

Masthead Logo

The Iowa Review

Volume 1
Issue 2 *Spring*

Article 16

1970

Sailing to the Happy Isles

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Recommended Citation

Brady, William. "Sailing to the Happy Isles." *The Iowa Review* 1.2 (1970): 21-21. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1049>

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SAILING TO THE HAPPY ISLES

On the Decennial of His Enlistment in the Navy

One might have thought, the skids well juiced,
the soft-drink bottle broken on the bow,
such a jury-rigged vessel would go down
ch-gunk at its berth as soon as it got loose
from the supporting and restraining ways.
A real abortion: no place for the crew,
iron to the water, balsam below, boosted
by paddle wheels, propellers, oars and sails.
Yet there it wallows by, seagoing farce:
the S. S. Brady ten years out of port,
bound for the baths of all the western stars.
On the canted bridge the captain blots a chart,
curses his sextant and lays another course
to calm his paddling, screwing, rowing, tacking heart.