

The LOOKOUT

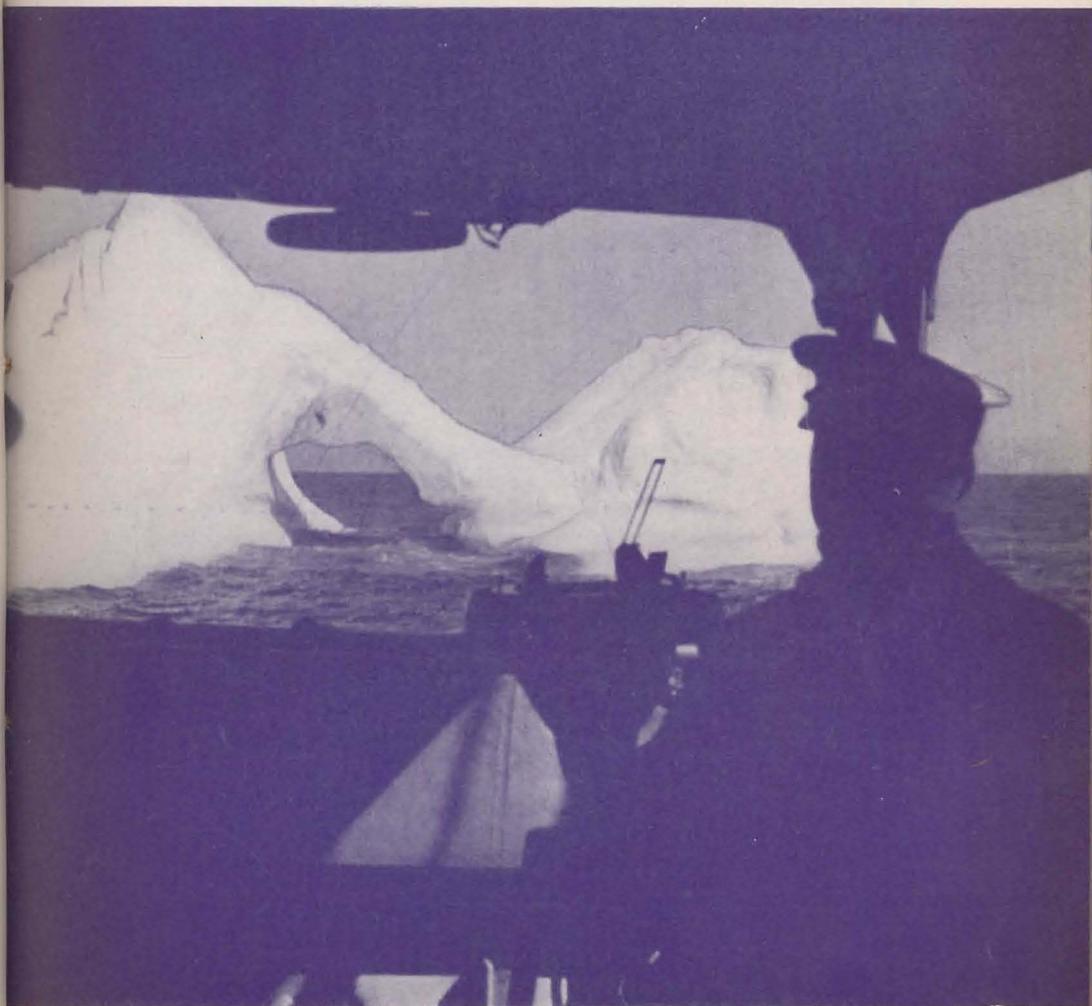


Photo from Erving Gallaway

THE ICE-BERG — ONE OF THE MANY HAZARDS OF THE SEA

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

VOL. XXXIX

February, 1948

No. 2

Sanctuary

Open our eyes, we beseech, O Father, to the pitiful brokenness of thine earthwide family, our ears to the unspoken cries of the impoverished and enslaved, and our hearts to understand the needs of all thy children. Save us from the sin of futile sorrow which only sees but does not act and stir up our wills to practice that brotherhood by which alone the Kingdom of thy Christ can be wrought upon the earth; for His sake we ask it of thee who dost govern all things, world without end. Amen.

Forward Movement



The LOOKOUT

VOL. XXXIX, FEBRUARY 1948

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Ahoy! Parrot Adrift

By Don D. Brown, *Boatswain*

THERE is a certain parrot down in the island of Cuba who is probably sitting on one leg, scratching his feathery head, mumbling to himself in Spanish and trying to figure out why it had to happen to him.

This same parrot, only a few days before, was peacefully riding around on a native bumboat down in Cartagena, Columbia, enjoying a quiet parrot's life, and was content with it, we assume. But, as they say, into every life some rain must fall — even a parrot's. And the day that Pacific Tankers Ship SS Casa Grande sailed into Cartagena, a little rain fell into his.

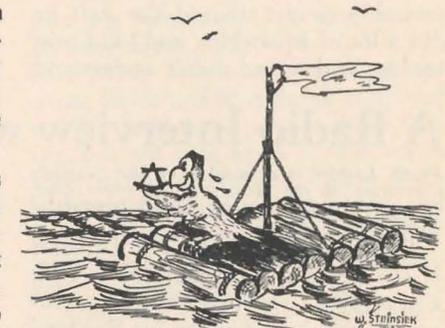
It seems that after a little deal between one of the crew-members and the native bumboatmen was made, the Parrot had a new owner. And he suddenly found himself being hoisted up onto the deck and hustled into an empty room all by his lonesome.

THREE SQUARES REGULARLY

He strutted around and soon accustomed himself to life aboard the ship, ate his three squares regularly and didn't even complain about the service. Of course, if he had, nobody would have understood him anyway because he spoke only Spanish. And we think he knew it.

Now all went well and we put to sea, that is, until the Skipper found out we had a passenger. That uncharitable soul immediately called for the Chief Officer, and the conversation went something like this: "Mister Mate, get rid of that Parrot!"

And so the Mate dutifully passed on these orders in no uncertain terms to the proud owner of the parrot. Now as you know, there are certain



Drawing by Walter Steinsiek

laws about parrots being brought into the United States and our customs men frown heavily on people who disobey them. Which is, no doubt, what the Skipper had in mind when he issued his order. He didn't want a fine assessed on his ship and his crew possibly quarantined.

In the meantime, the Chief Officer was having a heated discussion with the parrot's new owner about cruelty to dumb animals, Spanish-speaking parrot's and the like. But needless to say, it was soon decided in favor of the Chief Officer that the parrot would go over the side.

IGNORANT OF FATE

Now the SS Casa Grande was New York-bound and at a fast speed of 14 knots. At the moment she was passing the sunny, palm tree-studded island of Cuba. As it was only about a mile offshore it was decided that the parrot could easily float in with the current to shore in a matter of hours. Another discussion followed and a decision was made to disembark the parrot, who of course, knew nothing about it yet.

A raft was hastily built. Parrot, cage and raft were dropped over the side with a hearty "bon voyage," for the parrot. It was then we learned that parrots, too, can swim because he fell out of his cage on the way down. He lost no time in getting back aboard the raft, which was to be his new home for many long dreary hours.

On the way down and on his mad scramble to get aboard the raft he did a lot of squawking and loud protesting, and as we didn't understand

Spanish we're not sure, but we gathered he wasn't happy about the whole affair.

The last we saw of our unfortunate parrot, he was safely afloat on his raft back in our wake. He had just finished checking his food ration and was taking a bearing on the nearest point of land.

We hope he'll be happy in his new home. He should be because Cuba is a wonderful island — so the sailors say.

Reprinted from Seafarer's Way

A Radio Interview with Frank Laskier

Frank Laskier is a member of the Seamen's Committee of the Artists and Writers Club, sponsored by the Seamen's Church Institute of New York.

Professor Warren Bower, Director of the Writers' Workshop, New York University, interviewed Seaman-author Frank Laskier on his Readers' Almanac Program, Station WNYC, December 11, 1947, at 8:30 P.M.

Professor Bower told his radio audience that Mr. Laskier is growing into an important American novelist and that his last book, "Unseen Harbor"* is in the tradition of Joseph Conrad. He said that literature about the sea is extensive and cited Conrad, Forester, Richard Henry Dana, as examples of good story tellers, a company in which Mr. Laskier deserves a place.

Professor Bower asked Mr. Laskier some pertinent questions about sea life: "Are sailors ever apprehensive of storms?" Mr. Laskier replied: "On board ship you know by the barometer sometimes days ahead that the storm is coming. The Bosun tells you to batten this down, secure this or that, tie things and be prepared and ready, but you're still not very sure. When the storm breaks and the cargo is being torn about, and it gets worse and then worse than worse, and you are not sure you will survive, you feel like dropping on your knees and praying to God to save you, and finally when the storm reaches what you think is its height and it can't get any worse, it does, and yet all

through this experience you find yourself relying on some man — an Officer on the bridge who is older and wiser than you are. When the storm is over this Officer will invariably say to you "What! you call that a storm; that was just a cap full of wind!"

Professor Bower asked Mr. Laskier if seamen are a special lot in any particular way and he answered "Yes, they have very special problems and very special feelings. A real seaman gets that same wonderful feeling every time his ship takes him away from the land, that there is something about a ship when you know you are on your own and the only ones who will save you are your shipmates and officers on whom you can rely, and you are bound to them by every tie. You will be tired and wet and weary and sometimes afraid, but you know that there up on the bridge or in the lookout in the foremost head you've got a shipmate who's got to be relieved and so you go and get him a cup of coffee and take his place there, and at the end of your watch another shipmate will come and relieve you, and he will stand by you."

One of the questions raised by Dr. Bower was: "Is a ship a democratic organization when seamen carry out the orders of their superior officers without question?" Mr. Laskier replied that "a ship is democratic in the truest sense. The Captain is the

*Reviewed in the November LOOKOUT. Published by Lippincott.

boss but each seaman knows that he has done the same as you only harder, he is trained and that the orders he gives to you to do he has done them himself many times before, and so in this comradely regime it is natural to rely on each other and a seaman relies on the man who commands his ship."

"Why do sailors relax so completely when on land?" was Dr. Bower's next question. Frank Laskier explained it this way: "A seaman gets ashore and all that has held him up in stays, all the discipline, all the dangers and all the comradeship of that voyage are gone. The mate is no longer the mate; the captain is no longer the captain; they are just men like himself on the beach. There is nothing to hold him back or no one to tell him, Do this! Do that! and that is why until he gets back aboard his ship, a seaman is something like a little child without his father."

Frank was asked if he had ever done any writing before World War II. He replied that until he lost his leg at sea and spent many months in

a hospital, he had never written letters home, only postcards. "During those long months I learned to write, but what was even stranger, I didn't have to be afraid of shore people any more. I could appreciate them and understand them, and my shipmates too, and out of the misery I learned, and began loving people, and found I could write a little."

Frank was asked if writing was now his substitute for going to sea. He answered: "My wife and I are now living in a place where we see green fields and mountains and I am writing books and stories for a living, but not long ago I went down to Fire Island and when I saw those rollers come in from the ocean and saw the ships outward bound, I knew that I would soon have to go back to sea, I couldn't help it."

Asked what the theme of his novel, "Unseen Harbour" is Frank replied, "A man is a direct result of his own behavior and answerable to no one in the world except himself. He is his own master but he must pay for his own behavior, and the sea will bring out the best and the worst in a man."

Seagoing Bottle Contains Message for Royal Couple

LAND'S END, on the westerly tip of England, made the headlines when a tightly corked bottle was picked up on the shore, addressed to "Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten, Buckingham Palace."

The message inside stated that the bottle had been dropped overboard from the Greek steamer *ARISTIDIS* when she was 28 miles west of Bishop's Rock, bound for the United States.

The radio operator, J. S. Papageorge, tossed the bottle into the sea and the message inside read:

"Although there are three modern wireless transmitters in my possession, I just thought it would be nice and more interesting in this

strange way to send you my heartiest wishes for a long and a very happy life to you both. God bless you two."

The bottle was forwarded to Lieutenant Mountbatten and his bride, Princess Elizabeth.

When the freighter *ARISTIDIS*, which is operated by the Central American Steamship Agency, arrived in Norfolk, Va., the radio officer was glad to learn that his message had reached the royal couple.



Art Exhibit on Shipboard

TOM DWYER, who won first prize for his painting "Lonely Lighthouse," writes us from Gothenberg, Sweden, where he received the announcement.

Tom is serving as Bosun on a Liberty ship. In acknowledging the award, he writes:

"Gee, it almost floored me to receive the news. My painting was done with two bits worth of sign-painters colors. I would feel guilty if I didn't tell you that.

"My last two trips were to Sweden with stops in Denmark and Holland. The weather-gods threw everything at us but good weather — like riding a submarine. We started for the Portuguese Schooner, *Maria Carlotta*, but that Army transport beat us to her."

"I guess you hear enough sea yarns in your LOOKOUT which I thoroughly enjoy getting and sitting down with to read while smoking my pipe and drifting all over the weary globe in and out of fo'c'sles.

"Your Marine Poetry Page shows me people who live and die for the beauty of it. It takes a real purpose in life to be able to write like that. It would be a miserable life without a song and a poem to build on, laugh or cry on.

"You would be interested in an art exhibit we had at sea aboard this



Liberty ship. The pictures, which I will try to send you, show the Skipper giving a box of cigars, a carton of cigarettes and candy to yours truly who is among the winners. I think I won because I was Bosun and had charge of the paint supply, canvas brushes (hand made) and production. I believe this was the first art show of its kind. The pictures painted by the crew showed empty tomato cans from the galley, portraits of some of the characters on shipboard, and even paintings of my stores, pails of various colored paints, brushes, etc. The outdoor exhibit of the pictures was on the Boat deck. They were hung on the engine room vent. We also had an indoor exhibit with paintings hung on the walls of the Messroom and Recreation room. It was a barrel of fun and hard to explain just how the thing got started and grew so.

"We had a funny A B on board who pleaded with me to place him in one part of the ship or another according to the way his picture was coming along. He had a half dozen buckets of paint wherever he worked, up the mast, on the anchor chain, all over the stack, in the life-boats, etc. What a realistic painting it turned out to be — really beautiful. This sailor, whose home is in the Great Smokey Mountains, and whom I met at the Institute, told me that his folks back home had an awfully hard time understanding his job. Every time he goes home, they ask him this question: 'Is a ship made of iron? Yes, he will say. Then how does it stay on top of the water when water can't float iron? T'aint so.' On the next picture he will paint a straw bottom and he has asked me to bring along a bale of hay!

"It was funny to see sailors swinging a three-inch brush all day long against the midside of a ship and then trying to paint the same thing in their off-hours with the same paint — but in miniature on canvas, and

curse at being able to "paint" the whole damn bridge up there and then come down here (spare room and carpenter shop turned into a studio) and not be able to duplicate it on canvas! One guy after working all Saturday insisted on keeping the bucket of paint for his picture that had a mast and boom to be filled in.

The next trip will be different (sounds familiar) and I will bring a camera and take pictures of our next art exhibit.

LOOKOUT readers will remember him as the same artist who won a prize for a painting from which the brush was made from the hairs of his head.

THE LIBERTY SHIP THAT CHANGED HER NAME

A REPORTER at the christening of the Liberty ship "Francis J. O'Gara" found himself embarrassed. "But Miss O'Gara," he protested. "I didn't mean to offend you by saying your brother was dead! Only — you know as well as I do that — they wouldn't be naming a Liberty ship after him if he wasn't dead."

The O'Gara family would not accept the fact of Francis' death, even when some of the survivors of the torpedoed ship "Jean Nicolet," testified that they hadn't seen him in the lifeboats. They still wouldn't believe it.

And, as it turned out, they were right. Francis O'Gara turned up, alive. He was hauled aboard a Japanese submarine. When a Jap officer asked O'Gara his official position he replied, "American Consul. I wish to protest against any ill-treatment of the crew." When the sub submerged, O'Gara was given rough treatment, iron pipes beaten across his feet, knees and back. He was a prisoner for 44 days on the sub, then 31 days in a prison camp at Penang, then seven months in a prison camp in Ofuna (known as "the Camp for Dead Men.")

O'Gara was scheduled for transfer to a civilian camp but somehow the orders got gummed up. He started, but never got there. When the war was



over, and O'Gara was released, he learned that the atom bomb had landed on Hiroshima — the place where the civilian camp was located.

The Liberty ship which had been named in his memory continues to sail, but *not* in accordance with the custom of naming Liberties for dead men.

"HIS STORE OF EQUANIMITY"

AS grim and deadly as the sea can be, its terrors have seldom driven a sailor from his trade. What breaks some hearts and discourages others is the relative solitude and confinement a ship enforces and the monotony of endless months away from home and the works of men. A sailor's existence in normal times is compounded of an eventless routine which forms the warp and woof of every sea passage and the brief and usually unsatisfactory excitements of port. To be content in his work, a seafarer must be able to call upon his store of equanimity and patience every day, upon his courage once or twice a lifetime; it is a calling which demands a philosophic resignation to mischance and an ambition which is in no hurry to be served.

Extract from an article in *The Saturday Evening Post* of June 28, 1947 entitled "Men at Work — Merchant-Marine Officer," by Richard Thruelsen.

Two Sea "Tragedies"

By John Sante

Editor's Note: If you were asked to recall the greatest tragedy of your youth, it might take you considerable time to remember. In the two stories which follow, a merchant marine seaman recalls the time he wanted to get to sea, and didn't — and another time when he wanted to get ashore, and didn't! Both of them seemed, at the time, he commented, "completely tragic experiences, from which I would never recover."

BERMUDA BOUND

"Taxi . . . ! Taxi!" I yelled. The cab driver veered and came to a sudden stop at the curb.

"Ah, finally!" I sighed, as I entered the cab. "You fellows are least available when one is most in haste. Is it possible that all cabs are engaged at one time in New York? For the past twenty minutes it certainly has seemed so."

The driver turned around, looked me over. "Soitnly! Anyt'ing c'n break in dis boig. Whe'e ya gawn? Wad's da ruszh, Bud?" he parried. "Can you get me to the A—— Steamship Company, Pier No. 30, on the Hudson River side, in ten minutes?"

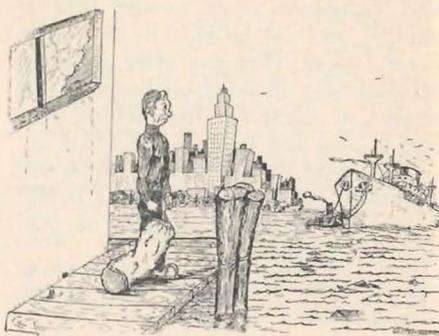
"Shuer t'ing, kid. Consida yerse'f dere. Shet yer eyes an' hol' awn ter yar hat!"

"It's my first trip," I told him excitedly.

"Well, whaddy know?"

He bolted into motion. Down Third Avenue we sped, swerving in and out of traffic, circumventing the "El's" steel-girdered supports with hair-breadth proximity. In suspense, like a Hollywood movie's version of a melodramatic pursuit, we raced through traffic and against time.

Unnerved and alarmed by his recklessness, I closed my eyes as he had suggested. My thoughts revolved around the past four weeks of weary waiting in the seamen's union halls. It was just by chance that I had been there at the right time. I was a newcomer, but no union member with an able-bodied seaman's rating was present. I was asked if I was interested in making a trip. Was I?



Drawing by Walter Steinsiek

For weeks I had waited for just this opportunity.

The temporary membership card was mine. I fingered it with assurance. My first voyage to sea was no longer a dream — it was a reality! And of all wondrous places — Bermuda bound!

The driver interrupted my reverie. "Okay, son, here ya're" he broke in. The cab lurched and screeched to a halt. I grabbed my bag and ran toward the pier. Suddenly I stopped. "Oh, I forgot, How much is my fare?" I yelled retracing my steps.

The cabbie grinned. "Dat's aw rite. Fa'git it, kid," he banged the door shut and drove off.

With bated breath I reached the dock. The whistle of the *Angeline* sounded: "Boooooo . . . ! Boooooo! . . . Boop!"

There she was! But, alas, already in midstream, slowly making her way down the river! With a muffled sob, and through tear-dimmed eyes, I watched her white wake, the last evidence of her passage slowly vanishing, and from a distance, her shrill call reverberated. I understood it to say: "Gloooooom! . . . Glooom! . . . Glooom!"

Shore-Leave?

"**L**AND." I shouted joyously back to the captain's bridge. "Land to the starboard side, Sir!"

At that moment I sensed Columbus' sensation when he first sighted the

New World and fell to his knees in humble thanksgiving. During the past sixty days I had stood "the four to eight" on lookout. From the ship's prow, each day my eyes would travel and search the vast encircling horizon, but to no avail. It was always an empty, constantly beckoning goal. Now, at last, like a thin wavering pencil line drawn between sea and sky, land-fall lay in the hazy distance beyond.

The anchor was dropped at six o'clock that evening. Capetown lay spectacularly before me, more amazing than I could ever have imagined! The mountainous terrain consisted of peculiar rock formations abruptly jutting out into the sea.

The following morning, high spirits prevailed. Everyone was to be granted shore leave. I was quivering with anticipation. How wonderful to set foot on solid earth once more! After the many monotonous days at sea, I could hardly wait!

A portly official in an immaculate white uniform, arrived in a launch, followed by his *entourage*, similarly attired in time for lunch. Early that morning the two watches not on duty had been directed to form a line in the main salon and await the official's convenience to certify each individual's identification papers. It was a necessary customs' routine procedure, as in any foreign port. By late afternoon the men had become impatient and tired because of the drawn out proceedings.

The salon doors finally swung open, and in waddled his honor, with his retinue closely following at his heels. Adjusting himself to his seat, his honor finally looked up, as his flaccid lips parted, and commanded: "First chap come forward and have your papers ready."

Bang! Bang! Bang! The report shattered the air like a gunshot. Startled by the sound, the official leapt out of his seat and made as though to lunge right through the bulkhead. The men in line broke out into roaring laughter, as some pointed to his perspiring face, now white with

fear. Sensing a practical joke and quick to perceive his ludicrous position, he partly regained his composure and glowered in our direction. The laughing voices diminished into silence. Livid with rage, he paced toward the swinging doors, parted them, and, without a word, vanished.

Back in my quarters I gave thought to the incident and wondered what the final outcome would be. It had been announced over the ship's loudspeakers that everyone would be restricted from shore-leave unless the person or persons who had set off the firecrackers in the official's presence were to admit to the act. I felt wretched. The prospect of shore-leave grew dimmer. As I lay in my bunk, Hurley, my shipmate, slamming the fo'c'sle door, entered, saying:

"Doze guys put me up to it. I taught da Ol' Man had a sense a 'umor. Now I ain't got da guts ta face da cap'ain an' tell 'im."

"What?" I exclaimed. "Did you have a hand in it? You know, everyone's sense of humor isn't the same as yours. Most of the fellows are furious at being deprived of shore-leave. You'd better go up and see the mate. Just repeat what you've told me." He winced at the suggestion. As he sat down on his bunk he appeared so dejected that he aroused my sympathy. Unthinkingly, I offered him moral support by saying that I would accompany him to see the captain if that would bolster his courage. He raised his eyes and arose, registering a grateful and relieved expression.

"What are you fellows doing up here?" It was the captain's voice. I nervously started to explain.

"Why, er—we came to see you about the firecrackers. It was—my—"

"Well, so you're the two, eh?" boomed the captain. "It took you both long enough to own up to it."

"You have it all confused, Sir; I merely came as—"

"Never mind; I don't want to hear another word about it," he ordered. "You'll both be restricted to this ship for the remainder of the time we're in port here."

A Red Letter Day Report

One of our loyal contributors, Mr. William Winter, very kindly gave us permission to reprint a Red Letter Day report sent to him on "the first day of winter." For 21 years he has made his annual gift of \$273.97 for the shortest day of the year so that, as he writes, "the Institute will not be short on that day."

There are 18 other loyal friends who give Red Letter Day by making themselves responsible for the cost of maintaining all the Institute's facilities for an entire calendar day, usually in memory of some relative or friend, or to commemorate some anniversary or special event in their lives. Their generous gifts are designated as Red Letter Days on the Institute's calendar.

We hope that others, after reading this letter, will be inspired to give a Red Letter Day. Checks for \$273.97 (and the date you wish to reserve) should be sent to:

HARRY FORSYTH, *Chairman, Ways and Means Committee*
SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK
25 South Street, New York 4, N. Y.



My dear Mr. Winter:

On your *Red Letter Day*, December 21st, it was cold and wet outside but inside, at "25 South Street", it was warm and snug. Christmas preparations were well under way and the air was full of that special Holiday feeling. The good fellowship and warm hospitality always in evidence throughout our 13-story building was especially noticeable on your Day.

Your Day was a busy one for the entire building. The Registration Desk reported 1,077 seamen registered for beds and the Cafeteria served 2,407 meals. The Baggage Room was as busy as Grand Central Station: 472 seamen came in with their gear. In our Seamen's Lounge 195 men enjoyed

hot coffee and conversation or cribbage. In the Janet Roper Club, 40 younger seamen played games, chatted with the hostess or addressed last-minute Christmas cards. One group drew up comfortable chairs around the radio and enjoyed a full program of opera. In the evening 115 men attended the weekly dance and were enthusiastic about the hostesses, the refreshments and the music. Many stayed until the lights were turned out. In the third floor Game Room where men of all nationalities congregate, 44 men and 37 officers played cards, chess or read newspapers.

Our Conrad Library was used by 105 seamen on your Day, a number of whom are studying in our Merchant Marine School toward advancement of their ratings.

The Seamen's Funds Bureau protected the wages of 16 seamen just paid off their ships. The men leave their money here for safekeeping or for transference to designated banks.

Our ship visitors began their Santa Claus role on your Day and delivered Christmas packages to five American ships which were in port but would be on the high seas on Christmas Day. Over 6,000 boxes were distributed this year. Each year we receive many wonderful letters from the men who have been the happy recipients of these boxes.

We were glad to be able to send our Chaplains to visit in the Maritime Hospital on Ellis and Staten Islands on your Day to conduct services for convalescent seamen and to distribute "get-well" packages.

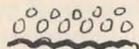
Your generous Red Letter Day gift again made it possible for us to render services in your name to our men in the Merchant Marine. Because of your kindness, hundreds of men were able to enjoy comfort, companionship, and a wholesome family atmosphere at "25 South Street."

Trusting that your own holidays were made happier by your generous sharing of them, and with every good wish for the New Year, I am,

Sincerely yours,

HARRY FORSYTH

Chairman, Ways and Means Committee



Movies



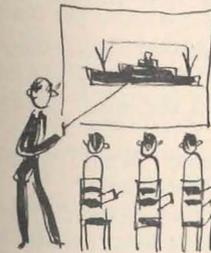
Barber Shop



Telephone Messages



Seamen's Lounge



Merchant Marine School



Cafeteria



Clinics



Dances



1400 Lodgings Nightly

True Tales of Heroism at Sea:

Live Wire

By Marjorie Dent Candee

STANDING off-shore from the Anzio beachhead, on the third day of the landing, a veteran cargo vessel *Lawton B. Evans* was riding out an electric storm. Across the rain-swept deck, two seamen in oilskins fought their way, heads down to the wind, clinging to railings and stanchions until they reached, at last, a bulkhead and stopped for breath.

Bosun Lex Fanjoy raised his eyes to the mainmast. "It's like tryin' to see through a solid sheet of water!"

"What'd you say, Lex?" shouted his companion, also looking up, unmindful of the water pouring down his face and neck.

"I see it, Cap! I see it!" Lex yelled. "The barrage balloon's still up there . . . like a fat sausage on a string!"

"It's up there, all right," replied the master. "But what you called string is a thousand feet of wire — charged with electricity!"

Lex thought: "Enough to blow a ship skyhigh if a spark should hit our gastank." Aloud he said: "I've got to cut that balloon loose."

"Do you think you can, Lex? Do you think you can?" The skipper's voice was anxious.

"I can try," Lex shouted back. "The lead stop on the wire's jammed in the fairlead. I'll have to go up to the mainmast to cut it loose."

"Yes, I know," the master cut in. "Think you can manage it?"



Lex chuckled. "It's got to be done, hasn't it?"

The Captain clapped him on the shoulder. "Right, Lex it's got to be done."

"Then I'm takin' a crack at it."

"I wish you luck, Lex. Go to it, man."

The fury of the thunder storm was unabated as Lex climbed the mast.

A hundred and twenty feet below him, on the tilting, pitching deck, the second mate and the master anxiously watched Lex's progress. Visible only by lightning flashes, Lex could be seen hanging on for dear life, while the mast cut a circle through the black sky.

The young mate commented: "The static electricity collected in that thousand feet of wire running from our winch to that balloon is enough to—"

"Blow us to Kingdom Come," finished the Skipper succinctly.

"If anybody can cut that balloon loose, Lex Fanjoy can!" And then the mate added, guiltily: "I wouldn't want to be in his shoes right now."

The master said: "It's funny, whenever there's a tough job to be done on board this ship, Lex is the man. No wonder the crew calls him 'Live Wire.' How far's he got, now?"

"Can't see . . . Wait." A lightning flash illuminated Lex for a brief instant. "Yes. There he his. If he's —"

A tremendous clap of thunder drowned out the mate's words. And then a lightning bolt hit the wire cable.

The master peered heavenward. "That was close—" he began—"Close Good Lord! It hit the wire . . . and knocked Lex off!"

The mate shouted "What? I can't see him up there any more."

"Look," said the captain. "He's fallen, but his fall's been broken by the crosstrees, just twenty feet below!"

Thank God! He's lying up there, probably injured. Come on! We've got to get him, somehow!

"I'll go" said Vanning, the young mate.

But something happened before he could get to Lex. His skipper put a restraining hand on his arm. "Wait," he ordered. "Look aloft!"

"He's coming to!" Vanning exclaimed.

"Yes," nodded the skipper. "Look at him. What a man. He's gone back up the mast — to finish what he'd set out to do!"

Bosun Lex Fanjoy finished his job, cut the charged wire, and climbed back down to the deck, to be treated for severe shock, burns and arm injuries suffered from his fall to the crosstrees.

What he did that day off Anzio has added a bright chapter to the book of heroic deeds performed by bold and courageous merchant seamen. His action saved the ship, his shipmates and the valuable cargo which was badly needed for our troops fighting in Sicily and Italy.

The Merchant Marine — and his country — is proud of Lex Fanjoy!

"Shining Seaward"

By Paul Walker

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From *The Patriot*, Harrisburg, Pa.



Oscar the Terrible

By Thomas Bowers*, *Ship's Electrician*

Editor's Note: Our friend Oscar in another adventure, one vouched for by a scientist at the Museum of Natural History. Readers are referred to earlier adventures of Oscar, described in the LOOKOUTS 1946 and LOOKOUTS 1947.

ON this last voyage our ship was rumored to have as passenger on the return trip from Bogota, Columbia, S. A., a very eminent Professor of marine life research.

Before going to Columbia to study a tribe of men who spend most of their life in water, he had stopped off in Yucatan for several months to study the cause of the Sea Turtle's decrease in numbers.

A few days out of Bogota I had the good fortune to meet the Professor alone on deck. After passing the time of day and one of the old tried and true remarks about the weather, I mentioned something about his work being interesting; but all the time he was leaning on the rail looking out over the water until I very casually mentioned my friend Oscar, the turtle, and our close friendship, which was what I wanted to do all the time. He turned to look straight into my face.

His expression had changed from that of the dreamy intellectual to a mixture of pleasure and interest. Then he took the initiative and asked the questions.

I told him all I knew about my friend only to discover that the Professor knew much more about Oscar, his history and that of his ancestors, a breed of amphibians who 400 years ago ruled the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The Professor also told me that when the baby turtles were hatched they dug their way out of the sand all within a few days of each other. The Sea Gulls were waiting to swoop down and devour many of the babies before they could reach the water and those who did get off the beach into the water faced a school of large hungry fish.

It was at this point that he told me why he was especially interested in the one Turtle I had mentioned. He explained how, after many weeks of work and study he and his assistants had waited for the buried eggs to hatch.

One morning as the time drew near, the Professor noticed that a large Bull Turtle he hadn't seen before had appeared on the beach. Looking through his glasses, he saw marks on its back which he later made out to spell O-S-C-A-R.

While the Professor was pondering over this, the eggs began to hatch. Nature's Incubator had done its work and as the babies began digging their way out of the warm sand and crawling toward the water, flocks of

Sea Gulls appeared. Suddenly Oscar went into action, rising on his flippers, lifting his body off the sand. He got all the babies under him that he possibly could and then started to convoy them to the water. The Gulls swooped down and carried off some of them, but Oscar managed to get most of them to the water only to find a school of large fish waiting to devour the rest.

This made Oscar see red and he charged the fish. The Professor said

that in all his life he had never seen such violent action. Oscar fought with feet, mouth, flippers and tail. When the battle was over, Oscar was back on the beach, but dead and dying fish could be seen for several yards off shore.

When the Professor disembarked here in New York he bade me good bye and promised to send me more information on the domestic life of the Sea Turtle as soon as he compiled his notes.

*Member, Artists and Writers Club.

The Decline of Coast-Line Shipping

By Freeman Hathaway

Editor's Note: One of our Lookout subscribers, Judge Robert C. Parker of Westfield, Massachusetts, wrote to us inquiring about the disposition of the Coastwise Steamship Lines. We asked Freeman Hathaway of the Steamship Historical Society to investigate, and the following article is the result. We believe readers who enjoyed Mr. Hathaway's last article in the June 1947 LOOKOUT will find this one equally informative.

WITH few exceptions, the Lines* you mention were victims of a combination of circumstances which you have suggested, just as the steamships on Long Island Sound, and those to Boston have ceased to run.

The Clyde and Savannah Lines once had a heavy cotton business, which dwindled with the movement of the cotton mills to the South. The introduction of air-conditioning in the Southern mills produced the same damp atmosphere which originally gave Fall River, New Bedford and those cities their great mills, which made it unnecessary to ship the cotton North.

Competing highways, with their busses and trucks, streamlined, overnight rail travel, and finally labor demands diminished the service. Now, the airplane covers, in a few hours, the Clyde Line Florida passenger service, which took three days.

In the cases of the lines which you mention, with the war the government took all of the coastwise ships, and set them all over the world. Many

*Clyde Line, O.S.S. Co., Merchants and Miner's S.S. Co. and Old Dominion Line.

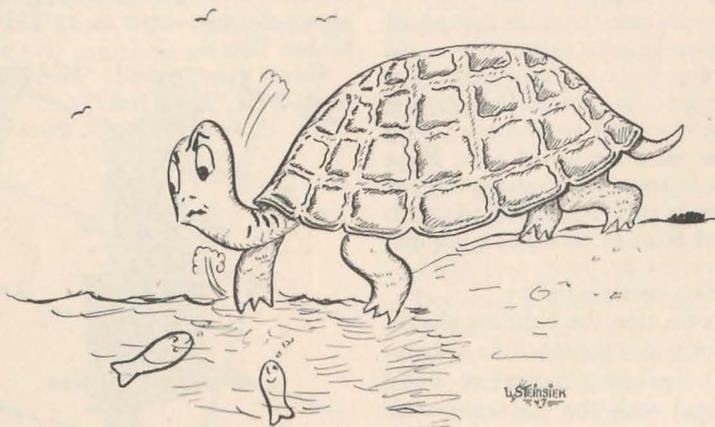
were lost, and the remainder offered for sale by the Maritime Commission, or returned to the owners, who did not want them.

The last of the Merchants & Miners fleet, The FAIRFAX, was sold about a year ago to Chinese interests. I have been told that the company has closed, will probably never operate again.

The Old Dominion Line lost the "Robert E. Lee," and after the war the "George Washington" ran for a while to Bermuda, under charter to Alcoa Lines, but has been laid up for some time. The old "Madison" is still in Boston for sale.

The same factors which put the New England Steamship Company out of business, namely the high cost of handling package freight, now handled by trailer truck overland, and as the passenger steamship business dwindled, finally both handicapped by continuous labor troubles, paved the way for the end of the coastwise passenger steamship. Clyde Line now operates a few freight ships, but about the only pre-war coastwise passenger ships operating out of New York now are the "YARMOUTH" and "EVANGELINE" of the Eastern S. S. Company, cruising to Nassau, Havana and Miami. "BORINQUEN" of the Porto Rico Line is also in service.

At the beginning of World War II the government had a large fleet of



coastwise passenger steamships to commandeer. Unless help is given to establish such ships again, in a future emergency there will be no such ships to use as stop-gaps.

For coastwise service, the only hope at present seems to be of the Trailership type, which will carry loaded trailers, with some passengers.

Another inquiry was made by Mr. Paul Brinsmade about the disposition of the *Commonwealth* and the *Priscilla*. Again Mr. Hathaway has helped us out by investigating this and his reply to Mr. Brinsmade follows:

In July, 1937, the New England Steamship Company having previously closed the Providence, New London, and New Bedford Lines, had amongst its remaining assets, the Fall River Line, with the side-wheel passenger steamboats COMMONWEALTH, PRISCILLA, PROVIDENCE, and PLYMOUTH. Because of labor difficulties, the trustees

applied to the Federal Court of New Haven, for permission to dispose of the company's assets. This was granted by the court.

A bid of \$83,000 was received from the Union Shipbuilding Company of Baltimore, which was accepted. Meanwhile the COMMONWEALTH was tied up at Fall River, PRISCILLA at Providence, and the PROVIDENCE and PLYMOUTH at Newport. They were towed to Baltimore early in 1938 and completely scrapped.

One of our members secured a complete stateroom from the COMMONWEALTH and has it in his home in Taunton, Mass. Another secured the whistle of the PRISCILLA and PLYMOUTH, and presented them to the Jamestown—Newport Ferry Company, and they were installed on their two ferries. Two boilers from COMMONWEALTH were installed in the SANDY HOOK, and still operate that vessel.

Ship Shape Shirts

By Polly Weaver

YOU may think *you* have headaches but what if you had to hold bundles of laundry for six months or longer and comply with customer's requests to mail their laundry to them at seaports all around the country? And what if your customers, because of their calling, had to be allowed access to their finished bundles at any hour of the day or night?

This is routine business for the laundry at the Seamen's Church Institute of New York, largest shore home in the world for active seamen of all races and creeds.

The Institute laundry, located in the sub-basement of this 13-story building at 25 South Street, right on New York's waterfront, rolls out clean shirts and dungarees for its seamen customers on a two-day schedule. It divides its work into two main classifications: its guest work for seamen and its house work which includes linens for about 1000 beds daily, uni-

forms for commissary and clinic personnel, drapes and other miscellany.

One of the most important services rendered by the laundry is the two-day service for seamen's personal laundry, with special emphasis on shirt finishing and packaging. Because many seamen-customers stow away their clean gear to be worn later at sea, an effort is made to give them a shirt which will look clean and well pressed after having been packed away for a while. Before the war a cellophane envelope was used for every shirt, but this material has not been released again. The laundry did mending before the war, too, but has discontinued it. Now mending kits are distributed to seamen through the Institute and many a brawny tar proves his own handiness with palm and needle. To maintain the 2-day schedule, the size of the bundles is limited. The laundry accepts no more than 3 or 4 shirts to a bundle, and the daily

"lot" is closed at a specified time. Something of a record was chalked up during the war when the laundry turned out 100 white uniforms a day for the Coast Guard. A letter from the area commander complimenting their fast, careful work is a prized possession of the Institute. When you consider that officers are *inclined* to be fastidious and their juniors *trained* that way, this is a feather in anyone's cap. Prices are kept as low as possible in keeping with the Institute's tradition of service to men of the sea.

Of the thousands of seamen using the building daily, a large percentage have their laundry done here. Though they do some washing aboard ship, they avoid as much of it as possible and usually make a bee line for the Institute laundry with sea bags bulging with soiled garments as soon as they hit the port of New York.

The seamen, whose calling necessitates sudden departures, are able to get their laundry at any hour of the day or night. After the laundry's closing hour, the night manager of the Institute arranges for the customer to get his package.

If the man leaves before the bundle is ready the package is held for six months or, upon written request, even longer. At the customer's request, it will be forwarded to any port he names . . . which is a very unusual feature of the Institute's laundry service. The business department takes care of the mailing and they have sent laundry bundles as far away as England and Scotland. If a bundle is unclaimed after six months and no word concerning it has arrived, the contents are given to the Sloppe Chest for free distribution to needy seamen. Sometimes, Mr. Barker keeps shirts from confiscated bundles for sailors in need of a quick change with no clean shirts of their own available.

One seaman customer, writing for his laundry to be mailed to him, was so carried away by his appreciation of this unique service that he addressed his letter to: "Seamen's Shirts Institute."

Reprinted from "The Starchroom Laundry Journal"

With the "Sam Fleet"

By Frederic A. Sands

ONE of the least known chapters in the maritime history of World War II is the story behind the "Sam Fleet".

This "Fleet" came into existence in December, 1942, and by the spring of 1945 there were 177 merchant ships which were turned over by the United States to Great Britain for operation under Lend Lease. Never before had one nation so greatly aided the seapower of another.

These ships were operated by the British officers and men at the charter rate of \$1.00 a year. For the purpose of ready identification, it was decided that all ships should bear the prefix "Sam". However, most of these ships had already been launched and christened, and they bore historically prominent American names.

Thus, the Peter Cooper became the Samarkand; Adolph Lewison, Samota; Priscilla Alden, Samlouis; Henry Van Dyke, Samhain.

Some of these ships bore ordinary names like "Sampler", "Samovar", "Sampan", and "Samaritan." Others were formed by the addition of a name of a city or state, for example, "Samboston", "Samlouis", "Samvanah", "Samakron", "Sam Tampa".

A considerable number of these ships had suffixes such as "blade", "vale", "-shire" and "hill." Others had nautical suffixes such as "Sam-bay", "Samwash", "Samkey".

Under British registry, the "Sam Fleet" carried cargoes to all the fighting fronts. The British have now returned some of the "Sam" ships to the Maritime Commission, and they have purchased 105 of these.

A few of these chamelon-like ships have recently assumed still another identity. For example, the Zungeru was the ex-Samota, ex-Adolph Lewisoohn, etc.

Such were these Liberty ships which gave up their famous American names in the interest of the war effort.

Excerpts from the "Grace Log"

Book Reviews

FOCS'LE DAYS

By Anton Otto Fischer

Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, \$3.75

One of the Saturday Evening Post's best known illustrators tells in this book of his days at sea. It is chiefly the story of "Gwydyr Castle's" voyage from Hamburg to Puget Sound and then New York. She was a hungry ship and two tragic deaths occurred during the struggle with gales around Cape Horn.

Mr. Fischer liked and respected his shipmates and he recalls the humorous as well as the grim side of life aboard a Windjammer.

Born in Bavaria, he served in the German Navy but became an American citizen as soon as he had the opportunity.

He began to draw while on shipboard. One of his early masterpieces was of Dennis, the ship's pig, but this was washed overboard. There was only one book in the focs'le, a tattered copy of Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby. Fischer read it and learned English. Eighteen of his illustrations were painted especially for this book.

Like Conrad, he was born far from the sea but he had a hankering for it even before he saw it. His focs'le experience helped to make him a fine maritime painter.

M.D.C.

It was an awesome sight to look back and see a big sea forming astern, rearing up, up, up, until its monstrous mass towered above the stern, its translucent, bottle-green top heralding the coming crash



THE VICTORY

By Vincent McHugh

Random House, \$3.50

Vincent McHugh was a correspondent for WSA in the Central Pacific in 1944. Now he has written a book about the Merchant Marine that is so realistic that it can be lived in from beginning to end. The story concerns the voyage of the HOPI VICTORY to the small Pacific island of Matam soon after it has been retaken by the Americans. It is written in the first person by a writer going along to make a documentary film of the Merchant Marine, part of whose mission is to find the sole American survivor of the Japanese invasion of Matam, a cowboy, who by his courage and daring has become a legend with the Chamorra islanders. The theme of the book is the growing community spirit of the crew—working and living together, until by a joint action they give up part of their ship's rations to the starving natives. These men are intensely real, although it seems unbelievable that war could ever be enjoyed so much.

LOUISE NOLING



of a breaking sea. After the ship had "pooped" a big sea, which threatened to wash the men at the wheel away, they were secured with ropes tied around their waists and warned not to look back.

From "Focs'le Days" by Anton Otto Fischer

Anton Otto Fischer

Marine Poetry

THE PURSER ENTERS HEAVEN

By C. R. Schriver, Purser

"'Tis dull," said St. Peter, with a thoughtful air,
"I wish that some Sinner would come up the Stair,
Bringing his story of evil or good
And excusing himself as a Sinner would,
But alas and alack, times are not the same—
And it's high time I quit this Doorman game."
But just as he spoke, did the Fates portend
That there come in sight from around the bend,
A saddened Sinner, with weary frame
Who, with dragging footsteps slowly came
To where Peter guarded the Golden Gate
And stood there, meekly awaiting his Fate.
"Well," quoth Peter, in a manner quite kind
"Speak up, young man, what's on your mind?
Just what sad story is it that brings
You here, to hope for a pair of wings?"
The Sinner looked up, with a lack-lustre eye,
Then hung his head and made no reply.
"Come!," said Peter, (and his tone was sharp),
"Or you'll win a shovel instead of a harp—
"Quick now, your story, and have no fears,"
But the Sinner burst forth in a flood of tears
And standing there, close by Heaven's Gate,
He sobbed and sighed at his sorry Fate.
"By my Beard," said Peter, in a voice of alarm,
As he patted the Sinner's trembling arm,
"What tragedy this? What tale of woe?
That a simple question unmans you so?"
The Sinner looked up, and bit his lip
"I was once a Purser on a passenger Ship!"
"Minding the baggage and tending the mails,
Handing out money and hearing long tales
Of woe and sadness, of illness and sin,
From passengers long and short and thin;
Working away, from dawn until dark—
And say, St. Peter, I'll rise to remark
"That answering questions those people would ask
Was anything else but an easy task.
"Is this ticket wrong? Is this ticket right?
Say, what was that Island we passed last night?
Where is my room and where is my key?
Will you hire a touring car for me?
What time this month will there be a full moon?
And, where do I sit in the dining room?
Have you been here long? What's that on your cap?
How much is a one way ticket to Yap?
Why does the Captain never appear?—
I wish to complain about everyone here!

'Cash a check for me? And quick, on the lam—
It's a personal check, but you know who I am,
Take care of my jewels, and I want a receipt,
Come on now, Purser, get fast on your feet:
Where's the Stewardess? I'm feeling quite ill,
Let go the life-boats and send me a pill.'
"Now this thing went on," said the Sinner, sad,
"For many long years and it got real bad.
And I toiled and I moiled in the Purser's rut,
'Til my brain gave way and I went off my nut,
Then stealthily I crept to the sea-cocks below
Where the ghostly ships' rats run to and fro—
"And I opened them up with a mighty shout,
As the water rushed in, then I rushed out
And up on the fo'castle I dashed, with all speed,
Exulting there o'er my terrible deed—
And I bayed at the moon with a horrible zest,
Until I was drowned, along with the rest."
The Sinner ceased speaking and hung low his head,
"That's all, St. Peter, that's all," he said—
"There's not much excuse but I've lived a hard life,
For I'm always the center of turmoil and strife;
Now, tell me, St. Pete, before I go,
Am I forgiven for that which happened below?
St. Peter wept loudly. "Pass in," he said—
"Pick out a harp and a nice, soft bed,
Get yourself an angel and a cup that cheers,
That's the saddest I've heard in many long years.
You've suffered enough and you need a long rest,
I'll find you a halo that's one of the best."
Thus, the Purser went in with a ringing tread,
His heart was quite lightened, his worries had fled,
He held up his head in a very proud way—
And all of the angels sang—"Hey! Hey!"
They fitted him out with a pair of nice wings
And gave him a lute with twenty-five strings.
And he drank and relaxed, as he lay on a cloud,
He thought of his past and he chuckled aloud;
But alas, for Heaven's promise, forsooth,
They gave him a job in the Ticket Booth—
And there he stands to this live-long day,
Still answering questions in the old way!

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You are asked to remember this Institute in your will, that it may properly carry on its important work for seamen. While it is advisable to consult your lawyer as to the drawing of your will, we submit nevertheless the following as a clause that may be used:

"I give and bequeath to "Seamen's Church Institute of New York," a corporation of the State of New York, located at 25 South Street, New York City, the sum of.....Dollars."

Note that the words "of New York" are a part of our title. If land or any specific property such as bonds, stocks, etc., is given, a brief description of the property should be inserted instead of the words, "the sum of.....Dollars."