

*The*

# LOOKOUT

VOL. XXXIX

SEPTEMBER, 1948

No. 9



SAILORS' SWEETHEART — M/S "BAALBEK"

See Page 6, "Figureheads on Modern Ships"

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE  
OF NEW YORK

## Sanctuary

O Gracious and Loving Father, who hast set men in families upon the earth, we would remember before Thee all who live the wandering life of the sea. Grant, we beseech Thee, that the Seamen's Institutes everywhere may be homes of welcome for the strangers, harbors of safety for the tempted, and sanctuaries for all who need, and that Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, may be in the midst giving courage and endurance for His Name's sake. Amen.

(Missions to Seamen, Adapted)

## The LOOKOUT

VOL. XXXIX, SEPTEMBER, 1948

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY

by the

SEAMEN'S CHURCH  
INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

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\$1.00 per year 10c per copy  
Gifts of \$5.00 per year and over  
include a year's subscription to "THE  
LOOKOUT".

Entered as second class matter July 8,  
1925, at New York, N. Y., under the act of  
March 3, 1879.

Address all communications to

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE  
OF NEW YORK  
25 SOUTH ST., NEW YORK 4, N. Y.

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Please reserve WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3rd, on your calendar for our annual Fall Theatre Benefit. We have arranged a performance of the new Howard Lindsay, Russell Crouse play, "LIFE WITH MOTHER." A detailed notice will be sent you later.

# The Lookout

VOL. XXXIX

SEPTEMBER, 1948

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## My Favorite Shipmate

By Frank Keyser, Chief Mate

**A**S I walked up the alleyway on my way to the saloon for a cup of coffee, I heard the sound of violin music coming from one of the rooms. It was the cook's room. The door was partly open and, altho the room was in total darkness, as I passed by, the glow from the alleyway lit up the huge figure of the chief cook standing in the center of the room with a violin tucked under his chin. As he swayed in time to the music I thought of a huge bear weaving about deep in the shadowy recesses of some dimly-lit cave. I sat drinking my coffee and listening to the music. It was the first night out — cold with a drizzling, wintery rain. A new ship — a new crew. Another trip started. How many times had I sailed down this harbor and out past the sea buoy . . . how many ships . . . how many days . . . how many nights . . . ?

"You like violin music?" A face smiled in at me from the saloon doorway. It was a big, sallow face covered with a grayish stubble of beard. Drops of perspiration stood out on the bald expanse of shiny, brown, front skull. In back of the shiny skull a fringe of short, iron-grey hair straggled about like the few remaining bristles on a nearly-worn-out scrubbing brush. He was dressed in an undershirt and dirty white duck trousers.

"I play for you in here. More light." Moving in great haste, as if fearful of my leaving, he grabbed some sheet music from his bunk and rushed into the saloon, where he began setting up his stand under one of the overhead lights. "Handel," he said shortly, and began to play.



A draught of cold sea-wind swept up the alleyway and in through the door, chilling my legs as it sucked at the warmth in the saloon. Rain beat against the portholes and ran down the glass in glistening rivulets. From somewhere behind the bulkhead came a creaking as the ship pitched in regular, easy motion to the ground swell at the harbor's entrance.

"Hard." The chief cook laid his violin carefully down on the mess table and searched his pockets for a handkerchief. He flashed me an apologetic smile when, finding none, he pulled a corner of his undershirt from underneath his trousers and wiped the perspiration from his face.

"You like gypsy music?" He spoke English haltingly, and I now remembered that his birthplace as given on the articles was Portugal. As he played the Gypsy music his face contorted in a frenzy of effort. There was a wild, happy look in his eyes — the look of a man living on the verge of some half-mad, wonderful, violent world. His great bulk seemed to fill the saloon. He played very badly. He stopped many times

and apologized to me, his audience, for not playing better. He explained that he was out of practice, and that he had left most of his sheet music ashore. His dark eyes softened and his lips parted in a warm, gentle smile as he held out his hands for me to see the deep cuts in the flesh from his work in the galley. Again he played for me, his audience. He played Beethoven's Minuet in G, and, as I listened it came very simply to me that for the first time I really understood the meaning of music.

My room was on the deck above the galley, and many times during the trip that followed I smiled to myself when I heard the violent eruptions of shouts and banging of pans coming up from the deck below. I don't know why I smiled — perhaps it was the tenderness I was beginning to feel toward this huge, violent hulk of a man. He had the mind of a scholar. He had studied many things, and his knowledge and complete grasp of his subject was amazing. We were on the South American run and I used to get him to help me with my Spanish. I'll never forget how I used to stop in the galley, and he would pause for a moment before his bubbling pots and pans on the stove and conjugate verbs for me. At one time in his long career he had taught Spanish, and with unbelievable accuracy his mind had retained almost the whole of the complicated grammar. He had studied medicine, and could talk at great length on the pathology of certain diseases. He knew the history of nations and of people. His was not just a smattering of knowledge — many of the subjects he knew with a professional thoroughness.

"Julio," I said to him one day, "with all the things you know, why do you go to sea?"

"You theenk I go to sea to make money?" Laughter danced in tiny glinting lights in his soft eyes, and his lips parted over gleaming white teeth. "I get a good job ashore. Anytime I want. Make plenty money." As he talked his hands worked with expert speed at the pile of chickens he was preparing for our Sunday dinner. At the sink in the corner the galleyboy smoked his pipe in oblivious silence as he stirred up the suds for the breakfast pots and pans. "I make trip just for fun — I like to travel around — meet lotsa different people." He laughed at me in good-humored merriment. "You theenk I can't get job ashore? Say — anodder fellow and me one time — we gonna start a restaurant in B.A. I get a ship and wait for heem ashore — but odder fellow never show up. No money, I guess. No dinero. Comprenda?"

"Comprendo," I said.

He worked at his chickens for a while in silence.

"And then what did you do?"

"I get anodder ship," he said.

And so it goes. The sea is kind to many. Julio, with his great ragged, restless, misfit soul had found in it his last place of refuge. I can hear his loud laughter when he reads what I have written about him. "You theenk I can't get job ashore?" Sure you can, Julio. You can get a job ashore. But you won't be happy. So pack up your violin, Julio, and let's get a ship together. For that's where we belong, shipmate, that's where we'll be happy.

## "My Most Unforgettable Shipmate"

By Captain Gordon Messegue

### 2nd Prize Winner

MICKEY was only seventeen when he went to sea in '37, but even then the hunger was in his eyes. Wide and blue, they would grip yours when you talked to him as if they were reaching inside you to scrape every atom of knowledge you had to offer. And when you finished talking he would nod and smile as if he got the full meaning of every implication, and you felt that you had said something of great significance to one who really understood. Then he would look away and his eyes would become distant and searching and unsatisfied.

The trip was still young when all hands learned they had a friend in Mickey. Mickey's energy was limitless. His interest prolific. He wanted to do, see, know, all about everything. He didn't learn just the usual knots and splices. He learned them all and made some of his own too. He painted, and worked more than anyone. Even old Swede Anderson, the Bos'n, had to admit he was a sailor. But Mickey wasn't just a mate's dream. He never missed a fo'c'sle party or a beer bust ashore.

In each port Mickey took in everything from cabarets to temples. Everywhere he listened in his rapt searching way and when he spoke it was quietly and respectfully. We made a lot of ports and everywhere, everyone liked Mickey; those he fought and those he loved, missionaries and "B" girls, stevedores and sailors and tourist guides.

We parted at the end of the trip. Two years passed, then one day while walking along the beach in a little port in the Fijis, I saw a wild sarong-clad creature with a thick beard and a mass of long hair coming towards me. It was Mickey!

"What are you doing here?" I asked, surprised.

"Studying the language and customs and the natives' way of think-

ing," he answered seriously.

"Where do you live?"

"Over the hill with a lovely native girl." He pointed to a lush green hill rising steeply from the coral beach.

"I jumped the Golden Horn in Aucland," he explained casually, "and herded sheep for a while before stowing away on a coaster coming here."

"How long are you going to stay?"

"Maybe a month more, maybe forever."

Despite his appearance, Mickey's eyes hadn't changed. They were still unsatisfied and searching and I felt that soon he would return to ships and civilization.

I heard of Mickey several times in the following year. Besides sailing, he had fished in Alaska, worked as a logger, and even picked crops. Then the war started. I didn't see nor hear of Mickey for two years. One day in a bar I met Shorty Russo.

"I see they haven't finished you," I said.

"They came close." Shorty answered.

"Where?"

"Going to Russia. If it wasn't for Mickey I don't think I'd be here."

"Mickey?"



Drawing by Joe Michaels

"Yeah, he was Second Mate. When she went down there was only one boat left. We piled in, wounded too. Mickey was in charge. He did everything, rescued, navigated, straightened out . . . and preached."

"Preached?"

"Yea, he made us feel like it was a kinda adventure. That we were lucky to be there. 'magine that!"

"Huh?"

"Yea, he told us that we was lucky even to be born in the first place. That one day a life was better 'an none. That there ain't nothin to be afraid of in dyin'. It really didn't make much difference if it came then or fifty years from then. It was all in the way ya looked at it. Then he told jokes and stories and even the cook, who was screwy, came to. Pretty soon we weren't scared no more."

It was two years after the war ended when I heard of Mickey again. A few of us were talking in a San Francisco bar.

"Who do you think I saw in New York driving around in a Cadillac with a sweet gal?" Slim Jensen asked.

No one answered.

"Mickey!" he said.

"Are you sure?"

"I talked to him."

"Didn't high hat you?"

"Hell no!"

"I saw him in London," said Abe Goldberg.

"What was he doin' there?"

"He came down to the ship to get a square meal," he said. "He told

me he was staying on the beach while studying French and philosophy."

"Philosophy? that's like religion, ain't it?" Martinez broke in and without waiting went on, "I was havin a soda in Mobile after church when I hears in the next booth this high-brow conversation about religion. I thought I recognized one of the voices so when I got up to pay the bill I sneaked a look and what do I see but Mickey and a Priest chewin' the rag for all they're worth."

"You mean Captain Mickey," the bartender said, smiling knowingly. "I made a trip on a Liberty a couple of months ago," he continued, "and he was skipper. Everyone was sure sorry to see him go."

"Go?"

"Yes, he got off. Said he was quitting the sea."

That afternoon I bumped into Mickey!

"Hello Cap—" I started to say, delighted and half joking.

"Call me Mickey," he cut in. He hadn't changed much. Except for an air of greater strength and assurance he still seemed like a kid, and whatever his eyes had seen and gained had passed quietly within without a mark for they were still clear and penetrating and calmly searching.

"How have you been?" he asked. I found myself telling him and he listening as he always had as if my story of ships and ports and the old gang was the most fascinating thing in the world.

"Have a drink, Mickey?"

"No thanks, haven't time. But how about coming to a little party I'm throwing to-night?"

"Why sure, thanks."

"My apartment," he said, scribbling the address on a card. "See you about eight, so long."

It was in both distance and class a long way from the waterfront. I rang the bell and waited.

The door opened. There stood Shakes Nelson, intermittant sailor and chronic drunk.

"Mickey hired me as butler for the

night," he explained, taking my hat. Behind him was Mickey, and behind Mickey the sound of glasses and music and people talking.

"Come in and meet the guests," Mickey said, leading me into the parlor. Still confused from my surprise at finding Shakes as butler I didn't immediately notice anything strange about the dozen or so guests in the room. The atmosphere was one of a rare and natural cordiality that made me at once feel welcomed and wanted.

Mickey led me from one person to another. There was a priest, a minister, a messman, an A.B., a well known society matron, a Chinese laundryman, a Japanese restaurateur, the owner of a boarding house, a professor, a businessman, a waitress and the proprietor of a waterfront hock shop.

Mickey was a busy host and it was sometime before I had a chance to talk to him.

"Are you married yet, Mickey?"

"No."

"Girl friend?"

"Sure, plenty."

"I hear you have quit the sea."

"Let's say I've quit going to sea steadily," he answered.

"Oh," then I asked, "Why did you invite all these different people here?"

"Are they different?"

"Well—", I started to say.

"They're not as different as you think," he interrupted. "All of them have given me something. Some helped me when I was broke. Others gave me knowledge. They all gave me their friendship which is more. These people checked something more than their hats and coats with Shakes. They left much of their vanities, pretenses, and snobbishness there too."

"Is that what you learned, Mickey, from all your travel?"

"That and a few simple things that are so close they are hard to see," he answered.

"Such as what?"

"Oh, not to despise a drunk, or

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*Drawings by Rockwell Kent*

envy a beachcomber or respect a man merely because he has wealth and power—." He looked as if he were going to say more but stopped.

"What are you going to do now, Mickey?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe I'll go to college and study philosophy or religion; maybe I'll hole up on an island or in a cabin in the woods somewhere and just think and read. I'm just sure of one thing" — he paused and his eyes shone with an intense fervour as if they were trying to see clearly something terribly important, yet painfully distant and blurred, "I'm going to keep looking and when I find what I'm after I'll try to give it away."

For a moment as if seeing beyond the confusing simplicity of his answer, I almost grasped its meaning, almost glimpsed that for which he was seeking. And it wasn't wealth, or fame or love as most of us know it. A friend of all for whom all doors were open and yet had no place to rest, who had fights but no enemies, loves but no lover, who was easily delighted and never satisfied; a wanderer of the world who had found so much and was forever searching.

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## Figureheads on Modern Ships

The three ship's figureheads depicted here and the one on the cover are from ships of the Fred Olsen Line. In the June issue (page 15) we published a photograph of the bow of the ship "Balkis," showing the graceful "goddess" type of figurehead. Capt. Wilh. Eitrem, wrote to tell us that this ship was sunk in 1942 by a German submarine off Brazil. He kindly supplied us with the photographs of the sister ships of the "Balkis" and their war history. The ships are Diesel-powered.

The figureheads are of bronze, rather than of wood as in the old days, and they were carved by various Norwegian sculptors.

M/S Baghdad — built in 1936 by Akers Mek Verksted, Oslo in 1936. Measurements: 315 ft. length; tonnage 3,210 d.w.t. (dead weight tons). Sunk May 30, 1942 on her way from New York to Brazil.

M/S Braga — built in 1938 in Sweden. Length—285 ft., 2700 d.w.t. tons. Was on time charter to WSA during the war, and frequently called at New York. Is now used in Fred Olsen & Co.'s service between Norway and the Mediterranean.

M/S Baalbek — built in 1937 in Norway. Length 315 ft. 3,210 d.w.t. tons. Now sails to the Mediterranean but was used by the War Shipping Administration during the war.

M/S Bomma — built in 1938 in Oslo. In North Sea trades. Length—244 ft. and 1,425 tons. Was also on time charter to WSA during the war.

The use of figureheads on the bows of ships was largely discontinued when steam replaced sail as a method of propulsion.



M/S Braga

*Courtesy Fred Olsen Line*



M/S Baghdad



M/S Bomma

## "My Most Unforgettable Shipmate"

### 3rd Prize Winner

By Captain I. F. Wood

LITERALLY speaking, I have seen most of the world that can be seen through a porthole. I have viewed most of the world's wonders, both modern and ancient. Yet I have been more impressed by the unusual or the coincidental than by the gigantic or the majestic. Neither great size nor historic importance have ever impressed my memory as did my contact with Blackie, the Englishman.

While our ship was in London, Blackie had taken it upon himself to show me the town. We had gone to the British Museum where I had experienced a great desire to see the historic Egyptian Rosetta Stone. We had viewed the paintings in the Royal Art Galleries. We had ridden in a horse carriage through Mayfair and Soho. We had eaten in a tiny, dingy Chinese place somewhere near the Limehouse district. One evening we had just stood and drunk too much in the popular pub of the celebrated character, Charley Brown, and watched the elite of London on "slumming" parties. Blackie had enjoyed each kind of activity seeming never to lose the sailorly toughness of which he seemed to have so much. A friendliness had grown up between us on the ship and our London experiences made it stronger.

One evening while the ship was lying in one of the Gulf ports someone started a poker game. The crew had been paid off that afternoon. At seven bells the fireman on watch came up to call his relief. It was Blackie. Before going back to the engine room, he stopped in the messroom to watch the poker game for a

few minutes. Shortly after eight o'clock, the fidley door opened and Blackie walked down the passage way as straight as an arrow toward the messroom. I could see all of this from my place as gangway watchman near the number three hatch.

About nine P. M. I walked by the messroom. Blackie was watching the game with great fascination. Shortly some one moaned what have been called the saddest words ever spoken, "Deal me out." A seat was open in the poker game. I watched Blackie hesitate for a moment and then slide into that empty seat. He rather cautiously extracted two green ten dollar bills from his full pay off and returned the remainder of the roll to his dungaree pockets. About this time, an instinct born of guilt caused me to look up the passage way. I saw the Mate who had the watch, out on deck. When the Mate had returned to the officers' quarters, I left the deck again for the messroom door. As I walked up, I saw Blackie taking more ten dollar bills from his roll. He repeated that process several times before I was again forced back to my station by the presence of the nemesis of the Mate. It was evident that Blackie was having tough luck. He got his aces backed up more than once and as many times had them drawn out on that fateful last card.

About four A.M. I came across Blackie in the passageway. I had never seen grief or remorse so plainly visible in a man's features. He was shaking his head as one suddenly bereft of his senses. At my inquiry about the outcome of the game, he answered that he had lost all his money. I laughed at him for such mournful conduct. In an effort to minimize the situation I added that he could have just as quickly spent it ashore. Then I continued that a sailor's pay off was to be spent

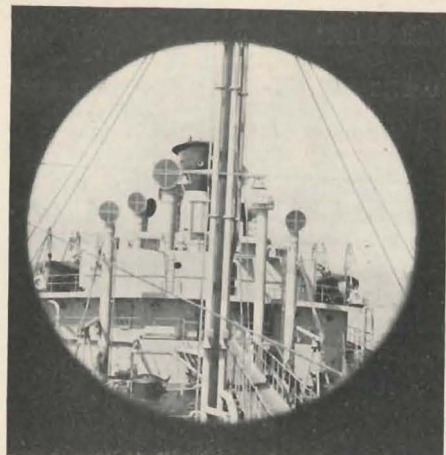


Photo by Capt. James Burns

as he wished.

Blackie regained his composure for a moment to say, "Woodsy, I am going to tell you something I never tell people. I have a kid brother in England. There are no other living relatives but me. For the past four years I have been sending money to keep him in a boys' school over there. You probably remember the day I went off alone in London. I went to visit my brother. The money I lost in the poker game was to have gone to England tomorrow. Now I don't know what will happen to him." With the ending of this speech, it was plainly evident that his grief was real and in earnest.

I did not know at that time that my friend was what is known as a "sucker." He did not have a chance in the game with good cards or bad ones. I have spent many productive and unproductive hours around a "stud table" since then. He is the only loser for whom I have ever had sympathy.

The outcome was that I lent Blackie one hundred and fifty dollars and saw to it that it was properly and correctly sent to a boys' school somewhere near London.

In those days I usually looked for inexpensive entertainment ashore. I had not become accustomed to the atmosphere of bar rooms. When in port on Sunday, I occasionally attend church. The day after the poker ex-

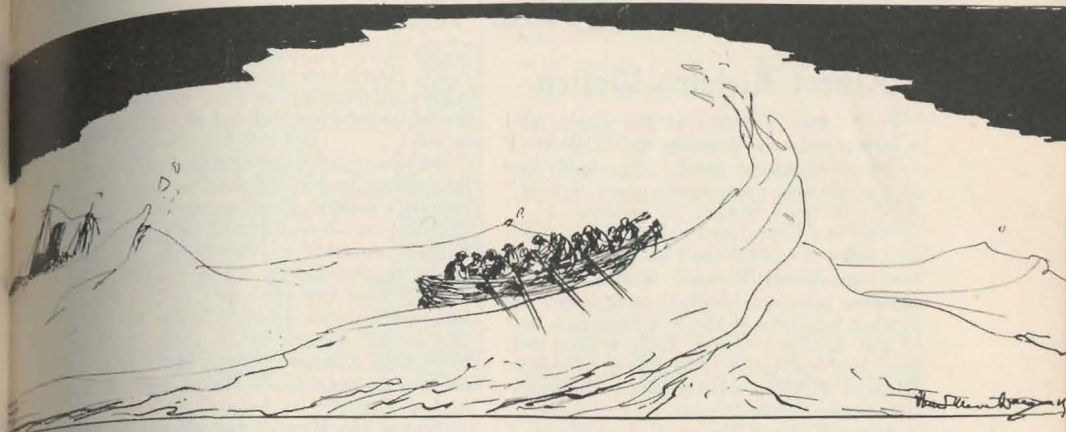
perience I noticed in the paper that a very famous English Evangelist was holding a revival meeting in one of the local churches. I was determined to hear him. When Sunday came, I dressed for shore. I asked Blackie if he would accompany me. I am certain now that he had no desire to go to church. I suppose he felt obligated to go with me out of gratitude for the money.

We attended the service in an ancient moss covered church which was packed to overflowing. Chairs were in each aisle and there was no standing room at the back. After a very fine sermon that was both eloquent and spiritual, the evangelist asked the congregation to stand and sing his favorite hymn "Nearer My God to Thee." It was rendered with zeal and enthusiasm. The harmony was almost divine. I was thrilled by such an exalted rendition of the hymn. I looked at Blackie who had sat all through the sermon with a bored or non-interested attitude. Tears were running out of his eyes. I had never seen a grown man cry. It was all the more incongruous because Blackie looked so definitely a man of the world.

It was some time after we left the church before I had courage to ask for an explanation of the tears.

Blackie was hesitant but finally spoke, "I used to tell people this but haven't spoken of it for years because nobody ever believed me. I was on the Titanic when she sank. I was in the water. I had somehow gotten overboard and was trying to stay afloat. I could hear singing voices out across that cold, clear night. Some of the crew and passengers left on board sang 'Nearer My God to Thee' while the 'unsinkable' Titanic slid under the sea. This was the first time I had heard these words since that night. Years ago just before my mother died, she took me to church. We heard the same man we heard today and the same song was sung. Woodsy, it was too much for me. These two memories I hope I never do forget."

## The Institute "Stands By and Lends a Hand"



Drawing by Hendrik Willem van Loon

ALEX NAVARRO'S ship, the *Ville de Liege*, was torpedoed on Easter Sunday, 1941. There were ten other men who survived with Alex, and for thirteen days in a small boat they rolled and pitched in the turbulent grey wastes of the North Atlantic. Alex and three others survived, but when rescued and taken to a hospital, all of them had to have both legs removed above the knees. The Institute chaplains visited these seamen frequently during the long months in a hospital and took them comfort bags, candy, cigarettes, knitted articles and books.

Today Alex walks on artificial legs, has a job, a wife and two children, and even drives a car. During the war years it was easy even for a crippled man to get an electrical job, but the past year has been tough sledding for Alex. Recently he returned to the Seamen's Church Institute of New York, which again stood by and lent a hand helping Alex to get a good job at the kind of work he can do.

Here is a recent letter of appreciation from Alex to the Institute staff:

Dear Captain Morasso:

I know it will please you to know that I have started working at Sperry's. I am doing electrical assembly work and like it very much. The working conditions and hours are good and suitable for me.

I will keep in touch with you and let you know how I progress. I can't say how much I appreciate all you have done for me.

Please let Miss Candee know that I am working and tell her I thank her very much for her helpfulness. I send my best regards to you both.

Thanking you for all your work and help, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) AL NAVARRO

In the course of a seaman's turbulent life he may call upon the Institute once, twice or many times for help, and because of the years of experience of meeting seamen's needs, the Institute comes to the rescue and lends a hand without fail.

Many of the services rendered at 25 South Street, as the Seamen's Church Institute is known to sailors, are the result of careful planning and long experience in knowing what seamen like and need. The many clubrooms, social welfare, religious, educational and recreational activities are maintained by the generous gifts of thoughtful landmen who in this practical way pay tribute to the men who sail the seven seas and who carry the essential cargoes in peace and war.

Won't you please help the Institute to "stand by and lend a hand?"

## Albert Richard Wetjen

Fred Lane, a writer of sea stories and a former seaman, wrote to the LOOKOUT to tell us about the death of "probably one of the greatest contemporary sea writers," Albert Richard Wetjen. He writes:

"The San Francisco Public Library is setting aside a special shelf as a memorial to the late Albert Richard Wetjen. It will contain rare sea books, contributed by brother members of the San Francisco unit of the Author's Guild. Each volume will bear the inscription, "In honor of Albert Richard Wetjen—who received his education in the Public Library."

Albert Richard Wetjen died on March 8, 1948 at his home in San Francisco following a brief illness. He was a contributor to the Saturday Evening Post, Colliers, American, etc. He is author of a number of volumes including Sailor's All and Fiddler's Green. Among his short stories, reprinted again and again as classics are "Fortitude," and "For My Lady."

Dick Wetjen went to sea at 14 and was in the British Merchant Marine during the first world war. There is hardly a writer who knew him who did not benefit from his understanding advice and encouragement, and many owe their success today to him."

His last story appeared in the May issue of American Magazine, and was called "The Midnight Leadsman." This elicited most favorable comment from seamen readers.

## Basil Harris

Basil Harris, chairman of the Board of the United States Lines Company, died Friday, June 18, 1948, at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, New York, after a brief illness. He was fifty-eight years old.

Mr. Harris began his shipping career shortly after his graduation from Princeton University in 1912. He first joined the firm of Norton, Lilly & Company in New York and later became a partner with General John M. Franklin, now president of the United States Lines, and the late Kermit Roosevelt, son of President Theodore Roosevelt, in the Roosevelt Steamship Company. Subsequently the Roosevelt Company was merged with the United States Lines' organization.

Mr. Harris, who had been vice president since 1931, and later executive vice president, became president of the United States Lines Company in 1942, succeeding John M. Franklin.

Mr. Harris was an outstanding figure in American shipping for many years. He was one of its most forceful and effective spokesmen.

He was equally distinguished as a Catholic layman and recognized as one of the country's most generous contributors to the charities of the Church. No American Catholic, outside of the clergy, stood in closer relationship to Pope Pius XII. He accompanied him when as Cardinal Pacelli he toured America shortly before his elevation to the Throne of St. Peter. In 1935, Pope Pius XI conferred on Mr. Harris the Order of Knight of Malta, one of the highest Catholic lay honors.

One of Mr. Harris's last charitable projects was the American Silent Guest Committee which solicited aid for starving Europeans.

## A WHALE OF A STORY

### Rode on Whale's Back

A seventeen-year-old fisherman, Frank Cabral, Jr., who says he isn't too familiar with Melville's thrilling tales of the old whaling days, told this story today:

With his father, he was hauling lobster pots off Race Point. Frank was in one dory and his father in another. Suddenly, Frank's small boat was hurled into the air by a whale. Frank and boat were thrown some fifteen feet, he estimated. He landed on the whale's broad back.

Grasping a precarious hand-hold, Frank said he hung on while the whale sped along the surface. The big fish sounded, Frank continued, and he almost went down with it. However, he said he managed to swim clear and made for his dory floating near by.

For proof, Frank pointed to a four-foot hole in his dory and scraps of blubber under his fingernails.

N. Y. Herald-Tribune, June 28, 1948

### DRIFTING BARGE CUT IN HALF BY TANKER Dog in Cabin Rescued

The tanker *William H. Ferguson*, of the Marine Transport Company, moving south on the Hudson River struck an unlighted barge drifting off 235th Street, the Bronx, and cut the barge in half.

The barge, the *Estelle McGeeny*, whose only passenger was a brown mongrel dog in the after cabin, was believed to have slipped her moorings. The dog was rescued much later. No one on the tanker was injured.

N. Y. Herald Tribune, July 9, 1948

## Sea Capers

By Carl Frederick Sigmund



DOWN through the ages there have been various types of humor practiced on the uninitiated on their first trip to sea. To cite a few, there is the one about sending the green-hand for a left hand monkey wrench or bucket of cold steam, red and green oil for the port and starboard lamps, the hammock stretcher, hammock ladder, white lamp black, striped paint, etc. An original bit of hazing was given a brand new sailor by one of his watch partners, a veteran Able Bodied Seaman, just after the war, in the Fall of '45.

We were in mid-Atlantic on the Mediterranean run and the vessel's course was approximately East 10 degrees North; which is 80 degrees True on the gyro compass repeater. Hand steering was not required, due to an excellent automatic apparatus known as an "iron mike." However, the AB was idly standing near the big hand wheel with his hands casually resting on the spokes when in came a green and trifle naive Ordinary Seaman. Gazing soulfully at the compass he said, "Gosh, you're making about eighty, eh?" "Yep" answered the oldtimer. Then getting an idea he said, "Want ta steer, kid?" "Gee, sure," said the Ordinary, excitedly. Turning the dead wheel over to the greenhorn the veteran took up a position near the mooring telegraph indicator. Grinning sadiistically the old-salt yelled "HARD

LEFT RUDDER," and the young fellow turned the lively wheel to left with much gusto. "OKAY — RUDDER AMIDSHIPS — NOW" and the green quartermaster did so. (The junior Third Officer was watching it all from his secret vantage point on the wing of the bridge and chuckling and trying to suppress amused sounds originating from his midriff). Of a sudden the oldtimer ran over to the voice tube (connecting with the crow'snest on the mast) and pretending it was the engine room, he yelled "WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW CHIEF" and the hep lookout without hesitation yelled down, "NINETY SIX POINT THREE." To which the salt answered "UP TEN REVOLUTIONS." There was a slight pause before the lookout yelled back "OKAY, HOLD ON TO YOUR HAT — HERE WE GO." Then the green hand gazed wide eyed and open mouthed as the veteran AB ran amok-like over to the gyro room voice tube and yelled meaninglessly "X J Z over three plan 4" and beserk-like jumped over to the defunct mooring indicator and rang it back and forth several times, yelling meanwhile to the new hand "HARD RIGHT, AMIDSHIPS, HALF LEFT, etc., etc." After the excitement died down the sweating young man said in a reverent voice "GEE — YOU HAVE TO KNOW A LOT TO BE AN AB, EH?"



## Christmas Boxes for Men at Sea

"... Today I get Seamen's Church Institute Christmas present. I have happy because I get present. Because my wife come Hospital see me if good day. Mary Christmas. Happy New Year for everybody at Seamen's House at 25 South Street. Hope 1000 years never die this house because very good house when seamen no have money to eat, no have money to sleep. This house help man no have money. I know. I tell any man this house of Seamen's Church Institute best House in World. Thank you very much for Christmas present."

The above letter was written by a Greek seaman while he was ill in a Marine hospital last year at Christmas time. Its touching warmth is typical of the hundreds of similar letters which come to us after the distribution of Christmas boxes by the Institute to seamen in hospitals, on the high seas, or staying at 25 South Street.

This year, as in the past, some 7,000 boxes will be given out. Packed by women volunteers who are members of the Central Council of Associations at the Institute, the boxes contain candy, tobacco, razor blades, cards, books, knitted articles, pens, sewing kits, and other useful articles. Men on ships outward bound at Christmas will find them on their bunks. Seamen will find them in their rooms at 25 South Street on Christmas Eve. Institute Chaplains will visit the Marine hospitals at Ellis Island, Stapleton and Neponset . . . and distribute them to sick and injured seamen who are far from their homes or, as is often the case, have no loved ones to remember them.

About 500 additional boxes will be filled and shipped to the British Missions to Seamen for distribution among British seamen in foreign

Address inquiries to Mrs. Grafton Burke,

Central Council of Associations, 25 South St., New York 4, N. Y.



ports at Christmas time. The Isbrandtsen Steamship Co. will take the packages over free of charge.

Volunteer packers will be most welcome at the Central Council's office at 25 South Street.

From the Manager of the Pacific Far East Line came this expression of gratitude:

*"I have received advice from several of our Masters that your organization with their usual thoughtfulness has placed aboard various ships in our fleet a supply of Christmas packages prior to their sailing in which you remembered every man in the crew. This Company wishes to express appreciation for this action on your part which is in perfect keeping with our own policy of promoting and improving the morale of the men going to sea. We salute you and thank you."*

From the British Chaplain at Rotterdam:

*"Thank you for the marvelous Christmas Boxes. The seamen have not seen parcels like these ones for years and were like children opening a stocking, as they took each package out of the box one by one and opened them with excitement and curiosity. They departed pouring blessings upon the S.C.I. and us."*

## News of Our Seamen Artists



Watercolors by Bernard Bovasso

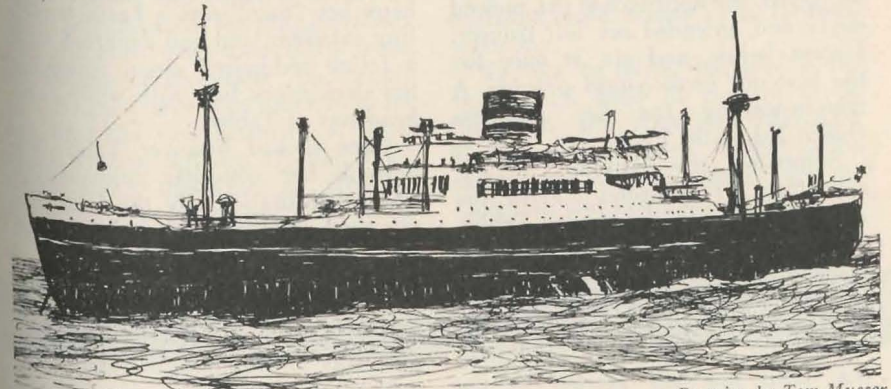
**TOM MUSSER**, third mate, a member of our Artists and Writers Club, had a one-man show of his pen and ink and wash drawings and watercolors of ships, tugboats, and waterfront scenes. The exhibition was in our Janet Roper Club and has caused much favorable comment among seamen and visitors alike. The United Fruit Company bought twelve of Tom's wash drawings of their ships in New Orleans, Houston and New York, for use in their monthly house organ. Tom is a native of Hammond, Indiana, and has been going to sea for five years.

An exhibition of fifteen pastel portraits by Thomas Lyons, ship's steward, is also on view in the Janet

Roper Club. On a recent trip aboard the Moore-McCormack liner "Argentina," the artist painted portraits of members of the crew during his off-duty hours. He has been going to sea since 1932, sailing from his home in Cheshire, England, on his first trip as a water tender. In between trips he studied at the National Academy of Design and Columbia Art School, Washington, D. C.

Seaman Bernard Bovasso, two of whose striking watercolors are reproduced here, was awarded an art scholarship at Cooper Union. He is 21.

Purser Ben Rosen was granted a Pratt Institute scholarship through our Artists and Writers Club.



Drawing by Tom Musser



## "My Most Unforgettable Shipmate"

By Ralph A. Sayres, Radio Officer

**T**HIS is no saga of skid-row, Singapore or human seamen. It is a true tale of a tanker cat, Tabby is a sea-lady, as exacting and as fastidious as any two-legged dowager. Aboard the mammoth S/S *Phoenix*, all 41 of us from Captain Japchen down knew and loved her. Just when she joined the ship none can remember. The *Phoenix* carries 165,000 barrels of crude oil from Texas and Puerto la Cruz, Venezuela at a neat cruising speed of 17 knots — plus. She delivers at Marcus Hook, Pa., or Constable Hook in New York Harbor. Captain Japchen — Commodore of the fleet has commanded her for several years. Tabby was aboard when he took charge.

Tabby luxuriates in the wheelhouse during the sunlit hours. Unlike most of her kind, she never visits the precincts of the galley. She lives 'topside' and forward, — high aloft in the wheel house. At night she condescends to descend one deck and occupy the Skipper's favorite overstuffed chair.

When Tabby requires food she lets someone know about it. During my several voyages aboard last year, she elected me. Three times, I tried to coax, cajole and carry her below — and aft, where our gastronomers in the galley could tempt her palate with delectables. No use. I was scratched and clawed for my pains. I gave in. Thereafter, whenever she hungered, she approached me, mewed coyly and ascended my left trouser. I went below, and aft, at once for the best our cooks could provide. A man-in-waiting for her highness Queen Tabby the First!

Sometime the Autumn before, something or someone aboard the *Phoenix* had miffed or vexed Tabby. Or, perchance, was it the seductive lure of a Venezuelan Tom? Who will ever know? Tabby did something few sea-cats ever do. She missed the *Phoenix*. Cats who go to sea, keep one ear alerted to the



familiar note of their ship's departure whistle. Dogs, on the other hand, frequently linger too long at their dalliances. Cats, almost never! I have seen sea-cats climb across two or three other vessels to rejoin their own ship at sailing time.

Tabby dallied, or waited, at Puerto la Cruz. When our sister-ship S/S *Amtank* came alongside the loading dock, Tabby cast her lot with that vessel. She made one round trip; jumped ship at the Venezuelan port, and waited 'on the beach' for us to return. Tabby looked somewhat wan and woe-begone when she slowly climbed the gangway of the *Phoenix*. Something of the Tropics had robbed her of her usual zest and vigor. Perhaps her "man" was a Latin traveling salesman and had departed with a feline red-haired siren, forsaking the sleek black hair with white forehead star of Tabby.

Once aboard, however, Tabby undertook her complete rejuvenation and rehabilitation. By the hour she groomed herself to the epitome of cat perfection. Had there been a human beautician aboard, no better turn-out could have been achieved. The debutante-slump, in due time, gave way to drum-major rectitude of posture, and general bearing. If she

ever went ashore 'o nights again, she was never detected during my several voyages. She had returned, the Prodigal, from the fleshpots of South American soil, and had ventured a full round-trip on our sister-ship. She knew what she wanted. Sought and had found it!

Often, in the cool of a tropical evening, as I relax awhile in my deck-chair, my thoughts turn warmly, and with admiration to a little black feline lady who still holds Court aboard the Tanker *Phoenix*. We mortals could learn much that is wise, and good from God's four-legged creatures.



Drawing by Victor Dowling from "Joey Goes to Sea" by Alan Villiers

## An Exceptional (?) Captain

**N**EARLY everybody who has seen the dramatization of Thomas Heggan's novel, "Mr. Roberts," has thoroughly enjoyed this lively and amusing play with its setting on board a Navy cargo ship during the war. However, the LOOKOUT Editor and a number of merchant seamen, who have read the book and seen the play, felt that the characterization of the villainous captain is an exception to the general rule. The skipper, as portrayed by the veteran actor, William Harrigan, had served in the Merchant Marine for many years, then took command of the Navy ship during the war, and suddenly became a stickler for ceremony, ritual and order even to the point of sadism. In the play he insists that the crew wear their shirts when unloading cargo under the tropic sun. Seamen have been quick to point out that the vast majority of Merchant Marine captains are not at all strict about the kind of clothing worn by their crews, particularly on

freighters. This editor knows of several freighter captains who do not even wear the officer's peaked cap while on shipboard, but prefer the knitted wool caps.

To give point to this discussion, recently the Moore-McCormack's passenger ship *Argentina* invited the cast of "Mister Roberts" for lunch on board the recently converted ship and Actor Harrigan had the pleasure of meeting the affable Captain Thomas Simmons of the *Argentina*.

Recently when Captain Hans E. Hansen of the *Mooremacpenn* was transferred to the West Coast, the crew, unlike the crew in "Mister Roberts," were so fond of their skipper that they presented him with an engraved gold watch in a farewell ceremony.

We like to think that this is the more usual kind of captain to be found in our American Merchant Marine and that such "heels" as the captain in "Mister Roberts" are the exception and definitely not the rule.

WHALE HUNT,  
the Narrative of a Voyage  
By Nelson Cole Huntley  
Ives Washburn, \$4.50

This is the story of the whaling cruise of the Charles T. Morgan from June 3, 1849 to the end of May, 1853 as told by a "steerer" (harpooner) who though only seventeen at the beginning of the cruise, held that important position with such credit. This author, in spite of his rather sketchy school education—and at times, probably because of that very handicap—tells his story with the naive verve and gusto of the born story teller. There is a wealth of information, of rapidly told experiences of observations of people of all kinds, of minute and vivid details of the day's work; of adventures at sea and on the cannibal islands; of stoven boats, storms and captured whales; of disappointments and drunkenness and fights that make every page alive. The author's occasional boyish attempts at a literary style are an amusing but also an informative part of the show.

Besides being a fascinating story this book is really a valuable piece of documentary history of the life and times of these men who went down to the sea in ships to catch whales. The old Morgan, by the way, before herself becoming a museum piece, first on the sandy shore a few miles outside of New Bedford and now at Mystic, Conn., was used as the whaling ship in the film, "Down to the Sea in Ships," made shortly after World War I.

WILLIAM MILLER

DIAMOND HEAD  
By Houston Branch and Frank Waters  
Farrar, Straus, \$3.50

DIAMOND HEAD, while presented as a fictional romance, is a true chronicle of the Confederate raider *Shenandoah* and her odyssey through every ocean on the globe.

In 1864 when the South was being strangled by the Federal blockade, this gallant ship was surreptitiously bought in England and chosen to strike at the northern whale oil industry. This meant learning the Pacific rendezvous of the New Bedford whaling fleet and rendering it useless to the northern cause. The *Shenandoah* more than fulfilled these hopes for after winning many minor battles along the way, she destroyed 38 Yankee whalers in Honolulu harbor and wrote one of the noblest pages in all naval history.

Two handsome Confederate naval lieutenants and a couple of attractive young women are used for romantic interest, otherwise the story follows historical records.

I. M. ACHESON



Drawing by Clarence Johnson

THE CANNY MR. GLENCANNON  
By Guy Kilpatrick

Dutton, \$2.75

If you can swallow the one about Mr. Glencannon's polishing off two full bottles of Duggan's Dew of Kirkintilloch as a preliminary to constructing a ship in a bottle, or the one about his making Captain Ball a set of false teeth from a rubber heel for the gums and some old toothbrush handles for the gnashers, you should get some fun and unexpected laughs out of the comic strip gusto and the preposterous situations in these stories. To readers of the Saturday Evening Post these stories have developed into a kind of Glencannon saga. Guy Kilpatrick's titles themselves are attractive: Where Early Fa's the Dew, The Glasgow Fantom, Monkey Business at Gibraltar, Souse of the Border, are names of stories that take you into a variety of far-flung places where tramp steamers go and the crew garner what fun and diversion they may. You feel that the writer knows his freighters and his people. Once you accept the very unusual situations, you're more than likely to be diverted by their lively, persuasive nonsense. It's light, very light summer reading.

WILLIAM MILLER

ISABEL AND THE SEA  
By George Millar

Doubleday & Co., \$3.50

The author of "Horned Pigeon" has written a delightful account of his voyage, with his wife Isabel, in their auxiliary ketch "Truant" through the rivers and canals of France, around the coast of Italy and Greece. He modestly claims slight knowledge of navigation and seamanship, but his accomplishment indicates his ability as a sailor. The book is filled with interesting portrait sketches of the people they met enroute.

MDC

THE HAUNTED SHIP  
By W. T. Dunlap

'Twas the messroom of the fo'c'sle in the schooner *Isle-of-Wight*  
Under way for Delagoa Bay.  
Everything was to our liking and eight bells were clearly striking.  
Seemed a signal for a chat to end the day.  
Pipes and cigarettes were glowing and the stories went around,  
Stirring tales of land and of the sea.  
"Tavern Teck" the time was filling now by telling of a killing  
In a semi-lit saloon in Kustenje.  
"Paris Pete" the fiery Frenchman then said "Boys, I'll tell you straight.  
Once I did a sea dive stripped and stark.  
From my teeth my long knife grabbing then by rapid bloody stabbing  
I fought and killed a man-attacking shark."  
Then spoke Sol, the sunny Spaniard:  
"Twas one night within the *Nymph*  
Demon-like a face shone in my room.  
Through my open porthole peeping while all the crew were sleeping  
And . . . need I tell? Our ship went to her doom."  
"Sure, that's nothing," said Big Casey.  
"I was wrecked on Sea Birds' Isle.  
"Lone Castaway" is what they always say.  
When a schooner in the nearing held a true course and was steering  
Inbound straight to landward toward the bay.  
She was rigged from job to spanker; there was no one at the helm.  
Just the same she sailed up in the cove  
With her sails unreefed and flapping, sure,  
I thought the crew were napping  
With their table set and smoke from galley stove.  
There was none aboard the schooner though I searched her through and through.  
She was the phantom ship you've heard about before.  
Well, I claimed her, sized the faring, saw her charts and got my bearing  
And then sailed her safely into Singapore."  
Then there was a silent moment as the ship heaved gently on  
Through inky space without a star to sight.  
Whist! what was it did astound them, was it someone right around them  
Weirdly whistling "It'll Be a Hard Night Tonight?"  
As the spook tune sounded strangely, quick the crew pricked up their ears.  
Each looked at the other in affright.  
"Twas then Teck and Sol were paling and neither was inhaling  
And Casey spoke: "It's a warning for tonight!"  
Then the mate a search did order. Empty boxes were upturned.  
Every nook and corner was gone through.

Then we came on deck most gently and listening there intently  
Heard the tune again most clear and true.  
But somehow it was not human and the notes came from above.  
Something in the rigging, that was right.  
So then up went Billie Barot, found the Piccadilly parrot  
Pertly whistling "It'll Be a Hard Night Tonight."

THE SINKING OF THE  
S.S. FINNBORG

By George Reoch, *Ship's Baker*

Note: The S.S. *Finnborg* sank after a collision with the S.S. *Southport*, in the English Channel at 6:30 P.M. June 12th, 1948.

The S.S. *Southport's* eager bow  
Cleft the English sea.  
Le Havre and La Belle France lay  
A scant mile to her lea;  
Her marks showed that light she rode,  
For homeward bound was she.  
Salt spray kissed the forepeak rail,  
Cold as a green mermaid.  
Fresh winds sing to the long, strong booms,  
Fast in their cradle laid;  
High pressure turbines, purr and whine,  
Exhaust steam hisses free,  
Plop, plop, plop, murmurs the prop,  
As it beats the lazy sea.  
King Neptune threw a blanket gray  
Across the channel wide,  
It curled and wrapped the *Southport's* bulk,  
A surging vapor tide.  
The world we knew, was lost to view;  
In cotton wool we hide.  
Long, deep, and loud our fog horn blew,  
Her echo answers back;  
With never a sound of other ships,  
Around our lonesome track.  
The lowering sun showed day was done,  
And gray was edging black.  
Then quick to port, the silence broke,  
A whistle sounded clear;  
Three desperate blasts, the *Southport* blew,  
Shrill warning to the rear;  
The strange ship's call, told one and all,  
That she was gravely near.  
'Twas then we saw her sharp black bow,  
Break thru the wall of white;  
Her course to port she held, and then,  
Swerved sharply to our right.  
She was quite low, with full cargo,  
While we were high and light.  
She cleared our forepeak by scant yards,  
Then hard to port she made,  
Our lookout cursed a salty oath,  
For he was sore afraid  
Each second past, would be his last,  
Yet on the forepeak stayed.  
Just aft of midships, we both met,  
Our sharp bow cut in deep,  
She drifted off amid the haze  
To find her long, last sleep.  
Our horn sounds shrill, then all is still,  
As thru the fog we creep.

Our nautical expert, Capt. Charles E. Umstead commented on this picture:

"Note the scrap of Manila used as a bell rope which is attached to the clapper in a manner unknown to any good seaman. The resultant "Irish pennant," should never be permitted on shipboard.

Notice, also, the thick chipped paint on the stanchions indicating an old, oft-painted but never chipped ship.

The photographer must have selected an ancient vessel for his subject!"

### WHAT SHIPS' BELLS MEAN

Visitors to the Seamen's Church Institute of New York, 25 South Street, are perplexed when each half hour they hear the ship's bell over the main entrance striking. On board ship every sailor knows that when it strikes eight bells it is the end of the watch. For example: 12 o'clock is eight bells; 12:30 is one bell, 1 o'clock is two bells, 1:30 is three bells, 2 o'clock is four bells, 2:30 five bells, 3 o'clock six bells, 3:30 seven bells, 4 o'clock eight bells. Then this repeats: 4:30 is one bell, 5:00 two bells, and so on until eight bells or eight o'clock. And that is why the bell at the Institute tolls off the ship's time every thirty minutes, in order that the seamen may feel "at home."

SHIP WATCH BELL

Photo by L. T. ...

