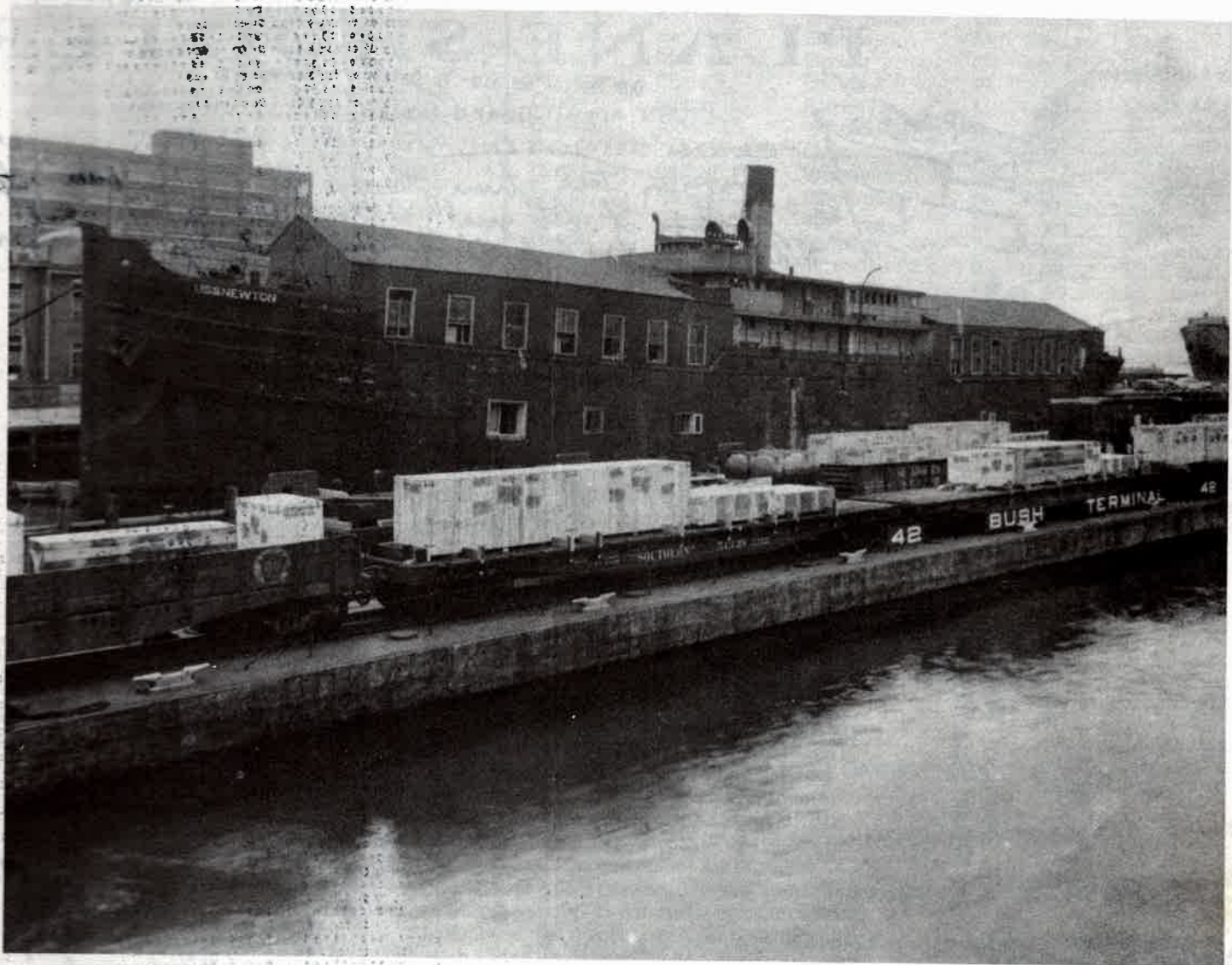


NOV./DEC., 1997

THE P OINTER



THE USS NEWTON

Wooden Hulled ship at the Armed Guard Center in Brooklyn, NY

(see letter from George Gunderman, page 4)

THE POINTER

Officers for 1997-78

Charles A. Lloyd, Chairman & Secretary
5712 Partridge Lane
Raleigh, N.C. 27609
1-919-876-5537*

Joseph and Jeanne Benedict, 1998 Hosts
8220 Quinn Circle
Bloomington, MN 55437-1228
1-612-835-1380

Lonnie D. Lloyd, Treasurer

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Lyle Kell WA
Robert Aldrich..... NV

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

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



THE PLANE SHOOTER

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

USN Armed Guard World War II Veterans

"PLAIN SHOOTING FOR PLANE SHOOTERS"

Finally took time to see the Photo Video after locating it. It's great!! I think that if you could video the front + back side of enclosed, to let people who were not a/b. Read it.

Dear Armed Guard Crew, Ladies, Family and Friends: *not a/b. Read it.* Around Nov. 16 1997 *cal*

Now, where in the world did 1997 go? Here it is almost Thanksgiving and only a few more days til Christmas. Hope you get this before the Holidays. Time to light the pilot light and cut off the air conditioner that's been running continuously since the Spring and start looking for the contraption called a snow shovel. At least we did not have the hurricane destruction of last year; or we haven't as of this typing. Looks as if Mexico caught it though.

We got to visit with the II/Wi Crew at their reunion, and also the Northeast Crew. Enjoyed both and things were great. For those who could not attend, you missed out on a treat. Understand that all the other Mini's went well also.

Joseph Benedict called to say that there will be a 450 limit on the ship cruise and it is on the FIRST 450 tickets sold. He has 250 special reservations to the "Chanhassen Dinner Theater" for Friday Night June 26th, 1998. He can get more if we fill up by April 1, 1998. From the interest shown so far, this reunion may surpass the 1300 turnout at Las Vegas. Maybe, it's the Women who want to go shopping at the "MALL OF AMERICA," If you don't make your reservation before the deadline, it is your fault for you have been told.

For those of you "LATE COMERS" or those who misplaced the telephone number of the "THE MARITIME ASBESTOSIS LEGAL CLINIC:"

Division of the Jaques Asmiralty Law Firm
Attorneys and Counselors at Law
1570 Penobscot Building
Detroit, Mi. 48226 TEL-(800) 492-3849 - CALL BETWEEN 9 AM AND 4 PM

Call them and ask for application claim form and follow their directions. They will send you a form to fill out and return to them. This is for any Armed Guard or Merchant Seamen who served on ships where the pipes were covered with asbestos BEFORE 1982, especially the cold climate runs. Armed Guard will be required to send a copy of their separation discharge papers or DD-214 and the name of the ship; dates on and off. (MM DD-214)

The cost to get the S.S. JOHN W. BROWN up the St. Lawrence River to Detroit and back to Baltimore in 1999 would be approximately \$400,000 I was told. I then called Martin Vallee and it looks as if it will be impossible to get her there in 1999 so Vallee will try in the year 2000. Will keep you informed.

The Armed Guard bank account as of 10/25/97 is \$17,493.54. The cost of this "POINTER" is approximately \$9000.00 and I need a little help from those who have not donated anything (as yet) that can afford it to get the next one out and over regular office expenses. Tom Bowerman has the Armed Guard on Internet and other computer programs and I have to reimburse him for some of his expenses. He has located about 200 or you lately and with the other names coming in, it gets to be rather expensive, but worth every cent. We have to located as many as we can, as fast as we can by the year "2025."

*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*

Of late, I have been sending out five copies or more of the POINTERS from the OVERPRINT copies. As these copies run out, I hope to have special copies of interesting subjects to send out to the new ones just located. Therefore, it is necessary that donations keep coming in. It is not fair to the ones who keep donating to keep it going. Many of you are able to help. Open up a little and help those not so fortunate as you are. Be Thankful that you've had it so good.

Many of you have had Telephone Area code changes since you came on board. Many have even had complete new telephone numbers changed and never notified me. You should drop me a note for update. How do you expect a shipmate to contact you? Many have Rural Route Numbers changed to street numbers and vice-versa and I get the mail back and have to resend the "POINTER." It gets expensive. If you don't want the "POINTER," at least you should let me know. Many of you widows let me know you would like to stay on the mailing list. Many others have not. A \$.32 post card can keep the "POINTER" coming. It's as simple as that. I've held up this mailing long enough for the "SNOWBIRDS" to let me know they have migrated again. Many have failed to advise and you will not be getting the "POINTER" until the post office returns it and that will probably be after the Holidays. I do not have my computer where it will transfer the name and address automatically. Wish I did. Nor, will it read your mind. yuk! yuk!!

From the gang here, to all of you, have a wonderful Thanksgiving and if I don't get another "POINTER" out before Christmas and the first of the year, here's to all a MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR. CHEERS MATES!! cal

The following clipping was sent in by Sidney Dominique, 370 42nd Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94121-3325

A crew of near-ancient mariners sailed the Liberty Ship Jeremiah O'Brien out of the Mothball Fleet and later across the Atlantic Ocean to the 50th anniversary of D-Day. To date, she is the only ship ever to leave the Mothball Fleet under her own power. Restoration is under way on the Red Oak Victory, a cargo ship that served in three wars. The city of Richmond's museum wants to dock the vessel at the Point Molate Fuel Terminal and operate her much like the Liberty Ship Jeremiah O'Brien. The Red Oak is one of the few survivors of a huge fleet of war-time merchant ships built at shipyards in Richmond for service during World War II.

The Red Oak Victory Restoration Project can be reached at (510) 222-9200.

— In Memory —

Deceased shipmates since Aug./Sept./Oct., 1997 POINTER

Anderson	Tom (DEMS)+	Thunder Bay	Cn		10/16/97
Bailey	Roger	Dewey	Az	Shirley	8/1/97
Baillie	George W.	Hobe Sound	Fl	Kay	8/15/97
Bates	Calvin D.	Mt. Juliet	Tn	Irene	12/26/96
Bonecutter	Junior D.	San Antonio	Tx	Rose	6/97
Briscoe	Billy J.	Dallas	Tx	Nadine	8/16/97
Burke	Cornelius A.	Philadelphia	Pa	-	10/1/97
Burnett	H. Frank	Wheatridge	Co	Virginia	3/1/97
Carlson	Harold W.	Buchanan	Mi	Edna	1/3/97
Cassidy	Matthew	Elmont	NY	Anne	5/16/97
Christner	Clyde S.	Beaver	Pa	8/28/97	
Crane	Milton G.	Rahway	NJ	Mary	9/1/97
Depman	Albert J.	West Chester	Pa	Nathalie	4/9/97
Dingle	Theodore J.	Carlisle	Pa	Erma	7/3/97
Dixon	Eddie L.	Worthington	Wv	Evelyn	10/15/97
Easley	Robert J.	Barefoot Bay	FL	Virginia	10/15/97
Hadley	Devere A.	Ithaca	Mi		8/1/97
Hecht	Joseph E.	Reeders	Pa	*	97
Isakson	Knut	Elmwood Park	Il	Ruth	5/16/97
Jacques	Walter A.	N Kingston	Ri	Jane	9/1/97
Kodelya	Frank (MM)	St. Louis	MO	Ella	7/7/97
Kwartnik	John M.	Philadephia	Pa	Betty	6/30/97
Mehuren	Donald E.	Searsmont	Me	Irene	7/22/97
Metzler	Earl	Ansonia	Ct	*	4/30/97
Nosack	Francis J.	Clatskanie	Or	Helen	10/29/95
Perdue ++	William J.	Lake Wales	Fl	Betty S.	10/9/97
Quinn	James O.	Windsor Locks	Ct		8/5/97
Repman	Albert J.	Chester	Pa	Natalie	4/9/97
Smith +++	Charles W.	Jacksonville	Fl	*	8/28/97
Stickney	Lynn M.	Decatur	Mi	Pauline	1/6/96
Watson	Loris M.	Lyndon	KS	Susie	10/21/97
White	Robert E.	Baker City	Or		8/7/97
Wolff	Robert H.	Heystone Hgts	Fl	Margaret	8/27/97

+ Many of you who attended reunions from 1983-93 will remember our Canadian friend who attended our reunion to represent his crew. Tom was a TRUE friend and loved the Armed Guard as he did the Canadian DEMS. He had missed the last few reunions but always called to wish us well. cal

++ Bill wrote the Novel "FOX, UNCLE CHARLIE" that many of you purchased.

+++ I learned of Smith's death through the article by Joe Cook.

A happy note from one of the crew: Sept. 15, 1997

Mr. LLOYD:

We received the Aug/Sept/Oct 1997 "POINTER" a few days ago and there is a mistake in the "IN MEMORY" of the deceased shipmates. My husband, Harlen Sheridan is listed as deceased. As of this date, 9/15/97, he is still alive, or at least he was ten minutes ago when he left home to go do some errands. I have no idea from whom you received the information, but, it is wrong and I am happy to say he is still well enough to do some things even though he was sick the first 3 months of the year. Sincerely, **Frances Sheridan, (wife of Harlen) 237 Cherry Way, Salisbury, Md. 21804**

Frances and Harlan, I would like to share in your happiness as I am sure the rest of the crew does in knowing our shipmate is still with us and will have many more wonderful years to go. I am at a loss as to how I received the incorrect information. That's 3 times this has happened and I apologize. cal

★ ★ ★ ★ REUNIONS ★ ★ ★ ★

“REGIONAL, MINI-REUNIONS AND GET-TOGETHERS”

Support these local meetings while you're able.

OOOPS!! COLUMN!! BEFORE I FORGET IT AGAIN!!

A. MY APOLOGIES GO TO HARLAN AND FRANCES SHERIDAN, OF SALISBURY, MD FOR LISTING HARLAN AS DECEASED IN THE AUG/SEPT/OCT “IN MEMORY” COLUMN. SEE LETTER IN THIS “POINTER.” PLEASE MARK THROUGH THAT LINE.

B. ON PAGE 8-“LETTER BY RAY BARBA” ON “THE ARTIC INTERLUDE.” This should have been typed and written as from the correct Author - Harry Hutson, 90, Bradford Ave., Cleethorpes, NE Lincolnshire, DN35 OBH - England. You can still order the book “ARTIC INTERLUDE” from the same U.S.A. address - WW II HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 218 Beech St., Bennington, Vt. 05201, but the price should have been \$29.95 plus \$3.00 postage in the U.S.A. (\$12.00 if purchased overseas). I hope this was not such an inconvenience to you. It is a great book!! Hutson signed out in his letter of correction as: “KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK. BEST WISHES TO “Y’ALL.” (HOW’S THAT FOR A BRIT!!)” HARRY HUTSON #1565.

UNDER REUNIONS, BE SURE TO PAY ATTENTION WHEN IT SAYS: “IF MAKING RESERVATIONS, BE SURE TO SAY “ARMED GUARD.”

LST ASSOCIATION will hold their Sept. 2-8, 1998 National Reunion at the HYATT REGENCY on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. CONTACT: Mike and Linda Gunjak, 64 Ponderosa Dr., Oregon, Oh. 43616, 800-228-5870. They publish a GREAT PAPER!!

TEXAS SAN ANTONIO CREW: CONTACT: Dan Mock, 8810 Silent Oaks, San Antonio, Tx. 78250-6267 for the Dec. 13, 1997 breakfast at the GOLDEN CORRAL, NW Outer Loop, San Antonio, Tx.

CONNECTICUT CREW MEETS AT THE GROTON INN in Groton, Ct. on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 11:45 A.M. Contact: Joseph Silvia, 82 Anthony Rd., N. Stonington, Ct. 06359, 860-599-2697; or Lew Tew, 4 Glenwood Ct., Gales Ferry, Ct. 06335.

AP TRANSPORT CREW REUNION: CONTACT: Chuck Ulrich, 35 Oak Ln., New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11040, 516-747-

7426 (6/4-7/98- Norfolk, Va. Area).

LOGANSPOORT, INDIANA CREW has a new Skipper in Forrest Spencer, 910 W. Melbourne Ave., Logansport, In. 46947-3345, 219-753-7066. He will be assisted by John Stratton, 627 Grove St., Logansport, In. 46947-4910. They have replaced Pete Dela Cruz, one of the 1st Armed Guard to meet in Winchester, Va. in 1982. Pete has done a great job in getting the Indiana crew together, but is having a little health problems and we wish him full recovery. They will still meet at Al's, Hwy. 29 and 435 on the last Saturday of each month at 11:00 A.M.

John Neven is the one to contact for the **IL/WI** meetings in 1998.

HOFFMAN ISLAND RADIO ASSOC. 7TH NATIONAL REUNION WILL BE HELD AT THE H.I., PHILADELPIA, PA. ON APRIL 22-24, 1998. Contact: John J. Murray, 122 Wyndale, San Antonio, Tx 78209-2348, 210-826-4687.

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS Armed Guard area meets at McDonalds in Fairview Hgts. on the 2nd Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:00. Contact: Skipper Theodore Kawula, 3232 Carlson Ave., Granite City, Il. 62040, 618-876-2241. A.G. and M.M. “GET-TO-GETHER.” They have over 80 members now. Kawula also informs me that the S.S. Samuel Parker Chapter of AMMV meet the 4th Monday of each month at the Seafarer's Hall, 4581 Gravois Ave, St. Louis, Mo. 63123 at 10 A.M. ARMED GUARD WELCOMED TO ATTEND.

SACRAMENTO, CA. AREA Armed Guard Crew, wives and friends: 10:00 A.M.- 3rd Thursday at BRADSHAW RESTAURANT HIWAY 50 at Bradshaw Exit. Welcome Hosts are: Bill and Doris Welch, 6048 Holstein Way, Sac, Ca. 95822-2955, 916-428-4681 and Peewee and Charlotte Hunter, 916-354-0623.

The “**NORTH-WEST PASSAGE**”, “**AK-OR-WA-ID**” HOLDS A LUNCHEON AT 1400 HOURS ON THE 3RD WEDNESDAY AT THE BELL'S RESTAURANT, 8501 FIFTH AVE N.E., NORTH SEATTLE, WA. 1 MILE SOUTH OF NORTHGATE MALL. Contact: Billie and Richard Kohse, 2304 Lister Rd., N.E. Olympia, Wa. 98506-3616, 360-456-1946; or Don and Pearl Werner, 18605 N.E. 219th St., Battleground, Wa. 98604, 360-687-3630. Notice: The KOHSES will again host their 1st Sunday in December ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY December 7th, 1997 (PEARL HARBOR DAY) at the “GENOAS ON THE BAY,” 1525 N. Washington in Olympia. (Tel-360-943-7770)

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 BREAKFAST at SHONEY'S RESTAURANT at Shelby and Eastern Parkway. Kentucky will also be the host for the 1998 Mi/Oh/In/Ky Mini-Reunion.

Topeka, Kansas. Area meets on the “FIRST THURSDAY” of each month at 8:30 A.M. AT THE TOPEKA PLAZA INN WITH DON GLEASON, 2405 N.W. Cross, Topeka, Ks. 66606, 913-234-6087 and Dean Vining, 1026 S.W. Cambridge Ave. Topeka, Ks. 66604-1716, 913-273-1247 as hosts. The MID-WEST CREW WILL HOLD THEIR REGIONAL REUNION at the “HOLIDAY INN WEST” in TOPEKA, KS. Sept. 18-20, 1998. Hilda and I will attend this one if all goes well.

RICHMOND, VA. CREW'S “NEW HOSTS” are Wayte and Feran Huffer (MM), 3102 Aqua Ct., Richmond, Va. 23230-1902, 804-262-6710. He replaces Clarence Durham who has done an outstanding job. They still meet at 12:30 PM for LUNCHEON at MORRISON'S Cafe, 7035 W. Broad St., Richmond, Va. on the “2ND SAT.” Thanks Wayte for looking out for both crews there. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!!

NOTICE!!!: MEETING PLACE CHANGED! ROANOKE, VA. AREA meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at the Shoney's on Route 19 (Electric Rd.), Tanglewood area, Roanoke, Va. at 11:30 A.M.; and Ralph and Myra Swillinger, 734 Estates Rd. SE, Roanoke, Va. 24014, 540-427-1927 have volunteered to Skipper the crew there and do a great job.

Rudy and Ellie Kozak, 4950 Dory Dr., New Port Richey, Fl. 34652, 813-847-4038; and Harold Ceaser, 8621 Vixen Ln., Port Richey, Fl. 34668, 813-863-1367 notified that the **FLORIDA NATURE COAST ARMED GUARD** meets on Wednesday for LUNCH at “KALLEY K's” Restaurant, located on Hwy 19 in New Port Richey. Contact “CEASER.” Everyone's WELCOMED!! THE KOZAKS WILL HOST A DECEMBER 7, 1997 MINI-REUNION (3RD ONE) AT THE CLARION HOTEL IN ORLANDO, FLA. CONTACT HAROLD CEASER!! Hilda and I may come down for some sunshine.

Please send me any correction as to time or date changes too!! IT IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN CORRECT MY ERRORS. Y'ALL HEAR!! (CALLOYD)

SERMON NOTES... LETTERS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Good Morning C.A. Lloyd:

8/26/97

It has been some time since I have written to you, but I wanted to send a donation to help with the expenses of the "POINTER" and also to add another "NEW MEMBER" to the crew. Lloyd, I really appreciate all that you and others have done for the "GOOD THINGS" that have happened.

First, I would like to THANK YOU for writing the note on my shipmate printout that was sent regarding John Mann of Ohio. His father was killed when the Tanker, the S.S. SUNOIL was torpedoed and sunk with no survivors on April 4, 1943 in the North Atlantic enroute from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Scotland in Convoy HX-231. The SUNOIL carried a Merchant Crew of 43 and 16 Armed Guard.

I phoned John and he told me he was only 6 weeks old when his dad was lost at sea; therefore he never knew his father. I told him that I had served on the SUNOIL on an earlier trip and I acknowledged my sympathies. He said that day was his birthday and my phone call was the best birthday present he had ever received. I have phoned and wrote letters occasionally since then. THANKS!!

Another "THANK YOU" is for putting me in touch with Tom Bowerman of Anniston, Alabama to whom you send backups of the computer. I told him about a gunner from Anniston whose first name was Thomas, or Tommie, (could not remember his last name) with whom I had served with on the S.S. RUSSELL SAGE from January 1944 to October 1945. Since I had kept in touch with Mel Vanstad in Oregon, Mel didn't know anything about Thomas's whereabouts. Mel did send me a photo of Thomas; Mel and Earl Williams of Missouri who died recently. On the back side of the photo was the name-"TOM (THOMAS) TILLISON" of Anniston, Alabama. One week ago, I mailed Bowerman the name Thomas Tillison and Bowerman mailed all those in the area phone book by the last name of Tillison and one reached Tillison's brother who gave him (Bowerman) the address in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Last evening, I received a phone call from Bowerman saying he had located my lost shipmate and that Tillison was at home at

that time should I want to speak to him which I did and what a nice ending to a LONG, LONG search for a friend of 54 years ago. It was just unbelievable. I am so grateful for people like you, Tom Bowerman, Bob Ober and so many more who are involved in keeping the ARMED GUARD ALIVE. THANKS!!

Also is enclosed info about the Kansas City, Mo. Mini-Reunion 9/26-27/97 and I've mailed out over 30 copies to former shipmates so you can add: Thomas Tillison, 8420 Iris Dr., Chattanooga, Tn, 37421, 423-892-0683 who, with his wife, will attend, along with my wife and I. I have notified more "NEW" ARMED GUARD" and Merchant Seamen to contact you. Hope they do. MANY THANKS AGAIN! It is now 3:20 A.M. and my local newspaper has just arrived. Almost daily the Obituary carries a couple of WW II Veterans. So sad. **Vernon Vawter, 124 Corporate Dr., The Heights 14-B, Hot Springs, Ar 71913.**

Vernon: You made my day so I took time to say that I am so happy that I have people like Tom Bowerman and others who see the need to assist their shipmates in their endeavor to locate their gun crew buddies. They put their lives on the line to protect the ships and their crew, and to deliver material overseas in WW II, to the men on the front lines to eradicate the conquerors of others. THANKS!! calloyd

Charles: Sept. 22, 1997

Thanks for sending the "UP-DATE COPIES" of the names and ships for our Mini-Reunion. They arrived two days before we started and the men appreciated them too. We had a good reunion. We were down in numbers due to different reasons but it was still great to get them together.

We presented the NORMANDY MEDAL to seven of the men. Enclosed is a photo of the group along with Lt. Col. Robert King of the Iowa National Guard, who was our guest speaker and congratulated each man after the presentation of the medals. Our best to you, Hilda and all the Armed Guard from the Iowa/Minn. Crew. **Arnold Latare, Skipper of the Iowa Armed Guard Crew.**

Dear Lloyd:

9/14/97

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoy the "POINTER" and to say that I see that Jay Wildfong from Sturtevant, Wisconsin is one of the Trustees. Jay and I were shipmates on the Liberty Ship, S.S. JACQUES LARAMIE 5/44-5/45. Jay was a good softball pitcher, too, and threw a good knuckle ball which I caught on the end of my little finger and it still hurts to this day when I bend it.

I received a telephone call from Jay last summer and he said he would visit me at my winter home in Florida. He didn't make it last year but hope he will this winter as I would like to see him again. If you see him at any of the reunions, tell him Houston says "HELLO." I have another friend and shipmate of ours by the name of Everett Brill who's from Reedsburg, WI. I met him in Florida and I let him read some of the "POINTERS" and he enjoyed them. I am enclosing his name and address so you can place him on the mailing list. I also served on the S.S. RICHARD MANSFIELD, SQUARE SINNET and BON HOMME RICHARD. Winter address is: **James Houston, 2403 Skyview St., Sebring, FL 33870.**

I forwarded the letter above on to Jay Wildfong and also info about the Florida Crew holding a "REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR-GET-TOGETHER" at the Clarion Hotel in Orlando, Fl. on December 7th, 1997. All are invited and they have room for you if you sign on early. ROOMS ARE STILL \$60 PLUS TAX (See Reunions") calloyd

Dear Charles: We were delighted to have you and Hilda attend our Mini-Reunion in Appleton, WI. this past September. My wife and I thoroughly enjoyed dining with you two on several occasions. Especially, the conversation you and I had about the USS NEWTON which was berthed behind the Brooklyn Armed Guard Center and used as a brig and confinement of sailors for other reasons. I was assigned to the NEWTON for about two months as a guard from Nov. 1944 through January of 1945 while waiting between a ship and oceans for future assignment. Our job was to march the confined sailors to sick bay, chow and any other visits they had to make. It brought back memories.

Enclosed is a donation to help keep up the good work. We all appreciate it and again, I want to say we enjoyed having you at our Mini-Reunion and we hope to see you again at Bloomington, Mn. June, 25-30, 1998. (Good Lord Willing). **Robert Blake, Skipper II/Wi Crew, 5318 Brookshire Ln., Madison, WI 53714, 608-244-7394.**

Dear Skipper Blake: The pleasure was ours and we had a great time. You have a wonderful crew to direct for the upcoming year. To be picked up by Jay Wildfong at the O'Hare airport and driven up to his home to be greeted by his wife, Jane, along with Bill and Marge Bartzatt from Lincoln, Nebraska was a treat in itself. It was great to see the Benedicts, our hosts for the 1998 National Reunion there plus



From the Iowa/Minn. Mini-Reunion (L-R): Rex Hedge, Joe Benedict, Don Branaman, Virgil Hinz, Richard Svensen, V. Duane Clark, Ray Satterlee, Lt. Col. Robert King.

all in attendance. We were also chauffeured back to the airport after the reunion by Joseph Esposito and we had a great flight back to RDU and home to a box of "ARMED GUARD" and GRASS CUTTING and I started all over again. Thanks for inviting us and letting us be a part. (C.A. and Hilda)

While I am on the Mini-Reunion subject, Hilda and I attended the North East Regional Reunion hosted by Alex Lombardi at the exclusive Pocono Manor Inn in the beautiful Poconos Mountains of Pennsylvania. This site was the home of many injured Navy personnel during WW II and a Plaque and Memorial service was held in their honor with Local T.V. and newspaper coverage. Mary Frances Ham, Hilda's sister, the Armed Guard Bookkeeper for those who didn't know, rode with us and we all had a great time. Brother L.D. and Mary also attended. It was just great to be with such a great bunch of folks again. Thanks "Y'ALL". cal

Dear Sir: 10/14/97

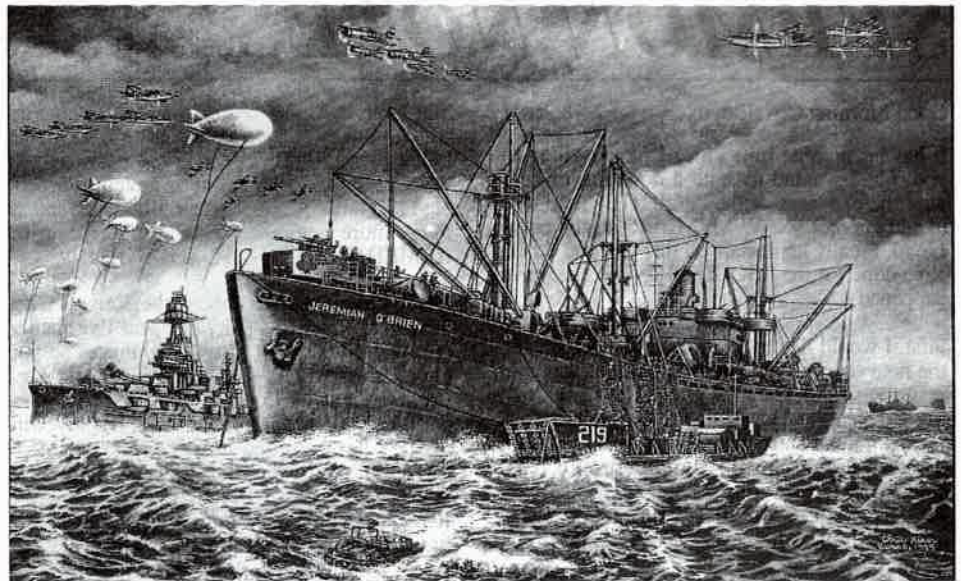
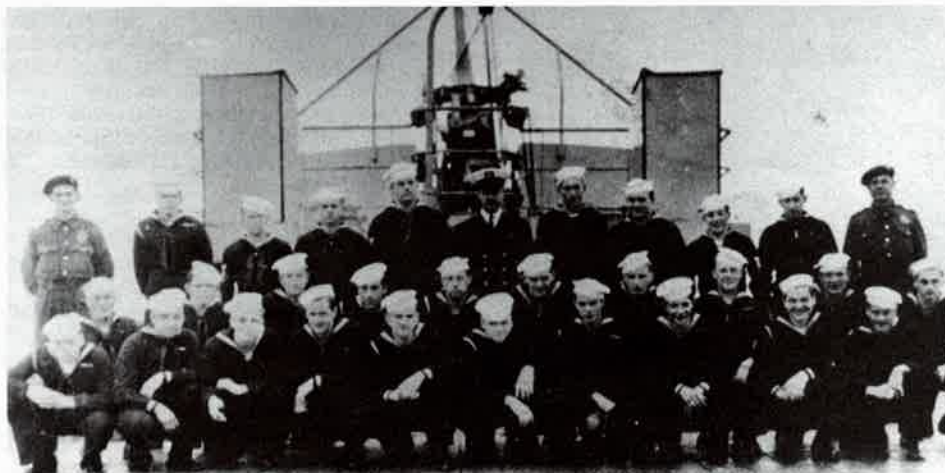
Enclosed is a picture of the USS Newton. (see front cover.) This ship had an all wood hull and was used to ship horses to France during WWI.

I came to the Armed Guard Center, Brooklyn, NY in February, 1943, and bunked in the structure built on the as did most of "ship's company." My rating was Yeoman 3rd class, which I qualified for at the time of my enlistment in Toledo, Ohio, November, 1943. The two story barracks at the left of the bow was erected later on. The factory building was the old E. W. Bliss Co. that manufactured punch presses. Notice gun placement on ship to far right.

Though you would be interested in what was behind the old Armed Guard. Respectfully,
George Gunderman, 6971 Riga Hwy., Blissfield, Mich 49228.

Dear Charlie: 9/23/97

I am sending one name: George O. Brown, 1205 Arbutus Ct., Traverse City, Mi. 49686 and a photo (below) of the S.S. EDWARD W. SCRIPPS's crew showing our officer, Lt(jg) J.G. Sartell and two British plane spotters. We carried the material to build the first airport on Normandy Beachhead. We made 12 trips from England to France. We carried 50 Red Cross Ladies on one trip across to France. I am the third person, front row. **Jim Kolka, 210 Maple, Grayling, Mi. 49738.**



Dear Armed Guard Veterans:

My father and my aunt worked on Liberty Ships and Tankers at the Marine Ship Yard in Sausalito, Ca. during WW II. My dad had passed away before the S.S. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN was restored but my Aunt worked aboard as a docent. When the O'BRIEN made its historic voyage back for the 50th Anniversary of Normandy's D-DAY on June 6, 1994, I painted a watercolor illustration of her as she appeared during D-Day from eyewitness descriptions given by men who were on board her during the invasion. The price of the 1,000 limited copies, 11 x 17 inches, 65 weight Gainsborough Cover is \$20.00 each. **Chris Riker, Clear Water Ranch Art Studio, PO Box 368, 695 Cherry Creek Rd., 95425-0368, 707-894-4434.**

CHRIS, IN COLOR, YOUR WORK OF ART LOOKS GREAT. CALLOYD

C.A.Lloyd: 9/9/97

St. Louis, Mo. Reunion last year and the Alexandria, Va. this year were GREAT, especially, the Memorial Service at the Navy Memorial along side of the LONE SAILOR.

The picture of the ARMED GUARD CENTER at 1ST AVE-52ND St., Brooklyn, N.Y was very real. My last time to be there was in 1951 for a reunion. My wife and I, along with an Armed Guard friend from Winston Salem, N.C.

attended a dinner/dance there. The "POINTER" is like a friend- "ALWAYS WELCOMED." Thanks, **A. Edwin Byrd, 230 Woodshire Rd., Collinsville, Va. 24078.**

Byrd and many others who didn't know: Reunions were held at the Armed Guard Center in Brooklyn until 1954 and my understanding was that it was successful but there was not enough parking places and the cops towed away cars parked on the curbs and sidewalks. Maybe someone that attended can write me more details. cal

Dear Mr. Lloyd 9/1/97

Several months ago, I wrote about membership in the Armed Guard Veterans' organization and you sent me material. I really appreciated it, and since then I have been receiving THE POINTER regularly. Wallace Oftendahl of South St. Paul, Minnesota, who was a radioman on the S.S. Fort Erie, a T-2 tanker on which I was a signalman in 1945-46, first told me about the organization. I believe that either you or he indicated that there are no set dues, just voluntary contributions. At the time, money was in short supply, but I am now enclosing \$(censored!) and will try to send more from time to time. I was glad to find out about the organization, and I wish I had know about it sooner. I have not been able to make it to a National Reunion, but I hope to. I see that there is a monthly meeting in Logansport, Indiana. I only live about 20 miles from there and will try to attend the next meeting.

I recently made contact with the 2nd Engineer from the Fort Erie with whom I became acquainted while on board ship. I hadn't seen nor heard from him since August of 1946, but I was able to locate him through his college alumni association. He lives in Virginia and came through Indianapolis about a month ago and we met for lunch and a great three hour visit. He is retired from the Navy as a Lt. Commander. I am glad there are people like you who make this organization possible. Very truly yours, **Joe Carey, 303 Riley Rd., Delphi, IN 46923.**

P.S. My wife and I saw the Jeremiah O'Brien sail under the Golden Gate bridge a few years ago. I was quite a sight.

Sailors remember their WWII service in the Armed Guard

▼ *Life aboard 'non-combatant' ships had its share of action.*

By JOHN R. OLSON
Puget Sound Navy News

They are World War II sailors of a different sort.

They didn't ride in lumbering, armor-laden battleships.

They didn't get swarmed by Japanese Zeros on Navy destroyers seemingly made of

cardboard.

They didn't experience the glory of submariners coming back from stealthy, high-risk patrols.

But they took withering fire, were the targets of torpedoes, and bled and died just like any other sailor.

Nearly 144,000 sailors ended up in the Armed Guard aboard civilian vessels and Liberty and Victory ships during WWII. About 1,800 of them died in all the world's oceans.

They were placed aboard the non-combatant ships, often with little experience, pointed

toward gunmounts, and told to protect the ship.

Recently four Kitsap County veterans of the Armed Guard gathered at the Bremerton Naval Museum to reminisce about their experiences.

Most of the men joined the Navy expecting duty aboard haze-gray Navy ships and were surprised, if not shocked, when placed aboard lumbering tanker, troop and supply ships.

Robert Dodson, 71, of Bremerton, was a native of Winthrop Harbor, Ill. when he enlisted. After a quick boot camp at Camp Farragut, Idaho,

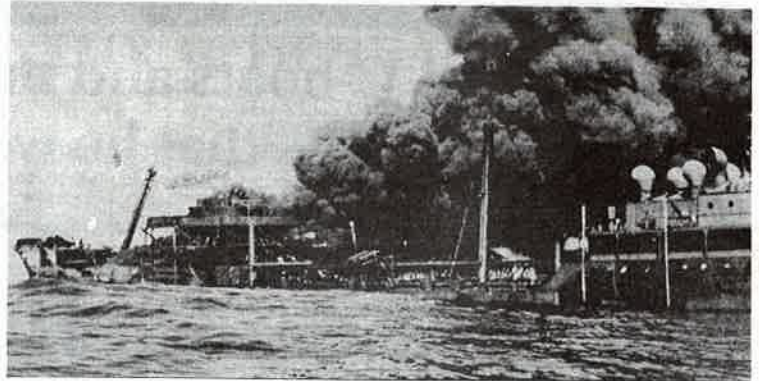


Photo courtesy of Ralph Tetro

The Armed Guard was stationed aboard civilian ships in World War II to prevent conflagrations such as this. Here the tanker "S.S. Esso Boston" burns after being torpedoed and shelled by a German submarine in April 1942. Its crew of 37 was later rescued.

he was at Treasure Island near San Francisco ready to ship out.

"They lined us up and said, 'You are all in the Navy now. That's your seabag. We'll show you how to pack it in a moment.' I would have needed

a pogo stick to jam it all in," if. Dodson remembered.

He soon put to sea on the troop ship Cape Mendocino. Raw-boned and with little actual experience manning a 20mm gun, he found himself on watch with reality settling

"There were thousand of guys sleeping below me and they trusted me," Dodson said. "And here I didn't know hardly anything about the Navy."

SEE GUARD, PAGE B4

Friday, October 3, 1997 • Puget Sound Navy News

GUARD

▼ *Sailors on 'non-combatant' ships saw their share of action.*

CONTINUED FROM B1

Eventually he would ride other Liberty Ships and be at Guadalcanal and Bougainville in the South Pacific where the action was furious.

"You couldn't tell who was firing at who," he said.

He would eventually arrive in Portland and pick up a new construction T-2 tanker and head to the Pacific for the tail end of the war.

But no ships or battle groups requested the fuel on his ship, and the crew began to feel like orphans in the middle of war. The ship actually spent until November 1945—three months after the war ended—trying to catch up with task forces. Because of radio blackouts, his ship never knew the war was over.

Ralph Tetro, 72, of Silverdale was a native of Los Angeles, Calif. when he joined the Navy in January 1943.

His Navy awakening was equally rude as Dodson's. A quick boot camp in Idaho. A quicker 30-day gunnery school, and soon Dodson was walking up the bow of the Liberty ship Josiah Nelson Cushing in San Pedro, Calif.

His journey would end as an around-the-world journey that included stops in Australia, Bombay, Calcutta, Portugal and South America before arriving back in New York. The plodding trip took six months.

"You got 11 knots if you threw in the mess tables as

you went along," Tetro said.

Eventually, Tetro was aboard the "China Victory," a faster version of the Liberty ship, headed for Okinawa with ammunition. He watched as Navy battleships relentlessly lobbed shell after shell onto the remaining Japanese forces on the island, supposedly softening up the island for the amphibious attacks.

"We thought they would all be dead before we started in, but that wasn't the fact," Tetro said. "They kept us at general quarters 95 percent of the time."

Back stateside at the end of the war, his career ended ingloriously when outprocessing personnel gave him a pat on the back and 44 cents for the streetcar ride from San Pedro to home in Los Angeles.

Charles Hurst, 74, of Bremerton, is one of the Armed Guards who barely made it out of World War II alive.

The Stockton, Calif., native thought he was going to be a Navy patternmaker, but soon was in San Diego learning how to operate .50cal guns.

He picked up a Liberty ship in Portland. After stops in South America, the ship took copper bars to New York City.

Then the ship reloaded for a trip across the Atlantic. Included in the cargo was a huge supply of Schlitz beer.

"Not all 10,000 case got to where they were supposed to. We figured out a way to get in unnoticed," Hurst said.

The ship would head back to the United States and the Caribbean, and then came Hurst's dalliance with his maker.

On May 7, 1943, at 6:55 a.m., between Haiti and Cuba, his ship was torpedoed on the aft starboard side.

Hurst was near the gun magazine when it blew.

"It threw me up in the air

Cal, We finally got our article printed in the PUGET SOUND NAVY NEWS. Hope you enjoy reading it. Maybe we can pick up a few more shipmates. Donation enclosed. Ralph Tetro, 9324 NE Old Military Rd. #1, Bremerton, Wa. 98311, 360-308-8921. Robert L. Dodson and Charles W. Hurst are also from Bremerton, Wa.

and ripped open my right side," Hurst said. "It ruptured my kidney and broke my back."

His ship sinking, Hurst said he was taken to a hospital at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where five doctors said he shouldn't be alive.

"I spent six weeks pumped full of morphine," Hurst said.

Miraculously, Hurst recovered enough to remain in the Armed Guard.

But it was on the S.S. Bald Eagle, headed out from Australia with a stinky load of nut-ton, that Hurst began to realize what had happened to him off Cuba.

"I was scared because of what I thought could have happened," Hurst said.

Herman Laes, 77, of Bremerton was another Armed Guard member who spent the first part of his Navy enlistment aboard regular Navy ships.

But he was transferred to the Liberty ship Nira Luckenbach and eventually the civilian liner Santa Clara, which took troops to Guadalcanal.

He would end up in New York City, but didn't stay long. Armed Guards had heard of the murderous runs from New York City to Murmansk,

ferrying troops between Alaska and Seattle.

Perhaps one of his scariest moments in his entire war career came in a vicious storm off Alaska, where Laes said the ship took 43-degree rolls.

"Every time we went over, we were sure we were never going to come back up," Laes said.

Decades after the war, all four Kitsap County men largely have no regrets about their duty. They served their country, and the ships they served on had more room, better food and a better variety of ports than their fellow sailors.

Dodson first got out of the Navy and then went back and stayed for 20 years, eventually becoming a chief petty officer diver. He helped bring up a two-man Japanese midget submarine off Pearl Harbor in 1957.

Tetro became a national

sales representative for a glass company.

Laes returned to Bremerton and Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, where he eventually rose in civilian ranks to become a superintendent of production control.

Physically, Hurst had it the worst of all three men in the past 50 years. He is not bitter and says he has had good care from Veterans Hospitals after multiple back surgeries. He spent 25 years on Guam, working in construction management for the Navy.

Hurst was awarded the Purple Heart for the injuries he received on that fateful daybreak off Cuba in 1943.

He's appreciative of the medal, but still there's a painful tinge in his voice.

"It's not worth what you have to go through to get it," he said.



(L-R) Ralph Tetro, Charles Hurst, and Robert Dodson look at a model of a WWII troop transport during a recent visit to the Bremerton Navy Museum. They served during the war in the Armed Guard aboard civilian "non-combat" ships.

Between the U-boats and the stormy seas, World War II sailor had doubts that he would ever see his home again

This is Part 23 of a series dedicated to the United States Merchant Marine and the Naval Armed Guard who served during World War II.

This series can be viewed on the Star Beacon Internet site: <http://www.ashtabula.net/StarBeacon>.

Throughout World War II there were thousands upon thousands of Merchant Marine seamen and Navy Armed Guard serving on the Merchant Marine vessels. It would be difficult to find one story that would embrace, in complete detail, the experiences of all of these fine men.

Since the start of this series, I have had many letters and newsletters sent to me which I have read with great interest. I have already shared some of the articles with you.

The following article appeared in the March 1997 issue of the newsletter of the St. Johns River Chapter of American Merchant Marine Veterans, Jacksonville, Fla. It was sent to Bert Hinds of the Ohio Valley Chapter, who sent it on to me with some other newsletters and materials:

A sailor's story

By Charles W. "Bill" Smith as told to John Lockhart

The reason I went into the Navy in the first place was a matter of economics. The country was just starting its slow recovery from the Great Depression. My home was in Bluefield, W.Va., and West Virginia was slower than other states to start the economic recovery.

Those of you who lived through the Great Depression know how tough it was to survive. There was no welfare, unemployment checks, food stamps or much of anything to keep your belt buckle from rubbing against the back of your stomach. I was patriotic and wanted to do my part to help win the war. That \$21 a month plus three meals a day was a great attraction so I literally trotted to the nearest Navy Recruiting station. This was the latter part of 1942.

I went to Boot Camp in Norfolk and was given the opportunity to attend a school that would have kept me ashore for several months. I told my chief that I wanted to get on a ship and go to sea. He tried to talk me out of it but I have always been a little hard nosed. He mumbled something under his breath. I was shipped to Gunners School at Little Creek, Va., for the Navy Armed Guard.

Meeting the princess

After completing a fast course in gunnery, they shipped

me to Brooklyn in October 1942. Before I could say "Jack Robinson," I found myself a member of the Armed Guard on the SS Aztec, a United Fruit Co. vessel. She was sailing under the Honduran flag and, as I recall, the only man in the merchant crew who could speak English was the boatswain.

We sailed from New York with a load of ammo. We were all alone, not in a convoy. We had only 11 men in the Armed Guard. We arrived at an anchorage off Gourock, Scotland, near the Clyde and the Port of Glasgow. Some of us got shore leave and we went to Glasgow. We needed directions to a big dance hall so I asked two girls, one Scottish and one English, how to find it. One girl started talking fast and I said, "Slow down lady and speak English." As I recall, we found the big dance hall. The future Queen of England, Princess Elizabeth, was there in a British Navy uniform. I did get a chance to speak with her but I did not get to dance with her.

"Operation Torch," the invasion of North Africa, began in November 1942. Our return to the U.S. was fast. We reloaded military cargo on the Aztec and proceeded to Casa Blanca where the cargo was discharged for use in the Northwest African Campaign. The Aztec returned to the states and another cargo of ammo was loaded and transported to Burry, Wales. Then we went back to the U.S. Our next trip was to Edinburgh, Scotland.

On return to the U.S.A., I was relieved of duty on the Aztec. Since we were not allowed to take photos or keep diaries, or even notes, I must rely on my memory. I may have had a short leave before being assigned to the Liberty ship Arthur T. Davis. We sailed, with a military cargo for the British in Africa, down around the cape of Good Hope, with a stop at Mozambique, then on up through the Suez Canal. I am not sure of where we discharged the cargo but, coming back we stopped off in San Paulo and picked up a load of coffee for the U.S. where we discharged it. We then took on a cargo for England.

Hit by 'friendly' fire

It may have been in this convoy when a German submarine surfaced in the convoy and every ship in the convoy started shooting at it. One of our gunners got hit by this friendly fire, which broke a bone in his arm. I remember that when he closed his fist one end of the bone would pop up through the wound.



JOE COOK

In later convoys, the order was given for us to hold firing when a sub surfaced to keep from over shooting and hitting the ship across from us. After discharging our cargo, we took on a load of English coal and, instead of making a return to the U.S., we went to South America, discharged the cargo and took on another cargo of coffee for the U.S.

My next ship was the SS Latrobe and another trip to Scotland, again in convoy. The U-boats hit us pretty hard. One ship across from us got hit in the stern and it went up in the air and then just seemed to dive bow first and was gone. Luck was with my ship as the ship in front of us was hit and the one astern of us was hit. The ship on our starboard took a hit and the one on our port side also took a hit.

The corvettes and DEs were dropping depth charges all around the convoy. An ammo ship, in the middle of the convoy, took a hit and it blew up. We felt the blast and a heat wave from it even though our ship was a good distance from it. This attack was from dusk to dawn and didn't end after one night. This mayhem of our convoy continued for several nights.

I am not sure of the exact number; but, I think I made approximately 20 runs across the North Atlantic and all of them were pure hell! Between the U-boats and storms, one had doubts about ever seeing home again.

On another trip of the SS Latrobe, we went into the Mediterranean Sea, through the straits of Messina where we saw Mount Stromboli erupting as we passed that island. We discharged at Naples then went home again where I was reassigned to the Liberty James W. Nesmith. We took on a cargo of ammunition and Jeeps for India for General Stillwell's China-Burma-India war. We were in India long enough for us to qualify for the China-Burma-India campaign ribbon.

While unloading the ship,

the sling broke on a crated up Jeep that was about 15 feet about the dock. The Jeep fell on top of a longshoreman who was directing the winch drivers. It took about 15 minutes to get the Jeep off of him. He jumped up, said he was not hurt and went back to work.

Something was up

We then took on a cargo of Manganese ore and returned to New York. We guessed that something was up when workers came aboard and started installing asbestos insulation all over the ship. We took on a cargo of clothing, boots and ammo and sailed in convoy for Loch Ewe, Scotland.

In a few days, we then sailed in another convoy for Russia. We had a deck hand who fell overboard while he was trying to secure a gangway that had broken loose. He was picked up in about 15 minutes by the vessel whose job was to pick up survivors who had to abandon ship. Our crewmen was dead after only 15 minutes in the water.

Sub and JU-188 bombers started hitting the convoy but our anti-aircraft fire from the merchant ships and our escorts kept them at bay. I was told that 3,000 depth charges were dropped in those three days.

We eventually arrived at Murmansk where we saw one building covered with snow and all around us was snow. We got alongside the dock and the unloading commenced by women and children stevedores. I asked the interpreter about child labor laws in Russia. She said they had to be 17-years-old to work and all of these workers were over 17. I told her, "In a cat's eye," which she did not seem to appreciate.

A burner in a bottle

There was a so-called Enlisted Club for seamen where "long hair" music was played and there was also a dance hall. It was at the dance hall that I had my first and only drink of Russian Vodka. I will never drink any kind of Vodka again. It took me an hour before I could ever speak. The firemen on my ship could have shut off the oil to the burners and I could have blown my breath into the furnace and kept the steam pressure up.

Daylight was very short at that time of the year and, just after dark, a siren went off as German bombers approached. The hills that had been covered with snow came alive with anti-aircraft fire. It amazed me because, during the day, all you could see on the hills was snow. One of the ships caught a 200

pounder through the deck but it was a dud.

On the way back from the dance hall to the ship, a Russian girl came along wearing a pair of skis. I had never seen skis before or had worn a pair. She did not speak English so, with sign language, I let her know that I wanted to try skiing. She took off the skis and, as I was putting on one of the skis, I felt something poke me in the back. It was a Russian soldier putting his rifle barrel against my back. I took off the ski and gave it back to the girl and the soldier let me go.

When I got back to the ship, I asked the interpreter why no one was friendly and she told me that the purpose was to prevent prostitution. She told me that if a girl was guilty of prostitution, she would be sent to Siberia. One Mongolian woman stevedore came into the amidships deck house to warm up. Outside in the cold you could not smell her; but in the warmth of the alleyway, the smell of fish oil would knock you down. She was asked to leave.

We finished discharging cargo at Murmansk and took on some ballast. Some of the other ships did not get solid ballast and took on sea water in their aft holds. We sailed again in convoy and came directly back to the states without a stop in Scotland. When we got back to the U.S., the asbestos insulation was stripped from the ship.

We took on another cargo and sailed again in convoy for the U.K. We had planes loaded on the deck. That may have been the reason the U-1024 picked us. We were in the Irish Sea about five miles off the coast of Northern Wales when the torpedo struck us on the port side in No. 5 hold. This happened about 4:30 p.m. April 7, 1945. I had just finished eating the best meal of pork chops we had ever had on this ship when the torpedo struck. We had about 45 merchant crew and 39 Navy Armed Guard on board. None of us was killed. We were taken in tow with a tow-line attached to one anchor chain which parted when we grounded off of Holyhead, Wales, the night of April 8. Delving into the history of the James W. Nesmith, I later found out that she was refloated and towed into Liverpool, arriving on April 23, where she was repaired and eventually returned to service.

Camp at Holyhead

I do not know what happened to the Merchant Crew of the Nesmith, but we Armed Guard were put in an H.M.S. receiving

camp near Holyhead, Wales. There were no mattresses on the bed springs and no blankets. We were allowed about three inches of water in the bathtub once a week. We stayed there about a week. Then we went to an American amphibious base at Plymouth, England, getting there about 2 a.m. I had lost about 17 pounds while we were at Holyhead.

There was only one man on duty when we arrived and he asked us where we came from. When we said, "Holyhead," we woke up the cook saying, "I know what you guys need." We were not required to do any work there and we eventually were put on a train for Southampton where we caught the U.S.S. LeJune, a Navy transport and returned to the states.

I was given duty in the galley on the way back. One evening, after chow, I was cleaning up in the pastry locker when I got locked in. Needless to say, I helped myself to many pastries throughout the night. About 4 a.m. the door was unlocked and the guy asked me, "What are you doing in there?" I told him, "You guys locked me in here." They were regular Navy. Coming back, I slept in my hammock up on the boat deck. An old Bo'son came out and set up his cot right under me. I fell out of the hammock that night right on top of him. It was the only time I ever fell out of a hammock.

We got back to the states on May 5 at about 9 a.m. They put me in care of luggage, seabags, etc. I didn't have anything. It was 6 p.m. when they came back to get me. I had not even had a drink of water throughout the day. I was mad. The fellow got a lieutenant commander who said, "Sailor, you should have been on your way home by now." He took me over to the Armed Guard Center at 52nd Street.

I didn't have anything except the clothes on my back. Evening chow was over and everything was closed. I couldn't get paid, couldn't get some clothes and I went to raising holy hell. The chaplain came out and asked what was going on and I told him.

Sailing days are over

He went back and got somebody who opened the small stores and the pay office so I could get paid. They then opened up the galley and fed me. Then I had to run to catch my train at the Pennsylvania Station — I had to run to jump aboard it.

I finally got home for a 17 days leave. When I got back to the Armed Guard Center in New York, I guess I was being evaluated when I was asked "How long have you been at sea?" I told the interviewer, "A little over three years." They then sent me to see a doctor. The doctor said, "Son, your days at sea are over." This was

sometime in June of 1945. I asked the doctor what was coming off. He said, "We will take care of that." They put me on a train at New York and I went to the Rest Center at Deland, Fla., in the old College Arms Hotel. I had no duty at all. The only thing I had to muster were the meals.

The points system

I went back to New York after a month and a half. From New York I was sent to Chinco-teagua, Va. A few days after the war, was over, I was sitting on my bunk getting ready to go on liberty when a guy came in and said, "I'm going home!" I said, "How did you manage that?" He said "From the point system. If you have 44, you get out." I asked, "How do you get the points? He said, "I don't know." You have to find out from the guy at the administration building. That's where I got mine."

I got a bicycle and rode down to the ad building. The guy there asked me for my serial number and told me to have a seat while he checked it out. He came back to me and said, "I've got bad news for you. You need 44 points and, according to your record, you have 105 points. The Navy is losing you." It took them 17 days to process me and get me out of there.

I got my discharge at Breezy Point in Norfolk on Oct. 8, 1945. I got on the train for home and I had my arm or hand over the "ruptured duck" on my uniform when the MPs came by and tapped me on the leg and asked for my leave papers. I told them I didn't have any. They wanted to know where I was going. I told them I was going home and that I had been discharged. They wanted to see my discharge. I moved my arm and they saw the "ruptured duck" and they said, "Never mind." I got home about 7:30 a.m.

A personal note

Here ends the saga of Bill Smith's Naval career. He went on to marry a girl from North Carolina and raised a family of two daughters and one son. They lost their son when he was 27 years old in a crossing accident. Bill lost his wife in March 1996. Bill earned 13 campaign medals and ribbons from the war. He made his home in Jacksonville, Fla.

I regret to say that Bill Smith died Aug. 28, 1997, five months after his story appeared in the newspaper. I take my hat off to Bill and am proud to dedicate this part of my series in his memory.

To be continued...

Write Joe Cook at P.O. Box 3065, Ashtabula, Ohio 44005-3065; call (440) 964-9313 or fax c/o Star Beacon (440) 998-7938.

THE PIERRE VICTORY IN ENEMY ACTION - APRIL 6, 1945

by CHARLES C. BARTLEY

The PIERRE VICTORY entered Kerama Retto in Convoy with 6 other ships. Because of the nature of their cargo, the S.S. PIERRE (V) with 2 other Victory ships, the S.S. HOBBS and S.S. LOGAN, were not allowed to enter the main anchorage; but were moved to an anchorage between the 2 small islands, some distance from the main anchorage. The only other ship in this area was an L.S.T. and the only defensive fire power in the attacks which followed, was that supported by the 4 ships. All attacks were by suicide planes resulting in both the S.S. Hobbs (V), the LOGAN (V) and the L.S.T. being rammed by the Kamakazis and set afire. One attacking plane was definitely destroyed by the PIERRE (V), one was accredited by all observers as a plane knock down and one other direct attack was beaten off by rapid accurate fire.

At 1535 on April 6, 1945, all ships received warnings of an air attack and all hands went to their battle stations. At 1620, low flying enemy planes were seen heading for the main anchorage off our starboard side. Gun fire was opened up by all ships in range but no hits was observed. An enemy plane crashed into the starboard side of the L.S.T. midships, exploding and setting her in flames.

At 1624, a low flying enemy plane (ZERO) was seen moving in the same direction and about 4000000 yards, the plane banked sharply and headed directly for the Pierre (V) at about a 30 ft. elevation. Fire opened up immediately with 3"50 and 5"38 guns. The starboard 20MMs opened up at about 2000 yards. At about 1500 yds. distance, the plane was hit by a burst of our 5"38 gun tearing off part of its port wing, causing the plane's line of flight to change from amidships toward the after part of the ship. All starboard 20MMs were observed hitting at various times and also close burst from the 3"50. At about 80 yards from the ship, the plane received a direct hit from the 5"38 gun, exploding the plane and causing wreckage to hit the water about 60 yards off the starboard quarter. At 1635, A Jap single engine plane came into view around the island and headed over the anchorage. Fire opened with the 3"50 and 5"38 at about 2500 yards distance. Starboard 20MMs opened up at about 1800 yards. The third round from the 52"38 was seen to burst directly underneath the plane and at the same instance, the plane burst into flames and crashed. Other firepower was being directed at the plane and tracers were seen hitting but observers watching the action were of the opinion that the 5"38 burst was the causing for it to explode.

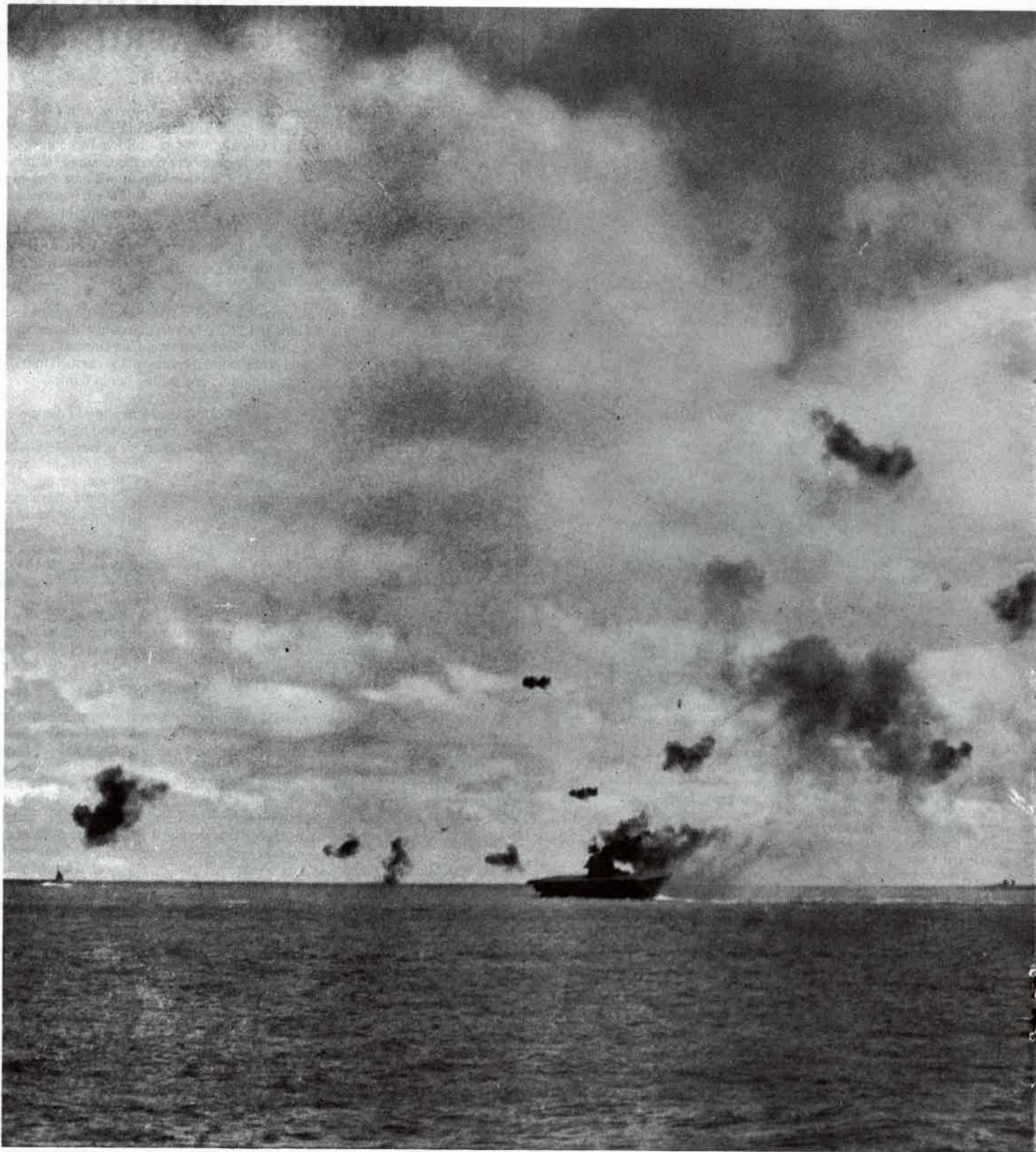
At 1640, low flying suicide plane came in from our starboard side and started for the center of the anchorage. The S.S. PIERRE (V) and the 3 other ships in the anchorage opened fire. The Pierre (V) opened fire at about 3000 yards distance and the 20MMs opened up at about 20 yards. The plane then changed course, went around the edge of the anchorage and across the ship's bow. The starboard 20MMs and 5"38 ceased fire as their guns would not bear. The 3"50 kept up continuous fire and near misses were observed. The plan then banked sharply and headed back for the anchorage. The 3"50 continued fire and the 5"38 opened up at about 3500 yards. At about 2500 yards, the plane straightened out and headed directly for the LOGAN (V), at about 1800 yards. The port 20MM opened fire and tracers were seen striking the plane. After crossing our bow from Port to Starboard, the plane crashed into the bridge of the Victory Ship laying off our starboard bow, setting her in flames.

At 1652, the PIERRE (V) hoisted anchor and proceeded out of the anchorage for fear of an explosion of the burning ship and for maneuvering. At 1730, a low flying suicide plane was spotted at about 4500 yards off our starboard side, making a run for the ship. Fire opened immediately with 3"50 and 5"38. The 20MMs also opened fire at long range; all guns firing rapidly. At about 1800 yards, the plane banked sharply to the left, crossing our stern. The 5"38 continued firing until plane was well past the ship. No hits observed.

At 1745, a low flying suicide plane was seen making a run on the Victory ship off our stern, but this ship was in no position to fire. The plane crashed into the bridge of the Victory ship, setting her on fire. At 1810, a dog fight was observed off our starboard side between our HELLCATS and Jap Zeros. Two Jap planes were shot down in flames.

April 7th, 1945

0300, received warning of enemy air attack, all hands to the battle stations. 0310, a twin engine Jap bomber passed over the Pierre (V) after dropping bombs on the main anchorage. The Pierre (V) held its fire because of poor visibility and did not undergo any more attacks while laying alone at an anchorage in Kerama Retto awaiting movements to Okinawa but the guns were manned continuously for 5 days because of constant alerts and air attacks in the vicinity. A vigilant watch was maintained at night for guard against suicide boats which were active in this area.



MIDWAY BATTLE

**"Yorktown" is attacked and damaged
on second day of Pacific air fight**

Last week the Navy released its first complete story of the battle of Midway, and with it an inspiring account of the part played by naval aviation in that decisive struggle. From the U. S. carrier force which, in a master stroke of tactics, inserted itself between the two prongs of the Japanese marine pincers closing on Midway, came squadrons of bombers and torpedo planes to smash at the Jap carriers and warships until they fled into a screen of rain and mist. For their dar-

ing the squadrons paid a fearful toll in planes and men.

Moving into position on June 4, the American carriers launched their planes. Unaware that the enemy was retreating, many of the planes futilely searched the Pacific wastes for their targets until they ran out of fuel and crashed into the sea. One group (Torpedo Squadron 8), guessing that the Japanese had changed course, found their targets. Coming in low over the water through a storm of fire, they sent their torpedoes into



the enemy columns. Not one of the 15 planes and only one of the 30 men survived that murderous barrage. But by their action they revealed the enemy's position and soon carrier dive bombers followed them to sink three Jap carriers, one destroyer and badly damage two battleships.

Shortly after this, 36 Japanese planes from the carrier *Hiryu* found the U.S. carrier *Yorktown* (above). Though she put up a blanket of gunfire and her fight-

ers shot down eleven Jap bombers, three bombs caught her squarely and set her afire (right). Another plane slipped through and sent a torpedo into her hull, causing a list which made her flight deck useless. But before her bomber squadrons came back to land on a nearby carrier, they pounced on the *Hiryu* and hammered her until she burst into flames. The Japanese planes circled the *Hiryu* helplessly until she sank, then plunged into the sea and followed her to the bottom.



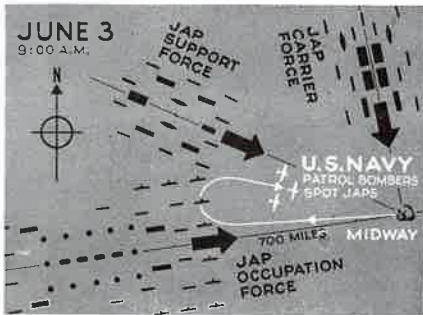
THESE CHARTS SHOW WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE FOUR-DAY BATTLE OF MIDWAY

On the morning of June 3 a Navy patrol pilot radioed his base at Midway Island, "I have just fired on a strange cargo vessel." That was the first shot in a great sea-air battle, on whose outcome may well have rested the fate of the Pacific War.

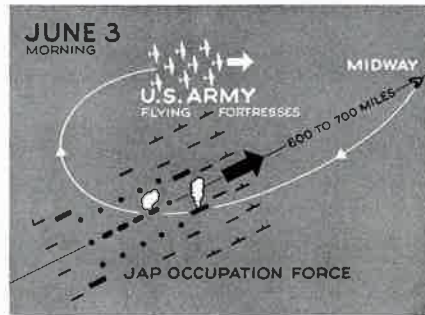
The drawings below show what happened to the Japanese force of 60 ships during that fateful, four-day battle. The first blow was struck at the occupation force by Flying Fortresses immediately after the alarm was given on June 3. On June 4, all hell broke loose. The Midway defenders discovered the other Japanese forces and sent Army and Marine Corps bombers and torpedo planes against them. Then Navy carrier planes sped to the attack. To the problems and dangers of attack were added those of defense, for Japanese planes struck back heavily at Midway and the U. S. carriers.

For two more days the battle raged. The retreating Japs, relentlessly pursued by planes and submarines, finally slipped away into an overcast and the Battle of Midway was won. In their attempt to smash U. S. defenses, the Japs had lost four carriers, two heavy cruisers, three destroyers, 275 planes and a supply ship. Three battleships, three heavy and one light cruiser, three auxiliaries and several destroyers had been severely damaged. Besides the carrier *Yorktown* which was put out of action, the U. S. forces had lost one destroyer and at least 33 planes—but they had proved to the world that fast, maneuverable, land-based and carrier dive bombers and torpedo planes were more than a match for anything afloat.

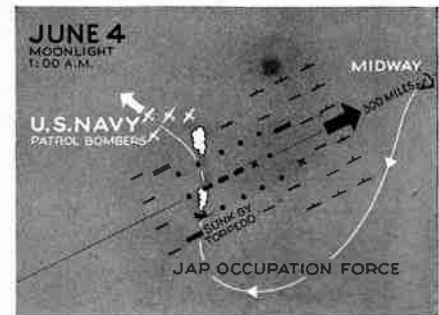
KEY:	
◄	BATTLESHIP
■	AIRCRAFT CARRIER
■	HEAVY CRUISER
■	LIGHT CRUISER
—	DESTROYER
—	SUBMARINE
●	TRANSPORT
●	SUPPLY SHIP
⊙	SHIP HIT
⊗	SHIP DAMAGED
⊘	SHIP SUNK



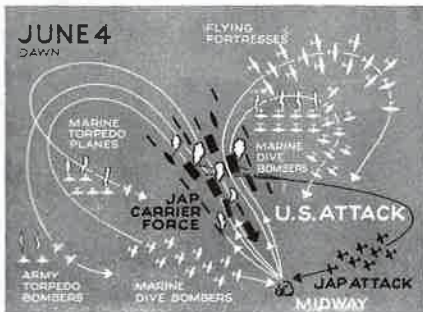
1 Three Navy patrol planes discover Japanese occupation force approaching Midway from the west, radio alarm.



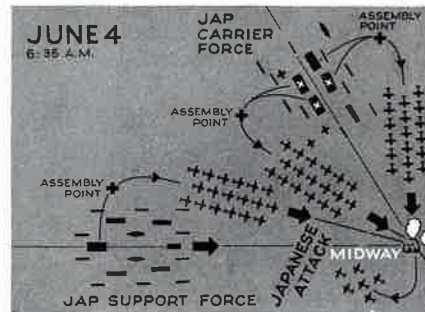
2 Nine Flying Fortresses from Midway attack occupation force, hit and set afire a heavy cruiser and a transport.



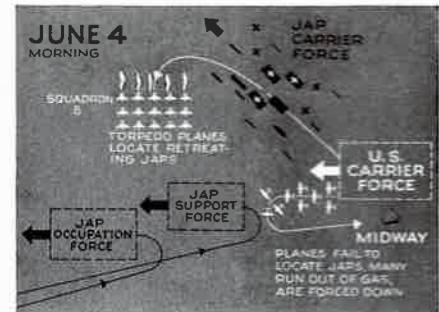
3 Four PBY's attack the occupation force by moonlight, torpedoed two supply ships. One is set afire and one sunk.



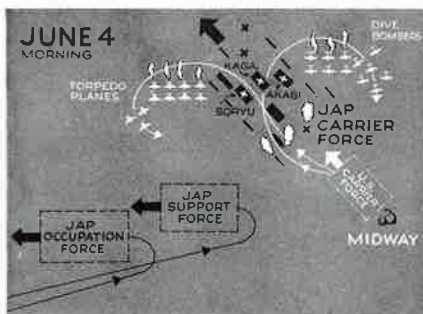
4 Japanese carrier force to the north is attacked by land-based Army and Marine dive bombers, torpedo planes.



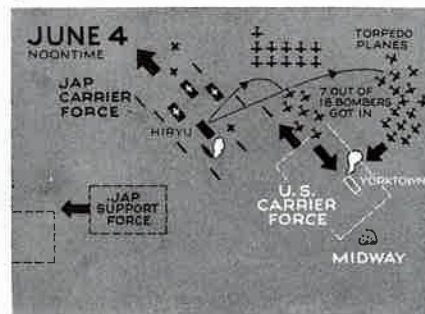
5 Japanese planes from carrier and support force attack Midway installations, are driven off by Marine fighters.



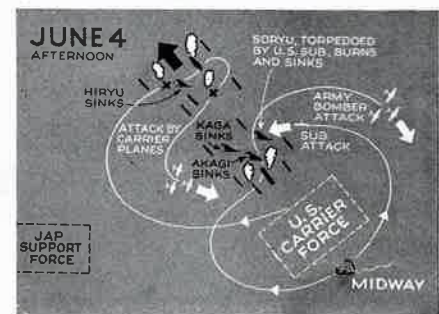
6 U. S. carrier force begins its attack. Torpedo Squadron 8 loses all of its 15 planes and all but one of its 30 men.



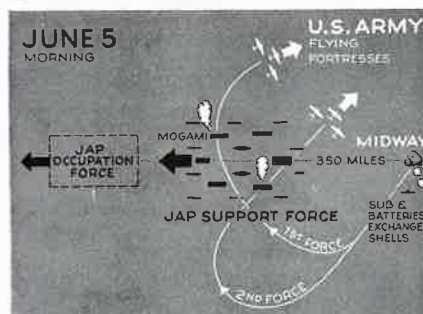
7 Torpedo planes engage enemy fighters and dive bombers hit three carriers, two battleships and a destroyer.



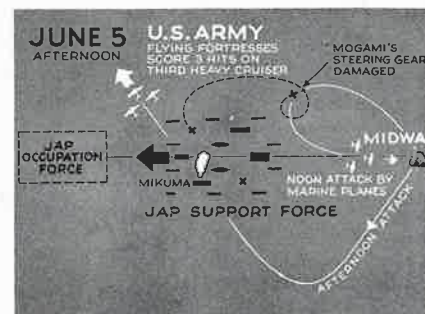
8 Thirty-six Jap planes attack *Yorktown*, which is hit by three bombs, then torpedoed and put out of action.



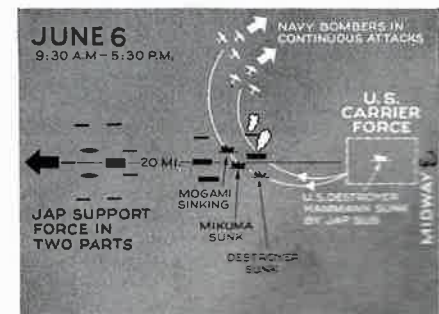
9 *Yorktown's* planes sink *Hiryu*, U. S. sub sinks carrier *Soryu*, Army bombers hit enemy carrier force heavily.



10 Jap sub shells Midway. Army bombers attack support force in two flights. Each flight hits a heavy cruiser.



11 Marine planes hit damaged heavy cruiser *Mogami*. Army planes hit another cruiser of Jap support force.



12 U. S. planes hammer retreating Japs throughout June 6. Jap sub sinks U. S. destroyer *Timberlake*.

Clippings on this page (except for "Books" column) are reprinted from "The Pointer" issues printed in 6/22/45, 7/20/45, 8/3/45, 8/17/45, and 9/14/45.

The following poem was printed in a booklet about the trip of the SS Henry Lomb from Baltimore to Murmansk in September, 1943. It was written by the mother of the Armed Guard Commander, Lieut. J. F. Zimmerman. We reprint it here, hoping that you might find it valuable enough to pass on to your mother.

FOR THE ARMED GUARD OF THE SS HENRY LOMB

Dear Father, at the dawn of day
We turn our thoughts to Thee and pray
That Thou wilt guard and guide and keep
Our loved sons riding on the deep.

We pray Thee keep each one from harm,
But if there comes the fray's alarm,
Dear Father give them courage strong
To battle till they right the wrong.

Dear Father, through each morning hour
We pray Thee that Thy might and power
May turn the thoughts of all to know
That God is stronger than the foe.

And when the shades of evening fall
We pray that Thou wilt hear our call
To cover with Thy outstretched wing
Our loved sons from each evil thing.

At midnight when the sky is black
And doubts and worries turn sleep back
Dear Father, then to Thee we pray
To keep our sons from evil's way.

And now we know, oh, Father dear,
That we have really naught to fear
For Thou wilt bring each dear loved son
Home at last when duty's done.

And so we pray for each of you
That God will keep you clean and true
To stand with Him, the wrong to right
Protected, blessed by His dear might.

The following poem was printed in the Daily Beacon, a newspaper of an Army Base somewhere in New Guinea. It was sent to me by my fiancée. I liked it so well that I decided to share it with you.

GO AHEAD, DEAR

Do not become a drone, dear,
While I am far away.
Just have a lot of fun, dear,
Step out each night and play.

The lads I left behind, dear,
Must also have their fling:
Be sure to treat them kind, dear,
And dance and laugh and sing.

Do anything you will, dear—
Just pet or flirt or park,
With Jack or Joe or Jill, dear,
And even after dark.

The years are far too few, dear,
Your happiness to wreck—
But if these things you do, dear,
I'll break your little neck!

★ ★ ★

The following sentences about allotments were taken from actual letters from wives, mothers and fathers of men in the service:

"Please send my wife's form to fill out."

"I can't get any pay. I got six children. Can you tell me why this is?"

"Sir, I am forwarding my marriage certificate, and two children. One is a mistake as you can see."

"I am writing to tell you that my baby, born two years ago, is two years old. When do I get relief?"

AGC WAVE LINKS
By NIBS

Cupid was sure a busy fellow lately. We have four pair of newlyweds and one engaged couple. The newlyweds are Barbara Johnson, PhM3c, formerly of sick bay who married William Taylor, CPhM; Nancy E. Jones, Y3c of the Armed Guard Office who said "I do" to Pfc. William B. Morris (now enroute to the Pacific); Norma Campbell, MaM2c who married Frank Donahue, MaM3c stationed at the Fleet Post Office; and last but not least we have Esther M. Pylman, S1c of the Armed Guard Office who is the bride of George Arvanitis, SM2c. Then we have Loretta G. Martin, Y3c, of the Armed Guard Office who said "Yes" and has yet to say "I do" to Harold Bridges, S1c. Our congratulations to all of you. May you have a lot of happiness and the best of luck.

Submarines Sink 1,187 Jap Ships

(SEA)—The Navy's underwater fleet sank 1,187 vessels including 146 combatant ships at a cost of 52 submarines. Since 1940 the Navy has increased its sub fleet to 240. A total of 211 subs were built in the last five years.

Of U. S. submarines lost, 43 failed to return from patrol, four are known sunk, two were destroyed to avoid capture and three were scrapped as obsolete.

Jap submarine losses are estimated at around 130. Approximately 50 are still afloat. Nazi losses were 713, of which 151 were sunk by U. S. naval forces. The Germans had 50 submarines on V-E Day.

★ ★ ★

A gunner's mate, home on leave, was sitting with his cat before an old-fashioned stove. His wife had to go out and visit some relatives, and warned him to keep his eye on the fire. She went out. The gunner's mate fell asleep. The fire in the stove died out. Upon her return, the wife, took one look at her husband snoring before the dead fire and screamed, "Fire!"

The husband leaped to attention, tore open the door of the stove, rammed in the cat, slammed the door and cried: "Number one gun ready!"

Though the Armed Guard is slowly being demobilized, many an AG looks back to the time when things were really tough sledding. The following poem, submitted by Simon J. Jolin, GM3c, express his views and ideas of the Armed Guard during many a trying time.

PRECIOUS CARGO

I'm about to tell you
A tale from this war sea;
To narrate what we've been through
For the sake of victory.

Firstly, may I declare
Willfully, desperate and hard,
We partook in this warfare
As the U. S. Navy's Armed Guard.

We're all for one and one for all
That's how they make heroes,
So, praying never to fall . . .
Here's how my story goes . . .

It happened one night in May
About 'quarter of nine,
Early in the dusk of day
When all's well and all seemed fine.

Suddenly, there came a shout!
It sounded horrified with fear;
'Twas from the bridge lookout
Who'd noticed a sub was near.

Then came the alarm for stations;
Everywhere resounded a bell
Urging men like stallions,
Or like bats flying out o' hell!

There was a sudden explosion
Which held us all in strain;
Men who'd itched for action
At the bow, were lost in vain . . .

Our heart with anger burned
As we stood by waiting;
'Till the skipper starboard turned,
And the plugman yelled: "Commence firing!"

The first round barked fiercely
And echoed through the night;
As a second torpedo swiftly
Screwed up onto a lost flight.

Two rounds had been expended,
But our target remained to see
By the moon's glow silhouetted
When came the cry: "Ready three!"

'Twas but a few seconds later
From astern of our ship,
The gun spat a flash of fire
That claimed a direct hit!

The enemy sub exploded . . .
Likewise with blood and bones,
For nothing remained to be sighted
Except perhaps from Davy Jones.

With glory the gunners hailed,
Also joined by every hand;
For the cargo could still be sailed
To the place called "No man's land."

FRED GESSNER

An officer in the Navy Nurse Corps was called to task by the officer-in-charge, and told that she could not have dates with anyone lower than an ensign. She countered that she "did not know anyone lower than an ensign."

★ ★ ★

A sailor in the Pacific, upon receiving his ballot application to vote wrote, "Thank you for the ballot. It came as a welcome and very flattering surprise. This is the first time in 18 months I have been invited to express an opinion on anything whatsoever."

An officer, home from strenuous service overseas, was assigned to a desk job in the Navy Department in Washington. Each day for a week he shifted the location of his desk, and finally wound up in the men's wash-room.

"Must be shell-shocked," his associates guessed.

But the officer explained grimly, "It's the only place around here where people seem to know what they're doing."

FRED GESSNER

BOOKS!

The book, "A CARELESS WORD-A NEEDLESS SINKING" by Captain Art Moore is out of print. The DENNIS ROLAND CHAPTER AMMV are trying to have 500 books printed at a cost of \$70.00 per book. All interested members who would like to have their name put on the list for this excellent book, send a check or money order for a \$30.00 deposit to me and made out "U.S.N. ARMED GUARD" For: "A CARELESS WORD." This money will be refunded to you if production is not started in 6 months. It is one of the best books written on ships sunk that Armed Guard and Merchant Seamen sailed during WW II. If you can afford it, it's really worth it!! Many of you who just came on board or those we locate in the future will buy it if they know what it is about. It's great. *calloyd*

ARMED GUARD COOKBOOKS are still on sale for \$13.00 by Richard and Billie Kohse 2304 Lister Rd., Olympia, Wa. 98506.

The "UNSUNG SAILORS" (ISBN 0-87021-770-4) by Justin Gleichauf was printed by The United States Naval Institute, 188 Maryland Ave., Annapolis, Md. 21402-5035, 410-268-6110, Fax 410-268-6111. The Institute Public Relations Manager, Valry Fetrow, has informed me that they have available now over 450,000 black and white photos of ships, aircraft and other maritime images which are logged in their archives. B&W 8"x10" photos are \$12.00 each (\$9.60 for members) Color photos are \$18.00. There is a \$3.50 shipping and handling fee with all orders.

Now available: "BLUEJACKET ODYSSEY" (ISBN 1-889901-05-9) by Armed Guard Wm. L. McGee and published by The Glencannon Press, P.O. Box 633, Benicia, CA 94510 (USA), 800-711-8985 or 707-745-3933. \$35.00 plus \$3.00 S&H. You wanted a "great book on the Armed Guard Pacific" - you got it! CAL

Armed Guard veterans seek recognition for unit's efforts

By Lacy McCrary
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

They fought World War II in obscurity, unsung by the Cronkites, the Murrows and the Pyles.

While America set its gaze on the big battles, they traversed the seas in the poorly armed, thin-skinned, fatally slow ships of the civilian merchant marine, struggling to deliver men and materiel to the European and Pacific Theaters. For the German U-boats in particular, the ships were arcade-game ducks; one of every nine was sunk.

As quickly as it was formed in late 1941, the special U.S. Navy unit called the Armed Guard, in which nearly 145,000 sailors served, disappeared with the war's end.

Now, half a century later, its surviving members are fighting again, though this war has not been so handily won.

It's for recognition — a belated salute from their country in the form of a presidential citation or a congressional resolution. They've been lobbying Washington since 1982, through three administrations.

"We were sort of put aside and forgotten about," said former Guardsman Sam Lattimore, 73, of Barrington, Camden County. "It would be nice to get some of the recognition we deserve."

This month, they may.

Calling their point "well-taken," U.S. Rep. James Greenwood (R., Bucks) said he intended to introduce a House resolution, possibly as early as this week, hailing "the relatively unheralded heroes" of the Armed Guard and their critical role in the war.

For Lattimore, as the rest, the impending victory in Congress is "terrific." Especially because the Guardsmen lately have been feeling the press of time.

James W. Biscardi, of Quakertown, Bucks County, is 85. He and his compatriots, he said plainly, "are fighting the calendar."

The national Armed Guard veterans group has dwindled to about 12,000 members. There are fewer than 400 in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and only 80 in the Delaware Valley branch, which meets monthly at the American Legion post in Fallsington, Bucks County.

In recent years, their letter volleys produced small gains.

By the governor's proclamation, Rhode Island declared April 15, 1992, as "United States Navy Armed Guard Veterans World War II Day." In 1995, New York state bestowed on them its Conspicuous Service Cross. Last May, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution commemorating their "outstanding service."

Russia honored them

Even Russia paid tribute — three times. During the war, the Armed Guard was decorated for heroism, in particular for its dangerous supply convoys to Murmansk and the Gulf of Archangel that helped undo the German army. In 1985 and 1995,

the 40th and 50th anniversaries of the war's end, Moscow added bronze medals.

Yet from Washington, there has been nothing for what once was known as "the other Navy."

The Armed Guard came to life briefly during World War I. It reappeared in the fall of 1941, to protect the merchant marine fleet plying the Allie shipping lanes. The first formal class of 207 officers and enlisted men was held that October at Little Creek, Va., and on Nov. 17, the unit was officially activated, under the motto, "We Aim to Deliver."

In the beginning of the war, there was no dearth of volunteers. "When we were in boot camp, nobody knew what it was," said Peter Cugasi, of Levittown, Bucks County. "Word got around it was convoy duty, and the guys thought it was pretty good. They didn't realize how dangerous it was."

They were required to be in excellent health, for there would be no doctors aboard. They had to have great eyesight, especially at night when most enemy attacks came. And they had to be good mechanics, able to repair the World War I-vintage 4-inch guns that, at the war's

They were required to be in excellent health, for there would be no doctors aboard. They had to have great eyesight, especially at night when most enemy attacks came. And they had to be good mechanics, able to repair the World War I-vintage 4-inch guns that, at the war's start, were their primary defense.

Sometimes the merchant ships also carried 37mm cannons and .30- and .50-caliber machine guns. Still, they were no match for the "wolf packs" of U-boats that stalked them across the Atlantic or the German aircraft that battered them in the Norwegian and Barents Seas.

Crews often abandoned flaming ships in subfreezing weather and complete darkness.

"It was nerve-racking. Every day you could meet your end," said Biscardi, who crossed the Atlantic 25 times during the war.

"On our first trip, we were two days out and one of our ships was sunk by a German torpedo. It went down in 2½ minutes. My knees were shaking."

As the war wore on, the Armed Guard became more heavily involved in the Pacific Theater. With more Navy warships there to guard the convoys, the merchant ships took less of a beating, if only slightly so, from the Japanese than from the Germans.

Armed Guardsmen also served on Liberty Ships, civilian cargo vessels that the Navy used by the thousands to deliver men and supplies. And they rode shotgun on destroyer escorts and on infantry- and tank-landing craft.

Harlan Ross, 72, of Exton, Chester County, was stationed on a tugboat that towed ammunition and gasoline to the beaches during the Normandy invasion.

"Most people," said Ross, "picture us guarding some building — if



For The Inquirer / HINDA SCHUMAN,

Former Armed Guardsmen (from left) Harlan Ross, Fred Goeke and Peter Cugasi reminisce about the war. The Armed Guard protected the merchant marine fleet, cargo ships, and infantry landing craft.

they've heard of us at all."

Or worse, "everybody had the impression we were *civilians* in the merchant marine," said Conrad Will, 73, of Egg Harbor City in Atlantic County. He spent three years protecting ships sailing to Europe, North Africa, Sicily and Italy.

By war's end, according to the Naval Historical Center in Washington, Armed Guard members had served on 6,236 merchant ships, of which 710 were sunk. A total of 1,810 guardsmen were killed, and 27 became POWs. Worldwide, they had fought in 45 combat actions.

Unit disbanded quickly

Because the unit was disbanded so quickly, reconstructing its role in the war has been difficult, said Alan Farrara, 72, of Yardley, Bucks County, who heads the veterans' Delaware Valley group.

The lack of journalists' accounts has not helped. "We had no reporters or photographers on our ships like the fleet had," said Farrara. "There was nobody to tell our story."

At the Naval Historical Center, historian Robert Schneller said many Guard records were destroyed — in part because of lack of space, in part because poorly trained archivists threw them away.

Today, even some high-ranking Navy officers know little about the unit.

Vice Adm. James B. Perkins 3d, head of the Military Sealift Command, said he had heard of the Armed Guard. But not until he was asked to speak at the unit's reunion last May in Washington did he learn "what a brave and impressive group of folks they were."

After digging into their history, he told them, he found out "how little-known and underappreciated you are."

Former Guardsmen have tried to fill the information gap.

Lyle E. Dupra, 71, of Fairport, N.Y., said he spent more than 12 years and \$26,000 putting together a 160-page chronicle of the unit, *We Delivered*, published this year.

C.A. "Pete" Burke, an Armed Guard vet and retired department store manager, donated a book about the unit to his East Falls branch of the city's Free Library several years ago. This year he added a prize-winning video called *Forgotten Valor*, a history of the Armed Guard, produced last year by vet Zed Merrill, of Portland, Ore.

Last month, at 80 years old, Burke died — believing, as he said just days before, that "we got lost in the shuffle by the Navy."

And still are.

While getting a congressional resolution might have been time-consuming, getting a presidential unit citation — awarded by the Secretary of the Navy in the president's name — could take forever, and then some.

Jeannie Kirk, head of the Navy Awards Section in the Pentagon, said a citation was a very long shot for the Armed Guard vets. During the war, few were handed out, and only for specific ships and actions.

"The problem here is, because they were on so many different vessels, I doubt the award would be approved for them as a unit," she said.

As individuals, Armed Guardsmen were eligible for medals during the war, just like other sailors. In the end, 150 were decorated for heroism, five Navy Crosses and 75 Silver Stars among the medals.

But many Guardsmen contend they never received the medals or commendations they deserved because of poor record-keeping. They were too busy fighting the war to complain then. Even now, they say, they are more interested in letting the nation know their story than having something to pin to their chests.

Going unrecognized "doesn't matter much to me," said Cugasi. "But when I think of the ones who didn't come back, it infuriates me that people don't know anything about them."

Russians thank Harrison World War II hero 50 years later

ADVERTISER DEMOCRAT—
Thursday, March 30, 1995

by Greg Fish

HARRISON - Visit the Harrison home of Gerald Brien, and nothing seems out of the ordinary. It is a small, simple house in a quiet neighborhood, neat as a pin. Brien himself is an unassuming and friendly fellow at first glance seeming to be no different than any other retired gentleman in his late sixties.

Appearances, though, can be deceiving, for Brien recently received a medal bestowed on few people in this country.

It was a bronze medal from the Russian Embassy — for military service dating back to World War II.

Brien honestly never expected to get the medal. He said he had learned of it from a veteran's magazine nearly two years ago. "They were looking for American soldiers who had worked on convoys during World War II transporting supplies to Russia," he said. "I had, and I was curious, so I mailed a check they requested for three dollars. I couldn't forget about it; that check wasn't cashed for quite a while. I couldn't balance my checkbook because of it."

In mid-February, a package arrived in the mail from the embassy. It contained a letter from Ambassador Yuli Voronstov commending Brien for "outstanding courage and personal contribution" in Russia's fight against Nazi Germany.

Brien later learned the Russians have been awarding medals similar to his since 1985, the 40th anniversary of the Great Patriotic War (World War II). Those similarly honored to date are a select number: Brien said he personally knows of only two to three more in Maine.

So just what was this medal for? In Brien's case, it was for travelling endlessly back and forth across the sea, for three long years, eight trips totalling nearly 50,000 miles. It was for living under the constant fear of torpedo or artillery attacks by the Germans.

Gerald Brien was a gunner aboard Liberty ships.

During the course of the war, 18 American shipyards cranked out 2,751 Liberty ships, vessels built not for speed but rather for the long haul. The ships Brien served on, beasts of burden 300 feet long and capable of carrying 10,000 tons, had a top speed of only about 11 miles per hour as they zig-zagged their way across the Atlantic trying to avoid detection.

They might have been slow, but the contribution of Liberty ships — which Brien said were referred to by servicemen as the "ugly ducklings" of the Naval fleet — during World War II was immense. It has been estimated they carried nearly 95 percent of all military cargo moved by sea.

Without their efforts, World War II could have had a far different ending.

Brien, a native of Portland, had wanted to be on a cruiser and in the thick of the action when he left high school and enlisted in 1943 at age 18. Instead, he was assigned to the Liberty ships after three weeks of training on 20 mm anti-aircraft guns and surface cannons. It wasn't long

before Brien found himself on the way to North Africa.

The seas were no place to be then; Nazi U-boats were everywhere. Even America's shores were not safe: it is known that U-boats lurked within 65 miles of the U.S. coastline. One German seaman even claimed to have watched swimmers off the coast of Coney Island one pleasant summer evening.

While the Liberty ships had sea-plane or dirigible escorts for parts of their journeys, they often journeyed alone. "One trip would pay for those ships, but it was scary sometimes," Brien reminisced. "Once, on a southern route, 34 ships went out. Only 11 made it home."

The voyages often were shrouded in secrecy, with sailors not knowing until they were underway where they were headed or what they were carrying. That might have been in part to not further worry the seamen, and for good reason.

Brien said the ships frequently carried ammo, fuel and bombs, with only thin layers of wood separating tiers of the volatile freight. "Once, we were headed to Italy, and there were nightly air raids from German-occupied France," Brien said. "We wouldn't know who it was, but sometimes we would see smoke and explosions when one of our ships was hit."

It was on a supply run for Russia that Brien saw probably the oddest cargo carried on a Liberty ship: two locomotives. That voyage took Brien's ship across the Atlantic Ocean, up the Mediterranean Sea, and through the Suez Canal. Brien recalls the canal as being eerie at times, with sand up to 60 feet high piled up on both sides of it. "It was like sailing through a desert," he said.

Eventually, the ship arrived at its destination in the Persian Gulf, the Iranian port of Khrumashaw. Brien described that stopover in one word:

hot. So hot that interior ship temperatures rose to 140 degrees Fahrenheit, enough to cause severe burns when bare flesh touched the steel frames on beds.

After leaving that sweatbox, Brien's most memorable trek took him to South Africa, where supplies were picked up. Then it was on to Brazil, for a load of coffee. His ship wasn't alone while in port: a score of German warships was there as well. Luckily for the Americans, Brazil was neutral during the war, and the crew sailed without incident to New Orleans.

On other missions, the cargo on return trips would be flesh and blood — prisoners of war being brought to the United States. Surprisingly, the German soldiers often were glad to have been captured. "They were tired of living like desert rats. The M.P.s washed them with salt water, and they liked it. They would sit and sing every night on the deck," Brien said.

After the war, Brien continued his military service, criss-crossing the country and foreign nations, working on railroads, water rescue boats,

as a diesel mechanic, and on telephone cable ships. For a brief period, he was even involved in a research



MEMORIES AND MEDALS -- Gerald Brien of Harrison holds stories on Liberty ships and a medal of commendation he recently received from the Russian Embassy for his service in the U.S. Navy during World War II. (photo by Greg Fish)

and development project that aided the Apollo space program.

Brien didn't just sit back and collect a pension after hanging up his stripes. He moved on once again, running a yacht club for a few years in New Rochelle, NY. Finally, he returned to Maine in 1969, working at S.D. Warren and as a wastewater treatment operator in Lewiston and South Portland before settling into retirement.

So what is Brien doing these days? Not surprisingly, he enjoys an active membership in VFW Post #9328 in Harrison, and he's still travelling — having logged 43 flights since 1987 with his wife of 12 years, Charlotte, with who he "settled down" in 1983 in Harrison.

On those trips, the Brians often visit relatives, but one annual trek involves a different sort of family — a reunion of armed guards of World War II. That organization boasts

about 144,000 members; more than 10,000 attend the yearly reunions.

When asked what he thought of the medal, Brien said the Russians went through tremendous suffering, and they were trying to show their gratitude in a small way for being saved from a cruel fate at the hands of the Nazis.

At the same time, he acknowledged that there were many other heroes as well, many who never left their towns. "A lot of people sacrificed, went on rations," he said. "War is never good, and the common people go through a lot."

For information on the Armed Guards World War II Veterans Organization, contact C.A. Lloyd, 5712 Partridge Lane, Raleigh, NC 27609. For information on the Russian medals, write to the Embassy of Russian Federation, Consular Division, 1825 Phelps Place, NW, Washington DC, 27609.



MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 30, 1996
(Left to right): Joe Paulus, DAV (MM), Leland Martin, VFW, Bill Pilchman, Armed Guard.

Honorable Trent Lott October 20, 1997
487 Senate Russell Office
Washington, D.C. 20510
Tel-1-888-723-5246

Dear Senator Lott:

Enclosed is a letter I sent to you 1/12/96. Did you receive it? It concerns giving credit where credit is due to the Merchant Marines of World War II. They helped us man the guns when needed and brought up the ammunition from the ammo magazines when under attack. Contrary to isolated cases, these men served not only their country, but those countries to which they delivered material and supplies after the war was over. If it were not for the skills and desire to deliver these goods, many entire families would have died of starvation. Please think about this when you bring Bill-S-61 and HR-1126 up for a vote.

As a schoolmate and Merchant shipmate of WW II said to me one day, "C.A., I wish I was half the Christian today as I was in the engine room when those depth charges were going off almost all the way over and back." As he told me this, I could see the fright in his eyes, some 50 years later. I don't show that fright in my face because I was one of the Lucky ones to be topside when the depth charges went off and I could see the destroyer escorts when they threw out the "ASH CANS" and I knew what it was that exploded.

There were five of us brothers in the service of our country. Three of us were in the U.S. NAVY ARMED GUARD on board ships run by the Merchant Seamen. One was a Merchant Marine carrying supplies to Italy and who also rode out the Typhoon later at Okinawa and was due to be in the invasion of the Japanese mainland. The other was a regular Marine and due to his age and marital status with a child, he was a Sentry Guard at Treasure Island, one of the three Shipping and Receiving Stations for Armed Guard. (He apologized for taking the cigarettes.)

Brother Whitson, one of the first Armed Guard, entering Navy Service 12/28/41 and volunteered for that Special Branch of the Navy when it was known as the "SUICIDE SQUADRON." I remember when he came home from the "MURMANSK RUN" when he told my Mother and Dad, and I quote, "If it was not for the Merchant Crew bringing us our ammunition, I wouldn't be here today. Mom, they brought us food and water 3 days and nights and there werer no nights due to the time of year and we did not sleep. If we did, we would not have made it." Unquote.

Whitson made it back to England several times; to the North Africa Invasion; was at Bari, Italy right after the "DISASTER AT BARI" took place and he sailed through the Pacific to Australia and Bombay, India on a



Photo above taken on the steps of the Capitol Bldg., in Harrisburg, PA, on May 13, 1997, after the ceremony in the House of Representatives with Resolution #136 honoring the Armed Guard of Pennsylvania.

load of ammunition. The Merchant Marines were aboard these ships in the engine room, on the bridge, in the "CROW'S NEST" and with the gun crews in practice and under fire from the enemy. That's why I and the Armed Guard stood up for Merchantmen to get their Veteran's Status in January of 1988. That's why I and our crew stand up that they be granted December 31, 1946 as their "CUTOFF DATES" of in-time service.

You see, the eleven merchant seamen who were killed May 5th, 1945 along with my brother, Lonnie Whitson Lloyd, would have gone on to serve until December 31st, 1946 if they would have been given a choice. Two of them had just finished up

their Maritime training and came aboard the S.S. BLACK POINT at Newport News, Va. just a few days earlier. Honor these men and those who survived. Let us not forget those who gave their all and those who were willing to, also.

Sincerely,
Charles A. Lloyd, Chairman 1985-96
U.S.N. Armed Guard WW II Veterans
5712 Partridge Lane
Raleigh, N.C. 27609-4126
919-876-5537

"IN THE SAME BOAT-ON THE SAME SHIPS"

CC: Congressmen David Price, Jesse Helms and Lauch Faircloth.

The Liberty Ship

The Liberty Ship so proud and staunch — more than twenty-seven hundred of them were launched. . .

Manned by brave American mariners who sailed them with pride — upon the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans they plied. . .

The gunners of those lumbering Libertys warded off many enemy attack; airborne raiders found it difficult to penetrate their flank. . .

Our armies and air forces never could have survived, without those brave American mariners

— and those Libertys they sailed with pride. . .

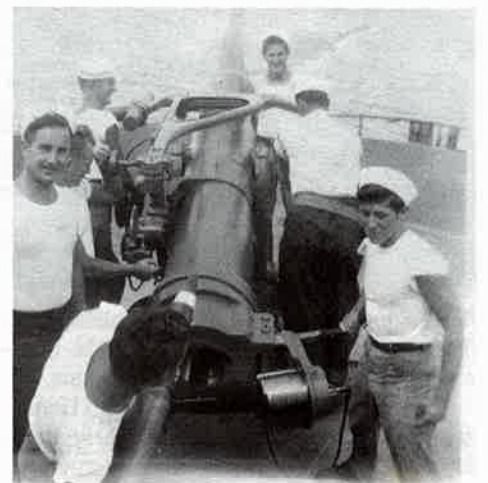
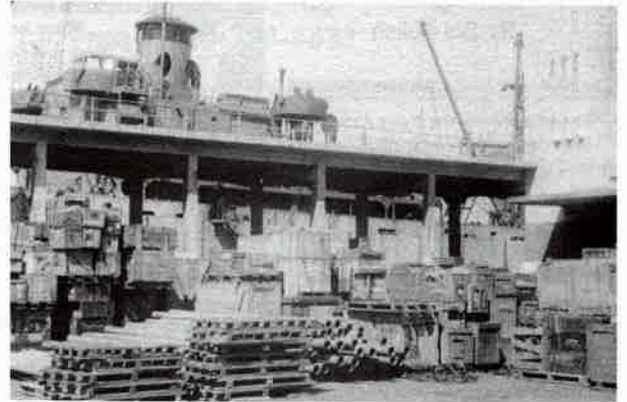
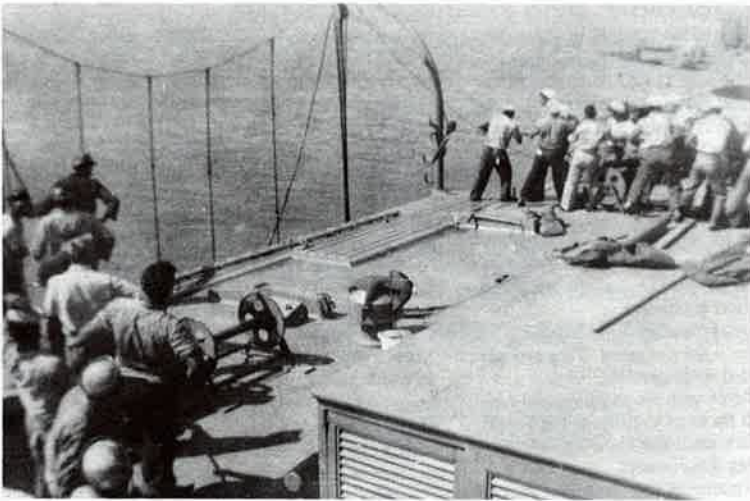
The world's greatest armada of ships ever known. . . was led by those lumbering Libertys — who finally brought our guys home. . .

Some two hundred of those gallant Libertys — and the sailors on board never made it back to their homeport. . .

They will, however, live on forevermore, as symbols of freedom. . . pillars of courage. . . Consorts of the Realm. . . in King Neptune's Court. . .

Capt. Daniel Kozak USMC (Ret)

Photos on this page sent in by Robert G. Nixon, 307 Grove St., E. Rutherford, NJ 07073-1710. (Clockwise, from top right): SS James Rumsey in Naples, Italy, 1943; Bob's ship, U.S. Army Transport State of Maryland; Boat drill on the State of Maryland; Aft gun crew on the Maryland; US Army Transport State of Virginia, taken from the aft gun deck of the State of Maryland in 1944; Armed Guard Crew of the SS State of Maryland; Boat drill on the Maryland.



Polish lauds Armed Guard and Merchant Marine

Looking Back

By Sol Polish



Breakfast with the Navy Armed Guard

After missing several invitations to join the Navy Armed Guard for their regular meeting at the Kings Plaza Diner, I at last pulled into the parking lot of the diner to meet the group of veteran seamen.

As a landlubber who went to sea on a victory ship after the war was over and I was heading home from the ETO, and there was no more threat from the U-Boat menace, it was a pleasure cruise.

I felt a little out of place among those men who sailed the Liberty and Victory ships in time of the real peril.

I had been invited to attend by Michael Molinari because of the Harbor Watch stories I wrote about the Armed Guard.

As I tore into the big dish of hot cakes, I listened to some of the stories told by those sitting close to me. It was not like a group of veterans swapping tales of the rigors of Army life during basic training and the way the sergeants made life miserable for them.

The Armed Guard veterans spoke of voyages to distant lands, places that I hardly associated with the fighting I

knew in the ETO. They were on ships bringing the necessities of war to all parts of the areas in which the fighting was involved. All the while the U-Boats were trailing them and at times sinking them:

These brave men spoke of the voyages in which they were involved in casual terms that one might construe as cruises. They were hardly that. The great number of Armed Guard seamen that never returned attested to the fact that this was not to be construed as a cruise by any measure.

Every member of that group had his own story to tell and each story could make a television documentary.

These brave men and the heroic merchant marine seamen made it possible for this country to successfully wage a winning war against an enemy who had prepared for that conflict years before and they had the advantage militarily in manpower and equipment.

That was why the Armed Guard and the Merchant Marine were so valuable to the war effort. They brought us the tools of war needed so desperately.

The ocean floor is littered with the ships that did not make it through the wolf packs of U-Boats in the oceans that the Armed Guards traveled. You name a place and they were on ships plying those waters.

I was amazed at how matter of fact these men were in telling about these voyages. Never before did I ever hear a group of veterans speak in such a detached manner. I thought that only the very brave and the kind of men who could face death by drowning or by shark attacks could

join the Armed Guard or the Merchant Marine.

The meetings of the Armed Guard are publicized in the Lifestyles part of the Courier Life newspapers with meeting times and places.

Actually the notice is intended to invite members of the Armed Guard end to discover Armed Guard members who are not aware of the group's meetings.

I thought it was ironically amusing when a new member arrived. There were two new faces at the meeting. Actually there were three including myself who was a guest from Harbor Watch.

As was the custom at the meetings, the new men were asked to introduce themselves. One arose and identified himself by name and he announced that he was with the Armed Guards. The other guy stated that he was in the infantry. Clearly he did not belong in this group, but he was cordially invited to stay and enjoy the breakfast.

I am not that cordial but I sized that guy up as a freebee expert who interprets a newspaper ad in a manner in which he likes it to read. The guy from the infantry identified with the seamen because he went overseas by ship and returned on the Queen Mary. As another Army man, I felt a little embarrassed at the way this guy equated his experiences with those of the Armed Guard.

The general public has little or no information about the Armed Guard's participation in our war effort. We are aware of the great service the Merchant Marine performed, but did the people back home know that the Armed Guard was aboard those ships?



Photo at top was taken aboard ship in New Guinea in December, 1944 on the S.S. JOHN T. McMILLAN. Bottom photo was taken at a gathering of five of the crew in Durant, OK in June 1996. (Left to right): Dwain Holmes (TX), Edward Hamler (MO), Edgar Hartman (WI), Gay Self (OK), and Arlie Harper (AZ). Sent in by Edward Hamler, 206 Bishop Lane, Versailles, MO 65084.

REUNION NEWS

MAKE COPIES BEFORE FILLING OUT IN CASE YOU FIND MORE OF THE CREW AND ALSO TO KEEP IN THE "POINTER" IF YOU'RE SAVING THEM AS MANY DO. LOOKING FORWARD TO A GREAT TURNOUT SO MAKE YOUR RESERVATION EARLY. MAKES IT EASIER ON ALL THE HOSTS.

LADIES!! MINNEAPOLIS HAS THE LARGEST SHOPPING MALL IN THE U.S.A.!!

THE PLAY AT THE "CHANHASSEN DINNER THEATER" WILL BE "BRIGADOON," A DELIGHTFUL FANTASY WRITTEN BY ALAN JAY LERNER AND FREDERICK LOEWE. THEY HAVE 250 DINNER RESERVATIONS SET ASIDE FOR US. WE CAN GET MORE IF RESERVATIONS ARE MADE BEFORE APRIL 1, 1998.

WE HAVE 450 TOTAL CAPACITY (ON A FIRST COME BASIS) FOR THE BRUNCH CRUISE ON THE HARRIET/BISHOP RIVERBOAT. THE CRUISE WILL BE NARRATED UP THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER TO WITHIN SIGHT OF FORT SNELLING AND RETURN. A BEAUTIFUL EXCITING CRUISE.

THERE IS A COMPLIMENTARY SHUTTLE TO MYSTIC LAKE CASINO ON A DAILY BASIS. DEPARTS THE HOTEL AT 7:00 PM AND RETURNS AT 11:00 PM. THE RADISSON HOTEL SOUTH IS AT INTERSTATE 494 AND HWY 100 AND HAS 1300 FREE PARKING SPACES. IT IS 7 MILES FROM THE "MALL OF AMERICA; 9 MILES FROM THE MINNEAPOLIS /ST. PAUL AIRPORT AND IS ONLY 10 MILES FROM DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS AND ST. PAUL.

U.S. Navy Armed Guard WW II 17th National Reunion

Room Rate \$75
Plus 12.5% tax

June 25-30, 1998

Check in Time 3:00 pm
Check Out Time 12 Noon

Radisson Hotel South
7800 Normandale Blvd. • Bloomington, Minnesota 55439-3145
Tel. 612-835-7800 • Fax 612-893-8431 • Toll Free 1-800-333-3333

TELL THEM "ARMED GUARD"

Let the Hotel know if you want Smoking or Non-Smoking

ITINERARY AND RESERVATIONS

Hospitality Room will be in the Cabana Rooms 214 thru 219 and will be open from 8 am til 11:59 every day except during breakfast or dinner functions (update will be posted later).
NOTICE PLEASE: "ITG" signifies "Includes Tax and Gratuity."

("Cabana Room 213" will be SHIP's STORES" run by Ellie and Rudy Kozak.)

THURSDAY JUNE 25 - Registration 9 AM-5 PM.
(On your own to look over Hotel and area, old shipmates, etc.)

FRIDAY JUNE 26 - Registration 9 AM-5 PM

BREAKFAST TOGETHER 8 AM-10:30 AM EACH \$15.00 ITG

CHANHASSEN DINNER THEATER 5:45 PM-11:30 PM EACH \$47.00 ITG

Price Includes Dinner - (Choice of Entrees), Theater and Transportation
(250 reservations allotted so far.)

TOTALS

No. () \$ _____

No. () \$ _____

SATURDAY JUNE 27 - Registration 8 AM-9 AM and 12 Noon-5 PM.

BUSINESS MEETING 9 AM TIL 12 NOON.

LADIES TEA - Noon-3 PM (Not a Lunch) EACH \$13.00 ITG

+DINNER/DANCE:

6-7 PM Social Hour - Dinner/Dance 7PM-11:59 PM EACH \$26.00 ITG

No. () \$ _____

No. () \$ _____

SUNDAY JUNE 28 - Registration 8 AM-10 AM and 5 PM-6 PM

BRUNCH CRUISE ON THE HARRIET/BISHOP BOAT - 11 AM-2 PM

(Board Buses at 10 AM—SHARP!) EACH \$26.00 ITG

Cost of Bus Ride To and From EACH \$ 7.50 ITG

(450 capacity on 1st come basis)

No. () \$ _____

No. () \$ _____

MONDAY JUNE 29

GUIDED TOUR OF MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL AREA - 9 AM-Noon.

DROP OFF AT "MALL OF AMERICA" 12 Noon for Lunch and Shopping til 5 PM.

(On your own at Mall) CIRCLE RETURN BUS PICKUP TIME: 4 PM

EACH \$19.00 ITG

5 PM

No. () \$ _____

INFORMAL DINNER AT THE HOTEL - 7 PM-9 PM

(Buffet Style)

EACH \$22.00 ITG

No. () \$ _____

TUESDAY JUNE 30

"SO LONG" BREAKFAST 8 AM-10 AM

EACH \$16.00 ITG

No. () \$ _____

GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

ARE YOU HANDICAPPED? Y___ N___ STRICT DIETS? Y___ N___ IF SO NOTIFY HOTEL, TOO.

Fill out and make a copy of this form and bring it with your cancelled check for proof, in case of mixup. It is a good policy to bring your room confirmation form also and be sure to have them send you one, if time available.

Make check or money order payable to: "USN Armed Guard WWII Veterans." Send to: Joe and Jeanne Benedict, Hosts, 8220 Quinn Circle, Bloomington, MN 55437-1228. (Notice: His Armed Guard Telephone Number is: 1-612-835-4429.)

Make your own room reservations. If you use the 1-800-333-3333 number and they say they are filled, remind them you're Armed Guard and if they still tell you they are filled, call the Hotel direct and inform them. Bloomington is on "CST" time.



Lone Sailor

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

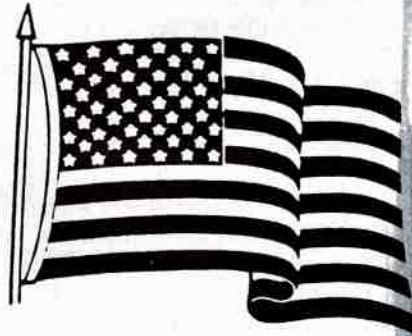
DEDICATION

To the Officers and Men who sailed the ships of
World War II,
especially to those who lost their lives, and to
their families.

THE U.S. NAVAL ARMED GUARD WW II VETERANS 17TH NATIONAL REUNION WILL BE HELD AT THE RADISSON HOTEL SOUTH, 7800 NORMANDALE BLVD., BLOOMINGTON, MN. 55439, 612-835-7800, JUNE 25-30, 1998. MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS EARLY. HOSTS ARE: JOSEPH AND JEANNE BENEDICT, 8220 QUINN CIR., BLOOMINGTON, MN. 55437-1228, 612-835-4429. LET THEM KNOW YOU ARE "U.S.N. ARMED GUARD." -"YOU HEAR!!"



USN Armed Guard WW II Veterans
5712 Partridge Lane
Raleigh, N.C. 27609-4126
1-(919)-876-5537



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Address Correction Requested

Remember Pearl Harbor!
December 7, 1941



C. F. KORKER
7 North Mulberry St
Jellsmere, Fla.

Support The USN Armed Guard
WW II Veterans Reunions
NOV./DEC., 1997

