

The LOOKOUT



**Funds are badly needed to meet Current
Bills for Work on the New Annex Building**

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

The LOOKOUT

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Spring Openings



Dr. Mansfield opened the new doorway with an official gesture one Monday morning and welcomed the first seaman to enter. We inscribe his name in Institute history — Harry Cochrane of East Boston, oiler on one of the United States Steel Corporation

ships. He has been a seaman for seven years, in the Navy, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine, and he always "hangs out" at the Institute when in port.

The new entrance is actually in the old building, but it is a



Photo by Schoenhals

WAITING TO "CRASH" THE NEW SODA FOUNTAIN

piece of new construction work incidental to joining the two buildings and making adequate provision for the comings and goings of the thousands of sailormen who use the Institute daily. The opening of the new doorway was therefore a step toward the occupancy of the new building.

A similar situation surrounds the new soda fountain which is also in the old building but which is of a size to serve the doubled capacity which the opening of the new annex will give us.

Both the entrance and the soda fountain opened up on February 20.

John Bunacke, an old-timer from Boston, was hanging around expectantly, aware of significant activity behind the fountain, and speculating on the possibility of getting some food. John has been going to sea for over 35 years, which of course implies that he is a survivor of the old sailing days. He too did time in the Navy—went around the world with it, in fact, with President Roosevelt's good-

will cruise. John has known fair weather and foul and this past winter caught him in its cruel clutches as it did so many other worthy seamen. Jobs were scarce and John's age didn't help him. The day the soda fountain opened he had turned his pockets inside out. He confessed as much when the photographer, recognizing a picturesque subject, suggested that he step up to the counter and go on record as being the first one served. The difficulty was promptly remedied,

however, for the photographer is a kindly soul, and John was soon energetically breaking his twenty-four-hour fast.

Others followed immediately and things began to hum on both sides of the counter. We are a bit proud of those first days of the new fountain. Everything was new including the attendants, but the wheels turned smoothly and the equipment was kept shining.

It may be an item of interest to note that the cashier rejoices



Photo by Schoenhals

BREAKING A FORCED TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR FAST

in the name of Jesse James, but his methods are far from extortionate. In fact, his only weapons are the cash register and an alluring saxophone.

The third of our spring openings was the dormitory floor, actually in the new annex building. There are seven rooms, each given as a memorial, with a total capacity of 322 beds. John Sivertsen was the first to register for a bed and to call for his locker key. He is a real wind-jammer sailor and has been for the entire nine years of his

sea-faring career. He is a sober stolid Danish youth of twenty-four who likes his A. B. job on an old sailing vessel that still plies between here and Denmark. John likes the Institute too because it fits in with his wholesome thrifty program of life.

We try to look forward patiently to the time when the entire new building will be complete and we can offer our present facilities to just twice as many John Sivertsens who want to live decently and economically ashore.



Photo by Schoenhals

THE FIRST SAILOR TO BOOK IN THE NEW DORMITORY

The Odyssey of Hubert

This is the saga of Hubert, aged thirteen, who disentangled himself from his mother's apron strings to follow the call of the sea in the role of mess-boy on a freighter bound from Norfolk to New York. With all due respect for any prior claims of the apron strings, mother was not informed of the contemplated flight.

Being his mother, however, she knew that the sea held first place in Hubert's heart. She knew with reasonable certainty that he had taken ship. She figured it all out that sooner or later every sailor makes the Port of New York, and due consultation with the sea-going populace of Norfolk led her to believe that Hubert would inevitably eventually gravitate to the Seamen's Church Institute at 25 South Street.

So, having been Hubert's mother for thirteen eventful years, she philosophically decided to possess her soul in patience, meanwhile registering a request with the Institute that we be on the lookout for her progeny.

He came sooner than we had

hoped, at the end of a two weeks' Odyssey. A fortnight, after all, is a long time to be away from your mother even if you can be a mess-boy during that period. Thus Hubert came to the Institute post office hardly daring to hope that there might by some trick of magic be a letter from home, although he had given them no address. Anyhow, all the other fellows were asking for mail, so Hubert sauntered up to the window.

There was a letter from his mother, to be sure, also an incriminating bright pink slip that indicated Hubert was wanted by our police department.

He was duly apprehended and taken to our police office. There he read his mother's letter, and rolled his big eyes at our kindly Lieutenant whilst he telephoned to Norfolk. Hubert, couldn't see for the life of him what all the fuss was about, but of course you have to be more or less tolerant of these grown-ups.

The Lieutenant gave Hubert the message from home. His father would arrive on the mor-



HUBERT AND HIS INSTITUTE GUARDIAN

row. In the meantime, did he need any money?

Hubert was disdainful. Why should he need money? Hadn't he just been paid off after two weeks as mess boy?

"O, so you've been paid off? Quit your job, did you?" we asked. "What was the trouble?"

"Aw, I hired on as a *regular* mess boy. You know how it is. I was supposed to wait on the engineers and the crew, and what did they do to me?—Stuck

me in the officers' mess—that's what they did!"

"But wasn't that a promotion?"

"Naw," indignantly. "The officers have real dishes—the kind you can break. The crew have tin plates—the kind you can throw around and nothing happens. I wasn't going to work in any officers' mess. So the steward told me if I didn't like my job, I could quit and I told him all right, I would. Of course

I didn't say it just like that because the steward was bigger than me."

Our Lieutenant was once a cabin boy himself, and through the long years that have elapsed since that time, he has carried the poignant memory of his first voyage — 140 heart-breaking days away from home!

"Tell you what, Hubert," he said with a fraternal thump on the youngster's back, "you and

I'll just have supper together and go see a movie. What do you say?"

Hubert rolled his big eyes in anticipation—

Now, two days later, our kindly Lieutenant smiles reminiscently over the happiest evening he has had in a long time; a subdued mess boy rests in the bosom of his family in Norfolk contemplating more school; and his mother—well, one can imagine!

Whitey Entertains

Our Thursday stunt nights continue in spite of what look to us like difficulties; but to the resourceful sailor, giving a vaudeville show on a reading table is as simple a matter as sliding down a rigging.

Occasionally we have the good fortune to enlist the sympathies of professional entertainers but we hesitate to be too aggressive in this direction, being a bit apologetic for our temporary lack of appropriate entertainment space. It takes an awfully good sport to come down from a Broadway stage and sing to the accompaniment of our rattled-

bang old piano in the midst of plenty of pipe smoke.

Still a group of bankers—a double quartette to be accurate—did a braver thing than that. They not only gave the boys a delightful evening of assorted songs, but they wound up their program with some sea chanties. It's dangerous business for a landlubber to try to display nautical knowledge before our sailormen, but these bankers got away with it with "full steam ahead and a fair wind."

Their most popular number extolled the seamanship of Noah, the first real sailor. It pointed out that

"Noah was a grand old man

— He knew a thing or two."

It was a lusty chanty—though perhaps a bit more nautical than biblical.

Our sailor audience was fascinated by the bankers, but there was an almost uncomfortable respect in their applause. It seemed to be a relief to them when the



bankers asked one of their own number to do something. Now they could whistle and stamp their approval.

Whitey responded to the bankers' call — our versatile Whitey just back from a voyage, with a complete new repertoire of stunts. He put real feeling into his first offering—

"She's only a boot-legger's daughter,

But she's got a right to live."

There seemed to be interminable verses, but the song finally merged into a dance. It was a particular brand of dance known and practiced only by our Whitey, and the wonder of it is that he doesn't shake his feet off entirely.

Whitey is a particular joy at the Institute. He is only nineteen, but he has been going to sea since he ran away from home nearly four years ago. Home is in "N'Yawleens," as witness the shy "Yes, mam" that answers most of the questions put to him.

Whitey paradoxically belongs to the Black Gang, which means that he works in the engine room aboard ship. He has knocked about in ports all over the world, has seen the pitfalls that await

sailors ashore, and has managed to steer clear of them.

When he lands in New York his first move is to book lodgings at the Institute. Then he goes to the movies, and after that he looks for a job. "Business before pleasure" is not Whitey's motto; and his explanation is simple. If he were to look for

a job first, he might get one and then he would miss out on the movies.

After all it is a sort of tribute to him, for he usually manages to get a ship immediately he tries. Apparently Whitey's twinkling eyes and ingenuous smile melt even an employment man.

The Guardsmen of the Sea

The following is an extract from an editorial in the New York Times in connection with the heroic work of those Massachusetts life-savers who went to the aid of the *Robert E. Lee* March 9th:

"There are many ballads of the barrack room and the battlefield, as also songs of those who face the perils of the seas. Masefield has included the sailor, the stoker of steamers, the chanty-man of the halyards, "putting a tune to the shout," the drowsy man at the wheel and the one who ever looks out. But neither he nor any other remembered writer of ballads has dealt with those men of the sea who ever

look out upon it from the land.

"The heroic behavior of those life-saving guardsmen who from the night of Friday to the afternoon of Saturday, though flung back, bruised and helpless, again and again by the angry surf, at last made a final, and for three of them a fatal, attempt to reach the vessel on the rocks, deserves lasting praise. . . .

"It is more than a mere means of livelihood, this vocation in which men must ever be ready to imperil their lives for others. Such exploits, all in the course of a day's work, reveal the valor that sleeps in the breasts of men, but wakes when there is occasion."

WHEN WE EAT?

When do we eat?

If you have boys in your family you no doubt hear this battle cry frequently.

We have five thousand boys a day here at the Institute—active sailormen with sea-going appetites—but we have no place for them to eat.

Where do we eat? is an even more vital question with them, for we have no lunch room for them during construction.

The waterfront does not offer all that might be desired in the way of "feeding stations." In fact, it is almost impossible for a seaman to get a wholesome meal in clean surroundings, at a price which he can

afford, and it will continue to be impossible until we can open up the Institute cafeteria in the new annex.

In the meantime we are not providing for their most fundamental need.

It will cost \$25,000 to build and equip the cafeteria.

We are hoping that someone will give it as a memorial. Surely there is no more vital need to be assuaged amongst our daily throng of five thousand seamen.

It may be helped along by smaller gifts in any amount which can be used for the kitchen equipment which forms a necessary supplement to the cafeteria.

Please to
JUNIUS GAN, JR.,
Treasurer, Building Fund,
25 South New York

John Swallows the Anchor

We finally succeeded in getting poor old John Higgins into Sailors' Snug Harbor, but it was after a long persistent struggle to convert evidence into proof.

The requirements for entry into the Harbor are not difficult to meet. An applicant who is a native-born American citizen need only show documentary proof that he went to sea for five years under the American flag. Even that, however, was almost impossible in John Higgins' case, although he had been at sea for almost 64 years, much of that time in the United States Navy.

John sat down wearily in our Chaplain's office, searched through his pockets, and pulled out two discharges, soiled and cracked in the folds. They credited him with six months' service—all he had to show for the labor of a life-time.

John is an independent soul. He had taken care of himself since he was thirteen and he had never expected to have to ask quarter of anyone. But the time had come when he must. Of course he just naturally turned to the Institute where he had

been making himself at home for years.

He had a bad case of rheumatism—not that it mattered especially to him, but the ship's officers wouldn't hire him anymore.

There followed six anxious weeks, during which our Chaplain followed up every clue old John could give him. There was a discrepancy in the spelling of his name in the Navy files, and John couldn't prove that he was the same man whose service was there recorded.

"And I the man who fired the first shot on Manila," he reflected wistfully. "Yessir, I was on Admiral Dewey's flagship *Olympia* and 'twas meself that fired the first shot on Manila."

We wrote to one steamship company after another only to find that we were chasing rainbows in most cases. The best we could do was to account for two years of John's life with the documentary evidence required by Sailors' Snug Harbor.

By that time John was really sick and discouraged. He saw the irony of it. Here he was,



JOHN AND HIS HANDIWORK

seventy-seven years old, a seafaring man if ever there was one, and still unable to meet the technicalities that would give him a comfortable berth for the rest of his life.

He rambled on about his adventures a bit aimlessly and absent-mindedly until he happened to mention,

"Yessir, that was the year I went on the Greeley Relief Expedition — in eighty-four, it

was."

The Chaplain grasped at this wisp of evidence eagerly and wrote to Washington. It turned out to be the missing link. The first communication we received from the Navy Department stated that every man who volunteered for that expedition and saw it through was credited with three full years. Just the amount of time old John needed!

Providentially he was able to

identify himself properly and the bridge to Sailors' Snug Harbor was easily spanned.

And here we should like to say parenthetically that the institute has no connection whatever with Sailors' Snug Harbor. The impression that the Harbor has fabulous wealth which is at the disposal of the Institute is entirely a myth. The only contact we have is to occasionally help an old-timer like John to gain admittance.

John is as happy as he ever could be on dry land. He comes to see us occasionally, all dressed up in his warm blue suit furnished by the Harbor. Pinned to his vest he proudly wears two medals which he got in recognition of service on a transport during the World War—rather large medals that overlap and rattle when he shambles along rheumatically.

He came to the Institute one of the first fine spring days to bring our Chaplain a model of a full-rigged sailing vessel which he had made during the first leisure hours he had ever known in his life. Over at the Harbor, where one is always off watch, there is time for such things. John made the model from his memory of a ship he

once helped to man, but he would not divulge its name, explaining with all the naiveté of a seventy-seven-year old,

"It was a British ship and you see I've put an American flag on the model. It wouldn't do for anyone to recognize it."

Time is hanging heavily on John's hands and the peaceful leisurely life at the Harbor is difficult for him to assume, so he's off to sea again. Each old Snug may have a leave of twenty-eight days periodically, and John is going to use his to take a cruise. The spring days have played havoc with his serene program and he has got himself a job as bo'sun's mate on a ship bound for various Mediterranean ports.

"Why shouldn't I work? Why shouldn't I get out and see something of the world? I'm not dead yet. I've never had a sick day in my life since I left my mother when I was thirteen, thank God, except this rheumatism, and I don't call that sick. Rheumatism is something that's like to come onto anybody.

"Yep, ran away from my mother when I was thirteen. In Charlestown, Mass., we lived. I wasn't a cabin boy—A. B. right from the start. Penang was my

first voyage—ship called the *Fearless*. Good name. I've never been afraid of anything.

"I've kept all right too. No one's ever seen any liquor on me—leastways not since eighty-four. That was the time of the Greeley Relief Expedition. Brought six of them back alive and thirteen dead. Hadn't washed their faces for eleven months. We just happened on them up there near the North Pole somewhere. Yesm ma'am, I've been some queer places."

And indeed his ramblings bear him out. Another Ethelreda Lewis might here find another

Trader Horn. There is no doubt many a tale behind the haphazard snatches that crop out in old John's monologues:

"Mare Island — we sure chased the Rooshans out that time—a hundred forty-eight blue jackets—they killed their queen you know—Fiji Islands—that makes five wars I was messed up in—"

But in spite of the fact that old John hankers for the sea again, he is most grateful to the Institute for getting him into the Harbor and for "being a mother" to him during his active sea-faring days.

Pork Chops

Pork Chops has reformed in the matter of thrift, and the Institute claims the credit.

He is an old-timer here. He has been coming to us between voyages for years, and until recently he was known to be rather careless with his hard-earned wages.

Pork Chops is the Will Rogers type. He resembles the peripatetic comedian in length, middle-west drawl, gum-chewing proclivities, and skill with the

rope. Being a seaman, however, his rope tactics are nautical rather than cowboy.

He is always on hand for our weekly open forum when he is in port. In fact, he is quite likely to end the discussion by getting to his feet, unfolding himself like a jackknife, and demanding rhetorically.

"It's all right this theorizing but what I want to know is where do we get our pork chops?"

Apparently he has taken the problem unto himself seriously, for a recent letter to Mrs. Roper from the Seamen's Church Institute of San Pedro brings the good tidings that Pork Chops has begun to save in earnest.

But even a well intentioned seaman who saves in earnest is likely to make one exception in his thrift program when he thinks of the best friend he ever had.

Evidence of such a lapse on

the part of Pork Chops greeted Mrs. Roper when she returned to her office from lunch. A huge box of roses contained the cryptic message, "Just to show I haven't forgotten."

Consultation with the florist divulged the name of Pork Chops as the donor. Mrs. Roper, of course, was a bit distressed, but she'll perk up when Pork Chops blows in from his next voyage, childishly eager for her grateful smile.

Vignettes of the Seaman

The "rule of three" has a new convert to belief in its superstitious meaning. It is Peter, a ship's carpenter from Russia.

Peter recently had the not monotonous experience of being shipwrecked three times on his voyage from Bombay to New York.

The strange part of it is that he seems to have forgotten the details, if indeed he ever knew them! He knows only that the first wreck was twenty miles from Bombay, the second four hundred miles from Bombay, and the third five miles from Gibraltar.

What caused the various wrecks doesn't seem to interest him. His main concern was to help save the cargo, and his pride and satisfaction in the fact that they did save it on the occasion of each of the three disasters is the essence of seamanship as we observe it daily at the Institute.

Peter's listing of the cargo, however, savored of the romance of the sea. There were castor seeds to be made into a special oil for air planes; there was rice; there was manganese oil; and there were nuts to be used in the making of ink.

During the cold weather when as many as nine thousand active seamen were coming to us during the course of the day, it was necessary to check up at the door to make sure that some of the applicants were entitled to our hospitality.

A sailor who can show discharge papers from a ship dated not more than two months ago is our idea of an active seaman.

Clark from the Emerald Isle was on duty at the door when along come an old fellow who didn't seem to smack of the sea. Clark challenged him and he produced a grimy discharge issued in 1919. Our officer pretended to look it over carefully and with characteristic humor inquired:

"I don't suppose ye'd be after having a discharge from the Ark now, would ye?"

"Yessir, I think maybe I might," replied the unsuspecting applicant and he began a systematic search of his many pockets.

"Noah was captain of the ship, ye'll be remembering."

"Yessir. I remember him well and a fine Old Man he was."

"He was that," agreed Clark and rung down the curtain on

his little comedy as he showed the Pretender the exit.

A well-known playwright has expressed his intention to come to the institute in quest of interesting material from which to make a play. He will have one difficulty—he will find too much!

Scratch a sailor and you find a story, is our own little paraphrased epigram.

An extract from a sailor's letter to a land lubber friend may give an idea of what the playwright will have to choose from when he invades the Institute:

"The Institute is a real sailors' meeting place where they like to come. Here they meet old cronies who have sailed the Seven Seas with them. Here the Limey greets an ex-shipmate and they recall a fight they witnessed in Bubbling Well Road, Shanghai; or perhaps a conversation on the beach at Nome, Alaska; or a mutual acquaintance encountered in Singapore or Durban; a screaming howling typhoon in the Indian Ocean; a shipmate who died in the Marine Hospital in Algiers, or another who got his ticket in Manila. One quarter of the globe is as familiar to them as another

and their conversation is most casual."

A New York clergyman has told us of a chance encounter with a sailor who came to him, down and out, for spiritual advice. In the course of his talk the clergyman offered the idea, by way of consolation, that God is everywhere. The boy's reply perhaps expressed the yearning of many a lonely seaman who looks to the Institute for something definite:

"I'm not needing to find God everywhere, Padre, I need to find God *somewhere*. Can't you understand?"

Many sailors are out of their element entirely ashore — like fish out of water, might be an appropriate simile. But occasionally we have a more or less amphibious creature who takes to our land routine as a duck takes to water. A young German of this class is so chameleon-like that he has even learned to hurry while in New York. He was giving us a breathless account of a hasty trip uptown and his conscientious efforts to get back to the Institute to keep an appointment.

"I just made it, but I made it all right though," he said proudly. "When I got to the South Ferry subway station, instead of climbing all those stairs, I just jumped onto the percolator!"

They have confidence in us these sailors of ours. One of them recently cabled \$240 to our Chaplain personally from a foreign port with no instructions whatever. The boy's name did not appear on any of our records. We held the money for a matter of weeks until he showed up and explained that he wanted to put the money in a safe place. He had never been to the Institute but a shipmate told him about our Chaplain.

A shy looking youngster stood on the edge of a group in the reading room, apparently enjoying their singing but not quite daring to join in. We singled him out for a bit of a chat.

"Yes'm, I like the sea all right, but I guess I'll get me a land job."

"Why a land job?"

He only smiled and plunged into his vest pocket for a small leather stamp case. He opened

it up divulging a well worn, narrowly trimmed snapshot of a girl in skating togs.

"Guess that's why I want to get me a land job."

One form of Mother Roper worship (and be it said there are many) is an unbridled flight of the sailor imagination as to what will take place in Heaven when at last she arrives.

Only poetry, of course, can do such speculation justice, so here it is from the pen of one of our most enthusiastic tars, with the presupposition that Heaven is filled with sailors, and with punctuation by the poet himself:

Next came a widow lady
Who stood speechless there with
grief
In the kindly face of Peter
She seemed to find relief
Said he You're welcome mother
From the land of toil and strife
Your kindness to the sailorman
Is in the book of life
So Madam please to enter
The gates are open wide
And many of your sailor boys
Will welcome you inside
Then Peter sighed quite wearily
And rose at once to go
Saying Now I'll have a chat with
Paul
It is my watch below
So Gabriel blow your trumpet
Another sound the drum
Let Roper be the password
If any more should come."

Chess playing is notoriously conducive to thinking and the thinking is not limited to pawns and knights and castles, it would seem. Henry Stern is such a good chess player, and such a deep thinker withal that he is frequently invited to play with our champion chess Chaplain.

Henry has ideas about the Institute. He thinks it should be entirely self-supporting — that the income-producing departments, such as the lodgings and restaurant, should not only serve our sailors at cost, but that they should produce a sufficient profit to carry on all our relief work. This would put a fraternal stamp on our policy. It would mean that the active seaman would be "carrying" his fellow in times of temporary hard luck.

Our policy is to help the sailorman to help himself. Henry goes us one better with his suggestion that we let the sailor help his fellow sailor to help himself. Perhaps he's right. At any rate, it is gratifying to encounter such an attitude in one of our men. It rather strengthens our belief that they appreciate the opportunities we offer them to be self-respecting.

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DON'T READ THIS

if you have subscribed for THE LOOKOUT for all your friends who would be likely to find it of interest.

Through its pages we aim to acquaint our readers with Jack Tar of the Merchant Marine for whom the Seamen's Church Institute exists. He is a likable fellow—picturesque, debonair, deeply philosophical, courageous, open-hearted and selfless—but the loneliest man in the world.

The true stories about our Institute sailormen as published in THE LOOKOUT are stranger than fiction and, we venture to say, just as entertaining.

In subscribing for THE LOOKOUT you are helping us to serve our seamen.

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