

BARISTA UNO
MARITIME
DOUBLE
SHOTS



*Maverick views on 21st-century shipping
and its multiple dimensions*

With a Foreword by
REID SPRAGUE

Maritime
Double Shots

BARISTA UNO

First e-book edition, 2017
© Marine Café Blog

All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior permission of the Marine Café Blog administrators.

Individual passages contained herein may be freely quoted, provided that the source ('Maritime Double Shots') is indicated.

Visit Marine Café Blog at www.marine-cafe.com

To my daughter Lara

Contents

- i Foreword
- iv Introduction
- 1 Men and Women at Sea
- 7 Ships, Ports and Commerce
- 13 Maritime Human Rights
- 18 The Female Factor
- 21 Power and Governance
- 25 Crew Training
- 30 Sea Accidents and Safety
- 37 Maritime Writers and the Web
- 41 The Language of Maritime Folks
- 45 Society, Customs and Values
- 53 Marine Art and Culture
- 59 Mother Earth and Climate Change

Foreword

Barista Uno serves up a strong cup o' joe. He gives it to you straight!

Who is this Barista Uno character anyway, and what does he have to say? As a maritime professional myself who has enjoyed Barista Uno's trenchant Marine Café Blog for years, let me try to answer those questions.

Barista Uno is the pen name of a former shipping and ports journalist known to his fans worldwide as BU. His knowledge of the maritime realm is deep and wide. This prompted one Indian seaman to ask him: "Excuse me, Sir, are you a ship captain?" BU's casual and cryptic reply: "I was an ancient mariner in a previous life."

From his headquarters in Manila, BU looks out upon the world of international shipping from the unique viewpoint of one whose home provides 30% of the world's professional mariners. He knows the maritime world intimately, but one could say that about some other writers as well. What sets him apart?

One of BU's distinguishing characteristics is his humanity. Read a bit of his writing, and you will discover a man whose knowledge of human nature — in all its glory and its folly — throws an unusual light on the day-to-day workings of our industry. An illustration: "*The culture of maritime safety should proceed from the premise that all human life is precious. How can seafarers be expected to imbibe this culture when they're treated no better than commodities coming out of the factory?*"

And, going deeper: "*Is there a subtle but strong connection between one's love for the sea, good seamanship and maritime safety?*" In addressing the wellsprings of human action from

profane to sublime, BU takes safety culture, professionalism and maritime education to a powerful level that regulatory rulemaking can never address.

His courage to confront shines forth, too: *“If IMO is really serious about effective implementation, why doesn’t it provide free online access to the full text of STCW (International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers) and other IMO conventions as the International Labour Organization does with ILO treaties? I can only think of one answer. IMO loves to talk rhetoric, but it also loves to make money.”*

BU can also draw back and see the shipping world’s power and beauty: *“There’s a certain energy, a rhythm that doesn’t seem to falter even when the shipment is colossal.”* And: *“For reasons that are not hard to fathom, the sea has provided the impetus to some of the world’s greatest and best loved poems. It is beautiful. It is daunting. And above all, it is mysterious.”*

There’s more — much more — in this deceptively slim volume. BU tellingly illuminates many aspects of this profession that we love (and sometimes don’t). His intimate knowledge of the shipping world’s shakers and movers takes us from school to vessel to boardroom. He quotes poetry, discusses art, and analyzes semantics. He highlights the role of maritime history and art in building a modern maritime culture that promotes safety, professionalism, and pride. He scrutinizes convention and skewers the status quo. And he does it all with engaging honesty.

This is an adventurous read. You are in for a treat!

REID SPRAGUE

Washington, DC, 2017

Reid Sprague is a USCG–licensed deck officer with wide experience in the maritime realm. He has sailed the world in tankers, in the scientific research fleet, and also worked for many years as a tugboat captain. He has been a maritime trainer, and created & administered a training program used by tug crews at a major LNG terminal. He is currently an independent technical consultant in the Washington, DC area advising on safe & efficient docking and undocking of LNG tankers.

Introduction

This book gathers together the reflections of a maritime writer who goes by the pen name of Barista Uno. The selection was made and edited by Barista Uno from hundreds of articles published from late 2009 to May 2017 in the popular Marine Café Blog (www.marine-cafe.com). The passages are grouped into 12 sections, from the people who work at sea and seamen's rights to marine art and the environment.

The scope reflects Barista Uno's long experience as a former shipping and ports journalist and his diverse interests as an individual. From his vantage point in Manila, where he resides, the author offers candid glimpses of the national maritime scene and Filipino society in general. He also tackles global maritime issues — his observations revealing someone with a good knowledge of literature, art and psychology.

It is hoped that the collection will be a welcome addition to the world's body of maritime literature. Some of the passages are short and read like aphorisms or epigrams. Others are longer yet never dull. Altogether, they provide an unorthodox and sometimes irreverent view of 21st-century shipping and its multiple dimensions.

The title of this book — **Maritime Double Shots** — was inspired by the world of coffee. The term "double shot" (*doppio* in Italian coffee parlance) means twice the amount of a single shot of espresso — i.e., coffee brewed by forcing a small amount of pressurised hot water through finely ground coffee beans. Espresso is served without milk. It is strong, just like the spirit that gives this book its distinctive flavour.

Men and Women at Sea



I do not mean to denigrate Filipino seamen and seawomen. They are amongst the most hard-working and well-trained in the world. They are pleasant to work with, and they can communicate in English. As for Filipino ship officers, I have known a few who could hold a candle to Indian or Polish officers — old salts who were stout of heart and could navigate their ships through stormy seas gracefully like ballet dancers on a stage.

'Ship manning and misplaced national pride', May 2017

On the great and sometimes crazy stage we call shipping, few players are more interesting than the old salts, the *lobos de mar* — men who cut their teeth on boats and know, as did Polish-British novelist and sea captain Joseph Conrad, that “there is nothing more enticing, disenchanting, and enslaving than the life at sea.”

'Celebrating old salts in paintings', October 2016

To call those who work on board merchant ships “seafarers” is to fail to distinguish them from the seafaring tribes of Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. It is to disregard the fact that seamen

Men and Women at Sea

spend many years trying to master the art of seamanship — how to navigate a vessel and operate the complex equipment on board, safely and efficiently. It is, in the final analysis, to devalue the merchant marine profession.

'Time to resuscitate the term *seaman*', June 2016

Campaigns aimed at promoting the seafaring profession seem to overlook the obvious: many choose to become seafarers because there are not enough decent-paying jobs on shore. It's an economic imperative. Why not instill in the youth a love for the sea and the nautical life? Perhaps then they can fully embrace whatever the job brings — the joys and the sorrows, the triumphs and the hardships.

'Seafaring: what they don't tell the youth', June 2015

Many Filipinos would point to the Manila–Acapulco galleon trade to make the claim that the country has a long seafaring tradition — forgetting that their ancestors who served on the Spanish galleons were conscripts, maritime slave workers.

'A galleon model and ghosts from the past', February 2015

It may well be that the register of missing seafarers would lead to only a few ever being found. But the very attempt to quantify these maritime *desaparecidos* is significant. Perchance it would

Men and Women at Sea

result in a better appreciation of the hardships and dangers constantly faced by seafarers and fishermen.

'Keeping missing seafarers in mind', December 2014

The sailors of old relied on the heavenly bodies to navigate, using instruments that seem primitive by today's standards — compass, hourglass, celestial globe, jacob's staff and mariner's astrolabe. Back then, it was seamanship that mattered most, not technology. How times have changed!

'Today's sailors, hooked on technology?', October 2014

I have met and known quite a number of sea captains. Some have hugely impressed me; others, hardly. The latter include what one could call “decaf captains” — those who hold a master's licence but lack experience as a shipmaster or who never had command of a vessel. The term seems more precise than “paper captains,” some of whom have enough style to make up for a lack of substance. It sounds more elegant in Spanish: *capitanes descafeinados*.

'Sea captains: espresso versus decaf', June 2014

I've had the privilege of knowing a number of old sea dogs — men with weathered faces who spent many years at sea and had colourful tales to tell; who knew the dreadful power of the ocean but had a passion for the nautical life; and who mastered their

Men and Women at Sea

trade, not just because it was their livelihood, but because they loved what they were doing. They seem to be a vanishing breed.

'An early homage to old sea dogs', May 2014

For many, it's just a source of livelihood or a place of recreation. But the sea is much, much more. It is deep and has the power to stir man's deepest emotions: loneliness, grief, despair, fear, shock, awe, love, ecstasy and hope.

'21 sea quotes for sailors and landlubbers', October 2013

...the 25th of June is supposed to be a day for showing our love for the men and women who toil at sea — just as we would express the same feeling to those close and dear to us. This day belongs to seafarers, not to IMO (International Maritime Organization) or those who declare support for its promotional campaign. It's a day for greeting seafarers and wishing them happiness and success, not a day for mouthing slogans.

'For whom is the Day of the Seafarer?', June 2013

No, seafarers are not invisible. They are so only to those who praise seafarers on the 25th of June but have no real empathy for them; to those who make rules for the seafaring profession but fail to see the real conditions on board ships; and to those who have turned seafarers into faceless entities with such fancy terms as "the human element".

'The myth of the invisible seafarers', June 2013

Men and Women at Sea

Other countries are not turning out enough seafarers because they would rather build ships, computers and BMWs. And they all seem to be better off by doing so.

'Inside the Filipino seafarer factory', May 2011

There are far brighter stars in the maritime galaxy than the Coast Guard. Even in the US, where the Coast Guard enjoys a good deal of prestige, much of the work done by Coast Guard units goes unnoticed and deeds of heroism are often unsung.

'Coast Guard star shining through', April 2011

Although other kinds of work are available overseas, seafaring holds a special appeal to many young Filipinos. Not only is it a high-paying profession, at least for ship officers. It has also been romanticised by maritime schools and returning seafarers, the latter with their tales of white-skinned damsels and of carousing at night with dollars instead of pesos in one's pockets. The romanticism wears off, naturally, once the young lads board their first ship. Shipboard life is hard, and the work can be dangerous.

'Fated to be world's top crew supplier', May 2010

In a sense, seafarers and housemaids working abroad are on the same boat. The latter will never get to own the foreign flats and mansions where they toil, although they may earn enough to build a nice little house back home. Similarly, the former won't become shipowners. Some may end up as crewing managers or

Men and Women at Sea

put up their own crewing agencies. All this is not a prescription against ship manning as a national economic activity. It's simply a reminder of where it has taken the Philippines' maritime aspirations and where it is likely to take them 15 or 20 years from now.

'Of greenbacks, seafarers and servants', May 2010

There are good, bad and in-between crewing agents. The first more than recruit and supply crew and officers to shipping principals. They manage human resources and do so with a clear understanding of the complex environment in which ships, their owners and crews operate.

'Mastering the art of crew management', April 2010

End of Preview

You can continue reading by purchasing the eBook at

<https://marine-cafe.com/product/maritime-double-shots/>