

We didn't go around the world but found some beautiful countries and islands, met exciting people; some were adventuring on boats like us and others living simple or interesting lives in the countries we visited.



We cooked and ate strange food, did our laundry in unexpected places and learned to cut each other's hair. We struggled with different languages but it is amazing how a thank you, please, how much or even goodbye in someone's language starts a friendship. We ate cross-legged on floors, I got arrested, looked after toddlers in an awful orphanage, saw the most wonderful sunsets and Trevor learned to "grind" with a beautiful black girl at Trinidad Carnival. We spent a year in the USA and were overwhelmed with the generosity of Americans. Survived a hurricane... I could go on for ages.

I was incredibly moved when in Tel Aviv, Israel, I watched three very old local ladies socialising over coffee. All taking at once with their diamonds flashing; when the most volatile lady's sleeve fell back and I saw her concentration camp number. By her age she must have been a teenager when interned. What a story she would have had to tell! I was incredibly moved.

## Back on dry land

Finally we sold up and came home, yes England is still our home.

People ask do I miss the sailing; I don't but I guess it helps as I have relived it all by writing a book and now I give talks. So I can have a sailing 'fix' with those.

Trevor, who truly is the adventurous one, decided to catch up on his education and took two degrees, gaining his Masters when he was 80. He is now enjoying photography and as far as sailing is concerned two of his sons have boats and he can join them.

If anyone is interesting in learning to sail, go for it! One is never too old, it's fantastic exercise and in reality don't be put off by my tales, as 95% of the time it was great and perhaps 5% of the time it was dramatic and we all need a little drama!

## Where to learn more about sailing

Whitstable Yacht Club:  
3-4 Sea Wall  
Whitstable  
Kent, CT51BX  
Tel: +44 (0)1227 272942  
[office@wyc.org.uk](mailto:office@wyc.org.uk)

Tankerton Bay Sailing Club:  
[www.tbsc.co.uk](http://www.tbsc.co.uk)

Ley Liberson: [www.leyliberson.co.uk](http://www.leyliberson.co.uk)

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# SAILING

## Memories of a reluctant sailor



by **Ley Liberson**

**Sounding Out Your Heritage**

## A land-lubber

My name is Ley (short for Shirley) and I am 75 years old. My grandparents were a huge influence on my early life and a source of inspiration and as you will see my husband became another great influence on my later life.

My grandfather worked in the tannery in Canterbury and suffered some traumatic events in his life, but his character and ability made him a very important character in my life, particularly as I lived with him.



Ley's grandfather and grandmother



My grandmother just escaped being born in the workhouse and was the oldest of 13 children. She was tiny at just 4'10" tall and had a very hard childhood and working life. She had a happy marriage apart from the occasion when her waist-length hair was bobbed by my grandfather without warning!

Although I lived in Canterbury I have early memories of the seaside as my mother and I used to travel to Whitstable to buy fish, and if my mother wanted Dover Sole we would go to Folkestone. I think she believed it was fresher if you bought it from by the sea.

## Setting sail

In my forties I remarried and learned to sail, in fact I learned screaming and shouting in protest. I guess it was a case, my husband's case anyway, of love me, love my boat and gradually I learned to love sailing.

The husband and boat took me on many adventures, to many places and to meet some outstanding people.

I learned very slowly and appeared to have no natural ability. Maybe the fact that I couldn't swim was a problem. Anyway we had a fun time, interesting jobs, lovely kids, and great holidays using the boat.



Trevor and Ley

## Drama on the high seas

Trevor's secret wish was to take a year off and sail away and this finally happened when I was made redundant, the kids settled and with the cottage let, we could go for it.

It was a wonderful year, chasing the sun, meeting the local people and finally ending up in Madeira. The year had run out so we turned around and heading for the Azores, as our swan song, made for home.

Halfway to the Azores we hit a submerged object and sank. I feel I should put SANK. We sat in our life raft for five days seeing only one ship. That ship didn't see us or our red flares.

On the fifth night another ship did see us and we were rescued. They were heading for Italy so four days later we were on an Italian plane heading for home.



Ley with the laundry

## Sea adventures

Now anyone in their right mind would think that would be the end of my interest in sailing. Well it was for a while but time is a great healer and by the time Trevor was ready for retirement, we had another boat and decided to set off again. The kids were settled we sold the cottage and sailed away once more.

This time it was different, we did not return for 11½ years. I have to read that twice to believe it. Of course we flew back each year to see everyone was OK. My mum was fine, the kids thriving and grandchildren were growing and some flew out to spend time with us.