

SEP/OCT 2013

nau**ique**

lifestyles@rafflesmarina



HIGH LIFE IN TAIWAN

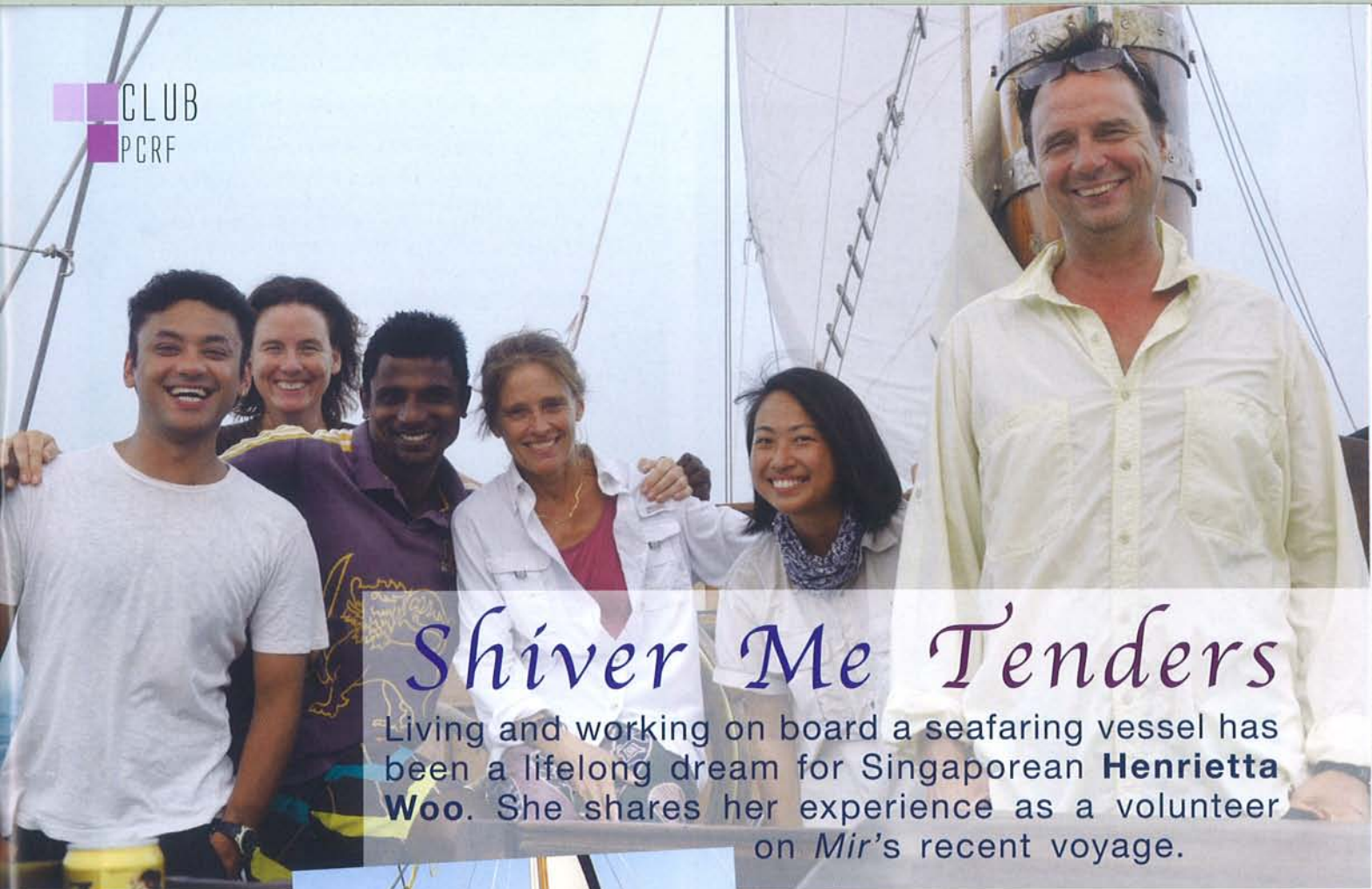
Bask in Formosa's lap of luxury

ASIAN YACHTING GRAND PRIX

2012/2013 season end's two regattas

ABA CRUISE TO ANDAMAN SEA

Another signature cruise to remember



Shiver Me Tenders

Living and working on board a seafaring vessel has been a lifelong dream for Singaporean **Henrietta Woo**. She shares her experience as a volunteer on *Mir's* recent voyage.

Mir crew left to right: Karma (Nepal), Carol (UK), Raja (Sri Lanka), Abigail (USA), Henrietta (Singapore) and Captain Mark (Belgium)

A good part of my childhood was spent with my nose buried in a book, living vicariously through the countless adventures of heroes and heroines, and of course, swashbuckling pirates. I often wondered how it would be like to live on board a ship, sail the seven seas, and of course – as they often say – to swab the deck. Common sense told me that it was far from easy, but the notion of being a sailor had already been romanticised in my mind!

In June this year, that idea came to fruition when I joined Biosphere Foundation as a crew member on *Mir's* voyage from Phuket to Singapore. It was the final leg of their journey after having spent nearly eight months surveying marine mammals in Sri Lanka as well as documenting plastic pollution in the Bay of Bengal with 5 Gyres. *Mir* was anchored off Chalong Bay where the waters were calm and the gentle lapping of waves against the hull lulled me to sleep every night. Suffice it to say, all romantic notions of sailing went out the window with the abrupt end of the 'calm before the storm'.

About an hour after casting off, we found ourselves in a storm. I watched, transfixed, as the Andaman Sea started to surge up around us. Pelting rain, crashing waves, gusty

winds: I felt as though I were in a washing machine especially when rogue waves sloshed over portholes below deck. Never had I witnessed Mother Nature unleash such raw power before. As *Mir* lurched wildly from side to side, so did my senses at that point. Though seasick, I still felt safe knowing that she was in capable hands.

Over the days, the challenges of being at sea became increasingly apparent to me. Extreme weather conditions meant that it could get very cold during a downpour, yet swing to being unrelentingly hot on a cloudless day. Then came the haze, which blanketed the sea in a shroud of greyish white, reducing our visibility to a grim 0.5 nautical miles – a sufficiently short distance for an unnoticed vessel to hit us in less than a minute.

Since all crew members were assigned staggered watches aboard *Mir*, I had to learn to reset my body clock to my slots of 2 to 6pm and 2 to 6am. A buddy system was used for both safety and morale. I will definitely not forget how it was imperative to learn the art of balancing on a swaying vessel. It's akin to perching above the fulcrum on a see-saw!

From learning how to helm and identify navigation lights of ships at night, to making *pol sambal* (Sri Lankan coconut salad) and sighting dolphins, this is one collective experience I will never forget. Thank you Biosphere for having me on board and for fulfilling my childhood dream. Cheers to the friendships forged over space and time. "I'll make a sailor out of you yet!" – and they have, or the beginnings of one, anyway. Come join us!

www.biosfirindonesia.org