

A PIRATES LIFE FOR ME



by

Reg. A. Watson.

(A true account of my early life.)

When I was just a boy, about your age, I began an amazing adventure of which only dreams are made. For at that time, I became a pirate and for the next seven or eight years roamed the great seas of the world, living a life of fun, excitement and comradeship. You must understand of course, that I was a good pirate. Now I know you must be asking, 'how can a pirate be good?' To answer that, perhaps I can start at the very beginning of my incredible tale upon the high seas and the drama that unfolded. It happened like this...

One early morning I was walking along Kingston Beach in Tasmania and out of the sand dunes jumped a number of ornery looking, foul smelling pirates. One, whose name I later learnt was 'Cut-Throat George' held a knife with a six-inch blade in his mouth. He grabbed me by the shirt collar, much to the delight of the other six pirate rogues. Wielding the knife in front of my face, he said "*Gotcha youngen, yours comin' with us*" and he immediately dragged me to the waiting oar boat into which I was thrown. Now the other pirates all jumped in and while singing a sea shanty, rowed out to the four masked mother pirate ship that was anchored about 200 yards from the beach. As it was very early and in those days, not many people lived at Kingston Beach, my

kidnapping was not witnessed by anyone.

I suppose I was rather naive at the time for even though I was somewhat fearful for my welfare, my bright eyes marvelled on the adventure that perhaps was before me. After all, I lived in an imaginary world of pirates, cowboys, Indians and spacemen, like all young boys do. I was a great reader of Biggles, Superman and the classic heroes of old. And who comes along? Pirates! I could not believe my luck!

It was not long before the rowboat had made it to the mother ship. She was a beauty if there was ever a ship. Looking down was a fearsome fellow; someone I would not like to meet at night time. Cut Throat George pulled me up by my shirt and propelled me in no kind manner to a rope ladder which was dangling down the side of the ship. It was quite obvious I had to scale the ladder, so I made my way up to be pulled on board by the grotesque looking figure I had mentioned before.



All he could say was *“Arr! And who might be you?”*

“Please sir,” I said as politely as I could, shaking somewhat from head to toe *“I am Reginald Andrew Wentworth Watson”* adding with a bow *“at your service.”* This prompted a thunderous roar of laughter from the gentleman before me while the rest of the crew, equally hideous looking, who had now surrounded me, roared also with laughter. Well, I was only young and I felt like bursting into tears, but then I thought, ‘mum always said *be a little Briton*’ so I bit my upper lip and said nothing.

“Reginald Andrew...wots ‘is name?” said the towering figure before me. *“Well*

I am Captain Black Beard the greatest of pirates” and before he had finished all his crew chorused “Arr!” like all agreeing with him. I then looked and found him to be a giant of a man, well over six feet and very portly. His huge black beard had the amazing spectacle of having four-penny crackers entwined in his beard hair and protruding from the crackers was the unburnt wick. There must have been a dozen or so of these ‘bangers’ encrusted in his dark black beard. An absolutely amazing sight. The captain was adorned with a massive three-cornered pirate’s hat and his attire consisted of the clothing that one traditionally associates with the pirates of old. A ruby crusted gold handle cutlass was at his side and six brass pistols were in his wide belt. My eyes quickly perused the ship to which I was unceremoniously taken and sure enough, flying from the highest mast was the old Jolly Roger, the Cross and Bones flag of pirates. Well, you could have knocked me down with a feather!



Captain Black Beard.

“Arr” the captain said, “Wot shall we do with this landlubber?” he roared to the crew. I heard shouts of “feed him to the sharks” and “Let the critter walk the plank” “drown him in bilge water” and the likes. This did not look good at all, and then the second in command, Titch, made a suggestion. “Captain, why doesn’t we holds the blighter for ransom. Send his mother a note and asks for Spanish gold in return of her pup!”

The captain stroked his immense beard. Obviously he was pondering. *“I will think on it over a jug of rum. In the meantime, young sir, accompany me to me*

quarters, so that I may keep a watch on ye."

Well down into the captain's cabin I went with the imposing gentleman. He thrust me into a rather large, but well-worn armchair, *"Sit and be still"* he ordered. He then threw himself upon another large chair and by breaking with his knarred teeth the top of a rum jug he began to guzzle the contents down his throat. I watched in amazement and as I did so, began to chatter...and chatter...and chatter. As I rambled on I saw the captain's mouth open, but this did not deter me, I kept on going while he drank his jug of rum, followed by another. *"So you see sir,"* I continued politely, *"I believe the greatest school of all is the school of life. I am looking forward to my association with yourself and your colleagues. There is no doubt, in my mind, that what awaits is a union that can and will be, of great benefit to all..."* and so I went on in like manner and I must have spoken for over an hour, but I stopped when the old gentleman with an almighty groan shouted, *"Shut up, shut up for gawd's sake! I can't take any more!"*

This loud wailing brought Titch barging into the cabin, wanting to know what the problem was with Captain Black Beard, who screamed out, *"Take him out of here. Take him. Take him. I've never heard anyone chatter so much. Titch get rid of him..."*

"But what will I do with him?" asked Titch.

"Dunno you dope, lock him up somewhere in lower deck, but just get him out of my sight."

"But we must have a permanent solution to him. Should I get Cut Throat George to carry out his trade on him?"

By now I was quiet and eyed the captain as he once again began to ponder. Suddenly, *"No, we are pirates true, but we have our pride and killing of children, even brats like this one, is something we do not do. However, am I ever sorry for signing the pirate's code beck in '78 when wees were docked in the Caribbean. It has now come back to haunt me. Let me think...I know, yes, go back to our original aim of ransom. We'll send his mother a note demanding money from her...no, better still, the way he chatters and does not shuts up, we will state to his mother, 'send two hundred Spanish gold pieces of eight or we will send him back to you'."*

"But captain, say she does send the money, which she is sure to do, we can't keep him."

"Keep him!" Roared Black Beard. *"Keep him! Never or my name is not Black*

Beard the Terrible. Naw, when she sends the gold pieces, we will send him back as punishment for her for giving birth to such a boy. Now throw and store him below, send the note, which I will write to his mother and we will release the brat when we have the money. Now go Titch, sees to it."

I was very much surprised at the captain's reaction as I thought we were getting on so well and he seemed so mesmerised and attentive. How wrong I was. Titch grabbed me once again by my shirt collar (seemed to be favourite place for pirates to grab people) dragged me down below deck and threw me into a foul smelling, small cabin which contained ropes, barrels and all sorts of rubbish which you would find on a pirate ship. Fortunately no skeletons. How Titch was ever going to find my mother was anyone guess. No doubt they posted the note in the mail with forwarding address to where to send the money, on the promise that my well talked about throat would be cut if she involved the authorities.

Would you believe that within two days, 200 golden Spanish pieces were received on board sent by my mother. Black Beard called for my presence...."*Well pup. Your mother has sent the ransom we asked for. Two hundred gold pieces so that we don't send you back."*

I must admit this hurt me somewhat that mother did not want me to be returned. Then, in an adult fashion, I surmised this was her way to have me experience the world and what better way than with pirates. After all, did I not incessantly say to her, 'I believe the best school is the school of life' well now I was to attend. Good Mother for being so wise!

Black Beard was pondering again, I could see that. "*Hmm,"* he mumbled. "*No if we did sends you back whens we said we wouldn't then that is breaking a pirate's word and if that got around, this old Black Beard the Terrible would no longer be trusted. Not a good image and image is everything."*

He then looked at me through squinted eyes. "*Say boy, would you like to become a pirate?"*

I could not again believe my ears. "*Oh yes, please sir!"*

He put up his hand to me with his index finger pointing, "*On one major condition."*

"Anything, anything."

"That you button yer lip. Just don't talk so. Keep the words few. Do the action."

Promise?"

"If that is what you want Captain."

"That is wot I want," he replied. After a few minutes scrutinising me in great detail, he added, "Look lad, a pirate's life is everything a boy would want. Now, now I am not saying there are no risks, of course there are risks, but it is a life of adventure, mayhem and anarchy, everything a boy can imagine. I'll personally teach you the cutlass and how to drink gun powder mixed with rum, how to run up the rope ladders aboard this vessel, how to sail her and how to plunder. Keep to your promise lad and you can in time, become a captain like me, the most feared creature on all the seven seas."

He finished with an extended "Arr. "and I was hooked. It was a pirate's life for me

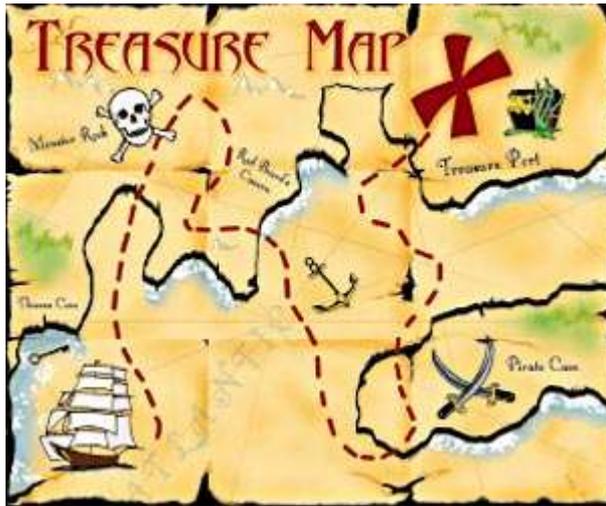


Me when I first joined up as a pirate.

Well, over the years it was an exciting life indeed. We sailed the seven seas, plundering the rich merchant ships and we grew fat on our wealth. From time to time we would take shelter in some well-guarded and remote harbour where we would go ashore and eat, drink and be merry. The captain was good

to me. I learnt to shut up when necessary and I became his '*blue-eyed*' boy so to speak. Old Black Beard taught me all I had to know about sailing, watching out for myself, sword play, how to fire the canon, how to cuss, how to shoot the musket, how to behave like an ornery pirate should, all the time keeping the Pirate's Code. One time off the coast of Algeria, after a very good raid on a Sultan's palace when we captured much silver, gold and jewellery, Black Beard was so delighted that he lit the four penny bombs, which was encrusted in his long flowing black beard. With his dirty great big cigar he lit them one by one, when after but a few seconds, they started to blow, making an enormous noise with plenty of smoke. He thought it was hilarious and roared with laughter, even more so when his beard actually caught fire. He then grabbed a pint of rum mixed with gunpowder and threw the contents on to his beard thereby putting out the fire. I never did have so much fun in all my life! Ah, she was a glorious life it was, this Pirate's life. Not a care in the world, adventure around every corner so to speak, plenty of firewater, ale, wine and song. Cut Throat George (and he wasn't such a bad ole thing in the end) taught me many sea shanties which with all the others, I used to sing at the top of my voice, many of the words contained, I would not like to repeat, me being always amazed how people could contort themselves so...anyways, they were but words.

Cut Throat's best mate, Three Fingered Joe (for he had his fingers blown off when attacking the fort of King Ambidextrous of Kalamazoo on the North African coast before I joined up as a pirate), taught me all about ropes and knots and how to dance the jig. In appreciation of my devotion to the cause, the Captain in front of all the hands presented me with a jewel-crusted dagger with an ivory handle. The blade was of Spanish steel and was about six inches long. He taught me how to hold it between my teeth, when I jumped from our ship to another vessel, which we always took as a prize. When I became a man (and you become a man in the pirate world when you are fourteen) they gave me a party. It was a moonlit night, with the ocean as smooth as a baby's bottom. There was no wind and we had been sailing the doldrums for a few days somewhere in the Indian Ocean. The party was a surprise to me with the cook (No Teeth Barney) baking especially for the occasion a wonderful cake full of apples, pears and bananas, which we were able to take from a deserted island in the Pacific, - that's where we buried much treasure and I still have the map today.



The Treasure Pirate Map which I still have.

Ole Captain used to trust me with such maps, as I was the only blighter who could really read and write, he only in a fashion, enough to write ransom notes. Often they would sit around cross-legged at night time, when all the chores had been done and asked me to read to them, captain included. They were like children, they were, when I read *The Water Babies*, or *King Solomon Mines* or *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, but they especially liked *Moby Dick* and used to give out a great big “Aw” when the great white whale slammed into Captain Ahab’s ship. They never got sick of *Moby Dick* nor did I get sick of reading it to them. Anyway, on the night of my birthday when I became a man by pirate’s time they brought out this cake as I said and all the crew crowded around me with many with tears in their eyes for it was such a special occasion and event. You see, they had all come to love me in their funny way and strange as it may seem, even though they were dirty, vulgar and not too bright, I loved them in return. Being on a pirate ship is like one big happy family. The Captain, after I cut the cake with my cutlass with one big swoop, told everyone to hush... well he put it a bit different, for he said, “Shut Up you flea bitten scare crows!” and of course they all obeyed, otherwise it was to walk the plank and let me tell you there were plenty of great white sharks in those days as they used to follow the ship especially when we threw rubbish and scraps of food overboard. When they all shut up, the Captain went below and within a few minutes had returned, brandishing his marvellous sword, which I had seen on the first day of my arrival. It glistened in the moonlight. The blade was so shiny that one had to hide one’s eyes from it. The handle was made of gold encrusted with rubies. I tell you never did I see such a sight.



The Sword.

The Captain, getting all emotional like said to everyone and looking at me, "boys," he began, *"my old father, Captain Hatchet, god rest his soul, the most fearsome pirate of all time, even worser than me, gave me this sword when I was fourteen just like Reggie 'ere. Well, you all knows that I do not have a son,"*...here he began to weep and then pulled himself together and continued, *"but if I was to 'ave a son, I would like him to be like our Reggie."* Well, you could have knocked me down with a feather. By now I was getting teary eyed and a lump came in my throat. I could hear sniffles from all those who were there...then the captain said, *"And 'aving no son, I cannot give this special sword to anyone can I? So I am going to give it on this special day to our boy Reggie,"* he was wiping his nose, *"who is now a man and one of us. True when we first brought him on board, I had my doubts (shouts of 'no', 'no' 'surely not') yes, yes, I want to be honest, but those fears and doubts soon passed away, especially after we raided General Rodregress on the coast of Brazil, that no good creep of a dictator who imprisoned all those people and made slaves of them and we set them free. It is true that we stuck the general's head from our main mask for three days and threw apple cores at it, but it was Reggie who, bold and true, let those people free by undoing the padlocks of their cells. Something happened that day which I had never felt before; I felt good and we has to thank our Reggie for it all. Not that he got soft or we got soft, but we did the best thing and were able to take all that General's weapons, gold and money aboard for ourselves and when we docked in to the Barbary coast for a long time of feasting and wenching, we owe it all to Reggie. Anyway, I want to give this sword to him on the achievement of manhood, of being one of us and being...becoming....my son."* Here he simply burst out in tears, with all the others copying. Once all the emotion calmed down, they cried, *"Speech, Speech!"* Well I was obligated to respond which I did. Reader may realise by now by reading this narrative that yours truly can have the gift of the gab, but so emotional was I, my words were few, but nonetheless, well chosen. *"Captain,"* I began, *"and my colleagues on the high seas,"* ("Don't he speak beautiful" I heard someone say) *this is the finest moment of my life. It was*

now six years since I was taken from Kingston Beach and it is true, I was very much afraid at the time. But I have to thank the wisdom of my mother and in time, I have learnt what true comradeship is and what friendship is. I thank you for this great honour. I am proud to be a Pirate.” After this they all cheered loudly and we finished up with the pirates giving me three hearty cheers and singing “For he’s a jolly good fellow”

When I was sixteen we were sailing off the coast of Cornwall, England near a town called Penzance. (Later, Gilbert & Sullivan wrote a musical based on it) and we were preparing to raid the town for supplies and any plunder we could find. By this time I had become aware that there was another sex besides males. Often when we took a break from our pirating we used to carouse in various ports around the world, away from where the authorities could reach us. There were plenty of wenches in these places, women that could out cuss, drink and fight many-a-man. These did not impress me at all and I thought that this type of creature made exclusively up the female sex. At sixteen the life on the seas had tanned my skin, my hair was the colour of hay and I was built slim because of all the activity. My teeth were as white as ivory as our diet was mainly of red meat other than No Teeth Barney’s cakes. I was so healthy and I did not have one day’s sickness. There was a time when during a bout using my special cutlass with an Egyptian that I lost my footing, entangled my feet in the coils of rope that I had slipped on. He slashed at me so vigorously, even though he had missed my head which I truly have a fondness for, he cut, ever so slightly, my left arm, which prompted some blood. The Captain came to my rescue when with one shot to his head from his pistol, sent the swarthy Egyptian to the spirit world, and being a devout Muslim (as no doubt he was) he would have been happy to arrive there. I tell you this dear reader that was the closest I came to danger. I did indeed, live a charmed life.



Me when I was a Pirate before I left the High Seas..

Off the coast of Penzance we moored and down into the long boats did we climb. Rowing with all our might, we landed on the beach just below the town and with one mighty effort roared at the top of our lungs and charged into the village, frightening all into surrender and to give us their valuables. We then raided the shops and took enough provisions to keep us going for a long sea voyage. Now you must understand we had to do this very quickly for the local militia led by a notorious Major-General whom we knew would spare no quarter, could have arrived at any moment. While we had no fear of them and knew we could match whatever they threw at us, we wanted to avoid a fight, so that we could be on our way for areas of better pickings, where we could find, gold, silver and precious stones off the coast of Africa and the Orient.

It was on the way back to the boat when something happened that changed my life. We were scarping it to the long boats to return to the mother ship, when while on the beach, preparing to do so, I heard a whimpering. At first I thought it was a puppy and as us pirates (and you may be surprised at this) are softies at heart, I went to see if I could help the poor creature. So I darted behind a large bolder from where the whimpering was coming and to my astonishment there was not an injured animal at all, but the loveliest person I had ever seen. It was what I took to be a girl, certainly she seemed to be of the same sex of the wenches I was familiar with, but this one was young, fair and pretty, oh ever so pretty! She had been crying and when she looked up through her tear soaked green eyes, which were adorned with the prettiest and the longest of lashes, my heart melted and I fell in love.

"Please kind sir, please do not hurt me. For when I heard that pirates arrived I

ran away frightened and hid behind this boulder," she sobbed.

I knelt down to her, taking her delicate, soft white hand looked into her eyes, *"Do not be afraid, fair creature, for surely you are an angel. I will not hurt you for indeed I will protect you."*

"I am not an angel kind sir, but just a mere weak girl, who knows of all the terrible stories that I have heard about pirates. Surely sir, you are not a pirate?"

Well this was a moment of truth for me. Was my profession one that was feared by good folk? Had I been blinded all my youth about the type of life I was leading? This innocent creature that God had delivered into my life with no doubt a purpose could not be wrong. Oh how could such a perfect maiden be wrong about anything? Therefore I made my mind up there and then. I would have to give up the pirate's life and devote myself to the service of the beautiful girl before me.

"My angel, for that is what you are to me, I may shock you to say that yes, I had been a pirate, but by your purity and vitreous nature, you have convinced me to give up my life of terror and devote myself in protecting you and do charitable works." I instantly saw the delight in this child's eyes.

"Wait here," begged I. "I shall not be long, but I must say farewell to those who have looked after me all these years."

I left the darling creature away from the presence of my crude comrades. When they saw me they beckoned me to hurry and join them in the long boat, the captain pleading most of all. *"I am sorry my comrades,"* I began. *"It is at this point in time that we must say farewell, for I will remain here. I have met the most gracious and loveliest of womanhood and I plan to make her my wife"*



The girl I fell in love with

The Captain groaned. *“I dreaded this day my boy. I knew it had to come. It is no use arguing over the matter is it Reggie?”*

I shook my head, which prompted a deep sigh from Black Beard. *“Then all I can say is farewell for who am I to come between two lovers?”* And on this they put out to sea, all waving to me with their hats and crying their eyes out with arms outstretched and even though the scene wrenched at my heart, I had made up my mind.

In the end I did court the fair maiden and we were married at the quaint little chapel in Penzance. It turned out that it was her father that was the Major-General and my comrades got away just in time before the local militia arrived together with the police who had missed their prey, well, that the policeman’s lot for you.

My wife, whose name was Flower and I sailed to Tasmania to settle and it was there I was reunited with my mother whose wise decision had played such a vital major part in my life. Certainly, the best school is the school of life. It was strange though, when we were first united, she said, *“But I paid those pirates not to send you back!”*