

Old Admirals

Al Stewart

I can well recall the first time I ever put to sea
It was on the old 'Calcutta' in 1853
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 new born 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
The 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