

AMERICAN
MERCHANT MARINE
VETERANS
NEWS MAGAZINE

CGM Design Committee Report;

**New WWII MM legislation
introduced**



"The Mariner and the Monk" book excerpt --life story of Capt. LaRue/Brother Marinus — page 30



Russian Ushakov Medal Recipients — page 42



United States at Cape Henry

It is a clear, brisk winter day in 1962 at the Cape Henry Pilot Station. With the Pilot Boat *Virginia* close aboard and her launch alongside to receive the disembarking Virginia Pilot, the magnificent passenger liner *S.S. United States* prepares to take her departure from Chesapeake Bay. Built in Newport News in 1952, the ship carried no passengers from Hampton Roads but she visited the Bay regularly for her annual winter drydocking. A short run up the coast to New York and she would return to her regular transatlantic passenger service.

The great ship was a true marvel. At 990' she was not the longest liner ever built, nor was her tonnage the greatest. But in speed she was omnipotent. With her quadruple screws and her 220,000 horsepower steam plant originally ordered for a cancelled aircraft carrier, she was the fastest commercial ship in the world. She logged an astounding 43 knots on her trials and probably could have gone faster. She broke the Atlantic speed record on her Maiden Voyage, averaging better than 35 knots and making the eastbound passage in three and a half days. No other large liner would ever equal that feat.

United States was destined for a long career, but the 1958 advent of commercial jet travel to Europe gradually reduced her passenger load. In 1969, after only 17 years of service, with relatively few passengers and very high operating costs, she was laid up, never to sail again. The great liner has lain idle for over 50 years.

For information on helping to save this historic vessel, please visit the website of the *SS United States* Conservancy at: **www.ssusc.org**

About the artist: After graduating from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point) in 1965, Brian Hope sailed on U.S. cargo ships in support of the Vietnam War. He began as a Chesapeake Bay pilot (Association of Maryland Pilots) in 1970, retiring over four decades later in 2013. Capt. Hope is also a founding member of Project Liberty Ship. In addition to a lifetime of maritime artwork, he is the author of *Bay Pilot, Volume 1*, a coffee table book detailing the history of the Chesapeake Bay Pilots. *Bay Pilot, Volume 2* is expected to be published this year. Capt. Hope is planning an artwork display at the upcoming AMMV National Convention at the Maritime Conference Center.

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2020/2021 National Convention Committee

Convention Chairman ... **John Pitts** *Member-at-Large*

Vice Chairman **Capt. Dru DiMattia** *Member-at-Large*

Registration Head **Dennis Kelly** *Member-at-Large*

Committee Member **Sindy Raymond** *North Bay Mariners Chapter*

Committee Member **Sheila Sova** *Member-at-Large*

Committee Member **Steve Snyder** *Member-at-Large*

Committee Member **Dennis Ng** *Dennis A. Roland Chapter*

Finance Chair **Lynn Kelly** *Member-at-Large*



Executive Board of Directors

National Officers &

2021 National Officers Election

On December 30th, John Pitts notified various Board and non-Board members via email of his resignation from the position of AMMV National President. Please see his resignation statement and outgoing report; we thank him for his organizational service and appreciate that he remains committed to helping complete some projects which are still in progress. In the meantime, AMMV Executive Vice President Capt. Dru DiMattia has agreed to step-up and finish his term.

Capt. DiMattia was the only member who signaled intent to run as National President in the upcoming election (term to serve from July 1st, 2021 thru June 30th, 2023), which means that as per Article II, Section 206 (C)(6) of the AMMV By-Laws, he is considered elected.

Sheila Sova was the sole member to signal intent to run as AMMV Executive Vice President; therefore, she is considered elected to said position.

Incumbent AMMV National Treasurer Dennis Kelly stated his intention to run for re-election. He is also unopposed and thus is considered elected.

At total of four potential candidates expressed interest in the National Secretary position. However, two withdrew their nomination. Out of the remaining two persons, the AMMV Executive Board has deemed one as eligible and one as ineligible. An explanation follows:

One of the remaining two individuals pursuing the National Secretary position was Stanley Blumenthal.

As per AMMV By-Laws, Article II Section 202 (C), which states “*Any officer, elected or appointed, may be removed for just cause by the Board of Directors by a majority vote whenever the best interests of the organization will be served thereby*”, Stanley Blumenthal has been removed from his position as AMMV National Secretary for good cause, and will not be allowed to run in this election. Mr. Blumenthal has for some time been sharing internal AMMV communications with his extensive and far-reaching email list, including stating his intention to continue doing so in the future. The AMMV Executive Board of Directors has found this breach of privacy and security as grounds for dismissal as per Section 202 (C).

In addition, it is clear to the Board that while Mr. Blumenthal has exercised his right to free speech, he has often

done so contrary to the views of AMMV’s mission. For that we have sought his resignation, of which he refused, forcing the Executive Board to exercise due diligence as per Article II, Section 202 (C).

While the removal of Mr. Blumenthal was not an easy decision, the AMMV Board would like to thank him for his WWII service and for stepping-up on many occasions to serve or offer to serve as an officer of the organization. We also appreciate his pro-U.S. Merchant Marine views.

Cynthia Driscoll-Komlos has communicated her intent to run for AMMV National Secretary. She has been deemed eligible and, since being unopposed, is considered elected as per the By-Laws under Article II, Section 206 (C) (6).

Since all four candidates for National Office are unopposed, there will be no mailing of election ballots. (Reference: Article II, Section 206 (C)(7) AMMV By-Laws)

Convention Update

At the time of publication, the AMMV National Convention is still scheduled to be held between May 24th – 29th at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights, MD. If the dates hold, convention forms and information will follow in the spring AMMV News issue.

AMMV Website

The AMMV website is admittedly outdated, and this problem is acknowledged by the Board. We are in the process of seeking a web designer to create a modernized website, while maintaining all of our archived blogs and content. The process is a bit more involved than many might think, considering that the online joining/membership function is linked to the website. Please have patience while we work to improve our online presence.

Non-Profit Status Vote

Members-in-good-standing should have received a packet to vote yea or nay on the pending change from a 501(c)(19) non-profit corporation to a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, a move in which the Board feels is necessary for the ultimate survival of AMMV. The original ballot paperwork stated a deadline of December 31st; however, the Board strongly felt that the deadline be extended to allow more members to vote. A new deadline of January 14th was established.



National President Capt. Anthony "Dru" DiMattia



What remains most important to each and every one of you is to stay safe and healthy during these extreme times around the world and right here in our Republic! Maintain the guidelines at a minimum.

Our hats are off to the Greatest Generation celebrating in 2020 the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII. Progress on

the Congressional Gold Medal designs continue as the committee meets again this month. You'll see an update on the process in the Recognition section.

Another very important project worked on throughout 2020 is the inevitable transition of our non-profit status from a 501 (c)(19) to a 501 (c)(3). Several unforeseen complications prevented this mail-in ballot process to take place in a timely fashion, while facing an aggressive expiration. AMMV will afford our members-in-good-standing every opportunity for fair treatment extending the deadline two weeks for the ballots to be received by our Administrator. Upon the official determination of this majority vote count, we must expeditiously seek our transition status with the IRS. The importance of this process cannot be over emphasized.

Already in 2021, we have two bills introduced in the new 117th Congressional Session supporting recognition towards our WWII Merchant Mariners. The equity compensation bill has been attempted for over 10 years! We must continue to educate the public and advocate for remembering a crucial piece of our maritime history during WWII. Though this is long overdue, it's never too late to do the right thing. What part will you play? **LET'S FINISH THE JOB!**

Another project that commenced back in fall of 2019, is working with the Russian Embassy finding living participants of the Arctic Runs. You'll find a full update in the Recognition section. Only 17 living participants received this honor from the Embassy. This was a very satisfying and humbling project.

Continued efforts are going into the National Convention planning which remains slated for late May 2021. While

remaining are many evolving guidelines at the Maritime Conference Center in Maryland due to the pandemic, we must consider this event going virtual.

AMMV wishes to thank the countless hours of our volunteers working for the continued mission of WWII Merchant Mariner recognition. We must extend a huge thanks to the U.S. Maritime Community for rendering so much support going into the success of the Congressional Gold Medal Act. There are so many people to individually thank, but one who stands out, is Mark Ruge, Partner, K&L Gates LLP.

As we enter in 2021, you will notice a new slate of volunteers at the helm of AMMV. We all share the common interest and look forward to further progress.

Have a good watch,

Captain Dru DiMattia
Master Mariner
President, AMMV



Color Guard on Opening Day (3 March 2020) of the WWII U.S. Navy Armed Guard/Merchant Marine Museum.

The WWII U.S. Navy Armed Guard/Merchant Marine Museum, a 501(c)(19) non-profit, has struggled with funding during the COVID pandemic. We are dependent on donations and grants to keep our doors open. Please consider a donation, payable to USNAG/MM Museum, P.O. Box 6910092, Vero Beach, FL 32969. The Museum is at the Vero Beach Mall, 6200 20th St. unit 840, Vero Beach, FL 32966, and is open from 1130 to 1600 Thursday, Friday, Saturday at present until we can get more volunteers. We do not charge for admission. Any questions you can contact Korky at 772-571-0230, or Rick at 772-559-1946, rtucch@gmail.com.

A Message from John Pitts



Due to personal considerations, I have decided to relinquish the office of President of the American Merchant Marine Veterans, Inc. Having served a full term as Treasurer, and half term as President, I have wit-

nessed several positive advancements by the AMMV, Inc.: the Merchant Mariners of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2020 has been approved and the medal is in the design stages of the minting process at this time; the AMMV, Inc. financial balance sheet is positive and expected to increase which belays any concerns about a dues increase which has been discussed since I became involved; the change in Internal Revenue Service tax status is in the process of finally being revised from the questionable 501(c)(19) to the less restrictive and beneficial 501(c)(3); the organizations governing documents have been updated, simplified, and ratified by the membership; outreach with other maritime-related organizations have been established and strengthened, including organizations from other countries, so much so, that an International Affairs Committee has been established to coordinate future efforts; we continued to stay the course while navigating the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic; all in addition to furthering the education of the public and spreading the word about the U.S. Merchant Marine.

When I agreed to volunteer to serve as an officer of the American Merchant Marine Veterans, Inc., it was out of thanks and an effort to pay back the service and sacrifice U.S. Merchant Mariners have dedicated to our great country, preserving the way of life we cherish today. As an amateur student of WWII history, I am convinced that the Allied forces would not have won WWII if not for the extraordinary efforts of the U.S. Merchant Marine. While there were many battles and

strategies which are considered “decisive” to the Allied victory in WWII, each of those battles was fought with ordnance, food, medical supplies, blankets, water, and every other item utilized by an army on foreign soil, all made available by the Merchant Marine. Delivery of these wartime necessities was not limited to the U.S. armed services alone, they were delivered worldwide to all Allied forces. Individually, the Army participated in many invasions and battles, as did the Marines, and the Navy in engagements at sea, but the U.S. Merchant Marine was present at each and every landing, with supplies for each and every battle, all over the world in each and every theatre of operation. The U.S. Merchant Marine of WWII, had no rear echelon, no supply or headquarters divisions, every Merchant Mariner was on the front lines, all the time, manning their vessel in harm’s way.

Recognition for these efforts and sacrifice began with the achievement of Veterans status for WWII US Merchant Mariners, albeit 43 years after WWII, but continues today with numerous books, a myriad of memorials, statues, and the Congressional Gold Medal, all dedicated to the memory of the accomplishments, service, and heroics of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

It is my hope that the just recognition of the vital role of the Merchant Marine continues after the Congressional Gold Medal presentation. I am thankful that my service as an officer of the American Merchant Marine Veterans, Inc. has allowed me the opportunity to move the organization forward and assist in expanding the public awareness of the contributions of U.S. Merchant Mariners in Peace and War!

I thank you, salute you, and wish you Fair Winds and Following Seas.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature of John Pitts in cursive script.

John Pitts



NEWS Magazine Editor Capt. Christopher Edyvean



Please join me in saying thank you to Sindy Raymond, who has been the Editor of AMMV News for many, many years. Sindy retired from the National Office Administrator position at the end of 2017, but continued on as Editor. We wish Sindy the best of luck as she pursues writing books and other personal hobbies.

nately, even though being a Past National President, I have little information of AMMV prior to 2009, and virtually nothing from the 80's and 90's. This is disturbing, considering AMMV is only about three years from its 40th anniversary as a corporation.

We do have some archived files stored in California, and other files in Florida which were recovered from the family of the late Morris Harvey, Past AMMV National President. Beyond these files, so much has been lost.

When it comes to the National AMMV magazine, we currently enjoy a quarterly magazine with colored covers and great stories. This is mainly due to the longstanding contributions of now-retired Editor Sindy Raymond,

former Graphic Designs Contributor Carole Gutierrez, lay-out contractor Susan Alexander, and the late A.J. Wichita, another Past AMMV President, who on his watch was responsible for making the jump to a modern magazine template.

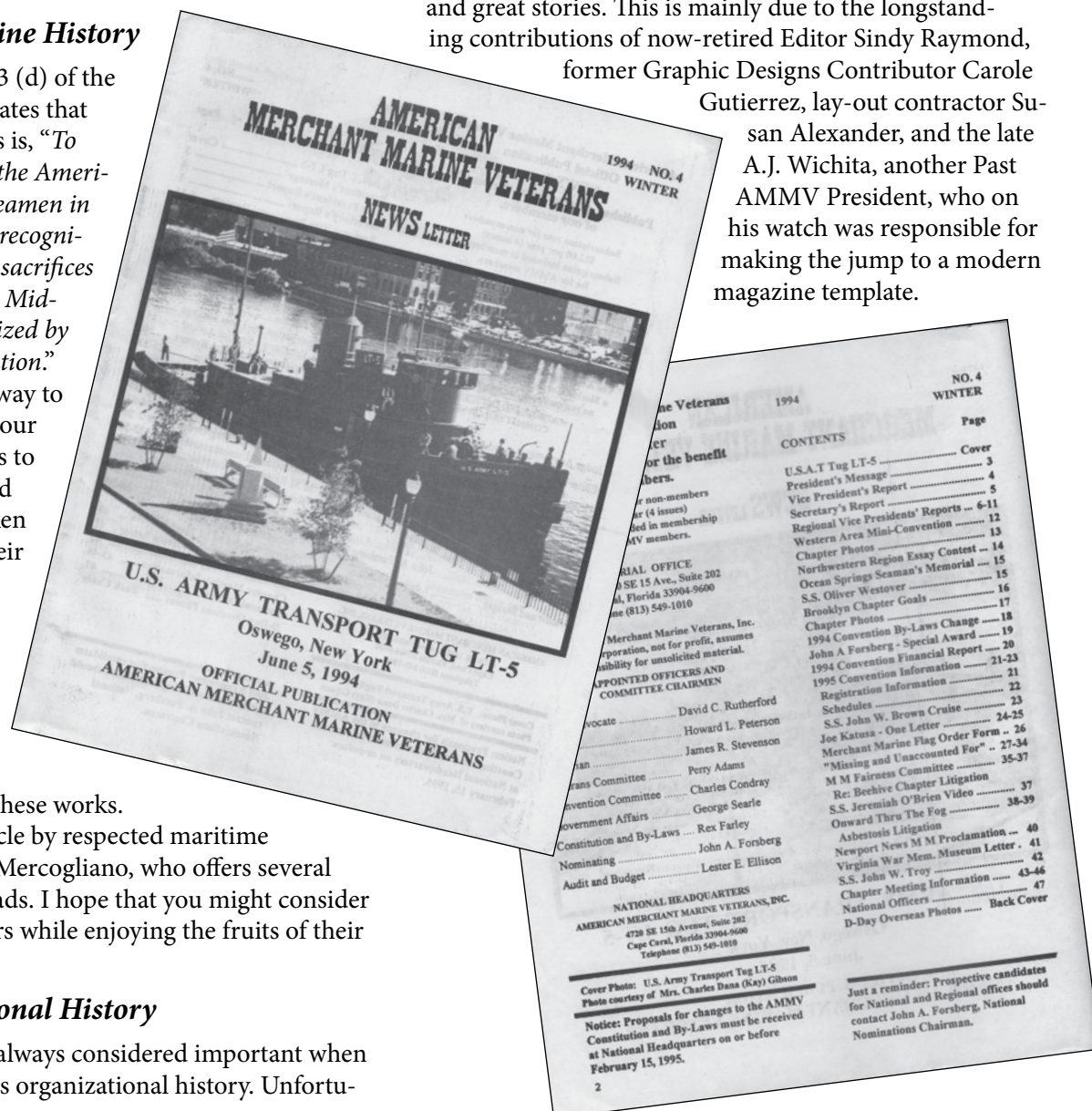
U.S. Merchant Marine History

Article III, Section 3 (d) of the AMMV Constitution states that one of our key purposes is, "To publicize the services of the American Merchant Marine Seamen in World War II, and gain recognition for the services and sacrifices of Korean, Vietnam and Middle-East Wars as recognized by the Veterans Administration." Sometimes, the easiest way to publicize the history of our U.S. Merchant Marine is to promote the authors and historians who have taken the time to assemble their research or tell their amazing stories.

To that end, this issue of the AMMV News contains a handful of book reviews as well as excerpts from some of these works. Also, please see the article by respected maritime historian Dr. Salvatore Mercogliano, who offers several more recommended reads. I hope that you might consider supporting these authors while enjoying the fruits of their labor.

AMMV Organizational History

One topic that I've always considered important when it comes to AMMV is its organizational history. Unfortun-



Some recent history: In 2007, the late Dr. Larry Kerkow (WWII MM Vet) approached a small printing company in Texas to upgrade the quality of the AMMV News magazine, which would begin to feature color covers. This led to the use of our current printer (Prestige Printing) and mailing service (Alamo Mailing Company). Susan Alexander came aboard at this time and remains as a lay-out contractor.

Carole Gutierrez of Portland, OR was involved from the summer 2009 issue thru the spring 2019 issue. She was originally deemed the Communications Director, and later the Webmaster of the original AMMV website which preceded *ammv.us*. Carole's outstanding graphic work became more visible in each issue, and she was eventually named as Graphics Design Coordinator until her resignation.

In 2008, the editorial position was handed over to

Sindy Raymond. Sindy had been the Secretary for the Just Compensation Committee, and would soon take over from Barbara Reher as the National Office Administrator.

I do not know when the AMMV News first came into print. But in true "throwback" spirit, I've included a couple images of the oldest issue that I've been able to obtain (winter 1994).

AMMV is seeking an outside contractor to handle editorial duties in the near future.

Wishing you all a prosperous 2021!

Christopher J. Edyvean

Capt. Christopher Edyvean
Interim AMMV News Editor
Past National President



USMMA/KINGS POINT GRADUATE ELECTED U.S. SENATOR

Senator Mark Kelly is the son of two police officers, and he attended public schools from elementary school through the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, Class of 1986, and U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. As a naval aviator, he served on the aircraft carrier *USS Midway* and flew 39 combat missions in Operation Desert Storm. Senator Kelly was later selected as an astronaut in 1996 in the same class as his twin brother Scott. He flew his first of four missions into space in 2001 aboard Space Shuttle *Endeavour* and retired from the Navy and NASA after commanding the final flight of *Endeavour* in 2011. Senator Kelly was sworn into his Senate seat on December 2, 2020 to finish the term of the late Senator John McCain. He lives in Tucson with his wife, former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords.



National Office Administrator Lynn Kelly



“Dues were due” on July 1, 2020 for the membership year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. If you are receiving this issue of the News Magazine, then you are paid up. If you are a Member-at-Large, dues are \$32 for the year. Memberships expire June 30th each year.

In celebration of the awarding of the U.S.-issued, Chinese-American WWII Veterans Congressional Gold Medal on December 9, 2020 (signed into law December 2018), I have decided to highlight a particular member of that group. He was a proud member of the Chinese Navy, Chinese Army, the British Merchant Marine, and finally, from 1942 to 1970, the U.S. Merchant Marine. Chow Chuck Ng was also the father of AMMV Member Dennis Ng who is

not only the CEO of our Dennis A. Roland Chapter (NJ), but also an active member contributing his time and talents to various AMMV projects and causes.

I hope you appreciate Chow Chuck Ng’s story as much as I did. He acquired the hard-fought immigrant’s dream and left behind a wonderful American legacy in his six children and many grandchildren. He is certainly a man to be admired.

Calm Seas,

Lynn C. Kelly
Lynn C. Kelly

Photo captions for facing page are as follows:

Photo #1, top left; Chow Chuck Ng

Photo #2, group picture, right; Chow Chuck Ng (called Chuck) and his bride Ying King at their wedding Feb 9, 1941 in the new territories of the British Colony of Hong Kong.

Photo #3, Photo #4; The SS Santa Maria, a C-2 freighter operated by Grace Line. Photo #3 was taken before the June 20, 1943 attack by German submarine, U-214 off the coast of West Africa and photo #4 soon after the attack. The explosion from the attack threw two members of the armed guard overboard, but only one was rescued. The remaining crew was ordered to abandon ship before the ship itself was towed into Dakar, Senegal for repairs.

Photo #5, left; Chuck Ng posing with shipmates aboard one of the several liberty ships he sailed.

Photo #6, right side; Chuck (on right) posing with close friend and shipmate, Hon Chung Ng (no relation).

Photo #7, bottom left; Chow Chuck Ng and wife, Ying King Ng (also called Elaine) with their family in 1960 in New York City. Back L-R; Chuck, Xavier, Elaine, Elizabeth (daughter born in China). Middle L-R; Christopher, Dennis, Thomas. Front: William.

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Chow Chuck Ng - 吳卓根 (1912-1989)

U.S. Merchant Marine

Chow Chuck Ng was born in Nantou (南頭), Guangdong, China. Orphaned at 12, he was conscripted in his mid-teens into the Chinese Navy. After his training at Whampao Military Academy (黃埔軍校), he was deployed successively on two Chinese warships, the 飛鷹 (Fei Ying) and the 海周 (Hai Chow), both of which were sunk in separate naval engagements. With the loss of the Chinese navy, he and other sailors were reassigned to the army to oppose the Japanese offensive of 1937. In the fighting, he was hit in the abdomen by gunfire.

While serving in the Chinese Navy, Ng married his first wife. They had two daughters. Tragically, they all died: his first child during infancy, his wife from cholera, and his second child from a deadly infection.

Upon being discharged from the army, he found work in Hong Kong, as a stoker on a British steamship. By early 1941, Ng had remarried, and soon they were expecting their first child together. However, the relative safety of Hong Kong was short-lived. In early December, while his ship was docked in New York, Japanese forces invaded and seized control of the British colony. Unable to return home, he accepted an offer to sign up with the U.S. Merchant Marine. Due to a clerical error at registration, "Chow" was made a part of his name.



From the spring of 1942 and until the end of World War II, Ng made 10 voyages on the Atlantic Ocean, aboard 4 different freighters, earning ratings of utilityman, messman and assistant cook. He was also qualified to operate the anti-aircraft gun of a ship. One ship, the SS Santa Maria, was attacked and heavily damaged by a U-boat off the coast of West Africa. Another ship, the SS William H. Webb,

completed the perilous Murmansk Run and, on returning to Scotland, was directed to help ferry desperately needed supplies to the allied forces in the Battle of the Bulge.



As the war ended, Ng learned that his wife and their child, a daughter, had survived the war and they were living in Hong Kong. Initially he wanted to join them in China, but with heightened concerns over the worsening crisis between the Nationalists and Communists forces, it was necessary for him to defer those plans. In 1948, after nearly dying from tuberculosis, he applied to bring his family to New York. The application for his wife was approved immediately, but approval of his daughter's application took another 4 years.



His family settled in New York City where he and his wife had five sons. He continued to sail on both merchant and passenger ships, as an assistant/2nd cook, baker and cabin steward, but, in 1970, a serious heart condition forced him into retirement. After retiring, he devoted his time and resources to the New York Chinatown community as a community leader and investor in Chinese-American owned businesses.



Ng was especially proud of his military services for the Republic of China and his service in the U.S. Merchant Marine for the United States of America. He was also grateful that he was around to see our government finally recognize him and his fellow merchant mariners as veterans of World War II.

At the time of his passing, he was survived by his wife, their six children, and 5 of their grandchildren, all of whom continue to admire him for his resourcefulness, resilience, and service to others.

A Message from **Sindy Raymond**



Whether through tumultuous seas, U-boat attacks or shark infested waters, the good ship SS AMMV NEWS Magazine must get to its destination; no matter how many challenges it faces The voyage may be treacherous but we need it to stay on course. I am proud to

have been aboard that ship. However, as long-time Editor – or should I say co-Captain of this vessel – I have decided it's my turn to stay ashore from now on.

CHANGE IS IN THE AIR:

Capt. Chris Edyvean has stepped up to the wheel to guide our ship through the seas with other crew change possible in the future. His stewardship is welcome; perhaps it's something that he has wanted for quite a while. He may guide this good ship to different destinations than I might have but change may be progress.

The good ship SS AMMV NEWS Magazine, as part of the American Merchant Marine Veterans, Inc. (AMMV) organization, has been an integral part of my life for about 12 years now. However my AMMV experience has not entirely been the NEWS and has been combined with 16 years of national legislative efforts for U. S. Merchant Mariners, 12 years of AMMV accounting and 10 years as National Office Administrator, dealing with membership and dues collection, now handled by Lynn Kelly.

All of these positions have been guided by the real Captains – the late National President A. J. Wichita, the late Morris Harvey, Capt. Christopher Edyvean, and immediate Past President John Pitts. Sailing may not have been smooth through all these years but it has definitely been interesting. Progress has been made by AMMV over the years and I look forward to reading about future activities as I lounge around sipping my coffee or whatever.

WHAT IS SHORE TIME GOING TO BE LIKE?

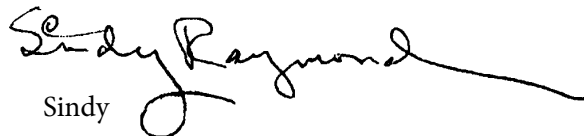
Well, it will be trying to finish, or should I say proceed, with all those projects that I've been meaning to do for years. I must admit that I think very fondly of the "semi-retirement" fete that honored me in St. Louis in 2018, when I took permanent shore leave from the Office Administrator's position part of my AMMV involvement. However, I sometimes wonder why I feel like I've worked almost as hard since then; guess that's my advancing years showing.

I will miss, though, the many friends that I have made with AMMV over the years and really hope that we can stay in touch. You may have heard me to say this before but my door is always open. If you're ever in the Santa Rosa area, please, please contact me and we'll swap sea stories or whatever. My address is 2722 Maynes Ct., Santa Rosa, CA 95405; cell phone: (707) 235-6598; email: saaren@sonic.net. Of course, I'll keep doing what I can to further our legislative efforts, as our newly re-introduced Just Recognition legislation in the House of Representatives Bill #HR.39.

Although it has been turbulent seas at times, it has been an honor to serve on the crew of the American Merchant Marine Veterans, Inc. organization.

I'm looking forward to the convention in May in Baltimore and seeing y'all there.

FAIR SEAS and FULL SPEED AHEAD,


Sindy

National Officer Candidates

The following biographies were submitted by candidates for AMMV National Officer positions for the term of July 1st, 2021 thru June 30, 2022.

Candidate for National President:

Capt. Dru DiMattia

Upon graduating Maine Maritime Academy in 1988, I started sailing as an AB-Tankerman aboard tug and tank barges, transiting along the eastern seaboard. From there I set my goals on sailing on my third mates license gaining a position aboard one of the Quincy Built Aquarius Class Liquid Natural Gas Carriers. This turned into my second home, and second family, as I worked my way up to Chief Officer in 1999.

Shortly after 9/11, demands for military sealift were paramount. I was assigned Second Officer on the LMSR *Bob Hope* class of vessels. These vessels can carry nine football fields of cargo, at over 300,000 square feet of space and transit at 24 knots. Shortly after that assignment I sat for my Master's license, and took command of a *Shughart* Class vessel in 2003.

In 2004, while at home from a normal sailing rotation of 4 months on /4 months off, I was reading my local newspaper, the News-Press out of Ft Myers, which ran an ad about the local chapter of the Southwest Florida American Merchant Marine Veterans organization. As many AMMV members know, the National American Merchant Marine Veterans Organization was founded in 1984 right here in Lee county.

In 2006, I was assigned to the sister ship to the *Shughart* which was assigned a forward deployed joint mission hunting the Abul Sayif terrorist group in the Philippines. I sailed as Chief Officer, then Master until 2009. Certainly, one of the highlights of my sea going career, was working side by side with active military personnel, and seeing the accomplishments of taking out the high value targets.

In 2010, I joined the Maersk Lines sailing on one of their RORO vessels as Chief Officer and then a permanent Master's rotation, sailing with a hybrid cargo of commercial auto and strategic sealift for our military. Typically, we would sail around the world transiting the Suez and Panama Canals arriving back in CONUS in about 90 days.

After 30 years going to sea, I'm happily retired!

I currently volunteer in multiple local community services including my local Rotary, Director of the Navy Armed Guard Merchant Marine Museum in Vero Beach, FL, member of the Navy League Suncoast Chapter, and Past President of the Southwest American Merchant Marine Veterans Chapter.



Candidate for National Vice President:

Sheila Sova

As a Proud Daughter of a U.S. Merchant Marine Veteran, the plan was simple: to gain recognition for the WWII USMM. Embarking on a legacy that was sketched in history, it has been an uphill battle, but one that we are winning!

Six years ago, I knew nothing about the U.S. Merchant Marine except that they existed in WWII. I know much more now, thanks to former AMMV President Chris Edyvean, who asked me to create a Twitter page. Along with this request was a list "Things to Know About the USMM." I do know now, how much I didn't know then!

Managing the AMMV Twitter page, along with two WWII USMM Facebook groups, has been very educational. Social media allows me to interact daily with WWII USMM Veterans, family members of these Veterans, writers, collectors, historians and well-known authors. I am proud to say that I can now quote almost any statistic from usmm.org.

Participating in the last three "Storm the Hills" (2017 thru 2019) has also been an honor. Many contacts were made in D.C. that have furthered our mission for recog-

dition. I currently sit on the Congressional Gold Medal Committee at MARAD of which I am honored to serve with a handful of AMMV members and two WWII USMM Veterans.

The respect that I have for these WWII Veterans has certainly molded my passion for the AMMV. My proudest moment is yet to come.... the day I accept the Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of my father, Orville Lee Sova.



Candidate for National Treasurer: Dennis Kelly

Originally from Wantagh, NY on the South Shore of Long Island, I attended the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point. While a Midshipman there doing my sea year, I sailed on various C2/C3/C4 freighters operated by US Lines, American Export-Isbrandtsen Lines and Farrell Lines. I completed my sea year with Hess Oil Co., sailing coastwise on the *Hess Voyager*.

I graduated cum laude as a deck officer with a BS in Marine Transportation/Nautical Science, a commission as an Ensign in the Naval Reserves and U.S. Coast Guard License as a Third Mate (unlimited tonnage/radar observer).

A week after graduation I flew out to Los Angeles and joined the *SS American Trader*, a jumboized T2 built in 1943 owned by American Trading Transportation Company. The ship was on charter to the Military Sealift Command and for the next two years we were charged with delivering jet fuel during the Vietnam War to various U.S. bases in southeast Asia (Sattahip Thailand, Subic Bay in the Philippines, Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang, South Vietnam).

In June of 1973 I came ashore to get married and

joined Global Bulk Transport (parent company of States Marine Lines) as an Assistant Operations Manager. Over the next 43 years I worked ashore for various shipping companies culminating in my retirement in 2016 as Chartering Manager for Pioneer Navigation – a deep sea bulk shipping company.

I currently live in CT along with my lovely and forgiving wife of 47 years. We travel a few times a year to visit friends and see our grown children who live in Denver and Portland, OR. We still do a couple of ski trips a year and hope to continue skiing as long as the knees still bend.

We have a wonderful circle of friends whom we know from our Kings Point days. Some are still working but most have retired from careers in the U.S. Government, Merchant Marine, Coast Guard, and the Navy. We still get together for our anniversary reunions at Kings Point every five years and our KP mini-reunions held annually, when possible, throughout the United States.

It has been an honor to serve as your National Treasurer the past year-and-a-half and I look forward to serving another two-year term.



Candidate for National Secretary: Cynthia Driscoll-Komlos

I am the very proud daughter of a Merchant Mariner who is now 94 years old and served during WWII and post-WWII. I have always supported his cause, and have often helped in the past by running petitions for active legislation or collecting donations. I have been a member of the two chapters of which he has belonged. I have also accompanied my dad at AMMV conventions, and was part of the 2019 "Storm the Hill" group. I couldn't have been prouder for this opportunity, and would be honored to assist by serving as National Secretary.

American Merchant Marine Veterans
Profit & Loss
 July through December 2020

	Jul - Dec 20
Income	
402 · Contributions	51,447.96
403 · Interest Income & Bank Bonuses	602.82
405 · Mission Support Fund	282.00
409 · Miscellaneous Income	16.00
410 · Chapter and MAL Dues	
DAR · Dennis Roland	832.00
EOH · Edwin O'Hara	32.00
GLD · Golden Gate	689.00
HIR · High Rollers	200.00
JTS · John T. Schmidt/Palmetto	600.00
LON · Lone Star	175.00
MAL · Members at Large	15,153.67
NBM · North Bay Mariners	325.00
NOA · North Atlantic	64.00
OHV · Ohio Valley	300.00
ORV · Oswego River Valley	75.00
THR · Three Rivers	625.00
410 · Chapter and MAL Dues - Other	96.00
Total 410 · Chapter and MAL Dues	19,166.67
411 · Convention Income	
412 · Convention Registrations	-290.00
Total 411 · Convention Income	-290.00
Total Income	71,225.45
Expense	
500 · Fixed Expense	
507 · Telephone	195.66
511 · Service Charges - Paypal	40.03
Total 500 · Fixed Expense	235.69
514 · Convention Expenses	
515 · Convention Events	-200.00
Total 514 · Convention Expenses	-200.00
520 · Mission Advance	
526 · Internet Initiative	282.00
Total 520 · Mission Advance	282.00
530 · AMMV News Magazine	
533 · Postage	1,852.03
536 · Printing	6,408.40
538 · Layout	2,600.00
539 · Editorial Fee	600.00
Total 530 · AMMV News Magazine	11,460.43
550 · Personnel	
551 · Administration	9,300.00
Total 550 · Personnel	9,300.00
560 · Operating Expense	
564 · Office Supplies	270.29
565 · Postage - Office	118.95
566 · Printing - Office	449.78
567 · Licenses & Fees	452.32
Total 560 · Operating Expense	1,291.34
Total Expense	22,369.46
Net Income	48,855.99

American Merchant Marine Veterans
Balance Sheet
 As of December 31, 2020

	Dec 31, 20
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
105 · Chase Bank	183,238.34
Total Checking/Savings	183,238.34
Total Current Assets	183,238.34
TOTAL ASSETS	183,238.34
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Credit Cards	
200 · Chase Credit Card	109.50
Total Credit Cards	109.50
Other Current Liabilities	
312 · Member Recruitment	893.00
314 · Mission Support Donations	65,225.49
Total Other Current Liabilities	66,118.49
Total Current Liabilities	66,227.99
Total Liabilities	66,227.99
Equity	
32001 · Retained Earnings	68,154.36
Net Income	48,855.99
Total Equity	117,010.35
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	183,238.34



AMMV member & WWII MM Vet George Ratcliffe shows off his coin table, of which the NOAA/WWII Merchant Marine challenge coin was recently added. Ratcliffe's daughter, Susan Cameron, handles the financial statements for AMMV.

Welcome Aboard to these New Members of the AMMV

DENNIS E. "DENNY" BEHR.....	MADISON.....	WI
ALBERT BERGERON.....	ROCHESTER.....	WA
CAROL BUTLER.....	NORTH CANTON.....	OH
CHARLOTTE CHRISTMAN.....	SAN MARCOS.....	CA
MARY BETH CONRATH.....	BELLEVILLE.....	IL
JOHN T. DAVIS.....	SIMPSONVILLE.....	SC
COL. M. THOMAS DAVIS.....	SEATTLE.....	WA
DENISE DEMME.....	SHIRLEY.....	NY
JAMES H. FISH.....	BOERNE.....	TX
JOHN GALLAGHER.....	SELLERSVILLE.....	PA
MICHAEL L. MICHELSON.....	TAMPA.....	FL
ALAN MURRAY.....	SYOSSET.....	NY
PETER OYER.....	HOLYOKE.....	MA
LORENZO PANIGUTTI.....	THE VILLAGES.....	FL
STUART QUAN.....	SAN RAFAEL.....	CA
EDWARD RENSHAW.....	SAN DIEGO.....	CA
GENE A. TAYLOR.....	FAIRLAND.....	IN
JUSTINE WONG.....	MOUNTAIN VIEW.....	CA
KENNETH EARL WORD.....	CARSON.....	CA

HOMeward BOUND

*Oh, let us put out to sea,
in early morning, just you and me.
With the tiller in your hand,
steer her far from this sad land.*

*Set a course for far away to
the world where sea birds and dolphins play.
To where there's naught but sun and sea,
and the vastness of eternity.*

*Drift there through space and time,
to that sacred place, ever yours and mine.
To that place so dark, a place so deep,
to the place where my fellow sailors sleep.*

*Here let the sea breeze dry your tears and
memories of our love allay your fears.
Hold me close, then, with loving care,
cast my ashes there.*

Arthur Webster



*Longtime AMMV member & Vietnam era
Merchant Mariner, Peter Gannon (right), Crossed
the Bar on January 1st. He is pictured with
WWII MM Veteran George Koch.*

IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE FINAL BAR

JOHN W. ALDRIDGEGlen Ellyn, IL
WILLIAM SPEIGHT BURTONLawrenceville, GA
E. S. "SPUD" CAMPBELLCullman, AL
JOHN H. CONRATHBelleville, IL
CAPT. EDWARD M. "TED" DONAHER .Mahopac, NY
BURTON JOHN "BURT" ESPY, SrBradenton, FL
PETER F. GANNONRotunda West, FL
THOMAS F. "FRED" GRIFFITHSSalt Lake City, UT
HELEN GROHSan Anselmo, CA
CECIL E. HARRISONPort Huron, MI
EUGENE R. KENTWheaton, IL
EDMUND B. KINTERButler, PA
JOSEPH R. KUBALAWest Orange, NJ
HENRY KVISTTaylorsville, UT
RICHARD LANDOLFIPalm Bay, FL
EDWARD MALZENSKIWilbraham, MA
JOEL E. MC CRUMDiamondhead, MS
DELBERT MOLLRed Bud, IL
CAPT HARRY G. NEWAKGreenfield Twp, PA
WALTER OYLOECastle Rock, WA
FRANK PICCOLOManorville, NY
JACK CARLTON POSTEnglewood, OH
PAUL L. RITTERWarren, IL
HAROLD TANNERBountiful, UT
CLETIS "BUCK" WILFONGSpringfield, MO
ALFRED O. ZABALALos Angeles, CA

To honor a loved one, memorial donations may be made to the American Merchant Marine Veterans organization on the loved one's behalf. This is a tribute to their memory and the dedicated service they gave to their country and to mankind. Thank you for your thoughtful gesture. Donations may be sent to: AMMV, P.O. Box 2024, Darien, CT 06820-2024.

FEMALE “SPARKY” IN THE WWII MERCHANT MARINE

Based on research & phone interview by Sheila Sova

It was a different world for women back in the 1940's. While men went off to war, women entered the workforce in large numbers to support the war effort. Some went to work at the shipyards, becoming welders and riveters. Others worked in new facilities that seemingly opened overnight, such as munitions factories and parachute plants.

Billie Louella Adels was never one for conformity and instead would set sail on a new career that would literally set her apart from other women of the day. She would become a Merchant Marine Radio Operator, serving in WWII.

Billie was born in 1921 in Hawaii, and even called Australia her home for a short period of time. Her father was an international salesman which kept the family on the move. They lived in several states including Oregon, Washington, New Mexico, and California.

As often as the family moved, Billie took on a new school, a new job, or enrolled in a new university. Her jobs included working at a laboratory for Kraft, Eastman Kodak, and the U.S. Weather Bureau. Billie was one of two women putting up weather balloons at night, just one of many “firsts” that Billie would achieve in life.

This trailblazer wanted to see more of the world, and soon found that volunteering in the Merchant Marine was the best way she could serve the Allied war effort. Very little has been written about the women who put their lives on the line in the Merchant Marine during WWII.

Billie registered as a Stewardess in March 1944, according to the Norwegian War Sailors Logbook. Norwegian ships sailing from U.S. ports had female crew members in several roles. Archived vessel crew lists indicate she served as Purser, Stewardess, and Radio Operator. Residing in San Francisco at the time, Billie took time off to attend a six-month radio operator school, which she completed in just four months. She does not recall the

name of the training facility; however, our research has turned up a few different training facilities on the West Coast, such as an Alameda, California based Radio Operator's school operated by the U.S. Maritime Service.

Further research indicates that Class I or II Radio Operators had to achieve high levels of proficiency in Morse Code interpretation. However, a Radio Officer was usually considered more of a Staff Officer, thus holding lesser rank than other shipboard officers.

At sea, Billie embarked on voyages to some of the most dangerous ports of call, including Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal. She sailed into many countries including France, Germany, Argentina, Belgium, Norway, and Columbia. Sailing under the Norwegian flag, Billie served on several ships including *M/S General Ruge* (formerly U.S.-flagged *M/S*

Cape Arago), *Edward J Berwind*, *Hoyanger*, and *Jotunjell*. When the war ended, Billie sailed on American ships, including the *S/S Gulf Banker*. In total, she spent a decade as a Merchant Mariner.

According to a newspaper interview in the Oregon



Dr. Bille Pennings

Bend Bulletin, June 1950, Billie recalled being ordered off a ship after a Captain learned that Billie was not a man's name. However, Captain G. H. Melichar of the *S/S Gulf Banker* is said to have praised "Sparky" for her work; the officers and crew praised, "She is just like a sister."

After the war, Billie went to work for a shipping company in Los Angeles. Her boss, a graduate of Auburn University, suggested that Billie should consider this facility. She soon embarked as a student at the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine, fueled by her love for cats, of which she had often kept as companions while at sea. She was the only woman to graduate in 1958 from a class of 63 students, and only the 7th woman to graduate from Auburn College of Veterinary Medicine.

Billie married Harry Norbert Pennings after graduation, and being the trailblazer that she was, Dr. Billie Pennings opened one of the first "feline only" veterinary clinics in the country in 1959.

She retired in 1991 at the age of 70, only to continue with volunteer work at the Galveston Seaman's Center. She also served on the Board for the Galveston Pilots, as appointed by the Texas governor.

Billie is now in the process of obtaining her Honorable Discharge DD214 from the U.S. Coast Guard, to become the fourth known female WWII U.S. Merchant Marine Veteran. Dr. Pennings will be recognized on Maritime Day

(May 22nd) in Washington, DC (COVID permissible), and is slated to be honored with the Norwegian Convoy Cup Award from the Government of Norway.

Little known facts about women mariners in WWII:

Mary Collom Kimbro of Tennessee was the first female Merchant Mariner killed in WWII. At 64 years old, she was Stewardess on board as the American passenger ship *S/S City of Birmingham* as it sailed out of Norfolk, Virginia on June 29, 1942. On the evening of the 31st while off the coast of Cape Hatteras NC, *City of Birmingham* was hit with two torpedoes, quickly sinking the vessel. Six crewmen, including Mary Cullom Kirmbro, and two passengers were lost. On April 6, 1945, the 90th-built liberty ship was launched at Panama City, named the *S/S Mary Cullom Kimbro*.

Clara Gordon Main was taken off of the *S/S President Harrison* by the Japanese Imperial Navy while making a military mission between Manila and North China in the China Sea. The entire crew was captured, and Main spent two years in a POW Camp. This incident occurred the same day as the Pearl Harbor attack, so it never made headline news. She eventually received the Merchant Marine Meritorious Service Medal. At the time, she was the only woman known to have received this honor.



SS Gulf Banker (circa WWII)

AMMV Veteran Spotlight: Bob Ross

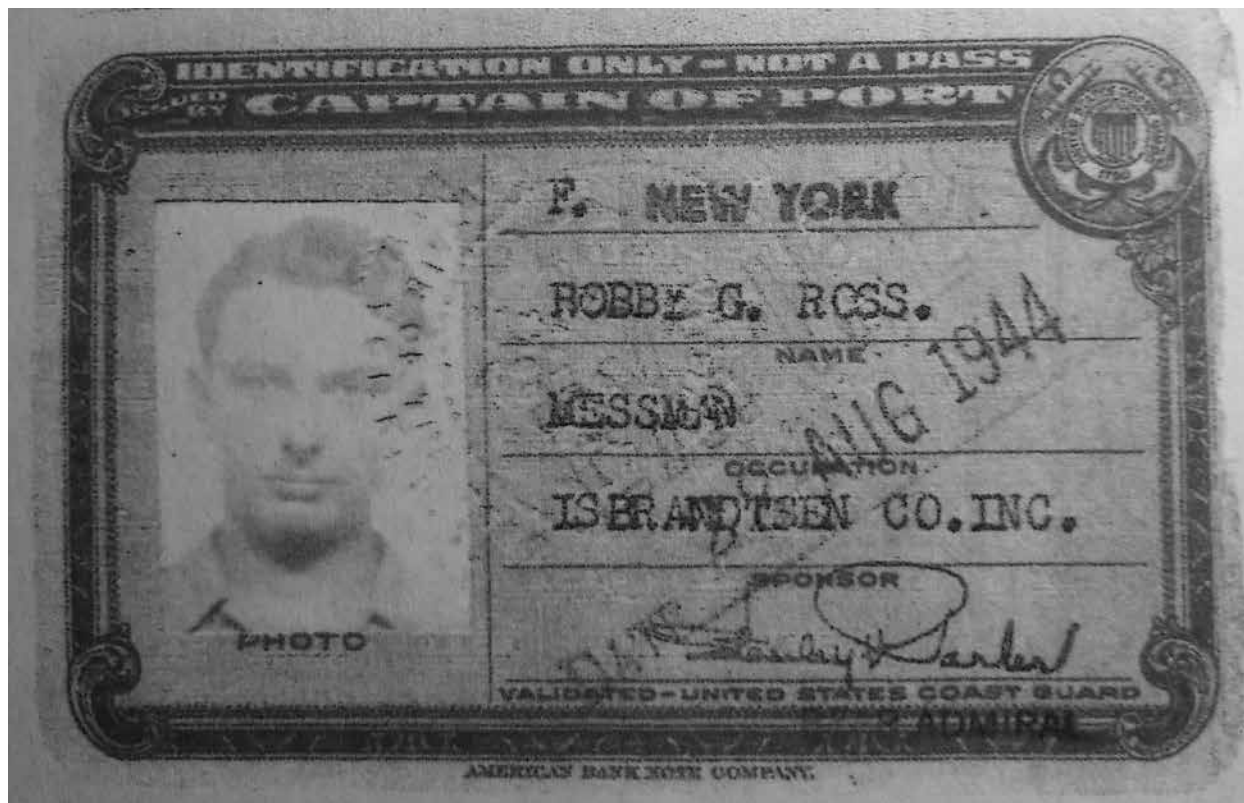
For many years, WW2 Merchant Marine Veteran Bob Ross of Arkansas, along with his daughter Shirley Knight and son-in-law Crawford Knight, have been a driving force behind AMMV's causes. The family has attended every National Convention and Western Region Conference in recent years, and Ross frequently initiates gatherings with other AMMV friends and family. The Ross/Knight trio still produce one of the few surviving AMMV chapter newsletters (AMMV Razorback), and Ross continues to serve the organization as a Regional Vice President.

Ross, who joined the Merchant Marine at age 14,



also belongs to VUMS (Veterans of Underage Military Service), a nationwide group representing the surprisingly many men of the WWII and Korean Conflict eras who enlisted while still underage. Ross earned the South Pacific Victory Medal, Pacific War Zone Bar, and the Atlantic War Zone Bar for his WW2 service.

More recently, in his hometown of El Dorado, Ross was instrumental in having the American Merchant Marine Memorial Monument placed on the Union County Courthouse lawn. In addition, the mayor issued a proclamation naming Dec. 31st, 2018 as Bobby Gene "Bob" Ross Day, and Ross was featured in an August 2020 El Dorado newspaper



Port Identification Card

article highlighting the 75th anniversary of the end of the war.

The AMMV Editorial staff interviewed Mr. Ross in December to learn a little more about his time in the war and his thoughts on the recognition of fellow WW2 Merchant Mariners.

AMMV: What fuels your desire to remain so active in the AMMV organization?

Ross: AMMV is somewhat like a fraternity. You enjoy visiting with your brethren.

AMMV: You began your sea service in the Merchant Marine at age 14. In general, how do you recall feeling? Were you scared; was it adventurous; did you realize the risks?

Ross: I have somewhat of a different opinion than some of the other teenage seamen. We had just come out of the Great Depression. Our families had little. No pot, and no window. It was also a different kind of patriotism back then. I considered it an honor to serve. At the age of 14, I tried to enlist

in the



*El Dorado Mayor proclaims Bobby Gene "Bob" Ross
Day on 12/31/2018*



RVP Bob Ross with Past AMMV President Capt. Edyvean at 2019 National Convention in Tampa

Army, Navy, and Marines, all turned me down due to flat feet, bad eye sight, and a bad heart. With the assistance of a security officer in Pine Bluff, AR, I was directed to the U.S. Merchant Marine and signed up without a hitch, since they did not seem to care about those things.

AMMV: Can you tell us a bit more about your Merchant Marine service, such as your shipboard department, rank, years served, and some of the vessels and vessel types you served upon?

Ross: My first job was as Utility Messman, then Messman, and finally Salon Messman for the officers. I served a total of two years from 1942-1944.

AMMV: Good or bad, will you share your most memorable WWII Merchant Marine story?

Ross: One day along the Carolina coast, the ship began blast-

ing a signal, and suddenly all the guys were rushing up the stairway by the Messroom, with their deck knives clinched in their mouths. "What's going on?", I asked, and was told the signal meant to abandon ship. A submarine was in the area with a P.T. boat approaching with depth charges. Some action took place, the submarine surfaced, and the action was over.

AMMV: Following the war years, you led a healthy life and successful career. What values did you acquire during your time in the Merchant Marine which were beneficial later in life?

Ross: I came home, married my high school sweetheart and went to work. One thing I learned was "work hard and save your money".

AMMV: Unfortunately, the many sessions of Congress with legislation aimed at giving WWII Merchant Mariners a cash pay-out were in vain. However, the passage of the Congressional Gold Medal Act is the first major recognition for WWII mariners since gaining veteran status in 1988. How do you feel about passage of the WWII Merchant Mariners Congressional Gold Medal Act? Do you feel that your group is finally getting proper recognition?

Ross: Gold medals are for heroes. My brother died from Agent Orange. I consider him a hero. Should the Gold Medal problems be worked out, there are two that I would like to present in person. One in Arkansas, and one in Mississippi.

Steaming to Djibouti

The following excerpts are from the new travelogue by Captain Sean P. Tortora, titled, *"Steaming to Djibouti...My First Hitch on an Underway Replenishment Ship."* Join a motivated young merchant marine officer on his first journey onboard

a venerable navy auxiliary steamship. Accompany him through the convoluted reporting for duty process through his truly surreal first tour onboard. Meet the oddball characters in the crew and follow their outlandish daily routine. Listen in to the truly jaw-dropping crew interactions. Follow along through the myriad of hilarious adventures and astonishing experiences that can only be described as unbelievable. Along the way, you will find yourself alternating between shock and chuckles as you can't wait to see what happens next!

"...Standing on a pier, alone, waiting for a ship... How did I arrive here...? I came into this world Francis Kowalski Natale...

...I stood statue straight in the middle of pier with my suitcase at my right side, my briefcase hanging in my left hand, wearing my chino slacks, blue blazer, tie, and Vuar-net brand cat-eye sunglasses, all the while drenched with perspiration running down my face. I could see the ship making its approach to the pier as I stood there silently waiting, thoroughly soaked to my skin in sweat...

...The ship was the USNS SHINNECOCK T-AOK 1, which was built as an experimental class, loosely based on the design of the U.S. Navy's MISPELLION AO- 105 class of underway replenishment ships built after World War II. At 40,000 tons the SHINNECOCK was 725 feet in length overall, with a beam of 96 feet, and a deep draft of 37 feet. Her 35,000-horsepower steam turbine powered twin screws with a single rudder for a design speed of 25 knots. The ship was painted U.S. Navy haze gray and had a big number "1" on each side of the bow next to the anchors...

...As I stood outside the Captain's office door with the

Chief Mate while he knocked, I felt a sense of nervousness combined with a bit of excitement and adventure. Here I was getting ready to meet my first Captain on my first ship as Third Officer... As I prepared to walk into the Captain's



A young Tortora leans on the Engine Order Telegraph (circa 1991).

office, I contemplated that I always had an idealistic characterization of my first Captain. He would be a maritime academy graduate, maybe even a Ft. Schuyler alum, middle-aged with a weathered look, but very dignified and masculine. He would be well-spoken, witty, maybe even in an aloof sort of way; he would be wearing a neatly pressed uniform with eagles on his collar, clean shaven, with salt-and-pepper

colored hair. He would be medium height and medium build and, finally, would be of the utmost intelligence.... With that the door opened, and there sitting in a filthy room, at a desk covered in papers that were in no real order and bedraggled, sat a huge Cro-Magnon-like man. He had the head of a bulldog, with the jowls and frown lines to match, the little hair he possessed was gray and in a comb over, and he had the body of *Jabba the Hutt* from those *Star Wars* films. He wore a way too small dingy, food-stained, yellowed under-shirt with rips under his huge armpits. His immense fat rolls billowed out from under his t-shirt. But the worst was yet to see, for when he stood up, as I entered the office, he was not wearing pants; rather, he had on a pair of underwear, briefs at that, the old "tightie-whities." You would think this objectionable mess would have had the decency to, at the very least, wear boxers, being so inclined to go so informally. Nope, not this cretin; he was sticking with the bikini bottoms for men. They were God-awful, stained yellow, with blowouts around the legs and rear, including strategically placed holes. They were nasty and funky, again with his rolls of fat bulging over the over-stretched waistband between where the grimy undershirt ended and his beastly briefs commenced....

...recall the SHINNECOCK, being an old girl, had two Engineers on watch at all times, one at the control board in the engine room proper and another in the boiler room at the boiler's front to direct the Fireman. Engineers have very



USNS Laramie (T-AO 203), one of Tortora's commands, returning from the Arabian Gulf for Christmas (circa 2010).

complicated names for shipboard equipment, which sound extremely impressive and intricate, requiring oodles of skill and knowledge to operate, or God forbid, repair. Of course, any complicated machinery, either actual or just by nature of the name, requires a great amount of overtime to repair...just ask an Engineer. Sometimes I think the Engineers love confusing the Deck Officers with the use of three-syllable gobbledygook machinery terms. Case in point, the Engineers thoroughly enjoy speaking of the intricacies of the *air handler* or for us mere mortals, the fan. Then there is the *purifier*, which sounds a bit more impressive than a filter. There is the *heat exchanger*, when discussing a radiator. The common dimmer switch for a light goes by the moniker *rheostat*. Fiber-glass insulation is way too easy; better to use the convoluted nomenclature of *lagging*. These examples are a few of the Engineers attempts to confuse, befuddle, and confound the Deck Officers.

As my watch was progressing without incident, the dial telephone rings on the bridge. "Bridge, Third Mate," I belch out.

I then hear the voice on the other end of the line, "Hey, this is the 3rd in the engine room. We are having a problem with the number three air handler."

I perk up with this warning, "Is that serious?"

The old 3rd shoots back, "You better let the Captain know."

Now I am fully aware of the (perceived) seriousness and reply, "Ok, I'll let him know, call me when you get it fixed." With that, I hung up the phone and immediately dialed 7-1-1, the number for the Bulldog's stateroom. Even though I knew it was not a good idea to wake the sleeping bear, and he made that quite clear to me on my first watch, I had to notify him of an equipment problem or what I thought was such.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT?" Stone howled into the phone.

"Captain, my apologies, the 3rd just notified me that he is having an issue with number three air handler," I accurately reported.

However, there was a distinct silence for what seemed like an inordinate amount of time, and then Stone blew his top, and I literally had to pull the phone receiver away from ear due to the din..."

Visit *SteamingToDjibouti.com* for purchasing information.



Tortora's father, a Merchant Marine Veteran of WWII (circa 1943).



About the author:

CAPT Sean P. Tortora is a Master Mariner with twenty-five years at sea. He is also an unlimited Master of towing vessels and Master of underway replenishment vessels. During his career at sea, CAPT Tortora has had Command of many different vessels including tankers, general cargo, break bulk, ammunition, ocean towing and salvage, special mission, as well as underway replenishment vessels. CAPT Tortora has conducted over 2,000 underway replenishment evolutions during his career. CAPT Tortora is native on Long Island, New York, and is a graduate of Chaminade High School and holds both a Master's and a Bachelor's degree from the State University of New York Maritime College at Ft. Schuyler. He has served in the first Gulf War – Operation Desert Storm/Desert Sortie 1991-1992, Operation Noble Eagle – the response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and the second Gulf War – Operation Iraqi Freedom 2002-2010. After retiring from the sea, CAPT Tortora is now an Associate Professor in the Department of Marine Transportation at the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York. CAPT Tortora is the author of the marine firefighting textbook, *Study Guide for Marine Fire Prevention, Firefighting, and Fire Safety*, published by Cornell Maritime Press. Read more about CAPT Tortora at LongIslandMaritime.com

Jacksonville Florida 11-11-2020 Veterans Day Parade

*Report by Stephen Snyder,
Region #1 VP*

For my second year I have assisted in honoring Merchant Marine Veterans by participating in the Jacksonville Veterans Day Parade, where the WWII-era lifeboat once again “sailed” through downtown Jacksonville, a “voyage” going back 20 some years. This participation was inspired and organized by longtime MEBA C/E Jimmy Curran, whom I crossed the final bar in 2020.

Helping to keep the tradition sailing along were Mark and Chris Swan, sons of WWII MM Veteran Dave Swan, along with Tom “Sunny” Suneson and Dan Campbell, by cleaning and outfitting the lifeboat two days before the parade.

At 0800 on Wed. 11/11/2020 the family and friends of AMMV met at the back-lot warehouse of North Florida Shipyard, where the boat is stowed and a roll call was taken. Joining us this year from Cape Coral, FL was AMMV National Vice President, Capt. Dru Di Mattia.

We then proceeded to the staging area at the Prime Osborn Convention Center, alongside many other veteran and service groups participating, including the Navy League and Naval Order.

At 1100 hours, under a glorious blue sky we begin to “cruise” down Bay Street. and even with social distancing, the sidewalks are busy with people honoring veterans.

What personally moved me was when a military veteran pointed to us in the lifeboat, and acknowledged and thanked the AMMV veterans.



RVP Stephen Snyder poses in front of the lifeboat.



Snyder's “crew” of the WWII lifeboat



Part of the El Faro Memorial

I in turn looked them in the eyes, pointed to them, and thanked them for the acknowledgment.

The parade was broadcast live locally by News4Jax, and in attendance was the Honorable John Rutherford, U.S. Congressman from Jacksonville, an early co-sponsor of the WWII Congressional Gold Metal Act of 2020.

After the completion of the parade route, we headed back to the area of the shipyard where we broke for some pizza, refreshments, and sea stories.

A few of the guys were interested in visiting the El Faro Memorial honoring the 33 Merchant Mariners lost on 10-01-2015 in Hurricane Joaquin, whose last voyage originated at Blount Island Marine Terminal, Jacksonville. As the guys were viewing each memorial bollard with the photos of the seaman lost, they recognized some names with whom they had sailed.

The day was both solemn and beautiful, and I’m glad to be able to share these moments with this group, keeping the memory of Jimmy Curran’s inspiration and tradition.

(Editor’s note: Participants and MM Veterans in the Jacksonville area are connected with the dissolved St. John’s Chapter of AMMV.)

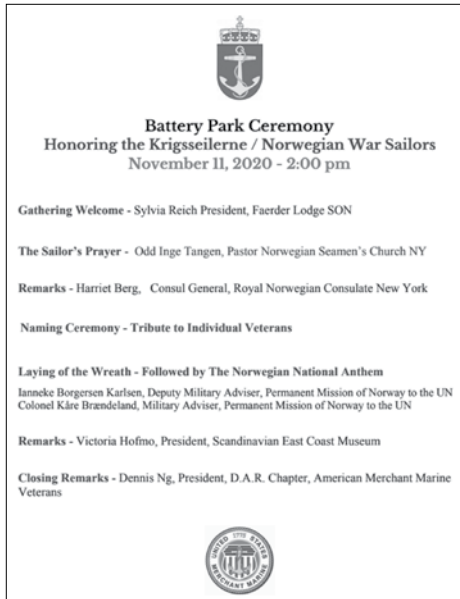


Capt. DiMattia with SW Florida Chapter’s flag



CHAPTER NEWS

DAR Chapter at Battery Park to honor Norwegian War Sailors



On Veterans Day, the AMMV Dennis A. Roland (DAR) Chapter was represented at a ceremony held at the famous Battery Park Merchant Marine Memorial in New York. DAR Chapter President Dennis Ng submitted the accompanying photos. This particular event was held specifically to commemorate the service and sacrifice of Norwegian War Sailors.

The following correspondence was received afterward by Scandinavian East Coast Museum President (SECM) Victoria Hofmo.

Dear All,

On behalf of the Scandinavian East Coast Museum, I

would like to thank you for your participation in yesterday's Ceremony at Battery Park to honor and remember the Norwegian War Sailors & Navy, as well as to honor and remember the important relationship between Norway and the U.S., especially during WWII. To that end, we also gathered at the U.S. Merchant Marine Monument. It was an apropos day, November 11th - Veterans Day and a most significant year, 2020, the 75h Anniversary of the end of WWII. Although COVID had cancelled our original date May 8th, we knew that those who had served on the seas for 5 long years, to defeat fascism, chaos and the decimation of humanity, deserved to have their experience and choices recognized and remembered.



*Once again thanks for making this Veterans Day so special.
Sincerely,*

Victoria Hofmo – President, SECM

Christmas message from Edwin O'Hara Chapter

A Brief Greeting from the Flying Bridge (received at AMMV HQ 12/26/20 via email)

I believe that all is well with our chapter's mariners as I've received no messages to the contrary from the wireless. The chefs on board outdid themselves. And in addition to the ever-present shipboard bells sounding every half hour and the occasional additional ring during the heaviest of weather, I did hear a different tone of bells for only a short time. When I checked out their possible source, I discovered that there were many packages with a touch of dark smudges from the fiddle. I wonder where they came from?

Looking back in the Official Logbook, I recall that there were three members of the AMMV O'Hara Chapter who met at the Mariner's Memorial at the Battery Park for a small get-together around the 11:00 hour on November 10th, 2020. The weather was nice and comfortable for the two-hour loose, socially distant gathering. We witnessed a tanker and a bulker, about a mile distant from each other, heading up the North River for destinations undetermined.

Soon we'll be out and about in search of new itineraries and gatherings. In the meantime, I demand that everyone be safe, be well, and be extra cautious in everything you do and with every step that you take. And may God Bless not only the O'Hara Chapter members, their families and their friends, but all of the mariners of the AMMV as well as the proud mariners of the world!

J. Fred Rodriguez Jr. -- Proud President & CEO of the AMMV O'Hara Chapter

Dr. Lloyd Burkett [PhD] -- Assistant Vice President of the AMMV O'Hara Chapter

Hector L. Arroyo, Jr. -- Secretary of the AMMV O'Hara Chapter

Christopher Kutch -- Treasurer to be of the AMMV O'Hara Chapter

Wreaths Across America observance at the San-Pedro Memorial

John Pitts submitted photos of the American Merchant Marine Veterans Memorial Committee (AMMVMC) Board Members observing the Wreaths Across America function at the memorial site in December.



L to R: Mark Hurley, AMMVMC board member; John Pitts AMMVMC board member; Jerry Aspland, AMMVMC Vice President; Bent Christiansen, AMMVMC Treasurer; Wendy Karnes, AMMVMC President; Paul Nielsen, AMMVMC board member; Bob Bugarin, AMMVMC board member.



The Jacob's Ladder bronze statue was cast in 1987.



The AMMV Memorial in San Pedro



AMMV National Office Administrator Lynn Kelly brings a wreath to the Spring Grove Veterans Cemetery in Darien, CT. This is the oldest of only two veteran's cemeteries in CT.

Letters to the EDITOR

The following is a response to the Editor of the American Legion Magazine (November 2020 issue), in which an AL member from South Dakota stated, "The sailors, the seaman, who served on Merchant Marine ships were not Marines, but mariners. They were employees, not warriors. I am surprised the Marine Corps hasn't complained about that gross error of identification..."

*American Legion Magazine
Indianapolis, IN*

Sir: Response to the Letter to the Editor in the American Legion Magazine, Nov. 2020, page 6.

(He) is absolutely right. The members of the Merchant Marine during WWII were not Marines, and I wish a lot more people knew that. It isn't the Merchant Mariners who perpetrate that misnomer. It is the general public that was never taught that there even was a Merchant Marine during WWII.

I did not consciously let it be known that I had been a wartime Merchant Mariner. It wasn't until after 1988, when Title 38 CFR was modified by the PL 95-202 so as to make the Mariners of WWII a VETERAN and therefore of equal standing with all the other military branches, that I became an advocate promoting the recognition of the Merchant Mariners as a branch of the military. At this point the Merchant Mariner became equal to the other 5 branches of the military. We stand proudly amid the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and the Coast Guard.

I excerpt a paragraph from one of my speeches.

"What do we call members of the Merchant Marine? The preferred name is Merchant Mariner or Mariner. Merchant Seaman is fine. Even Seafarer is OK. Never, ever a Marine. "Marine" is, by common acceptance, reserved for a member of the U.S. Marine Corps. The Marines did the fighting, and most often it was we Mariners who took them, en masse to the general staging areas of combat, took them as much fighting material as we could get thru, and then brought them home when their job was done. Fighting always under the same flag with one goal in mind: Let's get this job done."

When the law made the MM veterans, the American Legion opened the organization to the Merchant Mariners of WWII. I hope that (he) noticed the difference between "Merchant Mariner" and "Merchant Marine". Both are correct depending on how they are used. Also note that this law refers only to Merchant Mariners who served, in harm's way during official WWII dates.

William Balabanow,
WWII Veteran – Korea and Vietnam
Lititz, PA

It is my opinion that Mark H. Buzby, Maritime Administrator is the biggest gun to get the American Legion back on track to where they were in 2004, and resolution 172, supporting the Jones Act and everything associated with the Peace and War Merchant Marine and ship building, if only he gets to give his report on same at their next National Convention and hopefully at future ones. In fact, I think it would help if he joined their organization as I believe other high ranking military officers have although I don't know of any. It would help Mark if there are as many WW II MMs members as possible so their National Commanders would have a hard time explaining why they don't join in on the various MM campaigns as they are doing now. The A.L. from what I read in their monthly routinely gives their views on military veterans and Homeland Security matters to the proper Congressional Legislative Committees.

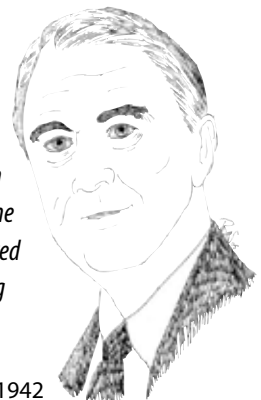
I see no reason why our WW II MM who are physically & mentally able, to join the A.L like I did, especially those who are MALs and have no more Chapter meetings and here is an opportunity to go to an equivalent Post meeting of which there are over 12,000 so there is probably one nearby and rub shoulders with a bunch of other veterans of all the Services. Further once in, they can talk us up and show our magazine to get their Post on our side. Ruth and I looked forward to our monthly with about 30 others, listened to an always invited speaker on community affairs, then discussions on A.L. affairs followed by a free dinner brought in usually by women, occasionally a man. A matter of killing two birds with one stone so to speak.

To join: membership@legion.org – (317) 630 1321 -
Dues \$28 -- 2021

Stanley Blumenthal

The war is now five months old and we have had our answer. Two million men have been called to the colors. In far places and near, our soldiers, our sailors, our air pilots, the beleaguered men of the Merchant Marine, have shown the stuff of heroes. Everything we have asked of them they have delivered. Everything -- and more.

President Roosevelt, May, 1942



TROOPATHON SUPPORTS U.S. TROOPS SERVING OVERSEAS

At the 2019 AMMV National Convention in Tampa, convention attendees and guests aboard the *S/S American Victory* “Salute to Service” cruise were honored to have 3-time Emmy Award winner, NYT Bestselling Author, and Veterans advocate Rita Cosby among the group.

Ms. Cosby presented on her bestselling book “Quiet Hero” on the final day of the convention, then joined us on the *American Victory* event, during which time she spoke to the audience about the heroism of our WWII Merchant Marine Veterans. She is deeply passionate about honoring and giving voice to the U.S. military as her own father was a P.O.W. in a Nazi camp, ultimately saved by American forces.

One of the causes that is dear to Ms. Cosby’s heart is “Troopathon”, a non-profit which collects donations via telethons, using monies to ship packages to U.S. troops serving overseas.

Specifically, Troopathon is an annual care package drive held by Move America Forward (MAF) that culminates in a star-studded television and web broadcast with the goal of sending the largest single shipment of care packages to our troops for the year. While there are

many admirable groups supporting our veterans, Troopathon is one of the few organizations supporting active-duty troops deployed on the front lines of Afghanistan/Iraq, and in harm’s way around the world. It is the only telethon fundraiser to support the troops in the United States.

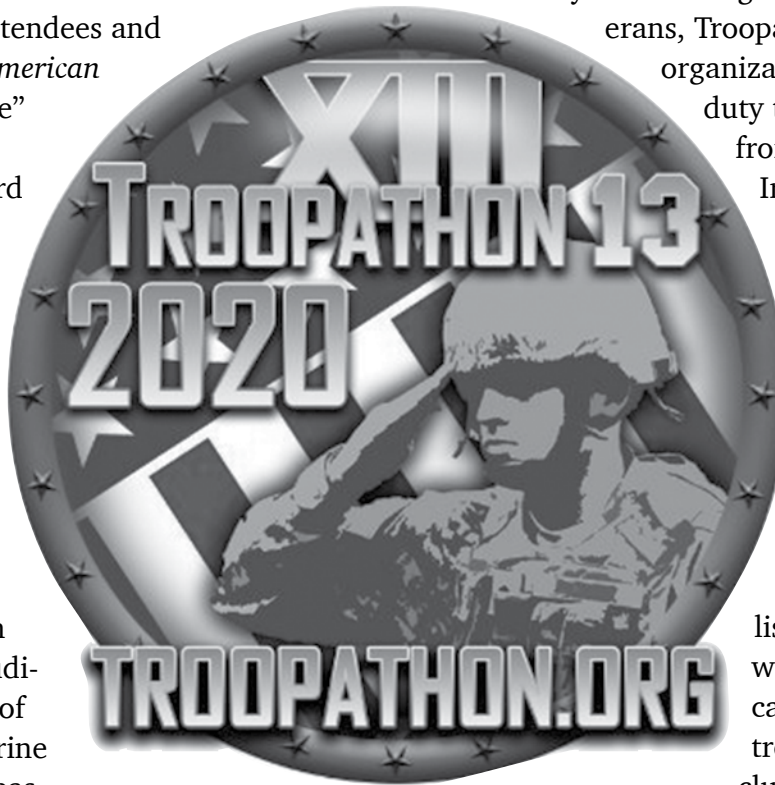
Rita Cosby serves as the Co-Host of Troopathon, along with Troopathon founder Melanie Morgan, a published author/radio host who has spent an entire career advocating for our troops. The telethon includes interviews, and also

features performers such as Lee Greenwood and Tomaczek Bednarek singing patriotic songs.

A recent Troopathon was held on September 11th to commemorate the 19th anniversary of 9/11. This event has thus far raised over a million dollars. Overall, close to eight million dollars have been raised in recent years to support our troops! Folks

can still view the latest Troopathon (Troopathon 13) and donate on the official website: <https://live.troopathon.org>.

Past Troopathon events have included an amazing array of guests from every type of industry. Some of the notable past guests have



included:

Adam Carolla, Buzz Aldrin, Charlie Daniels, Chuck Woolery, Cris Carter, Dennis Miller, Dionne Warwick, Don King, Duane “Dog” Chapman, Evander Holyfield, Fran Drescher, Gavin Degraw, Gene Simmons & Paul Stanley, General David Petraeus, Gerald McRaney, Geraldo Rivera, Hulk Hogan, Irv Locker (D-Day Veteran), J.T. The Brick, Jackie Mason, Jerry Bruckheimer, Jocko Willink (U.S. Navy SEAL), Joe Mantegna, Joe Theismann, John Harbaugh, John Ratzenberger, Jon Voight, Kelsey Grammer, Kevin Farley, Kevin Graves (Gold Star Parent), Mario Lopez, Mike “Coach K” Krzyzewski. Mike Row, Mike Tyson, Montel Williams, Nancy Grace, Orson Bean, Pat Boone, Pat Sajak, Reba McEntire, Rich Little, Robert Davi, Sebastian Bach, Stephen Baldwin, Suze Or-



man, Ted Nugent, Tony Orlando, and Wayne Newton.

AMMV thanks Ms. Cosby for the amazing work she has done, and continues to do, in shining a spotlight on our Veterans of all eras. Bravo to her and the whole Troopathon team!

2020 Admiral of the Ocean Seas (AOTOS) Award

I'm sure everyone can agree that 2020 was not a typical year for anything, and the annual awarding of the Admiral of the Ocean Seas (AOTOS) Award was no exception.

The United Seamen's Center (USS) has, since 1970, annually presented the AOTOS Award. According the USS website, the AOTOS Award is “recognized as the most prestigious award in the maritime industry”. Past recipients include maritime union presidents, pro-maritime congresspersons and senators, shipping company presidents, and even military generals.

The overshadowing of the COVID pandemic led to a virtual event, which was held on December 9th. The recipient of the 2020 AOTOS Award was essentially the U.S. maritime community as a whole, which included all

U.S. Merchant Mariners, U.S.-flagged shipping companies, American longshoremen, and the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD).

On behalf of all of U.S. maritime, the traditional silver statuette of Christopher Columbus, the first AOTOS, was accepted by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao. The award will be permanently on display at MARAD HQ.

The United Seamen's Service is a charitable organization with a worldwide presence. They have been a paid advertiser in the AMMV convention program books for years. We certainly hope that the 2021 AOTOS ceremony will return to a normal setting!

Reported by Capt. Chris Edyvean – AMMV Interim Editor

WWII MM Vet Charles Montanaro to Parachute Jump to Celebrate 100th Birthday!

AMMV President Capt. Dru DiMattia was recently notified by an Honor Flight Director from Nevada that one of our favorite veterans, Charlie Montanaro, has been found physically fit to parachute out of a plane!

Montanaro has been a longstanding active AMMV member, and is often seen wearing his trademark coon-skin hat. The parachute jump is his 100th birthday wish.

The jump is scheduled for 1:00 pm on January 28th

at Skydive Arizona in Eloy, AZ. Please contact Capt. DiMattia if you will be in the area and would like to attend to cheer for Charlie! AMMV advocate Laura Johnson Riddle, who has attended several conventions and Storm the Hill events, has notified AMMV that she and family members will be in attendance.

Happy 100th Birthday, Mr. Montanaro! Thank you for your service, and Heave Ho!

The Mariner and the Monk

(book excerpt)

Author: Phillip Lacovara

The winds were calm before sunrise on December 20 as the *Meredith Victory* neared Hungnam on her return from Pusan. The sea showed a moderate northwesterly swell as she steamed a course just west of north, twenty-three miles off the coast, almost due east of Chuncheon, far enough into the Sea of Japan that the fathometer couldn't find the bottom. The day dawned overcast but with good visibility. At 1000 Chief Mate Savastio inspected the holds and the cargo spaces, which were nearly empty except for three hundred tons of aviation fuel in fifty-two-gallon barrels that had been left by the authorities at Pusan at the bottom of Holds Two and Three. Captain La Rue inspected the officers' quarters at 1130, and afterwards he joined the officers off watch for lunch in the *Meredith Victory's* saloon, the Merchant Marine equivalent of a navy ship's officers' wardroom.

About two hours later, after the ship had passed well offshore Wonsan, Third Mate Alvar Franzon activated the ship's degaussing coils to make her less vulnerable to magnetic-influence mines. At 1528 the bridge sighted the frigate assigned as the Harbor Entrance Control Vessel near Sea Buoy One. Franzon called Captain La Rue to the bridge, and the men navigated the ship to the entrance of the swept channel. Unmentioned in the Deck Log, the ship's radioman was feeling the effects of too much Soju, the potent Korean liquor, in Pusan and had been shackled by his ankles to his bunk as *Meredith Victory* passed Buoy One at 1610.

Junior Third Mate Burley Smith stood on the bridge wing in the freezing breeze and used the Aldis lamp to communicate with the frigate by Morse code. The ship was instructed to take an anchorage, and the ship slowly made her way through the swept channel to Anchorage 46, almost dead in the center of the anchorages in the "Transport Area" south of the entrance to the inner harbor. She walked out her starboard anchor at 1947, and at 1948 the bridge rang the engine room, "All Stop."

With the ship gently swinging at anchor in 50 feet of water, the deck crew began uncovering the hatches. As Smith came on watch at 2000, the deck crew were still uncovering the hatches and with the ship blacked out except for an anchor light, the men worked in almost pitch blackness. Below, the firemen and water-tenders kept steam on the boilers, the engine room ready at any time for the



Waiting at the anchorage in Hungnam for the opportunity to load. Purser Lunney on the left, Captain La Rue on the right.

"Ahead Slow" bell as the *Meredith Victory* would weigh anchor and proceed to the dock. As the off-watch crew tried to sleep, shells flew overhead all night from the ships offshore towards concentrations of Chinese soldiers, ten rounds an hour from the *Massey*, nine from the *St. Paul*. The *Meredith Victory* was ready for Colonel Forney.

But Colonel Forney was not yet ready for the *Meredith Victory*. While the big troop transports *Seminole*, *Noble*, *General Bayfield*, *General Collins*, *General Sultan*, *General Breckinridge*, and *General Freeman* were loading at anchor, most for their second time in the evacuation, the *California*, *Empire Wallace*, *Alamo Victory*, *Exmouth Victory*, *Cornell Victory*, *Helen Lykes*, *Paducah Victory*, and *Kenyon Victory* were at the docks. Five LSTs were beached, loading at one of the Green beaches. X Corps' control system was working as men worked all night to load 3rd Infantry and the Corps' remaining vehicles and stores (so as not to leave anything for the enemy, Colonel Forney even found space on four Liberty Ships to load broken-down vehicles.) In addition to "Anchor bearings checked frequently," *Meredith Victory's* log entries for December 21 include, "at anchor as before awaiting orders" six times. The ship sat for the whole day after hurrying back from Pusan. She had not even been permitted the time to unload all of her cargo in Pusan, but

here she sat. The captain and chief mate performed their inspections. The officers kept their watches. The crew ate their meals.

The next day, December 22, began as before, partly cloudy, cold, and with a gentle northwesterly wind. At 0650, before the sun rose, a boat came alongside with “rations for 1,000 men.” Forty-five minutes later, she was away, and the day went on like the previous, with holds inspected, anchor bearings taken, orders awaited. At 1520 Captain La Rue ordered a lifeboat drill to break the monotony. The abandon-ship signal blared and the men mustered at their stations and climbed into their boats. The boats were lowered into the water and the motors run and tested for five minutes before they were raised again.

As the lifeboats returned to their davits, another boat was approaching, but this time it was carrying the harbor pilot, Captain Dawson, with orders for the *Meredith Victory*: she was to weigh anchor and tie up outboard the SS *Norcuba* on Dock One. Captain Dawson was aboard and in the bridge by 1530 and three minutes later on a slow bell, the ship was slowly walking up her anchor rode, the windlass on deck drawing the chain up the hawsepipe until the anchor was weighed at 1553.

With Captain Dawson on the bridge, *Meredith Victory* slowly picked her way through the anchored ships. The outer harbor was thick with ships at anchor, thirty of the eighty available anchor locations occupied by ships being loaded from lighters or awaiting loading there or at a dock. By half past the hour, Dawson had her inside the inner harbor, and less than fifteen minutes later she was in position to moor alongside *Norcuba*. Stevedores were loading that ship from the pier with more than twelve thousand barrels of fuel and lubricating oil.

With only one of the YTBs available, the wind was pushing *Meredith Victory* towards the dock and the ship that was already there, so *Meredith Victory* let go her starboard anchor to control her bow, while the tug took her stern. Berthing mer-

chant ships alongside each other was a somewhat hazardous proposition, since, unlike warships, they did not carry fenders. The port director provided floating wooden “camels” to hold the ships off from the dock or each other, but in this case, whatever was between the ships was not quite adequate, and the *Meredith Victory* made contact astern with the *Norcuba*. Second Mate Albert Golembeski’s log entry says, “No apparent damage to either ship,” but later that day *Norcuba*’s master sent Captain La Rue a “Letter of Damage.” In any event, at 1713 she was moored fast, boilers steaming and engine slowly turning so she would be ready to loose her hawsers and make for sea as soon as ordered.

But what cargo was *Meredith Victory* going to add to the three hundred tons she was already carrying? At 1730 the Deck Log only notes, “Army officers aboard with orders to load.” In later retellings, they were described as “several Army colonels,” with only one identified: Colonel John H. Chiles, who was the X Corps G-3 (operations officer). The others were likely Lieutenant Colonel Mizell, head of the control group’s movement section, either Colonel Gustave W. Oberlin, the X Corps civil affairs officer or his

deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Leon W. Korschgen, and a representative or two of the 2nd Engineer Special Brigade, which was responsible for supporting the actual loading. Once settled in the saloon, the colonels told Captain La Rue and his officers that the cargo was not to be soldiers or trucks or ammunition or C-rations or any of the other thousands of items X Corps had already crammed into 135 shiploads by the time *Meredith Victory* tied up alongside *Norcuba*. Instead, her cargo would be civilian refugees.



Burleigh Smith signals the Harbor Entrance Control Vessel at the entrance to the swept channel by sending Morse code using an Aldis light. Fresh out of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Smith earned the frigid duty because he remembered his Morse and was the junior-most deck officer.

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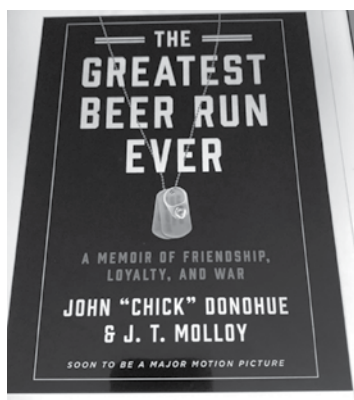


BOOK REVIEWS

Reviews by Capt. Chris Edyvean, Past AMMV National President

The Greatest Beer Run Ever: A Memoir of Friendship, Loyalty, and War

John Donohue and J.T. Molloy



Without the fore-knowledge of knowing this is actually a true story, one might mistake this as a work of historical fiction. The setting is Vietnam, early 1968.

The story opens with John “Chick” Donohue, an ex-Marine, pledging to a group of NY neighborhood friends and family to travel to Vietnam with the

purpose of finding local boys serving in the conflict, and to bring them a beer and offer the support and thankfulness of their community.

How could a civilian travel to Vietnam during the height of the war? Well, turns out Chick is a U.S. Merchant Mariner with an Oiler’s ticket. Chick goes to the NMU hall and successfully secures a job on the *Drake Victory* (a WWII vessel resurrected from the mothball fleet to serve in Vietnam). He stops and loads up on quality American beer prior to departure for sea.

Once in Vietnam, Chick convinces the ship’s Captain to allow him to go ashore, and that’s where the story really begins. This book is a true “page-turner”, and is not easy to put down once you embark on this daring adventure with Chick. Although the Merchant Marine is not the main focus, the larger story of true American patriotism is both heartwarming and refreshing.

The Greatest Beer Run Ever is available at Amazon and other major booksellers.

With Love and Affection, Your Sailor, Ben: WWII Letters of B.H. Mauer

Compiled by Carol Butler

The memoirs of WWII sailor Bernard Henry Mauer are captured in *With Love and Affection, Your Sailor, Ben*. This book is compiled in unique fashion, being a collection of letters mailed home from Bernard (aka Ben).

The book opens to find a young Ben signing up with the U.S. Maritime Service at Hoffman Island, NY in 1941. He is quickly transferred to St. Petersburg, FL where he trains until March ’42, receiving his original seaman’s papers. In April, he reports to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point under an accelerated officers’ program, and in September 1943 he is appointed as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy. From there, Ben goes to sea.

With Love and Affection captures the innocence of a youthful generation tossed into war. Thousands of young men left their homes to sign up for the Maritime Service and the Navy; this book truly reflects the coming of age of the Greatest Generation. This impressive collection of letters, assembled by Mauer’s daughter, Carol Butler, includes many intriguing photos, images, and documents.

Prices (including shipping via USPS) are \$20 for soft cover, or \$30 for hard cover.

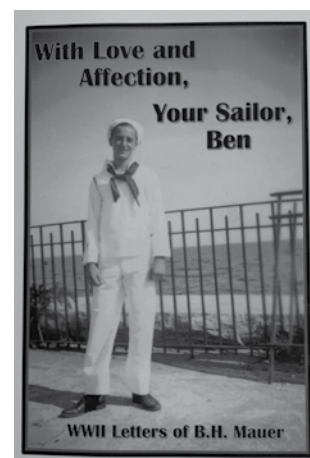
To order, please mail check or money order to:

Carol Butler

7167 Cobbledale Ave., NW

North Canton, OH 44720

(Or, for more information or payment options, please email Ms. Butler at butler.carol@att.net)

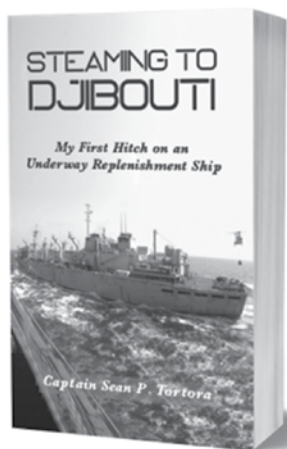


Steaming to Djibouti: My First Hitch on an Underway Replenishment Ship

Capt. Sean Tortora

AMMV member Captain Sean Tortora recalls his early experiences with the MSC (Military Sealift Command) in *Steaming to Djibouti*.

I knew this would be a good read when finding the lyrics to “Heave Ho, My Lads!” on the first page! Tortora begins by telling of his father’s real-life stories in the WWII Merchant Marine, most notably having his ship sunk by a Japanese U-Boat, in which the surviving crew members were round up and interrogated.



The bulk of *Steaming to Djibouti* is the story of Tortora and his first deployment with MSC. With the ink still wet on his U.S. Merchant Marine officer's license, Tortora tells the story of a young man setting foot into the alternate reality of life aboard ship. Lessons are learned and experience is gained as Tortora finds his place as a deck officer.

The epilogue fast-forwards to a seasoned Captain Tortora, in firm command of his own ship, with decades of experience behind him.

The author wisely changed the names (including his own name) of the characters in his adventures. The book is "landlubber friendly" in that time is taken to explain shipboard terminology, acronyms, and procedures. Please see the excerpt from *Steaming to Djibouti* located elsewhere in this issue.

Steaming to Djibouti is available at Amazon or at: <https://steamingtodjibouti.com>

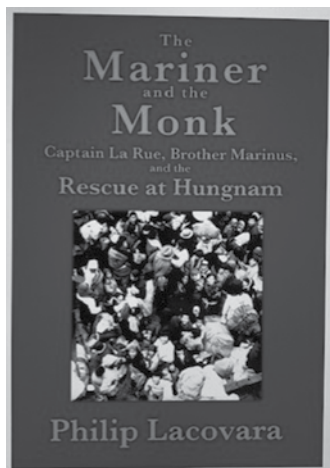
The Mariner and the Monk: Capt. LaRue, Brother Marinus, and the Rescue at Hungnam

Philip Lacovara

While much has been written about the Hungnam evacuation of December 1950, with the highlighted role of the S/S *Meredith Victory*, this book focuses on the life of *Victory* Captain Leonard P. LaRue. Author Phillip Lacovara has extensively researched the life and career of Captain LaRue, beginning with his training at the Pennsylvania State Nautical School, and including a meticulous record of his entire seagoing career.

The epic humanitarian feat accomplished at Hungnam by Capt. LaRue and his *Meredith Victory* shipmates has often been considered a miracle; however, LaRue's WWII Merchant Marine service, including surviving the Murmansk Run, is another phenomenal story in itself. Another bonus to this book is Lacovara's detailed history of the origins and the early months of the Korean Conflict.

LaRue's strong Catholic faith is palpable throughout the book, and upon retirement from sea, he begins steps to



join the Order of Saint Benedict. LaRue becomes Brother Marinus and lives out the remaining decades of his life at the St. Paul's Abby in New Jersey. The book fittingly ends with a prayer by Father Sinclair Oubre of the Apostleship of the Sea USA, who has spearheaded initial efforts to see Brother Marinus canonized.

Please see the excerpt from *The Mariner and the Monk* located elsewhere in this issue. This fine book can be found at Amazon.

More on Capt. LaRue/Brother Marinus: AMMV has in place an active organizational resolution, passed at the 2017 National Convention in Reno, to support efforts to see Brother Marinus canonized.

The Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America, a private association of the Christian faithful, is the petitioner for the cause of Servant of God Brother Marinus, O.S.B. For more information, to join the guild, to ask for prayers, or to financially support the cause, you may go to:

Web: <https://aosusa.amercommerce.com/store/pg/51-Cause-for-Brother-Marinus/Capt-LaRue-clone1.aspx>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BrotherMarinus>

Email: brothermarinuscause@gmail.org

Phone: 409-985-4545

Mailing Address: Cause of Servant of God Brother Marinus, 1500 Jefferson Drive, Port Arthur, Texas 77642

Prayer for the cause of Capt. LaRue/Brother Marinus

God, our Father, Creator of the seas, Protector of refugees, and all those in need,

You called Captain Leonard P. LaRue to recognize Your Son Jesus Christ in the faces of the Korean refugees, and led him as Brother Marinus to a life of prayer and service in the tradition of St. Benedict.

May his life be an inspiration to us, and lead us to greater confidence in Your love so that we may continue his work of caring for the people of the sea, welcoming those who are refugees from war, and deepening all the faithful in their prayer and work of service.

We humbly ask that You glorify Your servant Captain Leonard LaRue/Brother Marinus on earth according to the design of Your holy will, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord.

AMEN

Reading Up on the Merchant Marine While at Home

Salvatore R. Mercogliano, Ph.D.

The pandemic has left many of us cooped up in our homes and thankful for online shopping to alleviate some of the boredom. I was recently asked by the friends of my university library to give a talk on my field of research and I decided to discuss the role of the American merchant marine. Instead of giving them a perfunctory overview of the 245-year history of the industry, I decided to provide a historiographic discussion on some of the best books – currently available for purchase – on the history of the merchant marine. With the beginning of 2021 looking like we may still be trapped inside, I thought I would share this list.

It is hard to start any discussion on the subject without providing an overall history of the role of shipping and the maritime industry in American history. The best single source that details this is Alex Roland, W. Jeffrey Bolster, and Alexander Keyssar's *The Way of the Ship: America's Maritime History Reenvisioned, 1600-2000* (2008). This work was part of the American Maritime History Project, funded by Eliot Lumbard. The book uses five analytical threads to address the subject: economics, policy, labor, military, and technology. Organized into five chronological periods, with thematic chapters, it is a great book to read from cover to cover, or to delve into a single chapter on a particular subject, such as one on Henry Shreve and his work on bringing steam power to the Mississippi River. If you are more interested in specific times and areas of American maritime history, then there is a broad spectrum of books that may 'float your boat.'

A lot has been made recently about George Washington and his use of spies and espionage during the American Revolution. There has also been a renewal of interest in the fledgling Continental Navy and its rather lackluster performance during the conflict. But one of the areas that does not receive the attention it deserves are the American merchantmen that were outfitted and used as private men-of-war, specifically privateers. In James L. Nelson's *George Washington's Secret Navy: How the American Revolution Went to Sea* (2008), we set sail from New England as the British Army is surrounded in Boston but supplied by Royal Navy supply ships from their base in Halifax. Washington, without directing Congress, outfitted a fleet of schooners and set them upon the British vessels.

If privateers and Age of Sail action is not your forte, then how about some politics, commerce, and technology during the period to propel the United States into a continental and world power. While we are enamored by large

sailing and steaming ships, it was barges – hauled by a mule, unfortunately named Sal in an infamous song – that changed the nation in a profound way. Peter L. Bernstein's *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* elevates people like De Witt Clinton and Gouverneur Morris into the pantheon of great American maritime heroes with their effort to connect the inland waters of the US with the Atlantic Ocean. Stymied by opposition from the federal government, the state of New York undertook the effort and profited immensely from the endeavor.

While the Erie Canal represented the inland waters of early America, Stephen Ujifusa – following up after his tremendous work on William Gibbs and SS *United States*, *A Man and His Ship* (2012) – addressed the demand for goods from halfway around the world in China that led to an epoch equivalent to the Space Race of the 1960s. In this case, it was the Tea Race and the construction of vessels of such size and speed that they can race from the East Coast of the United States to China and back in record setting voyages that propelled their ships and captains into the headlines. *Barons of the Sea: And Their Race to Build the World's Fastest Clipper Ship* (2018) is American maritime industry at its finest. Using new technologies such as weather and wind prediction and building larger and faster vessels, provided the United States with a competitive edge to rival the great maritime power of its day, Great Britain.

If tragedy and disaster, along with heroic tales of courage on the high seas are of interest to you, then two works from this period come to mind. In David W. Shaw's *The Sea Shall Embrace Them: The Tragic Story of the Steamship Arctic* (2002), we learn of the race between Edward Collins of the United States and Samuel Cunard of Canada to dominate the trans-Atlantic passenger trade routes in the middle of the nineteenth century. The story is told through the voyage of one of the super-liners built by Collins and the tragic story of what befalls the ship and its captain, James C. Luce. If you thought *Titanic* was harrowing, then hang on for this one.

Chester G. Hearn tackles the issue of the American Civil War, which witnessed the decline of the American merchant marine and it enters the doldrums. His *Gray Raiders of the Sea: How Eight Confederate Warships Destroyed the Union's High Seas Commerce* (1996) highlight the danger and precarious nature of the nation's maritime dependence on the sea. While the eight Confederate

raiders featured in the book – ships such as *Alabama*, *Florida*, and *Shenandoah* – destroy numerous vessels, the lack of Union defense and the security provided by flying the British flag led to the near destruction of the nation's deep-water merchant marine.

In the early twentieth century, two world wars dominated the rise, decline, rise, and decline again of the American merchant marine. While many people think it was the Zimmerman Telegram – the German foreign minister cable to Mexico – that led to the United States declaring war against Imperial Germany in 1917, it was their implementation of unrestricted submarine warfare that President Woodrow Wilson focused on in his war speech to Congress. Rodney Carlisle's *Sovereignty at Sea: U.S. Merchant Ships and American Entry into World War I* (2018) sets the record straight and highlights the attack and loss of ten U.S. ships and the death of 64 mariners that were the root cause for Wilson's request for war, more so than Germany's attempt to incite Mexico.

One of the criminally underwritten areas of American merchant marine history is that of the Second World War. Authors, such as William Geroux, with his books *The Mathews Men: Seven Brothers and the War Against Hitler's U-Boats* (2016) and *The Ghost Ships of Archangel: The Arctic Voyage that Defied the Nazis* (2019), fill a critical void. Other authors, such as Sam Moses, Michael Gillen, Gerald

Reminick, Michael Gannon, and John Bunker all provide solid contributions but what is seriously lacking is a single authoritative and comprehensive volume on the role of the American merchant marine in the Second World War.

Finally, in the post-World War Two era, two books provide a good overview on the current state of the maritime industry. Marc Levinson's *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (2006) discusses the invention of American truck driver Malcolm McLean and the impact it had on trade. Unfortunately, the tale is not a good one for the U.S. shipping firms as multi-national corporations and ships flying flags of convenience became the standard. The last is an outsider's look at world shipping today. Rose George embarked on one of these foreign container ships to see firsthand how commerce is handled in her 2013 book, *Ninety Percent of Everything: Inside Shipping, the Invisible Industry That Puts Clothes on Your Back, Gas in Your Car, and Food on Your Plate*.

As we wait for this pandemic to pass, and a return to a 'normal' life, perhaps you will find a book on my list that will interest you. One of the most important things that we can do is to not only educate ourselves about the American maritime industry but be educators to those who do not know about this vital industry, its past, present, and future. Stay Safe!



Richard Burbine, AMMV Member-at-Large

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Email: leidingedge@dejazzd.com

Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery



JUST RECOGNITION

Congressional Gold Medal Update

The AMMV proactively established a “member” based internal Congressional Gold Medal Design Committee in May of last year. This team consists of:

Dave Yoho	WWII Merchant Mariner
Capt. Hugh Stevens	WWII Merchant Mariner (Murmansk Run participant)
Dennis Kelly	Vietnam Merchant Mariner & AMMV National Treasurer
Capt. Scott Nowak	Operation Desert Storm & Operation Iraqi Freedom Merchant Mariner & Three Rivers Chapter Treasurer
Sheila Sova	AMMV Vice-President Elect & Proud Daughter of a Congressional Gold Medal recipient
Capt. Dru DiMattia	Committee Chairman, O.I.F./O.E.F. & AMMV National President

Meetings were conducted virtually enabling us to gain a consensus of slogans, quotes, theaters of operations, vessel types, uniforms, diversity, and integration of the Merchant Marine. These meetings were conducted from late spring into the winter season of 2020. Many discussions have been hammered-out touching upon concepts, and reviewing the wonderful memorials that many of our AMMV Chapters built from coast to coast! From the onset of these meetings, we were given the U.S. Mint Medal Design Development Process and estimated timeline. From the start, the U.S. Mint’s timeline for estimated time to completion has been June 2021.

Please review the flow process and progression included in this section.

We will be conducting “Round Two” of the Stakeholder Review Revisions of the Design Development Process later this month (January 2021).

Then it’s on to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee (CCAC).

A correction to the fall issue of our Magazine regarding the Congressional Gold Medal Design Committee; I understated the AMMV members on the team; not three, but four. AMMV secured four seats on the “official” Internal Design Brief Team hosted by MARAD. This Team consisted of AMMV members Sheila Sova, Capt. Hugh Stephens, Capt. Dru DiMattia, and Ian Watts, who is highly regarded in the historic knowledge of Merchant Marine uniforms, pins, ribbons, and medals; www.ianwatts.org.

The MARAD Congressional Gold Medal Design Team consists of:

William McDonald	Director, Office of Sealift Support - Committee Chair
Deveda Midgett	Vessel Transfer Officer Maritime Awards Officer
Barbara Vouglaris	Program Historian
Katrina McRae	Vessel Transfer Specialist
Perquita Scott	Public Affairs Specialist
Supriti Ghosh	Infrastructure Specialist
Cameron Humphrey	Governmental Affairs Officer
Kristen Amarosa	Supervisory Legislative Affairs
Joshua Smith	Director of the American Merchant Marine Museum, Kings Point, where the Congressional Gold Medal will be permanently displayed.

In addition, we had the honor of having Captain Brian Hope, artist and former Maryland Bay Pilot, offer his renderings of Liberty Ship paintings. The collaboration of the Internal Design Committee kicked off in early May 2020.



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The Congressional Gold Medal Design Committee, chaired by William McDonald, to date has hosted over eight meetings from spring through this winter.

Following the Design Process and guidelines, we have been able to submit to the U.S. Mint a Design Brief that spanned from the beginning of the U.S. Merchant Marine which coincides with the founding of our Republic.

Below are links to MARAD's historical documents page and a direct link to the report, *The U.S. Merchant Marine at War*, covering the operations of the War Shipping Administration from 1942 to 1945.

Maritime Administration Historical Documents Page:

<https://www.maritime.dot.gov/history/historical-documents-and-resources/historical-documents-and-resources>

The U.S. Merchant Marine at War:

<https://www.maritime.dot.gov/sites/marad.dot.gov/files/docs/outreach/history/vessels-maritime-administration/9761/theunitedstatesmerchantmarineatwar.pdf>

Here's a worthy quote from the booklet; *U.S. Merchant Marine at War*; Report of the War Shipping Administrator; E.S. Land, to the President, 15 January 1946. From Chapter One, *The Winning Combination*:

"The United States was a member of a fighting team of the United Nations that won the greatest war in history. There were three major players who represented the United States on that team: Our fighting forces overseas, the production army here at home, and the link between them - The United States Merchant Marine."

We discussed so many other quotes by historical figures such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt – *"It seems to me particularly appropriate that Victory Fleet Day this year should honor the men and management of the American Merchant Marine. The operators in this war have written one of the most brilliant chapters. They have delivered the goods when and where needed in every theater of operations and across every ocean in the biggest, most difficult and dangerous transportation job ever undertaken. As time goes on, there will be a greater public understanding of our merchant fleet's record during this war."* Source: www.usmm.org

We shared with the Mint, the Maritime Day 2020 Presidential Proclamation and one by the Florida Governor, which was posted on the Florida Maritime Partnership website:

<https://floridamaritimepartnership.com/gov-ron-desantis-proclaims-maritime-day-in-florida/>

The committee reviewed the following inscriptions and slogans:

Potential Inscriptions

- "MERCHANT MARINERS OF WORLD WAR II"
- "ACT OF CONGRESS 2020"
- "DEEDS NOT WORDS"
- "FULL AHEAD TO VICTORY"
- "FOURTH ARM OF DEFENSE"
- "COURAGE EDURANCE, HONOR, DEDICATION"



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Some slogans suggested

- “We Deliver”
- “In Peace and War”
- “Keep ‘em Sailing”
- “Let’s Finish the Job”
- “You Bet I’m Going Back to Sea”
- “You Deliver the Ships – We’ll Deliver the Goods”
- “You Build ‘em, We’ll Sail ‘em”
- “The Life-line is Firm”

From the commencement of these meetings, MARAD sought input from the multi-faceted team which included WWII Merchant Mariner, Captain Hugh Stephens, who didn’t hesitate describing the conditions at sea! We have been extremely fortunate to have the collaboration of this entire team reviewing the extensive memorials spanning the country, which have direct links to our AMMV family and sacrifices.

Our research included uniforms, covers, jackets, training facilities, shipyards, theaters of operations, war materiel, convoys, crewing, and of course the nature of the formidable ocean! One of the favorite design concepts introduced has been the Liberty Class of vessels; the workhorse of WWII sealift! Understanding that many other types of vessels were utilized and served upon in all theaters, the Liberty Ship remains iconic to the WWII era.

Our good friend, AMMV member and historian Ian Watts, offered the committee in-depth guidance on the breakdown of shipboard departmental dress, medals awarded, and distinction of war time slogans. Ian was able to illustrate typical dress worn by Stewards, Bakers, Cooks, and Deck & Engine Department personnel. We certainly didn’t want to leave out anyone, including (Radio Officer) Sparky! Conveying crew on the medal was concerning as we did not want to exclude any shipboard departments. We discussed the use of the Liberty Ship profile working its booms and cargo alongside. Attempting to illustrate an underway convoy was highlighted but proved to be difficult translating such details to a medal. (There’s a limitation on what can be imprinted on a 3” diameter medal without it looking too busy!)

To summarize, everyone on the design committee has been fabulous, offering up great ideas and reviewing WWII MM history.

Committee Chair Bill McDonald utilized the entire team to submit input of the vast array of WWII Maritime History! Sheila Sovia was firing on all cylinders, calling attention to Congressional Gold Medal designs from graphic artist Thomas G. Hill, USMC (ret) who had some good artwork. The Mint explained that they feel compelled to render original designs for the process. Sheila cited the likes of Mrs. Clara Gordon Main, a female mariner taken prisoner the same day as the Pearl Harbor attack.

Our committee was notified from the onset, not to share our reports and or U.S. Mint designs beyond our team, as this process is ongoing. To the best my knowledge we have obliged with this requirement.

Progress continues as the Design Committee recently met on December 16th, along with the U.S. Mint reviewing the reverse sides of the candidate medals. Areas of discussion included technical and historical correctness along with appropriateness. Although the AMMV has influence on this committee, sharing a wealth of WWII Merchant Mariner input, we do not have a final say as to what design will be chosen for the Congressional Gold Medal. As you may know, this lies with the Secretary of the Treasury.



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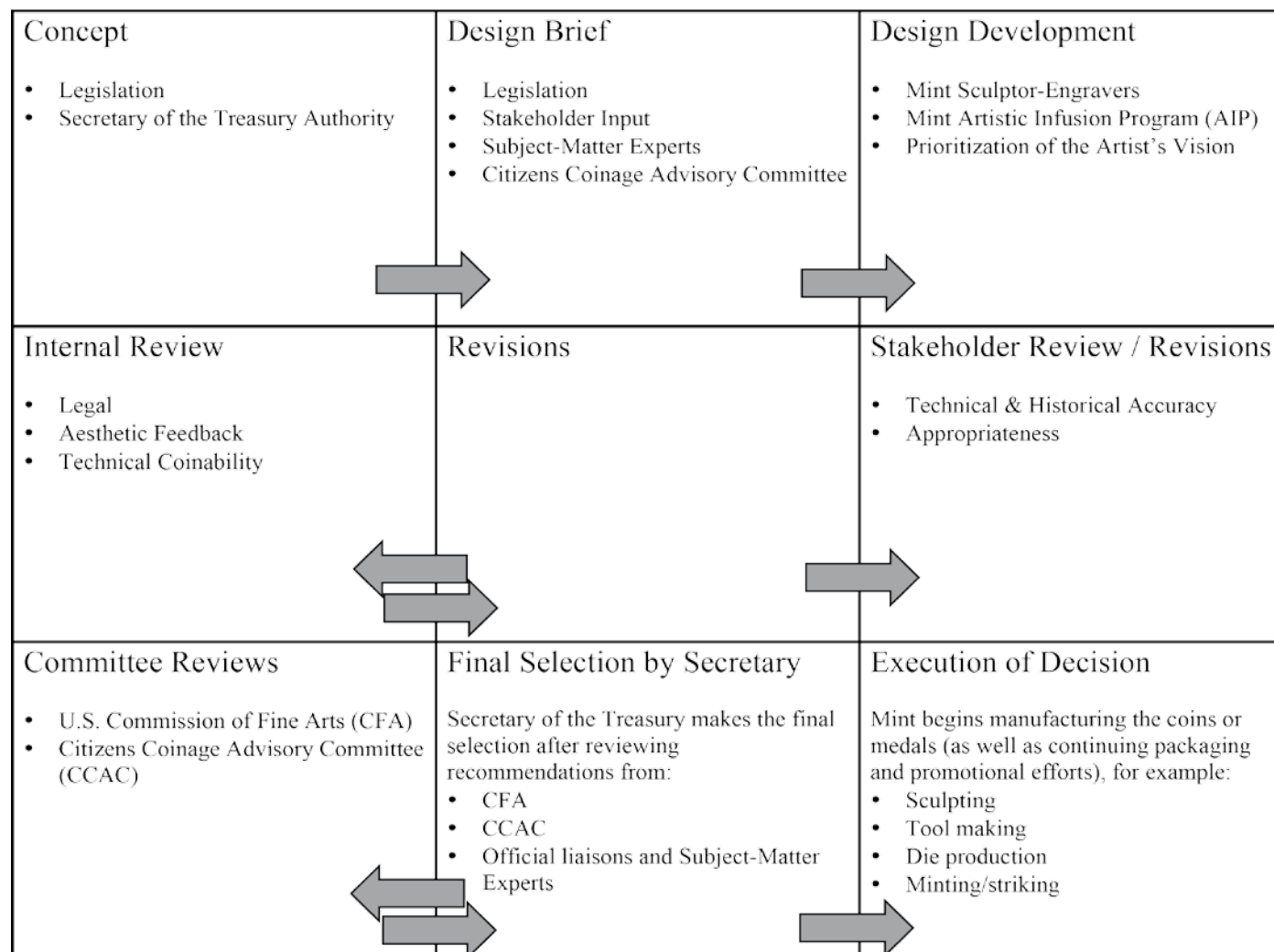
Everyone on the committee shared the same sentiments of how humbling this task has been and remains aware of how significant the Merchant Marine legacy must be illustrated on the Medal! To say the least, we hope that whatever design is chosen by the Secretary of the Treasury, that the history and message conveys the true grit of our WWII Merchant Mariners which made victory possible!

The AMMV Congressional Gold Medal Committee wishes to thank all who have continued to volunteer their thoughts and passion at this stage of the process. We wish to thank MARAD for their ongoing great hand in this project and of course the U.S. Mint! We must thank the entire maritime community which has pulled together multiple times gaining the necessary support to see this bill signed into law!

Let's Finish the Job!
HEAVE HO!

Capt. Dru DiMattia
 AMMV National President

United States Coin and Medal Design Development Process





JUST RECOGNITION

NEW WWII Merchant Mariner Legislation Introduced

Legislation introduced that would allow MARAD to purchase duplicate medals

Regarding the Merchant Mariners of WWII Congressional Gold Medal, a bill was introduced by Rep. John Garamendi (California) and Rep. Dan Young (Alaska) which if enacted, would authorize MARAD to use appropriated funds to purchase duplicate medals for eligible recipients. This new piece of legislation was introduced on January 4th and is numbered **H.R. 104**. (Rep. Garamendi actually introduced a nearly identical piece of legislation, H.R. 8825, on November 30th. However, that version died quickly at the close of the 116th Congress.)

Following is the text of H.R. 104:

117th Congress — 1st Session

H.R. 104

Sponsors: Rep. John Garamendi (California); Rep. Dan Young (Alaska)

A BILL To authorize the Maritime Administrator to use certain appropriated funds to purchase duplicate medals authorized under Merchant Mariners of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2020, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION TO PURCHASE DUPLICATE MEDALS.

- (a) **IN GENERAL** — The Secretary of Transportation, acting through the Administrator, may use funds appropriated for the fiscal year in which the date of the enactment of this Act occurs, or funds appropriated for any prior fiscal year, for the Maritime Administration to purchase duplicate medals authorized under the Merchant Mariners of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2020 (Public Law 116–125) and provide such medals to eligible individuals who engaged in qualified service who submit an application under subsection (b) and were United States merchant mariners of World War II.
- (b) **APPLICATION** — To be eligible to receive a medal described in subsection (a), an eligible individual who engaged in qualified service shall submit to the Administrator an application containing such information and assurances as the Administrator may require.
- (c) **DEFINITIONS** — In this Act:
 - (1) **ADMINISTRATOR** — The term “Administrator” means the Maritime Administrator.
 - (2) **ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL WHO ENGAGED IN QUALIFIED SERVICE** — The term “eligible individual who engaged in qualified service” means an individual who, between December 7, 1941, and December 31, 1946—
 - (A) was a member of the United States merchant marine, including the Army Transport Service and the Navy Transport Service, serving as a crewmember of a vessel that was—
 - (i) operated by the War Shipping Administration, the Office of Defense Transportation, or an agent of such departments;
 - (ii) operated in waters other than inland waters, the Great Lakes, and other lakes, bays, or harbors of the United States;
 - (iii) under contract or charter to, or property of, the Government of the United States;



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(iv) serving in the Armed Forces; and

(B) while so serving, was licensed or otherwise documented for service as a crewmember of such a vessel by an officer or employee of the United States authorized to license or document the person for such service.

"Compensation bill" reintroduced

Rep. Al Green (Texas) has once again introduced legislation that, if enacted, would give eligible WWII Merchant Mariners a one-time sum of \$25,000.

The bill title states, "**H.R. 39** - To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish the Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund to provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States merchant marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II." Introduced on January 4th, **H.R. 39** was immediately assigned to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The previous version of this bill, H.R. 114, died in the 116th Congress with only 31 cosponsors and no companion bill in the Senate. Rep. Green had also sponsored the identical H.R. 154 in the 115th Congress. Prior to Rep. Green's support of this cause, former California Congresswoman Janice Hahn had championed this general piece of legislation for two sessions of Congress. Preceding Hahn was Rep. Bob Filner of California, who had a very different version of the bill. Here is a recap of the past 16 years of "compensation" legislation:

<u>Congress</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Bill</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	
116 th	2019-20	H.R. 114	Rep. Al Green	
115 th	2017-18	H.R. 154	Rep. Al Green	
114 th	2015-16	H.R. 563	Rep. Janice Hahn	
113 th	2013-14	H.R. 1936	Rep. Janice Hahn	
112 th	2011-12	H.R. 23	Rep. Bob Filner	
111 th	2009-10	H.R. 23	Rep. Bob Filner	*passed House*
110 th	2007-08	H.R. 23	Rep. Bob Filner	*passed House*
109 th	2005-06	H.R. 23	Rep. Bob Filner	



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AMMV Membership Dues were due July 1, 2020

Members-at-Large: Mail your check for \$32 to National Office Administrator Lynn Kelly

American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV)

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Chapter Members, pay your dues to your CEO or Treasurer



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UPDATE: Russian Recognition of the Arctic Runs in WWII (Ushakov Medal)

Late in 2019, our National Office Administrator, Lynn Kelly, forwarded a communication regarding a Joint Commission between the Europe Mediterranean Directorate, POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA); Senior Enlisted Advisor Brent Ryder. He was seeking our assistance of conveying data to the Russian Embassy researching our living participants of the Arctic Runs to Russia. The Russian Embassy and AMMV have been working to provide the Joint Commission with contact information for living participants of the Arctic Runs. The Embassy wished to recognize this group with the USHAKOV Medal. This medal was created in 1944 and is awarded to veterans “for personal courage and valor shown during World War II while participating in the Arctic Convoys”.

The effort coincides with the ongoing work from the St Petersburg Russia Museum campaign. As you might know, several ceremonies over the years have recognized this unique group of WWII Veterans. This dates back to the 40th Anniversary of the end of WWII. Several of our Merchant Mariners were presented these medals in The White House. The Russian Embassy was utmost sincere with every inquiry enabling me and our honorees with the time to process their requirements leading to a Presidential Decree from the Federation.

In total, there have been 17 medals awarded in the United States. The AMMV was successful in locating 10 participants.

On November 10th, the Russian Embassy, via Fedex, delivered 15 packages containing the Ushakov Medals. The Embassy held back two medals hoping to attend a ceremony hosted by the AMMV Three Rivers Chapter, honoring WWII Merchant Mariners Howard Pfeifer and Mike Kemple. Capt Scott Nowak (chapter representative) had to cancel the December event due to the pandemic; however, the Embassy arranged to ship the medals to Scott, who safely delivered them in person.

Eight AMMV members were located who participated in the Arctic runs:

- Issie Deitsch - Los Angeles, CA
- David Eugene Baker - Norman, OK
- Michael Kemple - Elizabeth, PA
- Howard William Pfeifer - Wexford, Pennsylvania
- Capt Hugh Stephens - Franklin Square, NY
- George Henry Koch, Jr. - Rotonda West, FL
- Richard Burbine - Bridgeport, CA
- Spud Campbell - Cullman, AK (crossed the bar in June)

Also receiving the Ushakov medal were:

- U.S. Navy Armed Guard William Burton, Sr. - Lawrenceville, GA (crossed the bar in December)
- U.S. Navy Armed Guard Richard Landolfi - Palm Bay, FL (crossed the bar in November)



David Eugene Baker

The AMMV's Southwest Florida interest along with the Navy League's Suncoast Council are planning a ceremony for 6th February, 2021 to be hosted at the Heritage Museum in Punta Gorda, FL for our local WWII Merchant Mariner George Koch. <https://freedomisntfree.org/upcoming-events/>

Since the issuance of the Medal of Ushakov, Russian news media has interviewed several interests of the Arctic runs, including our friend and author, William Geroux. Interviews continue into the new year. In addition, please see the request from The Northern Convoys International Centre Foundation message below. They continue to seek names of participants who may have crossed the Final Bar to ensure they are honored.

“The Northern Convoys International Centre” Foundation was established in St. Petersburg, Russia, in December 2018. We invite you to cooperate on the subject of the Northern (Arctic) convoys of 1941-1945.



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The activity of International Centre is devoted to immortalizing the feat of people from different countries who served in Arctic convoys. From the moment of its establishment our Centre has been working on implementing unique project "Memorial Complex "Northern Convoys" including Memorial Museum of the Northern convoys History. Special emphasis in compiling the Museum's exposition will be made on the lives of the Convoys' participants from different countries. The Museum's exposition will include stands dedicated to each country that took part in the convoys.

We would therefore greatly appreciate your advice on the way a stand dedicated to the USA may look like and what kinds of artifacts, photos and information could be placed on it.

We would also be delighted if you could share with us biographical information, memories and photographs of those Americans who took part in the Arctic convoys or may be some more detailed information on the USA, its government and ordinary Americans in planning and organizing supplies to the USSR.

It would be great if you could assist us in finding and establishing contacts with public and veteran organizations, museums and non-indifferent people of the USA engaged in immortalizing the feat of veterans of WWII.

On August 31, 2021 the International Centre together with State Maritime University in St. Petersburg plans to hold the International conference dedicated to the 80th anniversary of «Dervish» operation. We shall be delighted to see you and members of the AMMV team among the conference participants!

If you have any questions or should need any additional information, please contact us!

north.convoys.centre@mail.ru

+7 (921) 952 0 777

"The Northern Convoys International Centre" Foundation ("NCIC" Foundation)

About the Medal of Ushakov

The Medal of Ushakov (Russian: Медаль Ушакова) is a state decoration of the Russian Federation that was retained from the awards system of the USSR post 1991.



Dale Strausser

The Medal of Ushakov was created on March 3, 1944 by decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. It was named in honor of Russian admiral Fyodor Ushakov who never lost a battle and was proclaimed patron saint of the Russian Navy.

The Medal of Ushakov is awarded to soldiers and sailors of the Navy and of the Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation for bravery and courage displayed while defending the Motherland and the public interests of the Russian Federation in naval theatres of military operations, while protecting the state borders of the Russian Federation, in carrying out naval combat missions with vessels of the Navy and/or Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, during exercises and maneuvers in the performance of military duties under conditions involving a risk to life, as well as for excellent performance in naval combat training.

Among the foreign recipients of the Medal of Ushakov are US Navy and Royal Navy personnel and merchant mariners who participated in Arctic Convoys in WWII.

The Russian Federation Order of Precedence dictates the Medal of Ushakov is to be worn on the left breast with other medals immediately after the Medal of Zhukov.



JUST RECOGNITION

NOAA Continues to Recognize WWII Merchant Mariners

David Alberg, former Sanctuary Superintendent with the National Oceans & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), had a big surprise in store for our WWII Veterans who would have been in attendance at the (postponed) 2020 National Convention. Special NOAA “challenge coins” to honor our seagoing heroes were created by NOAA under the direction of Alberg and his peers at the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary.

Before Alberg left NOAA after 15 years of dedicated service, he wanted to ensure these challenge coins were promptly recieved by our veterans. So, a number of the challenge coins were mailed to our WWII members due to the postponing of the convention.

AMMV member William Balabanow of Pennsylvania was an appreciate recipient of the NOAA/MM coin, and recently contacted the editorial staff with photos of such.

AMMV’s relationship with NOAA started in 2016, when Special Projects & Veterans Outreach specialist Shelia Sova connected with Alberg via the social media platform Twitter. Alberg presented at the 2017 (Reno) National Convention in regards to efforts to create a marine sanctuary off the east coast, which would encompass several WWII wrecks; AMMV at that time passed a resolution to support such efforts. At the 2018 (St. Louis) Convention, Alberg returned with a film crew from NOAA to interview several of our WWII Veterans on the importance of preserving these underwater gravesites.

We wholeheartedly wish Mr. Alberg great success in his new career with the National Park Service.



Bay Pilot

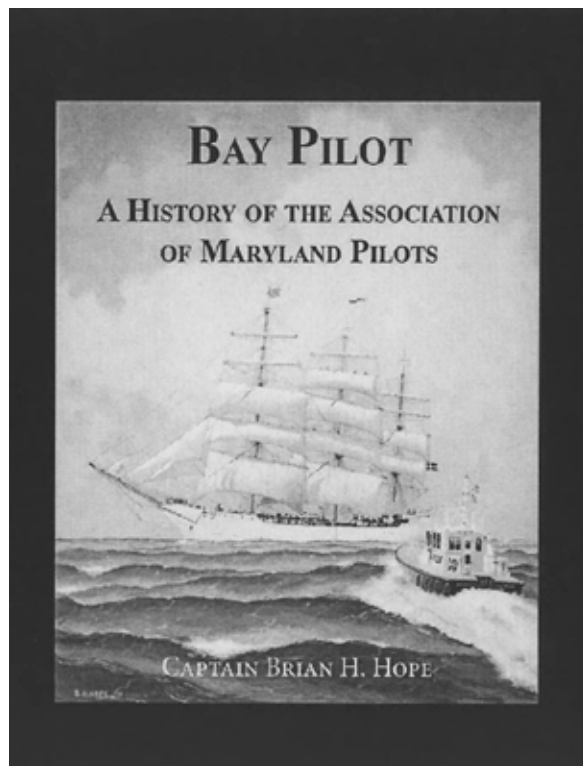
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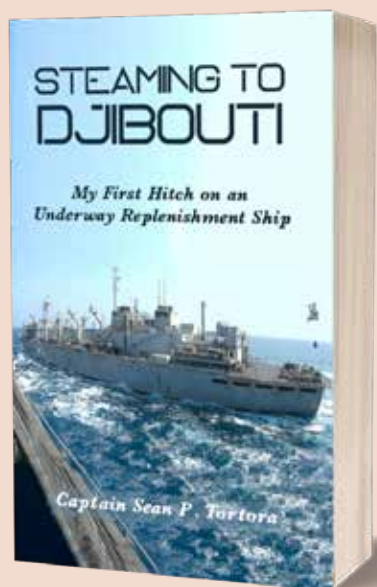
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CAPT Tortora is native on Long Island, New York, and is a graduate of Chaminade High School and holds both a Master's and a Bachelor's degree from the State University of New York Maritime College at Ft. Schuyler. He has served in the first Gulf War – Operation Desert Storm/Desert Sortie 1991-1992, Operation Noble Eagle – the response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and the second Gulf War – Operation Iraqi Freedom 2002-2010. After retiring from the sea, CAPT Tortora is now an Associate Professor in the Department of Marine Transportation at the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York.

CAPT Tortora is the author of the marine firefighting textbook, *Study Guide for Marine Fire Prevention, Firefighting, and Fire Safety*, published by Cornell Maritime Press. Read more about CAPT Tortora at LongIslandMaritime.com

The Medal of Ushakov

Медаль Ушакова



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Read the full story on page 42 of this issue.



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