

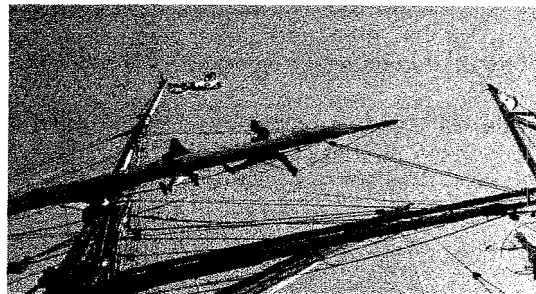
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Birthday sail

'Pride of Baltimore II' marks the 20th anniversary of its commission

By Susan Gvozdaz | Special to The Baltimore Sun
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As the *Pride of Baltimore II* cleared the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and headed toward Annapolis, the young crew flew into action. They yanked lines to adjust the heavy canvas sails of the clipper ship to move against the wind.



Deckhand Jojo Chacon (left), and bosun Michael Magno loose the foretopsail. (Baltimore Sun photo by Barbara Haddock Taylor / November 19, 2008)

The captain swung the wheel to steer parallel to shore in a zigzag pattern. With the sun lowering in the sky, the six-hour jaunt from Baltimore was nearly over, but the work was picking up. In windy, 30-degree temperatures, the 10-person crew raced from one side to the other, often heaving their entire bodies to move the heavy lines just a few feet to adjust the sails of the 185-ton ship.

The work is grueling and made for the young and able-bodied. In addition to the captain, the crew - seven men and three women - range in age from 19 to 32.

Keith Barkwood, 32, who started in August, said he gained 30 pounds when he started working on tug boats in Valdez, Alaska, several years ago. After his first month on *Pride II*, he lost 14 pounds. Used to wearing gloves, his soft hands became bloodied from working the lines on the clipper ship. His calloused palms protect him now.

Barkwood said he wouldn't trade the experience - it's the closest he can get to traditional sailing.

"It's important to keep this tradition alive," said Barkwood, who wanted a change of pace after his divorce earlier this year. "Just because we have combustion engines doesn't mean we should lose control of the wind."

Pride II, a replica of a clipper ship used in 1812, is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its commission. Workers completed construction in 1987, a year after the 10-year-old *Pride I* sank in a freakish storm 240 miles north of Puerto Rico. The accident took the lives of the captain and three crew members.

State officials were hesitant to build another ship, but a public outpouring of support fueled efforts to rebuild, said Captain Jan Miles. Miles, 58, was one of three skippers who rotated duty on *Pride I*, but he was not on the ship when it went down.

Miles has been the full-time captain of *Pride II* since its commissioning.

"It's a fitting tribute to those who were lost," he said.

Pride II has had its share of challenges. In September 2005, a squall off the coast of Saint-Nazaire, France, took down the mast of the ship and collapsed the rigging. Fortunately, no one was injured, said Linda Christenson, executive director of Pride of Baltimore Inc. in Baltimore. It cost \$540,000 and took eight months to re-mast the ship. Most of the expense was covered by insurance, she said.

Pride II represents the kind of privateering ship that was terrorizing the British Navy in the early 1800s. The newly formed United States allowed sailors to seize cargo on enemy ships and sell the goods for money. The navy sent ships in 1812 to destroy the shipyards in Fells Point that were making these clipper ships, but the British never made it past Fort McHenry. Francis Scott Key commemorated the battle in a poem that later became the *Star Spangled Banner*.

Pride I was based on such a clipper ship in Baltimore called the *Chasseur*. Legend has it that when the successful clipper returned from a raid, crowds shouted that it was the "Pride of Baltimore."

For now, *Pride II* is the goodwill ambassador of Maryland, a tourism draw and a living history museum, but in a few years the ship will play a big role in the celebration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812. Christenson is working with officials from Maryland and D.C. on the celebration.

"*Pride* is a living, movable, traveling example of Maryland's importance to the second war of independence," Christenson said.

Pride II is owned by the state and operated by the nonprofit Pride of Baltimore Inc. The 2008 annual budget was \$921,000, Christenson said. Because of cutbacks in state funding, most of that money comes from appearance fees, private events and fundraising.

The Maryland Department of Transportation had agreed to an annual contribution of up to \$350,000 in operating expenses pending legislative approval, according to a charter agreement in 2005. The agency was able to contribute \$364,000 in 2005 and \$164,000 in 2007, but it has not been able to make any other payments because of budget cutbacks, Christenson said. Agency officials have agreed to pay any unpaid appropriations that the General Assembly already approved on the condition that Pride Inc. becomes self-sufficient, according to state transportation officials.

Because of the cutbacks, Pride Inc. has to step up its fundraising and private engagements. The nonprofit held a 20th anniversary fundraiser Oct. 11 that raised \$55,000. *Pride II* derives most of its income from appearance fees paid by cities that invite the ship to races and events. *Pride II* also hosts weddings, corporate events and charges fees for taking passengers on day sails. Passengers also can pay a fee to travel overnight from city to city, Christenson said.

Pride II has six berths and two private cabins for guests. The small bunk beds make for tight quarters, so it is difficult to bring little more than clothes, tools and books along, said Kate Tanski, a 26-year-old deckhand from Maine who is serving temporarily as the ship's cook. Every few weeks, two deckhands take laundry ashore.

"There are no secrets here and no delicate items," Tanski said.

On a tugboat, captains can push a button to make a turn, Barkwood said. On *Pride II*, it takes muscle-aching manpower. The ship does have an engine to back up the wind, Miles said.

Everyone at some point has to climb the 107-foot mast and climb out on the yardarms to help unfurl the sails.

"You're just doing your job," Barkwood said. "You don't have time to think about, 'I'm 75 feet up in the air, and I'm on a little stick.'"

The hardest part about being a deckhand is the sleep deprivation - sometimes crew members can get only 3.5 hours at a time depending on weather conditions, said Ryan Graham, a 28-year-old from New York. Sometimes it's hard for new crew members to take the stress.

"It's interesting to see how they respond, faced with the challenges," Graham said.

Then there's the pay - some of the deckhands earn only \$600 a month, he said. Crew members can be away from their families for up to six months at a time.

But potential crew members line up at different ports of call to get on *Pride II*. She has a national reputation of being well-run and offering a lot of training in seamanship from its experienced captain.

Jojo Chacon, 19, of Ann Arbor, Mich., said he first learned about the ship seven years ago. A veteran of youth sailing programs, Chacon came aboard this year from the T.S. *Playfair*, a schooner ship from Canada.

"Captain Miles is like a legend for tall ships," Chacon said. "He's a true mariner."

Pride II also gets around - it has traveled to ports in North and South America, as well as Europe and Asia. The ship traveled the Great Lakes this summer.

Kelly Poole, the first mate, has been on the ship for five years. Unlike most of the crew members who will move on after the season ends in December, she will come back. For her, there is no other vessel like *Pride II*.

"It's a great culture," Poole said. "I'm learning every day."