

Sailor's Story

Able Seaman Richard Dunn

My name and post

I am Dick Dunn of West Chester, Pennsylvania. I joined the Navy on June 19th, 1812, the day after war began. I was posted to *Constitution* a week later. I learned my sailing skills on merchant ships, so they straight away made me an Able Seaman. I enlisted to give the Brits the bloody nose they deserve, so I am impatient for a sight of their fleet!



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I risk my life on high

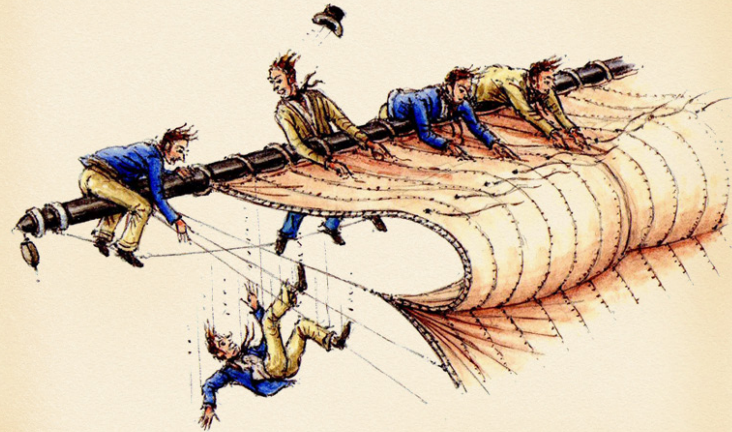
I am a maintopman, and you will usually find me high above the deck, working the ship's biggest sails in fair weather or foul. My duty is here even in battle – perhaps more so then than at other times. For chainshot and other ammunition is aimed to take away the rigging. Then I must climb to the yards and knot and splice and fix up the damage – all the while dodging musket balls!



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My hands and ears are my tools

Our ship has an acre of sail on her. If all hands do their duty this canvas will drive *Constitution* fast towards the enemy. But if one of us makes a mistake while aloft, an angry sail may argue with us and hurl us all into the briny ocean. So our work tools are our ears, with which we hear orders, and our hands, which we use to obey them.



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Our lives are not our own

Only when sailors are asleep in their hammocks may they think and do as they like. When we are awake, we are at the mercy of forces stronger than we are. Our lives are ruled by the officers who command us; by the wind and sea, that is hungry to eat us up; and by the enemy, who would crush us all if they could.



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The war did not treat me kindly

When battle finally came, with HMS *Guerriere*, I was among the casualties. My leg was shattered, and that hard butcher Evans took it off the next day. But do not pity me. Captain Hull promised he would look after me, and he was as good as his word. He took a collection for my benefit and raised \$1000. And for the next 25 years, he found me work aboard every ship he served on.

