



Poseidon and the Four Wind Gods

by Gerard Triesman
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Poseidon, the Greek God of the Sea and overseer of off-shore vessels, is reputed to be a pretty temperamental guy. He keeps a “Ledger of the Deep,” a list of every vessel travelling the seven seas. I’m glad that my sailboat is on the list, because this God doesn’t have much patience for rule breakers. If I hadn’t performed the mandatory renaming ceremony for my boat, he’d have great destructive forces released on me. Besides, renaming a boat is a seafaring tradition full of fun.



The renaming ceremony consists of six parts:

- (1) Removing every trace of the old name.
- (2) Performing a purging ceremony.
- (3) Performing a renaming ceremony.
- (4) Making a sacrifice.
- (5) Appeasing the four wind gods.
- (6) Toasting to the new name.

While removing the old name (Open Air), I had to be thorough, and could not miss a warranty sticker on the underside of a hatch, or the floating key chain with the

spare key in the galley junk drawer. Any mention of the old name had to be removed in cruising journals, maintenance logs, receipts, or related paperwork.

The offerings to the mean-spirited lord of the sea are:

- A branch of green leaves. These symbolize safe returns and must stay on the bow for the ceremony and the maiden voyage.
- Red wine.
- Champagne.
- A poem to recite.
- Friends and family

When I had acquired the necessary amenities, I gathered everyone at my boat, and, in a loud voice, recited the following verse as an ode to Poseidon.

*“Oh mighty and great ruler of the seas and oceans, to whom all ships and we who venture upon your vast domain are required to pay homage, I implore you in your graciousness to expunge for all time from your records and recollection the name **Open Air**, which has ceased to be an entity in your kingdom.*

“Oh dear,” the previous owner of my boat said. He sounded a little sad, but I continued.

As proof thereof, we submit this ingot bearing her name, to be corrupted through your powers and forever be purged from the sea. In grateful acknowledgement of your munificence and dispensation, we offer these libations to your majesty and court."

At that point it was time to pop some bubbly. I broke a champagne bottle against the bow, and poured some of the white sparkling wine into the water from West to East. One of my guests, a man with a lifetime of sailing experience, stepped forward and poured some very good quality rum in the water. The remaining champagne and the red wine were dispensed among my family and friends, who were delighted to participate.

Poseidon had remained quiet so far, and the water was still relatively calm, without any whitecaps on the waves. This encouraged me to quickly move to the next step, the renaming ceremony, which required the following essential words to be spoken.

*"Oh mighty and great ruler of the seas and oceans, to whom all ships and we who venture upon your vast domain are required to pay homage, I implore you in your graciousness to take unto your records and recollection this worthy vessel hereafter and for all time known as **Hakuna Matata**, guarding her with your mighty arm and trident and ensuring her of safe and rapid passage throughout her journeys within your realm. In appreciation of your munificence, dispensation, and in honour of your greatness, we offer these libations to your majesty and your court."*

After I had recited this poem, the new name was in existence.



But, there was one more thing to be done before hoisting the sails, and that was appeasing the four wind gods. To be addressed were Boreas (north wind), Notus (south wind), Zephyrus (west wind), and Eurus (east wind). The aim here was not only to be delightfully redundant, but also to ask for calm seas on my voyages.

The four wind gods had been following the rituals very closely, and were anxiously awaiting the next phase of my ceremony. I had gathered family and friends on the dock, because I needed them to support me in appeasing these deities.

"Let's see if this sailor has got it right," Boreas said to the other wind gods.

"If he doesn't humour me, he can forget about my generosity. I won't spare him my awful punishment."

Nevertheless, I knew what to do, and faced north; throwing some champagne in that direction and said:

"Great Boreas, exalted ruler of the North Wind, grant us permission to use your mighty powers in the pursuit of our lawful endeavours, ever sparing us the overwhelming scourge of your frigid breath."

So far, so good, I thought, and moved on to pacify Zephyrus. This god was waiting for me to make a blunder, so he could make me suffer. But I wasn't about to let that happen, and invited my friend from

Toronto to address the west wind. Howard faced west, repeated the champagne pours and toss, while saying in a clear voice:

“Great Zephyrus, exalted ruler of the West Wind, grant us permission to use your mighty powers in the pursuit of our lawful endeavours, ever sparing us the overwhelming scourge of your wild breath.”

“Blast! Nothing wrong with that,” Zephyrus muttered from underneath his bushy, red moustache. He isn’t done though; let’s hear what he’s going to say trying to appease my colleagues. I hope he fails.”

At my invitation, one of my other old time sailing friends at the club faced east, and repeated the champagne toss while saying:

“Great Eurus, exalted ruler of the East Wind, grant us permission to use your mighty powers in the pursuit of our lawful endeavors, ever sparing us the overwhelming scourge of your mighty breath.”



Eurus was satisfied, but made up his mind not to go too easy on me.

“I’ll blow on the Hakuna Matata hard enough to make it difficult for her skipper to get away from the main dock. He’ll have to head east, against my breath to

reach the open water of the lake. I’m going to enjoy seeing him struggle.”

To humour Notus, the south wind, I asked my friend and previous owner of my boat to do the honours. He gladly obliged, faced south, poured the champagne and tossed it while reciting:

“Great Notus, exalted ruler of the South Wind, grant us permission to use your mighty powers in the pursuit of our lawful endeavors, ever sparing us the overwhelming scourge of your scalding breath.”

“Oh my God!” John exclaimed.
“Your **scalding** breath.”

I laughed and thanked him, and the others, for their assistance. Notus, the south wind was amused. I just barely heard his gleeful voice wafting over the lake.

“Be assured. I’ll make it hot for you alright.”

With the speeches out of the way, it was time for a collective toast to the Hakuna Matata and to begin her maiden voyage. I invited the sailor who had poured the rum, my friend from Toronto, and my brother-in-law on board. As soon as the sails were hoisted, I undid the mooring lines and trimmed the main sail. The rum-pouring sailor adjusted the jib and off we went.



It wasn't a very long ride, but we enjoyed being out on the lake. The wind picked up a bit - it was Boreas - who decided to make it a little more exciting for us. The boat began to heel to the leeward side, making one of my passengers a little worried, but we didn't capsize or anything.

Back at the shore, I took the sails down, raised the rudder, locked the cabin, and secured my boat to my designated mooring buoy. To get back to the dock, I used one of the tenders. All the other guests had already left.

Before my friend from Toronto and his wife, Jennifer, drove back home, Yvonne and I took them out for dinner on the patio of the golf and country club on the opposite shore of the lake. It had been a very enjoyable afternoon.

The traditional renaming ceremony had been great fun. I never saw anyone else at the club performing such a ritual observance, and it's no wonder that some sailors have been in trouble on the lake. But having followed the folklore, I am safe. Poseidon and the four wind gods will forever spare me.

