

James Myatt Trust  
5 Mumby Road  
Gosport  
Hampshire  
PO12 1AA

7/11/12

Dear James Myatt Trust,

Firstly, I would like to offer my apologies for my late reply. Sailing on the Stavros Niarchos was a privilege and the most challenging yet enthralling experience of my life. I would like to thank you for your very generous support which allowed me to undertake this experience.

When I was choosing which Tall Ship voyage to go on, sometime last winter, I decided I wanted to sail on the voyage that would have the biggest impact on me, both physically and mentally. Despite the price, I opted for the La Coruna to Dublin leg of the Tall Ships Races from the 11<sup>th</sup> August to the 23<sup>rd</sup> August. After a few months of fundraising, it became clear to me the great work of charities such as yours and the very humbling generosity of others who were complete strangers to me, even in difficult times such as these.

I arrived in La Coruna on the evening of Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> and was amazed by the spectacle. There was a real party atmosphere and seeing the whole fleet lit up was an impressive sight. We even had a chance to step onboard some of the smaller wooden barques, including one which was almost 100 years old!

On our arrival at the Stavros, all 48 of us squeezed into the mess. I already knew four people on the voyage, but by the end of the voyage, I knew every single person. We listened to the Captain Liam Keating as he vividly described the chart. With reports of very strong winds and high seas, there was a sense of excited trepidation in the air as we introduced ourselves to each other.

We had an early start the next morning, as by the end of the day we all needed to be well versed into the workings and procedures of the ship. We got our first opportunity to climb aloft, as well as learning the basics of rope work and helming. After dinner we got our final taste of dry land for some days.

The race was due to start at 7pm on Monday, so we set off for the start line that morning, some 9 miles off the coast. Reports came in early afternoon that the weather across the Bay of Biscay was worsening. Although the Parade of Sail went ahead, the Race start time was sensibly delayed 24 hours. We found this quite frustrating at the time but it allowed us more time to ensure that we were completely ready for the race.

By 7pm on Tuesday we were raring to go, my watch was helming as we started the race and it was inspiring to see the other Tall Ships so nearby. At 8pm we were relieved and decided to get some sleep before our 4am start. However, we were woken up at around 3am by the violent swaying of the ship.

At 4am we emerged onto the deck and were taken aback by the size of the roaring waves and the powerful swell that tossed us around. After two hours of seemingly futile helming, a 12m wave crashed into the starboard side of the ship, as we were sucked down by the swell. Up on the bridge, as the starboard lookout, I was soaked up to the shin by the foaming wave. Over the next hour, the whole ship sprang into action to help take down sails and rescue the cabins (the wave went through a vent and cascaded into the cabins below.)

This monumental effort epitomized the teamwork and dedication that sailing the Stavros required and it was over the next 24 hours that real friendships were formed. Thankfully, I was not sea-sick during this period, although many were. In fact, the feeling of complete helplessness and isolation eclipsed the feeling of sea-sickness for many of us. It was during this period that I learnt the need to stay positive and to help raise the morale of others who were feeling a lot worse than I was.

Mealtimes were really difficult, but a very memorable experience, as we juggled with plates. Helming continued to be a struggle, but we were making quick progress and we started feeling a tangible sense of achievement as we made 256 miles in the first 24 hours. On Wednesday evening we were second in the race behind the huge Cuauhtémoc, but slipped to fourth as the race went on.

By Thursday, we were out of the Bay of Biscay, after tacking to avoid the Brittany Coast. The sea continued to be rough off the Isles of Scilly and off the coast of Cornwall. However, by the time we reached the Bristol Channel we had slowed considerably.

On Friday, early afternoon, we finished the race! Finishing 4<sup>th</sup> in class! This was a record-breaking result for the Stavros and during this race it had also broken its top speed – 14 knots. It was a tremendous feeling and we made our way towards Waterford, arriving later that night, where we continued to celebrate.

We continued to sail for the next six days, honing our skills, having fun and achieving our Competent Crew awards as well as lots of shore leave in Waterford, Wicklow and finally Dublin.

We manned the yards on Tuesday afternoon as we entered the port and Wednesday morning as we continued towards the Samuel Beckett Bridge. This was a great way to see Dublin as we sang and waved to people in their high rise office blocks. We then disembarked on the Thursday morning before enjoying the rest of the festivities in Dublin.

Sailing in this race was a truly memorable experience and it has taught me so much. I have learnt the true meaning of teamwork and how to be a key team member. As well as the need to show initiative when completing new tasks and the skills required to successfully lead a team.

I made many great friends on this voyage and we continue to stay in touch, reminiscing how events and lessons taken from this experience have impacted and shaped our everyday lives. The main things that I have taken away from this experience are the great buzz from working in a team and a great sense of

achievement. I believe that my self confidence has also grown; I feel that after sailing through the Bay of Biscay in a force 7 storm, I can achieve whatever I want over the next academic year and in my future.

I am very grateful for the support that the James Myatt Trust gave me. Since my return, I have encouraged many friends and acquaintances to sail on a Tall Ship because of the fantastic time that I had. I hope that many more people such as me can benefit from the great work of your charity.

Thank you once again,

Kind regards,



Alasdair Carnegie



Manning the yards in Dublin