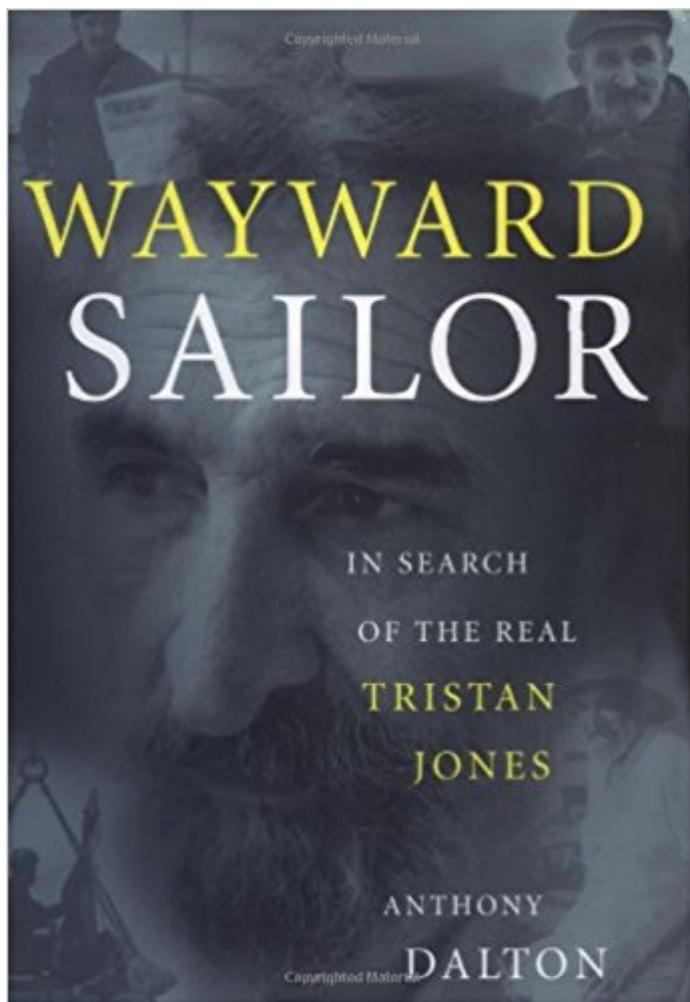


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# Wayward Sailor : In Search Of The Real Tristan Jones



## Synopsis

He died in 1995, but his nautical adventure books continue to bring entertainment and escape to legions of fans worldwide. He was larger than life, perhaps the most successful sailing writer of the twentieth century. But, as Anthony Dalton's meticulously researched biography reveals, Tristan Jones was not who he said he was. *Wayward Sailor* began as an uncomplicated tribute to a great adventurer and writer, but one line of inquiry branched to another, plunging Dalton into a three-year odyssey of his own. With the cooperation of Tristan's friends and supporters, Dalton pursued Tristan's life through correspondence, logbooks, government documents, and interviews worldwide. With each new revelation, Tristan's voyage through life seemed more and more like his greatest adventure. His real name was Arthur Jones. He was born in Liverpool in 1929, the illegitimate son of a working-class Lancashire girl, and he grew up in orphanages with little education. Too young to see action in the World War II naval battles he would later write about so movingly, he joined the Royal Navy in 1946 and served fourteen unremarkable years. Arthur Jones then bought an old sailboat and tried his hand at smuggling whiskey cross-Channel. In his early thirties he sailed into a Mediterranean limbo, scraping a living from charters by day and haunting the bars of Ibiza by night. When he was drunk, which was often, he could be loud and obnoxious and had the scars to prove it. He had no family, no attachments, no accomplishments. Then came a midlife sea change. Arthur Jones looked into his future, imagined greatness, and began to claw his way to it. Having taught himself to sail, he taught himself to write. He was a natural at both. As Tristan Jones, in his midforties, he sailed out of Brazil's Mato Grosso and into a Greenwich Village apartment to write six books in three years and reinvent his past. The Tristan Jones of his books was born in a storm at sea in 1924 on his father's tramp steamer; was torpedoed three times in epic World War II engagements; completed the first circumnavigation of Iceland; traveled farther north and farther up the River than any sailor before him; and sailed more than 400,000 miles, 180,000 of them solo. Readers loved his books and crowded his lectures and signings. He had a bard's voice and a street performer's delivery. He had more renown than he could have dreamed. Having invented a life, Tristan Jones tried to live it. After the amputation of his left leg in 1982 he sailed more than halfway around the world. He lost his right leg in 1991 yet still returned briefly to sea. But as his body failed him, so too did his spirits. It was as if the life from which he'd bodily lifted himself were pulling him down again. He died a bitter man. *Wayward Sailor* is the biography Tristan Jones did not want. His books were autobiographical, he said; there was no more to tell. But there was. *Wayward Sailor* is the last Tristan Jones story and the most incredible one of all: the story of a man who invented himself.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 350 pages

Publisher: International Marine/Ragged Mountain Press; 1 edition (April 22, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0071402519

ISBN-13: 978-0071402514

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1.3 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,148,027 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Sailing > Narratives #88 in Books > Travel > Europe > Great Britain > Wales #228 in Books > Travel > Europe > Great Britain > Scotland > General

## Customer Reviews

"An arresting study of a sailor who invented himself as a modern hero and kept embellishing the legend until truth and fiction were impossible to pinpoint...Should appeal to all those who love adventure..." - Publishers Weekly "Valuable, compelling, and sobering." - Sailing "I was enchanted from start to finish by Wayward Sailor." - John Rousmaniere, author, After the Storm and Fastnet, Force 10" --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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sympathetic book."--John Rousmaniere, author, *After the Storm; Fastnet, Force 10; and The Annapolis Book of Seamanship*

Tristan Jones has published some two dozen books that detail his adventures while sailing all over the world on any number of worthy and/or hare-brained schemes. The pace of the action and his routine faux pas to worsen a bad situation does sometime cause you to wonder whether your leg is being pulled, but the rich detail that in many cases conforms to my personal experience of some of the places, people and things causes one to accept that some people just bring challenges with them. Accordingly, I was shocked - shocked! - to learn of "Wayward Sailor". In this book, Dalton started out as a fan's documentary of Jones' life and voyages, but along the way he concluded that not only were a number of occurrences impossible to document (fair enough while alone at sea) but also many others could in fact be documented as impossible to have occurred. And, now informed, I did find that a re-reading of his work often reveals passages in which he foreshadows by saying that after all, what is important is the feeling of the story and not the events themselves. This heresy set off loud screams for Jones' many fans, but Dalton refers constantly to the fundamental reality, which is that even with the impossible or unlikely information removed, the feats that Jones is documented to have accomplished are truly remarkable nonetheless. Dalton's book is by no means an adventure story; it is not particularly exciting reading (although it could serve as a model to day's database-centered "academics" as to how real research is done). But the many people who simply like the great sea stories that Tristan Jones wrote would (possibly after getting over their initial shock and dismay) enjoy having a biographic compendium to go along with the stories.

Before the review, first I preface by saying that I have enjoyed reading Tristan Jones' books over the years. Anthony Dalton has written a book that he initially did not intend to write. He had greatly admired Tristan's works, and intended to write a fulsome tribute. Instead he discovered that much - if not most - of what he wrote was fiction. His hero had fallen. "Wayward Sailor" describes in painful detail the instances of deception and behavioural failings. As such, I cannot fault his research, nor his findings. Some critics have suggested that he had not properly balanced his biography, that his research was limited and biased. That may be true, I cannot verify that. What I can say, and the reason I gave this book 3 stars only, is that I found Dalton to have written a mean-spirited book. While he did indeed give credit where it was due, and repeated that Tristan was indeed a very capable sailor, he also took every opportunity to nuance his research and shade his opinion into the darker options in front of him. Far from giving benefit of the doubt, where doubt existed, Dalton has

regularly chosen to choose the less honourable outcome for Tristan. In fact - and here I agree with some of the critics - Dalton has not only written a mean-spirited biography, he has traduced the memory of Tristan Jones. I can, however, recommend that you read this book if you are a fan of Tristan Jones. Why? Because it clearly outlines a completely different man, paints a broader picture of a complex man, defines in greater contrast the skills of the man. I do recall my initial discomfort on hearing, while in Phuket, a very different description of a sailor I had come to admire. This book explains in clear terms that discrepancy between the public face of Tristan, and the deeper layers of the flawed author. I just wish there had been a little more generosity in describing the true TJ. But that is a reflection, I think, of Dalton as a man who has been severely disappointed in his hero. I can forgive him that.

I was always a fan of Tristan Jones's books. I realized so many things in them just didn't make much sense or add up. But enjoyed them nonetheless. Anthony Dalton made sense of Tristan's life, which begs the question of why Tristan wasn't far more autobiographical than he was. Tristan was shown to be, in my eyes far more fascinating by Dalton's book than Tristan's own barely believable yarns. I intended to leave 5 stars but may have accidentally hit less.

Having read all of Trisan Jones' books and recommended him over the years, I found this book a necessary final read. It rejuvenated my respect for Tristan, but in a different way. He was a great story teller and his creator gave him a writing gift. He chose to fabricate in support of the greater cause....the story. Not the choices I would have made, but I'm not Tristan. I've seen big egos do worse but only a few have the gift to write the stories for our pleasure, and his income. Tristan would not be the first person I know who lives by the creed, "Never let the truth stand in the way of a good story". Was I angry to learn I'd been duped? Yes. Was I even more amazed at a man who created himself? To witness that is worth the time to read this book. I wouldn't be interested in this book if I hadn't been well read in Tristan's books. For those of you have want a good read, read Heart of Oak by Tristan, then read Anthony Dalton's book. The combo will blow you away.

...that de-bunks the Tristian Jones self created "persona". It is clear that the end of the book was hard to write and researching the latter parts of TJ's life was made harder by his isolation abroad coupled with TJ's recognition that he was in the process of getting "caught out" and so made his life hard to research. This makes the end of the book rather flat - but it is worth it in its own right for the first two thirds.

Quite interesting

They were really good and I still enjoyed reading every one. I am thankful to Anthony for clearing things up. I admire him and Tristan may he rest in peace.

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