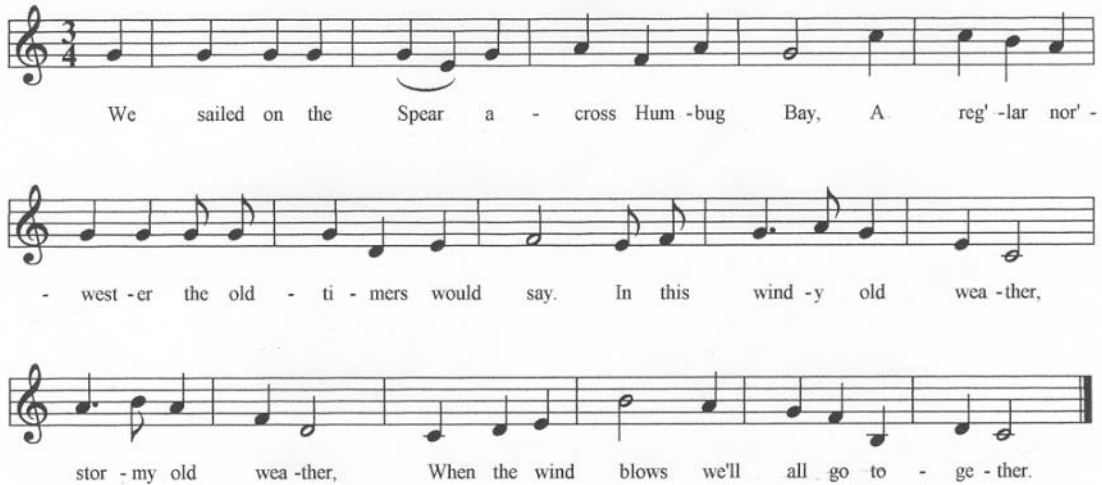


The Cruise of the Spear

Sol Siggurdson



We sailed on the Spear a - cross Hum -bug Bay, A reg' -lar nor' -
- west -er the old - ti - mers would say. In this wind -y old wea -ther,
stor -my old wea -ther, When the wind blows we'll all go to - ge - ther.

We sailed on the Spear, across Humbug Bay,
A regular nor'wester the old-timers would say

Refrain: In this windy old weather, stormy old weather,
When the wind blows we'll all go together.

Engineer Baldy was down below deck,
A great big wave just rolled down 'is neck.

Mindy the chief's up in his night attire,
There's water all over but my chimney's on fire.

Helgy the mate pulling hard on the wheel,
"You'll have to do better! I just saw the keel!"

Captain Dick's up - he's just rolled out of bed,
He's standin' there cursin' & holding his head.

He came in the wheelhouse, mad as "Sam Hill",
"Didn't I tell ye boy! Keep this boat still!"

And then there was me, hangin' over the rail,
"I'll tell ya this, boys, she's one hell of a gale."

The wheel man came up from the deck down below,
"You know something Solly? She's startin' to blow!"

The cook, in her bunk, she just lay there and shivered,
"Ain't none of ya get fed 'til we hit Beren's River."

We ploughed through the sea on that stormy night,
The light at Black Bear was a wonderful sight.

Chorus (twice)

Mike Ballantyne writes: This song was written in 1967 by Sol Siggurdson of Riverton, Manitoba. Sometime between 1976 and 1989, during my travels across the Western provinces playing music in bars and lounges, I was given the words. The song is written out in long hand, but it is given with no title. I have therefore taken the liberty of giving it the name under which it appears here. At the top of the sheet upon which the song is written there is a note that the *J. R. Spear* sank in a gale on Lake Winnipeg in 1970 with the loss of 47 lives.

Although I'm only guessing, I presume the manuscript was given to me by Mr. Siggurdson himself. For three years I played at the Trapper's

Festival in The Pas and it was perhaps at one of these, or at a gig in Swan River, that I met him. Unfortunately, in 1989 I had something of a collapse and for some time I was totally divorced from music. Now, fourteen years later, the words have turned up amongst some miscellaneous papers but the where and the when of my acquiring them is sadly long forgotten. I tried to find Mr. Siggurdson through telephone directory web sites but was unable to locate him. His song deserves to be known, however, and it is with regret that I give it here without more information. If anyone has any information about Sol Siggurdson or about the *J. R. Spear* perhaps they would get in touch with me.

Singers' Workshop

Rosaleen writes: No new song from me this time, but here is a reply from James Prescott about the ballad I shared with you in the last issue:

Hi Rosaleen,

I've had a good look at, and think about, "Lovers' Farewell". I agree with your analysis, that it was most probably written by Miss Wetmore (or by someone known to her).

There are a number of anomalies such as infelicitous phrases, unique borrowings, and so on. And some just plain poor poetry. For example, "down fell he there" is to my ear very awkward; as is "many a cry will utter". The phrase "ere evensong", when sent to Google, reveals that every single reference is to a version of "Three Ravens". My OED does not know of "bowing room", so I

don't know what one is, though a web search reveals it shows up in an Appalachian version of "Fair Margaret and Sweet William". The phrase "pallet of grief" is excessively precious.

I don't recognise the tune. Its range, well over an octave, is unusual in older songs and ballads, which suggests the possibility of a more recent composition, or the recent reworking of another tune.

The only modification of interpretation that I would venture is that if Miss Wetmore indeed wrote it, it could have been about a friend or relative's experience rather than about her own.

James Prescott

News

The 16th annual conference of NAFA (the North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance) is taking place in San Diego, California, on February 26 to 29, 2004. Showcasing are Canadian acts The Arrogant Worms, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer, David Francey and The Mark Atkinson Trio, along with others from Ireland, Scotland and the USA.

There are lots of workshops, educational forums, special events and exhibitors. For further information: <www.folk.org>, <fa@folk.org>; (301) 588-8186 (fax); (301) 588-8185; Folk Alliance, 962 Wayne Ave., Suite 902, Silver Spring, MD 20910, USA.