

AMERICAN

MERCHANT MARINE

EST. 1984

VETERANS



Convention information p. 13-16

NEWS MAGAZINE



IN PEACE AND WAR

\$6



Winter 2023-2024

1775

Veterans Day 2023 Washington, D.C.



On November 9, a new WWII memorial was dedicated at Warbird Park in Myrtle Beach, SC. Present were members of the AMMV John T. Schmidt Palmetto Mariners Chapter.



(Photo credits: City of Myrtle Beach)

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Cover photos: Upper left photo: (L to R) Dennis Ng (AMMV Region # 3 VP), Ross Rowlinson (USA Warrior Stories & Rowlinson Media Group), Capt. Chris Edyvean (AMMV National Secretary), Capt. Dru DiMattia (AMMV National President), Jack Kammerer (MARAD Executive Director), Adam Vokac (MEBA President), Capt. Don Marcus (MMP President). Lower right photo: (L to R standing) SIU Apprentices Xavier Roberts, Caleb Estrada, Emma Digenaro and Orlando Quirantes; (L to R sitting) WWII MM veterans Capt. Pete Kurkimilis, Dave Yoho, Charles A. Mills



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Historian **vacant**

Nat'l Public Relations **vacant**

Nominating &
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Convention
Committee **Capt. Dru DiMattia, Chairman**
Paula Papamarcos, Events Co-Chair
Veda Handy, Events Co-Chair
Lynn Kelly, Registration



National President Capt. Anthony “Dru” DiMattia



To recap 2023, AMMV has participated in several history making events recognizing the service of our World War Two mariners. This is not only due in part to the fact that 78 years have gone by, but to the WWII surviving members with a simple resolve of, “HELL NO WE WON’T GO AWAY!”

The sheer tenacity of who and what drives our mission of *legacy and education* is nothing more than the common traits of our U.S. Maritime Service since the founding of our Republic. These are made up of the *actions* taken by our members and our industry stakeholders!

AMMV’s Government Affairs Standing Committee, which is chaired by 103-year-old WWII mariner Charles A. Mills and co-chaired by Member-at-Large Patrick Cotter, has been instrumental in bringing about long overdue recognitions gaining a spotlight on the vital service of the U.S. Merchant Marine on a national level. I’m referring to the events in the fall magazine and the initial planning highlighted for November 2023.

What played out on November 11, 2023 was again an extraordinary event. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Day National Committee cordially invited our WWII Mariners to the Seventieth Annual Veterans Day National Observance on Saturday, the 11th at 11:00 at the Memorial Amphitheater, Arlington National Cemetery.

We were able to partner with the Seafarers International Union affiliated Paul Hall Center who provided the Color Guard to represent the WWII Merchant Marine. Our group included four WWII mariners: Charles A. Mills, Howard Pfeifer, Dave Yoho, and Capt. Pete Kurkimilis, accompanied by chaperones/family members Veda Handy, Nancy Pfeifer, Carole Yoho, and Steve Kurkimilis. We were also honored with special guests’ attendance by Joan McAvoy, Esq. who just so happened to lead the charge for our WWII Mariners in the critical court decision of Schumacher v. Aldridge case; Wendy Coble, Historian and Acting Federal Preservation Officer for the Office of Strategic Sealift, Maritime Administration Department of Trans-

portation; Courtney Pecquex from International Transport Workers’ Federation, along with her mother Linda, who have a long family history of serving our maritime industry; and Dr. June Klees of Bay College who has become a strong advocate for AMMV with her *Veterans Speak!* program. In addition, we were honored to have our closest maritime supporters, MARAD’s Executive Director Jack Kammerer who assisted in laying a wreath; Adam Vokac, President of MEBA; and Capt. Don Marcus, President of the IOMMP. We thank all of them for their steadfast support!

The Veterans Day National Committee event, hosted by the VFW, invited our WWII mariners and chaperones to a reception following the ceremony at the Womens Military Museum in Arlington National Cemetery. Check out the entire story of this historical Veterans Day event later in this issue.

There’s no doubt that our Sea Services of the Navy, Marines, USCG, and the USMM are front and center as current events are unfolding over in the Mideast. Attacks on commercial shipping are being waged by the Houthi Rebels out of Yemen while other theaters of conflict are straining resources. Due to thousands of commercial vessel diversions, shipping schedules and liner trade routes have been turned upside down.

What has become our Nation’s Fourth Arm of Defense? I’m not sure if we even apply the Mahan Doctrine of Seapower anymore. If we did, we wouldn’t be in this situation. Due to a lack of public awareness of the importance of a strong modern Merchant Marine we have allowed the government policies to grossly slip, weakening our ability to maintain a strong Seapower. Necessary recapitalization plans are well underway with our adapting policy for effective Maritime Strategies. This addresses ship acquisitions to the U.S.-flag fleet like the TSP, ship building, and manning.

The U.S. Merchant Marine service is vital to our national security and economic prosperity.

Top USMM Priorities; (ref.) Navy League 2023-2024 Maritime Policy Report.

- Develop and rapidly implement a new National Maritime Transportation Strategy
- Expand U.S.-flag Merchant Marine
- Recruit, train, and retain Merchant Marine workforce

2024 will be another milestone year as we embark on

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

National President's Report

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

the 40th anniversary of what our WWII founding brothers and sisters created, the American Merchant Marine Veterans organization. This organization has faced challenges from day one but nothing compared to what our Greatest Generation of Mariners faced carrying the vital military supplies around the world!

Our next convention is scheduled for April in New Orleans. See details in this issue.

American Battle Monuments Commission has informed us the new Merchant Marine commemoration will be added to the West Coast memorial and is tentatively scheduled to be dedicated in May 2024. We will update you on this special event as it becomes known.

I want to thank our Region # 8 VP Christian Yuhas for his years of service to AMMV and his Golden Gate Chapter volunteering. He has received a Port Engineer's position with Matson Steamship Company. Best wishes for his new assignment! Meanwhile, we welcome aboard longstanding member Scarlett Rose to the Region # 8 VP post. Scarlett is very passionate about our cause and has family history of Merchant Mariners who have served in WWII and Korea.

AMMV has learned that American Airlines has partnered with Honor Flight and will host WWII veterans, including our Merchant Mariners and their guardians, to the 80th anniversary of D-Day taking place in Normandy, France. Prioritization will go to those who served in D-Day operations and in the European Theater. Our Administrator, Lynn Kelly has mailed out the details to our WWII members and their guardians about the American Airlines notice and contacts in order to start your applications. Make sure your passports are good through December 2024 to meet the travel guidelines. We are humbled for this opportunity extended by American Airlines to our WWII mariners!

We remain hopeful that our WWII USMS story will be highlighted in a segment of the 2024 National Memorial Day Concert. Stay tuned.

Here's a shout out to our AMMV officers, administrator, editor, our members and volunteers throughout the country who continue engaging with their local cities, state and federal agencies advocating for a strong U.S. Merchant Marine service! I'd like to also thank our Regional Vice Presidents for agreeing to serve another term. To all: please maintain the charge educating the vital service of our U.S. Merchant Marine!

I've recently been made aware that AMMV has received a substantial donation from the family of one of our WWII members which will go towards our 2024 mission support. For this level of dedication we are extremely grateful. Understanding you might not be able to donate a lot, but how about a little? AMMV continues to work hard for you!

It has been a true honor serving our WWII mariners, their legacy, and our service of the USMM during 2023.

On behalf of AMMV, we mourn the passing of former SIU President Mike Sacco, who's lifelong passion was serving the maritime labor movement. Mike and the SIU have been staunch supporters of AMMV's mission from the start. We send our deepest condolences to the Sacco family.

Wishing all of you a very healthy and prosperous New Year!

Who tolls the bell for us?

Have a good watch!

Captain Dru DiMattia

National President AMMV



AMMV National President Capt. Dru DiMattia was invited to the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (MEBA) and American Maritime Congress (AMC) Christmas party in Washington, DC, which was attended by the top names in U.S. maritime, including many sponsors of AMMV. Pictured (L to R) are Augie Tellez (SIU Executive Vice President), Roland "Rex" Rexha (MEBA Secretary/Treasurer), Capt. Dru DiMattia (AMMV National President), and David Heindel (SIU President).



National Vice President Capt. Darin Huggins



As your new National Vice President, I wanted to thank you for your support. Growing up on the banks of the Panama Canal I have been a lifelong supporter of the U.S. Merchant Marine. As a boy I heard the stories of achievement by our WWII Merchant Marine veterans. It is an honor to support you now with my new role. I have gratitude for the sacrifice paid by

those who have come before.

The next several months will be very busy for our organization with many great opportunities on the calendar. Be sure and check our website for current events. With our events, most importantly is our annual convention in the spring. We welcome our members and eagerly look forward to the annual convention. Please consider joining us.

This a fabulous opportunity to come together for camaraderie and focus on our mission at hand. I look forward to meeting more of our members.

As noted in previous newsletters we are beginning to turn a new focus on the participants of the later global conflicts. This does not mean that our respect and admiration for the WWII MM's has diminished, only that in order to persist in carrying their torch we need to take some steps to insure our continuance. As with most endeavors there comes a time when we need to expand our base and broaden our message. We also need to continue to build membership. As a reminder our membership is now open to all supporters, regardless of whether they have a MM background.

Our role is to carry on and inform the current and future generations of their deeds and actions; lest they forget. Enjoy the holidays. Fair Winds and Following Seas.

Follow us on the web, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Captain Darin Huggins
AMMV Vice President



U.S. Mint to release "Greatest Generation" coin

Background

The U.S. Mint will release the Greatest Generation Silver Dollar Coin as part of the Greatest Generation Commemorative Coin Program. The Mint will strike \$5 gold coins, \$1 silver coins, and half dollar clad coins as part of the program. The designs are emblematic of the National World War II Memorial and the service and sacrifice of American soldiers and civilians during World War II.

Recipient Organization:

Friends of the National World War II Memorial

Surcharges in the amount of \$35 for each \$5 gold coin sold, \$10 for each silver dollar sold, and \$5 for each half dollar sold are authorized to be paid to the Friends of the National World War II Memorial. The surcharges support the maintenance and repairs of the National World War II Memorial, and educational and commemorative programs.



Commemorative Coin Surcharges

Commemorative coin programs are created by acts of Congress to honor a person, place, or event. Surcharges from the sales of these coins help fund a variety of organizations and projects that benefit the public. Commemorative coins are only available from the United States Mint for a limited time, as specified by public law.

Characteristics

The obverse (heads) features six figures working together to support the Earth, illustrating the cooperation of each of the military branches (Army Air Forces, Coast Guard, Navy, Army, and Marine Corps), as well as the Merchant Marine during World War II.

The reverse (tails) features a view from beneath a baldacchino, a sculptural canopy inside a Victory Pavilion in the World War II Memorial. The sculpture depicts four eagles holding a laurel wreath, within which is a globe centered on the Pacific Ocean.





National Secretary / Editor Capt. Christopher Edyvean



Veterans Day 2023

I was able to join the AMMV group for Veterans Day in our nation's capital. This was a historic first in that the Merchant Marine were represented at the wreath laying procession following the National Veterans Day Program. Our group received the support of SIU, MEBA, AMC, TI, MMP and others who understood the significance of the moment.

Thanks to all who supported and/or attended!

2024 National Convention

The next AMMV Convention will be in New Orleans in April and will be centered around the National WWII Museum. AMMV last convened in NOLA for our 2016 convention. Since that time, the National WWII Museum has added many spectacular features and displays. In addition, the Gary Sinise Foundation has offered to sponsor a number of WWII Merchant Mariners to attend our events. Please contact AMMV HQ for more information on that front. Finally, I am pleased to know that we, along with the

Apostleship of the Sea – USA, will be joining the Council of American Master Mariners (CAMM) for a dinner gala at the museum on April 19th. (CAMM's annual event will also be in NOLA and held on a parallel timeline.)

Memberships, sponsorships, & donations

AMMV as a non-profit group carries out important work in both outreach and education, while striving to see that our Greatest Generation of mariners receive the recognition that they have earned. While AMMV's most valuable assets are our volunteers, it is the financial component that allows our work to be carried out. Please remember to renew your membership in a timely manner. Perhaps consider an ad/tribute in the convention publication to help offset costs. And please know that donations of any amount are sincerely appreciated.

Wishing a wonderful 2024 to our veterans, members, and supporters.

Capt. Christopher Edyvean
AMMV National Secretary, Editor,
& Past National President



Members Turning 100 in 2024

David Eugene Baker

Robert E. Barbee, Jr.

Bob F. Jesse

James T. Lindsey

Frank R. Monticelli

Rudy J. Okoren

Capt. Hugh Stephens

Gordon W. Thompson

Albert Varhola

Harold Wellington



National Office Administrator Lynn Kelly



Seagoing Cowboys

Although we frequently speak about the Merchant Marine and its role during World War II, we don't often focus on what became of the ships after the war. As many of you know, there is some documentation as to the final service of many of the ships as troop carriers and hospitals.

An interesting example is a WWII Liberty Ship called the *SS Mary Cassatt*, named after the famous Impressionist Painter of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The ship was delivered on May 31, 1943 by the Permanente Metals Company in Richmond, CA. She carried vital supplies to U.S. and Allied Forces during the war and at the end of the war was transferred to Russia and Far Eastern Shipping Vladivostok and renamed *Odessa*. After serving as a Russian-flagged cargo ship she was converted to a fish processing facility (1977) and eventually to a storage ship at Vladivostok. She was scrapped around 2004. She was the only surviving Liberty ship in Russia and the only surviving Kaiser built Liberty ship.

In 1943 Forty-four Allied Nations founded the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in collaboration with the Brethren Service Committee (BSC) of the Church of the Brethren. In cooperation with the UNRRA many of the historical "peace churches" such as Church of the Brethren, the Society of Friends (Quakers) and Mennonites sponsored relief missions which took the form of transporting farm animals by transatlantic ship where the animals were tended to by **Seagoing Cowboys**. There was a strong belief in the need for humanitarian aid to help the people of the war-torn countries. The theory was we can send milk but if we send a cow the people will always have milk. From June 1945 until April 1947 over 7,000 men and boys known as **Seagoing Cowboys** from the U.S. and Canada made 360 trips on 73 vessels to countries like Albania, China, Czechoslovakia (unloading in Bremen, Germany), Italy, Poland, Greece, Ethiopia, and Yugoslavia (unloading in Trieste, Italy) to deliver cattle, pigs, goats, mules, horses, and even chickens and rabbits. Most of the ships were converted WWII cargo ships with added cages and horse stalls. Although UNRRA ended shipments in 1947, The Heifers for Relief Project (later called Heifer

International) continued to operate.

Twenty-three Liberty Ships were utilized, each ship carrying about 15 **Seagoing Cowboys** and 340 horses. There were 46 Victory Ships, each carrying 32 **Seagoing Cowboys** and 750 horses. Livestock ships left from Baltimore, Galveston, Gulfport, Houston, Montreal, New Orleans, New York, Newport News, Portland (ME), and Savannah. Animals were donated by ranchers, farmers, church groups, schools, and civic organizations.

One of the tragedies of this benevolent operation occurred on the *SS Park Victory* on December 25, 1947. The ship originally began service as a livestock carrier manned by **Seagoing Cowboys** on October 25, 1945 when she loaded 485 horses and 322 heifers and steamed out of Baltimore. She unloaded her livestock in Trieste, Italy where the animals were then transported by truck and train to Yugoslavia.

The *SS Park Victory*, operating as a "Livestock Ship," sank in the Gulf of Finland on Christmas night, 1947 after running aground on rocks when the anchor failed in a storm. The rocks opened a hole in the engine room and a boiler explosion followed. The ship, carrying 48 crew members sank leaving 38 survivors. Ten **Seagoing Cowboys** lost their lives.

Many people are unaware of these humanitarian efforts undertaken in peacetime, permitted due to the aggressive U.S. shipbuilding policies of WWII and a strong belief in the need to provide relief to the war-ravaged countries of the world.

Calm Seas,

Lynn C. Kelly



Author's note: The day I submitted this piece to the magazine I went to the supermarket and on my way out I encountered a young woman who represented Heifer International. This was quite a coincidence since I had not heard of them until I researched this piece on Seagoing Cowboys. She had set up an information table to try to stir interest in the organization and to encourage folks to become donors through the website by "sponsoring an animal" for a family. Based in Little Rock, AR the organization no longer ships livestock from the U.S. but instead source animals (pigs, cows, horses, goats, chicks, and bees) in areas where they are needed and move them by truck and train to families suffering from hunger and poverty. Website: www.heifer.org

Welcome Aboard to these New Members of the AMMV

GARY BROOKS TAMPA FL
 JEFF GILTZ HOBART IN
 JAMES KELLEHER KAILUA KONA HI
 LACE KILLMAN ASHLAND VA


WILLIAM MUSELER PORTSMOUTH RI
 ROBERT OLSEN KATY TX
 ROBERT SHEEN, JR. FULSHEAR TX
 GARRETT C. SMITH PUYALLUP WA

AMMV attends Maritime Security Conference

On October 5, AMMV members and veterans attended the 2023 New York Maritime Security Conference, presented by the New York Council, Navy League of the United States and held at the Gerald W. Lynch Theater in NYC. AMMV officers in attendance were Capt. Dru DiMattia and Dennis Ng. WWII mariners joining the conference were James Dipelesi and Captain Hugh Stephens.

James Dipelesi, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, joined the U.S. Merchant Marine. He toured for about a year across the Atlantic through the Suez Canal to India. Once back in the states he joined the U.S. Navy. He was then assigned

to the Cleveland-class light cruiser *Duluth* to Okinawa, and experienced a typhoon which sent the *Duluth* to the shipyard. The ship was repaired and sent back into action in the final battles of Okinawa. During Jim’s time in the Navy, the *Duluth* was attacked by Kamikaze and Japanese bombers, surviving both. The *Duluth* was part of the fleet in Tokyo Bay when the surrender papers were signed.

Capt. Hugh Stephens is a highly decorated WWII Merchant Marine veteran. He also worked for many years as a deck instructor, and most recently participated in the *Veterans Speak!* virtual event on November 27 with other AMMV vets. 



AMMV RVP Dennis Ng



(L to R): RADM Ann C. Phillips (U.S. Maritime Administrator), Joan Mancini (daughter of WWII mariner James Dipelesi), James Dipelesi (WWII MM), Congressman Jerrold Nadler (NY – District 12), Lou Feig, Capt. Hugh Stephens (WWII MM), Mary Ann Zappulla, Dennis Ng (AMMV Region # 3 VP)



AMMV President Capt. Dru DiMattia (L) with James P. Spear, Director, LNG Center of Excellence, Faculty SUNY Maritime College and moderator of the conference

American Merchant Marine Veterans Profit & Loss

July through December 2023

Income	
402 · Contributions	1,648.97
405 · Mission Advance Support	28,416.43
406 · Gold Medal Fund Support	204.97
407 · Member Recruitment Support	94.33
410 · Chapter and MAL Dues	
DAR · Dennis Roland	450.00
EOH · Edwin O'Hara	130.00
GLD · Golden Gate	1,000.00
HIR · High Rollers	650.00
JTS · John T. Schmidt/Palmetto	650.00
MAL · Members at Large	9,685.74
NBM · North Bay Mariners	550.00
ORV · Oswego River Valley	50.00
Total 410 · Chapter and MAL Dues	13,165.74
411 · Convention Income	
413 · Comm. Book Ads	300.00
411 · Convention Income - Other	20.00
Total 411 · Convention Income	320.00
420 · Magazine Ads	75.00
Total Income	43,925.44
Expense	
500 · Fixed Expense	
507 · Telephone	228.27
510 · Membership Promotion	94.33
511 · Svc Charges - Paypal & Square	73.22
Total 500 · Fixed Expense	395.82
512 · Memorial Expense	170.88
514 · Convention Expenses	
517 · Convention Misc. Exp	605.00
519 · Convention Hospitality Room Exp	500.00
Total 514 · Convention Expenses	1,105.00
520 · Mission Advance Expenses	
525 · Mission Support Exp	27,816.43
526 · Internet Initiative	600.00
Total 520 · Mission Advance Expenses	28,416.43
530 · AMMV News Magazine	
533 · Postage	923.37
536 · Printing	5,326.37
538 · Layout	1,300.00
Total 530 · AMMV News Magazine	7,549.74
540 · Gold Medal Expenses	204.97
550 · Personnel	
551 · Administration	10,200.00
Total 550 · Personnel	10,200.00
560 · Operating Expense	
564 · Office Supplies	367.99
565 · Postage - Office	473.14
566 · Printing - Office	1,364.82
567 · Licenses & Fees	1,348.03
560 · Operating Expense - Other	75.00
Total 560 · Operating Expense	3,628.98
Total Expense	51,671.82
Net Income	-7,746.38

American Merchant Marine Veterans Balance Sheet


As of December 31, 2023

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
103 · Paypal	-119.57
105 · Chase Bank	144,171.78
110 · Chase CD	150,000.00
Total Checking/Savings	294,052.21
Total Current Assets	294,052.21
TOTAL ASSETS	
294,052.21	
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Credit Cards	
201 · Chase Card - DDiMattia (8156)	637.00
Total Credit Cards	637.00
Other Current Liabilities	
311 · Dues Receivable	696.00
312 · Member Recruitment	798.67
314 · Mission Advance Fund	15,056.69
315 · Gold Medal Fund	5,929.79
Total Other Current Liabilities	22,481.15
Total Current Liabilities	23,118.15
Total Liabilities	23,118.15
Equity	
32001 · Retained Earnings	278,680.44
Net Income	-7,746.38
Total Equity	270,934.06
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	294,052.21



AMMV was invited by U.S. Maritime Administrator Ann C. Phillips to attend the retirement ceremony for Kevin Tokarski, Associate Administrator for Strategic Sealift, MARAD, on December 8 at the DOT building in Washington, DC. Pictured is Sara Fuentes (Transportation Institute) presenting the Helen Delich-Bentley Lifetime Achievement Award to Tokarski.

Regional VP Election Results

Seven of our eight Regional Vice Presidents signaled intent to run for another term, in compliance with Article II, Section 202 of the AMMV By-Laws. All seven ran unopposed, which means they are successfully re-elected to serve from July 1, 2024 thru June 30, 2026. We have an interim Region # 8 VP, Scarlett Rose. 


Meet Scarlett Rose: Region # 8 VP



An AMMV member since 2017, Scarlett is the proud daughter and niece of two WWII merchant marine brothers, Ellis and Billy Rose. Her father, Ellis, also served in the Military Sea Transportation Service for the Korean War on the *USNS Cardinal O'Connell*. Her Uncle Billy was recruited and returned to serve on several merchant ships during the time of the Vietnam War.

Scarlett teaches and lectures about quilts and quilt making. She designs quilt patterns and creates fabric prints. Scarlett is the author of two books on Celtic

applique. She judges quilts at county fairs and national quilt shows. Her site is www.ScarlettRose.com.

After her grandfather got her interested in family genealogy when she was in high school, Scarlett has spent decades researching for all the branches and twigs of her family tree, ranging from her father's *Mayflower* ancestor to their British, Norman, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon roots. Her mother's family is Japanese and Ainu, an indigenous people of Hokkaido, the northernmost Japanese island. 

IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE FINAL BAR

BLAIR ELLWOOD BARNHART.....Flemington, PA	FRANK A. MAHER, JR.Mount Arlington, NJ
ARMIN BARTH.....Appleton, WI	ROBERT H. MIFFLIN.....Oceanside, CA
HERVEY "CHIC" THOMAS BROOKS.....Fresno, CA	JAMES P. MONTELEONE, JR.Phillipsburg, PA
JEREMIAH GARRETT "GARY" COTTER.....Walla Walla, WA	JAMES V. MONTELEONE, SR.Oxford, NJ
GOMER EVANS.....Black Diamond, WA	JOHN J. NELSON.....Mt. Pleasant, SC
GEORGE L. GRIFFITH.....Williamsburg, OH	LEONARD SCHLADWEILER.....Billings, MT
W. GLENN HACKNEY.....Seattle, WA	STANLEY SKOWRONSKI.....Parlain, NJ
FRANCIS C. HYNDS.....Pittsburgh, PA	ANGEL LUIS TORRES.....Puerto Rico
JOSEPH KOLIS.....Springfield, IL	ARTHUR WATSON.....Cleveland, TX
RICHARD W. "DICK" LOW.....Peoria, AZ	HARRY W. WOLFENBERGER.....Hagerstown, MD

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.

AMMV 36th National Convention

New Orleans, Louisiana – April 18 – 21, 2024

Higgins Hotel by Hilton

1000 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA 70130

phone: (504) 528-1941



Times subject to change; see updated agenda at time of convention

Thursday, April 18th

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Registration & Hospitality Room open – *American Red Cross Chartwell Room*

Friday, April 19th

7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Higgins Hotel – breakfast on your own
8:00 a.m. – Noon Registration & Hospitality Room open – *American Red Cross Chartwell Room*
9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. AMMV Business Session – *Casablanca Room*
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Lunch – *Casablanca Room*
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. AMMV Business Sessions – *Casablanca Room*
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Guest Speakers; AMMV program awards – *Casablanca Room*
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Break & Hospitality Room open – *American Red Cross Chartwell Room*
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Cocktail hour – *National WWII Museum*
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Gala Dinner hosted by CAMM – *National WWII Museum*
Includes Victory Belles entertainment and AMMV spotlight

Saturday, April 20th

7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Higgins Hotel – breakfast on your own
8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Hospitality Room open – *American Red Cross Chartwell Room*
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. National WWII Museum tours (pay as you go)
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Lunch w/ speaker(s) at National WWII Museum – *BB's Staged Door Canteen*
2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Continued museum tours featuring movie *Beyond all Boundaries*
3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Hospitality Room open – *American Red Cross Chartwell Room*
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Riverboat dinner cruise – *off site* (pay as you go)
8:30 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. Hospitality Room open – *American Red Cross Chartwell Room*

Sunday April 21st

7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Higgins Hotel – breakfast on your own
8:00 a.m. – Noon National WWII Museum tours (pay as you go)
11:00 a.m. – Noon Hotel check-out & travel home for many

Monday April 22nd Optional extended stay

HEAVE HO! Safe Travels!

To register online, go to the AMMV website at:

<https://ammv.us/events>





Convention Registration Form
 AMMV 2024 36th National Convention
 April 18th thru 21st, 2024
 Higgins Hotel by Hilton
 1000 Magazine Steet
 New Orleans, LA 70130

Name: _____ Affiliation: _____
 Email: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____
 Additional names(s) in party: _____

Registration Fee (per person, WWII & Korea MM free) \$50 x _____ = \$ _____

Friday, April 19

Lunch (Higgins Hotel) \$50 x _____ = \$ _____

Dinner Gala w/ CAMM (National WWII Museum) \$100 x _____ = \$ _____

Please select your party's meal choices for the 4/19 evening dinner

Fish.....Quantity: _____

Beef.....Quantity: _____

Saturday, April 20

Lunch (National WWII Museum) \$50 x _____ = \$ _____

****Does not include admission to National WWII Museum. WWII veterans receive free admission****

4/20 DinnerRiverboat jazz cruise /dinner; self-pay at time of event, please RSVP with AMMV HQ at ammermarvets@gmail.com

TOTAL due for all selections = \$ _____

Note: Convention Registration does not include your hotel stay.

Please make check payable to: **AMMV**
 Mail check (no cash please) with completed form to:
AMMV, Attn: Convention, P.O. Box 2024, Darien, CT 06820



36th AMMV CONVENTION

The Higgins Hotel New Orleans

Curio Collection by Hilton

1000 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA 70130



Thursday, April 18 thru Sunday, April 21, 2024

To book rooms online:

<https://group.curiocollection.com/5cf8hq>

To book over the phone: (833) 357-1172 (**Group Code: 93L**)

Nightly rate \$179 + taxes; cut-off date for reservations is March 20



American Merchant Marine Veterans
 36th National Convention
 April 18 — 21, 2024
 Higgins Hilton Hotel, NOLA

COMMEMORATIVE BOOK SPACE -- ORDER FORM

We extend an invitation to recognize the contributions of the U.S. Merchant Marine, especially our WWII MM, by placing an ad or page in our commemorative convention book. Chapters, individuals, maritime organizations, and other groups are urged to participate. Heave Ho!

COMMEMORATIVE BOOK RATES

Deadline for submittals is March 10, 2024

- Full Page (8 in x 10.5 in) @ \$400.00 (must be vertical)
- Half Page (8 in x 5.25 in) @ \$200.00 (must be horizontal)
- 1/4 Page (4 in x 5.25 in) @ \$100.00 (must be vertical)
- Business Card @ \$50.00 (must be horizontal)
- Patriotic contribution/donation (enter amount: \$_____)
- Premium location: (Call first) Inside front cover; inside/outside back cover \$750

→ *All full-page orders will receive copy of book*

→ *PDF copy will be posted to the AMMV website*

*All submittals must be camera ready * No bleeds except back and inside covers * Digital copies only; PDF format preferred * Email artwork to: **susan.alexander269@gmail.com***

Contact (or name of company/sponsor) : _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____



Check or money order payable to AMMV, send to:

AMMV HQ
Attn: National Convention
P.O. Box 2024
Darien, CT 06820-2024

Call (475) 470-9200 to pay over phone



AMMV attends Ed Laughton's 102nd birthday celebration

submitted by Patrick Cotter

This year, AMMV member Ed "Big John" Laughton celebrated his 102nd birthday at Embassy Suites in Seaside, CA with many family members and friends. Everyone was dressed in a masquerade theme for the fun of the celebration. AMMV members Capt. Dru DiMattia, Christian

Yuhas (Golden Gate Chapter), and I were pleased to be invited to the party and treated as members of the family. The Laughton family goes all out to celebrate Ed's life and specifically his service in the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Ed, a graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, NY, served as 2nd Officer aboard the *SS Hobbs Victory* when the ship was attacked and sunk by enemy kamikaze aircraft off Okinawa on April 6, 1945. While in a lifeboat, Ed helped to save several of his shipmates. Unfortunately, 11 of his crew lost their lives during the attack. Tears come to Ed's eyes when he retells the harrowing story about the attack.

This year, Ed and his family attended the National Memorial Day Concert on the Capitol Grounds and the wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier during the Memorial Day ceremony. Before the ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, Ed and his granddaughter Betsy Mount had breakfast with President Joe Biden



Capt. Dru DiMattia Honors Ed Laughton and his family.



Capt. Dru DiMattia, Ed Laughton, and Patrick Cotter



Masquerade birthday party guests celebrate with Ed Laughton (center)



Ed Laughton (center), the Laughton/Mount Family, and samba dancers celebrate Ed's Birthday.

and First Lady Jill Biden. The Laughton family's photos and memorabilia from the historic events for Memorial Day 2023 and many other Merchant Marine events where Ed was honored were on display at the birthday party. The Laughton family's love for Ed was first and foremost, and everyone shared in the

spirit of the party.

Capt. DiMattia was a featured speaker at the party. He told the audience how important it was to have Ed and his family at the Memorial Day celebrations in Washington, DC and how appreciative he was to be invited to Ed's birthday party. The Greatest Generation is well represented when Ed attends and shows his big smile. Check out the photograph of Ed and Betsy with the President and First Lady on page 32 of the AMMV News Magazine's Fall 2023 issue. Capt. DiMattia also had kind words for the work that AMMV and I did to honor all U.S. Merchant Marine World War II veterans for the first time in history on Memorial Day and Veterans Day this year. It was an honor for AMMV to be included in the birthday celebrations for Ed and to be counted as friends of the Laughton family. We look forward to the next party! *Note: All photographs courtesy of Robert Ellis Photography.* 📍

AMMV at 2023 National Veterans Day Program



AMMV wreath laying contingent

For the first time in the history of Veterans Day, the U.S. Merchant Marine were invited to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, following the national ceremony at the Arlington Memorial Amphitheatre. Earlier in 2023, AMMV represented our WWII Merchant Marine in a similar event on Memorial Day. This level of participation did not come by accident; rather, it was the relentless work of advocates such as AMMV Government Affairs Committee member Pat Cotter

and AMMV National President Capt. Dru DiMattia.

Gathering for a reception at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel on November 10 were Captain Dru DiMattia (AMMV President), Captain Chris Edyvean (AMMV National Secretary), Dennis Ng (AMMV Region # 3

VP), Wendy Coble (U.S. Maritime Administration Historian), Dr. June Klees (Bay College/Civics Corps), Courtney Pecquex (International Transport Workers' Federation), Mark Gallagher (MEBA Contracts Representative), Roland "Rex" Rexha (MEBA Secretary/Treasurer), Marco Cannistraro (MEBA Director/Special Projects & Communications), Bob Vint (MEBA, retired), Mark DeLatch (MEBA engineer), and



Vice President Kamala Harris and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden at the Veterans Day program

Ross Rowlinson (USA Warrior Stories & Rowlinson Media Group). WWII Merchant Marine veterans present for the reception and the ensuing day's events were WWII mariners Charles A. Mills (with granddaughter Veda Handy), Howard Pfeifer (with wife Nancy), Capt. Pete Kurkimilis (with son Steve), and Dave Yoho (with wife Carole). Also joining the group were the Color Guard contingent for the following day, made up of SIU Unlicensed Apprentices Orlando Quirantes, Xavier Roberts, Emma Digennaro, and Caleb Estrada of Class # 901, with their Commandant, John Romer (Seafarers International Union-affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education).

AMMV member Phil Strissel (MEBA, retired) assisted with logistics on both ends of the weekend and donated to cover the cost of catering for the November 10 reception.

Sponsors for the weekend included Marine Engineers Beneficial Union, International Organization of Masters, Mates, & Pilots, American Maritime Congress, USA Maritime, and Transportation Institute.

The reception allowed for inter-generational dialogue between our





POTUS Joseph Biden delivers a Veterans Day speech

Greatest Generation of mariners and those mariners who are preparing for their first shipboard assignment. Charles A. Mills, who stepped foot on his first ship in 1937 and sailed throughout WWII, offered words of advice to the young SIU Apprentices: “Study, study, study... Then, when you

get your chance, you will be ready.”

Captain Pete Kurkimilis started his mariner career during WWII, and went on to have somewhat of a legendary career both as a Panama Canal pilot and MMP Captain. He shared sea stories, many relating back to his days as Master on the Sealand SL-7 class

a short speech to the group at large, emphasizing the importance and significance of the day ahead. Mr. Yoho’s words also served to educate our young seafarers.

During the afternoon and evening, Ross Rowlinson conducted interviews with the veterans and attendees to



Rep. Mark Takano (left, standing) and Rep. Mike Bost chat with WWII mariners Howard Pfeifer (left, sitting) and Charles A. Mills prior to the wreath laying ceremony

containerships.

Another of the attending WWII mariners, Howard Pfeifer of Pennsylvania, is a longtime AMMV member who has been involved in the fight for recognition and had led the AMMV Three Rivers Chapter for several years, also serving many terms as a Regional Vice President. Pfeifer participated in the Murmansk Run during WWII.

Renowned speaker and WWII mariner Dave Yoho gave



Capt. Dru DiMattia, Howard Pfeifer, and Nancy Pfeifer

be crafted into a documentary of the event.

On the morning of Veterans Day, AMMV veterans, members, and supporters were bussed to the Arlington Cemetery so that the veterans could be positioned in their assigned seating areas.

The ceremony opened with selections from the U.S. Air Force Band and Singing Sergeants.

During the presentation of Colors, in which many military and auxiliary organizations participated, the four



Capt. Pete Kurkimilis with son Steve

SIU Apprentices proudly carried the American flag, the U.S. Merchant Marine flag, and the SIU flag. President Joseph R. Biden was flown into the grounds via helicopter and placed the first wreath of the day at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Ceremonial remarks were offered by Ms. Karen Durham-Aguilera, Executive Director, Army National Military Cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery; Mr. Duane Sarmiento, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States; the Honorable Denis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and finally, President Biden. Other dignitaries observing the event included First Lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg.

Following the program, guests and participants were repositioned for the wreath laying procession. The AMMV wreath laying contingent, which included all four of our WWII veterans, along with Capt. DiMattia, Capt. Edyvean, and Jack Kammerer, Executive Director of MARAD, were fifth in line to lay a wreath. While awaiting the start, Rep. Mark Takano (CA – District

39), House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member, and Rep. Mike Bost (IL – District 12), House Veterans' Affairs Chairman, took time to speak with Charles Mills and Howard Pfeifer.

Others in attendance for the program and ceremony included MMP President Capt. Don Marcus, MEBA President Adam Vokac, Courtney Pecquex, Linda Pecquex, Dr. June Klees, Wendy Coble, Dennis Ng, Ross Rowlinson (with a media pass), and the Honorable Judge Joan Zeldon (retired), who as a young attorney was on the plaintiff team in the successful lawsuit won in 1988 which finally granted veteran status to our WWII mariners.

A reception sponsored by the VFW followed, held at the Women's Military Memorial in Arlington. Our veterans and their immediate family members attended.

The weather for this day was cool but with mostly clear skies. It was a great day! ⚓



AMMV President Capt. Dru DiMattia (left) gives an AMMV challenge coin to Executive Director of MARAD Jack Kammerer



WWII Merchant Marine veteran Howard Pfeifer



(L to R): Dr. June Klees (Bay College / Civics Corps), Courtney Pecquex (ITF), Linda Pecquex, Judge Joan Zeldon, Wendy Coble (MARAD Historian)



The SIU Apprentices prepare for their role in the ceremony

Happy Veterans Day From The Ohio Valley Chapter Of The American Merchant Marine Veterans

Rain or shine for thirty-one years, we have held our Veterans Day observance at the AMMV monument in New Richmond, Ohio. The membership at one time was 77 and included both Merchant Marine and Navy Armed Guard WWII Veterans. Present at the chapter's ceremony this year were two of our three remaining WWII veterans, Julian Smith and Albert Varhola. Unable to attend was ninety-nine-year-old George Griffith, who is having a tough go of it. Words of support and well wishes can be sent to him at: 3348 Concord Hennings, Williamsburg, Ohio, 45176. The three veterans again send thanks to the Navy League of the United States Greater Cincinnati Council for arranging

the *USS Cincinnati* honorary crew membership that has meant so much, and all of us with the Ohio Valley Chapter are indebted to the Navy League for its continued recognition and support of the American Merchant Marine. May God bless America and all of her veterans past, present and future.

Heave Ho,

William "Speed" Hinds
Proud Nephew of an
American Merchant Marine WWII Veteran



From the Midwest Chapter

(submitted by Karyn Holm)

On Saturday, November 4, the Midwest Chapter (Capt. Joe O'Connor, President; Karyn Holm, Treasurer; Paula Papamarcos, Regional Vice President; and Marilyn Wnuk, member) traveled to the Franciscan Village, Lemont, Illinois to honor Del Reynolds, one of our living recipients of the Merchant Mariners of WW2 Congressional Gold Medal. Del's son, Jerry, and his daughter-in-law, Karen, were also in attendance. The event was well-attended, and the fact of the contributions of the Merchant Marine in the World War 2 war effort was not only of interest but sparked comments and questions. Most important though was that

we left knowing that honoring Del and his fellow mariners, living and deceased, was in fact, a very fulfilling task.

The Midwest Chapter also participated in the Veterans Day Commemoration Ceremony on November 11, 2023, at Soldier Field, 1st Floor, United Club. Capt. Joseph O'Connor represented the Merchant Marine Veterans on stage. The band played *Heave Ho*, and did so with gusto! Keynote Speaker, Admiral Cecil D. Haney, former Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, recognized the Merchant Marine in his remarks. Also attending were Karyn Holm and Joan O'Connor.



Members of AMMV's Chicago-based Midwest Chapter honor WWII mariner Del Reynolds



Capt. Joe O'Connor and Karyn Holm in a group photo which includes Illinois Senator Tammy Duckworth, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, and 36th Ward Alderman Gilbert Villegas

Charles Mills visits National WWII Museum with fellow Veterans

During the last week of September, 103-year-old WWII Merchant Mariner Charles A. Mills participated in a trip to the National WWII Museum in New Orleans, LA. The trip was sponsored by the Texas VFW Post 654. Mr. Mills has remained active in his community and continues to advocate for the Merchant Marine and share in its history.



Charles A. Mills with granddaughter, Veda Handy



AMMV member receives 25-year membership pin from the Naval Order

The Naval Order of the United States (NOUS) held their Annual Congress in October in San Diego California. This annual business meeting, education forum, and awards opportunity is held each year at various locations around the country.

The Naval Order of the United States is the living history of our sea-going services which prominently includes the Merchant Marine. Naval Order members keep history alive through the restoration of historic artifacts, establishment of memorials at key sites, history education programs, and the active collection of our shared history through academic papers, published works, and ad hoc stories.

The Naval Order was founded on July 4, 1890 and continues to be a growing community of members spanning multiple generations and military engagements. Using personal histories which are written, visual, oral, and through social media, we tell our stories and work as a community to build, restore, and commemorate our treasured national history of those who went to sea in the name of our country.

Awards presented at the recent Congress include Distinguished Sea Service Awards to outstanding members of the Maritime services – Senior Officer and Enlisted members, Preeminent Member of the Community that has previously served the nation in uniform, Outstanding Commanderies from across the country for the Naval Order, and various other recognitions of outstanding performance.


This year a special presentation included awarding a Quarter Century/25-year lapel pin and certificate to CDR Charlie Sellers, USNR/USMM (Ret). Charlie joined the Naval Order in November 1975 and thereby completed the first 25 years on November 24, 2000. The Naval Order initiated the 25-year pin just last year and wanted to make sure CDR Sellers was recognized. He will be eligible for another pin in November 2025!

More information is available on the Naval Order website www.navalorder.org or by emailing membership@navalorder.org.



NOUS Commander General, Capt. Bob Whitkop, USN (Ret) presents Commander Charlie Sellers USNR/USMM (Ret) with his 25-year pin

Balabanow speaks at Pear Harbor remembrance ceremony

On December 3rd at the Lebanon Valley (PA) Expo Center, WWII mariner William Balabanow was a speaker at a Pearl Harbor remembrance ceremony. Balabanow served as a Radio Operator in the U.S. Merchant Marine, retiring in 1997. He remains extremely active with AMMV. 



William Balabanow at the Hoffman Island Radio School, 1944



Deeds, Not Words: A Ceremony Honoring the Merchant Marine

Elmwood Cemetery, North Brunswick, NJ

On September 30, 2023, under a heavy overcast sky, about twenty participants gathered at the Elmwood Cemetery of North Brunswick, New Jersey, to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, NY and to remember the commitment and sacrifices of the Merchant Mariners in World War II. Three of these mariners are known to be interred at the cemetery. The cemetery association holds an annual event to honor the men and women who served in the armed forces and this year it chose to honor those who served in the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Opening the proceeding was Eleanor Molloy, the president of the association. Next to speak was Dennis Ng, a Regional Vice President of American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV) and the president of the AMMV Dennis A. Roland (New Jersey) Chapter. Mr. Ng made a short presentation about the history of the U.S. Merchant Marine, the extraordinary price the Merchant Mariners paid in support of the allies' efforts in World War II, and the reluctance of our government to afford them due credit. Aiding in the proceeding was Program Assistant Liam Smith.

The participants then heard recordings of three Merchant Mariners whose experiences were preserved by the Oral History Archives at Rutgers University.

Frank Ambrosy, the first of the interviewees, was born in Newark in 1928 to Polish immigrants. At 16 years of age, he was so eager to serve our country like his two older brothers, that he signed up with the U.S. Merchant Marine. Later, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and served in the Korean War. The following is a summary of the interview:

Frank Ambrosy was sixteen when he enlisted. “[a]t the beginning, (the US Merchant Marine) was only taking seventeen and eighteen, but, then they lost so many that they finally decided, ‘hey, a sixteen year old? We’ll take you...’” At sixteen, “I think I was too stupid to realize (how dangerous it was to join the Merchant Marines.) I was just happy to get, you know, get going.”

Ambrosy adapted well after the first trip. “The old

seasickness was just about gone.” In the shallower parts of the English Channel, there was the graveyard of ships. “[W]e had to maneuver between sunken

Liberty ships. There must have been thirty of them sunk there. All you see is the cross tree, the upper part, you didn’t see the deck.”

Aboard the ship, everyone was suddenly thrown in with a crew of various ages, from various countries. “I got to get used to the most of them. To some that spoke broken English and all, you’ll manage to, you know, get to know each other. You know what he was

saying, or I was saying, or you got to understand each other. We got along pretty good. Though everybody had their own thing to do and for pastime, like I say, you played cards, or dominoes, or some of them even had a Ping Pong table, you know, on board.” Crew was very good, no matter who they were.”

“Believe it or not, we only had one radio and that was in, I don’t think they allowed you to bring a radio on. No radio, no cameras, nothing. The only radio we had was a special radio that was in the officers’ mess hall, which was, it’s about the size of this room, too, maybe not as wide, and they had it on loud enough for, you could hear it. The, what’s his name, would give us some news every now and then, the radio operator, you know, he had his own; they still use that, believe it or not, the ticker tape, Morse code, yes. So, he gave us some news that he heard. You know, he had it typed or, you know, on a piece of paper. Crew was very good, no matter who they were.”

Ambrosy also remembered how beautiful out in the ocean the stars were. “Everything was so perfectly clear. You don’t have no haze, no lights, no trees, or whatnot, buildings, shooting stars would be going by and all like, real beautiful.”

Ambrosy never saw any enemy aircraft or was that ever a problem but “you are feeling you’ll be attacked anytime. We were afraid more of those mines up in the North Sea after you saw them sunken ships and you’re carrying that high fuel. What does it take? For one



torpedo or one mine and that's all I can say, a floating bomb. That's all the thing was. You could smell the fumes."

The next interviewee was Matthew Drag who was born in 1917 and who later grew up in Paterson, New Jersey. After studying at a vocational school and participating in the Sea Scouts, he joined the merchant marine during the Great Depression, and he continued serving throughout the Second World War. He finally retired in 1984 and he went on to college in his 70's to study law. The following is a summary of the interview:

Before Pearl Harbor, Matthew Drag already completed two cruises, one to Australia and the other to the Philippines. But "when we did see sail, we sailed with the American flag... painted on both sides of the ship. The big floodlight was directed on that. And that was one of the duties on watch. You checked that the light was lit. That was strict orders 'to make sure that the light is on.'"

After Pearl Harbor, the ship was diverted to Wellington, New Zealand. It was then ordered to sail right across for the tip of South America. "[I]t was, it was good routing because, the weather was...just sort of... cold, foggy, and hazy...the visibility for submarines was very poor...[w]e fabricate... an outline, a silhouette of a gun, had it painted gray, and placed with canvas aboard it. It looked very imposing...it looked like the real thing...the captain got reprimanded because this was against the Geneva Convention...[b]ut, look, we were alive, we weren't torpedoed."

Of the five years he spent in the Merchant Marine, "...most [of it] was ... sailing independently...I slept with a life jacket on for all five years...At nighttime, you had a little duffel bag with your 'abandon ship kit,' in case you had to abandon ship in a hurry..."

"We had blackouts right away, came blackout everyday. In other words, the ship proceeded, ... the portholes were painted black and they had the screens, the baffles in the passageways, so in case you opened the door, the watertight door to get outside ... the light that was in the passageway would not show. It was a series of baffles..."

On board, they had weekly fire and boat drills. "[W]e were running independently. No escorts, no armament... [t]here were no gun crews, because there was no guns. So, finally they put the ship in the shipyards. Came guns aboard, four inch ... on the stern, three inch gun on the bow, and about two, four, six, about eight (Arlicken?) antiaircraft guns, 20 mm aircraft guns." The gun crews of the Naval Armed Guard then came aboard. It was in Okinawa, in preparation for the invasion of mainland Japan, that he finally word that the war was finally over.

The last interviewee was Morton Dietz, who was born in 1921 in Trenton, New Jersey. After finishing the

Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, he was rejected from officers training in the U.S. Navy, so he joined the U.S. Merchant Marine. After the war, he became a radio DJ and an IRS agent. He went on to graduate from Rutgers Law School and to teach at Princeton University. The following is a summary of the interview:


In the summer of 1942, Morton Deitz received his orders to report to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point. He was then assigned to the SS John Drayton to deliver armaments to the Persian Gulf, for the Russians. The ship traveled down the East Coast in convoy, because of German submarines.

In the Persian Gulf, they offloaded planes to be assembled at an aircraft assembly plant. "When the ship was fully offloaded, we headed home" at first as part of a convoy. "[A]t about the Northern end of the Island of Madagascar, the convoy broke up and we were proceeding on our own, alone ... [w]henver we had any warning or sighting of potential submarine activity, the Skipper was very adept, adopting the established course of action of zigzagging, dropping of depth-charge antisubmarine explosives, and whatever else was done to minimize the risk of being struck by a torpedo." But despite that, the ship was torpedoed on the night of April 21, 1943 south of Madagascar. "The attacking submarine then surfaced and began shelled the ship. We barely got off..."

"Normally, a complement of twelve, we were twenty-five (in a lifeboat) ... [t]wenty-five survivors in a life raft for twelve for thirty-one days after seventeen died and were thrown overboard. there were several times during the thirty-one days where we were spotted by aircraft. Once, they dropped us some food and water and flares and stuff and, "Help was on its way," they signaled a message to us, but that help never arrived. ..."

Ultimately, the few survivors were picked up. "I was comatose at the time and there were eight of us left in the lifeboat, of whom, on the way from being picked up and being taken to the Addington Memorial Hospital in Durban, South Africa, three of the fellows died. only four others, besides myself, that survived."

He continued to suffer nightmares long after the war, some were very violent. "I was always dreaming of violent activities. It was "...only after I was recognized by the VA as a veteran, got my formal discharge paper and went to the VA medical services...(did the) very serious, frightening nightmares dissipate...I'm still ambulatory. I live with my difficulties...but you learn to live with it."

At the end, a wreath to honor all the merchant mariners who are no longer with us was laid at the gravesite of one of the merchant mariners. Following this was a panel discussion about the key role and the contribution of the U.S. Merchant Marine in service to our country. 



Three Rivers President Capt. Scott Nowak with WWII Merchant Marine Veteran Howard Pfeifer

From the Three Rivers Chapter

The AMMV Three Rivers Chapter reported on a handful of events. They participated in the Pittsburg Veterans Day Parade, attended the Chartiers Valley High School Flag Folding Ceremony (appearing on the local CBS TV news broadcast), engaged in a tribute to veterans from a 2nd grade class, and helped Howard “Howdy” Pfeifer celebrate his 100th birthday.



WWII mariner Joe Kallist



Three Rivers Chapter group photo



Howard and Nancy Pfeifer at Howard's 100th birthday party



(L to R): Joe Kallist, Frank Suska, Howard Pfeifer (sitting). Suska is an original member of the Three Rivers Chapter.



Three Rivers Chapter members at a tribute to veterans by a 2nd grade class



AMMV members and supporters in Jax for Veterans Day parade

November 11, 2023: It was a fine day for a parade to honor all veterans, including our WWII Merchant Mariners. After an arduous journey from the Museum of Military History in Kissimmee, Florida, the only WWII Liberty Ship Lifeboat returned once again to Jacksonville for the 2023 Veterans Day Parade. Museum Director Chris Robertson and Christine Ladas-Drake were there to meet her on arrival at the tailgate staging area. “Captain” Charlie Sellers oversaw the dressing out of the Great Dame, by Mark and Chris Swan, in AMMV finest regalia for the occasion. Dan Campbell was the “helmsman,” sailing her down Bay Street. C/E Tom “Sunny” Suneson secured the “home berth” at Tailgate Bar, and Kelly Pickens greeted the crowd as Miss Merchant Marine.



(L to R): Steve Snyder (AMMV Region # 1 VP), Cole Eddins (3rd.Mate, MM&P), Denny Luke (Chief Engineer, USN-Retired), Momma Rosa Keener (USO Volunteer), Mark Swan (AMMV Member), Ricky Walega (AMMV Member), Dan Campbell (AMMV Member), Tom “Sunny” Suneson (AMMV Member, MEBA), Karl Klassen (USN-Retired), Christine Ladas-Drake (Museum of Military History), Chris Robertson (Museum of Military History) Charlie Sellers (Chief Engineer, AMMV Member), Chris Swan (AMMV Member)

AN ACCELERATED MILITARY-TO-MARINER PROGRAM WILL HELP ADDRESS THE NATIONAL MARINER SHORTAGE

America's six State Maritime Academies (SMA) annually produce no less than 70% of the officers entering the U.S. merchant marine who hold a USCG credential ("license") with an "unlimited" endorsement that allows them to operate any size U.S. flag vessel. The SMAs propose a new program to provide a fast track into the maritime industry for honorably discharged military veterans. This program will be a *win-win* approach that will not only assist veterans transition from military service to the merchant marine, but will also be an important step toward addressing the national mariner shortage.

Background

The largest source of new U.S. merchant marine officers with a USCG license and an unlimited endorsement is a network of six SMAs located throughout the United States, in California, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, and Texas. The SMAs are regionally accredited higher education institutions that offer a bachelor's degree combined with a USCG-approved merchant marine officer license program. As such, a SMA graduate must carry a full baccalaureate degree course load plus complete a program that ensures they meet all international and domestic standards for a merchant marine officer license, including accumulating the required 360 days of sea time. Graduates can then enter the American maritime industry as licensed officers who hold an unlimited endorsement that allows them to operate any U.S. flag vessel. Our military sealift capacity depends on maintaining enough officers with this credential to operate the fleet of government and commercial vessels that support the U.S. military.

Proposed New SMA Military to Mariner Program

Today, earning a USCG merchant marine license with an unlimited endorsement requires earning a bachelor's de-


gree at a SMA (or the US Merchant Marine Academy). In other words, historically, an honorably discharged veteran who already holds a bachelor's degree must receive a second bachelor's degree at the SMA in order to graduate as a USCG-licensed merchant marine officer with the unlimited endorsement.

The SMAs propose a new approach that essentially decouples the bachelor's degree and license requirements for veterans. Under this new approach, an honorably discharged military veteran, who holds a bachelor's degree will have the ability to focus on the license requirements and earn a merchant mariner's license in 28 months or less.

The change would have multiple benefits:

- It would allow veterans with an existing bachelor's degree to complete his or her SMA program in approximately two years instead of the usual four-years-or-longer, greatly incentivizing the military to mariner path.
- Those veterans could then fully fund their SMA education within the pendency of G.I. Bill assistance, something not possible in a traditional SMA program.
- Those veterans could then more quickly enter the commercial maritime industry and help address the current national mariner shortage.

In short, an accelerated license program for honorably discharged military veterans would eliminate a major impediment to current military-to-maritime programs – the requirement that a veteran with a bachelor's degree get a second bachelor's degree in order to receive a license with the unlimited endorsement from a SMA.

For more info, contact RADM Jerry Achenbach (Great Lakes Maritime Academy) at gachenbach@nmc.edu. 



WWII Mariner Joseph Kolis receives Congressional Gold Medal



IL Congresswoman Nikki Budzinski with WWII mariner Joseph Kolis

Able-Bodied Seaman Joseph E Kolis of Springfield, Illinois was officially presented the Congressional Gold Medal for his service in World War II by U.S. Congresswoman Nikki Budzinski on Veterans Day weekend. 98-year-old Kolis was accompanied at the ceremony by many

members of his family including his sister, Margaret, who is 100-years-old. Also in attendance were his care facility staff, many fellow veterans, and one very special friend: Rose Hammitt, the daughter of Joe's best friend and fellow WWII shipmate on many voyages, Jimmy Livingston.



Kolis with lifelong friend and fellow mariner Jimmy Livingston

Joe's service with the Merchant Marine began in July 1943 at Sheepshead Bay, NY. His service included seven voyages in the Atlantic theater, delivering troops and supplies to Great Britain. Some of the ships were so heavily loaded that he could almost stick his feet in the water from the deck. On several occasions his convoys came into direct contact with German U-boats, and calls to General Quarters occurred frequently.

Kolis also had two voyages in the Mediterranean theater delivering supplies and Free French and Senega-



lese troops from North Africa to Italy. In addition, his ship made direct delivery of material onto the beach during the first day of D-Day of Southern France. Joe's ship became beached and could not




move for three days during the battle. After the invasion, his ship then delivered German POW's back to North Africa. While on this voyage Joe was able to speak with a German Major who he believes was initially captured by his brother-in-law only days before. The German Major also let Joe know that New York City had been destroyed by German "wonder weapons!"



Kolis aboard the S/S David Caldwell

Joe then made two voyages into the Pacific Theater; first to Pearl Harbor, then to the war-torn islands of Kwajalein, the Gilbert Islands, Eniwetok, Tinian, Saipan, Guam, and finally joining a task force headed to Iwo Jima. There, during the Battle of Iwo Jima, Joe's ship delivered onto the beach a contingent of specialized U.S. Marines, and he watched as the U.S. battleships bombarded the island. Afterward, Kolis embarked on his longest trip, a 9-month voyage starting with a sailing from Baltimore to Italy, picking up material for the invasion of Japan. While loading in Italy, the ship added an additional hand for the voyage. The man was a Polish mariner named Nick who was also with the Italian Partisans. Nick's unit was involved in the capture of Mussolini and he was present when Mussolini was hung upside down in Milan. Nick also was a POW in both German and Russian camps, and he would speak of the atrocities at both. Joe then sailed thru the Panama Canal, continuing to the Philippines. While enroute the ship became adrift for about five days before being repaired. The fear onboard was that a Japanese submarine would find them a sitting duck. When the ship finally arrived in the Philippines preparing for the invasion, the atomic bombs were dropped and the war ended. Joe's ship returned thru the Panama Canal back to Baltimore, ending his service in February 1946.

In all, Joe Kolis served on six ships starting with the S/S BYCAYL, USAT TROUBADOUR, USAT CHRISTOBAL, Liberty ship S/S ROBERT DALE OWEN, Victory ship S/S BRITIAN VICTORY, and finally the Liberty ship S/S DAVID CALDWELL. He had a great number of stories about his voyages ranging from hilarious, to frightening, to very sad. But all were interesting, informative, and meaningful. 

Monument Ensures Legacy of Ships' Radio Officers!



Among the many historic maritime treasures located in New York City's Battery Park in lower Manhattan is an imposing monument to ships' Radio Officers lost at sea. The monument was commissioned in 1915 under the auspices of the Veteran

refurbished, and restored the monument over a two-year period, before repositioning it at a more prominent location near the entrance to the park. It now sits alongside several other maritime memorials. Please visit our web site at WWW.VWOA.ORG.

By Richard T. Kenney, 1st V.P. VWOA
email: seaservice2@aol.com



Wireless Operators Association (VWOA), to honor those "wireless" radio operators who lost their lives while performing their duties. The first name to be added to the memorial was Jack Phillips, Radio Officer on the *Titanic*, who went down with the sinking ship in 1912, while sending out an SOS, after it hit an iceberg.

The monument consists of an upright granite cenotaph, decorated with a carved swag of seashells and foliage, and inscribed with the names of the deceased. In addition, there is a granite display fountain and two stone benches. Well-known author Willa Catha wrote of it, soon after its dedication: *"The monument is one of the most attractive and most friendly commemorative works in New York ... these men died in storm and terror, but their names are brought together here and abide in a pleasant place with cheerful companionship."*

Additional bronze markers naming those who have perished since have been added by the VWOA since the monument's dedication on May 12, 1915, through the present.

Historically, the monument has been visited by Former Honorary President of the VWOA and radio pioneer Lee De Forest, and Princess Elettra Marconi, the daughter of VWOA Former Honorary President Guglielmo Marconi. Both men were physicists who carried out the first successful experiments in wireless technology. It has hosted various memorial services through the years, usually accompanied by a U.S. Navy Honor Guard.

For more than 90 years, the Veteran Wireless Operators Association has been a fraternal organization of these highly skilled "Ship's Sparks," as the radio officers came to be known due to actual sparks generated by early wireless equipment. With the demise of the ship's radio officer as obsolete in the age of digital technology, the VWOA has transitioned into a non-profit historic organization dedicated to honoring and preserving the service, history and sacrifices of all radio operators – at sea, in the air, and on land.

In 2014, the New York City Parks Department cleaned,



Biography: Colonel William H. “Bill” Pruitt

Written by Rob Andrew “Robie” Matthews IV

Veterans Heritage Project Club – St. Joseph Academy, St. Augustine, FL

When people think of World War II, most people tend to think of the battles, like Midway, Sicily, and Stalingrad. For others, it brings to mind the technology used in the conflict that changed the face of combat forever, such as planes, tanks, artillery, ships, and weapons. However, wars are not won by soldiers alone. Soldiers need food, and vehicles need fuel. In order to win World War II, the United States, called by its own President Roosevelt “the great arsenal of democracy”, needed to ship thousands of men and materials to far-off battlefields all across the globe to supply America’s fighting men and their allies. To do this, the American military needed a certain breed of men to deliver these crucial supplies. Enter the Merchant Marine.

The Merchant Mariners who crewed the supply ships carrying war material across the ocean did not have it easy. For those in the Atlantic, they came face to face with Hitler’s dreaded *Kriegsmarine*, or German Navy. At the onset of the war, the *Kriegsmarine*, focused on fearsome surface ships such as the fearsome sister battleships *Bismarck* (sunk in May of 1941) and *Tirpitz* (Sunk on November 13, 1944). However, the *Kriegsmarine*, and the German High Command as a whole, knew that to win the war, they needed to stop the Allied shipping vessels from ever reaching the battlefield. It was 1941, and the Germans seemed unstoppable. England, being an island, was mostly supplied from the sea. In order to cut off England and starve the English out, the Germans turned to a devastating weapon: the *Unterseeboot*, or U-Boat. These submarines were very technologically advanced and were very deadly. They were deployed in “Wolf Packs” of eight to twenty U-Boats, which would attack at night and use the silhouettes of burning, sinking ships to find their next kill. These tactics led to a whopping 5,000 ships sunk by U-Boats throughout the war. This adds up to approximately 13 million tons of material sent to the bottom.

Another weapon the German *Kriegsmarine* had at its



Bill Pruitt (left) and Ed Trester received their Congressional Gold Medals in 2022

disposal was the deadly Commerce Raiders. These were ships who disguised themselves as unarmed merchant ships from neutral countries, but when they got closer to an unsuspecting unescorted convoy, they would raise the German Battle ensign flag and drop the sheet metal concealing their guns and torpedo tubes. They would then proceed to wreak havoc among the convoy, sinking many ships until they were out of ammunition. These, along with U-Boats, and German surface vessels and aircraft made the waters of the Atlantic and Mediterranean a dangerous place to be for Merchant Mariners.

Colonel William H. “Bill” Pruitt was born on May 22, 1920 in Florida. He served in the Merchant Marine for five years and in the U.S. Army’s Florida Guard for over thirty years. He was a Lieutenant Junior Grade and Ensign in the Merchant Marine and a full Colonel in the Florida National Guard.

When Pruitt wanted to join the Merchant Marine, initially, his mother would not let him go. However, after he begged her to let him go, she signed for him and he enlisted. During his time in the service he served in Oran, North Africa, Alexandria, Egypt, Italy, France, and England. After completing high school, Pruitt was employed by the War Department (known now as the Department of Defense) in Birmingham, Alabama. Surrounded by the war, he decided to enlist with his coworker. After joining the Merchant Marine, Pruitt was sent to basic training in Hoffman Island, New York Three Islands, and Coney Island. Here, in New York Harbor, Pruitt rose to the rank of Petty officer.

Next Pruitt was moved over to Sheepshead Bay, New York. With few doctors available, he was trained to perform minor medical procedures. This added “Purser” to his title. For his on-the-job training, Pruitt was moved to the Marine station hospital, in Mobile, Alabama. During this time he rose to the rank of Lieutenant.



After this Pruitt sailed on four different ships: the SS *Thomas U. Walter*, SS *Thomas J. Jarvis*, SS *Philander C. Knox*, and the SS *Joseph Warren*.

Pruitt made four round trips across the Atlantic Ocean and sailed the Mediterranean Sea. For this sea duty, Pruitt received the Atlantic War Zone Bar and the Medi-

terranean War Zone Bar. While on these ships, Pruitt and his fellow Merchant Mariners were escorted by the United States Navy, then the British Navy in the Mediterranean. The ship's crew onboard consisted of the Captain, the Chief Mate, the Engineer, the Purser (Pruitt's position), Radio Operator, and a crew of forty-two, along with six guards supplied by the Army. The armament on board of an average merchant vessel consisted of four 20mm guns on either side, a 3-inch gun forward, and a 5-inch gun aft. There were also several cans, called depth charges, that were filled with explosives that would be pushed off the side of the ship and would explode at a predetermined depth to destroy submarines. The radio on board was only able to receive information. Even in emergencies, it could not be used.


During the war, convoys were around one hundred ships, spaced about one mile apart. As said above, they were escorted by the U.S. Navy and sometimes the English Royal Navy. Pruitt says he felt "better with our (the U.S.) Navy."

Pruitt's duties on land, both in the United States and on foreign soil, consisted of: signing on crew, pay advances during the voyage, pay everyone when the trip ends, handle medical problems on board, be in charge of ship's store, handle customs and immigration officers, and keep the captain happy.

From the first day, Pruitt and his coworker whom he signed on with had no idea what pay or other finances existed. They received their pay, which stopped

when your ship went down. You only started receiving pay again if you were lucky enough to be rescued and signed aboard a ship again.

During and after World War II, the Merchant Mariners did not get the same benefits that the other branches got. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had a bill that he was trying to pass that entitled them to these benefits, but he died in office in April of 1945 before it could be put into effect.

William H. "Bill" Pruitt served in the Florida National Guard/United States Army for over 30 years and retired at the rank of Colonel. His story sheds important light on the Merchant Mariners of World War II. This branch of the American Armed Forces had the lowest survivability rate of the war, and they played an essential part in winning the war. During the war, 1 in 26 Merchant Mariners gave his life for his country. To put it in perspective, 1 in 34 Marines were killed, 1 in 48 Soldiers and Airmen of the Army, 1 in 114 Sailors and Airmen of the Navy, and 1 in 421 Coast Guardsmen. Without the Merchant Marine, the American War Machine, the "Great Arsenal of Democracy", that would bring an end to the Third Reich, the Japanese Empire, and the Italian Fascists would not have been able to transport the massive numbers of men and material over to the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific, and the Americans would not have been able to supply their Allies in England and the Soviet Union through the Lend Lease Act. The story of Colonel Pruitt, and the story of the Merchant Marine is an integral part in our Nation's history, and it cannot be forgotten. To them, we the free peoples of the world are eternally grateful. 



Pruitt with the author of the story, Robie Matthews

RESCUE AT SEA

as recalled by AMMV member Douglas Torborg, Master

I was Master of the tanker *USNS Sealift Antarctic* (“*Antarctic*”) in June 1980. Marine Transport Lines, by whom I was employed, had an operating contract for the nine Sealift Tankers with the Military Sealift Command. After discharging a cargo of JP4 (jet fuel) in Subic Bay, Philippines, we departed enroute to the Persian Gulf for another cargo.

While transiting the South China Sea we received a VHF call from the *LNG Virgo*. This vessel, which was fully loaded with LNG, was enroute to Japan. As we approached the *Virgo*, we could see she was stopped. Her Master advised us that he had taken 62 Vietnamese refugees aboard and they were standing by another boat with 14 more. He could not take these refugees to Japan and asked if we could take them and the 14 from the boat. The 62 had been in their boat for almost two weeks before the *Virgo* picked them up.

Several months earlier, the *Antarctic* had picked up and discharged Vietnamese refugees in Singapore. I was not her Master then. Because the *Antarctic* was gas free with clean ballast, I agreed to take the 62 refugees aboard. I also agreed to pick up the 14 in the boat that was near the *Virgo*. As the *Virgo* pulled away from the boat, the people aboard did not know we were there and believed the *Virgo* was leaving them, so they all jumped into the water.

When we got in position, we launched a lifeboat and retrieved the 14 from the water. The *Virgo* used one of her lifeboats to transfer the 62 refugees to the *Antarctic*. There were 37 males, and 25 females with seven children under three years old. The men were told they would live in the stern/poop area and use the public restrooms on the main deck, while the women and children were put in spare rooms. We advised everyone

water would be at a premium and they could take one and only one quick shower. The Steward provided these people with soap and towels. Our Steward recruited several men to assist by working in the galley.

Late that afternoon as we proceeded to Singapore, we

spotted another boat drifting with people waving towels/sheets and anything at us. We pulled alongside to discover they were enroute back to Indonesia, but their engine broke down. They had been drifting about a week. There were nine adults onboard. When they were off their boat the Chief Mate boarded it, opened the sea valve, and lit it on fire so no one would run into it before it sunk. With limited space we

put them all in one spare officer’s room. They received the same instructions about showers and water.

Once again, we headed towards Singapore passing through a very strong thunderstorm system. Just before midnight we approached a ship drifting with its lights on.

We communicated via VHF with the *Globtik Windsor*, which was near a boat of Vietnamese refugees that they could not or would not take aboard. So, we pulled alongside this boat to find 100 men, women, and children aboard. They had been drifting for over a week with no fuel. My crew turned to, and we took these refugees aboard. Each person was searched for knives and/or guns, which we did not want them to have on our vessel. This boat was also scuttled and lit on fire.

Many of the women and children had rashes on them from sitting in the bilges of their boats for days. Luckily, we carried JP4, which is toxic, so we had a medical ointment that would help these women and children with their rashes.

Once again, we were heading



USNS Sealift Antarctic (retrieved from Naval History and Heritage Command)



Doug Torborg at Merchant Marine monument in Vero Beach

for Singapore. When we arrived at Singapore the Indonesian Embassy sent people to the *Antarctic* to remove their citizens. The Singapore authorities required all the Vietnamese refugees to be brought up on deck. The ship had made detailed lists of all the Vietnamese people. The people had to line up to conform with the list, which the local authorities checked. The 174 Vietnamese went ashore in Singapore. It was my understanding they would be sent to a United States operated camp in Indonesia. It was now 4 July 1980; the Vietnam refugees were all safely ashore and the *Sealift Antarctic* was once again heading for the Persian Gulf.

With a crew of 24 we had 185 guests on board. Throughout these operations my entire crew demonstrated a high degree of courage, compassion, and professionalism. Each member of my crew was an outstanding representative of what the United States Merchant Marine is all about.

In spring of 2016, I received a phone call from a man in Lakeland, Florida who advised me there was a lady in San Francisco looking for me. This was Lauren Vuong, one of the refugees I got off the *Virgo* and took to Singapore. Lau-

ren and her family were coming to Lakeland, Florida. I was asked to come as they wanted to meet me again. My wife and I drove there to meet the father, mother, and daughter whom I left in Singapore 36 years ago.



2016 photo of Lauren's family

This young lady, Lauren Vuong, went from Singapore to Indonesia to San Francisco. She attended UC Berkeley and graduated in 1995 with a degree in English literature. Then she earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of San Francisco School of Law, class of 1999. She has practiced law since 2000. She has told me that I could describe her as "a grateful survivor."

She spent over ten years searching for the Master of the *Virgo*, who had passed away, and myself the Master of the *Antarctic*. Ms. Vuong produced a video titled, "Finding the *Virgo*."

I know that all the officers, crew, and cadets who were aboard the *Antarctic* would be extremely happy that one of the people that they worked to help in 1980 turned out to be so successful. It would be very nice to know about the others, but Lauren was the only one of the 176 who searched for the two Masters who picked them up and took them to safety. 🚢

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The torpedoing and sinking of the Liberty Ship S/S John Carter Rose

Story by Lillard Waddle; written by Vince Patterson

The *John Carter Rose* lay at anchor for five days in Trinidad awaiting a convoy. Why, I have no idea, as the ships heading north toward England remained in convoy. Our ship heading south toward Freetown, Africa was turned loose to fend for ourselves as were other ships heading into the South Atlantic Ocean.

On the evening of October 7, 1942, we were at "general quarters" and as everyone knows dusk and dawn were the most opportune time for attack. We were approximately five hundred miles off the South American coast, running at 10 knots. Out of the evening appeared this submarine from the direction we were heading. We did not see him and it was quite evident he did not spot us, until we were on top of each other. The reaction of the submarine was to come about and shoot a torpedo at our starboard quarter. The torpedo missed, but the wake was very visible. Our Navy gun crew fired three shots, which failed to hit the submarine.

Night was falling and our ship started zig-zagging until we were out of sight. The next day we kept lookouts trained on the ocean and thought we had escaped our deadly foe. By evening things had settled back down to routine duties.

The night was hot and muggy, so when my 4-8 watch ended, I decided to put my mattress on top of the # 4 hatch and catch a few winks. At 00:30 the noise and impact of the first torpedo slamming into # 3 hold was like all hell breaking loose. It seemed in a matter of seconds, another torpedo hit between # 2 and # 3 holds. The attack came from the starboard side.

In # 2 and # 3 holds were stored 26,000 fifty-five-gallon drums of high-octane gasoline. The explosion immediately turned the forward part of the ship into a raging inferno. The men in the Engine Room, which was spared, shut down the engine and came topside. The ship was traveling at 10 knots of speed and would take a long time to lose steerage.

It took a few seconds before I realized what had happened, and I headed for the boat deck. Soon others joined in and we attempted to lower the lifeboats on the port side. At one of the boat stations, the men were lowering a boat with the falls, when the Captain jerked the rope from their hands and flipped it off the chock, causing the end of the boat to fall vertically into the water.

After the life boats were in the sea, the only two men left aboard the ship were the Bosun and myself. The ship was still in steerage, and the lifeboats were now getting well astern of the ship. We headed for the stern and abandoned ship.

The fire from the burning gasoline was now all around us. In our clothes and life jacket it would take hours of swimming to reach the lifeboats, so my shoes were the first to go, then the pants that were dragging me down.

The Bosun was a rather young fellow. He told me he was going to remove his lifejacket, and to hell with it. It took a while but I convinced him to keep his lifejacket on. I told him that life was worth living and we would make it to the boats and eventually be rescued.

When I finally climbed into the lifeboat, all I had on was a sleeveless shirt and my shorts, which I promptly lost over the side when rinsing them out!

In a disaster such as this, the mind plays tricks that sometimes you cannot overcome, such as the Captain's folly. We had the Second Mate aboard the lifeboat with us and he also became unstable. The Mate curled up in the bow and stayed there. We had another Able-Seaman aboard besides myself. He picked up a small ax that was part of the boat supplies, and threatened bodily harm to all. We told him to put the ax down or we would heave him overboard, and we meant every word!

The next day, the *John Carter Rose* was still afloat and the fires were going out, so we decided to re-board the ship. As we drew near, a submarine came from behind the ship. The submarine approached us and asked for the Captain and Gunnery Officer. They were both among us; however, we told them they were not.

In our lifeboat we had some injured shipmates, one who was badly burned. The Captain of the submarine asked if we had any injured aboard and gave us some salve and black bread in sealed gallon cans. The Captain also gave us the course to steer for the coast of South America, which was about 700 miles to the west.

A ration of the supplies was in order as we had no idea how long we would be alone at sea and drinking water was vital. (Thank God it was a German submarine, as the Japanese may have machine gunned and killed all of us.)

Our lifeboat spent five days on the open seas heading west as best as we could determine. On the fifth day a ship was spotted, and they saw us. It was an Argentine tanker called the *Santa Cruz*, which picked us up on October 13. The day before, it had picked up one of the other lifeboats from our ship. The third *Rose* lifeboat was picked up by the *S/S West Humhaw*, which sailed on to Freetown, Africa.

The tanker brought us to Recife, Brazil where the American Council bought us two cheap suits and much needed underwear. For ten days we stayed in Recife until an English troop ship arrived.

They sent us out to the transport on a cattle barge. The English wanted to put us in hammocks below deck like a bunch of stowaways. At this time, we refused and raised a little hell. They finally put us two to a cabin as the troop ship was empty and had enough space for everyone. However, they got even for our outburst as they fed us mutton and boiled potatoes three times a day until we reached New York.

The *John Carter Rose* was torpedoed by *U-201* on October 8, 1942. Five crew and three Navy armed guard were lost. A third torpedo was fired into the ship, and along with gunfire from the submarine, the *Rose* finally sunk.

The *U-201* was sunk on February 17, 1943 off Newfoundland. There were no survivors.



S/S John Carter Rose



S/S West Humhaw



Celebration of Life for John Pitts

Submitted by Steve Snyder, AMMV Region # 1 VP

On Saturday, October 14, my wife Sandy and I were honored to attend the memorial service for John Pitts.

John wore many hats during his maritime service, such as: Chairman of the Atlantic Maritime Employees Union (AMEU), President of the American Merchant Marine Veterans Memorial, and National Treasurer and National President of AMMV.

The Celebration of Life was held at Lakewood Country Club, Long Beach, CA. Hosting was John's good friend Kim Estes, a former Arco Marine Engineer, and actor. Kim requested that attendees share a remembrance or a joke that they heard from John.

Captain Jerry Aspland, former President Arco Marine, former President of California Maritime Academy, and former VP of the American Merchant Marine Veterans Monument, spoke of his time working with John while he was AMEU and working together on the memorial.

AMMV Member, Ken "Sinbad" Delancy related a time on May 22, National Maritime Day, when John was President of the memorial committee. John was speaking of the WWII Merchant Mariners

who lost their lives in the watery grave with no recognition or memorial service. John had thrown his hat into the memorial fountain as a symbol of burial at sea to honor those mariners lost at sea. Sinbad asked John if he could retrieve

the hat, which he now proudly wears in memory of those lost at sea.



Steve Snyder AMEU Retired, AMMV Region 1 VP spoke about John's work. "Because of John's efforts on behalf of AMEU, I have the good life I have today... John got me involved in Florida with AMMV, WWII Merchant Mariners, and the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Christmas at sea is a lonely time. The company does its best to make it enjoyable, but it's still lonely. One Christmas Eve just before midnight I came up to the mess hall.

John was there and started quietly playing Silent Night on his harmonica. I later had an opportunity to go to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and purchased a harmonica,

which I gave to John. Whenever I saw John afterwards, he always had that R&R HOF harmonica with him and would play me a tune. I wish for the family to cherish that harmonica as a symbol of John's humanity, humility, caring, and sharing. Thank you."

A reception followed at John's good friend Phil Trani's Restaurant in Long

Beach, where John

would occasionally do his standup comedy on Phil's open mic night. Everyone was able to share their sea stories and hold up their hand, and as John would say, "I swear it true, on the right hand of God."





JUST RECOGNITION

Honoring USMM WWII Veterans on Veterans Day

In September 2022, Capt. Dru DiMattia applied to the Veterans Administration for AMMV to become an Associate Member of the VA's National Veterans Day Committee (NVDC). Though our application is still under review by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and members of the NVDC, the VA invited AMMV and several USMM WWII veterans to participate in the November 11, 2023 Veterans Day ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery when President Biden and other national veterans' organizations lay wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This solemn occasion demonstrates the highest respect for all veterans who served our Nation, including U.S. Merchant Marine World War II veterans.

AMMV was represented at the Veterans Day ceremonies by Capt. DiMattia, Capt. Chris Edyvean, and USMM WWII veterans Pete Kurkimilis, Charles Mills, Howard Pfeifer, and David Yoho with their chaperones. In addition, Capt. DiMattia coordinated with the U.S. Maritime Administration to have Jack Kammerer, Executive Director of MARAD, lay a wreath during the ceremony. The honor guard carrying Old Glory and the Merchant Marine flag was represented by merchant mariner apprentices from the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education, a merchant marine educational facility in Piney Point, MD that is affiliated with the Seafarers International Union.

Capt. DiMattia said, "America honors all U.S. Merchant Mariners who served our Nation in times of peace and war, including military sealift support during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and six Expeditionary Operations in the Middle East and Northeast Africa. Laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Veterans Day this year is a historic first for the Merchant Marine. The American Merchant Marine Veterans are proud that our organization's veterans can represent the heroic contributions of the U.S. Merchant Marine, our Nation's fourth arm of defense, to military successes and maritime leadership of the United States."

The wreath laying ceremony was attended by many national veterans' organizations. AMMV was represented for the first time in the 40-year history of our organization. After the ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, AMMV members participated in a celebration of Veterans Day sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization. AMMV is grateful to maritime industry organizations

that provided funding support for the Veterans Day events, including: the American Maritime Congress; the American Maritime Officers; the International Organization of Masters, Mates, and Pilots; the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association; Ms. Gloria Cataneo Tosi; the Transportation Institute; and USA Maritime.

This year is the first time in U.S. history that the U.S. Merchant Marine were honored on Veterans Day at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. All AMMV members should be proud of our Nation's veterans, U.S. Merchant Marine WWII veterans, and the significance of AMMV's accomplishment to represent Merchant Mariners on Veterans Day. A copy of our press release and our Veterans Day brochure can be viewed on AMMV's website.

AMMV Commissions a Challenge Coin to Honor All U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans

About two months before the Veterans Day ceremony, Capt. DiMattia commissioned a contractor, Brent Casey of Valor Coins and Pins (<https://valorcoinsandpins.com/>), to develop a challenge coin to honor all USMM veterans who served honorably in U.S. military sealift operations. Mr. Casey, the AMMV Board, and I worked on the design of the coin to cover national celebrations for Merchant Mariners on Maritime Day, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day.

After several drafts of the design that were reviewed by the AMMV Board of Directors, Mr. Casey produced a spectacular challenge coin that AMMV can use to promote the valor and sacrifice of all U.S. Merchant Marine veterans during national celebrations of Maritime Day, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day. The challenge coin shows the AMMV logo and the three national recognition days on the obverse and the USMM motto *IN PEACE AND WAR*, the USMS logo, and the four major military sealift operations for the USMM since 1941 on the reverse. Given the success of the new challenge coin, it is likely AMMV will commission other challenge coins to commemorate important events for U.S. Merchant Mariners.





JUST RECOGNITION

Demolition at the U.S. Maritime Service Officers' Training School in Alameda, CA

I have some unfortunate news to report regarding the status of designating the USMS Officers' Training School in Alameda, CA for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Carmen Reid, of the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS), has been trying for months to have her application evaluated by the California State Historic Resources Commission (the Commission). The California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has not permitted the appeal to be presented on an agenda for the Commission's formal review despite a sustained appeal on to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Place that is managed by the U.S. National Park Service. On September 22, 2022, the Keeper instructed the SHPO to process the nomination "without delay"; however, no action has been taken by the SHPO.

I believe the SHPO's refusal is most disrespectful of Ms. Reid's rights to appeal a decision by the State of California to allow valuable United States historic resources at the USMS Officers' School to be demolished. U.S. citizens' rights for due process with regard to government actions are defined in Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as follows:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

To the shock and outrage of local supporters of the sustained appeal, including AMMV, demolition of some of the significant historical resources of the United States at the USMS Officers' Training School began on December 5, 2023. AMMV's Government Affairs Standing Committee will continue to work with Ms. Reid to evaluate this apparent improper action by the State of California to ensure that the remaining significant historic resources at the USMS Officers' Training School are protected by listing them on the National Register of Historic Places. I will keep our AMMV Board and members informed about actions related to listing the USMS Officers' Training School on the National Register of Historic Places.

If any AMMV members or those reading this magazine are interested in supporting the appeal, please send your

comments to: Joy Beasley, Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, Email: joy_beasley@nps.gov, Telephone: 202-354-6991; Mailing Address: National Park Service National Register of Historic Places 1849 C Street, NW (7228) Washington, DC 20240. You may also contact Ms. Reid at carmereid@gmail.com or 510-282-0633.



Demolition at the site of the USMS Officers' Training School, Alameda, CA. Photo provided by Carmen Reid.



Cleared demolition debris at the USMS Officers' Training School, Alameda, CA. Photograph provided by Carmen Reid.

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.

HEAVE HO!

Patrick Cotter

Member at Large

AMMV Government Affairs Standing Committee

coolenvconsulting@gmail.com





A bill passed the Michigan House of Representatives on November 1, and has now in the hands of the Michigan Senate. If enacted, a special license plate would be created for U.S. Merchant Mariners who are residents of Michigan. These efforts are due to the work of the International Ship Masters Association (Navigation, Engineering, and Legislation Committee).

HOUSE BILL NO. 4723

A bill to amend 1949 PA 300, entitled "Michigan vehicle code," (MCL 257.1 to 257.923) by adding section 803s.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:

Sec. 803s. (1) An individual who was or is a member, or an individual whose spouse was or is a member, of the United States Merchant Marine may apply to the secretary of state for a special registration plate that displays an appropriate vignette preceding the registration numbers and has the words "Merchant Marine" inscribed beneath the registration numbers.

(2) The application for a special registration plate must be on a form prescribed by the secretary of state and accompanied by any proof of the applicant or applicant's spouse being or having been a member of the United States Merchant Marine that the secretary of state may require. The application for a special registration plate must not require a service fee under section 804.

(3) Upon proper application, the secretary of state shall issue 1 or more special registration plates under this section for each applicant for use on a passenger vehicle. An individual who is a disabled person and applies for a special registration plate under this section must be issued a tab for persons with disabilities as provided in section 803h for the applicant's special registration plate. The secretary of state shall require the same proof that the applicant is a disabled person as is required for issuance of a permanent windshield placard under section 675. An individual issued 1 or more special registration plates under subsection (1) must be assessed the applicable tax provided in section 801.

(4) The use of a special registration plate issued under this section on a vehicle other than the vehicle for which the plate is issued, or by a person who does not qualify under this section, is a misdemeanor.

(5) The special registration plate issued under this section expires on the birthday of the vehicle owner. When new plates are issued by the secretary of state, application for renewal of the special registration plate must not require a service fee under section 804. The applicant is not required to furnish the proof provided in subsection (2).

(6) As used in this section, "member of the United States Merchant Marine" means an individual who holds a past or present Merchant Mariner license or credential issued by the United States Coast Guard.



A Night of Veterans' Experiences:

Bay College Civics Corps Hosts Merchant Marine Panelists



During Bay Colleges' annual Civics Corps *Veterans Speak!* event on November 27, 2023, we had the pleasure of hosting a number of merchant marine veterans on our intergenerational panel of veterans. This included: Dave Yoho

who served during WWII; Burley Smith who helped rescue Koreans in the Hungnam Evacuation during the Korean War; and, Captain Hugh Stephens who served in WWII. Captain Sherri Hickman also participated, bringing a unique perspective to the evening's discussions. Along with others with ties to the merchant mariners, 106-year-old Reynolds Tomter of Wisconsin was in the audience. Members from different branches of the military also were present on our multi-generational panel.

The stories the veterans told created a personal connection that allowed younger generations to understand the important role that the merchant marine has played in our country's history "in peace and war," as their motto says. For example, we learned that the merchant marine was active and critical to the success of the United States military during World War II. Civilians had manned merchant ships and took on a new role of supporting the military's campaigns. These ships served the United States government, usually under the Secretary of the Navy, supplying weapons, soldiers, or other materials needed during the war. As still is done, during peacetime, merchant ships sent cargo around the world. Although the merchant marine has been around since the beginning of our country, it's only gotten the recognition it has deserved in recent times.

For some of us, we found it shocking that all of the American Merchant Marine Veterans on our panel willingly signed up to serve, with many doing so at very young ages. For example, Dave Yoho was just fifteen when he tried to join. Then there was Captain Stephens who joined the merchant marine specifically due to his uncle's encouragement, believing that it was "safer." This was not the case for, as one panelist described, "During the war (WWII), one in twenty-six of us died," leading to the highest mortality rate of any service.

However, this isn't just a tragic story, many of the merchant mariners not only served their country but also used the experiences and skills they learned to find success in other areas of work. For example, Dave Yoho, who is in his 90's, was able to create a multi-million-dollar company in effort to

help other businesses in sales. Like the other World War II merchant mariners, he earned the Congressional Gold Medal for his service. Burley Smith continued to serve for thirty years (switching to the navy), and he now participates in interviews about his time in the Korean War, keeping his fellow comrades' memories alive. Captain Hugh Stephens served for twelve years, before becoming a maritime instructor to pass down his knowledge and experiences to future generations, until retiring in his late nineties. Though not a World War II veteran, Captain Sherri Hickman is still a ship pilot and actively encourages the next generation (particularly young women) to consider maritime careers.

We, the organizers and hosts, learned so much from the stories of the AMMV members and other veterans. We had an opportunity to build our dialogue facilitation skills, as we heard about individual experiences that no Wikipedia page or Google search could ever give! From the hardships of growing up too fast through war, to bonding moments with comrades and the loss of friends, to the triumph of victory and success of jobs well-done, the history of the United States Merchant Marine is one that role-models to all Americans the qualities of endurance, valor, and service.

To learn more about the Civics Corps' Veterans Speak program or to volunteer to be on next year's panel, please feel free to outreach to Dr. June Klees, our club's advisor at kleesj@baycollege.edu.

With thanks to AMMV and all of the veterans, *Samantha Combs, Madelyn Chaillier, Alexis Hall, Kaitlyn Horchner, and Chloe Pokovich*
Civics Corps – Bay College Branch
Escanaba, Michigan



Highlights of My Sea Duty on the *S.S. Henry Middleton* Liberty Ship Operated by Merchants and Miners, June 1943 to April 1944

Part I

Walter C. Bosch

Section B-299

Graduated U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

January 5, 1945

Voyage No. 1 – Early June 1943 to August 1943

Bronx, NY to Caven Point, NJ to North Africa/Sicily/
North Africa/Brooklyn, NY

Captain: Captain Hooper. He disliked maritime schools. The only way to advance in the Merchant Marines was to “come up the hawsepipe.” He disliked cadets!

Chief Mate: Elderly Norwegian gentleman from Brooklyn, NY. Superintendent of an apartment house.

He held a Master’s license from Norway. Started sailing at age 12 on his father’s fishing schooner in Norway. Held temporary U.S. papers as a First Mate. I understand that after our voyage, he was granted U. S. Master’s Papers and sailed as Master.

Cadets: Donald Volovski:
Engine Cadet from Connecticut;
Donald Lamer: Deck Cadet from Ashtabula, Ohio (second largest ore receiving port on the Great Lakes); Walter Bosch: Deck Cadet from New York City.

Don Lamer and I went aboard the *Middleton* at a pier in the Bronx. She had just completed discharging a bulk cargo of bauxite (aluminum ore). We were no sooner aboard than tugs came alongside and towed us to Caven Point, NJ, an ammunition pier that extends a couple of miles out in the Upper Bay.

That was our initiation! They put a spark arrestor on our stack. No one was permitted to come on the pier with matches on his person. There were railroad tracks running the length of the pier. A many-boxcar freight was pulled up next to us, and we began loading. Loading started by lowering our cargo whips down to the dock with a cargo hook at the end. They took our hook into the boxcar. When ready, they let out a warhoop. The steam winch operators had control levers that were limited to: 1. Full speed lift; 2. Stop; 3. Full speed drop. At least they were the positions most utilized!

A few seconds after the “warhoop,” a 1,000-pound aerial bomb (less fuse and fins) leaped out of the boxcar, bounced off some wooden pallets lying on the cement pier, ricocheted off the side of the ship or both, went up over the gunwale, swung over the open hatch and then down until we heard the bomb hit the ceiling of the bilge.

Why the crew did not mutiny, I’ll never know.

We eventually formed up into an immense convoy. There must have been close to 200 ships. We weren’t stationed in “coffin corner,” probably because there were not enough corners to accommodate all the ships carrying hazardous cargo. We had many alerts to submarine con-

tacts during our voyage and lost a number of ships.

One day the chief officer rounded up Don Lamer and I, put us to work dragging our barrage balloon out of a locker. We unrolled it over No. 5 Hatch. Put a very large cargo net over the balloon and threaded the balloon’s mooring cable through guides on the mizzen mast. On the after end of the boat deck, there was a wooden locker that held a number of hydrogen bottles. We connected a flexible rubber hose from a bottle aft to the balloon nozzle, which was simply a flexible plastic tube that slid over a steel pipe that was secured to the hose. We wrapped a wet Turkish towel around the nozzle assembly to make it gas tight. At a signal someone opened

the gas valve, and our balloon came alive.

When the balloon was about a third inflated, we heard a loud explosion coming from up ahead of our vessel. This was followed by our “Battle Station Alarm” going off. Immediately, both merchant seamen and gun crew were running past us to their battle stations. No one stopped to help us or to turn the gas off. About two or three minutes after the first explosion, there was a second. We could not see a thing from our No. 5 Hatch vantage point.

About five or six minutes after the first explosion, we saw a ship off our port side in a vertical position with about 30 or 40 feet of her stern up in the air. She was going down.



Walter C. Bosch, 1924 - 2005

We saw a couple of wooden life rafts with survivors on them. The sea was filled with floating debris.

A couple of minutes later, a second ship appeared off our port side that was listing so badly to port that her gunwales were awash. Her boats were in the water, several of them right side up. Before we passed her completely, she rolled completely over and sank. We found out later they were both English freighters.

By the time the “all clear” signal was sounded, our balloon was completely buoyant

and straining at the lines holding it down. If “Battle Stations” had lasted much longer, Don and I might have made history and beaten the astronauts to the moon!

We reached North Africa, and eventually we were broken down into a small convoy of three ships. We were the commodore. We were nearing the coast of southern Sicily. “Nearing” is correct, for next we knew we were aground. The two ships following us had some common sense and veered away and left us.

I was on the bridge, manning the engine room telegraph. The captain was attempting to back us off the shoal. We were aground a couple of hours before a Navy sea-going tug came to our rescue. When a heaving line was passed to our deck, our captain ordered the chief officer to throw it back. He did not! The skipper stood on the wing of the flying bridge, cursing at the tug and refusing their help. Eventually, the tug got a steel towing wire onto our stern and managed to haul us off the shoal and out to deep water. When we were sufficiently clear, they requested that our chief officer drop an anchor. He did. The skipper had lost his voice and was on the verge of collapse. When the anchor was down, he left the bridge.

I phoned the chief mate on the bow and requested orders. He told me to ring “Finished with Engines.” The “Bell Book” in which I had been recording all speed changes to the engine room contained 110 changes in speed. We had taken a lot of sand into our condensers during our grounding, and the engine room worked all night to correct this.

The next day we sailed to Porto Empedocle, Licata, or Agrigento. I can’t remember in which order we emptied our cargo. None of these so-called ports had docking facilities for a vessel of our size, so we anchored off shore. The army sent out “ducks” -- amphibious vehicles. They could hold two or three cargo nets of goodies. When the first

ones reached us, they were not empty. Instead, each had about 25 to 30 Italian prisoners of war. There were three or four U.S. Army MP’s in each vessel, and each had a sub-machine gun. The Italians were equipped with knapsacks and bedrolls. When they started to climb the cargo nets we had hanging over the side, the skipper screamed for all the ship’s officers to come to his office for sidearms. “We are being boarded by the enemy!”

We were somewhat comforted when the prisoners came on deck and were laughing and shaking hands with us, and in some cases, trying to kiss us! When the U.S. guards started to climb the nets, they found their submachine guns to be quite cumbersome so they passed them up to the Italians to hold while they climbed the nets. Later, the prisoners worked the holds to unload us. When we were ordered to move to another port, we had to first disembark the prisoners. The guards had a devil of a time finding all of them. For them the war was over, and they were going to New York! It was a strange war!

When we were empty, we sailed to Algiers. The captain went ashore to attend a Convoy Conference. We sent our power lifeboat to wait for him and bring him back. Don Lamer, my fellow deck cadet, went along, as did the third assistant engineer, and the purser. The captain came back to the ship but in another ship’s boat. We signaled ashore to have them send our boat back as we were departing. Our boat returned, but without the third assistant and the purser. The ship departed Algiers without them.

When we reached New York, we found out that the captain had logged the two missing officers as deserters. He claimed he had returned to our vessel in our boat. While we were in the shipyard for some repairs and refitting, a Coast Guard Hearing was held. Testimony was made by a number of the ship’s personnel. The captain was found guilty of a number of violations, and he lost his Master’s ticket. The missing officers had returned aboard another vessel. I know they were paid back wages and per diem for the days they were back in New York.

End of Voyage No. 1

To be continued in Spring AMMV News...



S/S Henry Middletown



Membership Application for:

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

(To join an organized Chapter, please contact AMMV HQ for further information.)

American Merchant Marine Veterans is an incorporated non-profit group working to promote the history of the U.S. Merchant Marine; membership is now open to any interested persons with a desire to share in our goals. Climb aboard and join us as we strive to educate the public about the role which the U.S. Merchant Marine has played throughout American history!

AMMV aims to obtain overdue recognition for our WWII Merchant Marine Veterans and gain recognition for post-WWII U.S. merchant seamen. AMMV members participate in memorial events and support laws/program which promote our modern U.S.-flagged fleet. Membership includes a full color quarterly AMMV News magazine and an annual membership card.



Join online at ammv.us or complete the following information and send to National Headquarters:

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____ DATE OF APPLICATION: _____

Do you have any connection to the Merchant Marine? (Please explain) _____

Member-At-Large Dues are \$50 annually (July 1st through June 30th). Other options are \$90 for two years, or \$130 for three years. Send check or money order to:

***American Merchant Marine Veterans
P.O. Box 2024, Darien, CT 06820-2024***

Questions? Please call AMMV HQ: (475) 470-9200; email ammermarvets@gmail.com



Each December on National Wreaths Across America Day, our mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach is carried out by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 3,400 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea and abroad.



AMMV National Treasurer Dennis Kelly at Spring Grove Vets Cemetery



Three Rivers Chapter President Capt. Scott Nowak at Cemetery of the Alleghenies



Marietta National Cemetery, GA



Ryan (left) and Andrew, great-grandsons of the late E. Douglass Pushard, place a Christmas tree on his marker. Pushard was an active member of AMMV.



RVP George Bruno at Jefferson Memorial Gardens, Trussville, AL



Scott Nowak's grandchildren Jackson and Taylor at Rhode Island National Cemetery

American Merchant Marine Veterans

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SANTA ROSA CA



AMMV member William Balabanow recently attended his first Penn State Nittany Lions football game. According to the local paper, 107,208 fans paused to honor his service. Balabanow sailed in the U.S. Merchant Marine in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and until his retirement in 1997.