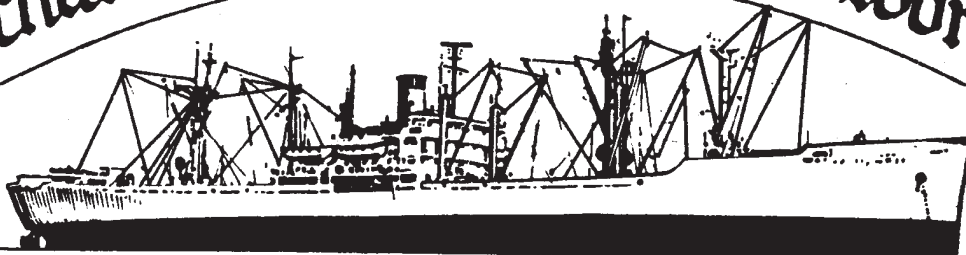


U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans World War II



Volume 27

The Anchor Light

Number 9
September 2009

TAKE OUT OF TOWN VISITORS TO . . . VISIT THE S.S. LANE VICTORY

**A FULLY OPERATIONAL WWII VICTORY SHIP
OPEN DAILY AT BERTH 94 IN SAN PEDRO**

**“DREADFUL
LOOKING
OBJECTS...
BUILT
BY THE
MILE,
CHOPPED
OFF BY THE
YARD”**



By Keith Milton

As we made our way along the streets of San Francisco, my eyes were drawn irresistibly toward the wharf area. Suddenly I caught sight of the stern of a ship, battleship gray in color, with a naval gun mounted. I felt a sort of tightness in my chest, as I thought back 45 years, to my first ever sight of a Liberty ship.

That was January, 1944, at Engineer's Pier in Norfolk, Virginia, and

I was a green kid of 17. Although I was not exactly new to the seaman's life, having served two seasons on the Great Lakes during two summer vacations from high school, that was to be my first wartime salt-water assignment.

I was thrilled then and I was thrilled now as we drew closer to the last remaining Liberty Ship in its original unaltered condition. The S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien loomed large as we approached her berth at Fort Mason.

The most distinctive identifying

mark of any Liberty: the cambered black cap of her funnel; seemed stories high as we approached her accommodation ladder.

Once we were aboard, the years melted away and I knew my way around her instantly. The deck department fo'c'sles, the crew messroom and the scullery that separated it from the gun crew messroom were still in their usual places, as were the galley with its huge coal fired range and steam tables, and the stack uptake (fidley) around the corner where we used to hang our laundry to dry.

Everything seemed smaller than I had remembered it, but I am told this often happens when you visit places from your youth. We spent the rest of the day aboard the O'Brien, as my wife waited patiently for me to get my fill of nostalgia.

Each different part of the ship that I visited brought forth some long forgotten incident or face from the past, and things that hadn't crossed my mind for 45 years were suddenly fresh and new again,

(Continued on page 10)

THE ANCHOR LIGHT

U.S. MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS
WORLD WAR II

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San Pedro, CA 90733

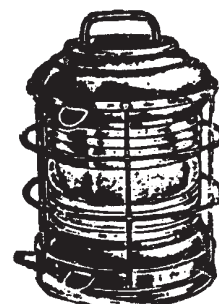
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MONTHLY MEETING

General meetings of the USMMVWWII are held the second Saturday of the month in the Lane's museum at Berth 94, San Pedro. Refreshments at 10 am Meeting at 10:30 am



VISIT THE SS LANE
VICTORY ON THE INTERNET
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HONORED SHIPS, SEPTEMBER 26 & 27, 2009

SS HENRY R. MALLORY, SS HEREDIA

SS HENRY R. MALLORY

Company: Agwilines, Inc. New York
 Master: Horace Rudolph Weaver
 Gross Tons: 6,442
 Home Port: New York, NY
 Built: 1916 @ Newport News, Virginia
 Dimensions: 424'x 54'x 22'

Sunk by the German submarine U-402 February 2, 1943 about 600 miles SSW of Iceland.

The passenger ship, SS Henry R. Mallory, was torpedoed by the German submarine U-402 (von Forstner) at 0538 GCT on February 2, 1943 about 600 miles SSW of Iceland (55-18 North/26-29 West) while en route from New York to Reykjavik, Iceland via Halifax, Nova Scotia in Convoy SC-118 (#33) with a cargo of clothing, food, trucks, tanks, cigarettes, and 610 bags of mail and 383 passengers.

The passengers were 136 U.S. Army personnel, 72 Marine Corps personnel, 173 Navy personnel and two civilians. In addition to the passengers, the ship carried a crew of 77 and an Armed Guard of 34. There were 270 men lost and 224 were saved. It is definitely known that 39 crew members were lost.

At 0538 GCT, a torpedo struck on the starboard side at #3 hold. After being hit, the ship did not list, or settle in the water. The main steam lines let go and the engines were secured. There was no fire and no radio damage.

It was firmly believed the ship would stay afloat for some time. Two of the after lifeboats were damaged when the hatch covers from #4 hold blew off and landed on them. Number 9 lifeboat was blown out of its chocks and #10 was damaged.

All of a sudden, the ship started to go down with the stern awash and a port list. Within 30 minutes after the attack the ship was gone.

When the ship started to list and go down by the stern, the abandonment of the vessel began. The only boat to get away safely from the starboard side was #5, and it was fully loaded.

Number 1 and 3 lifeboats capsized when they hit the water. On the port side, #6 and #8 boats were the only ones to get away. Number 2 and #4 capsized when lowered. The majority of the men on board jumped overboard and climbed aboard rafts. Many of them took to the donut-type, which capsized frequently.

Some life rafts were tied down with one inch lines and could not be cut or untied in time so these went down with the ship. The survivors were not sighted until four hours after the attack. No one in the convoy or in the 11 escort vessels

knew the Mallory had been hit.

The skipper of the USS Schenck (DD-159) who was sweeping well astern of the convoy for survivors from the British rescue ship SS Toward, saw lights in the distance and started to head in that direction. When he requested permission to investigate the lights, it was denied and he was informed the HMS Lobella would recover the survivors.

This decision cost the lives of scores of men struggling in the ice cold water. About four hours after the attack, the USCGC Bibb found a boat with survivors from the Mallory and it was only then that it was discovered the Mallory had been hit.

The Bibb picked up 205 survivors, three of whom died on board after being rescued. The USCGS Ingham picked up 24 survivors, two of whom died aboard the cutter.

The lifeboats that did get away from the Mallory were dangerously overloaded with 70-75 men. The bilge pumps failed to work so they bailed with their caps, cans or anything that would hold water. The men who were warmly clothed survived.

Those who were scantily clad died. Men on box-type rafts were in better condition than those recovered from the donut-type raft. Many were sighted within the donut rafts already dead from exposure and constant immersion in the very cold water.

The U-402 (von Forstner) was bombed and sunk in Mid Atlantic by aircraft from the USS Card (CVE-11) on October 13, 1943. There were no survivors.

Note: A well written account of this tragedy can be found in the book, "Bloody Winter" by John M. Waters, Jr.

MERCHANT SEAMEN LOST

- Alley, John W. (1st Engineer)
- Biber, Sol (Utility)
- Blanco, Binito (F/W)
- Brockett, Richard C. (Messman)
- Brodersen, William M. (Chief Mate)
- Chandler, Samuel (Oiler)
- Colleton, Francis J. (F/W)
- Daniels, Roland F. (2nd Mate)
- DeCruz, Joseph (Cook)
- DePina, Antonio (Cook)
- Driggers, Haven L. (2nd Engineer)
- Ferreira, Walter (Utility)
- Gorman, Edward A. (4th Mate)
- Grabenstein, Joseph (Doctor)
- Hammershoy, Jay A. (Engine Cadet)
- Holland, Richard E. (Deck Cadet)
- Lawless, Olon N. (Utility)
- Leamon, Lester W. (2nd Mate)
- Lintz, Emory S. (Chief Engineer)
- McCaffery, Robert E. (F/W)
- McCarthy, Thomas J. (Messman)
- McLaughlin, Phillip J. (Waiter)
- Marcolongo, Michael S. (Messman)
- Mathews, Francis J. (OS)
- Mihalik, Stephen (F/W)

- Montanez, Ramon (Utility)
- Nicholson, George (Utility)
- O'Brien, John (Oiler)
- Race, George R. (Eng. Cadet)
- Reynolds, Hayes S. (Oiler)
- Roth, William R. (Oiler)
- Schilling, Edward J. (Purser)
- Soto, Peter (Carpenter)
- Stephens, John E. (Messman)
- Tangen, Arnold L. (Radio Operator)
- Thomas, John R. (Cook)
- Weaver, Horace R. (Master)
- Williams, David R. (Waiter)
- Zornow, Otto M. (Chief Mate)

SS HEREDIA

Company: Clark & Co. Ltd., Belfast
 Gross Tons: 4,732 tons
 Home Port: New York

Sunk by the German submarine U-506 on May 19, 1942 about 2 miles off the Louisiana Coast.

Completed in July 1908 as Heredia for Tropical Fruit SS Co Ltd (United Fruit), Glasgow. 1914 transferred to US flag. 1933 renamed General Pershing for States Steamship Company, San Francisco CA. 1937 returned to United Fruit SS Co and renamed Heredia.

At 08.56 hours on 19 May 1942, the unescorted Heredia (Master Erwin F. Colburn) was hit by three torpedoes from U-506 two miles southeast of the Ship Shoal Buoy, while proceeding on a nonevasive course at 13.5 knots.

The first and second torpedoes struck the port quarter aft at the #3 and #4 holds. The third torpedo struck amidships on the starboard side, causing her to sink within three minutes. The explosions blew the decks up, stopped the engines and destroyed two lifeboats and two rafts.

The survivors of the eleven officers, 37 crewmen, eight passengers and six armed guards (the ship was armed with one 3in and two .30cal guns) had no time to launch boats and only two rafts got

away.

Twenty-three survivors were picked up by the shrimp trawlers Papa Joe (1), Conquest (2), J. Edwin Treakle (10) and Shellwater (10) and landed at Morgan City, Louisiana. A seaplane picked up three other survivors and landed them at New Orleans. Six officers, 24 crewmen, one passenger and five armed guards were lost.

MERCHANT SEAMEN LOST

- Alvarez, Frank (Messman)
- Blanco, Antonio (F/W)
- Bruaw, Glenn R. (Deck Cadet)
- Cunningham, James (Utility)
- Dover, William K. (Wiper)
- Ebel, Irwin S. (Engine Cadet)
- Eichell, Charles F. (Purser)
- Fisher, Albert H. (Carpenter)
- Fontana, Roger I. (Radio Operator)
- Ford, Henry (Cook)
- Gomez, Ernesto (Messman)
- Gomez, Luis (Oiler)
- Green, Robert S. (Oiler)
- Hunt, Hugh (Cook)
- Iturra, Ananias (Chief Engineer)
- Leathan, Walter G. (Messman)
- Lord, Archibald S. (Messman)
- MacDonald, George E. (2nd Engineer)
- Mosquera, Marceline (F/W)
- Murcia, Pascual (Wiper)
- Ojen, Enrique (Oiler)
- Paliura, Andrew (AB)
- Patterson, Arthur (Steward)
- Pearcey, Joseph P. (1st Engineer)
- Rego, Jose (Oiler)
- Roberts, Daniel J. (OS)
- Sayan, Clifton J. (Messman)
- Seebeck, Ernest A. (Steward)
- Tamayo, Mansueto M. (AB)
- United States Navy Armed Guard Drummond, B.M (Coxswain)
- Griffin, Robert E. (Apprentice Seaman)
- Gray (Apprentice Seaman)
- Plans (Apprentice Seaman)
- Mascinach (Apprentice Seaman)

COLORADO WESTERN SLOPE CHAPTER PICNIC



James Burkhart of the Colorado Western Slope Chapter sent in this great photo of their chapter gathering for their annual summer picnic in Grand Junction, Colorado. Three members were unable to attend and missed out on the camaraderie and good food. *The Anchor Light* would be very happy to receive photos and news from other chapters too!

Visit www.usmm.org
 for a wealth of seafaring
 information

JUMPING SHIP, BILLY BOYS AND HOME AGAIN

By Frank Finch

In the March 2009 *Anchor Light* I wrote concerning my last Norwegian ship and sailing on my first American ship. So now I write on joining my last American ship and heading home to Australia.

It was Wednesday, 25 September 1946, a bright and sunny day and I would spend my last night ashore in San Pedro, sleeping in the "Globe" movie house, one of two on 6th Street. The all night movie house allowed you to curl up in one of the double seaters.

My friend Eddie had managed to bum a few dollars and we drank most of it, but left enough for us to pay the fifty cents for a cheap bed at the "movies." Next morning after cleaning up in the toilet room Eddie remarked "I never thought of it before, Aussie, but have you sold any blood lately.?"

I asked, "What do you mean if I've sold any blood." Eddie explained that around on 7th Street there is a place that gave \$5 for a pint of blood, and added, "So before we go to the union hall, we'll drop around there and sell a bit of blood."

A short time later, we both stood at the desk of the matronly looking woman in charge. She filled out a form for Ed, and into a back room he went. Then I fronted up. "Your name?" She asked. "Finch" I replied. "Frederick B." She looked up.

"Oh, you are not American, I'm sorry but no aliens required, thank you." With that she went into the back room to attend to Ed.

"What a lot of crap" I remarked to Eddie as we headed to the Del Rio Club, with five dollars between us and not ten. "I sail your ships, yet they don't want my blood." From the Del Rio we walked around to the NMU Hall along Palas Verdes Street. The union room was full of seamen and there were jobs going everywhere.

The dispatcher had just finished writing the list of ships and jobs up. There were ships to the Middle East, South America, everywhere but Australia. However, there was one ship that caught my eye. SS *Bulkero*, bound for Bataan in the Philippines, then on to the Persian Gulf.

I didn't like the idea of going back to the Gulf, but perhaps if I was to get to Bataan, I may have a chance of getting to Australia. I thought about it last time I was there, but never carried it out, that is, "jump ship."

The second job was called for the day. "A bosun for the tanker *Bulkero*," called the dispatcher. I was third on the bosun list and the other two fellows didn't want it. So I went forward and produced my assignment card and signed on. S/T

Bulkero was an 11,016 grt tons; she was built in 1944 at the Welding Shipyards, Norfolk, and was referred to as a Ludwig ship.

Bulkero was anchored just inside the breakwater at the northern end of the harbor. So it meant catching a launch out to her. As I climbed the gangway and stepped on deck, I met the captain and mate going ashore.

"You the bosun?" asked the mate.

"Yes, I am," giving him the once over, as he was doing the same to me.

"You a Limey, huh?"

"No mister, I am Australian."

"Ah, a god damn Aussie" he says. At first I didn't know how to take that remark. But then he broke into a smile, as did the captain.

"Well bos, there's not much to do, just get her washed down, and a few stores to get aboard when they arrive."

The mate followed the captain down the gangway adding, "We sail at noon tomorrow."

We sailed right on time the following day, skirting Catalina Island and setting a course westward. Homeward bound for me. One way or another, I was going home. It was near on the three year mark since leaving Australia, and I was now very much homesick for family and friends.

Day after day we steamed with sunny blue skies and cool nights, with nothing to do except turn the crowd to and give them their work. At night I lay in my bunk and reminisced over the past 18 months since the last Atlantic convoy of World War II. My two mates, The Mouse and Bluey Fabian. Where were they now? I bet they were back home long ago.

The pitching and rolling of the ship brought me back to the present. I had been reminiscing far into the night, and the good weather we had been experiencing was now turning nasty.

The ship raised herself high on each wave and then buried her nose deep into the ocean. The sea rose to tremendous heights and huge waves came crashing down on our decks.

Our bows rose again from the sea to climb and shake herself free of the water, like some shaggy dog. For three days we battled through a force 12 storm and when the worst of the weather was over, it was found that cracks had developed around the midship house.

Another day passed and the storm had gone completely. Once more we were enjoying warm weather and cool nights. However, as we neared our destination, the days gradually became hotter.

Having sailed several thousand miles across the Pacific, we finally tied up to the oil wharf at Marivelles, Bataan. One morning while still discharging oil, Captain William sent for me.

The captain was a big man, maybe fifteen stones, maybe more, but a jovial and pleasant person. In the past weeks since leaving San Pedro he had spoken to me about his trips to Australia.

However, on this bright, cloudless sunny day, as I climbed the ladder to the bridge, I wondered why he had sent for me. I approached the captain sitting in his high chair gazing away towards the distant mountains on Bataan Peninsula. "I believe you want to see me, Captain" I said. He turned around slowly, his eyes traversing from the distant mountain ranges to the forepart of the ship and finally to me.

"Bosun, I have reason to believe you are about to 'jump' when we sail across to Manila, would this be correct?" Before I could answer he went on to say, "Now that would be a silly thing to do, Bos, and I must advise you against doing it. I knew the captain to be an honest man from what I had been told from other members of the crew.

"I don't know how you found out, Captain, but yes, I was thinking of dropping off over at Manila. I have no intention of going back to the Persian Gulf."

The captain deliberated for a moment, then speaking very slowly said, "Bos, I could stop you, I reckon I could have done the same myself many years ago." He then went on to say, "If you want to try getting home to Australia, then I'll work something out." He then told me that Manila is under "martial law" and he could not give me a discharge.

Adding also that once I left the ship, I would find things difficult ashore. Finishing off our conversation, he said, "In four hours time, Bos, after leaving here we will drop anchor in Manila Bay, in the meantime say nothing to anyone.

SS *Bulkero* sailed from Marivelles at midday and anchored late afternoon in Manila. Bay. A number of "bum-boats," fishing boats and larger cargo vessels surrounded us. As soon as we had dropped anchor and finished with engines, Captain Williams sent for me.

"Bosun, I am going ashore now and we will be just long enough to get my sailing orders through the Malacca Straits and uncleared mines. I expect to be underway again in two hours time. As I mentioned to you, over at Marivelles martial law is still enforced ashore. You will have to be careful and on your guard at all times.

"I have instructed the purser to make up you wages, so when you are ready call in one of the bum boats and they will be happy to land you on the beach for a couple of dollars. Best of luck bosun and I hope you make it home safely."

I left most of my things behind, taking only what I would need, and said good bye to a few of my friends who were in

the know as to what I was doing. I then called in one of the bumboats hanging around our stern and gave him five dollars for the trip ashore. Twenty minutes later I walked up the narrow strip of sand and climbed up onto the seawall.

Confronting me now was a very busy highway, "Dewey Boulevard." A short distance to my right I noticed some bombed out buildings. I learned later that they were the treasury and administration buildings. Rumor had it that quite a bit of gold bullion was still in the rubble.

Traffic flowed continually along the highway, and as I walked back along the seawall, I felt a little conspicuous with my sea-bag slung over my shoulder.

A few moments later and I was gazing into these bombed buildings and at all the people strolling by. So, it wasn't a good idea to hide my things or sleep there. I then retraced my walk back along the seawall and headed for Manila City.

As I kept walking I came face to face with a tall fair haired fellow about my own age. I could tell at a glance that he was a seaman of Scandinavian origin. "Er de Norsk sjoemen"? ("Are you a Norwegian seaman?") I asked.

He answered, "Yer er Norsk, er de"? ("Yes I am Norwegian, are you?")

"No, I answered in English." I knew that most Norwegians spoke better English than I could Norwegian. So with the small talk over, I pointed to where SS *Bulkero* was still at anchor and said, "I have just left that vessel."

What a change in my position, all in the space of a few minutes since landing on the beach. He was waiting to join a ship and was bumming around Manila, and I was looking for a place to camp.

He was billeted in the USS Club in "Dewey Lane," a short distance off Dewey Boulevard. He suggested that I come back with him and I might score a bed there.

What luck it was to meet up with Priebe (Peter) Petersen. The USS Club looked more like a mansion, a big white building and a swimming pool as well. I showed my American seamen's papers to the woman behind the counter, and no other questions were asked.

Luckily, a seaman had just checked out, so I finished up getting a bunk in Priebe's room, which also accommodated two other seamen.

Now that I had stowed my things and settled in, I gave Priebe \$20, adding, "Lead the way Priebe, where do we drink?" As things turned out later that night, I was pleased that I had given the lady back at the USS Club most of my money to put in the safe.

We drank at several different locations before finishing up later that night in the Silver Dollar Bar. We were only there a short while when we were joined

(Continued on page 4)

JUMPING SHIP, BILLY BOYS & HOME AGAIN, *CONT.*

by two young attractive ladies. A few more drinks and we finished up in a hut on the outskirts of town. The rest is history.

Those young ladies were grand masters at "rolling" (robbing) seamen. They had spiked our drinks in the hut, and I guess I got off light, only losing \$80 and coming out of that episode with my life. I had been rolled for the first time in my sea going career. So much for my first night in Manila! But it taught me a valuable lesson.

To stay alive in Manila, you had to be on guard always. Many a body was dragged out of the Penig River, their hands tied and throat cut. No matter how careful I tried to be I did slip up badly on a couple occasions.

One of these episodes happened several nights later. I woke up in a dimly lighted shack at the back of Clark Field Air Force base. With a throbbing head and a swinging kerosene lantern above the army cot I was sitting on, I slowly grasped the situation I was in.

I could make out a tall blond headed person, dressed in army fatigues. He was just walking back through the bamboo curtain with a 45 automatic in his hand. Both he and my lady friend were talking in whispers.

When she returned she explained that he wanted to do me harm but she talked him out of it. Telling me also that he was a deserter from the American Army and that he was training the "Huks."

By now my money had all but gone, and soon I would be broke in a strange, dangerous land. Every ship I boarded looking for work, it was the same old story. "No jobs today."

I couldn't stay in Manila indefinitely, and I couldn't get out of the damn place. I had been to the American War Shipping Administration. Yes, they had a ship going to Australia once a month. "How did you arrive in Manila, son? Sick you say. Alright then, get your discharge from the hospital and bring it to me."

That was the situation I was in. I hadn't been in the hospital to get a discharge.

When Captain Williams had entered me in the Bulker's log book I thought his report would have been, "Signed off sick." It wasn't till many years later, that

I found out different.

The captain had submitted his report on arrival in Galveston Texas, dated 24 January 1947. It stated "Reason for discharge in Manila: desertion or death." Seeing that I was still alive, my reason for being in Manila was desertion.

The report had been certified by the Honorable District Court, Southern District of Texas, dated 28 January 1947. The only thing I had in favor of not deserting the SS Bulker was the fact that Captain Williams had the ship's purser pay me my wages in full.

So the only thing I could do now was present myself to the Australian consular, Mr. Petersen. His office was on the second floor of the Manila Hotel. "How did you arrive here?" he asked. So I told him the truth, that Captain Williams had made it possible for me to leave the ship. I hadn't been home since 1943, and I had been trying to get home since the war ended.

"God," he says as we sit in the hotels lounge having a beer. Then adds, "I have over 500 Australians up here all wanting to get home, and I have a "fuzzy wuzzy boy" to get back to New Guinea." The consular was a jovial sort of person, looking more like a shearers cook.

His long white pants had shrunk -- well above his ankles, but he made you feel at ease. He was not the "high and mighty type" like some of the British consulars I'd had dealings with.

As days went by and my money now had dwindled to just a few dollars, I called again on the consular. He mentioned to me that a Mr. Clive Caldwell (Wing Commander Caldwell), a well known ex-Australian fighter pilot, was in Manila buying up American C47 Dakota planes for Butler Airways of New South Wales. Mr. Petersen was going to ask Caldwell to take the New Guinea boy back to Sydney.

He asked me would I be interested in flying too. "Mr. Consular," I said. "I would do that act a fellow did 2,000 years ago and walk across water if possible."

"Come in and see me in a couple of days time," said the consular. Two days later when I called at his office, what a disappointment it was for me. Mr. Caldwell wouldn't take us, insurance wise. He didn't want anything happening to the planes, or us.

The last of my money was now gone, and I was prepared to take a ship anywhere, just to get out of Manila. Very few people can understand the feeling of being stranded in a foreign country thousands of miles from home. "Still, it wasn't the first time, Finchy, old boy, so why bitch now?"

One bright and sunny afternoon, Prieben and I were walking along the sea wall bordering Dewey Boulevard. There sitting on the wall were two beautiful women, dressed in nice colored floral dresses.

Their legs crossed showing how shapely they were in high-heeled shoes. As we approached they smiled and invited us to sit with them. After a little small talk we invited them back to our room at the USS Club.

So we hailed a passing jeep taxi. As we sped along the highway, both Prieben and my hands began to wander and explore. God! What a surprise when I got a handful of cotton wool for boobs, and Prieben, much more. We stopped the jeep and got out, but not before we gave our female impersonators a belt in the mouth.

Boy, how that disturbed them both. We took off running down Dewey Boulevard with these two "Billy Boys" chasing us screaming their heads off, and throwing their high heeled shoes at us, retrieving them and throwing them again.

The taxi driver who must have known them was standing in the jeep laughing his head off, as were the people on the sea wall. I had heard of these "Billy Boys" but never thought that I would be taken in by one.

On the last day of the following week, I had just finished breakfast and was relaxing in the swimming pool. Helen, the consular's secretary, drove up and knelt beside the pool, and said. "Pack your bag, Mr. Caldwell has decided to take you."

"Wow! You beauty, I'm on my way home at last." I look at the face of a roommate Roy. "What about my mate here, do you think Caldwell will take him too?" Helen wasn't quite sure, but told Roy to pack his bag also. By now we both had nothing to pack.

All our gear had been sold to exist. All we had was a khaki shirt and khaki pants. What away to be arriving home after three years away. Mr. Caldwell and his six Dakotas were already lined up on the runway when we arrived at Clark Field.

Naturally he wasn't too pleased to have a third person thrust on him at the last moment. However, he had papers drawn up for us to sign. Words to the effect that we wouldn't hold the company responsible if anything was to happen to us on the trip to Australia.

The three of us, Roy, plus the New Guinea boy and me, climbed into our plane and sat on the floor among crates of cargo. We sat huddled and hanging onto what ever was handy. Several hours later we landed on a jungle air-strip on Samar Island, 340 miles south. Our next stop was on Moratoi Island, and here we spent the night with some of Caldwell's air force friends.

On taking off the next morning, the Perspex observation dome on top of the plane took off as well and this left a hole about four feet in diameter. The wind came in and the temperature dropped alarmingly, and we three froze.

Mr. Caldwell came out where he was flying co-pilot. He had been flying

Spitfire planes in World War II and not C47s. He gave us two blankets and one flying suit to keep us warm. He said also that they would come down under 10,000 feet where it wouldn't be so cold.

Boy, how we appreciated those blankets, as we only had a khaki shirt and pants on. Roy and I decided that the New Guinea boy would be much warmer in the flying suit, so we helped to put him in it.

Then we wrapped the blankets around ourselves, but still we froze. I sat there with wishful eyes, looking at the "fuzzy wuzzy boy" in that nice warm flying suit.

Our next stop was Darwin, the capital city in what is called the Northern Territory of Australia. Here again Caldwell looked after us by having billeted the three of us with his Air Force mates. Another mishap occurred here when our plane was swinging around and collided with a post, striking our wing tip.

However, this and where the dome use to be were both repaired. We then flew onto Long Reach in Central Queensland and had another stop over. Very early the next morning, we took off for the final run to Sydney. On approaching the city all, six planes flew in formation over the harbor, and what a sight it must have been from the ground looking up.

We landed at Sydney's Mascot Airport on December 3, 1946. Just on three years since I had left. Here I was back home with no money and just the clothes I was wearing. But wait, I had a carton of Yankee cigarettes and a carton of chewing gum. Wow!

What a way to arrive in a big city. Me in dirty tropical khaki shirt and pants, ready to drop off me for the want of a wash. I hitched a ride to the city in a delivery van to Central railway station.

From there I had a 20 minute walk to where I had heard my family were living. So, my World War II period ended that day at Mascot Airport, while other service men were already back home, and discharged. Australia! I too am back home!

LOCATOR COLUMN

Are you looking for information on an old buddy or a favorite ship?

We will print your request in *The Anchor Light* -- just send your question to the USMMVWWII office.

IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT D. TOMPKINS

USMMVWWII sponsor and gangway watch died October 28, 2009. Our condolences to friends and family.

Let's hear from you --

We are always looking for stories from Anchor Light Readers!

If you are sending an article for publication in *The Anchor Light* and have used a computer to write it, please send it to me via e-mail.

frances@thronson.net
Otherwise, just send to the office
c/o The Anchor Light.

“SAILED ON NINE SHIPS...STILL DON'T KNOW HOW TO SWIM”

BOB BELANDER
1922-2009

By Jan Michaelis

Another shipmate “finished with engines” Bob Belander wrote his sea-going bio for me some years ago. Here are excerpts from his many voyages, beginning with one ship, recently detailed in the April 2009 Anchor Light, in an article titled, “Coming Full Circle,” the S.S. Edward Canby.

Here's Bob story:

My 4th ship was the SS. Edward Canby, and guess who was on board as engine room cadet? Bob Mader. We met again many, many years later on the S.S. Lane Victory and became fast friends.

The log of the S.S. Edward Canby: Left Portland 24 June 1943 on an around the world voyage. In Calcutta, India, we loaded 300 live monkeys loaded in cages on top and outside of #4 hatch. One ordinary seaman had to feed and clean them every day.



It was cold when we arrived in New York, we anchored out in the harbor, no sooner had we dropped the hook when a tug came alongside and took off the load of monkeys. Ten or 12 monkeys died on the way over, had a burial service for the poor monkeys, as they went overboard. The monkeys were going to be used to help perfect a polio vaccine.

Steam schooner S.S. George L. Olson, Oliver J. Olson Company, San Pedro. Well, I received one of those letters from the people called the U.S. Army Draft Board. I went up to this office in San Pedro, told the girl “There are merchant ships you can see from your window that cannot sail because there are no crews available.”

All she said was “If you don't report in 30 days, the FBI will pick you up and escort you to the draft board office.”

Next stop, the union hall, “Got anything leaving tomorrow?” Steam schooner needed an oiler, left San Pedro the next day. Crews' quarters were in the stern and several steps down. A pretty odd event aboard in the afternoon.

Heard a strange noise, woke up and saw a huge rat climbing up those steps, I suppose for fresh air. Even with the draft board after me, I am only making one trip on this tub. To oil the shaft alley you almost had to crawl.

May 1944 still had some time before the 30 days of the long arm of the U.S. Army; its back to the union hall, asked for anything going on a long trip. Of course the dispatcher did not know when or where a ship would go; fortunately I never heard from the draft board again.

Liberty ship, S.S. Francis Warren, Coastwise-Pacific Far East Line. We sailed from New York, Jan 1944, sailing as firemen-watertender, major ports were Guantanamo, Cuba, then via the Panama Canal, to Honolulu, Port Allen, Kauai (load was all bags of sugar), then Port Chicago.

I paid off and took a train to Auburn, Washington, which was near my hometown of Enumclaw, Washington. Enumclaw is an Indian name meaning “Mount of Evil Spirits.” Now you know where I came from.

Liberty ship, S.S. Martin Johnson, began its long journey in May 1944, going up the Hooguly River, a branch of the Ganges River, to Calcutta. We began to see dead bodies floating down stream. Someone told me the dead women float one way and men the opposite way. One face down and one face up, forget now which was which. Bodies were everywhere on shore as well, not enough trucks to haul them away.

S.S. Twin Falls Victory, an 8,500, was my last ship. Loaded with 10,500 tons of naval ordinance, everything from 30 caliber bullets to 16” projectiles and huge powder bags. Never lost any sleep, if she blows up I will never know it.

Never went ashore, from 25 April 1945 to 3 December 1945. After loading munitions at Beaver, Oregon, the ship made port at, Ulithi, Leyte Bay, Entiwetok and then final docking at Port Chicago, California.

This was the end of my sea going life. I went back to work in a cabinet shop in Seattle, Washington. I loved the sea, but would rather be a woodworker.

[Jan picks up with Bob's story here:] Bob also sailed on the S.S. George Chamberlain, around the world; the S.S. Waipio, Matson Line, a 1918 shipping Board Ship; the S.S. John C. Ainsworth, Seattle to Dutch Harbor, Alaska

A major story about Bob Belander and the S.S. Lane Victory was printed back in May of 2004 in the Antelope Valley Press. I quote a portion of that article:

A PROUD MERCHANT MARINE MOMENT



By Robert Hahn

Canton Hall of Fame Chapter

It was September of 2007 and I was at the Louisville, Ohio, Constitution Day Parade when approached by Shirley Toland of the Stark County (Ohio) Veterans Clinic checking on the possibility of getting a merchant marine flag for their veterans group.

Our chapter, the "Canton Hall of Fame Chapter of the United States Merchant Marine and Navy Armed Guard Veterans of World War II" had two extra flags; we were more than happy to give their group a flag.

I thanked Ms. Toland for her desire to honor the merchant marine by wanting to include our flag with the other service flags on display; I sent her group a flag the following day.

In the spring of 2008 Shirley phoned me and asked if I would want to stand with the merchant marine flag on a float in the Pro Football Hall of Fame Grand Parade? Her request came as a complete shock and caught me completely off guard! I really didn't know how to respond....

She then went on to explain about the float they were building: the name of their group was the Canton Veterans Health Administration; the theme for the parade was "Freedom." The title of their float was "Freedom Float" and they wanted all of the branches of the service from World War II represented on the float.

Once I recovered from the surprise of the call and the request, I knew it would

“Bob Belander said he had an intense interest in ships and the sea when he was young. He tried enlisting in the Navy in December of 1941, but failed the eye test. He fulfilled his desire for sea service by joining the merchant marine in May 1942 and was trained at Port Hueneme, shipping out at age 19.”

Bob loved the Lane Victory; on our cruises when his watch in the engine room was over, instead of grabbing sack time, he would visit with the passengers, telling of his WWII experiences and promoting the Lane at every opportunity.

His talent as a cabinetmaker was displayed on many cruises in the form of large cedar chests with nautical motif that would be raffled off during the cruises.

be an honor to stand with the flag of the merchant marine on a float commemorating freedom. After all, it has unfortunately not always been true that the merchant marine have been asked to participate in these types of events with the other services.

I called Shirley back and told her I would be proud and honored to stand with my flag!

I will always remember riding atop the Canton Veterans Health Administration Freedom Float with representatives of all the other services. We got to know each other well and all enjoyed the experience to the fullest — they were a great group of guys.

And, as if the experience itself wasn't incredible in itself — the Freedom Float won two awards: The Exceptional Merit Award and Best Use of Festival Theme!

Shirley Toland, her group members, and all of the parade volunteers were wonderful. They even gave me my name plate from the float and I will treasure it always. It was a tribute to the merchant marine to be asked to have our flag on the Freedom Float along with the other services represented.

Thank you from all merchant mariners!

[Mr. Hahn also took the "Honor Flight" out of the Akron Canton airport in May of 2008. He says "It was great so see the WWII memorial and most of the other veterans' memorials. I was the only merchant marine out of the 145 veterans on the flight."]

Today we say goodbye to another shipmate, one who left a bit of history behind of his experiences at sea in time of war. He considered himself extremely lucky because none of the ships he served on drew enemy fire at any time, even during the large convoy runs across the North Atlantic.

Considering the more than 700 ships and more than 8,000 crew were lost, Bob was blessed he never needed to know how to swim.

[Editor's note: Bob was kind enough to make me several beautiful boxes to “organize” all my papers in. They are a pleasure to behold, though sadly, they do not magically organize papers! He was a great craftsman and a kind man.]

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- White w/ Lane Victory silkscreen (1124)
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- Stars and Stripes (red, white, blue w/ Lane Victory embroidery) (1120)



1222



1117



1121



US MM Veteran w/ ship



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- Lane Victory broad side (8205)
- Lane Victory starboard (8200)
- T-2 Tanker (8202)
- Victory Ship, VC2 (8221)
- Victory Ship, Navy APA, black & white (8198)



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Navy with Gold (7134)

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- Lane Victory Floating Ship (7117) \$2
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We have a wide variety of tee-shirts and denim shirts. More coming next month.
Check www.lanevictory.org for more styles.



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Also available on a long-sleeved denim shirt with "We Can Do It" design on the back. Item 2727 \$35
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The Lane logo is available on a variety of shirts. Call the shop for available styles.

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Ash, navy or white with small Lane Victory silkscreen, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL (2308) \$25
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Anchor & Prop Pin \$10 (6114)



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S.S. LANE VICTORY BOOK SHOP

Experience Adventures and High Jinx at Sea

History and Heroism – All from the Comfort of Your Easy Chair

NEW! American Mariner. Herbert Hahn, \$29, #3138.

The story of a great ship and its role in the history of America's proud maritime heritage. Aside from his own wartime love affair with her and some of the recollections of others who fell under her spell, the author has uncovered data that otherwise might never have been brought to the surface. Witness the American Mariner's varied, interesting and sometimes mysterious life cycle.

NEW! Patriots and Heroes: True Stories of the U. S. Merchant Marine in World War II, Vol. 2. Gerald Reminick, \$22, #3325.

Volume 1 of *Patriots and Heroes* touched such a chord with readers that it is in its third printing. There were so many requests for more stories that we brought out Volume II: all new and all true stories of the merchant marine in World War II. As with the first volume, Mr. Reminick gathered the stories to honor the men of the merchant marine. Each story bears witness to the courage, loyalty and fortitude displayed by the thousands of mariners who served their country.

NEW! From the Bridge. Kelley Sweeney, \$17.50, #3351. This book gives us a peek into the world of the merchant marine -- a glimpse of a world that most of us know nothing about. Captain Sweeney humanizes the industry while tackling serious issues that obviously need to be addressed. He cajoles us, entertains us, makes us laugh and gets us angry -- and hopefully leads us and the people in the marine industry to demand the changes that are sorely needed, and recognize the incredible contribution that the people in the merchant marine make.

NEW! A Few Years at Sea. Carl Marcoux, \$20. *A Few Years at Sea* deals with the life of a young sailor from 1943-1945. Jim Hurley starts his maritime years, first as a shipyard worker, and then going to sea in different capacities. His first ship takes him to areas of conflict where he is involved in fighting, aiding in the defense of his ship from attacks by German aircraft and submarines. In his final wartime trip aboard another cargo ship, a German submarine succeeds in sinking his vessel. A brief postscript deals with the subsequent life of the young sailor following the war's conclusion.

Nightmare in Bari, The WWII Liberty Ship Poison Gas Disaster and Cover-up. Gerald Reminick, \$22, #3338. On Dec. 2, 1943 in Bari Harbor, Italy, the German Luftwaffe laid waste to the busy port. Seventeen allied ships were destroyed. A Liberty ship laden with a top-secret cargo of mustard gas bombs exploded. The loss of life was appalling. Yet to this day few have heard of the disaster at Bari.

Gallant Ship, Brave Men. Herman E. Rosen, \$25, #3347. A spellbinding war memoir of a torpedoing and the fight for survival of 24 men in a life-boat. Hank Rosen, cadet-midshipman aboard a Liberty ship, tells the dramatic story of his 30 days adrift in the Indian Ocean.

Forgotten Heroes. Brian Herbert, \$27, #3344. Drawing from historical documents, government records, diaries and interviews, Herbert has constructed a brilliant history that details the heroism, self-sacrifice and grim determination that has been the hallmark of the United States merchant marine.

Extreme Waves. Craig B. Smith, \$30, #3354. *Extreme Waves* is a fascinating book based on the science and history of waves. Covering both the headline shores as well as incidents that are less well known but equally startling. The author-amateur sailor will keep you riveted from the first chapter to the last.

Ship Model Booklet. Ron Stahl, \$15, #3333. Full-color photographs of 27 finely crafted ship models displayed aboard the S.S. Lane Victory with a brief description and background narrative of each ship.

The Lane Victory. New edition by Capt. Walter Jaffee, \$30, #3130. An update of the 1997 publication of the history of the last active Victory ship, from construction in 1944 to the present-day living memorial to merchant seamen. Includes information about the Lane's use as a movie set as seen in many films and TV shows.

Action in the North Atlantic. Guy Gilpatric, \$30, #3324. This book was the inspiration for the Humphrey Bogart/Raymond Massey movie honoring the contributions of the Merchant Marine in WWII.

A Medal for Marigold. Michael Skalley, \$8, #3322. From the journal of Captain Robert Skalley. The story of the hospital ship Marigold began in Seattle when the Army converted the liner President Fillmore into a 765 bed sea-going hospital. During WWII she traveled 78,000 miles in the Atlantic and the Pacific. Though classed as a safe conduct ship with Red Cross markings, she experienced enemy shells, bombs and mines.

The Ordeal of Convoy NY119. Charles Dana Gibson, \$25, #3118. This book tells the story of a U.S. Army convoy of seagoing tugs, harbor tugs, yard tankers and barges on a 31-day passage to an English port in 1944. Cited by the U.S. Naval Institute in 1973 as one of the year's significant books on naval history.

Odyssey of a Merchant Mariner. Capt. Peter Chelemedor, \$23, #3139. The story outlines Capt. Chelemedor's adventures that led him to sea, his experiences during WWII and his attempts to find a place to settle down when ready to come ashore.

Operation Drumbeat. Michael Gannon, \$17, #3116. The true story of Germany's first U-boat attacks along the American coast during WWII.

The Presidential Yacht Potomac. Capt. Walter Jaffee, \$30, #3131. A wonderful biography of a ship, or in this case, "yacht" by Capt. Jaffee. A part of history...a tale worth reading.

The Homeward Bounder. Floyd Beaver, \$16, #3105. A collection of exciting sea stories that are squarely in the tradition of Conrad.

The Strange Voyage of the Malayan Princess. Capt. Frank F. Farrar, \$16, #3123. A fictional story based on two decades of life as a mariner.

Ships of the U.S. Merchant Fleet. Capt. John A. Culver, \$17, #3113. Facts and pictures of American flagships with historical events, names of ship builders and owners, 1939 to 1968 (revised edition).

Voyage of the Ship Revere. Madeline Rouse Gleason, \$16, #3106. This book traces the development of deep-water trade on the Pacific Coast beginning in 1849, with experiences on the sailing vessel Revere.

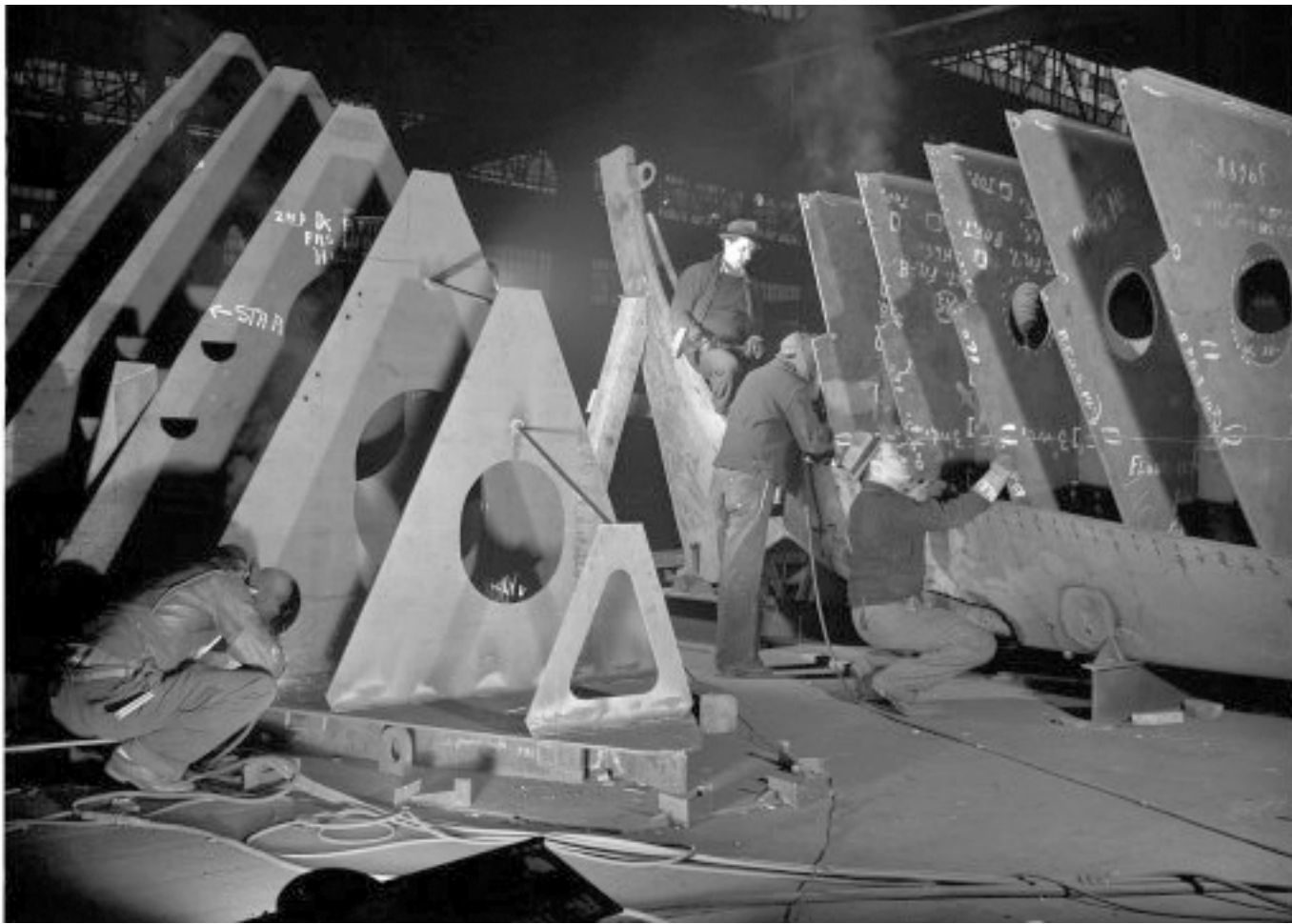
Appointment in Normandy. Capt. Walter Jaffee, \$30, #3102. The story of the Liberty ship Jeremiah O'Brien's historic voyage back to the beaches of Normandy.

Burning of the General Slocum. Claude Rust, \$11, #3125. The story of one of the most appalling disasters in maritime history, researched by the author whose grandmother was one of the victims.

Hog Islanders. Mark H. Goldberg, \$20, #3134. The story of an almost forgotten type of merchant ship, the passenger-cargo liner, built at the Hog Island shipyards of Pennsylvania.

Sailing West. Carl Marcoux, \$25, #3340. A must read based on what every maritime service school seaman will certainly associate with his own war time experiences, from the hiring hall loud mouths (being sent to the hall in his "sailor suit") to learning what it's like to be the low man on the totem pole on his first assignment aboard ship.

DREADFUL LOOKING OBJECTS... , CONT.



It's hard to think of a dull gray rust streaked bucket of a tramp steamer as a weapon, but in fact, the Liberty ship of World War II probably had more to do with winning the war than any other single piece of equipment.

Once the design was standardized, they were "Built by the mile and chopped off by the yard," by farmers, truck drivers and waitresses turned shipbuilders, in 18 different yards on all of our coasts.

Two thousand, seven hundred and ten were built between 1941 and 1945, the largest number of a single class of vessel ever built. Laid end to end, they would stretch from New York City to Washington, D.C., a distance of 230 miles.

After the First World War, the United States found itself with a large surplus of war-time emergency-built merchant vessels, and as a result, practically no new tonnage was built during the 1920s and early 1930s.

As this fleet wore out and became obsolete, and as war clouds gathered in Europe and Asia, Congress decided that the U.S. must rebuild its maritime fleet. The Merchant Marine Act of 1936 was passed and called for the construction of 50 ships a year from standardized designs.

They were to be fast, modern, turbine-driven vessels with a service life of 25-30 years. Four basic designs were agreed upon, each serving a specific need. They were designated C-1, C-2 and C-3 for the dry cargo ships and T-2 for the tanker vessels.

When the war in Europe was about a year old, a British shipbuilding mission came to the United States to arrange for ships to be built on these shores.

Her own yards had not been able to keep up with the losses and Britain was desperate for merchant ships, having lost over a million tons that first year. Our own plans had been doubled twice since passage of the act and all yards were

busy.

This, coupled with the build-up of the rapidly expanding U. S. Navy, meant that more yards would have to be built and another emergency type freighter would have to be designed if the British were to be accommodated.

They had brought with them a design that looked promising, and while the hull configuration was almost ancient, it allowed the vessel to be driven along at 11 knots, loaded with 10,000 tons deadweight using only 2,500 horsepower.

With a few changes, it could be adapted to prefabrication of many major parts, and it lent itself to electric welding very well. The British design was designated as "Ocean class" and this design was settled on and contracts were let for the construction of yards specifically laid out for mass production of these ships. The British ordered 32, and within two months, increased it to 60.

Early in 1941, it became evident that the U.S. would probably become involved in the war, and that the current shipbuilding program would not be enough to meet the need. Although the C type ships were excellent vessels, they were considered too elaborate, too costly and too difficult to build quickly.

The Maritime Commission then took the British Ocean design, made a few more changes to allow more and better standardization, and let contracts for the construction of more yards and ships.

High pressure turbine machinery was in very short supply, partly due to Navy requirements and partly to the shortage of specialized machinery required to produce it, so a tried and true reciprocating engine was decided upon.

It was a three cylinder, compound triple expansion engine that had been successfully driving ships since before the turn of the century. Rigidly standardized, parts for it were produced in facto-

ries all over the country for final assembly in the engine plants.

The most radical change made to the British Ocean design was the bringing together of the divided central deck-house into one unit. The Ocean models were designed as coal burners and needed this space open for ease of refueling.

Since the Liberties were to be oil buffers, overhead access for coal tipples chutes was not required. This brought about further savings in piping, ductwork, wiring and weight in general as well as in construction time.

In the interests of further economy, the Liberties would be sent to sea without radio direction finders, fire detection equipment, gyro compasses, depth finders, lifeboat radios, or emergency diesel generators. Those items were considered standard equipment on modern contemporary vessels such as the "C" freighters and the "T" tankers.

The Liberties also lacked the clean lines and modern design features of the classy looking "C" type vessels. President Roosevelt, himself a sailor with an eye for well turned curves, referred to them as "dreadful looking objects."

The press picked up on the theme and dubbed them "ugly ducklings." Other uncomplimentary nick-names such as "sea-scow" and "bluff bows" also emerged. The head of the Maritime Commission, Admiral Emory S. Land, felt that the ships needed a more acceptable, perhaps even a more glamorous name and decided on; "Liberty ship."

The first of the long line was launched on September 27, 1941 and was christened Patrick Henry, the person most famous for the use of the word "liberty." An executive order made the date, "Liberty Fleet Day."

The vessel herself had taken 150 days from keel-laying to launch, and an additional 95 days for fitting out. As production shifted into high gear, the average construction time fell steadily until in

late 1942, it was down to an average of 40 days.

A special effort in late September, 1942 resulted in a Liberty being launched in only 10 days and fitted out for delivery five days later. It was during this month that the sought after goal of three ships a day from the combined yards was realized, as 93 new ships were delivered.

Henry J. Kaiser's Permanente Yard No. 2 saw the record as a challenge, and on November 12, 1942, his new yard on the Richmond, California mud flats turned out the S.S. Robert E. Peary in only four days, fifteen and a half hours after laying of the keel, a record that stands to this day.

In his Liberty Fleet Day address to the American people, the president emphasized that the need was for, "Ships, more ships and still more ships." He also made it clear that he was going to do everything in his power to see to it that the ships could protect themselves in combat zones.

"Each new ship strikes a blow at the menace to the nation and for the liberty of the free peoples of the world," he continued. "We propose that these ships shall sail the seas as intended, and to the best of our ability, shall protect them from torpedoes, bombs or shells."

He finally did manage to get Congress to amend the Neutrality Act and allow the arming of the ships. This happened on November 13, 1941, less than a month before Pearl Harbor. That event united the nation as never before and programs for new yards and ships were put in place on an "as soon as possible" basis.

The man most often remembered for using unconventional methods to get the job done was Henry J. Kaiser. His contracting firm was well known in the construction industry, but was completely new to shipbuilding.

In many ways, this was an advantage, since his engineers and designers were not constrained by the old ways of building ships. On one occasion, one of his top foremen arrived at the slipway and wanted to know when they would start, "pouring the keel."

New methods of prefabrication of sub-assemblies, some of them in shops miles from the slipway were tried and used. When Kaiser inquired as to why the ships couldn't be built in a basin and the basin flooded to float the ship out, he was told that it just wasn't done that way. So he went ahead and did it anyway. (This method was used at the Todd-Bath East Yard in South Portland, Maine.)

Kaiser's people were expert in bridge construction, and used this expertise to great advantage in building the new yards. They saw no reason why some of the prefabrication techniques used for bridges could not be used for shipyards and perhaps even for the ships themselves. They tried them and they worked. Kaiser preferred to think of his yards as producing

(Continued on page 11)

DREADFUL LOOKING OBJECTS... , CONT.

ships, not just building them, and his name became a household word.

When Kaiser became aware that some of the Eastern steel firms were not always honoring his priorities as regards to steel shipments, he suggested building his own steel mills in California. All very well, but would the ore shipments be any more reliable than the steel shipments which caused the shortages in the first place.

Most of the anecdotes about the speed with which he got the ships delivered could have applied to almost any of the new yards, as all were quick to adopt methods that worked.

One of the best remembered stories told of the wife of a VIP who had been selected to christen a new Liberty ship. When she arrived at the scaffold, there was no ship there. When she asked about it, she was told to commence her swing with the champagne bottle, and by the time it was completed, they would have the ship built to receive it.

One cartoon in the Saturday Evening Post showed an office door with the name Henry J. Kaiser on it. On the doorknob hung a sign with the cryptic words, "Out to Launch."

Patriotic fervor and dedication to the war effort played a part in speeding the production of vessels, but the War Shipping Administration, which had assumed ownership of the entire merchant fleet, paid handsome bonuses for ships delivered ahead of schedule.

All of the yards took advantage of the bonus system, and in effect, were in competition with each other in that regard.

New programs for more yards and ships were put in place, almost on a monthly basis, once the U.S. entered the fighting.



In the interests of further economy, the Liberties would be sent to sea without radio direction finders, fire detection equipment, gyro compasses, depth finders, lifeboat radios, or emergency diesel generators.

Even though the Allies produced eleven million tons of new shipping that first year, (eight of which were American, mostly Liberties) they ended the year 1942 with a net loss of over a million tons.

The contest became one of production, Axis U-boats against Allied freighters and tankers. It is clear that if the U.S. had not gotten a start on shipbuilding before 1941, the war could have been lost. Winston Churchill admitted in his ponderous tome, World War II, that the only thing that really frightened him during the war was not the Blitz, not Dunkirk, not the threat of Sealion (the invasion of the British Isles by Germany) but that the Battle of the Atlantic might be lost.

If the U-boats sank ships faster than they could be replaced, or if German heavy ships broke out into the open

Atlantic to ravage the line of communication from America, Britain would be isolated and helpless. Fortunately, his fears did not materialize.

Once the order for the 60 Ocean-type vessels was filled, some 200 Liberties were built for loan to Great Britain under terms of the Lend-Lease Act. These ships were all given names starting with "Sam" (Samsoring, Samkey, Sambrian, etc.). It was thought by many that this was done as a way of saying, "Thanks," to Uncle Sam for the use of the ships, but the real reason was much more practical and down to earth.

The British Ministry of War Transport used the letters to classify the ships as having superstructure aft of midships in their system of ship identification. After the war, most of the remaining SAM ships were purchased outright by British shipping companies.

Fifty of the Liberties were also transferred to the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease arrangement, but were never returned or even accounted for after the war. The Soviets merely used them in their merchant fleet until they were worn out and then they scrapped them. The United States Maritime Commission eventually wrote them off.

The U.S. Navy took 162 of the Liberties for their own use, many of them before completion so that adaptations of their own could be made. Most were used as transports, (AK); but many were put to special use as repair ships (AR, ARV, AG, etc.); radar picket ships, AGR; general stores ships (AKS) and experimental mine sweepers, (YAG).

By late 1942, tanker losses became so severe that it was decided to convert some of the Liberties to carry bulk oil and gasoline. Sixty-four were built and were nearly identical in appearance to the dry cargo models.

All the piping and pumping gear was concealed below decks and dummy cargo handling gear was added to further the deception. The success of this effort is attested by the fact that not one Liberty tanker was lost to enemy action though they were all at sea by the end of 1943.

As the Liberties continued to splash off the assembly lines and fulfill their role as carriers of war materiel and troops, a few structural failures on a few ships gave them an undeserved bad name. Many old hands in the trade blamed it on welding, which they said made the ships too stiff, with no flex such as a riveted vessel would have.

Most of these failures occurred in northern latitudes, where the extreme cold made the mild steel brittle. The Commission then arranged to have riveted belts applied to the gunwales around the waist of the ships and have hatch comers reinforced with heavy gussets. This seemed to solve the problem, but the stigma remained throughout the Maritime community.

The Liberty ships were named for famous deceased Americans, though this rule was not absolute. One was christened Am Mer Mar to pay tribute to the entire American merchant marine, and the American Mariner to seamen in particular.

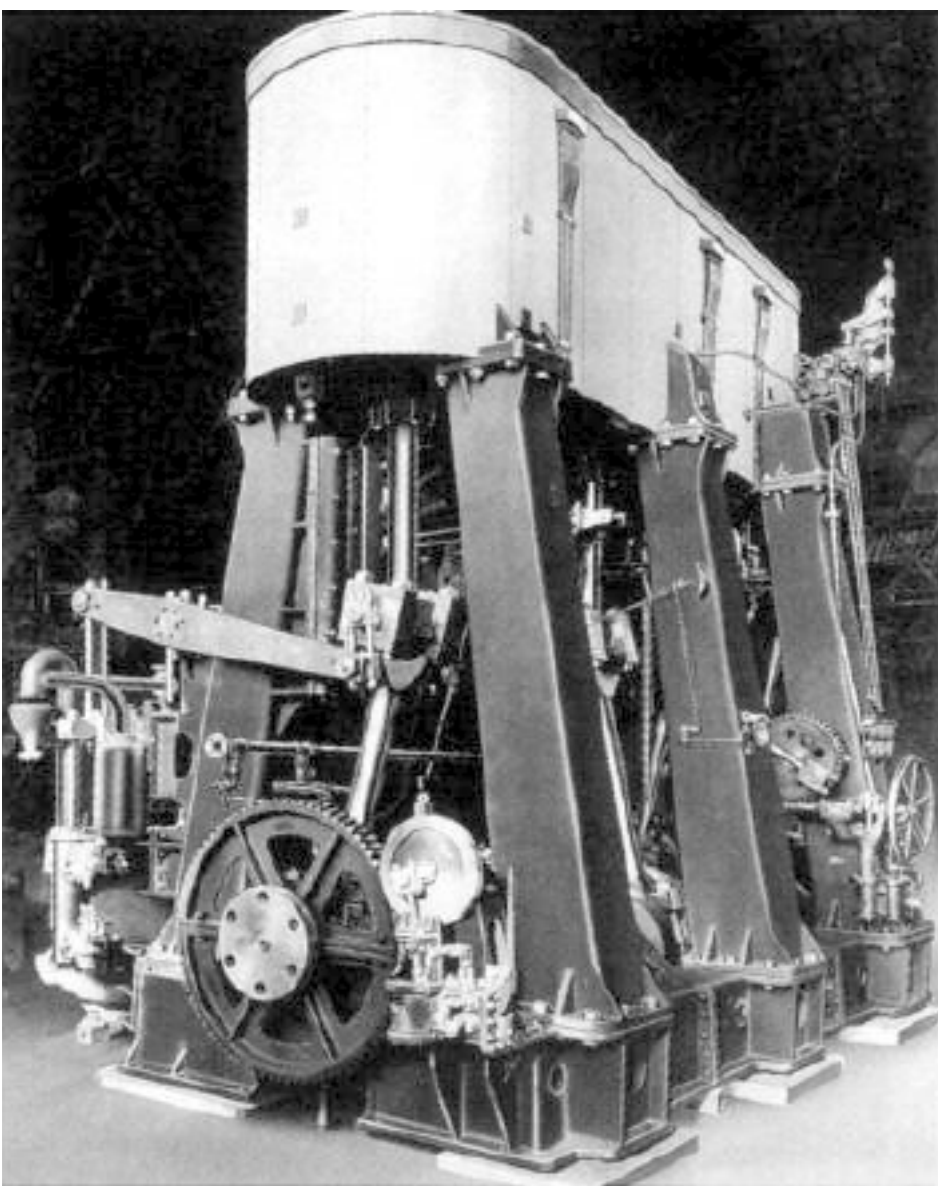
One was named U.S.O. and another Stage Door Canteen to honor those who saw to the entertainment of servicemen. Nine were named for U.S. presidents and Jefferson Davis was honored as president of the Confederate States of America.

Seven Native American chief names were used; Pocahontas and Sacajawea were also honored. Ironically, the fate of S.S. Amelia Earhart cannot be determined with certainty.

Only one of the ships was named for a living American person, and this was in error. It was thought that Francis J. O'Gara, purser aboard the Liberty ship, Jean Nicolet, had been killed when his ship was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. After the war, he returned from a P.O.W. camp and became the only person to see his own name on a Liberty ship.

O'Gara was one of 120 merchant marine seamen honored by having their names used on the Liberties. It applied not only to those killed in action, but in other disasters at sea in which they had distinguished themselves.

(Continued on page 12)



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DLOs, CONT.

While they had been conceived in desperation, were considered "emergency" type vessels and were assigned a service life of only five years, the Liberties proved to be surprisingly tough and long-lived. To the Liberty ship Stephen Hopkins belongs the singular honor of being the only U.S. surface vessel to engage and sink a German surface vessel of cruiser caliber during World War II.

Homeward bound toward the U.S. East Coast after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, the Stephen Hopkins encountered the Steir, a German "Q" ship (armed merchant cruiser disguised as a merchant vessel), hove to and refueling from a German tanker.

Action began as soon as the ships sighted each other and should have been a more unequal fight. The German ship carried six 6-inch naval guns, five 37mm cannon, four 20mm rapid fire guns and two torpedo tubes. She had a highly trained crew of over 300 and had already sunk six merchantmen on her outbound leg. The Steir was equipped with sophisticated gun directors and easily out-matched her opponent.

The Stephen Hopkins had two 37mm guns forward, six 30cal machine guns, and one four inch naval rifle on the stem. The duel continued for over a half-hour until both ships were reduced to flaming wrecks.

When the eighteen year old engine cadet, Edwin Joseph O'Hara came up the ladder from the after magazine to the gun tub, he found the entire gun crew dead at their posts. He fired an additional five shots, singlehandedly, all of which were hits, until he too was killed at his post.

Of the crew of 57 merchant marine and Navy Armed Guard aboard the Stephen Hopkins, only 19 survived. Four more died on the month long trip to the Brazilian coast in a lifeboat. For this action, the Stephen Hopkins was awarded the Gallant Ship award, one of only nine awarded during World War II.

Two-hundred-fourteen Liberties were lost to enemy action in the war, 140 of these to U-boat torpedoes. Twenty-eight others took torpedo hits but survived and were repaired. Many took two or more hits before they sank, the record being six for the Peter Sylvester.

She finally broke in two after four

strikes, and her forward section sank. Two more were required to put the stem section under.

Three Liberties fell victim to E-boats, the German version of our PT boats, and one to a radio controlled bomb. One was sunk by shore batteries. Sixteen Liberties recorded strikes by Kamikaze aircraft and all but three survived even that.

Those three were lost through secondary explosions and fire due to their cargoes. Five Liberties struck unrecovered mines after the war was over.

Liberty ships carried three-quarters of all the men, equipment and materiel used to fight the war, and brought them back when the war was over. When one considers that it takes 750 tons of materiel to keep one division in the field for one day, the support problems become staggering.

The Army Air Corps dropped over two million tons of bombs on Europe, and those bombs didn't just appear magically in the ammo dumps. Someone had to bring them over from America and Liberties did most of it.

War's end saw the Liberties take on the task of returning troops and equipment, and carrying relief and reconstruction supplies to the ruined nations.

When this was largely accomplished, many went into private service and they were a common sight in the seaports of the world with their guns removed and their wartime gray covered now by bright company colors. The rest were moth-balled at eight reserve sites to await a possible call to arms.

As the years passed, most were scrapped or taken out of service, used as targets or scuttled with obsolete ammunition or for fish reefs. Today, only two remain intact, one of which is in its original unaltered condition.

The Jeremiah O'Brien, built at New England Shipbuilding's West Yard in Portland, Maine and launched in June of 1943, is now a National Monument at San Francisco's Fort Mason. The other, the John W. Brown, was used by the City of New York for many years as a marine trades school ship. She has been returned to her birthplace at Baltimore where she has undergone full restoration to her original condition. She too is now a national monument.

Application for Membership

U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II

This nationwide, tax-exempt, non-profit, non-discriminatory, non-biased, non-sectarian, pro-American organization, whose officers and crew serve without pay, extends a hearty welcome to all men, women and children who are interested in the following programs and activities:

1. To continue our educational program about the role the merchant marine played in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, as well as in peace time commerce.
2. To improve the scope of recognition and benefits for Merchant Marine Veterans, and to assist them in getting up-to-date information and applications for all benefits and awards due them.
3. To promote a stronger American merchant marine industry.
4. To help us with your advice, volunteer work, publicity or funding for the restoration and operation of the S.S. *Lane Victory*.
5. To provide a nationwide forum for communication and fellowship for all merchant seamen, active or retired, Naval Armed Guard personnel, and for all interested associates and well wishers.

All members will receive a membership card, our monthly publication, *The Anchor Light*, free admission to the S.S. *Lane Victory*, and notices of special events.

Membership Category

(Check one)

- Associate \$28*
 - Regular \$36*
 - Life \$500**
 - Sponsor \$1,000**
 - Patron \$4,000**
 - Benefactor \$7,000**
 - Plank Owner \$10,000**
- *Annual Dues
 ** No Dues for Lifetime

Membership Renewal

New Membership

Date _____

Name _____

Tel: (_____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

General statement about your career background: _____

Dates of merchant marine and/or military service: _____

Rank or rating: _____ Did you attend a maritime school? Yes No

Interesting information: _____

I'd like to know more about volunteering in the Office Engine Room Deck

Gift Shop Museum Radio Other interests: _____

Mail to: USMMVWWII, P.O. Box 629, San Pedro, CA 90733

VOLUNTEERS -- THE NEW GENERATION

By Jim Shuttleworth, Underway Engine Room Tour Volunteer

Increasingly, volunteers donating their time and effort toward the preservation and operation of the S.S. *Lane Victory* are not World War II veterans of the United States merchant marine.

The newest volunteers are too young to have served in any capacity during WWII. But they all share a common interest with the founding members of the USMMVWWII -- they love the *Lane Victory* and want to see her steam into the next century.

These new volunteers bring to the *Lane* a wide variety of experience and skills that will be critical to the survival of the *Lane*. They also inject renewed energy and vitality to this mission. Some have maritime experience or knowledge from having served in the Navy or other armed forces, or from avocation. Still others bring with them civilian organizational and management skills. Most importantly, they have enthusiasm.

The S.S. *Lane Victory* can sail forth into the next century and beyond as a living memorial to the merchant marine veterans of WWII - but only if there are future volunteers to stand watch!