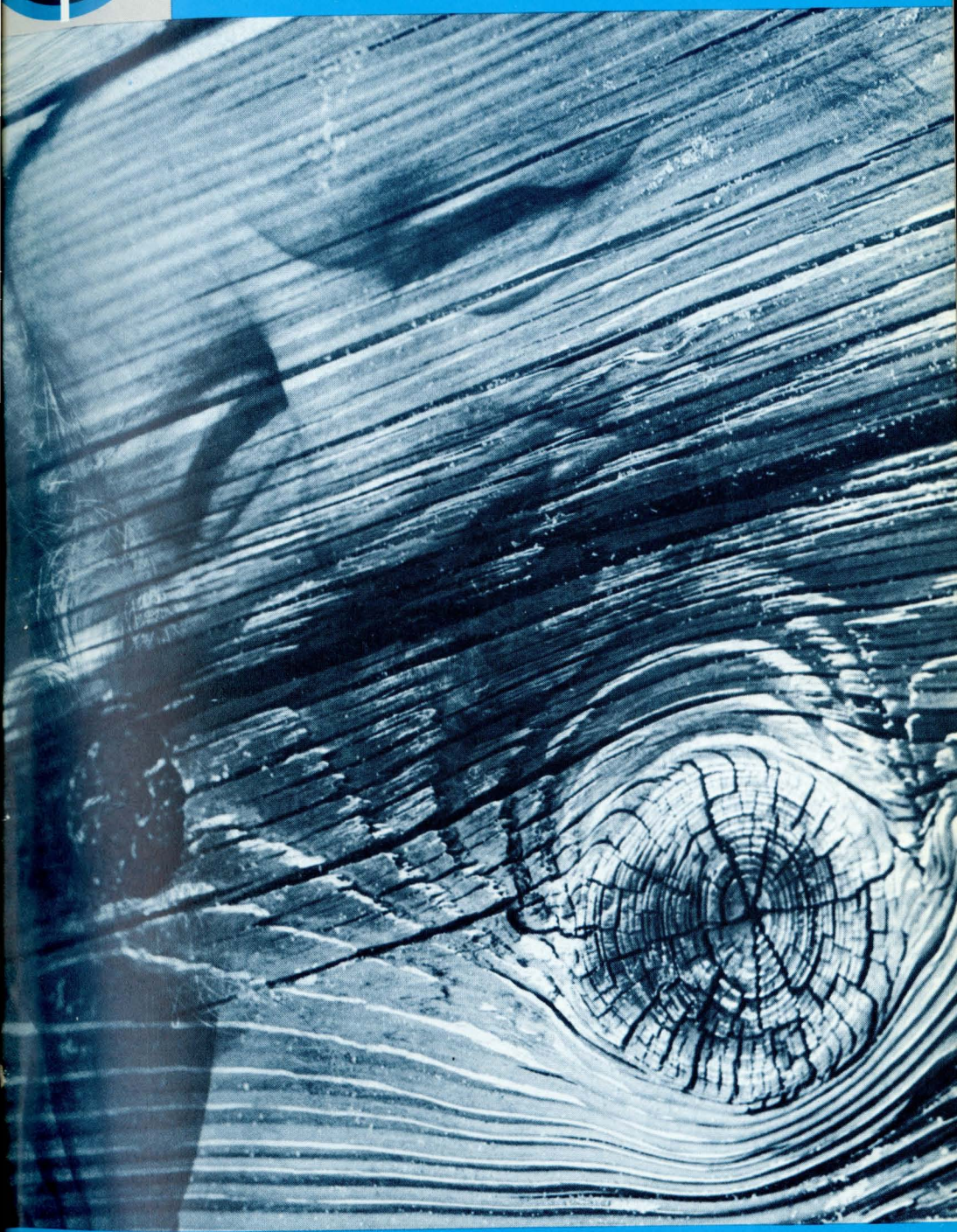
the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



JUNE 1972

THE PROGRAM OF THE INSTITUTE

The Seamen's Church Institute of New York, an agency of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New York, is a unique organization devoted to the well-being and special interests of active merchant seamen.

More than 753,000 such seamen of all nationalities, races and creeds come into the Port of New York every year. To many of them the Institute is their shore center in port and remains their polestar while they transit the distant oceans of the earth.

First established in 1834 as a floating chapel in New York harbor, the Institute offers a wide range of recreational and educational services for the mariner, including counseling and the help of five chaplains in emergency situations.

Seamen's Church Institute
State and Pearl Streets
Manhattan

Each year 2,300 ships with 96,600 men aboard put in at Port Newark, where time ashore is extremely limited.

Here in the very middle of huge, sprawling Port Newark pulsing with activity of container-shipping, SCI has provided an oasis known as the Mariners International Center which offers seamen a recreational center especially constructed and designed, operated in a special way for the very special needs of the men. An outstanding feature is a soccer field (lighted at night) for games between ship teams.

Mariners International Center (SCI)
Export and Calcutta Streets
Port Newark, N.J.

Although 55% of the overall Institute budget is met by income from seamen and the public, the cost of the special services comes from endowment and contributions. Contributions are tax deductible.

the LOOKOUT

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SEAMEN'S CHURCH
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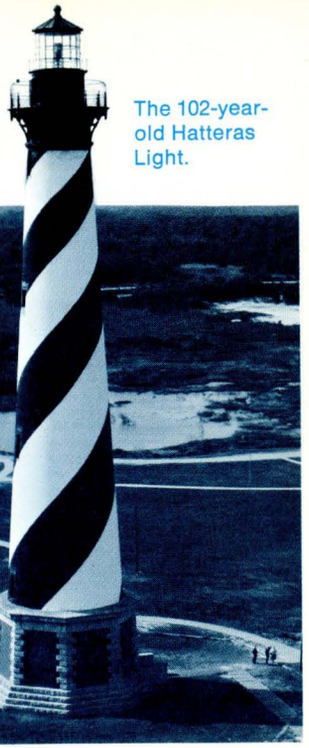
COVER: Grizzled face of the man "printed in" on the ocean-scoured timbers of the wrecked *Laura A. Barnes* on the Cape Hatteras beach is said to resemble the vessel's former captain.

CAPE HATTERAS

The Graveyard of the Atlantic?



The 102-year-old Hatteras Light.

It's hard to deny that there are many reasons for the grisly "graveyard" sobriquet attached to Cape Hatteras — what with well over 600 hulks of wrecked ships resting on the beach or bottom of the area.

But it seems that its days as an active ship cemetery have ceased. For since 1942-43, the peak years of the Atlantic prowlings of Nazi U-boats, there have been only two major maritime disasters in the area, and neither of these was really close to Hatteras itself.

One mishap occurred when the tanker *Texaco Oklahoma* broke up in heavy seas 130 miles off the coast, and the other when the tug *Marjorie McAllister* went down in a violent storm 17 miles off Cape Lookout.

The reason for the relative absence of groundings and sinkings in recent years lies in more efficient navigational aids. The Hatteras area hasn't changed; it still means trouble for navigators. Modern technology has simply made shipping safer. But it isn't an easy job.

A look at the area tells why. Cape Hatteras is the easternmost land point on a chain of barrier islands called the Outer and Lower Banks. These, in combination, form the North Carolina coast, the Outer Banks making up the northern chain which runs south from Virginia, pokes out into the Atlantic (thirty miles east of the mainland) as the Cape, hooks back to the southwest and ends up as Cape Lookout, about two-thirds of the way down North Carolina. The Lower Banks make up the rest of the chain, terminating as Cape Fear almost at the South Carolina border.

This whole island chain juts out into the Atlantic far enough (Hatteras is the easternmost of any American land south of Delaware) to detour north/south coastal traffic. But it's not only its position that is a navigational problem. There's the shoal water. Dangerous shoals lurk off both Cape Lookout and Cape Hatteras. But those off Hatteras are the ones with the real killer reputation.

Diamond Shoals they're called, but these diamonds are hardly anybody's best friend. This area is devilishly deceptive, a constantly shifting, sandy shoal stretching some 25 miles out to sea and in some places no deeper than three feet. It is so deadly that the navigational charts for the area simply don't show any depth because of "the changeable nature of the area" and state — "Navigation is extremely hazardous to all types of craft."

And as if course changes and shoal water aren't enough for mariners to contend with, there are ocean currents as well — specifically the Gulf Stream, that great salt river that flows out from between the Florida Keys and Cuba and on up the coastline of the United States.

by H. R. Berridge

Photo taken on the day the Diamond Shoals Light Platform was formally commissioned. Lightship is making a ceremonial circle of the new station before it formally retires.

As it gets near the Outer Banks, it gets very near land; in some places to within ten miles. And since the velocity of the stream is about two-and-one-half knots, it's no wonder some unwary vessels taking advantage of its northerly flow used to end up in trouble on the banks.

And finally, there's the weather. The Hatteras area is renowned for its gales: September 1944 — wind velocity 110 m.p.h., all instruments get whisked away; March 1962 — wind and waves carve out a 500 foot-wide inlet north of Buxton village, literally slicing Hatteras Island in two; 1967 — a waterspout collides with the Diamond Shoals Light Platform, carrying away all antennas and smashing most of the windows.

But in the face of all that Hatteras can dish out, it is the obstinate persistence of navigational aids like the light platform that has so effectively cut down marine disasters.

The oldest type of navigational aid around the banks is the traditional lighthouse — the tall, light-topped tower built on the shore. The oldest, tallest and one of the most graceful to be found anywhere is the Hatteras Light itself. Some sort of light structure has stood on Hatteras Island since 1798, although the present building dates back only 102 years. It raises its black and white spirals 208 feet high to a light that can be seen 22 miles out to sea.

Other Outer Banks lighthouses are the Currituck Beach Light, 163 feet high; the Bodie Island Light, 163 feet; the Ocracoke Light, 75 feet and the Cape Lookout Light, 169 feet high. Beams from these lights have ranges of from 14 to 19 miles.

Lighthouses on shore, however, can do only part of the job in as treacherous an area as Hatteras. When hazards like Diamond Shoals extend out to sea as far as they do, something else is needed.

For a long time the answer was the lightship; lightship service off Hatteras started in 1854. But as in almost everything, a better way has been found. Light vessels had their limitations. They swung at anchor, thus not maintaining a constant position. They occasionally drifted or dragged anchor and sometimes suffered mechanical breakdown and had to be relieved. As a matter of fact, one Diamond Shoals light vessel was even torpedoed by a U-boat in 1918.

So, in an effort to provide a more permanent setup, the Coast Guard, on

(Continued on page 7)

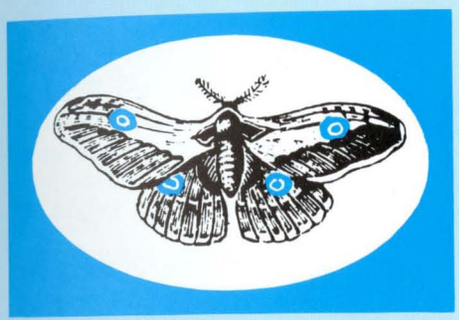
INSECTS AT SEA

by Cecil Kent

One day in 1880 a ship bound for the United States was approximately 400 miles out from Glasgow when some of the crew noticed several large butterflies flying round the rigging.

When these alighted on the deck, four of the butterflies were captured and from the description the men gave, the insects were later identified as specimens of the common black and orange-red *Milkweed* or *Monarch* butterfly.

This is a North American species that migrates in flights of thousands from Canada and the USA in autumn southwards to Mexico, returning to their North American habitats the following Spring. Occasionally they arrive in Britain, the first known occa-



sion being in 1876, and since then two hundred have been recorded, chiefly in autumn months. The puzzle is how do they get there safely from the North American mainland?

It is likely that during their migratory movement southward along the eastern coast of the USA some of the huge flight are carried out to sea by westerly wind currents and being large, unmistakable insects (the wing span is four inches in the male) some of them survive the crossing, but they are unlikely to reproduce because their food plant, milkweed, does not grow in Britain.

No doubt some of the *Monarchs* have been given a "lift" at sea by conveniently available ships bound for British ports; for example, two specimens were seen on board a ship bound from Virginia to Tilbury. They flew inland on arrival at Tilbury, but entomologists are now certain this powerful insect also deliberately migrates from North America to new areas, perhaps during a population explosion. In this way it has spread across the Pacific to the Hawaiian Islands, New Zealand, Australia and Indonesia and across the Atlantic to the Azores and the Canary Islands.

Although our knowledge of bird migration across the sea is considerable, that of insects has remained much of a mystery. In recent years, however, a lot has been learned, partly through ships' crew members following entomology as a hobby or being interested enough to record what they see on record cards and forward these to societies or individuals carrying out investigations into insect migration.

The crews of Britain's Trinity House lightships and lighthouse men have also provided a large amount of information on insect movements. For example, ten lightships on the east and south coast alone recorded 400 cases of insect flights.

Probably for thousands of years insects have been crossing the seas from one land mass to another, but whether this is done through a hit-or-miss chance of reaching another habitat or whether they have some mysterious instinct of land elsewhere is unknown. Christopher Columbus in June, 1494, when at a position near western Cuba, recorded a huge mass of butterflies approaching from the American main-

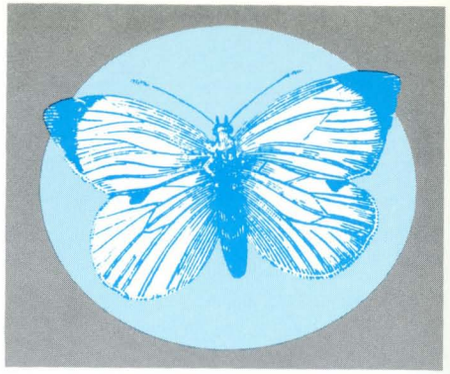
land in "such immense swarms as even to darken the sky."

Another mystery was the *Camberwell Beauty,* a beautiful rarity that does not breed in Britain, yet it appears there from time to time in late summer. It is probably shipborne, as they have been seen in considerable numbers flying around ships loading timber in Finland, possibly attracted by the sap exuding from the wood and thus accidentally stow away in the timber stacks until they reach Britain and the unloading of the timber again disturbs them. They are also known to migrate across the Baltic and the North Sea.

The Painted Lady butterfly is a migrant species whose home is in North Africa. There it sometimes occurs in huge swarms and presumably quits its habitats and limited food supply, leaving only a nucleus to continue the species, surplus butterflies being liable to venture to any part of the world.

When the *Great Eastern* was laying the trans-Atlantic cable about 1,100 miles west of Ireland and 500 miles east of Newfoundland in August, 1865, some *Painted Lady* butterflies were seen flying nearby.

These butterflies were then known to be swarming in Ireland, and when the



two ships arrived in St. Johns just over a fortnight later, this species was common on Newfoundland, so the flight seen far out at sea could have come from either country.

Storms have frequently been blamed for the appearance of insects at sea. In one case, at 4 p.m. on December 4th, 1832, Charles Darwin on *H.M.S. Beagle* off the Argentine coast witnessed a large flight of butterflies approaching on the edge of a storm. The insect mass was estimated to be a mile wide, unknown miles in length, at a height of about 600 feet.

The butterflies were the *South American Clouded Yellow,* a migratory species, and Darwin thought those he saw were migrating and the assistance of the storm coincidental. The chief point against wind and stormy weather as responsible for the majority of insects being seen at sea is that wind would not be able to differentiate between one species and another. If carried away by a strong wind it would be expected the mass would contain numerous large and small insects, whereas these flights are mostly always of one species.

Moths, even quite small species, also migrate across the sea. The large wing-spanned strong-flying *Hawk* moths frequently arrive at lightships when migrating from Europe and the Mediterranean area to Britain. A curiously placed example of the *Convolvus Hawk* moth was captured by a crew member on a ship 350 miles northwest of the Azores in 1880. This migrating moth has a wing-span of 4½ inches, but another moth, the *Diamond Backed,* also migratory, has a wing span of only one-half inch across, yet it has passed fishing boats fifteen miles off the coast of Northumberland, U.K., crossed the Mediterranean, and in 1933 a large swarm of these tiny creatures arrived on the East Dudgeon lightship 22 miles northeast of Norfolk, U.K.

Beetles and aphids have been trapped while windborne in towing-kites above the North Sea when over a hundred miles from land. Beetles also deliberately migrate. Large numbers of 7-spot *Ladybird* beetles arrived on the southeast coast of England, from the direction of Belgium and France, in 1847, and more recently on the Lincolnshire coast in 1952.

Dragonflies, which are very fast fliers, also migrate across the sea, even the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans. On the night of April 11th, 1896, when the *S.S. Victoria* was about 900 miles from Australia and 300 miles southeast of the Cocos-Keeling islands in the South Indian Ocean, a flight of an African dragonflies alighted on the vessel from a westerly direction during a heavy rainstorm. Next morning they were gone.

Whither they were bound is unknown. By continued research and keeping of records, however, we may eventually learn more of the how and why such varying types of sometimes seemingly fragile insects deliberately set off to cross large expanses of sea and ocean, and, more important, how frequently they succeed.

CAPE HATTERAS *(Continued from page 4)*

November 7, 1966, commissioned the Diamond Shoals Light Station, located 13 miles out to sea from Cape Hatteras.

This structure, a Texas tower, rests on four steel legs driven 156 feet into the ocean bottom. The main deck is 25 feet above the water and has a top which is used for a helipad as well as a catch basin for rain water to furnish the needs of the crew.

Six coastguardsmen regularly man the station, ensuring the display of a light of up to 4,500,000 candlepower visible for a distance of 17 miles. And although the structure is designed to withstand the worst that Hatteras gales can hurl at it, provision has been made for automatic operation should the crew have to be taken off.

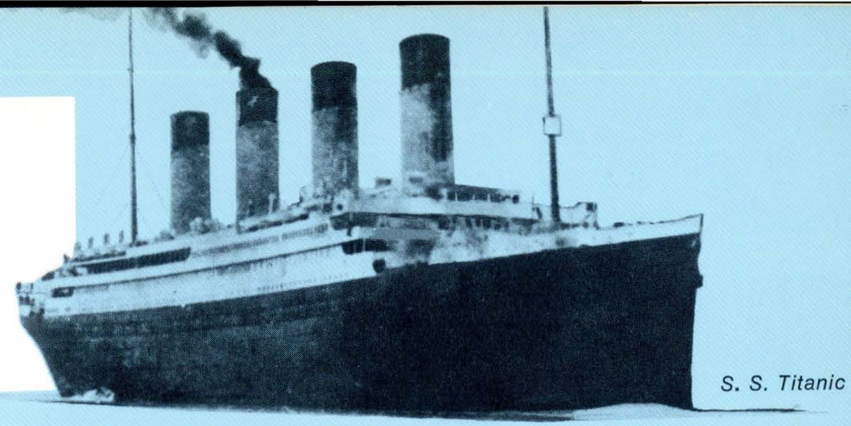
And, in addition to these lights, mariners in the Banks area can turn for help to radio beacons, Loran stations and an intricate but well-maintained system of buoyage.

Then too, modern vessels give themselves added protection through equipment carried on board. Such things as radar and electronic depth finders enable navigators to tell almost at a glance when they're approaching hazards.

These then, are the things that do the job — giving ships safe passage past the jutting capes, the sandy shoals, the strong currents and the foul gales of Hatteras — now a graveyard whose gates seemed to be closed, hopefully for good.

The TITAN

by George Berens



S. S. Titanic

There is an old adage that truth is stranger than fiction. And it has been said that fiction is fact distorted by art to make it more entertaining.

Both these declarations are substantially true, but there is one fictional sea story that belies both. In a way it is the most incredible tale of the sea ever written.

It was written by a not-so-well-known seaman-author, Morgan Robertson. Born in Oswego, New York, in 1861, with a father who was a Great Lakes shipmaster, Robertson's first youthful experience was in vessels on the Lakes.

But he longed for the open ocean, and soon left home to seek employment in deep-sea ships. He was sixteen then. For the next ten years he served in ocean-going vessels, and he must have been an intelligent and proficient seaman for, despite lack of formal education, he rose to be first mate.

He left the sea in 1886 and, after some training, entered the jewelry business in New York City. In his writings Morgan Robertson reveals some traits of personality unusual in seafarers, and this probably accounts for his leaving the sea. He was an avid reader, endowed with the type of mind which refuses to accept anything as unassailable truth. He despised dogmatism.

He did not become a success in the jewelry business, and finally sought to make a sideline, writing fiction, earn money for him.

In this he met with some success, having many stories published in magazines. Considering his limited education, his stories show a remarkable grasp of literary form and the use of language, though he never became a really famous author.

Many of Robertson's stories are unusual. Nearly all are tales of ships and the sea, sailing ships, steamships, warships. Most are accounts of adventure with seafaring characters well described.

Some might be regarded as off-beat, involving spiritual, mystical and psychological aspects. All give proof of his vivid imagination, and his background as a seaman. In a letter to him that famed sea-author, Joseph Conrad, wrote: "Indeed, my dear sir, you are a first-rate seaman." This coming from an experienced shipmaster indicates the authenticity of Robertson's yarns.

Of them all, the one that is most incredible is the story of a new Atlantic superliner. Of her Robertson wrote: "She was the largest craft afloat and the greatest of the works of men . . . She was eight hundred feet long, of seventy thousand tons displacement, seventy five thousand horsepower, and on her trial trip she had steamed at a rate of twenty-five knots . . . In short she was a floating city, containing within her steel walls all that tends to minimize the dangers and discomforts of the Atlantic voyage, all that makes life enjoyable. Unsinkable, indestructible, she carried as few boats as would satisfy the laws. These, twenty four in number, would hold five hundred people."

This mammoth passenger ship left New York with some three thousand aboard, passengers and crew. The story involved some strange behavior of persons aboard the giant liner; and of the wreck of the 'floating city.'

In fog, just south of the Grand Banks, steaming full ahead, ". . . a shout from the crow's nest split the air: 'Ice' yelled the lookout; 'ice ahead. Iceberg. Right under the bows." In seconds the speeding liner crashed into the floating mountain of ice, and in less than an hour she sank, her 'indestructible' hull split open. Most of her passengers and crew perished.

Well, what's so incredible about that? One remembers that there really was a fine big superliner, of the latest construction, claimed to be unsinkable, that steamed out of Southampton, England, on April 10, 1912, 60 years ago, with 1310 passengers and a crew of 898 aboard.

She was the *Titanic*, starting on her maiden voyage. Bound for New York, she was fated never to reach there, but to be involved in the worst and most publicized sea disaster of all time. Four days after she left her berth in Southampton, when she was just south of the Grand Banks, steaming full ahead in fog, she struck an iceberg.

Two hours later she sank, and 1503 of the persons aboard went to an ocean grave. (It will be remembered that a light tower atop the old home of the Seamen's Church Institute at 25 South Street, was dedicated as a memorial to the *Titanic*.)

So what is so incredible about Morgan Robertson's story? Just this — his story of the giant English superliner that struck an iceberg and sank was entitled, 'The Wreck of the *Titan*." The details given in his account of the loss of the *Titan* are almost exactly the same as the actual facts in the loss of the White Star liner *Titanic*.

So? Hasn't it been said that fiction is fact distorted by art to make it more entertaining? Yes; but Morgan Robertson's well-put-together novelette about the loss of the *Titan* was written in 1898! Over a decade before the *Titanic* met her terrible fate. Some have questioned this date, but I think the mention of sails on two masts of the *Titan* proves the correctness of it.

We are a kaleidoscope of the waterfront

Captain Archie Horka who went to sea at seventeen, was honored at a luncheon of the Shipwrites (New York marine writers' club) April 10 at the Institute in recognition of his years of service to the maritime industry.

A former master with United States Lines, he was tendered the James Munroe Award which commemorates the start of regular international cargo and passenger service by the packet ship *James Munroe* in 1818.

It was the first time that a ship advertised its sailing schedule and departed on time regardless whether or not she was fully loaded.

In the picture are, from left: Captain Archie Horka, Mrs. Emily Schait, John Horka, Dr. John M. Mulligan, SCI Director.

The following appeared recently in *The New York Times* in a column written by reporter Richard F. Shepard:

Maritime seafaring, which seems to be every day more of a vanishing art, is the only reason for the Seamen's Church Institute of New York and its modern, four-year-old 23-story headquarters at 15 State Street, opposite Battery Park. The building can house 300 beached merchant sailors, give them rest, nourishment and training.

Every day at 2:30 except Saturday, visitors are welcome to a tour of the bottom five stories, where they may see all sorts of ship models, bowsprit ornaments and bells, including one from the *Normandie*. They are also shown the classrooms, the really lovely library — heavy on marine tomes — and the cafeteria and dining room, open to the public.

The old institute, at 25 South Street, was practically paved with plaques commemorating donors, but the new building has done something that must be seen by all plaque-bedeviled organization officials. All plaques, hundreds of them, are fastened to a pole that runs the entire five-floor stairwell in an ingenious column that is artistic and tells all to those who really want to know. Sheer genius.

One of the Institute's distinguished members of its Board of Managers was President Franklin D. Roosevelt, elected to the Board in 1908, and who never resigned his membership.

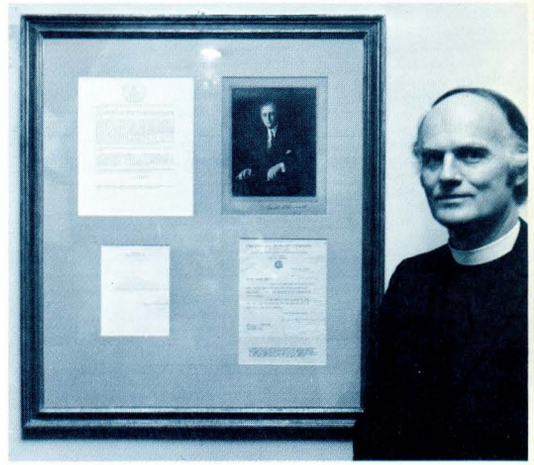
At his death the Board entered a Resolution into the Minutes of its regular meeting of April 26, 1945, a copy of which was sent to the Roosevelt family.

The Institute recently had the Resolution and some Roosevelt family letters mounted in a glass case in the SCI library.

A portion of the Resolution reads:

"Franklin Delano Roosevelt as an enthusiastic young yachtsman and fisherman worked as a law clerk with Mr. Edmund Lincoln Baylies, President of the Institute, upon whose suggestion he was elected in 1908 a member of the Board of Managers. Serving on legislation committees he was of great assistance to the Reverend Dr. Archibald R. Mansfield, at that time Superintendent of the Institute, in his fight against the vicious exploitation of sailors.

Among his activities he represented the Institute on the State Board of Commissioners for Licensing Sailors' Hotels and Boarding Houses. He continued his active interest and attendance until appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy by President Wilson.



He was elected a Vice-President of the Institute in 1929.

Both from Albany and from Washington his official acts and statements gave abundant evidence of his continued interest in merchant seamen and maritime affairs, as witnessed by the establishment of the United States Maritime Commission and likewise of May 22nd as National Maritime Day, the latter marked by annual proclamations in the interest of the American Merchant Marine.

The Nation and the world have lost a leader. Merchant seamen have lost a friend."

Standing at side of case: Chaplain Miller M. Cragon, Jr., of SCI staff.

THE STRANGE CASE OF THE "ADMIRAL KARPFANGER"

by John Britton

On a wet, windswept day in 1939, a man named Arthur Repetto, who lived on the island of Tristan da Cunha, in the Atlantic Ocean, was searching the rocky shore and numerous caves on the remote British colony gathering driftwood for his fire.

At Cave Point he entered a gloomy cavern and thought what he saw in the poor light was the drowned body of a woman. Closer examination, however, revealed it was a ship's figurehead. It was an incredibly beautiful piece of skilled carving. The hair of the woman was swept back from her forehead and from the shoulders hung a long, flowing cloak, with the folds of it held in her left hand.

In the other hand there was a lily. Bracelets were on each arm and around her neck was a pearl necklace. The carving was still in fine condition, even though it must have been in the water a long time. It had not been scratched or battered and the paintwork was as good as if it had only been done yesterday.

The figurehead was carried, with the help of other islanders Repetto had summoned, back to the island settlement and enquiries started about the origin of the figurehead. Eventually, after much detective work, the ship from which the figurehead came was identified — and proved the superstitions of sailors who saw her sail.

On February 8th, 1938, the German training ship *Admiral Karpfanger* set sail from Port Germain, southern Australia, bound for Britain, with a complement of German merchant seamen cadets on board. It was the first voyage for the ship, claimed then to be one of the world's most beautiful sailing vessels afloat, as a means of giving these young men a real taste of life in these conditions at sea.

Originally, the ship, a four-masted barque, had sailed under the name of *L'Avenir,* after being built in Belgium in 1908. After a career at sea she had been bought by the Hamburg-Amerika Line. Her new owners decided to rename her the *Admiral Karpfanger.* Superstitious seamen have for centuries claimed changing a ship's name invited bad luck.

Then the new owners decided to remove the woman figurehead. It was stowed away in the ship's paint store out of sight, but still aboard the ill-fated ship. When news of this reached the veteran seamen they foretold the ship was now certain for disaster —

Admiral Karpfanger when *L'Avenir*

and it seemed they were proved right. A ship's figurehead should never be taken off deliberately unless there is a good reason, because didn't she "see" the way across the water for the ship?

For a month all must have gone well on the *Admiral Karpfanger*. There was no hint of trouble when she radioed on March 12th, 1938, that her position was approximately 300 miles south-south-west of New Zealand, but that was the last that was heard of the ship. Ever after there was complete silence. Ships set out to search and others were questioned that had been within range of the area at the time and later. There were no bad weather conditions, no icebergs in the area. The ship was known to be in a good physical condition.

Yet the figurehead that had been stowed out of sight in the paint store was destined not to share the same fate as the ship she had adorned. When calamity overcame the vessel, the figurehead must have broken free and floated to the surface. Then began its 7000 mile journey across the South Pacific, round Cape Horn, carried along by the force of the currents, until being cast up high and dry in the cavern on Tristan da Cunha.

There have been many conjectures about what awful disaster overtook the ship and crew. A fire was the popular suggestion, with the crew abandoning ship, but this would most likely have been seen and also the figurehead would almost certainly show signs of burning.

A mysterious illness? But then surely someone could have got to the radio? Perhaps the crew abandoned for some reason then disappeared in the lonely seas, but the ship could reasonably have been expected to drift on. Whatever fate dealt them it was sudden and overwhelming — and the only witness, the figurehead, will never be able to tell what did happen.

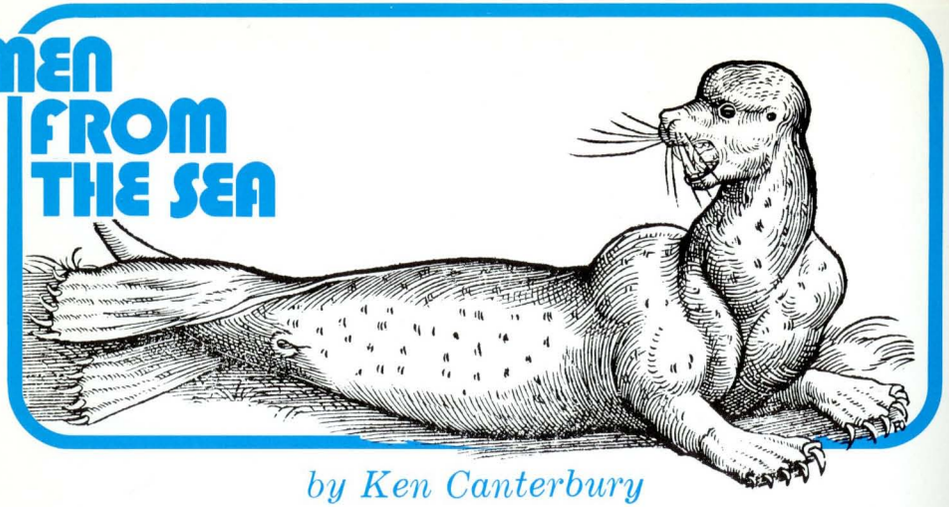
NEW BOARD MEMBER

Seth B. French, Jr., vice president for Otis Elevator Company, has been elected to the Board of Managers of the Institute.

He joined the U. S. Naval Reserve in 1941 and served on active duty from 1941 to 1945, retiring from the Reserve with the rank of Commander.

Mr. French is a member of the Board of Managers of St. Barnabas Hospital; a vestryman and assistant treasurer of St. John's Episcopal Church of Lattington, L. I.; a member of the advisory council of the Episcopal Church Foundation and of Holland Lodge.

MEN FROM THE SEA



by Ken Canterbury

We know that the seals are a group of carnivorous animals with a streamlined, fish-like body, having the limbs modified into swimming paddles.

In the past, due to these mammals living, at certain seasons, both in the sea and on land, around them arose strange beliefs.

The chief of these is that they were human beings able to take the form of the seal whenever they wanted to, or, as seals, could shed their coat to assume human shape. These legends are strongest in the folklore of countries that have centuries of association with the sea.

Some of the families inhabiting the west coast of Ireland and offshore islands, until comparatively recent times, were even proud to claim ancestry from the seal-folk.

Irish folklore has suggested those with the surnames O'Flaherty, O'Sullivan, Coneely, and MacnaMara (Son of the Sea) are directly descended from them and these families in particular would never dare kill a seal because they would be destroying one of their own family.

The Coneelys were originally supposed to have been the first people able to transform themselves from human into seal-men and seal-women. This occurred in ancient times during "art-magick," but it is not known why they were given this power.

On the Orkneys and Shetland Islands, off the northern tip of Scotland, there are many folk legends of the Silkies, as the seals are known there, transforming themselves into human beings and reverting to seal shape afterwards.

In one tale a Shetland fisherman was shipwrecked on an island off the north Scandinavian coast hundreds of miles from his home.

On walking inland he found a cottage and knocked on the door. A woman opened it who he was astounded to recognize as his own sister. But she had disappeared mysteriously twenty years earlier. His sister was preparing a meal and while she and the fisherman-brother were sitting eating at the table the door opened and into the room shuffled a large seal.

It made its way into another room and closed the door. A short time afterwards the door of this room opened again and there stood the woman's husband, a seal-man, who bid the fisherman welcome on his sister's behalf.

How the woman got to the island was explained by her having been on some rocks that day twenty years ago, slipped and fallen into the sea and been swept away. Fortunately the seal-man had been passing and prevented her

from being drowned by carrying her to the island, where they fell in love and lived together.

A variation of this belief in other parts of Scandinavia, Shetlands, Ireland, Orkneys and Western Isles, is that drowned people were able to assume the shape of seal-men and seal-women during the day, but at night could shed their seal skins and become human in form during the hours of darkness, even going ashore, though they had to return to the sea at sunrise.

Those who did not do so in time were supposedly the seals seen on the offshore rocks and islands or stranded on the rugged coastline.

On the north Scandinavian coast of Norway and Sweden and the offshore islands of the area, there was a strange race of people known as the Finn-folk, who moved about on the various fjords and sea in canoes covered with seal skin. These Finn-folk were often sighted on the sea in the Shetlands, Orkneys and Hebrides, near the West Ireland coast and remoter Northern Isles during the 17th and 18th centuries.

At the end of the 17th century one was "catched in Orkney" by a Dr. James Wallace, son of a Church minister. The man in it was examined by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, in September, 1696, but no explanation of his origin was made.

The man must have soon died because "the shirt of the barbarous man that was in the boat" with the canoe, paddle and harpoon were given to Edinburgh University. In 1730 another instance occurred when "a hairy man speaking a language no one could understand" was driven ashore in a canoe near Aberdeen.

According to a writer at the time, "He lived but three days, though all possible care was taken to recover him."

Who were these strange "barbarous men," the Finn-folk? Almost certainly they were either a separate but related race of Eskimos living in the Scandinavian regions, or Eskimos that deliberately ventured or were carried off course far beyond Greenland and the North American continent.

An Eskimo sitting in a kayak from a distance would appear to be sitting upon the surface of the sea or half immersed in the water and easily mistaken for people like seals. It has been suggested this may be the origin of seal-men, too.

The Eskimos would appear a strange race entirely different when seen by the islands' local superstitious inhabitants, and by their mode of transport and visiting from the sea would soon give rise to beliefs in seal-folk.

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AFTERNOON IN BATTERY PARK

Over blue continent of sea
stretches the vast blue tent of sky.
You almost hear time winging by,
dropping you, dropping me
into the years.

Leaves on plane and aspen trees
gossip the afternoon away.
Two Arrow-shirted old Chinese
gossiping too, relish the day.
I watch the piers

where a ferry, homing to its slip,
heels to a master's knowing rein,
self-satisfied, having made the trip
as planned, as timed by the master brain.
Across the bay,

gasping for breath, a tugboat drags
nine barges loaded with cement.
A pleasure craft chuff-chuffs and brags
that it carries life. The sea is rent
by spray.

An afternoon escapes the piers,
sloughs off the discipline of years,
slips down the bay.

Jennie M. Palen