

Tom's Gone to Hilo

1. Tommy's gone on a whalin' ship,
Away, to Hilo
Tommy's gone on a damn long trip.
Tom's gone to Hilo.
2. He never kissed his girl goodbye
Away, to Hilo
He left her and he told her why
Tom's gone to Hilo.
3. She'd robbed him blind and left him broke
Away, to Hilo
He'd had enough, gave her the poke
Tom's gone to Hilo.
4. His half pay it went, it went like chaff
Away, to Hilo
She hung around for the other half
Tom's gone to Hilo.
5. She drank and boozed his pay away
Away, to Hilo
with a weather eye on his next pay-day
Tom's gone to Hilo.
6. Tommy's gone and left and left her flat
Away, to Hilo
Tommy's gone, and he won't come back.
Tom's gone to Hilo.

This short and popular version was sung by **Bob Davenport** at <https://youtu.be/9NsHfG0mVtg>

Notes

A **tops'l halyard** shanty

Alternative names: John's gone to Hilo, Tom's gone to Hilo

Glorieta del Ilo, by Reinaldo Ponce

The pavilion / gazebo of José Galvez
Port of Ilo, Southern Peru

from [wikimedia commons](#)

Hugill, Stan, 1994, *Shanties from the Seven Seas* :

"*Tom's (or John's) Gone to Hilo* was a tops'l halyard song, and one which never found favour with the afterguard, as it took too long to hoist the yard to it on account of the slow and lethargic way in which it was sung by a good shanty man. It was rather difficult to sing correctly, but even so it was popular with the crowd, particularly for heavy lifts.

"... The place name Hilo – whether in Hawaii or Peru – is pronounced with a soft "i", but seamen always pronounced the soft i's in songs as "eye", e.g. Rio – Rye-O, California - Califor-nye-O, etc. Therefore Hilo was sung High low. ...

Hugill's version has 19 verses, starting

1. Tommy's gone, what shall I do?
Away, you Hee-lo-o-o
Tommy's gone, an' I'll go too!
Tom's gone to Hilo.

2. Tommy's gone to Hilo town
Where all them girls, they do come down.

3. Hilo town is in Peru
It's just the place for me an' you.

4. Tommy's gone to Liverpool ...

It goes on to name a range of destinations for Tom.

Where is Hilo?

The [Shropshire Boatmen](#) wrote:

The present day Hilo is a large town on Hawaii while the Hilo referred to in the shanty is more likely to be ['Ilo' in Peru](#) where many sailing ships went to load nitrates.

Hear their version at <youtu.be/atSefUTr9Yg>.

Ilo - read about the Peruvian port of Ilo on <wikipedia.org>

