

CROSSING THE

LINE CEREMONY

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Well, to make a long story short, while we know all about Neptune, his life and works, historians of a later date were not so smart as the Romans and Greeks, and they did not write down how the Crossing the Line Ceremony came into being, so present day scholars have to say that "Its origin is wrapped (or shrouded) in mystery," and then "We can only guess at the actual date of its inception into the maritime services." Some fairly educated guesses have been made, though, and the dates have been narrowed down to the half century between 1768 and 1818. One Professor Callender, who's opinion we must admit, is rather biased in those matters, reckons that the custom was brought into being in the Royal Navy's East Indian Command during Nelson's day. Since most of the Navy's peculiar customs can be traced back to dear old Nelson one way or another, this may be considered not a bad guess. Why they chose the equator instead of the international Date Line or the Arctic Circle, is another point altogether, and your guess is as good as Callender's.

To bring this short history right up to date, it would be mentioned that certain sects or cults, such as the Royal Canadian Navy, still practice the ancient ritual of Crossing the Line, (although in its enlightened form) and on the following pages will be found the complete details of the latest ceremony which was carried out in Her Majesty's Canadian Ship "Ste Therese" when it crossed the equator in March, 1959 enroute from Pearl Harbour to Samoa.

The enlightened ceremony takes three phases; first, the Herald of His Oceanic Majesty comes on board the night previous to the actual crossing, in order to inspect the ship and decide upon its worthiness to receive on board Neptunus Res in all his glory. His opinion favourable, Neptune himself comes aboard the following day with all his court, and presents orders and awards to those Shellbacks who have proven themselves worthy thereof, on the Quarterdeck. The third and final phase is when King Neptune retires to the Boatdeck and supervises the initiation of the Tadpoles.

NOTE: A shellback is one who has been initiated into the Ancient Order of the Mysteries of the Deep, i.e. One who has crossed the Line before.

A Tadpole is one who has not yet had this privilege.

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NEPTUNECPO COCHRANE
AMPHRITITE PO CLARKE
HERALD PO KLOKEID
SECRETARY LS HIDSON
JUDGE PO GALLO
DOCTOR PO TAYLOR
BARBER PO MOORE
CHIEF OF POLICECPO EMBERTON
SCRIBE AB KERR
DAVEY JONES PO KIPP
SOUND EFFECT OS NEUFELD

POLICE

CPO EMBERTON
PO GLOVER
CPO SOUTHIN
CPO LOGIE
PO ERVEN
PO MCCLOY
AB MEE

BEARS

PO TOWERS
PO SULLY
CPO COPLAND
AB ALBERTSON
AB MACDONALD
LS PARRISH
AB HENRY
AB KING

MERMAIDS

AB MACLAUGHLIN
AB DADSWELL
TRIDENT STAMPER
AB THOMSON

CROSSING THE LINE CEREMONY

- SCENE I: The bridge. As if by mistake the whole scene is enacted over WAT.
- TIME: Around Sunset or shortly after, the night before crossing the line.
- O.O.W.: (Over WAT to the background of a bell tinkling. Sound effects to be made by the O.O.W. Masgr. using the usual Church Bell)
Bearing rightahead Sir, Classified unknown object.
(Short pause) Appears to be closing Sir.)
- CAPTAIN: Very good. That may be King Neptune's Herald. Number One pipe clear lower decks to the forecastle. Guns, muster the Midshipman's Guard. Officer of the Watch, have a jumping ladder rigged forward.
- LOOKOUT: Bearing Green 10 Sir, a light, near.
- CAPTAIN: Very good, alter course toward it, Officer of the Watch (The ship will close toward the alleged light for about 5 minutes with no further patter in order to allow the ship's company to assemble on the Forecastle.)
- SCENE II: Both Herald and Captain speak through loud hailers. The Captain on the Bridge and the Herald on the Forecastle.
- HERALD: (From behind the fog spray) Ship Ahoy.
- CAPTAIN: STE THERESE.
- HERALD: I've had the word you were around
Now tell me Skipper, whither bound?
- CAPTAIN: We're steaming for the Fiji Isles
Altering course every fifteen miles
as these Cadet navigators advise me to
But tell me stranger, who are you?
- HERALD: No stranger, I've the right,
to board your ship this balmy night
As King Neptune's Herald, and I mean
to find out if your ship is clean.
- CAPTAIN: I've stopped my engines, please come on board,
Your guard of honour is Starboard side forward.
They're Venture Cadets, second year perfection,
And are waiting Herald, for your inspection.
- HERALD: Of your courtesy I've taken note,
My attendant shall record it.
And when King Neptune boards your boat,
I'm sure he will reward it.
My retinue is assembled, I quote
My attendant, Bears, Mermaids assorted
And Davey Jones is anxious to note,
All these, in Hawaii, who cavorted.
FORWARD ALL.
- (Herald, attendants, Davey Jones, 2 Bears carrying 2 Mermaids advance through the spray.)
- O.O.G.: (Calls the Guard to "Attention" and roars "sound note")
Guitar complies with Elves version of the "Hound Dog."

HERALD: (Looking Disdainfully at the Guard)
 What motley looking rabble is this,
 That stands before me here.
 They should be sent to Royal Roads
 To do an extra year.
 DAVEY JONES, INSPECTS THE GUARD.
 (Davey Jones, using lots of slapstick, inspects it ...
 e.g. points out haircuts, etc. with a dead fish which
 he carries under his arm like telescope.)

HERALD: (To the assembled multitude)
 Before this mighty ship of war
 Had slipped from her home port
 A spy of mine had come aboard
 Her complement to sort.
 He's scanned the names of everyone....
 Come forward now, your work is done.
 (Secretary makes his appearance carrying a large book)

SECRETARY: The nominal list I've closely scanned
 To learn by whom this ship is manned;
 One Hundred & Fifty more or less
 Who by their conscience must confess
 They must be made to taste the salt.
 Of my King's Royal Main
 And Choke upon our pills and soap
 'ere they can cross again.
 (Bears start shouting "UNCLEAN, UNCLEAN")

HERALD: At two bells of the afternoon watch
 Tomorrow, come what may,
 His Oceanic Majesty, King Neptune will hold sway.
 And by the ancient laws laid down
 By custom will ordain
 That all you Tadpoles, young and old
 Be initiated in our name.

SECRETARY: All hail, KING NEPTUNE.
 (Bears, in a fit of fanatic fervour shriek "BLOOD,
 BLOOD") PO TOWERS.

CAPTAIN: KEEP SILENCE. (Pauses till shouting dies down)
 Assure King Neptune that we all
 Are honoured by this meeting;
 And please convey to him our thanks
 And our most loyal greeting,
 We shall be ready for our King
 And glad to meet his Queen
 And will she bring her daughters fair,
 To beautify the scene?
 (Bears make wolf calls, etc.)

HERALD: It cannot be: A sea nymph form
 Would take each sailor's heart by storm
 Our good Queen spares them from such shows
 because they haven't any clothes

The Queen will come alone.
 (Bears once again start wolf calls, etc.)
 (The company commences retiring through the spray;
 the Herald is last to go through and just before he does,
 he turns to the multitude and says;)

HERALD: "I commend you all to rest with sorrow
the fittest will survive tomorrow"
(Very lights of various colours are shot from before the
spray and as they are, all lights on the F.X. are
turned out, and a heinous, sub-human laugh is heard
from the eyes of the ship.)

ACT II:

Scene I: The Quarterdeck. Lower deck has been cleared to the A.X.
and King Neptune's Court has assembled in full regalia
in the Cadet's study. The remainder of the shellbacks,
including bears, and police, have assembled in traditional
garb. The bears and police having done their stuff as
arranged, muster on the A.X. and it is now time for the
Royal Court itself to arrive. The solemn entrance will
be made through the Cadet's Hatch.

HERALD: (On entrance) HEAR YE, HEAR YE, MAKE WAY FOR HIS MOST
GLORIOUS OCEANIC MAJESTY NEPTUNUS RES, RULER OF ALL WHO
SAIL UPON THE SEA UPON THEIR LAWFUL OR UNLAWFUL OCCASION
HEAR YE, HEAR YE.
(On arrival of Neptune and Amphritrite) ALL HAIL KING NEPTUNE.
BEARS AND POLICE: ALL HAIL KING NEPTUNE.

HERALD: (calls for silence and is assisted in getting it if
necessary by police.)
Captain, call your crew to attention for the Oceanic anthem.

CAPTAIN: (Complies)
Led by the herald, the complete ensemble of shell backs
sing in delorous tones the Oceanic Anthem.
The Captain now stands the ship's company at ease and
bids it pay attention.
In humblest duty, Sire, I bring
To you, our Oceanic King
All here on board, may they submit
To what in Ancient Laws is writ.

NEPTUNE: (Acknowledge Captain's remarks, then turns to address
the ship's company.)
Good morning, Ste. Therese, you've come a long way,
And I've waited months for this glorious day.
You all know full well what I've come to do
For I hear there are Tadpoles among your crew.

HERALD: My Barbers are good, and widely renowned, (Barbers top
forward gesticulating sadistically)
Their razors are sharper than's ever been ground,
My doctors are butchers and as for their pills
They're better than ExLax for curing your ills.

CAPTAIN: Ere you punish our crimes with that terrible fork
I present for your favour my crew to your court.

NEPTUNE: From my courtly Herald I've heard it told
That there're some in your crew so brave and bold
As to warrant my favour... There may be some missed;
So Herald, bring forward my Honour List.

HERALD: (Reading from a large scroll) Captain.
(Captain comes forth and stands before the King.)

NEPTUNE: For your welcome to my staff last night,
A reward is due, it's plain.
So I dub you Old Seadog Charley Brown
Of the Order of the Peanut Clowns.
(Captain is dubbed with trident staff)

HERALD: (Loudly) RETIRE, OLD SEADOG CHARLEY BROWN ORDER
OF PEANUT CLOWNS.
(Captain retires)

HERALD: (From Scroll) Executive Officer.

NEPTUNE: When you boarded Ste. Therese,
I'm sure I heard you say
No pipes you'll hear, not once this year
What peaceful bliss each day
But now you know twas all in vain
Coz the Jimmy's on the air again.
And I now present you with
the recent Order of the YAK, YAK,
Over to you!

HERALD: GRANTED: THE RECENT ORDER YAK, YAK.
ABOUT TURN, QUICK MARCH.

HERALD: (Chief ERA comes forth and stands before the King)

NEPTUNE: Air conditioning is gone from heart of your realm,
But, true to your cause you have stayed at the helm.
You have never looked back, nor heaved a great sigh,
For the days when 80 reached an all time high.
We know of a gift that would be very nice.
But we're sorry to say "We're so low on ice".
So we won't disappoint you, one tittle or jet,
But award you the Order of The Busted Prop.

HERALD: AWARDED THE ORDER OF THE BUSTED PROP.
ABOUT TURN, QUICK MARCH.

HERALD: (PICK comes forth and stands before the King)

NEPTUNE: For 20 years you've had your wish,
To plan our meals at noon,
And never have you broke a dish,
Or lost one greasy spoon.
Have noticed this,
And says he craves a boon
That you are now presented with,
"The Order of The Greasy Spoon".
(He is dubbed with the trident and presented with
the Spoon)

HERALD: ARISE SIR KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE VENERABLE ORDER OF
THE GREASY SPOON, AND DOUBLE AWAY SMARTLY.
(Addressing His Majesty)
If your Majesty finds it convenient,
We've had time enough to be lenient.
Let us now get on with the ceremony.
And let the condemned try to save his neck.

SCENE II:

On the A.X. The Court and Shellbacks have taken up their
positions, and the King is ready to see his defaulters.
Trumpeter sounds the alert, and the Herald calls for
silence.

NEPTUNE: King Neptune, I, Lord of the sea,
 Welcome you all who 'ere you be;
 I am the Lord of the Oceans Wide,
 Lord of the Rivers...Lord of the Tide.
 My laws are strict, but do not fear,
 If you will only persevere.
 To keep the freedom of the seas,
 As recognized by our degrees.
 Here are the Bears, The Suds, The Bath;
 They are the only certain path
 For all who wish to cross the line,
 And be enrolled as sons of mine.
 In order then, as we command,
 Before us let each Tadpole stand
 Who has his freedom yet to win.....
 ENOUGH.... MY TRUSTY MEN, BEGIN.

HERALD: If you will see requestman first,
 We'll save till last the best..and worst.

NEPTUNE: So be it.

HERALD: Chief Petty Officer ROGERS
 You heard Roger the lodger and the Sod
 Well this is Roger the dodgers by God.

JUDGE: (Continuing where Neptune left off) AND HE HAVING
 NOTHING TO SAY ON HIS BEHALF, I FIND HIM GUILTY AND
 SENTENCE HIM TO BE INITIATED INTO THE ANCIENT
 ORDER OF THE DEEP IN THE MANNER PRESCRIBED BY NAVAL
 TRADITION.

HERALD: Chief Petty Officer Stoker (EM) Forrester
 This man claims to be the Ship's Barber,
 But you will never make it
 Ashore in harbour,
 After you have done business with the Barber.

JUDGE: DECONTAINATION COMMENCE. BARBERS, DO YOUR OFFICE.

HERALD: Chief Petty Officer Dykes
 This man claims to be a seafaring man
 But most of his faring has been on land
 But here we have him and he's trapped
 But to listen to him he's been all over the map.

JUDGE: GUILTY OF EVERYTHING. DOCTOR, SEE THAT HE DOES NOT
 ESCAPE.

HERALD: Cadet HOEBEN
 From lands afar he comes to us
 Now we'll teach him not to cuss
 and now to the baths he must descend
 I doubt if this will mean the end.

JUDGE: KEEP SILENCE. YOUR GUILTY.
 What happens to your insides,
 I care not to admit.
 But when you've sampled our Doctor's Pills,
 You'll (Long Pause) be a Shellback First Class.

HERALD: What have we here and "engineer"
 (LT.(E) ROSS assisted to the front by bears.)

NEPTUNE: Behind his beard he tries to hide
 A countenance of blissful pride
 But now this man be fire and thunder
 Good King Neptune will be time under.

JUDGE: AYE, TO THE POOL WITH HIM

HERALD: Ls BULLEN
But here we have a Canteen man.

NEPTUNE: Of his books he is not so sure,
Until he gets your signature,
Spuds and duff he wont indulge,
But its rum and coke that made the bulge,
As canteen man he's pretty slick,
So to the pool he goes right quick.

HERALD: Leading Seaman FARREL
(Farrel is brought to the fore assisted)

HERALD: And here we have a buxom stoker.

NEPTUNE: As upper deck stoker of the ship
He carries a wheel spanner on his hip
With all the tanks he is quite sure
But as a cox'n has' like manner
But like manure he'll improve with age
And not incur the Captain's rage.

JUDGE: OKAY LET US SPRAY.

NEPTUNE: Bears, bring the remaining Tadpoles to me as they
are guilty and calling no one on their behalf.