

According to an official biography, twelve-year-old *Little Lord Nelson*

Horatio Nelson was a small and sickly child. So when he wanted to join the English Royal Navy, the most formidable fighting force in the world, he wrote a letter to his brother begging for help in convincing their father to let him go.

“Do, William, write to father, and tell him that I should like to go to sea with Uncle Morrice.” ‘Uncle Morrice’ it happens, was the imposing Captain Maurice Suckling, Commander of the powerful Royal Navy warship, HMS *Raisonnable*. Little Horatio’s mother had died three years earlier and he hoped that by training to be an officer in the Royal Navy he could ease the financial burden on his father, struggling alone to raise eight children.

Uncle Maurice wrote, in a teasing way, about the dangers little Horatio might encounter if he really wanted to join the Royal Navy.

“What has poor Horace done, that he...should be sent to rough it out at sea? But let him come and the first time we go into action, a cannon ball may knock off his head...”!

Undaunted, Horatio signed on aboard HMS *Raisonnable* and soon afterward “Uncle Maurice” gave him his first big promotion. Henceforth, the ship’s row-boat would be Horatio’s to command! Horatio



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impressed his superiors and, while still a teenager, was offered a commission as an officer in His Majesty’s Royal Navy.

Nelson’s creative naval tactics and courage under fire (including fighting against the Americans during the Revolutionary War) earned the respect and admiration of all England. But it was splinters, not cannonballs that his uncle should have foreseen. As commander of ships and fleets, Nelson was wounded and blinded in his right eye by flying splinters. Less than an hour after having his mangled right arm amputated, after it was shattered by airborne rock fragments in the midst of combat, Horatio was back directing the fight.

Throughout his 34 years in the Royal Navy, little Horatio successfully ducked all those cannonballs his uncle had mockingly warned him about, and he continued to write letters home about his Navy adventures.

Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson’s stunning defeat of the enemy fleet at Trafalgar, in 1805, established England and the Royal Navy as rulers of the world’s oceans. Almost two hundred years after his death, Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson is still considered England’s most illustrious naval hero and a symbol of the best of British character.

Hard Water Boating

Does boating come to an abrupt halt when the lakes and rivers freeze and snow covers the ground? Not for some intrepid sailors. When temperatures begin to drop below 32 degrees, America’s iceboat pilots pull on their long underwear and head out to the barn to sharpen the runners and tune the rigging on the fastest boats on water. *HARD* water, that is. Iceboats are sailboats that use runners instead of rudders and which can reach speeds of more than 100 miles per hour over the ice on lakes and rivers throughout the northern half of the country. While iceboats have been sailed for centuries in Europe, the sport of iceboat racing was brought to America by the Dutch immigrants who settled along the Hudson River in the 1600s. Some of the fastest of these ice boats (or ice yachts as the larger ones are called) were built more than 120 years ago. Many of these older iceboats are still in good condition and are raced every winter weekend that promises hard ice, (slick, “black” ice is best) strong winds, and stalwart companions (it takes more than a few helpers to set up and rig one of these 40-foot-long ice cruisers).

Large recreational sleighs, like the *Mayflower*, were popular with revelers during the snowy New England winters of the mid-1800s

