

MARCH/APRIL, 1996

# THE POINTER



## **EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN AT BALTIMORE PORT FEST '95**

Armed Guard Commander Joe Colgan shows off the BROWN's 5 inch gun to a group of Baltimore City children during the Maryland Port Administration's annual Port Fest at the Dundalk Marine Terminal. (reprinted from "Brownie's Bights" Jan. 1996)

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## ATTENTION

You know where you are.  
You know where we are.  
We know where we are.  
But we don't always know where you are.  
Please notify us when you move.

## Non-Profit Organization

Tax Exempt No. 74-2316668

# THE POINTER

AND

THE

# PLANE SHOOTER

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

USN Armed Guard World War II Veterans

"PLAIN SHOOTING FOR PLANE SHOOTERS"



Dear Shipmates, Mates, Friends, Widows and Orphans,

March, 1996

Hope all's well in your part of the world. At least, most of the winter weather for this season is coming to a close and that means that it's not long before the U.S.N. ARMED GUARD 15TH NATIONAL REUNION, so put your snow shovel away up North and your lawn mowers away down South and let's go and enjoy another NAVY FAMILY "GET-TOGETHER" in St. Louis, May 20-24, 1996. I hope you have already made your Reservation at the ADAM'S MARK HOTEL or the place of your choice. The earlier you make them, the easier it is on everyone. Get your money in to Wanda and Chet Colella for the things you will attend. This will be the largest reunion yet and it takes time to process your itinerary. AND REMEMBER!! THE CUTOFF DATE to make reservations at the HOTEL is one month prior to the Reunion to be guaranteed the same price. So, call them before April 20th. For those we locate after that date and who want to attend, we will try to hold a few rooms as long as we can. I will have to give them an HONEST COMPUTER NUMBER on that date and if you are located after that date, the number will be larger.

When we get there, I would ask all of us fortunate ones to look out after our handicapped shipmates, or their ladies. I think it only fitting to let them in to our social events early so they can be seated. I noticed last year that they did not take the front tables and it was just great how everyone reacted. It astonishes me to see them there and enjoying themselves. It's great!! We CAN NOT afford SPECIAL BUSES for the handicapped as this is very expensive. If there is a Veterans Group there who can supply one, we will do all we can for them.

One of the biggest problems we have had in the past has been that many want to sit together at one table and reserve tables. If you were a group of shipmates from one ship, I can understand your feelings. If this has been a problem with you before, I hope we can work something out in the best interest of all. You may not get a front table but we will try our best to seat you together. Everyone can not sit up front and all can not enter the banquet hall at once. We are not the only crews who have had this problem. The "POINTER" goes out to many WW II groups and maybe we can learn from them, or, vice versa.

Plans to bring the S.S. JOHN W. BROWN to Wilmington, N.C. have been in the making for quite some time and she'll be there from April 10-15, 1996. I hope you will get this in time to attend if possible. For those who can not, wish us all luck!! She will be tied up in downtown Wilmington at the Coast Guard Dock just across from the Battleship USS NORTH CAROLINA (BB-55). Those of us who attended the 2nd Reunion toured the BB-55 at the time.

Officers - Gunners - Signalmen - Radiomen - Medics - Waves - Boatswains - Coxswains - Ship's Company - Radarmen

**\*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**

I have as yet to find a HOTEL "LARGE ENOUGH", "SAFE ENOUGH" and "REASONABLE ENOUGH" on the East Coast to hold our 1997 NATIONAL REUNION as of this writing. I am in contact with a few and I hope we can have it finalized before St. Louis. At our age, we may have to get a Professional Group to handle it in the future.

We will have items for sale at St. Louis so bring a few bucks to purchase them. There is a Gambling Casino on the waterfront for those of you who may want to try your luck with the cards or the "slots". You will be given a packet upon arriving and I hope that you will read the program in the packet and keep it handy in case you "FORGET" when we eat, or when we catch the bus.

Stan DeFoe, Armed Guard from Independence, Mo. will be at the Reunion and will be showing WW II slides at different places. I hope that you will take time and view these slides for they are very interesting and he has worked hard on this project. Also, Zed Merrill will be there to interview many of you for the ARMED GUARD DOCUMENTARY and I am sure many will want to take part. His letter to me is in this POINTER. Have your notes with you for accuracy.

The song, "I OVERLOOKED AN ORCHID, WHILE SEARCHING FOR A

ROSE" fits the OKINAWA "OPERATION AND ENGAGEMENT STAR" which I had been sent and placed in my "HIDDEN FILE" and it just floated to the top, with many more important things. It may be that there are other Decorations and Medals files where these came from and I will try to see if they are available in the near future. I may have this info before this is put into this "POINTER" so I'll leave this in. REMEMBER-I DO NOT ISSUE THIS OUT. Call your local Congressman's office. They should have a staff for Veteran's Affairs.

Before I close this letter, I would like to THANK each and every one of you who has donated in the past; especially since the Jan/Feb POINTER so this one could be printed and sent to you. It sure takes a lot of time but they have to be endorsed and deposited. Donations pays the ARMED GUARD BILLS!

All of Capt. Art Moore's Books, "A CARELESS WORD.....A NEEDLESS SINKING" have been sold and it is now out of production. You may be able to go to the Library and read it for references. THE "LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NUMBER IS: 82-73552. On behalf of all the U.S.N. Armed Guard and the Merchant Seamen whom this Book has enlightened, I wish to thank Captain Moore for sharing this workmanship with us. It has very informative reading.

**ATTENTION U.S. NAVY ARMED GUARD AND U.S. MERCHANT SEAMEN!!! IF YOU SAILED ON A SHIP DURING WW II, YOU ARE ENTITLED TO FILE A CLAIM WITH "THE MARITIME ASBESTOSIS LEGAL CLINIC," BUT YOU HAVE TO CONTACT THEM TO GET THE FORMS TO FILL OUT. YOU CAN GET THIS FORM BY CALLING 1-800-492-3849 FROM 9:00 A.M TO 4:30 P.M. AND ASK FOR RAY BONOMO. IT IS THAT SIMPLE. PLEASE!! DO NOT CONTACT ME. WRITE THE NUMBER DOWN WHERE YOU WILL NOT LOSE IT SHOULD YOU LOSE THE "POINTER." IT DOES NOT COST YOU ANYTHING SO DON'T PAY ANYONE ANYTHING. JUST FOLLOW THEIR INSTRUCTIONS. THIS ALSO APPLIES TO THE CANADIAN D.E.M.S. IF THEY SAILED ON AN AMERICAN "FLAGED" SHIP AND A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER.**

There are so many things I have left out such as that I gave Clarence Korker credit for the 5"38 picture on page 9 of the Jan/Feb., 1996 "POINTER." Credit should have gone to: Curtis Simmons (GM1/C), 174 Dentation Dr., Baton Rouge, La. 504-766-2490. Curtis acquired these photos while serving at NOLA and Korker made copies of many photos and I could not think of Simmons's name and had to go to print that day I received them. THANKS CURT!! Now we know!! And many still look for me to get their photos, etc. back to them. I sure wish I knew which box it was in. I have searched several. I'll get to it one day. calloyd

## — In Memory —

### DEPARTED SHIPMATES SINCE SINCE JAN./FEB. POINTER

Andrey	Oliver J.	Ft. Lauderdale	FL	Virginia	3-5-96
Bradbury	Willard L.	Kansas City	Mo	Reba M.	3/3/46
Cartier	Maurice P.	Casper	Wy		12/12/96
Cox	Don	Twin Bridges	Mt		2/8/96
De Clerico	Camillo A.	Staten Island	NY	Antoinette	5/17/95
Fischer	Elwyn C.	Edgewater	FI	Marie	10/18/95
Fry	Darwin L.	Fort Wayne	In	Marilyn	12/27/96
Green	Jack	Merseyside	England		1/11/96
Gutzwiller	Clyde	Northbend	OH	Marian	3-13-96
Hughes	Walter R.	Phillipsburg	NJ	Helen	11/8/95
King	Russell E.	Las Vegas	Nv	Treva	12/95
Kraft	George H.	Glen Burnie	Md	Doris E.	12/9/95
Kuzelka	Richard	Brooksville	FI	Agnes	2/96
Laurie	Francis .	Las Vegas	Nv	Arlene	10/14/95
Lennon	Frank J. E.	Providence	RI	—	5/21/95
Littel	John F.	Prescott Valley	AZ	Margaret	1-6-96
Marks	Louis D.	Ft. Worth	Tx		1/12/96
McAlpine	Wesley D.	Midland	Tx	Mary	12/26/95
Patterson**	E. Arthur	Fairbanks	AK	—	3/1096
Roberts	Thomas H.	Mt. Dora*	FI	Theresa	2/9/96
Seligman	Charles E.	North Port	FI	Frances	3/28/95
Schenk	Dan C.	Newburgh	In	Louise	12/10/95
Sheives	Oliver	San Antono	TX	Martha	3-10-96
Smith	Omar T.	Tipp City	Oh	Barbara	1/1/96

\* BURIED IN HIS HOMETOWN OF WILKES BARRE, PA.

\*\*Merchant Marine, Author of "Militant Mariner"

### S.S. JOHN W. BROWN IN WILMINGTON, NC

THE S.S. JOHN W.  
BROWN will be in  
WILMINGTON, N.C.  
APRIL 10-15, 1996.  
"CRUISING DOWN THE  
RIVER" on the 12th at  
approx. 10 A.M. If you  
can't sail her, come and see  
us off. Order your \$50.00  
tickets directly from the  
S.S. JOHN W. BROWN.  
(address above.)

# ★ ★ ★ ★ REUNIONS ★ ★ ★ ★

## “REGIONAL, MINI-REUNIONS AND GET-TOGETHERS”

Support these local meetings while you're able.

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### NOTICE!

Please check the Jan./Feb. 1996 POINTER for local meetings. I entered only those with changes in this POINTER to save space.

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**THE AMERICAN ASSOC. OF NAVY HOSPITAL CORPSMEN (AAONHC)** will meet 9/12-16/96 in Corpus Christi, TX. Contact: Ned Johnson, 224 Jackson St., De Quincey, LA 70633-4128, 318-786-2082; or, AAONHC, Joe B. Havens, Founder, Homeport Place, #43 Pleasant Valley Rd. W., Greenbrier, Ar. 72058.

**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. They've got it together for you!

**THE MID-ATLANTIC CHAPTER REGION OF THE AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS** will hold a caucus meeting on April 8-10, 1996, at Best Western “Hoss's” Inn, Bedford, PA for fellowship and to discuss the AMMV NATIONAL CONVENTION AT LAS VEGAS, NV, May 1996. All “FORGOTTEN HEROES” U.S.N. Armed Guard and Merchant Marine Veterans are urged to attend. Make reservations by calling 1-800-752-8592. Contact: George K. Bathie, 580 Melissa Lane, State College, PA 16803-1221, Phone/Fax 814-237-0329.

**KEYSTONE CHAPTER OF THE AMMV** meets on the 4th Saturday of each month at a 12 noon luncheon at the Days In n Motel, Altoona, PA. Contact George Bathie (see address above). All Armed Guard and MM and urged to attend in fellowship.

**ILL-WISC.** will hold their 1996 Mini-Reunion October 11-13, 1996 in Joliet, Il. with Joe Esposito, 328 S. Michigan, Addison IL 60101, 708-832-2978 and Mike Pavilich, P.O. Box 2347, Bridgeview, IL 60455, 708-481-6468 as their Hosts.

**PHILADELPHIA-DELAWARE VALLEY PA.** Area” Armed Guard holds an 11:30 A.M.-2ND WEDNESDAY MONTHLY MEETING AT THE AMERICAN LEGION, FALLS TWP POST #834, FALLSINGTON, PA. 19054, 215-295-9858. HOSTS: AL AND NORMA FARRARA, 45 UPPER HILL TOP RD., YARDELEY, PA. 19067, 215-493-9134.

**SOUTHWEST OHIO HOSTS** Bob and Dot Ober, 7115 Dunn Rd., Cincinnati, Ohio 45230, 513-231-3181 Host an 11:30 Luncheon Buffet on the 2ND SAT. “EVERY OTHER MONTH” starting in Feb. 1995, at THE “OLD COUNTRY BUFFET” 1097 Smiley Ave, Cincinnati, Oh. Exit 39 off I-275.

**The PORTLAND-MILWAUKIE OREGON** Armed Guard meets with the AMMV at North's Chuck Wagon in Tigard, Oregon on the THIRD MONDAY at 11:30 a.m. Contact: George Goode, 4017 S. E. Aldercrest Rd., Milwaukie, Oregon 97222, 503-659-1925. It is tentatively scheduled for the S. S. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN to come to the Portland-Seattle area in July, 1996. Contact George!

**WYOMING ARMED GUARD** Skipper for 1996 is Charles Gray, P.O. Box 126, Fort Duchesne, Utah 84026. THIS IS AN ADDRESS CHANGE!

In **NORFOLK, VA.**, Contact: Reginald Dolliver, 3820 Amberly Forest Pl., Virginia Beach, Va. 23456, 804-471-6397 for their meetings on the LAST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH at the OLD COUNTRY BUFFET, 1952 Laskin Rd., Virginia Beach, Va. at “HILLTOP REGENCY SHOPPING PLAZA.”

**ROANOKE, VA.** Area meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at the ROANOKER Restaurant, 2522 Colonial Ave. Roanoke, Va. at 11:30 A.M. Contact: Bill Miller, 157 Houston Ave., Roanoke, Va. 24012, 703-362-0576.

Jack and Corinne Renaud, 839 So. Success Ave., Lakeland, Fl. 33801, 941-688-1312 get the **LAKELAND CREW** together with the help of Harold Ceaser, 8621 Vixen Dr., Port Richey, Fl. 34668, 313-863-1367. “SUNNY? FLORIDA”.

**MESA, ARIZONA HOSTS** are Clarence and Marilyn Halpny, 1180 S. Starr St., Apache Junction, Az. 85219, 602-983-5212. THEY MEET AT THE “RED MOUNTAIN STEAKHOUSE in Mesa on the “FIRST THURSDAY” of the month at 11 A.M. Assisting is: Adele Traficano, 108 N. Greenfield Road Apt.-2117, Mesa, Az. 85205, 602-396-6233.

BELOW ARE ARMED GUARD CONTACTS ON THE THREE SHIPS! DO NOT ORDER TICKETS FROM THEM!! ONLY FROM THE SHIPS!! AND THE SHIPS CAN GIVE PRICES AND DATES OF SAILING IN CASE OF A CHANGE.

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.

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA. AREA CONTACT:** Carl Kreidler, 15852 Via Eduardo St. San Lorenzo, Ca. 94580, 510-317-9600 welcomes you to be a part of the “U.S.N. ARMED GUARD GUN CREW” on the **S.S. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN.** (NOW AT PIER 32)

**SHIP'S ADDRESS:** (unless moved somewhere else )

1. **S.S. JOHN W. BROWN**, P.O. Box 25846, Highlandtown Sta., Baltimore, Md. 21224-0846, 410-558-0646
2. **S.S. LANE VICTORY**, 839 S. BEACON ST., PIER 94, SAN PEDRO, CA. 9073, 310-519-9545
3. **S.S. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN**, Ft. Mason Center, Bldg. A, San Francisco, CA 94123-1382, 415-441-3101 (AT PIER 32)

**THE LAS VEGAS AREA CREW** meets on the first (1st) Tuesday of each month at the “Country Inn” on Sunset Road in Henderson, Nevada for 1 p.m. Lunch. Contact: Merv Yarbrough, 7920 W. Wigman Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89113, 702-361-6817 or 565-4022. All Armed Guard, Merchant Marine and Visitors Welcomed!

**STATESVILLE N.C. AREA** meets the 1ST TUESDAY- 8.A.M. at SHONEY'S “SIGNAL HILL MALL”. CONTACT: K.E. Watt, 2967 Wilkesboro Hwy., Statesville, N.C. 28667-9242, 910-876-0650. Would like for all to come.

**GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI** WILL HOST THEIR FIRST MINI-REUNION THURS, AUGUST 1-3, '96 AT THE HOLIDAY INN (BEACH). RESERVATIONS: 1-800-441-0887. CONTACT: John Foretich, Host, 310-44TH St., Gulfport, Ms. 39507, 601-986-1926.

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*MISS ANY MORE? LET ME KNOW. Please send me any correction as to time or date changes too!! IT IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN CORRECT MY ERRORS. (cal)*

# Dear C.A. ... Charles... Cal... Ol' Salt...

## LETTERS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Enclosed is a donation to "THE POINTER." As an interesting sidelight, Admiral Morison, in his History of the U.S. Navy in World War II says that I died when the S.S. Touchet was torpedoed on Dec. 3, 1943. Though I, and a few others, floated around for a while, eventually they did find us. By the Admiral's report, I am one of the more active corpses from those days. Keep up with the good work. Your efforts are well received and respected. **A. Frank. Bray, 736 Ferry St., Martinez, Ca. 94553, 510-228-2550.**

*TO THE CREW!! I called shipmate Bray to get his permission to print the above and I told him that I note by Capt. Art Moore's book, "A CARELESS WORD," that the Officer was killed. Bray informed me that he was that Officer so those of you who purchased Moore's book may want to correct it for historical purposes. (Pg-282) cal*

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Inclosed is a Poem, which you may print, that I composed while at sea during WW II. At the time, I was a Lt(jg) with a gun crew of 17 APPRENTICE SEAMEN and a Gunner's Mate 1/C. Among my crew, for whom I have a lasting affection, was Thomas Roy Bowerman. He has been my friend during all the years since we were shipmates. Also, the Armed Guard emblem I received by mail is displayed on my car. Several times there have been inquires about the Armed Guard. Inclosed is my check to help to meet the expenses. **Charles L. Larson, 906 W. Larabee St., Port Washington, Mi. 53074, 414-284-5226.**

### SAILING ALONE

*Smaller, smaller, buildings ashore,  
Dimmer, dimmer, muffled light,  
The last patrol boats by us roar,  
We pass alone into the night.*

*Moonless, starless, gloomy sky,  
And we as dark as it,  
Our purpose has a friendly tie,  
we thank this upturned pit.*

*Watching, watching, on we steam,  
Forecastle, 'midship, stern,  
Object sighted, starboard beam,  
Man the guns, we turn.*

*Scanning waiting, is it there?  
Was it there at all?  
Shall we fire? If so where?  
Blasting darkness' wall?*

*Moonless, starless, gloomy sky,  
Friend, but too our foe,  
Once discovered, that is why,  
Churning, on we go.*

Composed by Lt(jg) Charles L. Larkins aboard the S.S. Charles M. Hall in the Pacific, Nov/Dec. 1942

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The Jan/Feb. "POINTER" had the best picture I have ever seen of a 5"38 gun and crew. I was 1st powderman on a vintage 5"51 aboard the S.S. WILLIAM A. PRESCOTT in WW II and after the war, I was 1st projectileman on the USS VOLANS (AK-59). I read every word of the "POINTER" and will tell everyone of the story on Page 14 of the "LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS, LIGHTHOUSE".

What a small world this is when we have time to talk to each other. While on the PRESCOTT, we smashed the private run-about boat of the USS PECOS (AO-62) when our new 3 ton metal liferaft was knocked off our ship by one of their booms which was a fleet tanker. It was a GARWOOD; mahogany, inboard, about 17 ft. or so. The husband of my secretary at work, James Van Brunt, was on the PECOS when it happened. He was surprised when I showed him pictures I had.

While in Baltimore at the National Reunion a few years ago when we were on the S.S. JOHN W. BROWN, I noticed the #2 lifeboat had PECOS stenciled on every box. I gave the Captain the History of the PECOS and he told me they had just gotten

the lifeboat from fleet storage or fleet reserve and were going to repair it.

My brother Ray was killed on the USS PARTRIDGE (AT-138) on June 6, 1944 in the English Channel off Caen, France. I have attended their survivors reunions. Cal, Keep up the good work. Respectfully, an ol' Armed Guard, **Samuel L. Johnston, 1408 Rathbone St. SW, Wyoming, Mi., 49509, 616-243-0591**

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Received my first "POINTER" and it makes good reading. I got along fine with the Armed Guard aboard my ship, the S.S. GLENN CURTIS and while on shore leave together in an English port. My "HERO" in the Armed Guard was my cousin, Louis DeGennaro, who was aboard the S.S. KAIMOKU" when she was torpedoed August 8, 1942. He saved the young gunner, Billy McKean, for which he received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. McKean was on another ship before that had been sunk but this time he lost the use of his right arm. Both have passed on. I am enclosing a Battle Report of the Officer, Robert R. Clayton, a survivor himself.

I remained in the American Merchant Marine and after some service time during the Korean War, I went back to sea. But every time I went to a British Port and had a few pints of half and half at a waterfront pub, that WW II gang of Naval gunners would come to my mind. I attend the Armed Guard gathering at TRACEY'S Restaurant in Little Ferry, N.J. Lloyd, I (continued on next page)



U.S. Navy Armed Guard WWII Veterans display by the Florida Crew at the Crystal City Mall on Veteran's Day. Several more Armed Guard were located. (L-R) Diane and Harold Ceaser, Stretch Mede, Ellie and Rudy Kozak, Charlie and Mary Hinkle.

look forward to the "POINTER" and I will always remember those BELL BOTTOM TROUSERS and COATS OF NAVY BLUE. All the Best and God Bless the Veterans of the Navy Armed Guard and the mates who are now at peace and rest. **Louis V. Cafiero (MM) P.O. Box 354328, Palm Coast, FL 32135, 904-445-6312.**

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WHAT A WINTER!! January was terrible!! We broke all kinds of records. On the 12th and 13th of January, it snowed on top of snow!! On our way to the Jan. 14th meeting, I said to Tom, "there want be many there." Lo and behold, as you can see by the picture, we had a great meeting. There were also 8 women who attended and I should have sent you a picture of the 5 feet high snow we went through to get there. (I am sure you know what that looks like!!! (yuk! yuk!!) We took this picture and thought it would be great for the "POINTER." **Priscilla and Tom Dufresne, 289 Munsing St., Ludlow, Ma. 01056.**

*NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL DEDICATION. WE GOT A MIXED 5" ICE, SNOW AND SLEET AND I DIDN'T GO OUT OF THE HOUSE IN THREE DAYS. THERE WERE MORE "NORTH CAROLINA YANKEES" (PARDUN THE XPRESSCHION) WHO WERE PUT IN THE HOSPITAL FOR SLIPPING ON THE ICE THAN WERE HOSPITALIZED WHEN GENERAL GRANT TOOK RICHMOND. calloyd*



*Western Massachusetts Armed Guard Cres 1/14/96 meeting*

**L-R-BOTTOM:** BARTON MUNRO; FLOYD W. DOWNEY; SAM PITITIERI; KENNETH SLICER; TOM DUFRESNE; EDWIN SERAFIN; FRED HARVEY.

STANLEY KOWAL; CHARLIE HAYES; DOUG ACHESON; AL MIDGLEY.

**L-R-MIDDLE ROW:** RUSSELL SPAFORD; JOHN GRANT; ROGER MANNING; LEONARD ALIX; STAN WIELICZKA; GEORGE HURLEY; ROBERT LAMPHREY; WALDO RANKIN; BOB FULTON; BILL LAK;

**BACK ROW:** STAN KULIG; JOSEPH DULKA; CHARLES SHEARE; JOHN D'AMATO; ED MALZENSKI; HAROLD MCHEANEY; RAY GELINAS; PAUL FENTON; KEN TOMLINSON; CHARLES O'LEARY; EARNEST PAULIN; NORMAN MARCH; VINCE MAFFUCCI; BOB MARTIN.

## What Is A Sailor?

A sailor is a guy who is worked too hard, gets too little sleep, takes verbal abuse no civilian would take, does every imaginable kind of job at any imaginable hour, never seems to get paid, never knows where he's going, can seldom tell where he's been - yet accepts the worst with complete resignation, and last but not least, he really kinda likes it! You know why? - When you're dog tired, been up since 4 a.m. working like hell all day, and about to hit your sack at 8 p.m., a voice shouts "turn on a work detail!" They you unload a ship's cargo of perishable refrigerated foods. - You are ready to die by 2 a.m., but the job must be finished before dawn. - Soon you don't care if you live or die, and suddenly you're a sailor, it's over, and you did it and you think of all the people you know and how they would react under the circumstances and you begin to grin. You grin because you ain't scared of nothing, and it is a fact that there is no ordeal you can't face - and you know it!

*(Above and right, page 13 and page 14 all are reprinted from "All Hands," March and June 1945.)*

HOW RATE OF JAPANESE SHIP LOSSES HAS INCREASED							
SUNK		PROBABLY SUNK		DAMAGED		TOTAL	
7 DEC. 41 TO 19 JUNE 44	19 JUNE 44 TO 2 FEB. 45	7 DEC. 41 TO 19 JUNE 44	19 JUNE 44 TO 2 FEB. 45	7 DEC. 41 TO 19 JUNE 44	19 JUNE 44 TO 2 FEB. 45	7 DEC. 41 TO 19 JUNE 44	19 JUNE 44 TO 2 FEB. 45
<b>COMBATANT SHIPS</b>							
152	152	31	39	159	105	342	296
<b>NON-COMBATANT SHIPS</b>							
719	759	52	65	270	605	1041	1425
<b>TOTALS</b>							
871	911	83	104	429	710	1383	1725
Grand total is 3,108 ships sunk, probably sunk or damaged.							

**MORE ENEMY VESSELS** have been sunk or damaged in the Pacific in a little more than half a year since the Battle of the Philippine Sea, on 19 June 1944, than in our two and a half years of war against Japan up to that time. The comparative figures, as announced by the Navy Department last month, are shown above. Fleet and air units operating under CincPac have accounted for a major part of the enemy shipping listed in the tabulations, while submarines operating under the same command accounted for the remainder.

Dear C.A.:

2/23/96

Wanted to get back to you sooner but had the FLOOD of '96 to contend with but we're all dried out now. Don't know if any of the other ARMED Guard were in the area that took away over 100 homes. I will check out.

C.A., I am enclosing an ad (at right) for the "FORGOTTEN VALOR" documentary that I hope to have completed around Mid-July. We have priced it to cover our production costs and will rebate the Armed Guard according to total sales. If it is not the policy to run this ad, I understand for I am sure you get many offers. Do let the crew know that we'll have these available and we will process by then.

Running part of my letter in the last "POINTER" issue brought on phone calls and letters from the crew. GREAT!! I have been in the Video and Television business eons and I have never had such a feeling of success about a project as I have about this one. I have 10 people aside from my family who want one. Out of the 10, only one knew anything about the ARMED GUARD and she knew only because her uncle was a Merchant Seaman.

I located a Merchant Seaman from Medford, Oregon, who was one of the survivors from the S.S. JEAN NICOLET through an Armed Guard Veteran from Vancouver, Wa. I found out that you'd made him an Honorary Member and he has nothing but praise for the Armed Guard. But what was almost beyond belief was that when I was talking to him, I discovered a Merchant Seaman named Richard L. Kean was on the Nicolet and didn't survive the Japanese bayoneting. Dick was a childhood best friend of my wife and I got to know him when we got up into High School. We had known that he was killed in the fashion, along with many others off the ship, but that's all we knew; not even the name of the ship. We plan to get Bill Fury on camera for the Documentary some time in March. He was one of the few survivors on the NICOLET.

There's something I'd like for you to include at the bottom of the ad which should say: "A portion of the proceeds will go to the Armed Guard WW II Veterans Association." I think this is very important. You can tell the crew that we will be shooting a lot of still photos and transferring war footage to tape for editing later. I am going to use a lot of the photos from the "BLUE BOOKS" you sent me, also. The help that all want to give is just fantastic. Once again, Thank you and the others for their help. Sincerely, Zed Merrill, P.O. Box 19608, Portland, Or. 97219, 503-252-1485

**DURING WORLD WAR II  
THEY HAD 710 SHIPS SUNK  
BENEATH THEM.**

**YET, FEW EVER HEARD OF  
THEM.**

**THEY WERE THE  
U.S. NAVY ARMED GUARD.**

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WHO SURVIVED**

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The Long overdue account of  
their heroism and sacrifices  
while protecting the delivery  
of essential war supplies  
to allied troops.*

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# The Voyage of the S.S. Henry A. Bacon

(Reprinted from the New York Times, Sunday, April 1, 1945)

## 15 U.S. SEAMEN DIE SAVING 19 REFUGEES

**Skipper and All Senior Officers  
Lost as Germans Torpedo  
Liberty Ship Off Norway**

### HEROISM-PRAISED BY OLAF

**Corvette and a Third Allied  
Vessel Sunk as Convoy to  
Russia is Attacked**

WASHINGTON, March 31, (AP)—Fifteen American merchant seamen died while helping save nineteen Norwegian refugee patriots when German planes sank a Liberty ship off Norway a few weeks ago.

All eight senior officers, including the master, Capt. Alfred Carini of 44-15 Thirty-fourth Avenue, Long Island City, Queens, NY, and seven seamen, were lost after the Navy guard aboard battled more than a score of attacking planes, bringing down five. The refugees were put into a lifeboat.

The story is that of the freighter Henry Bacon, told by the War Shipping Administration today in announcing the names of American victims and survivors. Crown Prince Olaf, commander in chief of the Norwegian forces, praised American heroism in a letter to Vice Admiral Emory S. Land, War Shipping Administrator.

The Henry Bacon was starting home in convoy after carrying freight to Russia and carried as passengers the Norwegians, who were among several hundred being evacuated from the German-held island of Soroe to England. She encountered heavy weather, lost touch with the convoy and was singled out by the Germans. An aerial torpedo plunged into the hold. The vessel went down with her guns firing.

#### Captain Last Seen on Bridge

Two lifeboats were launched successfully; one with the refugees and a few crewmen, and the other with fifteen crewmen and seven gunners. The official report was made by Joseph L. Scott, Acting Third Officer, of

Norway, Ma., who said Captain Carini was last seen on the bridge and went down with his ship.

Mr. Scott also reported these heroic incidents:

Robert J. Hunt, purser, might have saved his own life had he not stopped to give first aid to a wounded gunner. Mr. Hunt's mother, Mrs. Mary Scott, lives in Greensboro, N.C.

Donald F. Haviland, chief engineer, was safe in a lifeboat but chose to give his seat to a younger man and return to the sinking ship. He was not seen again. His next of kin is a sister, Mrs. F. McGrath of Waymouth, Mass.

Holcomb Lammon, boatswain, of Mobile, Alabama, saved the lives of many before losing his own.

Survivors include these seamen: Joseph Marback of Brooklyn, NY; John Bartin of Buffalo, NY; Robert Tatosky of NY, NY; and Joseph S. Pazybyas, Long Island.

#### Allied Ships are Sunk

LONDON, March 31 — Back from a voyage to north Russian ports during which it was under repeated attack by enemy aircraft and U-boats, a British convoy brought confirmation of reports that Germany was making greater efforts to renew submarine warfare on a big scale.

Despite bad weather and persistent attacks, the convoy won through to the Soviet ports without losing a single escort or cargo ship. On the homeward journey, however, a corvette and a merchant ship were sunk, two naval vessels damaged and two naval fighter aircraft were shot down. (The United Press said a third Allied vessel of undisclosed type also was sunk.)

The enemy lost one U-boat and twelve aircraft, with seven additional planes so badly damaged that it is doubtful if they were able to return to the bases in Norway.

According to a communique from the Admiralty today, the merchant ships, including many American vessels, were protected by two escort carriers and a large complement of destroyers, corvettes and other naval units from the British Home Fleet, all under the command of Rear Admiral Rhoderick R. McGrigor.

#### "Most Persistent Attacks"

Shortly after its departure the convoy fell under "the most persistent and sustained

attacks mounted by the enemy in northern waters for some time."

During the double passage, weather of exceptional severity was encountered, with winds often reaching hurricane force. At times waves sixty feet high swept the laboring vessels, and twice the convoy was scattered during pounding gales, but each time managed to reassemble.

It was on the homeward run that JU-88s and torpedo-carrying planes swept in upon the convoy time and again despite heavy weather. Fighter aircraft took off from the carriers to meet them, while escort vessels and the merchant ships sent anti-aircraft fire into the enemy flights.

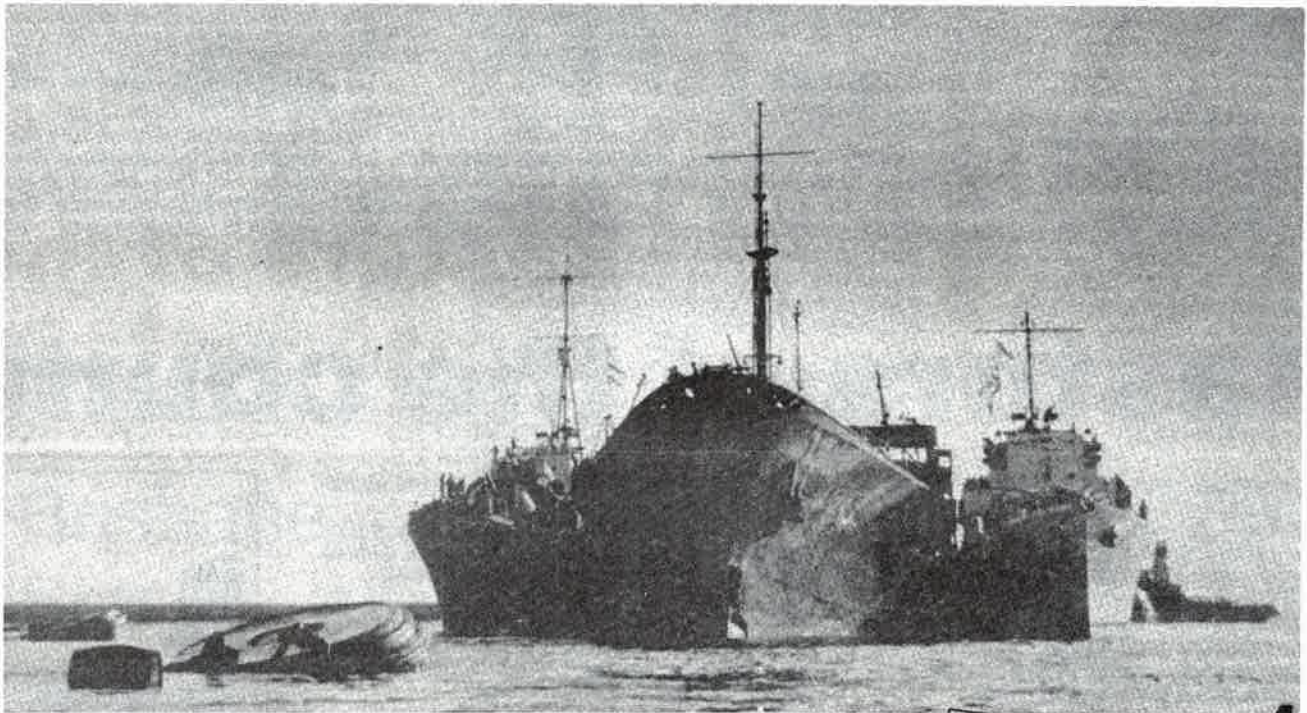
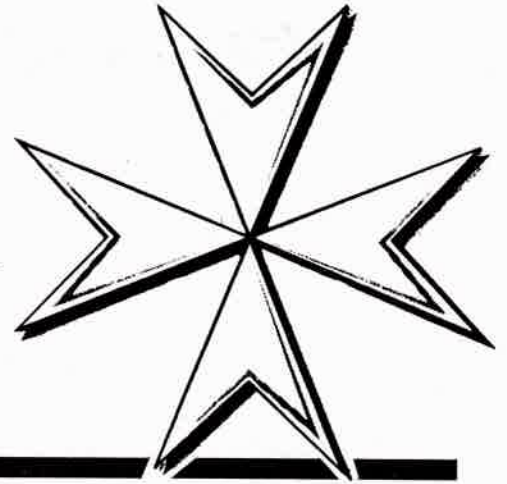
During one of these attacks the corvette Bluebell was hit by a torpedo and, according to witnesses, "seemed to disintegrate."

#### Convoy R.A. 64 Ships

**These ships left Murmansk Russia on  
17 February, 1945**

S.S. ALANSON B. HOUGHTON  
S.S. GEORGE H. PENDLETON  
S.S. JOSHUA W. ALEXANDER  
S.S. JOHN LA FARGE  
S.S. SILAS WEIR MITCHELL  
S.S. J. D. YEAGER  
S.S. BERNARD N. BAKER  
S.S. THOMAS SCOTT (SUNK 2/17/45)  
S.S. R. NEY McNEELY  
S.S. JAMES KERNEY  
S.S. BENJAMIN H. HILL  
S.S. CHARLES M. SCHWAB  
S.S. FRANCIS C. HARRINGTON  
S.S. CHARLES SCRIBNER  
S.S. JOHN IRELAND  
S.S. CEASER RODNEY  
S.S. WARREN DELANO  
S.S. PHILIP F. THOMAS  
S.S. JOSE MARTI  
S.S. HENRY BACON (SUNK 2/23/45)  
S.S. JOHN A. QUITMAN  
S.S. CROSBY S. NOYES  
S.S. HENRY VILLARD  
S.S. EDMUND FANNING  
S.S. LE BARON RUSSELL BRIGGS  
S.S. HENRY WYNKOOP  
S.S. PAUL H. HARWOOD

# MALTA REMEMBERED



WHEN oil tanker Ohio (above) entered Grand Harbour early 15 August, 1942, it signalled the end of the siege of Malta. Holed, close to sinking, and lashed to two destroyers, HMS Penn and HMS Bramham, she was one of five out of fourteen merchant ships that survived what the people of Malta called the Santa Maria convoy.

But if any ship in the convoy truly mattered, it was Ohio. With her precious cargo of 11,500 tons of fuel, she was the lifeblood of the airforce as well as everything else on the island. The tanker was evacuated twice before she reached Valletta.

Every merchant seaman who manned the tanker knew the risk he took and that a hit would turn the ship into a fireball; still they volunteered. Ohio's skipper, Captain Dudley Mason, later received the George Cross for gallantry. A testimony to his bravery and that of his men. But Ohio would never sail

again. After a period as a store ship and an accommodation block, she was towed out to sea after the war and scuttled. The tanker that Hitler and Mussolini could not sink was laid to rest off St. George's Shoal.

Angelo Aquita shared the relief of thousands of Maltese when the Pedestal convoy limped into Grand Harbour. The Maltese cheered every ship into harbour, but these survivors, the remnants of the biggest convoy in World War II, were special.

"Three came on the 13th, the Brisbane Star came on the 14th by itself, and then the Ohio on the 15th," he said. "When she came close to the harbour, the local tug boats went out. The Ohio's deck was awash. It nearly sank. The put it alongside and started to unload it. When it was unloaded they beached it outside Grand Harbour so she wouldn't sink in the middle of the harbour."

# Santa Maria mi

By **KAREN TRAVISS**,  
Defence Correspondent

THE ISLAND of Malta has been no stranger to war. Romans, Phoenicians, Arabs, Normans, Crusaders, Turks, French, Italians and the British have all made their mark on the strategic island in one war or another.

But the toughest battle it faced – and the nearest it came to total collapse – was the three-year siege in World War II.

From 1940 to 1943, the Mal-

## Desperate mission relieved island in the nick of time

tese population and Allied servicemen faced an unrelenting attempt to bring the island to surrender.

Bombed, blockaded and starved, the tiny, rocky island came within one week of running out of supplies in the summer of 1942.

Malta had to survive if the Axis forces in North Africa

were to be beaten. The survival of Malta, dubbed “the unsinkable aircraft carrier,” was crucial to the course of the war and Allied victory.

Thousands of men and women died trying to defend the island and keep it supplied. In April 1942, at the height of the siege, King George VI awarded the island the George Cross for

the courage of its civilian population – the only time an entire nation has been decorated for gallantry.

As soon as the Italian dictator Mussolini revoked his country's neutrality and entered the war as an Axis power, the bombing raids began.

The Italian air force could strike from bases in Sicily, only sixty miles from Malta. Eight air raids were carried out on the first day alone.

In the first 205 days of 1942, Malta totted up 154 consecutive days of bombing.

Maltese were forced into the streets, their houses reduced to rubble, and they cooked their meagre rations on stoves in the street.

The island third of the had no natu oil. The isla from the Brit upon for supp of the Medite long proces Maltese into began.

In August attempt to r Operation Pe ched. A task 50 Royal Nav take a mercha from the Stra Malta.

Even befo British water many of the home again.

# Masters of the counter

THEY were “Agnew's Pirates” or the “Saturday Night Sailors”. The men of the warships in K Force – Aurora, Penelope, Lively and Lance – earned their nickname in a string of successful counter-attacks on enemy convoys.

Frank Pavey, now living in Lower Drayton Lane, Cosham, was a gunlayer in HMS Lance.

“They called us the Saturday Night Sailors because it seemed we always went out on Saturdays and sank something,” he said.

On November 8, 1941, K Force scored one of its most spectacular successes. Ten merchantmen had been spotted off the Italian coast and the destroyers and cruisers left Malta to attack the convoy, itself escorted by four destroyers.

Two of the enemy warships fled, but the other two were sunk. Another two destroyers and two merchant vessels were spotted, and attacked.

HMS Upholder, the submarine commanded by the legendary Lieutenant Commander David Wanklyn, VC, also took part in the attack and sank two destroyers. Between them, K Force and the boat accounted for ten merchant ships and four destroyers in just that one night.

HMS Lance had her share of escort duties. “The last ship we escorted was the Breconshire, back and forth to Alexandria,” said Mr Pavey. “We kept that up until she was beached in Marsaxlokk. We managed to salvage some blown tins and tobacco!”

## Vagabonds

Hunger, and shortage of anything worth smoking, tested the ingenuity of Lance's crew while they were ashore in Malta. Lance was in dock while the area around Grand Harbour suffered almost non-stop air raids. She was

badly damaged when a 4,000lb landed alongside her and blew her off her chocks.

“Half the ship's company were living like vagabonds,” he said. “I was living on corned beef, and a bit of bread, and tinned stuff.

“I remember paying 2/6d for an egg. For my 21st birthday party, I had two sardines with half a slice of bread. My birthday cake caught up with me a year later. I opened the package and all these green bits fell out!”

Cigarettes were made by rolling precious baccy in envelopes gummed together with condensed milk. In May 1942, Frank Pavey and his shipmates were sent to Fort Leonardo to man anti-aircraft batteries. He was awarded a silver shield by the Royal Artillery for his work.

Later, he moved to Manoel Island submarine base with the 10th Submarine Flotilla and became coxswain of a vessel whose duties were to depth-charge the length of the defensive boom in case Italian frogmen had managed to get through.

The Italians, contrary to popular myth, were particularly daring and used tiny “chariot” submarines – maiale, or “pigs” – to carry divers on sabotage missions.

The depth-charge patrol might have put paid to Italian commandoes. But it hardly deterred their British counterparts, who used to train in the midst of the explosions to test their own nerve.

“They told us ‘Don't worry about the charges, it doesn't bother us,’” said Mr Pavey.

“We also used to see if the charges would land us any fish, too. But the fish had obviously got the message and at sunset they seemed to put out the message to abandon ship!”

The Germans and Italians who attacked Frank Pavey and his comrades at sea and on land were anonymous enemy. But years after



**ATTACKED** ● The merchant ship Rowallan Castle pictured from HMS Lance during a bomb attack. She was damaged and taken under tow.

the siege, Mr Pavey came face to face with “Gerry” – as an in-law.

His son, serving in the RAF, married a Maltese girl, and her uncle Ulrich had served in the siege of Malta. The two met at the wedding.

# miracle

produced only a small amount of resources like food and fuel found its way to Malta, struggling to eke out a few weeks' rations.

exposed waters of the Mediterranean, they had to ensure that some food and fuel found its way to Malta, struggling to eke out a few weeks' rations.

Air raids, U-boats and surface attacks took their toll. A handful of remaining ships limped into Malta on August 15th, an oil tanker lashed to two destroyers.

It was the day the devoutly Catholic Maltese were celebrating the assumption into heaven of the Virgin Mary. The supply line became known as the Santa Maria convoy, a tribute to an operation that was seen as a miracle itself.

It was the beginning of the end of the siege of Malta.

1942, a desperate effort to relieve the island, was launched. The force of more than 100 warships was to supply the convoy from Gibraltar to Malta.

Warships left the crews knew they would not see them again, in the

## 'We're safe with Eagle,' then carrier went down

BILL STROUD had spent two-and-a-half years in the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle before joining HMS Manchester in April, 1942.

He watched his old ship sink in minutes when she was hit during Operation Pedestal. And there was nothing he could do to help his former shipmates.

"I had just taken over the afternoon watch on the aft defence station, one of the four gun mounts," said Bill, now 76 and living at Wilcott Close, Gosport.

"I was saying to the gun crew, don't worry, we're as safe as houses as long as Eagle is with us.

"She was an old carrier. She didn't even have an armoured flight deck. Suddenly there were three loud explosions - and unfortunately it was Eagle. She had been torpedoed, and within seven minutes she was completely gone."

It was especially painful for Bill. One hundred and forty seven of his former comrades were killed.

"I felt sick," he said. "I knew most of them, and we couldn't do anything about it.

"We saw Eagle glide under the water, but we weren't allowed to stop to pick up survivors. As I say, it made me feel sick.

"I still have pictures of some of my mates who were lost, and they were all hostilities-only ratings. They didn't appreciate what we were up against."

### Abandon ship

The bombing continued as the convoy pressed on towards Malta. Bill Stroud recalled spending all the time at action stations, living on sandwiches and unable to leave his position even to use the heads. The men relied on a bucket.

When Manchester herself was hit, she lost power and was plunged into darkness. Although the guns could still be fired, they could not be trained in the right direction.

The decision was taken to abandon ship and scuttle her. Although she could have tried to struggle back to Gibraltar at a crawl, she would have been an easy target and more lives would have been lost.

Bill Stroud and his gun crew took a float and began paddling towards the Tunisian coast.

"We knew Manchester was going to be scuttled," he said. "We heard the explosions and saw her gradually go down, stern first, with her bows in the air.

"We paddled away and landed at Cape Bon. 160 men were picked up by the destroyer HMS Pathfinder. We were rounded up by the Vichy French and interned at Laghouat."

Bill does not have happy memories of the former Foreign Legion barracks. The conditions were appalling.

"Dysentery, bugs, you name it - we had the lot," said Bill. He was liberated when the Allies swept across North Africa in Operation Torch.

## But 1,000 men died

CONVOY after convoy set sail for Malta, from Britain, Egypt and Gibraltar. But few got through.

In all, 40 convoys tried to run the gauntlet of the Axis forces, and in the first six months of 1942, nearly 315,000 tons of supplies left the UK. Almost half that ended up at the bottom of the Mediterranean: 34 per cent of supplies sent from Egypt were also lost.

The terrible losses led to a special technique of loading merchant ships. Their holds would be filled with a mix of supplies from food and fuel to aircraft and ship spares to ammunition. If only one ship reached Valletta then at least a little of everything would reach those who needed it.

The "loaded Malta cargo," as it was known, often tipped off spies that the vessel was headed for the island.

One ship in three was lost in the Straits of Sicily, where surface ships, U-boats, mines and bombers could pick off merchantmen and warships alike.

### Expected

In March 1942, a convoy from Alexandria reached Grand Harbour only to be sunk as it arrived. The heartbreak was almost too much, but for every ship that made it safely, there was an ecstatic welcome from Maltese lining the ramps and quays.

Little could be kept secret in Europe, it seemed. The vital convoy, Operation Pedestal, in August 1942, was monitored by Axis spies even before ships left the UK. British sailors who managed to get ashore after their ships were sunk were taken prisoner in North Africa and told they were 'expected'.

Pedestal was the largest convoy of the war. It was so important, not only to Malta but also to the course of the war in the Mediterranean and North Africa, that it warranted three admirals commanding the escort, three aircraft carriers, two battleships, seven cruisers and 24 destroyers. It was known as convoy WS21S - later, to the grateful Maltese, as the Santa Maria Convoy.

Vice Admiral E Syfret sent a signal to every ship in the group. He warned it would be a difficult 1,000 miles. The signal ended: 'Malta looks to us for help. We shall not fail them.'

More than 1,000 men died. But the promise was kept.

# attack

## Brisbane Star sparkled

THE Merchant Navy matched "the Andrew" for bravery and determination during the run for Malta.

The Brisbane Star was hit by a torpedo and limped into French territorial waters off the African coast - neutral waters.

A German submarine and an Italian plane harassed the merchant vessel trying to provoke a retaliatory attack. Had the Brisbane Star responded with her guns, she would have invited a "legitimate" attack in neutral waters.

But her captain kept cool. When the plane and the submarine withdrew for a few hours, they were banking on the Brisbane Star not daring to try to break out until dark. But she made a dash for Malta in broad daylight. The Italian plane caught up with her next morning, but was shot down by the Merchant ship's gunners. She reached Malta a day after the main convoy.

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# Desperate Journey Through Hell

THE ADMIRAL'S briefing left no doubt in the minds of the men of HMS Manchester that many of them would not be coming back.

Before the cruiser left Scotland on Operation Pedestal, the crew was told that losses were inevitable. Leonard "Mac" McDonald, now 82 and living at Edmund Road, Southsea, recalled the briefing.

"We knew what we were doing before we left," he said. "The admiral said we were joining up with a convoy, with 54 warships as an escort.

"If we got one ship through, and lost half the escort, he told us, it would be classed as a success and those of us who got back would get seven days extra leave.

"We knew that if that convoy didn't get through, Malta would last another week." Mac, a Royal Marine, manned one of Manchester's four-inch guns on the upper deck. As soon as the convoy formed and left Gibraltar, the bombardment began.

"It was a continuous battle all the way through," he said. "We saw ships going down all round us. When the aircraft carrier Eagle went, we were having a smoke on the upper deck.

"We saw four spurts of water and smoke from her and she just went down. She had been hit by four torpedoes and was gone in less than two minutes."

The dwindling convoy was prey not only to planes, U-boats, and E-boats but also to shore batteries. On August 12, HMS Cairo was tor-

pedoed by the Italian submarine Axum off Bizerta, and HMS Foresight was another victim of a "tin fish" from a torpedo bomber.

Ithuriel and Pathfinder redressed the balance a little by sinking another Italian submarine, Cobalto. Early next day, on August 13, Manchester joined the casualties after being torpedoed by a submarine.

"There had been air and submarine attacks all day long," said Mac. "There was a man on watch looking for E-boats.

"Suddenly he called out, 'Tin fish, green 120, E-boat in sight.' That was the first we knew of it."

Compartments were flooded to try to right the ship and Mac joined 18 volunteers who tried to rescue men from the engine room. Some had nearly drowned in fuel oil, and one died later from oil poisoning.

Two hours later, about 3.30am, the crew mustered on the upper deck and prepared to abandon ship.

"The captain, Peter Drew, told us the nearest land was 14 miles away and he was sorry he couldn't get us any closer. He said he wanted 40 volunteers to set scuttling charges, the rest could abandon ship - God bless you and good luck."

Mac spent five and a half hours in the water, alternately swimming and clutching at debris. He staggered ashore on a beach in Tunisia to be met by 13 Spahi soldiers of the Vichy French.

He could speak French, and so was able to learn that the Axis powers had known every move they had made, from the content of the

Admiral's briefing in Scotland to the number of survivors they could expect.

"They were prepared for the full ship's company of 960 and were disappointed that there were only 450 of us left," he said.

His capture was the first leg of an overland journey, from train to train, that ended in a prison camp in Laghouth in the desert.

The French had a Foreign Legion base there once but had condemned the building as unfit for human habitation in 1938. Nevertheless, 1,000 prisoners were already in the camp.

The colonel in charge was a Frenchman whose son was lost in the American carrier USS Wasp. Second in command was an Irishman who had adopted a French identity after joining the Foreign Legion. The third in command was an SS Oberleutenant.

The regime could be far from benign, although the two senior men were pro-British. Sentries took a bribe from a young stoker, Norman Greaves, and two RAF men to allow them to escape.

They accepted the bribe, and let the men get over the fence. But then they shot the 21-year-old stoker in the back at ten yards with a soft-nosed bullet. It is a memory that still haunts Mac McDonald 50 years on.

Eventually, news that the Allies had broken through and were making their way across north Africa sent the Vichy French running. Mac and his shipmates walked out of the camp in November even before the American forces arrived to liberate them.

---

## Carrier Made a Fool of Traitor

LORD HAW-HAW, the traitor who played a key role in the Nazi war machine, got it wrong several times when he broadcast to the besieged people of Malta.

Mistake number one was to predict that the crippled aircraft carrier *Illustrious* would be sunk in the harbour. Mistake number two was the threat that the Pedestal convoy would never reach Grand Harbour.

Walter Gatt was a young Maltese draughtsman working in the dockyard during the siege. Radios were in short supply but he was one of the few people able to listen to the bragging threats of retribution.

"I was one of five draughtsmen from our office to take account of the damage to *Illustrious*," said Mr Gatt. "During the raids we were not allowed on the ship - we had to go to the shelters.

"Everyone had to leave, even naval personnel, unless they were firefighting or manning

the guns. There was a barrage to stop the bombers having a straight run to the dockyard."

The Luftwaffe had a score to settle with *Illustrious* after the carrier's pilots had all but destroyed the Italian fleet at Taranto in November, 1940.

Now, in January, 1941, as the carrier lay in the dockyard awaiting urgent repairs, the bombs rained around her. The three cities - Vittoriosa, Cospicua and Senglea - near the naval base suffered terrible devastation.

"Fortunately, after six days in the harbour, dockyard people managed to repair her," said Mr Gatt. "She slipped out quietly to Alexandria one Sunday morning."

Walter Gatt, whose father was a dockmaster, lived with his family in the dockyard itself. He also had relatives a world away, in Laburnum Grove, North End, also facing air-raids.

The Gatt's dockyard home suffered two direct hits, and Mr Gatt, who also acted as an official photographer recording bomb damage, lost his private pictorial record of the siege.

Living in the dockyard was a mixed blessing. It was the focus for bombing raids, but at least

the electricity supply was continuous, unlike the rest of the island. But food, or the lack of it, was a universal problem.

"We had to find food for ourselves," Mr Gatt recalled. "Anywhere I thought I could get some food or vegetables, I would go, although the prices would be much higher than normal.

"But it was Lord Haw-Haw who warned us the Santa Maria Convoy was coming through the Straits of Gibraltar, and he promised the Germans would destroy it."

More than 10,000 men worked in the dockyard, many doing hard, heavy work that became increasingly difficult as rations dwindled. Many Maltese wives and mothers went hungry so their menfolk could eat enough to cope with a day's labour in the yard. "It was mainly vegetables," said Mr Gatt. "And there were those who said the meat we were eating was not rabbit, but cat."

Not all cats ended up as dubious fare in kitchens, and some people looked after the growing number of feral cats even though humans were starving.

## NOW HEAR THIS!!

### S.S. LANE (V) - 1996 Cruise Dates

July 13 & 14; Aug. 17 & 18; Sept. 14 & 15  
Contact the ship or call 310-519-9545

### HOAX WARNING!

From the Dept. of Veterans Affairs - Congress did NOT pass any new law giving Veterans any dividends on their insurance while on active duty, or giving any kind of serviceman group insurance refunds. This is a hoax!

### ST. LOUIS CAMPING INFO

For those of you wishing to camp in St. Louis for the 1996 Reunion, call the St. Louis R.V. Park at 1-800-878-3330. Cost is \$10 per day.



*This is* **JOIN  
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**Send them on their way with an  
EXTRA WAR BOND**

*LEFT - An official Navy war bond poster*

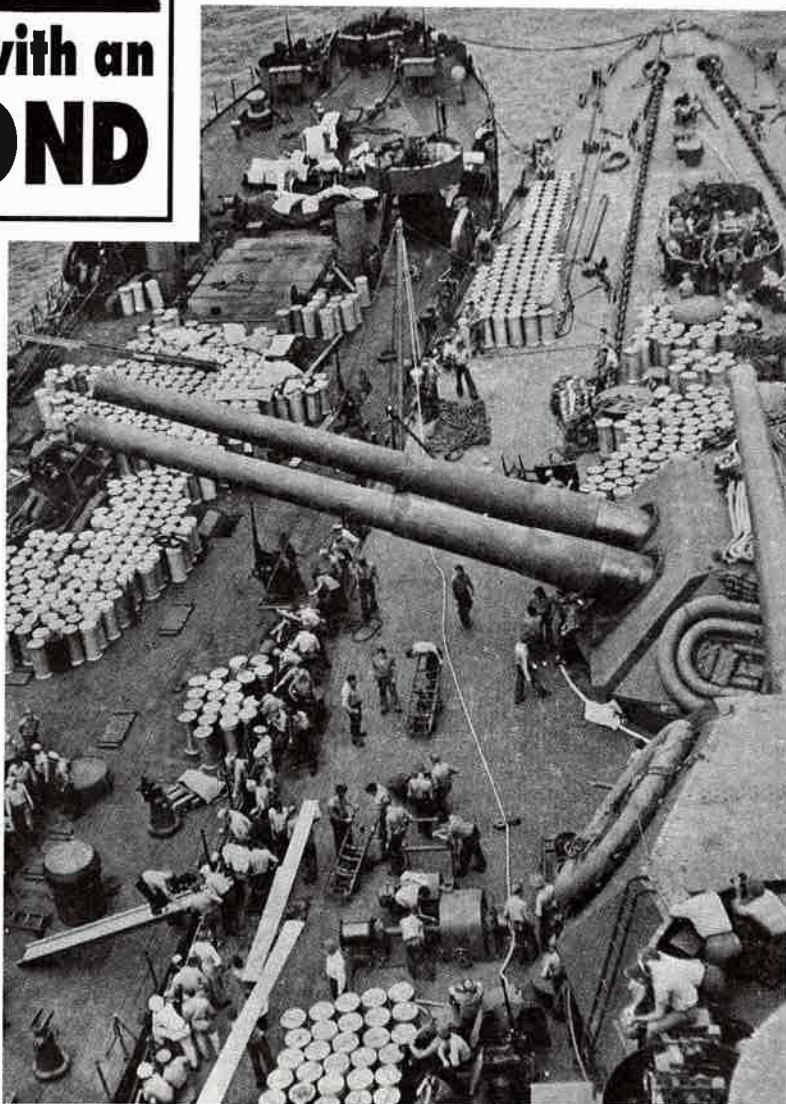
*BELOW - Off Okinawa an American battleship takes on ammunition from an LST, getting ready to support ground troops with bombardments.*

## BOOKS . . . . .

**THE QUACK CORPS**, by Arthur W. Wells. Experiences in the South Pacific, Palmyra Island, Saipan, Tinian, and Okinawa in a Marine Amphibian Truck Company (DUKW). Order from DolArt publishers, 1629 Sunset Avenue, Chico, CA 95926-2655, (916) 342-1453. Cost is \$14.95 plus \$2.00 shipping.

**NOTE: ONE BUCK (\$1.00) DONATED TO NAVY ARMED GUARD FOR EACH COPY SOLD TO MEMBERS.**

**BEFORE I FORGET IT! BOOK ON PBYs! ALEUTIAN ISLAND AREA. "THOSE NAVY GUYS AND THEIR PBYs"** by Elmer Freeman. Kedging Publishing Co., 1124 West 8th Ave. Spokane, Wa. 99204, (509) 838-3282, \$18.95 plus \$2.00 shipping.



# U-BOAT HUNTERS

## Only CVE Lost in Atlantic Led Hard-Fighting Team

**A**LL her action-packed life the escort carrier USS *Block Island* lived precariously in the midst of battle. And in battle she died, her freighter hull holed by three torpedoes from an enemy U-boat. Her grave was the Atlantic where, for 14 months, she led a diminutive task force in scourging the sea of German underwater raiders.

The *Block Island* was the only American carrier lost in the Battle of the Atlantic. In announcing her loss on 29 May—a year to the day after she was sunk—the Navy also disclosed the dramatic story of her career.

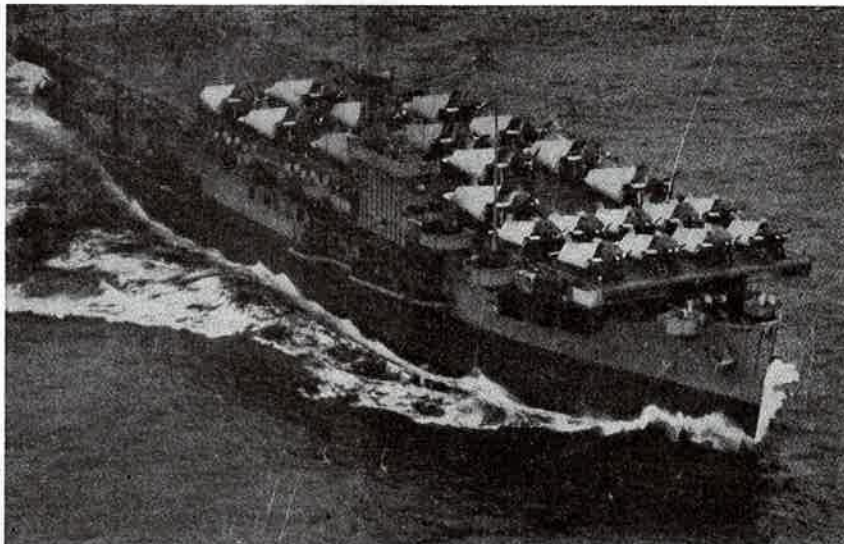
The *Block Island* first went to sea in March 1943, under command of Capt. Logan C. Ramsey, USN. Except for about 50 survivors of the old USS *Lexington*, most of her crew had never seen a carrier before they were assigned to her. A few days after she started out on her first sub hunt, the baby flat-top flushed several U-boats during the night. Crewmen lined her flight deck to watch star shells and gunfire and an escort rushing in for the kill.

War was almost always like that on the *Block Island*—close, personal, thrilling. With her DEs she slugged it out in close surface actions and depth-charge attacks by sea and air, even witnessing a hand-to-hand scrap between crews of a damaged U-boat and the DE USS *Buckley*.

A plane from the carrier spotted that German submarine at 0300 on a bright moonlit night. The *Buckley*, directed to the spot, opened fire with three-inch guns and scored a direct hit on the sub's forecastle. The enemy, electing to fight it out on the surface, returned fire with her deck gun and semi-automatic weapons while swerving sharply to get out of the moon track. Torpedoes from the U-boat's tubes swished through the water but missed. Tracers flashed across the *Buckley's* superstructure but only one hit—in the stack. Lt. Comdr. Brent M. Abel, USNR, the DE's skipper, decided to ram. A hard right rudder drove the *Buckley* up on the sub's forecastle.

The submarine's crew swarmed out of the conning tower and up on the DE's forecastle. The *Buckley's* crew used anything handy for weapons. Two Germans were felled by heavy coffee mugs, others by empty shell cases and by small-arms fire.

Finally, to avoid too many boarders, the *Buckley* backed off and resumed fire. As the DE closed in again the submarine swerved suddenly against her side and remained pinned beneath the *Buckley's* hull. Rolling to 60 degrees, the submarine gave men on the *Buckley* a full view of the flaming



Official U. S. Navy photographs

USS BLOCK ISLAND pictured as she put to sea to hunt U-boats in Atlantic.

shambles that was the interior of the conning tower. Torpedomen on the DE tossed grenades into the open hatch. Slowly the sub drew away again; but one three-inch gun on the *Buckley* scored three direct hits, and the U-boat plunged beneath the surface with her diesels still running at full speed. Both the con hatch, spouting flames, and the forward deck hatch were open as the submarine dived. Heavy underwater explosions followed.

The *Buckley* captured five German boarders and picked up 31 other submarine crewmen from the water. The entire action lasted only 16 minutes.

In March 1944 Capt. F. Massie Hughes, USN, took over command of the *Block Island* and with it the luck of the task force in tracking down and destroying the enemy. Four days later the *Block Island* was at it again.

Patrolling planes detected another U-boat and tracked it along with the escorts. Two of the DEs closed in as the sub surfaced and began pounding it with their guns. The sub's crew abandoned ship without a fight.

Two days later one of the carrier's Grumman torpedo planes found a submarine lying dead in the water, with her crew enjoying a swim. The pilot,

Lt. (jg) Mark E. Fitzgerald, USNR, cut loose with a determined depth-charge and strafing attack before the Jerries could scramble aboard. One of the depth charges cracked the sub in two.

His plane damaged by AA fire from the U-boat, Lt. Fitzgerald was forced to land in the water nearby. As he drifted in his rubber boat he saw a man swimming toward him. Hauled aboard and treated by the flyer for severe head injuries, the swimmer turned out to be the 23-year-old captain of the submarine. Later Lt. Fitzgerald rescued and captured eight other Germans before being picked up by a destroyer.

The final battle of the fighting carrier was yet to come. Six planes were out on patrol when the *Block Island* shuddered as two violent explosions rocked her beneath the waterline. Capt. Hughes, realizing that his ship was hopelessly damaged, gave the order, "Prepare to abandon ship."

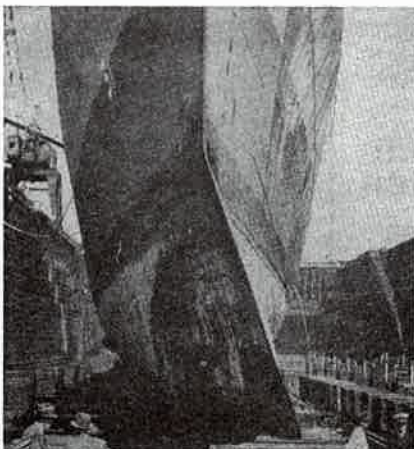
All hands mustered on the flight deck. Shortly thereafter a third explosion shook the ship. "Abandon ship," ordered the captain. Most of the officers and men, including 18 wounded, went over the side and climbed aboard rafts.

Last off the stricken carrier, Capt. Hughes had been picked up by a whaleboat and was only a few hundred yards from her when she suddenly went down by the stern.

As the *Ahrens* proceeded to the rescue of survivors she positively located the enemy submarine which, after torpedoing the carrier, had sent another tin fish at the USS *Barr*, another escort, hitting near the stern and crippling her.

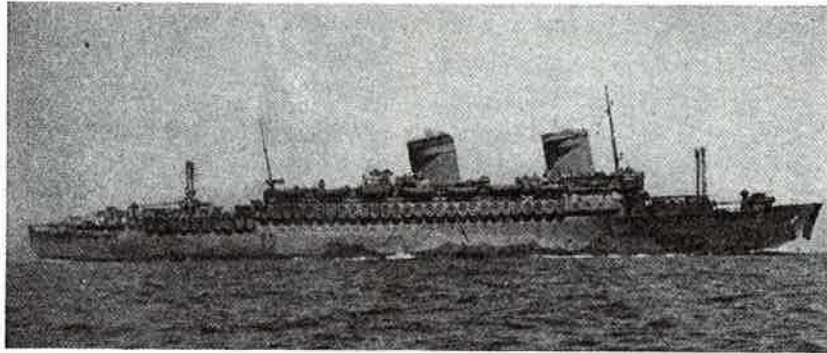
Exactly one hour after the first attack the *Eugene E. Elmore* delivered her assault on the submarine. A tremendous explosion indicated that the U-boat had been destroyed.

Casualties for the entire action totaled six killed on the *Block Island*, five killed, 12 missing and 16 injured on the *Barr* and four aviators from the *Block Island* missing. The other two pilots who were in the air at the time of the attack were rescued.



DENTED NOSE was price destroyer Buckley paid to ram and sink sub.

# The Navy's Biggest Transport



USS WEST POINT'S sleek lines suggest speed which protects her from subs.

Through seas streaked with torpedo wakes, torn by storms and ripped by bombs the USS *West Point*, the Navy's largest troop transport, has carried more than 350,000 soldiers, sailors and marines to and from the battlefronts of the world in unescorted dashes covering more than 350,000 miles and equal to 14 trips around the globe.

Like most large transports—she's only 27 feet shorter than a 750-foot *Washington*-class battleship—all her wartime voyages have been made without the protection of convoying warships. On speed alone has her safety depended and never once has she lost a passenger.

Details of her operations came last month as security was partially lifted on her career. Converted from the luxury liner *SS America*, largest merchant vessel ever built in the United States, the *West Point* began her war life in Singapore harbor when Jap artillery and planes scattered shrapnel on her weather decks and dropped bombs within 50 yards of her giant hull.

Since then her escapes have been numerous. Off Rio de Janeiro a Nazi torpedo streaked across her bow. In Milne Bay men of the *West Point* stood at battle stations for hours

against Jap air raiders. In the Red Sea and at Suez her guns were alerted and barrage balloons were lifted against surprise Nazi torpedo planes. Submarines have been sunk not far from her track.

Last winter, during raging storms which produced waves 50 feet high, the *West Point* suffered some damage, according to her skipper, Capt. Webb C. Hayes, USNR. One wave struck the forward gun platform, 50 feet above the waterline, and demolished it.

In continuous service since the outbreak of the war, the *West Point* has made as many as 24 crossings of the Atlantic in a single year. Her ports of call include Bombay, Marseilles, Capetown, Guadalcanal, Canal Zone, Liverpool, Noumea, Merzel-Kebir.

With a crew of more than 800 men, the *West Point* can carry upward of 7,700 passengers but only half of them can crowd at one time on open weather decks. Besides serving as a troop transport she also carries casualties. In a recent trip—after V-E day—she brought 191 litter cases and 400 wounded home from Europe. She has transported thousands of Axis prisoners destined for prison camps in the States.



Official U. S. Navy photographs

GI PASSENGERS sun themselves on deck. *West Point* ferried 350,000.



Bulletin (Ft. Mifflin, Phila., Pa.)  
"It's amazing what these liferafts carry nowadays!"

## A Thad Thtory

Say, Mac, if you happen to see a rat . . . the four-footed variety . . . with false teeth on one of the South Pacific islands, get in touch right away with Seabee Franzell H. Boardman, SF2c, USNR.

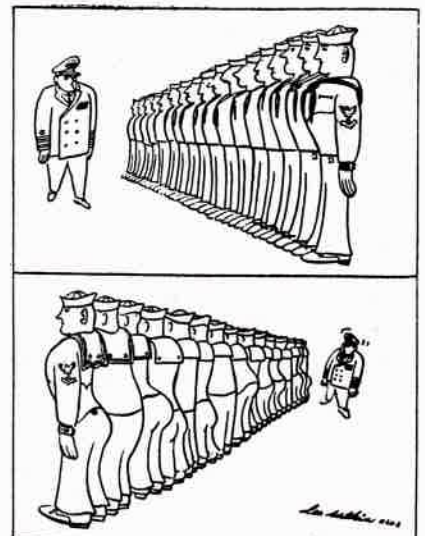
You see, Boardman, who hails from Dark Harbor, Maine, has been out in the islands with the Seabees for a couple of years. Every night, come rain or shrapnel, he would carefully place his upper and lower plates in a cardboard box for safekeeping before retiring. It was a happy arrangement . . . and a secure one, Boardman thought.

But one morning he awakened to find that a rat had gnawed a hole in the box and scurried off with the lower plate. The Dick Tracys and the Nick Carters of the jungle established, upon fine-tooth investigation, that the culprat had also tried to make away with the upper plate, but couldn't get it out of the box.

This was no consolation to Boardman, however.

"Tho what!" he ejaculated, as well as a man without lowers can ejaculate. "Tho what if he did leave me my upperth? What good are upperth without lowerth?"

Nor was Boardman forgiving. "I wouldn't mind," he said, "if the rat needed the lowerth more than I need them. But without my lowerth I can't munch my way out of a paper bag, but look at him. . . Hith teeth were good enough for him to chew through a cardboard boxth!"



Tadcen Topics (Camp Elliott, San Diego)

# ALAMAR – MURMANSK – MASSMAR – LONDON

## S.S. ALAMAR

S.S. ALAMAR was a member of Convoy PQ-15 to Murmansk in May, 1942. Alamar left Philadelphia in March with stops in New York and Halifax enroute to Iceland. Stayed at anchor in Reykjavik harbor for about two weeks until convoy was formed and left for Murmansk in late May, evidently waiting for ice floes to break up before proceeding.

Early on, seas were calm with dense fog and poor visibility. Some ships came so close it was possible to have a conversation with their crew. Ice floes were constantly banging against the ship's sides. When the fog cleared, ships were scattered out of position. Destroyers and corvettes escorted merchantmen back to their positions and the convoy was reformed. There was no enemy contact for the first week and we enjoyed bright sunlight – although very cold. The Arctic in May has 24 hours of daylight and “nighttime” is a sort of gray haze, but with good visibility.

I don't remember the date, but one bright day a plane showed up and circled the convoy out of range of our guns (which, on the Alamar, consisted of 30 cal. and 50 cal. machine guns). Once in a while, an escort vessel would leave the convoy and head in the direction of the plane, which would just fly off with no shots fired. We were told by the older merchant marine crew that the plane was taking pictures of the convoy and would return to German bases in Norway, where the pictures would be studied. Ships could be targeted according to the importance of their visible cargo. Each ship had supplies and equipment lashed on deck. Some had tanks or trucks or dismantled planes, etc. The Alamar had hundreds of 55-gal. drums of hi-test aviation gasoline topside. A wooden walkway provided access from bow to stern.

One day, a flight of planes showed up and started what would be a constant harassment of the convoy. The Luftwaffe used the continuous daylight to their advantage and came in at all hours of the day. One result of this constant air-raid was no chance for the Armed Guard to get any sleep, other than a quick nap at their gun station in the interval between raids. Food consisted of sandwiches and coffee eaten at your battle station. Once in a while, a squall would come up with blowing snow and poor visibility. This gave a respite from the planes, but the U-boats were always prowling around and the escorts were dropping depth charges during the lull between raids. As I remember, it was May 26 when we saw the first ship go down. There was a

tremendous explosion and she went down in what seemed like seconds. There were no planes at the time, so we figured a sub took her down.

May 27, 1942 was the day I guess the Germans picked to wipe out the convoy. They came in waves overhead. Stuka dive-bombers joined the heavy bombers in the attack. We were closer to Norway and were now in range of the lighter Stukas. I was a Radioman 3/C at this time. However, there was nothing for me to do. The Alamar already had a radio operator and there was just no sense in having both of us sitting in the radio shack monitoring the frequency for messages. Transmissions were not allowed, as subs could zero in on the radio signals. So, I became a volunteer loader on one of our 50 cal. machine guns. I teamed up with a young Gunner's Mate I'll call “Georgia,” because that is where he hailed from. We had practiced in the quiet times before the planes came and we got to be a pretty good team. I should mention that this was early in the war – Spring of '42 – and there were not enough weapons (Alamar had 30s and 50s), nor enough men (there were 6 Armed Guard enlisted and 1 Ensign aboard), so there was no formality. Everyone pitched in wherever needed, especially during enemy air raids. It was not unusual to see a merchant sailor manning a 30 cal. machine gun.

“Georgia” was an excellent gunner, very well trained. We didn't actually knock down any planes, but did manage to turn them off several times from their approach to our ship. But, on this particular day – May 27, 1942 – they came in such numbers it was impossible to keep your eyes on them all. The Stuka dive-bombers used the bright sun to their advantage. They came down from the sun and we usually couldn't see them, but fired at the sound they made in their dive. (Stukas made a piercing, screaming sound when they dived to drop their bombs and it could really unnerve you.)

Our gun station was located midships on the starboard side. There were ships on either side of us in the convoy and bombs were dropping between the ships. The noise was deafening, between the planes, the bombs dropping, and the anti-aircraft guns firing from the ships. While we were firing up at the Stuka coming in overhead, I bent down to get another load to keep feeding the gun. I looked back over my shoulder and saw a bomber (a German JU-88) approaching us from starboard aft. I pounded on Georgia's shoulder and hollered at him. He swung the gun around to meet the

plane, but it was too late.

We didn't hear the bombs coming down, but there was a tremendous explosion. The noise was unbelievable. The Alamar leaned way over to starboard. The sea came up into the gun tub and both Georgia and I were picked up and carried over the side when the ship came back up and the wave went back down to the sea. I remember falling through what felt like a waterfall, hitting solid water, and going down like a rock below the surface. I came back up into the sunlight and there was Georgia a few feet away, hollering at the top of his voice. I looked back and saw the Alamar, still afloat and listing to starboard. There was a lot of smoke coming from her deck and we could see the crew letting down the boats. Georgia was trying to let them know we were still around, but we were so far away I didn't think they could see or hear us.

The next time I looked, the Alamar was gone. As far as we could see, there was nothing but water. The ships and planes were all gone and there was just the two of us bobbing around in the ocean. We looked at each other and kind of nodded our heads. We were sure that this was as far as we would go.

I don't know how long we were in the water. The cold Arctic water has the effect of putting you to sleep. I vaguely remember seeing a lifeboat and the face of the Alamar's First Mate as he pulled me into the boat. When I came to, I was in a bunk on a British Corvette. It was crowded with survivors. All of the Alamar's crew, both merchant and Navy, had survived. Georgia and I were the only ones who got wet.

The air raids continued for the remainder of May 27 and for several days afterward, until the Russian planes were able to come out to provide air cover for the convoy. All we could do on the corvette was to try not to get in the way of the ship's crew, who were busy at their battle stations. We finally reached Murmansk, safe and sound, on Memorial Day, May 30, 1942.

## MEMORIES OF MURMANSK

Our first meal ashore after three days aboard the rescue vessel was globs of “jam” on thick slices of black bread. The bread was tasty, but the “jam” turned out to be caviar, which tasted like raw fish. It was manfully eaten so as not to offend our Russian hosts. Navy survivors were sheltered in a crude wooden barracks located on a hill overlooking Murmansk harbor.

This location provided an overall view of the harbor as daily air raids by German planes from bases in Norway dropped bombs on ships, docks and buildings in the city. Outmoded Russian planes slowly climbed up to meet the modern German Stukas and heavy bombers. Navy Armed Guard sailors watched a parachute floating down and stood and cheered as a Russian flier was pulled from the water. Later, we watched quietly as a slow, stalling outboard motorboat finally reached a downed German pilot. Even though we knew he was the enemy who cost us so much, we felt relieved as he was finally taken aboard.

Navy survivors were taken on an escorted tour of the city across the harbor. Buildings were demolished, windows broken, roofs caved in, and streets were filled with rubble. But, the work went on as ships' cargo was unloaded 24 hours a day and reloaded onto flat cars for the rail trip to Leningrad and inland Russia. (The Murmansk Railway was the vital link to Leningrad and to the front, and remained open throughout the war in spite of repeated German efforts to destroy it.) The most memorable part of the tour was the visit to the hospital where Allied survivors of Arctic sinkings and Russian soldiers and workers, injured in air raids, were being treated. Seeing the importance of medical supplies and equipment to the overworked staff under threat of constant air raids made us realize how very important the Murmansk convoys were to the Russian people.

The Navy Armed Guard crews were sobered at the sight of so many men of various nationalities who had suffered the loss of their arms or legs due to prolonged exposure in the cold waters of the Arctic. Only their good fortune at early rescue saved them from a similar fate. The British Corvette that had rescued some of Alamar's crew had provided me with a Royal Navy uniform as my own clothes had been ruined by the oil in the water. When we visited the hospital, a British sailor who had lost both arms and both legs thought I was a fellow Britisher. He kept pleading with me to please come back with a gun and shoot him, as he couldn't face going back home in his tragic condition. He kept up this incessant pleading as long as we remained, and I finally had to leave and wait outside for the rest of the party. I was not yet 18 years old and was horrified by the sights in the hospital. (I was still wearing the British uniform when my next ship, the S.S. Massmar, went down.)

One of the sights I remember from Murmansk was a group of young Armed Guard sailors, standing on the deck of an aged American vessel, waving to the crew of a huge, modern Russian freighter pass-

ing by and realizing with surprise that many of the Russian crew members waving back are *women!* (This was 1942!) Another memory is of Armed Guard sailors voluntarily standing at attention on the deck of the S.S. Massmar and saluting as a Royal Navy unit in a motor whaleboat conducted a memorial service over their corvette which had been sunk while at anchor close to the Massmar during the previous day's air raid.

The most lasting memory of living ashore in Murmansk in 1942 is the courage of the Russian people who lived in the city. They were under constant attack, lived in primitive conditions, had no luxuries, and small comforts. Yet, they share their meager rations, provided us with shelter, protected us from enemy aircraft and tried to keep us entertained. Their living conditions were abysmal with shortages of basic needs: food, clothing, etc.; yet they never complained and never doubted that they would be victorious eventually. It was a rare experience – a privilege – to have lived amongst them for a while. We all learned lessons of courage and fortitude, and I'm sure that those of us who have survived have been better men for the experience.

## S.S. MASSMAR

S.S. MASSMAR was one of the merchant ships to survive German air and sub attacks on convoy PQ-16 and arrive safely at Murmansk on May 30, 1942. Once the Murmansk was unloaded and assigned anchorage in Murmansk harbor, the ship's crew and Armed Guard crew of the S.S. Alamar were assigned to the S.S. Massmar for the return voyage to the States, via Iceland. The return trip in late June and early July was uneventful at first. The Luftwaffe and U-boats showed no interest in the convoy, which was assigned number QP-13. The ships were all empty of war material and the Germans were probably saving their efforts for loaded, Murmansk-bound convoys.

Enroute to Iceland, we met an outbound convoy, PQ-17, headed for Murmansk. There was a total of 37 ships in PQ-17, and as we waved at them as they passed, we could not have known that 23 of them would be sunk after their escorts left them on July 4th to chase after the German battleship Tirpitz (thought to be enroute to the convoy). Following this terrible loss, PQ-17 would be the last convoy to Murmansk for several months.

Meanwhile, Massmar and the rest of our convoy proceeded peacefully on our way to Reykjavik harbor. During the voyage, the Alamar's Armed Guard crew was assigned

to lookout duty aboard the Massmar. The night of July 5, 1942 was very cold with dark clouds, strong winds and heavy seas. My assignment as lookout was on a hatch cover just forward of the bridge. I felt certain that with the size of the waves, no sub could possibly fire a torpedo with any chance of success, but we took nothing for granted and still kept a sharp watch. When I was relieved of my watch, I went to my bunk, which was just off the main deck. Of course, at this time and in these waters, we had learned never to be without our life-jacket – eating, sleeping or whatever.

I had just laid down when there was a horrendous explosion that shook the ship. The noise was louder even than that on the Alamar when the bombs hit. I hit the deck and started for the hatch when another powerful explosion sounded. When I reached the main deck, it was already three or four feet above the water. I looked down midships and saw a crew trying to get a lifeboat free. The water was coming up so quickly that the boat was already floating in the water before they had time to unhook the davits. When I next looked over the side just in front of me, the deck was only a few inches above the surface. There was someone standing next to me – I don't remember who it was – and we both just stepped over the side into the water.

The sea was running high and those of us in the water would ride up to the top of a wave and then ride down into the trough – something like riding a small rollercoaster. When you rose to the top of a wave, you could see many people floating in the water. When you dropped down, you could see nothing but huge waves overhead. An overturned lifeboat floated by but I was unable to get to it. Later, a lifeboat sailed by with a Navy Armed Guard sailor standing up in it! He had a big smile on his face as he sailed by. Some people called out to him from the water, but he didn't respond. He seemed to be in some state of shock and didn't seem aware of his situation. All of a sudden, an overturned lifeboat came over the top of a wave, directly at me. There was a merchant seaman clinging to it and I noticed a line wrapped around the upturned bottom. The merchant sailor tried to reach me, but he was exhausted and wasn't able to pull me up out of the water. I was able to grab the line that was wrapped around the boat, and with some help from him, I was finally able to climb up onto the boat. We both were able to secure our arms under the taut line, and this kept us from falling off. Then, as happened when the Alamar went down, I fell asleep from the cold.

When I woke up, I was in the hospital at Reykjavik. I have no idea of the time that passed between the lifeboat and the hospi-

tal. I was told that we had been rescued by a Free French Corvette. There were other survivors in the hospital – some in bed and some walking around. I looked around for my Armed Guard shipmates from the Alamar. There was just one other with me. He was the one who rode alone standing in the lifeboat. He had no memory of that, although many others told him of seeing him go by them in the water. My partner, the Gunner's Mate "Georgia," was gone, as were my other mates, whose names and faces I still remember, but have not mentioned here. Three other ships went down along with the Massmar on the night of July 5, 1942. For years afterward, I wondered how a sub could be so accurate in that storm and thought that perhaps I could have been more vigilant at my lookout watch.

It wasn't until years after the war that I read that the Massmar and the other ships were escorted into an Allied mine field, and that the Merchant and Navy crew of the Alamar, who survived the loss of their ship by enemy action, lost their lives as of a result of someone's mistake in navigation. We all know that mistakes are made in war. But, though it has been a lifetime since the Massmar went down, I still remember those young men of the Armed Guard – 17, 18, 19 years old – who fought against an overwhelming enemy and survived, only to lose their lives because one of their own blundered. I will always be bitter and out-

raged at the cause of their passing. May they rest in peace.

## LONDON

In 1944, I was on duty at the USN Radio Station in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, following service in the Navy Armed Guard in 1942 and destroyer duty in 1943. The Londonderry station was the link for all communications between Washington and London and was busy 24 hours daily, seven days a week.

In late May, 1944, six radiomen, including myself, were told that we were to go to London on special assignment. We sailed from Belfast to Glasgow and were put aboard a train for London. A private compartment had been reserved for us and we were told to tell anyone who asked that we were on shore leave from our ship that was docked in Derry. Upon our arrival in London, we were met by U.S. Army personnel, escorted to a hotel, and then taken to the SHAEF Headquarters in downtown London.

Security was very strict, and the Army provided us with a photo ID to gain access to the building. Once inside, we were restricted to our own area which was located deep underground in an elaborate communications area. We reported to HQ, but did not

have much to do other than to practice our short wave skills. We decided among ourselves that we had been given this assignment because we were probably the fastest and most accurate morse code operators at the Derry Station.

When we got to our station, we were told by an Army officer that each of us was assigned a certain frequency and we were to report all transmissions received immediately to the Army NCO who was with us. We should also be prepared to transmit messages as needed. We sat at the radios all night long, but we did not receive any messages; nor did we transmit any. We did hear conversations between other people and it was obvious by the excitement in their voices that they were involved in something important.

As it turned out, we did not contribute anything of importance on D-Day. At our debriefing later, we were told that when the invasion was being planned, it seemed necessary to have us there, and that being there and not being needed was much better than not being there and being needed. We were to spend the next couple of weeks in London, enjoying the sights and watching the "Buzz Bombs" fly by.

*Charles Hayes, 118 Overlook Drive  
Northampton, MA 01060-3529  
Telephone 413-584-6556*

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## REPORT OF VOYAGE - S.S. JOHN MUIR

**12 August 1945      Lieut.(j.g.) J. N. Bennett, Commanding Officer**

During our stay at Okinawa there were 38 air raids for which we were alerted. However, only one plane made a direct attack on the ship. The following details are from the Armed Guard Log:

0148 (26 June 1945) Airplane motor heard. Plane not visible because of smoke.

1050 Plane motor stronger. Headed for ship on port beam. Still not visible because of smoke. All guns at standby to fire if plane visible in close.

0152 Plane in close but not visible because of smoke. Dropped three small bombs estimated at 50 lbs. to 100 lbs. off port beam and port bow about 50 yards away. Two bursts from 20 mm aft on port side when gunner glimpsed plane through smoke. No other guns fired. No damage to ship and no casualties. Shrapnel struck 3" tub forward. Plane apparently approached from rela-

tive bearing of 210 degrees at 500 ft. altitude with ship between him and full moon, probably just above smoke. After dropping bombs turned sharply left on relative bearing of 300 degrees. Did not return. Probably missed ship because smoke coverage was effective at time of attack.

To this can be added that the weather was clear and the moon was full. One of the escorts laying down smoke in the harbor (Naga Wan) identified the plane as a Zero. This was the only known enemy plane in the immediate area at the time although there had been heavy AA fire at Ie Shima, north of us, and Hagushi, south of us, at frequent intervals during most of the night. One small piece of shrapnel found in 20 mm gun tub forward on port side.

Incidents out of routine: At 1350 on 12 June 1945, one of the escorts sighted and exploded a floating mine ahead of the con-

voy. There were no unreasonable delays in port. The commercial operators appeared to carry out wartime radio instructions for merchant vessels.

The signal blinker light furnished by the ship is antiquated and has only a 500 watt bulb in it. It is practically useless during the daytime and, as a result, it is often necessary to carry the Navy 1000 watt light back and forth across the bridge with the resultant hazard of dropping it over the side. This has been reported in all voyage and communications reports filed. It is recommended that the Port Director call this to the attention of the ship's agent.

The Master and Officers of the ship carried out "Wartime Instructions for Merchant Ships." No recommendations. No improper procedure of friendly aircraft. Training at sea: Semaphore, blinker light, gun drills, gun breakdown and servicing, lookout, seamanship.

# Decorations & Medals for Armed Guard Crews - Okinawa-Gunto

The following is a list received from the Board of Decorations & Medals on 15 November 1945 of Merchant Ships eligible for the Operation & Engagement Star for operations at Okinawa Gunto between dates indicated (Document Op-414-D3-js, Navy Department, Office of the Chief Naval Operations, signed by Edw. C. Cleave, Captain, USNR, dated 19 November 1945.

A.C. Balch	5/21-5/31	Fairland	5/27-6/19	N. Hapgood	5/29-6/30
Aberdeen (V)	5/3-5/16	Flagstaff (V)	4/10-5/5	Niantic (V)	5/10-5/31
Adabell Lykes	6/7-6/14	Flying Cloud	5/10-5/22	Nicaragua (V)	5/10-5/22
Afoundria	4/10-4/22	Fordham (V)	5/31	Norman J. Colman	6/6-6/30
Ames (V)	5/3-5/19	Francisco Coronad	5/26-6/30	Oberlin (V)	6/8-6/15
Anniston City	5/3-5/31	F.S. 209	4/26-6/30	Ocean Telegraph	5/19-6/11
Appleton (V)	5/19-6/19	GAGL 62	6/2-6/30	Paducah (V)	5/3-5/16
Athaansia	6/26-6/30	George E. Waldo	5/29-6/23	Pierre (V)	4/6-4/30
Augustin Daly	6/18-6/30	George Middlemas	6/18-6/30	P. Larsen	6/26-6/30
Augustin Stahl	6/13-6/19	Glassford (BCP 2098)	6/16-6/30	Prince L. Campbell	6/26-6/30
Bartlesville (V)	5/10-5/27	Green Bay (V)	4/6-4/22	Richard B. Moore	6/18-6/30
Belle of the West	6/17-6/23	Greenville (V)	5/27-6/19	Robert M. La Follette	4/26-5/16
Berea (V)	5/27-6/30	Gretna (V)	4/18-5/5	Robert Morris	6/13-6/30
B.F. Irvine	6/26-6/30	Grinner (V)	6/7	Robert Wentley	5/27-6/23
Billy Sunday	6/13-6/30	Halaula (V)	4/6-4/26	Rockland (V)	4/16-5/5
Boche	5/27-6/30	Hastings (V)	6/24-6/30	Rock Springs (V)	6/7-6/23
Bowdoin (V)	5/10-5/22	Harvard (V)	5/3-6/30	Rodman Coleman	5/10-6/30
Boxman	4/17-5/16	Henry Gantt	5/3-6/30	Saginaw (V)	4/10-4/26
Brigham (V)	4/10-4/26	Henry George	6/13	Salina (V)	5/28-6/14
Brown (V)	5/19-6/6	Henry Raymond	5/3-6/30	Samuel F. Miller	6/26
Bucknell (B)	5/3-5/22	Hibbing (V)	5/10-5/27	Samual Young (IXSS)	4/26-6/40
Canada (V) (sunk)	4/26-4/27	Hobbs (V) (sunk)	4/6	San Bruno	6/18
Cape Alexander	5/19	Honduras (V)	5/27-6/11	Santa Monica	6/3-6/11
Cape Bon	6/3-6/11	Hota Inten	5/19-5/27	Sea Bass	5/1-5/8
Cape Canso	6/24	Howard (V)	5/27-6/30	Sea Flasher	5/3-5/16
Cape Charles	5/10-5/27	Hurricane	6/7-6/28	Sea Flier	5/6-5/16
Cape Constance	5/27	Jacob A. Westervelt	5/13-6/23	Sea Marlin	6/24-6/30
Cape Douglas	5/21-5/27	James Buchanan	5/21-6/19	Sea Partridge	5/5-5/19
Cape Georgia	4/20-4/22	J. S. Hutchinson	5/3-5/22	Sea Quail	5/19-5/27
Cape Isabel	4/18-4/30	James King (IXSS)	5/8-5/27	Sea Runner	4/10-5/16
Cape Lambert	6/3-6/28	Jean Lafitte	5/21-5/31	Sharon	4/26-5/8
Cape Lilibeo	6/17-6/28	J. Maurice Thompson	5/3-5/16	Sidney H. Short	5/3-5/19
Cape Romain	6/7-6/22	Jeremiah M. Daily	5/19-6/30	Silverbow (V)	4/10-5/5
Cape San Martin	4/18-4/26	Jeremiah S. Black	5/29-6/30	Sioux Falls	4/10-4/30
Cape (V)	6/15-6/19	J. Mildrum	5/29-6/30	Skagway (V)	
Cedar Rapids (V)	5/19-6/6	John Meddrum	6/10-6/30	S. R. Belvis	5/19-6/17
Charles Crocker	5/10-6/6	John Muir	6/13-6/30	Stanley Matthews (IXSS)	5/10-6/27
Charles M. Conrad	5/21-6/11	John Owen	5/21-6/11	Tabina	6/17-6/28
Claremont (V)	4/10-4/22	John S. Bassett	5/29-6/19	Tjjsadane (IXSS)	5/10-5/19
Clark Howell	5/21-6/27	Josiah Snelling	5/14-5/31	Tolpin (V)	6/17-6/30
Clarksdale	4/26-5/8	Jubal A. Early	5/10-5/31	Typhoon	4/17-4/26
Clearwater (V)	5/3-5/16	Kelso (V)	4/17-4/30	United (V)	4/10-4/19
Clovis (V)	5/19-6/14	Kota Agoeng	5/27-6/11	Uriah M. Rose	5/14-5/19
Columbia (V)	5/27-6/4	Laredo (V)	5/3-5/19	Virginia City	4/26-5/8
Contab Kohrs	6/18-6/30	Logan (V)	4/26-5/8	Waco (V)	5/28-6/30
Cornelius Vanderbilt	5/10-5/27	Laura Drake Gill	6/26-6/30	Walter Colton	5/28-6/27
Cuba (V)	6/3	Loma (V)	4/26-5/8	Walterwitch	5/21-6/17
C. W. Post	5/10-5/19	Luxembourg (V)	5/28-6/30	W. B. Ayer	5/28-6/23
Czechoslovakia (V)	4/10-4/26	Marcus Daly	5/21-6/30	W. B. Rogers	6/26-6/30
Dartmouth	6/26-6/30	Mariscal Sucre	4/26-5/5	Wesleyan (V)	6/17-6/28
Dashing Wave	4/10-4/22	Mary A. Livermore	5/10-6/6	Whirlwind	4/10-4/26
David Heves	5/29-6/30	Mello Franco	5/29-6/19	White Horse	4/21-4/23
Day Star	6/3-6/19	Mercer (V)	6/8-6/20	White Swallow	6/24-6/30
Defiance	6/24-6/30	Meteor	6/7-6/22	Williamette (V)	6/17-6/30
Durango	6/24-6/30	Michael Pupin	5/14-6/19	William B. Allison	5/21-6/30
Donald Macleay	5/20-5/22	Minot (V)	4/10-4/26	William Ellery	5/29-6/19
Edward K. Collins	6/26-6/30	Mornacport	4/14-5/22	William N. Dall	6/18-6/30
Edward P. Alexander	5/1-5/19	Moline (V)	4/1-5/22	William J. Gray	5/6-5/16
Edwin N. Stanton	6/26-6/30	Mormacwren	4/26-4/30	William J. Sherman	6/18-6/30
El Reno (V)	5/3-5/19	Mormora	5/28-6/30	William R. Davie	4/26-5/19
Enos. A. Mills	5/3-5/27	Morning Light	4/10-4/26	William S. Clark	6/26
Ethiopia (V)	5/10-6/14	Mt. Holyoke	5/10-5/19		
Exchange	5/1-5/5	Nampa (V)	6/24-6/30		



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