



The Last Time Around Cape Horn: The Historic 1949 Voyage of the Windjammer Pamir

By William F. Stark

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A memorable tale of adventure on the turbulent seas of the Great Southern and Atlantic oceans—on one of the most historic voyages of our time—finds its way into paperback. This is William F. Stark's engrossing memoir of the last leg of the Grain Race, and the Pamir's rounding of fearsome Cape Horn—the storm-tossed tip of South America just 600 miles from Antarctica—the veritable Mount Everest of sailing. In 1949, the crew of thirty-four sailors from around the world experienced the shipboard life of the seventeenth century on a four-masted vessel that carried hundreds of acres of sail. In 128 days the Pamir journeyed 16,000 miles from Port Victoria, Australia, to Falmouth, England, through the world's stormiest seas, as Stark worked on decks awash with huge swells, and scrambled up ice-coated rigging to manhandle sails on masts that were up to twenty stories high. Contrasting romance with the realities of life at sea, and poignantly evoking the love affair he left behind to join the Pamir, while punctuating his tale with illuminating photos, maps, and details of maritime history, Stark has written a thrilling book that climaxes the fabled era begun by Cape Horn merchant sailors more than three centuries ago.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The year 1949 marked the final journeys of commercial windjammers, huge, steel-hulled, four-masted sailboats carrying cargo halfway around the world. Stark was a sailor on the Pamir, a Finnish ship, the very last windjammer to sail commercially around Cape Horn, and lived to write this romantic tale of adventure and camaraderie tempered by grueling, dangerous work. The author, who committed suicide earlier this year at age 75 after suffering from depression, had been enthralled with ships and sailing since childhood. He first heard of the Pamir's voyage in a Zurich cafe during a year abroad as a college student in 1947. He quit school to fly to Australia to try to get a job on the ship. That trip, on a tiny, rickety charter plane, was an adventure in itself, as Stark and his seat mate, a charming Frenchwoman en route to Indonesia, were engaged in a brief but passionate affair as they braved hair-raising takeoffs and brushes with guerrilla war in Saigon. Eventually arriving at the Pamir's port, Stark spent months working on the docks, acquiring, at the last minute, a much-coveted berth on the Pamir as an Ordinary Seaman. The four-month voyage across the world's most stormy and dangerous seas, without engines or even a radio, challenged him not only with dangers like furling sails atop 200-foot-high masts in hurricane winds, but also with grinding work and sleep deprivation demanded by four-hour watches. This entertaining memoir seamlessly imparts sailing terms and ocean lore, and will enthrall all who have held romantic notions of life at sea. Maps, photos not seen by PW. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From [Booklist](#)

In 1949 the *Pamir* sailed from Port Victoria, Australia, to Falmouth, England, a 16,000-mile, 128-day journey through raging seas. It was the last commercial sailing vessel to round Cape Horn, the storm-tossed tip of South America, and it carried 60,000 sacks of barley. On board was Stark, a 22-year-old sailor who worked on the decks along with 33 other seamen. Stark describes his four-hour watches with little sleep (he was fully dressed with clothes perpetually wet with seawater), drinking rum (a time-honored reward for hard work and a job well done), raging gales, torrential tropical rain, the sheer terror of sailing through a hurricane, and floundering around in the fog and calm off the Cornish coast. Stark's son, Peter, wrote the introduction, a loving tribute to his father, who killed himself earlier this year. The book, with 16 pages of black-and-white photographs, is a fascinating account of this historic voyage. *George Cohen*
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Users Review

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