

Lifting, transporting and launching the *Pieces of Eight* replica pirate ship for its maiden voyage was a task that crews from Miller Transfer and W.O. Grubb Crane Rental enjoyed.

D. Ann Shiffler reports

Ship Ahoy!

Starting this month, the pirate ship *Pieces of Eight* can be seen sailing up and down the Virginia Beach coastline, offering pirate voyages to adventure-seeking tourists. Back in March, the ship was launched in the ocean thanks to the lifting, rigging and transport expertise of crews from Miller Transfer and W.O. Grubb Crane Rental.

At 125,000 pounds, 65 feet long, 12 feet wide and 16 feet tall, the ship as an object to lift and transport would not be considered extraordinary, says Lynne Southcombe, rigging superintendent for W.O. Grubb.

"It certainly isn't that big or heavy, and we were in a wide open area with no wires or trees," says Southcombe. "It was a simple job, even though it was unusual."

After the ship was completed at a Virginia Beach shipbuilding facility, the task at hand last spring was to get the craft from the shipyard onto a trailer where it would be backed down to the water front, and then lifted off the trailer and placed into the water. Questions ranged from "does the boat have engineered lift points to will it float once put in the water?"

Using a spreader bar system, Southcombe and his crew decided the best way to lift the boat was to use 12-inch wide straps in a basket configuration.

"Each one was good for 92,000 pounds," says Southcombe. "We had plenty of rigging but the question was where do we place the straps to be able to pick it up level? We needed to keep from having 90,000 pounds on one strap and 20,000 pounds on the other."

With no engineered lift points identified, Southcombe figured the weight of the ship to be mainly in the center hull area, the location of the engines. Using a 200-ton capacity Demag AC535 for the lift, Southcombe says the crane was placed parallel to the boat, which was secured to a platform on which it

was built. The straps were placed around the hull and the platform, in order to lift both at once. The boat was swung about 180 degrees to place it on the trailer, Southcombe says.

The crane lifted the craft gently up a few feet off the ground, to assure the straps were in the right place to keep it level. Southcombe

directed the operator to bring the boat back down and asked for one of the straps to be moved about six inches to better distribute the weight of the boat. It was then lifted and placed on a Miller Transfer trailer system.

"We used an extendable tri-axle step trailer and a four-axle tractor," says Craig Smith, district sales manager for Miller Transfer, located in Norfolk, VA. "We secured the platform to the trailer using chains."

Once secured on the trailer, the boat's journey to the sea was quite short, no more than 500 yards, Smith estimates.

From that point, the Demag was again marshaled to lift the boat off the trailer and set it in the water. This time the boat would be separated from the platform and the slings placed around the hull where Southcombe had previously marked for them to be placed.

Smith agrees that the project was not that difficult, but that special care needed to be taken due to the investment the owners had in the brand new boat, which was commissioned for his tourist business. The owners were onsite to watch the launch and christen the ship.

"Everyone wishes the owners success," Smith says. "It's totally an entrepreneurial effort. The guy had sunk his life savings into this idea. But everyone seems to think it will do well."

"It was a fun project because there is so much human interest in the project," Smith says. "Everyone was so excited, especially the owners. She even came up and hugged the driver."



A 200-ton capacity Demag AC535 owned by W.O. Grubb was used to lift the ship onto the trailer and off the trailer into the water



Miller Transfer used an extendable tri-axle step trailer and a four-axle tractor to transport the vessel down a slope, about 500 yards to the dock