

Fist of the Fleet Association

a non profit 501 (c) (19) military organization

NEWSLETTER

Dec 2021

Preserving the Past Providing for Today
Promoting the Future

HOLIDAY EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

Growing up surrounded by Italian relations usually meant that during the holidays we would pop in and visit each and every house either for lunch or dinner, depending on the adults schedules and day of the week, and so eat our way through December. This does have its drawbacks because, well, not all lasagnas are created equal, and the benchmark was my grandmother Christine. She was a tremendously talented cook *and* baker from the "old country" up in the Abruzzi mountains, a talent not shared by many of our first-generation Italian-Americans relations. She would start baking for the holidays about three weeks before Christmas from cookie recipes she had pulled from a variety of sources and put on 3 x 5 index cards. She never made less than 4 dozen each of 15 recipes and these were carefully portioned out to each of our relations houses. When she passed my sister transcribed all the recipes into word docs and sent me the ones I wanted. Now you'd think that following directions would result in cookies, and you'd be wrong. Patty and I have been working to get these right for years, and finally this year I was able to get 5 recipes to come out nearly perfect. So Christmas Eve I will be bringing cookies to selected friends of ours, but our really good friends always get cannoli. It's not really a holiday tradition as we give these out for any occasion *and* they're a lot easier to make.



It was years after my dad's passing that we finally uncovered his heritage. He was adopted at three by his maternal aunt, another "old-worlder" who took a lot of secrets to the grave. Turns out his father was a Danish merchant sailor who met a Scottish girl in New York harbor and jumped ship. Patty spent years digging into New York archives to get even this little bit. But we would never have a chance to experience other European traditions as his folks died in a car wreck before they could wed, and his aunt locked out his past. So for years I've been diving into European cultural histories, and trying to sample as much out of it as I can, cuisine included. My wife is Polish so every November we make our own Kielbasa and it's just *killer*. It takes up to eight hours to smoke up to 25 lbs worth of sausages correctly.

The holidays are a time to *embrace* all that we are, and all we wish to be, and not turn a dark or blind eye on the yesterdays of our lives or the ancestry of our own individual heritage. It is a time to reaffirm our faith, regardless of what that might be, and a time to renew our hopes for tomorrow; to put aside the noisy, messy marketing campaigns of monolithic corporations and in the quiet moments find our spiritual centers. It is a time for sharing with family and friends and remembering those we miss and acknowledging and reflecting on all that is good about humanity. So dial back the noise and shut out the seeming chaos of the world and remember that the Feast Day of the Nativity is about the birth of hope for man. *Nothing* is more important.



www.fistofthefleet.org

Mission Statement

Perpetuate the history of Naval Aviation Squadrons VT-17, VA-6B, VA-65, VA-25 and VFA-25,

Remember deceased veterans and comfort their survivors,

Conduct charitable and educational programs,

Foster and participate in activities of patriotic nature,

Assist current active squadron members, and

Provide assistance to family members in times of emergency.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Season's Greetings to all Fisties, past and present. It's the time of year when we scurry about, preparing for Christmas day with chores to get the house ready for a holiday party, and of course, I'm late on deadline and Jerry, our capable Editor in Chief, is on my case. So between the many errands, I must run back to the house to update and send this Yuletide greeting to all of you.

No doubt you've seen and heard about Tailhook 2021, somewhere between Delta and Omicron, we managed a pretty good turnout to rekindle old friendships. And now we look forward to booster shots, masks and light at the end of the tunnel, whenever that may be.

But our friends at the A-7 Corsair II Association are planning a spring rendezvous at Sun & Fun Air Show in Lakeland, FL on April 7-9, 2022. But that's a long way into the future and with snow on the ground in Park City, open ski resorts, and bluebird clear skies, I'm looking forward to skiing this new year. "Got to keep the old man out" as Clint Eastwood said. And with sunny and warm weather in San Diego, I may even try a short bay cruise to Coronado.

But for now, it's time to enjoy family and friends, take some time off from work, pass around the presents and give thanks for all that we possess, especially our good health. Speaking of passing items, I've been tasked to go whip up some eggnog, with a double shot of High West Campfire Whiskey. See you next year or when we can next meet.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

John 'Chalks' Chalker

President



OFFICERS
President: John Chalker
7802 Glenwild Drive
Park City UT
Cell 619-922-4207
Email jchalker@lmcapital.com
Vice President: John Leslie
205 Bluebird Lane
Saint Augustine FL 32080
Tel 904-233-4712
Email leslie_john@bellsouth.net
Secretary: Nick Johnson
8217 Kiawah Trace
Port Saint Lucie FL 34986
Tel 936-499-8051
Email nrjohn@yahoo.com
Treasurer, CFO: Chuck Webster
2441 Lock B Road North
Clarksville TN 37043
Tel 605-380-5827
Email cwebster@nrctv.com
Sergeant at Arms/PR: Bob Schreiber
949 Crystal Park Blvd.
Clifford Township PA 18407
Tel: 570-780-4356
Email robert.a.schreiber@echoes.net
Member at Large: Al Gorthy
8839 W 143rd Terr
Overland Park KS 66221
913-681-9026
Email algorithy@gmail.com

Blue Notes

- Mar 12 NAF El Centro Festival of Flight CA
- Mar 19/20 NAS New Orleans LA
- Mar 26/27 MacDill AFB FL Tampa Bay AirFest
- Apr 2/3 NAS Kingsville TX Wings Over South Texas
- Apr 9/10 JRB Charleston SC Air and Space Expo
- Apr 23/4 Vidalia Onion Festival AirShow GA
- Apr 30/May 1 Vero Beach AirShow FL



SKIPPERS CORNER

Happy Holidays! Hope this finds you and your families healthy and excited to ring in the New Year! VFA-25 has been keeping busy this fall and into the winter months. We had a successful detachment to Key West with our new Air Wing, and the pilots spent some time in St. Louis learning how to use new software. While we all enjoyed our travels, everyone is happy to be home and ready to take leave over the holidays.

“Fistmas” came early for us with the delivery of our first (and the Navy’s first operational) Blk III Super Hornet! She is so new she looks fake! The landing gear is so white it almost blinds you and there isn’t a spec of grease on her yet. Our maintenance teams are working hard to accept her, and hopefully we can give her a spin after the New Year. She has a full glass cockpit, which is the first step in completely modernizing the way information is displayed to the pilots in the Super Hornet.

2022 promises to be an exciting year as we continue to accept the Blk IIIs and start rebuilding the ready room with new pilots. We are already looking at which training detachments will be most beneficial and will finally start shifting our focus towards workups and deployment.



Best wishes to you all and Merry Fistmas!
Very Respectfully,
CDR Kristen “Dragon” Hansen



There is a feature article on the Block III aircraft coming soon ~ Ricochet

IN MEMORIAM



Captain Ronald Kurt Schilling, of Wexford, passed away on Sunday, November 7th, 2021. Born on May 11th, 1947 in Baltimore, Maryland, Ron was the eldest son of the late Kurt Herman Schilling and Alice Barbara Niebuhr. He was raised in Lynwood, New Jersey, where he attained the rank of Eagle Scout, and was an active member of his church. As a child, he enjoyed fishing, canoeing, surfing, and other outdoor activities. Ron graduated from Mainland Regional High School in 1965, earned a BS degree in biology from Juniata College in 1969, and then enlisted in the US Navy the following year. He married Pamela Sue Venters in 1973, and they moved to California where he was stationed at Lemoore Naval Air Station. Ron flew

the Vought A-7E aircraft with attack squadron 25 onboard the USS Ranger. To his naval friends, he was affectionately known as ‘Big Mac’. He is described by his VA-25 brethren as a great friend, aviator, and officer.

He served in the Navy until 1977, then moved back to Pennsylvania to begin his career as a commercial pilot for Allegheny Airlines. Ron spent his career in the airline industry and achieved the position of Director of Flight Operations and Standards with US Airways. After he retired from US Airways, he became an airline consultant for SAMA Airlines in Saudi Arabia and later for Jet Asia in Bangkok, Thailand. Those who worked with him held him in high esteem. He was known for being fair and was well respected. Later in life, Ron was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. This was not something he readily shared with people and did his very best not to draw attention to his affliction. He kept a lot of his pains and struggles to himself, and never let it get the best of him. In the final years of his life, he was an active member of the senior Men’s Club of Sewickley, where he volunteered his time to help others. Ron fought this disease all the way to the end, but eventually succumbed to it this past Sunday.

Ron is survived by his wife Pamela, younger brother Mark (Joy), his three children Andrew, Jason (Nicole), and Stephanie, and his two grandchildren Jessie Robert and Emma Rose. Ron enjoyed fishing and traveling with his family. He will be loved and missed for his wisdom, sage advice, and unwavering support. Ron is whole again, and he has taken his final flight west. No service

will be held due to safety issues concerning Covid-19. He is being cremated at BALL FUNERAL CHAPEL, INC. A celebration of his life is being planned for the spring of 2022. Please contact his family for more information. Memorial donations may be made to the following: Michael J. Fox Foundation, <https://www.michaeljfox.org/news/giving-tuesday-your-donation-will-be-doubled>. Contributions are matched when made on November the 30th, 2021; or Good Samaritan Hospice House in Wexford, 146 Neely School Road, Wexford, PA 15090.



VA-25—(FROM LEFT) LT C.S. Chapman, LCDR R.W. Nordman, LT R.K. Schilling, LT R.C. Bechtel.



THE HORNET'S STING: OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH

Operation Southern Watch was an air-centric military operation conducted by the United States Department of Defense from summer '92 to spring '03. United States Central Command's Joint Task Force Southwest Asia (JTF-SWA) had the mission of monitoring and controlling the airspace south of the 32nd Parallel (extended to the 33rd Parallel in '96) in southern and south-central Iraq during the period following the end of the '91 Persian Gulf War until the '03 invasion of Iraq.



Summary

Operation Southern Watch began on 27 Aug '92 with the stated purpose of ensuring Iraqi compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 (UNSCR 688) of 5 Apr '91, which demanded that Iraq, "immediately end this repression and express the hope in the same context that an open dialogue will take place to ensure that the human and political rights of all Iraqi citizens are respected." Nothing in the resolution spelled out the Iraqi no-fly zones or Operation Southern Watch. Following the end of the Gulf War in Mar 1, the Iraqi Air Force bombed and strafed the Shi'ite Muslims in Southern Iraq during the remainder of '91 and into '92. The US and UK deemed that Saddam Hussein was choosing not to comply with the resolution. Military forces from Saudi Arabia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France participated in Operation Southern Watch. The commander of JTF-SWA, an aeronautically rated USAF Major General, assisted by an aeronautically designated USN Rear Admiral, reported directly to the Commander, USCENTCOM. Military engagements in Southern Watch occurred with regularity, with Coalition aircraft routinely being shot at by Iraqi air defense forces utilizing SAMs and AAA, although such incidents were usually only reported in the Western press occasionally. Intensification was noted prior to the '03 invasion of Iraq, though it was said at the time to just be in response to increasing activity by Iraqi air-defense forces. It is now known that this increased activity occurred during an operation known as Operation Southern Focus.

Immediate postwar



At first, Iraqi forces did not attack Coalition aircraft. However, after the United Nations voted to maintain sanctions against Iraq, Iraqi forces began to fire on the aircraft and US E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft reported an unusual amount of Iraqi Air Force activity. On 27 Dec '92, a lone Iraqi MiG-25 Foxbat crossed into the no-fly zone and flew towards a flight of USAF F-15 Eagles before turning north and using its superior speed to outrun the pursuing Eagles. Later in the day, several Iraqi fighters dodged back and forth across the 32nd

parallel, staying out of missile range of US fighters. However, an Iraqi MiG-25 crossed too far and was trapped inside the 32nd parallel by a flight of USAF F-16 Falcons of the 33rd Fighter Squadron. After intelligence verified the aircraft was hostile, the fighter pilot received clearance to fire. The lead plane piloted by then-Lieutenant Colonel Gary North,



USAF, fired a missile which destroyed the Iraqi fighter. This was the first combat kill by an F-16 in USAF service, and the first combat kill using the AIM-120 AMRAAM missile. On 17 Jan '93 a USAF F-16C destroyed an Iraqi MiG-23 Flogger with an AMRAAM missile for the second USAF aerial victory.



On 7 Jan '93 Iraq agreed to US, British, and French demands to withdraw their SAMs from below the 32nd parallel. However, they did not remove all of them, and US president Bush ordered US aircraft to bomb the remaining missile sites. On 13 Jan, more than 100 US, British, and French aircraft attacked Iraqi missile sites near Nasiriyah, Samawah, Najaf, and Al-Amarah. Around half the Iraqi sites south of the 32nd parallel were hit. On 29 Jun, a USAF F-4G Phantom II destroyed Iraqi radar which had illuminated it, and a month later, two US Navy EA-6B Prowlers (VAQ-131) fired AGM-88 HARM missiles at more Iraqi radars.



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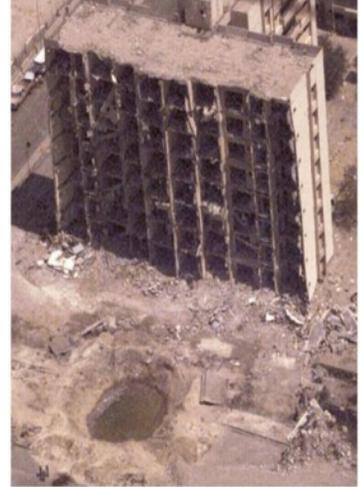
Operations "Vigilant Warrior" and "Desert Strike"

The first nine months of '94 were quiet, and the USAF began to withdraw forces from the region. In Oct Saddam deployed two divisions of Iraqi Republican Guard troops to the Kuwaiti border after demanding that UN sanctions were to be lifted, precipitating *Operation Vigilant Warrior*, the rushing of US troops to the Persian Gulf region. Saddam later withdrew the Iraqi Republican Guard out of the Kuwaiti border due to massive US military buildup. This served to increase Coalition resolve to enforce the no-fly zones and contain Iraqi aggression.

On 25 Jun '96 terrorists bombed the US base at Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia which housed personnel at King Abdulaziz Air Base supporting *Operation Southern Watch*. The attack killed 19 US airmen and injured an additional 372 people. This event led to a re-alignment of US forces in Saudi Arabia from Khobar Towers to Prince Sultan Air Base and Eskan Village, with both installations located away from population centers. In Aug '96, Iraqi forces invaded the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq and US forces responded with *Operation Desert Strike* against targets in southern Iraq. As a result, the no-fly zone was extended north to the 33rd parallel. This marked renewed conflict with Iraqi air defenses and several more radars were destroyed by F-16 fighters.

Operation "Desert Fox"

On 15 Dec '98 France suspended participation in the no-fly zones, arguing that they had been maintained for too long and were ineffective. On 16 Dec, US President Clinton ordered execution of *Operation Desert Fox*, a four-day air campaign against targets all over Iraq, citing Iraq's failure to comply with UNSC Resolutions. This resulted in an increased level of combat in the no-fly zones which lasted until '03.



Last years



On 30 Dec '98 Iraqi SA-6 missile sites fired 6 to 8 SAMs at US military aircraft. USAF F-16s responded by bombing the sites. On 5 Jan '99, four Iraqi MiG-25s crossed into the southern no-fly zone, sparking aerial combat with two USAF F-15 Eagles and two USN F-14 Tomcats (VF-2). The US fighters fired a total of six missiles at the Iraqi aircraft, but the Iraqi aircraft were able to evade all of the missiles and escape back to the north. On 22 May '00, it was reported that since execution of *Operation Desert Fox* in Dec '98, there had been 470 separate incidents of AAA or SAM fire at Coalition aircraft, while at the same time Iraqi aircraft had violated the southern no-fly zone 150 times. Over the same time period, US aircraft had attacked Iraqi targets on 73 occasions.



On 16 Feb '01 US and British aircraft launched attacks against six targets in southern Iraq, including command centers, radars and communications centers. Only about 40% of the targets were hit. This operation sparked scathing editorials in the foreign press, which reflected growing world skepticism about US-British policy towards Iraq. Incidents of Coalition planes coming under fire, followed by retaliatory air strikes began to happen on a weekly basis. In late '01, a Sudanese man with links to al-Qaeda fired a man-portable SA-7 Strela missile at a USAF F-15 Eagle fighter taking off from Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia. The missile missed the target

and was not detected by the pilot or anyone at the base. Saudi police found the empty launcher in the desert in May '02, and a suspect was arrested in Sudan a month later. He led police to a cache in the desert where a second missile was buried.

In Jun '02 US and British forces stepped up attacks on Iraqi air defense targets all over southern Iraq. It was later revealed that this was part of a pre-planned operation called *Southern Focus* which had the goal of degrading the Iraqi air-defense system in preparation for the planned invasion of Iraq. From Aug '92 to early '01, Coalition pilots had flown 153,000 sorties over southern Iraq. From '92 to '03, various Coalition naval assets also supported maritime interdiction operations in the Persian Gulf under the banners of *Operation Southern Watch* and *Operation Northern Watch*.



Basing and withdrawal

Prior to late Feb '03 all coalition aircraft based in Saudi Arabia had been "defensive" assets in support of the defense of Saudi Arabia, e.g., with the exception of AGM-88 HARM missiles carried by USAF F-16CJ and USN or USMC EA-6B aircraft as defense against Iraqi SAMs, they carried no "offensive" air-to-ground ordnance with which to strike ground targets in Iraq in response to hostile actions against Coalition aircraft in Iraqi airspace enforcing UNSCR 688. As a result, strike aircraft with offensive ordnance were limited to USAF A-10, F-15E, F-16C, RAF Tornado GR4, and occasionally USMC F/A-18 or AV-8B aircraft based at Ali Al Salem Air Base and Ahmad al-Jaber Air Base in Kuwait, and USN and USMC F-14, F/A-18 and EA-6B aircraft aboard US aircraft carriers and USMC AV-8B aircraft aboard US amphibious assault ships operating in the Persian Gulf.

In addition to USAF E-3 AWACS and E-8 J-STARS command & control aircraft and KC-135 air refueling aircraft based in Saudi Arabia, additional USAF KC-10 and KC-135 air refueling aircraft were also based at Al Dhafra Air Base in the UAE, while RAF VC10 K3 refuelers were based at the US Navy's Aviation Support Unit (ASU) at Bahrain International Airport in Bahrain to support these strike aircraft.

On 27 Feb '03 it was announced that the US would be allowed to launch warplanes with offensive ordnance from its bases inside Saudi Arabia to support the Iraq War – and would in turn begin a phased withdrawal from the country. On 29 Apr '03, SecDef Rumsfeld announced that he would be withdrawing US troops from the country, stating that the Iraq War no longer required the support installations within the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Deputy SecDef Paul Wolfowitz had earlier said that the continuing US presence in the kingdom was also putting US lives in danger. All non-Royal Saudi Air Force aircraft and units at Prince Sultan Air Base relocated to other bases in the region, mainly Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar and Al Dhafra Air Base in the UAE. This included the Coalition Air Operations Center which had relocated to PSAB from Eskan Village in Sep '01, and which now resides at Al Udeid AB.

Sources:

Operation Southern Watch: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Southern_Watch

Order of Battle: https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_021223.htm:

NEXT TIME IN THE HORNET'S STING: OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM



Jul, the Danish Yule and Christmas, is celebrated throughout December starting either at the beginning of Advent or on Dec 1 with a variety of traditions. Christmas Eve, *Juleaften*, the main event of Jul, is celebrated on the evening of December 24, the evening before the two Christmas holidays, Dec 25 and 26th. Celebrating on the eve before Christmas is also used for most other holidays in Denmark.

Jul is originally an ancient old Norse tradition related to the Germanic Yule celebration of North Europe, but was mixed with the overlapping Christian tradition of Christmas when Denmark was christened during the 11th century. The traditions related to Jul have evolved through the centuries, still with many pagan traditions carried on today. In the 1800s, the tradition of bringing a Christmas tree inside the home was introduced gradually, inspired by Germany.

In the evening, an elaborate dinner is eaten with the family. It usually consists of roast pork, roast duck, or - more rarely - roast goose, with potatoes, caramelized potatoes, red cabbage and plenty of brown gravy. For dessert, *risalamande*, a cold rice pudding dish, is served with a hot cherry sauce, traditionally with a whole almond hidden inside. The lucky finder of this almond is entitled to a small gift, which is traditionally a marzipan pig. In some families, it's tradition that the rice pudding dessert is made with the remaining rice porridge from the previous evening, a meal served on the 23rd, *Lillejuleaften* (Little Yule Eve), with cinnamon, brown sugar, and butter. It is eaten warm with a fruit drink or sweet malt beer.



risalamande

After the meal is complete, (some families dance before the meal) the family will dance around the *Juletræ* and sing Christmas carols and hymns like "Nu er det jul igen" (Now it is Yule again) and "Et barn er født i Bethlehem" (A child has been born in Bethlehem). When the singing is complete, presents from under the tree are handed out by the children or in turn. After they have been opened, there are more snacks, candy, chips, and sometimes the traditional *Gløgg*.



brændte mandler



pebernødder

Throughout the Christmas month of December, various confectionery, fruits, cakes, beverages and sweet treats specifically associated with Christmas are widely available in the streets, in shops, cafés or in homes. This includes nuts, dried fruits, oranges, clementines, mandarins, pigeon apples, *brændte mandler* (sugarglazed almonds), glazed apples on a stick, pancakes, *æbleskiver*, *pebernødder*, *klejner*, *brunkager* and other types of *småkager* (Danish cookies), *gløgg* (mulled wine, pronunciation close to Glug, stressing the doubly G) of various recipes and a variety of marzipan treats, some of which includes chocolate and Danish nougat.



æbleskiver

In Denmark, Santa Claus is known as *Julemanden* (literally "the Yule Man") and is said to arrive on a sleigh drawn by reindeer, with presents for the children. He is assisted with his Yuletide chores by elves known as *julenisser* (or simply *nisser*), who are traditionally believed to live in attics, barns or similar places. In some traditions, to maintain the favor and protection of these *nisser*, children leave out saucers of milk or rice pudding or other treats for them on the afternoon on the 24th, and are delighted to find the food gone on Yule morning.



Danish homes are decorated with *kravlenisser* (climbing nisse), which are cardboard cutouts of *nisser* which can be attached to paintings and bookshelves. This is a unique Danish tradition started in the early 20th century.



Julehjerter or pleated Yule hearts are handmade decorations which are hung on the Yule tree. Children together with other members of the family create the hearts from glossy paper in various colors.

Danish *Gløgg* Recipe: 1 cup water, 2 oranges, sliced, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1 bottle red wine Spices: 2 cinnamon sticks, 2 bay leaves, 2 star anise, 10 cloves, 10 cardamom pods, 1/2 tsp whole black peppercorns, 1/2 tsp ground ginger.
Serving: 6 tbsp blanched almonds (1 tbsp/glass), chopped, 3 tbsp raisins (1/2 tsp/glass). Instructions: Wash the oranges and



slice them. In a large pot, add water, orange slices, spices, and brown sugar. Bring to a boil and let simmer for 10 mins with a lid on. Remove from heat and let the mixture process for about 2 hours. Discard all spices and orange slices and add the bottle of red wine. Optional: You can save the cinnamon sticks and orange slices as decoration when serving the *gløgg* in the glasses. Heat up the *gløgg* to 170 degrees Fahrenheit, so the alcohol doesn't evaporate. Add 1 tbsp of chopped blanched almonds and 1/2 tsp raisins to each glass and pour in the *gløgg*. Serve immediately.



Glædelig Jul og Godt Nytår!

Christmas Fo'c'sle Shanty By Ann Matthews date unknown

Look lively lads, haul on those ropes
At last we're homeward bound
With a following wind we have high hopes
To be home before Christmas comes around.

CHORUS: Pray God fill the sail with a favorable gale
Give us fine fast running seas
And we'll make it home for Christmas boys
To our wives and our families.

We've sailed across the seven seas
Such sights we all have seen
But now we long for our families
To tell them where we've been.
CHORUS

Around the world we all did roam
Many girls in many ports
But now at last we're headed for home
And our wives are in our thoughts.
CHORUS

And in our last few ports of call
When we've had our runs ashore
We've sought out gifts for one and all
And who could ask for more.
CHORUS

So weigh the anchor, set those sails
Don't slack along the way
With this good wind, unless luck fails
We'll be home For Christmas Day
CHORUS



Sea shanties were work songs once sung by sailors on board sailing vessels at a time when work such as hauling up an anchor or raising a sail was accomplished by manpower. Shanties were critical to the proper working of a ship and made it possible for many hands to work together by provided both rhythm and energy for the job at hand. When the job was a long drawn out affair such as raising a sail, long haul or halyard shanties were sung. These had a very steady pulse which allowed sailors to move, set up and haul together with their raw hands on tarry ropes. The shantyman would often need to string together a great many verses before such jobs were done and so needed to be able to make them up on the fly. Sometimes when the job was known to be of short duration, such as trimming or furling the sail, a short haul shanty would be sung. These were used for hauling jobs which required, as one shantyman is purported to have said, "only a few pulls, but they had to be good ones!" Again the definite beat told the men when to exert a good strong pull and when to relax. When a capstan was used to raise the anchor or warp the ship, a capstan shanty was called for. These shanties created a steady walking rhythm as the sailors moved around and around heaving on the capstan bars. These same capstan shanties often doubled as pumping shanties because operating a ship's pump required the same sort of easy rhythm to be effective.

Sailors also sang songs when not on duty and these were referred to as fo'c'sle shanties or forebitters. These were not considered work songs but were sung for entertainment and solace; songs about home, missing loved ones and life ashore. It was no accident that many a mate was heard to holler out: "What about a song there? Can't any of you sing?". They knew how important shanties were to the success of a voyage.

