

# Ed Simeone: The Voice of Peace in March 1973

1973 was a long time ago, exactly thirty years since the events related here. My memory for names and specific dates is a bit rusty. I am sorry to say I can't remember the names of all the incredible group of volunteers that staffed the Peace ship on its voyage from New Jersey to the Middle East. But to the best of my recollection: I was working at a stereo store in northern New Jersey and my cousin told me about a radio ship docked on the Hudson River that was looking for someone with electronics experience. I visited the Peace Ship in February and was immediately struck by the friendliness of the crew and their commitment to creating a more peaceful world. This seemed like a great adventure, so I signed on and within several weeks was issued Panamanian seamen's papers, even though I couldn't have passed any legitimate test!

We had three Norwegian crewmembers. The Captain and the first and second engineer all came out of retirement to join the crew. The Captain ran a tobacco store and the first and second engineers worked at an auto repair garage. One of the engineers was named Ud. The First mate was from Canada, as was one on the DJ's (presenter), sorry no names. Four of us were from N.J.: Roger (who had some sea experience), a Catholic priest, Father Charles McTague, the cook (sorry I can't remember his name) and myself. There is one other crewmember that appears in several photographs that I have but my mind draws a blank about his name.

Father McTague or Father Charlie as we called him, had left home at the age of 16 and was an experienced seaman. He had a late calling to the clergy, so he had not led a sheltered life, which made him fun to be around. He never wore his collar at sea, so he was just another one of the guys manning the ship. We also had a very experienced seaman for the Philippines named Pete. And Pete swore he would never return to the Philippines until President Marcos was deposed. Sad to think he had to wait another 13 more years to go home. The chief transmission engineer was from Holland, his name was Bill Danse.

Bill could fix just about anything and he kept the dual 25000 watt Collins valve transmitters humming. I also credit him for being one of my career mentors. We had a British DJ named Tony Allan, who had much experience on radio. Tony would tell us stories about the history of pirate radio. We would sit wide-eyed, listening to harrowing stories about storms in the English Channel and the days of Radio Caroline and Veronica. And, of course, Abie! Abie was a unique mixture of bluster tempered by a good heart. Today we would use the word "micro manager" to describe him. Abie wanted to do everything! Sometime I wondered if the guy ever slept.

I am terrible with names but I remember the events of the trip quite well. We sailed out of NY harbour in mid March, smack into a huge storm that nearly pounded the old ship to bits. No one bothered to check the long-term weather forecast. This storm was so big that large cruise ships were a day late on the NY to Bermuda run. We carried 65,000 gallons of diesel fuel in the ships ballast tanks that would have normally been filled with water. We needed this much fuel because once we started to transmit without a license, we would be in violation of one of the international conventions and could not put into port again. In the heavy seas our water supplies were contaminated by the fuel, leaking

from the old gaskets on top of the ballast tanks, washing across the lower decks and into the fresh water tanks.

I can still remember the sight and smell of diesel fuel washing over the lower deck. Even today I become ill after a good whiff of diesel. We had good water distillation gear on board but one essential piece of gear was missing, an oil separator/cleaner. The fuel oil was so contaminated with water and sludge, that our single main (and only!) Deutz engine was always breaking down. Also the two Allis-Chalmers generators kept failing as well, due to the unclean fuel. Without electricity we could not make fresh water, so we drank canned fruit juice for a good part of the voyage. Didn't bath much either because diesel fuel causes nasty rashes.

Having never been to sea, I was really seasick for the first few days, could not get out of my bunk. A few days out of NY, someone came to my cabin and told me the helmsman had been on watch for 24 hours and had to be relieved. I got up, staggered to the wheel house (I had to go outside to get there!) astounded by the huge seas. I got to the wheelhouse to find we had no radar, and no idea where we were (no sextant reading could be taken because of the storm). This was well before GPS! Bill got on the distress frequency (2.182MGz) and called the US coast guard. They triangulated our position, did a fly over and gave us our location. The captain decided to head towards Bermuda for repairs. He got us within a few miles of our destination by dead reckoning. No mean feat, considering his affection for distilled spirits.

No oil separator was brought on board in Bermuda, so our troubles started anew as soon as we left. Abie also left us and flew on to Europe. We sailed on to towards Gibraltar and had to limp into Cadiz, Spain. All that waited us there was a telegram telling us to go on to Malaga and with no money for repairs we had to leave. The police in Madrid was detaining Abie. We left Cadiz but inadvertently pulled in behind Franco's private yacht and followed it all the way to Malaga for his annual Easter holiday (he was not on board). Longhairs with a 50,000 Watt transmitter follow the dictator's boat. Nice, we sailed through the Straits and put into Malaga for repairs. We were met by machine gun toting federates. They told us we could go into town for a short while. No sooner did we go ashore when the captain was told to "get out of town". He had Farther Charlie round up the crew within a few hours, no small feat! We nearly rammed a US military radio ship in our haste to get out of port because the engineers were so drunk, they reversed the captain's telegraph instructions.

Abie arrived not long after cleared the harbour. He bribed a fisherman to bring him out to the ship. We waited for Abie off the coast until our one of our anchor chains broke. We limped on to Marseilles, France. We still had no money, no ship's agent and no idea what we were going to do next. We needed repairs in the worst way but without an agent in Marseilles we were in a bad state. We received no encouragement from the harbour master. In desperation the Captain ordered that we put up the international distress flags. Each time we put one up they became more severe: I am manoeuvring with difficulty; I am disabled; man overboard; I require medical assistance; I am in distress, dangerous cargo; In need of a tug. All these flags finally captured the attention of the captain of a bouy tender, François Bozon.

The original Captain and first and second engineer were relieved of their duties and sent

packing while we laid up for ten days. We got a new Captain (Bozon), new engineers and new French cook. One more repair stop in Sicily and we made it to Tel Aviv around 10 days later. After my stint as a helmsman, I assisted Bill in maintaining the transmitters but my main job was to operate the Hammerlund 600 short wave radio receivers, so we could pirate the UPS and Reuters teletype news services. We called it "rip & read".

Abie would read the news stories as part of his on-air evening talks. At first we began transmitting late in the morning and signed off around 10 at night. One weekend to raise donations we got the bright idea to stay on all day and night for an "All Beatles" weekend. Not very original but it was exciting running the station 24 hours a day. Poor Abie, I thought he was going to have a nervous breakdown. He just couldn't sleep worrying we might say something politically incorrect.

I left a few months after we went on the air. We had put our lives on the line, sailing that old hulk across the stormy Atlantic. It was exciting to be steaming around the world but it was a lonely life once we got to our transmitting station. This we did all for \$100 a month. By July I had had enough and left the ship for an English speaking Kibbutz in RoshPina. That's a very abbreviated version. I could write a whole screenplay about the trip! It was some very scary and some funny moments. Just thought you might enjoy it.

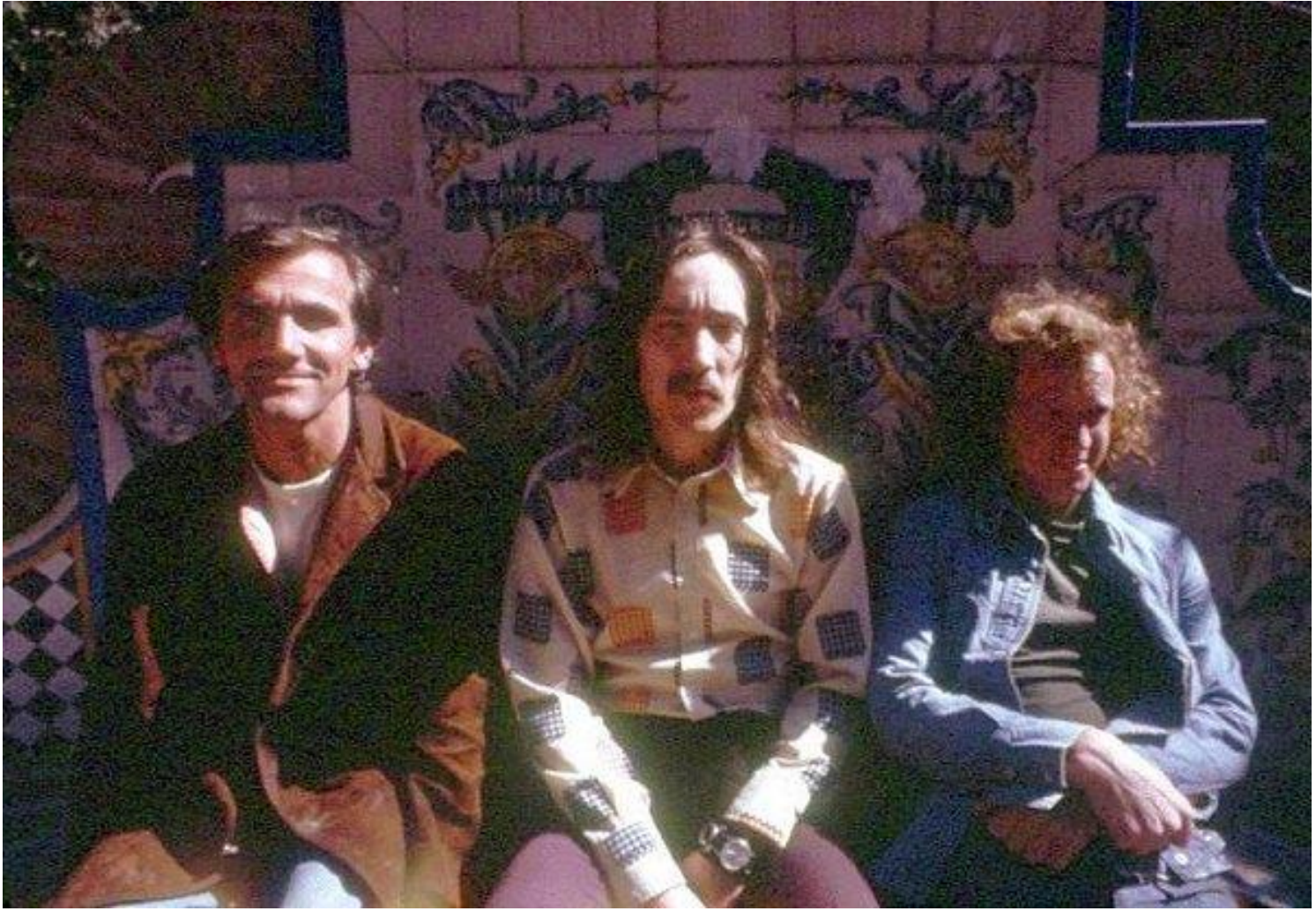
Pictures of the original crew that sailed with the Peace Ship from the USA to Israel:



**Still in New York City**



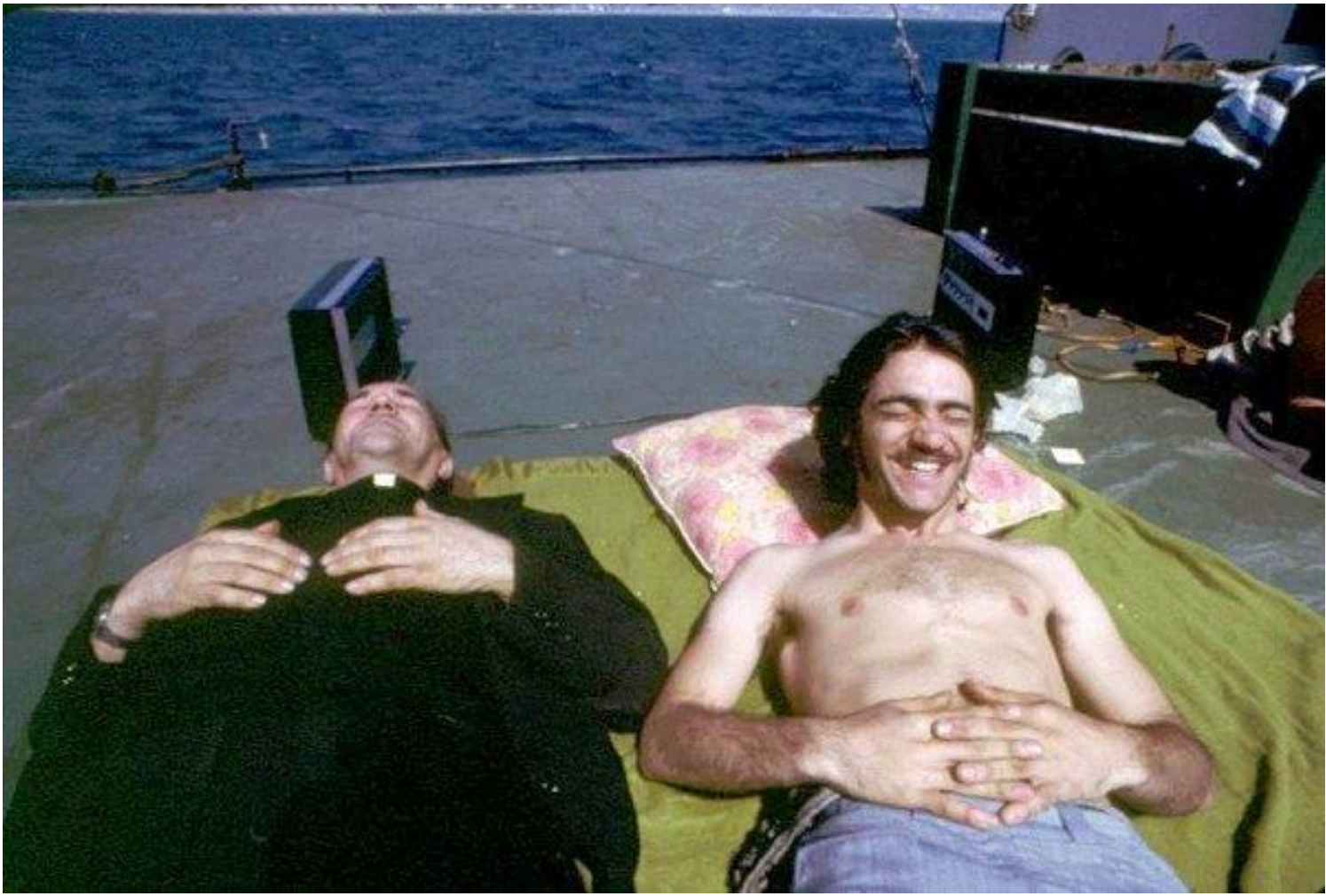
**These photos capture most of the original crew. Only the Captain and the First Engineer are missing.**



**Unknown, Tony Allen, Bill**



**One of the engineers**

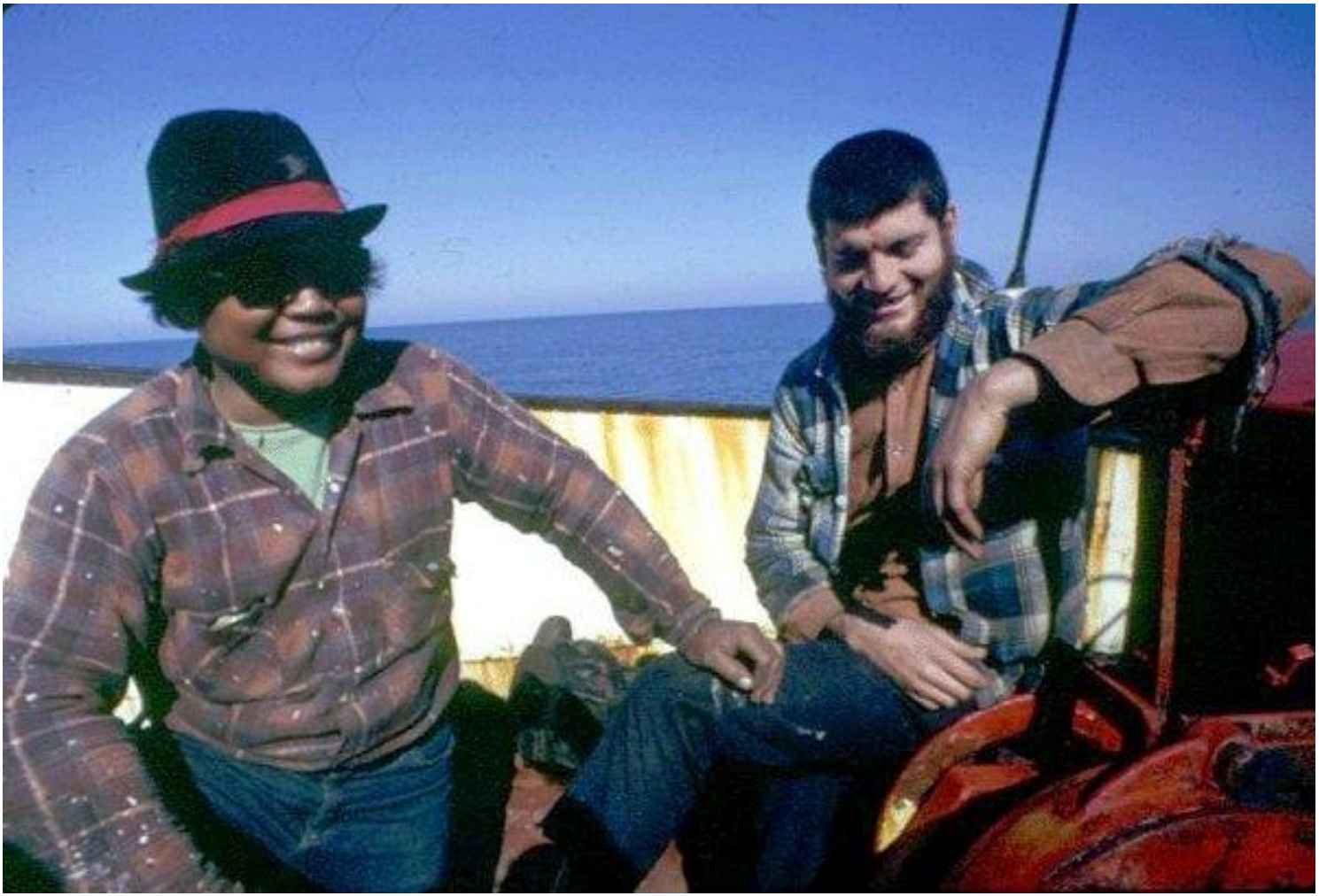


**Charlie McTague & Ed**





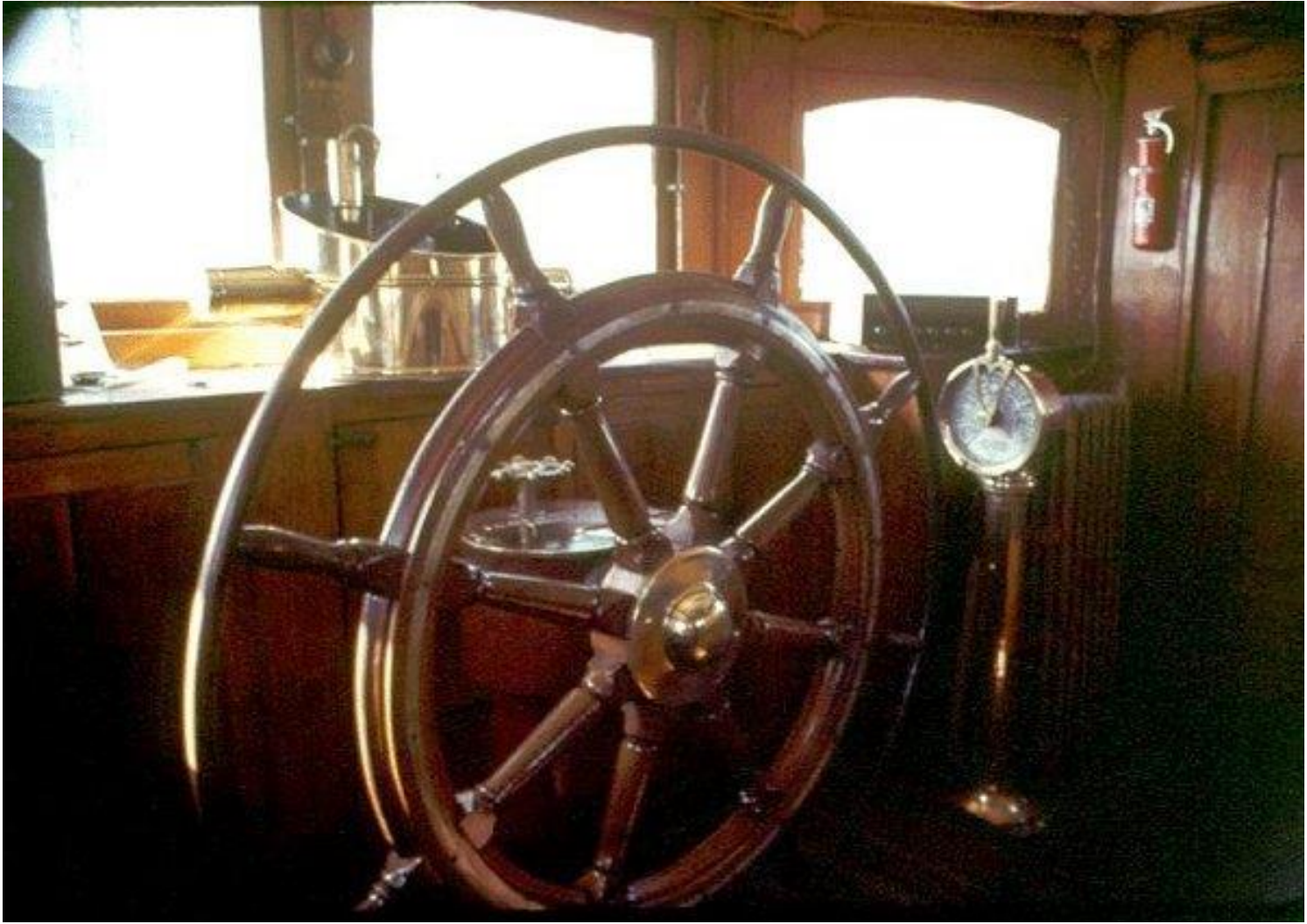
**Charlie McTague & first mate**



**Pete & Roger**



**4 crew members**



**The wheel**

**Many thanks to Ed Simeone for the pictures.**