



Trial by Wind and Water

By Marc Jensen ('76)



Presentation to the CM2 classes about life aboard...I loved their questions!

L'Hermione is a replica of the 216ft frigate that brought La Fayette to the American Colonies with word of King Louis XVI's support of the revolution. The project started in 1997 and will both culminate next spring in her visit to the east coast of the US and engender a new educational program designed to bring French and American school children closer together. I have followed this project since 2001 and count on being a member of the crew when she leaves Rochefort, France next April.

My training aboard L'Hermione during her recent sea trials was simply one of the most gratifying experiences of my life. I was challenged physically and mentally as I worked with a wonderful group of individuals to meet them head on and even surpass what we thought ourselves capable of.

Of course, not being one of the youngest (average age of the sailors was 29) to climb aloft added a layer of effort for me to make, to both prepare for this and to live it. But, believing that you take out what you put into something, I gave it my all and was repaid so many times over for taking this challenge on.

Although language was not an issue, there is a sailing vocabulary that I knew as little about as many of the other trainees. We quizzed each other often and came to understand that we learned faster together than individually.

The workout that my mind and muscles got was repaid by two moments that I will never forget.

The first was seeing dolphins surround the ship one night when we were several hundred miles out. There must have been 30-40 of them and as they streaked through the water they left a trail of glowing phosphorescence punctuated only by their occasional breaches where we could enjoy their form. Young ones swam with what I assume were their mothers. Larger ones came straight at the hull and disappeared without a trace. We spent an hour being entertained and there was not a single member of my crew who wasn't smiling in spite of their fatigue.

The second came the following night when at 23:00 my Quarter Master called for volunteers to go to the top of the mainmast to stow the top gallant. There was a 10 foot sea running abeam that was causing the decks to roll a fair

amount, but I knew this was my chance to find out if I had what was needed, so up shot my hand. It was like climbing a 135ft metronome! And, an interesting thing happens when you climb beyond the level of the mainsail. As the ship rolls from side to side the shrouds, that you hold on as you climb up, go from being taunt (when you are on the high side of the see-saw) to extremely limp when you are on the low. How you climb and the work you do as you get to the top takes on the rhythm of the ship's rolling once you find it, your work becomes smoother and you find yourself relaxing. Oh, and the view from there, even in the dark, is spectacular!

Lastly, I would like to again thank the amazing friends I made while I was aboard. Their support and encouragement meant a great deal. I look forward to doing it again next April! My training ashore continues!!

Call to action...When L'Hermione crosses the atlantic there will be the capability aboard to video conference. Our dream is to have students from both sides of the ocean speak simultaneously with experts aboard about the experience, the challenges and the learning. But these exchanges will cost approximately \$25/min. Without sponsorship and/or support it will remain only a dream. Please contact me if you have an idea of how to help me make it a reality. To learn more and support this amazing project, please see hermione2015.com, [Facebook.com/hermione.voyage](https://www.facebook.com/hermione.voyage), twitter.com/hermionevoyage, or [youtube.com/user/HERMIONE17300](https://www.youtube.com/user/HERMIONE17300)

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That's me with the blue hat in the middle! This wet mainsail weighed over a ton and the 30 of us managed to furl it..in an hour!!



Children in Bordeaux wrote notes to their "camarades" in the states and placed them in a bottle....we hope to share them in the near future.



Crew's quarters...in order to move around without hitting your head in the 4 ft clearance one learns to walk in a permanent deep knee bend...a bit like an ape.



Your gear must fit in this 100L box



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Everyone decorates their mug to be able to find it at any hour.