



BELIEVES...

ENCOURAGING YOUNG WOMEN TO FOLLOW THEIR DREAMS...



THE MASK... has almost always been symbolic of femininity. Be it the theatre where she showcases two sides to her roles or the blind dates where she hides her identity. It is symbolic of DOMINANCE if we come to think of it in the world of Merchant Navy. A severely male dominated area of work where women are looked in – not as Chief Officers or Chief Engineers, but as exceptions...

Aah... this is not new to her! She has been battling this tag in almost every profession she expressed an urge to enter. Her 'consistency' taught a lesson to his 'hesitation' on a woman's capability, and women soon came to be accepted as a part of the game – albeit not so well in the industry of waters, vessels, goods, ports and voyages – of Merchant Navy.

We have one such *exception* here, who was more than pleased to share her experiences to our readers, of course battling a very tough task of encapsulating all of it in about two pages! She is Megan and she is bound to please you!

Would you ever dare to take a step out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself to do something that you never in a million years would have dreamt of doing? Some people jump out of planes, others commit to starting a family young and me, well me? I am a little bit different. I have chosen to head in the direction of living a life at sea. Work, sail, travel and see amazing places – it all comes with my job.

My name is MEGAN STEWART, I work as a DECK OFFICER on ships in New Zealand. I have been at sea since I was 16 years old working on various ships including RoRo cargo vessels, Passenger ferries, Product Tankers, a Cruise ship, Bulk cement ship and an Island medical supply vessel.



More and more women are today turning to choose a career at sea.

Why now after so long?

That's a good question. Women are finally accepted socially to work in a male dominated environment today; though it has taken ages, we have eventually got there. Be it working on a Cargo Ship around the coastline of a country, doing Deep Sea Trading voyages, working on Supply Vessels around oil rigs or even just voyaging around the world on a Cruise Ship, I enjoy it! I've sailed to many countries, been involved in several dry docks including a Product Tanker on a floating dock in Singapore.

What does a woman gain from placing herself in a male dominated environment?

A lot more than you would probably think! Women gain a level of independence and self security within themselves as well as develop an inner strength that encourages them to stand and speak up when they need to. In the near future though, it could, or rather would be difficult for a woman working on a ship, especially if she cannot cope with being alone and having time to herself. Women are considered more social than men with the fact that women tend to *want to talk 24/7* whereas men are more leaning towards the quieter side of things. When women are placed in an environment dominated by men and their lifestyle, their way of living kind of changes to adapt to the current situation. You still have to maintain your femininity on a ship even though you may think that it is impossible and irrelevant with the lifestyle you are living.

Glass Ceiling... what's that huh?

As a woman you have to be confident in your competence. Stand up for what you know is right and don't let gender differences bring you down. Some men will challenge you, no matter how hard you try to gain their respect. They just will not budge to listen to you. It's nothing





against yourself as a woman and you should definitely not take it to heart. I've been there facing it, been challenged and walked over, spoken down on and

interrupted, and I've been

ignored and disrespected...

But I don't let any of that bring me down. I live on the good times I have had. May be this is why I am admired and looked up to, as a leader and teacher, an inspirer and encourager. All of the above is a part of who I have grown to be today. I live to share my experiences and knowledge to the younger generation who are looking at taking the step in the direction of building a career at sea.

The most interesting experiences which I have had at sea would be the endless opportunities to travel around and see the world. A career at sea sets you up financially for life. The freedom you get when you are on the bridge of a ship in the middle of the ocean and all that you can see from your workplace window are *the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets in the world and endless amounts of sea life*. This is why the 4-8 watch is my favourite of them all.

You get the chance to grow up with the crew who you work with, therefore creating a sea family for yourself. Some crew members will become your best friends while others may be your worst enemies.

working on a ship at sea. Whether someone is away for only one week, six weeks, or three months, it takes a lot of mental strength to adapt to the change in lifestyle and being able to cope with the emotional side of missing loved ones back home.

Physical strength comes with the job. You are kept fit by being active while working on board 24/7 as well as by using the onboard ship gym equipment. Mental strength on the other hand takes a lot more time to build up. Most people say that it comes with age and develops over time. As you grow older, you learn to cope with life's issues and the curve balls which it throws at you – much better than when you were younger.

So far for me, my biggest hurdle has been to adapt to a change in lifestyle every seven days. One week I'll be home close to my friends and family, working on the farm, feeding the animals, relaxing with my partner, cooking dinners, and spending time with friends socialising.



Then the next week I'll be working 12-16 hour days on a ship at the other end of the country. I have to be honest it does get really hard at times!! As time is passing by, I am taking one day at a time and learning techniques on how to manage my life when change occurs. It's not easy a lot of the time but that's just Life! We have to accept change and what it throws at us, and find the inner strength to pull through it.

"Physical V's Mental Strength"

A career at sea is not for all women, definitely not for the weak and fainthearted. So I challenge you today: Do you want to create and live a life based on the foundation of the inner strength you gain from life experiences? Do you want to be confident and thoroughly love your job? How about being paid to travel the world and see amazing places? All this can be yours when you take that first step... towards being a part of the Merchant Navy!!

Most people underestimate the significance of mental strength when it comes to



Nothing is IMPOSSIBLE!!