

PETER ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

Antigua-Azores-Hamburg

WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY

After my 1977 trans-Atlantic sail from Camden, Maine to St. Malo, France, I did not think I would ever venture across the "pond" again. Three days of 60 knot winds near Sable Island, Nova Scotia on a 45 foot coastal schooner with an inebriated skipper, constantly fighting with his wife, was no fun, to say the least.

(See my article: "Fiddler's Green across the Atlantic")

But then in the depths of last winter I heard that the old Peter von Danzig, the Kiel University, Germany 60' sailing yawl, had been bought by a new owner who totally refurbished her and who was now sailing her, with crew who pay for the trip, on the Baltic Sea, North Sea and even across the Atlantic to the Caribbean and back. That sounded like the perfect medicine for a snowbound, cold Mainer suffering from a severe case of cabin and sea fever (see John Masefield's poem "Sea Fever", attached).

In 1961, exactly 50 years ago (my, does that make me sound old!), I had sailed on the Peter from Kiel to Scotland, the Shetlands, Norway, Sweden and Denmark - a most memorable 5-week voyage. (See my article "Sailing to the Shetlands" on my website.) And this boat, I found out on the web, was now planning to return from Antigua, one of the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean, to Hamburg, Germany with a brief stop-over in the Azores – 5 weeks again, total distance: about 4,000 nautical miles, same distance as my solo sea canoe trip around New England and the Maritimes during the summers of 1999-2005.

I could not have planned a better trip: no Newfoundland cold, fog, rain and storms, but rather, ambient warm weather, steady trade winds and a pushy Gulf Stream current to boot; and all this on a familiar, traditional 60 foot (18 meters) ocean racer. That sounded like lots of fun. The Peter had been built in Danzig, Germany (which is now Gdansk, Poland) in 1936. Barely finished, it participated in the race from Newport to Bermuda and from there to Germany as an opener for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin/Kiel. In 1973 it was the only German entry in the first Whitbread Around the World race. (No US, Australian or New Zealand boats were entered in that race!) It finished without any mishap – in last place, thus getting the most out of the race. In 1991 the Peter was sold to a young skipper from Seestermühe, a small town at the mouth ("mütthe" in the local Low German dialect) of the Seeste River, behind the dikes along the Elbe River near Hamburg. So Peter von Danzig became Peter von Seestermühe, and has already sailed 250,000 nautical miles with its new name on its white-gleaming bow and transom. (The ASV Kiel had retained the original name for another sailboat.)

Trips on classic veteran sailboats like the Peter are normally booked years in advance, I understand, but it so happened that one crew member dropped out just when I inquired about the possibility of joining them. Five days later I was in. I was elated. In my mind I already gathered my gear for the 5-week ocean trip: full one-piece oilskins for the rough stuff, Gore-Tex suit for a second layer water-shield or plain rainy days, sea boots, rigging knife, lots of polypropylene, polar fleece and fast drying clothing (no cotton or wool!), my satellite phone and SPOT locator beacon, VHF radio - all the things I usually take on my long sea canoe trips. I could be ready in no time.

My family was supportive, but understandably a tad reserved at first, except for my oldest son Mark, who wanted to come along badly - please, Dad! But next day, Nancy was already checking flights from Boston to Antigua and from Hamburg back home. What a dear! Only we could not figure out why one-way flights were so much more expensive than round trips (\$3,000 from Hamburg to Boston!). So we booked round trips, and I forfeited the other half of each ticket. Yes, this sailing trip was going to be different from my usual minimalistic canoe trips along the shores of New England and the Canadian Maritimes, which normally only cost me gas money for the car shuttle plus what little food I usually consume, all bought at the supermarket at home - no stops in marinas, campgrounds or even stores. Just top off my two 10 liter water tanks.

This time I had to dig deep into bank reserves, but then, I was not planning on doing this every year, I told myself, and had not dipped into my savings for any of my other trips - frugal dude that I am. Rebuilding a large 60-foot yawl and keeping it in top shape to cross the Atlantic is expensive, for sure. My \$3,000 new tooth, scheduled for March, I knew, had to be postponed indefinitely - I had already spent the money. Sorry, Randy (my dentist)! :-)

We were to sail with 6 crew members and skipper/owner, two watches of 3 crew, 6 hours on during the day, 4 hours at night, which comes to a 2-day full rotation. Meals were to be prepared by the crew during regular watch hours every other day. The skipper was watch-free, but did the navigation and could be called on in tight situations at any time. Everything made a lot of sense, and even the crew profiles looked interesting. They were mostly Germans, Swiss, or ex-patriates like me or former East Berliner, Uwe - a most interesting and colorful fellow - now living in Beijing, China. Even another former member of the Kiel University sailing club, the ASV (Academic Sailing Club) had signed up. This sounded like fun. I could hardly wait to get through the rest of our harsh Maine winter. April 20, 2011 could not come fast enough.

Time flew by fast with all the things that needed to be done before leaving home for 6 weeks. A bus then took me and my large Navy duffel to Boston, from where I would fly to Miami and on to Antigua. Following the string of islands, including the active volcanic island of Montserrat, out to Antigua, was a trip in itself. Landing there at first seemed impossible. To make sure, the pilot took an extra loop around the island. Then we were hustled through immigration, since Antigua is British, which also means that all cars

were driving on the "wrong" side for us from the US and most European countries.

Our taxi driver, however, did not seem to have any problem negotiating the 9 miles of narrow, winding roads to the Antigua Yacht Club in Falmouth/English Harbor, slowing down only occasionally to avoid hitting a goat, donkey or chicken. The land was hot and dry with lots of small ramshackle houses strewn all over the countryside, and here and there a dilapidated, defunct sugar mill. Only Falmouth and English Harbor stood out as small, historical, but now mostly touristy vacation towns.

I had allowed myself an extra day to get acclimatized and take in the atmosphere of the island. I visited the Admiral Horatio Nelson museum in English Harbor, hiked out to the fort at the harbor entrance, as well as to Pidgeon Hill Beach, a white sand beach at the entrance of Falmouth Harbor, while the Peter was finishing its last race of the series for classic sailboats

PART I: ANTIGUA - AZORES

At high noon on April 23 all new crew members materialized out of nowhere on the yacht club pier and were motored to the Peter, at anchor amongst a large pod of other cruising yachts. There were the usual introductions; the official language on board was German, with some English thrown in. I was assigned the upper starboard bunk as well as some closet space. Foul weather gear was to be left in a hanger/closet at the chart house stairs, but never ever on the green leather cushions of the saloon. Then there was time to familiarize oneself with the boat, the different halyards, stays, sails, sheets and winches, as well as go over safety procedures, including a full repertoire of knots. Finally it was time to jump overboard to cool off and then enjoy a cool beer.

Early the next morning (April 24, 2011) we motored over to the marina in English Harbor to top off our water and fuel tanks. A long line of boats heading back to Europe had already formed, and we did not get off much before noon. The day was glorious: sunshine, but not too humid, and a steady 10-15 knot breeze from the east north east, a typical trade wind. We made one hitch out of the harbor on starboard, then flipped over onto our port bow and stayed there for the next 2000 miles. Yes, 2000 miles with the easterly trade wind coming in over starboard and the port bow down! No tacking or jibing for 2000 miles, only reefing and un-reefing the main as well as shortening foresails and putting everything back on, with old-fashioned vintage 1936 brass hanks – no roller furling, no power winches or other fancy stuff, but Peter of course had the latest electronic navigational gear and GPS.

Just as I had anticipated from my studying the Pilot Charts for April and May and other sailing info for this area, we sailed practically straight north, 60 degrees off the wind, till we reached 30 degrees north latitude. The weather remained sunny, the wind steady, and the night skies were filled with stars, with the north star showing us the way. It was real easy for the helmsman, because the compass on this 75-year old veteran boat

was not always easy to read, especially at night, but also during the day when the sun was hitting it wrong. At first the lubber line was practically invisible, and the degree numbers also had faded with time. I remember trying to steer 10 degrees, which for me was "a tad to the right of the big N (NORTH)". 83 degrees was "a tad to the left of the big E (90 degrees/EAST)". Most everyone had some problems with the compass, or did not dare voice it out loud. I, however, always mentioned when I could not clearly read the compass and volunteered to change sails or reef the mainsail instead. But on a "classic yacht" one accepts such historic imperfections – the old brass binnacle compass looked great, though.

Right from the beginning of the trip, Skipper Christoph as well as young and eager Best Man (First Mate) Benno constantly checked the speedometer and always were eager to coax another knot out of the old racer. We only reefed the main and reduced foresails when absolutely necessary. We flew the mizzen staysail whenever possible and even the large spinnaker, one day even past midnight. We definitely did not sail the old Peter as a museum piece, cautiously, gingerly across the Atlantic; we pushed it hard, as the Peter was used to. Although the whole crew was paying to go on this trip, we were not pampered "paying guests", but were all actively sailing the boat, and had lots of big-boat sailing experience. My watch-mates Franz and Karl-Heinz and I greatly enjoyed the challenge and were impressed with Peter's simplicity, beauty and toughness.

Most days the deck was wet and the rail was in the water. Occasionally the Atlantic came up to the cockpit coaming, but only rarely did it jump into the cockpit itself, the bathtub, as it is known amongst sailors. Sailing about 60 degrees on the wind, the boat frequently slammed into the waves or fell off a wave top with a mighty bang and a shudder. Moving around below deck was very difficult, even when holding onto the many handrails with both hands. All of us had sizable black and blue spots on elbows, knees and hips, from being tossed around below deck. Cooking a meal on the hinged stove was a real challenge; pouring off hot spaghetti or potato water into the sink downright dangerous.

But my, did the food taste good, compared to the French "cuisine" on Fiddler's Green in 1977! Everything we ate was cooked from scratch by either watch crew with Skipper's expert supervision. We had fresh chicken, steak, pork and lamb chops, salt cod (bacalhau), but best of all, fresh tuna steaks and sushi as well as dorade steaks. We caught two ten-pound tuna and two ten-pound dorades on our two trailing fishing lines. Best Man Benno baked sourdough bread, and I had brought some Fleischmann's yeast along, so I could bake fresh yeast rolls and bread. We also had a generous supply of fresh Antigua tomatoes, green peppers, sweet and regular potatoes, grapefruit, bananas, mango and lots of coconuts for afternoon snacks in the cockpit. All the above was interspersed with lots of pasta dressed up with pesto. And yes, there always was a thermos of tea or coffee, day or night.

After 2000 nautical miles sailing with our port side in the water and starboard so high that it was real hard for me getting into and then staying in my starboard bunk, it was a relief to tack over. Shifting the four running back stays (two on each side), jib and main sheets was gladly done. The wind mostly was around 15-20 knots, but never more than force 7-8, 28-40 knots. We occasionally had to drop the main sail, but never had to hoist the try sail, heave to or use a drogue anchor, the three most frequently used storm procedures. We always sailed on course with at least one fore sail (storm jib) and full mizzen sail on the mast aft, one of the major advantages of sailing a yawl. The Peter felt solid as a rock at all times, giving us full control fore and aft, unlike that dreadful time on the schooner Fiddler's Green in 60 knot winds with only a triple reefed foresail on the foremast (no jib, jumbo or main), because the skipper was drunk and would not let us reef in time.

Getting to the Azores from the Caribbean is not as easy as it looks, since you cannot steer a direct course, due to the prevailing easterly trade winds and the larger weather pattern around the Azores, the Azores High. Sailors have to head north first, almost to latitude 30, in order to get onto the northern edge of the high pressure system. Only then can they slowly curve in or even down to the Azores from the north. At one point (on May 5, 41N 44W) we were closer to Newfoundland than to the Azores, a shocking thought, requiring changing from shorts to polys and polar fleece sweaters.

Our distances noon-to-noon varied between 131 and 206 nautical miles, 148 on average. All in all, we sailed an extra 700 miles on the way to the Azores (a total of 2671 nautical Miles/2938 statute miles/4808 km). But at 1:00 a.m. on the 19th day of our trip we sailed into Horta Harbor on the island of Faial, just across from the island volcano Pico, (2352 meters – technically the tallest mountain belonging to Portugal), visible for miles out to sea. We stepped ashore, to complete our landing, slapped each other on the shoulder and quietly enjoyed a beer at the dock. There wasn't much to say. We had a very long, dark and windy night behind us and were very tired. And since we could not go ashore to find a bar that was still open, because we weren't able to clear through immigration till later that morning, most of us just fell into bed on the boat, which for once was not trying to pitch us out onto the cabin floor.

This was only our second beer of the entire trip. On the half-way point to the Azores (our "Bergfest" on May 2, at 36N 49W) we had celebrated the 75th birthday of the Peter, its 25th Atlantic crossing, Skipper's 20th anniversary as new owner and skipper, as well as my return trip on the Peter after 50 years exactly. We all had one beer, one beer only, since we were sailing on the open ocean - for safety reasons, otherwise almost no alcohol the entire trip!

Horta Harbor was full of sailboats, many of which, like us, using the Azores as a stop-over for ports in Europe. The boat behind us in the gas line in English Harbor on Antigua arrived the same day we did and tied up alongside our boat, since space was sparse in the tight little harbor. The Azores, a group of 9 larger volcanic islands way off

Portugal/Spain in mid Atlantic, is Portuguese, which meant we had to go through immigration and customs into the European Union. We did not have to repeat this procedure entering Hamburg, Germany.

The first thing sailors do in Horta is find the Sports Bar "Peter" (not named after our Peter, but we pretended it was and made it our meeting place on shore) and have a beer or two. This made washing the boat top to bottom with fresh water much easier. Supper was in a real fine harbor restaurant, the Canto da Doca, where table and plates did not constantly move and threaten to unload the food into your laps. Instead, each of us could grill his own seafood and meats on an individual red-hot slab of volcanic rock, placed right beside us on the table. The local red wine wasn't bad either. It was a memorable evening, a well-deserved moment of celebration.

The next day, five of us took a taxi to the huge caldera, the large volcanic crater lake in the middle of the island. The last eruption was in 1957, but all was quiet now. The island looked surprisingly green and fertile, with lots of farm land, grazing cattle and vineyards. In earlier days, Faial was a whaling station, I learned when visiting the local whaling museum, filled now with pictures of whaling boats, whaling stations, whalebones, and elaborate scrimshaw carvings on sperm whale teeth. Poor Moby Dick, I thought to myself, as I headed down to the Sports Bar "Peter" for a glass of real Douro Port to settle my stomach.

To nobody's surprise, Skipper then gave the crew an extra day on shore, since he did not want to leave on Friday the 13th. Two crew members, both very good friends of mine by now, were leaving for home. I lost my watch captain Franz, with whom I had established a very good rapport, but who had planned to sail only the first leg of the trip, and unfortunately also Oliver, with a deep cut on his hand that got badly infected and needed medical help. Three new crew came on, as planned. So now we were 8 on board. Skipper and Best Man Benno returned from the supermarket as well as the farmers market with lots of supplies for the second part of our trip. We were ready to push off again.

PART II: AZORES - HAMBURG, GERMANY

We left Horta on May 14, my 72nd birthday, which Skipper and crew helped me celebrate with a sizable chocolate cake for breakfast, accompanied by a hearty rendition of "Happy Birthday" and a navy blue polo shirt with the Peter von Seestermühe logo on it. Thanks, guys! I in turn "donated" my white University of Maine baseball cap to Neptune in the windy hustle of leaving – always clip it on, folks, if you do not want to lose it!

The second part of our trip was quite different from the first. The wind was more southerly and less strong, i.e. it came more from behind. This meant the boat was riding much quieter and drier. Often two jibs were boomed out up front, and both main

and mizzen were wung out. Occasionally we even hoisted the spinnaker to give us some extra speed. At just such a moment, around supper time on the fourth day out of Horta (or 450 nautical miles out to sea, at 46N 26W), we were buzzed twice by a low flying American military helicopter, who refused to identify himself when hailed via VHF radio. Ah, well, we must have looked great, though, and I hope they got some nice pictures of us tearing along under full sail.

Speedster at the helm was Skipper Christoph, who got the speedometer needle up to 12.6 knots for a short spurt. Two days we made 205 and 206 miles in 24 hours (noon to noon), a great distance for an older heavy 60' racer with a steel, not carbon fiber composite, hull. On the days we set our clocks ahead one hour (6 times across the Atlantic to Hamburg), we of course lost an hour of sailing, with noticeably lower daily runs.

Our course was rather straight towards the Scilly Isles, Lands End and The Lizard in southern England. We saw land (Bishop's Rock) on the 29th day out since Antigua. We had made it across "the pond"! From there we literally flew through the English Channel, with lots of huge container ships in the ships' channel to our right. Early in the morning of Day 31, at 4:30 a.m. to be exact, we sailed past the white cliffs of Dover, with the very first rays of the rising sun just hitting the steep, white shore.

Before we noticed it, we were across the Channel and off Holland, Belgium and the Frisian Islands, leading all the way into the Elbe River. Off Norderney Island, the wind suddenly fell dead calm. Motoring or swimming off the boat were the options. Of course we went swimming, that is, three of us, who were confident we could climb back on board via the poop-away boom aft (the two wooden stern extensions for the mizzen sheet), since Skipper refused to put down the boarding ladder and scrape up his new paint job. Earlier he had re-varnished the sides of the chart house and gunwales – he was always doing something, was always busy, was helping with the meals or figuring out a way to coax another half-knot out of the boat. He was also definitely in charge of setting and controlling the huge (185 square meters) spinnaker. Skipper was kind and helpful on one hand, but also demanding and tough when required. He reminded me of my younger self, and so we got along just fine.

We then motored a bit, till the wind picked up again. (Total time under motor for the entire trip: 79.5 hours.) After a while the wind swung around to the east, which meant we could not head for the mouth of the Elbe River directly, but headed for the island of Helgoland instead for the night. For me, this stretch was one of the most glorious joyrides of the entire trip. The wind cranked up to force 7-8 (a solid 35 knots), and the Peter was loving it, and so was I. I was at the helm from midnight to 3:30 a.m. without a break, keeping the powerful light of Helgoland just 10-15 degrees to port, without having to check the dark and gloomy looking compass. Occasionally Skipper or Best Man Benno, who were checking our course and progress through the myriad of fishing, tour and pleasure boats on radar and GPS, called out a slight course correction, but I

mostly heard: "Perfect course! Keep going the same direction!" A real ego-booster.

Skipper then took us into the inner harbor. It was 4:00 a.m. We were back on German soil, and just as on our arrival on the Azores, it was a tad too late for a celebratory drink ashore. So we guzzled down a can of Becks beer, standing cold, tired and not knowing what to say, on the gray concrete pier. Since I had promised the crew one last round of my homemade yeast rolls and müsli/raisin bread, I got up again at 6:30 a.m. to bake. I figured I had plenty of time to catch up on sleep later.

After a short hike on shore, looking at the resort town on this tiny North Sea island with its steep, red sandstone shore, we left at about noon to catch a favorable tide up the Elbe River to Hamburg. A sudden gust put the old Peter on its ear, but he bounced right back up again. We then blew up the river just outside the shipping lanes, racing the huge container ships into port.

We made it as far as the Oste River, where we decided to run up to the tiny, idyllic river port of Neuhaus. It did not hurt that it had an old country inn right behind the dikes, serving great homemade beer and Hawaiian baguettes. This was our homecoming, even though we still had another 6 hour sail to the Wedel Yacht Club, the Peter's home port.

We were off again at 5:00 a.m., which was very hard for some of the revelers. Sailing up the Elbe River, hard on the wind at a very fast clip, with all sails set, was exciting. But arriving at the Wedel Yacht Club & Marina around noon on May 27, was kind of a letdown - very mild, to say the least. There was nobody there to greet us. I missed my cheerful sweetheart Nancy to wave us in, as she does on most of my ocean paddle trips. My sister, cousins and friends, who live in and near Hamburg, were all on vacation themselves and couldn't come. Sorry! Only Skipper's dad and sister came a bit later, with a large bowl of fresh strawberries – yum, and thanks!

We tied up, glugged down another Becks, took down, washed and bagged all sails, tossed the old mizzen staysail on the truck to go to the sailmaker to be replaced, washed the entire boat, inside and out, emptied out all food and extra gear, including ours, and the trip was over. Most crew members then called taxis to head for the airport or train station to go home. That night only Dominik and I slept on board and then enjoyed one last early breakfast together in the morning. He was off at 6:00 a.m.; I was picked up at 9:00. It suddenly felt awfully lonely on board.

SUMMARY

Thus ends this great sailing trip on the 75-year-old veteran Peter von Danzig, now Peter von Seestermühe, diagonally across the Atlantic from Antigua to the Azores and on to Hamburg, Germany. It took us 5 weeks to cover the 4672 nautical miles (5139

statute miles or 8410 kilometers). Due to the wind and weather patterns, we had to sail an extra 700 nautical miles to get to the Azores. But we did it with speed and arrived on time on both legs of the trip. All in all we sailed 32 days and spent 3 days on shore on the Azores; 79.5 hours the motor helped us along. There was no damage to the boat or gear, except for a number of tears in the genoa and mizzen staysail, which were easily fixed with stick-on tape. The two wooden masts survived yet another crossing with flying colors.

GEAR, HEALTH & WILDLIFE

As for the crew, one broke or cracked a rib in a car accident on his way to the boat in Antigua. Being a true Berliner, he grit his teeth, went along in spite of that mishap, with the help of my Tylenol, mostly sat and manned the helm, rather than hoisting sails, and slowly got better. Another crew member cut his hand on a broken glass. The cut got badly infected and forced him to fly back home to Switzerland from the Azores. (Glass shouldn't have been on board in the first place, or should only be used in port, is my thinking.) Several crew members got seasick, but such is life on the high seas (fortunately, I never have). On the Azores, one of the crew brought a one-day stomach bug on board, which most everybody caught, including me.

My personal sailing gear of lots of polypropylene, polar fleece and waterproof materials worked very well. Most days I wore a poly suit, polar fleece vest, Gore-Tex suit, one-piece foul-weather gear, wool cap and hood as well as poly gloves, and of course poly socks and big rubber sea boots. At night and during windy days we also put on our life jackets with built-in harness system with double carabiners, always clicking into the safety lines before stepping out into the cockpit or on deck. Sunscreen and sunglasses were also absolutely necessary. So it took quite some time to get ready to go on watch, as well as getting undressed for meals or bed. It had to be planned in carefully timewise. We only took bucket-baths behind the mizzen mast, practically every morning during our off-watch, and the water was quite cold all the way across the Atlantic. My satellite phone again worked flawlessly, all the way across the Atlantic. (I used it only on prearranged days and times to call Nancy at home.) My SPOT locator beacon, which I activated every noon, local time, worked most of the time.

I am sorry to say that I did not see all that much sea life. The whales appeared mostly on the other watch, so it seemed, and had already disappeared when I stuck my head out. The dolphins seemed much smaller than on my earlier crossing, came in much smaller pods and were gone much faster. Our greatest triumph, though, was freeing a good-sized turtle entangled in a sizable discarded net. We always trailed 2 fishing lines behind the boat, and one day we thought we caught a real big one. It turned out to be a large rope net with a big, live turtle in it. We cut the turtle loose, took pictures of it, and released the happy swimmer. The net had floated on the surface, and lots of little crabs had made it their home, so the turtle must have been able to breathe as well as eat.

Lucky for the turtle, we came along to extricate it.

The Azores announced themselves in advance with flocks of seabirds, which I could not all identify, and Ireland/England sent out elegant gannets to greet us. I kept a look-out for pollution all the way across the Atlantic, especially fields of floating plastic as recently reported on the Pacific, but I found none, except for a few discarded boxes and small floating containers when crossing the major shipping lanes on the Atlantic. (Peter only threw food scraps and punctured cans overboard, which I was assured was acceptable.)

When I left the Peter on May 28, 2011 at the Wedel Marina, being the last crew member off board, the old veteran looked very lonely, but also very proud with its gleaming white sides and rich mahogany brightwork. And I have to admit, I felt the same: lonely, standing there with my large Navy seabag with the trip being over, and at the same time proud of having completed this long trans-Atlantic sail at age 72 without any mishap, and sailing as actively as the rest of the crew – and loving it! I knew my life would pick up speed again as soon as I flew home to Boston and got to Orono eventually, and so would Peter's life. Skipper would take his beloved yawl to the big Kiel Regatta on the Baltic Sea in a couple of days, and then with yet another new crew to St. Petersburg in Russia and some Finnish and Swedish ports along the way. Later in the summer Peter would sail to Bergen, Norway and back, and finally around Skagen, Denmark into the North Sea, and back up the Elbe River to Wedel, for a well-deserved winter's rest and overhaul. The following winter, though, Peter would sail again in the Caribbean, and the entire cycle would repeat itself. Anybody want to sail along? Just go to the www.peter-von-seestermuehe.de website and contact skipper Christoph von Reibnitz. He may have a bunk just for you.

PS: My actual departure from Hamburg on May 30 was more dramatic than necessary. First I had to skirt a significant e-coli outbreak centered around that city. Second, I hoped the airport would re-open after the ash cloud from the Iceland volcano had shut it down for a couple of days. And third, I almost missed my landing at Logan Airport/Boston because of a rare tornado headed right for it (it hit Worcester instead). So you see, life picks up again fast and is never dull...

www.peter-von-seestermuehe.de and www.peter-von-danzig.de
NOAA Gnomonic plotting chart of the North Atlantic
NOAA Pilot Chart of the North Atlantic Ocean, April-May
Simon Winchester: Atlantic. Harper Collins, NY, 2010.

John Masefield (1878-1967)
(English Poet Laureate, 1930-1967.)

SEA-FEVER

I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And the grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.