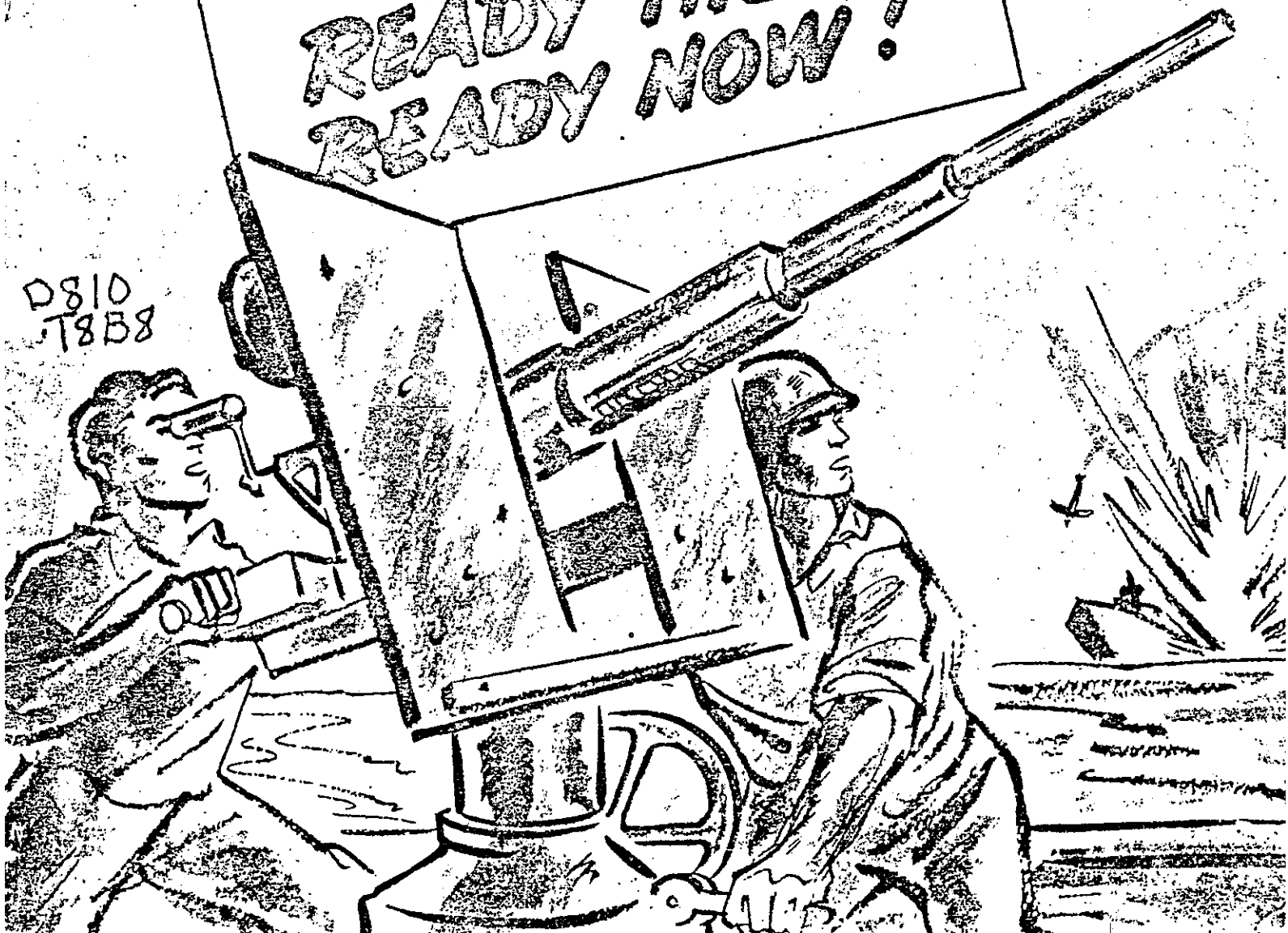


the Seafarers in World War II

By John Bunker

READY THEN!
READY NOW!

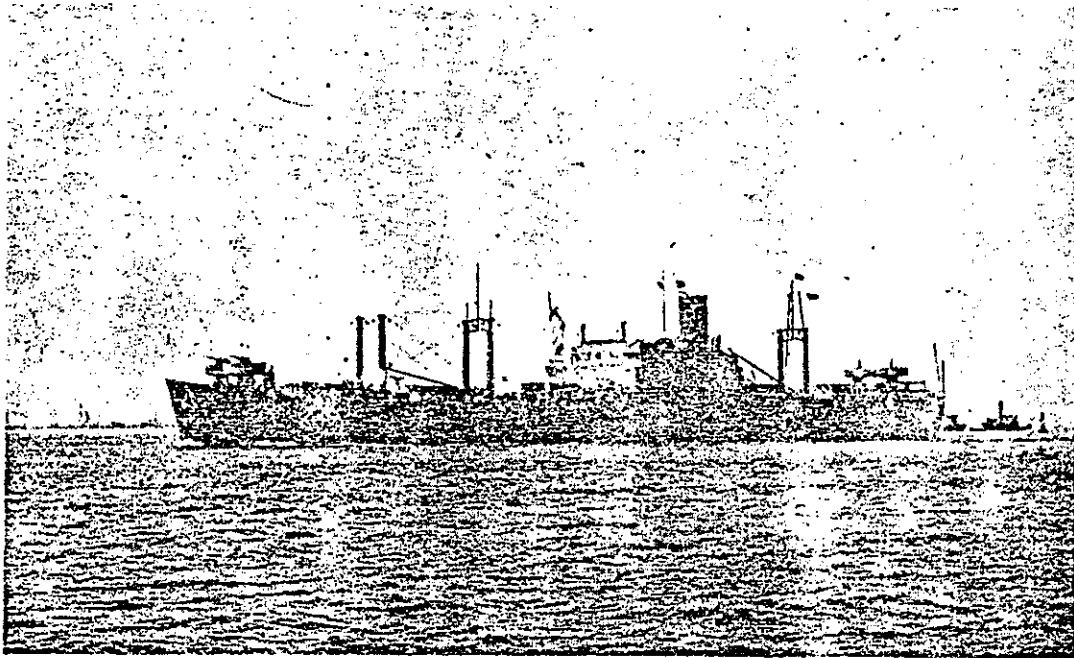
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The Seafarers In World War II

by JOHN BUNKER



U.S. Maritime Commission photo

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Ready Then . . . Ready Now

As timely as the next call for duty is this brief story of the Seafarers in World War II. It's a story of heroism and daring and a tremendous job ably done.

Trained crews from the Seafarers International Union are ready now—just as they were in World War II—to sail the ships wherever the freights of war must go; to bring home those hundreds of vital materials indispensable to our industrial economy.

Before any of the nation's armed services were ready for all-out duty in World War II, the merchant marine and the men who manned it were on the front lines of global action.

No executive manifestos; no formal enlistment, no testings of loyalty or pledges of devotion to their country's service were required to put SIU crews into action or prove their willingness to face danger—and death.

They helped to man the nation's cargo carriers long before there were guns or convoys to protect them, inspired by that sense of patriotism and pride of profession which has characterized the maritime industry and its merchant seamen time and again throughout the nation's history.

As employees of a private industry which converted almost overnight to 100 percent war service, SIU crews did their jobs in World War II with an efficiency that saved the nation millions of dollars. They were paid at wage rates prevailing in shore-side industries for comparable skills and responsibilities, not to mention the great personal risk to which they were subjected in front line service.

Throughout the war SIU ships were crewed through the union's hiring halls in an efficient system of manning which dispatched thousands of men to freighters, tugs, tankers and transports. The union also served as a practical means of recruiting personnel for the merchant service.

Through a great expansion of facilities since the war, the SIU is well equipped to do the job of recruitment and manning even more completely in any future emergency.

In these critical days when the nation's armed forces are scattered over large parts of the world and we are becoming increasingly dependent on foreign lands for raw materials, the merchant marine is one of the country's most vital assets.

Historically resilient and tough of fibre, nurturing a race of men who are skillful and resourceful, the merchant marine is ever first to make available its men and facilities for the nation's service.

And the men of the Seafarers International Union are ready now as they were in '42 to write another chapter of loyalty and able performance of duty into the annals of the American merchant service.

The Robin Moore. . . Prelude To War

This is the story of SIU ships in World War II—the thrilling saga of the cargo ships and the men who sailed them over the far-flung ocean tracks to write an epic chapter in American maritime history.

Here is the story of the storm-swept, submarine-swept, bomb-pocked road to Russia over the misty Arctic—the epic of the ships that sailed alone during the first hectic months after Pearl Harbor, when there were no coastal convoys and torpedoed tankers became flaming pyres along our eastern seaboard; when the freight ships and the tankers went out unprotected and unarmed, but never lacked for crews.

Here, too, is the log of fighting freighters whose Orelion guns traced tales of high courage in a myriad foreign skies. Wherever the freights of war were needed, these cargo carriers sailed them through.

SIU ships freighted everything imaginable in the way of war goods and the necessities of life to our Allies, to our overseas garrisons, to the beachheads and the supply ports for the fighting fronts.

ASSORTED CARGOES

Ships left the States loaded deep with everything from cigarettes to Sherman tanks; with barbed wire, guns, powder, railroad cars, airplanes, dehydrated eggs, beans, grain, flour, bombs, trucks, clothing, oil, gasoline—and so many other items that a complete manifest could never be made of it all.

In addition to helping supply half the world with fuel, food and the tools of war, ships of the Seafarers International Union brought back to this, the world's arsenal of democracy, the vital raw materials without which a war effort on such a tremendous scale would have been impossible.

Little has been said about this homeward-bound traffic from foreign lands during the war, but it was just as important as the bombs, the grain and the cannon that were carried out of American ports in an endless stream for five war-harried years.

Our freighters and those of our Allies brought to this country manganese, burlap, mica, rubber,

timber, bauxite, iron ore, sugar, jute, spices and hundreds of other industrial necessities, without which we would have found the fighting of a war not only most inconvenient but downright impossible.

They also helped to carry what normal commerce there was between the United States and Caribbean, Central and South American countries, which depended upon us for the numerous requirements of daily existence.

When the war at sea was finally through and bright lights shone through the open ports of ships at sea, on peaceful missions once again, the Seafarers International Union had paid a heavy price in ships and men.

The merchant marine as a whole lost 6,000 seamen, dead or missing. A total of 1,554 American flag ships were lost by torpedoing, bombing, mines and the varied other accidents of war. Of these, no less than 570 were lost in direct action with the enemy!

Our merchant marine had its baptism of fire long before Pearl Harbor. The SS City of Rayville struck a mine and sank off Australia in 1940, to be followed by the Charles Pratt, a Standard Oil Company tanker, which was torpedoed off West Africa in December of the same year.

Even before these actions, the SS City of Flint had made the headlines and caused an international furor, when it was captured, while en route to Norway in October, 1939, by the German pocket battleship Deutschland on the charge that it was carrying contraband.

After the eventual release of this ship and her crew, it was still many months before Pearl Harbor. Then came the incident of the SIU-manned SS Robin Moor, bound for South Africa from New York, which was shelled and sunk by a German submarine, eliciting from President Roosevelt an historic pronouncement on freedom of the seas.

Chief Officer Melvin Mundy was on the bridge of the Robin Moor at four o'clock in the morning of May 21, when he saw a light blinking on the horizon, signaling in international code the letters AAA or "What ship are you?"

Mr. Mundy answered: "American steamship Robin Moor." Captain William W. Myers came on the bridge, and to the Moor's question "Who are you?" the answer was signaled back, "Submarine." This was followed by the command, "Don't use your wireless."

A boat was then launched from the freighter, according to the U-boat's orders, and pulled over to the submarine, where the Germans questioned First Mate Mundy about the vessel's destination and cargo. The sub commander insisted that the Robin Moor carried contraband, despite Mr. Mundy's assertions that the cargo included nothing more warlike than pleasure automobiles, engines, tin plate, and general merchandise for South African stores.

Crew and passengers were given 20 minutes to dress and get into the boats, after which the sub put 33 shells into the ship, sinking her in 18 minutes and without any chance to dispatch an SOS.

Until weeks later nothing was known of the freighter's fate, for the submarine departed without reporting the incident and the 45 crewmembers and passengers were left adrift.

Of the four lifeboats that got safely away from the ship, the first was picked up by a freighter 13 days later and the last was not found until it had sailed 700 miles, its occupants subsisting on a meager ration of biscuits and water.

When the first survivors from the Robin Moor were landed and news of the sinking stirred the nation, President Roosevelt sent a special message to Congress. The date was June 20, 1941.

Said the President:

"I am under the necessity of bringing to the

attention of the Congress the ruthless sinking by a German submarine of an American ship, the Robin Moor, in the South Atlantic Ocean (25 degrees and 40 minutes west, 6 degrees and 10 minutes north) while the vessel was on the high seas en route to South Africa.

"WE ARE NOT YIELDING"

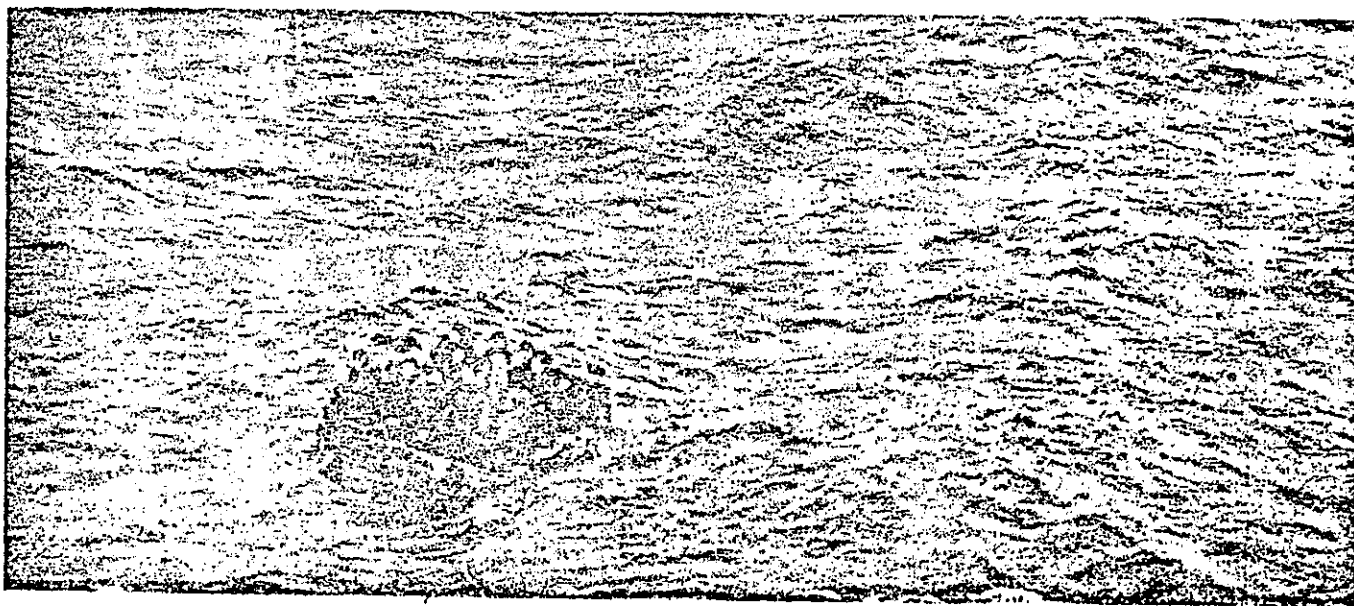
"... We must take it that notice has now been served upon us that no American ship or cargo on any of the seven seas can consider itself immune from acts of piracy. Notice is served on us, in effect, that the German Reich proposes so to intimidate the United States that we would be dissuaded from carrying out our chosen policy of helping Britain to survive.

"... Were we to yield on this we would inevitably submit to world domination at the hands of the present leaders of the German Reich. We are not yielding and we do not propose to yield."

There were other incidents involving American ships prior to Pearl Harbor: the bombing of the Steel Seafarer in the Gulf of Suez; the sinking of the freighter Lehigh; the mysterious disappearance of the tanker Astral, and the sinking of the freighter Sagahodac only four days before the attack upon Honolulu.

But it was in January, 1942, that the merchant marine felt the full fury of the war at sea. And then, with a suddenness that found us totally unprepared, the U-boats struck—not in foreign waters nor on the convoy routes to Europe, but along the shores of our own Atlantic coast.

One of the first ships to feel this Nazi thrust in the western Atlantic was the SIU-manned City of Atlanta.



U-Boat Lane

There was a chill breeze and a long, glassy swell on the sea, as the SIU-manned Seatrain Texas came up the Carolina coast at full speed in the morning of January 19, 1942.

Captain Albert Dalzell was on the bridge and every officer and unlicensed man aboard was on the alert, for Sparks had been receiving messages of ships being attacked by submarines.

During the night there had been flashes of gunfire on the horizon and, though they supposed it was practice fire by the Navy or Coast Guard, they were taking no chances. The ship was holding as close to the shore as safe navigation would permit.

The officer of the watch had just taken a bearing on Wimble Shoals buoy, when a call came from the lookout that there was wreckage on the water ahead.

Captain Dalzell got his glasses and swept the sea in the direction toward which the lookout had pointed. There were small black specks bobbing on the long swells and, as he focused more clearly on the area, he saw a man's hand wave from one of the bits of flotsam.

It waved again, weakly. All he could see was the hand, for the man's head and shoulders were too close to the water.

Turning to the Mate, the Skipper ordered a boat prepared for lowering. The engine room telegraph jingled as speed was decreased, and the freighter ran swiftly up on the scattered wreckage now becoming more visible.

They could see pieces of boards and shattered odds and ends of ship's fittings strewn for a mile here and there across the undulating water, but careful scrutiny through the glasses revealed only five bodies amid the debris. One man was holding onto the frame of a wheelhouse door.

As the Seatrain Texas came to a stop, the lifeboat was put quickly over the side in the well-coordinated movements of a veteran crew and was soon pulling through the watersoaked wreckage.

The boat's crew worked fast, for Captain Dalzell couldn't endanger his vessel and her crew a minute longer than was necessary. For all they

knew, a submarine was watching every movement they made.

The men stopped at one wave-washed collection of flotsam, lifted an inert body aboard and then went to another, where a grimy seaman half lifted himself out of the water, trying to grip the gunwales of the boat.

STRONG HANDS HELP

Strong hands bore him to safety, while those on the Seatrain's bridge used megaphones to direct the crew to where a third and a fourth body could be seen half-alive, half-dead in the winter sea.

In a matter of minutes the boatmen had done their work, and were back at the vessel's side to be hoisted aboard with their human cargo.

At first the survivors were too weak to talk but, when they had been warmed with hot coffee and wrapped in blankets, they revealed that their ship had been the City of Atlanta.

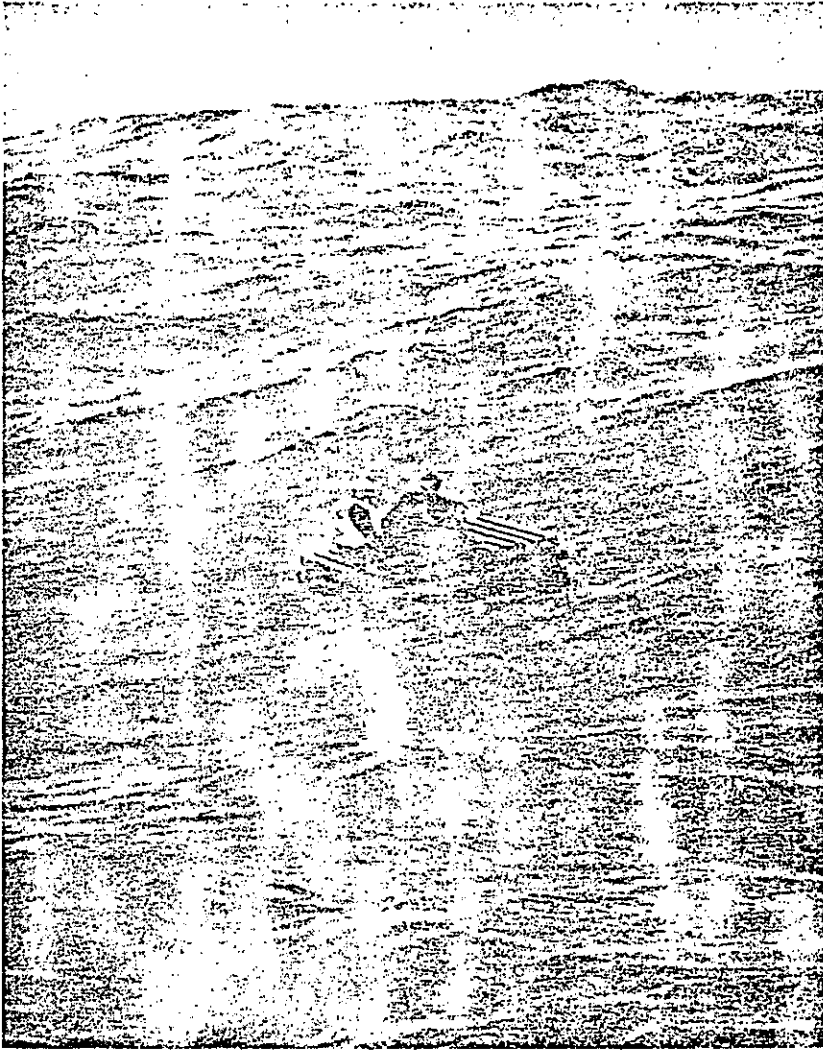
They told how the one-time passenger vessel had been torpedoed without warning early that morning—how she had gone down so fast that there had hardly been time to jump over the side . . . how the burning hulk had rolled over to starboard onto the only lifeboat that cleared the ship, crushing its unfortunate men beneath the sea.

For a while after the sinking, they recounted, some of the crew had floated around on bits of wreckage while they joked and sang in an attempt to keep their spirits up.

Then, one by one, all but five of them had sunk beneath the cold, dark waters. And of the five who were still afloat at daybreak, only three were alive when the Seatrain Texas hove by. The others lay astride their bits of wreckage, but had died sometime during the morning hours.

Living to tell the story of the City of Atlanta, one of the most costly sinkings along the Atlantic coast, were Oiler Robert Fennell, Jr., Seaman Earl Dowdy, and Second Mate George Tavelle.

Captain Albert Dalzell and Chief Engineer Tom Kenney of the Seatrain Texas heard their story without wanting to believe it could be true.

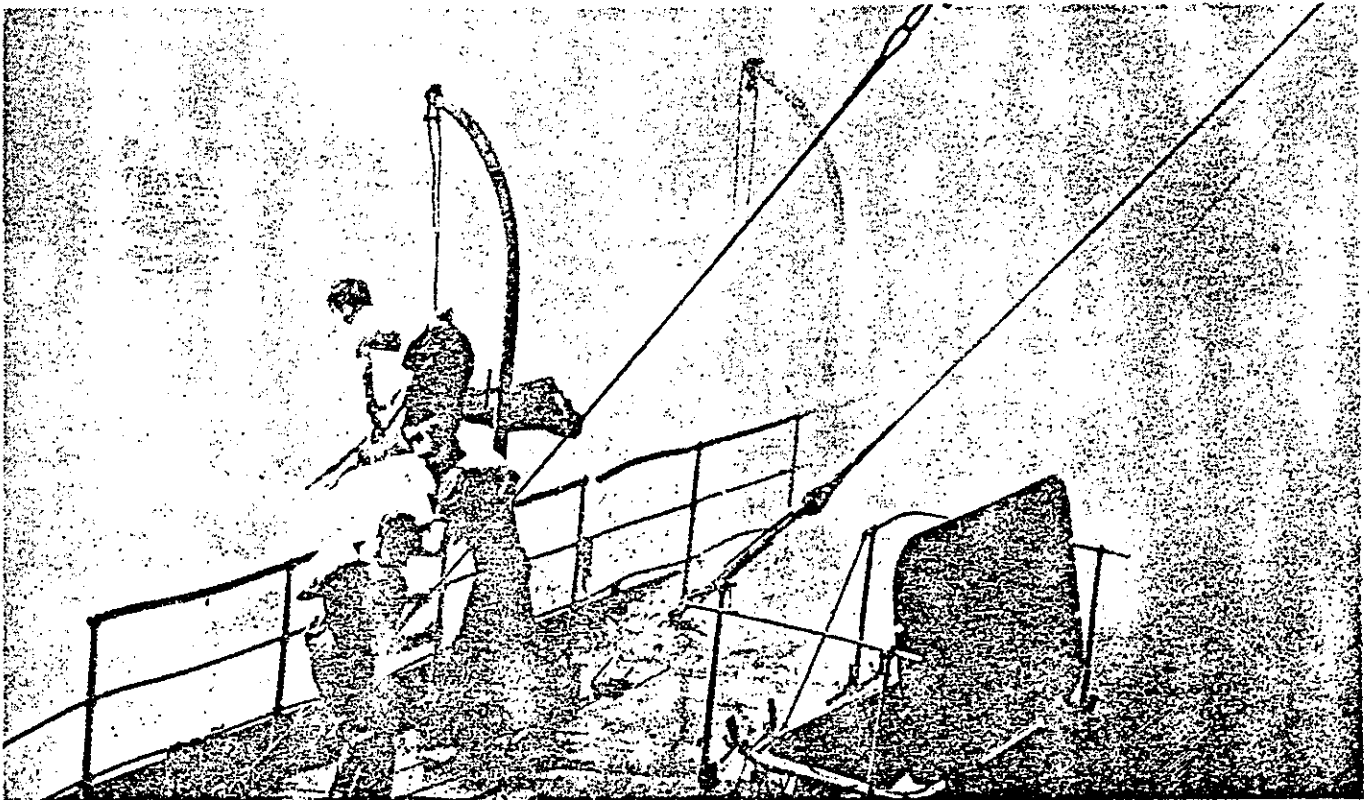


Adrift! At the mercy of huge seas, these torpedoed seamen huddle on a raft awaiting rescue.

U.S. Coast Guard photo

Abandon ship! Crewmen jump overboard from a burning tanker.

Acme photo



TRAGIC COINCIDENCE

For the Chief it was a hard story to hear. His father was Chief Engineer of the City of Atlanta.

Both Capt. Dalzell and Chief Kenney had started their seafaring careers on the City of Atlanta many years before, when she was a well known coastwise passenger liner. Capt. Dalzell's father had commanded her for many years before Capt. Leemon Urquhart took over.

"U-boat lane" they called Atlantic coastal waters now. Nazi submarines ambled down the seaboard on sinking sprees that cost hundreds of lives, and sent scores of ships to the bottom with a huge loss in precious cargoes.

There was no naval defense worthy of the name, and it was to be five months yet before the first convoy was organized for the protection of shipping along the seaboard, in the Gulf and the Caribbean. Merchant ships, in the meantime, sailed unescorted and, in most cases, unarmed—with the U-boats so bold they shelled their prey even within sight of the Delaware Capes.

As the rate of sinkings increased, no seaman could be sure that his ship would reach its destination. Legion were those that didn't, but they kept sailing, nonetheless, and none of them idled in port for lack of crews. In some cases there were even more men willing to "ship out" at SIU Halls than there were ships for them to sail.

At the old New York Hall of the SIU, at number two Stone Street, across from famous Bowling Green, men reported for the hourly "calls" as though there was no war within ten thousand miles. They manned the ships and kept the cargoes moving.

On January 25th, torpedoes struck again, sinking the 550 foot Venore off Cape Hatteras with a loss of 18 men. She, too, was a well known SIU ship.

The end of this vessel is dramatically told in the terse, urgent calls for help sent out by her radio operator.

At 12:47 a.m. he flashed this SOS: "Two crashes so far. Will keep informed. Think swimming soon."

This call came two minutes later: "Torpedoed twice. Ship still afloat but listing badly. Captain requests assistance immediately." He then gave the ship's position a number of times.

The third and last message was heard at 1:22 a.m.; "Cannot stay afloat much longer."

No more reports came through, for soon after the radio man had tapped out this message on his key the Venore sank and Sparks, true to the

traditions of his calling, stayed at his post too long to escape.

Several lifeboats were launched by the Venore's crew and the survivors were picked up 38 hours later.

Sinking declined along the Atlantic seaboard after coastal convoys were inaugurated in May of 1942, but the U-boats prowled these waters off and on right up till the end of the war.

In fact, the collier Black Point was torpedoed just a few miles from the big naval base at Newport, R. I., on the fifth of May, 1945, the last American ship to be lost in the war.

Many more SIU vessels were to be numbered among the 154 Allied ships sunk along the coast and in the northwest Atlantic between January and June of 1942.

Among them were the Robin Hood, Alcoa Guide, Oakmar, Marore, Major Wheeler and Pipestone County. The Major Wheeler—of the Bull Line—completely disappeared, never to be heard from again, while the Robin Line Pipestone County, a well-liked freighter among men who sailed SIU ships, was sunk en route from Trinidad to Boston, about 200 miles due west of Bermuda. Two of her boats spent 16 days at sea before being picked up.

CHILORE GETS IT

U-boats continued their attacks despite the use of convoys, and the SIU-manned Chilore of the Ore Shipping Company was hit while in a heavily protected convoy under escort of surface ships, planes and blimps.

Known as convoy KS 520, this fleet of 19 merchantmen left Lynnhaven Roads in the Chesapeake on July 14, 1942. When it was off Cape Hatteras the next day it ran into a flock of torpedoes.

No one even saw a tin fish until the Chilore got smacked, to be followed a minute or so later by the tanker Mowinckel. The Bluefields, a small Nicaraguan freighter carrying explosives, was blown up while the escort ran around dropping depth charges and the escorting bombers spattered the water with bombs and machine gun fire.

It was the freighter Unicoi, however, which got credit for sinking the doughty sub, along with an Army patrol bomber.

The Chilore and Mowinckel dropped out of the convoy and headed for the nearby shore under their own power, but both of them ran into a minefield and suffered more explosions. The big Chilore capsized and sank while being towed toward Baltimore several days later.



IN MEMORIAM

More than 1,200 members of the Seafarers International Union gave their lives in World War II. The restless ocean tracks on which they died provided no monument to these men, but their deeds will be long remembered and the saga of their heroism will be oft retold.

✱ ✱ ✱

*These were men of the merchant marine —
Sailors in dungaree blue.
No dangers stayed them from the seas;
They carried the cargoes through.*

*Their battle lines were the far trade routes;
They died on the lonely deeps,
But the brotherhood of the age-less sea
Eternal their record keeps.*

— J. B.

Caribbean "Carnival"

Just as the Atlantic seaboard in 1942 was called "U-Boat Lane," so could the Caribbean and the Gulf have been called "U-Boat Lake"—for the German undersea raiders roamed these waters at will, becoming so bold in their hunt for prey that they sank ships in the very mouth of the Mississippi, in the narrow passage between Key West and Havana, and at the entrance to the Texas oil ports.

The height of bold audacity was reached on the evening of July 2, 1942, when a sub entered the harbor of Puerto Limon, Costa Rica, and sank the SS San Pablo.

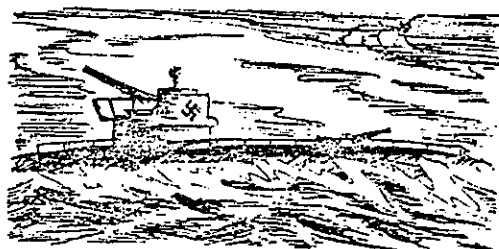
During the first two months of war, six American ships were torpedoed and sunk in the Caribbean and the Gulf. Six more were sent to the bottom in April; and in May the Germans had a month-long field day, sinking no less than five ships on the 4th, two on the 6th, and three on the 12th.

The total bag for the month of May in American vessels alone across the Gulf and the Caribbean was 31 ships. By the end of June, 1942, a total of 167 Allied freighters and tankers had been sent to the bottom in these warm, southern waters!

It was the SIU-manned Robert E. Lee, a former Eastern Steamship Lines passenger ship, that was sunk when almost within the "safety" of the mighty Mississippi—on July 30, with considerable loss of life among both passengers and crew.

A surprisingly large number of these U-boat victims were cargo carriers manned by SIU seamen and it would seem, from a study of the war records, that the Germans had a special liking for Waterman, Bull, and Alcoa ships. An entire fleet of them was lost in 1942. Limited space permits describing only a few of the many dramatic incidents involving SIU ships during this phase of the war. A book would be needed to tell about them all.

For the undersea raiders it was a Roman holiday—simpler than knocking off clay pigeons at a shotgun shoot.



So it was with the Elizabeth and Clare of the Bull Line, as they plodded along the southwest coast of Cuba on the night of May 20, 1942. A bright moon lit up the sea and silhouetted the two ships as they headed south with their holds full of general cargo for the Islands.

On the Clare's bridge, the Skipper watched a light that had been reported a minute or so before by one of the lookouts. He couldn't tell whether it might be a small Island freighter or a fishing boat, for it was moving across their bow and lay some distance off.

LOST IN THE DARK

A rain squall blanketed the moon just as the Skipper was trying to identify the unknown craft, which seemed to be pursuing an erratic course.

Up forward in the hot fo'castle, Fireman Ernest Torres was stretched out in his bunk, clad only in a pair of shorts. It was stickily hot and he was trying to read. He had almost decided to take his mattress on deck and stretch out on number one hatch, rain or no rain.

Just then a bright searchlight blossomed out on the vessel ahead, playing over the Clare from bow to stern with a blinding intensity. Almost immediately a torpedo smashed into the hull at number one hold; just where Fireman Torres was about to stow his mattress for a cool snooze.

"It made one hell of a noise," says Torres. "The explosion threw me out of my bunk and onto the deck. The old Clare shivered like a shimmy dancer.

"All the lights went out and I ran like hell to my lifeboat station. I had the book in my hand all the time, but I never even thought of going back for my clothes or my papers. The spray from the explosion gave me a shower bath when I ran down the deck."

So violent had been the blast that water cascaded down the vents into the fireroom.

There was no panic on the ship and the Captain visited all the crew's quarters to make sure that no men were trapped in their rooms, after

which he gave the order to abandon ship. Both boats lowered away and the men pulled as hard as they could for the shore.

ELIZABETH GETS IT

They hadn't taken many strokes before the Elizabeth, still following along behind and caught proverbially, "between the devil and the deep," received a torpedo amidships, accompanied by a bright flash that momentarily lit up the vessel and then was gone.

From the boats the crew of the Clare could see little lights blinking on the Elizabeth as her men ran out of the deck house doors and pushed aside blackout baffles on their way to the boats.

Several of the men laughed at the sight, for it seemed amusing in a way to see other guys get it, too. "I bet they don't save any silk stockings for the girls in Puerto Rico," someone said.

"It ain't funny," said an Oiler. "If they got hit in the engine room there's some good guys goin' down on her."

That was a sobering thought and they pulled for the shore. It took about 15 minutes for the Clare to sink and they watched her settle, silhouetted against the tropic sky. No men were lost on the Clare.

Not so fortunate were other SIU ships that are now rusting many fathoms under the surface in the lightless deeps of the Caribbean and the Gulf.

Of the hundreds of men lost on SIU ships in World War II a large percentage made the supreme sacrifice in these waters that looked so calm and peaceful, yet comprised one of the most hazardous sectors of the war.

It was oil and bauxite, the two prime essentials of modern war, that lured the U-boats to the Caribbean in the first place. The tankers and the bauxite ships were their number-one targets, but they also sank anything else that came along. In the first six months of 1942, the subs shelled or torpedoed anything that steamed their way, without fear or favor.

One of several bauxite-laden ships to get sliced with a tin fish in these waters was the little SS Suwied under command of Captain Bernard David. She was off the south coast of Cuba bound for Mobile with aluminum ore when, on June 7, a torpedo exploded in her starboard side and she went to the bottom in

just 1½ minutes! Not many ships beat her record for sinking.

Water and debris shot up the funnel as the boilers exploded and First Mate John Hume, one of the last to leave the plummeting ore carrier, walked off the deck in water over his shoulders after releasing the forward life rafts.

The sub that torpedoed them surfaced nearby and watched the troubles the men had with their leaky lifeboats, but the Germans did not interfere in any way and the 27 survivors were picked up the next day by a Navy patrol vessel.

It is pertinent to note in this regard that there were only one or two instances in all the sinkings in the Caribbean where submarine crews mistreated torpedoed men from American ships. In many cases they even gave the survivors water, bread and cigarettes, offered medical aid when needed, and gave the officers a course to the nearest land.

A close competitor to the Suwied for the title of "the fastest sinking ship" was the Alcoa Pilgrim, which was torpedoed without warning early in the morning of May 28 while en route from Port of Spain, Trinidad, to Mobile with 9,500 tons of heavy bauxite aboard. She sank by the stern in a little over 90 seconds, with heavy loss of life.

NO TIME FOR SOS

This blacked-out, SIU-crewed freighter had three lookouts on watch, and was zig-zagging when the unseen U-boat sent a torpedo into her engine room on the starboard side just below the water line. Needless to say, there was no time to send out an SOS and no time to fire any guns even if the ship had been armed.

The Alcoa Pilgrim plunged so quickly no boats could be launched, but nine survivors got aboard two life rafts which drifted clear and were picked up a week later by the SS Thomas Nelson.

As was usual in sinkings of unarmed ships steaming alone, the sub surfaced, came up to the survivors, and questioned them about the ship and cargo. The U-boat was a big one, had a three inch gun on her forward deck, and bore the insignia of a ram's head on her conning tower. After questioning the Pilgrim's men, she steamed calmly away on the surface looking for more victims.

Truly it can be said that the Caribbean in 1942 was a "U-Boat Lake."



An American Liberty ship explodes after being hit by dive bombers off Sicily. U.S. Coast Guard photo

60 Seconds To Sink

Although U-boats liked best to bag a bauxite ship or a tanker, because these cargoes were so vital to the war effort, they weren't at all choosy about their targets—and molasses tankers got sunk as well as more "vital" prey during the war in the Caribbean and the Gulf in 1942.

The SS Catahoula of the Cuba Distilling Company, a favorite among SIU men who liked the *senorita* run, was hit on April 5, to be followed by its sister ship the SS Carrabelle on May 26.

There was a full load of molasses in the tanks of the Catahoula, as she stood north from San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic, toward Wilmington, Del., in the late afternoon of a warm clear day over a lazy, beautiful sea.

Two men were on lookout, but they couldn't see the sub waiting for them against the glare of the setting sun. The first torpedo hit on the port side in a terrific blast that blew up the deck plates, loosened the engine room bulkheads and carried away the catwalk.

PITCHED BATTLE

Being one of the first ships equipped in some fashion to fight back against the subs, the general alarm was sounded; and a complement of Navy gunners manned their machine guns so well that the inquisitive sub had its periscope shot away—or so it seemed from the deck of the tanker.

Not a bit daunted by the prospect of fighting a raider with .30 caliber pellets, the guncrew fired away till they consumed 200 rounds.

But four minutes after the first torpedo, the sub let them have another, which found its mark forward of the bridge to starboard—showing that the wary U-boat had made a quick circuit around the ship for its second try.

After this hit, the Catahoula lost no time going down, and was under water fore and aft in little more than 60 seconds.

Two of the crew had been killed in the first blast, and five more were crushed when the stack fell athwart the starboard lifeboat.

One lifeboat and one raft on the port side got away safely and, thanks to Sparks having stuck by his post to get off four calls for help, 38 survivors were rescued the next day by the USS *Sturtevant*.

Heroism of the Radio Operator and the tragic death of the Skipper and 23 men marked the sinking of the Carrabelle, which tried bravely to escape from a U-boat on the night of May 26, while en route from Good Hope, La., to San Juan, Puerto Rico, with a cargo of emulsified liquid asphalt.

The first they knew of a U-boat's presence was the moan of a siren and the crack of a shot across the bow.

CLOSE RANGE

In a moment or two, they saw the raider little more than a ship's length off the beam, where it opened fire on them with a light gun, throwing shell after shell into the defenseless tanker while the general alarm summoned all hands to the boats and the order was given to abandon ship.

They lowered away as the nearby U-boat moved around to the port side and opened fire again, the shells hitting in rapid succession against deck house and bridge.

As the first boat pulled away from the ship's side, the U-boat commander hailed them from the conning tower.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

They shouted "no"—that another boat was still preparing to cast off. They heard several men laughing on the raider's deck, even while a second torpedo streaked past them and headed for the lifeboat that was just now shipping its oars beside the sinking Carrabelle.

The men in the boat probably never saw the torpedo till it was all but on top of them, and then there was only time for a startled cry or two.

The steel tube bulleted through the lifeboat, and hit the steel hull of the tanker in an explosion that stifled all cries or shouts for help, blowing boat and men into a myriad torn pieces of human bodies and flying steel.

It was one of the few known cases in which German submarines deliberately attacked lifeboat occupants from American ships.

SIX SOS CALLS

Before the Carrabelle sank, Sparks managed to get out six SOS calls, then ran out of the

radio shack onto the flooded deck and jumped overboard just as she went under.

Brave were the men who volunteered to sail their old, unarmed ships through "U-boat Lake" in early 1942.

On the 20th of May, the George Calvert, a Bull Line Liberty, was sunk with a loss of three men while bound for Bandar Shapur with 9,116 tons of war supplies for the Russians.

Another Bull Line ship, the Major Wheeler, disappeared in the Caribbean to become an unsolved mystery of the sea.

And there was the City of Alma of the Waterman Company, en route from Port of Spain, Trinidad, to Baltimore on June 2, when she was hit by just one torpedo from an unseen submarine.

Ripping a 40-foot hole in the hull, the "tinfish" almost sliced the freighter in two, and she sank so speedily that ten men were saved only because they had jumped clear when she plunged, later climbing aboard a liferaft which had broken loose and floated free.

Sparks was caught in his shack, sending out calls for help. The Skipper, Second Mate, Chief Engineer, First, Second and Third Assistant Engineers and 22 other crewmen were lost on the City of Alma.

The little Millinocket, Bull Line, was warned of the proximity of a marauding sub, but too late to save herself.

It was five minutes past five in the afternoon when Steward Ernest Oxley stopped by the wireless room and read a message which had just come in from San Juan. The radiogram warned that a submarine was in their vicinity.

And correct it was, for Steward Oxley had no more than read the warning of danger when the ship shuddered from a torpedo explosion in the starboard side amidships.

Oxley ran out on deck to see the Skipper, the Chief and the First Mate running toward the life rafts, with the Captain shouting "Let go the rafts. It's our only chance. Let go the rafts."

That was the last he saw of the trio, for they went down with the ship.

On watch below, when the torpedo hit, was the 4 to 8: Second Assistant Francis Amberger, Fireman Robert Baylis and Oiler Joe Lewnuk.

Joe escaped — miraculously, it seemed — by climbing up the emergency cable ladder to the

engineroom skylight before the engineroom flooded and the Millinocket settled by the stern.

Seamen could never tell when their ship might get hit during these hectic days, for subs gave no warning.

Captain Homer Lanford was pulling the whistle cord of the SS Del Mundo, to turn a convoy into the old Bahama passage off Cuba, when this Mississippi Shipping Company freighter got a torpedo in the engineroom, killing all hands below.

An old "Hog," the Del Mundo was "commodore" of a 38-ship fleet, and was carrying 30 Polish women war refugees as passengers. A number of other ships were sunk in the same attack, covering the sea with a maze of floating debris.

Captain William B. Sillars, of the Waterman freighter Afoundria, sensed pending disaster to his ship on May 5, 1942, when the vessel was hit by a sub in mid-afternoon off the northwest coast of Haiti.

SENSED DANGER

He had come on to the bridge just a few minutes before, saying to Second Mate James Chatfield, "I feel that right now we are at the most dangerous stage of our trip. Keep a very good lookout!"

The Afoundria had a load of bombs up forward and a cargo of beans aft. Fortunately, the torpedo hit among the beans. All hands were saved.

By the end of July, submarine sinkings in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico had been drastically cut, but ships continued to go down in these waters right up to the end of the war, and among them were freighters manned by SIU crews.

Lack of space precludes the telling of even a part of the action-packed drama that these ships contributed to the story of the war at sea.

It is, unfortunately, impossible in this account even to mention all of the Union's contracted ships that went down in these tropic waters, but not to be forgotten are some of the "oldtimers," including the Barbara, sunk with considerable loss of life among passengers and crews; the Alcoa Carrier, Alcoa Partner, Edith, Lebore, Alaskan and Antinous.

To these ships and the men who sailed them across "U-boat Lake," in most cases without guns or armed escort, it's "hail and farewell. Yours was a job well done."

To Malta and Suez

October of 1942 was one of the critical periods of history.

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps were less than 60 miles from Alexandria, striking for Suez and domination of the middle east. They had destroyed 200 tanks, two-thirds of all the 8th Army possessed, and victory seemed to be almost theirs.

Hard pressed were the desert-hardened fighters of the British Army and its Allies. It looked as though nothing could stop the German panzers from running through Egypt to the Suez canal.

And then the 8th Army stiffened, giving Rommel a stiff right to the chin at Alam El Halfa. Taking a deep breath, they swung hard and hit the Germans with a succession of hard body blows at El Alamein, after which the Afrika Korps turned back and, chased by the "desert rats," headed pell-mell toward the west across the burning sands.

AID TO DESERT RATS

That the 8th Army accomplished this victory in the face of defeat may well have been made possible by the historic voyage of the SS Seatrain Texas and her SIU crew.

This train-carrying freighter had just returned to New York from England in the summer of 1942, when she was rushed to dock and started taking on a load of Sherman tanks which had been diverted from our own armed forces on an emergency order from President Roosevelt.

She was ordered to rush the tanks to the British at Suez without so much as an hour's delay, for two American ships carrying Shermans for the 8th Army had just recently been sunk—their precious cargoes entirely lost beneath the seas.

With 180 tanks and 165 Army technicians aboard, the Seatrain Texas left New York as soon as loading was complete, with Capt. Albert Dalzell in command. Hazardous as the ocean lanes were at that period of the war, there was no time to wait for convoys.

Proceeding at top speed, the Seatrain Texas zig-zagged through the dangerous Caribbean with guns manned every minute and double lookouts

on watch continuously day and night. Then came the precarious dash across the long and lonely South Atlantic, where Nazi raiders were known to be operating.

Stopping at Cape Town only long enough for fuel, the Texas coursed along the east coast of Africa to rendezvous with a British corvette, her only escort of the entire voyage, at "torpedo point" off Madagascar.

FROM SHIP TO BATTLE

Furrowing the warm seas as they speeded north, the two ships passed a convoy which had left the States three weeks before the Texas slipped her hawsers from the Jersey pier, and they arrived at Suez a full seven days ahead of the convoy.

Unloading gear was already rigged as the Seatrain Texas came to anchor. Tank drivers of the 8th Army were there to meet her, and as soon as the broad, heavy Shermans hit the shore they were rumbling off toward the fighting fronts not many miles away.

Said the Seatrain Lines of this exploit: "It was the men of the Seatrain Texas as well as Montgomery who turned the tide in North Africa." They helped put Rommel to rout and, perhaps without exaggeration, played an important part in changing the course of history.

No better accolade for the ship and her crew could have been given. Theirs had been an historic mission ably fulfilled.

Action-packed voyages in the Mediterranean were not unusual for SIU-manned ships, from the time of the Malta convoys till after Italy had surrendered.

The Liberty ship Daniel Huger of the Mississippi Shipping Company, for instance, was loaded with 6,000 tons of high octane gasoline in barrels when she was caught in an air raid at Bone, Algeria, in 1943, and hit by a bomb which wounded several gunners and started a fire in the 'tween decks.

BATTLED GASOLINE

Although the ship threatened to blow up at any minute, with flames from exploding gasoline roaring 300 feet into the air, the crew stayed

by their posts till the order came to abandon ship.

Later a fire brigade arrived and crewmen volunteered to help the shoreside fire-fighters put out the flames and save ship and cargo. Several of the crew dared death to enter the hold adjacent to the fire and spray foamite over the red hot bulkheads.

When the Alcoa-operated William Wirt was attacked by Nazi bombers in the Mediterranean, the War Shipping Administration later said of its crew that "although it was the first experience in action for the majority of the merchant seamen stationed with the guns, they served like seasoned veterans." The same commendation could be made of many another SIU crew.

After the SS Maiden Creek, a C-3 operated by Waterman, was torpedoed near the coast of North Africa in 1944, crewmen returned to the ship when it was seen she wouldn't sink immediately, and volunteers went below to break out towing hawsers from the after chain locker.

As they were at work below, a second torpedo struck the vessel in the stern, with six sailors losing their lives and 12 others being injured as this SIU crew attempted to save their vessel and its valuable cargo of war supplies.

SIU men played an important role in another thrill-packed theater of war, when the SS Robin Locksley of the Seas Shipping Company helped to rush food, gasoline and ammunition to beleaguered Malta, that brave bastion of the middle Mediterranean, which proudly bore the title of the "most bombed spot on earth."

German and Italian airmen had tried futilely

to blast this 17-mile long island out of the war with innumerable raids, for Malta had three flying fields and British planes were using them to exact costly tolls from Axis convoys supplying Rommel in North Africa.

But for several small and heavily protected Allied convoys that reinforced the island by running the "bomb blockade," Malta might have fallen and the conquest of Africa been made immensely more costly in men and material.

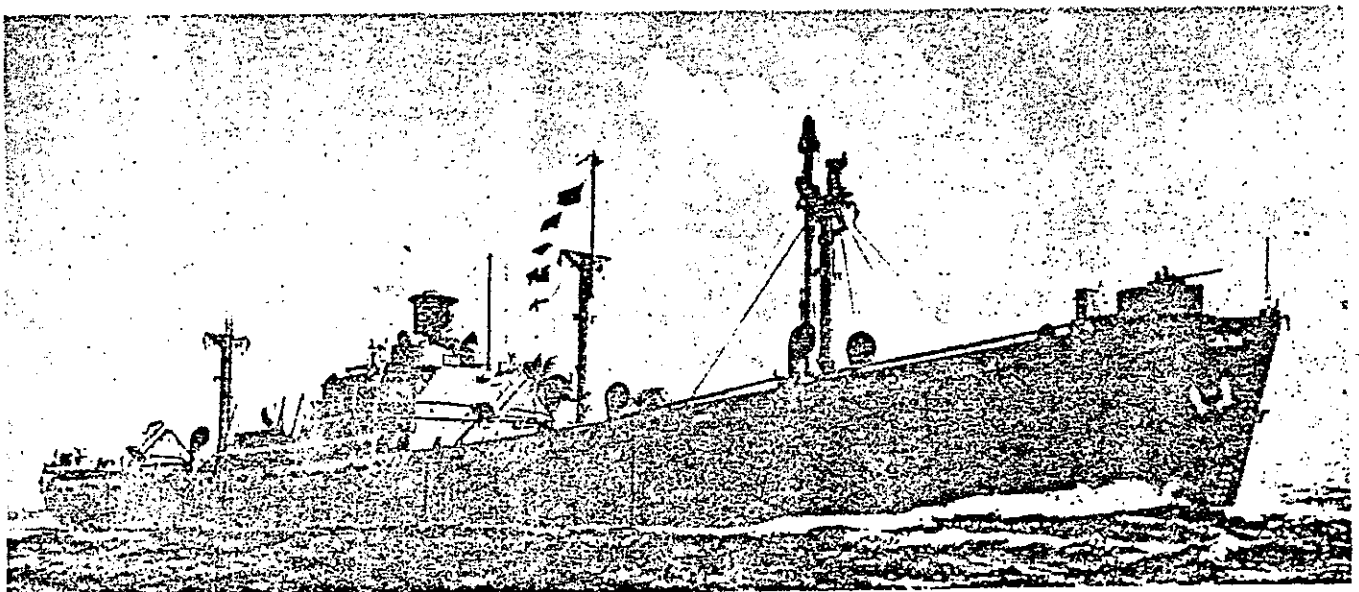
It was on November 17, 1942, that the Robin Locksley, the Bantam (Dutch), and the Denbighshire (Br.) left Port Said for Malta.

Importance of the convoy is emphasized by the size of the escort they had: five cruisers and seven large destroyers!

The first heavy attack was by seven Junkers 88s, which were driven off by intense ack-ack fire, but three torpedo planes came in soon after and hit the cruiser Arethusa. In this attack the Robin Locksley was given credit for downing one of the torpedo raiders.

On the 19th, a flight of 27 Nazi troop-carrying planes bound for Africa made the mistake of passing over the convoy, and long range Beau-fighters from Malta which were flying cover for the fleet at the time knocked down four of the transports with their human cargoes.

Heavy seas and frequent overcast helped the convoy to reach Malta without loss on November 20, delivering a cargo that helped immeasurably to keep the island fortress in the war. The Robin Locksley and her companion ships skirted subs and bombs to arrive safely back in Port Said.



U.S. Maritime Commission photo

The famous Liberty ship, "workhorse" of World War II.

The Russian Run

As long as men who sailed in World War II still go to sea, there will be told stirring tales of the Russian run—the long, cold, hazardous voyage to Murmansk and the ports of the White Sea.

Close to 350 American ships made the run to Russia with bombs, guns, tanks, ammunition, gasoline, beans, bandages, dried eggs, sugar, shoes, grain, and even gin for the big brass.

Up to March of 1943, 32 American ships out of 143 setting out for the Barents Sea had been lost. Many of these, and not a few of those lost later, were manned by men of the SIU, for the number of ships crewed by Seafarers on the legendary run to Russia was almost legion.

Greatest danger on this northern voyage came when the convoys approached North Cape, the Arctic tip of Scandinavia, which posed the last great hurdle before they reached their destination on the upper rim of the world.

Some convoys delivered their cargoes without loss, but most of them saw action from planes, subs, and Nazi surface craft. Added to this were the natural hazards of bitter cold, storms, ice and fog.

Nearly every ship setting out for Russia was given a load of explosives to carry: anywhere from several hundred to a thousand tons. It was "sudden death" that could—and more than once did—send ship and crew to kingdom-come in a sudden fearful roar.

Seamen in convoy PQ-18, which included the Schoharie, Virginia Dare, William Moultrie, and other SIU ships, will never forget the end of the freighter Mary Luckenbach.

WIPED OFF THE SEA

During a heavy air attack, a torpedo bomber either crashed on her deck or dropped its torpedo like a bomb. No one can ever tell exactly what happened, for the vessel was completely obliterated.

When the William Moultrie steamed over the spot (she was in column behind the Luckenbach) crewmen could not spot a single bit of wreckage from the unfortunate vessel — not even a board or a shattered piece of liferaft.

The Skipper of the nearby freighter St. Olaf

entered in his log that the Mary Luckenbach "flew into a million parts like a giant hand grenade."

Following the famous "Fourth of July" convoy — which was decimated by planes and subs when deserted by its escort—convoy PQ-18 was heavily protected, but still had to fight its way through to the White Sea.

Of 40 merchant ships in this convoy, 13 were sunk in bitter attacks that included as many as 40 torpedo bombers at one time, and which lasted even to the moment the fleet arrived in Archangel.

Sailing the "road to Russia" was frequently quite exasperating to crews whose ships either sat at anchor for weary, uneventful weeks, or went wandering around over the ocean as though there was not the least hurry about delivery for their cargoes of war.

BEAUREGARD TAKES THE "ROAD"

Captain William Patterson and his SIU crew took the Waterman Company's SS Beauregard out of New York for Halifax on May 1, 1942, joining an eight-knot convoy from there to Hull, England, where the cargo was taken out and the ship re-loaded with tanks and other equipment for which the Russians were said to be in desperate and urgent need.

By September, the Beauregard was in Lock Ewe, Scotland. Then to Glasgow for some repairs. After that to Belfast, where the crew were surprised to meet 12 other ships of the original group with which they had left the States. To Russia now? Not at all, for the dispatch of ships in those days was not so simple as all that.

It was now the middle of October, and during the next eight weeks the tired old Beauregard was sent, in turn, to Kirkwall, the Firth o' Forth, and Edinburgh, where the outmoded tanks were taken off and replaced with newer models.

Sailing for Russia at long last, the ship arrived in Murmansk on Christmas Day, and then on for a month the crew sweated out 130 air raids, shooting down one Nazi bomber with a rocket gun.

The Beauregard returned to the States just one month short of a year-long trip.

Other SIU ships, like the Schoharie and the Gateway City, wasted weeks in cruising between Scotland and Iceland, or laying idle at Reykjavik.

The Gateway City rode at her anchor chain for 107 days in Iceland while the crew, who were forbidden to go ashore lest they divulge matters of "military importance" to Axis spies, made skiffs out of dunnage and paddled around to other ships in the harbor, including the Russians.

The "Russkies" liked checkers and chess, and the men from the Gateway City answered many challenges from the Russian crewmen (and women).

On those ships in the 1942 convoys which had guncrews, the Navy personnel was seldom more than ten or twelve men at the most, and their armament was usually of popgun caliber.

The SIU-manned Alcoa Banner sailed to Russia in convoy PQ-16, being defended by a prodigious battery of five .30-caliber machine guns and a Navy guncrew of two men!

This convoy had plenty of use for guns, too, for it was attacked 25 times en route from Iceland. Among the ships it lost was the SIU-crewed Alamar, sunk about the same time as the SS Syros, which blew up when a torpedo nosed into its load of TNT.

MASSMAR HITS MINE

En route back from Russia, the Massmar (SIU) struck a mine, along with the John Randolph and the Heffron. Men of this convoy will always be grateful for the heroic work of the French corvette Roselys, which rescued 180 men from sinking ships.

There were many other SIU ships on the run to Russia—ships like the Alcoa Rambler, Alcoa Cadet, Topa Topa and the old Bayou Chico—which saw action aplenty, but it is not possible here to do honor to them all, though they all richly deserve to be equally well remembered.

Whatever the ship, their crews shared alike the hazards of this Arctic run and, while 1942 was the peak year for losses in ships and men, there were casualties right up into 1945, with some of the heaviest attacks being launched by the Germans in this last year of the war.

The return trip from Russia was hardly less arduous than the run north; for a sunk ship,

as far as the Nazis were concerned, meant one less bottom for supplying the Russians, and they let no opportunities go by to bag ships homeward bound from the White Sea.

Such was the fate of the SS Puerto Rican (SIU-SUP), which had delivered her freight and was headed back for Iceland early in 1943, with 3,500 tons of ore under hatches.

She lost the convoy in a violent storm on March 6, and by the night of March 9 the gales had not abated. The Puerto Rican was proceeding alone against a bitter cold wind and freezing spray when, at 10 PM, she was hit.

Loaded deep with ore, the ship sank so fast that there was no chance to launch the boats. Perhaps they couldn't have been launched anyway, for the davits were coated with ice.

There wasn't much chance of a man surviving in such weather, but those who were afloat after the ship went down clung to pieces of wreckage. Several of them climbed aboard a liferaft; others clung to the icy keel of an upturned lifeboat which had been torn from the davits.

It was an epic of pure, raw courage by men who would not give up.

BITTER-ENDERS

By morning Bob Howard and George Reilly, ABs, several gunners, AB Robert Kaley, an Englishman, Joe Disange and Fireman August Wallenhaupt were still fighting the huge seas and the cold—fighting to live, though there seemed no chance of their ever being found.

But courage alone, even for men brave as these, was not enough. One by one they were swept away by the battering seas, till, after two days, only two of them were left.

One was dead, frozen with a death grip on the pitching liferaft. The other, Fireman Wallenhaupt, clung to life with a superhuman tenacity.

And a miracle (for surely in that wild, tumbling ocean swept by snow squalls and curtained by spray, a miracle it was) rewarded this courageous seaman for his fight.

The British destroyer St. Elistin, making a final sweep of the area in its search for the lost Puerto Rican, sighted the raft and its brave occupant. He alone survived his ship — one of many that never came back from the Russian run.

Heroes All

"A hero," said the poet Rupert Hughes, "is a man plus."

There were many heroes among men of the SIU during World War II—men who accomplished feats of self-sacrifice; who did acts of courage beyond the ordinary call of duty.

There were men such as ABs Tom Crawford and Joseph Squires of the freighter Maiden Creek.

They stayed behind on the Maiden Creek to tend the falls and get the lifeboats away when this Waterman ship foundered off Block Island in December of 1942, losing their lives for the safety of their shipmates.

And there were men like Seafarer Per Lykke, whose able boathandling that night, through huge waves and gale winds, won from the Navy a commendation for "extraordinary courage and seamanship." Those who survived owed their lives to Lykke.

And not to be forgotten are the seven sailors who manned a lifeboat from the SS John Howard Payne (SUP), risking their lives in dangerous seas to rescue men from an Army bomber forced down in the Pacific.

Count as heroes, too, those merchant crew—T. Meredith (SUP) to rescue exhausted survivors from the sinking transport Cape San Juan—men who jumped overboard from the SS Edwin

Or the crewmen who manned a gun on the SS Joseph Pulitzer for four days and nights at Gela, Sicily, when the regular Navy gunners were all wounded by a bomb.

Yes, they were heroes, these and many more. But if anywhere in the annals of World War II there was "a man plus" it was silent Gustave Alm, carpenter of the SIU-manned steamship Angelina of the Bull Line.

Huge seas that were 35 feet high and ran 300 feet from crest to crest had separated this ship from a west-bound convoy from England on the 17th of October, 1942.

Just before midnight, when the 8 to 12 Oiler had called the watch, and the Third Assistant was making the last notation in the engineroom log, a torpedo hit the Angelina amidships, blow-

ing up the starboard boiler, flooding the engine spaces, and putting out all the lights as the dynamos sputtered to a stop.

The Angelina was soon abandoned, and 43 of the crew crowded into one lifeboat, which threatened momentarily to be smashed against the sinking hulk as they tried to get away.

Captain W. S. Goodman and the gunnery officer climbed over the side onto a raft, for the lifeboat was already too full and could not hold them all.

OVERWHELMING SEA

Somehow the boat pushed off from the ship without being crushed or capsized, but hardly had the men taken a dozen good pulls at the oars, before the boat broached and a huge comber rolled down onto them with the suddenness of a fast express. They saw the mountain of water momentarily just before it hit.

"Lookout," someone yelled, "here's where we swim."

Rolling hard over, the boat teetered for a moment and then capsized.

When the churning comber had swept on fewer than half of the original 45 still groped for a hold on the upturned craft.

For a while they talked a little to each other, calling out names of their shipmates to find out who had been lost.

But conversation was brief, for the sea was drubbing them unmercifully.

Several men left the boat and swam back to the half-submerged Angelina, hoping to climb aboard and await rescue, but a second torpedo hit the freighter just as they neared its side, sinking the ship and drawing the swimmers down with her as she sank.

Back on the up-turned lifeboat some of the cold, be-numbed survivors despaired of rescue but it was Gustave Alm, the carpenter, who urged them to hang on.

INDOMITABLE SPIRIT

"Don't give up," he kept saying. "Don't give up. There's always a chance. Hang on. Hang on a while longer."

During the grueling hours of the night, a

destroyer passed within a stone's throw but no one on the warship saw them or heard their desperate cries.

It was then that one of the gunners gave up and drifted away from the boat, but Gus Alm struck out against the pounding seas and hauled the boy back.

The rescue ship Bury and a corvette had responded to the Angelina's SOS and had picked up the men on the raft before midnight; but it was not until dawn that they spotted the lifeboat, by now with only a handful of survivors still clinging to the grab rails on the bottom.

While the corvette dumped oil to windward of the boat, Captain L. E. Brown of the Bury maneuvered his little vessel within a line's throw of the capsized craft.

Captain Brown counted five men on the wallowing lifeboat, but what amazed him was the superhuman exhibit of dogged stamina and courage by one of those sea-beaten five: Gustave Alm, the carpenter.

One man would be washed off and then another, but each time this man Alm, by feats of great courage and strength, managed to haul them back aboard the lifeboat's bottom.

PRECISION SEAMANSHIP

While the rescue ship pitched and rolled, Captain Brown managed to get alongside the capsized boat. It was a precarious moment—a time for faultless thinking, for a miscue at the wheel or a roll of the Bury at the wrong moment and the survivors in the water would be crushed by the plunging vessel.

But Captain Brown knew his ship, and on the lifeboat Gus Alm summoned up what seemed to be superhuman determination and courage.

When they threw him a line from the Bury, he stretched out an arm to get it. Twice the line was thrown and twice it missed, but on the third try Alm grabbed the vital strands of hemp and made them fast around one of the holdrods.

Minutes counted now. It was obvious that Alm, strong as he was, could not take care of his battered shipmates much longer.

As the big carpenter held one exhausted man on the grab rails, another one was swept off. He would have been lost had not the Bury, with Captain Brown at the helm, darted up so close to the struggling seaman that one of the vessel's crew reached over the side, grabbed his life-jacket, and dragged him aboard on the crest of a sea.

His half-conscious companions being too weak even to know what was transpiring, Alm caught five more lines that were thrown to him, securing each one in turn around the chest of a shipmate and freeing the man from his hold on the boat when the Bury was ready to pull him in.

SUPERHUMAN SACRIFICE

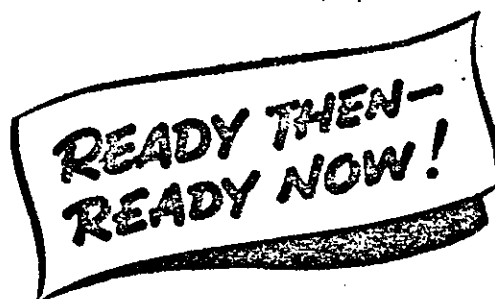
It would have been exhausting work even for a man who had not already spent the entire night in the water, much less for this seaman who had consumed so much of his strength so that others of the crew could live till rescue arrived.

When a line was finally thrown to Alm himself, he was almost too exhausted to secure it around his own waist. It seemed like hours before he could summon up sufficient strength to secure the knot and wave for them to haul him aboard.

All this time Captain Brown kept his ship within a few feet of the castaways, but Alm was too weak now to help himself and when the Bury edged closer to try and swing him aboard, he was hit several times by the side of the ship.

Once he went down, choking with water, but the sea could not claim such a man as this and they fished him finally onto the deck, bruised, bleeding and covered with oil—exhausted to the point of semi-consciousness—but still very much alive. After they gave him a shot of brandy he passed out "like a light."

Gustave Alm was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal of the merchant marine. Wrote the Bury's Captain Brown to the United States Maritime Commission: "I feel honored to have played a part in the rescue of a man with such spirit. He is a true American."



To MacArthur on Bataan

It was at Brisbane, Australia, in January of 1942 that several Army officers came aboard the SS Coast Farmer and informed Captain John A. Mattson that his ship was to be loaded immediately with a "very important" cargo of war supplies, and that he and his crew were to hurry them north with the utmost speed.

"North!" To Captain Mattson that could mean only one thing—what with the Japs in possession of all the Pacific north of Australia except the Philippines—north to MacArthur on Bataan!

BROOMSTICK ARTILLERY

Two machine guns were then mounted on the bridge as armament, and several Navy gunners were put aboard to serve them. It was later discovered that some vital parts were missing in the guns and they couldn't be fired, so the Coast Farmer was as well armed as though she mounted a battery of water pistols.

Not long after midnight on February 3, the Coast Farmer swung out her lifeboats, "doused" all lights, and left Brisbane for the north.

Several days later they arrived at Thursday Island off Cape York, at the entrance to Torres Strait. Here the Skipper was given detailed routing instructions, plus the disquieting news that two faster ships which had left for the same destination had been bombed and sunk by the Japs.

Submarines, it was said, had been sighted along the course the Farmer was to take. This induced Captain Mattson to take advantage of night, and they left Thursday Island for the Arafura Sea in the face of heavy winds and seas which gave the old ship some protection from submarines on the first lap of its hazardous voyage.

They were on their own now! No American ships to call upon for aid. No friendly ships of any kind to offer succor in the seas ahead.

After passing a chain of islands held by the Japs a few nights later, the Skipper decided they would have to stop for part of a day in order to approach a certain narrow channel under cover of night.

The channel was flanked by Jap islands and there was a very good chance that enemy patrol boats or transports would be about.

At the time they were only 45 miles off the Jap base at Amboina and, as dawn swept across the great southwest Pacific, the crew of the Farmer started the longest day of their lives.

The clocks ticked away minutes that seemed like hours, suspense-filled minutes that were fraught with constant danger.

Lookouts manned the bridge and crow's nest. Every man aboard the ship walked restlessly about the decks, pacing away the dragging hours as the bright sun climbed ever so slowly to its zenith.

Occasionally in the distance they could see black objects which seemed to be riding the placid surface of the sea like the conning towers of submarines. But they must have been whales or blackfish, for no sub attacks developed.

They all held their breath when several planes crossed the horizon some miles off, but these airmen ignored the little freighter entirely, for no American ship, the Japs were confident, could venture so far north and so boldly, too.

All hands felt much better when the sun had disappeared over the Java sea and the waters were once again clothed in night.

The boiler fires were lit again, the throttle was opened, and the shaft began to turn over once more. They continued on their way, making the expected landfall during the darkest part of the night and passing close between two Jap islands unobserved.

STEADY NERVES A "MUST"

Several days later they sighted the mountains of Mindanao in the Philippines, but Captain Mattson stayed clear of the land until he was sure of their position. There was no help to be had here in case the shores ahead should be swarming with Japs. It called for steady nerves, calm judgment, and a few prayers.

Facing the Skipper now was the problem of getting ship and precious cargo up to the rendezvous point on Bataan without detection by the enemy. It was 150 miles yet to the embattled defenders of Bataan so, with an assurance from Chief Engineer George Smithers that his men could coax a few extra revolutions from the machinery, Captain Mattson threw the telegraph

over to "full ahead" and on they went to whatever might lay before.

The current was in their favor and so, too, must have been destiny, for they later found out that their course lay through a mine field which the Japs had planted just to forstall such reinforcements.

Ignorant of this peril, they forged ahead at what for the Coast Farmer was the amazing speed of 15 knots, arriving at the appointed rendezvous at about 5:30 in the morning.

At first no one was to be seen along the wooded, hilly shore, but after a while a small launch put out from a veiled landing some 300 yards away.

The men in the launch wore American Army uniforms and all hands were on the qui vive as they came up the gangway. But alert, too, were the strangers, for they drew their service revolvers as soon as they stepped over the rail. After all, the Coast Farmer flew no flag and bore no markings on her bow or stern.

MEET FRIENDS

Grim jaws relaxed, however, as everyone realized that the rendezvous had come off as planned and the boarding party introduced themselves as Colonel Chastine, Major Gregory and Mr. Wilder, a civilian pilot.

While the crew rigged booms and tackle for discharging, Mr. Wilder brought the ship to anchor very close to shore under the shadow of a mountain rising nearly 3,000 feet above the sea, thus affording some cover from air spotters and making it harder for bombers to attack from the land side.

In the week that followed, Army stevedores and the freighter's own men unloaded her vital cargo of guns, shells, food and medical supplies, then took aboard \$150,000 worth of tin, a scarce material of war which the factories were crying for back in the States.

The Army men at Gingoog were amazed that the Coast Farmer had made it through, for they had received reports that the Japs sank her, along with several other vessels trying to run the gauntlet to Bataan.

Fourteen-hundred miles unescorted and unarmed through enemy waters alive with Jap planes, ships and subs—it was a feat of heroic proportions.

While the discharging was underway, the crew acquired several monkeys and a lively dispute arose as to whether they should be kept or put

ashore, one faction claiming the simians would bring good luck, and the others averring that they didn't want any part of "monkey luck," good or bad.

The "official" ship's mascot was a scrawny cat and the Chief carried his own mascot in the person of an Angorra rabbit.

When the tin was stowed away the anchor chain ground up through the hawse and the brave little ship headed out to sea.

From the shore the doughboys waved them a wistful good-bye and as Captain Mattson put his ship seaward on the tide it was with the gravest misgivings, for a Jap cruiser had been reported not far down the coast.

"At 3:00 PM," said the Skipper's official report, "we were on our way, taking great care not to let the fires smoke, keeping a good lookout for floating mines, and spinning the rudder hard over when one was sighted right ahead."

SOMETHING ON STARBOARD

While edging south through the night, expecting at any moment to hear the hum of airplane engines or the crack of shells from a U-boat, a ship was reported coming toward them off the starboard side.

From the silhouette of the stranger, they thought for awhile she was the Mormacsun, which had been scheduled for the same run.

Captain Mattson was about to order the signalman to "speak" her by blinker but an instinctive caution held back the command.

He let the ship pass unnoticed and lucky that he did, for when the two vessels came abreast several miles apart they could see that she was not the Mormacsun despite the close resemblance. Whoever she was, she was by all odds a Jap transport.

Several days after this hairbreadth escape, they sighted Thursday Island dead ahead. Army and Navy personnel welcomed them back as though they had returned from the dead.

"It's a miracle," they insisted; "It's sure a miracle, all right."

Said Captain Mattson: "Every member of the crew behaved splendidly. I cannot say enough for their loyalty, inspiring courage and co-operation during the entire voyage." (Deck crewmen were SUP.)

The varied adventures of the SS Coast Farmer ended on July 20, 1942, when a Jap torpedo sent her to the bottom 25 miles off Cape Perpendicular.



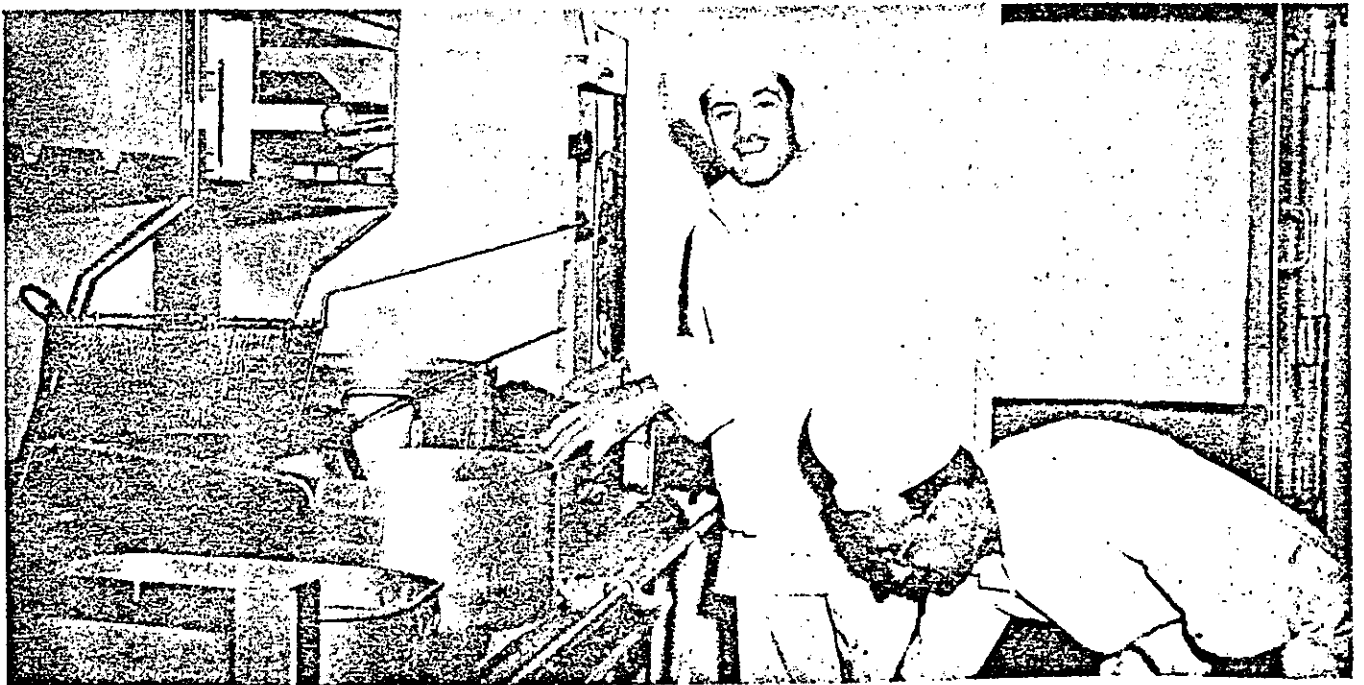
A ship is only as good as the men who man it.

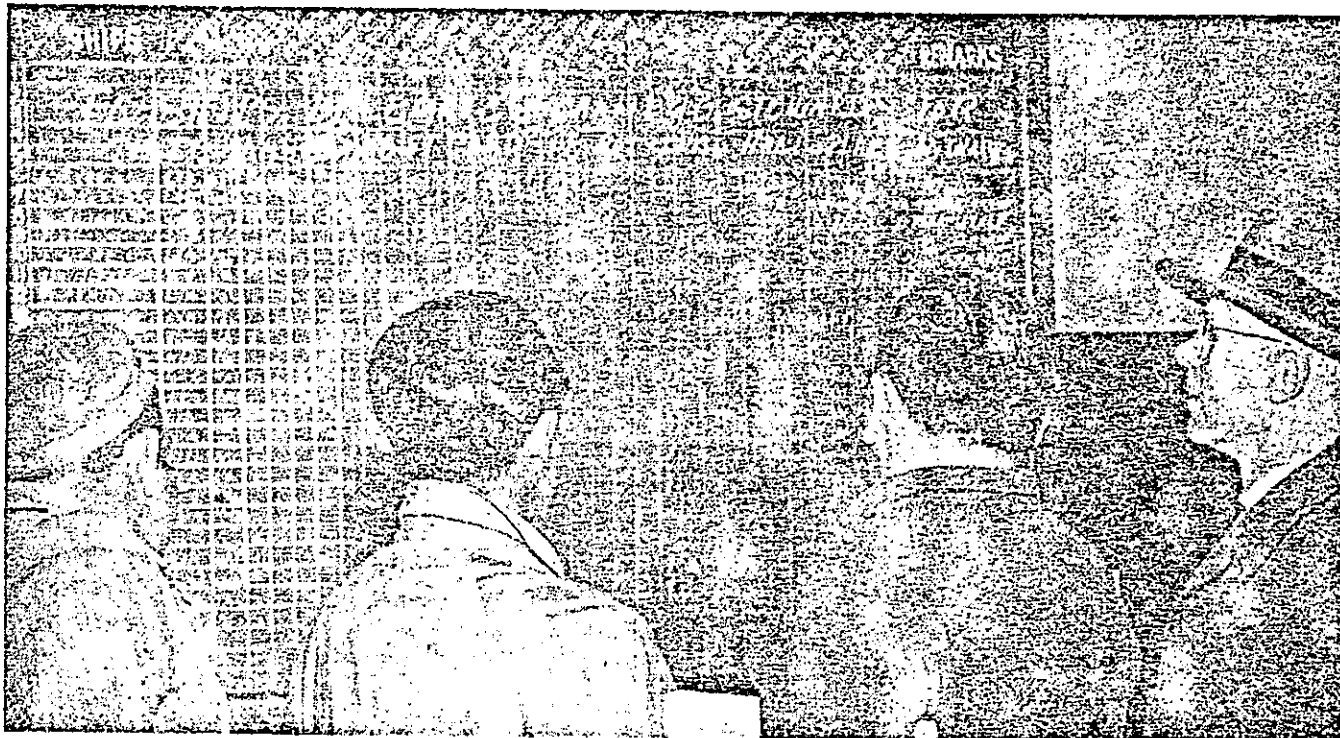
Among its thousands of members in the unlicensed departments aboard ships, the Seafarers International Union encourages professional skill and job responsibility.

It believes that the merchant seaman should be well trained through practical experience for the job he holds . . . that he should be proud of a calling dignified by the world's best, union-won maritime wages and working conditions.

Seafarers now—as in World War II—are ever ready to live up to the highest traditions of the great profession of men who go down to the sea in ships.

**READY THEN—
READY NOW!**





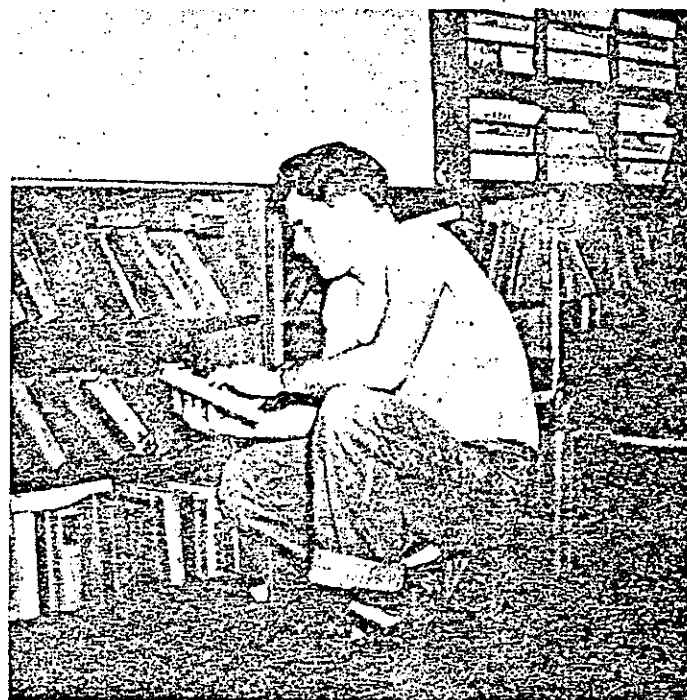
Democracy . . . the American way of life.

These words and all they represent inspired merchant seamen during World War II. They rode the ships with the precious bauxite, the ammunition, manganese, gasoline, grain and guns so the nation's free institutions could survive.

Perhaps the word democracy has a special meaning for men of the Seafarers International Union.

Over the years, the Seafarers have built up a democratic union featuring such work benefits as rotary shipping, the most democratic of all job placement methods.

In all SIU-SUP halls, every available job is posted on a board such as that pictured above. Jobs are given out according to a list whereby a man who has waited the longest gets first choice for any position for which he is qualified.



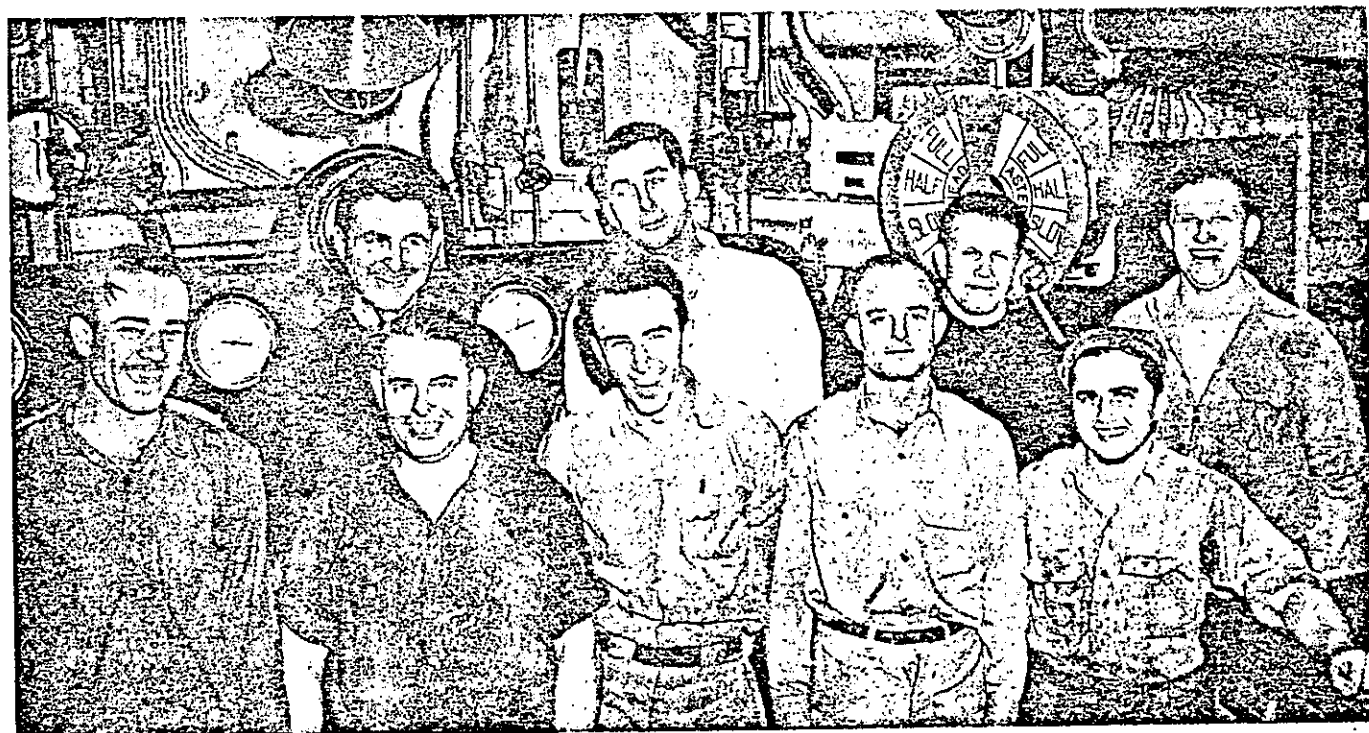
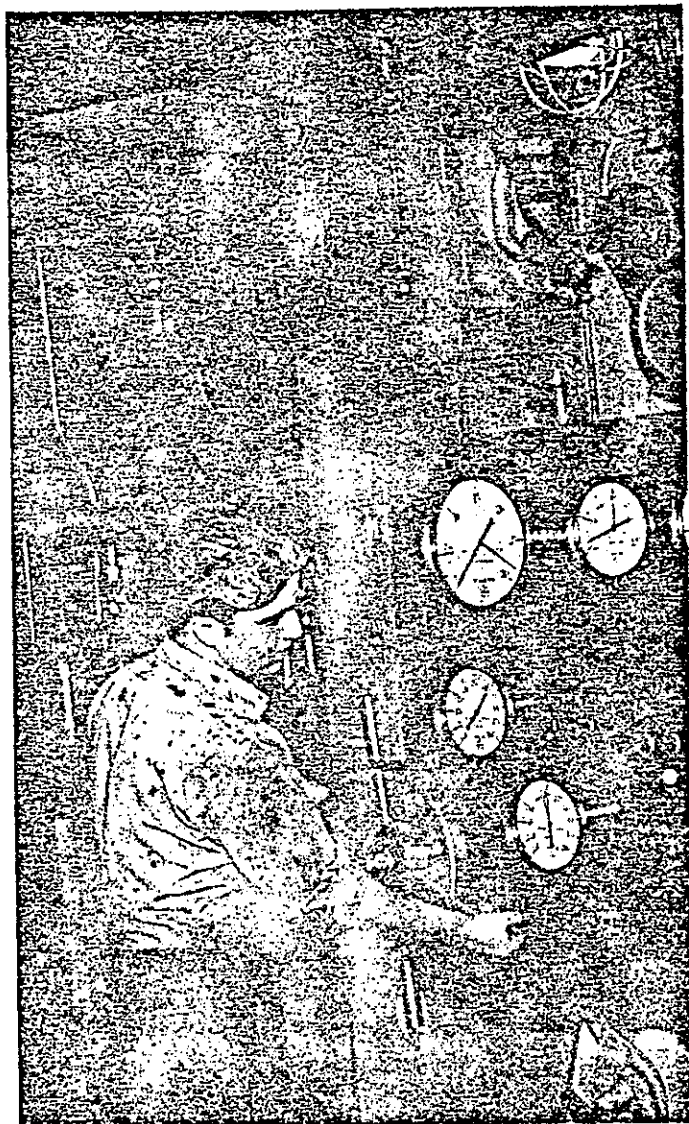
Libraries and lounges are just two of the many conveniences provided for members of the SIU-SUP in spacious and modern hiring halls which typify the "new era" for men who follow the sea as a profession.

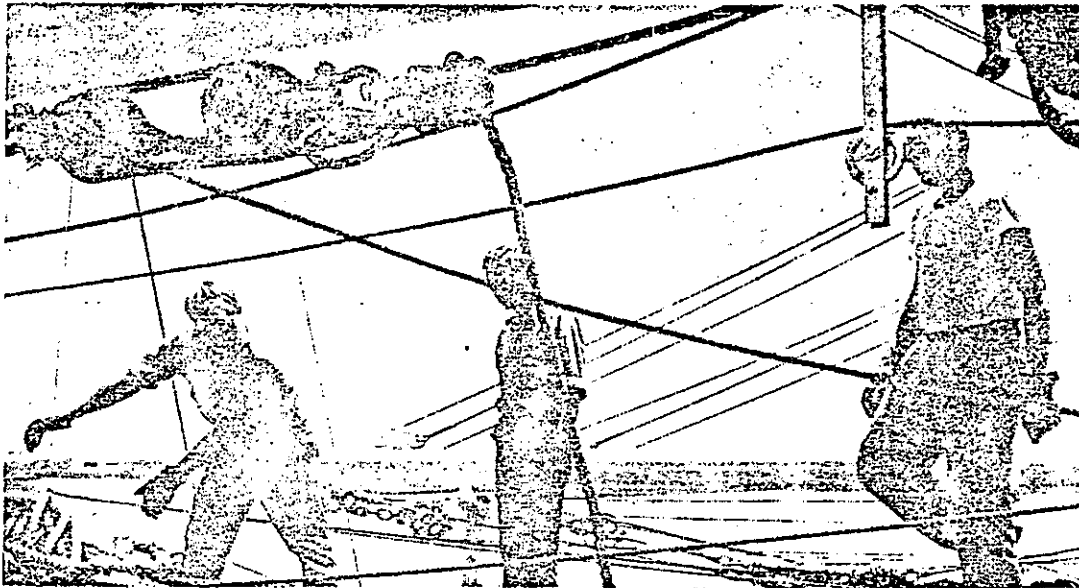
**READY THEN—
READY NOW!**

Capable crews like this engine room gang are dispatched every day from hiring halls of the Seafarers International Union to operate the fine, big cargo and passenger ships of the American merchant marine.

Thanks to good wages and working conditions won by union organization, seafaring for these men is a proud, stable profession. That is why the American merchant service today is manned by capable seafarers operating the nation's vital seaborne line of supply — the "front line" of national defense.

**READY THEN—
READY NOW!**





**Outward
Bound**

As the United States becomes increasingly dependent on foreign nations and distant lands for many vital, raw materials, the merchant marine plays an ever more important role in the nation's defense; even its very existence.

These men are typical of loyal, well-trained Seafarers who keep the freight ships sailing every day throughout the world. They man the global sea routes that feed American industry.



**Far Away
Places**



Home Again

Convoy PQ-17

One of the most dramatic and yet tragic episodes of the war at sea involved Convoy PQ-17 better known among SIU seamen as the "Fourth of July" Convoy to north Russia.

Seamen of the Seafarers International Union and its affiliate, the Sailors Union of the Pacific, have a very personal interest in this convoy, because they manned most of the 20 American freighters in the 33-ship fleet.

PQ-17 was heavily protected when it left Reykjavik on June 27, 1942. For convoy patrol and defense there was a heavy task force consisting of destroyers, sloops, corvettes, two "ack-ack" ships, several armed trawlers, three rescue vessels and two British submarines that hoped for a chance to torpedo any big German men o' war that might be lured out to attack the fleet.

Heavy escorts included the cruisers HMS London, HMS Norfolk, USS Wichita, and USS Tuscaloosa.

Covering the convoy's flank about 100 miles to the east was another battle fleet, numbering the aircraft carrier HMS Victorious, British battleship Duke of York, USS Washington (battleship), several cruisers and numerous destroyers.

QUICK ATTACKS

Soon after leaving Iceland, PQ-17 was spotted by a Nazi Blohm and Voss patrol plane that kept a constant vigil over the convoy's course, directing subs and planes to the attack.

In the early morning of July 4, a doughty Heinkel defied the escort, darted through a bank of mist, and torpedoed the Liberty ship Christopher Newport (Calmar) with its 9,000 tons of war supplies.

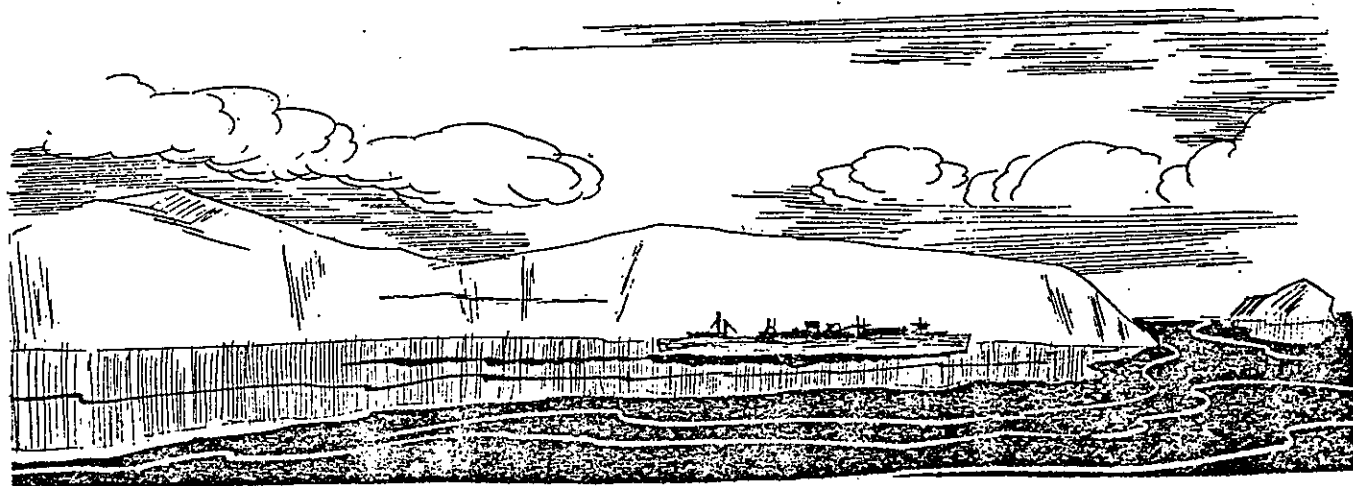
That afternoon a flight of 25 torpedo-carrying Heinkels attacked from astern and braved a hail of anti-aircraft fire to sink the freighters Navarino (Br.) and William Hooper (Am.) and hit the Russian tanker Azerbaidjan, which, however, did not sink and rejoined the fleet. Another "tin fish" missed the SIU-manned Bellingham by a few feet.

Gordon Small, seaman on the Ironclad, recounts how the bombers plowed right up through the convoy lanes against terrific fire, loosing their torpedoes and firing at the ships with their machine guns.

A plane passed so close to the Ironclad they could see the face of the pilot and the gunner. Bullets from the old Browning .50s on the Ironclad seemed to bounce off the bombers like hail on a tin roof.

This was dramatic and costly evidence that the Germans intended to stop Convoy PQ-17 from delivering its 188,000 tons of freight to the Russians. But, despite the warning, the convoy commodore signalled this message to his merchantman at 8:30 on the evening of July 4:

"Scatter fanwise and proceed independently to destination at utmost speed."



Three ships had already been lost despite the heavy naval escort. Now the merchantmen were to be left "on their own" with no more than .30- and .50-caliber machine guns and a few three-inch guns for defense!

The order had come from London. Only the armed trawlers, several corvettes and the three rescue ships were left with the freighters and they hurried off independently at top speed.

When the cruisers and destroyers dashed away the Bellingham was close behind the little rescue ship Rathlin. Not intending to be completely deserted if he could help it, Captain Mortenson told Chief Engineer Saltsman to "give us every bit of steam you can squeeze out of those boilers."

The watch below really produced, and the Bellingham stuck right on the tail of the annoyed Rathlin, despite its repeated signals to "get away."

The Bellingham turned up 14 knots in its hour of desperate need and made it safely into Archangel after numerous adventures, still in company with the rescue ship.

When the convoy scattered, the old Ironclad was alongside the Panamanian freighter Troubador, which trailed a continual column of heavy smoke from her coal-burning fires, and near the Silver Sword.

The little British armed trawler Ayershire steamed up and said, bravely enough, that she would "convoy" them to Nova Zembla. The only escort ship with "guts" enough to stay by the deserted merchantmen was this one-time fisherman.

Under escort of the doughty Ayrshire, the Silver Sword and Ironclad spent three days in heavy pack ice, which protected them from subs; arrived safely in Nova Zembla and, later, made it through to Russia.

First ship to go down after the convoy scattered was the SS Carlton, torpedoed in the deep tanks. Her survivors were picked up by a German seaplane and submarine and others rowed to the coast of Norway. After being taken prisoner, they also survived the torpedoing of a German prisoner-of-war transport.

Next to get it was the Matson Company's SUP-manned Honomu. She went down in 10 minutes with 19 of her crew.

HEAVY SHIP TOLL

Soon after the SIU-manned Pan Kraft was attacked by three Junkers 88s and set afire, her 5,000 tons of bombers and airplane parts lost amid the mists of the icy Arctic.

In succession went the British freighters Em-

pire Byron, Earlston and River Afton. A gift for Hitler they were! Unescorted and lightly armed merchantmen against powerful bombers and U-boats!

The American freighter Peter Kerr gallantly fought off 7 torpedo planes with four machine guns, but the unequal contest was soon ended and this brave ship also went to the bottom.

About the same time the SS Washington edged along an ice pack in company with the Bolton Castle (Br.) and the Paulus Potter (Dutch).

Nine Junkers dive bombers attacked, blowing up the Bolton Castle and sinking the Washington after many near misses had caused her to leak like a sieve. Later, they got the Paulus Potter, too.

The SS Olopana (another Matson, SUP ship) hove by and offered to pick up the Washington survivors, who were pulling toward Nova Zembla amid gusts of snow and big chunks of drift ice.

"No," they shouted. "You'll only get sunk, too."

And sunk the Olopana was—only a few hours later.

PAN-ATLANTIC DIES

Survivors from these ships then pulled through freezing weather to the mountainous coasts of bleak Nova Zembla where, after "celebrating" over a feast of duck and sea gull soup, they were picked up by the SS Empire Tide and other assorted vessels that had made it there to take shelter under the cliffs.

An epic fight against overwhelming odds, meanwhile, was waged by the SIU-manned Pan Atlantic, a Waterman ship which had an armament of four .50-caliber machine guns.

"Nineteen of the merchant crew and seven Navy gunners were killed while defending this ship," says the official Navy report about the Pan Atlantic.

They stuck by their guns even while a Junkers dropped its lethal load on them from a height of only 4,000 feet—safe beyond machine gun fire.

The bombs exploded in the cargo, knocked the foremast on top of the wheelhouse, and severed the ship completely just forward of the bridge. She filled and quickly sank with a very valuable cargo of oil stills, aluminum, nickel, food, tanks and cordite.

COURAGEOUS CREWS

Shortly after the Pan Atlantic went down, a sub torpedoed the SIU-manned Alcoa Ranger and the Hartlebury (Br.), many of whose crew froze to death trying to reach Nova Zembla.

The Liberty ship Daniel Morgan shot down two dive bombers before a sub got her. It took three

torpedoes to sink the Liberty ship John Wither-
spoon, whose men were picked up after a daring
decision by Captain John Thevik of the SS El
Capitan (Pan.), to stop his ship for the rescue,
even though a sub was close behind at the time.

By the 7th of July, Convoy PQ-17 had lost 18
ships. Almost 100,000 tons of war cargoes had
been sent to the bottom of the Arctic and the
Barents Sea, to be lost forever.

It was on the 7th, incidentally, that the plucky
Bellingham was hit by a torpedo which did not
explode, although the concussion blew out the
lights and knocked the watch off their feet.

The SIU-manned Ironclad of the Waterman
Company, the Troubador and the Silver Sword
and the trawler Ayrshire ran into thick pack
ice, then hit on the happy idea of painting their
hulls white and covering as much of the topsides
as possible with sheets and blankets.

TRICK SUCCEEDS

This camouflage helped them to evade attack
in getting to Nova Zembla and, finally, to the
White Sea.

Several other freighters of the convoy made it
safely to Nova Zembla, where they joined with

some escort vessels to steam the last lap without
further loss, arriving in Archangel July 25.

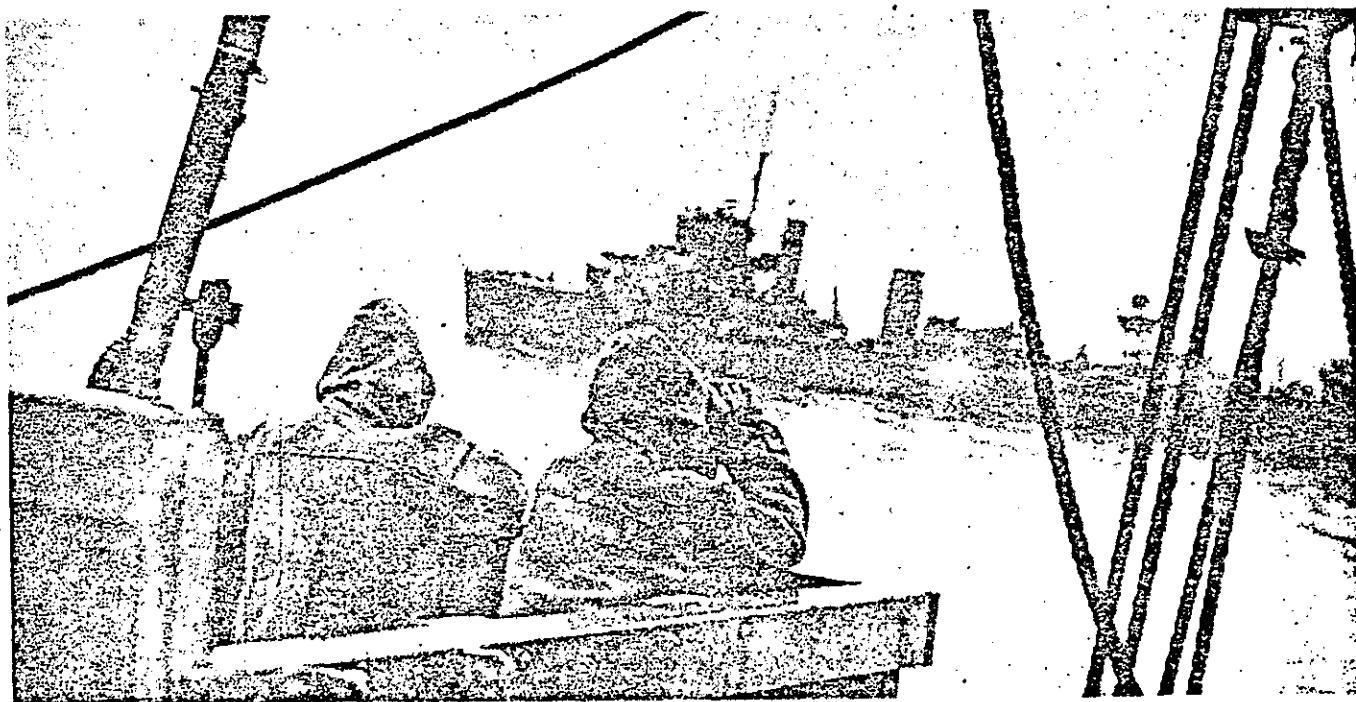
Another segment of the ill-fated fleet had made
the dash from Nova Zembla toward Cape Kanin
on July 7, accompanied by corvettes and armed
trawlers.

Included were the freighters Hoosier, Ocean
Freedom (Br.), Benjamin Harrison (Calmar) and
El Capitan (Pan.). They were later joined by
the Liberty ship Samuel Chase (SUP).

The Hoosier and El Capitan were sunk short
of their destination in violent air attacks, and
the Samuel Chase made it in only after a raging
fight in which bombs snapped all the steam lines
to the main engine and auxiliaries, and the fight-
ing ship was taken in tow by a corvette, her guns
still barking defiance to the Nazi bombers.

Only eleven ships out of PQ-17 made it through
to Russia; among them being the American ships
Ironclad, Samuel Chase, Benjamin Harrison (all
SIU), Silver Sword, Winston Salem, Bellingham
(SIU) and Troubador.

They had survived by pitting courage and
determination against great odds in one of the
most bitterly fought battles of World War II.



Manning the guns on the "road to Russia."

Acme photo

Freighters At The Front

Oran, Casablanca, Avola, Gela, Salerno, Anzio, Guadalcanal, Normandy, Leyte, Okinawa . . .

Memorable places these, stepping stones on the long road to victory—the invasion points where the tide of battle finally turned and then, surging forward on the flood, engulfed the Axis in a deluge of men and materiel as the Allies marched inexorably toward Rome, Berlin and Tokio.

SIU ships made these and other beachheads along with the assault troops and the landing craft, and the names of far-flung battle shores became as familiar to Seafarers as the names of towns back in New York, Indiana, Nebraska or Texas.

One of many SIU freighters at the beachheads was the SS Jonathan Grout, a Liberty operated by the Mississippi Shipping Company, which helped carry British troops from Alexandria for the invasion of Sicily in the morning of May 10, 1943.

PEACEFUL SICILY

It was an idyllic day as the Jonathan Grout approached the hill-fringed Sicilian shore, and were it not for the firing of monitors and destroyers, for bits of wrecked gliders and dead paratroops bobbing grotesquely about in the placid tide, the war would have seemed a thousand miles away.

But the summer calm was broken that afternoon, when Stuka divebombers came roaring down onto the invasion fleet with sirens screaming in their noses as they dived, a wailing cry that was intended to strike terror in the hearts of the gunners below.

Gunners on the Jonathan Grout and the other ships weren't impressed, however. The three-inch bow guns on the Liberties, the oerlikons and the bofors threw so much steel into the sky that the divebombers didn't make a single hit.

The enemy didn't give up—not by a long shot, they didn't. They launched 50 raids against the anchorage at Avola during the next five days.

Armed guard and merchant crewmen slept at the guns, while the British stevedores unloaded bombs, canned gasoline, trucks, tanks, food, and the myriad other implements of war, knocking off only when the sirens moaned the ap-

proach of more raiders and the lights of the anchored ships blinked off.

On the afternoon of July 11, three flights of high-level bombers—15 in all—swept over the convoy so high that it was futile to fire the 20-millimeters. The bombs left the belly of the droning raiders like tiny, shimmery pinpoints of light.

A Navy gunner on the nearby Liberty ship Colin Kelly wrote that "the stark terror of the sight is indescribable."

'NICK OF TIME' ESCAPE

The first salvo shook the Jonathan Grout as though she had been rammed, but all were near misses, partly because the bridge signaled the engineroom for "full ahead" and, moving from a dead stop, the ammunition-laden vessel scurried away from the falling bombs in the nick of time. Not so lucky was a Dutch ship, hit by bombs and sunk nearby.

Third Mate Wonson of the Colin Kelly sang, "Praise the Lord and Pass the ammunition" as hot shrapnel bounced off the deck plates and hissed in the water overside.

When hot shell fragments started a fire amid gasoline tins in a forward hold of the Jonathan Grout, two ABs instantly climbed into the hold and put it out.

Just before noon on July 13, without any air raid warning, a pair of Stukas dropped over the mountains that lined the bay, and plummeted onto the anchorage with their engines cut out.

Lookouts saw them too late. So sudden and so silent was the attack that not a shell was fired at them till they had blown their target to pieces and were skipping safely back to their bases.

The first plane dropped two bombs into an open hold full of ammunition on the Liberty ship Timothy Pickerin (SUP), which had arrived at the anchorage only a few hours before and was still crowded with troops.

There was a blinding explosion. Tongues of flame roared out of the stricken ship a thousand feet into the air, followed by whirling clouds of smoke.

It may have been red hot hull plates from the exploding Liberty, or bombs dropped by the

second Stuka, but a tanker nearby was set afire and exploded in a flaming holocaust soon after.

In a few minutes both ships were nothing but twisted, shattered masses of steel, resting on the bottom with only their masts protruding above the surface. Of the 192 crewmen and British troops on the Timothy Pickering, only about a dozen survived.

TWO-TIME LOSER

The attack had lasted only a minute at the most.

Another Liberty that saw exciting action in Italian waters was the James W. Marshall (SUP).

Arriving at Salerno just two days after the invasion, she was hit and set afire by a 250-pound bomb that smashed through the bridge and wounded several men at the guns.

The fire was quickly extinguished by quick action on the part of the crew, and she continued discharging her ammunition, guns, trucks and gasoline.

Two days later she was hit again, this time by a heavy bomb that went through the top deck of the ship into the main deck before exploding among GIs who had taken refuge in the mess-room.

And thrilling tales aplenty can be told by the men who took supplies to 5th Army troops holding the beach at bloody Anzio.

For months the British and Americans had held a costly strip of beach and marshland 30 miles south of Rome, and all the while they were supplied by merchant ships for whom "destination Anzio" also meant "destination front line."

The SIU-manned Liberty ship Lawton B. Evans had 4,000 tons of gasoline and ammunition in her holds when she arrived at "Peter Beach," Anzio, from Naples on January 22, 1944.

No sooner had she dropped the hook than the Germans opened up on her with long-range artillery. Shells hit within 50 feet of the ship and shrapnel peppered the decks like BB shot.

Captain Harry Ryan "up anchored" as soon as steam could be turned on the windlass, and

they sought a safer spot. But the Germans got their range again and shells splashed too close for comfort. It was "up anchor" again . . . a game of hide and seek which went on for most of the day.

During the next four days, gunners and crewmen ran to battle stations time after time, for one air attack was quickly followed by another, and between raids the Germans plopped big shells onto the anchorage.

The grind of the anchor chain through the hawse pipes lent a mournful accompaniment to the drone of airplanes and the whistle of shells—they called them "Whistling Williams."

It was on the 29th of January that the Germans tried out the radio-controlled glider bomb on the ships at Anzio. The USS Philadelphia and two freighters were victims during the first attack of this kind.

THREE BOMBERS DOWN

Through it all the Lawton B. Evans proved herself a fighting ship, fit to battle with the best of them.

When Stukas and Junkers attacked the anchorage, her gunners knocked one of the Junkers down with 20-millimeter fire, then blew a divebomber to pieces with the three-inch fifty on the bow.

Two days later they bagged another divebomber that got too near their guns. On the same day, the Lawton's gunners blasted a glider bomb out of the sky before it could do any damage, and followed that up by obliterating still another divebomber. A carburetor from the plane landed on the Lawton's deck and was kept as a souvenir.

It was fortunate that the Lawton's gunners did shoot well for, soon after blowing up the glider bomb, another of these strange missiles hit the Liberty ship Samuel Huntington, setting it afire and causing an explosion that rent the ship apart.

Long will SIU crews remember the shuttle run to "bloody Anzio."

Acknowledgement

The writer was greatly assisted in obtaining the facts concerning many of the incidents in this war story of the SIU through the cooperation of Capt. W. N. Mansfield, USN, of the Office of Naval Operations, War Records Section; and to Captain Frank Rusk of the Records and Awards Division of the US Maritime Commission, both in Washington, D. C. They kindly allowed the writer to refer to official files to check the history of many of these ships.

They Made The Beachheads

So well known and so often told is the story of the Normandy invasion in 1944 that there is no point in describing that tremendous operation here.

Thousands of SIU-SUP seamen took part in the initial beachhead operations and in the vital line of supply that followed, from D-Day till the German surrender.

These men had a part in landing the 2,500,000 troops, the half-million trucks and tanks, the 17,000,000 tons of ammunition and supplies that were put ashore at the beachheads in Hitler's "fortress Europe" during the first 109 days after D-Day. The flow of material was almost beyond comprehension!

SEAFARERS VOLUNTEERED

Many Seafarers were also among the 1,000 merchant seamen who volunteered to sail to the Normandy beaches the 32 American merchant ships that were scuttled to make the emergency breakwater—the "miracle harbor" along the Normandy coast.

As they steamed their breakwater fleet from British ports on the eve of invasion, theirs was a most hazardous task, for everyone expected the coast of France to erupt in a hell of flame and shell as soon as the ships were sighted by the Germans.

That this did not happen to the extent that it was anticipated did not detract one whit from the courage of the seamen who volunteered for this extremely dangerous operation.

Among these sunken ships at the Normandy beachhead were a number well known to old-timers—ships that had been sailed along the ocean sea lanes for many years by men of the SIU and the SUP.

OLD SIU FRIENDS

There was the old Kofresi of the Island trade (named after a Porto Rican rum, she was); the West Nilus, Illinoian, Kentuckian, Alcoa Leader, Pennsylvanian and Robin Gray.

Three SIU Liberties were among the breakwater ships, too: the Matt W. Ransom, Benjamin Contee and James W. Marshall. All of them had seen thrilling action and were consigned to "operation scuttle" as unfit for further service.

The Marshall (SUP) had been bombed and gutted by fire at Salerno. The Matt Ransom had been torpedoed and then brought into port by the heroic action of her crew. And the Benjamin Contee, while sailing in the role of a prison ship in the Mediterranean, was torpedoed by a bomber with large loss of life among Italian POWs.

HEADS-UP ACTION

Quick action on the part of her Skipper and merchant crew calmed the panic among hundreds of rioting troops; kept the tragedy from becoming a disaster of huge proportions.

Seafarers have vivid memories of the shuttle run which operated after D-Day between the United Kingdom and Normandy and, later, to French and Belgian ports.

Some 150 ships, mostly Liberties, were assigned this monotonous and far from placid service by the War Shipping Administration, plodding back and forth between England and the continent, trip after trip, and month after month.

"Channel ferries" the crews called them. A few hit mines, like the SIU-manned Colin Kelly, and ended their careers for good in the English Channel and the channel ports.

SIU ships braved the buzzbomb barrage with supplies for the port of Antwerp, where at times a buzzbomb fell on the city and its environs every ten minutes.

"SWARM OF BEES"

Seafarers will recall seeing those eerie, crewless missiles sailing through the sky over Belgium, trailing flame from their tails and droning like a huge swarm of bees while ack-ack tried to knock them down.

When the droning stopped it was time to "hit the ditches" for the buzzbomb was on its way to earth.

The SIU-manned SS Bayou Chico was the second ship up the canal into the old city of Ghent in Belgium, and was cheered by the populace as she steamed along the waterway with her holds full of Army supplies.

It was in the Pacific—land of the kamikaze—that SIU and SUP ships experienced some of the hardest and most costly fighting of the war at sea, as Jap bases fell before the northward ad-

vance of American troops from Guadalcanal to Okinawa.

Innumerable were the instances of heroism and high courage as Seafarers took their ships up the long, battle-scarred Pacific from island to island and beachhead to beachhead.

In February of 1942, the SS Admiral Halstead (SUP) earned a citation unique among merchant ships, when six of her crew received the Distinguished Service Medal of the merchant marine for defending their ship with two machine guns against heavy assaults by Jap bombers.

The Admiral Halstead was the only ship of 12 in Port Darwin to escape being sunk, discharging her cargo of gasoline and ammunition for Australian troops, and escaping the Japs to participate in more Pacific action.

In August of 1943, the Japs were flushed from New Georgia in the Solomons and Army troops re-took the Aleutians. Then came the four-day bloody battle at Tarawa, followed by invasions at Kwajalein in the Marshalls, at New Britain and Hollandia. By July of 1944, Saipan and Tinian had been won, followed shortly by another victory at Peleliu.

Then came the biggest show yet staged in this amphibious war, as a seaborne juggernaut of 600 ships by-passed hundreds of miles of enemy-held territory and landed on the eastern side of Leyte Island in the Philippines.

SIU ships were up front here, as usual, fighting with guns and guts as the Japs pounded the beachhead with everything they could muster.

KAMIKAZES MAKE APPEARANCE

It was at Leyte that the Japs launched the strangest weapon ever used in war—the "kamikaze" or "divine wind," the one-way bomber flown by suicide pilots willing to sacrifice themselves as human bombs in an attempt to win the war for Nippon.

An early victim of the kamikaze was the SS Thomas Nelson, a Calmar Liberty hit off Dulag in Leyte Bay while still crowded with some 630 Army troops and loaded with gasoline and ammunition.

Her gunners blasted a suicide plane which made a run at the ship but the Jap hit his tar-

get, nonetheless, his two exploding bombs turning the freighter into an inferno of flame, with 213 soldiers killed, wounded or missing.

Gunners of the Liberty ship Matthew P. Deady (SUP) bagged two Jap planes at Leyte, but the ship was bombed and set afire with considerable loss of life among soldiers and crew.

In December of 1944, a convoy of ammunition-laden ships, including the Liberty John Burke, was attacked by kamikazes. One hit the Burke square on, blowing her up with the loss of every man aboard. Not a bit of wreckage was left to mark her place in the convoy.

Another SUP-manned Liberty, the Lewis L. Dyche, was hit by a kamikaze in January 1945, at Managrin Bay during the Mindoro invasion. She, too, was obliterated. There were no survivors.

And so it went in almost countless dramatic actions that cannot possibly all be recorded here.

It was in the invasion of Leyte that the Liberty ship Adoniram Judson won a special niche for herself in the annals of the war, by not only delivering vital landing mats and 3,000 barrels of high octane aviation gasoline for the captured airfield at Tacloban, but by providing the principal air protection there for several days.

GALLANT SHIPS

For this the "Ad" Judson was honored by the US Maritime Commission in being named a Gallant Ship of the merchant marine, a distinction accorded only a few ships throughout the war.

Another Gallant Ship was the SS Marcus Daly (SUP). This Liberty and her crew won a commendation from General Douglas MacArthur for shooting down at least three Jap bombers, and for defending the docks at Leyte with her guns.

Despite her fire-spitting Oerlikons, and the accurate shot from the flaming three-inch fifty on her bow, a kamikaze smashed onto the Marcus Daly on Christmas Day, 1944, blasting huge holes in the deck and sides and ripping the steel plating of the ship like paper, while flames shot high in the air and jagged pieces of steel showered the area in a deadly hail.

More than 1,000 soldiers were aboard the Liberty at the time, and some 200 were killed and wounded in the suicide attack.

The letters SUP used in this narrative refer to the Sailors Union of the Pacific, part of the Seafarers International Union of North America.

Kamikazes, Too

Many a merchant ship was subjected to prolonged battle action during the fighting in the Phillipines. The SS Alcoa Pioneer, for instance, experienced 103 alerts and 50 direct attacks during her 23-day sojourn in Leyte Gulf.

At 7 a.m. in the morning of November 19, 1944, three Jap suicide planes broke out of protective cloud cover and dived onto the Alcoa Pioneer, whose guns were instantly in action, joining those of nearby ships to hurl a gauntlet of fire that would have discouraged ordinary airmen.

But these kamikaze pilots were eager to die for their fatherland, and enter that land of infinite bliss promised to them in exchange for blowing an American ship to bits.

Two of them swerved off to dive on the nearby freighters, General Fleischer and Cape Romano, but the third kept at the Alcoa Pioneer through a hail of fire, crashing onto the bridge deck in an explosion that destroyed all the navigating equipment, demolished the stack, ripped up the decks and started fires all over the ship.

BLANKET OF FIRE

Even as the plane smashed into the ship every man was at his post, the navy armed guard at the 20 millimeters and the merchant seamen standing shoulder to shoulder with them as ammunition tenders and replacements.

Captain Andrew Gavin and the other officers were on the bridge as the kamikaze hit, pinning First Mate Daniel Noonan and armed guard Lieutenant Howard Jersild under the wreckage.

Pieces of the burning plane and showering shrapnel from the guns started a fire in a gasoline-laden forward hold, but Bosun Clark Smith and AB John Peterson put out the flames, and turned the fire hose on the burning midships section till the flames there were also extinguished.

All guns were kept manned, despite 20 casualties among armed guard and merchant crew. Navy gunners stayed at the forward 20 millimeters though they were badly burned and the gun tubs were punctured with shrapnel holes.

Sharing the battle honors was Captain Gavin's little dog "Skipper." Although hit with shrapnel, Skipper stayed on the bridge beside his master,

licking the Skipper's face as Captain Gavin lay unconscious in the wreckage.

The ship's crew kept discharging cargo as though the vessel were safely at dock back in Frisco, working 18 hours at a stretch and turning to at the guns during the recurrent air raids.

HOME FOR MORE CARGO

After discharging was finished, the merchant crew made temporary repairs to the midships house and the Alcoa Pioneer returned home under her own power, ready to fill up with another load for the fighting fronts!

SIU ships were among the huge fleet that landed marines and supplies on the volcanic, bloody isle of Iwo Jima.

And they were in the midst of the fighting at Okinawa where, on Easter Day in 1945, began the last great invasion of the war, a battle that lasted for 82 days and ended only after 90,000 Japs were killed in a maniacal defense of the "last stop before Japan."

In the 1,400-ship armada that launched this invasion was every type of craft built during World War II, a vast array of freighters, tankers, combat transports, invasion barges and warships.

A measure of the fury with which Jap airmen sought to throw back the Americans at Okinawa is the staggering total of planes shot down during the fighting there—no less than 4,000 of them!

Kamikaze pilots made no differentiation between merchant ships or men o'war, the one being as good a key to eternal paradise as the other as far as these suicidal Nips were concerned. Many were the fighting freighters at Okinawa that battled nobly, but still were not spared from the onslaught of the "divine wind."

One of these was the SS Logan Victory (SUP), which arrived at Okinawa with a load of "hot stuff" for Buckner's battling doughboys.

KAMIKAZE'S TARGET

Only a few slingloads of cargo had come out of her holds before there was an air raid alert, followed by the appearance of three kamikazes swooping over the nearby hills.

Gunfire from the nearby Hobbs Victory blew one of the attackers to bits, sending its pilot

riding the "divine wind" to the warrior's Valhalla.

The second suicide plane headed for an LST, while the third bore straight at the Logan Victory. Every gun that could bear was instantly pouring a hurricane of lead and steel at this Jap, but it had no effect. Less than a minute later he crashed into the boat deck, exploding and searing the ship in sheets of flame.

Fire soon roared out of the Logan Victory as though it were being fanned by a giant bellows in the hold. The midships house was a solid mass of flame as the crew abandoned ship.

The Logan Victory blew up at 11 p.m. that night, followed by a veritable rain of steel fragments from the sky around her.

She was in commission only two months to the very day that she ended her career before the kamikaze onslaught by the embattled shores of Okinawa. She was another SIU-SUP ship that, in taking supplies to the beachheads, fought at the very front lines of World War II.

Before concluding this story of SIU ships in the war it would be greatly amiss to overlook the great job done by the many freighters, mostly Liberties, that carried supplies to the Russians by way of the Persian Gulf.

Riding often well below their Plimsoll marks and carrying huge deck loads, they freighted everything from locomotives and bombers to flour, shoes and black powder.

For the most part these ships sailed alone—without convoy on the long road to Iraq and Iran. To minimize losses from subs and raiders,

some were dispatched across the South Atlantic to Cape Town, and some down the west coast of South America 'round Cape Horn; while still others crossed the South Pacific by way of the Tasman Sea, stopping in Australia briefly for bunkers before continuing through Jap-held waters west of the Indies.

Some of the "Persian Gulf ships" were sunk. The SS La Salle, an old Waterman ship, disappeared sometime after passing through the Panama Canal bound for Cape Horn, probably the victim of a German raider. Not a word of her fate has ever been reported.

MIGHTY DELIVERY JOB

Reaching the Persian Gulf, these freighters unloaded their cargoes at small ports, whose facilities were created by American engineers at American expense.

Unloading was done mostly by Army longshoremen and, during the summer months, in temperatures so hot work could only be done at night. Not a few merchant seamen succumbed from the heat of the Gulf.

On the voyage home, which was also undertaken without convoy for the most part, the ships faced additional peril from raiders and subs and a few, like the Jean Nicolet, were sent to the bottom by shells and torpedoes.

These ships, on the Persian Gulf run contributed vitally to one of the biggest transport jobs the world has ever seen. They sailed their hazardous route to supply the Russian front, carrying a stupendous amount of war cargoes, the full extent of which has never been told.



Way Of The Japs

Voyaging in the Indian Ocean and adjacent waters was especially hazardous during the war, for Jap subs roamed these seas and, while a German raider would torpedo a ship without warning, the Japs added a touch of unnecessary cruelty to the sinking of merchant vessels. They exercised their own queer brand of fun on torpedoed ships and crews—fun that was inhuman and bestial.

SIU crewmen of the SS Bienville, an unarmed Waterman freighter outward bound from Calcutta for Columbo, experienced this uncalled-for cruelty when their ship was caught by a Jap task force in the Bay of Bengal on April 6, 1942.

Without even a rifle with which to defend themselves, the Bienville's men could do nothing when two Jap planes came over and planted a brace of bombs squarely on the foredeck, setting the ship afire. The planes were followed by a cruiser, three destroyers and an aircraft carrier.

While the crew huddled helplessly behind whatever slim shelter they could find, the cruiser and a destroyer used the Bienville for target practice, throwing shell after shell into the gunless ship until she finally sank beneath the placid waters of the Bay.

LIFEBOAT SHELLED

One shell hit a lifeboat that was being lowered away, killing all the occupants, and, with the ship in flames fore and aft, one after another of the crew were killed or wounded by flying shrapnel.

Salvo after salvo smashed into the freighter without mercy, slashing the deck plates, smashing the booms, cutting the hull to ribbons and sending rivets and bits of steel bulleting through the air in a deadly hail.

Only half of the Bienville's crew was still alive when the freighter went down, and they were sucked under the water by the suction of the cargo-laden hulk.

While the Jap sailors laughed at the crewmen struggling in the water, the task force steamed off on the quest for other prey.

One lifeboat had floated free and the men climbed into it, while several of the survivors

who were terribly wounded begged their mates to throw them over the side.

Of the Bienville's crew of 43, only 19 lived to tell the story of this one-sided battle after the lifeboat reached the shore of India some 20 miles away.

About a year after this incident the SS Henry Knox, a Matson Liberty, was pushing along toward the Persian Gulf about 850 miles southwest of India. Gunners were at general quarters and the ship had been blacked out for the night when a torpedo hit, exploding in a hold full of smokeless powder, turning the ship instantly into a solid sheet of flame from bow to stern.

CREWMEN TRAPPED

Cadet Maurice W. Price later described how many of the crew were trapped in the quarters and the passageways, with the bodies of merchant seamen and gunners laying here and there across the fire-swept deckplates.

He told how two Jap subs cruised among the wreckage while the Liberty exploded, taking the oars, masts, sails and other gear from the lifeboats, throwing the rations into the sea and leaving the survivors, so they thought, to perish slowly from thirst and starvation.

But in their hurry to get away from the burning ship, which served as a huge beacon as she flamed and exploded in the darkness of the night, the two Jap U-boats overlooked another lifeboat which had floated free from the hulk.

The boat enabled the survivors to arrive safely, after a voyage of many days, on some islands south of the Indian coast, where they were later picked up and taken to Columbo.

Bad as were these sinkings, they seemed mild in comparison with the fate of the SS Jean Nicolet, an SUP-manned Liberty operated by the Oliver Olson Co. The personnel of this ship suffered diabolical treatment at the hands of a Jap submarine crew which would have seemed more appropriate to the darkest days of the middle ages.

SAW LONG SERVICE

A lazy swell was rolling across the Indian Ocean on the evening of July 2, 1944, as the Jean Nicolet steamed her way from the Persian Gulf toward the coast of Africa, with more than 100

crewmembers and passengers aboard—the latter including Army personnel and civilians returning to the States after long service in the Persian Gulf.

At exactly seven minutes after seven, two torpedoes hit the ship in number-three hold just forward of the bridge. It should have been enough to blast the freighter apart but these Liberties were staunch vessels and, while she reeled under the impact, the engines kept going. In fact, the black gang stayed at their posts for five minutes after the blast, receiving no orders to abandon ship.

When the engine was finally secured and the propeller stopped, all hands abandoned ship without a casualty, the boats and rafts laying some distance off from the deserted hulk. They could see flashes of gunfire from the unseen raider as it shelled the Jean Nicolet.

SAVAGERY STARTS

After 15 minutes of shelling the sub decided it wasn't getting anywhere towards sending this stout Liberty to the bottom, so it maneuvered among the lifeboats, ordering the men aboard the deck of the U-boat, one boatload at a time, all except a tiny doughnut raft with the armed guard lieutenant, several gunners and a soldier.

The first boatload of 25 were forced to kneel on the deck and have their hands tied behind them. William Musser, a Messboy, was shot and thrown overboard for no reason at all.

More of the survivors were then ordered onto the sub, and those who didn't move fast enough were clubbed on the head with rifle butts. Others were beaten with lengths of pipe, or pricked and cut with bayonets.

This cruelty was kept up for nearly three hours, while the Japs systematically took off the shoes of their captives and beat them with bayonets across the ankles and feet.

Finally the Japs lined up on the deck of the U-boat and the captives, their hands still tied behind them, were forced to run the gauntlet.

Third Assistant Charles Pyle was the first to start through, hesitating from the dreaded ordeal just long enough to be hit over the head with the butt of a gun. Blows rained down on him till he was clubbed into unconsciousness and tumbled over the side into the sea.

MIRACULOUS SURVIVAL

The water revived him and after a while he managed to free his hands enough that he could keep himself afloat. Perhaps an hour later—or it might have been more—Able Seaman Stuart Vanderhurst, who had jumped clear of the U-boat before the final torture, found Mr. Pyle and cut his bonds after painstaking labor with his lifebelt knife. Together, they clung to a piece of wreckage.

Sometime later they heard the drone of a plane, a big Catalina that had responded to the Nicolet's SOS. But as soon as the plane approached the U-boat hastily submerged, then the air was filled with the shouts and cries of the tortured, beaten men who were left on her deck.

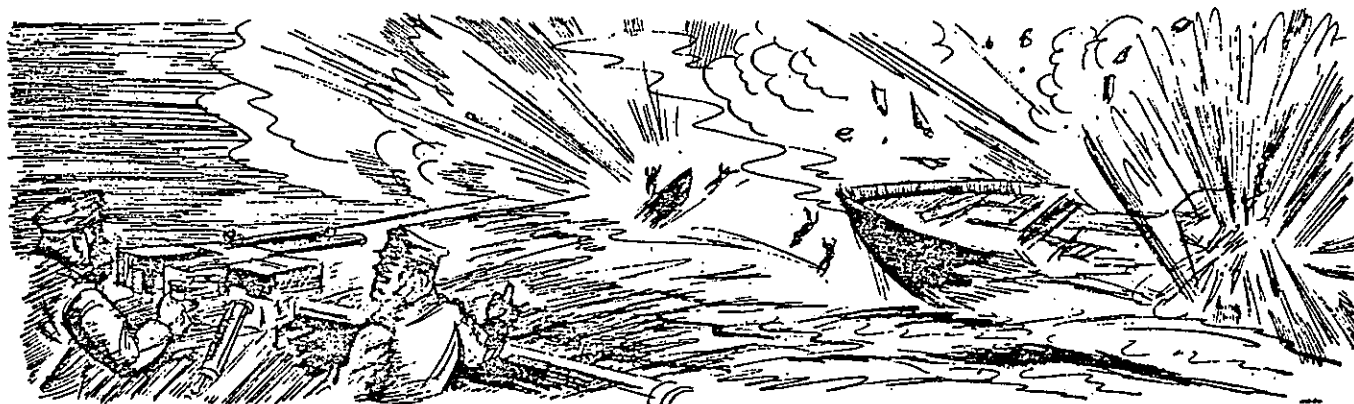
VICTIMS DROWN

Some of them floundered in the water for a while, then sank. Seven others were saved by a Navy gunner who had secreted a knife in his trousers and cut their bonds in time.

The Catalina returned some hours later to drop life preservers and food, then directed the SS Huxac of the Indian Navy to the spot. The survivors were picked up at 11 am, July 4.

Of the more than 100 men on the Nicolet when she was torpedoed, only 23 survived, of which 10 were Navy gunners and three were Army passengers.

Such was the way of the Japs!



Tankermen

Plodding, rust-streaked, squatty tankers
Decks awash on lonely way;
Piled deep with hell-brewed lightning,
Lifeblood of the battle fray.
Reeling decks, man-made volcanoes;
Heroes where true seamen meet
Are men of daring, men of courage —
Sailors of the tanker fleet.

—Top 'n Lift
(SEAFARERS LOG, 1944)

Man-made volcanoes! Tankers crammed with oil and gasoline were certainly that, and the men who rode them did so knowing full well that a torpedo, a stick of bombs from a Stuka, or a collision in convoy might set off that cargo of "lightning" in a holocaust that would take not only the ship but many—perhaps all—of her crew as well.

Despite the hazard, there was no scarcity of men in the SIU-SUP to ride the "volcano fleets" on their dangerous missions 'round the world. This country furnished 80 percent of all the oil and gasoline that powered the bombers, the tanks and the jeeps of World War II. It was the tankermen—the merchant sailors of the oil ships and their armed guard comrades at the guns—who delivered this "lifeblood of the battle fray."

COVERED THE GLOBE

To Salerno and Murmansk they went; across the Pacific to Freemantle with fuel for our submarines; and through the buzzbomb barrage to fill the tanks at Antwerp. On all the oceans of the world plied the vital petroleum carriers; from the English channel to the Bering Sea; from the Gulf of Maine to the Straits of Magellan off "old cape stiff."

From December 7, 1941, till V-J Day, 1945, nearly 65,000,000 tons of oil and gasoline were carried to Allied and friendly nations, to the beachheads and the fighting fronts!

A special tribute is due those men who manned the tankers on the "Abadan run," freighting oil from the huge refineries in the Persian Gulf to Australia and, later, to MacArthur's forces in the South Pacific.

The War Shipping Administration assigned between 60 to 70 of the T-2, war-built tankers

to a shuttle service between Abadan and the Pacific, and for the men who manned them it was an arduous run indeed.

Many of the ships stayed on the service for for more than a year, with the crews remaining aboard for the duration of the vessels' assignment. It took no more than 48 hours to load in Abadan and seldom did they get ashore at the other end of the line which, likely as not, was merely a Navy fueling station at some islet or atoll in the South Pacific.

FOUGHT BACK

As the war years went by and the ships became more adequately armed, the submarine attacking a tanker frequently got much more than he was looking for. Tankermen paid back, in some measure, for the fearful losses suffered by their comrades of 1942.

The battle put up by the Yamhill of Los Angeles Tankers (SUP) is one such instance.

During a voyage to the South Pacific in 1944, a lookout on the early morning watch was amazed to spy a torpedo streaking toward them on the port side. As soon as he yelled the alarm, the man at the wheel swung the helm hard over and the "tin fish" missed the stern by less than six feet. The alarm was still ringing as 80 merchant seamen and Navy gunners ran to battle stations.

While the guns were being manned, a second torpedo sped at the Yamhill, only to miss when the vessel was again maneuvered out of the way by a deft turn of the helm. Three more torpedoes were fired by the unseen sub and they all missed.

Determined that such a fat prize should not get away after this lavish waste of costly torpedoes, the submarine broke the surface close by on the starboard side, its crew pouring out of the conning tower to man the big gun on the forward deck.

HAIR-LINE MISSES

Even as the Yamhill turned sharply about to present her stern to the raider, two shells missed by a short distance, splashing into the sea. The tanker's gunners then answered the fire, and saw their shells skip over the raider's deck

so close that the Nips must have shivered from the breeze. Their next shot was just short of the target.

They had bracketed her now and another shot would do it! But the Nips didn't give them time. Knowing the attacked was now the attacker, they deserted their gun and hurried below decks as fast as they could scramble.

Before the Yamhill's gun crew could get in another shot, water was foaming around the U-boat's nose as it made a hurried plunge toward the bottom.

Less than an hour later, however, the sub was up again several miles away and the Japs fired some 60 shells and a long-range gun duel developed in which the tankermen scored another near miss. For miles the two vessels kept company, the Jap changing course every time that Captain Phillip Shinn turned the Yamhill on a different heading. The Nips were determined to sink their oil-laden prey.

AID FROM THE SKIES

Just when darkness was approaching, and the sub would have the necessary cover for a close-up torpedo attack, there was the drone of an approaching plane, responding to the Yamhill's SOS. This time the Jap submerged and stayed down for good and, with a PBY for escort, the Yamhill delivered her cargo of oil safely to Navy bases in the Far East.

A dangerous assignment it was, riding the tankers that carried high octane aviation gasoline, for along with dynamite, this was the tenderest cargo on the seas. Torpedoes that hit such vessels could—and often did—destroy them with an amazing completeness.

High octane gasoline caused the end of the SS Jacksonville, a Deconhil tanker (SUP). She was torpedoed when almost at the end of a trans-Atlantic voyage on the 30th of August, 1944, blowing up with but two survivors out of the entire crew of merchant seamen and Navy gunners.

Fireman Frank Hodges was sitting in the crew's messroom at 4 pm on the fatal day, as the Jacksonville approached the coast of Ireland in convoy. He was just about to go down into

the engineroom on watch when there was a terrific explosion that shook the vessel from bow to stern.

Running out on deck, Hodges saw that the Jacksonville had become almost completely enveloped in flames within a matter of seconds. He ran toward a lifeboat, but a wall of fire leaped up in front of him as though by magic, dazing him with its searing heat.

Realizing that the boats would never be launched, he ran to the rail and jumped over the stern into cold water that sucked away his breath but quickly revived him.

Flames already covered the water all around the blazing tanker but, by swimming underwater intermittently, and splashing away the flames from in front of his face when he came up for air, he was able to clear the ship without getting seriously burned.

ROARING INFERNO

Finally finding a clear spot, he kept to windward and watched the flames roaring high above the masts of the Jacksonville in a terrifying spectacle that seemed too destructive to be real.

After a while, he saw some of his shipmates floating in the sea, but they were too badly burned to be recognizable.

One man was alive and Hodges tried to hold him up, but his strength was not equal to the task. Perhaps it was just as well, for the man was badly burned. There were many lifejackets floating around—the crew had no time to put them on before they jumped.

Other ships in the convoy estimated that the Jacksonville was enveloped by flames no more than fifteen seconds after the torpedo hit—a solid mass of fire from stem to counter.

Hodges was picked up about 1½ hours later by an escorting destroyer, along with Navy gunner Marcellus Wags.

Captain Edgar Winter and 48 merchant crewmen and all but one of the Navy gun crew perished in the blast.

"... Heroes where true seamen meet

Are men of daring, men of courage —
Sailors of the tanker fleet."



Boats Away

The story of SIU ships in World War II includes many incidents of long voyages in small boats after seamen left their sinking ships.

There was the 1,200-mile trip of the Star of Scotland's men after their big schooner was shelled by a sub in the South Atlantic, and the long, cold voyage in the boats after the Liberty ship Jonathan Sturges was torpedoed in the North Atlantic, a voyage that ended in the capture of the survivors by a German submarine and their internment for the duration of the war.

Some of these lifeboat voyages were strenuous ordeals in which only a few of the men were eventually rescued. In other cases, like that of one lifeboat from the SS Maiden Creek, the survivors were never found.

More fortunate was the SIU crew of the SS James W. Denver, a brand new Liberty which was bound for North Africa on April 11, 1943.

Captain Everett Staley reckoned their position as 400 miles west of the Canary Islands, as the Denver hurried along at 11½ knots trying to rejoin the convoy, which it had lost sometime previously during a prolonged and heavy fog. All lookouts were scanning the horizon for wisps of smoke that might indicate the "missing" fleet.

They never even saw the track of the torpedo that hit them. It smashed into number-two hold and all hands abandoned ship soon after. No casualties occurred, for the boats were well handled, and they stood some distance off from the big Liberty as she settled slowly beneath the waves.

They all looked around to see if the sub was going to surface and spray them with machine gun fire, for such a possibility was in the minds of all torpedoed men during the war. But the U-boat never showed itself—not even coming up for an inspection of its kill.

Deck Engineer Dolar Stone tells about the 34-day odyssey taken by the 18 men in his boat after the survivors separated that night.

"There was a little half-hearted joking at first," he recalls, "but, all in all, it was a pretty solemn affair. We hated to lose our ship, and to see her go down without even having fired a shot in defense."

The Skipper gave them a course to steer, and

told each boat to "hoist sail and get going. . . . the sooner we sail, the sooner we'll land."

Dolar's boat stepped its mast, hoisted the little red sail with which Liberty ship lifeboats were equipped, and set out for the east. Seas were making up fast under a sharpening wind, and they soon had to rig a sea anchor and heave-to before the waves. The other boats by this time were out of sight and they rode the sea alone, a tiny flotsam, so it seemed, on that huge expanse of darkening ocean and breaking white caps.

A lifeboat in placid waters is anything but comfortable, and the keelless craft pitched, rolled and wallowed all that first night and for the day and night that followed, making all hands wet and miserably seasick.

Just at dusk on the third night, the lookout stationed in the bow sighted a vague shape looming up ahead, and in the excitement of this discovery yelled, "Destroyer!" As soon as the lookout had sung out, Dolar lit the boat's lantern and, standing up on the bow thwart with one hand on the mast, waved it back and forth as a signal, on the chance that the ship would see them, if indeed there was one up ahead.

To better attract attention, each man switched on the little lights that were fastened to a pin and lanyard onto their lifejackets, hoping that the red glow would shine enough to be seen through the night.

And then, before they realized what was happening, a shape loomed up directly in their path—the black hulk of a submarine.

"It was a big, one," say Dolar, "and we were headed right for it."

While they watched the raider in amazement, the lifeboat grated against the submersible's hull, sheering off just in time to keep from riding right onto the low flying deck. One of the U-boat's officers shouted at them from the conning tower.

"What ship are you from?"

They knew it was no use to evade the query, for the Germans could inspect the lifeboat and find out anyway.

"Denver," they replied, "the James W. Denver."

The men on the conning tower had a good



Anti-aircraft shells burst over a convoy.

Coast Guard photo

laugh over the fact and the SIU men guessed that this must have been the sub which sank them.

"Well," the German answered in good English, "so you lads are from one of those Liberty ships."

The remark sounded sarcastic, but before the sub moved off in the darkness a sailor came down the deck to hand them a carton of cigarettes and from the bridge the officer shouted a course for them to steer. During the next hour they sighted two more U-boats, evidently part of a wolf pack.

ROUGH SEAS

All hands continued to be seasick as the heavy weather persisted, and the lifeboat made more mileage up and down than it did toward the east.

Rations got low after the first 12 days. Crackers gave out, water was limited to three ounces a day per man and there was nothing left to eat but malted milk tablets. Three flying fish landed in the boat most opportunely and were cut up in equal parts, to be eaten raw. It was not the first time that these aery fish helped to sustain torpedoed crews!

On the night of May 11, the sea-tossed survivors saw moving lights some distance off. These immediately disappeared when the men shot flares. "Probably more subs," Dolar believes.

Just three days later, however, the long voyage ended. Spanish fishermen sighted the boat, picked them up and took them to La Aguera in the Canary Islands, from whence they later got passage back to the States by way of Cadiz.

After the torpedoing, the Captain's boat had set a course for the nearest land, which the Skipper figured to be Rio del Oro on the coast of Africa.

For the first 12 days, things weren't so bad. At least there were crackers to munch on and some of the sickeningly sweet pummican which had been devised for lifeboat crews. But on the 13th day the food gave out and from then on it was nothing but water. Even at that, the water was limited to two ounces a day per man.

The winds held strong, which was a blessing, but it also made life uncomfortable, throwing spray over them continually for each of the 25 days they were adrift. At night it was cold and, being thoroughly wet, they almost froze before the sun broke across the seas each morning.

Captain Staley had a sextant but this was of no use without the necessary tables to go with it, so he relied on dead reckoning, while the helmsmen steered with a compass held between their legs.

When the food ran out, the men became dis-

couraged and from time to time some of them had to be restrained from jumping overboard, for they dreaded the prospect of becoming crazed from sun and salt spray.

Every once in a while someone struck up a song and they all joined in. When the water was doled out the Skipper would say, "It may be water now, but keep your spirits up and it'll be juicy steaks one of these days."

The songs and the promise of steaks—it helped to buoy their spirits—make them forget somewhat the discomfort, the hunger and the monotony.

Finally they saw fish spawn in the water, a sure sign that they were coming into shallower depths. This was followed by the gradual changing of the sea from blue to green as they entered the 100-fathom curve. Their hopes soared, for they knew now that the shore wasn't too far off.

On the 5th of May they sighted land and, with the wind still holding good, sailed right up on to the sands of Rio del Oro.

By this time none of them could walk and they tumbled out of the boat like so many cripples to crawl across the welcome sands on their hands and knees. For a while they exulted in the luxury of just being on dry land, but this joy was tempered when they discovered that all around them was a vast desert—nothing but dunes and endless sand. There was no habitation or sign of life anywhere—not even a tree.

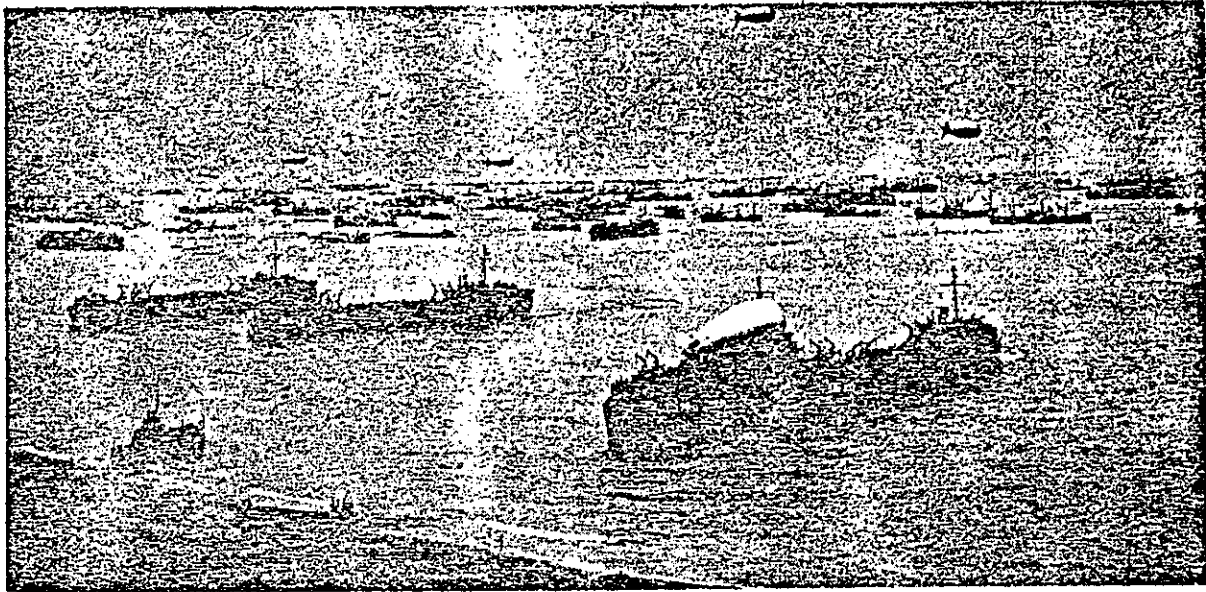
At night there were terrific sandstorms and during the day the blinding sun.

They might have died there on the sands of Rio del Oro and never been found if it hadn't been, strangely enough, for a German submarine which had been sighted and depth charged by British patrol planes, not far offshore from the spot where they had landed just a few days before.

On the 10th of May, five days after the weak and hungry men had beached their boat on the African coast, these planes were out searching for the U-boat and sighted the Denver's men sprawled about on the sand.

Not many hours later a patrol vessel came by and landed a party armed to the teeth with revolvers and rifles, for they thought the men from the Denver were survivors from the hunted U-boat.

It is a tribute to the hardihood of these SIU men and the Navy armed guard gunners that all survived the ordeal and went back to sea after reaching the States some weeks later.

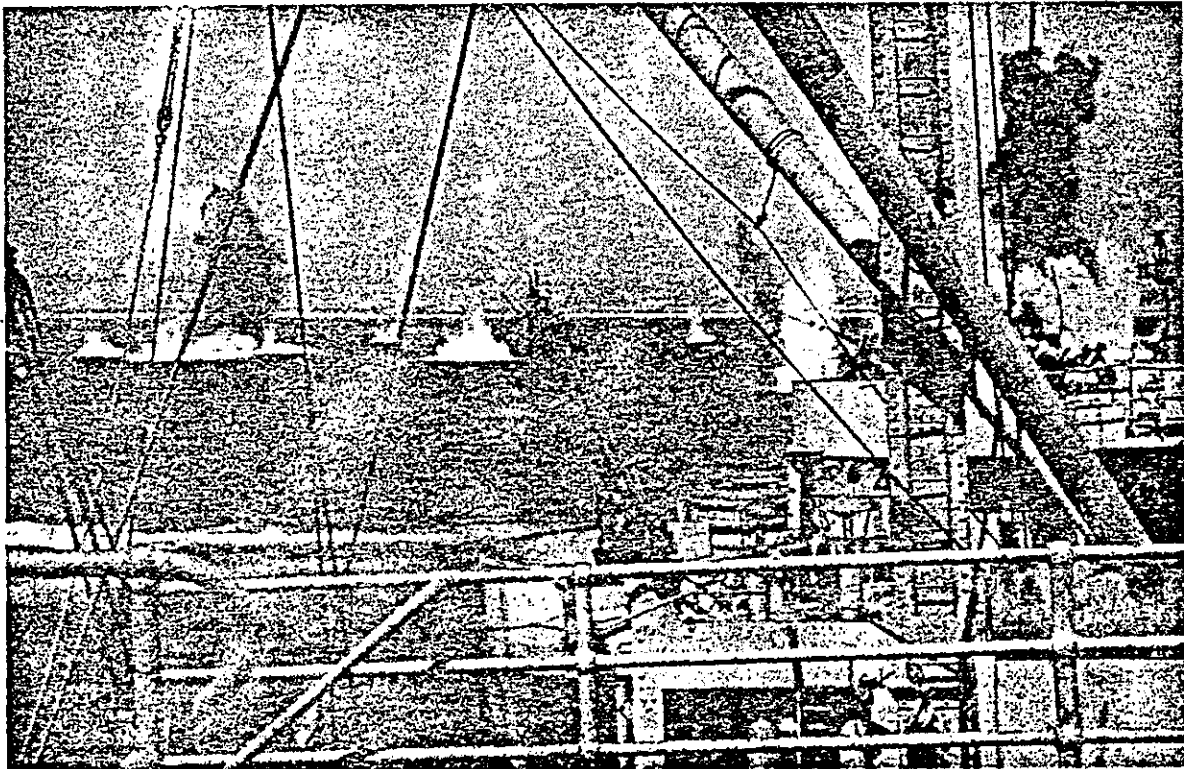


U.S. Coast Guard photo

Merchant ships of all kinds stand off the Normandy beachhead. Barrage balloons help protect the invasion vessels against dive bombing and strafing.



Bombs fall amid a merchant ship convoy during the invasion of Sicily.



U.S. Coast Guard photo

The Fighting Henry Bacon

No better finale to the story of SIU ships in World War II could be written than the epic account of the SS Henry Bacon, an SIU-manned Liberty operated by the South Atlantic Steamship Company.

Cold were the Artic waters and forbidding was the sky when the Henry Bacon added its name to the list of valiant fighting freighters.

Besides her crew, the Henry Bacon carried 19 Norwegian refugees as passengers, when she headed back toward Scotland after a voyage to Murmansk, North Russia, in the early winter of 1945.

After leaving the White Sea, the Bacon had been in convoy, only to lose contact with it on the 19th of February because of heavy weather. She rejoined it on the 20th, then dropped out again two days later when trouble developed with the steering gear. A heavy gale was blowing, and Captain Alfred Carini radioed his plight to the convoy while the black gang worked on the steering mechanism.

CONTACT LOST

With this finally fixed, the Bacon proceeded, meeting up with more moderate seas, but seeing no sign of her companions which, Captain Carini then decided, they must have passed during the night as they hurried to rejoin the fleet. Having lost radio contact, and there being no response to his messages, he decided to turn back over his course for just one hour in the hope of picking up their companion ships.

It was while doubling back on her wake that the Henry Bacon was suddenly attacked by a huge flight of 23 torpedo planes that pounced upon the lone Liberty almost as soon as the thundering roar of their engines was heard through the leaden sky, sending the crew running to battle stations.

Twenty-three planes against one merchant ship! It was odds enough for a battleship or a cruiser. Many a big aircraft carrier that thought itself hard pressed in the Pacific thundered back at half as much opposition with a hundred times the firepower that this unattended freighter could muster for its defense there amid the bleak, rolling waters. There was not another ship around upon which to call for help.

The bombers were Junkers 88s, coming in off the starboard bow in an extended, wing-to-wing formation no more than 30-feet above the jumbled wave tops.

ALL GUNS WORKING

Every gun on the Bacon went into action as soon as the canvas covers could be jerked off the barrels, and the magazines clamped onto the breech of the 20-millimeters. The sky around the ship was pocked with shell bursts as the fighting merchantmen and the vessel's armed guard drove off sally after sally by those audacious bombers that attacked simultaneously, one to a side, darting away through a hail of 20-millimeter shells.

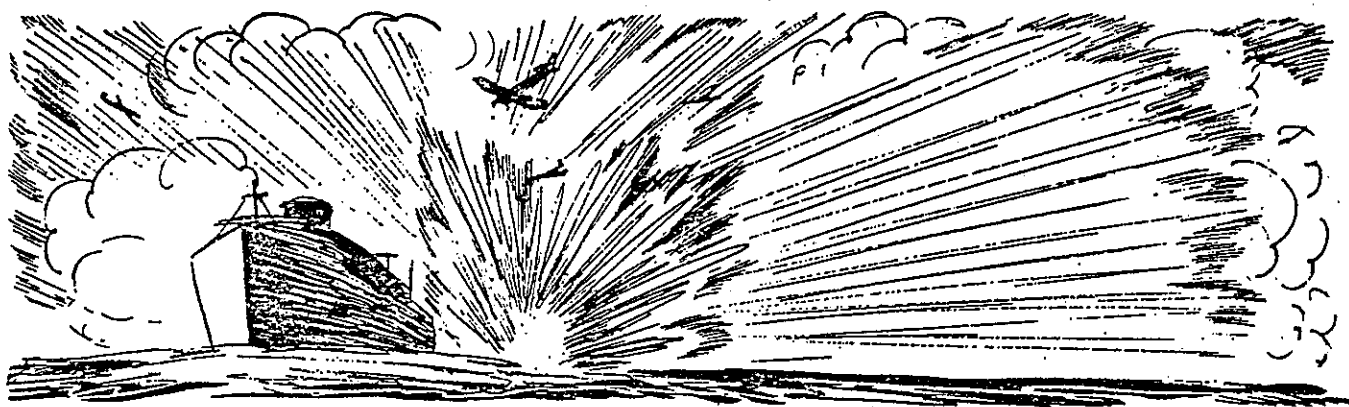
The gun on the bow boomed out at point blank range, blowing one bomber to pieces as it banked and exposed its belly to the Bacon's forward gun. Another Nazi nosed into a wall of 20-millimeter fire and dived into the sea in flames. A third wobbled aimlessly over the waves with smoke pouring from his engine. He probably crashed into the steep, green seas soon after, but the crew had no time to worry about verifying their hits.

When the Germans swooped down on the unaccompanied Bacon they probably were expecting an easy time of it. Three or four torpedoes and the laboring Liberty would sink beneath the waves, they no doubt thought. If they expected any resistance at all, they were certainly unprepared for the flame and fire of battle with which the men of the Bacon met this overpowering assault.

MORE AMMUNITION

The 20-millimeters stopped firing long enough only to load more ammunition, to change overheated barrels. A bomber which tried to get in at the ship from dead ahead ran into a storm of this small shellfire and disintegrated into a thousand pieces, as tracers found the torpedo slung beneath the fuselage and blew up plane and occupants in a terrible explosion of steel and flaming debris.

Torpedo after torpedo missed the ship when the pilots faltered in their aim in the face of such concentrated fire from this fighting Liberty. For twenty minutes the gunners of the Henry



Bacon, standing side by side with the men of the merchant crew, held off this armada of Junkers bombers that had by now become so madly exasperated by the heroic defense of the ship that, once their torpedoes were wasted, they flew at her with machine guns blazing.

But such a fleet of planes had only to persist, if nothing else, to be successful against one unescorted ship, and a torpedo finally hit the Henry Bacon on the starboard side in number-three hold, forward. When another tin fish found its mark soon after, Captain Carini ordered the ship to be abandoned.

NOT ALL LEAVE

The fateful signal to "leave her" was sounded in long, solemn blasts from the whistle while the Junkers—about eight or nine fewer than when they had begun the fight—roared away from the scene toward the coast of Norway 200 miles to the east. The doughty Bacon had kept them in action longer than they wanted.

With their gas getting low, they could find no satisfaction in winging around as this "bulldog" settled beneath the waves.

The order from the Skipper was "passengers first" and, though two of the lifeboats had been smashed in high seas, the Norwegian refugees—man, women and children—were put safely over the side into the first boat launched, along with some of the merchant crew and Navy gunners.

Into the second lifeboat went as many more as could be accommodated. It could not possibly hold them all, but still there was no rush for seats of safety. These SIU crewmen and their Navy comrades waited quietly as Third Mate Joseph Scott counted the regular crew assigned to the boat, and then called to the deck above for half a dozen more to climb down over the scramble nets and take their places between the thwarts.

During this time Bosun Holcomb Lemmon was making what the survivors later described as

"heroic efforts" to help his shipmates over the side into lifeboats and onto several life rafts which had been launched into the chilling waters. This done, he hurried about the sinking ship gathering boards to lash together as emergency rafts.

The Henry Bacon was slowly sinking. Water was pouring into her holds. The black gang had left the engineroom and all was deserted down below. Bit by bit the cold water rose higher around her rust streaked side plates.

One of the men assigned to a place in the Third Mate's boat was Chief Engineer Donald Haviland, who climbed over the side into the bobbing craft only to decline his chance for rescue in favor of a young crewman. The Chief had already taken a seat in the boat when, looking up at the men still left on the Bacon's deck, he saw among the forlorn group a youthful crewman staring down at those who were about to push away from the settling hulk.

Deserting his own place in the boat, Mr. Haviland yelled to the lad to hurry down the net and take his chance for safety.

SO LONG, BROTHERS

"Hey, you," he called. "You're a young fellow. It won't matter so much if I don't get back."

As the Henry Bacon went down, the survivors in the lifeboats saw Chief Engineer Haviland leaning against the bulwarks with Bosun Holcomb Lemmon, as casually as though the ship was leaving the dock for another routine voyage. Captain Carini waved to them from the bridge and, as he did so, the Henry Bacon slid swiftly and quietly under the sea.

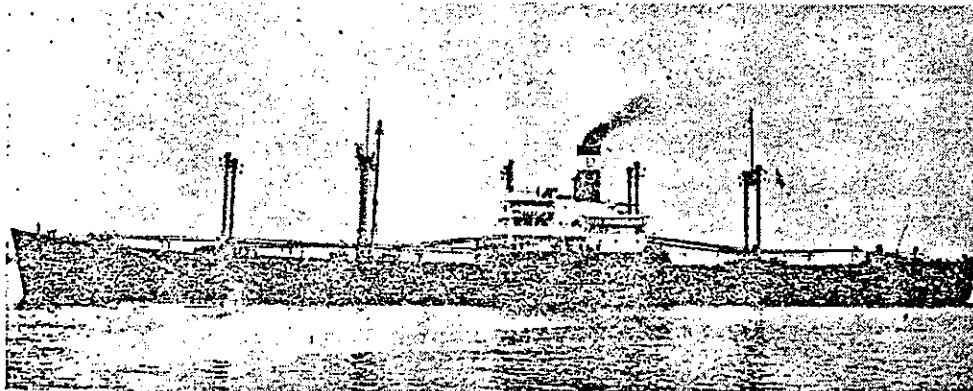
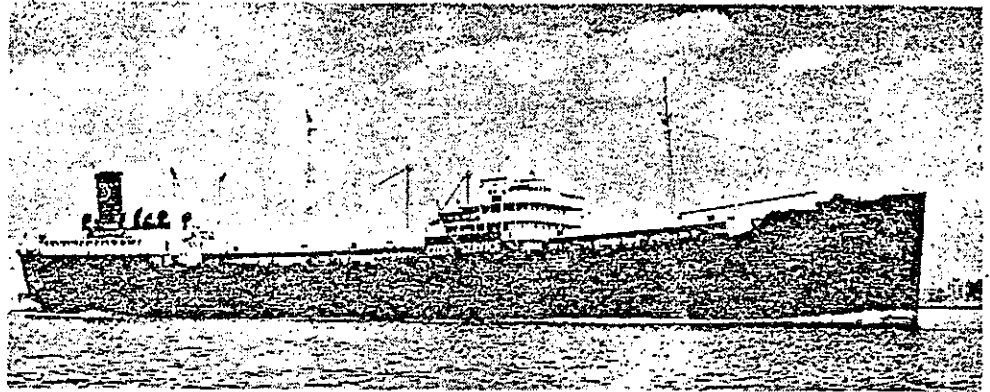
A big wave rolled over the spot and soon only some floating boards and crates marked where this gallant fighting freighter of the SIU had written such a glorious chapter into the annals of the American merchant service.

Ships Of The SIU—1951

*Representative ships
manned by members of the
Seafarers International Union.*

Tankers

SIU crews sail many big oil carriers like the S.S. Chiwawa of the Cities Service Oil Company.

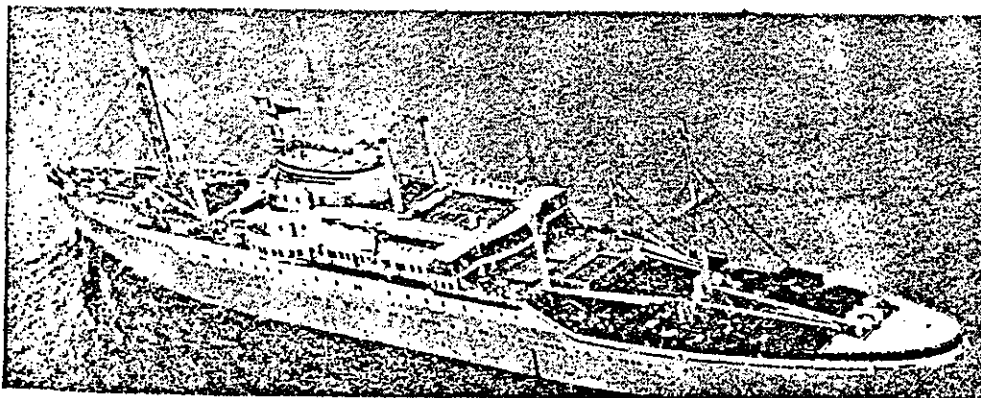
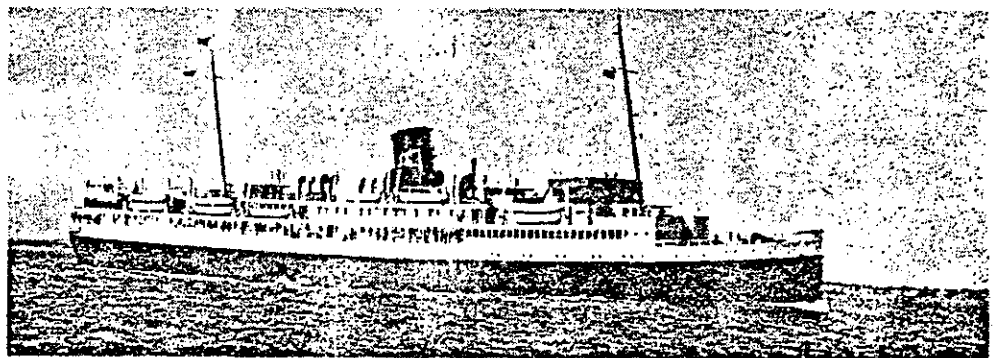


Freighters

This C-2 type freighter of the Bull Line, the S.S. Frances, is typical of modern cargo carriers crewed by the SIU.

Passenger Ships

Ships like the S.S. Yarmouth of the Eastern S.S. Co. require large, well-trained crews.



Combination Cargo-Passenger Ships

This is the modern, streamlined S.S. Del Mar of the Mississippi Shipping Co.

SIU crews also man many colliers, tugs, dredges, and other merchant ships.