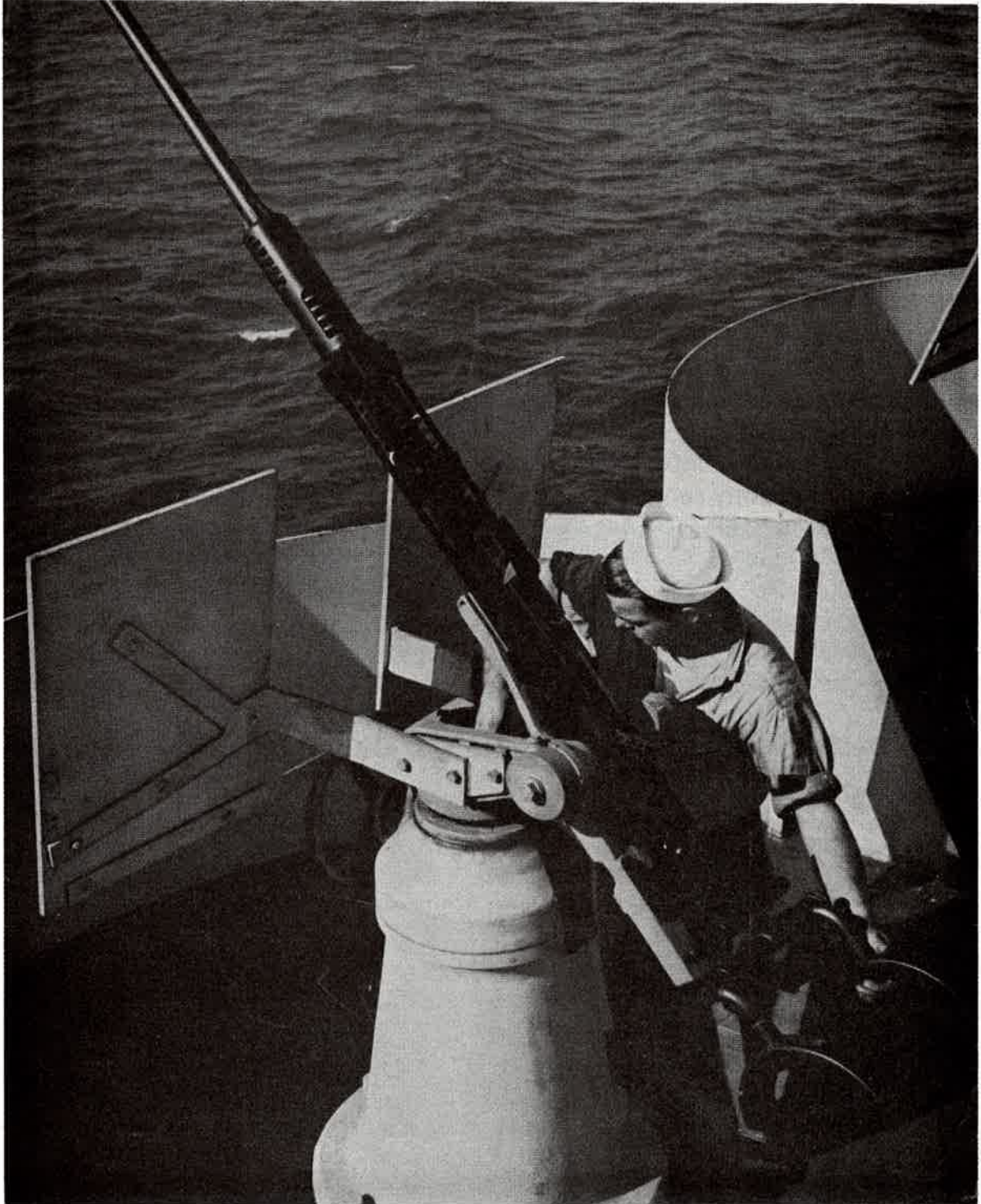


GOLDEN OLDIE No. I

THE POINTER



Gunner's Mate works on 20mm.

REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR!

July 4th, 1999

Dear "NEW OL'SALTS":

This is a good day to "**WELCOME YOU BACK ON BOARD**"!! Even though it may be some time in the future that you will receive this, but I thought you would like to have some stories and pictures from the past "POINTER"s that I picked out that I thought you would enjoy. This will be an expensive project, but I believe that many of you will voluntarily support it. This is strictly of your own free will and accord. If it succeeds, then others will also get the same material. There are no dues, or are there any salaries paid. It is up to you.

Many in the past, and I am sure many of you "NEW OL'SALTS" will want something "SPECIAL", etc. put into the "POINTER". I "CAN NOT" favor one over the other. If you have a good "TRUE" story that you think may be of interest to others, write it down and send to me. It may not be used but will be kept so that someday, maybe it will be used by someone in the future.

If you did not send in your the name of your ships with the dates on and off, please do so right away so we may help you locate a shipmate who sailed with you. Enclosed is a SHIP FORM to fill out and return. Also, enclosed is another FORM-180. If you have never sent to St.Louis for your Service Records, please fill in at check marks and send it to ST.LOUIS, not to me, as it will only delay the process. If you don't hear from them within 3 months, call your congressman or senator from your district and maybe he can speed up the process. You may want to do this to start with. If so, have your full name and service number ready. If you don't remember your service number, it should be listed at the courthouse in the county you were living when you were inducted into service.

BEWARE of people who are out to "**FALSELY HELP VETERANS**" and are out to rip you off. If you are in doubt, contact some of the Armed Guard groups near you or give me a call. Here are a few that are O.K.: Our National Organization, Local Units that are listed in the "**POINTER**", The Navy Memorial in Washington, D.C., the two Liberty Ships; **S.S.JOHN W.BROWN** and the **S.S.JEREMIAH O'BRIEN**, the three Victory Ships; the **S.S. AMERICAN (V)**, **LANE (V)** and **RED OAK (V)**. If it is within your power to help them financially, please do so. Do attend and support local Armed Guard meetings. After all, they want you.

I hope you enjoy the enclosed material as much as I DO in getting it together for you. If you know of others that we have not located, please get the SHIP FORM INFORMATION and YOU SEND it to me and I'll see that they gets their packet. REMEMBER they also deserve to know. We are all lucky to be here!! **AGREE?**

Charles A. Lloyd

SEA LANE VIGILANTES

Armed Guard on Merchantmen Played Vital Role In Delivering Goods for War Around the Globe

IN the log of World War II is an early entry that reads like this: The United States became the arsenal of democracy producing for liberty-loving nations the goods essential to the successful prosecution of the war against aggression.

Today you can add: Goods delivered in time.

And one great reason why the goods were delivered is the Armed Guard, the Merchant Marine's bodyguard that, in the days before adequate escort ships and planes, stood as virtually the lone defense of our supply lines through successive U-boat forays.

Ranging north and south, east and west, to remote "whistle stops" of the world unknown even to ubiquitous Navy ships, the men of the Armed Guard went to work at a time when no insurance man would have wagered much on their life expectancy.

They started as a small band, with scanty training. But by the end of the fighting they constituted one of the largest and most specialized outfits in the service.

They put to sea in ancient ships armed with ancient guns. And they battled the U-boat when it was its deadliest, when it was making the eastern seaboard a graveyard of blasted hulks.

"You can tell them all that we are going to sea again. They can't stop us with a couple of torpedoes. . . ."

They fought back against submarines, contemptuously striking on the surface. And they fought back with .30- and .50-caliber machine guns and 4" and 5" guns which were too obsolete for warships.

They sailed when they knew that long black shadows were waiting beneath the waters outside of New York harbor and Lynnhaven Roads and even in the estuary of the Mississippi River. But they sailed.

And when they died they died as seamen—on a rusty old freighter which a torpedo smashed and jarred apart, or a tanker which burst into a cascade of flames—in a chaos of their wrecked ships or in the oil-covered waters. They starved to death or died

of thirst in the tropics or froze to death on life rafts in the Arctic Ocean.

The loss of ships and cargo they carried was deplored throughout the nation, but the men died in obscurity and loneliness.

But—the guns improved, and the crews grew in size. Soon the subs would not come to the surface any more. Life expectancy in the Armed Guard was on the increase.

"We may not be the fanciest outfit in the world—but show me another gang of salesmen, farmers, newspapermen, teachers, and lawyers that have knocked off as many U-boats and planes. . . ."

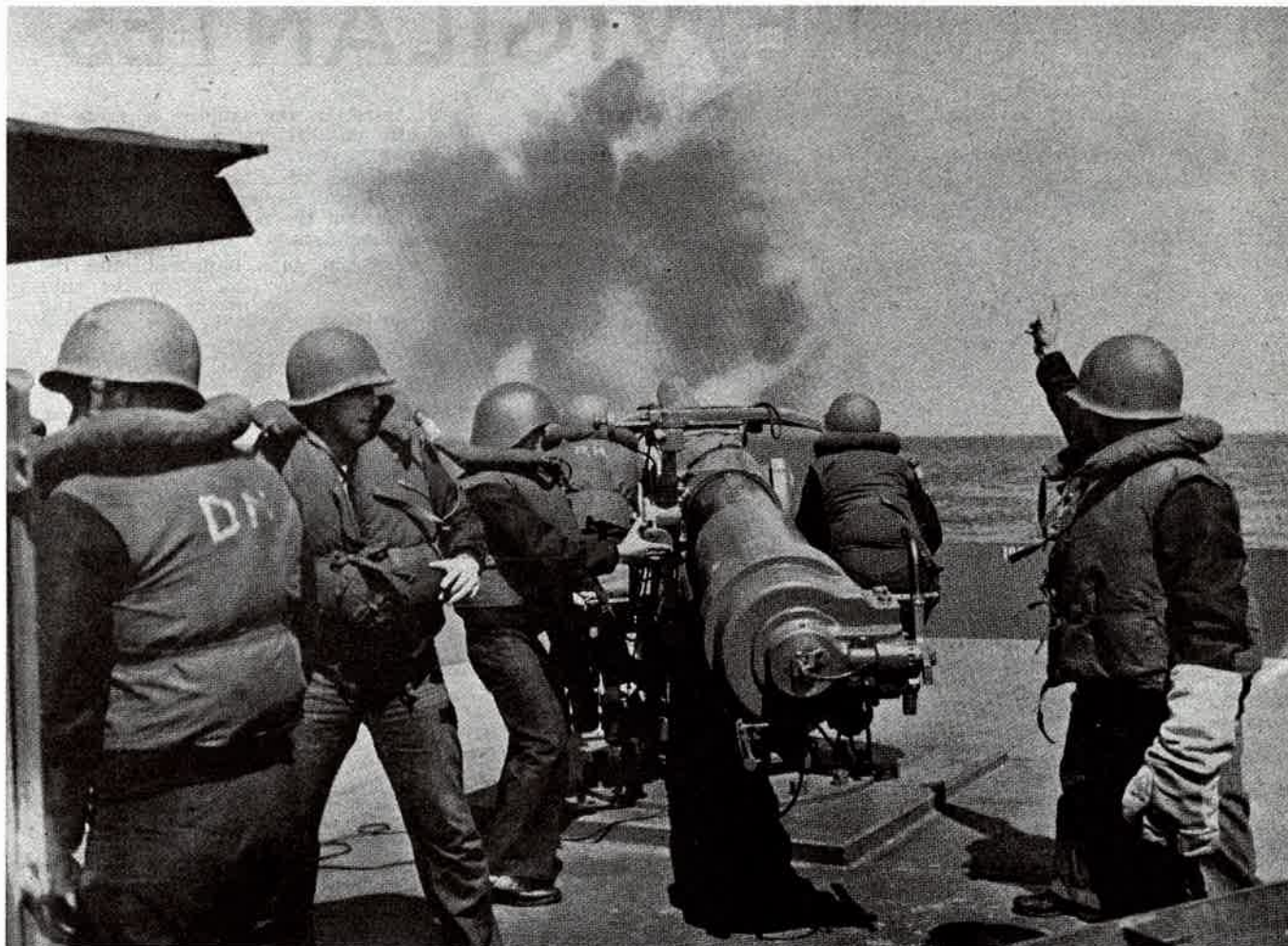
The scope of their travels was on the increase. U-boats became but one among many predatory dogs of war. There was the Luftwaffe in the Mediterranean and the Luftwaffe along the gale-swept trail to Murmansk. Out in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, and the Bay of Bengal there were Jap planes, also Jap raiders and cruisers in addition to Jap subs.

In September of 1942 the Armed Guard of the ss *Stephen Hopkins*, a Liberty ship, in an heroic and epic 20-minute battle sank with her 4-inch and 37-mm. gun one German armed

AT GENERAL QUARTERS (below), Armed Guard helped beat off enemy subs and planes, keep supply lines open.

Official U. S. Navy photographs





ARMED GUARD crews, serving aboard more than 4,000 ships at midsummer, 1945, are now being disbanded.

raider and probably damaged another. The action took place in the South Atlantic between Capetown and Rio de Janeiro.

The *Hopkins* was herself quickly riddled by the superior fire power of the raider, but the crew stuck to the guns until ammunition was exhausted and the magazine was finally hit and exploded. The Armed Guard officer, Ens. Kenneth M. Willett, who kept firing though wounded, and was last seen trying to launch life rafts, was awarded the Navy Cross. Five of his crew survived, these after a 31-day voyage in an open boat to Brazil.

Casualty rates varied throughout the war. For weeks at a time the survivors section of the Armed Guard Center, Brooklyn, would have no business at all. But after a long lull, the survivors this past winter and spring began again to stream home in a manner tragically reminiscent of early '42.

1,810 Casualties

Through 30 June of this year 1,810 officers and men of the Armed Guard were reported killed or missing, and 41 were or had been prisoners of war. This very high incidence can be better appreciated when it is understood that the average unit was 25 men, and in almost all sinkings more survived than were lost.

On the asset side it wasn't so long after Armed Guard got in full swing that more and more merchant ships

were returning to port with swastikas and rising suns painted on the gun tubs and funnels. And the crews were being awarded and commended for acts of heroism.

By 30 June, 7,728 awards, from the Navy Cross to service record entries had been conferred, and 24,273 personnel were authorized to wear operation and engagement stars.

With the posthumous award of the Navy Cross to Ens. Kay Vesole, of Davenport, Iowa, was this citation: "For extraordinary heroism as commanding officer of the U. S. Armed Guard aboard the ss *John Bascom* when that vessel was bombed and sunk in the harbor of Bari, Italy, on the night of Dec. 2 1943. Weakened by loss of blood from an extensive wound over his heart and with his right arm helpless Ens. Vesole valiantly remained in action calmly proceeding from gun to gun directing his crew and giving aid and encouragement to the injured. With the *John Bascom* fiercely ablaze and sinking, he conducted a party of his men below decks and supervised the evacuation of wounded comrades to the only undamaged lifeboat, persistently manning an oar with his uninjured arm . . ."

They saw hundreds of thousands of troops safely overseas by manning the guns both on Army and War Shipping transports. They saved many transports and untold numbers of lives of soldiers by fighting off planes, submarines, and E-boats. Particularly

vital was the service they rendered in this respect during the great invasions of the war.

They manned the guns not only on American ships, but also on ships flying the Belgian, Brazilian, Chinese, Dutch, Greek, Italian, Latvian, Norwegian, Panamanian, and Polish flags. They tasted a shipboard bill of fare which ranged from bird's nest soup to ravioli.

On 4,000 Vessels

As of the end of this June more than 4,000 vessels were in service with Armed Guard aboard, and 6,200 had been armed during the war.

And—144,857 personnel had been assigned to Armed Guard duty by the end of June.

Actual arming of merchant ships started 18 Nov 1941, the day the President signed the repeal of the Neutrality Act, although preliminary organizational steps had been initiated during the summer.

A modest pattern for Armed Guard had been set in the last war when 384 merchant vessels carried a Navy complement and guns. The first such ship to be armed was the ss *Manchuria* of the American Line, which put to sea with her armament in March, 1917.

The global nature of World War II made it necessary to dwarf 1917 quantities of ships and quality of armament. In the first rush to protect our

ships in 1941 the bottom of armament barrels literally had to be scraped.

Yet modern rapid-firing and heavy-caliber weapons, when they became available, were given to the Armed Guard, and by this summer a total of 45,157 guns had been installed on merchant ships and Army transports. They comprised these types: 5"51, 5"50, 5"38, 4"50, 3"50AA., 3"23, 6 pounder, 40-mm., 20-mm., .50 cal., and .30 cal., plus pistols and rifles.

A Liberty ship mounted eight 20s, a 3"AA. and a 4", or a 3"AA. and a 5", or possibly three 3" guns and a 5" or 4".

The Armed Guards never had the advantage of modern fire control devices. They depended rather on local control at each gun station, and a battlephone circuit to the bridge. Even so, the sharp eyes and training of the gunners made up for what was lacking in scientific equipment, and officers and men with Armed Guard experience became sought after by ships of the fleet.

"One Nip came in so close we could have almost reached out and touched him. We shot off his tail assembly . . ."

Training of crews was perforce ephemeral at first. A few weeks in gun sheds at Little Creek, Va., and the pioneers of the Armed Guard were rushed off, still a bit dazed, to battle against what was then almost insurmountable odds.

Schools, however, sprang up with amazing rapidity. Schools and firing ranges started at Norfolk, Chicago, Gulfport, New Orleans, San Diego, New York and San Francisco. During the past fiscal year officers were trained at the rate of 192 a month and men at 3,000 a month. During the peak of the training program 360 officers and 4,400 men were trained per month. Officers were usually over 30 years old, while the men varied from 17 to over 40, the youngsters predominating.

Instruction constantly improved and became more routine and exact as experienced officers and men returned to teach. When such battle-tested veterans arrived, they were usually introduced to their class with some such understatement:

"This is Smith—he came back."

By late 1943, an officer knew almost everything concerning the functions and problems of Armed Guard after his two months' instruction, and the men were given a concentrated course on guns and gun mechanisms.

Varied Skills Needed

Rates to be found in an Armed Guard crew were Gunner's Mate, Boatswain's Mate, Coxswain, Signalmen, and Radioman. The officers not only had to know enough about these rates to give their men examinations for advancement, but in their varied knowledge they also had to have understanding of communications, first aid, seamanship and navigation.

The Armed Guard as a self-contained and independent unit was a natural for the fostering of esprit de corps. The average Armed Guarder came to be as proud of his duty as those in a similar "silent service," the submariners.

"At times bombs fell around us like hailstones. . . . we just kept those guns barking at the Jerries. . . ."

Even when we were getting the upper hand in the war against the U-boats, Armed Guard continued to be hazardous duty. A large number of ships carried high-octane gasoline and high-explosive cargoes, and even if the route was through a "quiet area" the ever present danger of accidents and collisions were as much a threat as the enemy. Many personnel were lost in shipwrecks and fires.

One merchant ship ran aground within yards of the coast and pounded to pieces before rescue could arrive.

Only two gunners survived that disaster. A Liberty broke in two in a wild North Atlantic gale. The entire Navy and merchant crew huddled on the careening stern for more than a day and a half before a corvette could get a line to them. All were rescued.

When the ships made port and began to discharge, dangers were not necessarily at an end. Ask those who called at Antwerp or Naples or Anzio, Oran, Suez, Murmansk, Noumea, or Malta. And in numberless foreign ports where direct attack was unlikely, the possibility of sabotage had to be guarded against with constant vigilance.

All was not combat in an Armed Guarder's life. But always there was waiting and an unexpressed and often unrealized current of tension, whether during the long morning and evening periods of general quarters or at chow time or even in the hours of off duty, letter writing, and reading.

The hull of a merchant ship is not a very thick affair—and almost constantly there was the waiting for the torpedo, the aerial bomb, or even the prow of a neighboring ship in the convoy to come smashing through.

"It was light 20 hours a day . . . we were on the guns for 36 hours at one stretch, ate and slept right on the gun decks . . . one day nearly 100 planes hopped us, Hitler really wanted to stop that convoy . . ."

When the merchant ship came home for another cargo the men had a great feeling of accomplishment. Not only had they seen several thousand tons of war supplies come safely through the perils of the weather, the sea, and the enemy, but they had come through it themselves. They had a right to feel more than ever proud of their branch of the service.

They came home on leave or perhaps only extended liberty—home to Centralia or San Francisco, Upper Darby or New York City—to tell tales worthy of sealore traditions: of how they had ridden camelback in Egypt, or climbed the Eiffel Tower in Paris, or eaten water buffalo meat in South Africa, or visited the burning ghats along the Ganges River, or tasted fish and chips, ginger beer and porridge in England or bouillabaise in Marseilles, or bargained in Ceylon for rare sapphires and rubies.

If they were on survivors' leave their stories were proportionately more breathholding:

"The ship was sinking so rapidly that I just had to step into the water rather than jump . . ."

"We were machine gunned after we took to the life boats . . ."

"I floated for three and a half hours in the North Sea before they picked me up . . ."

Soon after the Japanese surrender, Armed Guard crews and their guns began to move off the ships they had served so well.

Aside from these things, all that remains of the Armed Guard are the various tasks of physical disposition, the voluminous files in the Navy Department, and a lurking nostalgia in the hearts of those who were a part of it, who helped deliver the goods which won the war.



NAVY CREW reports aboard ship that formed part of United Nations supply line. Armed Guarders served also on ships flying flags of other Allied nations.



(Top Left) U.S.N. Armed Guard WWII Veterans marched in the V.A. National Cemetery Parade in Bourne, MA, May 28, 1995. Photo by Art Frietas, N. Dartmouth, MA.



(Middle Left): Armed Guard Memorial at National Cemetery, Bourne Massachusetts. Dedicated by the New England Chapter.



(Bottom Left): U.S.N. Armed Guard WWII Veterans and the U.S. Maritime WWII Veterans join in at the Charleston, S.C. 50th Victory Parade on 7/5/95. A little different than 50 years ago when they were in the "Same Boat" on the "Same Ship."

(Top Right): (L-R) Capt. John LeCato (MM) and General Robert Floyd (AG) at the Charleston, S.C. parade.



Famed Quonset Huts Developed in This Area

Created Here Before Air Station Conceived

Many hard years have passed since Quonset Point was a quaint and colorful summer colony. And many, many thousands of men and women have since trod upon these former vacation grounds, totally unaware of any historic achievements originating here and arising from our country's dire necessity to expand the military. Foremost, amongst whatsoever these achievements may be, the Quonset Hut stands as a universal symbol of this area's aid to

ease a war imminent pressure.

In the spring of 1941, before any clue to an air station could be found at Quonset Pt., an organized naval unit was located in the now idle wooden structure opposite Barracks Nos. 5 and 7. This unit was known as ABD, which has since, and is at present located adjacent to Camp Endicott in Davisville. It was through the cooperation of a handful of plankowners, still with ABD, that the following history of the Quonset Hut has been compiled.

The design of the Quonset Hut was developed by the Engineering Design Section of the George A. Fuller Company and Merritt-Chapman and Scott Corp., main contractors for the Bureau of Yards and Docks at Davisville. (It was the hut that was developed by this design section at Quonset that took its name from the place of its ori-

The development of the present Quonset Hut involved a great amount of study and research. Originally, with the British Nissen hut as a guide, a hut of the general contour of a Nissen hut was developed. The objection found with this type of construction was that the curveline of the side-walls began at the floorline resulting in a loss of space adjacent to the side walls. This feature reduced the effective width of the hut, which was objectional, as the hut in its original form was only sixteen feet wide at the floor line. Through investigation, a more suitable structural rib was found in

the form of a welded sheet metal I beam, as manufactured by Stran Steel. By fabricating this member, a vertical side wall was obtained for a distance of four feet from the floor line. This feature added to the spaciousness of the hut. Innumerable details were encountered in the development of the huts, principally through the necessity of fulfilling 48 different types to develop the Bureau of Yards and Docks requirements. All huts were designed and detailed, using the original "T" rib design. Upon the adoption of the Stran Steel I beam section, all established types of huts were again detailed. As the necessity arose for adapting of the huts to use as dispensaries, latrines, hospitals, etc., the details were worked up by the Architectural Department, and field units erected to determine the practicability of the design for field use.

Every effort was made to actually determine if design and detail requirements could be met in manufacturing and later in erection. To this end the design and engineering was carried on with close liaison existing with manufacturing. Upon the decision that a hut design was satisfactory, necessary plans and specifications were forwarded to the Estimating Department for the preparation of material list preparatory to purchasing. In all, eighty-six approved plans were prepared by the Architectural Department pertaining to hut and building design.

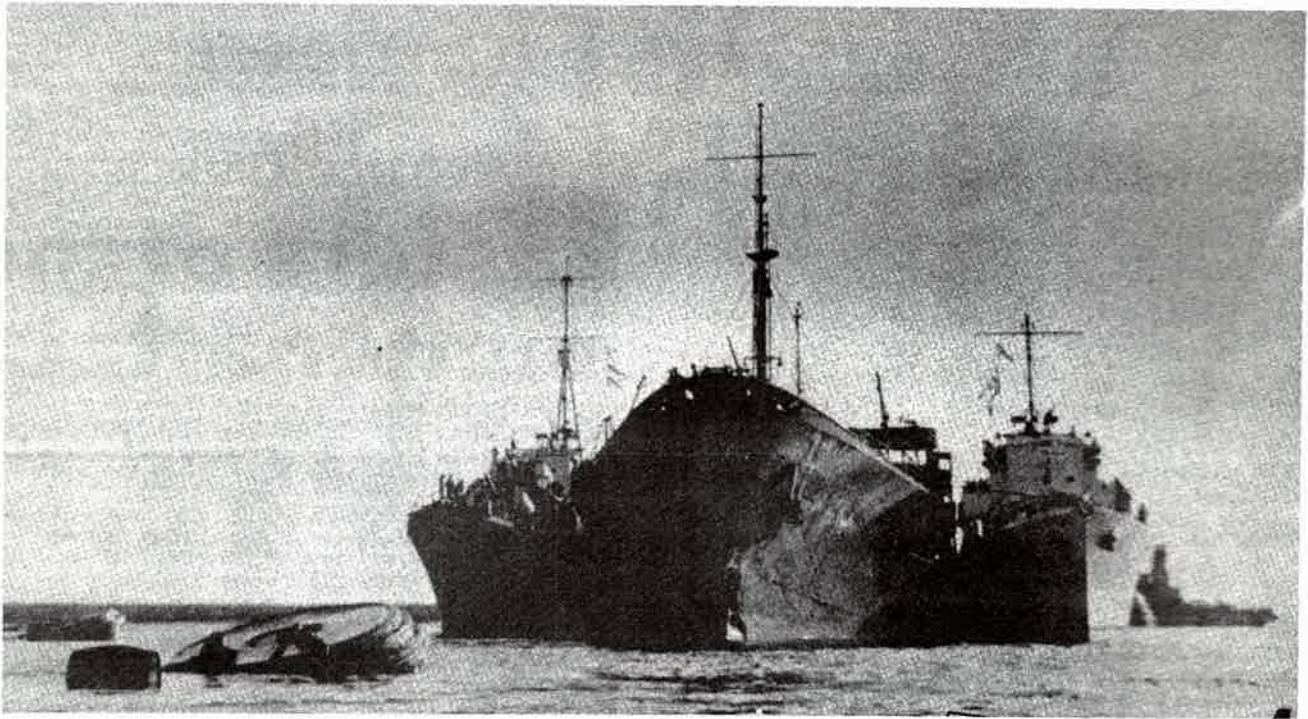
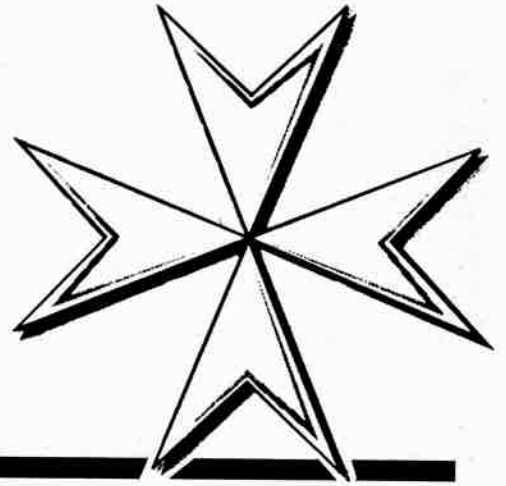
As is common to all problems

of a development nature, a great deal of time was spent in the "cut and try" method. Sketches were received from the Bureau of Yards and Docks, outlining their requirement, but making no effort to anticipate structural problems and details. It was the responsibility of the Architectural Department to translate the sketches so received into practical and positive plans and details, so that procurement could be effected.

Actual operation of the plant for the prefabrication of the huts took place on May 1, 1941, in the area designated as West District and located in West Davisville, under the Anderson Sheet Metal Co. of Providence, sub-contractor to the main contractor. The three superintendents originally in charge were Alex Anderson, Andrew Stuart and Andrew Auld. And it was at West District that every flaw, every improvement, every conceivable amount of data was seen and foreseen to aid in eliminating the entire hut project from the experimental stage. And by Dec. 7, 1941, the average daily output stood at a respectable forty. Although the immediate effect on ABD, Davisville, of the declaration of war, was an amazing increase both in the manufacture of huts which jumped, in two weeks, to an average of 150 per day, and in the influx of materials.

In Washington, there obviously must be one statement that infers that the Quonset Hut was originated at Quonset Point, R. I. Regardless of whether there was an air station or a clambred here at the time, that half-moon structure that bears our namesake has carried it to every imaginable nook and nation in the world. Whether ABD or half a dozen other units were commissioned before our birth, it is our air station alone that bears the native title of Quonset. That in itself, suggests we skip the formalities, and, not falsely, boast that the Quonset Hut was born at Quonset Point.

MALTA REMEMBERED



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

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

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

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

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

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

Desperate Journey Through Hell

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carrier Made a Fool of Traitor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Santa Maria mi

By **KAREN TRAVISS**,
Defence Correspondent

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

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

From 1940 to 1943, the Mal-

Desperate mission relieved island in the nick of time

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

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

Malta had to survive if the Axis forces in North Africa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The island had no natural oil. The island from the British upon for supplies of the Mediterranean long process Maltese into begun.

In August 1942, an attempt to relieve the island by Operation Pedestal failed. A task force of 31 ships, including 50 Royal Navy merchant ships, was taken from the Strait of Gibraltar.

Even before the British waters, many of them were home again. S

Masters of the counter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vagabonds

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

miracle

duced only a little it needed, and resources like was a long way to bases it relied on at either end of the Mediterranean, and the of starving the submission had

42, a desperate eve the island, stal, was laun- ce of more than warships was to t supply convoy of Gibraltar to

warships left the crews knew would not see mehew, in the

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

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

It was the day the devoutly Catholic Maltese were celebra- ting the assumption into heav- en of the Virgin Mary. The sup- ply line became known as the Santa Maria convoy, a tribute to an operation that was seen as a miracle itself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abandon ship

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bill does not have happy memories of the for- mer Foreign Legion barracks. The condi- tions were appalling.

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

But 1,000 men died

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

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

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

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

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

Expected

In March 1942, a convoy from Alex- andria reached Grand Harbour only to be sunk as it arrived. The heart- break was almost too much, but for every ship that made it safely, there was an ecstatic welcome from Mal- tese lining the ramparts and quays.

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

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

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

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

attack

Brisbane Star sparkled

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

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

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

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

Eighty-Three Days And Forty-Five Years: Remembering Basil Izzi

by Lester Paquin

Before he joined the United States Navy in April of 1942, Basil Dominic Izzi worked at Chas. G. Allen's foundry on School Street in Barre, and was known for his determination and reserve. As distinguished as this

spirited young man was to his family and friends, he remained yet another American teenager on the verge of going to war.

When he completed his basic training in Newport in May of that year, Basil was assigned to merchant marine service. He re-

turned home to Barre for two days' leave in July, then left to become a member of the Navy's armed guard, assigned to a Dutch luxury liner. His loved ones had no idea that his life was about to change forever. The next time they saw him, he

would be a hero.

The ship had been converted from passenger service to wartime cargo duty by the Allies, its once gleaming exterior now shrouded in battleship grey. Looking like any other warship of its day, Basil and his ship mates



THEIR FIRST MEAL IN MANY DAYS. Basil (with beard at right) eats a bowl of peaches as he watches fellow survivors Cornelius Van Der Slot (left) and Nicko Hoogendam (center) do the same. Taken moments after their rescue on board a U.S. Navy P.C. boat, Basil and his Dutch shipmates graphically portray the rigors of their ordeal.

were stunned when they saw the interior of the ship.

Once inside, the liner still bore the embellishments of the prestigious transatlantic passenger trade it was created to serve. Fine woods and crystal fixtures surround-

ed crates of war matériel, sitting heavily on Oriental carpeting. The dining room stewards had been replaced by Navy seamen, their uniforms now hanging in closets designed for tuxedos and evening gowns.

Still, the men were un-

happy. Staterooms meant for two were now quarters for six, the food was awful and the bickering constant. The only escape from the boredom of passage was maintaining the ship's newly-installed artillery and an occasional leave in port. Basil had

leave in South Africa before the ship left port, bound for New York.

On Nov. 1, 1942 Basil and two other crew members were painting gun turrets on the port side of the ship. They assumed the plane which flew overhead was friendly, although they



HIS HEALTH RETURNED and his ordeal past, Basil holds a photograph of himself (at right, waving) as they were spotted by the rescue vessel. Taken after his return to Bethesda, Maryland, the young sailor from South Barre seems to find his dangerous adventure hard to believe.



THE VERY PICTURE OF NAVY PRIDE. Basil Izzi, his smile and spirits restored following 83 days on the raft, beams confidently beneath a navy recruiting poster. At this point, Basil is about to begin a nationwide tour to boost the moral of defense plant workers.

couldn't identify it. They finished their job, then went below decks to play cards before chow.

They did not see the plane return at 4:15 p.m., nor could they have seen the German submarine it foreshadowed. At 4:30, Basil and four friends tossed a fifth crew member out of their cabin for interrupting their game. This deed done, Basil was about to lay his winning hand on the bunk when a torpedo from their unseen companion slammed into the liner. The damage was extensive and fatal. Wreckage and sea water poured into the cabins and companionways below

decks. Although there was much noise, confusion and fear, there was no panic.

Basil made his way to the bridge where his gunnery officer, Ensign James Maddox, gave orders to his young crew to man their battle stations. The Captain then appeared, saying it was only a minor explosion in the engine room, not a torpedo. As Basil made his way toward his gun position in the stern, and as Ensign Maddox began arguing the point with the Captain, a second torpedo struck the port side.

All power was now lost, and Basil, still at his position in the stern, watched

as the once-sleek vessel, now twisted and awry, went down rapidly by the bow. A voice near him said "Let's get out of here!", and Basil ran into the ship's laundry and grabbed a shirt, then headed for the rail. He paused briefly, not knowing whether to jump or head some 30 feet toward the bow and just walk into the water. An explosion beneath his feet prompted him to jump, and once in the water he caught a piece of wreckage in time to see the proud ship descend vertically into the sea.

The submarine surfaced, and four Germans

appeared on deck and watched the men struggling in the water. They produced a machine gun, and Basil was certain they would use it on the survivors. They did not, instead returning to the safety of their vessel and disappearing beneath the waves, as silently as they had come.

For two days Basil clung to wreckage, frequently exchanging it for larger, more substantial pieces. Near the end of the second day, nearly overcome with delirium, Basil spotted a large raft with four men aboard. He abandoned his section of bamboo, once used as decoration in the

ship's elegant lounge. He swam toward the raft and was pulled aboard by Ensign Maddox, who greeted him with "Where have you been hiding?"

Other "passengers" on the eight by ten foot wooden hatch cover were a third American, sailor George Beezley, Cornelius van der Slot, an oiler on the ship and Nicko Hoogendam. Beezley and Hoogendam had been torpedoed once before, and were passengers on the Dutch ship on its return to New York. For the next 83 days, their lives would hang in the balance.

The readership of the *Barre Gazette* was made aware of Basil Izzi's plight for the first time in its issue of Thurs., Nov. 19, 1942. The small article appeared at the top of the last page, sandwiched between an advertisement from the New York Central Railroad (which ironically discussed the Nazi threat to ship convoys), and an offer from the Coronado Hotel in Worcester of Thanksgiving Dinner for \$2, including parking and entertainment. Thanksgiving in the South Atlantic, however, came and went without notice aboard the raft, nicknamed by its occupants "The Shark's Pit."

Thirty days into their ordeal, Basil had his 20th birthday, serenaded by his fellow survivors. Twelve days later, the Ensign turned 30. James Maddox was the kind of man you would least expect to find in military conflict. A professor of speech at Purdue University and an ordained minister before the war, Maddox was soft-spoken and gentle, extremely well-mannered and beloved by the men with whom he served. His quiet sense of humor and deeply held religious convictions provided the emotional strength he and the others needed to sustain them throughout their ordeal.

Each man on the raft harbored at least one treasured thought — something to look forward to when this was over. For Basil, it was an endless

feast of his mother's spaghetti and meatballs. For Jimmy Maddox, it was being reunited with his young wife. When he had sailed away, his wife had placed her wedding band with his on his finger — he would kiss them each night before he went to sleep.

When their struggle began, the raft contained two pounds of chocolate, nine cans of milk, two dozen hard-tack biscuits and 10 gallons of water. These rations were gone 19 days later — they gave most of the hard-tack to the birds because it made them thirsty. With nothing to eat, creative invention became necessary. The men caught a four-foot shark using their dangling toes for bait, an improvised lasso for capture. The next day, they saw a ship and hailed it, but it disappeared half an hour later on the horizon. Another ship was sighted the day after, with the same disappointing result.

On the 24th day, their water supply ran out. It rained three days later, and they captured rain-water by making a canvas trough. Basil's birthday produced one of their heartier meals when a school of small fish sought refuge under the raft. Caught barehanded, they were eaten bones and all. Birds landing on the raft to escape the chop of the sea were also fair game, and their entrails were used as

bait for larger fish.

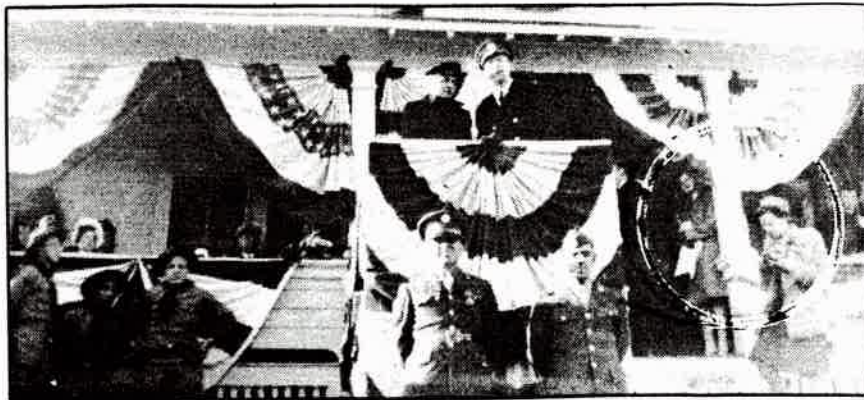
The survivors' clothing began to rot on the 40th day, and Basil made himself a new pair of shorts from his life jacket. Beezley lost sight in one eye, deafness followed on the 66th day. He then developed severe stomach pains, which lasted two days. Delirious, he raved about his girlfriend and died during the night.

Ensign Maddox performed the funeral service. As Beezley's body was lowered over the side of the raft, Maddox commented, "I hope I won't be the next one."

In Basil's words, "Lieutenant (he was posthumously promoted) Maddox went like Beezley on the 77th day." Before he died, he murmured about his wife as he fondled their wedding rings. They buried him at sea using prayers he had taught them. Now there was three — van der Slot, Hoogendam and Basil.

Crew member van der Slot was nearing 40, Nicko Hoogendam was all of 17, and Basil was now 20. The spirits of the men were now at their lowest point. Jimmy Maddox, their conscience and symbol of their human dignity and hopefulness was gone — without his optimism and encouragement to keep them going, Basil and his Dutch comrades now prepared themselves for death.

Back home in South



BARRE WELCOMES A HERO HOME. Speaking at the elaborately decorated clubhouse on the High Plains Ballfield, Basil Izzi is introduced to his well-wishers by Ensign Robert N. Mallett of the U.S. Navy's Industrial Incentive Division. After spending two days at his home in South Barre, Basil and Mallett began a nationwide tour of defense plants.

Barre, Basil was, to many of his friends and relatives, already dead. Only his mother Rose steadfastly believed he would return, to the point where she mobilized her daughter Angela to pressure the government for information and response. Angie wrote letter after letter, at the same time trying to raise a young family of her own.

Basil was the first-born son in the Izzi family, making him the precious center of his close-knit Italian relatives. His absence from them was painful enough, his loss was incomprehensible. To avoid having to deal with the increasing fear that he was indeed gone, all talk of him in the household ceased.

Each of his brothers and sisters sustained themselves with their own memories of their "favorite brother," remembering his gentle laughter and ability to keep a secret. Angie remembered the interaction between Basil and his mother, especially at mealtimes.

Due to the hours he kept and the jobs he was doing, Basil would often miss meals with the family. Rose would always cook for him, no matter when he chose to eat. She would sit right next to him as he ate, watching his every move with admiration and respect. As you might imagine, it drove Basil crazy. It was this particu-



AFTER EIGHTY-THREE DAYS on the raft, Cornelius van der Slot of Rotterdam is helped aboard by a U.S. patrol boat blue-jacket off the Brazilian coast on Jan. 24, 1943. Van der Slot's two companions, Basil (far right) and Nicko Hoogendam of Holland (Netherlands) (left of Basil, sitting), gather their meager belongings. These three, survivors of the five who reached the raft after their ship was torpedoed by the Germans, were adrift in the South Atlantic for 83 days. They survived by eating raw fish, fowl and rain water which they managed to catch from time to time.

lar memory which Basil recalled most often during his days and nights at sea.

Eighty days had passed when the men on the raft spotted a plane, but it didn't see them. They laughed, cried and prayed, but could not sleep that night. Early the next morning, another plane flew overhead. Then they

saw four more.

The miraculous rescue of the three survivors is best recalled in the words of Seaman Izzi: "We were holding Van around the knees so he could stand up. Suddenly he shouted (that) he could see smoke on the horizon. Sure enough, it was a convoy with escort vessels. A PC

boat headed straight for us. The first thing I saw on the PC boat was an officer with a shell in his hand — in case our raft turned out to be something else. We thought we could walk the minute we set foot on deck — we found we couldn't. We hollered for good old Navy beans, but they gave me a bowl of peaches first,

and then the blankets were ready for us." It was now Jan. 24, 1943.

The survivors gained their weight back quickly aboard the rescue vessel. They were brought first to a hospital in Brazil, then to the United States Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. Once in Bethesda, Basil wrote to his fam-

ily and assured them of his good health and safety.

The Izzi family found out that Basil was safe not from the government, but in the morning newspaper. The War Department still maintained that his well-being could not be verified, but that soon changed. A terse telegram finally arrived at the Izzi home, stating that "...Seaman Basil Dominic Izzi, U.S.N.R., previously reported missing following action in the performance of his duty is now reported to be a survivor. The anxiety caused you by the previous message is deeply regretted."

Basil's mother Rose was so grateful that she kept a promise she had made to herself to walk to St. Thomas-a-Becket church from the family home on Powder Mill Road in her stocking feet (bearing in mind that it's January). The priest met her at the door and offered her as-

sistance inside. She refused, marching instead to the altar to give thanks for her son's miracle.

Basil finally came home to Barre on Sun., April 11, 1943, three weeks before Easter that year. The "Barre Gazette" of April 8 had contained explicit instructions on parade participation. As Frederick Hiller, Barre Gazette publisher, also served as the "Izzi Welcome Home" committee chairman, the story now ran on page one.

The train bearing the young hero reached Union Station in Worcester at 2 p.m. that afternoon. The fit and trim sailor stepped from a private railroad car and saw his parents for the first time in nearly a year. When the emotion of the moment had subsided a bit, official greetings and addresses of welcome were delivered by a host of dignitaries. Governor Saltonstall and Queen Wilhelmina of the Nether-

lands had been invited to attend, and both sent official representatives. Her Majesty praised Basil's heroism and expressed the gratitude of her nation for his courage.

At the conclusion of the official welcome, the Barre Brass Band struck up "Anchors Aweigh" and the parade began. The motorcade, made up of cars festooned with signs and bunting, left the train station and proceeded down Main Street and finally out of the city, eventually traveling to the Clubhouse at High Plains Field — still the longest parade on record in the Commonwealth.

Once back in his native South Barre, Basil graciously accepted the praise of his friends and neighbors. More prayers, speeches and musical selections followed, to be repeated yet again on the bandstand in Barre Center later in the afternoon. By

available accounts, Basil heard the *Star-Spangled Banner* four times that day, the *Navy Hymn* six times. No less than 14 speakers praised him and all spoke eloquently of his ordeal, fueled by the fury of the war overseas.

When it ended, Dominic Izzi invited all who wanted to join them to come back to the family home. Following this, a formal reception was held at Florence Hall in South Barre, complete with a Grand March and the presentation of many gifts to the handsome young symbol of our national pride and defiance against the enemy. A long day of thanksgiving and celebration was over. A committee of 63 Barre citizens, each being assigned different tasks for the occasion, had overwhelmed their war hero on that Sunday, and although it was now over, Basil's next duty to his country was just



MANY YEARS AND MANY MEMORIES LATER, Basil gathers with friends in 1963 to celebrate the 12th Anniversary of his historic ordeal. Basil proudly displays photographs from his book "83 Days on a Raft." Always reluctant to discuss his wartime experiences, Basil seems at ease and comfortable among the people who never lost hope that he would return.

beginning.

Now especially valuable to the United States Navy as a morale booster, Basil began to tour defense plants throughout the country to tell his story. He enraptured audiences everywhere he spoke, managing to intersperse occasions of ceremony in-

to his touring schedule. He received numerous medals and commendations, visited Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia of New York City, several senators and congressmen, and other Americans of prominence.

Basil's most important and poignant visits, how-

ever, were to the families of Jimmy Maddox and George Beezley. Basil was never far from tears when he talked about these men, and he was especially moved when he met his officer's wife and parents, returning the two wedding rings to Maddox' young widow. He gave each of the families of these men a gold watch from the townspeople of Barre, and spent many hours recounting their times together for those they left behind.

Once he had satisfied his obligation to the Industrial Incentive Division of the United States Navy and the war effort in general, Basil returned to Barre where he would live out the rest of his life. He seldom spoke of his ordeal after the war ended, saying it made him uncomfortable because "so many boys' didn't come home." Basil was a quiet, unassuming man who was strengthened beyond measure by his experience in the South Atlantic.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to have known him remember the gentle peace in his eyes

and warmth of his smile. The young sailor with the reassuring face grew into a man whose pleasures were simple and who suffered beyond our ability to comprehend.

Seeing pictures of Basil as he toured the country after he came home, we are struck by his apparent patience and purpose. He became everyone's younger brother, someone America could see, touch and hear — someone we all admired and could identify with. While we may not have been able to empathize with the scope of his suffering, we could see him now — strong, healthy, charming and symbolic — and claim him as the best we had to offer, and consequently the best we were, and the best we had to give.

The illustration of this young man's endurance as the price we must be willing to pay for freedom was a powerful and effective one, bringing a bit of light and hope to a war-weary country when it needed it most.

Basil Izzi's life ended on July 2, 1979, 36 years after



THE THREE SURVIVORS AFTER RESCUE. Basil Izzi (top), Cornelius van der Slot (left), and Nicko Hoogendam (right) react after meals and showers aboard their rescue vessel. Basil, 20, is shown resting; van der Slot, 37, enjoys a good after-dinner cigar; and Hoogendam recounts his story for eager crew members.

he had faced death for the first time. His mother died four months later, again never believing that he had gone. Basil Izzi brought a distant war home to Barre and we have no concept today of how deeply this country was touched by the second world war, nor can we fully understand the jubilation when Basil came home to us. Victory gardens, rationing of food and gasoline, war bonds, and scrap metal and silk stocking drives in Barre are foreign concepts now, and today our definition of war and its deprivation causes us to look to places like Beirut or the Persian Gulf.

In 1943 the war was here, with us. So was Basil Izzi, reminding us of the price we must pay for

freedom, and the commensurate joy we experience when that rare occasion arrives when we can welcome such as he home and express our gratitude. Basil gave us a special gift — that of himself. Through his suffering and pain we were made to appreciate our lives and good fortune.

Once Basil's sister Angela had gently chided him for his not going to church on a regular basis — thinking that if anyone needed to be grateful, he did. His response was that he and God knew and understood each other very well, that God knew where to find him — "Remember," he told her, "He did once — and we've been together ever since."



THE MAN BASIL ALWAYS referred to as "My Officer." Ensign James Maddox of Evanston, Illinois was the Gunnery Officer on the torpedoes Dutch liner. He pulled Basil on the raft two days after the sinking. Maddox, a professor at Purdue University and an ordained minister, was a kind and gentle man who seemed out of place in combat. Tragically Maddox died on the raft just six days before the rescue.

Here ends the story of Basil Izzi, perhaps one of the best and most true depictions of Basil's rescue and his impact on Barre's citizens. He is, and always will be, one of Barre's greatest heroes.

C.W.H.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Lester Paquin and Angela Whigham, Basil's sister, for providing this newspaper with such outstanding account of Basil's rescue and return back to Barre.

Those of you who were in the Convoys or Ships to Malta, call me at 234-1234. I have a form for you to fill out to send for your MEDALS.

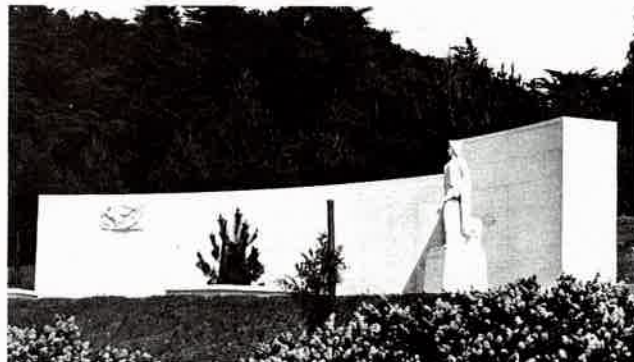


EAST COAST MEMORIAL is in Battery Park in New York City at the southern end of Manhattan Island. It is about 150 yards from the South Ferry subway station on the IRT Lines and stands just south of historic Fort Clinton, on a site furnished by the Department of Parks of the City of New York.

This memorial commemorates those soldiers, sailors, marines, coast guardsmen and airmen who met their deaths in the western waters of the Atlantic during World War II. Its axis is oriented on the Statue of Liberty. On each side of this axis are four tall gray granite pylons upon which are engraved the name, rank, organization and State of each of the 4,596 Missing who gave their lives in the service of their Country.

WEST COAST MEMORIAL is located on a high point near the junction of Lincoln and Harrison Boulevards in the Presidio of San Francisco, California and near the southern end of the Golden Gate Bridge.

This memorial was erected in memory of those soldiers, sailors, marines, coast guardsmen and airmen who met their deaths in the American coastal waters of the Pacific during World War II. It consists of a curved gray granite wall decorated with sculpture; on this wall are engraved the name, rank, organization and State of each of 413 Missing whose remains were never recovered or identified. The terrace affords an impressive view of the neighboring shore and the exit from the Golden Gate to the Pacific Ocean.

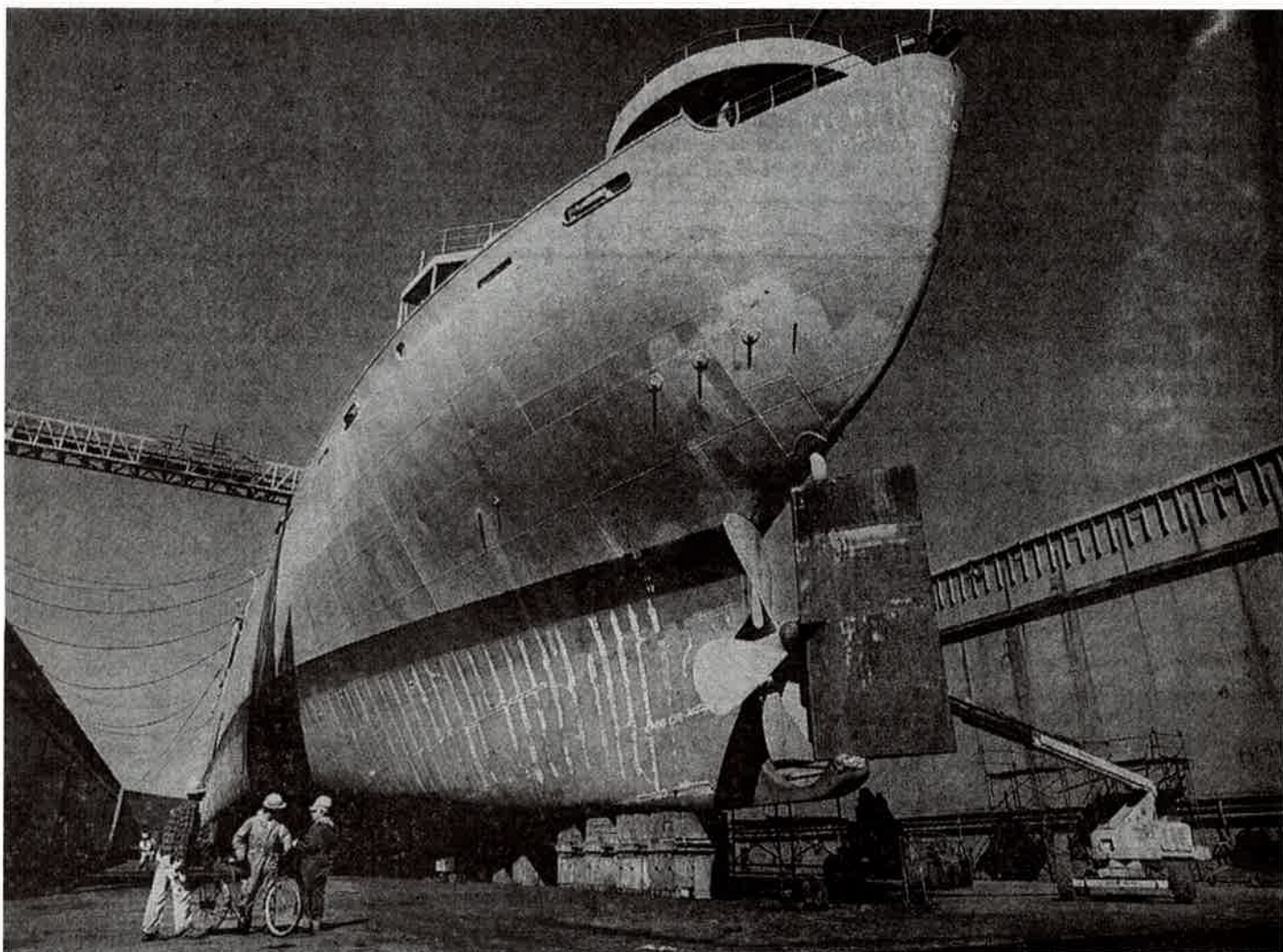


Captain Arthur Moore, author of "A CARELESS WORD - A NEEDLESS SINKING" informs me that he will not have any more books printed unless he has a high demand in the future. It may be that your library may be able to loan you one. Library of Congress Card # 82-73552. calloyd

THE P O I N T E R

The Last Convoy Sails for Normandy

The S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien and S.S. Lane Victory



The Jeremiah O'Brien is being made ready at a San Francisco Dry dock for its voyage to France. (photo: Brant Ward/The Chronicle)

Call 415-441-3101 to hear a taped message about the progress of the
S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien and to leave a message to the crew.