

"I don't know why they'd want to go out there," someone said to me, "there's nothing but wind and water forever." True. Here the world shrinks to the hundred feet of length and height that is your small floating wooden world. Here the world expands to the limitless horizon; a circle of sea, a circle of sky. A circle of possibilities. I know why they want to go out there. Why they want to go down to the sea in ships. You can fly anywhere on the wind.

Sailors pay a lot of attention to the shape of that sky circle: the form and color and position of its clouds. They pay a lot of attention to the shape of the water as well: the form, height and direction of the waves. The Polynesians had maps of those waves: sweeps and curves woven of plant fiber that showed prevailing currents and swells and how to find your way upon them. I can feel the shape of the water in my kayak; how the bottom comes up under me in the shallows, how the waves reflect off mudwall and pier. Pride parts the Bay waters like a cutlass, riding smooth on waves too insignificant to notice. These waters are almost too small to contain her.





The Gate

In my landlubber childhood, The Shore was a place as faraway as Princess Fiona's homeland of Far Far Away in the Shrek films. We never went there. We went to the Mountains. Mountains are nice, but I wanted to go to the sea. I finally did, with an aunt once, I remember running up the last sand dune between me and the sea, standing atop it staring out in awe at the endless water world. Then Dad took us to Assateague; for the pony roundup, not for the beach. We convinced him to take us out to the beach, where he clomped up and down the sand in his work boots and jeans and chambray shirt rolled up to the elbows. He did not go near the water.

In my favorite book, J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings", there is a poem, a song sung by my favorite character, Legolas, a tall bow and knife wielding Elven warrior who can talk to trees and ride horses

without saddle or rein. On the way to a great battle he hears the gulls crying in the dark and it awakens the Sea-longing which lies buried deep in the hearts of his people;

to the sea, to the sea, the white gulls are crying

the wind is blowing, the white foam is flying west west away, the round sun is falling, grey ship, grey ship, do you hear them calling? the voices of my people who have gone on before me

I will leave, I will leave, the forests that bore me...

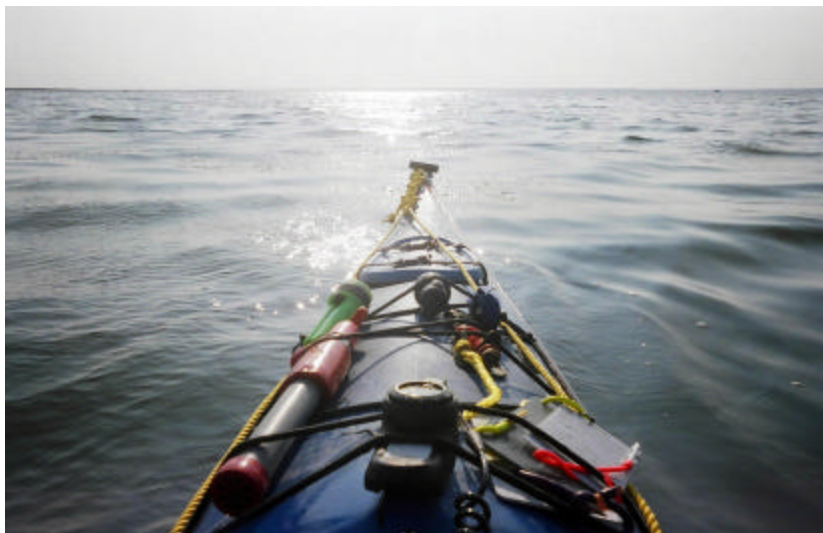
I heard the cry of the gulls and returned. In my own cars, beat up station wagons, old trucks, and one van with kayaks lashed to the roof racks. At first, I would journey down route 83, around Baltimore on 695, then south to the only bit of Real Beach left by the hordes of developers: Assateague Island.

On the way south, somewhere on 695, there is an amazing overpass: three bridges weave overhead like something out of a sci-

ence fiction film.

For me, that was always the Gateway to Elsewhere. In the Hero Journey, the archetypal myth told by every culture (and written about at length by Joseph Campbell in "Hero With A Thousand Faces"), the Hero leaves his mundane world, passes through a threshold, a gateway of some sort, and enters the world of his adventure. The Overpass was the Gate to the Sea, until I began driving down the Delmarva Peninsula, then the Conowingo Dam became the Gateway.

What is the Gate for this journey? I pass under my old Overpass on the way south, but I am still in the world of traffic and cell phones. I leave land behind when I board Pride, never to touch it for another forty-four hours. I see sunrise glancing off the sail shaped tower of the aquarium, off the masts of the ancient and venerable Constellation, through the shrouds of Pride. We putter around that morning, fueling ourselves and the ship, still in the world of concrete and steel.





Then we sail under the Key Bridge. The noise of Inner Harbor is behind us. The man-made towers recede. The sky opens up, we catch the wind in our wings, the wide blue water stretches out before us full of possibility.

We pass through the Gate to Adventure.

Bobstays, Bluff Bows, and the Wild Black Mare

I have a thousand million questions. I read all



the books I could find; the big coffee table book *Sailing With Pride*, two recommended by a Pride crewman last year (*Downrigging Weekend* in Chestertown), *Tall Ships Down* and *Pride of the Sea*. I read websites: *Pride's*, *Lynx's* (both have a fair amount of info on the "Baltimore Clippers"), and Wikipedia.

I am still clueless whattheheck this piece of rope does. Excuse me, line.

The crew answer random questions, or find someone who can. *What's deadrise? It says in the book this is one of the defining characteristics of Baltimore Clippers: a lot of deadrise.* Basically, a sharply V-shaped hull rather than a broad-bellied flat one. My kayak is flat bottomed, my friend's is V-shaped. I can glide over rocks that confound her,

she doesn't have to work as hard to track straight or keep from weather-cocking (turning broadside to the wind). The "clippers" have





Heading for the Key Bridge, the foresail (farthest left, on the mast) is still furling, we're still flying.



less cargo room, but better speed, maneuverability and handling characteristics.

Why are the masts raked? I got about forty-eight answers to this over the years, ranging from the technical: it changes the center of effort of the wind on the sails... to the random; it sold more ships because they looked fast. At my first sight of *Pride* in 2004, I stood in jaw-dropped awe. With her low knife-shaped hull hugging the water and her raked masts, she looked like she was going warp 11 sitting still. One of the books says something like this: "fore-masts are set well forward to make cargo hold accessible, with large sail area so far forward, schooners had

tendency to drift to lee, raking masts placed center of effort (wind on sails) farther aft and balanced helm".

Skipjacks have raked masts too, and no backstays (the line that keeps the mast from falling forward) be-



Sultana and Sae Hrafn at Solomons Island MD



some hollow (lighter) spars and other differences that make her easier for her cargo of school groups to handle. And the hulls are radically different: *Sultana's* is broad, bluff-bowed (she was designed as a small cargo ship, and later used as a revenue cutter by the British Navy).

Sultana is the sturdy, round-bellied golden pony who takes the kids out on a fascinating, and safe, trail ride. *Pride* is the wild black mare, running through the wild black woods in the night.

It was a crewman on *Pride I*, who made the wild black mare comment. I found the reference in *Pride of the Sea*, in *Pride II's* main salon, while doing the two hour tour at Downrigging Weekend. It resonated with me because it conjures up a favorite archetypal image.

The Black Horse; not the white horse of the Shining Knight, or the Lone Ranger... not the sun-bright horse of the Golden Hero (Roy Rogers, for example). The Black Horse: the Black

cause of their immensely long booms. The rake, I was told, is one thing that keeps the mast from falling forward (there are, of course, shrouds holding it from the sides). *What's a bobstay?* (it's the thing that broke awhile back, sending the foremast into the sea. I heard the crew acted with great skill and professionalism, saving the ship and themselves further damage). The bobstay is the heavy line holding down the bowsprit which holds up everything behind it. *Why doesn't Sultana have that?* She doesn't face the kinds of heavy seas *Pride* does, though the original (1769) *Sultana* made several trans-atlantic voyages. She weathered a four-day gale on one voyage, took on water to the point where she nearly sank. The crew saved the ship by losing the beer: 5000 pounds of beer in hogsheads on deck. That restored her stability enough to make it to port. Their rigs look the same.



No, not really: *Sultana* is about half *Pride's* size, has





Stallion (a book series by Walter Farley), or Fury (a TV western of the late 50s); wild things that can only be tamed by a child. It's Zorro's horse, swift steed of the masked Rider of Night, outfoxing, outrunning the corrupt empire.

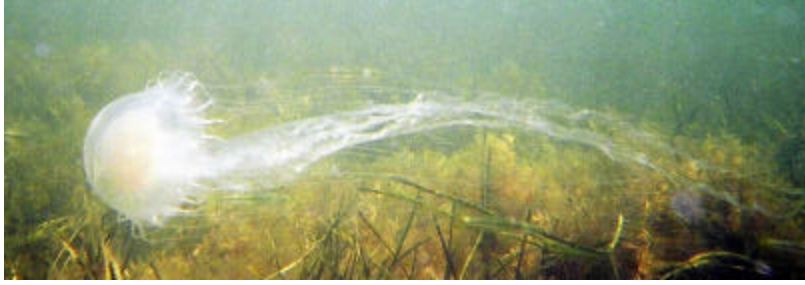
Zorro was a privateer. So was Han Solo. The Millennium Falcon should have been painted black. She did have cannons.

There's the romantic image, the archetype. I had the honor of learning about the reality. I got my Wild Black Mare twenty-two years ago. She was born in 1977 (same year as *Pride* the first) in the wilds of eastern Oregon, had spent eight years of her life running with a wild herd before being rounded up as part of the Bureau of Land Management's Adopt-A-Horse Program. She was

untouched, except for a halter and a freezebrand and some basic shots. She had a flight radius of about sixty feet (the circumference of the round pen she lived in for a year). She had a warning snort like a cannon.

She wasted no energy on senseless flight or fight. If you spoke the language of sensible horsemanship, she understood. If you were impatient, she fled. She faced the screaming Viking hordes (doing historical reenact-





ment), and fidgety five year olds. She noticed things moving a mile away while my domestic horses still had their noses buried in their lunch. After years, she still glided up to water as if searching for panthers in the bush.

She redefined everything I thought I knew about horses.

No amount of read-



ing will prepare you for the reality of wild horses of any color, or of tall ships. The reality, like that of the Black Mare, is not worse, or better, than the romantic image, merely sideways... different, full of unexpected tacks and shifts of wind.

Sturgeon, Scaup, and 10,000 Loons

We are crossing the upper Bay. Life in the Chesapeake Bay (Alice Jane Lippson & Robert L. Lippson) calls this upper zone 2; brackish water, 1-10ppt (parts per thousand). Below the Bay Bridge, lower zone 2 begins; 10-18ppt (changeable with seasons;

spring runoff creates fresher waters). The Bay is young (about 12,000 years old, merely the drowned feet of my home river, the Susquehanna), and shallow. We move through waters 5-10 meters deep, with maybe 10-15 meters in the deepest bits. There's no reefs, no rocks, just mud and silt below us (proof is on the anchor we haul up and hose off at the mouth of the Chester). In the shallower waters, lots of stuff lives in that goo, mostly squishy (invertebrates) or crunchy (invertebrates). A few; crabs, oysters, shrimp, are edible. In the shallows submerged aquatic vegetation like sago pondweed, redhead grass, horned pondweed and wigeon

grass take hold and form important ecosystems. Oyster bars yet exist. The striped bass are rebounding. The sturgeon are vanishing. Anadromous (return to fresh water to spawn, i.e.: salmon) and catadromous (return to sea to spawn, i.e.: eels) fish find their migration routes



hydromedusae

blocked by dams. There are weird things; bryzoans, snail fur, dinoflagellates. Beautiful things; sea nettles, comb jellies, sea ducks. There are familiar things; anchovy, menhaden, terns, gulls, cor-



Brown pelicans



morants. Unusual things, occasionally seen: dolphins, loggerhead turtles, bull sharks, and the odd humpback whale.

The eels are going downbay to spawn in the sea. The crabs are migrating to deeper waters. The big fish who came in from the ocean in the spring are returning to sea. Waterfowl are forming traffic jams on the Atlantic Flyway and staging stopovers in the Bay. Buffleheads are coming into the Bay now; these little ducks like shallow waters of 4-15'. Longtails (Old Squaws) are arriving too, they like the deeps, diving to 100', flying underwater on their wings, hunting amphipods and other invertebrates. Scoters and scaups are here too, along with the other sea ducks. It's fall, and the minke, sei and humpback whales are mi-

grating south now, so they probably won't make the wrong turn into the Bay that they sometimes make in the spring.

And somewhere out there are 10,000 loons; sharp-bowed, low freeboard birds, like little privateers.

A Comparison of Pirate Ships

Pride is truly in her environment in these Maryland waters. *Tidewater Triumph* (which I found an

schooner Virginia, seen through Pride's shrouds and cannon smoke







excellent copy of on *Pride's* bookshelf), says that the sheltered, complex, re-

stricted and narrow channels and shifting winds require vessels of draft to

make frequent adjustments of course, and that the schooner rig was easier to manage than the sloop with a small crew.

Maneuverability and ease of sail handling were hallmarks of the "sharp-built schooner". The Chesapeake Bay type "pilot schooner" began evolving before 1750.

Before the 1730s tobacco was the big export, then MD and VA began shipping grain to Europe and the West Indies. The schooner appears then, in local waters, along with merchant fleets, flour mills and iron works. Perishable cargoes, the dangers inherent in voyages to the West Indies (pirates and the Royal Navy) and the natural characteris-



Next page: Pride and Lady Maryland seen from the bow of Sultana





tics of the route favored vessels of speed and limited cargo space. In the American Revolution, many of these became privateers, and by the War of 1812, the “sharp-built schooner” reached the height of its design. Later pilot schooners like Virginia, and puny schooners like Lady Maryland are branches of the same evolutionary tree.

I have an excellent book on colonial seamanship, 96 broad, landlubber-friendly pages with detailed illustrations: *Pirates and Patriots of the Revolution* (C.Keith Wilbur, Globe

Pequot Press). This is about forty years before the time of ships like *Pride*, but it gives a good look at the kinds of skills and technologies that would have been used even in 1812. The book mentions a privateer of the American Revolution, a ship of 4 guns and 6 crew, the *Lady Washington*. One of *Pride*’s crew (Megan) sailed on the *Lady Washington*. Not the original one, of course, (although if you count reincarnation, maybe she did), but a pretty little brig out of Aberdeen Washington. Her page in

the ASTA tall ships directory says the original *Lady Washington* was a privateer in the American Revolution, then the first American ship to visit the west coast (in 1788). Whether she is the same one mentioned in *Pirates and Patriots*, I’m not sure, but it seems likely.

Lady Washington also had a bit part in some pirate movie... she’s the ship Johnny Depp and Orlando Bloom stea...eh...comandeer and sail to Tortuga (*Pirates 1*). Her ancestor’s life as a privateer (usually fast and maneuverable), and her film



part as the *Interceptor* (note that they steal the fast ship, not the powerful one) led me to wonder how her design compared to a privateer of a slightly later age; *Pride*.

I downloaded some excellent info and illustrations from her website, and have talked to three of her crew so far. The *Lady* is broader, beamier, bluffer of

bow, with straight masts, not raked. She's widest amidships, *Pride* is widest slightly forward of that (from above, her hull is fish-shaped, or like a lean aerodynamic seabird). *Pride* has about twice the sail area, and the keel that slopes down from bow to stern, the *Lady's* is level. The *Lady* has a tiller (though the film crew dressed her up with a

wheel, because that's what the audience expects to see on "pirate ships"). There are probably other differences the sailor's eye could find between these two privateers of different eras: a glimpse of how much the technology changed in half a lifetime.