

Al Stewart, Old Admirals

I can well recall the first time I ever put to sea,
It was on the old "Calcutta" in eighteen fifty-three.
I was just a lad of fourteen years, a midshipman to be
To make my way in sailing ships of the Royal Navy.

By the time that I was twenty-one I'd sailed the world around,
Weathered storms in the China seas with the hatches battened down,
And made my way by starlight off the coast of Newfoundland
And dined on beer and herrings while the waves blew all around.

I live in retirement now and through my window comes the sound
Of seagulls and sets my mind remembering.
The evening stars like memories sail far beyond the distant trees
Way out across the open seas I hear them sing.

Oh, the wooden ships they turned to iron and the iron ships to steel
And shed their sails like autumn leaves with the turning of the wheel
And I was given Captain's rank, and soon took under me
the proudest ship that ever sailed for Queen and country.

Ah, the old queen she passed away with the newborn century
And I received my calling up to the admiralty.
The sands ran through the hourglass each day more rapidly
As we watched the growing of the fleets of High Germany.

So at last the Great War blazed I waited with the passing days
a call to arms that never came, writing letters.
"I may be old now in your eyes, but all my years have made me wise,
You don't see where the danger lies, oh call me back, call me back..."

But the war, it ran its course they could find no use for me
And I live in the country now, grandchildren on my knee
And sometimes think in all this world the saddest thing to be
Old admirals who feel the wind and never put to sea.

Now just like you, I've sailed my dreams like ships across the sea
And some of them they've come on rocks and some faced mutiny
And when they're sunken one by one I'll join that company -
Old admirals who feel the wind, and never put to sea.