

The LOOKOUT

SPRING 1986



EDITOR'S NOTE

Safety-at-Sea is of constant concern to all of us here at SCI and two articles in this issue relate directly to that subject. One is on how the US Coast Guard is struggling to provide essential and emergency services in spite of severe budget cutbacks. The other introduces Port State Control as one means of helping to ensure that minimum international standards of overall ship conditions, manning requirements, equipment, proper certification of crew, etc. are maintained.

The Titanic article in this issue also brings to mind that it was too few lifeboats which increased the casualty level of that mammoth disaster; and ironically, the article on Key West, Florida tells how salvaging foundered ships was the basis of its early economy.

We also have an article *about* a former student of the Institute's, and a story *by* a former student/merchant mariner.

Last but not least we update you on Christmas-at-Sea 1985 and the program's plans for '86.

The cover is simply a Springtime evocation of the majestic tall ships that will soon be in port for the Statue of Liberty/4th of July celebration.

As always, your suggestions and comments are always appreciated.

Carlyle Windley
Editor



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Stringent budget cuts force the USCG to take extreme measures in order to maintain essential services.



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The Lookout (SSN 0024-6425), published Spring, Summer, Fall-Winter, by Seamen's Church Institute of New York & New Jersey, 50 Broadway, New York, NY 10004. Telephone (212) 269-2710. The Right Reverend Paul Moore, Jr. S.T.D., D.D., Honorary President/Alfred L. Loomis, III, President/The Rev. James R. Whittemore, Director. Mailed to all those who contribute \$5.00 or more annually to the Seamen's Church Institute of New York & New Jersey. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Seamen's Church Institute of New York & New Jersey, 50 Broadway, New York, NY 10004.

COAST GUARD DELIVERS IN SPITE OF BUDGET CUTS

The federal budget figures have not been good for the Coast Guard in 1986. They are operating under a contingency budget. A total of \$36 million for mandated salary increases was also removed. Now, they are expecting a further reduction of \$76 million in accordance with the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill. The total is \$142 million, a sizeable amount even for an organization that runs on an estimated \$2 billion budget.

In the Atlantic Area and Third Coast

Guard District, which is headquartered on Governors Island, N.Y. and covers from New London, Connecticut to Cape May, New Jersey and Delaware Bay, its Commander, Vice Admiral Paul A. Yost, Jr. has suspended routine sea patrols, although he said the command would be ready to "respond immediately in the case of an emergency distress call."

In the New York area, Admiral Yost said the suspension will curtail the spotting of oil spills, the management of arriving and departing tankers, inspections of transfers between tankers and land storage, drug interdiction and the supervision of regattas.

Lt. Cmdr. Marc Wolfson, public relations officer for the Third District headquarters said that the Coast Guard's traditional duties in port safety, security and environmental protection are being maintained, but they are cutting out nonessential use of equipment. "For instance, we have cut

routine patrols, but we have the people in place to respond to an emergency situation. We are still maintaining our aids to navigation in the port and will go out to repair a buoy or light that is off line or not functioning. But we are not doing routine preventive maintenance. If one of our boats is out for another reason and sees something in the area of maintenance that needs to be done, they will stop and take care of it."

The routine harbor patrols, ship and pier inspections, response to oil and chemical spills and other emergency situations are handled by the Captain of the Port section, which is headed by Captain Gene Henn. As Lt. Pete Blaisdell, who is public relations officer for the Captain of the Port, explained, they have had to cut back on routine operations to be ready for emergencies. "Right now, we have reduced our harbor patrols from two to one a day. We divide the harbor into two sections: the Kills patrol, which includes Newark Bay, Arthur Kill and Kill Van Cull, and

the East and North Hudson, which runs up to the George Washington Bridge and down to the Upper Bay. We alternate patrols between the two sections."

During these patrols, the Coast Guard looks for potential problems in safety, pollution and the general condition of port facilities. They also conduct "remote" patrols on a monthly basis on the Hudson, Hackensack and Passaic Rivers and these have been reduced as well. By reducing the use of boats for patrols, the Captain of the Port has maintained the capability to respond to oil and chemical spills, which average about 650 oil and 100 chemical spills a year of varying severity, and other emergency situations. Lt. Blaisdell indicated that the patrol schedule will be reviewed throughout the budget year, so that patrols can be gradually increased if funds are available.

One other major responsibility of the Captain of the Port is oil tanker inspection. "We receive notice of every tanker scheduled to enter the port and can check their safety record through the Coast Guard's computer system," Lt. Blaisdell said. "If a tanker shows up as a 'high priority' vessel on the computer we board it for inspection."

The Third Coast Guard District averages some 10,000 search and rescue operations annually—one of the largest totals in the country for ships that range in size from merchant vessels to pleasure craft. While the Coast Guard remains committed to responding to emergencies, there has been debate within the Reagan Administration and the Coast Guard as to how far this responsibility extends in the area of pleasure craft. Lt. Norman Williams, Director of the Coast Guard Auxiliary—a 3,600 person strong volunteer arm of the Coast Guard that helps handle the summertime increase in small craft emergencies, spoke about the problem. "We have found that 70-75 percent of the emergencies we respond to on pleasant summer days occur within three miles of the coast and represents a pleasure boater who has run out of gas or run aground. It's been suggested that such 'minor' emergencies be handled by commercial towing concerns in order



Vice Admiral Paul Alexander Yost, Jr. has been Commander of the Atlantic Area, Commander Maritime Defense Zone Atlantic and Commander, Third Coast Guard District since June 1984. In these capacities he is responsible for Coast Guard operations in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico including drug interdiction, law enforcement and search and rescue. As Commander Maritime Defense Zone, he is responsible to Commander Atlantic Fleet for full use of all available Coast Guard and Navy assets for the maintenance of an effective level of maritime coastal defense. Prior to this assignment he was Chief of Staff of the Coast Guard in Washington, DC for three years,

where he was responsible for coordinating the Coast Guard Headquarters staff and for planning, programming and budgeting within the service. He was promoted to flag rank in 1978 and served as Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District in New Orleans, Louisiana for three years.

Vice Admiral Yost has held a wide range of key positions which include Chief of Staff and Chief of Operations of the Seventeenth Coast Guard District in Alaska and Commander, Task Group 115.3, a combat command in Vietnam. He has spent a significant portion of his career in seagoing assignments which include command of three Coast Guard cutters. In addition, he has served as a Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Transportation and an Alternate Delegate on the US Law of the Sea Delegation.

He is an ex-officio member of the Board of Managers of the Seamen's Church Institute of NY and NJ and has been nominated by President Reagan to succeed Admiral Paul Gracey as Commandant of the United States Coast Guard.

to save some money. But, the question remains of how to coordinate such a system and how you would distinguish between a 'minor' and 'major' emergency. Right now, we plan to handle our job in the same manner as before." Lt. Williams said any reductions in the Auxiliary's role in public education can't be assessed until later in the year.

The Auxiliary has also played a major role in supervising the waterways during such special events as OpSail and plans to serve during the Statue of Liberty celebration this summer. "We are awaiting some indication of how much of our budget will be devoted to these activities and what extra appropriations we may need."

Unfortunately, the Coast Guard's budget problems will not be going away for next year. Coast Guard Commandant James Gracey testifying at a House subcommittee hearing on Coast Guard operations held on February 6, said that 1987 will be another "hold the line type of budget."

E.K.

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Coast Guard cutters sit easily at their moorings on Governors Island.

A Coast Guard 40 foot Patrol Boat

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SCI HOSTS FIRST US CONFERENCE ON PORT STATE CONTROL

In the often confusing and contradictory world of legal jurisdiction and control that faces the international maritime industry, changes are in the air which promise to improve the safety of ship operation and the welfare of the seafarers who live and work aboard them. Presently in the maritime world, there are approximately 50 major conventions in place that cover issues as varied as the overall condition of the ship and its equipment, to the health and safety of crew members. Indeed, today's maritime law derives much more from international conventions than from its customary source, national law.

At the same time, the idea of Port State Control is gaining greater acceptance. Port State Control means that responsibility for enforcing international maritime conventions of ship board operation is accepted by the host country regardless of the ship's flag of registry and the maritime practices of that registry.

It's the view of Dr. Paul K. Chapman, Director of SCI's Center for Seafarers' Rights, that these developments represent a new maritime enforcement procedure with the potential to improve the situation of seafarers just as it assures the safer operation of ships. "There have been times in our history when the flag state had exclusive control over the operations of a vessel. But, the pendulum has now swung in the direction of Port State Control" he contends.

To investigate the implications of Port State Control in the United States and foster interest in US ratification of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention 147 on shipboard conditions for seafarers, the Center for Seafarers' Rights is holding a conference in New York April 2-4. "We are

bringing together owners and operators, unions, government officials and port chaplains to update them about Port State Control, to look at how the Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (MOU) put into effect in July 1985 by 14 European nations has worked, and to encourage support for ILO 147, which will probably be considered by the US Senate this spring or summer."

The distinguished group of European and American officials speaking at the conference reflects the educational goal of the conference. "Henk E. Huibers, Deputy Secretary, Secretariat, MOU, Dr. Frank L. Wiswall, Jr., former Chairman of the IMO Legal Committee, and Francis Wolf, Legal Advisor and Assistant Director-General of the ILO, will speak about how well MOU is working," Dr. Chapman explained, "while Philip J. Loree, Chairman of the Federation of American Controlled Shipping; Talmage E. Simpkins and Dr. Thomas A. Mensah, who represent organized labor in the US and worldwide, respectively, and Congressman Mario Biaggi will reflect the interests of parts of the maritime community on this issue."

Dr. Chapman described the MOU as the embodiment of the trend towards Port State Control. "It's an important development which is not very well understood by maritime lawyers, government or the port chaplains, who are so often called upon by seafarers to respond to their problems. All of these people will be part of our conference."

About eight years ago the maritime ministers of several European nations met in Paris in the wake of two major European shipping accidents—the Torrey Canyon and Amoco Cadiz—and agreed that the only way to insure the enforcement of the most important

international maritime conventions was to take united action and enforce those rules themselves rather than leaving it to the ship's country of registry. In July, 1982 the Paris Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with July, 1985 set as the date for full implementation of the program.

Dr. Chapman explained how the MOU system operates. "It was agreed that by July 1, 1985, 25 percent of all ships coming into European ports

would be inspected on a random basis by inspectors who were controlled by the individual port, but who then feed their data into a central computer system, which France supplied, so that they would exchange their data and be able to track these ships and, in certain cases, detain them if the deficiencies were serious enough."

Dr. Chapman believes the system is working well. "20 percent of all ships entering European ports are being in-



Dear sir,
I'm in a ship in very bad cond.
tions.
Could you, please, help us?
Our company is palestinian and the owner lives in Greece (Athens), but he has also one office in Lebanon. The flag is Lebanon and all people from Syria.
Our problems are:
about SECURITY:
The ship is 30 years old.
At sea, we repair 3 holes in the hull by divers!
During 7 months, not exercises against fire not exercises of live-boat.
We don't know if we can put live-boats at sea.
Only one officer know to make position of the ship. Not chief officer; the boatswain is day man, often captain sleep and nobody in bridge, with automatic pilot.
In the engine, 2 officers; one oiler make watch from 12 "a" 4" alone.
3 officers don't have licence.

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The ship is 30 years old.
At sea, we repair 3 holes in the hull by divers!
During 7 months, not exercises against fire not exercises of live-boat.
We don't know if we can put live-boats at sea. Only one officer know to make position of the ship. Not chief officer; the boatswain is day man. Often captain sleep and nobody in bridge, with automatic pilot.
In the engine, 2 officers; one oiler make watch from 12 H - 4 H alone.
3 officers don't have licences."

This letter is typical of the many that are received by the Center for Seafarers' Rights. The letter is dated October 23, 1985, and goes on to detail additional problems on board. The seafarer who wrote the letter asks how the eleven ratings on board can get relief.



Mrs. Beverly Fawcett (L) and Mrs. Janet Lang (R) recently visited the Institute to get an update on the work of its Center for Seafarers' Rights (CSR). As representatives of the Episcopal Church Women of the Diocese of Connecticut, they also informed CSR Director, Dr. Paul Chapman, that the Center would receive the proceeds of their ECW's White Envelope Campaign in 1986.

spected on an annual basis, regardless of flag, and inspected to make sure that the conventions having to do with safety, pollution and minimum standards of employment are met."

While not directly applicable to the US, Dr. Chapman feels the MOU is an important positive example of Port State Control and that a close examination of it will provide the impetus for support of Port State Control in the US. "Since so many ships are going to flag of convenience countries and since so much shipping is now being controlled in parts of the world where there are different standards for labor," Dr. Chapman said, "it seemed wise to those of us who are concerned about the working and employment conditions of seafarers that instead of always relying on the flag state to enforce standards on the ship, we'd be better off if the United States would take jurisdiction in these cases."

Dr. Chapman continued. "Right now, if a seaman comes in to the Center and says I've not been paid, we have to go to the flag state and if it is Cyprus, or Lebanon or Malta or Grand Cayman, we can't get help from them. We'd much rather that the US would accept jurisdiction in these cases and that's the whole principle of Port State Control."

The US has already ratified the international convention for safety of life at sea and tanker standards. The Coast Guard inspects tankers to see if they meet convention requirements and maintains a computerized record of all tankers coming into US ports and their safety and inspection records. Other vessels are inspected for safety provisions.

As the conference was being organized, Dr. Chapman learned that the Reagan Administration has moved to

show its support for ratification of ILO 147. "Labor Secretary William Brock has sent a letter to Secretary of State George Shultz urging ratification of the convention," Dr. Chapman said, "and we understand that he supports it as well. We hope this conference will educate others in the political process, particularly in the Senate, where it must be ratified, to its importance and win their support."

E.K.

SPEAKERS FOR THE PORT STATE CONTROL CONFERENCE

Congressman Mario Biaggi, (D-NY) Chairman, Subcommittee on Merchant Marine, House of Representatives, U.S. Congress.

Mr. Henk E. Huibers, Deputy Secretary, Secretariat, Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (MOU), The Netherlands.

Mr. Philip J. Loree, Chairman, Federation of American Controlled Shipping (FACS), New York.

Dr. Thomas A. Mensah, Assistant Secretary General, International Maritime Organization (IMO), London, England.

Mr. Talmage E. Simpkins, Executive Director, AFL/CIO Maritime Committee, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Frank L. Wiswall, Jr. Proctor and Advocate in Admiralty Law, former Chairman of the IMO Legal Committee.

Mr. Francis Wolf, Legal Adviser and Assistant Director-General, International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva, Switzerland.

SEA NOTES

CONGRESS COMPLETES FIRST STEP IN EFFORT TO PROTECT TITANIC WRECKAGE

The U.S. House of Representatives recently approved a bill to designate the wreck of the Titanic an international maritime memorial. Representative Walter B. Jones (D-NC), Chairman of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee and a leading advocate of the legislation, hailed the House action.

"This legislation seeks to enlist international cooperation so the countries interested in the shipwreck will conduct research, exploration and, if appropriate, salvage in a manner befitting this historic wreck," Chairman Jones said. "Just as the Titanic disaster was a turning point in introducing tougher safety standards for vessels throughout the world, so should the discovery of her signify the development of international guidelines for dealing with wrecks found in international waters."

The bill directs the Secretary of State to begin negotiations with interested nations and instructs the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to develop guidelines governing activities at the site. "Until an international agreement is reached, the bill encourages research and limited exploration, as long as it enhances public knowledge and the shipwreck is left undisturbed," Chairman Jones explained. "We hope to foster a spirit of cooperation between nations in realizing what we hope is a common goal—protecting the Titanic and preserving its proper place in maritime history."

The bill must now be passed by the Senate and signed by the President before becoming law.

OPERATION SAIL 1986 TO BE PART OF STATUE OF LIBERTY'S 100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

H. Alexander Salm, president of Operation Sail 1986, announced that at least 18 tall ships—the largest display of such ships in modern times—are expected as part of the July 4th flotilla celebrating the 100th anniversary of

the Statue of Liberty. As many as 300 vessels are expected to participate in the event, which coincides with the rededication ceremonies for the Statue of Liberty.

Operation Sail 1986 will surpass the standard set by Operation Sail 1976 which brought together more than 220 vessels, including 14 tall ships. The tall ships scheduled to pass in review of the Statue will be manned by trainee crews. "This will give my crew the experience to sail far away from their own country and get to know other countries," said Lt. Col. Ripa Gamhadi Prawirosastro, commander of the Indonesian ship, Dewa Rutji. "We are all very excited about it." The voyage to join up with Operation Sail 1986 will take Dewa Rutji 70 days, including stops at west coast ports, the Panama Canal and eastern seaboard cities.

Mr. Salm said the event will emphasize cooperation between the 141 nations invited to participate in the ceremonies. Other nations sending tall ships to the event will be Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay, Venezuela and the United States.

MUSEUM DEDICATES PROPELLER OF WORLD WAR II CRUISER

A propeller that once belonged to the World War II cruiser, Canberra, the sister ship of the USS Los Angeles, became a part of the permanent collection of the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro following dedication ceremonies held in December. The propeller, which weighs five tons and has a 12 foot width, came to the museum as a result of the efforts of several corporations—Southwest Marine, Inc., Todd Pacific Shipyard, National Metal and Steel, Metro Steel International Paint and Moffat & Nicholas, an engineering firm.

Shirlee Sawyer, assistant museum director, said the propeller was an important addition to the Museum's collection. "People are attracted to it by the shiny gold brass. At nighttime, with the lights shining on it, it is very impressive," she said. "Many of the

people who come to see it served on the ship."

THE FUTURE LOOK FOR LUXURY CRUISE SHIPS

When the designers at Wartsila, a Finnish shipbuilder and the world's leading maker of cruise ships, gazed into their crystal ball recently, they saw a cruise ship that looked like an ocean-going, high-rise hotel. The 18-story vessel will be supported by two or more hulls and allow the several thousand passengers on board, the option to stroll along its numerous decks, swim in one of its many pools, or take a spin aboard one of the small boats that sail between the large hulls for jaunts along the coastline or scuba-diving expeditions.

Wartsila is prepared to build one of these ships in less than three years, should a cruise-line operator place an order, but the company expects some of the larger ships won't be seen on the ocean for some 20 years. "You have to have visions," Fred Danska, marketing manager and a ship designer at Wartsila, said recently. "We make these designs and put them out on the market like hooks. We like to test different ideas... out of 100 ideas, one will come true."

While it may look forward to one day putting to sea the largest ships ever built, Wartsila has already accomplished innovation in the design of small ships. Its ship, the Sea Goddess, is a 340-foot-long deluxe cruiser for 116 passengers that offers the feeling of being on a private yacht, rather than a luxury cruise vessel. The ship can travel on the ocean and can also dock at small harbors inaccessible to large cruise ships.

Since 1970, Wartsila has built 30 percent of the world's cruise ships, including the largest cruise liner of all, the Royal Princess. This \$160 million, 1,500 passenger ship is distinguished not only for its size, but its innovative design feature that provides all passengers with an exterior cabin. So, while the ocean-going, "high rise hotel" may ultimately never develop beyond a designer's vision, the cruise industry knows that at Wartsila dreams sometimes do come true.

LOUISE SACCHI

The Airplane Pilot who Studied at SCI

One often quoted cliché reminds us that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Louise Sacchi would argue with that premise, and use her own life as an example. In early 1941, what Louise wanted more than anything else was to pilot an airplane across the Atlantic Ocean. Two years earlier, Louise had earned a pilot's license. With credentials in hand, it would seem that her next move should have been simply: find a plane scheduled for Europe and sign on as pilot.

"There were plenty of planes going to Europe," Louise recalls, "but I was a woman and the men in charge of hiring wouldn't hire me for that reason." But, Louise would not be put off so easily. "Being a stubborn woman, I looked for a way around the prohibi-

tion and decided that if I were a navigator, I'd have a better chance."

Louise enrolled in the Seamen's Church Institute's Merchant Marine School's sea navigation course. That might seem like a wrong turn for this story, but it wasn't. "It was 1962 before my chance to fly the Atlantic Ocean arrived, but the navigation knowledge I learned at the Merchant Marine School was useful in many ways during the intervening years," Louise said; especially on her first Atlantic Crossing, where Louise served as navigator.

Louise found a bit of skepticism greeting her application for admission to the Merchant Marine School. "Capt. Frederick Just, the principal of the school told me that while sea navigation could be applied to aerial navigation, no one would ever hire a woman navigator. Therefore taking the course would be a waste of money," Louise said. "However, I employed

every route of persuasion I could, and finally got him to agree to let me take the course."

"It involved three nights a week from September to May," Louise continued. "After their first astonishment, the men in the class and the instructors accepted me and there was no problem. I do remember vividly our trips to the roof with our sextants to 'locate ourselves.' At first, we appeared to be anywhere but in lower Manhattan. Gradually, we arrived in lower Manhattan and eventually we were consistently on the roof."

Louise received her certificate for the course May 15, 1942 and one week later had an offer to teach a course in Advanced Navigation for the R.A.F. Cadets at the Number 1 British Flying Training School in Terrell, Texas. "The

school was one of five training sites established in the U.S. to train British pilots. I never applied for the job and was never told how they got my name, but I assume someone from the Institute must have been influential in bringing about that wonderful piece of luck."

Following the end of WW II, Louise found attitudes towards women pilots hadn't changed much. "I worked as a flight instructor at a seaplane base and then flew for a small manufacturing company in Pennsylvania, but the industry was not open to women yet," Louise said. As the sale of American-built small planes picked up in the early 1950's, opportunities for flight work developed in ferrying the planes from the manufacturer to the customer and Louise picked up some of those flights as a fill-in.

Finally the chance to fly the Atlantic presented itself. "I heard that a woman named Marion Hart was flying her own plane to Europe and needed a navigator and so I applied." Between 1962 and 1980, when eye problems forced Louise to give up piloting, she flew the Atlantic and Pacific oceans 340 times in small planes while operating her own air ferry company, Sacchi Air Ferry Enterprises.

Her skill as a pilot was recognized by her peers, who named a street in her honor in Gander, Newfoundland. The most easterly point on the North American continent and a key jumping off place for flights across the ocean, Gander had been used by such re-known pilots as Charles A. Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart. "Being honored in Gander put me in the company of not

only two of my greatest inspirations—Lindbergh and Earhart—but the many great Atlantic fliers whom I have so admired," Louise said.

Louise traces her wish to be a pilot back to 1926 and the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial celebration. "On display was an old World War I Jenny that children were allowed to sit in," Louise recalled. As soon as I settled into the pilot's seat, I knew I wanted to fly."

Over the years, flying never disappointed Louise nor caused her to question it as a career choice. "In the air you are not the same person you are on the ground," Louise remarked. "From the beginning it made me feel detached and euphoric and it still does." With so much experience crossing the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Louise commented on the differences in flying each. "On Atlantic flights you had to be constantly prepared for the shifting weather patterns, which were never the same from one day to the next. Also, there is so much traffic over the Atlantic that you never felt lonely sitting in the small planes I was flying. There was always someone on the radio to talk with.

"The Pacific is just what its name implies. The weather is usually smooth and sunny with hot, light winds. You also get much lonelier out there since there aren't as many pilots to get on the radio to pass the time," she said.

Although she never used her navigation skills at sea, Louise feels a special bond with the Institute. She is a knitter for the Christmas-at-Sea program and has what she describes as "soft spot in my heart for SCI."

E.K.



Above: Louise Sacchi at the Victoria, B.C. airport at the conclusion of the London-Victoria Air Race. She finished second.

Below: Louise posing with some of the 85 planes delivered to the Spanish Government.

Louise Sacchi in Manila, Philippines, having just delivered a plane for the "Manila Times."



CHRISTMAS AT SEA 1985

*Seafarers from many lands enjoy
a Happy Christmas*

Christmas-at-Sea 1985 is only a memory now, but a very happy one for 9,000 seafarers who received the special holiday packages. And, as Pat Jones, who heads Volunteer Activities at the Institute, reminds everyone, it is also a source of wonderful remembrances for all those who donated their time and services to make it happen.

"I've always thought that the best part of Christmas-at-Sea was the fact that it benefits the volunteers as much as the seafarers," Pat said. "For instance, many of our knitters are home-bound; and, in the letters that accompany their work, they tell us that the knitting is one of their favorite activities." Pat also hears the same kind of message from the volunteers who come into the Christmas-at-Sea Room at 50 Broadway to assemble the packages.

Last year, as it has for the past several years, Trinity Church in Elmira, New York led all the knitting groups with 976 caps, scarves, and sweaters. Among the new groups helping with knitting was the Mount San Antonio Garden retirement home and the Actor's Home.

Every year a special effort is made to distribute packages to the ships chartered to the Military Sealift Command/Atlantic and 1985 was no exception. The ships serving under this command, which are responsible for delivering supplies to the U.S. military, are scattered at sea in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and other points. Pat Jones coordinates delivery of the packages with Erna Scarlett of MSCLANT.

"This year we received some 2,700 packages from the Christmas-at-Sea program," Ms. Scarlett reported, "and we sent them out to seamen on 26 ships." Since the location of the ships is



A seaman writes home after opening his Christmas-at-Sea gifts.

classified, Ms. Scarlett checks with the Crewing Department on the number of ships and packages needed for each and then assembles them for shipment to their fleet post office boxes, from which they are sent to each ship. "In order to have the gifts to the seafarers by Christmas, we need the boxes from Pat and her group by the beginning of November," she said. "Then we have to rewrap them for shipment and have them in our warehouse, ready for shipment by the third week of November. We appreciate all the help we get from Pat and her staff in meeting our deadline. All the scrambling around is worth it when you read the letters of thanks that come in."

A group known as the "Knit Wits," from the Church of St. John in the Wilderness, Flat Rock, North Carolina puts tags on every item they knit with the name and address of the knitter. Over the years many wonderful letters have been received by the Knit Wits, who have put them together in an album, which they display every

chance they get. Not only are they proud of the correspondence that's been built up, but Pat Jones reports they find the letters are an excellent tool for recruiting new knitters.

Each year the Christmas-at-Sea team receives many letters from seafarers expressing their appreciation for the gifts and the feeling of sharing they bring during the holiday season. Among the letters that came for 1985 was a note from the Captain of the *M.S. Lanai*, J. Honig: "Christmas day we spent in La Ceiba, Honduras. At our morning meeting our whole crew (22) opened the presents. As we are coming back to New York now in the wintertime, we can sure use your knitted caps, shawls and sweaters. Thank you and we wish you all a peaceful 1986 in good health."

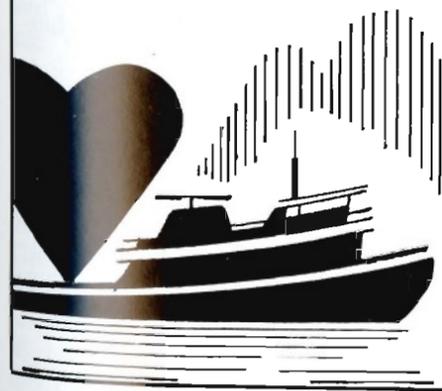
The master and crew of the *M.V. Anita 1* sent a note and a crew list showing that seven nations and four religions were represented among them. They were moved by the show of concern for others the gifts represented. "It was with great pleasure that we received your Christmas bags with the nice knitting wear inside. It is good to know that there are some people in this world willing to help and to think of others who spend their Christmas on the high sea and away from friends and families. Thank you very much for your lovely work."

Finally, the spirit of Christmas-at-Sea was captured in the closing line of a letter from O.J. Hansen, Captain of *M/T Northern Tiger*: "Thanks, again, for what you are doing for us. We do not feel alone—even in the middle of the Pacific—with such friends as you around." E.K.



"SWEETHEART OF A VOLUNTEER" AWARDS

This past Valentine's day, Con Edison sponsored an awards breakfast at the Roosevelt Hotel to honor outstanding volunteers in the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. After a delicious breakfast and interesting program, which included the keynote address from Manhattan Borough President David N. Dinkins, the awards—certificates of "LOVE" and a number of useful gifts—were presented to a group of very deserving volunteers. In the photo above the honorees were SCI Volunteers Lillian Martin (L) and Vivian Dickson (R). Lillian, who works in the Mail Room and Christmas-at-Sea, was one of the honorees selected for special mention, and she well deserves it. One of the nicer features of the breakfast was that each volunteer was allowed to bring a friend to share in the event. Pat Jones, Coordinator of Volunteers/Christmas-at-Sea, who nominated both for the awards was also an invited guest.



POETRY

The Pixie Wave

It was an April wave, no doubt of that—
it skipped along with glance of impish glee
at solemn breakers booming toward the shore
teasing them, saying, "Hurry, follow me!"
It rollercoasted giants, screamed with joy
at catapulted depths, skyscraper tries,
and dallient sprays of foam that paused to play
were caught up in a burst of seagull cries.
Hopscotching seascape pavements toward its goal it
quickly jumped to spaces it must span
and landed happily—the rollers roared,
half-child, half-sprite, this seaspray Peter Pan.

Helen T. Brown

Find Me My Place

Through wind and wave, in stars and song,
Oh God, who moves the earth along—
Find me my place, let my heart be
a drop of blue within the sea
and you, the ocean so profound
my life with you is heaven-crowned.

Helen T. Brown

The Perfect Ingredient

Gleaning soufflé sun first-hand,
Warmed by noontime's stall,
Brown Baggers start to congregate
Flanking the office wall.
The mixture that they stir each day
Like bakers, oven-wise,
Is more than food for it contains
Camraderie, life's prize . . .
Food for gods to be shared alike
Free of a mortal's cage,
Ingredients of purity,
Recipe of a sage.
The beauty of the perfect loaf
Implies a simple truth,
Though man may live by bread alone
It needs the yeast of youth.

Helen T. Brown

SHIPPING OUT

“Get over there as fast as you can, she’s leaving today. It’s a pier head jump, a freighter from Africa.”

Grabbing the paper, Jim pushed

through the crowd of seamen standing around the Shipping Master’s Office in the Seamen’s Church Institute. He walked out to South Street, taking a deep breath of musty, damp, fall air. The sounds, sights and smells soon enveloped him. Each block along the waterfront emitted a different odor, coffee roasting, jute, bananas, all drifting out of the old worn, dingy warehouses, relics of the 1800’s, the days of sail. Today, they looked and smelled good to Jim.

It was early evening, South Street was still lively with the bustling crowds of homeward bound office workers rushing to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal. Jim didn’t pay much attention

to them, he was too excited with his good luck, a chance to *Ship Out*. Trying to read the shipping orders, he wondered how he could get to Atlantic Basin in a hurry.

In Brooklyn, alone on the trolley ride down Atlantic Ave. to the Basin, he had time to think about the events that now led him to shipping on this African freighter. The basic and fundamental ship work at the “Institute” was all simulated, doing it aboard a real ship was another story; he hoped he could handle it. He wasn’t going to be an Officer or Quartermaster but he did know how to steer, keep the log and seamanship which he learned at the school. Now to do it at sea, on a real ship was a different thing altogether.

Walking down to the Basin from the trolley, the street lights reflected dimly on the wet cobblestone road. He felt the darkness closing in on him and felt more alone now than he had ever been. Things were coming to a climax fast and he was floating along on the tide of events.

Up ahead, rising out of the dark evening haze, lay the huge metal covered shed of the Pier. Red, yellow painted blotches, peeling and rusted, shouting “Barber Lines” in giant white letters half as big as the shed. Alongside, in the deepening shadows, loomed a large shape that could only be his ship, the “West Lashaway.”

Pausing for a moment, gathering courage, he pondered, “Is this what I want? Is this what I planned for, even lying to get here? It’s one thing telling the Shipping Master I was eighteen,

convincing the Chief Mate on this ship was another. A green kid would have to come up with a good bluff to get away with it, especially when he was only fifteen and looked it.”

“No turning back,” he thought. No money, no school and with the depression on, no work ashore. His family had made it clear and plain, no going to sea until he was over eighteen. They even threatened reform school to scare him off the idea. As he stared at the ship, family and friends faded in his memory. The smell of the uncured hides, cocoa beans and palm oil grew stronger as he walked through the pier entrance. He looked at the cargo piled almost to the roof; bags, mats and barrels all around looking like mass confusion. The dim light made it hard to see the path through the cargo to a side door opening onto the dock alongside the ship.

A cluster of cargo lights blinded him momentarily as he looked upward at the side of the ship and the gangway. He watched cargo drafts whipping in and out of the hatches. He was afraid to ask any questions, he didn’t want to appear too green and stupid, so he walked along the stringpiece to a lighted gangway.

Holding on with both hands on the safety lines, Jim slowly climbed the swaying ladder. From the dock level, it seemed to climb straight up into the air, bending swaying, moving round, getting worse as he climbed. He thought to himself, “This is something I didn’t learn at the school.” Reaching the top, he shoved his papers at a man standing there with a seaman’s cap on his head. Looking at them, he pointed into an alleyway in the deckhouse saying, “You want to see the Chief Mate, he’s in the office there.”

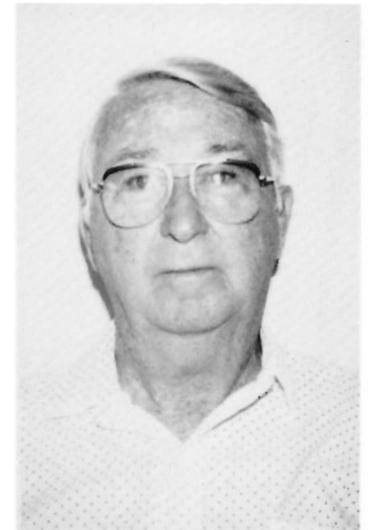
He walked in, trying to look salty. Upon entering the cabin, he saw a man seated at a desk, pouring over some kind of plans. Jim set his shipping papers in front of the man. The Mate looked up, staring hard at Jim and said, “How old are you kid?” Jim, keeping a straight face replied “Eighteen last summer.” The Mate shook his head, looked down at the cargo plans and said, “Look kid, I’m too busy trying to get this ship underway tonight and I can’t check on you. If

you say you’re eighteen, that’s all I want to know. Just let me warn you, eighteen or not, you’ll do the job you signed for. There’s no time to change your mind because we sail tonight.” Jim said, “That’s O.K. with me.” “Fine,” said the Mate, “Go aft with your gear and report to the Bos’n. He’ll turn you to when he’s ready.”

Jim turned quickly, almost running out on deck, too excited to stand still. Looking across the after well deck towards the stern, he saw men going in and out through a door in the after deckhouse. Saying to himself, “I guess that’s the crew quarters,” he started aft across the deck.

Stepping carefully over hatch covers, wire slings and cargo gear, he worked his way slowly toward the crew quarters. Jim ducked cargo loads swinging up from the dock and down into the ship’s hold, finally stepping through the high door sill into the cabin alleyway. Leaning against a bulkhead, a dark-skinned young man looked Jim over carefully, “Who you look for?” asked the swarthy one. Jim told him “The Bos’n.” “You signed on kid? Cause if you are, I show you a bunk.” He started to walk away. Turning he stopped “Hey, you pretty young ain’t you?” Jim said, “Eighteen, what about it?” The dark one said, “I’m eighteen, only I look older, that’s all. Hey what’s your name, anyway?” Jim told him, smiling. The boy said “I’m Chico, I’m Mexican, I sail as Ordinary, what you sign as?” “Deckboy,” replied Jim. “Deckboy, I haven’t heard dat before, somethin new. You ain’t an officer, you sleep aft with the crew. You work on deck same as me, some day you be an officer.” Smiling, Jim said, “I’m not worried about that now, just show me my bunk, I’ll change clothes and see the Bos’n.” Slipping off his only good pants and shirt, happily, Jim thought, “I made it, I’m shipping out tonight, at last I’m going to sea.”

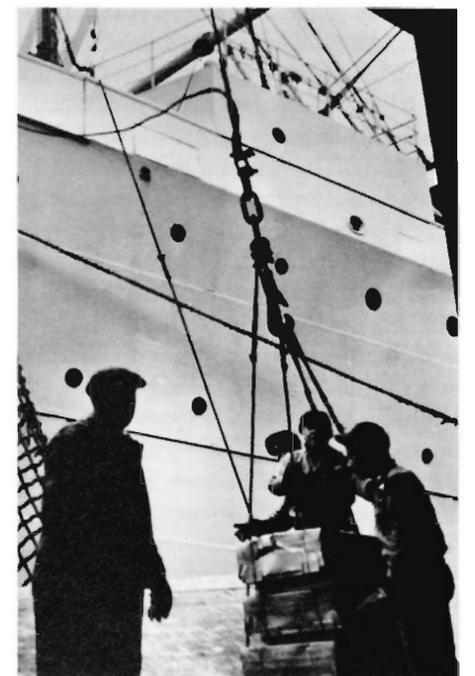
James J. McAuley



Mr. McAuley

About the Author: Born in Brooklyn, NY in 1913, Mr. McAuley first shipped out in 1929. He continued to sail deep sea until 1937 when he came ashore to work on harbor tugs and fireboats. During the Second World War, he was in the US Coast Guard.

Following the war, he worked as a fire and marine investigator in New York and Florida. Mr. McAuley retired in 1978 and now lives in central Florida.



WHAT WAS IT LIKE ABOARD THE TITANIC?

One boy will never forget

Young Gus Cohen in 1912 had saved enough money for a Third Class ticket to visit America. He always remembered his excitement. . .

"The fare was eight pounds single, and in those days the dollar was worth something—in all, it cost \$32.00!

The ship was queen of the sea and any young fellow lucky enough to get a ticket soon found out every detail about her on this her maiden voyage.

"My father saw me off when we left Southampton on April 10th. The Titanic was the largest of the vessels berthed, and as the ship left the dock, a liner close by snapped its mooring chains due to the Titanic turning to move off, and drifted close. But there was no collision and we continued on our way."

In a stateroom with six Englishmen, he enjoyed their comradeship on the journey to Manhattan, none guessing their destination was to be the ocean's bottom.

"We had an enjoyable time traveling and played cards and games to past the time. On April 13th it got very cold and I remarked we must be near icebergs, but I was laughed at."

Bets were placed on arrival time in New York as the Titanic was making excellent time. "Unsinkable" due to a double bottom divided into 16 watertight compartments, she could float with any two flooded, so no one had a moment's anxiety. As Gus and his new friends donned overcoats, temperatures fell to 45 degrees and a few passengers

roamed the decks. Below, a strolling bagpipe player trailed by children made music, a sound that would forever haunt Gus.

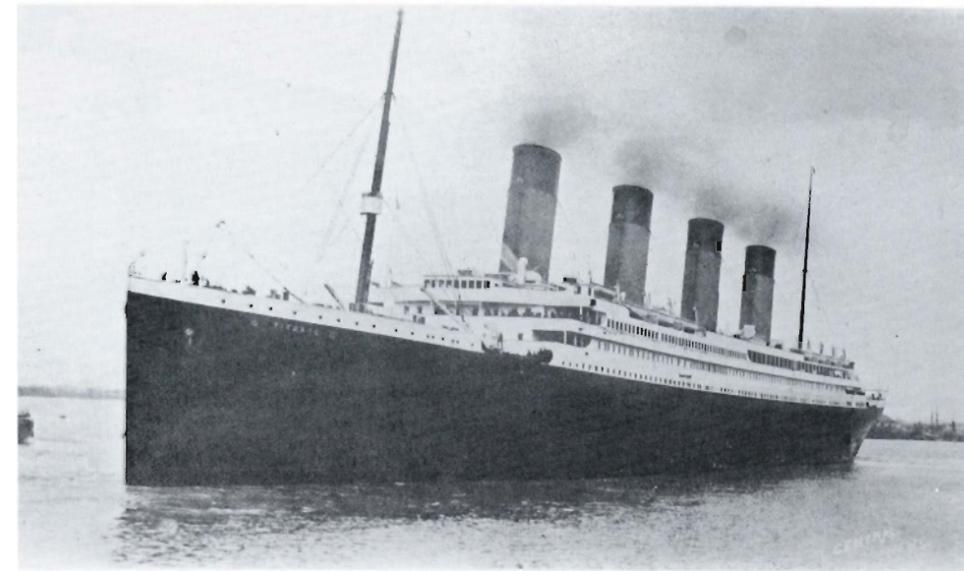
"I went to my berth around 10:00 p.m. At 11:45 we were awakened by a crash, and we thought something had happened in the Boiler Room and went to sleep again."

A knock on the cabin door awakened the men who were told to put on lifebelts, but like many others, Gus, sure the boat could not sink, didn't do so. "So far as I can recall, I don't think we had any boat drill. At the time nobody could tell us what happened or of any damage."

The band was playing elsewhere on the ship as he went out on the Third Class deck and saw huge chunks of ice. Still no thought of danger entered his mind as none knew the ship had struck a monster iceberg and been cut below decks, opening up six of her watertight compartments to the sea.

Suddenly there was an order to man lifeboats, "Woman and children first." Gus thought of the lifebelt and went back to his berth to get some of his belongings just in case . . .

"I was told by some officer that things were serious, so I went back on deck. All the bulkheads were closed to keep the ship buoyant. I saw quite a few people praying and holding rosaries. I thought—I will pray when I am rescued!"



The ill-fated liner "Titanic." The largest ship in the world which foundered on her maiden voyage off Newfoundland April 15, 1912.

People wandered about in confusion and many emigrating families in steerage were trying to stay together, reminding Gus of his own parents back in England.

"I was glad I was traveling alone, but worried if my mother or father heard I was drowned. The boat was tilting and I realized the precarious position we were all in and I could see that the First Class passengers were being looked after first."

However, when he tried to climb to the First Class deck, he was barred by sailors. Somehow he did manage to get up there, but too late.

"The Titanic was at a very sharp angle and I realized it would not be long for the boat to sink. Signal flares were up and the fog horn blasted away. We thought we would have help from other boats—the sister ship the Olympic, was not far away, going in the reverse direction. We found out later she was hundreds of miles away, so we had false hopes!"

There was no panic even then. But with what hopelessness Gus and the others saw the last lifeboat lowered! Now no band played, he recalled, but, holding their instruments, the musicians stood, like himself, on the tilting deck and would go down with the stricken vessel.

"While holding the rail and looking over the side, I heard a sailor in one of the lifeboats shouting for me to jump. It was about 200 feet from the water where I was standing. I was just a lad and did not realize the danger but I knew I

must do something. I climbed on the davit, crawled across and jumped for one of the ropes. I was wearing gloves and that saved my hands, partially."

Gus clung to the ropes and at the end jumped into the icy water. Kept us by his lifebelt, he was yanked into the boat filled with women and children. He had landed in Boat #4, last to leave the doomed ship. Lowered at 1:55 a.m., it had no lights and no compass but picked up survivors, finally carrying sixty-six to rescue, including several babies sleeping during all the excitement in their mothers' arms. One infant, separated on deck from its mother, was thrown over by a sailor and reunited with her later.

During that longest night of his life, Gus, like the others, was by no means sure of rescue, believing every star to be a boat. "But they were only mirages. All the lifeboats kept together by order of an officer."

Among the 36 women and children, many women rowed and even helped steer. Gus was not the only youth aboard; 13-year old Jack Ryerson, whose father had insisted he go with his mother, bailed frantically with Gus as their boat took water until survivors stood knee-deep as other rowed continuously for five hours. More survivors were taken on No. 4 from a capsized boat until all stood except for a few along the side.

With dawn the wind and sea rose with icebergs on every side, and all around was the floating Titanic wreckage.



Smoking Room, R.M.S. Olympic Titanic

During the long night, the memory of what had happened was in his mind like a nightmare, especially those last minutes with the ship.

"We had to pull away very fast for fear the suction would pull us down. When we were at a safe distance, we heard the first explosion. It may have been the boilers. Then the second . . . then she sank altogether."

The shock of seeing the great vessel disappear beneath the waves engraved on his mind a picture he would never forget.

"For several minutes, all was quiet, then I heard cries of people drowning, which (still) is never out of my ears! Our boat picked up several men from the water—two died of exposure."

It was about six a.m. when it became light and he saw the Carpathia which they reached by rowing the three miles between. "all in good health (if this was possible) had to climb on board by rope ladder."

On deck, warm blankets, hot drinks and sandwiches awaited the survivors and now Gus had time to remember he had lost everything, money and baggage, "a few coppers, my valuables which included a farewell watch from my Boys' Club, were with the purser who drowned. I was wearing pants, boots, overcoat, and had lost all addresses of friends to go to."

Other liners were now in the area, but far too late to

save the 1,507 lost. April 18th, the Carpathia docked in New York and survivors were given clothes and money by the Titanic Relief Fund and passed through Ellis Island. How different this landing was from what Gus had expected—the weeping crowds on shore had waited hours for reports of those saved . . .

"I was taken to a hotel and they cabled my parents in London who were mourning because my name was misspelled and not on the survivor list, and they had no conformation of my survival for five days."

Gus had little desire now to remain in America. After a short stay, he returned home to the grateful arms of his rejoicing family, but carrying a heaviness in his heart for all those not so lucky, and the memory of a tragic night at sea that would always haunt him.

Duane Valentry

GUS COHEN had many other narrow escapes in his lifetime. He was twice wounded in World War I and II, losing an eye. He barely missed a London bombing that killed his father and he survived so many traffic and other mishaps that he became known as The Cat. Gus died at age 80 in an English nursing home in 1976.

"WRECK ASHORE!"

The Story of Wreckers, Salvagers and the Early Days of Key West

In 1822 when three Johns—John Watson Simonton, John Whitehead, and John Fleming—together with their fourth partner, Pardon C. Greene, invested in the purchase of a solid mass of limestone and coral rock named Cayo Hueso (Bone Key) about two miles wide and four miles long, lying at the end of a long chain of Keys and islets extending from the Florida mainland, they started one of the most romantic and savage areas in that island's history—the era of the wreckers or salvagers.

It was John Watson Simonton who first purchased the island on December 20, 1821, from Juan Pablo Salas for \$2,000. He later took in his three friends as partners. The island had been granted to Juan Pablo Salas in 1815 by still another John, Don Juan de Estrada, a Spanish envoy, as payment for military services rendered the Spanish crown.

Salas had no use for the isolated Key, a known haven for pirates operating in the Caribbean, but when John Watson Simonton, an astute businessman from New Jersey with important Washington contacts and interests in certain gulf posts, New York, and Havana, was approached about buying Cayo Hueso, he immediately saw its potential as a maritime rescue and salvage station in the approaches of the Gulf of Mexico.

Cayo Hueso with its natural, deep harbor, entered through the northwest channel, was the logical maritime services and repairs port for the many ships plying between Spain and Central America and Mexico.

The Florida Straits through which these ships must pass were a dangerous sea passage—a terror of treacherous coral reefs, violent weather, and the erratic pulses of the Gulf Stream. These dangers, together with practically no navigation aids such as lights and markers, poorly drawn charts, and inadequate navigation instruments, made the passage a graveyard for many ships.

But ships could be saved, their cargo salvaged, their passengers rescued if they were reached in time. This led to a new breed of seafaring men—wreckers or salvagers—masters of sailing, navigation, and diving. To save and protect ship-wrecked property became known as "wrecking" and the men engaged in it, "wreckers." Payment or award for their services was known as "salvage."

The early wreckers came from the British Bahamas and Cuba. They salvaged the cargo and took it to Nassau and Havana for adjudication. Simonton and his partners saw the injustice of this. Why should the cargo be taken to a foreign port for adjudication when Cayo Hueso was within

four miles of the Florida Reef where the ships were going aground? Their plan was to establish salvaging as a legitimate business with Cayo Hueso, later known as Allentown, then Thompson's Island, and finally Key West, as a legitimate salvage port where cargo from wrecks occurring in American waters would be brought to this American port for adjudication. Before Cayo Hueso could be established as a safe port of entry for wrecked property, however, the waters had to be cleared of pirates. The same year he purchased the island, John W. Simonton, using his Washington connections, was instrumental in getting the United States Navy to send Commodore David Porter to do the job.

Lieutenant M.C. Perry, commander of the US Schooner, Shark, was also sent to formally take possession of the territory as ceded by Spain to the United States in 1821. Cayo Hueso was renamed Thompson's Island and its deep, natural harbor, Port Rodgers. The coast and harbor were surveyed by the government and supplies sent to establish a Naval Depot and station under the command of Commodore Porter who succeeded with his fast boats in ridding the Keys of the pirates.

With the dangerous Calusa Indians driven out of the Keys, the pirates gone, and the US Navy firmly established on the Island, Key West

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A fleet of wreckers clustered about the steamer Alicia of Bilboa which was bound for Havana with a full general cargo when

she went ashore on Ajax Reef off Caesar's creek. Photo Courtesy of the Monroe County Public Library, Key West, Florida

began to take on the first aspects of a small community. Fishing, turtling, and salvaging were the main sources of income and sustenance for the island's economic life.

It wasn't long before salvaging became the most lucrative of all these ventures because it led to other related businesses—the building of docks and wharves, warehouses for storing the salvaged cargo, shopkeeping, ship fitting, sailmaking, warehousing, and ship chandlery. Settlers were induced to move to Key West with the promise of free lots on which to build their homes and businesses. Early settlers came from St. Augustine, Virginia, South Carolina, New York, Connecticut, the Bahamas, West Indies, and Cuba. Among them were judges, lawyers, and bankers specializing in legal affairs such as monetary exchange and banking in foreign ports, mortgages on cargoes, ship clearances and inventories. Sea captains, grocers, carpenters, fishermen, traders in the buying and selling of wrecked goods, auctioneers, blacksmiths, adventurers, boat pilots, and skin divers all came seeking their fortune. Although there was no natural supply of fresh water, rainfall could be caught and stored in cisterns; and the sea was full of fish and the woods abundant with game.

On May 7, 1822, Key West was declared a United States Port of Entry by President James Monroe and a

customs house was established. By 1824 Monroe County was created with Key West as its county seat. That same year a company of mariners was stationed there and barracks erected for them fronting the harbor between Duval and Whitehead Streets.

1828 was a significant year for Key West. It was incorporated as a town. All free white males over 21 years of age, having resided in Key West for three months, were qualified electors.

Most important for the wrecking business was the establishment of a Federal Court by act of Congress under the title of Supreme Court for the Southern Judicial District of the Territory of Florida with jurisdiction over the wrecking from Indian River on the Atlantic to Charlotte Harbor on the Gulf. The new maritime law established by the Federal Court had teeth. Congress enacted that any wrecker who transported salvage from American waters to a foreign port for adjudication would forfeit the salvage and his wrecking vessel. Wreckers had to have licenses. The Federal Court could issue, revoke, or withhold them. Revenue cutters kept out the unlicensed. The Federal judge decided the value of the salvage and the amount the wreckers would be awarded. James Webb of Georgia was appointed by President John Quincy Adams to be the first judge of the District Court of Key West. He remained in office for

eleven years. Under the new laws of the court, the salvage business settled down.

Key West bustled with activity as the heart of the legitimate salvage business up and down the Florida Reef. The town prospered and grew with monies collected in salvage fees, boat repairs, duties, and port charges. Homes made of cypress, madeira mahogany, and white pine were built on the western section of the island along the Gulf waterfront where there was high hammock land sloping back from ponds and lagoons. The architecture was copied from New England, Louisiana, South Carolina, and the West Indies colonial models with double porches, tropical shutters, and scuttlers in the roof for ventilation. A large body of water, an inlet from the waters of the harbor, sat in the center of the town and covered several acres of land varying in depth from a mud bottom to two or three feet according to the ebb and flow of the tides. A foot bridge made of pilings covered with planks was built spanning "The Pond" as it was called so that pedestrians could cross from one side to the other. The uninhabited area of the island was thick with underbrush and mosquitoes. Far to the east were natural salt ponds. Duval, Whitehead, and Simonton Streets were the early thoroughfares—all running parallel and stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic.

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Loading salvaged cargo aboard The Dellie, a typical freight boat that attended every Key West wreck for two generations. Photo

Courtesy of the Monroe County Public Library, Key West Florida

By 1832 the incorporated town became an incorporated city and for the first time the value of real estate was assessed for the purposes of taxation. There were 81 buildings on the island, including blacksmith shops and warehouses. The population was a little over 300. Key West's first mayor was Oliver O'Hara.

The early wreckers were former Bahamian fishermen and turtlers who found salvaging more lucrative than selling fish. These early wreckers worked around Key Tavernier because of the proximity of Carysfort Reef, the most dangerous point on the Florida Reef where 20% of the wrecks occurred. These men knew the great reef, the dangerous shoals and sandbars. They knew the currents and tides and all the danger spots most likely to drive unsuspecting ships aground. Some wreckers patrolled the reefs daily, cruising in the vicinity of such wrecking grounds as Fowey Rocks, Molasses Reef, Coffens Patch, Halfmoon Shoal, French Reef, Sombrero, The Elbow, Western Sambo from Key Largo to Dry Tortugas, and the most terrifying of all—Carysfort Reef running northeast to southwest beyond Tavernier and Key Largo. Wreckers often paid fishermen and beachcombers to watch the sea and rush them word of a ship in trouble.

The early divers on a salvage ship were skin divers, mostly black. These

men could dive again and again into the hold of a ship. With no artificial apparatus, they simply held their breath while they swam down, secured a line to a box, made their way out of the hold and back to the surface again. After gasping on the deck for five minutes or more they would be ready to go down again; keeping this up for five or six hours.

The early wreckers were often called derogatory names such as scavengers of the sea, land pirates and moonsuckers when, in fact, most of them were hard working, honest, and brave men who piloted fast sailing sloops and schooners ranging from 20 to 80 tons burden with an average value of \$2,500. These vessels were manned with a crew of from 8 to 25 skilled divers and salvage men, strong and fearless, who put to sea voluntarily in all weather to help floundering ships. If there was no wind to sail, they would get to the wreck by warping. This was done by rowing anchors out ahead in dinghys, then pulling the vessel up to the anchors. This was repeated until they reached the wreck.

Almost every man living in Key West in 1830 was a wrecker although he might also be a shopkeeper, fisherman, sponger, warehouseman, bar tender, or trader. When the cry "Wreck Ashore!" was heard or the warning of a wreck blasted out on a conch shell, every working man stopped whatever he was

doing, grabbed his waiting duffel bag, ran to the waterfront, jumped aboard his boat, hoisted sail, slipped the moorings, and sped away. The first man to reach the wreck became the Wreck Master by unwritten law of the town.

The wreck master commanded that particular salvage operation with power to choose whomever he wished to assist him.

In the early days of wrecking, the award a salvager received was settled by arbitration between the wrecker and the captain of the distressed ship. The two men could come to terms right on the reef before the job began. When this arrangement proved unsatisfactory, it was determined that a five man jury of local, supposedly disinterested, citizens could be called in under Florida law to settle the amount of the award. This method of arbitration also led to questionable tactics. It wasn't until the Federal Court was established that matters became stabilized.

The Federal Court was given wide discretion in determining the amount of salvage to be awarded the salvager. Awards varied from 15% to 100% of the value saved. If there was evidence of collusion or bargaining between the captain of the wrecked vessel and the salvager, this caused reduction in the amount of the award or none at all.

If the salvager showed courage and bravery in putting to sea in stormy weather, or risked his own life and

property to help others, or made every effort to save life or property, he was rewarded handsomely. The saving of human life always took priority over saving cargo.

Sometimes the wreckers were paid in goods, but often the ship and cargoes were sold at auction. A percentage went to the wreckers and the rest to the underwriters of the insurance. Ship and cargo owners were paid by the insurers.

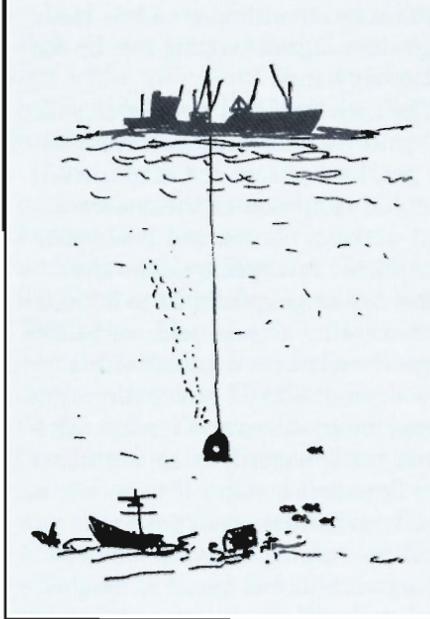
Wrecking was a chancy business. The work was dangerous. Competition was fierce. Some made fortunes; others knew only disappointment. Often a wrecker received no compensation whatever, regardless of the personal sacrifices or dangers encountered, unless he actually saved the property and brought the vessel and cargo safely to port. If the ship or cargo were small and the wrecker's services great, there was no way he could be adequately compensated.

Although wrecking was a legitimate business and licenses could be revoked and jail terms given if the court found evidences of corruption, fraud, or abuse, the business was open to discrepancies. An accurate check-up between goods and manifest was not always possible. A half unloaded cargo could be taken off the ship and a total cargo could be checked up. Tempting cargoes of wines, silks, cotton, jewelry, pharmaceuticals, English saddles, pianos, laces, silverware, cochineal, gold, cocoa, balsam, rum, crockery and much more often proved too tempting for the overworked, underpaid wreckers and, with the convenient near-by Keys to use as hiding places, some of this precious cargo never reached the warehouses.

Many forms of collusion were possible between a wrecking captain and the ship's owners such as insuring the ship for her full value and then deliberately running her aground, or insuring a cargo far beyond its value by false manifest and after sinking the ship carrying little more than ballast, collecting the full insurance on the non-existent cargo. Unfortunately, some port officials were known to be involved in this type of fraud. Another form of collusion between a ship's owner and a wrecking captain was a prearranged wrecking spot where a

Today's modern salvaging ships are floating workshops carrying electronic and sonar devices for detecting anything under water. They are equipped with underwater television sets, fathometers to record the water's depth, automatic pilots for steering the ship, power diving machines, double-ended diving boats that can be launched from the ship's deck when approaching a reef, fire fighting gear, tools for working and repairing under water, towing equipment, and life boats. Constant research updates this maritime technology. Modern divers use deep-sea diving gear with built-in air compressors. Ships in distress today are aided by the United States Coast Guard and the international fleet of great tugs—powerful and diesel-driven—squat and ugly, but designed to take any sea or weather with 4,000 horsepower engines and a cruising range of over 2,000 miles.

I.A.W.



ship would go aground on an isolated reef and a wrecking vessel would be conveniently near. This made sure that the "chosen" wreck captain had first go at salvaging the cargo.

Beachcombers also profited from the wrecks. They collected the lumber that was washed ashore and used it for building houses. Most of the early

houses on the Keys were built of this wood. Barrels and cases of wine and bales of cotton also could be found scattered along the coast and sold for profit.

The business of salvaging made Key West at one time the largest city in Florida. It was also the richest city per capita in the United States. This once romantic and dangerous era came at last to a close. Screw propellers and steam engines replaced sails. New, advanced navigation instruments came into use. Divers were equipped at first with clumsy diving suits, later with masks, oxygen tanks, and flippers. Light ships were stationed and light-houses built at dangerous points along the coast to guide ships through perilous seas. Beacons, buoys, and markers helped show the way. More reliable charts were drawn. Information on the changing currents was available. With improved communication between ship and shore, sea captains could receive weather forecasts and avoid storms at sea. Fewer wrecks occurred. The need for wreckers lessened.

In 1921, the 100th anniversary of the founding of Key West, the United States Wrecking License Registry was closed. No more licenses would be issued to fishermen, boatmen, or shipmasters to go wrecking. The cry of "Wreck Ashore!" was silenced forever. Wrecking licenses are now known as commissions. The commander of today's salvage vessel is commissioned to do the job. He must also have earned his rating as a licensed tugmaster. He is a greatly respected man doing a dangerous job for high pay.

Early wreckers were considered rough men preying on the misfortunes of others. While there were instances of wrong doing among some, their noble deeds far outnumber their bad ones. As men who always answered the call for help and put out in stormy seas to aid a floundering ship, often with no thanks and sometimes with no pay, little tribute has been paid them for their bravery, skill, and daring. No statue has been erected in their honor just as no bell was tolled at their passing. As part of our maritime history, they should be remembered.

Isabel A. Woodward

THANKS AND APOLOGIES

Thanks to SCI friend, Mr. Hendrik Jan Aldershof, the inscriptions on our beautiful old Dutch goblets shown on the cover of the Fall/Winter 1985 issue of the Lookout have been translated.

The one inscribed WEL VAAREN VAN DER VREYE SEEVAARD reads SAFE SAILING OF THE FREE TRADE OF THE SEAS.

The other, inscribed HET WEL VAAREN VAN DEESE BOODEM, translates SAFE SAILING WITH THIS VESSEL or Safe Sailing On This Ship.

And now, for the apology (and is our face red). The donor of these handsome goblets is Mrs. Sally Bradshaw of New York, NY. and not Miss Sally Howard as we stated.

Again our thanks, Mrs. Bradshaw and we apologize for the error.

editor



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