

Sailing Alone Around the World

by Joshua Slocum (1899 articles & 1958 book)

The author [& navigator] was born 20Feb1844 & was declared dead when he last set sail & didn't return on 14Nov1909. At 16 his mom died & he left home to sail the seas. He became a captain at age 25. He got married in 1871 & had several children, but some died young. She sailed with him until she died in 1884 [age 35].

1875 he did some work in the Philippines, but was given a 45-ton schooner instead of pay. He worked on it & now had his own ship. They went cod fishing in the North Pacific. He sold the ship for \$5000 in Hawaii & bought a 350-ton vessel in SF. 1882 he was in command of an 1800-ton ship & sent for his dad to see him & his family & success [it was his finest hour]. After his 1st wife died, he was like a ship without a rudder. He remarried in 1886, but she stayed home. 1887 he was ship-wrecked & made a 35-foot boat from the salvage.

1889 the age of steam ships had fully arrived & he was washed up. He turned to writing. 1892 an old friend gave him a 9-ton [37'] sail boat [*Spray*] that he had to take a year & rebuild [\$554]. He left Boston on 24Apr1895 [age 51] to sail around the world alone, returning on 27Jun1898 after 46,000 miles at sea. He was proud of how well it could hold a course without him at the wheel.

He crossed the North Atlantic to Gibraltar [4Aug'95], then sailed to Brazil [5Oct95] & south to the Strait of Magellan [Feb '96], north to Juan Fernandez (Robinson Crusoe) Island [5May 96] & west across the South Pacific to Australia [Oct '96-Jun '97], across the Indian Ocean, around South Africa [Jan-Mar '98], west over the South Atlantic along the north coast of South America & back to Boston.

He changed his course away from Suez Canal to avoid pirates. His sails were blown to ribbons during a storm in the straights & he was almost destroyed. The Panama Canal wasn't opened until 1915. When he 1st came out of the Strait of Magellan the winds blow him south & he had to come through it again. He had to sprinkle tack on deck to keep the savages out at night there.

He loved to read Robert Louis Steven & Mark Twain books while at sea. He used a sextant to find his latitude. 100 miles per day was norm. He usually ate potatoes, salt cod & biscuits. People were generous along the way. The Great Barrier Reef was a challenge.

He made money from lectures & royalties & bought his wife a farm in Martha's Vineyard, MA. 1905 winter he spent in Jamaica & brought back orchid plants for Pres. Teddy Roosevelt. He spent more time at sea than on land. The timbers & mast were spruce; the bulwark was pine over oak.

Quotes: "A man who shows unrelenting purpose attracts admirers & supporters." (JS)