

JAMES ANDREW EDEN

One of the scariest days of my life at sea was just a few months after joining my first ship, the Dea Maris. At 6:20 in the morning, while getting the Officers' Messhall ready for breakfast, the Fire Alarm started ringing. I rushed out to get my lifejacket and found all the passages already filled with smoke. I knocked on the door of my uncle, Pershing Merren, to awaken him, and we all rushed to our assigned stations. As I called out to him, I saw the Belgian engineer running from the engine room, where the smoke was coming from.

As we were on the boat deck next to the lifeboat, in case we had to abandon ship, the deck suddenly erupted, throwing about 50 empty 55-gallon drums into the air due to the heat from the fire in the engine room, scaring everyone to death.

Luckily, the Oiler, Peter Trujeque from George Town, stayed in the engine room and put out the fire, which had been caused by a broken lube oil line spilling onto the primary engine turbocharger. This was an 18,900-horsepower diesel main engine. No thanks to the engineer who ran from the engine room.

Another memorable time was many years later, when I was sailing as Chief Engineer, and we had three guys with mental illness on one voyage. One had to be offloaded in Dubai, one in Kenya, and one jumped overboard about 4:30 in the morning, off the mouth of the Amazon River. The ship was turned around, and we searched for him, but he was never found. A poignant reminder that seafaring is a challenging endeavour for many individuals.