

GOLDEN OLDIE No. II

THE P O I N T E R



The photo above was taken about August, 1945 in the New York harbor, near the Statue of Liberty. The returning troops aboard the S.S. MARINE FOX were POWs from German camps. They boarded in La Harve, France and were one of the first to be received in New York. It was a real celebration and was shown on Movietone News in the theatre, and this picture was on the front page of a New York paper (probably the Times). Note the Armed Guard topside and the happy troops.

Sent in by Harold M. Forbes, 102 2nd St., SE #1005, Rochester, MN 55904-3735

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.

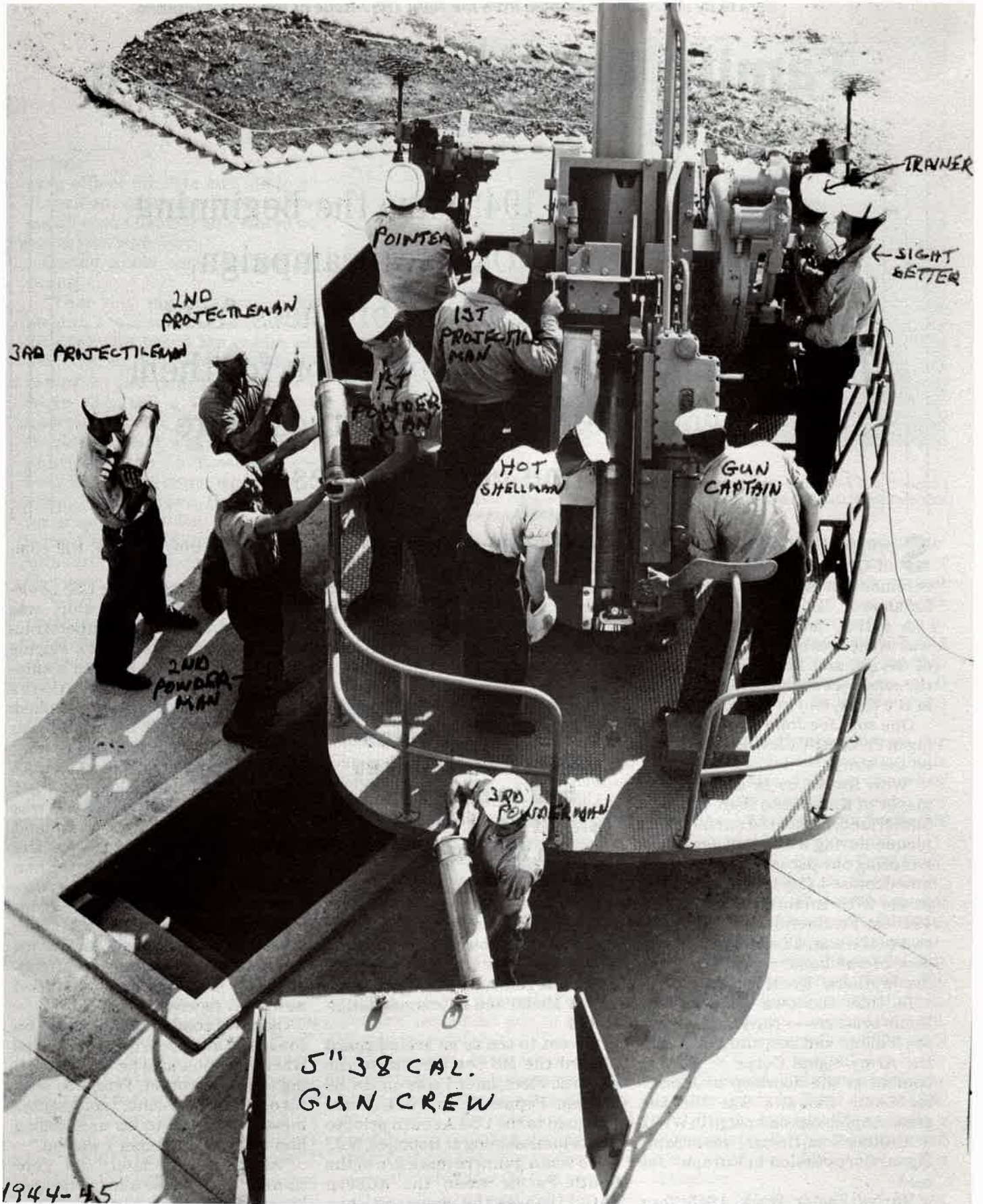
Many in the past, and I am sure many of you "NEW OL'SALTS" will want something "SPECIAL", etc. put into the "POINTER". I "CAN NOT" favor one over the other. If you have a good "TRUE" story that you think may be of interest to others, write it down and send to me. It may not be used but will be kept so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



1944-45

This 5"38 caliber dual purpose gun was used for teaching. It was mounted over a pit so that students could see the parts in the stand that the gun moved on while training. Taken at U.S. Naval Armed Guard Center, New Orleans, LA. Official U.S. Navy photograph. Sent in by Clarence F. Korke, 7 N. Mulberry Street, Fellsmere, FL 32948, (407) 571-0230

Family Reunion Off Okinawa

By Dan B. McCarthy

Easter Sunday, 1945, was the beginning of the bloody Okinawa campaign, and for the four Koole brothers from Kalamazoo, it was the occasion for them to get together in one of those rare wartime coincidences.

Spring of 1944, with the invasion of Okinawa a year off, a civic ceremony occurred in the city of Kalamazoo, Mich.

A fitting, memorable tribute it was in the lives of the military family of Gerald and Rena Koole. Five of the sons were serving overseas, three in the Navy, two in the Army.

One son, Joe John Koole, now living in Prescott Valley, Ariz., picks up on the story:

"With five of us in uniform, the mayor of Kalamazoo then, Louis W. Sutherland, presented our mother a plaque during a city hall ceremony honoring our parents, both of them now deceased. (My father had served in the 27th Infantry from 1907 to 1910 at Ft. Sheridan, Ill.) For the rest of the war, a flag hung in a window of our home representing the five brothers," Koole recalled.

In that Okinawa assault, four Koole brothers — Navymen Gerald, Jr., William and Joe, and Peter with the Army Signal Corps — were in combat at the doorstep of Japan's mainland. Okinawa was the last great amphibious campaign in WWII.

"Brother Tom, though, was in Army Signal Corps action in Europe," Joe said.

During Easter Week, 1945, four Kooles had a joyous reunion aboard a Navy ship off Okinawa, their COs

making the brotherly gathering possible. It was the first time they had been together since Feb. 1, 1942, when Peter enlisted and went overseas with the Signal Corps.

Joe Koole continued: "Tom had

The brothers had only about 20 minutes to visit before they had to board the small boat returning to the Auburn.

enlisted in the Army in September, 1939. He retired from service in 1962, after combat in Germany and Korea, and later transferring to the Air Force. Tom has two Bronze Stars, an Air Medal and a Commendation Medal.

"I went to sea as an armed guard aboard the MS Sea Serpent in the Atlantic Fleet; later I was on the SS William Pepperell. In 1944, I was assigned to the USS Auburn prior to her commissioning at Hoboken, N.J."

He was a gunners mate 2/c in the South Pacific when the Auburn (AGC 10) was the command ship, lying off Orange Beach 2, during the 5th Amphibious assault on Okinawa

with Rear Adm. Harry W. Hill commanding.

"During the assault the USS Louisville, my brother Bill's ship, was badly damaged in the superstructure by a kamikaze pilot's suicide attack. Aboard the Auburn a shipmate said to me, 'Hey, Joe, there's the Louisville over there!' I replied: 'The Lady Lou's got two stacks! His reply was: 'She got only one now!'

"And sure enough! When I met Bill later, he said that a kamikaze got 'em. The day after the Louisville was hit I asked the signal officer to send a message to the cruiser to see if he was all right. Our brother, Jerry, had sent a similar message from his battleship, the Idaho, also in the Okinawa attack.

"The good news came back to us. Bill was okay," recalled Joe enthusiastically, 41 years after the good news was received.

Okinawa combat had lessened on the island and aboard support ships when Joe Koole said he "got the feeling that my brother, Pete, was with his outfit on the island. I got another message sent off to his unit, telling him what ship number I was on."

"About a week later," Joe continued, "Peter came aboard the Auburn with one of his buddies. What a great surprise that was to me! Permission was granted later by my

exec officer for Pete and me to go aboard one of the small boats shoving off soon for the Idaho, where we could visit with Jerry."

Gerald Koole continues the account:

"That day my brothers came aboard, I was working around the aft deck and heard the public address blaring, 'Seaman Gerald Koole, report to the quarterdeck.' Well, when they call a seaman to the quarterdeck, the guy usually is in trouble. While I was pretending I didn't hear the PA message, I was busy wondering about what sort of a jam I was in. Then, the call came again, and they added: 'You have visitors.' I went up to the quarterdeck wondering who'd come aboard to visit me.

"What a funny but great feeling came over me when I saw Joe. After a handshake there was a big, brotherly bearhug! And Joe said: 'Do you know that fella over there?' I looked toward the 14-inch gun turret and there sat Pete with a mile-wide grin!" Jerry said.

The brothers had only about 20 minutes to visit before they had to board the small boat returning to the Auburn.

"Because of extensive kamikaze damage to the Louisville," Joe Koole said, "Bill couldn't leave his ship. However, about a week later Bill did come aboard the Auburn, and I passed along all the news about Jerry and Tom.

"And there was some talk about the tragic death several weeks earlier of Ernie Pyle. Everybody out there felt so bad about Ernie Pyle."

(Ernie Pyle, war correspondent and WWII author of books covering the battle zones, was with the 77th Infantry Division on Ie Shima, April 18, 1945, when a Japanese sniper's bullet ended his illustrious career.)

The Koole brothers' reunion was filed away among fond memories when another thrill occurred for Joe aboard the Auburn.



Aboard the battleship, USS Idaho, SM1/c Gerald J. Koole greets brothers Peter ('center') and Joe (John E.) on the right, during their first reunion in three years. Their 20-minute visit was during Easter week of 1945.

"Several of us were just sitting around off duty on the aft-deck when I spotted an officer of admiral rank approaching alone. I called 'tensh-hut!' and we all sprang to our feet. He returned our salutes and told us to sit at ease. I said: 'Your face looks familiar, sir. May I ask who you are?'"

"And he replied: 'Richard E. Byrd.' We talked briefly about the invasion and our part in the action, and Adm. Byrd left us there, pretty excited about meeting him," Joe Koole said.

(Adm. Byrd was a Navy pilot and Antarctica explorer in 1930 and later. He established several bases for scientific research in a region known as Little America.)

Also aboard the Auburn during the early assault at Iwo Jima, says Joe Koole, was a former Secretary of the Navy and later the first Secretary of Defense, James V. Forrestal, but few personnel got to see him during his brief visit.

In January, 1946, when all five brothers gathered in the family home along East Butler Court, a Kalamazoo Gazette photographer arrived to find them in civilian clothes again, their first get-together in five years when the whole family was present.

"I recall Jerry and Bill got into some brotherly debate about the merits and combat of their ships.

Jerry boosted the Idaho and battlewagon action. Bill reminded him of the three kamikaze strikes against the Lady Lou. I think they were both heading for a draw when I cut in to brag that each served aboard fine fighting ships, but I added: 'My ship had a lot of famous personnel aboard.' And that ended the arguments.

"The whole family counted our blessings during the reunion. Four of us were already in service when the five Sullivan brothers went down with the USS Juneau in battle off Guadalcanal," Joe Koole said.

(The Sullivans, George T., 29; Francis H., 26; Joseph E., 23; Madison A., 22; and Albert L., 20, were the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas P. Sullivan, Waterloo, Iowa. The Sullivans enlisted Jan. 3, 1942, with the proviso that they not be separated. Some 700 seamen were lost aboard the Juneau. A destroyer was launched in April, 1943, and christened the Sullivans.)

"Every Easter season," Joe Koole said, "holds special memories for my brothers and me. Peter died in 1980 and Bill in January. We're from a close-knit family. Our parents raised nine children, eight sons and a daughter."

Since 1943, Joe Koole said, he has been a continuous member of VFW Post 1527 in Kalamazoo. ■

Battle of the Atlantic

by Don Quesinberry,
Staff Writer

The Battle of the Atlantic was the scene of the longest, most crucial campaign of WWII. All hopes for victory over Germany depended on England. The allied air offensive would begin from there and so would the second front. Britain depended on being supplied from the sea. The 3000 mile-long shipping lanes from North America were her lifeline. Hitler said, "Cut that lifeline and Britain will be starved into surrendering".

The Atlantic battle was a dirty, cold grueling business. Nerves were constantly on edge in the claustrophobic submarines, or aboard the naval ships zig-zag searching for the tell-tale sonar ping, or the harried status of busy searching aircraft.

After Pearl Harbor, Hitler launched a vicious U-Boat offensive against the North American seaboard. Eastern ports such as New York, Boston and Norfolk were protected with mines and nets. Coastal convoys were established, black-outs ordered, and ship's radios restricted after U-Boat Packs achieved astonishing success.

In the first seven months of 1942, German submarines sank an appalling total of 681 Allied ships at small cost to them. One convoy, SC-42 (New York to England) was hit by U-Boats off Cape Farewell, Greenland, and lost 22 out of its 63 ships before fog blew in, saving the rest from annihilation. Conventional U-Boat tactics were to attack on the surface at night, staying safely submerged all day. They called this the "Happy Time". However, as radar and aircraft became more plentiful the ratios of Nazis successes changed.

As German losses grew, the Nazis lost their best U-Boat crews and Commanders. Replacements were less expert and resolute. At about the time of the Sicily invasion, German Admiral Karl Doenitz was forced to conclude, "Heavy losses must be borne, but last month for every 10,000 tons sunk we paid for it with one of our U-Boats, losses have reached an unbearable mark".

At the Casablanca Conference it had been determined that the defeat of the U-Boats was crucial. At that moment the U-Boats were winning. During 1942 a total of 7,790,697 tons of Allied shipping had been sunk, the bulk of it by German submarines. The American shipyards had only turned out 7 million tons as replacement plus the number of Operational U-Boats had risen from 91 to 212.

The Conference decided the key to defeating the subs was to bomb the yards where they were constructed and the U-Boat pens which offered sanctuary for the craft. Secondly, light escort aircraft carriers should be con-



(Above) Survivor rescued from oil.

(Below) Survivor being helped ashore.



structed to afford convoys cover protection in the Mid Atlantic air gap.

The German losses in part may be accounted for by increased Allied participation plus the breaking of several of the German naval codes including "Enigma".

"Enigma" was a coding machine which looked much like the conventional typewriter encoding and decoding messages via a series of drums. The Germans thought it was fool proof. The British obtained a working model and were able to decipher nearly all the messages for the rest of the war. The British intercepts were called "Ultra".

Another contribution to the downfall of the mighty Third Reich submarine fleet was the new techniques of signal "Triangulation". When a submarine used its radio (German U-Boats were required to report regularly) two or more stations on shore picked up the signal from the U-Boat. Drawing a directional line from each station, the point of intersection of the lines determined exactly where the U-Boat was at the moment. Many subs found themselves under attack and sunk when Allied bombers suddenly appeared from out of nowhere.

The death of the German Submarine Service was in some part their own doing. During the war, German scientist came up with a device for their submarines which detected the approach of enemy aircraft before

they could get into striking range. This permitted the Nazi submarine to dive to safety. Germans were unaware the device also sent out a radar pulse which the Allies were able to detect. Setting radar in low frequency, aircraft simply rode the beam down to the waiting submarine.

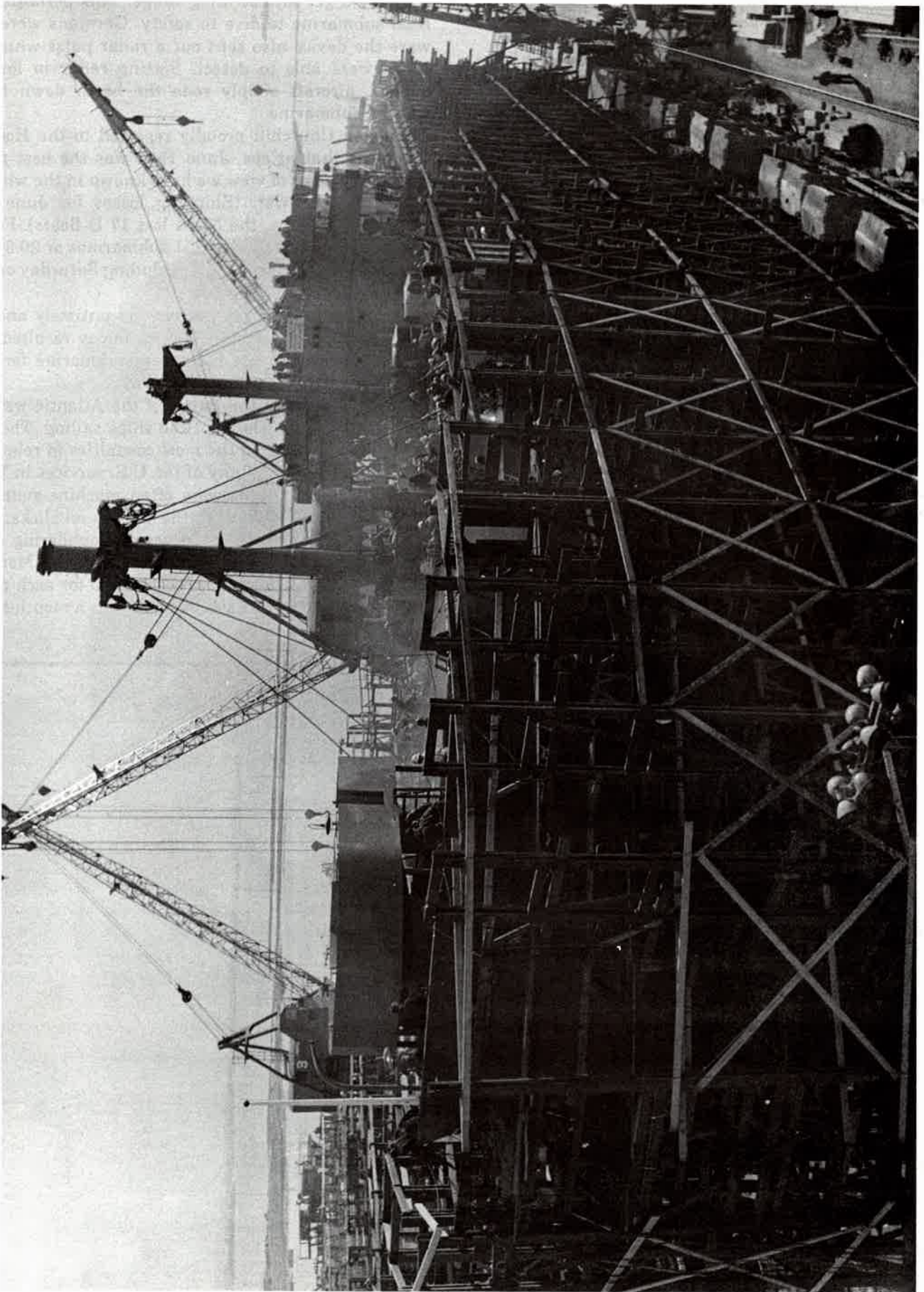
Winston Churchill proudly reported to the House of Commons that at sea, June 1943 was the best month from every point of view we have known in the whole 46 months of the war. (Shipping losses for June were 123,825 tons the Nazis lost 17 U-Boats). For the next year the Allies killed 251 submarines or 20.91 submarines a month (one a day, excluding Saturday or Sundays).

According to Admiral Doenitz the untimely and useless depletion of German U-Boat forces resulted from Hitler's decision to use his excess submarine forces to cover the entire coast line of Norway.

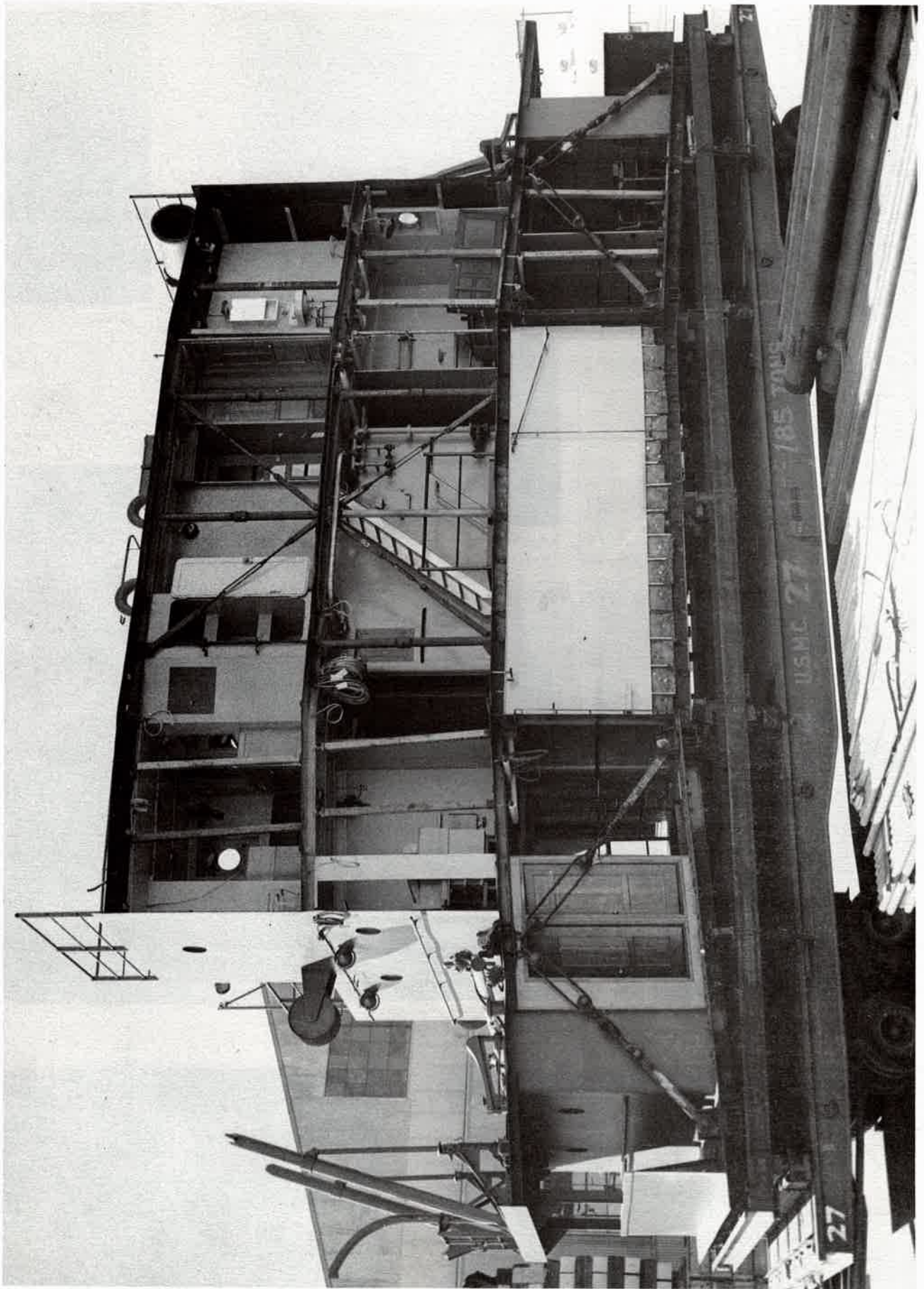
The real heroes of the Battle of the Atlantic were the Merchant Marine who kept the ships sailing. The Merchant Marine suffered the most casualties in relation to the number of men of any of the U.S. services in WWII. Sinking ship survivors were often machine-gunned as they tried to swim through the viscous oil slicks, ducking to escape the searing flames or floundering about, clinging to rafts or life preservers. Still the Merchant Marine had to deliver ten tons of cargo for each person to go overseas and one and one half tons a month to supply him while there.



WHAT A PILLBOX LOOKED LIKE AFTER WE GOT THERE !



Construction of Pre-Fabricated ship, S.S. ROBERT E. PEARY



Pre-fabricated section bound for the S.S. ROBERT S. PEARY

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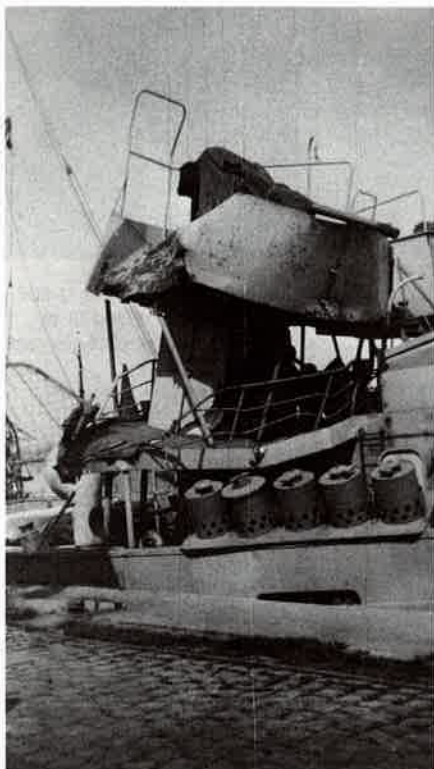
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10



These photos from SS Eugene Hale were sent in by William F. Sullivan, 156 North 6th Street, Fulton, NY 13069, telephone 315-592-9216.

1. Ramming another ship in Marseilles, France.
2. Ships tied at La Harve, France.
3. German Landing Craft, made of cement (1944).
4. Sunken ship at Marseilles, France.
5. Damaged splinter shield after being hit on board the "Eugene Hale."
6. La Harve, Northern France taken from aboard anchored "Hale."
7. View of Convoy slipping past mined area.
8. Torpedoed ship sinking in North Atlantic.
9. Port gun after it was rammed at sea.
10. Beached at Northern France.
11. View of ship tied astern at Harbor Side Terminal.
12. Captured snapshot of German plane and officers.
13. Ship sunk after hitting mine.

3



The Death of the U-boat Service

Following the climactic successes of 1943, U-boat losses increased to such an alarming degree that Admiral Doenitz felt compelled to call off his shark attacks lest the entire force be destroyed at the hands of the ever-strengthening Allies. Though there were to be many more ships sunk by the stealthy U-boats the momentum of their assault was broken and never returned despite the fact that submarine production was yet to reach its peak numerically.

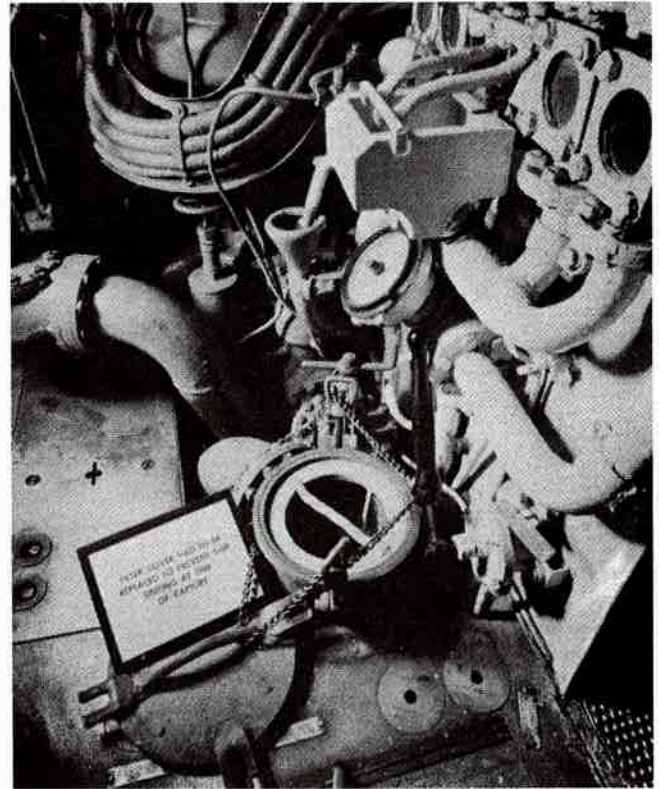
This loss of thrust and verve was attributable to many factors, not the least of which was the element of fear that struck terror into the hearts of new recruits and veteran skippers alike in the dark days of 1944-45 when Germany's chances of winning the war became bleak even to the most die-hard Nazi political officer. Though the truth about U-boat losses were kept secret the numbers of boats failing to return to their submarine pens became ever more apparent. Crews ordered to sea knew in advance their chances of returning grew rapidly worse as the cordon of Allied might dramatically tightened at every level.

Those lucky enough to sneak through the Allied blockade were certain to face the deadly Hunter/Killer teams of carriers and destroyer escorts that prowled the Atlantic under a broad umbrella of equally destructive naval aircraft. Radar's all-seeing eyes bothered them most for it sought them out in any weather no matter how bad the visibility. Nor did they fancy the frightening spectre of being bombarded by the new depth charges, Squid mortar and Hedgehog rocket launchers that fanned into the sea from warships like a shower of deadly explosive arrows. Worst of all was knowing through their own "Metox" echo sounders when an approaching destroyer was closing in for the kill. It took a special kind of courage to be aware how horrible death could be in a flooding submarine and still man your battle station with cool reserve. Certainly, to the young, raw recruits who still volunteered for submarine service, the war at sea was nothing like the recruiting posters' promises or patriotic rhetoric boomed by the recruiters.

It was a sad though tightly concealed truth that by late 1943 most of the early war U-boat veterans had died in their steel caskets. Well placed propaganda by Goebbels told only of the Allied tonnage sunk by the "brave U-boat crews," not of the severe losses inflicted on them. But the reality of the situation was that the young officers hurriedly promoted to skipper status along with their equally green, semi-trained crews were woefully ill-equipped to combat the Allies superior forces and sub-hunting technology.

Day by day the roll call solemnly drummed the waste of humanity sent to sea by the *Seekriegsleitung* (Directors of Naval Warfare). U-415 was ordered to sea even though its captain was not aboard. As the diesel engines were fired up a mine contacted the hull and the boat exploded and sank at its moorings with heavy loss of life. U-629 left Brest for Plymouth and was sunk two days later. U-621 left August 13, sunk August 18th. Ditto U-740, U-441, U-413, U-821 and U-984—all quickly lost with no survivors. The Allies were everywhere, day or night, endlessly on the lookout and ready to attack at the slightest "ping" of the Sonar.

Those who miraculously escaped destruction brought their battered boats back to submarine pens more con-



Above: In the only attempt to scuttle the captured U-505, her crew had opened this eight-inch sea strainer in the control room. Prompt action by the boarding party in replacing the cover saved the boat.



vinced than ever how primitive and inadequate their boats now were. German radar was in short supply and at best only partially effective. The submerged breathing device *Schnorchels* that allowed a U-boat to charge its batteries from its diesels was a great step forward for the boats didn't have to surface for long

periods of time. But days under the sea suffering in tight spaces the tensions of fear and apprehension also took their toll on even the newer type XXI boat crews that boasted all manner of advanced German technology.

Skippers often were more intent on survival than pressing home attacks that were certain to result in their own destruction. Many displayed remarkable courage in the face of certain doom, their attitudes foolishly bolstered by the hope that their sacrifice might save Germany from defeat. Other more prudent skippers carefully chose where and when to attack, generally under the safest circumstances. They knew Hitler would never admit defeat and in their loyalty to the *Reich* attempted to serve out their sworn oaths of allegiance regardless of the consequences. Indeed, when Doenitz sent the order for all 43 U-boats at sea to surrender in May, 1945, the loyal crewmen felt a profound sense

It was not until the end of the war that the story of the captured U-505 was told. For a time, she made a tour of eastern port cities as a show-piece for a war-bond drive, and then she was tied up in the Navy yard at Portsmouth, N.H., to await final disposition. When Chicago learned that one of its native sons had been in command when it was captured, the city requested the ship be displayed in Chicago as a war memorial. On May 14, 1954, the U-505 began her final voyage—a 3,000-mile tow trip through the St. Lawrence Seaway and four of the Great Lakes. The U-505 arrived in Chicago three months later and was placed on a floating dry dock in preparation for the final leg of the journey, an 800-foot trip overland from Lake Michigan to the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.



U-505: PRIZE OF WAR

When the German submarine U-505 was commissioned on August 26, 1941, it was understandable why the crew was in such great spirits—submarines in the Atlantic were already basking in the glory of fantastic kills with a minimum of losses. The submarine was the ultimate in combatants, destined to win the war for the Axis powers. The U-505 crew anticipated the same success and fame for Germany's newest undersea craft.

After several months of intensive training in various aspects of submarine warfare and undersea operations, U-505 received her first real war assignment. On February 11, 1942, U-505 made her way to Freetown on the coast of French West Africa where she sank four ships totalling 26,000 British Registered Tons. Her next assignment, in the Caribbean, netted her another 14,700 tons of shipping.

After returning an ailing captain to home port, U-505 was back in service with a new commander, this time assigned to Trinidad. Three days after sinking an unknown freighter of 5,500 tons on November 7, the U-505 was attacked from the air and a bomb scored a direct hit, sending the heavily damaged submarine back to her home port.

Following these months of successful operations, the bomb attack seemed to place a jinx on the ship. Several attempts at going to sea after repairs had been made, continued to turn up new problems. But finally, on June 1, the ship was again underway, bound for the southern Atlantic. Near the coast of Spain the submarine met with a British destroyer, was depth charged, and again was forced homeward. Morale aboard the ship suffered. But once again, luck returned.

By October, the ship again was underway. Again it came under attack, this time near the Azores. After taking several depth charges, U-505 sat helplessly, waiting for the destroyer to strike its final blow. The destroyer appeared to be in the best position to blow the submarine to pieces with depth charges; the crew was expecting the end, their nerves strained to the utmost. But the destroyer turned away.

Again repairs had to be made and this time U-505 received a new electric engine. By Christmas she again was underway, her planned destination—the Gold Coast of Africa; her ultimate destination—Chicago, Illinois, United States of America.

In May, 1944, the U.S. Navy task group 22.3, known as a "hunter-killer" group, sailed from Norfolk, Virginia, to look for submarines. Under the command of Capt. Daniel V. Gallery, and composed of an escort carrier and five destroyer escorts, the group headed for a known U-boat rendezvous area near the Canary Islands off the coast of West Africa.

The primary mission of the group was to find and destroy enemy submarines, but Capt. Gallery had a daring plan of his own; capture a U-boat intact! Such a prize would be of inestimable value to the Allies, he thought, because of the equipment and documents it might yield. And as the task group proceeded, a boarding party was organized on each ship and rehearsed in a role that few ever expected to materialize.

The first contact was made on June 4 by the escort *Chatelain* as the group headed for Casablanca, about 150 miles off the African coast. When the vessel was identified as a U-boat, the carrier sent two FM-2 Wildcat fighter planes over the area. When they sighted the submerged U-boat, they fired their machine guns into the water to mark her position. *Chatelain* heeled over in a right turn, steadied up on her bearing and moved in swiftly for the kill.

A full pattern of depth charges exploded in the water around the U-boat. As their detonations threw geysers of spray into the air, a large oil slick spread on the water and the fighter planes overhead radioed, "You struck oil! Sub is surfacing!"

Six and one-half minutes after *Chatelain's* attack, U-505 was on the surface, a wounded but still formidable enemy. Believing his ship was mortally damaged, the commanding officer ordered his crew to abandon ship. As the partially submerged U-505 circled to the right because of a jammed rudder, the crew went over the side, into the hands of the waiting ships.



Above: When Lt. Albert L. David and his eight-man boarding party caught up with the still circling sub, they found only one man topside—he was dead, the only fatality. They quickly scrambled down the hatch for the conning tower. Water was pouring into the deserted control room through an opened eight-inch sea strainer. In their haste to abandon ship, this was the only valve the Germans opened to scuttle her, and it was quickly closed by the boarding party. With temporary salvage measures completed, an additional boarding party from the carrier was dispatched to attach tow lines.



of bitter defeat. All but two of the 43 boats at sea headed for Britain and the U.S., as ordered. Two escaped to South America. But of the almost four hundred U-boats still capable of some kind of military service, two hundred were scuttled by their disheartened crews in total defiance of Doenitz' orders.

It had been a long and hard war with victory, often seemingly in their grasp, turned to bitter but proud defeat. The U-boat crews had served long and hard and sacrificed the most of any branch of service. Of the 40,950 men recruited, 28,200 lost their lives and over 5,000 were taken prisoner. Of the 1,162 U-boats built 785 were lost, the majority to aircraft late in the war. Though they paid dearly for their victories the Allied merchant seamen paid a higher toll with 30,246 men of all nations dying at sea, over 5,000 of them Americans. The U-boats accounted for 2,605 merchant ships sunk totaling over 13½ million tons. It took the combined might of half a million Allied seamen and fliers and the total resources of the United States, Russia and Great Britain to bring the U-boats to their heels. Even then they waged the one unending battle of the Second World War that lasted from the first day to the last. Doenitz' proud salute that they had fought a heroic fight without parallel, was indeed a well earned tribute to a cadre of men the world will likely never see again. ♣

Adventure at Sea for World War II Veterans

By Carl Nolte
Chronicle Staff Writer

The Liberty Ship Jeremiah O'Brien, one of the oldest operating merchant ships in the world, is getting ready to sail from San Francisco on an epic voyage to yesterday.

If all goes well, the trip will make history, because the O'Brien will be commemorating the 50th anniversary of D-Day, the Allied invasion of France. It will also be an adventure, because most of the volunteer crew are veterans of World War II, steaming the old ship back to their own youth.

The O'Brien was there on June 6, 1944, carrying troops, then tanks and supplies. It is the only ship that was in the invasion armada — the largest in history — that is capable of making the trip back to Normandy.

The crew has already gotten a taste of the old wartime cliché that told people to hurry up as fast as they could so they could wait around as long as necessary. So far the sailing date has been postponed twice because the Coast Guard wants more work done to be sure the old ship is absolutely seaworthy. With any luck, the O'Brien will sail during the weekend.

"This is the last big adventure in a guy's life," said Ralph Ahlgren, who is 72 and served in the South Pacific. He is a retired printer, has not been to sea for more than 40 years and is shipping on the O'Brien as an oiler in the engine room.

For more than six weeks the old sailors have been working on the ship, getting it ready, loading fuel, meat, potatoes, beans, butter, paint, tools, brooms, toilet paper, soap, and the thousands of things that will be needed for a 20,000-mile voyage down the Pacific Coast to Panama, through the canal, across the Caribbean and the Atlantic to Portsmouth, England and France and then back to San Francisco.

Last Sunday, the crew took the ship out for a trial run on the bay, and, as Coast Guard officers watched carefully, put it through steaming and steering tests.

On its return to the San Fran-

cisco Drydock Co. berth at the foot of Potrero Hill, the O'Brien had a broom lashed to its foremast — the traditional sign of a clean sweep of the tests.

That was a bit premature, it turned out. For one thing, work connecting the new electronic navigational equipment now required was not finished. For another, somehow fuel oil got into a water ballast tank and has to be removed. In the old days, the contaminated water would have been pumped over the side at sea, but that was then, this is now, and that is illegal as hell.

"We will proceed to sea as soon as we are ready," said Captain George Jahn, the 78-year-old master of the ship. When is that? "As soon as we get certified," he said.

The crew has been put on six-hour notice.

On board, there is a kind of optimism and enthusiasm that only comes when volunteers overcome those who said it couldn't be done. They have waited a lifetime for this; a few extra days do not matter so much.

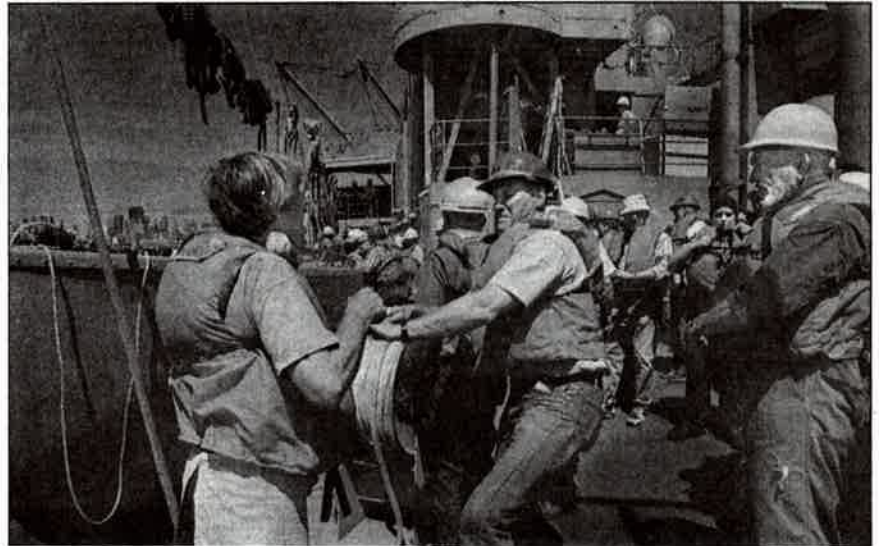
Once at sea, Captain Jahn says the trip will be "no problem. The ship is fine and the engine is perfect." The crew, he says, is old, "but they are all good and anxious to go."

Still, there have to be doubts. The O'Brien, one of 2,751 identical cargo ships built to last one wartime voyage, is 50 years old; it spent 33 years laid up in the mothball fleet in a backwater on Suisun Bay in a sort of suspended animation.

In 1979, the ship's long sleep was broken; the National Liberty Ship Memorial took the vessel over. The preserving grease was cleaned from the engine, the boilers were fired up and the ship was steamed by volunteers to San Francisco for a refit and restoration that has been a true labor of love — 400,000 hours of volunteer work.

The result, said Captain Jahn, is a nearly new 1943 ship, unaltered from its original condition, a true time capsule.

He notes that the O'Brien served at sea for only 2½ years and made a total of seven wartime sea



BY VINCE MAAGIOLA/THE CHRONICLE

The crew of the Jeremiah O'Brien worked on an emergency drill as they prepared for the trip to France

voyses. On the other hand, it is prudent to remember that the last ocean voyage was in 1946.

One must also consider that the Liberty ships were built quickly — the O'Brien was delivered in 56 days, an incredible time when you consider that these days it would take that long to even fill out the papers.

The Liberty ships were built to a simple — and obsolete — design. The O'Brien is 441 feet six inches long, half the size of a modern freighter. It will carry no cargo, which often means a nasty ride in any kind of sea.

The O'Brien is powered by a triple expansion steam engine, a maritime relic by any standard. The engine's top speed is 76 revolutions a minute, which will give a cruising speed of nine knots. One can fly to England in about 10 hours; the O'Brien will take 40 days to get there.

It is not air-conditioned; the temperatures in the tropics are in the high 90s. In the steamship's engine room, they expect temperatures of 120 degrees.

For this reason, the watches have been cut from the normal four hours to three. "Four hours in that engine room will be enough to give you heat prostration," said Ahlgren, who will join the ship in Le Havre and bring it back home.

Every member of the crew has had to take a physical exam and all were certified fit. However, they all have been told in writing that "a significant risk to life and limb exist, and the usually expected measures may not be available, with potentially dire consequences, especially in the age group expected."

A doctor will be aboard, and so will the Rev. Jim Wade, an Anglican priest, who is doubling as the purser.

Just to be on the safe side, the veterans have been augmented by some younger hands. Some of the less senior engineering officers are younger men. The kid in the engine room will be Dirk Warren, 20, a cadet from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, N.Y.

"This," he said, "is a great historical opportunity. I'm just gonna love it."

There will also be two 19-year-old deck cadets from Kings Point.

Money is still a problem. Nobody is getting paid, but the voyage is costing \$2.4 million, and all but \$300,000 has been raised. The National Liberty Ship Memorial borrowed the rest. "We have good credit and have always paid our bills," said retired Rear Admiral Thomas Patterson, who is heading the effort and sailing with the ship.

"But with credit, you have to pay it back."

The debt aside, Patterson has high praise for the help the O'Brien got from the San Francisco maritime community. "You couldn't do a job like this anywhere but on the San Francisco waterfront," he said. "When you need them, they are there."

It will be a triumph if the ship makes it. Even sailing day will be a small triumph.

A nearly identical ship, the John Brown, was also planning to go from Baltimore to France for D-Day but the voyage was canceled Thursday, almost the last minute. An inspection of the hull showed that the rivets on about half the length of the ship had to be renewed; the ship was not seaworthy. The cost of repairs, said Captain Brian Hope, who headed the project, "was beyond belief."

He called it "a terrible disappointment. We were done in by rivets."

One other old ship, the 1945 vintage Lane Victory, based in Los Angeles, is also expected to sail, perhaps in company with the O'Brien.

Reporter Ships Out On the O'Brien

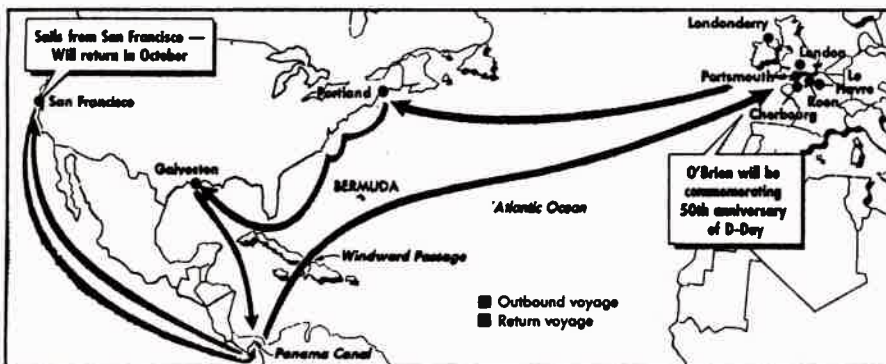
Chronicle reporter Carl Nolte is sailing with the Liberty Ship Jeremiah O'Brien on its trip to the 50th anniversary of D-Day and will be filing regular reports from the ship.

The ship is expected to call at Panama in late April, cross the Atlantic in May and reach Portsmouth, England, on May 22. After a naval review by Queen Elizabeth II, President Clinton and French President Francois Mitterand, the ship will go to France in time for the D-Day anniversary on June 6.

Nolte's last overseas assignment was covering the gulf war for The Chronicle.

THE VOYAGE OF THE LIBERTY SHIP JEREMIAH O'BRIEN

The voyage of the Jeremiah O'Brien will take the ship through the Panama Canal, up the Caribbean and through the Windward Passage between Cuba and Santo Domingo, to a rendezvous with other ships off Bermuda, then to Portsmouth, England. Following that trip, a short voyage across the English Channel to the D-Day beaches, a call at several French ports and London. On the way back, the ship will call at Portland, Me., where it was built, at New York and Galveston, Tex., where the ship called during World War II.



CHRONICLE GRAPHIC

Reprinted from the San Francisco Chronicle, Saturday, April 16, 1994.



Rhode Island U.S.N. ARMED GUARD CREW is shown placing a TIME CAPSULE at the Rhode Island Veterans Cemetery on August 14, 1993 in Exeter, R.I. Gerald Greaves (upper right photo, leaning over, in white shirt) 143 East Killingly Road, Foster, R.I. was in charge of the ceremony and it will preserve history of the Armed Guard.

US WW II VETERANS ELIGIBLE FOR RUSSIAN MEDAL

The Embassy is pleased to announce that we are now accepting applications from qualified US veterans for the medal "The 40th Anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War (WW II)".

This Commemorative medal is being made available by the Russian government to the veterans of the US Merchant Marine, US Navy, the US Corps of Engineers and other US Armed Force Services who participated in operations bringing war supplies to the Soviet Union by way of the Barents Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea or the Sea of Okhotsk during World War II.

To apply for this medal, veterans must submit a typed or clearly printed request to:

Embassy of Russia
Attn. Mr. Yuri MENSHIKOV
1125 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

The following information is required:
1) The veteran's full name, date of birth and current mailing address.
2) A full copy of the veteran's discharge papers - DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, Notice

of Separation from US Naval Service or another comparable document).

3) The dates and a brief description of the operation in which the veteran served and what he did.

The Embassy will also accept applications along with the appropriate information for this medal from the next of kin of deceased veterans.

The average time to process a request is 9 - 12 weeks.

Following this, the medal will be mailed to the veteran by certified mail. While the medals are being awarded at no cost to the recipient it would be appreciated if each applicant would enclose with their application a check or money order in the sum of three dollars payable to the Embassy of Russia to help defray the considerable cost of postage in mailing out hundreds of medals. Your help is greatly appreciated.

To speed up the procedure it may help if you mark the front left bottom of the envelope: "Medal".

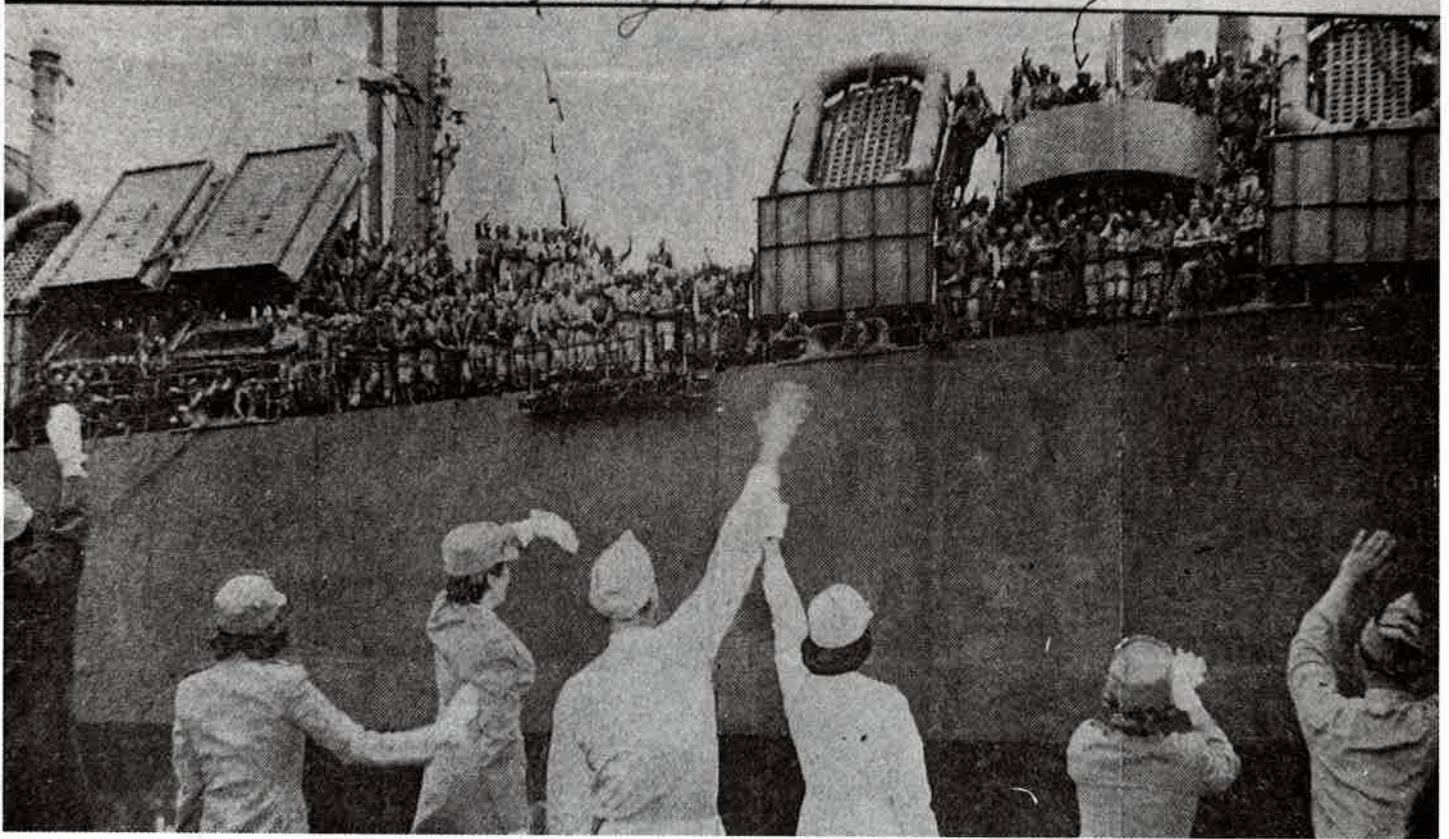
Office of the Public Affairs
Embassy of the Russian Federation
February 1994

Contact: Ian Millar, 1806 Bantry Tr., Kernersville, NC 27284

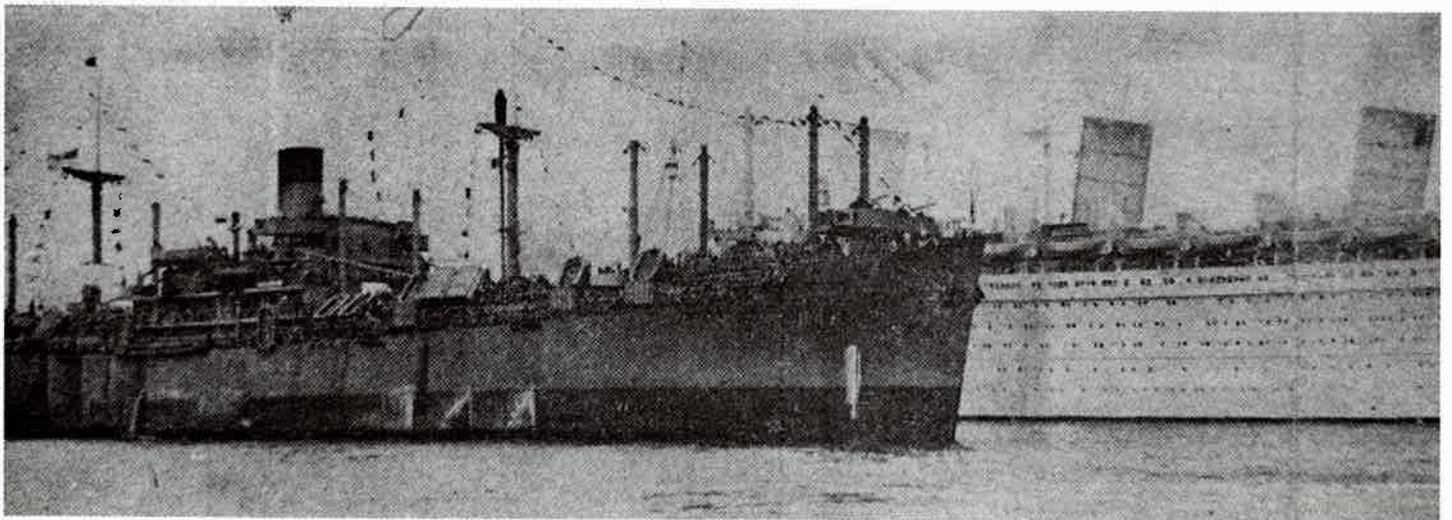
Gotham Instead of Pacific? Anytime, Pal

aug 1945

this is me



REDEPLOYMENT'S sweet to these Yanks aboard the S.S. SEA CAT docking at North River. Pacific bound when war ended, they were shunted to New York instead.



PASSING ACQUAINTANCES. The Sea Cat, (foreground), heading for the pier with 1,982 happy Army passengers aboard, passes the Queen Mary, outward bound.

Both of the above newspaper photos were sent in the David E. Brown of Clemons, Georgia.

THE POINTER

HEADING FOR HOME



The historical "LIBERTY SHIP", the S.S. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN is shown sailing the Panama Canal in 1995 as she heads for her home port in San Francisco, California USA after taking part in the 50TH ANNIVERSAR of NORMANDY. The "LADY" is one of the last two famous designated HISTORICAL LIBERTY SHIPS left of the 2710 built during WW II. The other, the S.S. JOHN W. BROWN is docked at the Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Maryland. We also have a third ship designated as Historical, the S.S. LANE VICTORY in San Pedro. Photo sent in by Captain Joe Chamberlain, U.S.Navy Armed Guard of WW II who piloted her through the Canal. (see letter on page 13)

SS Alexander Majors

Home Port: San Francisco, CA

Company: Isthmian Steamship Co. New York, NY
Master: Not known
Gross Tons: 7176

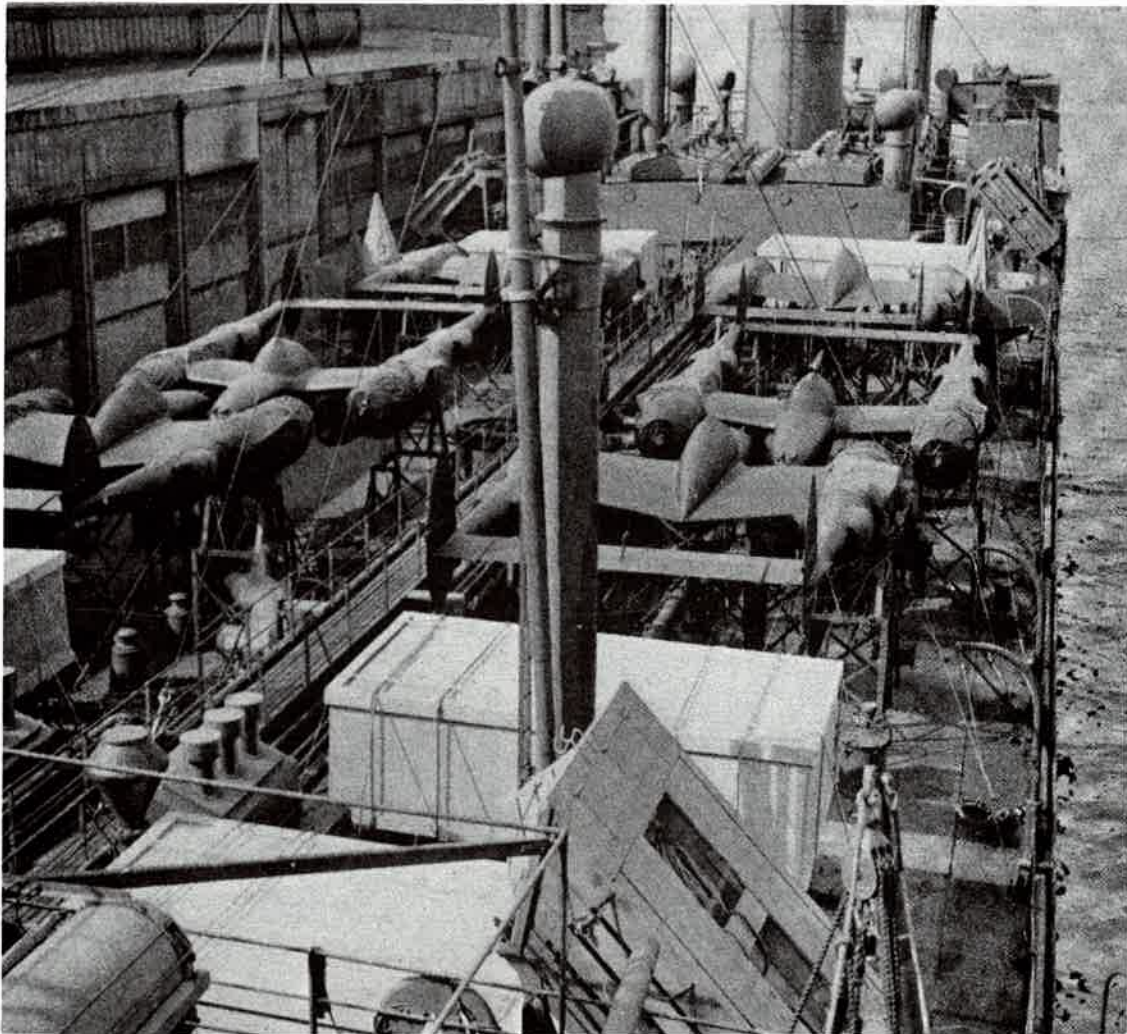
Built: March 1944 @ Richmond, CA
Dimensions: 441' x 57' x 37'

The Liberty Ship, SS ALEXANDER MAJORS, was struck by a Japanese suicide plane at 1030 GCT on November 12, 1944 while anchored in Dulag Harbor, Leyte, P.I. She arrived at Leyte on November 4 in convoy from Hollandia, New Guinea having left there on October 29 loaded with 1200 tons of cargo in-

cluding trucks, tractors, gasoline stored in drums, and 20 barrels of kerosene in drums stored under #1-2 life rafts. Her complement was 37 merchant crew, 26 Naval Armed Guard, and 407 U.S. Army troops. At the time of the attack all but 13 troops had been put ashore. Two crew members were killed.

At 1030 GCT, a plane crashed into the starboard wing of the bridge caroming off the wing into the mainmast shearing it off about 3 feet above the mast house. Upon striking the the mast, the plane and its bombs exploded showering the midship house and the forward part of the ship with flaming gasoline and bomb fragments. Hatch covers were blown off #2-3 hatches, #1-2 life rafts were blown overboard, and the kerosene under the rafts was ignited. Shrapnel pierced

steam and water lines on deck rendering the fire fighting equipment useless. A fireboat came alongside the starboard quarter and foam lines were brought aboard to fight the fire. It was brought under control within an hour. The deck cargo and the cargo in the forward holds was a total loss. The ship returned to San Francisco under her own power where she was repaired and returned to service.



Fighter planes and crates on the deck of a tanker in New York.

THE P O I N T E R



WHEN WILL THEY ALL COME HOME?

Photo of C. F. Korcker, official Armed Guard photographer, taken on March 13, 1945, at the 52nd street docks. We will never see ships like these again.