

## Pacific voyage a life changing experience for veteran



When Wayne Matthews' case manager from Veterans' Affairs told him of a sponsored sailing trip he seized the opportunity to step out of his own comfort zone.

The sponsored trip aboard the SV Tenacious would see him as a crewman on a two week trip from Auckland to Fiji. "The only sailing experience that I had to that point was watching the movie *Castaway*" says Wayne.

It was with great trepidation that he decided to do it. "The idea of breaking routine for some—including me—meant going against all I had going on at that time. You come up with all the excuses under the sun to not do what you could be doing."

But from the very start of the trip Wayne was in good company. On the first day aboard he met Jake, a veteran of the US military. The pair have remained good friends—writing to each other often. They're looking forward to meeting up again in the future, along with their wives.

While aboard the SV Tenacious he had many firsts. "Being aboard a sailing ship as a crewman for one" Wayne reflects to VA News.

"Another experience was when the Tenacious was fully under sail with the auxiliary motors shut down, hearing the sounds of the rigging and the ship creaking as it was being driven by the wind behind us."





During the voyage to Fiji Wayne got to steer the Tenacious while on duty watch in early morning hours. He was also atop a mast when pods of whales swam past the starboard side.

“When we were 120 nautical miles from Fiji we went for a swim in the Pacific. There would have been close to kilometres of water beneath the keel of the ship and my feet.”

At the end of the journey he presented the Captain of the Tenacious a gift. “It seemed so fitting that at the end of the journey that a taonga crafted by my brother would be resting with a leader who had guided us 1600 nautical miles across the Pacific Ocean.”

He found this trip to be a restoring experience. “Today I can say, with everything I have, that something in me fundamentally changed on the journey. But in a way most won’t understand outside the military.”

Wayne believes that this time when he came home, he brought a missing part of himself back to his whānau.

**“Now finally after all this time I can say that I am complete.”**

— *Wayne Matthews*

“I thank those in Veterans’ Affairs for what they placed before me. In giving me the chance to sail off into the great blue, came the opportunity to see beyond the boundaries, and to take that step.”

---

Date

09 July 2018

---

Tags

Veterans' stories (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/news-events/articles/?tag=45>)

---

Last Modified: 13 June 2019