

AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS NEWS MAGAZINE

IN PEACE AND WAR

\$6



Fall 2022



Rep. Ron Kind presents the Congressional Gold Medal to Reynolds Tomter — page 12



(L to R) Walter Miller, Joseph Homage, Raymond Mombelardi, and Stanley Skowronski receive the Congressional Gold Medal — page 15



AMMV member Mr. Rosario "Russ" Inzinga receives the Congressional Gold Medal from Rep. Joe Courtney — page 18

Meredith Victory, built in 1945, is one of the most famous vessels in U.S. maritime history, having been utilized in the Hungnam evacuation in December 1950 during the Korean War. The vessel transported over 14,000 refugees to safety under the command of Capt. Leonard P. LaRue.

Often called “Ship of Miracles”, Meredith Victory is one of only a handful of vessels to have been recognized by MARAD with the Gallant Ship Award.

With permission from artist Bob Rogers, we are pleased to include this painting of the Meredith Victory in conjunction with the 72nd anniversary of the Hungnam evacuation.



Artist Biography: Bob Rogers

Bob Rogers graduated from the United States Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point) in June 1968. After sailing as a Deck Officer for several years, Rogers came ashore and started working for Keystone Shipping, handling marine personnel. Beginning in 1977, he spent the next 37 years working for InterOcean Management, retiring as Vice President, Personnel and Labor. Rogers also served as an employer trustee on various AMO and SIU Plans.

Bob is married with three children and two grandchildren. He is a self-taught artist and has been painting for 20 years. “We never know where life will take us – I was blessed to spend my life working with some of the finest men and women in the world – the brotherhood of those who go down to the sea in ships,” he says.

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National Office Administrator Lynn Kelly



Popeye the Sailor Man --- real or just a cartoon?

REAL---Frank "Rocky" Fiegel was born in 1868 in Poland and emigrated to the United States as a child where he settled with his parents in Chester, Illinois.

Rocky went to sea as a young man and spent 20 years as a Merchant Mariner

before retiring, and was later hired by Wiebusch's Tavern in Chester, Illinois as a bouncer, charged with maintaining order in the rowdy bar. Apropos to his new chosen career he had a reputation for often becoming involved in brawls and being successful at the outcome. As a result of his habitual fighting, he developed a deformed eye and become known as "Pop-eye". His other familiar facial feature was the result of being a constant pipe smoker which caused him to speak out of the side of his mouth.

As a bouncer Rocky would entertain the bar patrons with exciting stories of his adventures which he claimed to have had over his 20-year career as a sailor crossing the "Seven Seas".

The creator of Popeye comics, Elzie Crisler Segar, grew up in Chester and, as a young man, met Rocky Fiegel at

the tavern and would sit for hours listening to the sailor's amazing "sea stories". When years later Segar became a cartoonist and developed a comic strip called "Thimble Theater" he honored Rocky by asking if he could model his new character "Popeye the Sailor Man" after him. Segar claimed that "Olive Oyl" was also based on an actual person named Dora Paskel, owner of a small grocery store in Chester. Not only did she look much like the "Olive Oyl" character, but she dressed similarly.

Through the years, Segar kept in touch with Rocky and always helped him by giving him a small percentage of what he earned from his "Pop-eye" illustrations. Frank "Rocky" Fiegel crossed the final bar March 24, 1947.



Calm Seas,

Lynn C. Kelly



National President and National Vice President reports are not available at this time due to issues with Hurricane Ian, and also due to our officers engaged with AMMV events as we entered into press time.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

For those of you who have paid your membership dues for the July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 membership year ---THANK YOU!

For those of you who are not sure if you owe or not, please call me at 475-470-9200 or email me at ammermarvets@gmail.com.



NEWS Magazine Editor Capt. Christopher Edyvean



Sea Stories (from Central Wisconsin)

On the morning of August 8, I had the pleasure of serving as Master of Ceremonies at a Congressional Gold Medal ceremony for AMMV's oldest WWII member, Reynolds Tomter. Mr. Tomter is the only WWII Merchant Mariner AMMV member from my home state of Wisconsin.

After driving for nearly four hours the night before and finding a hotel, I began that morning by stopping at a local Festival Foods grocery store to pick up two full size sheet cakes for the event. With the cargo holds (trunk of my car) full of cake, I headed to the ceremony location in Whitehall, WI.

I drove through Mr. Tomter's hometown, Pigeon Falls, with a whopping population of 411 people. Not too many miles later, I arrived in Whitehall where I had planned to meet up with AMMV Prez Capt. Dru for breakfast. Dru had flown into Minneapolis and rented a car.

We found the only diner that seemed to be open, and proceeded in for breakfast. A group of seven or eight men

were feasting at one of the tables. One looked familiar. "Is that Reynolds Tomter?" I asked the waitress. It sure was!

We introduced ourselves to the honoree of the day, and Reynolds quickly joined our table. As we gnawed away at hearty Wisconsin style breakfast platters, we were treated to hearing his first-hand recollections of serving in the WWII Merchant Marine.

The group that Reynolds had been sitting with slowly left the cafeteria one by one. Soon they were all gone.

"Do you need a ride?", I asked him, as we surely couldn't leave today's featured hero stranded at the café!

"No, that's okay. I drove here."

Did I mention that Reynolds Tomter is 105 ½ years old?

Here's to still driving a car in your second century of life! I wish Reynolds many more driver's license renewals in the future!

Christopher L. Edyvean

Capt. Chris Edyvean

AMMV News Editor & Past National President



Welcome Aboard to these New Members of the AMMV

DAVID BOUCHER	OLNEY	MD
CAPT. JEFF COWAN.....	SANTA PAULA	CA
RICHARD FARRELLY.....	ABINGDON.....	MD
CAPT. DAVID FOOTE.....	ALAMEDA	CA
ELMER HEMINGWAY	PEARLAND	TX
GEORGE KERESTES	SPRINGFIELD	VA
MARC LENZI.....	BARRINGTON	NH
ROSALIE OFFENHAUSER MURPHY	FRIENDSWOOD	TX
VANCE W. MURPHY.....	FRIENDSWOOD	TX
ROSS ROWLINSON	VERO BEACH	FL
RON SEMPLE.....	ADVANCE	NC
RICHARD YANCHUK.....	WEST HILLS	CA



Katrina McRae of MARAD received flowers from AMMV on July 26th. McRae is overseeing the task of approving and shipping out replica Congressional Gold Medals to eligible WWII mariners and family members of deceased mariners.

(L to R): Justin Lee (intern), Rhonda Davis (Tanker Security Program), Katrina McRae (Mariner Awards), Cheryl Myers (Maritime Security Program)

American Merchant Marine Veterans Profit & Loss July through August 2022

Income	
402 · Contributions	1,967.08
403 · Interest Income & Bank Bonuses	541.35
405 · Mission Advance Support	3,655.90
406 · Gold Medal Fund Support	2,034.76
410 · Chapter and MAL Dues	
EOH · Edwin O'Hara	225.00
GLD · Golden Gate	475.00
LON · Lone Star	50.00
MAL · Members at Large	4,493.50
NOA · North Atlantic	32.00
ORV · Oswego River Valley	50.00
THR · Three Rivers	575.00
Total 410 · Chapter and MAL Dues	5,900.50
420 · Magazine Ads	75.00
Total Income	14,174.59
Expense	
540 · Gold Medal Expenses	2,034.76
500 · Fixed Expense	
507 · Telephone	65.26
511 · Svc Charges - Paypal & Square	27.90
Total 500 · Fixed Expense	93.16
520 · Mission Advance Expenses	
521 · Awards	283.85
525 · Mission Support Exp	2,772.05
526 · Internet Initiative	600.00
Total 520 · Mission Advance Expenses	3,655.90
530 · AMMV News Magazine	
533 · Postage	28.00
536 · Printing	-83.54
Total 530 · AMMV News Magazine	-55.54
550 · Personnel	
551 · Administration	5,100.00
Total 550 · Personnel	5,100.00
560 · Operating Expense	
564 · Office Supplies	165.88
565 · Postage - Office	60.00
Total 560 · Operating Expense	225.88
Total Expense	11,054.16
Net Income	3,120.43

American Merchant Marine Veterans Balance Sheet As of August 31, 2022

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
103 · Paypal	25.24
105 · Chase Bank	351,636.12
Total Checking/Savings	351,661.36
Total Current Assets	351,661.36
TOTAL ASSETS	351,661.36
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
315 · Gold Medal Fund	14,208.34
311 · Dues Receivable	288.00
312 · Member Recruitment	893.00
314 · Mission Advance Fund	1,445.13
Total Other Current Liabilities	16,834.47
Total Current Liabilities	16,834.47
Total Liabilities	16,834.47
Equity	
32001 · Retained Earnings	331,706.46
Net Income	3,120.43
Total Equity	334,826.89
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	351,661.36



AMMV member Lorenzo Panigutti displays his CGM

IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE FINAL BAR

REX V. ALLENDER Albuquerque, NM
 HARLEN O. BALDUS Spring Lake, MI
 MORRIS BUXTON Cape Coral, FL
 ORAZIO S. CARDINALE..... East Boston, MA
 JOSEPH H. CASTEN..... Southbury, CT
 MANOLO COLON American Canyon, CA
 LEE R. COX Seattle, WA
 DOUGLAS W. CRUTE Camden, ME
 EUGENE R. JOHNKOSKI, SR..... Palm City, FL
 MARVIN ROY JOLLEY Brookhaven, MS
 MICHAEL KEMPLE, JR Elizabeth, PA
 JOHN W. "JACK" KNOWLTON Phoenix, AZ

REX B. LINK Los Angeles, CA
 FREDERICK O. "OWEN" MEYERS..... Pleasant Hill, CA
 BARBARA NUTTING Arroyo Grande, CA
 JAMES J. O'DONNELL Kensington, CA
 CALVIN J. OSS..... Minneapolis, MN
 DR. BILLIE PENNINGS..... Galveston, TX
 ASHLEY B. PIKE Gorham, ME
 MAURICE R. SAVARIA Fairhaven, MA
 DR. ROBERT L. SIMPSON..... Brentwood, TN
 ANTONIO V. SOZA..... Palmdale, CA
 KENNETH E. WORD..... Carson, 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.



Robert Lewis, AMMV's Veterans Affairs Chair (seen here with American Legion Commander for Massachusetts, Sally Nay) was installed as American Legion's District 6 Commander (MA) in June 2022. Robert has held many officer's positions in the American Legion including aide to former MA Commander Fred White.
Photo by Lisa Borges.

Ed Tester and William Pruitt presented CGM at local ceremony

On Thursday, 30 June 2022 the Veterans Council of Saint John's County, Florida hosted a ceremony to honor two local Merchant Mariners of WWII, Colonel William Pruitt, (U.S. Army, ret.), and Ed Trester. Both are members of AMMV, who risked their lives by serving in the U.S. Merchant Marine during WWII.

Pruitt and Trester were presented with the Congressional Gold Medal by Congressman Michael Waltz, U.S. House Representative, 6th District, Florida. Rep. Waltz saluted Pruitt and Trester and thanked them for their service. The Congressional Gold Medal is the top honor given by the United States Congress. "We do not give out many Congressional Gold Medals," Waltz explained, "and it is really my honor to give it to these two gentlemen."

One by one officials came forward to honor the two men on Thursday. They sat, Pruitt in a wheelchair and Trester on a chair next to him, holding up their replica Congressional Gold Medals in front of the crowd of over 200, at the St. Johns County Auditorium.

In attendance were representatives of Florida Senators Marco Rubio, Rick Scott, and Congressman John Rutherford, 4th District. Also among the officials in the audience were members of the Veterans Council of St. John's County, which hosted the event, as well as State Rep. Cyndi Stevenson, and officials representing State Rep. Paul Renner.

Colonel Pruitt's story began in Alabama, where he was born and raised. After graduating from high school, he worked for the Department of Defense in Birmingham, Alabama, and went into the Merchant Marine in 1942. "I crossed the Atlantic four round-trips on the way to the Mediterranean Sea," he said. The journeys carried tanks, personnel, munitions, and other supplies for the European and North African theaters, according to a biography provided by his daughter, Dinah. Pruitt served as a purser, handling customs, signing people aboard, running ship stores, and paying the crew, he said. He reached the rank of lieutenant, junior grade. He came to St. Augustine in 1950 to work with the state's Military Department and was a Florida National Guard member, according to his biography. He reached the rank of full colonel after becoming the United States Property and Fiscal Officer for the state, and he retired on May 31, 1980. Pruitt

remained involved in the community after retiring, including serving on the advisory board for Flagler College at its creation. He thanked everyone in the crowd for celebrating his award. "I have so very, very many friends, and they've made my life in St. Augustine the last 72 years wonderful, these citizens of St. Augustine and St. Johns County," he said.

Ed Trester was 17 when he quit school and went to the U.S. Navy recruiting office in Brooklyn, NY. The recruiter told him to go back to school. But he went instead to a Merchant Marine office and came away with paperwork for his parents to sign. After a tough conversation with his dad, he walked away with the blessing of his parents.

He was quickly sent to training and then assigned a Liberty Ship. "As I was walking down the dock to join the ship, I noticed they were loading bombs into the hull of the ship," he said. He recalled on a trip to a North African port seeing ships "as far as your eye could see," and two ships were hit with torpedoes in

the convoy, he said. Trester stayed in the Merchant Marine until around 1950. Following that, he worked for MetLife in New York City, and in the late '70s headed a district office for the firm in Jacksonville. Trester co-founded the St. Augustine Jazz

Society, which awards music scholarship to high school students. His longtime friend Lori Gill, who sings in his jazz band, accompanied him at the ceremony. "I feel very proud and very honored... to be recognized because the merchant service over the years has never really been recognized by our government, and too few people know about the Merchant Marine," Trester said.

Also in attendance were Captain Dru DiMattia (AMMV National President), Ross Rowlinson (Rowlinson Media Group), Chris Robertson (Executive

Director Museum of Military History), and various local media.

I would like to thank Veterans Council Chairman Bill Dudley for hosting the CGM Presentation and working with AMMV and others to ensure a successful event. Also, I would like to thank Sheldon Gardner, St. Augustine Record, permission to use portions of the article, "An Overdue Honor," as reprinted in the "Patriot Reader" newsletter.

Steve Snyder – AMMV Region #1 VP



(L to R back row): Captain Dru DiMattia (AMMV President), Chris Robertson (Director of Military History Museum, Kissimmee), Steve Snyder (AMMV Region #1 VP); (L to R front row): Bill Pruitt, Ed Trester



(L to R) Congressman Michael Waltz (Florida's 6th District), Bill Pruitt, Ed Trester, Lori Gill

Philly Shipyard Event

Report by Capt. Dru DiMattia, AMMV National President

July 11, 2022, was the National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) Hull No. 3 steel cutting ceremony, in conjunction with Congressional Gold Medal ceremony for AMMV member, WWII Merchant Mariner Thomas Reilly of the Dennis A. Roland South Chapter.

MARAD's new Administrator, RADM Ann Phillips, had wished for WWII Mariner Thomas Reilly to attend the National Maritime Day celebrated on May 24th at the Department of Transportation building, but he lost his chap-erone for that date. So, for their next opportunity to recognize our CGM recipients, MARAD sought out any WWII mariners in the area of the Philly shipyard for the planned steel cutting ceremony.

I was fortunate to be placed on the access list from MARAD to attend this unique event. Sharing some time with WWII

Mariner Thomas Reilly and his family was an absolute honor! Ms. Perquita Scott of MARAD had planned this opportunity to honor Mr. Reilly back in May and was also in attendance, along with Kevin Tokarski and my classmate from Maine, Doug Harrington. Lynn Kelly (AMMV National Office Administrator) and I tried to gain other WWII Mariners for this event, which proved to be extremely difficult.

The NSMV No. 3 is the training ship destined for Maine Maritime Academy. You know you are getting old, when you served as a cadet on the much older training ship, *T/V State of Maine*, formerly the *USNS Upshur*. Upon graduation I worked in the Sparrows Point Shipyard when the last two ships constructed were the *USNS Tanner* and *USNS Maury*. The *USNS Tanner* was later converted to Maine's current training ship. Seeing the steel cutting for Maine's next training ship amongst Maine Maritime cadets, ship's captain, and academy president was extraordinary!



(L to R): MARAD Administrator RADM Ann Phillips; Carl Tarbell (son-in-law of Thomas Reilly); Christopher Tarbell (grandson of Reilly & USCGA grad); Dorcas Anne Tarbell-Frangos (granddaughter of Reilly); Dorcas Tarbell (daughter of Reilly); WWII Merchant Mariner Thomas Reilly; Tom Reilly (son of Reilly); Judi Reilly (daughter-in-law of Reilly)

Transcript: Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Ann Phillips Presents WWII Merchant Mariner With CGM

Monday, July 11, 2022

REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR REAR ADM (RET.) ANN PHILLIPS FOR WWII CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARDING, PHILADELPHIA, PA

Thank you for joining us today.

During the Second World War, our Nation's heroic merchant mariners suffered a casualty rate higher than any military branch.

At great peril, the U.S. Merchant Marine delivered the weapons and supplies our Armed Forces required to topple tyranny.

We at the Maritime Administration make it our mission to honor the bravery and sacrifice of those merchant mariners who sailed into harm's way in defense of democracy. Such incredible service by American merchant mariners continues today (and every day) in service to the nation's economic and national security, carrying on the Greatest Generation's traditions of merchant mariners' sacrifices from World War II

Today, we gather to recognize one such hero: Mr. Thomas H. Reilly.

We bestow upon him the Honorable Service Button, the Merchant Marine Emblem, the Victory Medal, as well as the Truman Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Mr. Reilly earned these awards for his maritime service during the end of World War II. We also present Mr. Reilly with the recently unveiled WWII Congressional Gold Medal Award for his immeasurable contributions despite great personal risk.

Mr. Reilly sailed as a midshipman and later graduated from the United States Merchant Marine Academy. He went on to serve in the Korean War on tanker vessels. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Naval Reserves,

The sea and ships live in his blood, as the son of a shipbuilder of the famed "Wonder Ship," better known as the Titanic. He was also a proud member of the Masters, Mates and Pilots Union.

I hereby present Lieutenant Commander Thomas H. Reilly with these medals in recognition of his service and express our gratitude for his service from July 17, 1944, to February 03, 1945.

Please join me in one final recognition to Mr. Reilly and all of the Merchant Mariners who served our Great Nation to achieve ultimate victory in World War II, for as President Roosevelt stated:


"[Mariners] in this war have written one of its most brilliant chapters. They have delivered the goods when and where needed in every theater of operations and across every ocean in the biggest, the most difficult and dangerous transportation job ever undertaken. As time goes on, there will be greater public understanding of our merchant fleet's record during this war." (President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, September 19, 1944)



Ohio Valley Activities

Pictured in the front row are honorary *USS Cincinnati* crew members and Ohio Valley Chapter Merchant Marine WWII veterans George Griffith, Albert Varhola, and Julian Smith. In the second row are the visiting crew members of the *USS Cincinnati* Captain Colin Corridan, Commanding Officer, Command Master Chief (CMC) Sarah Morales, Lieutenant Santino Alteri, ET 1 Matthew Smith, and MN 2 Noah Coe.

Navy League of the United States Greater Cincinnati Council honored 5 crew members of the *USS Cincinnati* during a 3-day Cincinnati visit. At the dinner held for the crew April 6, 2022, the crew had the opportunity to meet the three Ohio Valley Chapter Merchant Marine WWII Veterans who had been made honorary crew members of the *USS Cincinnati*, November of 2021 by Captain Colin Corridan. The well-attended dinner celebration continued afterwards with the guests and dignitaries being able to express their appreciation to the crew and the honorary crew making for a most inspiring heartfelt evening.

Submitted by William "Speed" Hinds 



On July 29th in Florida, the "Knight of the French Legion of Honor" was bestowed upon WWII Navy Armed Guard veteran Stephen Nemeth (left, seated). Also in attendance, and displaying his recently received replica Congressional Gold Medal, is WWII Merchant Mariner Donald Dittmer (right, seated). Back row, L to R: French Consulate; AMMV National President Capt. Dru DiMattia; Christine Del Portillo (District Director for Sen. Rick Scott); Barry Cotton (Central Florida District Director for Sen. Rick Scott).



AMMV's oldest member receives top recognition at Wisconsin event



(L to R): Brigadier General Andrew M. Schuster, US Army (ret); Capt. Egil Vasstrand, Assistant Defense Attaché, Norwegian Embassy, Washington, DC; Capt. Dru DiMattia, AMMV National President; WWII Merchant Marine veteran Reynolds Tomter; Captain Christopher Edyvean, AMMV Regional VP; Lt. Col. Roy Aanerud, USAF (ret)

“Have a great day, unless you have other plans!”

Reynolds Tomter of Pigeon Falls, WI is AMMV's oldest member at 105 ½ years of age. Mr. Tomter served in the WWII Merchant Marine as a baker from 1943-45, having trained at Sheepshead Bay.

Tomter is known locally as “Mr. Pigeon Falls” and still drives his own car. His famous phrase is “Have a great day, unless you have other plans!”

On August 8, a special ceremony was held jointly by AMMV and the Tomter family to honor his WWII service. The initial plan for a small ceremony was quickly amended due to an influx of RSVPs, and the event was ultimately held at the nearby Whitehall High School auditorium. A Lions Club volunteer counted 380 persons attending or directly involved in the ceremony!

Representing AMMV were Regional Vice President Capt. Chris Edyvean, who served as Master of Ceremonies, and AMMV National President Capt. Dru DiMattia.

During opening ceremonies, the Colors were posted by Whitehall American Legion Post # 191, led by Commander Brian Lyga. Next, the National Anthem was performed by Jan Ford on vocals, accompanied by Jackie Goplin on

piano. Bud Tomter, son of Reynolds, did the invocation. An audio recording of *Heave Ho* followed.

Capt. Edyvean spoke first, summarizing the role of the Merchant Marine in WWII and explaining the significance of this group receiving the Congressional Gold Medal.

The next two speakers were Lt. Col. Roy Aanerud, USAF, retired, and Brigadier General Andrew M. Schuster, US Army, retired, who each personally know Mr. Tomter and were able to convey details about his service and life.

Capt. Egil Vasstrand, Assistant Defense Attaché with the Norwegian Embassy in Washington, DC followed. (Captain Vasstrand had attended the 2021 AMMV National Convention in Baltimore and assisted with a large Convoy Cup Award program.) After a short speech, Capt. Vasstrand presented Tomter with the Convoy Cup medalion and certificate, and a framed Norwegian Liberation Medal.

Doris Bautch, U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD), retired, spoke next, and provided Mr. Tomter with a letter of congratulations from recently appointed Maritime Administrator, Rear Admiral Ann C. Phillips.

AMMV President Capt. Dru DiMattia gave the next

remarks, followed by a ten-minute video clip of Dave Yoho speaking as part of the official Congressional Gold Medal ceremony held at the U.S. Capitol on May 18th.

The final guest speaker was Congressman Ron Kind (Wisconsin's 3rd District), who presented Reynolds Tomter with his replica Congressional Gold Medal.

Bud Tomter returned to the podium at the conclusion of the ceremony to offer closing remarks and appreciation.

Afterwards, cake and refreshments were offered in the school cafeteria, which was decorated in patriotic fashion.

The event was covered by several news outlets and made headlines nationwide. The full ceremony can be viewed via Norse TV on YouTube. [🔗](#)



Congressman Ron Kind presents Reynolds Tomter with his replica Congressional Gold Medal



American Legion Post #191 (Whitehall, WI), led by Commander Brian Lyga (third from left)



Reynolds with daughter, Julie, and son, Bud

AMMV attends Fort Myers Spirit of '45 event

Report by Capt. Dru DiMattia, AMMV National President

Back in April of this year, I joined our local Southwest Florida WWII Merchant Mariner Jim Sciple and our friend Rick Wobbe from Honor Flight at the Fort Myers Mission BBQ for lunch. Here I was introduced to the chairperson of the



AMMV WWII Merchant Mariners proudly display their replica Congressional Gold Medals

son of the Lee County "Spirit of '45" celebration, Eryka Aptaker. We briefly discussed the mission of AMMV and what our WWII U.S. Merchant Marine sacrificed in becoming part of that winning combination.

Fast forward to

July 2nd when Eryka called me, as she was astonished with the history and sacrifices of the WWII Merchant Marine. She explained that this annual Lee County Spirit of '45 had never highlighted the service of the Merchant Marine during her 11 years of running the event. I forwarded to her more background information along with Dave Yoho's speech from the official Congressional Gold Medal ceremony that took place in the Statuary Hall on May 18, 2022. She called me after watching Dave's speech, saying that the story put her in tears.

The "Spirit of '45" (www.spiritof45.org) was launched 12 years ago in the 111th Congress with Resolution 226. It had bipartisan co-sponsors led by Senator Susan Collins (R – Maine) in support of a National Day of Remembrance to be observed on August 14 of every year!

As some of you might know, Spirit of '45 is a great annual event happening across the country that our AMMV members may wish to attend. This venue avails the opportunity to share



Pipes and drums performance



A flag folding ceremony was part of the Spirit of '45 agenda

WWII veterans in attendance, as the event was held at the Sanibel Harbour Marina Resort in Ft. Myers, FL. All WWII veterans and their spouses were admitted free of charge.

Upon confirming with our AMMV local WWII members in Southwest Florida, we came up with four veterans. Two of these men participated in the Murmansk run; they are: WWII vet Captain Petro (Pete) Kurkimilis, from Ft. Myers, FL, who was accompanied by five family members, and WWII vet George Koch, with wife Jean, from Rotonda West, FL. Also attending were WWII veteran James Sciple, from North Ft Myers, FL, who was accompa-



AMMV members and guests filled two tables at the sold-out event

During the program, Eryka placed the spotlight on our Merchant Marine service during WWII, reciting the incredible statistics of what it took to deliver the cargo in one of the most dangerous transportation jobs ever undertaken. Our WWII mariners were called out by name as they proudly displayed their Congressional Gold Medals!

This was a very special occasion which highlighted our mission here at AMMV, and helped educate the public as to the service of the WWII Merchant Marine.

in the stories and educate many who do not know about our vital supply chain service!

During the planning of the 2022 Lee County Spirit of '45, chairperson Eryka sought as many WWII veterans as were capable of attending the event.

There was a total of 34

nied by our local AMMV members, and WWII vet Thomas Cavallo, from Sebring, FL, with his daughter, Theresa. In total, the AMMV group numbered 20 persons, taking up two full tables at this sold-out event of over 340 people.



Honoring Four American Merchant Mariners in New Jersey with the Congressional Gold Medal

At an award ceremony in New Jersey, four U.S. Merchant Mariners were presented with the Congressional Gold Medal for their services to our country in World War II. The event, held on August 23, 2022, in Brick Township, recognized Joseph Homage, Walter Miller, Raymond Mombelardi, and Stanley Skowronski. A fifth recipient, Charles Wills, Sr., was not well enough to attend the ceremony in person.

Congressman Andy Kim of New Jersey's 3rd District was the event's keynote speaker. The other honored guests included Dru DiMattia, President of the American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV), and Hank Kaminiski, former president of the Dennis A. Roland Chapter of AMMV (DAR). Mr. Mombelardi, Vice-President of the DAR Chapter, began the ceremony with a welcoming address and introducing Master of Ceremonies, DAR Chapter President, Dennis Ng.

As part of the opening ceremony, everyone joined in the singing of *Heave Ho!*, the official song of the U.S. Maritime Service and the U.S. Merchant Marine. It was written by the famed songwriter, Jack Lawrence, who in 1943 was a lieutenant in the United States Maritime Service, and the bandleader at Sheepshead Bay Maritime Service Training Station.

SS Sawolka

Mr. Ng and Mr. Mombelardi led a memorial service of the men of the freighter, *SS Sawolka*, which was sunk in 1942 by a German surface raider off Madagascar. Dennis A. Roland, the ship's 2nd officer and navigator, who is the namesake of the New Jersey Chapter, was one of the survivors of that sinking. Out of a complement of 59, there were 39 survivors who were taken prisoner by the Ger-

mans. In Singapore, they were turned over to the Japanese and forced to build the infamous "Railway of Death" in the jungles of Burma, Thailand and Malaysia. During his imprisonment, he acted as a senior American POW, looking out for his fellow prisoners as best he could.

When liberated, Roland was riddled with disease and weighed a mere 68 pounds. Of the 1,600 men in his labor battalion, fewer than 300 survived their imprisonment. As each branch of the U.S. military took charge of their freed POWs, Roland was on his own. Riding in an unheated cargo plane on a flight to India, he had only a discarded piece of a sandwich to eat. From the flight, he came down with pneumonia.

On his way home, he was given \$10 by a representative of the United Seamen's Service, but he was not given any medical care. Nor did he ever receive any compensation for all the time he was a prisoner. He died 1984,

four years before the U.S. Merchant Mariners of World War 2 were finally recognized as veterans. Even though he was denied formal recognition for his extraordinary service, he is without a doubt a hero in every sense of the word.

Chow Chuck Ng

Mr. Ng said he was personally interested in the AMMV because his father, Chuck, was a U.S. Merchant Mariner during World War 2. His father, born in China, was previously a merchant seaman in the late 1930's for the British Merchant Navy, sailing out of Hong Kong. When the Japanese forces invaded the British colony, he and other sailors found themselves stranded in New York, so he signed up with the U.S. Merchant Marine, eventually completing 12 voyages in the Atlantic. On one of those voyages, in 1943, his C-2 cargo ship was nearly sunk by a German U-boat. On another voyage in 1944, his Liberty Ship participated in the Murmansk Run. At the end of 1944, his ship was directed to ferry desperately needed supplies to counter the last major German offensive of the war, the Battle of the Bulge.



Rep. Andy Kim, Dennis Ng (DAR Chapter President), Ray Mombelardi (DAR Chapter Vice-president, CGM recipient)



Receiving their replica CGM's are (L to R) Walter Miller, Joseph Homage, Raymond Mombelardi, and Stanley Skowronski

The U.S. Merchant Marine

The U.S. Merchant Marine's long tradition of service, and sacrifice, to our country began in 1775, when our young nation had no navy of its own. The Continental Congress issued licenses instead, called Letters of Marque and Reprisal, to privately owned, armed merchant ships, allowing them to seize enemy merchant ships and transfer desperately-needed cargo and supplies to our poorly-equipped continental army.

These licenses made the sailors privateers, but those who were captured by the British still paid a heavy price. Treated as prisoners of war, they were locked up in prison ships with conditions so terrible that up to 12,000 would die from starvation and disease. By comparison, 6,800 Americans were killed in all the battles of the Revolutionary War. Since then, the U.S. Merchant Marine has continued to serve our country valiantly and honorably in every conflict.

General Omar Bradley famously said, "the amateurs talk strategy, the professionals talk logistics." No other service played a greater role for our nation in logistical support than the merchant marine. By the end of World War 2, the merchant marine delivered 15 million tons of goods in war materials and more than 7 million service men and women to every theater of the war, under the most challenging of circumstances. But the cost too was heavy: 1,554 ships were sunk, hundreds of other ships were damaged by torpe-

does, shelling, bombs, kamikazes, and mines. 1 in 26 merchant mariners lost their lives. An additional 11,200 were injured. Almost 700 were captured, and many, like Dennis A. Roland, were even tortured.

AMMV President Dru DiMattia

Dru DiMattia, National President of AMMV spoke, stating that it was an absolute honor to be with these Congressional Gold Medal recipients. He also said it was never too late to do the right thing and the Congressional Gold Medal recipients were the true definition of America. He has never given up hope that the veteran merchant mariners would finally be recognized for their service. In 1988, after a successful lawsuit by the AMMV,

our nation finally recognized the merchant mariners as veterans, and after successful lobbying efforts by AMMV members and supporters, Congress awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to these same veterans for their courage and contributions in the war. DiMattia added that AMMV still has multiple campaigns ongoing in legislation. With regards to this fight for recognition, AMMV will continue on to the last man breathing.

Mr. DiMattia pointed out that women also served in the merchant marine in World War 2. When they were denied entry into the U.S. Merchant Marine because some



Dennis Ng (left), who serves as AMMV Dennis A. Roland Chapter President and AMMV interim Region # 3 Vice President, receives a plaque from AMMV in recognition of his efforts and contributions to the organization. Pictured with Ng are Ray Mombelardi, Capt. Dru DiMattia, and Hank Kaminski.

of the ships would have to enter into combat zones, they sailed instead on Norwegian ships, foreign vessels that were under contract with the U.S. Maritime Service. He also highlighted two great examples of bravery and sacrifice. In 1942, PQ 17, a convoy of over 30 ships set out from Iceland to Russia, but only 11 ships made it to Murmansk. In 1943, almost 20 ships were blown up or damaged during an air raid by the Luftwaffe at Bari, Italy, resulting in 3,000 deaths from drownings, burns and exposure to poison gas, in what has sometimes been referred to as the “second Pearl Harbor”.

Congressman Andy Kim

Congressman Andy Kim, the Keynote Speaker, was the last person to speak. Before being elected to office, he served as a diplomat in Afghanistan and Iraq, alongside many servicemen, and he now serves on the Armed Services Committee. He expressed gratitude for the American forces who went into harm's way during the Korean War, saving his family and community from the communist forces, and inspiring his parents to come to America. He said “it feels surreal to think of what the four Congressional Gold Medal recipients have lived through and experienced.”

Congressman Kim talked about the bravery of those who served, many of whom never made it back, as something our country should always honor. The Congressional Gold Medal is a sign of our nation's gratitude and recognition of this bravery of our merchant seamen, and the critical role they played in our victory in World War 2. It is a recognition of this entire operation which has often not been given much attention in history books.

Congressman Kim added how he couldn't wait to go home to tell his two young boys about meeting the four heroes at this event and about World War 2, which to them is ancient history. Their stories of the recipients are an inspiration for the next generation to serve. The freedom we have cannot be taken for granted. His job in Congress is to make sure the military gets everything they need to keep themselves safe and defend our freedoms, that they have everything they need to win if they go into harm's way.

The Congressional Gold Medal Recipients

After speaking, Congressman Kim bestowed the Congressional Gold Medals, along with certificates from his office recognizing their service, on each of the four recipients.

Joseph Homage, born in 1926 in St. Benedict, PA, joined the U.S. Merchant Marine, earning a quartermaster rating, and completing 11 voyages on liberty ships in the

Atlantic war zone. Originally, he wanted to join the Army, but they rejected him because of his eyesight. On his first voyage, 10 of the 60 ships in his convoy were sunk from enemy action.

Walter Miller, born in 1927 in Coney Island, NY, as a child, loved watching ships enter and leave the Port of New York, choosing the U.S. Merchant Marine over the Navy because they offered him the rank of Radio Officer for

signing up. He sailed on Liberty and troop transport ships in the Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, and Middle East war zones.

Raymond Mombelardi, born in 1926, in Englewood, NJ, joined the U.S. Merchant Marine at 15, earning an able-bodied seaman rating, and completing 11 voyages on

cargo ships and tankers in the Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, and Middle East war zone. Like others, he lied about his age just to join, but when his ship docked in Texas, he was arrested because he was unable to produce a draft card. His father, Lawrence, also served as a U.S. Merchant Mariner, but was killed in 1943 when his ship was sunk by a German U-boat.

Stanley Skowronski, born in 1928 in Bayonne, NJ, joined the U.S. Merchant Marine together with his twin brother, Edward, completing 6 voyages on various ships as a wiper, fireman, oiler, and storekeeper in the Atlantic and Pacific war zones.

Dennis Ng, AMMV Region # 3 VP



Rep. Andy Kim (left) with Capt. Dru DiMattia (AMMV National President)



Russ Inzinga receives Congressional Gold Medal at 101th Birthday celebration!



Rosario "Russ" Inzinga displays his CGM

Following the long-awaited May 18th Congressional Gold Medal ceremony at the U.S. Capitol, was a regional ceremony in late September in the quiet hills of Windham County in Connecticut, for none other than AMMV member Mr. Rosario "Russ" Inzinga, a talkative yet humble 101-year-old World War II Merchant Marine veteran, one of only a handful of remaining veterans of this age.

While Mr. Inzinga's birthday is not till November, it seemed only fitting to take advantage of the fall like weather at the Windham Golf Club for this special Congressional Gold Medal presentation. Mr. Inzinga served aboard the *Edmund B. Alexander* 80 years ago, starting in 1942.

To celebrate the special occasion was his large family, starting with his daughter Joan all the way down to his great-great grandchildren.



Russ with AMMV Region #4 VP Kyle Knickerbocker

Also present was Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut Susan Bysiewicz, whose 102-year-old great aunt Mary Stewart met Mr. Inzinga's daughter, Joan Inzinga, in the 1970's following Stewart's career in the United States Coast Guard with the Semper Paratus

Always Ready Women's Reserve (SPAR). Representing American Merchant Marine Veterans was Regional #4 Vice President Kyle Knickerbocker.

Following the occasional one-on-one moments between guests and Mr. Inzinga were speeches made by the Lt Governor Bysiewicz and Congressman Courtney.

And to top it off, what better way than a group photo and a meal by the venue — Windham Golf Club in Willimantic, Connecticut.



Seated next to Russ is friend Mary Stewart, who is also the aunt of Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz (standing)



Congressman Joe Courtney with Mr. Inzinga

In addition to his family there were some dignitaries, including Congressman Joe Courtney of the Second Congressional District here in Connecticut. Rep. Courtney is the Chairman of the Sea Power and Projection Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.



Susan Bysiewicz addresses the audience with Russ looking on

WWII mariners honored at Museum of Military History in Florida

Submitted by Steve Snyder, AMMV Region # 1 Vice President



AMMV Region # 1 Vice President Steve Snyder

With all eyes on Hurricane Ian, a Congressional Gold Medal presentation was held Tuesday, September 27 to honor some of our local WWII Merchant Mariners.

The event was held at the Museum of Military History in Kissimmee, FL, hosted by Chris Robertson, Executive Director. The Colors were presented by the University of Central Florida ROTC, with the Pledge of Allegiance, National Anthem, and God Bless America performed by Cami Miller. The invocation and meal blessing were provided by Pastor Bob Brigham.

After the introductions of all honored guests and the museum Board of Directors, Mr. Robertson gave a brief account on how the museum became associated with WWII Merchant Marine history. This started with the closing of the Vero Beach museum, and with WWII Armed Guard Clarence "Korky" Korker and Capt. Rick Martucci contacting AMMV President Capt. Dru DiMattia, who in turn contacted Director Robertson regarding the transfer of

their collection to Kissimmee.

At about the same time, Charlie Sellers of Jacksonville Beach had been speaking with the Vero Beach museum, looking to donate the WWII lifeboat, which for 25 years has been used in the Jacksonville Veterans Day Parade by the former AMMV Saint Johns River Chapter. But unfortunately, the lifeboat sat in a riverside warehouse for the other 364 days each year.

Through the efforts of Charlie Sellers, Tom "Sunny" Suneson, Chris Robertson, and Mark Swan, an agreement was reached in which the lifeboat will be returned each year to Jacksonville for the Veterans Day parade, but would remain on display at the museum throughout the year as a symbol of the hardship and sacrifice of the WWII Merchant Marine.

At the ceremony, State Senator Victor Torres spoke on the importance of the Merchant Marine and the supply chain post-Pearl Harbor, and as a friend of the museum. The Honorable Darren Michael Soto, Congressman of the 9th district of Florida, was the featured speaker and presenter of the Congressional Gold Medals. He presented to his WWII MM veteran constituent Donald Dittmer (95) of Kissimmee, along with WWII MM vets Harold Seibel (95) of Oviedo, and WWII MM Thomas Cavallo (96) of Sebring FL.



*WWII Merchant Mariner
Thomas Cavallo*

Receiving recognition but unable to attend were WWII mariners Melvin Traub (95) and Bob Kulick (96), both of Lady Lake FL. Receiving posthumous family medals were Mrs. Ann Parrish, widow of WWII MM Richard Vernon Parrish, and Cathy Carroll, step-daughter of WWII MM Thomas J. Royere. Also in attendance and recognized was Pat Rudd (101), WWII Navy Wave.

AMMV President Dru DiMattia spoke about the delay in recognition of WWII Merchant Mariners, in not receiving veterans benefits until 1988, and in not receiving the Congressional Gold Medal until recently. Capt. DiMattia spoke of the icy Archangel/Murmansk Runs, the breakup



and losses of Convoy PQ-17, and the German attack at Bari, Italy, with sinking of the *John Harvey* and the release of mustard gas which produced mass casualties.

Local historian Bob Grenier then told the story of Bernie DeVore "From Farm, to Flight, to Faith".

About the Honorees:

WWII Merchant Mariners

Donald Dittmer, Age 94, Kissimmee, FL

- Signed up 17th birthday 1944 at Federal Building in Detroit. Basic Training as Engine Room Wiper, Sheepshead Bay, NY
- October '44: on board Liberty Ship *Henry George*, stuck two days in typhoon with an 18° list off the coast of Okinawa, Japan
- Christmas '44: picked up load of gasoline across North Atlantic, Port Author, TX to Bristol, England
- After war ended: sailed on ships returning troop from Japan and Italy
- April '46 final discharge; then enlisted with General MacArthur's Corp, 11-1/2 months in Korea and 12-1/2 months in Japan



WWII Merchant Mariner Donald Dittmer is presented his CGM

Melvin Traub, Age 95, Lady Lake, FL

- Signed up 1944: Age 17, after refused by Navy. Basic Training at Cook, Catalina Island, CA
- August '44: Tug/Naval Barge 42 days to Manila Philippines
- After war ended: sailed thru loose mine fields, returning troops from France and Italy

Harold Seibel, Age 95

- Signed up 1944: 17-year-old farm boy from Minnesota
- Basic Training as Engine Room Oiler, Sheepshead Bay, NY
- Shipped out of Boston on oil tanker, North Atlantic to France
- Assigned to ship taking first load of coal to Germany, because he spoke German
- Does not remember his 18th birthday celebration in 1945, as this was same day as V-J Day, Japanese

Surrender

- Served August '44 thru end of '45, 1-1/2 years
- Long time Secretary, AMMV Rudy Kozak Chapter, Sanford, FL

Robert Kulick, Age 95 (not able to attend for health reasons)

- Signed up: 16 years old, served years 1943 until 1947
- 1951 within days of his wedding, Mr. Kulick received his draft notice to appear.
- His WWII Merchant Marine service was not considered veteran service
- Army Signal Service, Adak, Alaska, 2 years before he saw his bride again



WWII Merchant Mariner Harold Seibel with Capt. DiMattia and Rep. Soto

Family of WWII Merchant Mariners

Ann Parrish, widow of Richard Vernon Parrish, Mt. Dora, FL

- Parrish signed up 1944: 16 years old, parents had to sign approval letter
- Sailed on ammo ships as Ordinary Seaman, October 1944 thru December 1944 aboard *W.M. Burton*; May 1945 thru 15 August 1945 aboard *Percy E. Foxworth*



Mrs. Ann Parrish with Rep Soto

- After Merchant Marine service, Mr. Parrish served in Korea. An enemy tank trapped him and a fellow soldier in a fox hole, and after 20 minutes his companion made a run and was shot by sniper fire
- Mr. Parrish suffered from hearing loss and PTSD the rest of his life, but as a man of faith he did not allow his

- impairments to tarnish his kind and generous life.
- Long time President, AMMV Rudy Kozak Chapter, Sanford, FL

Cathy Carroll, stepdaughter of Thomas J Royere, Beverly Hills, FL

- Royere dedicated 44 years of his life serving our country
- Started out as a U.S. Army Private, he then transferred to the Merchant Marine and worked his way up to the rank of 1st Assistant Engineer
- His ship, at the time, played an important part in supporting our U.S. Navy troops at Pearl Harbor immediately after the attack
- After his death, many artifacts and documents were collected by Florida volunteers and were donated to Museum of History in Kissimmee



Cathy Carrol and Rep. Soto

Charlie Sellers, Age 92, Jacksonville Beach, FL (not WWII Merchant Mariner)

- 17 years old in 1947, joined as Ordinary Seaman, Basic Training, Sheepshead Bay, NY
- 1949 attended Electrician's school, and in 1954 earned his 3rd A/E license
- 1955 was drafted, entered the Navy as an Ensign aboard the Aircraft Carrier WASP
- After 2 yrs, returned to MM, and in 1969 became Chief Engineer until retirement in '91
- Charlie is a successful Geothermal Engineer businessman in Jacksonville Beach

Captain David Swan

- Former secretary of the AMMV Saint Johns River Chapter
- Father of Chris & Mark Swan, who were instrumental in the transfer of the lifeboat
- Attended Fort Trumbull in New London, CT
- Served in the Mediterranean, European, and Pacific theaters during WWII
- Swan was serving on a vessel on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal when Japan surrendered. He was at a



bar or a restaurant ashore, when an officer came in and announced that Japan surrendered. He said you could have heard a pin drop. Everyone in there sang the National Anthem!

- Total time in the U.S. Merchant Marine: 1943 to 1946



Please visit and support:

Museum of Military History
5210 W. Irlo Bronson Memorial Highway
Kissimmee, Fl. 34746
(407) 507-3894
email: militarymuseum192@gmail.com
www.museumofmilitaryhistory.com



CHANNEL FEVER

(by Glen Chesnut)

After a long voyage
we are headed home.
Every day I wait for the mate
to post our position:
how many knots we are doing,
the miles we've gone,
the miles to go
and our E.T.A. -
the estimated time of arrival.
I can't sleep. I pace the deck.
I gaze out over the endless water.
I go through my daily routine like a robot.
I am consumed by anticipation.
Seamen call my malady "channel fever".
And channel fever has only one cure:
the sight of home port over the bow.

For more info, please visit: <https://glenchesnut.com>

A Letter to a Fellow Mariner

(Editor's note: The following piece was written by AMMV member Father Sinclair Oubre, as he reflects on the WWII segment of Leonard LaRue's maritime career. Sailing as a Deck Officer at this time, LaRue would later command the Meredith Victory during the famous Hungnam evacuation during the Korean War. LaRue left the sea in 1954 and quietly lived the remainder of his life as Brother Marinus at the Benedictine monastery of St. Paul's Abbey in New Jersey. As we approach the 72nd anniversary of the evacuation, AMMV asks that members support efforts for canonization of Brother Marinus, as put forward by the Apostleship of the Sea-USA.)

Dear Leonard,

As I sail on the *T/S Kennedy* with 219 United States merchant mariner cadets, I think of your voyage 80 years ago, when you signed on the *SS Mormacmar* on February 11, 1942, at the Army Base in South Boston.

Your ship was twenty years old when she began loading cargo for what would become PQ-13. Our ship turned 55 years old this year. Originally built by Lykes Brothers at Avondale Shipyard outside of New Orleans, and named the *Velma Lykes*, she was transformed into a training ship in 2003.

There are a lot of similarities between your ship and ours. Both are classic breakbulk stick ships, even though there are more than 40 years between them. Even today, the *Kennedy* retains her forward king-posts that support the booms over the #1 and #2 hatches. I can tell you, there was no little excitement among the deck crew and cadets when it came time to offload the garbage.

I know that sounds very strange, but the garbage containers are chained over the two hold hatch covers. Yep, we can't just chuck the garbage overboard. As Bob

Dylan sang about the same time that the *Velma Lykes* was on the drawing board, "... Times they are a changin'."

Well, a dumpster was delivered alongside, and super sacks were hooked to the booms, and we racked them over the side. Since most ships now carry cranes for this type of work, it is always an exciting moment for us to exercise this old maritime skill.

As a side note, boom ships are not all gone. When we pulled into Savannah to take on bunkers, there was a modern stick ship docked right in front of us. In some cases, the old ways are still the best ways.

We arrived in Reykjavík on Saturday, June 25, 2022. In my mind's eye, I thought Reykjavik was on the eastern side of the country, but here we were, taking on the pilot, and heading into port on the southwest corner of the country.

We docked at the cruise ship terminal on the edge of town, but it was still only about a mile and a half walk to the downtown area. It was a very pleasant experience for us, and I am sorry that you and the crewmembers of the merchant ships were not allowed to enjoy this beautiful city.

Looking on a map, I see that you sailed past Reykjavik,

to anchor at Hvalfjörður Fjord on March 15, 1942. However, it was probably good that the crews of 19 merchant ships were not given shore leave. They may have had too good of a time. We had that problem with a couple of our cadets, but in the end, "no harm, no foul!"



Captain LaRue, circa WWII

However, I am sorry that your ship master, Captain Senior had such problems with the bosun and two AB's. As you will learn when you take command, there are real issues of safety and quality of life on a ship, and there are alleged safety and quality of life issues. I am glad Captain Senior agreed to reach out to both the U.S. consul in Reykjavik and the U.S. Navy for advice, but I am also sorry that these three guys seemed to have a different agenda.

When you think about it, our merchant marine is in a very similar situation as February of 1942. Our merchant ships and the merchant mariners are just an afterthought.

We get two messages from the federal government, "We are really busy right now with 'important' issues, can you just sit on the bench over there, and when we have time, we will get with you." And also, "What's wrong with you, we have a national emergency, and you mean that you don't have an abundance of highly trained, highly motivated, and patriotic mariners who go to war?"

Leonard, I know that if we had to activate our ROS (reserve operating status) ships, we could do so, but we would certainly be scraping the bottom of the barrel in our maritime union halls. Then, when it would be time for reliefs four months later, there literally would be no one left to sail the ships.

I really think the problem that seemed to have plagued the *Mormacmar* from the time she left the States until she weighed anchor as part of PQ-13, was the exhaustion of our "quality mariner" resources. Think about it. Japan attacks Pearl Harbor on December 7. Hitler declares war on December 11. By January of 1942, Admiral Karl Dönitz sent his U-boats to attack East Coast shipping as part of Operation Drumbeat.

Overnight, the need for trained mariners skyrocketed, while at the same time, the U.S. merchant fleet lost hundreds of mariners to German U-boat attacks. We lost good men, and simultaneously, the U.S. government was trying to maintain its "iron bridge" to Britain.

Is it any surprise that by the middle of February,



Moore & McCormack Co. vessel, similar to S/S Mormacmar

when you signed on the *Mormacmar*, that most of the cream had been skimmed off the top, and what was available at the maritime union halls was not the most tasteful?

There must have been a lot of tension on your ship when the PQ-13 convoy sailed at 0630 on March 18, 1942. Captain Senior certainly got an earful from the Navy for

failing to sail, but I think he was correct. He lost the bos'n and two AB's to the brig, and he needed those billets filled to meet the arduous voyage that lay before him. It was a blessing from God that three Icelanders stepped forward to join the ship, and he was able to weigh anchor at 1600, and sailed at top speed in pursuit of PQ-13.

I wonder how many PQ-13 masters were surprised to see the *Mormacmar* on the morning of March 18, as she rejoined the convoy at 0730?

For me, Reykjavik was my last port with the *Kennedy*. She sailed for New York on Tuesday, June 28. I signed off because I had to get back to my parish, and flew back two days later.

I am sorry that when you arrived back at Hvalfjörður Fjord that you were still not granted shore leave. After losing ships going and coming, and facing attacks from German U-boats and planes, you guys could have used some shore leave.

In all, you stayed on the *Mormacmar* for another eleven months.

In closing, I want to thank you for your courage, your fortitude, and your service to the United States. Please keep me and our cadets, trainees, and merchant mariners in your prayers. In the midst of adversity, may they persevere as you have done.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

Fr. Sinclair Oubre, AFNI

Member - United States Merchant Marine

(A big thanks to Phil Lacovara, author of The Mariner and the Monk, from which I have drawn the historic details. The book is available at amazon.com in hardback, soft cover, and Kindle editions.)



Excerpts from Gerald Reminick books about the World War II U.S. Merchant Marine

STORY 1

Mariner Memories

Most merchant seamen, Navy Armed Guardsmen and historians will agree that the journey to Northern Russia was the most dangerous one. Goods to Russia could have been shipped through the Persian Gulf but the control of the Mediterranean early in the war was still undecided. Compared to the Persian Gulf, the Murmansk run was shorter by 11,000 miles, but infinitely more treacherous.

In choosing the Murmansk run, the Allies faced major obstacles to both supply and aid Russia in her attempt to hold her own against the Germany. The German Luftwaffe moved more long-range bombers and a flotilla of U-boats were sent north along with the German navy. The weather consisted of severe winter storms of ice and snow covering the ships, polar ice floes, and darkness. However, as dangerous as it was, it was essential for the Allies to supply the Russians in order for her to carry out her part of the war.

Despite these obstacles, the convoys were a tremendous success. From 1941 through 1945:

350 US-flagships were part of 40 convoys consisting of 800 ships. Ninety-seven of those ships were sunk by bombs, torpedoes, mines and the fury of the elements... They carried more than 22,000 aircraft, 375,000 trucks, 8,700 tractors, 51,500 Jeeps, 1,900 locomotives, 340,700 tons of explosives, a million miles of field-telephone cable, plus millions of shoes, rifles, machine guns, auto tires, radio sets, and other equipment. (Bunker, 62)

STORY 2

Former Capt. John M. Le Cato tells of his winter experiences ice-bound in Murmansk on the SS Thomas Hartley. The Thomas Hartley sailed out of New York harbor with five other U.S. merchant ships to join a larger convoy in January 1943. The convoy would not return for almost a year.

The Forgotten Convoy

To describe the city of Murmansk, I can only paint a picture of total desolation. Buildings mostly of logs were collapsed, roofless, half-burned out or only standing beams and chimneys. When the Americans ventured ashore, they were accosted by surly Red Army guards or militia who motioned for us to keep moving. One structure that survived was the large white Hotel Arktika. We soon found that for a few rubles, its dining room would supply a large bowl of steaming cabbage soup, sometimes with bits of mysterious meat floating in it, a slice of black bread and a jigger or two of vodka. Alas, one night during a very heavy raid, the structure was destroyed. Nobody ever knew what

happened to the magnificent stuffed polar bear that had adorned the lobby.

Finally, the holds were empty and we shifted to anchor-age a few miles down the river, happily anticipating the arrival of the next convoy with escort vessels to take us home. As the days wore on and the nights grew short, we began to accept the fact that there might not be a convoy that year. Food was growing short and its allocation became a point of controversy between the merchant crews and the American Naval detachment ashore. We had been told that we should be homeward bound in a month and submitted to the Navy requisitions for canned goods, cereals and meat. When our captains tried to reclaim some of this, they were told, "We have only enough for ourselves."

Finally, we were told that the ice was breaking up in the White Sea and we would be moving there. This was welcomed news. Our anchorage had acquired the nickname of Stuka Alley, with good reason.

Our destination turned out to be Molotovsk, a long wooden pier and a primitive village at the mouth of the Dvina River, some miles below Archangel with which it enjoyed daily rail connections... There was a Seaman's Club with soup and vodka, magazines and scratchy phonograph records. The theater showed occasional movies and light operas and concerts were performed by touring companies. The Intourist organization provided guides and interpreters and sometimes offered picnics and boat rides.

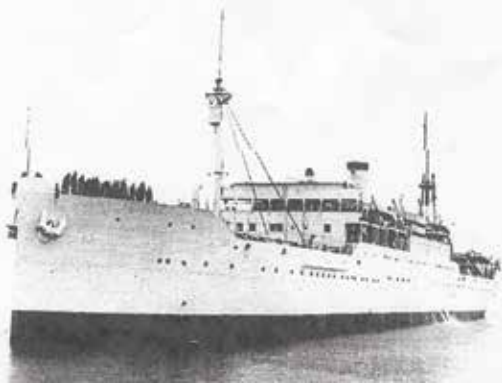
For entertainment, we established a baseball and a soccer league among the ships, sometimes playing by the light of the Midnight Sun. We schooner-rigged a pair of lifeboats and held regattas in the harbor. There was little work for the crews to do, as we were about out of paint, red lead and cordage. Since food was in short supply, crew members were offered liberal leave time to spend a few days in Archangel and eat in the hotel there.



SS Francis Scott Key

Since the *Hartley*, *Francis Scott Key*, *Israel Putnam*, and *City of Omaha* were berthed together, a close relationship developed between the young-officers and Kings Point cadets of the various ships.

The cadets were supposed to be completing their education so we developed classes to study navigation, Rules of the Road, meteorology, seamanship. I led a class in ice navigation and another in maritime history... Other subjects were small boat sailing, cargo rigging, ship maintenance,



and sexual hygiene. I doubt that the classrooms at Kings Point could have given those young men the education we provided.

Soon, the brief summer was on us. Peasant markets with wooden stands sprang up. My friends and I developed a brisk trade with soap, cigarettes and other contraband being exchanged for tomatoes, cucumbers and squashes. This was largely winked at by the authorities and Risk, Marshall and I even had the audacity to take over a vacant stall and label it "Le Cato, Potato and Tomato Co., Ltd." To show that we had no subversive intent, we decorated our billboard with portraits of Stalin and FDR.

Eventually the days grew shorter, a few snow flurries were seen and an icy wind swept in from the Polar Regions. Rumors of departure were flying. Then one gray day, a column of rusty gray ships formed up and headed into the icy White Sea, flags flying, and guns uncovered and manned. The "Forgotten Convoy" was heading home on the First of November 1943.

[This is an excerpt submitted by the author Gerald Reminick from his book *The Merchant Marine Lighter Side Of World War II*, The Glencannon Press, El Cerrito, CA., Copyright, 2016.]

STORY 3

Arthur R. Murray grew up on Long Island. He was a Cadet-Midshipman at the New York State Maritime Academy at Fort Schuyler in the Bronx, New York in WWII. Murray's training ship was the World War I Hog Island freighter the USS Empire State. The shipboard training was very rigorous and strict. After six months of training, they were advanced to First Class and had responsibility over the Third Class aboard ship who were called "Mugs." Art Murray wrote in his book The Smooth Log:

Both of you are on report...

On the ship my class had dominance over the Third Class who were known as "Mugs." We were learning techniques and responsibilities of directing and supervising the work of subordinates. At the same time the officers and instructors were teaching us how to obey orders, perform various tasks, and take on certain responsibilities. One such responsibility involved maintaining the cleanliness of the main deck mess room head. Another classmate, John and I had four Mugs to supervise in cleaning the head. Every morning right after breakfast we would spend about a half

hour swabbing out and cleaning this head. One morning one of the Mugs informed John and me that one of the toilet bowls was infested with lice. We gave it a thorough examination but saw no sign of the lice. The Mug insisted that he had seen some when he was cleaning the bowl. There were no insecticides available but John being an engineering cadet said that he knew how to get rid of the lice. He disappeared into the engine room and returned a short time later with a juice can containing an ounce of gasoline. The gasoline was poured into the infected bowl while the cleaning crew stood just outside the doorway. Then John lit a match and tossed it into the bowl. The result was spectacular. There was a muffled explosion along with a column of bright flame that rose up out of the bowl and spread mushroom like across the ceiling of the head. The porcelain bowl was disintegrated into hundreds of small pieces scattered across the deck along with the water the bowl had contained. The ceiling paint changed from pristine white to a charred black and burnt brown color. Blisters of various sizes covered the ceiling and the sides of the stall, and a good deal of smoke poured out of the head into the mess room. General quarters were sounded followed shortly thereafter by the fire alarm. The Executive Officer and several other officers came rushing into the mess room along with the firefighting crew. When they assessed the damage the ship's company stood down for general quarters and the firefighting team left the area. After John and I gave the Executive Officer our story he said, "Both of you are on report for willful destruction of government property and endangering the safety of the ship."

During the few days it took the ship to return to the dock at Fort Schuyler John and I with our Mugs scraped off the damaged paint and repainted the entire mess room head. The ship's plumber replaced the toilet bowl John and I had destroyed, and the head was back in use before the first line went on to the dock. The morning after the ship docked the ship's company was formed up on the fore-deck by sections. A formal Captain's Mast was held. The Commandant of Cadets, Commander Guy DeSimone, stood before the ship's company with everyone standing at attention. He held a clipboard with a printed-paper on it and ordered Cadet-Midshipman Green and Murray to step forward. John and I stepped forward smartly and stood in front of him at rigid attention Commander DeSimone began to recite the charges against us. He had some difficulty reciting the charges. Every few seconds he would stop and putting the clipboard up in front of his face he would turn his head to the side after a few more seconds passed he would lower the clipboard and resume reciting the charges. There was some muffled laughter from the men in the ranks. He went on, "... And did willfully cause an explosion which destroyed a toilet bowl" and at this point Commander DeSimone lost his composure and burst out laughing along with the whole ship's company. He quickly regained

control of himself and ordered silence in the ranks. Neither John nor I were laughing. We were in deep trouble. When he finished reciting the charges against John and me and asked if we had anything to say. We replied, "No sir." He then said, "You are guilty of destroying government property and each of you will receive twenty five demerits and be restricted to the ship for six weeks." The ship's company was then dismissed. John and I felt that we were very fortunate to receive such relatively light punishment...

[Murray, Arthur R. "Both of You Are On Report." Qtd. in Gerald Reminick, *The Merchant Marine Lighter Side Of World War II*, The Glencannon Press, El Cerrito, CA., Copyright, 2016]

STORY 4

Sinking of the *Atlantic Sun*

This story is about Henry Miller. Miller was the first engineer aboard the MS Atlantic Sun. Henry changed his name from Moeller to Miller because of anti-German sentiment. The story tells of the heroism displayed by those who simply disappeared from the face of the earth. His son, Dr. Henry Moeller who is a L.I. professor emeritus of Marine Biology, sent the story to me. He was five years old when his father died.

On March 21, 1942, the MS *Atlantic Sun* was enroute from Beaumont, Texas to Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania, when she was struck by a torpedo from the German submarine (U-124 *Mohr*) off Cape Lookout, North Carolina. Capt. Richard Montague managed to get the vessel and its load of crude oil into Beaufort, North Carolina for temporary repairs. My father, Henry Miller, was the first engineer on the *Atlantic Sun* for that cruise. He told my mother and me that many of his clothes had been used as dressings for crewmembers who have sustained burn injuries...

My father was home for Christmas in December 1942. At the end of the Christmas holidays we went with him to New York City and he left New York aboard the *Atlantic Sun* on January 14, 1943 with a cargo of fuel oil bound for Iceland. Her cargo was promptly discharged and the ship joined convoy ON-165 on February 8, 1943 for the return trip home.

During the end of the cruise the *Atlantic Sun* developed engine trouble and dropped out of the convoy. Captain Mergerson aboard U-607 observed the vessel 150 miles off Cape Grace, Newfoundland. He fired two torpedoes which struck the tanker on the port side. One split the ship in half and the other blew a hole in the bow. The bow section sank in twenty minutes. All who were that portion of the ship were lost.

After the ship broke in two, twenty-two men abandoned the stern which had remained intact and on an even keel. William Golobich, a survivor of the sinking, said that

the survivors hovered in a lifeboat near the stern of the ship for two hours. They concluded the vessel appeared safe and rowed back to it and reboarded. Soon they were below, changing into dry clothes and drinking hot coffee while my father and the other engineers were giving the engines a thorough going over.

A half hour later, with many of the crew still below decks, the U-607 fired a third torpedo that struck fifteen feet forward of the stern post, causing the stern to sink 30 minutes later. The surviving crew members went over the side into the sea just before the ship turned over keel up and sank. One lifeboat was observed partly swamped from the stern section which had sank a few minutes earlier. Eight men including my father found their way to it and climbed aboard. There were no oars and it was filled with water so that the survivors were sitting in waist high cold water. The crew tried to make the lifeboat more buoyant by throwing overboard all loose objects.

After the stern section sank the sub surfaced. Four or five crew members and a Nazi officer emerged from the conning tower and pointed a machine gun at the lifeboat in case any of the men were armed or had a grenade ready

to throw. The Germans asked for the name of the vessel and its destination which was provided to them by one of the lifeboat occupants. Then the crew members pleaded for oars and supplies. William Golobich jumped out of the lifeboat and swam for the sub. He was taken prisoner aboard the sub. The seven remaining crew mem-

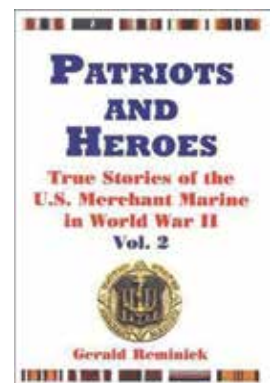
bers including my father were not permitted to board the submarine because it had a full crew. They probably died of exposure in the freezing cold waters of the North Atlantic. After the war, William Golobich was released as a prisoner of war and returned to the United States. At a memorial service provided by the Sun Oil Company, Mr. Golobich told the surviving family members about the incident. My mother and I were both present.

That was not my last experience with the Sun Oil Company. During my second semester of my senior year of college I had an outstanding bill of several hundred dollars and I did not know how I was going to raise the money. One day when I inquired about my bill, I learned that a Sun Oil Company person had paid the bill. I was free to graduate. I will be eternally grateful for that timely assistance.

[Moeller, Henry W. *Sinking of the Atlantic Sun*. Qtd. in Gerald Reminick, *Patriots and Heroes: True Stories of the U.S. Merchant Marine in World War II*, Vol. I, The Glencannon Press, El Cerrito, CA., Copyright, 2000].



Atlantic Sun



NOLA or BUST

*Submitted by WWII Merchant Marine
veteran William Balabanow*

No one seems to have taken advantage of the best deal in many moons: the fantastic offer by the GARY SINISE FOUNDATION to visit and tour the NATIONAL WW2 MUSEUM in New Orleans, LA.

I thought it was too good to be true and that surely there must be a catch somewhere. My sister and I decided to give it a try. WOW, what a surprise!

I answered their questionnaire and followed their instructions. We chose a 3-day time slot and wham – we get a round trip American Airlines prepaid ticket with everything filled out: departure time, date, seat number – you name it, and it was all confirmed.

At the airport, a limousine and driver were waiting, which took us to the Higgins Hotel where Tom Gibbs, representative of GSF, met us and settled us into the hotel. Tom treated us like a mother duck attends her ducklings. Expertise and courtesy were second to none!

Equally accommodating was the hotel and the museum itself. Everything went as a well-oiled machine.

On the trip home: ditto, ditto.



*Bill Balabanow at National WWII Museum in New Orleans,
earlier this summer*



In mid-August, AMMV WWII veterans Charles A. Mills and George Offenhauser of Texas joined a large group of WWII vets from various service branches for a trip to the National WWII Museum in New Orleans. The trip was sponsored by the American Legion Post #654 out of Houston. The age of the veterans in the group ranged from 93 to 102.





JUST RECOGNITION

Update on AMMV Efforts to Honor USMM Veterans

June through September 2022

Appropriate Honors for USMM on Memorial Day

Capt. Dru DiMattia received a letter from DOD's Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, dated April 20, 2022, indicating DOD's concern for including the U.S. Merchant Marine (USMM) flag and anthem in the 'Salute to Armed Forces' segment of the National Memorial Day Concert. The DOD letter also included a staff contact who would provide coordination for alternate ways to honor USMM veterans and those killed in action on Memorial Day.

Capt. DiMattia asked for advice from selected AMMV members who have been working on this matter for a number of years. After considering their advice, Capt. DiMattia decided to find a way to honor USMM WWII veterans and those who were killed in action through a respectful segment in the National Memorial Day Concert, similar to the segments honoring Gold Star Mothers and Women in the Military that were featured during the 2022 Concert.

On September 13, 2022, Capt. DiMattia sent a letter to Bruce Ramer, Chairman of the Board for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), requesting his assistance to work with the television executives at the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and Capital Concerts, Inc. to develop a segment honoring the USMM. His letter reminded Mr. Ramer that "[a]bout 9,500 Merchant Mariners were killed in action during WWII, alongside U.S. Naval Armed Guard sailors and other U.S. Armed Forces onboard ships that were sunk during the war. Under the National Moment of Remembrance Act (Public Law 106-579), Congress' findings include a statement saying, "It is essential to remember and renew the legacy of Memorial Day, which was established in 1868 to pay tribute to individuals who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the United States and their families."

To support an alternative proposal to AMMV's original request for PBS and Capital Concerts to include the USMM flag and anthem in the National Memorial Day Concert, Capt. DiMattia's letter to Mr. Ramer included a statement from DOD's April 20, 2022 letter which suggested, "...at its discretion, PBS could choose to include a dedicated segment of the National Memorial Day Concert, separate from the Salute to Armed Forces, which pays tribute to the Merchant Mariners of WWII." Capt. DiMattia also said, "[w]ith the

support of DOD, AMMV wants to work collaboratively with CPB, PBS, and Capital Concerts, to produce a respectful segment that will thrill all members of the U.S. Merchant Marine and their families, as only the National Memorial Day Concert can do on the national stage."

AMMV supports the development of a segment for the National Memorial Day Concert, outside the 'Salute to Services' segment because Merchant Mariners killed in action during WWII, USMM veterans, and their families need to be honored appropriately in 2023. AMMV wants to include a respectful segment to capitalize on the award of the Congressional Gold Medal and the respectful ceremony that was held in Statuary Hall in the Capitol on May 18, 2022.

In addition to contacting Mr. Ramer, Capt. DiMattia sent a September 13, 2022 letter to the new administrator of the Maritime Administration (Ann Phillips, USN, Ret.) seeking her support to coordinate with the television executives and producers working on the Memorial Day Concert. Capt. DiMattia said, "I am requesting MARAD's assistance, as a Federal Government champion of USMM issues, to coordinate with AMMV and the television executives and producers for the 2023 show...Time is of the essence for this action because the television producers are undoubtedly working on the concert now...I would appreciate your personal attention to this worthy and just recognition of the global contribution made by USMM WWII veterans who survived the war and those killed in action to the Allies' ultimate victory."

Coordination on the Proposed Gold Star Families Day Act

In February 2022, Sen. Elizabeth Warren and other U.S. Senators proposed a bill titled the Gold Star Families Day Act to designate a national holiday. Capt. DiMattia sent a supporting letter to Sen. Warren on March 16, 2022. In August, I contacted Sen. Warren's staff to offer additional support for the bill. Unfortunately, the bill will need to be re-introduced in the Senate during the next Congressional session. I will maintain contact with Sen. Warren's staff to ensure that AMMV's request to include the Merchant Marine in the bill is accomplished. I also informed Sen. Warren's staff that we could use their help in discussions with CPB, PBS and Capital Concerts. I have maintained contact with AMMV members in Massachusetts on this activity.



JUST RECOGNITION

U.S. Maritime Service Officers' School in Alameda, CA

The California State Historic Preservation Commission held a public hearing on August 5, 2022, which included an agenda item for an appeal to nominate the historic U.S. Maritime Service Officers' School in Alameda, CA for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Through a surprising and unwelcome procedural move on the morning of the hearing, the State Historic Preservation Officer declined to let the Commission hear an appeal of a negative decision about the listing for the second time. Many of the supporters of the listing, including AMMV, were able to let the Commission know their strong support for the listing in an open comment session at the end of the hearing. The State Historic Preservation Officer's decision not to hear the nomination was appealed to the National Park Service's Keeper of the Register in Washington, DC. Ms. Reid, the author of the nomination and the subsequent appeal, informed AMMV that her appeal to the National Park Service was sustained in a letter dated September 22, 2022. (Please see letter that follows this report.)

Application for the National Veterans Day Committee

On September 16, 2022, Capt. DiMattia applied to the Department of Veterans Affairs requesting Associate Member status on the National Veterans Day Committee. The Committee includes 25 Standing Members and 20 Associate Members who coordinate on the celebration activities for Veterans Day. AMMV looks forward to a successful application for membership.

Afterword

If you or your AMMV friends have additional stories or activities that will help with our goals and negotiations, I would like to hear from you. Please take a moment to send me an email about your activities. I would be glad to provide information if you need support.

Patrick Cotter
Member at Large
AMMV Government Affairs Standing Committee
coolenvconsulting@gmail.com





JUST RECOGNITION



H32(2280)

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

September 22, 2022

Ms. Carmen Reid
1811 Clinton Avenue
Alameda, California 94501

VIA EMAIL to carmereid@gmail.com

RE: U.S. Maritime Service Officers Training School appeal

Dear Ms. Reid:

On August 8, 2022, the National Register of Historic Places received your letter and supporting materials appealing the refusal and/or failure of the California State Historic Preservation Officer (CA SHPO) to forward the nomination of the United States Maritime Service Training School in Alameda, Alameda County, California to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). This appeal was made pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 60.12.

After carefully reviewing the entire record in the matter, including the nomination and other materials submitted, as well as the opinion dated September 7, 2022, from the CA SHPO, I am sustaining the appeal. My review of this matter reveals that while there has been a loss of buildings at this property, the remaining facilities appear to retain sufficient integrity to convey the significance of the property and its historic training operations.

DISCUSSION

The National Register nomination form submitted with the appeal argues convincingly that the 13.5-acre U.S. Maritime Service Officers Training School property, nominated as a historic district, is locally significant under Criteria A and C for military and maritime history, education, and architecture. Designed and built in 1942–43, the complex was one of two training centers for U.S. Merchant Marine officers during World War II and it contains the only extant resources of its type, as distinguished by its curriculum and students. This property played a critical role in training experienced seamen for the rapidly expanding merchant marine fleet essential to America's war effort. Crewing a merchant ship was demanding service and a professionally trained work force was deemed vital to national interests.

In a letter dated September 7, 2022, CA SHPO provided an opinion at the request of the NPS that while the property is significant under Criteria A and C, it lacks integrity to convey that significance. (Letter, p. 2.) Having conducted a site visit on July 27, 2022, CA SHPO cites disruptions to historical sightlines and visual associations from mature trees and absent buildings; the loss of several facilities typically associated with a military-style campus, such as



JUST RECOGNITION

administrative and academic buildings, barracks, and the parade ground; and the visual intrusion of modern development. (Letter, p. 3.)

While the nominated property has experienced significant alterations and the loss of several original buildings, the remaining facilities—two academic buildings, four barracks, a mess hall and galley, and the infirmary—retain integrity to convey the significance of the property and its historic training operations. The extant buildings include both principal academic training facilities (Engineering Building #1 and Seamanship Building #14), barracks and living accommodations (Buildings 2-7), and support facilities (Infirmary #15). These buildings represent a full complement of campus functions within their historic shoreline setting. The buildings reflect the characteristic forms of World War II-era rapid mobilization construction, presenting uncomplicated designs, standardized parts; and modest embellishments comprised of available materials. Economical and rapidly buildable architecture became essential during the war build up. The Alameda buildings reflect these patterns while also conveying the influence of Second Bay Tradition and International styles.

By separate letter, I am requesting that CA SHPO promptly process the nomination for the U.S. Maritime Service Officers Training School pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 60.6(y) without delay.

As the nominated district contains federal property under the ownership of the General Services Administration (GSA), CA SHPO should provide the nomination materials to the GSA Federal Preservation Officer for evaluation. The concurrent state and federal nomination should then be submitted to the Keeper without delay.

A determination regarding the eligibility of the property for listing in the National Register will be made upon receipt and consideration of the concurrent state and federal nomination.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Sherry Frear, Chief and Deputy Keeper of the National Register at sherry_frear@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

JOY
BEASLEY

Digitally signed by JOY
BEASLEY
Date: 2022.09.22
10:06:22 -04'00'

Joy Beasley
Associate Director, Cultural Resources,
Partnerships, and Science
Keeper of the National Register

cc: Julianne Polanco, California State Historic Preservation Officer,
julianne.polanco@parks.ca.gov
Beth Savage, U.S. General Services Administration Federal Preservation Officer,
beth.savage@gsa.gov

AMMV CHAPTER/REGION REPORT AS OF OCTOBER 1, 2022

REGION 1 STATES: FL

RVP Stephen Snyder

1111 Windy Oaks Dr N. • Jacksonville, FL 32225 • 609-458-3207 • ammvssnyder@yahoo.com

MALs contact RVP Stephen Snyder

Chapters: No active chapters

REGION 2 STATES: AL, DC, DE, GA, KY, MD, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV

RVP George Bruno

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MALs contact RVP George Bruno

Chapters: **John T. Schmidt Chapter**

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717-475-0796 • cnewcomer92@gmail.com

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RVP Dennis Ng (interim)

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Contact: Scott Nowak, Treasurer

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412-654-7771 • captscott48@juno.com

Dennis A. Roland Chapter

Contact: Dennis Ng, CEO

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201-265-1796 • dennissally@msn.com

REGION 4 STATES: CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT

RVP Kyle Knickerbocker

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MALs contact RVP Kyle Knickerbocker

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Contact: Fred Rodriguez, CEO

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347-831-1076 • caronia010449@yahoo.com

Oswego Valley Chapter

Contact: Keith Baker, CEO

2948 State Route 3 • Fulton, NY 13069-4881

315-592-5608 • No email

REGION 5 **STATES: IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI****RVP Capt. Chris Edyvean**

P.O. Box 41 • Hurley, WI 54534-0041 • cjedyvean@hotmail.com

MALs contact RVP Chris Edyvean

Chapters: Midwest Chapter

Contact: Joseph O'Connor, CEO
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joeoconnor7321@sbcglobal.net

Ohio Valley Chapter

Contact: Sue Wettstein, Treasurer
2390 Eight Mile Rd. • Cincinnati, OH 45244
513-474-0568 • No email

REGION 6 **STATES: AR, AZ, KS, LA, MO, NM, OK, TX****RVP Bob Ross**

111 Stroud St. • El Dorado, AR 71730-5353 • 870-863-4738 • kevandneisa@sat-co.net

MALs contact RVP Bob Ross

Chapters: Lone Star Chapter

Contact: Charles Mills, CEO
P.O. Box 841608 • Pearland, TX 77584-2031
713-436-1638 • mcamco@aol.com

REGION 7 **STATES: AK, CO, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY****RVP Jens Inge Egeland**

458-239-3196 • jensingeeegeland@gmail.com

MALs contact RVP Jens Inge Egeland

Chapters: High Rollers Chapter

Contact: Patrick Rafferty, CEO
2595 Aviv Ct. • Las Vegas, NV 89121-3947
612-325-6600 • captainpat2011@yahoo.com

REGION 8 **STATES: CA, HI, AUS****RVP Christian Yuhas**

790 West J Street • Benecia, CA 94510 • 530-265-8340 • cgyuhas@gmail.com

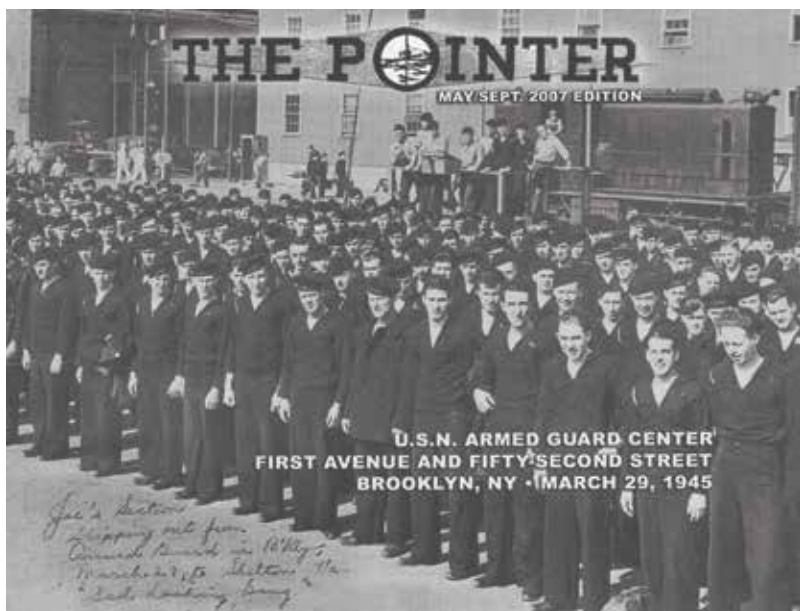
MALs contact RVP Christian Yuhas

Chapters: Golden Gate Chapter

Contact: Frank Mendez, Sec/Treas
401 Van Ness Ave, #213-D • San Francisco, CA 94102
415-252-0760 • mendezlaf@aol.com

North Bay Mariners Chapter

Contact: Harvey Walters, Sec, Treas
P.O. Box 6312 • Santa Rosa, CA 95406-6312
707-763-8167 • harveywalters1207@comcast.net



From the Archives: “The Forgotten Convoy...”

Editor's note: The following is a condensed version of the recollections of WWII mariner Jim Risk. The full story appeared in print in a 2007 edition of the Navy Armed Guard publication, “The Pointer”. This story ties in with the Forgotten Convoy story on page 24, in which both stories occur in the same timeline and location.

I was born February 28, 1921 in Jacksonville, FL, and entered the Cadet Corps of the U.S. Maritime Commission, Algiers Navy Base, NOLA, in January 1941.

As a Cadet, my first ship was a “Hog Islander”, S/S *Del Brazil*, Mississippi Shipping Company. I sailed on her from May 29, 1941 to September 5, 1941. Next, I sailed on the S/S *Del Rio* from January 14 to July 7, 1942. All of these voyages were between New Orleans and the East Coast of South America.

On the *Del Rio*, the war caught up to us. The first trip was with gun platforms, all of which were empty except for four 30-caliber machine guns amidships. Our Captain was a bit of a nut. He had orchids festooned all around the blackout equipment and armor hardware on the bridge. He also had a very large and vicious ring-tailed monkey, chained to the supports of the gun platform. It was very effective in keeping us from manning the guns at General Quarters. On our second trip on the *Del Rio*, we had a Navy Armed Guard crew with four 50-caliber guns, and one 4-inch, 50-caliber broadside aboard.

It was on that trip that we had a merchant seaman with severe DT's locked up in the lazaret. Because of his condition, our Captain decided to put him ashore in Pernambuco, Brazil. Now, the port was a twin city. The lower part, on the bay level, contained all the banks, commerce, and docks and was all German, while the upper city, which was much poorer, was all native. When we arrived, there was chaos because Brazil had just declared war on Germany. The natives were in full riot, pouring over the cliffs into the lower city, destroying all in their path. There were cigars and German money ankle deep in the streets! With a 45-caliber pistol (courtesy of the Armed Guard) strapped to my hip, my job was to escort the sick sailor, in handcuffs, through both cities to a native hospital on the outskirts. The American Ambassador was occupied with the riots and was no help to us. That was quite a journey.

A second incident occurred after clearing Recife/Pernambuco. We spotted a lifeboat with about twelve English survivors. Their tanker had been sunk in the mid-South Atlantic and they had been adrift for 21 days and were in bad shape. We took them to Trinidad before we were diverted to New York City. On our journey north, we sneaked by Cape Hatteras, after sighting a German submarine supply ship near Bermuda. We were the first ship to get past Cape Hatteras in 34 days, arriving in NYC on July 7, 1942.

Upon arrival, I was assigned to the Kings Point Academy. We spent our first few nights in the Walter P. Chrysler Mansion before we were moved to the just-acquired Schenck House. Those few months at Kings Point were devoted to naval science, abandon ship procedures, communications, navigation, etc. The weekends were wonderful, recalling the hospitality of Great Neck neighbors and our great NYC escapades. In November, I was told to sit for my Third Mate's license, and I got it.

With my license still wet, the War Shipping Administration and Masters, Mates, & Pilots union placed me aboard the Lykes Brothers ship S/S *City of Omaha*. She was a converted Alaska Packer, built in World War 1, with a 1918 reciprocating engine capable of nine knots at best. She was armed with a 4-inch broadside, a 3-inch 50-caliber anti-aircraft gun, and eight 20-mm guns. We loaded war supplies (including ammunition) in the lower holds, P58 aircraft in the tween-decks, and ready-to-fly P58 aircraft on deck. On January 19, 1943, we sailed and thus began the infamous saga of the “forgotten convoy of North Russia”.

It was my first winter convoy sailing across the North Atlantic toward a Scottish rendezvous. The trip was a “doozer” – with blizzards, wolfpacks, a scattered convoy, blown boiler tubes, a period adrift while being repaired, and a broken rudder. We even had to rig a drag (hatch covers) to the port and starboard winches on the stern to achieve partial steering. Eventually, we limped into the

vivid green of Belfast, Ireland – what a lovely sight! Tugs then towed us over to Glasgow where around-the-clock repairs were affected. Then we sailed for the north of Scotland, joining convoy JW53 just as it was forming. Our destination was secret, but we were told to “wear wool underwear”.

On the second day in the open sea, a German aircraft spotter found us. Despite the bad weather, there were bombers flying overhead every 20 minutes and we were kept at General Quarters for 24 hours. We organized the crew with shovels, tongs, and buckets of sand, to cope with the incendiary bombs. There we shoveled over the sides or smothered them before they could burn through the deck. Later, the snow and ice started creating problems, causing our decks to become slippery and making our ships very visible against a black sea. Eventually the crew was too tired and cold to keep the ice cleared from the ship. They were close to mutiny when we spread a black cloth on the mess table and put white plates on it to show them how visible and venerable the ice-covered convoy of ships were. There was no further problem with the crew. Blizzard conditions really helped keep the wolfpack and Luftwaffe kill down. We left Scotland with approximately 26 Allied ships and arrived with 24. Remarkably, all eight American ships arrived still afloat, although some were damaged.

All of this happened very early in 1943, so the ships were not equipped with gyrocompasses. We only had magnetic compasses, so keeping convoy stations in blizzard conditions was very difficult. It was made even more difficult when we got near Bear Island, high up in the Barents Sea. Because this island is composed almost entirely of iron, our compasses spun wildly for several watches, causing near panic in the convoy.

Eventually, we arrived at Murmansk. Our cargo of fighter planes was off-loaded under the direction of “Olga”, the stevedore boss, who roamed the ship at will. The city had been reduced to shambles by repeated German bombings, and many of its residents were living in caves. Most of the workers on the docks were really political prisoners who lived in fenced compounds. German Messerschmitt would bounce over the Ural Mountains between Russia and Finland and drop their two-winged booms on

the ships that were anchored in the river, or at the docks, and then be on their way home before Russian aircraft could get at them. While we were there, numerous ships were hit and three or four were sunk. Our only defense was to shoot upwards with everything we had, and hope that the German planes would fly through our curtain of lead. We did hit two German planes, plus one Russian which was in pursuit and mistakenly flew into the curtain of lead put up from several ships anchored in the Kola Inlet.

After unloading the aircraft, we were told to proceed north into the White Sea. Two Russian icebreakers were sent to lead our four American ships through the four-foot ice. These icebreakers had spoon-shaped bows that rode up on the ice and crushed it with the downward force of their weight. Naturally, our progress was very slow and we were easy targets for any Stuka dive-bombers in the area. Fortunately, none of them scored any direct hits. On the second day, as one of the Stuka pilots rolled over to start his dive, one of our 3-inch, 50-caliber rounds blew him apart.

This being February/March, the annual seal birthing was taking place, right there on the White Sea ice. What a sight – blue-white glistening ice as far as one could see, but all of it covered in red with seal birthing and afterbirth. Did

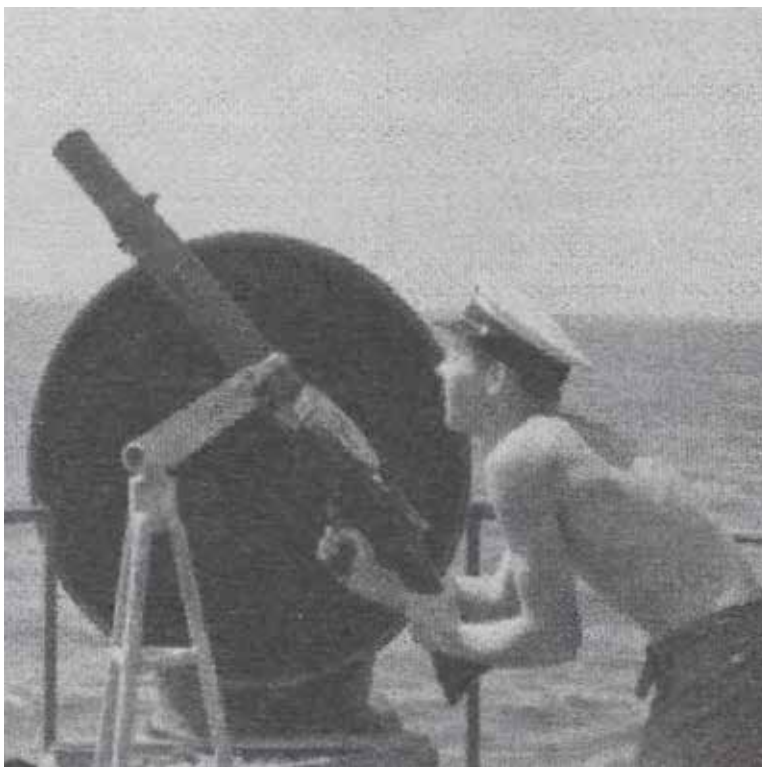
you know that baby seals cry like a human baby? There we were, stuck in the ice with thousands of crying babies all around.

Five days later, we reached our destination – Molotovsk (now called Severodvinsk). It was a wooden city, just built to handle Allied cargoes, and populated by people from all over Russia. There were 127 different dialects spoken in Molotovsk.

At the beginning of our stay in Molotovsk, our ship had lots of food, candy, cigarettes, and things to trade and barter. In fact, the Allied forces lived pretty well for several months. There was a small tourist place in the city, staffed by University

of Moscow students. Here we could get vodka, although it was rationed. The girls there were very serious, discussing Karl Marx while dancing to a windup half-broken Victrola with ancient American records.

Since we were hundreds of miles beyond bombing range, we stood watch, two days on and four days off, so we had plenty of free time on our hands. We spent this time



Jim Risk at a machine gun

playing lots of poker and making visits to Archangel, a city about 40 miles away. To travel there in the winter, we made skis from dunnage, and in the summer, we sometimes rode an old military train. Sometimes, we stayed at the Hotel Intourist.

Archangel is on the Northern Dvina River and, as summer dragged on, the water became tolerable to the Russians and nude bathing was very common. Naturally, the Allied sailors left their ships and lined the banks of the river to watch.

Although we spent a lot of time off ship in Archangel and elsewhere, there was a lot to do with our shipmates. We made baseball bats from dunnage and Russian lumber, and ball mitts from hot-shell gloves. A talented engineer made baseballs from small black engine room balls wound heavily with string, with the outside cover cut from leather tops of Navy-issue boots, and sewn. Thus equipped, the Merchant and Navy crews organized the "White Sea Baseball League".

Eight months in North Russia is a very, very long time. One of the kids in the Armed Guard on my ship had given up on ever going home. As I stepped outside my stateroom one evening, I saw him jump from the bridge. Without thinking, I dived after him, yelling for the crew to launch a lifeboat to pick us up. Even in the harbor, the water was

so cold that both of us immediately vomited. The lifeboat retrieved us both. After the war, I was told that I had been authorized to receive the Meritorious Medal for this act.

In November 1943, we eventually made preparations to sail for home. Why were we there so long? Well, don't forget that the British controlled the convoys in the North Atlantic. When Churchill began his Mediterranean Sea North Africa campaign, he drew out all his capital ships from the Atlantic. This left North Russian convoys unprotected from the German wolfpacks holed up in Norway and the Baltic. We just happened to be in Russia when the convoys were halted.

Eventually, we sailed for home. It was a quiet and safe trip to Scotland, and when we anchored in the Firth of Clyde, the Navy brought us fresh food. We were not in the best shape by that time. Our ships had run out of food while we were still in Russia and we lived on Spam and dehydrated potatoes and carrots for weeks. The fresh meat and vegetables provided by the Navy immediately made all hands violently sick.

We arrived in Philadelphia on December 22, 1943. America never looked so good! After a home visit and an officer's upgrade in NYC, I was assigned a ship for India and the Burma campaign...



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NOTICE :

2023 is an election year for National Officers

AMMV's Bylaws explain that candidates for National Office must signal intent to be on the ballot by December 31st of the year prior to the start of any given term. The current terms of our four National Officers will expire on 6/30/23. The following term for AMMV National Officers will run from 7/01/23 thru 6/30/25. Anyone with a desire to serve must make their intentions known by the end of this calendar year. A voting procedure is established for any contested positions; however, any unopposed candidates will be deemed elected in accordance with AMMV's Bylaws. (The next election for Regional VP's will be in 2024.)

SECTION 202 – ELIGIBILITY, NOMINATIONS, ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE.

A. To be eligible for any National or Regional Vice President office, the candidate must be a member in good standing. A member may hold one elective office and more than one appointive office. Elections for National office will be held on odd numbered years; elections for Regional Vice President office will be held on even numbered years.



B. All persons seeking National or Regional Vice President office (including those eligible for re-election) shall notify AMMV National Headquarters (Office Administrator) and/or the National President by mail or email by December 31st of the year prior to desired election. Beginning on January 1st of any given election year, no previously undeclared candidate(s) will be considered. Nominations "from the floor" during the National Convention for any National or Regional Vice President office(s) will not be allowed. All elected National Officers shall

hold their office for a term of two (2) years commencing at the start of the fiscal year, as stated in Section 209 of the Bylaws, and shall hold office for a term of two (2) years or until installation of their successor, if after the end of their fiscal elected year. Installation shall be before the end of the annual convention at which the officer is elected. In the absence of any duly elected officer, he or she may be installed when represented by any member selected for that purpose. No president can serve over two (2) year terms. However, if the president is elected after absence from office for at least one (1) term, then he or she shall be eligible for two (2) consecutive two (2) year terms.



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“Take me out to the ball game!”

AMMV members Charles A. Mills (left) and George Offenhauser were honored at a Houston Astros home game on July 21st.