

Mystic Seaport Museum Oral History Collection

Narrator: Carl C. Andersen  
Birthdate and place: 1898; Denmark  
Occupation: seaman; rigger  
Interviewer: Will Gates- staff rigger  
Date of interview: 5 March 1977  
Location of interview: Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut  
Release: oral  
Length: 56 minutes  
Format: 10" open reel stereo; 3 3/4 IPS  
Audio: quality good; volume good  
Miscellaneous: Recopied 19 June 1981

Summary

Seaman Around the World Under Sail and Steam

Carl C. Andersen, a native of Denmark, and retired boss rigger at Mystic Seaport Museum, was a sailor aboard sail and steam vessels before becoming a rigger at Electric Boat Shipyard, Groton, Connecticut, in 1939. The interview begins with Andersen's first job at sea, as a deck boy, in 1912. Andersen explains that signing up on a ship seemed more desirable to him than farming or learning a trade in Denmark at that time. He recounts his rise in rank on the various ships he served on.

Navigation, rigging, seamanship, and seamen's accommodations are important parts of the interview. Andersen explains the day-to-day routine on a square rigger, along with the layout of the officer's and crew's living quarters. He emphasizes that each crew member had to pull his weight and do his share of the work. He also gives his impressions of the various ports he visited and tells of his favorites. European ports top his list, but Hong Kong, Sydney, and Rio de Janeiro were also, he remembers, beautiful ports.

Andersen obviously enjoyed his sailing experiences. He gives a vivid impression of life at sea, and obviously has a great deal of experience on which he bases his narrative.

The sound quality of the tape is good.

## Abstract

- 00:00 Introduction by interviewer; Early sailing experience: started out of Denmark in 1912 as deckboy on four-masted bark Viking; returned two years later as ordinary seaman; became able-bodied seaman after going out on four-masted bark General Gordon.
- 00:30 World War I: seaman and quartermaster on St. Cecilia, ammunition carrier during World War I; brought back wounded to New York City; Navy crew of 126, 6 guns.
- 1:30 Personal reasons for becoming a seaman: pay and benefits of seaman more desirable than in trade or farming in Denmark.
- 3:00 Post-World War I sailing experience: aboard three-masted bark Ansons under Norwegian flag to Buenos Aires and South Africa; aboard U.S. schooner Camilla out of Durban, South Africa; rank and crew on each ship.
- 5:00 Four-masted schooner Omega carrying lumber from Seattle to Chile and Peru; then loaded sugar in Hawaiian Islands and copra in South Sea Islands.
- 5:30 Enjoyment of being at sea.
- 6:30 Work on Isthmian and American Indian steamship lines.
- 7:00 Beginning in 1928-29: work on schooners out of New York until owner changed to gasoline powered eighty-five foot commuter boat.
- 8:30 Residence: Huntington Harbor; sailed schooners from New Rochelle; later worked at Nevin's Boatyard.
- 9:00 Move to Noank: ran schooners for president of Royal Bank out of Nevin's Boatyard; later ran David Lawrence's boat for one year.
- 9:30 Electric Boat: hired in 1939 as rigger, promoted to supervisor, assistant foreman, foreman; employed there twenty-five years; reasons for starting there.
- 11:30 Married in 1929.
- 12:00 Square-riggers: living arrangements; crew of sixteen to seventeen men; two watches of twelve hours on and twelve hours off; tending and repairing sails during passage through trade winds and "roaring 40's".
- 15:00 Square-rigger crew responsibilities: bo'sun and mates kept

track of everything concerning the sails and rigging; all sails tended according to location - trade winds or "roaring 40's"; watch times and duties.

- 19:00 World War I: three-masted bark Africa headed for Australia, boarded by German U-Boat crew; Africa crew ordered off ship, fire set to ship, put out, but then reset by Germans; Africa crew picked up by British destroyer, transferred to Danish steamer which took them safely to port.
- 21:00 Home for a week, then out on General Gordon.
- 21:30 Shipboard living arrangements: officers living arrangements; location of storeroom, sail locker; house aft of mizzen mast for cook and sailmaker; two aft cabins for bo'sun and carpenters; galley; cleaning done every morning.
- 24:30 Ship rank regulations: crew not allowed on quarter deck; procedure for relieving man at wheel; officers had own side of ship to walk on depending on weather; officers only came forward for inspection.
- 26:00 Morning routine: bo'sun, sailmaker, carpenter, crew.
- 27:30 Watches: how time was spent off watch; what work different watches entailed; sail tending.
- 30:00 Sail tending: each crew member needed to know the name of every line; bringing the ship about.
- 32:00 Length of various voyages: Europe to South America; Europe to Australia.
- 33:30 Ship speed: averaged  $8\frac{1}{2}$  knots around the world; slower at equators; averaged 12 to 14 knots in the trade winds; averaged 16 to 17 knots in the "roaring 40's".
- 34:30 Merchant Marine shipping: order and delivery procedure described.
- 38:30 Andersen's favorite ports and why; shore leave activities; shore leave procedure.
- 45:00 Weather: discussion on predictability; signs used to forecast changes; worst weather seen and where; affect of weather on seamen.
- 49:30 Relations among crew: necessity of all crew members doing their job and working together as a team; honesty aboard ship.
- 52:30 Impression of life as a seaman: favorite places, favorite ports.
- 54:00 Interviewer's addendum of discipline.
- 56:00 End of taped interview.