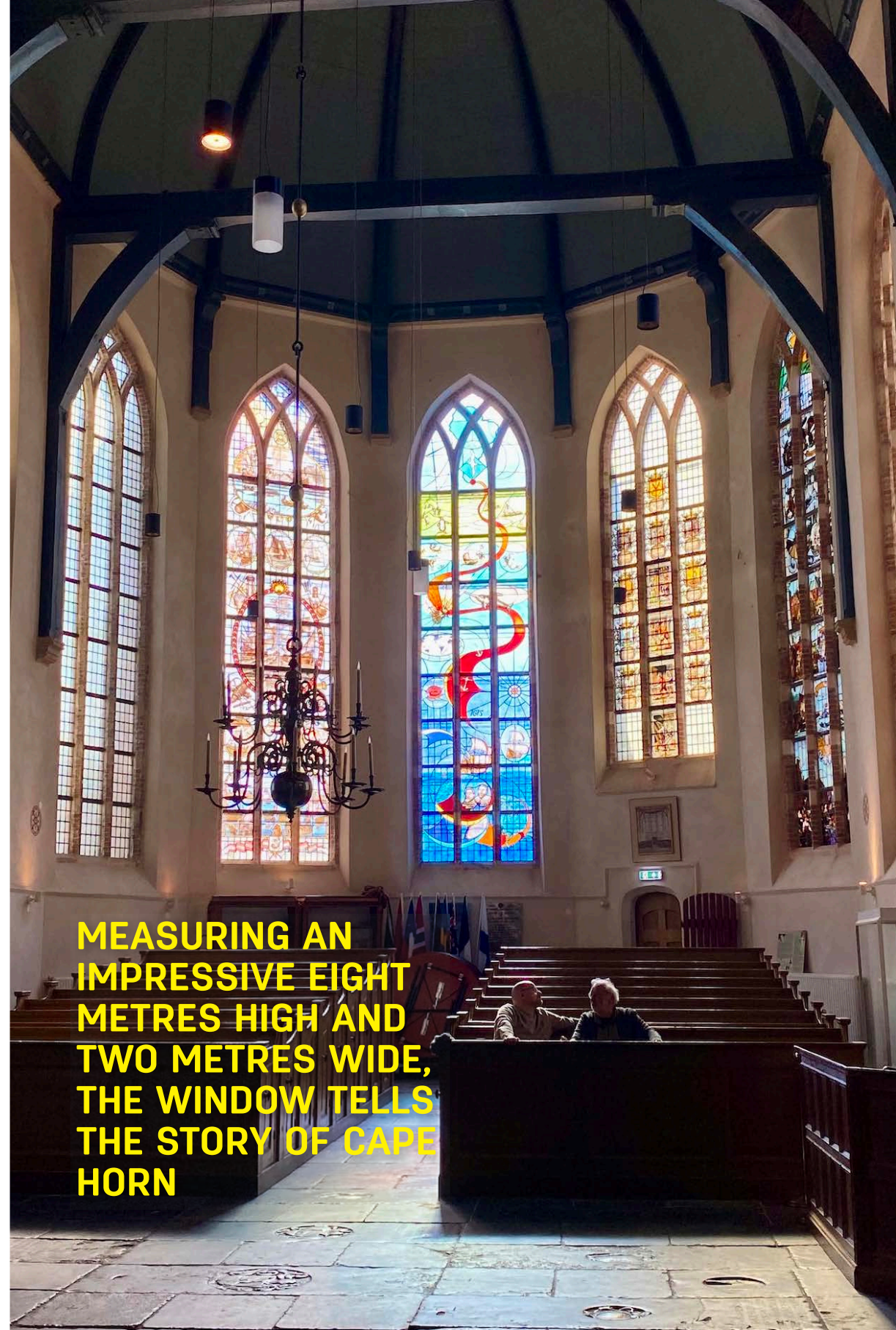
Sefanja Nods

Kunstenares, grafisch vormgever, illustrator, media
www.sefanjanodsgalerie.com

ments beautifully on canvas. Only later did boats begin to appear in her paintings. Traditional Dutch working boats, such as the 'Cow Boat' (Boeier) and the Grun-
 del, classic Dutch flat-bottomed vessels, be-
 came favourite subjects. Painted in acrylics,
 they are simple yet remarkably expressive. Then came an extraordinary commission. By
 then living in Hoorn, Sefanja was asked to
 design a stained-glass window for the Ooster-
 kerk. Measuring an impressive eight metres
 high and two metres wide, the window tells
 the story of Cape Horn—a fitting subject for
 the city of Hoorn. A striking red line leads the viewer along the
 route sailed by the Dutch explorers Willem

Cornelisz Schouten and Jacob Le Maire, who
 became the first Europeans to round Cape
 Horn on 29 January 1616. For an artist from
 Hoorn, it was a dream project.

From her studio, located just around the cor-
 ner from the Oosterkerk, Sefanja can see the
 window she designed almost every day. It has
 become a beautiful showcase for her work. The project inspired her to continue explo-
 ring stained glass. She has now entered the
 competition to design a new stained-glass
 window for the Great Church of Monnickendam. I have a feeling we will be hearing much
 more about this talented artist in the years to
 come.



**MEASURING AN
 IMPRESSIVE EIGHT
 METRES HIGH AND
 TWO METRES WIDE,
 THE WINDOW TELLS
 THE STORY OF CAPE
 HORN**

As I write this column, the FIFA World Cup is the main topic of conversation this summer. Which country has the best team? It is a wonderful time of impossible predictions, shouting at the television and unexpected results. Though in the end, the best team usually wins.



The same is true in shipping. Anyone can order a ship, but its performance – and just as importantly, the enjoyment of working on board – depends on a group of men and women who live and work together for weeks at a time. Together on a large piece of steel, hopefully with good fresh coffee and an excellent cook. In the end, it all comes down to one thing: team spirit. When the atmosphere on board is good, work runs more smoothly, people laugh more often and even a long watch seems a little shorter.

So, what creates a good atmosphere on board? A cook who not only prepares good meals but also has time to listen is worth his or her weight in gold. Good facilities on board also make a difference, as does a shore office that understands what life at sea is really like. But there are also many things that the crew can influence themselves. First of all: trust. People need the freedom and confidence to be themselves, to talk about mistakes and to share their opinions

without being afraid of being criticized or ignored. That is the foundation of every good team.

Consistency is also important. Not in the work itself – that can change faster than the weather on the North Sea – but in people's behavior. A captain who says one thing today and something completely different tomorrow because the shore office has another new idea only makes life more difficult. Crews can deal with a lot, as long as they know where they stand. Clear leadership is often more valuable than brilliant improvisation, however important improvisation may sometimes be.

A second point is fairness. Everyone understands that some people earn more or have a higher rank. What people do not accept is unfair treatment. If watch schedules or leave plans depend on favorites, people will soon start competing instead of helping each other. That works about as well as sand in a gearbox: it still turns, but not very smoothly.

Then there is the classic subject: communication. Interestingly, every industry says it needs better communication – even the communication industry! On board, it is actually quite simple: tell people what is happening. Is a project running behind schedule? Say so. Is the pilot or the client difficult? Say so. Is a colleague not doing the job properly? Talk about it. And if the shore office comes up with an idea that simply does not work on board, say that too. People can usually handle bad news surprisingly well. Half-truths are much harder to deal with. Funny, isn't it, that we usually think it is the other person who should communicate better? Humor may be the most important ingredient of all; it's the oil that keeps the crew running smoothly. The dry jokes on

board, the perfect joke at exactly the right moment or the slightly cheeky remark that makes everyone laugh. Not by putting someone down, but by laughing together. One of the nicest Dutch habits is that we are also able to laugh at ourselves. When people from different nationalities can laugh together, things are usually going well on board.

Good leadership is often less complicated than people think. It starts with professional skills, but it is not about big speeches, clever knowledge or impressive manoeuvres to feed your ego. In the end, it is about being present, listening, being clear, stepping in before problems become bigger – and sometimes not stepping in, so that people can find their own solutions.

Sometimes everything goes wrong. Bad weather, technical problems, delays or a shore office that is just a little too eager to help. Those are the moments when the atmosphere on board is really tested. Then you see the difference between a team and a collection of individuals. One crew pulls together and gets the job done. The other starts building little islands. And apart from dredging, that is rarely a good idea.

A good atmosphere does not happen by itself. It is not an HR project or a box to tick. It is built by being reliable, treating each other fairly, communicating openly and keeping a sense of humour. That not only makes work more enjoyable, it makes the job more successful as well.

And just like in the World Cup, it is not the collection of the best individual players that wins the tournament, but the best team. Although, as Dutch people, we secretly hope that this time we will finally win the penalty shoot-out as well.

SEAFARERS CENTRES & MARITIME CHAPLAINS IN THE NETHERLANDS



AMSTERDAM

Seamen's Centre

Radarweg 32
1042 AA Amsterdam
t. +31 (0)20 6117 912
Rev. L.J. Rasser
t. +31 (0)20 6690 065 / +31 (0)6 2209 0334
leon.rasser@zeevarendencentrale.nl



DELFIJL / EEMSHAVEN

Seafarers Centre

Borkumweg 2
9979 XH Eemshaven
t. +31 (0)6 1211 6928
Pastor S. Standhardt.
t. +31 (0)50 3127 178 / +31 (0)6 2929 6930
svenserg@zeevarendencentrale.nl



MOERDIJK

Seafarers Centre

Sluisweg – Roode Vaart
4782 PT Moerdijk
t. +31 (0)168 416 650
Rev. W.J.A. Ester
t. +31 (0)6 1107 0913
janwillemester@gmail.com



ROTTERDAM / OOSTVOORNE

International Seafarers Center The Bridge

Stationsweg 33
3233 CS Oostvoorne
t. +31 (0)6 3227 4725
Rev. H.M. Perfors
t. +31 (0)6 5367 9265
helene.perfors@gmail.com



ROTTERDAM / SCHIEDAM

Flying Angel Club

Admiraal Trompstraat 1
3115 HK Schiedam
Havennummer 562
t. +31 (0)10 4260 933
Rev. Daniel Odhiambo
daniel.odhiambo@mtsmail.org
Rev. M. Hafkenscheid
mark.hafkenscheid@mtsmail.org



TERNEUZEN

Seamen Centre

t. +31 (0)6 5712 4811
Engelandweg 1A
4538 BE Terneuzen
info@seamencentreterneuzen.nl



VLISSINGEN

Flying Angel Club

Ritthemsestraat 498
4389 PA Ritthem
Havennummer 562
t. +31 (0)118 467 063

WORLDWIDE

Rev. S.N.D. Francke
Parelduikerhof 8
4332 DA Middelburg
t. +31 (0)118 651 888
t. +31 (0)6 3700 8432
waterbouwpastor@gmail.com



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ISWAN Free, confidential, multilingual helpline for seafarers and their families
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COMES IN A SMALL BOX...