

Windjammer

The Voyage of the Christian Radich

Transcribed from the actual English soundtrack. Translations from Danish and German sources have been used to fill in some sections for which the English soundtrack couldn't be located.

PROLOGUE

In Norway, winter comes early and stays late. We Norwegians are used to long winters, and many of us young people enjoy winter as much as summer.

This particular winter might have been like any other. But in the middle of November, Oslo's full-rigged school ship Christian Radich was moved to a berth at the city dock.

Then, newspapers and the radio started telling that the Christian Radich was going to leave soon on a special training cruise to the east coast of the United States, by way of Madeira and the West Indies.

Of course, the captain will be Yngvar Kjelstrup, one of Norway's best-known sailing masters and the man who was responsible for designing and building the Christian Radich.

Never, it seems, had there been so much excitement about the departure of any Norwegian vessel, nor had there been so much competition among young men and boys to sign on for the cruise.

The purpose of a training cruise is to qualify boys for billets in Norway's very big merchant marine, but many Norwegian boys go to sea because it's a family tradition.

Captain Kjelstrup is very careful in choosing his boys. Out of the hundreds who apply, less than fifty will be chosen.

Those of us who were finally selected felt extremely lucky and very proud. We were told to report at once to the Christian Radich.

We are all kinds, and from all parts of Norway. Of the deck boys chosen, the oldest is Harald Tusberg, 21, just through with his military service.

Although two boys were only 14, most of us are the same as Sven Erik Libaek, 17. Sven Erik has been playing the piano since he was five and plans to make music his career. We often hear him over Oslo radio.

Mr. and Mrs. Libaek gave permission for Sven Erik to sign on for the cruise only because he'd promised to practise faithfully if they could somehow arrange to have a piano put aboard.

Of the grown-ups signed on as mates and petty officers, the best known is Lasse Kolstad, who besides being a good sailor is also an actor and popular singer.

No sooner are we on the ship than we are ordered into uniform, dress blues, for a round of inspections.

A sailor himself, His Majesty King Olav V wishes the Christian Radich fair winds and Godspeed. The royal visit is also a tribute to Captain Kjelstrup. This is his last voyage before retiring.

In our flat hats and bell bottom blues we imagine ourselves to be looking like old salts. But I guess we don't fool anyone. We're still just landsmen and have a lot to learn about the sea.

The captain gives us three minutes for goodbyes to family and friends.

According to Lasse, we're staying in the calm waters of the Oslofjord until we're rid of our lubberly ways and learn how to work together as deep sea sailor-men.

After you've learnt about the gear below deck and on deck, you're ready to go aloft.

The first rule on any sailing ship is: "One hand for the ship, and one for yourself!" This means: Always keep a firm grip on something solid, no matter what work you may be doing!

You must be completely sure of the purpose of each single part of the rigging and how it works. But even more important: You must be able to find your way up there in the darkest night and in the strongest storm, and to carry out each manipulation correctly.

You must know all the sails and how to operate them from up high on the yardarm. Never forget: "One hand for the ship, and one for yourself!"

Up here, for the first time, you become aware of your responsibility, not only for your own safety, but also for the safety of the ship and all of your shipmates.

That's why so many fathers think that the best way to turn boys into men is the sail-training ship – the windjammer.

Finally we're ready to set course for the Skagerrak and out on the open sea.

The winter's first real storm seems to have waited for us, only to test how well we've learnt our lessons in seamanship.

PART ONE

[Song: “Life on the Ocean”]

One day you'll always remember is the first time your feet feel sure on the deck.

Then you know that you and your windjammer can weather any storm, and ride out the angry sea.

We're deck boys now, standing regular sea-watches aboard the square-rigger, beating across the North Sea, on the fringe of a midwinter gale.

The Christian Radich is close-hauled on the starboard tack, averaging thirteen knots, pretty fast for a windjammer.

Although we've found our sea legs, and our appetites have come back, everything above and below decks is cold and wet, miserably uncomfortable.

In weather like this, all deck watches are doubled. There are two boys instead of one at the wheel and other stations.

Rules of the road give a sailing ship the right of way over steamships, but the second mate transmits our call letters L-J-L-M over and over again so other ships will know we're about.

This is our 20th day, and we're running away from winter as fast as wind and sail can take us.

Before many hours, latitude forty north will be behind us. South of that is fine.

Every day at noon, the ship's position is posted 'tween decks. We're heading for Madeira.

It's easy to understand why so many boys use to fall in love with sailing-ships, and spend most of their lives at sea. Our captain has been in windjammers for more than fifty years. In 1903 he ran away, and signed aboard a big Cape Horner.

After fighting winter storms in the North Sea, we boys feel we've earned the right to call ourselves “windjammer men.”

This is really our first opportunity to get acquainted with the ship and our shipmates.

The galley is midships on the main deck. Aboard all sailing ships, the cook is nicknamed “doctor,” and the chimney of the galley stove is called “Charlie Noble.”

Our sail locker is forward, below the fo'c'sle.

At exactly the same time every morning, Oscar Strønen, our second mate, comes to the chart-house to wind the chronometers.

Noon-time dinner is the high spot of every day. You can have all you want to eat, but no waste. Either eat the whole slice of bread, or leave the bread alone.

Stump, our mascot, has no trouble living up to the rule “waste not, want not.”

The captain's cabin is directly below the poop deck, on the starboard side. In Cape Horn days, masters of sailing ships often ate alone, but captain Kjelstrup takes his meals with the mates. If the captain's mess boy happens to be a special friend, you can sometimes borrow an extra orange or apple, or a slice of freshly baked cake.

At sea, once your appetite returns, it never seems to leave you. Only five minutes after dinner, we line up at the slop chest to buy candy.

The Christian Radich is probably the first school ship that ever allowed a boy to bring aboard his own piano.

[Piano music]

At half past five in the afternoon, boys off watch are free till bedtime.

By now, we have the old coal locker in shape. It makes a fine club room for boys who are working on their English.

“– She bought five pounds of potatoes.”

[Speaks Norwegian]

“– No Norwegian! 25 øre every time you speak Norwegian down here!”

In time, you get used to the routine of four hours on and four hours off. The 'tween decks compartment is our mess hall and dormitory. The only way forty-two boys can be crowded into so small a space is by swinging hammocks.

Once you've learned the trick of climbing aboard and keeping balance, your hammock becomes the perfect sack.

Of course, grown-ups live in cabins, a furnished room with real bunks and mattresses.

Before he turns in, the captain gets a picture of how everything looks, sounds, and feels: The wind and the sea, the clouds, the stars, and the trim of the sails. Any new sound, any change in the ship's motion or speed will wake the captain.

Sometimes dawn finds one or two of us who haven't slept at all. Sven Erik has spent the hours writing to Mr. Arthur Fiedler in Boston, Massachusetts. His Boston Pops orchestra made a big hit on its visit to Oslo. Sven Erik would like to play for Mr. Fiedler, and perhaps get a favourable letter which would help him win a scholarship to study music in America.

Our 30th day begins like most others. At six o'clock we deck boys fall in topside to wash down.

Early in the forenoon, we hear that a landfall is expected any minute.

After our noon position, we should know the time we'll anchor – more or less.

The sound of seagulls makes some of us homesick for Norway.

[Song: “The Sea is Green”]

The lookout's three bells means Madeira's been sighted dead ahead.

“– Madeira at last!”

“– Wonderful Madeira!”

“– The climate of Madeira is usually delicious. Generous sunshine, brilliant flowers, luscious food, charming people. Ideal for a honeymoon.”

“– I don't think any place can be that perfect.”

“– Columbus fell in love with a Madeira girl, and he married her. And Lord Nelson brought his ships to Funchal to buy Madeira wine, and to give his sailors shore leave. Now it is our turn.”

“– But listen guys: The roads and sidewalks on Madeira are rough and very steep. When going walking, ladies should not attempt to wear their hoop skirts.”

“– What? No hoop skirts?”

“– That was Madeira for me!”

“– I won't even go ashore!”

By mid afternoon we're trying to adapt our sea legs to the solid ground of Funchal, on the Portuguese island of Madeira, 2083 miles south by west from Oslo.

All boys must be back aboard ship by nine o'clock, but for a few precious hours, we're free.

Before leaving the ship, the captain gave each of us an American one dollar bill, worth about thirty Portuguese escudos. Even though prices here are very low, to see all the sights will have to make every escudo count.

Four miles up the mountain, we find the start of the famous Madeira basket sled ride.

The sleds have no guard rails, no safety belts, no brakes. There's nothing to hold onto but your hat, or if you're lucky – a girlfriend.

Every driver can say in seven different languages: “Don't be afraid, please! Just close your eyes! Thank you very much!”

Now it's our turn to be thankful. Thank **you** very much! *Tusen, tusen tak!*

The island's great day is the feast of Saint Sylvester.

Everyone from the Christian Radich, and sailors from the Portuguese school ship Sagres, are on hand for the opening of Madeira's country fair.

In a way, the shepherds who live up high on the mountain slopes remind us of our Laplanders, who tend reindeer herds in the north of Norway. At the fair we see many of the beautiful and useful things the Madeiran country people make.

The steward has promised to put aboard lots of these fresh fruits and provisions. If a boy wants to take some Madeira wine home to his parents, the captain buys it, and will keep it locked up until the ship gets back to Oslo.

It's easy enough now to realise why Columbus, and all the great navigators and sailors of history, have praised Madeira.

To keep evil spirits away from their little paradise, the islanders rely on an old custom, borrowed from the Chinese. At midnight, on St. Sylvester's, they light ten thousand fires.

From Madeira, we follow the route taken by Columbus. Now we will have the gentle trade winds, and so the captain gives orders to stow away our suite of strong storm sails. It's perfectly safe to use older canvas in this mild weather.

Also, we're dried out enough to get on with painting and maintenance: Cleaning, scraping, greasing, and tarring, trying to get every last piece of ship's gear into tip top condition.

We can't believe our eyes: Another windjammer in mid Atlantic – a four-mast barque?

She's the German school ship Pamir, a famous old windjammer built in 1906. All steel to the top of her masts, and as strong as a ship can be. For years she was one of a great fleet of German windjammers, sailing the stormy Cape Horn route to Chile for nitrates.

Like ourselves, the Germans believe there is no better way to develop character and leadership than aboard a windjammer.

The Pamir is seventeen days out of Hamburg, and is bound for Montevideo and Buenos Aires. On this voyage, she carries thirty-one grown-ups and fifty-five boys.

As long as we're able, we continue talking with the Pamir.

“– How do you spell 'sailing'?”

“– Sailing? S-A-I-L-I-N-G.”

“– Let's hear it!”

Sven Erik has on this, the 41st day, a great theme for his journal, from which he reads for his comrades. He describes the overwhelming impression of seeing the two ships meet, and he also notes that the Pamir would have been sold as scrap metal, were it not for sailing enthusiasts who raised enough money to keep her sailing.

“– That's pretty good!”

“– Ok. Let's try it.”

[Radio communications with the Pamir]

“– Many thanks, Pamir. *Auf wiedersehen*. This is the Christian Radich signing off.”

Day number fifty-six. The stars and stripes at our fore means we are entering United States waters. Everyone feels the thrill of reliving history. We have crossed the Atlantic in a windjammer, on the

route taken by Columbus nearly five hundred years ago.

El Morro marks the entrance to the harbour of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Since 1951, this island nation has been a self-governing commonwealth of United States citizens.

Maybe anyone arriving in a full rigger gets special attention. We certainly do, and everything is on the house.

We are even invited to hear the great Pablo Casals, who is now eighty years old, playing at the palace of Puerto Rico's governor Muñoz Marín.

Leaving San Juan, we speak the Swedish school ship Flying Clipper, which trains boys for commissions in the Swedish merchant marine.

Our schedule has been changed. Barnacles and grass on the ship's bottom had been slowing us down, so we're putting in to Curaçao in the Dutch West Indies, where there's a dry dock.

Harald hurries together as much information about Curaçao as he can find on board.

Willemstad is the capital of Holland's ABC islands: Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao.

The most famous sight is the Queen Emma pontoon bridge which opens whenever a ship arrives or departs.

After the Queen Emma bridge opens, you sail right up Main Street.

Lasse's been here before. He says it's like a Dutch village, only instead of tulips and cheeses, we'll find pretty girls.

In a dry dock meant for big tankers, the Christian Radich is like a tiny toy sail boat in an empty bathtub.

But she doesn't seem so tiny to us who have to get her hull scraped and painted before anyone can go on liberty.

Since arriving, we've gotten a lot of invitations. Some girls at Peter Stuyvesant College want us to go picnicking with them, and the Norwegian seaman's church is arranging a party.

Captain Kjelstrup let us draw part of the money that's due us. Curaçao's a free port where you can find real bargains from all over the world.

While most of us were enjoying liberty, Stump decides he should hit the beach too.

It was some time before Sven Erik discovered our mascot is AWOL, absent without leave.

Stump was pretty much Sven Erik's dog, so instead of shoving off for the picnic, he tries to organize a big hunt-for-Stump expedition. After notifying the police and the radio station, Sven Erik starts searching all over.

Curaçao isn't a large island. Someone is pretty sure to spot any new dog in town.

The first report said Stump was seen downtown. Then he was heading in the direction of the governor's palace, trailing Suzie, a poodle belonging to the Lancasters, the American consul general.

While Sven Erik is missing most of the picnic, Stump and Suzie are moving on to the beach club. Suzie, a landlubber, loves the wet element, while Stump, the sea-dog, seems to be afraid of water.

The picnic turns out to be a famous Dutch *rijsttafel*, the East Indian meal that takes hours to prepare, and hours to eat.

Now, we can give our full attention to this wonderful *feest*, as the Dutch call it. At least in one respect, we Norwegians are very like our Dutch friends. We believe no party can be a real success without music and dancing.

We don't have wooden shoes, but we do have the *brincos* we got in Madeira.

The captain seems in a great rush to get on our way to Trinidad. Has he forgotten that sailing on a Friday is supposed to bring bad luck?

With a fresh wind coming from the right quarter, we could reach Port-of-Spain, Trinidad within seventy-two hours. Or it could take us a couple of weeks. That's the way it is in a windjammer. In the Caribbean, one must always be ready for sudden changes in weather. Aboard a sailing ship, if it catches you unprepared, a tropical squall can be dangerous.

Seventy-five days and fifty-two hundred miles from Norway, and many of us seem to be thinking of home.

[Song: "Kari Waits for Me"]

It's discouraging to be set back by a current that carries us farther and farther away from Trinidad.

[Piano music]

There are hundreds of islands in the Caribbean: British, French, Dutch, and American. We drop anchor in the little harbour of Charlotte-Amalie which once belonged to Denmark. Here, we can take aboard fresh water and provisions, but we'll just have to wait for the right kind of wind to carry us on to Trinidad.

Today's short-wave broadcast from Oslo says all Norway is covered deep with snow and ice. Even the Sognefjord, they say, is so frozen over that horses and sleds are being driven across it.

The Caribbean is a real Davy Jones' locker. If you're a skin-diver, you can explore the remains of many unlucky ships, like this hull of the Royal Mail Ship Rhone, a packet-boat that went down with all hands while trying to escape a hurricane almost a hundred years ago.

Red sky in the morning – sailors take warning! But red sky at night – sailors delight!

[Song: "Everybody Loves Saturday Night"]

PART TWO

[Instrumental, steel band: “Marianne”]

“– Do you hear that steel band, mon?”

“– Trinidad's music is great, mon!”

“– You mean calypso?”

“– Play calypso, dance calypso, sing calypso!”

“– Mon, you even talk calypso!”

“– King Neptune's coming aboard, hurry up! It's like carnival!”

We've been hearing plenty of exciting stories about Trinidad, but none of us expected to be welcomed to the equator by King Neptune and his court.

School ships sail thousands of miles and visit many foreign ports, so boys may have first hand lessons in human geography. Education must come before skylarking, and sometimes that's very difficult.

Of course, no one ever gets ashore until after a lecture about sin and virtue and... other matters.

Trinidad is the capital of the West Indies Federation, the newest member of the British Commonwealth.

On hand to greet the captain are a dozen girls who have competed for the crown of carnival queen. We boys aren't introduced to the girls, but a few of us do get introduced to a long cool drink, intended only for grown-ups.

Except for the city of Port-of-Spain, the island of Trinidad seems like one huge sugar plantation.

[Song: “Sugar Cane”]

Everyone's enjoying Trinidad but the captain who must prepare his reports, and Sven Erik who's restricted for playing the accordion after lights out. The captain has given us permission to invite friends down to the ship before sailing. This means that Sven Erik won't have to miss calypso and the Trinidad steel band music after all.

Invitations went to everyone who plays, sings, or dances. In Trinidad, there's almost no one who doesn't do one or the other.

[Song: “Don't Hurry Worry Me”]

The limbo dancers of Henry Trim Junior.

They say this dance began during the days of slavery. According to one story, a master would set free the slave who could dance lowest under the bar.

The captain is a good sport about our party. The Trinidad jump up is really more lively than he or any of us expected.

Day number ninety-eight. We're leaving Trinidad at noon. Destination: New York City!

Day number hundred and eighteen. We're off Cape Hatteras, called "The graveyard of the Atlantic." With the help of the Gulf Stream, we put mile after mile behind us on our way north.

Everybody's talking about one thing only: New York, New York, New York!

When Arild Kristoffersen was nine, he spent the summer with an uncle in Brooklyn. Ask him any question about New York, and he goes on and on as long as you'll listen. One thing's sure: Norwegians in New York are expecting us.

"– Dinners, churches, sightseeing-trips."

"– We'll have a busy week in New York."

There seems to be more Norwegians in New York than in the entire Norway. And most of them live in Brooklyn. But we want to see New York.

Day number hundred and twenty-three. Fog bound off Ambrose Lightship, right at the entrance to New York's busy ship channel.

[Song: "The Village of New York"]

Our most exciting excursion outside New York is to a fireman's show in Philadelphia, where Benjamin Franklin organized America's first fire brigade in 1736. Everyone here is proud of the department's efficiency, especially its record for saving scores of lives and millions of dollars by teaching the public how to prevent fires. The reappearance of old-fashioned engines is a highlight of fire prevention week.

Not many people have ever had the fun of riding modern apparatus to a real fire.

Off New London, Connecticut, we sight another windjammer, a three-mast barque: The Eagle, school ship of the American Coastguard Academy.

The Eagle tells us she's starting on a cruise to Europe, and her first port of call will be Bergen, in Norway. We wish her fair winds, good sailing, and a happy time in Norway, and send some free advice on how to have lots of fun in Bergen.

Before we start back to Norway, we'll sail along the New England coast, which was explored by Leif Ericson five hundred years before the voyage of Columbus.

Sea-planes, submarines... We boys can't imagine what's happening. But then it seems that our windjammer is providing some diversion for a fast task force of the United States Navy. The captain is the only one who isn't surprised. This rendez-vous with the navy was planned long before leaving Oslo.

The Christian Radich is going to follow along wherever the task force goes. We boys will take turns visiting different types of navy ships for instruction and drill.

This is a complicated exercise in ship handling, a high line transfer from a windjammer under full sail to a high speed destroyer. It's also the kind of practical seamanship you can't learn from books.

Captain Crenshaw of the destroyer Forest Sherman pays us a real compliment. We're accepted right away as seagoing sailors, and are assigned with men of the sea detail.

Some of us are invited to watch the firing of a rocket-propelled anti-submarine device. It's called Weapon Alpha.

Christian Radich boys are probably the first Norwegians ever to go aboard one of the navy's guided missile destroyers.

Our windjammer ties up at the operating base as a special guest. Every day spent with the navy means you'll learn something new.

To a school of frisky porpoise, the arrival of a hunter killer submarine is just dandy. Another playmate I guess, to join in the morning's fun.

Torpedo practice is on the submariner's schedule for today.

After submerging to a depth of sixty feet, the sub will fire a salvo of three "fish," that's what the navy calls a torpedo.

When the torpedo fails to surface, an underwater search party can sometimes salvage the missing "fish," if it isn't in too deep water. Most Norwegian boys are pretty good at skin-diving. Kaare Terland even qualifies to lock out of the submarine with the navy's underwater swimmers.

The colour of a torpedo's war-head tells the kind of high explosive that it carries. Practice heads are always painted yellow.

A twist on a valve releases the compressed air inside. When air forces water out, the torpedo becomes buoyant.

By now, nearly everyone had forgotten all about Sven Erik's letter, asking for a chance to play for Mr. Arthur Fiedler.

We find Sven Erik's energy really admirable as he practices every day, sometimes sixteen hours without a break.

“– Imagine tomorrow, the distinguished Arthur Fiedler, conductor of the famous Boston Pops orchestra, introducing Sven Erik Libaek from Oslo as guest soloist.”

The Grieg concerto carries us home to Norway, and to the scenes each loves best.

Day two hundred and nine. Sou'-sou'-east of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Broadcasts on both sides of the Atlantic are telling about Sven Erik and the Boston Pops. And there's more fun coming. We've been invited to enter a regatta with a Danish school ship, if we can reach the Skaw in time. But sailing conditions are not good. The coast guard warns us to go way south before heading east, to avoid icebergs in the shipping lanes. And a hurricane is reported moving up from the Caribbean.

The shortest way home looks longest on the chart. We're on a great circle course around the north of Scotland. Erik the Red and the vikings sailed these waters a thousand years ago.

In Copenhagen as well as Oslo, the start of the windjammer regatta and the homecoming of the Christian Radich are making front page news.

There will be a weekend of festivities, a fine opportunity for Norwegians and Danes to talk about one of their favourite subjects: Sailing and sailing ships.

The full rigged school ship Danmark, fastest from the Skaw to Færder Light, precedes us into home waters on our two-hundred and thirty-ninth day. Ashore, there are special programmes, recalling the glorious age of sail, and a salute from ancient Kronborg Castle at Elsinore.

Just off Sandefjord, we meet still another windjammer, it's the Sørlandet, the school ship from Kristiansand in the south of Norway. And so we stand up the Oslofjord together: Danmark, Christian Radich, Sørlandet. A flotilla of windjammers, paying honour to one of Norway's distinguished mariners.

In the morning news, we hear that our friend, the German school ship Pamir is in the path of a hurricane, and is sending SOS for help. And some of us begin to realise how lucky we have been.

“– It's been a long trip. Over seventeen thousand miles. Fourteen ports of call.”

“– And nobody's sick, all the way.”

“– And no accidents.”

When boys in the foretop sight Oslo City Hall, we furl sail for the last time together.

It was from here, on a December day, that we started out as landsmen. We returned as seamen.

“– You know, Sven Erik, when you first came aboard, I thought you were sort of... sort of a baby. But you're OK.”

“– Thanks Kaare. You go pretty on yourself!”

“– Good luck, Sven Erik.”

“– Bye!”

“– Well, that's it.”

Radio voice: “– *The four-mast German school ship Pamir, which was foundering during hurricane Carrie, must be presumed lost at sea. Of a crew of eighty, five boys and one crewman have been rescued. The men and boys were still fighting to get the big windjammer under control when the sea closed over them. The loss of the Pamir has raised serious questions about the wisdom of using such sailing ships for training boys. Many persons are now urging the abandonment of the remaining school ships.*”

A new captain will have the Christian Radich on her future voyages. Over seventy now, captain Kjelstrup has served a long, long time. And he regrets not a moment of it. Like most sailor-men, the captain is sure that the tradition of the deep sea sailing ship will survive.

The school ship Sørlandet and her boys are already at sea, and the beautiful Danmark, with nearly a hundred new boys, is outward bound on a cruise like ours, to the United States. We're told that in the worrying push-button world of today, there's greater need than ever for competent, clear-thinking men. Men tested in adversity, men of proven character. We, who have grown up against a clear and clean background of a sailing ship at sea, believe that this is the best possible training for whatever world, and whatever work we are destined to know.

Somehow, our feet feel firmer, and perhaps our eyes see further and more clearly, because we've been fashioned by the school of the sea, in the stately windjammer!

- - - Transcribed and translated by **Anders M Olsson** - - -

Special thanks to Thomas Hauerslev and Bill Lawrence for valuable assistance.

Additions and corrections are welcome. Please e-mail your comments to
anders.m.olsson@abc.se

Updated versions of this document will be posted at
<http://www.abc.se/~m1019/>