

## Auckland to the Bluff

*Until 2010 Rudy Sunde led a group of Auckland-based singers of sea songs and wrote this song in the 1970s, in the old sea shanty style. Auckland has two harbours, Manakau on the west, giving access to the Tasman Sea, and Waitamata on the east, giving access to the Pacific Ocean. Bluff is a harbour near Invercargill at the bottom of the South Island. You could sail south from Auckland at 36 degrees, to the Bluff at 47 degrees from either harbour, but the Tiri light marks the entrance to Waitamata harbour, so Rudy's mythical Flora Belle sailed down the east coast, right through the stormy "Roaring Forties."*

I left the city when just a lad,  
Times were hard and no work to be had,  
So I went to sea in the Flora Belle,  
Little did I know 'twas a ship from hell.

The ship was old and leaking at the seams,  
A dirty old tub somewhat broad in the beam,  
Its sails were torn, some planks were rotten,  
It lay at the wharf a gently rockin.

### Chorus

*I've sailed from Auckland to the Bluff  
A thousand miles and that's enough  
A thousand miles on the heaving sea  
Glory Hal-le-luja that's enough for me* †

We set sail on the evening tide  
It was early on a Saturday night  
All went well till the Tiri light  
And then by God I got a fright

The ship was hit by a big beam sea  
Christ, I thought, it's all up for me;  
She rolled and she lollopped like a big tin drum  
Hell! I swore my time had come.

### Chorus

<more - a lot more!>

"Shorten sails" the skipper cried  
"Shorten the sails or you buggers will all die  
Get aloft, get aloft, right up the mast  
Get aloft, get aloft, and get up there fast."

Never in my life had I been so scared  
Never in my life had I wished I was dead  
But I climbed up the mast and I shortened sail  
Then I climbed down again and was sick o'er the rail.

Chorus

Man the pumps the skipper roared  
Man the pumps or you'll sail the ocean floor  
So I pumped all night though my hands were raw  
And I pumped and I pumped 'till the coming of the dawn

How we survived that night I don't know  
The wind it did roar and the wind it did blow  
But the sun came up and the sea went down  
The wind did ease and we headed south

Chorus

For breakfast we had mouldy bread  
For lunch it was the very same fare  
For supper we had a stinking stew  
Cookie couldn't eat his own damned brew

The skipper was an old man old and mean  
Tough as nails and just as lean  
Voice like a foghorn in the gloom  
When he cursed was a voice of doom.

Chorus

<more - nearly there!>

The work was hard and the pay was mean  
The food was rotten, and the quarters none too clean  
The journey south was always rough  
So I jumped the ship when we pulled into the Bluff

So here in Bluff I'll settle down  
Never again will I leave this town  
Never again will I go to sea  
Never again will it see me

Chorus