



the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



OCTOBER 1974

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.

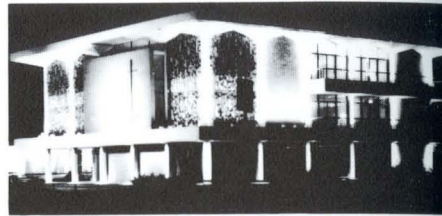
Each year 2,300 ships with 96,600 men aboard put in at Port Newark, where time ashore is extremely limited.

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.

Although 57% of the overall Institute budget is met by income from seamen and the public, the cost of special services comes from endowment and contributions. Contributions are tax deductible.



Seamen's Church Institute
State and Pearl Streets
Manhattan



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

the **LOOKOUT**

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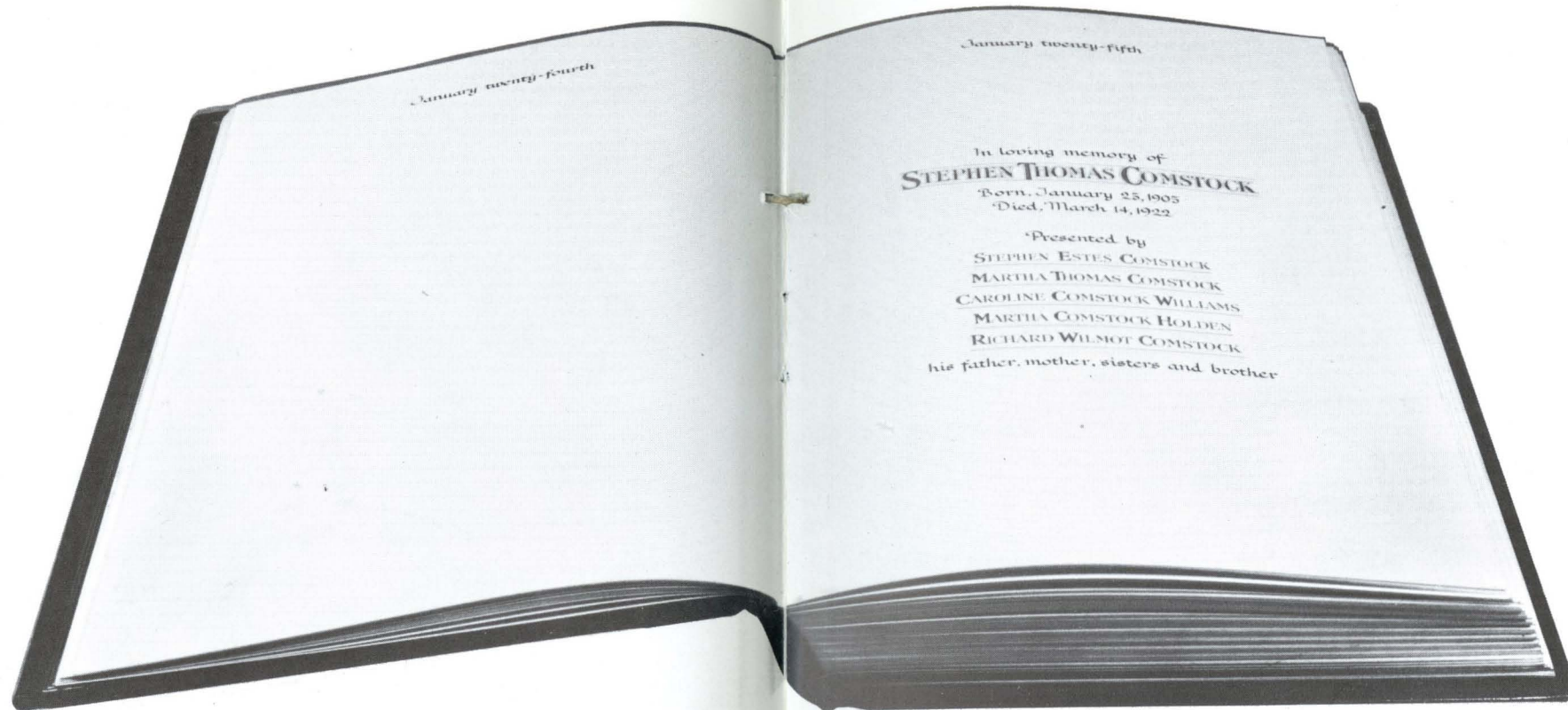
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A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE
OF NEW YORK

twenty-two
years
of living
legacy



With the inscription shown in the above photo, the late Stephen and Martha Comstock of Newark, New York brought to fruition a desire which they had long cherished . . . a Book of Remembrance for the Seamen's Church Institute of New York.

Their benevolent project was inspired by the custom of hand lettering and illuminating the very early Bibles, wherein the names of the most important saints were lettered in red, and each saint's day was thus designated a "Red Letter Day."

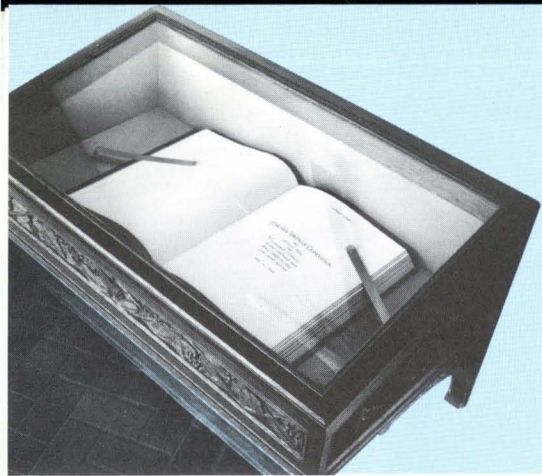
It was the Comstocks' thought that all of us have a red letter day which we wish to commemorate. Their concern was to find a way by which a "Red Letter Day" Gift and the memory of its donor would endure.

* * *

The Comstocks, who were devoted supporters of the Institute's work, consulted with the Seamen's Church Institute to determine how their mission could best be accomplished.

It was determined that the annual interest on an investment of \$10,000 would (at that time) close the gap between the Institute's income and the actual cost of ministry to men of the sea for a twenty-four hour period.

Subsequently, the Comstocks presented the Institute with a magnificently carved, glass-topped oak case containing a hand-tooled maroon leather-bound "Book of Remembrance." Between its covers are vellum pages for the days of the year. This gift was accompanied by their "Living Endowment" check for the Red Letter Days they had chosen. An individual page was handsomely engrossed for each of the days they selected, and inscribed with the special message indicating the event or occasion they wished to memorialize.



During their lifetime the Comstocks paid visits to the Institute's Chapel on their "special days," where the Book of Remembrance reposed in its place of honor, open to their page. The Comstocks have passed away, but not the memory of their benevolence.

Others have followed their inspiration, either through Living Endowments or bequests. Each year, on the anniversary date of the event cited, the person or persons memorialized are included in the special prayers during religious services held in the Institute's Chapel. The book remains open to their page for that day, and so it shall be, in perpetuity.

If you have a Red Letter Day we submit that "The Book of Remembrance" is a most fitting and satisfying way to honor some loved one, or event whose memory is cherished.

To those who might ask why the Institute has a "gap" between its daily operating cost and its earned and special income, the explanation is simple. It is because most of the various Institute services to seafarers are given without compensation; only the hotel and food services "pay their own way" — as the expression goes — out of the Institute's total operations. A perusal of our Annual Report makes this abundantly clear.

The Institute, its Board of Managers,

its founder, and its Charter, have mandated that ministry to seafarers means a *total* ministry to the whole seaman — with all that total implies . . .

Functioning within this concept and context, then, it is likely that the Institute will continue to incur an annual deficit until an Institute endowment of sizable proportions is achieved. The *Endowed Red Letter Day Memorial* plan is one way toward such an achievement.

Some persons may prefer to "build up" the sum of ten thousand dollars with the Institute over a period of time. Others may do so by bequest. Either is acceptable within the Red Letter Day Memorial plan and should probably be discussed with an attorney from several viewpoints, tax deductibility being one.

If there is a Red Letter Day in your life, please write to me.

The Rev. John M. Mulligan, D.D.
Director

SUGGESTED RED LETTER DAYS

- Birthday
- Wedding Day
- Child's Birthday
- Anniversary
- Memorial to a loved one
- Occasion for giving thanks
- Beginning or end of memorable event
- Escape from near tragedy
- A cherished, but undisclosed event

Captain Sam Ober



As told to Louis
by his oldest
brother, George.

It was back in the 1870's; those tough, old "salts" would sail out of Beverly Harbor, Mass. — destination: sometimes the "grand banks" for mackerel fishing, sometimes California, through the strait of Magellan. (There was no Panama Canal, back in those days.)

When a sailor ventured out of a snug harbor he was on his own — a case of sink or swim: no coast guards to be radioed. He could hang up a distress signal but the only thing that would notice it might be a lone seagull.

Capt. Sam Ober sailed the seven seas and I remember on one of his return voyages from Russia (in those days pronounced "Rushi") he brought back two "tumblers;" barrel shaped, small diameter top and bottom.

The captain was a strict "church-member" when at home, which was seldom, and wouldn't say "darn it." I remember hearing my mother proudly remark: "Capt. Sam brought up nine boys and not one of them had a bad habit." Now-a-days, if someone mentioned bad habits, no one would know what he was talking about, as anything is acceptable.

While the captain was a model of virtue at home, at sea, when battling the ocean gales, he was Capt. Sam Ober, the toughest of the tough and no member of his crew ever forgot it.

My oldest brother, George, told me a

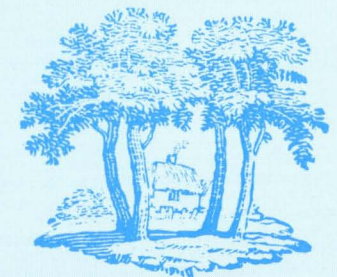
couple of stories (he sailed with our grandfather, at times, during his vacation from college). Grandfather was "skipper" on the MAGNOLIA, one of his 12 schooners.

One night they ran into a storm, such as only the Atlantic Ocean can serve up. The crew were demanding to "abandon ship." Now that made our grandfather angry. He grabbed an axe and stove a hole into every one of the life-boats, and they heard him shout above the din of the screaming gale, "Now, damn ye, ye'll stick to the ship." They "hove to" and the schooner rode out the storm without further incident.

After having tied up to one of the docks in Portugal, the crew went ashore. Two of the city's "wharf rats" came snooping around and found the captain alone in the galley. They tried to "jump" him but he ducked out of their way and leaped on to the deck to have more room to fight.

The two chased him, thinking he was afraid, but the result was he broke one's back over the rail and tossed the other over-board.

And how did Capt. Sam Ober meet his death? All his life he had sailed the seven seas, climbing 40 feet to many a head-mast to foil a top-sail. In his 80's, too old to ship aboard, he fell 15 feet out of an apple tree which led to his death.





Storm

by Frederick N. MacLean

While I have naturally been in all kinds of weather during my forty years at sea, undoubtedly the worst storm I ever encountered was in February of 1955. At that time I was captain of one of the freighters owned by American Export Lines, the steamer EXEMPLAR, 473 feet long and of about 9500 tons.

We were returning from a voyage to a number of ports in India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon and the Red Sea, as well as to several in the Mediterranean and we were loaded with some thousands of tons of manganese ore, mica, cashew nuts, cinnamon, hides, tea, pepper, mats, jute, coffee, hessian cloth (burlap), plumbago and many other items.

We had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar early in February, bound for Boston and New York. Just after we passed the Azores Islands, the weather worsened and we knew that we were in for a very severe storm. Our barometer kept falling and a thick overcast covered the entire sky; the wind increased in velocity, and the sea got higher and higher.

Ships co-operate with the Weather Bureau by sending out coded messages at prescribed intervals. These messages give our position, wind direction and force, barometric reading, condition of sea and sky, and various other items of information. The Weather Bureau plots all the information sent in by various ships, makes up a 'weather map,' and then draws up a weather bulletin and forecast. This is then sent out by radio, and all ships copy the weather messages which will give the estimated position of the storm's center, the direction in which it is moving and its speed of advance. These weather forecasts are of great benefit to mariners, because they can analyze them and decide on a course of action.

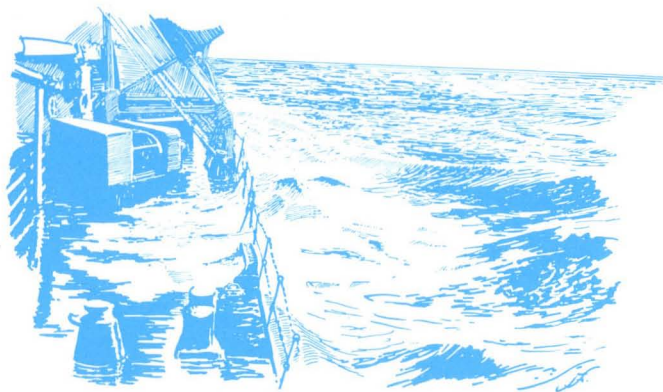
We soon realized that this storm covered a very large area and that many ships were caught in it. Before long we were forced to "heave-to," which is a

sailor's term for slowing his vessel to "steerage way," by which is meant only sufficient speed so that the ship can be steered. By a radical reduction of speed when the sea is rough, and is heading directly into the sea, the ship will rise gently to an advancing sea and ride it out. If the ship keeps on at full speed, heavy seas will crash over the bow and perhaps open the hatches to the sea and cause great damage to the ship and its cargo.

Before long the seas were mountainous! One minute our bow would be pointing almost straight up in the air, then the ship would shudder a bit and then the bow would come crashing down, down, down — giving the crew and me the feeling that we were riding on a high speed elevator. Meanwhile, the stern would rise as high as the bow had been! It seemed to me like riding on a giant roller coaster. We plunged and reared like a wild horse or steer at a rodeo. Every now and then it appeared as if a tremendous sea would come over the bow and swamp us, but just in time the bow would rise ever so gracefully, and the sea would roar past! In those days we had no radar, which added to the feeling of utter frustration as the visibility was almost zero, and as the extremely high winds lifted the top off the white caps, whipped into a foamy spume, driving it all over the surface of the sea. It was not even possible to see our own bow or for any distance in any other direction. We were literally blind and being tossed around like a cork ...

During the worst part of the storm, if we had foundered and been sinking, it would have been utterly impossible to launch our lifeboats. The seas were mountainous, and a lifeboat would have been dashed to pieces against the ship, assuming that it could ever have been lowered to the sea and cast off from the davits, but this would not have been humanly possible.

It was absolutely impossible to get any real sleep, as the ship was never quiet;



always tossing and shaking and trembling. I stayed on the bridge day and night for about sixty hours and never took my clothes off. For fifty-five hours we were "hove-to," and from radio messages received, I knew that ships for hundreds of miles in every direction also suffered the same. I hated to have the day end and darkness set in for it is rather frightening in utter darkness to feel the ship rising and sinking deeply into the seas, and yet not to be able to see anything. It was always a great relief when the darkness would gradually give way to a little light, for soon a new day would dawn, and with it the hope that the wind and sea would abate.

Eventually the wind slowly moderated and the barometer started to climb after a period of steadiness. The raging sea started to lose some of its wildness, and the motion of the ship became less strenuous. However, it takes considera-

ble time for the sea to regain its former composure. Everyone was very happy when we were able to increase speed gradually and to turn the ship back on the course for home.

Those old ships were very strongly built, and I never had any doubt but that we would ride out the storm successfully, although it was a long, tough battle. Many seas came over the bow during the storm, but because we were barely moving, they just swept harmlessly along the decks. After everything was calm and serene again, it was noticed that the sea water had left traces of salt over everything, even aloft on the masts and booms.

We were indeed pleased when we picked up the pilot at the entrance to Boston Harbor and docked soon after. It was especially pleasant for me, as I had grown up in that city, started my sea career there, and considered it my home town!



About the Author



Kay and Fred MacLean aboard the *Oriental Jade*

For many years, a familiar face at the Institute was that of Captain Frederick MacLean. Now retired, he and his lovely wife live in California where he maintains an extensive correspondence plus writing of his ocean ventures. During his 40 years at sea (25 as a captain) he had some unbelievable experiences and we know that the preceding account seemed all too true to many seamen and incredible to us landlubbers.

On a lighter note, Captain MacLean met his wife at sea and later commemorated the occasion with the following poem.

CONGENIAL PASSENGERS

Eight congenial passengers took a little trip
And found delightful company aboard an Export ship.

For fourteen days of sailing they were a happy mix,
Then the DAWSONS left them and there were only six.

The six congenial passengers managed to survive;
Then DOROTHY departed, and left them with five.

The five congenial passengers kept on having fun,
But when SHONNARDS and MOOREHEADS left, there was only ONE

The one unhappy passenger! Her gloom was underscored,
Until she had the cheerful thought — the CAPTAIN stays aboard!

Seaman Perry Ellis



Recently we had the pleasure of meeting seaman Perry Ellis, who has a most unusual and commendable avocation.

Perry has a functional reading disability which for many people would be a constant source of despair. But not for this young Texan. Through observation and hard work he has achieved a chief electri-

cian's rating which is the highest unlicensed rating in the engine room.

Equally important to him is his achieving a life long ambition of "reading" the New Testament through the use of audio tape cassettes. Already he has listened to the King James version four times and with each listening he gains new insights and greater understanding of its Christian message.

When asked how he felt about being able to "read" the Bible, Perry said it was always gratifying to hear the Christian philosophy of doing for others. He also noted that he thought he was quite fortunate to be living in modern times when tapes such as these were available for those who wanted to listen and learn.

SCI was also the location for the *Mystery Radio Theatre Production's* reading of "The Long Black Gloves," a thriller written and directed by Claire Carroll. Joining Miss Carroll for this spine-tingling performance were actors Anthony DeLeva, Olivia Golden, Tony Whitehouse, (Miss Carroll) and Howard Bigel.



From the Log

During the month of August 265 vessels representing more than 50 countries were visited one or more times by SCI ship visitors.

At 15 State Street the Seamen's International Club stayed busy with dances, the Club's annual birthday party, plus a surprise buffet given the seamen by the Hess, Kanton & Fitzgerald Corporation.

At our Mariners International Center in Port Newark, soccer matches were the order of the day with crews from British, Korean and Polish ships competing.

Various groups of seamen were brought to the weekly dances at 15 State Street; and Captain Lu of the *SS Union Defender* presented a ship model to the Center on behalf of his crew.



The Midnight Helm

by Robert H. Leavens

There was a following sea
That moonless night.
Control of the helm was nil,
And the helmsman steered with all
his might
Just to keep the compass still.

It was the midnight watch
From twelve to four,
And the air seemed heavy with storm.
The temperature hovered at eighty
or more
And sweat glossed the helmsman's form.

"Mind your helm," the skipper barked
As the rudder was shifted around.
"I know it's tough but you can do
the job,
We don't want to run aground."
And he spun the helm like a knob.

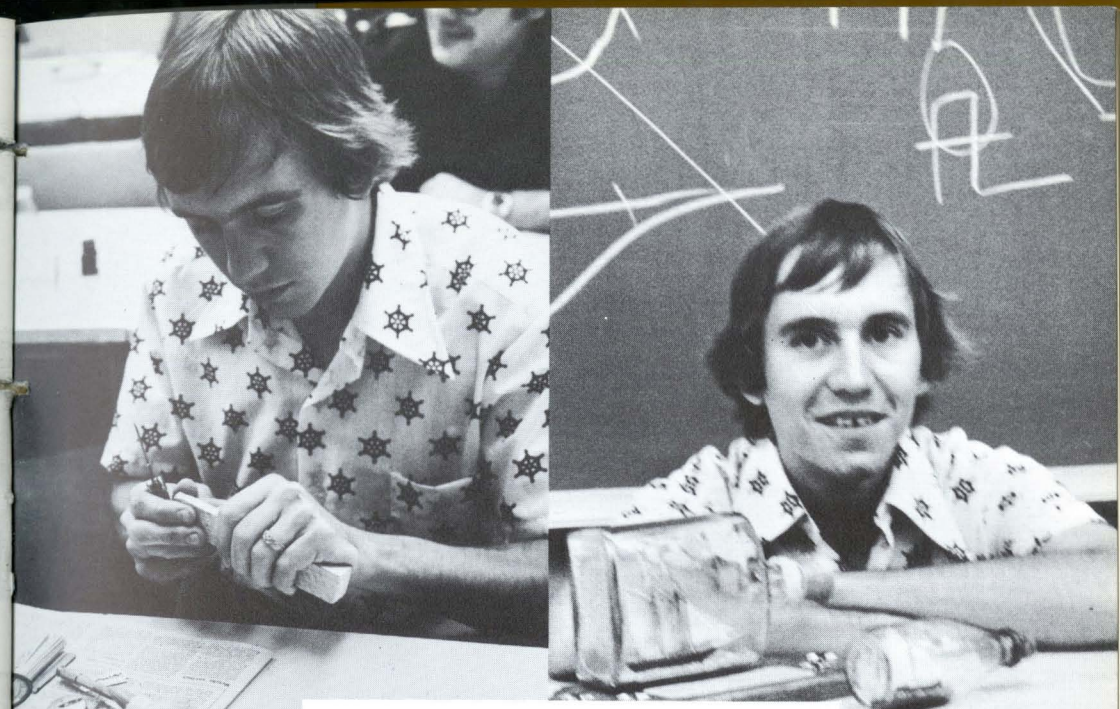
It wasn't always like this
And his mind thought back
To a night when the sea was calm.
Just last week, when the wind was slack
The brine was like a soothing balm.

A sharp pitch to starboard
Interrupted his reverie
And he gave it more rudder to hold,
But the compass swings by incredibly
And the skipper remarks, "You've been told!"

So the midnight watch passes,
Right, left, or shift your rudder,
He struggles to keep her on course.
The bow rises up and gives a shudder
Before plunging with gargantuan force.

On the eastern horizon
The sky becomes lighter
It must be time to be relieved.
His arm muscles ache, they couldn't
be tighter
And the watch he had won't be believed.

His relief here at last,
He explains the course
And tells of the time he had.
Then goes below decks with little remorse
And thinks that perhaps, it wasn't so bad . . .



NBC News visits SCI

In hopes of solving the riddle "How do you put a boat in a bottle?" NBC News covered our workshop in boat-bottling.

There young Ted Zoffinger with knife, wood, glue, paper and string (plus toothpicks), patiently taught his students how to whittle, rig, mount and hoist their first boat in a bottle — all in one evening. No wonder NBC thought it worth covering.

If we get enough requests, we just might hold a repeat performance. Just call us at 269-2710 and ask for Miss Argentine.



Seamen's Church Institute of N. Y.

**15 State Street
New York, N. Y. 10004**

Address Correction Requested

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the needs of Merchant Seamen
for 140 years

