

## **WHO WAS JOHN PAUL JONES**

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I found out about the Knight Essay Contest through my years of experience and involvement in T.S.C.A.R.

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Born in Kirkcudbright, Scotland on July 6, 1747, John Paul Jones was bound to be a master of the seven seas. Jones' real birth name actually never included the name Jones, his first name was John and his last was Paul, just like his father. He grew up in a poor Scottish home, where his dad was a gardner and his mom was a domestic servant. Jones started his naval career by enlisting in the British Merchant Marine as a seamen apprentice or cabin boy around the age of 13 aboard a boat named *Friendship*, which was bound for Virginia.

After a few years of trading goods and resources aboard the *Friendship*, he was released from his apprenticeship in 1764, when the shipping company that he was working for ran out of business. To find a new way of living at sea, John found a slave trade business that he could work for, in an attempt to try and save up money to live near his brother, William Paul, who had a tailor shop in Fredriskcburg, Virginia. While working for King George in the slave trade, Jones salied back and forth from Africa to the West Indies for 2 years.

After his last shipment of slaves aboard the *Two Friends*, he decided to immediately quit this "abominable trade", after docking in Kingston, Jamaica. While stranded in Kingston, he met a fellow Scot named Samuel McAdams who he knew from his hometown and was heading back to Scotland. McAdams offered him free passage home only if he would help keep up his brig, that just happened to be named *John*, on the journey home. While aboard the *John*, Mr. McAdams and the second-in-command both contracted an illness with fever and passed away. Jones was the only one left with the navigational skills to get them home. When he arrived back home, the wealthy owners of the boat were so delighted that he saved it, they gave him command and named him master a.k.a. captain of his first ship at the age of 21.

During his voyages as captain on the *John*, Jones gained a well-known reputation of being a strict and vocal leader with his crew members. He was known to flog his crewmates as punishment, using the notorious cat-o'-nine-tails. Once the owners sold the *John* in 1771, Jones had to find work for another ship, which wasn't hard due to the owners giving high recommendations of Jones to other owners. "In October 1772 John became captain of a square-rigged ship, the *Betsy*" (Lutz 21). On this ship he worked alongside a merchant, referred to by Jones as a "ringleader" who was from the Carribean island of Tobago. While in Tobago, Jones was cornered by a group of his crew, headed by this ringleader whom he stabbed and killed with his sword in self defense. Since the ringleader was a Toboggan native, Jones was afraid that his

trial would be biased, so he fled to the other side of the island and left on a ship with the name of John Jones, so that he would not be easily found. At this time he was then declared a fugitive pirate by the governing body of Tobago. Jones then has a few mysterious months of his pirate life, which are nearly impossible to accurately describe, due to his name change. The now John Jones makes an appearance in Virginia in 1774 to settle the will of his oldest brother who died the year before. While in the Colonies, Jones makes a new acquaintance with Joseph Hewes, in Philadelphia. “With the help of Joseph Hewes, a North Carolina Delegate of the Second Continental Congress”, he gains the title of first lieutenant of the Continental Navy (Lehman 27).

At the beginning of Jones’ Naval career, “the marine committee hired Jones to fit out the 20-gun *Alfred*, the first ship purchased by Congress”, on December 7, 1775 (Hearn 16). Thus making Jones the first ever to captain an official Continental Naval Vessel, because they did not have a captain at the time, which gave Jones full command since he was the first lieutenant. While aboard *Alfred*, he sailed to the Bahamas as a part of a squadron and in March 1776 he captured New Providence. Jones was then promoted to captain of the 12-gun vessel, *Providence*, on August 8, 1776. During his time as captain for *Providence*, Jones embarked on a seven week cruise where he captured or destroyed a 16 ship British fleet. Once the *Providence* was retired, Jones was named captain of the 18-gun sloop-of-war *Ranger*, which was the most powerful type of single deck warships. With his new ship Jones was directed by Benjamin Franklin “to sail to the British Isles ‘for the purpose of distressing the enemies of the United States by seas, or otherwise” (Lehman 28).

After terrorizing the British Isles, Jones visits France and meets King Louis XVI. Jones, reputation was growing popular in France for defeating 16 British ships. Louis XVI admired this and liked Jones and they became friends. King Louis rewarded Jones by giving him the *Bonhomme Richard*, which he used to battle the *Serapis*, a 44-gun, two decker warship just off the coast of Flamborough Head. In this epic battle, as the *Bonhomme Richard* begins to sink prompting Jones to heroically crash his ship into the *Serapis*, latching the two boats together, making it impossible for the Brits to escape. At this time Captain Richard Pearson of the *Serapis* calls out to Jones as if he has surrendered, then Jones exclaims his famous line “I have not yet begun to fight!” Jones and his crew eventually win the battle by taking over the British frigate and escaping to the Netherlands. This battle inscribed “his name permanently into the annals of Naval history for remarkable single-ship action” (Hearn 16).

Word of his incredible underdog victory spread like wildfire throughout Europe and so he decided to enjoy his days of triumph in France, where the people there loved him, especially King Louis. Throughout these joyous days Jones revelled in his victories and by the king's request, became subject of a life size marble statue, created by the famous sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. Finally returning back to the now newly named United States of America in 1781, Jones was granted his next warship named *America*. Jones didn't just command the ship, but he also helped in the design process as the *America* was being built. Although, around the time that Jones received his new ship, the Revolutionary War was coming to a close, meaning that Congress sold Jones' boat to France as a token for allies in the Revolutionary War. Understandably, Jones was upset when Congress took away his boat and rejected his idea of becoming an admiral of his own fleet in the US.

Jones continued searching for his dream and found an opportunity while roaming around in France. He was offered by Catherine the Great to help the Ottoman Turks in the second Russo-Turkish War. Taking his opportunity, Jones spent a few years fighting in this war by commanding a squadron of ships. After fighting in this war for a few years, Jones returned to France in 1790 and still wanted to settle down in America, but he stays in France hoping that he might get called back to take command of a naval fleet. John lived in Paris for another uneventful two years before he died there on July 18th, 1792 - only 10 days after his 45th birthday.

Over his lifetime John Paul Jones never had one permanent home on land, but that was because his home was the sea and he knew it from the beginning. Jones' adventures at sea took him all around the world including America, the Caribbean Sea, Africa, Europe and even Russia at the tail end of his career. Many stories were told of John Paul Jones and many recognitions were awarded to him while he was both alive and dead. Jones captained too many ships to count and was heavily praised for the leadership he brought on board whether he was fighting in a battle, fleeing from a country, or trading goods for shipping companies. After his death, Jones was a forgotten soul, but in 1905 his coffin was rediscovered and President Theodore Roosevelt had his body shipped back over to the US to give him a proper burial in Annapolis, Maryland at the US Naval Academy in honor of what he did for the US during the American Revolutionary War. In his beautiful and elaborate ceremony, President Roosevelt solidified his name into history as the Father of the U.S. Navy.

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