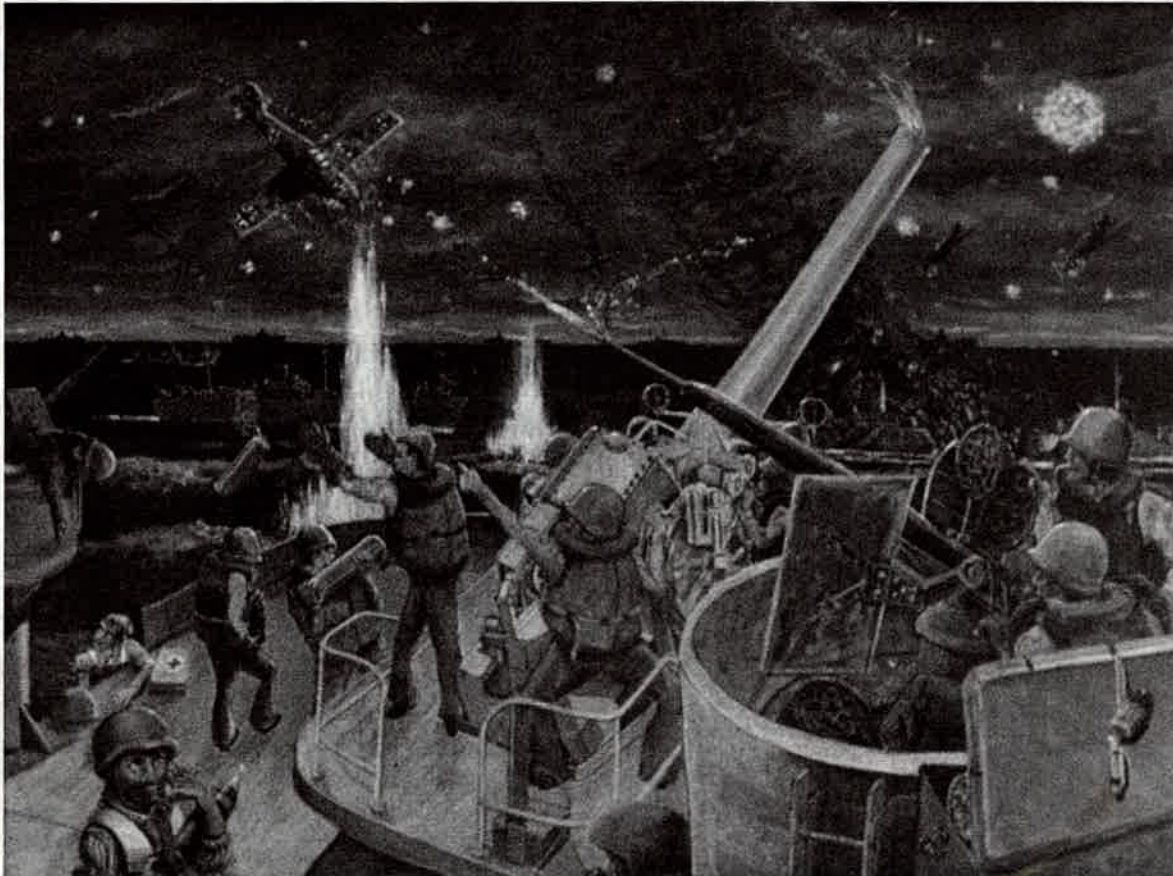


DECEMBER, 1994

THE P O I N T E R

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"Attack at Dusk," an original work by George Strakes (see Page 2)

REPRINTED BY REQUEST:

Yuletide in Murmansk



It wasn't the South Pacific with its palm trees, warm breezes and sandy beaches. No, it was Santa Claus's home territory, the Arctic region, where snow was piled on top of snow and the bitter blast of winter blew across Kola Inlet. In the long winter night of the Arctic, Christmas Eve had crept upon us and our spirits were as cold as the weather outside. Murmansk, Russia in 1944 was not the place for Ho! Ho! Ho! or the "season to be jolly." We were all sitting around in the messroom, aboard a Liberty Ship, bemoaning the coming of Christmas, and us without so much as a piece of tinsel. Well, when a crew sits around and bemoans long enough, it generally generates a spark of ingenuity, which usually erupts into a brilliant idea ... thus the Christmas party was conceived.

To get a tree was out of the question. Although trees did grow in that area, to cut one down would immediately land the cutter in jail, and incite an international incident. But the ideas for the party snowballed and everybody was throwing in suggestions. We could do this ... let's make such and such into that ... we can get those from the storeroom. So it went, until the ideas were put into action, and the action produced a tree as beautiful as any bunch of sailors could make on Christmas Eve in Murmansk.

Our tree didn't have the scent of pine or spruce because it was a handle of one of those large deck swabs. The carpenter had drilled holes in it, so wires and coat hangers immediately turned into branches. This skeleton tree was mounted on a raised wooden base and placed in the middle of the mess table, where strange ornaments began to pile up in preparation for the formal trimming.

Yellow papers, which once had been wrapped around oranges, were fashioned into Christmas balls; tinfoil from the galley became strips of tinsel, and the ship's machinist had cut out a brass star for the top of the tree. Before I had left New York to make this trip, my sister had given me a package - to be opened at Christmas. It contained a lot of goodies in jars and cans and boxes. Each of these little tidbits was wrapped in fancy Christmas paper with a rosette bow and a cute card. So my contribution to our homemade tree was the wrappings. These we cut into different shapes; some were pasted onto cardboard, while others were snipped to make streamers. The rest were twisted and rolled into elves. All these improvised ornaments were stacked on the table next to the improvised tree. As the enthusiasm for this project soared, so did our spirits. By 11 P.M. we were ready to put it all together.

Because we were in port and tied up to a pier, our security watch was at a minimum, so most of the members of this small Navy gun crew were able to participate in the trimming of the tree. The ship's captain had given us a bottle of bourbon and a bottle of blended whiskey, which was dumped into a large punch bowl - a large pot secured from the galley - along with several cans of grapefruit juice, orange juice and pineapple juice. To raise our spirits and to stretch our spirits therein, we dumped a gallon of the local moonshine (bottled under the fancy label Boris' Vodka). This kept the party going until the tree was finally trimmed.

We knew it was made of a mop handle and some wire, it was trimmed with bits of paper and junk and it lacked the aroma of a yuletide tree ... but it was beautiful.

Regardless of the circumstances, the human spirit can prevail if it is sparked by the spirit that does not fail.

C.A. PETE BURKE
3456 Tilden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19129

*(Reprinted from the Philadelphia Tribune,
Monday, Dec. 24, 1979.)*

THE POINTER

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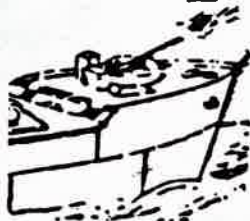
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THE PLANE SHOOTER

Our Motto: "We aim- To Deliver" and "We-Did"

USN Armed Guard World War II Veterans

"PLAIN SHOOTING FOR PLANE SHOOTERS"



HAPPY HOLIDAYS EVERYONE: (AND A HO!! HO!! TO Y'ALL) December, 1994

I hope that I can get this "POINTER" printed and delivered before Christmas of 1994 so we could wish all of you a MERRY CHRISTMAS!! I got busy with all those pretty leaves and it's sort of like the pretty snow in Foster, R.I., it's not so pretty after the first month!! Cutting grass in February is tough, too. It has been sort of a busy and hectic time trying to attend different functions and keep the "SHIP" on course.

First, Hilda and I attended the KY-IL-IN-OH Mini-Reunion in Louisville, hosted by Joe Foreman (no kin to the boxer) and James Close. A grand time was had by all who attended with tours to the Louisville Slugger Baseball Bat Factory, the Kentucky Derby Churchill Downs Race Tracks, the City of Louisville and the State Park with all the archeological finds. They will hold their MINI next year in Indianapolis, Ind. and the Hosts will be Pete and Helen Dela Cruz.

We also attended the Northeast Mini-Reunion in Livingston, N.J. hosted by Mike Molinari and crew with another great group of OL'SALTS and their ladies. A bus tour to Battery Park where all the names of Army, Navy, Marines and the Coast Guard killed half way across the North Atlantic are placed. As I stood and read my brother Whitson's name inscribed, I thought of how much he enjoyed life and the words he spoke to our mother when he said-and I quote—"Mom, you can't imagine how intelligent human beings, capable of flying an airplane, would try to kill another human being and look as if they enjoy it. If it were not for the Merchant Seamen bringing us ammunition, I would not be here today. I've seen a lot you wouldn't believe unless you were there and I cannot tell you anymore but if I live through this war, I will tell you." (unquote)

Two beautiful arrangements of flowers donated by Mike Molinari's children were placed at the base of Whitson's column of names and the other one at the Merchant Marine Plaque at the Eagle Statue, to all the men whose name appear. We were then bussed over to the USS INTREPID where we had a box lunch and placed a Merchant Marine and Armed Guard plaque on board her. To Mike and Lena and all their devoted children, to all of the GREATER NEW YORK COMMITTEE and to all who attended, I say thanks for making this possible. I regret that Bro L.D. was taken with a gall bladder attack the night before and had to return home and could not be there with us. He is doing fine now.

I had no sooner returned home, caught up with the mail and a few chores when L.D., John Vargas (84 year old Merchant Marine) and I went to Baltimore, MD to attend the S.S. JOHN W.BROWN Veteran's Day Ceremony on board her as Joe Colgan had called and asked me to be one of the guest speakers and represent all the Armed Guard of WW II. This I did and it was just great to get back on board a LIBERTY SHIP again!!! Our Armed Guard Gun Captain Walt Magalis, along with Merchant Seaman Charles Blockston (Survivor of the S.S. CARLTON and Prisoner of War Camps in Germany throughout WW II) was given the Honor to commend the wreath to the deep for our fallen comrades as a helicopter came in low over the Inner Harbor Waterway along side of the BROWN and dropped another wreath

TOWN & COUNTRY HOTEL RATE IS \$69.00 plus tax.

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You know where you are.

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But we don't always know where you are.

Please notify us when you move.

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*** Remember, I can't move as fast as I did when I was in my twenties!
When you call, let the phone ring so I can get to it! cal**

to all Veterans. To Captain Brian Hope and all those who worked so hard to make this ceremony possible, we owe all of you a debt of gratitude.

It had been suggested that the S.S. JOHN W. BROWN be sailed to Jacksonville, FL. for the winter months but the City could not arrange for the cost of fuel and enough free docking space so she is back at Dundalk Terminal, or close by. It may be that she will go into drydock for repairs so if you plan to go to see her, it may be better to contact the ship. Maybe, someday, she will become a "SNOWBIRD" and head South for the winter!!

All the other MINI-REUNIONS not listed had wonderful meetings and they look for the next one. Space will not allow to print your letters of what a great time you had at BULLHEAD CITY; in TEXAS; OREGON; Colorado; Nebraska, Etc. I do hope you understand. Attend those in your area and better than that, make your plans now to be with the crew in San Diego!! We don't have too many more years to attend them and the SAN DIEGO CREW are working hard to have the best one yet. The best way to enjoy a reunion is to be among the crowd!! If you have any good suggestions, send them in, such as: a step up stool for each tour bus so "THEM OL' FOLKS" can get on and off easier. It worked!!



C.A. Lloyd at the Memorial in Battery Park.

Many of you have asked me about the ASBESTOS CLAIMS. I called them at the 1-800-492-3849 number in September, 1994 and I received a form to be filled out, but it was for the Merchant Maritime Seamen. On Nov. 16, 1994, I received a letter again as a follow up as I had been very busy and they had not heard from me. On Nov. 21, 1994, I called Mr. Raymond Bonomo and explained that we were the U.S. NAVY ARMED GUARD CREWS assigned to these ships and sailed the same ships. He said we were entitled to the same compensation and for anyone who would like to file a claim to call the 800 number above for necessary papers to be sent to you to fill out. My understanding is the only cost to you is your transportation to and from the doctor. You be the judge.

The outside cover of the "POINTER" is a painting, "ATTACK AT DUSK" and the work of one of our own Armed Guard, George Strakes, 7024 Pelican Bay Blvd. #104, Naples, FL. 33963, 1-813-566-1410 as he remembers his World War II experiences in the Mediterrean Sea battle for survival. A full size 16 X 20 reproduction can be obtained from him at a cost of \$55.00 plus shipping and handling "IF" enough people would be interested. A Limited Edition of only 500 would be reproduced and if interested, let him know so he would take action on this. The painting can be "remarqued" by Strakes for an extra \$35.00 which serves to verify that the painting is an original reproduction and not a copy by someone else. To those who have visited the S.S. JOHN W. BROWN's U.S.N. Armed Guard Museum Section, the EAGLE painted on the bulkhead was the work of Strakes. "DO NOT" send money until he lets you know if enough participate to reproduce.

Rudy and Ellie Kozak, our 1994 ORLANDO, FL. Hosts have agreed to give me some relief and I will be shipping all ARMED GUARD CAPS, PINS, BELT BUCKLES, ETC. to them and they will take care of the stores. I will have a Form in the next "POINTER" listing items available. To those who have the old order forms, just use that till then. For those who have ordered things in the past and did not receive them, YOU NOTIFY "ME" and we can get it straightened out. REMEMBER TO MARK CHECKS OR MONEY ORDER at MEMO-ITEM-DONATION!! I have over 11,000 on the mailing list now and I want to devote my time to getting "POINTER"s out and spending a little more time with my family. I have chores that need to be attended to that have been left undone for too long. I will still answer your questions, answer your calls and this will give me more time to do this. I do want those of you who have not written their full war experiences and sent to me, to do so. We need to save your war memories and put on paper!!

SPECIAL NOTICE ON SENDING FOR SHIPMATES!!: We now have two more people who have computers to help in sending out shipmates located. Here are the five people and a different Computer Number assignment number, Shown on your address label.

If your Computer Number is:..... 1 to 2000, send to:

01. Ralph Lucas 1220 Hawthorne Rd., Hanahan, S.C. 39406
1-803-747-2031

.....2000-4000 Send to

02. George Milk 3136 NE St. James St., Port Charlotte, FL
33952 1-813-627-6759

.....4000 to 5000 Send to:

03. Phil Bradley 2207 Fox Hunt Dr., Monroe, N.C. 28110

.....5000 to 7000 Send to:

04. Ernest Cochran 12775 Titus Rd., Dresden, Oh. 43821 1-
614-754-1589

.....7000 to 10,000 Send to:

05. Tom Bowerman 814 Springdale Ave., Anniston, AL 36201

.....10,000 to 13,000 Send to:

06. Bob Ober 7115 Dunn Rd., Cincinnati, Oh. 45230 1-513-
231-3181

When you make corrections, DO NOT SEND THEM BACK TO THEM!! YOU SEND THEM TO THE "POINTER" ADDRESS FOR I AM THE ONE WHO HAS TO ENTER IT IN THE "MAIN COMPUTER". If you send it to them, they just have to spend 29 cents and an envelope plus their valuable time to forward to me. You send the "SELF-ADDRESSED-STAMPED-ENVELOPE" to them or me and you will get a printout of those we have located. I DO NOT HAVE ALL THE NAMES OF THE 144,970 ARMED GUARD WHO SERVED. "JUST" the ones we have located. I'll try my best to get an updated list of all names and ships to those of you who hold monthly meetings right after the Holidays.

I would like to remind "YOU SNOWBIRDS" who move from place to place, it is up to you to send that change of address to the NATIONAL COMPUTER here so you will not miss a copy of the "POINTER". Sometimes, I make a mistake so if you don't get a "POINTER" at least every 4 months, you should notify me that you did not receive one. I had 3 POINTERS returned to me due to the label coming off so if you did not get an October one with the LANE VICTORY, under attack, let me know and I will send one to you. I had 31 returned today from last POINTER. This is approx. 150 so far from one mailing.

To you widows of the crew, if you are receiving the "POINTER" and do not want it, please advise. Some of you have stated that you would like to remain on the mailing and some requested to be removed. This is a choice for you. Let me know either way BUT LET ME KNOW!! WE WILL NOT TAKE ANYONE OFF REGARDLESS IF WE ARE NOTIFIED OF THEIR DESIRE TO STAY ON BOARD. Many Armed Guard and Widows can not afford to donate due to many reasons and we will not remove your name if we know it to be the case and you are still interested. It will be strictly confidential. The ARMED GUARD CHECKING ACCOUNT shows a balance of \$20,609.69 as of 11/18/94. Expenses and donations since that date are approx. equal. THE SHIP STILL FLOATS! THANKS !! You're all just wonderful!!

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!
calloyd

★ ★ ★ ★ REUNIONS ★ ★ ★ ★

IWO JIMA VETERANS 50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION WILL BE HELD 2/16-19/1995 AT THE "ATLANTA,GA.-AIRPORT-MARIOTT HOTEL". CONTACT: Jim Westbrook 594, Old Highway 27, Vicksburg, Ms. 39180, (601) 636-1861. **ALSO!! IWO JIMA SURVIVORS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS** WILL HOLD A 50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION 2/19-23/1995 AT THE RAMADA HOTEL IN WICHITA FALLS, TX. CONTACT: CY YOUNG, P.O.BOX 1657, BOWIE, TX 76230

GEORGIA CHAPTER was formed on October 3, 1994 with Bill Burton, 251 Cardigan Cir., Lilburn, Ga. 30247, 404-381-5395 as Skipper. Co-Hosts were Charles Adams and Robert Kelly and 33 people attended. They will meet again on Jan. 9, 1995, 11 a.m. at SHONEY'S RESTAURANT, Exit 38, Lilburn, Ga.

"ROCHESTER, N.Y. AREA" ARMED GUARD AND MERCHANTMEN of WW II contact John and Mary Shevlin, 37 Winfield Rd., Rochester, N.Y. 14622-2212, 716-467-2057. A LUNCH MEETING is held at 11:00 A.M. on the "2ND" TUESDAY at the EASTMAN KODAK CO., Kodak Park, Bldg 28, THE THEATRE ON THE RIDGE, Ridge Rd., Rochester.

IOWA CREW meet the 2nd Wednesday at 10:00 A.M. at the "VALLEY WEST INN", 3535 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, Iowa, off I-235. Arnie and Mary Latare, 601 34th St. W., Des Moines, Ia. 50265, 515-225-1084 are the hosts. Support them. Be there!!

BROOKLYN, N.Y. AREA: CONTACT MIKE MOLINARI, 1422 EAST 54TH ST., BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11234, 718-444-8449 FOR MEETING DATES AND TIME.

Lincoln, Ne. Host, Moe Carlton, 6601 Benton St., Lincoln, Ne. 68507, 402-466-1058 reports that they meet for coffee and stories. Time-Date-unknown.

HOSTS Alvin and Thelma Kemble, 8150 Chamber Hill Rd., **Harrisburg, Pa.** 17111, 717-566-8728 announce they hold their "First Thursday" of each month meeting for their locality at the "HOSS'S STEAK HOUSE" in Hummelstown, Pa. at 1:30 P.M.

NOTICE DAY AND TIME CHANGE - WESTERN N.C. AREA meets at the "MILLS RIVER RESTAURANT, MILL'S RIVER, N.C. on the "3RD THURSDAY" of each month. "LUNCHEON" (notice change) starts at 11:30 A.M. Contact: Crayton Hall, P.O.Box 39, 88 Wilkie Way, Fletcher, N.C. 28732, 704-684-4588. THE ICY ROADS AND FOG DURING THE WINTER MONTHS WERE A PROBLEM. They welcome FLATLANDERS and YANKEES!!

ILL-WISC. - New Skipper for 1995 is John Nevens, 3514 N.Oak Park Ave., Chicago, Il. 60634, 312-725-2186. Exec. Officer-Virgil Meeks; Yeoman-James Cepican; Purser-Robert Blake with Ken and Jackie Niebuhr, 820 Brandie Rd., Madison, Wi. 53714, 608-241-2250 as the Hosts and they will be holding a 1:30 P.M. on 1/19/95 and again on 2/15/95 at the Midway Motor Lodge in Madison, Wi. where they will hold their October, 1995 MINI-REUNION.

Wilmington, N.C. Armed Guard holds a 1ST WEDNESDAY monthly meeting 9:30 A.M., WHITEY'S Restaurant, 4501 Market St., Wilmington. Host is George W. Cameron, 611 Middle Sound Rd. Lot 16, Wilmington, N.C. 28405, 910-686-4193.

DELAWARE VALLEY PA. Area Armed Guard HAS STARTED HOLDING A 11:30 A M 2ND WEDNESDAY MONTHLY MEETING AT THE AMERICAN LEGION, FALLS TWP POST #834, FALLINGTON, PA. 07039, 201-994-350 AT 11:30 A.M. HOSTS: AL AND NORMA FARRARA, 45 UPPER HILL TOP RD., YARDLEY, PA. 19067, 215-493-9134. A BIG SUCCESSFUL MEETING!!

SOUTHWEST OHIO HOSTS Bob and Dot Ober, 7115 Dunn Rd., Cincinnati, Ohio 45230, 513-231-3181 and Clyde and Marion Gutzwiller, 9799 Mt. Nebo Road., North Bend, Oh. 45052, 513-941-3072, HOSTS a 11:30 Luncheon Buffet on THE 2ND SAT. of the month at COBBLEWOOD PLAZA, 1097 Smiley Ave., Cincinnati, Oh. Exit 39 off I-275. They MAY change locations. CONTACT THEM!!

IOWA Crew has elected Arnold O.Latare, 601-34th St W., Des Moines, Ia 50265-3131, 515-225-1084 as their host and will meet on the SECOND WEDNESDAY of each Month at 10:00 A.M. at the "Valley West Inn" 3535 Westown Parkway, W.Des Moines, Ia., off I-235.

DEMS—CONTACT: DOUG SEPHTON, RCNA-DEMS, 203 ANNE ST. NORTH; BARRIE, ONTARIO CN L4N 4T4. ARMED GUARD AND MERCHANT CREWS ARE WELCOMED to their National Reunions. They had their largest attendance ever!! Their 1995 DEMS National Reunion will be held in Brantford, Ont. hosted by the Brantford Naval Association. Dates will be in next "POINTER".

The **PORTLAND-MILWAUKIE, OREGON** ARMED GUARD will be MEETING WITH THE M.M. CHAPTER on the last Thursday of each month at the ELKS CLUB. Contact: George Goode, 4017 S.E. Aldercrest Rd., "Milwaukie, Oregon" 97222, 503-659-1925.

NORTH-WEST "PASSAGE", "AK-OR-WA-ID" CREW will hold an April, 4-6, 1995 Mini-Reunion and Don and Pearl Werner, 18605 N.E. 219th St., Battleground, Wa. 98604, 206-687-3630 will host it. Place and time was not voted on at PRESS TIME.

Wyoming Armed Guard Host is Bob Muhm, 2001 East "C" St., Torrington, Wy. 82240, 307-532-7212.

NOTICE: Michigan meeting changed: Lansing, Mich. Area holds a FIRST WEDNESDAY of the "ODD MONTHS" at the "CORAL GABLES RESTAURANT", 2838 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing, Mi. 517-337-1311. Hosts are Carl Mescher, 508 Wayland, East Lansing, Mi. 48823, 517-332-1027; or, Martin Vallee, 1412 Brookwood, Flint, Mi. 48503, 810-235-3530.

KENTUCKY CREW contact Joe and Earlene Foreman, P.O. Box 99303, Jeffersontown, Ky. 40269, 502-267-4576 or James and Norma Close, 4036 Preston Hwy, Louisville, Ky 40223, 502-366-8966 as they are the Hosts for a "3RD THURSDAY 9:30 BREAK-FAST at SHONEY'S RESTAURANT at Shelby and Eastern Parkway.

The **Rhode Island Chapter** of ARMED GUARD VETERANS have a "LUNCHEON MEETING" on the 1st Wed. of every month at NOON at BICKFORDS in Warwick. R.I. GERRY and Lena Greaves, 143 E.Killingly Road, Foster, Ri 02825, 401-647-2212 are your hosts!!

Oklahoma should contact RALPH McNALLY, P.O. Box 423, Skiatook, Okla., (918) 396-2693 on their meetings at PERRY'S CAFE, Hiway 169-76th St. N., Owasso, Ok.

Paul Markley, 935 SW Lindenwood, Topeka, Ks. 66606, 913-233-7995. OR; DON GLEASOM, 2405 N.W. CROSS, Topeka, Ks. 66606, 913-234-6087 (NEW ADDRESS) can give you the place they will meet in **Topeka**.

MISSOURI CREW will meet on the 3RD TUESDAY of each month and the location is: D.A.V. Chapter #2, 8787 Old Santa Fe Rd., Kansas City, Mo. 64138, near the intersection of 87th St. and Blue Ridge Blvd. at 11:00 A.M. with Stan DeFoe, 4308 South Osage Ave., Independence, Mo. 64055-4645, 816-373-5890 and Bill Sears, 8505 NE 56th St., Kansas City, Mo. 64119, 816-453-2179 as hosts. NOTICE DeFoe Tel. corrected

The **UPPER PA.** WILL HOLD THEIR MEETINGS at PLATZ'S RESTAURANT, 101 Harrit Rd., Lehighton Pa. 18235, 610-377-1819 come Spring. CONTACT: Clint Barr, 2340 Third St., Easton, Pa. 18042, 610-258-3056. This crew is gaining in numbers.

LITTLE FERRY, N.J. AREA meets on the 1ST TUESDAY of EACH MONTH, 11:30 AM luncheon at TRACEY'S RESTAURANT, #4 Bergen Pike, Little Ferry NJ 07643. Host for this area will be William and Irene Yansick, 80 Charlton Ave., Lodi, N.J. 07644, 201-473-6640.

Pittsburgh, Pa. crew meets on the "3rd Sat." for a NOON LUNCHEON at the GREENTREE MARIOTT. CONTACT: Hilary

Makowski, 202 Wedgewood Crt., Carnegie, Pa. 1510, (412)-429-8510.

CHICOPEE-LUDLOW, Ma. HOSTS Tom and Priscilla Dufresne, 289 Munsing St., Ludlow, Ma. 01056, 413-583-8580 hosts a "2ND SUNDAY" 9 A.M. BREAKFAST at the MOOSE LODGE #1849, 244 FULLER RD., CHICOPEE, MA. and are assisted by Roger Fournier, Springfield, Ma. 413-543-3766; Sam Pitittieri, 413-592-1854 and Louis Carr, 413-783-5904.

COLORADO CREW: Contact Ed Jones, 616 S.Carr St. Lakewood, Co. 80226, 303-988-5581 as he has taken over W.H. Graham's place who has chaired the office for several years. Thanks Bill for all you've done to get the Colorado crew together. YOU'RE GREAT!!

Albany, N.Y. AREA HOSTS, Henry and Joyce Carrangi, 11 BULLARD AV., QUEENSBURY, N.Y. 12804, 518-793-0326 and crew meets at 12 NOON, "4TH" THURSDAY of each month at the "WATERVLIT ARSENAL OFFICER'S CLUB", WATERVLIT, N.Y. **NOTICE: NEW MEETING PLACE - DATE!** Henry and Joyce, Tom and Dottie Weber, Edward Diane Bablin, Charles and Jean Rich, Robert and Helen White, Robert and Ethel Weaver, Kenneth and Joan Holsapple, Ray and Mary Erno, Harry Hussey and Jim Flater got together from their community and drove up to Portland, Maine to welcome the S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien back to the States. Isn't it just great to have that much interest in a LIBERTY SHIP!

Jeff and Mabel Haselden, 120 Richardson Blvd., Lugoff, S.C. 29078, (803) 438-1491 has informed me that their latest **SOUTH CAROLINA** meeting was great and they will hold their next meeting on 2/25/ 1995 in the pretty City of Charleston, S.C. Howard Long, Box 65, Bowling, Green, S.C. 29703, 803-222-9402 is their Chairman for 1995. They WELCOME YOU!!

Richmond, Va. Crew meets at 12:30 PM for LUNCHEON at MORRISON'S Cafe, 7035 W. Broad St., Richmond, Va. on the 2ND SAT. Hosts Clarence and Helen Durham, 4813 Lowells Rd., Richmond, Va. 23224, 804-233-6023.

In **NORFOLK, Va.** Contact: Ralph Womeldorf, 1400 Garwood Ave., Virginia Beach, Va. 23455, 804-464-1130 for a new meeting place, THE RED LOBSTER on Independence Blvd., (GIANT SQUARE) at 12:00 each SAT.

Destroyer Escort Assoc. 20th National Reunion will be held in Louisville, Ky. OCT.9-13,1995. Contact: DESA, 352 W. Story Rd., Ocoee, Fl. 34761

George Milk, 449 St. James St., Port Charlotte 33952, 813 627-6759 area meets at the Golden Corral-PUNTA GORDA, FL. on the 3rd Tues. at 1:30 P.M. When vacationing, join in with these **Florida Crews.**

Springhill, Florida Area- Contact: William T.Young, 4206 Parkhurst La., Springhill, Fl. 34608, 904-683-9333. They will hold a breakfast on the "SECOND" Saturday OF EACH MONTH 10 AM AT: EVERGREEN WOODS RETIREMENT COMMUNITY.

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fl. area meets on a "LAST FRIDAY IN THE MONTH" at JOHNNY'S CORNER FAMILY RESTAURANT, 7180 U.S. #1, PORT ST. LUCIE, FL 34952, 407-878-2686 by HOST DICK JARMAN, 1461 MERION CT. SE, PORT ST. LUCIE, FL. 34952, 407-335-3716. THEY WELCOME "REBELS"!

SANFORD, FL. AREA: FRED AND MARGARET FONTAINE 2537, MOHAWK DR., SANFORD, FL. 32773, 407-323-7410 HOLDS A MEETING ON THE 2ND SUNDAY AT 1 P.M. AT THE AMERICAN LEGION HALL ON SANFORD AVE., SANFORD, FLA..

The **ARIZONA** Hosts Carlo and Adele Traficano, 108 N. Greenfield Road, Apt-2117, Mesa, Az. 85205, 602-396-6233 still hold a BREAKFAST meeting on the FIRST SATURDAY, 10 A.M. at J.B.s RESTAURANT, 1809 E. BASELINE, MESA, AZ. **NOTICE!! THIS IS A LOCATION CHANGE!!**

The **Tucson, Az.** Area hosts are Selvin and Marcella Lien, 2011 Tucson, Az. 85719 and William and Marion Howard, 4056 N. Tuttle St., Tucson, Az. 85705, 602-887-8703 for the 4TH SAT. of each Month meeting at 11 AM at the Mountain View Restaurant,

1220 E. Prince Rd. TUCSON, Az. Join them for fun!

PUGET SOUND CHAPTER OF M.M. VETERANS should contact James Colamarino, 2904 168th S.E., Bellevue Wa. 98008, (206) 746-6984. Armed Guard are WELCOMED!!

LCI NATIONAL ASSOC. CREW will hold their 4th Reunion at the HOLIDAY INN BY THE BAY, SAN DIEGO, Ca., APRIL 26-28, 1995. CONTACT: ROBERT KIRSCH, 643 CALLERY RD., EVANS CITY, PA. 16033, 412-538-8151.

Contact: Joe Piccolini, 9724 Paseo De Oro, Cypress, Ca. 90630, 213-598-8326; Charles Savonna, 8777 Coral Springs Crt G-9, Huntington Beach, Ca. 92646, 714-960-6925; or, Thom Hendrickson, 1531 S. Pomona-Apt. A-30, Fullerton, Ca. 92632 about the **S.S. LANE VICTORY**. They can use your help on the guns and if you're not able to help them, you can come by anyways. They have done an outstanding job. Joe has informed me that the guns are set up with butane gas and a 5' flame comes out of the gun barrels when fired. GO BY FOR A LOOK!! The LANE VICTORY has been moved to Pier 94 and many movies have been made on her.

Contact: Jack Rhodes, 3143 Cotter Rd., Millers, Md. 301-343-0369 about the **S.S. JOHN W.BROWN** as to where she is berthed when going for a visit. More than likely, she is on Clinton St., North of I-95 Tunnel.

Carl Kreidler, 15852 Via Eduardo St., San Lorenzo, Ca. 94580, 510-351-1954 welcomes you to be a part of the "U.S.N. ARMED GUARD GUN CREW" on the **S.S. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN**. It is tough on just 5 or 6 men trying to keep things going. Try it!! Go and see the items in the museum. HELP OUT!! WILL DO YA'-GOOD!

All three ships need volunteers and donations FOR MANY EXPENSES, SUCH AS; GUN COVERS, MUSEUM CASES, PRINTING OF LITERATURE PLUS MANY OTHER THINGS!!

Verne and Evelyn Barrett, 208 E. Centennial Drive **Rapid City, S.D.** 57701 605-343-4171 will get you in touch with whose in charge in that area for '95.

Check with your DAV; AMERICAN LEGION; VFW; AMVETS, etc., for other reunions. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DAV, ETC. LOOK IN THE "YELLOW PAGES" FOR THEIR LOCAL NUMBER AND THEY WILL GLADLY ASSIST YOU. I ASK YOU TO SAVE THIS "POINTER" AS REFERENCE TO UPCOMING MINI-REUNIONS, ETC. calloyd



Sample of Pin and Belt Buckle.

Rudy and Ellie Kozak, 4950 Dory Dr., New Port Richey Fl. 34652, (813)-847-4038, **OUR 1994 HOSTS**, NEXT NOTICE: The KOZAKs will be in charge of all CAPS (\$10. with donation) and other items.

SPECIFY:

Winter or Summer and lettering; as to:

- O1. MURMANSK RUN (NAVY BLUE)
- O2. EAGLE (IN BOTH NAVY BLUE AND "WHITE")
- O3. LIBERTY SHIP (NAVY BLUE)
- O4. PACIFIC (NAVY BLUE)
- O5. REGULAR BIG LETTERING "U.S.NAVY ARMED GUARD WW II". (NAVY BLUE)
- O6. East, West Coast and New Orleans Pins- \$3.00 each.
- O7. LIBERTY SHIP Belt Buckle \$12.00
- O8. LIBERTY SHIP PINS \$10.00

— In Memorium —

Bassett	Joseph E.	Brush	Co	Lura	9/17/94
Brizendine	Bert	Lyons	Ne		7/27/93
Chane	Leo S.	Beverly	Ma	*	10/10/94
Cotter	Emery	Coos Bay	Ca		9/94
Couch	Charles B.	Louisiana	Mo	Annie M.	8/30/94
Cruzen	Robert B.	La Jolla	Ca	Zolda	8/1/94
Dempsey	Don	Green Valley	Az	Velma E.	10/5/94
Dingler	Mace H.	Hyattsville	Md	*	7/31/94
Elder	R. B.	Tulsa	Ok		10/21/94
Fenske	Edward	Southampton	NJ	Frances M.	10/3/94
Fletcher	James R.	Rachel	WV	Mary L.	10/6/94
Howe	Leroy Bud	York	Pa		3/23/85
Krusor	William A.	Winfield	Ks	?	9/24/94
Lustek	Charles F.	Hoffmans Estates	Il	*	9/30/94
Maguire	John T.	Urbana	Il	?	8/13/94
Montgomery	William H.	Edmonds	Ok	?	94
Tucci	Anthony	Falmouth	Va	Judy	10/20/94
Vasquez	David P.	Ordway	Co	?	10/94
Walker	Abner B.	Miami	Az	Nettie	1/1/94
Walinsky	Pierce J.	Sunnyvale	Ca	Lois E.	8/3/94
Williams	Ivan D.	New Port News	Va		6/18/94

NOTICE

Anyone living in a three-state area around the Columbia River (Washington, Oregon or Idaho) from 1994-72 with possible exposure to radionuclides should call **1-800-959-7660**.

Sam Decker, 3391 S. Tongass Hwy., Ketchikan, AK 99901, 907-225-3271 is shown at the grave markers of Russian Soldiers in the National Cemetery in Sitka who died there when Russia owned Alaska. Decker is an Armed Guard who sailed on the S.S. R.S. WILSON 12/44-8/45 and the USS ARD-6 7/46-3/47.

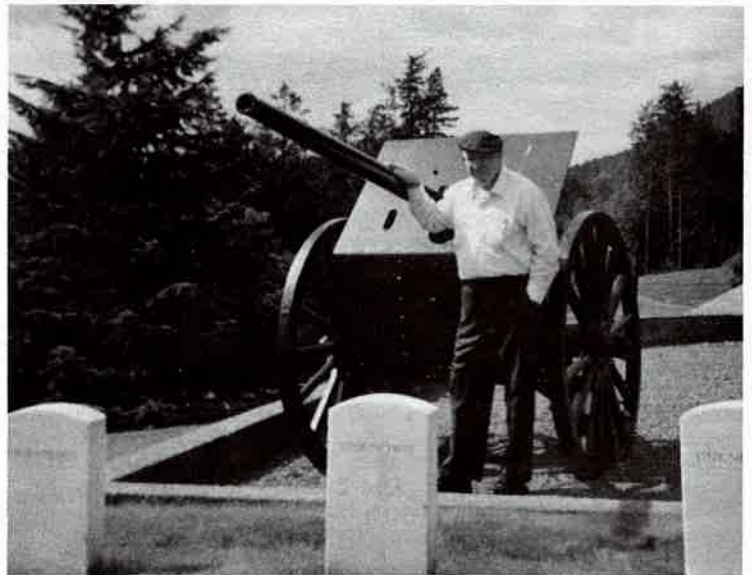
Dear C.A.,

May 4, 1994

Along with my donation I've enclosed a picture of my old shipmate Bill Braken of Sumner, Washington and myself. We served aboard the SS CAPE ISABELL together in the Pacific. We left San Francisco for Anaweita and Ulithi. We were at Okinawa at war's end. I thought maybe you could find a place in the POINTER for it.

We had the good fortune to meet at the National Reunion in Orlando. We hadn't seen each other in forty-nine years. It was wonderful to see him again and talk of our past experiences and get caught up on the last forty-nine years. Thanks for doing a great job. It's really appreciated.

Bill Ball, 300 Wisteria Ct., Deltona, FL 32738



U.S. Navy Armed Guard tour the USS INTREPID during a visit to New York City.

Hi Charles,

Mar. 4, 1994

Sirs:

I wonder if you have any information in your files about a convoy I was in in which 27 ships out of 83 were damaged by rammings in a fog. It was a miracle that no one was hurt considering that half the ships were carrying GIs coming home from prison camps.

The convoy was No. ON-303 and left the United Kingdom May 19, 1945 and was the last west-bound convoy of the war. I was on the Jonathan Trumbull and we had 500 American soldiers on board who had just been released from German POW camps.

On May 27 the lead ship in the convoy sighted an iceberg and called the convoy commodore. Over the WT the commodore sent the signal for all ships to turn but when the execution came he sent the signal by horn. With heavy rain and thick fog half the ships didn't hear the execution order and then all hell broke loose.

We were rammed twice and I will never forget standing on deck as a British freighter, coming out of the fog 50 yards away, bear down on the spot where I was standing. At the last minute they swung aft and scraped off all our lifeboats. Immediately, the commodore sent an RT message for all ships to stop. In the morning when the fog lifted ships were facing every which way with hull damage showing on many.

A few years back there was mentioned in the "POINTER" that you had made an English merchant seaman an honorary member of the Armed Guard Veterans. His ship, the PENNSYLVANIA, was in the convoy so I contacted him in Lewiston, Idaho. His name is John Brown and he was a young messman on that ship. He remembered the incident well.

Charles, that story in the January issue by Captain Art Moore, Jr., was a real shocker. What a stunning example of man's inhumanity to his fellow human beings in wartime.

Ed Fogarty, 4 Dickinson Street, Billerica, MA 01821

Dear Mr. Lloyd

Aug. 20, 1994

I look forward to receiving the POINTER as I was a member of the Armed Guard before being assigned to the PC1244.

In reading your newsletter I have not seen mention of a little known segment of the Armed Guard and that is the Convoy Control unit. We were signalmen, radiomen and gunners assigned to foreign flag merchant ships. Many of my friends were casualties ... and many more were on ships that were sunk. I sailed on three ships as the only US Navy man on board and others with Armed Guard crews.

In August of 1942 I was assigned a Panamanian freighter called the SS INTREPIO and came under sub attack the night of August 17 some 75 miles north of Trinidad. Three ships in the convoy's front row were sunk ... a torpedo passed a dozen feet ahead of our bow and hit and sank the commodore ship. The commodore was killed in this action.

Anyway, I thought you might like to have an old copy of a folder mentioning a Convoy Control picnic we had April 1943. It lists the names of those connected with our unit. We lived in a barracks at Port of Spain and would stay there a week or so until our names were called. A launch would then take us out to our ships and away we would go. During my time I came under sub attack in three different convoys, but my ships were lucky. Once, in a convoy of crippled ships (some carrying torpedo holes, others too slow for regular convoy) on the ship I was on (a Great Lake coaler named the SS LAWRENCE) our boiler header blew and we saw the convoy disappear over the horizon. The ship got going again and then we limped along alone for eight scary days to Guantanamo. I got off only to be assigned a tanker going north to New York. Then another 18 months sea duty aboard the PC1244.

You would be doing a service to mention Convoy Control - an all but forgotten unit of the Navy in WWII.

Gilbert Dean, 15783 Via Sorrecto, San Lorenzo, CA 94580

I am thrilled to write this letter for the records and any information on the ships that I sailed on during the hitch I served in the Navy. It has been only two months since I came to know that there was such a National group for the Armed Guard personnel. It seemed that when they were through with our services they just sent us home with hardly a thank you and good-bye. I saw in our Iowa Legionnaire magazine a mention that Iowa was starting a state reunion for such as us. I sent a letter to Mr. Arnold Latare and he informed me that he sent the information on to you. I genuinely want to receive all records and information that you can provide.

My first ship was the S.S. COLUMBIA. It was a passenger ship owned by the Alaska Steam Ship Company. While I was on it its home base was Seattle, Washington and we sailed the Aleutian Islands, the Bearing Sea to Nome, and many ports in the Gulf of Alaska as well as the inlet passages to Seattle. It was a beautiful ship, complete with exterior focsles, a ballroom and a beautiful dining room. It was armed with a 3"-50 on the bow, midships were six 20mm anti-aircraft guns, and on the gun deck over the poop-deck was a 4"-50 caliber to which I was assigned as a sight setter.

The day I came aboard, in early August, 1943, was the same day we sailed with troops for the Kiska Island invasion. I cannot remember the exact dates that I board nor the exact day that I left. It had to be the last week in October, 1944 because I was home the first two weeks in November.

I returned to Treasure Island and was assigned to the U.S.A.T. NEBRASKAN. We sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge on 22 December 1944 for the south seas. The ship was a German made ship that was taken when WWI was over and I think was stored in "moth balls" until we sailed her. It had the same armament that the other ship had and I was assigned as a sight setter on that ship too. It was a larger cargo ship than most and would sail at a remarkable speed. We took large graders and bulldozers etc. to New Guinea and then were assigned a food run from Australia to the Islands because of the speed. We never had an escort. I am beginning to forget the Islands that we served and whatever Navy records you can send me will be gratefully appreciated.

I did my boot training in Camp Scott in dear ol' Farragut, Idaho. I was assigned to Co. 233 in March of '43 but within three weeks I became ill with measles and it developed into pneumonia and later I was assigned to Co. 297. After boot leave I was assigned to Treasure Island where I had three weeks of gunnery school and shipped to Seattle.

The end of my hitch came on 6 April 1946. Shortly thereafter the ship U.S.A.T. NEBRASKAN left Biak Island for Manila where I was replaced and then left from Subic Bay, Philippines to San Francisco. I was sent to Chamberlain Field in St. Paul, Minnesota where I got my discharge on 24 May, 1946.

**Delwyn Wayne Foust, 203 Sycamore Avenue,
Garrison, IA 52229-0125**

Dear Joe Zapotocky:

Aug. 13, 1994

In January 1942, shortly after Pearl Harbor was bombed, our group forming Task Force 6814 was sent to the SoPac. Aboard the ARGENTINA we found the Navy Armed Guard crew, fresh from Great Lakes Station and their leaders, a Reserve Ensign and Gm1C knew nothing about the water cooled 50 cal. MG's aboard. Also on inspecting them, we found they were still in cosmoline.

When we asked about this condition we were asked to join the Armed Guard as volunteers for the 37 day cruise to Australia from Brooklyn, NY. We did and stood watches with them on all the guns aboard. This is detailed in Justin Gleichauf's excellent book, "Unsung Heroes."

I mention this only because you listed only Naval units, and Marine and Coast Guards. We were Army and knew these weapons backward at the time. Good luck with your Reunion!

Bill McLaughlin, 155 River Ridge Dr., Marston Mills, MA 02648

Dear Lloyd:

August 29, 1994

Thank you for the printout of names of people that were on the same ship that I was on during WW II. I have been trying to find some of the crew I served with on the S.S. GEORGE WHITEFIELD 9/8/43-1/14/44. I have written to one of the crew on that list and hope to meet with him soon. I have also ordered the book from Mr. Ray Thompson. Enclosed is a copy of my service. I am sorry to say that I was only in the ARMED GUARD for a short time before being transferred to the Amphib Forces and served on the LCI(L) 951 5/20/44-8/16/44 where I spent the rest of my time in the war.

During the invasion of Southern France, on the 15th of August, 1944, our ship made numerous trips from the troop ships to the beach, carrying 200 GIs each trip and taking wounded from the beach to a hospital ship on our return. During the trips to the beach, we lost a number of our gun crew due to being hit by German gun fire from the 88s on the hills overlooking the beach-head.

Our mission at the end of the day was to beach our LCI and set up a radio communications station. Having lost most of our gun crew during the day, our ship captain assigned the ship's flagman and myself to man the forward gun station. Neither of us had any experience working the 20MMs; we hardly knew even how to load them. Everything was fine going into the beach. There was no more enemy fire from the 88s in the hills. I guess the Army GIs had taken care of them.

When we felt the bow of our ship hit the beach, the whole beach blew up!! We had hit a mined beach area and our ship and crew was hurt bad. I had a broken right leg and other cuts and the signalman was injured, too as we were the only one on the bow where the most damage was done.

The ship's corpsman took care of us the best he could until the next day when we were taken to a hospital ship. They were too busy to take care of us on the ship so I was taken to an Army Hospital in Naples, Italy. The young Army doctor there was working around the clock, trying to take care of 42 "SERIOUSLY WOUNDED" people. My wounds were not life threatening so I had to wait 7 days before the doctor found time to operate on my leg, fix the bone and put on a cast. This doctor sure did a great job with what he had to work with. I wish I'd gotten his name. All I remember about him was that he had red hair. One week after the ARMY DOCTOR mended my leg, the Navy came to the hospital and took out all the Navy people and transferred us to a hospital ship, the USS REFUGE (AH-11) 9/14/44 for the long trip back to the States.

I enjoyed most of my time in the Navy and have had a very good life. My leg stills gives me pain, but I feel very lucky. Many of my shipmates were not so lucky. They did not come back to enjoy life, after fighting for it. All who came back from the war were lucky.

This summer, I took my wife to Baltimore to see the S.S. JOHN W. BROWN. We enjoyed seeing the ship and enjoyed a two hour cruise around the harbor. It was a very memorable trip for me. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!!

Ken Arnold, 2970 Oxford Dr., Springfield, Ohio 45506,
513-325-3694.



MAIL CALL!! An average day at A.G. headquarters.

Dear C.A.:

Oct. 30, 1994

I would like to apologize for this overdue letter, but, I waited until I was feeling better before I could write to you. Early this year I discovered I had throat cancer and I had to miss the 13th Annual Reunion in Orlando due to radiation treatments and had to be "tube-fed" for a long time. The doctor assures me that I can attend the San Diego Reunion and am looking forward to being there with the Armed Guard.

I sincerely want to THANK everyone who has sent me good wishes and to the Mini-Reunion Hosts who sent signed cards from the attendees. I hold you all dear to my heart. I hope you know how grateful I am to all you and wish all a Wonderful Holiday Season.

Frank (Stretch) Mede, 8031 Pequena Dr., Port Richey, Fl. 34668.

To all the Crew: It is great to know that our shipmate Mede is making a remarkable recovery from this dreaded disease. It is great news. My problem is that there are so many of you with different health problems and I sometimes feel so helpless that I can not put in the POINTER each person's name so they, too, be so encouraged. I put this one in as an example for you to follow to be strong and hope for the best. We have some wonderful doctors today.

It saddens me when I make a telephone call as I did to the Arizona Skipper, Carlo Traficano, 108 N. Greenfield Rd. A-2117, Mesa, Az. 85203 and Carlo informs me that the doctor says it's just a matter of time. He was in good Spirit and we hope he will overcome his cancer. He has turned over his duties to Selvin Lien and William Howard in Tucson. SEE REUNIONS. CAL

C.A.:

Just a note to let you know we had a wonderful time hosting the 11-Wi Mini-Reunion. We found 2 more men and they were amazed that we even existed!! Everyone enjoyed themselves. They went gambling on the River Boat, went sightseeing and toured the John Deere Museum.

Polly took some of the women over to Davenport. They have an old village over there and the women had a ball!! So, all in all, everyone had a great time. The weather was ideal, too!!

My son's jazz band from our High School played music and they started out with "ANCHORS AWEIGH" and by the time they played it eight times, everyone was up and marching and snaking all over the dining room!! As I said, we had a great time and it was a very successful Mini and we are looking forward to returning to ROCK ISLAND again some day. Thank you for the POINTER and say HI to Hilda for us.

Joe and Polly Klimson, 625 Genesee, Morrison, Il. 61270

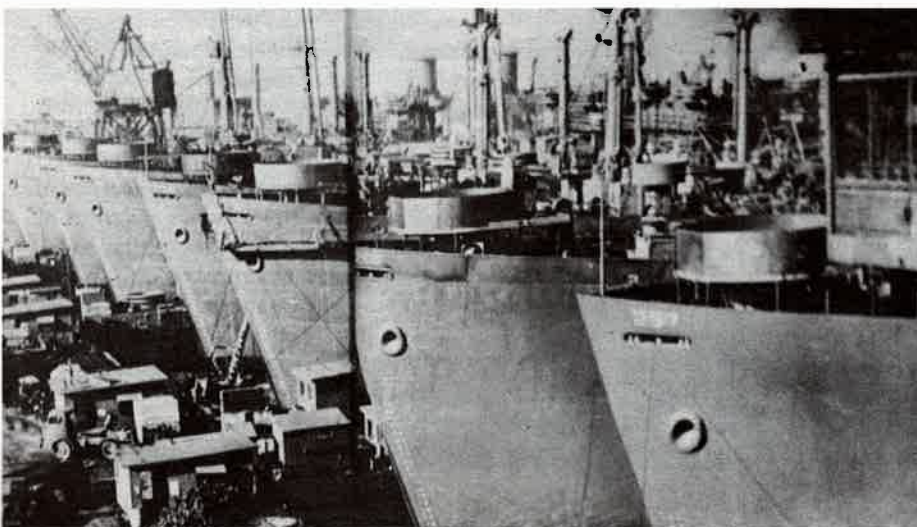
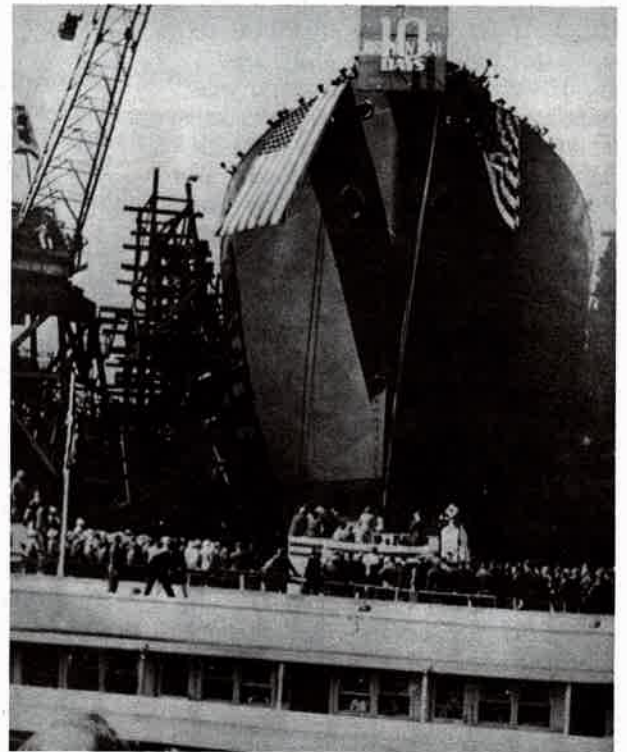
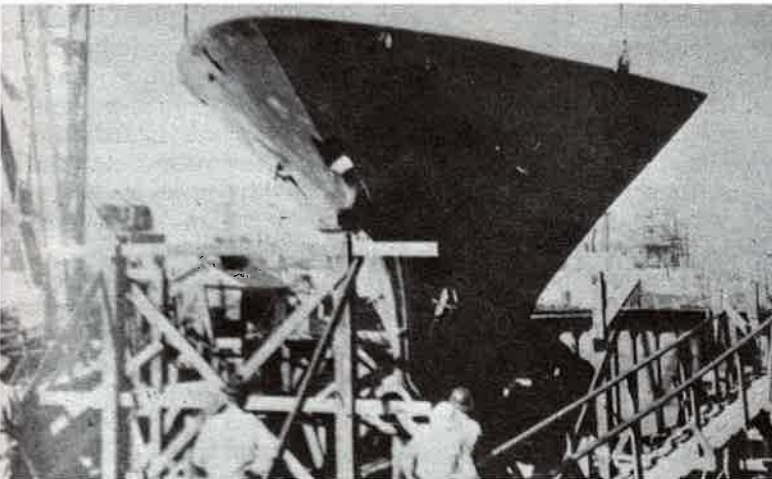
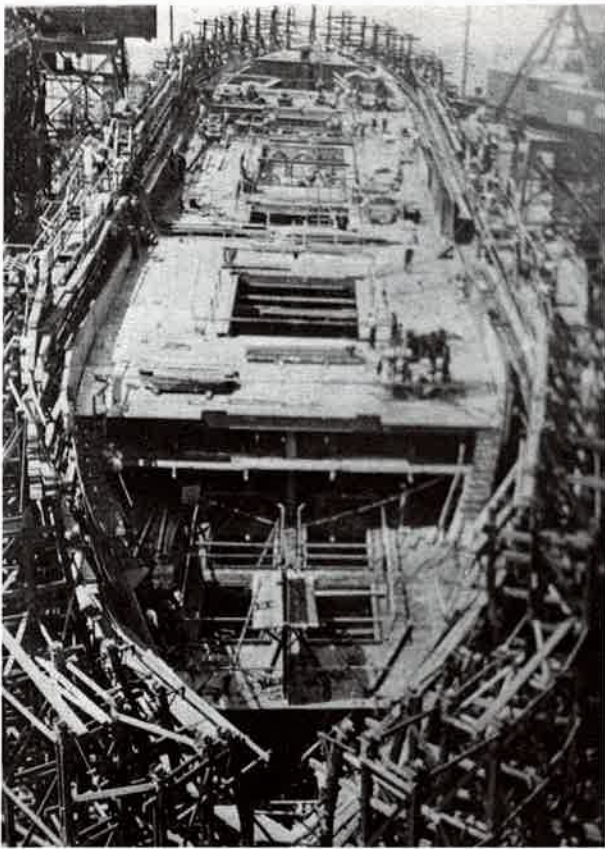
Charles Lloyd:

I very seldom attend the reunions due to the fact that I seldom find any signalmen or radiomen in attendance. It is as if we never were in U.S.N. Armed Guard. Seldom in the "POINTER" is there a reference made of us. I fully realize that there were more gunners than signalmen or radiomen but it would be nice if we were mentioned occasionally if it were only to say- "WE WERE ALONG FOR THE RIDE".

After three weeks training at San Diego, then to Treasure Island for another three weeks, I was off to a rusty old tanker with NO GUNNERS AND NO RADIOMAN. Just plain ol' me. Then, I served on a UNITED FRUIT BOAT which had no guns, nor gunners to start with. I served on five vessels and I enjoyed the experiences. I got along fine with the gun crews just fine since before joining the Navy, I had finished a 3 year hitch in the Army (peacetime) in the Field Artillery where I had been a member of a gun crew on a 75 millimeter field piece. I served on the S.S. HUGUENOT 4/42-6/42; S.S. WILLIS VAN DE VANTER 7/42-4/43; S.S. SAGUA 5/43-7/43; S.S. MYRON T. HERRICK 8/43-5/44 and the ABERDEEN VICTORY- 6/44-10/45. Here's to your continued success.

Paul Mason 5402 McKellips Rd #303 Mesa, Az. 85215.

PAUL, YOU SAID IT ALL!! Thanks for reminding me. Maybe some Radioman or Signalman would like to tell his story, too. We were all in the same boat on the same ship doing what had to be done. calloyd



LIBERTY SHIPS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Sent in by Paul M. Burke

TERROR ON THE TOWLINE

By Fred J. Cook (Reprinted from "Sea Classics" July 1994)

The sun painted a blinding shimmer on the water that day in early June 1951, when Captain Frank Hughes looked down from his 25th floor aerie at the tip of Manhattan Island and watched the powerful tugs — his special tugs — drop down the harbor, steering a course toward the open sea.

A black-haired, smooth-faced man in his mid-thirties, Hughes' medium-sized frame, is packed with the kind of trim muscle a swift-moving halfback might envy. His eyes are keen and dark; his smile friendly. But on this day, the smile was missing, and the eyes were somber. The reason lay in the scene he studied — a humdrum scene that was fraught with secret significance; with such significance, indeed, that Hughes was being reminded of those other days when his every move was a high-priority military secret and

he was the skipper of a V-4 tug towing massive concrete coffins through the choppy seas to a rendezvous off the beachhead at Normandy.

Past and present fused in a weird union in the setting Hughes now studied. He was standing in the operations office of the Moran Towing and Transportation Co., and below him, like an animated map, lay the ever-active waters of the world's greatest port. The Staten Island ferry frothed past the Brooklyn shore; dingy railroad car floats crawled like water bugs from Jersey toward Manhattan piers, a dirt-streaked freighter churned up the harbor from the Narrows. And through it all, Moran tugs threaded their lonely paths to sea.

Only Hughes, a few high planners and the tugboat skippers themselves knew that these rugged bulldogs of the sea were departing for a rendezvous with destiny. They were off on a mission which was to be the biggest secret military operation since the invasion of Normandy, and of which the American public wouldn't hear a whisper until September 1952. Only then would it be disclosed that the United States, through its top-secret Operation Blue Jay, had hacked a bomber base with a 10,000-foot runway out of the Arctic wastes at Thule, Greenland, just 900 miles from the North Pole and 3000 miles from the industrial heart of Russia.

Thus, within one short decade, Hughes was to participate in two of the most vital and secret military operations of our country's history.

The tugs, whose departure Hughes watched, were craft the outfitting of which he had carefully planned in his capacity as marine superintendent for the Moran Company, owners of the world's largest tugboat fleet. He had made certain that they were adequately provisioned; that radio and Loran equipment were in perfect order; that special, mobile gear necessary for work in the Arctic was installed. He knew that one of the tugs, the *Kevin Moran*, would have to shepherd a 60-ton float-

ing crane through the pack ice of the northern seas; he knew that other tugs would be towing barges 250 feet long and 50 feet wide, jammed to the bulwarks with trucks, bulldozers and heavy construction equipment. Nine of the toughest seagoing tugs in the Moran fleet had been assigned to this all-important mission. It would take the best to buck the ice packs of Baffin Bay and North Star Bay and to follow narrow water leads past massive icebergs, so that the equipment for war and for defense could be put ashore on the frozen tundra at Thule.

Hughes knew, as few men could, the rigors of the voyage that lay ahead. As they say, he had been there.

He had been there when E-boats were scouring the English Channel at night, when Messerschmitts screamed strafing out of cloudy skies, when dive bombers plummeted downward, trying to destroy the tugs and the massive concrete coffins which they were hauling to build the artificial invasion harbors off the coast of Normandy.

Yes, Frank Hughes, an executive, a planner now, had taken a tugboat to war. His had been one of the most vital, least-sung roles of World War II. The world had no conception then, or even now, of the adventures of Captain Hughes and his hardy band of civilian tugboat men who did so much to make victory possible.

For Hughes, the great adventure had begun with what had all the appearance of a routine tow through the crowded, wartime shipping of New York harbor.

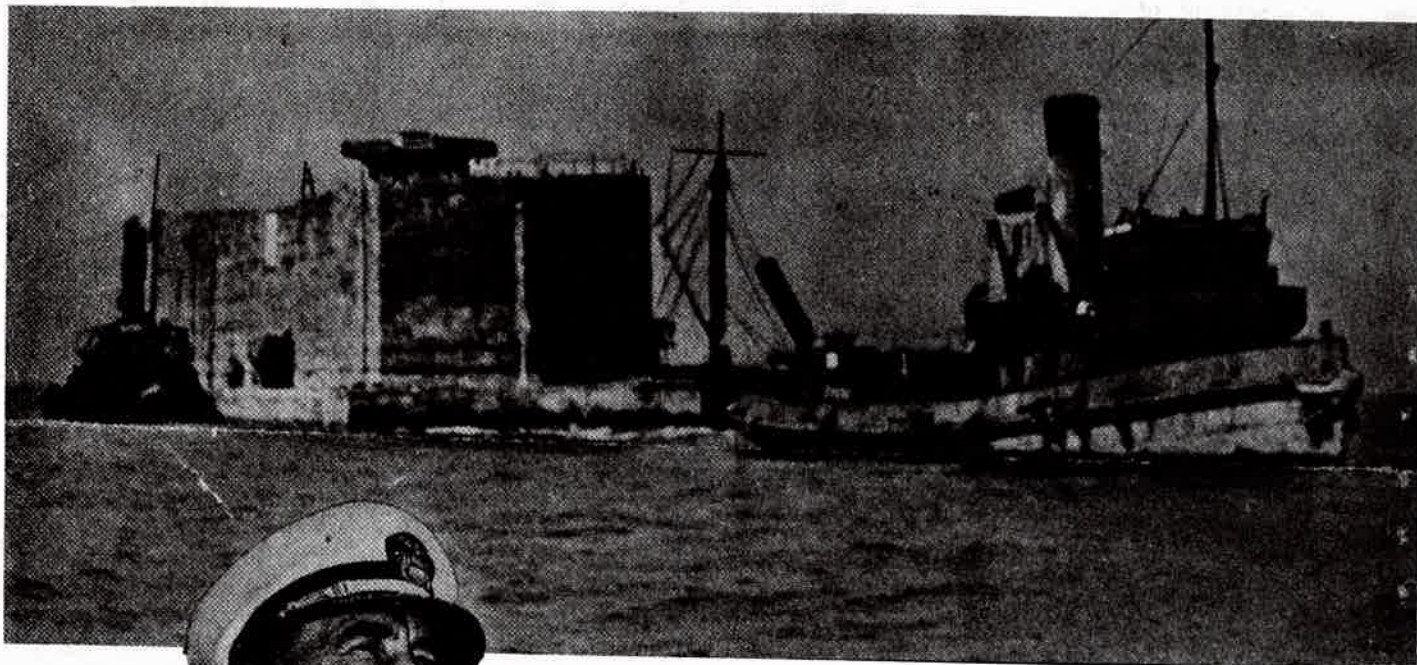
It was in the late afternoon of 25 March 1944, when a group of bulldog-like seagoing tugs went down the harbor, trailing weird tows behind them. First on the towlines came fantastic, piggy-back contraptions — each an ordinary car float surmounted by a broad, flat-bottomed wooden barge. Bouncing along behind the

PUBLICATIONS

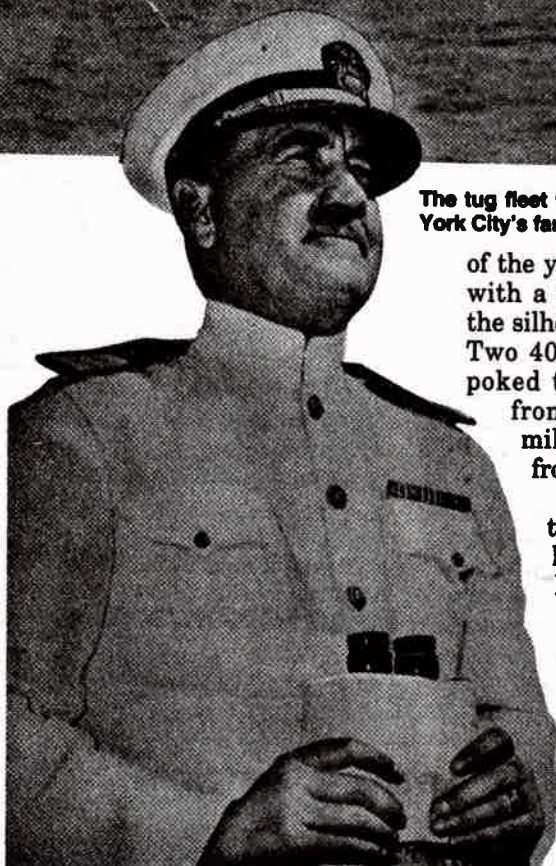
The book "The Voyage of the Jeremiah O'Brien - San Francisco to Normandy 1994" is now available. Price is \$14.95 plus \$2.00 shipping/handling. Contact Coleman Schneider, P.O. Box 625, Tenaflly, NJ 07670.

The article by James Blears in the October *POINTER* came from "COMMAND" magazine. Subscription rate is \$21.50 for one year (6 issues). Write to P.O. Box 4017, San Luis Obispo, CA 93403 or call 1-800-488-2249.

"Terror on the Towline" on this page came from "SEA CLASSICS" magazine. Subscription rate is \$18.95 for one year (12 issues). Write to Challenge Publications, Inc., Subscription Dept., 7950 Deering Avenue, Canoga Park, CA 91304.



The tug fleet was under the command of R/Adm Edmond J. Moran, former president of New York City's famed Moran Towing and Transportation Company.



of the yards. She was 195 feet long, with a 35-foot beam, and she had the silhouette of a small patrol ship. Two 40-millimeter machine guns poked their, thin snouts upward from her afterdeck, and a 50-millimeter gun as mounted in front of the pilothouse.

Standing at the wheel as the *Gay Head* went down the harbor, Hughes was proud of his new command. He had followed the call of blue water ever since he was a boy in his teens, and early in the war, he had had a freighter literally torpedoed out from under him while he rested in his cabin in a supposedly safe Caribbean port.

piggybacks were empty oil barges.

The tows passed in review before thousands of eyes along the busy waterfront, but there is no evidence that they drew even the faintest stir of curiosity. Certainly no one, seeing this odd flotilla, could have guessed that here was the prelude to the great Normandy invasion; that these flimsy-looking, hybrid harbor tows were a vital ingredient in the logistics of supply.

Hughes, then just 28, was in command of the *Gay Head*, a powerful V-4 tug built for the War Shipping Administration and fresh out

Before finally casting off from The Stakes, the Army base at 69th Street, Brooklyn, all skippers had been called to Third Naval District headquarters at 90 Church Street, New York. There, Navy experts had long planned this operation, but not without grave doubts and misgivings. It seemed like madness to experienced seamen to challenge the inclement North Atlantic with flimsy harbor car floats and barges — but the problems of supply demanded that the gamble be taken. Worried and fearful of the outcome, the Navy brass briefed the tugboat skippers soundly.

"Everybody was supposed to be in a certain position at a certain time, strict Navy style," Hughes recalls with dry humor. "But, of course, it didn't work out that way. There was the usual confusion and delay. Our tows cleared Ambrose Channel by 7 p.m. all right, but then darkness fell and the port was buttoned up for the night. Our escorts and the rest of the convoy hadn't been able to get out in time, and there we were at sea on our own, sitting ducks for any Nazi submarine that happened to be around. Nothing happened, and the next morning the rest of the convoy joined up."

With the convoy finally reunited, on the morning of 26 March, it formed up in the manner prescribed by the Navy in the original briefing. The protective forward screen was a fan of 12 PC's, the larger class of steel-hulled submarine chaser. Next came the tanker and supply ship *Maumee*, and after her, 12 tows in line abreast. On the wings were two mine sweepers. The destroyer *Moffett* and three DEs sniffed back and forth through the convoy and scouted the seas ahead and on either side. Four service lugs brought up the rear, ready to cope with any tow that might break loose.

From the day the convoy sailed, it was a rugged voyage. The North Atlantic winds blew with incessant,

March fury: the seas raged without letup. The crews of light-riding transports and freighters, returning home for new cargoes of war, stared with amazement as they passed the struggling convoy. They watched as the floundering tugs wallowed over white-crested seas and they speculated on the idiocy of flimsy Hudson River car floats castled by strange wooden barges, bouncing like unmanageable corks on the foaming combers.

Hughes' report to the Moran company, couched in the laconic terms of a sailor accustomed to accepting the sea as he finds it, later summed up in bare, unornamented figures the salient facts of the voyage. The ocean crossing required 25 days. Hughes noted, and there were only three days out of the 25 that the convoy was not hounded by the westerly gales and the heavy, quartering seas. Sometimes the *Gay Head* wallowed at a tipsy, 49-degree angle and was reduced to making bare headway.

There was one 10-day period that seemed to bring nothing but disaster. Day and night, the tempest from the west lashed the seas into ever-higher, ever-more menacing mountains, froth capping their towering slate sides as they thundered down upon the convoy. On 7 April, one such foaming terror broke over the decks of the *Moffett*, sweeping the destroyer from stern-to-stern and carrying two sailors like helpless chips on a flood overside to swift death.

For five days more, the convoy was racked by the elemental fury of the ocean deep, its river boat tows slewing on their towlines, their thin sides wrenched by the cross stresses of the towering seas. The things that Navy planners had feared when they sent the light-constructed craft on their seemingly foolhardy voyage began to happen. The devouring ocean began to take its toll.

The first to go was an Esso oil barge. Her seams, weakened by the constant hammering, began to open on 12 April. Foundering, she was cut adrift and dispatched by the gunfire of escort vessels. The rest of the convoy pressed on, the storm still raging.

Five days later, one of the piggyback car floats began to disintegrate, breaking up piece by piece as the crashing seas tore into it. Again, the guns of the escort vessels had to

be called into play to make certain that no half-foundered derelict was left behind to clutter the ocean shipping lanes.

The raging Atlantic snapped at a third victim, but this time did not quite claim its quarry. On Easter morning, as Hughes' *Gay Head* was wallowing stubbornly forward, breasting the tons of angry water flung at her, the heavy hawser holding her oil barge in position at the end of the tow snapped like whipcord. The barge was swept away like a bit of wildly-tossed flotsam, racing for the horizon on the crest of the swift-running seas. This was the kind of emergency, however, for which the service tugs trailed the convoy, and one of them instantly gave chase. She managed to get alongside the madly bobbing oil barge and to make fast another length of hawser.

"All this time, besides the storms, we were passing through dangerous, sub-infested waters," Hughes recalls. "We were warned on one occasion that we had to pass through an area that was being worked over by ten German subs, part of a 30-sub wolf pack that was on the prowl in that part of the ocean. Once, our escort vessels picked up an enemy sub at some fantastic depth — I think it was 500 feet. I hadn't known until then that subs could work that deep, much less be detected."

The escort vessels flocked to the point of contact. One after another, quattering and criss-crossing this pinpointed spot in the wastes of the angry ocean, they made their deadly runs, flinging their heavy depth charges overside at the hidden enemy far below. For 12 hours the savage attack continued, unrelenting, while the stricken sub turned and twisted, trying to shake her pursuers, as above, the killer pack followed every move with sonic devices.

"Just to show how deep that sub was," Hughes says, "there wasn't any spouting fountain of water such as you see in pictures when depth charges go off. There was just a little fuzz on the surface, the charges were set that deep."

"Finally, after 12 hours of relentless attack, there was evidence that the sub was really in a bad way. She had been forced up to 80 feet. There was oil on the water. Our escort vessels knew that she must be badly damaged — but they had spent so much time working over her that they had dropped far be-

hind the convoy. If the convoy ran into other subs, they would be sorely needed to help fight them off. They didn't dare tarry with the crippled sub any longer."

During the rest of the voyage, the elements were more persistent than the Nazis. Storms hounded the battered tows and their escorts all the way to Falmouth. There, the weird piggybacks and the oil barges were turned over to the Army — to be used to carry troops, supplies and gasoline. Hughes breathed a sigh of relief at the completion of one of the worst Atlantic voyages in his experience. If he had known what the future held, he wouldn't have been so happy.

There was one man who could have told him and, ironically enough, the man was Hughes' own peacetime boss — Rear Admiral Edmond J. Moran, then a captain and then, as now, the president of the Moran Towing and Transportation Company. Moran, a forthright man, has the walk and carriage of authority. He is short, stocky, a bit barrel chested—the toy bulldog type, you might call him. Even in civilian clothes, he looks as if he might have stepped off the quarterdeck of a ship-of-the-line of Hornblower's day.

Admiral Moran was one of those inside at Navy headquarters in New York who not only knew what the future held for Captain Hughes and his fellow skippers in the V-4 tugs but was, in fact, to direct their destinies for months to come. He arrived in England shortly after Hughes did, and with the actual invasion of France only a few weeks away, set up his headquarters at Lee Tower, Lee-on-Solent.

Now came the real headache of the invasion — the famous Operation Mulberry. This was the code name for the construction of artificial harbors in the open sea. A solidly linked chain of ships and obstructions was to be sunk to create a breakwater against which the rough Channel seas could froth and break spending themselves against the barrier and leaving a lagoon-like quiet on the circle of water inside. One portion of this odd breakwater was to be formed by old freighters loaded with concrete and stone. These were to steam out into position under their own power and be scuttled by their crews.

Another section was to be fashioned by the sinking of fantastic-looking rectangular, bluff-bowed

caissons of concrete (nicknamed coffins by the men who were to sail them) that the British had designed and built especially for the purpose.

These caissons, officially known by the odd name *Phoenix*, were like nothing ever seen before upon the sea. They were 200 feet long, 60 feet broad and 60 feet in depth from top to bottom. They were built in two slab-like sections, one set upon the other. A machine gun was mounted on the top block to help ward off air attack.

Hollow inside, they were designed so that, when seacocks were opened, they would fill with 7000 tons of water and settle to the bottom in about 25 minutes. And on the bottom was about the only place where they weren't a problem.

Certainly a more unwieldy, balky dead weight to horse through heavy seas has rarely, if ever, been designed by man. The square, sawed-off bows created the maximum resistance to forward motion through the water. Towing a house broadside through the waves would have been child's play by comparison.

Before Moran arrived, several towing devices had been tried. The British had experimented with teams of tugs, towing from each side of the bluff *Phoenix* bow. This technique caused more confusion than a mismatched team of horses. Almost invariably, one tug exerted a stronger pull than the other so that, in a short time, the forward motion tended to become circular.

Admiral Moran studied the problem and decided he had the answer in the V-4 super-tugs. He assigned the V-4s to do the job alone, one tug to a *Phoenix*. Churning at a furious rate, the engines of these master tugs stirred the blockhouse-like *Phoenix* units to forward motion. Sometimes, in strong adverse Channel currents, even the V-4s had to measure progress at the rate of one knot an hour, but move ahead they did.

For D-Day, Admiral Moran assigned 67 tugs to the Mulberry operation. He had 160 tugs of all kinds under his command. "There were seagoing tugs, harbor tugs, Navy tugs, Army tugs, WSA tugs, Dutch and Belgian tugs," he recalled. "We had everything."

His most powerful ships and his best tugboat men, however, he assigned to the task of jockeying the fort-like *Phoenix* units to France. Among the men whose skill had earned them the reward of this

assignment was Frank Hughes of the *Gay Head*.

Hughes, whose perception was the reverse of the brass — the characteristically down-to-earth approach of the little man caught up in the stream of the colossal — is the perfect raconteur for a tug's eye view of this unprecedented assault upon the exposed coast of a continent.

"During this whole waiting period," he says, "we were living in a never-never land, where everybody was Commanvu or Commanpac or something. Of course, the only thing we were really interested in was somebody who could give us our grub and take care of our supplies and our pay."

"About 29 May, we were sent to Lee-on-Solent, where we made our final preparations. On 4 June, we all attended a conference held by England's Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsey and by Admiral Moran, in which it was impressed upon us that we were a very vital part of this great endeavor — you know, the usual line."

"Four other tug skippers and myself got orders to proceed with our tugs to Selsy-Bill, where the *Phoenix* units were being made ready. This was a sheltered portion of the south coast of Britain, protected from heavy seas and submarine attack by a low line of reefs. There was a reasonably soft, level bottom inside the protecting reefs, and the *Phoenix* units had been sunk here waiting for the time to be used."

"There were two reasons for this. Submerged, they were in no danger of breaking loose from their moorings and drifting in a blow; also, they were less inviting and less vulnerable to air attack. Only about 15 feet of the hulls projected above the surface at high tide — not enough for the Germans, if they did spot them, to be able to figure out what the hell they were."

"The British had set up a special outfit, with command headquarters on an old side-wheel steamer, to pump out the *Phoenix* units and raise them as they were needed. It took about three or four hours to raise one of the concrete blocks and it was a delicate operation. The water had to be pumped out evenly or the whole thing would turn turtle and capsize."

"The five of us on the first tow went all by ourselves. We had no escort. Of course, that wasn't the way it had been planned, but that was the way it worked out. In an

operation as vast as this, there is so much inevitable confusion that a lot of plans flop."

"The original invasion date had been set for 5 June, but it was called off because of unfavorable weather. We just lay over and got some sleep. Everyone was a little jumpy. When you have 40 men under you whose lives depend on you, as I did, it isn't easy."

"Another thing, of course, was that we were a civilian outfit operating in a great military undertaking. We had no conception of a lot of the military angles. Nobody had the time or took the trouble to tell us."

"For instance, at that time you heard a lot of scuttlebutt about radar. You knew there was such a thing, but you had no idea what its limitations were, what it could or couldn't do. For all we knew, some German might have his eye glued to some magic eyepiece and be watching us just like in a photograph all the way to France. That's a bit fantastic, of course, but it gives you an idea."

"Then we knew that there were E-boats around — the German version of our motor torpedo boats. We were warned to be on the lookout for E-boats. We strained our eyes for E-boats. But if you knew that E-boats hardly ever operated except at night, it would have saved you a lot of trouble and a lot of worry."

"When D-Day dawned, we damn-well knew it. A group of little mine sweepers had come down the night before and anchored near us. In the morning, they were gone. Then the planes came over. The air was black with them. We waited for orders to sail."

"We had been given charts marked: 'Top Secret, Don't Open.' When we did get to sea we were allowed to open them. They proved to have nothing to do with the area we were assigned to — they were the wrong charts! The British had packed our charts, the charts we were supposed to get, in with a routine batch of charts for the British coast. That way, they would attract no particular attention by special markings on the packet. It was a clever idea — but the trouble was, it was too clever, and the charts got all mixed up and never did get to us."

"The first unit we took over was an A-2 *Phoenix*, next to the largest in size. Our orders were to keep north of a certain point on the French coast until midnight and not to be south of another point at daylight the next day. The way I figured it out, this meant that, if

I sailed when I was supposed to, we'd have to mess around out there for hours with this big, lumbering thing lashed to our tail, a prime target for anyone who came along.

"I couldn't see any sense in taking the damn thing out hours ahead of time and kicking around the Channel, so I hung around Selsy-Bill on one pretext or another until about 11 p.m. of D-Day, and then took off. We got to the French coast about 5 p.m. of D-plus-1."

By this time the landings had been secured, and the smaller tugs had taken in the car floats and oil barges that Hughes and his fellow tugboat skippers had towed to England. Loaded with 10,000 tons of gasoline and K-rations, the barges and car floats had been drifted right up on the invasion beaches, furnishing the first bulk supplies for the troops. Now the big buildup operation had to be got under way — and quickly.

This is Hughes' story of what it was like:

"Everything seemed pretty well secured in the area of Mulberry B, where I knew we were supposed to go, but with the mixup in charts we couldn't be sure exactly where the port-building operation was to take place.

"We asked everybody we could contact. There was a flock of destroyers inshore and we thought surely they'd know. But they just gave us a blank stare and went on. Those near by looked at us in amazement. Obviously, they couldn't imagine what the hell we were doing out there in the middle of an invasion, towing that weird-looking contraption around. Everything had been shrouded in such secrecy that all any one guy knew was his own little job; everybody else's problem was pretty much of a mystery to him.

"There were three or four battlewagons and a French cruiser offshore pounding hell out of the French coast. With the 40-millimeter gun rigged on top of our *Phoenix*, we looked like some kind of a strange, seagoing fort, and on every ship we passed, we could see men staring at us.

"I had the *Phoenix* on a short hawser and we headed up the beach, but we didn't see anything else that looked like the tow we had. Finally, about 11 p.m. — with the extra two hours of British war time it was just getting dark — I saw a

group inshore that looked like what we had been hunting for.

"A limey came out and said in effect: 'Okay, chum, we'll take that thing off you 'bout 10 o'clock tomorrow.'

"I was unhappy, to say the least. We had no charts to aid us in cruising around there, so I anchored where I was, about two miles off the beach.

"I placed my 45 handy and lay down in my bunk to try to get some sleep. But I'd hardly stretched out when I heard this *w-r-r-rump* outside, and everything broke loose. I rushed up on deck, and all I could hear was this plane screaming down on us. It was a dive bomber, I guess, and the pilot let go with a couple of bombs that plunged into the water right off our bow.

"Just before dark, I had seen one of our heavy craft in close under the cliffs, and it looked like a good spot to me with the cliffs giving you protection. I decided to anchor the *Phoenix*, take off the crew and run in under the cliffs, where it would be safer to wait out the night.

"But, hell, I couldn't see anything. When the air attack started, trawlers that had been equipped with special smoke-making apparatus gave out with billowing clouds of it. You couldn't see a hundred feet. An anti-aircraft cruiser offshore sent up a curtain of fire that looked like the sheets of spray from the hoses of a fireboat.

"There wasn't anything for it, so we stayed where we were all night. The next morning, the shore forces took the *Phoenix* from us and towed it into place. Our's was the first *Phoenix* delivered to France."

The next days were busy and dangerous. The tugs plowed back and forth, making regular, slow-crawling hauls with the dead weight of the massive *Phoenixes* lashed to their sterns.

"About four knots was the best you could do with one of those things fastened to you," Hughes says. "Talk about your ball and chain! When you were chained to one of those huge blocks, with an adverse wind and tide sometimes slowing you down to one knot an hour, and a lot of enemy around who were just waiting to take a shot at you, it wasn't pleasant. It was just like sitting there and waiting to be potted.

"On 10 June, a pack of German E-boats got into one of our groups on their way back. I had passed them in the night just a short time before and, luckily for us, I was some distance away and the E-boats didn't notice me. But they got two of

our tugs that night — the British tugs *Sesame* and *Partridge*.

"The *Partridge* was a cocky little craft noted for having shot down an Me 109 single-handed: but the poor guy went down that night. Most of the crew were killed when the torpedo hit.

"After that, they assigned escorts to us and tried to keep us together. But the escorts were almost as much of a problem as the Germans. They were navy men, of course mostly Canadian corvettes, and they had no conception of towing problems. They'd try to keep us herded together like a group of abnormal children in kindergarten.

"But the speed, sea conditions and varying towing abilities of the tugs made this impossible. I usually had the speed of the rest of them, and I got so I would keep stepping it up and stepping it up until I was well out ahead. The escorts would blink, blink, blink like mad at me, but finally they'd just give up in disgust and let me go my own way.

"This meant that usually I'd be the first tug to reach the far shore and I could get rid of my *Phoenix* unit quickly, get headed the hell out of there and be back in England by morning. Otherwise, you had to hang around off the coast all night, as we had that first night, and the planes would come over and bomb the devil out of you.

"We didn't have to spend too many such nights there, as a result of my practice of getting in and out as quickly as possible. This was probably the reason, too, that we delivered more *Phoenix* units for the Mulberry ports than any other tug in the invasion."

By 19 June, the artificial harbors were nearly complete. Then a Channel storm struck. This narrow strip of water, as rough and unpredictable as any in the world, seethed at its worst. Furious waves pounded the beaches during 19, 20 June and part of 21 June. It was a storm reminiscent of the historic fury that had hounded the Spanish Armada through these same waters, foiling an earlier attempt to invade Britain.

When the wind died down and the sea calmed, the American port was a mess. The breakwater formed by the *Phoenix* units had been breached by the foaming seas, and piers and installations had been wrecked. The British harbor, however, had been more fortunate. Protected from the full brunt of the storm by an offshore reef, it was soon restored to full working order.

Moran and his tugboat crews labored around the clock to clear away

the debris. Admiral Harold R. Stark, in a confidential cable to Admiral (Jerry) Land in Washington, said: "I wish you could see these harbors. A monument should be erected in them to Moran. Had it not been for him, Lord knows how much further we would have been behind."

After the cleanup of the beaches had been completed and a steady flow of supplies had been assured for the Allied armies, Moran was ordered home to resume his old role as a trouble-shooter for Admiral Land. Hughes stayed on in Europe through additional bitter months of fighting. Still commanding the *Gay Head*, he towed a massive electric generating barge into Antwerp, running the gauntlet of German submarines and E-boats and came under the fire of the new V-2 rocket that wrought incredible death and

destruction wherever it hit.

With victory at last assured, Hughes and the other American tugboat skippers were ordered home. Official rewards came their way and were noted in a few brief paragraphs in the newspapers, along with the announcements of medals given to officers who had set up rest camps or who had gone all-out in organizing entertainment programs for the troops.

Among the unprinted files, however, are notations like this from Admiral Stark to Admiral Land on 10 July 1944:

"Wish you could have been here when I decorated Moran this morning. That fine fellow was just like a schoolboy, and I don't know when I have gotten such a kick and pleasure out of anything as I have in pinning the Legion of Merit on him. Apparently,

he knew nothing about it until I held him here overnight so that I could assemble a group of people to be present at the ceremony today. We are all proud of him."

The Admiral was also awarded the Croix de Guerre by France and the title of Commander of the British Empire. For the tugboat skippers who served under him, there was the award of 21 Bronze Stars by the Navy "for meritorious service and courageous devotion to duty during the landing operations in Normandy."

The resounding phrases were a bit shopworn by that time, and the public at large never realized what they covered, never knew of the experiences of Captain Hughes and the other skippers who had delivered the goods to Normandy and to the shore on the frozen tundra at Thule, Greenland. **SC**

D-Day: Carl Kreidler (center), Otto Sommerauer (left), who sailed as Carl's assistant and (right) Purser and Anglican Catholic Priest Retired Father Jim Wade.



Note the 20mm Gun Cover, paid for by the Armed Guard.

Ship's might made right

By THOR JOURGENSEN
and BILL PIKE
Item Staff

BOSTON — One of the last two surviving World War II Liberty ships sailed into Charlestown Navy Yard yesterday and an old friend from Lynn was glad to see it.

The S.S. John W. Brown helped make up a 2,750-ship floating life-line that transported men and material to World War II battlefields. Attorney Barry MacDonald served as a gunner aboard the 300-foot vessel from February 1943 to March of 1944.

Like his two brothers, MacDonald saw his share of action in the Atlantic and Pacific theaters during the war. He served on a submarine following his stint on the Brown and earned a handful of medals, but it was his Liberty ship service that impressed MacDonald most about the might America brought to bear in its war against the Axis powers.

"I had heard that the industrial might of the United States was going to win the war, but I knew it was really the sailors and soldiers who would do the winning. Later, I realized that it was the industrial might, people working side by side building ships, planes and tanks faster than the enemy could destroy them that played an equal if not greater role," he said.

The 19-year-old English High graduate was put in charge of a 5-inch deck gun crew when he first shipped out aboard the Brown for Africa. The merchantman crossed

the Atlantic, bound for Algiers where the Brown and other convoy vessels came under attack from enemy bombers.

"That was when a boy became a man," he said.

The Brown returned to the United States with a load of German prisoners, veterans of the elite German Afrika Korps that stormed across North Africa before being beaten by the Allies.

The ship and MacDonald went on to participate in the invasions of Sicily and Italy. His crew landed in Pompeii and helped themselves to a personal tour of the ancient city's famous museum.

Following the war, MacDonald became a Lynn firefighter and studied nights at Suffolk University for his law degree. He opened his Central Square law office after passing the bar examination in 1956 and in 1974 moved to Danvers where he still maintains an active practice.

MacDonald is not the only Lynner to see action aboard a Liberty ship. Leo Ring of Harmon Street served aboard the S.S. Thomas Donaldson for more than a year starting in February 1944.

The Donaldson plied the dreaded Murmansk route, risking storm-tossed seas to bring vitally needed war materials to the northernmost part of the Soviet Union. German bombers and U-boats picked off the merchantmen like ducks in a pond and the Donaldson was one of the victims.

Ring and some of the other 45 men aboard the ship had just sat

down to eat a lunch of pea soup in the ship's galley when a torpedo struck the Donaldson.

"The ship just seemed to lift in the air," he said.

The blast killed four members of the engine room crew, but it did not start a fire in the cargo hold full of ammunition and locomotives or spread deadly fumes throughout the ship.

The Donaldson took six hours to sink. The crew took to the ship's boats and were rescued after three hours by a British warship.

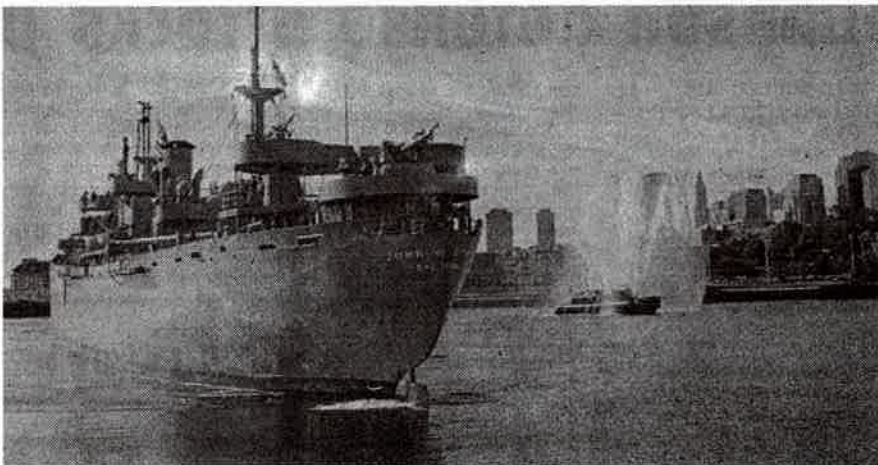
Like MacDonald, Ring served as a gunner. Each ship had a crew of Naval Armed Guards who defended the vessel. The Guards and Liberty ship seaman were under strict orders to keep the destinations and sailing times of their vessels secret while on shore.

Ring manned a .50-caliber machine gun on the vessel's bow, working four hours with eight hours off.

"You didn't get much sleep," he said.

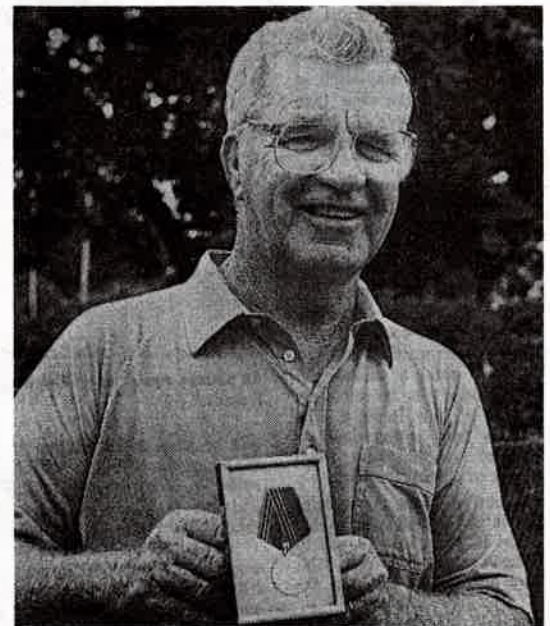
More than 700 Armed Guard and merchant marine veterans like Ring and MacDonald are expected to visit the Brown this week. The ship, which was restored by an all-volunteer organization based in Baltimore, will remain in Boston through Sunday and make a six-hour memorial cruise for paying guests on Saturday.

The ship is open for tours at Naval Yard Pier 1 W from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Friday.



The S.S. John W. Brown steams into Charlestown Navy Yard, with a welcome from a Boston city fire boat. The ship, now preserved as a museum, is here for five days for public viewing and a day cruise. During World War II, more than 2,700 Liberty ships were produced to carry weapons, heavy equipment, and other supplies for the war effort.

Photo: AP



Leo Ring of Lynn shows the medal presented to him through the mail by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, commemorating the 40th anniversary of "the Great Patriotic War." Item photo: Paula Muller.

Local man attends World War II reunion

The U. S. Navy Armed Guard World War II 12th National Reunion was held in Las Vegas, NV., May 16-19.

Ten members who served aboard the Liberty Ship S.S. John W. Troy were in attendance at the reunion. They were Durbin Schmitt, Lamar; William Burd, Casper, WY; Jay Lain, Culver City, CA; Everal Mallette, Oroville, CA; Eugene Martin, Whittier, CA; Jack Pearce, Salt Lake City, UT; Mitchell Rzepka, Utica, MI; George Schweitzer, Ocala, FL; Carl Thomas, Salem, OH; and

Orland Truman, Charleston, WV. This was the largest number from one ship at the national reunion.

Many of the crew had not seen each other for over 47 years. Much time was spent in getting re-acquainted, looking over photographs, books, ship logs, and other memorabilia. Before being transferred to the "Troy" almost all of the crew had served aboard other ships, so were considered veterans.

The attending crew, except Burd and Pearce, spent 13 months aboard the "Troy" mak-

ing two trips out from the States into the Pacific with destinations New Guinea, four times; Philippines, twice; Australia, Marshall Islands, Caroline Islands, and at Ryukyus Islands when the war ended in August, 1945.

One of the most specialized U. S. Navy units during World War II was the U. S. Navy Armed Guard Service. These men were gunners, signalmen, and radio operators who served aboard merchant ships. Their duty was standing lookout watches, manning the few guns on the ship

and maintaining communications. This duty was very hazardous at times with ship sinkings, aircraft attacks, and rough weather conditions at sea.

There were 2,710 Liberty ships built during the war years and 216 of them were sunk by enemy action. The total merchant fleet numbered 6,236 ships. Of that total, 710 were sunk by the enemy.

Atlantic Theater duty was generally considered more hazardous than Pacific Theater. German submarines were more numerous and more ef-

fective than Japanese subs. Japanese aircraft, especially the Kamikazes, were a constant threat in the Southern and Western Pacific. Out of the total number of a little over three million U.S. Navy personnel, 144,970 were in the Armed Guard with a casualty number of 1,810 dead.

Members who served aboard the S. S. John W. Troy, attending the reunion in Las Vegas, NV, are pictured front row from left: Everal Mallette, Jay Lain and Mitchell Rzepka. Back row: Durbin Schmitt of Lamar, Orland Truman, Carl Thomas, Eugene Martin, George Schweitzer and William Burd. Not pictured was Jack Pearce.

Sioux City as Narrow Escape in Great Storm

Typhoons Almost as Bad as Atom Bomb, Says Lt. Keane

Typhoons rival atomic bombs in destructive power, in the opinion of Lt. (j. g.) John W. Keane, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Keane, 1915 W. Fourth street. Lt. Keane has served in the navy for two and a half years and at present is stationed at Agushi, Okinawa, where the tropical typhoons hit with unexpected fury, causing great damage to American installations and killing many men.

In a letter to his parents Lt. Keane gave a colorful word picture of the ravages of typhoons, describing them as "tornadoes of atomic bombs." The S. S. John W. Troy on which he was serving narrowly escaped being wrecked in one of the storms when the wind lashed the sea at 130 miles an hour and the waves rolled to great heights.

"We have been dodging these typhoons for a month now and have had to put out to sea at least once a week so they would not catch us in an open roadstead and deliver us up on the beach like the whale did Jonah," the young lieutenant wrote. "We came back from sea a week ago, only to haul anchor and leave again as another typhoon was making up south of us.

"By Grace of God"

"It is only by the grace of God that I am able to write this letter as I thought sure last night would be my last. We were in a typhoon

a short distance from its center. It is an experience I do not care to have a rain check on.

"I thought our ship would break up for sure. The wind was about 130 miles an hour and the seas running very high. Everything in our quarters had to be lashed down and even that did not prevent the deck from being all cluttered up. We were taking on water from all directions and the men on the fantail were just plain dunked each time, the ship pitched. We were right in the jaws of the typhoon. Most of our deck load was washed overboard or smashed up. The lifeboats were stove in, but of course they never could have been launched anyway. Over the radio the S. O. S. signals kept coming in with news of all ships piled on the beach, some sinking, and men abandoning them. The radio was choked with so many signals that the operator could not get them all.

Ammunition Dumped

"On our way out of the typhoon we had quite a time and jettisoned almost all of our ammunition, about \$21,000 worth. As I am writing this the wind is blowing and the sea is pretty rough but it is some cooler and that is a blessing. Soon we will be back at our anchorage in Agushi. . . . I was just up topside looking around and counted six ships on the beach and we saw a Victory ship on a reef as we came in and it looks as if the storm did a lot of damage here. Thirty men were reported adrift on a barge which seems bad, as we have from 12 to 14 hours notice about a



typhoon, and the direction it is headed.

"After arriving here we found that the typhoon was a great catastrophe and many ships were lost. Bodies of the victims were being washed ashore today. The army is homeless, about 150,000 men, as all the tents blew away. The food problem is critical. They have been flying rations in with B-29s. All but a few of the planes on the Naha airport were wrecked.

They say that the damage is so extensive that if the Japs had not already surrendered the invasion would have been indefinitely postponed. The wind recording machines registered all they could and broke. The fleet postoffice at Buckner bay was destroyed, and that is where all our mail is routed through, so we expect losses of our mail there."

Dear Charles:

Aug 10, 1993

I am writing to you about two articles I have cut out of the "Dale, Indiana" Newspaper printed June 25, 1993 and from Sioux City, IA printed in November 1945. It was an oversight that the men from the Liberty Ship S.S. JOHN BROWN were not given the recognition they should have in Las Vegas, and I feel they should be given recognition in the POINTER. These 10 men met after 47 years from the East Coast, West Coast, Gulf Coast & the Central, Northwestern part of the U.S.A.

Also this article written by Lt.(jg) John W. Keane of Sioux City, Iowa was a real thriller that many Merchant Marines & Armed Guard went through in the South Pacific.

Mack Paynter, 2371 E. 41 St., Lorain Ohio, 44055

US Navy Armed Guard Report

On the 21st of September, the Lane sailed with the SS Jeremiah O'Brien to San Francisco. The voyage was excellent as we arrived on the 23rd sailing under the Golden Gate out to greet the O'Brien. We were along just to accompany her into port.

As we sailed under the Golden Gate, we heard gun fire from some small boats and shore batteries. We decided to join in on the fun — we called the Bridge, got the okay to fire our weapons and I believe, caught everyone in the vicinity by surprise.

The helicopters from the news media were all flying and hovering over the SS Jeremiah O'Brien — as we opened up our guns to simulate actual firing of the weapons. The helicopters that were flying around and over the O'Brien all this time, suddenly diverted their attention to the Lane at the sound of our guns — I think at that at that moment we

stole some of the O'Brien's thunder. This, of course was not our intention. However, a good time was had by all.

About 1200 on the 23rd, we were invited to be in a parade through downtown San Francisco — in cable cars. The San Francisco welcome was well received. Many greeters turned out in the rain. That same evening, the Lane crew were invited as guests of the O'Brien to a party with a number of dignitaries in attendance. gain, a great time was had by all.

Some of the crew had liberty in Frisco while we were in port. We had many tourists aboard over the weekend as well. Upon leaving San Francisco, we fired our guns intermittently out in the Bay and beyond the Golden Gate Bridge to the open sea. Our Navy Signalman had a field day with their flags and the use of their blinker lights to send messages..

The return trip home to San Pedro

was smooth sailing with arrival on Wednesday, the 28th of September.

The Gunners Quarters that have been restored recently with about 95% completion, served us well on the voyage for all hands.

The next Armed Guard Report will come to you from our new and permanent Berth #94, which we have all been looking forward to for a long time.

Fair Winds & Following Seas,
Arrivederci, Charles Savona.

Filming on the Lane Victory

The filming industry has been quite beneficial in helping to finance the very expensive restoration and operating expenses of the Lane Victory. Over 40 times the studios have used the Lane for various types of shows, including major features, documentaries, T. V. sitcoms, Musical Videos and Commercials.

Because of the many variations in the scope of these filmings, each one requires careful negotiations about what to charge so as to get the maximum funds for the Lane Victory without losing too many. The charges depend on various factors to be considered. These include the size of the project, areas of the ship to be used, the number of their people and vehicles, the number of consecutive days involved, as well as what our people have to do to prepare and restore the filming areas, and also to be compensated for interruptions of the normal work programs underway.

Also involved with these productions before filming starts are their dealings with the Los Angeles Film Institute, the Kaiser International Co. primary lessor of the wharf, and the Harbor Dept., each of whom get a fee and issue their permits.

A major consideration for all of us is a certified copy of a special insurance

policy for 6 million dollars before anything is signed.

The volume of business greatly depends on the amount of advertising we do. Also a big help in getting productions is our attendance at film industry trade shows, in which we rent a booth and display ship's artifacts and photos, and our main eye catching attraction is our model of the S. S. Lane Victory prominently displayed.

Some of these productions include features such as Double Impact, Naked Gun 2 1/2, and the 3 Ninjas, documentaries include the story of the sinking of the "USS Indianapolis" in WWII, and recently Amelia Earhart, "The Last Flight", with Diane Keaton. Videos include MacGyver, Murder She Wrote (twice), Unsolved Mysteries (4 times), and General Hospital. Commercials include Toshiba Camera and Maybelline Eye Products and several musical Videos including a recent lucrative Rap & Rock one with "Domino". Well over \$200,000 has been raised in filmings on the ship in the first 5 years and the future looks even brighter, as several productions are already tentatively schedule for the fall with one studio wanting the ship outside the harbor for several days.

John O. Smith, Film Coordinator



Dear Charles,

July 28, 1994

Just recently I heard of a medal available for Veterans of the Normandy Campaign, for a fee. Don't know if you knew it or not.

I guess to obtain it you write to the address below and ask for the form required to send for it. It comes from England.

Award Productions Ltd.
P.O. Box 30, Haslemere
Surrey GU26 6UT U.K.

Telephone: 0428-607267
Facsimile 0428-605672

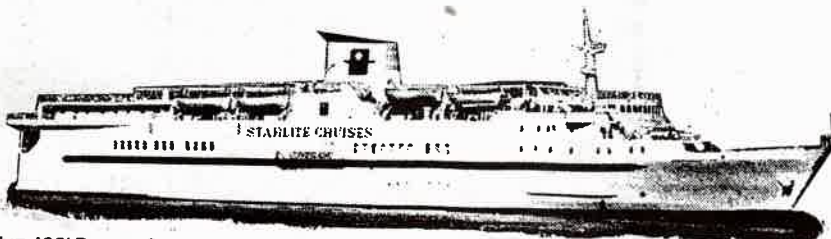
The person (Army) that received it said it cost him \$43.20.

Hope this finds everyone well.
Thanks for the communication.

Ernie Cochran, 12775 Titus Road
Dresden, OH 43821-9709

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SOME RESTRICTIONS APPLY SHIP'S REGISTRY: GRIECE

Dear Joe Zapotocky

November 11, 1994

Just got through reading October "POINTER" and enjoyed it very much. It's too bad that the S.S. LANE VICTORY broke down and could not meet up with the S.S. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN on her voyage to England for the 50th Anniversary of D-DAY.

My service experience started as an 18 year old farm boy from Petaluma, Ca. and after I took my "BOOTS", I took 6 weeks of gunnery training at San Diego, training on everything from small arms to 50 cal. and 5"38, then on to Treasure Island and caught my first ship, the S.S. CAPE BON, owned by Madison Lines and was a half cargo, half troopship carrier. We were "POLOWOGS" for too long as our destination was Guadalcanal and other islands to replace troops and supplies and pickup troops to drop off at other islands for their return to the States where I was transferred to the S.S. HARVARD VICTORY.

We spent a few days making "TRIAL RUNS" in the BAY as we loaded our ammo boxes and magazines, and squaring away our new quarters. We "swabbies" felt like we were on top of the world with a new VICTORY under us!! We made the usual stops on the PERAL; MARSHALL; GILBERT; ULITHI and CAROLINE ISLANDS. Many ships were getting ready for the invasion of OKINAWA. We finally set sail with an ARMADA of ships and when we got there, our ship had to lay back until the "BIG BOYS" ran the Japs off the beaches. Then, we moved in as close as we could so the C.B.s, ARMY and MARINE "DUCKS" could come out and unload us. There were no docks. We were kept pretty busy with air and "KAMIKAZE" attacks. These guys were crazy!! One or two funny parts was when one guy ran into a gun tub and broke his nose and the other was that I had the "GIs" and couldn't leave my 20MM gun so I used a bucket and threw it over the side. There were plenty of "FIREWORKS" going on all the time with all the sky black with "FLAK" and it was raining down on us.

They gave us credit for downing one Kamikaze and our Yeoman painted a Jap flag on our ship's stack. We thought we were pretty good. I don't know to this day who received credit as there were so many tracers going out. We finally got unloaded and got

our tail out of there and headed for San Francisco for more troops and supplies. While there, the war ended and the gun crews were pulled off. That ended my ARMED GUARD career. I was shipped to the Philippines and assigned to an L.S.D. and sailed to Tokyo Bay where I was assigned to a "REGULAR NAVY", twin screw tanker. I spent the rest of my enlistment on her going to ports all over Japan, Korea, China and many more ports on our way to the Persian Gulf, a real "MILK RUN" until I had my time in but my best days was on that Victory, the S.S. HARVARD VICTORY, a great bunch of guys from all over the U.S.A.. We had a great Lt(jg) and we looked like a bunch of regular CIVILIANS. No SPIT AND POLISH, but we could shoot!! AND WE DID!!

I often wondered what happened to the S.S. HARVARD VICTORY, if she got cut up for scrap or if she still sails the seas. I would also like to know if any of her crew has signed on. If so, please let me know. Good luck and good sailing!

Johnnie Tarchini, P.O.Box 1142,
Middletown, Ca. 95461

Dear Charles

9-22-94

Thanks very much for the August issue of the POINTER, I enjoyed it very much. Also enjoyed our time

spent on the phone, as I am always eager to talk about events concerning WWII. If you ever hear of any survivors of the S.S. ROHNA, crew members of the PIONEER or WILLIAM RAWL please let me know.

Thanks again and here's wishing the best of everything to you and your family.

James G. Clonts, 4140 Austin Bridge Rd., Douglasville,
Georgia 30134

The following is a summary of the details of the loss of the S.S. ROHNA, from the Historical Section of the Admiralty, London, dated 9th November, 1961, enclosed with the above letter:

She belonged to the British India Steam Navigation Company and was registered in London. Built in 1926 by Lawthorn Leslie and Company Limited, Newcastle-on-Tyne, she was of 8,062 gross tons, with a length of 461.4 feet, beam of 61.8 feet and depth of 29.9 feet. She had been on charter to the Ministry of Transport since the start of the War as a personnel ship.

On 26th November, 1943, she was proceeding on Convoy H.M.F.26 (United Kingdom to Mediterranean, Fast). In the evening, at about 1700, this convoy was attacked by some 30 enemy aircraft, and the ROHNA was struck by a glider bomb in position 36 degrees 56' N., 5 degrees 20' E., in the Gulf of Bougie. She sank about 30 minutes later. The rescue ship CLAN CAMPBELL, destroyer ATHERSTONE and U.S. minesweeper PIONEER stood by and picked up survivors, who were landed at Philippeville. Unfortunately half of the troops on board lost their lives, the heavy swell and initial bomb casualties having hampered the work of the rescue ships. The escort of K.M.F.26 included eight war vessels, among them the anti-aircraft cruiser COLUMBO and six destroyers. Wireless jamming by the escorts was partially successful in upsetting the flight of the bombs. One enemy aircraft was shot down by a landing craft, and our own fighter aircraft claimed eight destroyed and five damaged.

After the War the U.S. War Department stated that of 4,453,061 American soldiers carried to Europe, only 1,094 or 0.024 percent were lost at sea. Of these, 1015 went down in the ROHNA.



Lone Sailor

U.S. NAVY MEMORIAL
Washington, D.C.



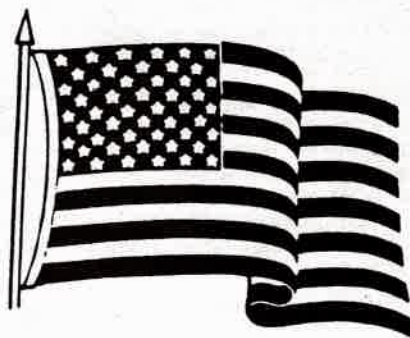
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