



“SPARKS,”

**THE MARITIME
CAREER OF
GILBERT V. LEVIN**

A TALE OF A NOVICE TO THE SEA IN WWII

GILBERT V. LEVIN
Palm Beach, FL
January 2016



THE MARITIME CAREER OF GILBERT V. LEVIN



WWII North Atlantic Merchant Convoy

2nd Edition

Corrected, updated and amplified

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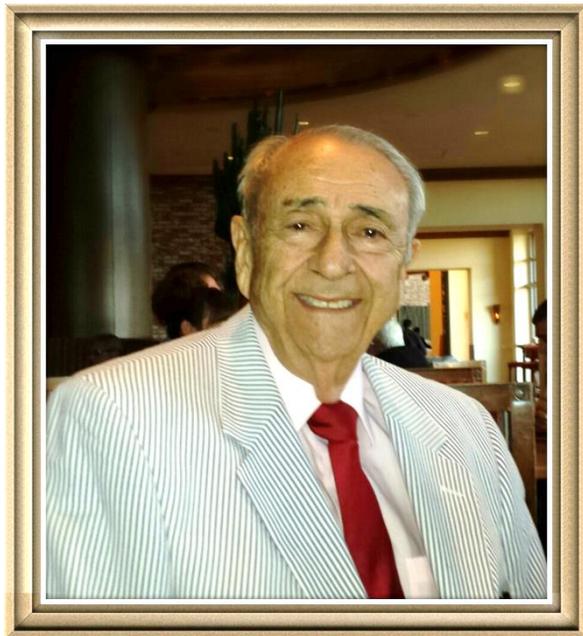
[<gillevin.com>](http://gillevin.com)

**January, 2016
Palm Beach, FL**



“SPARKS,” THE MARITIME CAREER OF GILBERT V. LEVIN

At my son Ron’s constant urging, and having outlived my youthfulness, I have at long last decided to set down my recollections of my career as a sea-going radio operator, “Sparks,” in the United States Merchant Marine during World War II and afterwards. I call this a “career,” even though time-wise it spanned only a little more than three years, because it provided more adventure and



Me in 2015

pragmatic education than many peoples’ normal careers. War-time restrictions proscribed keeping a diary or carrying a camera, so much has been lost, and much has been altered by time. Any errors in this account are not intentional, only omissions are. Fortunately, I long ago recorded a skeleton outline of my maritime trips which list ensures the accuracy concerning on which ships I served, where they went, and on what dates. This was constructed from my official ships papers issued at sign-off times. The rest, I record from memory, as recalled over the 72 years intervening since my enlistment in the U.S. Maritime Service, Number Z475638. The grain of salt you take as you read this should be large enough to encompass unintentional embellishments and alterations, neuron plaque-induced lapses, and the just-mentioned intentional

omissions. Nonetheless, the basic events and impressions recounted provide a reasonably accurate account of my sea-going experience, perhaps enough to win you toward a maritime life.

It all started innocently enough. In September 1941, having graduated from Baltimore’s Forest Park High School that June, I enrolled in the Johns Hopkins University’s civil engineering program. Pearl Harbor was attacked three months later. The war powers deemed college-graduated engineers vital to the war effort, so we were all deferred to continue school, to get our degrees, and then enter the armed forces.



Johns Hopkins University: Gilman Hall

I joined the Hopkins ROTC, marching around the campus in my officer pinks, carrying a WW1 Springfield M1903 rifle. I didn't like the regimen, and found it impossible to learn how to take my Springfield apart and put it back together (However, on the target range, I did become a "Marksman"). In furthering the war effort, Hopkins decided to eliminate summer vacation, go on three terms a year, and to start classes at 8:00 a.m., double daylight savings time, year-round. I lived at 1630 Moreland Avenue, across town from the University. I had to get up at 4:00 a.m., real time, to gulp breakfast, and catch the Number 13 streetcar going East on North Avenue to Howard St, where I transferred to the Number 32 bus to the 34th and Charles St. campus. Going out for the lacrosse team after class meant I arrived home just in time to gulp dinner and do the several hours of homework each night, getting to bed about midnight. It was a struggle, but, not knowing better, I just kept going.

REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE
This is to certify that in accordance with the Selective Service Proclamation of the President of the United States

Gilbert Victor Levin
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)
1630 Moreland Ave. - Balto. Md.
(Place of residence)
(This will be identical with line 2 of the Registration Card)

has been duly registered this 29th day of June, 1945

Lillian H. Bantley
(Signature of registrar)
Registrar for Local Board 25 Balto. Md.
(Number) (City or county) (State)

THE LAW REQUIRES YOU TO HAVE THIS CARD IN YOUR PERSONAL POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES

D. S. S. Form 2 (Revised 6/9/41) 16-21631

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

RACE	HEIGHT (Approx.)	WEIGHT (Approx.)	COMPLEXION	
White	<u>6.3</u>	<u>150</u>	Sallow	
	EYES	HAIR	Light	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Negro	Blue	Blonde	Ruddy	
	Gray	Red	Dark	
Oriental	Hazel	Brown	Freckled	
	Brown	Black	Light brown	
Indian	Black	Gray	Dark brown	
Filipino		Bald	Black	

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification
Appendicitis scar on right side

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 16-21631

Draft Card

NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION App. not Req.

Gilbert Victor Levin
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Order No. 13778 has been classified in Class 2B
(Until October 13, 1945)
(Insert date for Class II-A and II-B only)

by Local Board.
 Board of Appeal (by vote of _____ to _____).
 President.

4/18, 1945 H. S. Breen
(Date of mailing) (Member of local board)

The law requires you, subject to heavy penalty for violation, to have this notice, in addition to your Registration Certificate (Form 2), in your personal possession at all times—to exhibit it upon request to authorized officials—to surrender it, upon entering the armed forces, to your commanding officer. DSS Form 57. (Rev. 12-10-43.)

Cut along this line to detach card.

Selective Service

Local Board No. 25
Baltimore City

Rosedale & Westwood St
Baltimore, Maryland

(LOCAL BOARD DATE STAMP WITH CODE)

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY
PAY

Notice of Classification Card

March, 1944, when I was in my junior year, Uncle Sam decided he needed us immediately, degree or not. Hopkins agreed. My poem, "I'm a Nervous Wreck from Hopkins Tech," takes poetic license with the facts, but accurately depicts the mood. Not having fallen in love with Army procedures in the ROTC, and being allergic to wallowing in infantry mud, my choice was to join the U.S. Navy, which promised to let us finish school, receiving Navy salaries all the while, after which we would be commissioned as Naval Officers. My neighborhood and Hopkins buddy, Ray Smith, in the same dilemma, agreed with me, and off we went to enlist in the Navy's V-7 program for college students. It promised to let us complete our degree at some university it selected for us, and then to commission us as ensigns in the Navy. I passed the physical exam. But Ray flunked because of the Coke-bottle glasses he had to wear to see anything.

I'M A NERVOUS WRECK FROM HOPKINS TECH

It seems as if they've got me in their claws.
For every time I go to sleep I dream of bugle calls.
I feel the hot breath of the Army hard upon my neck,
And if something doesn't happen soon I'll be a nervous wreck.
They took away my dear IIA (the dean, he wrote a note).
Repealed it just like that (I'd like to fix that stinker's throat!)

Next day I got a postcard, a little brown one, oh you know.
Short, sweet and to the point. It came to make me go!
They told me to report to Hopkins (the hospital this time).
They didn't even send me fare, not a blasted dime!
At eight o'clock I crossed the door - I never saw so many boys!
They filled the room and jammed the halls and made a lot of noise.

The nurse, she waved a "needle" - it was the biggest sword you ever saw!
She grabbed my arm in a hammerlock and took the cutlass in her paw.
Three times she stabbed, three times I flexed my muscle.
She cursed and stamped and swore, "I'll get that damned corpuscle!"
Fourth time around she caught the thing and drew it from its lair.
She cleansed my arm with a cotton swab and said I needed air.

I was guided to another room and there removed my clothes.
The doctor felt my pulse, my heart - counted fingers and toes.
There was a cannon by his side and he suddenly pulled the firing pin.
"If you can hear the report, my son, I can safely say you're in!"
So I sit here brooding day by day and take an awful beating!
Waiting, waiting for that little note, the one that starts with "GREETING."

At that pivotal moment, an ex-classmate, Moe Burman, who had dropped out of Hopkins after his first term and joined the Merchant Marine, came home on a brief leave. He recounted how he had gone to Merchant Marine Academy at far-off, glamorous San Mateo, and graduated as an engineering officer. He had immediately signed on a merchant ship as Assistant Third Engineer, and gone to sea. In his resplendent blue uniform accented with gold braid and silver insignia, he regaled us with the wonderful adventures he had had in various ports in the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Indian Ocean. He opined that the Maritime Service, which ran the Merchant Marine during the War, would not be so persnickety about eyesight. Choosing to stay with Ray, I accompanied him to the Maritime Service recruiting office. The MD examining me said, "Hey, kid, why do you want to get into this outfit? Why not join the Army?" On the other hand, he snapped up Ray, "You're not going to stare the enemy to death so we don't care if you can't see so well." Deal done. We both signed up.



Identification Card for Merchant Marine Training at Sheepshead Bay, NY

Off we went on the square-wheeled Pennsylvania Railroad from the Baltimore Penn Station to the 34th Street Station in New York City.



1940s Pennsylvania Electric Railroad from Washington to New York

Then, by subway and elevated train to Brooklyn's Sheepshead Bay, boot camp for the Maritime Service. "Pepsi Cola hits the spot, Six full weeks, and that's a lot, Twice as much for a wiper too, Pepsi-Cola is the place for you," I sang my improvisation on the Pepsi radio jingle, because our shoulder patches closely resembled the Pepsi logo.



Pepsi's logo from 1898 to the 1940s, strongly resembling our Sheepshead Bay shoulder patch. Sheepshead Bay was also "the perfect mixer"

And six full weeks it was, full of calisthenics, swimming, diving, classes on seamanship and rowing around in lifeboats. At the end of the program, we were given aptitude tests to see what type of sailor we should become. Surprisingly, even though I had been pronounced tone deaf by my public school music teachers, I did very well in distinguishing Morse code sounds. Ray qualified also, so we both decided to apply for admission to the U.S. Maritime Service Radio Academy, two of which were operated under the U.S. Maritime Administration, one at Hoffman Island, New York, and the other at Gallups Island, Boston.

Both of us were accepted and assigned to Group 5R at the Hoffman Island Radio Academy (HIRA). After a weekend home, we took the same Pennsy Railroad to New York, but now extending our trip by going to South Ferry and boarding the Staten Island Ferry, then taking the "Toonerville Trolley" and, finally, the Hoffman Island launch to get to HIRA. Shaped like a ten-plus acre benzene ring, man-made Hoffman Island sits at the mouth of NY Harbor, so much so that one end of the submarine net protecting the harbor was anchored there. Rising scarcely ten feet above the water, the island was first used to quarantine Ellis Island immigrants deemed too ill for entry. Just before the war, it was revived by the U.S.M.S. as a training station.

Even though fresh from the rigors of Hopkins, we found the studies required effort to master. Colpitts oscillators and Armstrong amplifiers were new to us. We pitied our classmates to whom Ohm's Law, circuitry and the three-finger rule for electro-magnetic force (EMF) were new. My code aptitude propelled me to become one of the fastest Morse operators in the class, something to cause me a serious problem later. Most weekends we could go home to Baltimore, take the Sunday evening train back, and sleep on the Staten Island Ferry, our "Nickel Hotel," (the Ferry fare) as it went back and forth until time to leave for the 6 a.m. launch to the Island. That is, except for the time I caught the mumps and had to stay quarantined not at Hoffman Island, but at home for a week.



Hoffman Island Training Group 5R

G.. Levin: Next to Last row 2nd from the left
Ray Smith: Last row, left most

Most of the class was older and more sophisticated than we were. They spent their weekends in New York. Upon returning to base, they regaled us with tales of sexual exploits with those City girls, the majority of which, I am sure, were phantoms of delight. On occasion, I elected to stay on the Island on a weekend to visit New York. There I went to parties, invited by former Hopkins students, then at Columbia University, working on something called the “Manhattan Project,” with no idea of what it was. Some other interesting things happened during our stay at Hoffman Is. Most exciting was the 100-mile-an-hour hurricane that hit us one day and lasted through the night, threatening our dormitory and nearly putting the island under water. I went outside briefly to test it, and found I could not fall down facing into it. That convinced me to stay inside, where several different kinds of prayers were being offered. Then, there was the gunnery practice (we learned to shoot 3 in. and 4 in. cannons and 20 mm automatic guns which were on most merchant ships) when nearby Swinburne Island frantically called to report we were shelling them.

Our Superintendent was Captain Harry Manning, lately skipper of the S.S. President Roosevelt, original, but replaced navigator for his friend, Amelia Earhart, for her fatal flight, and future Captain of the S.S. United States. Manning was also a friend of the champion boxer, Benny Leonard, whom he had visit the Island and demonstrate his skills. Manning then instituted boxing lessons for us, which cost me a chipped tooth, which I still carry with me as a memento of our training. Despite his limp from a near-fatal airplane accident, Manning played tennis every



G.V. Levin learning celestial navigation in New York harbor

morning. His constant opponent was a black enrollee from Jamaica, named Ed van Beverhoudt. Ed was a great tennis player, and he regularly beat the Captain. One day I suggested he lose now and then so as not to incur the Superintendent's wrath. "No way! As long as I can beat him, I will," and he did. We all loved him.



Captain Harry Manning: Commander of Hoffman Island with Amelia Earhart

While attending the Hoffman Island Radio Academy, we learned of the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1945, D-Day. I was caught between two emotions: it sure would be nice if the war ended soon and I could get back to Hopkins; but, also, gee, after all this, it would be a shame not to see the world. Not to worry, I did both.



Hoffman Island Group 5R Class Graduation Photo

That's me, front row center; Ray Smith rear row, 2nd from left

Our graduation was celebrated with a full-up dinner on the Island. Everyone was shined and polished. The Superintendent brought his lady. One of our gang had misbehaved and was assigned mess duty as a waiter for the event. Toward the end of the grand evening, he brought coffee to Manning's table, tripped and spilled the hot coffee on the Captain's Lady. That was bad enough, but things were not improved by the "Oh, shit!" which involuntarily hissed through his teeth. Nonetheless, we all were graduated the next day, and assigned to take the FCC test to qualify as a Licensed Radiotelegraph Operator, a necessary achievement to go to sea as such.

Ray and I both passed, and thereby earned our certificates and our beautiful navy blue uniforms with gold warrant officer stripes. We were now freshly minted "Sparks," the name given shipboard radio operators since Marconi first made them possible. Our FCC-successful graduating class drew straws to see who would report to New York, Baltimore or San Francisco in order to obtain a ship. I drew New York and Ray drew San Francisco, but we easily traded those for Baltimore.

The United States of America

NUMBER
T-2-3179

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

RADIO TELEGRAPH OPERATOR LICENSE

SECOND CLASS
(Class)

GILBERT V. LEVIN

This certifies that

is a licensed radio operator authorized to operate any licensed radio station of the class specified by the regulations of the Federal Communications Commission, governing the issuance of radio operators licenses.

This license is granted under the authority of the Communications Act of 1934 and the terms and conditions thereof and of all legislative acts, executive orders, and treaties to which the United States is signatory, and all rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission, which are binding upon radio operators, are made a part hereof as though specifically set out in full herein.

Neither this license nor the rights granted hereunder shall be assigned or otherwise transferred to any other person.

This license was issued at New York, N. Y. on November 6th, 1944 and will expire at three o'clock P. M., Eastern Standard Time, five years from the date of issuance.

Special Endorsement:



Gilbert V. Levin
(Licensee)

Charles E. Leonard
(Issuing Officer)

Federal Communications Commission
J. R. House

(Secretary)

NOT VALID UNTIL SIGNED

Front View of my Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Second Class Radio Telegraph Operator License

NO PERSON RECEIVING OR ASSISTING IN RECEIVING OR TRANSMITTING, OR ASSISTING IN TRANSMITTING, ANY INTERSTATE OR FOREIGN COMMUNICATION BY WIRE OR RADIO SHALL DIVULGE OR PUBLISH THE EXISTENCE, CONTENTS, SUBSTANCE, PURPOSE, EFFECT, OR MEANING THEREOF, EXCEPT THROUGH AUTHORIZED CHANNELS OF TRANSMISSION OR RECEPTION, TO ANY PERSON OTHER THAN THE ADDRESSEE, HIS AGENT, OR ATTORNEY, OR TO A PERSON EMPLOYED OR AUTHORIZED TO FORWARD SUCH COMMUNICATION TO ITS DESTINATION, OR TO PROPER ACCOUNTING OR DISTRIBUTING OFFICERS OF THE VARIOUS COMMUNICATING CENTERS OVER WHICH THE COMMUNICATION MAY BE PASSED, OR TO THE MASTER OF A SHIP UNDER WHOM HE IS SERVING, OR IN RESPONSE TO A SUBPENA ISSUED BY A COURT OF COMPETENT JURISDICTION, OR ON DEMAND OF OTHER LAWFUL AUTHORITY; AND NO PERSON NOT BEING AUTHORIZED BY THE SENDER SHALL INTERCEPT ANY COMMUNICATION AND DIVULGE OR PUBLISH THE EXISTENCE, CONTENTS, SUBSTANCE, PURPOSE, EFFECT, OR MEANING OF SUCH INTERCEPTED COMMUNICATION TO ANY PERSON; AND NO PERSON NOT BEING ENTITLED THERE- TO SHALL RECEIVE OR ASSIST IN RECEIVING ANY INTERSTATE OR FOREIGN COMMUNICATION BY WIRE OR RADIO AND USE THE SAME OR ANY INFORMATION THEREIN CONTAINED FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT OR FOR THE BENEFIT OF ANOTHER NOT ENTITLED THERE- TO, AND NO PERSON HAVING RECEIVED SUCH INTERCEPTED COMMUNICATION OR HAVING BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH THE CONTENTS, SUBSTANCE, PURPOSE, EFFECT, OR MEANING OF THE SAME OR ANY PART THEREOF, KNOWING THAT SUCH INFORMATION WAS SO OBTAINED, SHALL DIVULGE OR PUBLISH THE EXISTENCE, CONTENTS, SUBSTANCE, PURPOSE, EFFECT, OR MEANING OF THE SAME OR ANY PART THEREOF, OR USE THE SAME OR ANY INFORMATION THEREIN CONTAINED FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT OR FOR THE BENEFIT OF ANOTHER NOT ENTITLED THERE- TO; PROVIDED, THAT THIS SECTION SHALL NOT APPLY TO THE RECEIVING, DIVULGING, PUBLISHING, OR UTILIZING THE CONTENTS OF ANY RADIO COMMUNICATION BROADCAST, OR TRANSMITTED BY AMATEURS OR OTHERS FOR THE USE OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC, OR RELATING TO SHIPS IN DISTRESS.—COMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1934 AS AMENDED, SEC. 605.

SERVICE RECORD.

This is to certify that the holder of this license has served as radio operator under my orders during the period named.

NAME	SHIP OR OTHER STATION		PERIOD	SERVICE (SATISFACTORY OR UNSATISFACTORY)	SIGNATURE	CERTIFIED BY TITLE (STATION MANAGER, SUPERVISOR, OPERATOR, MANAGER, OR AUTHORIZED AGENT.)
	CALL LETTERS	TYPE(S) OF EMISSION				
TOWANDA VICTORY	ANAZ	A1 A2	From DEC 8, 19 44, to APR. 29 19 45,	Satisfactory	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
<i>Henry Evelyn</i>	K XIX	A1 A2	From June 11, 1945, to April 21, 19 46,	Satisfactory	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
PURDUE VICTORY	ANRF	A1 A2	From June 1, 19 46, to July 18, 1946,	SATISFACTORY	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
MOUNT TAMALPAIS	A0GC	A1 A2	From June 23, 1947, to July 22, 1947,	Satisfactory	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
ARTHUR FRIBOURG	KVY0	A1 A2	From Aug 10, 1947, to Aug 21, 1947,	Satisfactory	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
NORTH POINT	KYSX	A1 A2	From Aug 23 1947, to Aug 31, 19 47,	" "	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
			From , 19 , to , 19 ,			
			From , 19 , to , 19 ,			
			From , 19 , to , 19 ,			
			From , 19 , to , 19 ,			
			From , 19 , to , 19 ,			
			From , 19 , to , 19 ,			

O. FORM 1423

UNITED STATES NAVY DEPARTMENT



Certificate of Proficiency

WARTIME MERCHANT SHIP COMMUNICATIONS FOR U. S. RADIO OPERATORS

This is to Certify that GILBERT V. LEVIN, T-2-3179
NAME FOLLOWED BY FCC LICENSE OR NAVY/ARMY RATING AND SERIAL NUMBER

HAS SATISFACTORILY DEMONSTRATED HIS KNOWLEDGE OF WARTIME RADIO PROCEDURE FOR MERCHANT SHIPS TO THE UNITED STATES NAVAL INSTRUCTOR AT

U.S.M.S. RADIO TRAINING STATION
HOFFMAN ISLAND, NEW YORK

NAME AND LOCATION OF SCHOOL

ISSUED THIS 17TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 1944

Gilbert V. Levin
HOLDER'S SIGNATURE

M. H. Blum
NAME OF INSTRUCTOR

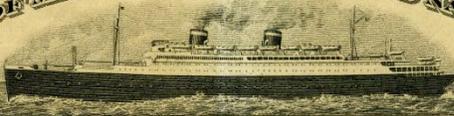
M. H. BLUM
Lt., USNR

CERTIFICATE SERIAL No. 100,107
RANK OF INSTRUCTOR

US Navy certifies Merchant Marine radio operators in wartime

SERIAL NUMBER
2475638

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF MARINE INSPECTION AND NAVIGATION



SEAMAN'S CERTIFICATE OF IDENTIFICATION

(TO BE RETAINED BY THE SEAMAN)

District Coast Guard Officer, 3rd
Examined for Security

Port of New York, N. Y.

NOV 7 - 1944 1944 JUN 21 1944 19

Charles Dutton
FOR THE SHIPPING COMMISSIONER
The Captain

Albert Victor Levin
(Name of seaman, in full)

whose home address is 1630 Moreland Ave
Baltimore Md., born in Maryland,
(State of Country)

on April 23 1924, is a citizen of U. S. A.
(Date of birth)

If naturalized - year _____, if 1st papers - year _____, if alien
- date of head tax, if any, _____

Statement of personal description: Height 6 ft. 3 inches,
Color of hair Black, Color of eyes Brown, Complexion Clear

Raymond H. Frost
Lt. Commander, (Acting) Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection
(Title)



Albert
Victor Levin
(Signature of seaman)

Seaman's Thumb Print

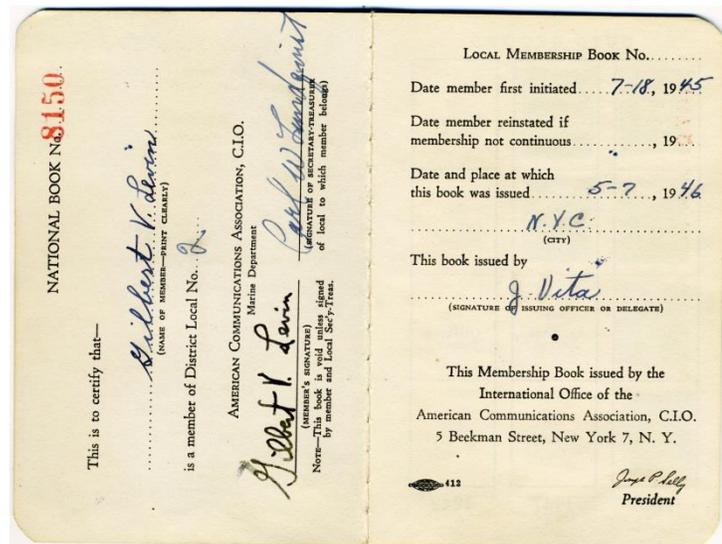
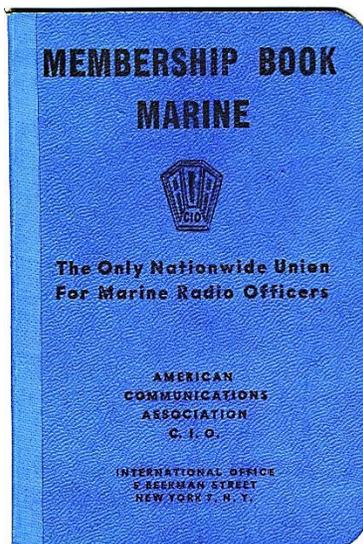


Merchant Marine Identification Certificate



Certificate of competency as a Merchant Marine radio operator from the officer in charge of marine inspection

Early December, 1944, found us sitting nervously in the Baltimore office of the American Communication Association (union). We joined the union, got our dues books and paid for the first stamps to be put in them.



Union Membership Book for the American Communications Association (C.I.O)

DUES RECORD			DUES RECORD		
ACA \$12.00 3771A 5-2-46	ACA \$12.00 3327 6-23-47	1ST QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	1ST QUARTER
ACA \$12.00 3771A 5-2-46	ACA \$12.00 3327 6-23-47	2ND QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	2ND QUARTER
ACA \$12.00 3325 6-23-47		3RD QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	3RD QUARTER
ACA \$12.00 3326 6-23-47		4TH QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951

INTERNATIONAL STRIKE FUND ASSESSMENTS			INTERNATIONAL STRIKE FUND ASSESSMENTS		
STRIKE FUND 25c 3771A 5-2-46	STRIKE FUND 25c 3327 6-23-47	1ST QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	1ST QUARTER
STRIKE FUND 25c 3771A 5-2-46	STRIKE FUND 25c 3327 6-23-47	2ND QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	2ND QUARTER
STRIKE FUND 25c 3771A 5-2-46		3RD QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	3RD QUARTER
STRIKE FUND 25c 3326 6-23-47		4TH QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951

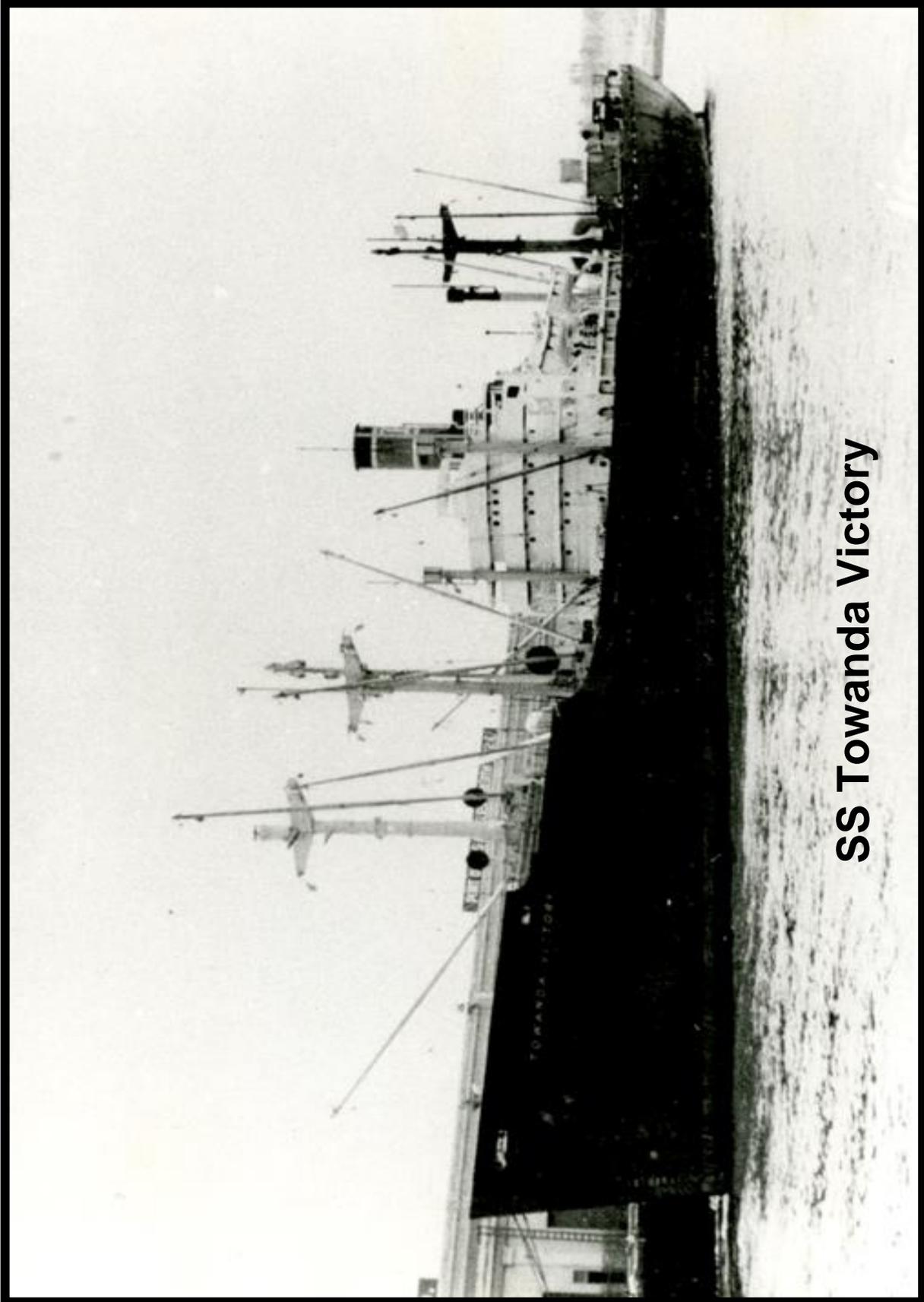
ACA \$12.00 3771A 5-2-46	STRIKE FUND 25c 3771A 5-2-46	3rd qtr. 1945 Paid 5-2-46	LICENSE DATA Radiotelegraph—Class No. Date of Issue City
ACA \$12.00 3325 6-23-47	STRIKE FUND 25c 3325 6-23-47	4th qtr. 1945 Paid 5-2-46	
SEAMAN PASSPORT No. Date of Issue			
COAST GUARD IDENTIFICATION CARD No. Port			

SEAMAN'S CERTIFICATE OF IDENTIFICATION No. Z Date issued		TRANSFERS 1. From District Local to District Local Request for transfer approved By Local on, 19... By Local on, 19... 2. From District Local to District Local Request for transfer approved By Local on, 19... By Local on, 19... 3. From District Local to District Local Request for transfer approved By Local on, 19... By Local on, 19... 4. From District Local to District Local Request for transfer approved By Local on, 19... By Local on, 19...
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE No. E Date issued		
SOCIAL SECURITY No. Date issued		

I paid union dues plus 25¢ per quarter for the strike fund

The local ACA president was Joe Rubin, who never went to sea during the entire war (thereby fully qualifying to be Admiral of the Queen's Navy). We asked him whether Ray and I might ship out together. He said there was a brand new Victory ship, the Towanda Victory, built in Baltimore's Fairfield Yard, which was just signing on its crew. Radio operator positions were available to both of us. We immediately accepted (you could turn down the first two available ships, but had to take the third). Taking Baltimore street cars, we arrived at Bethlehem Steel's Fairfield Yard, boarded the ship, and met Captain Melvin V. Mundy, who obviously doubtful of the ability of these two "Ninety-Day Wonders," nonetheless approved of us. A flipped coin gave Ray the 2nd Operator spot, leaving me as 3rd, both reporting to the Chief Radio Operator, Frank Grosser, an old-time, pre-war career radio operator, stemming from the era when he had to provide and carry his own radio receiver, cans (headphones) and mill (typewriter).

Thus, on December 8, 1944, we signed articles before the Purser. The Towanda Victory sailed under the flag of the Black Diamond Steamship Corporation, but like all U.S. merchant vessels during the War, was operated by the U.S. Maritime Administration. It was a lean operation, with our crew totaling just 48 men. In addition, we carried a U. S. Navy Gunnery Officer and ten Navy seamen as an Armed Guard to operate the fore and aft cannon and the machine guns in the port and starboard gun tubs. The Armed Guard was separately housed in an aft deckhouse, and we rarely mixed. For comparison, when the U.S. Navy operated its own Victory or Liberty ship as part of the fleet, a complement of some 250 officers and men was installed.



SS Towanda Victory

The ship was a beauty, our quarters were fine, even though I had to share mine with the Army Security Officer aboard to guard the cargo, and we happily made our home there. Just before we sailed, the Mayor of Towanda Pennsylvania, for which our ship was named, came aboard to bid us Godspeed. He gave us our ship's library, some 20 or so used books from the town's library, and made a little talk. I remember only that he said the name "Towanda" was a fine old Indian name meaning "the place where we bury our dead." Bon Voyage!

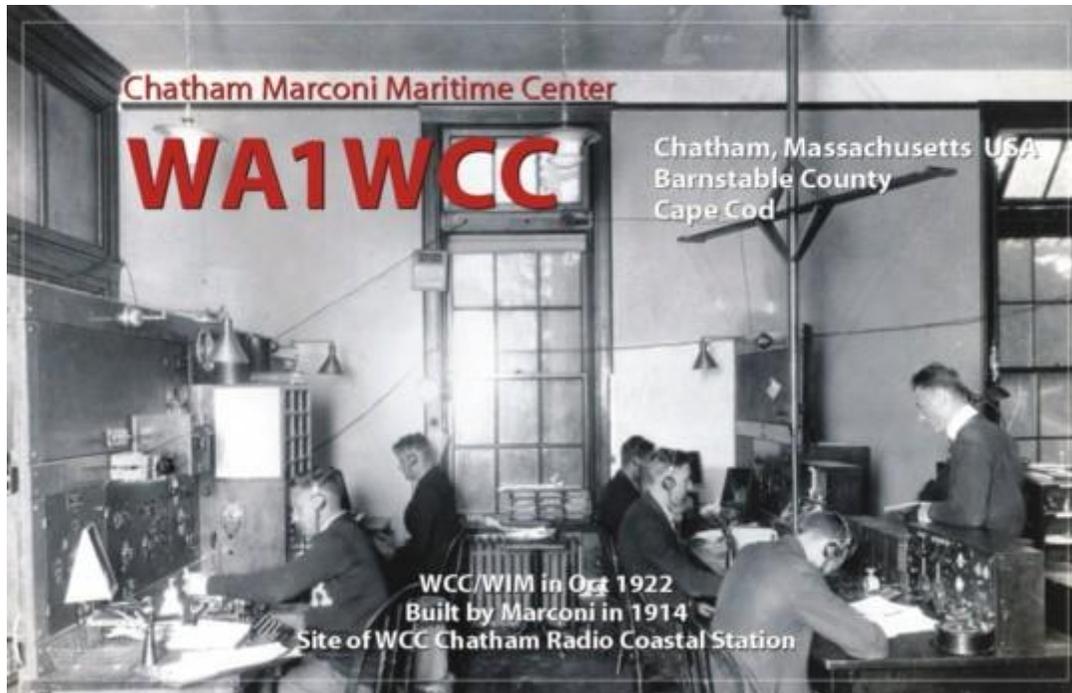


First day cover honoring the ship and the city of Towanda, PA

Well, that's a long prelude to the story of my sea-going days! See, one neuron just triggers the next, and I feel like I'd better jot down the memory before it evaporates.

The Towanda Victory was being loaded with cargo. I think I recall tanks, other military equipment and one or two locomotives placed topside. In those days loading was tedious even though we had the benefit of the yard's cranes. Stuff mostly came in relatively small packages that were hoisted aboard and lowered into the holds for proper stowage. There were no huge containers (which I claim to have invented while studying the problem at sea) that make loading so swift today, so we didn't set sail until December 18.

I stood the first watch on the beautiful, spanking new vessel, settling into my comfortable swivel chair, putting the cans on and practicing on the mill in front of me. I turned on the receiver and began listening. I quickly picked up traffic from land-based marine communications radio stations WMH (Baltimore, Maryland), WSL (New York), WCC (Chatham, Massachusetts), WOE (Lakeland, Florida), and even stations whose call signs began with the letter G (Great Britain).



WCC: The commercial marine radio station in Chatham, MA

That's all I could do, just listen. Transmitting was forbidden since it could betray our position to the enemy. We listened especially hard for three minutes at one-quarter and three-quarters past every hour, tuning to the international distress frequency of 500 kc, hoping not to hear any SOS, but prepared to alert our captain if we did.

Soon after we left the dock, Frank Grosser came into the radio shack to see how things were going. I well remember him telling me, "No matter how good you think you are at copying code, if you ever hear our secret war call broadcast, come get me immediately. Even the best of new operators can freeze up when they hear their ship's specific call sign." He then hung his pocket watch and chain on one of the knobs of the transmitter and left. I had a nice big clock built into the radio equipment, so I didn't – at first – know why he did this. About half an hour later, barely in the Chesapeake, I knew. As I watched this pendulum appear to swing back and forth in response to the ship's slow roll, my stomach began to respond to the unsettling rhythm.

Soon, and repeatedly, I had to go to my cabin next door to the shack and use the plumbing. Knowing that seasickness is no excuse for dereliction of duty, I went back to my station, and completed my watch with my head on the desk. Frank Grosser was unsympathetic when I declined to come to dinner. Not only did I decline that dinner, but scarcely ate anything but crackers and water for the rest of the ten-day voyage.



Radio operator console on a Victory Ship

Just to get rid of the seasickness issue, I will treat it separately right here. After not eating for ten days, I decided I would sign off the ship in our European destination and join the Army right there. But then it dawned on me, if I survived the war, I would still have to take a ship to get home. So, I decided to give it another shot, and make the return voyage. Same thing! Virtually no food for the 12-day return trip. I lost 20 pounds over the trip – and I had been nicknamed “stringbean” before joining up. When I got home on leave, my father and sister hardly knew me. Going back to the ship, I faced the dilemma again: sign on for another trip or join the Army. Aside from the seasickness, I had really liked the ship and the trip. Give it one more try! Magically, I was never seasick again! Nor on that trip, any subsequent trips, nor during the 50+ years I sailed the Chesapeake in small vessels under all weather conditions. In fact, I got to like the rolling and pitching, and wonder why I ever got sick in the first place. So much for *mal de mer*; back to our story.

Departing Baltimore, December 17, we had no idea of where we were going. Wartime secrecy prevailed. A strange thing happened to me that night on our way down the Chesapeake. It had nothing to do with my seasickness. In the middle of the night, I awoke in great fear, thinking we had

just been torpedoed. I had vivid visions of a terrible explosion in the side of the ship, followed by flames heading toward me in my bunk. It was so real, I nearly panicked, but managed to stay put. In the cool light of morning, I thought it through, and decided I had been cowardly and foolish. I put that fear behind me, and ever after, even under real attack, I regarded my ships as safe, invincible homes, and never had a re-occurrence of that nightmare. You really do get to put your trust in your ship, and think of it as a very secure and comforting haven.

Reaching Norfolk, we paused to become part of a 40-ship convoy. We were protected by destroyer escorts, and daily aircraft flyovers as long as we were within their range (for about three days). On December 18, when we sailed into the open Atlantic, Captain Mundy revealed that our destination was Naples, Italy.

Melvin V. Mundy was not your normal (actually none were!) wartime Merchant Marine skipper. He had been in World War I, and not on a ship, but as an Air Corps fighter pilot! In fact, he flew wingman to Captain Eddie Rickenbacker! One evening on the bridge wing, Mundy said that he had done much of the fighting that Rickenbacker got credit for, but still spoke highly of Eddie. And that ain't all about Mundy. He was Chief Mate of the Robin Moor, sunk by German U-boat 69 May 21, 1941, which almost catapulted us into WWII then. Mundy was among the small group who had gone aboard the U-boat to talk with its Captain, who, in German, said he would torpedo the Moor in 20 minutes. Mundy and his group quickly returned to their ship, but Mundy had scarcely climbed up the ladder when a torpedo hit. He fell to the boat 30 feet below, breaking his jaw, which had to be wired together when he finally got medical treatment following his rescue after two weeks of drifting in the lifeboat. The wiring was such that his jaw moved sideways, rather than up and down, when he spoke.

Flash forward again to our trip. Soon after our first nightfall in the Atlantic, Captain Mundy ordered the Towanda Victory to steer abruptly south, defying orders and breaking away from the convoy. He explained, "I know how those sub captains think, and I'm not going to be a target for them." We then plied the South Atlantic on our own, during which trip I claim to have saved the ship. How? Remember, I mentioned that my hot code ability got me into trouble? Well, this was it, but I still maintain that my "trouble" made me a hero. Standing watch at about halfway in our voyage, I was routinely listening to BAMS (Broadcast to Allied Merchant Ships), which several times a day broadcast general information, such as weather, to our ships at sea. I suddenly heard our secret war call, meaning that a coded message meant for our ship alone was to be sent at the end of the general broadcast. Of course, it came just at dinnertime, when I knew The Chief Operator was in the Officers' Mess. I also knew he had warned me to call him in just this exigency. However, I was certain of my ability to copy the message, so why bother the Chief? Dumb! But, sometimes dumb pays.

The Sheboygan Press

THE PAST IS GONE WE FACE TO-DAY.

★ ★ ★

SHEBOYGAN, WIS., TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 1941

Robin Moor's Chief Officer Is Commended

Sketchy Chart Used By Officer Mundy To Steer Lifeboat On Course To Africa

(By ROBERT ST. JOHN)

Capetown, Union of South Africa. —(AP)— The Robin Moor's chief officer was praised today by the last saved passengers of the torpedoed American freighter as the man who brought them to rescue after 13 days in a wave-tossed lifeboat.

He is Melvin Mundy of Bethlehem, Pa., who steered a lifeboat load of passengers—three of them women and one a 2-year-old boy—by a sketchy chart he copied from his captain's map, and was at the rudder when a British rescue ship was sighted.

That ship picked up two other boatloads and landed here last night with all of the missing from the Robin Moor—35 passengers and crew members feared lost after the Brazilian ship Ozoric picked up the fourth boatload of 11 survivors June 9.

The survivors said that luck of the sea—not any wireless notification of their plight by the submarine—saved them. The officers and crew members who boarded the submarine declared positively it was German.

Had German Accent

All agreed that the submarine's officers and sailors who spoke used good English, "but with a German accent."

There was disagreement, however, as to identifying marks on the submarine. Mundy said a red bull's head was painted on the conning tower. Second Mate Robert Taylor, whose father lives in Hollywood but who is not related to the movie actor, Robert Taylor, said he saw under the bull's head the word "Taureau"—French for bull. Another crew member said

(Continued on page 2, column 1)

Took Complete Charge

Ben M Cohn of New Haven, Conn., en route to Africa to manage an American-owned theatre said that Mundy despite a broken ankle suffered while going to the submarine, took complete charge of the passengers when he returned from his futile effort to dissuade the submarine commander from sinking the Robin Moor

"We had no sea chart in our boat" Cohn related, "but Mundy made a rough copy of a chart the captain carried in another lifeboat while the two craft bobbed up and down beside each other in the rough sea

"On this crude map he carefully plotted our course. When we were finally rescued the captain of the ship which took us aboard examined Mundy's chart and found he was less than 10 miles off in his final position"

Mundy said he saw the submarine's blinker light shortly after 4 a. m. May 21 and answered, identifying his ship as "American steamer Robin Moor"

The submarine ordered a boat sent Mundy injured his ankle dropping into the boat which took him to the submarine. He said bandages he was given aboard the submarine bore German trade-marks

"It was obvious x x x to all of us that the submarine was German" he said "All the men even those who spoke distinct English did so with a decided German accent

Mundy said he was asked in detail about 'heavy machinery' and 'motors' in the Robin Moor's cargo and that he replied 'he freighter carried only such cargo as automobile parts and pleasure car engines.

(Continued from page 1)

the word painted there was "La Touche

Crew and passengers were given 20 minutes extended grudgingly to 30 minutes to get into lifeboats it was stated. A torpedo was fired into the Robin Moor and she sank 18 minutes later under shell fire from the submarine's deck gun

In the 13 days that followed until rescue June 3 little Robin McCullough, son of Mr and Mrs Robert W McCullough was the only one who enjoyed himself. He seemed to like the 'long boat ride,' and cooed contentedly at the 'pretty fishes—sharks which followed the boat—passengers said

He alone could stomach the hardtack, part of the meagre rations aboard the lifeboat. Here in a hotel room last night the 2-year old still clutched a dried biscuit and said repeatedly "Robin want tack"

Our Captain Melvin V. Mundy was a hero after the sinking of the Robin Moor

I waited for the special message, which was broadcast in six-digit groups of mixed code (combinations of seemingly random letters and numbers), rather than plain language as were the general, innocuous messages. I soon suspected I was getting into trouble as I flinched a few times copying on the mill. Just when the message was complete, Frank Grosser popped into the shack fresh from dinner. I told him I had just copied a coded message. He briefly berated me for not

having called him, and then went to get the Captain, who quickly entered carrying the top secret code book, MERSIGS (Merchant Signals), which, with its periodic updates, contained a word for each six-digit "word" of the mixed code broadcast. The Captain and the Chief quickly went about decoding the message I had copied. As I said, all code groups contained letters and numbers. Well, it just so happened that I had miss-copied some groups, all of which by sheer coincidence translated into numbers. And what numbers! The message went something like this: "Submarine located at --- ----- long., ----- lat., at ----- gmt, following you on course ----- . At ----- gmt, change course to ----- , and maintain for ----- hours. Then change course to ----- and proceed until intersecting original course." The Captain turned to me and tersely said, "Sparks, the gangway is greased for you." BAMS was broadcast again in four hours, and, when it was, all three radio operators were copying. We then decoded the message, but, obviously, it was too late to act on it. I contend it is likely the Germans had our code, and wasted their time looking where we were supposed to be. So, I saved the ship! None of that helped my seasickness, nor gained me any sympathy.

Seasick or not, I knew we were not going to have a joyous New Year's, just days off. I decided it would be a happy-enough New Year's if we just reached Gibraltar safely. Accordingly, I geared my celebration to a poem, "This Round's on Me," expressing that view.

THIS ROUND'S ON ME

*** Part 1 ***

New Year's comes but once a year,
Ain't it a shame we gotta spend it here ?

*** Part 2 ***

One New Year's I got hit in the cranium
With a beautifully flowering, third-floor potted geranium,
But even that was a hell of a lot more sanium
Than spending New Year's out here in the middle of the Mediteranium.

*** Part 3 ***

But I can think of lots worse places yet,
So why get upset?
I could be lonely and starving in far-off Tibet,
Or on the ramp at Minsky's getting trampled to det.

*** Part 4 ***

Happy New Year! May tomorrow bring the joyful refranium,
"Yipee! We Medit - terrainium!"

We safely reached Gibraltar on the morning of Dec. 28, having spent a calm Christmas at sea. I will never forget our arrival at “the Rock!” It was just dawn, and the Sun was rising. But the nearly full Moon refused to desert the sky. The Sun’s direct light and its light reflected from the Moon made a spectacular brightly colored “religiosity” painting in the sky. The Captain went ashore, and I thought he would be sacked for having left the convoy, but he came back apparently unscathed. The next day, we left, again alone, for Naples. After a wary trip, we arrived January 2 in the new year of 1945. The city had just been liberated, and sunken ships filled the harbor. A terrible odor of decay and rot was everywhere. We threaded our way through the wreckage to an improvised dock, where we were cautioned to beware of air raids. The enemy was retreating northward, but was still fighting. Soon after docking, I felt hungry for the first time since leaving Baltimore, and raided the mess room locker, stocking up against suffering seasickness again on the voyage home.

We were in Naples unloading, using our own kingposts, winches and booms, until January 18. The prime benefit of being a radio operator is that the radio shack must be locked securely while the ship is docked. Thus, we were free to explore as much as we dared, but made aware that there might still be Nazis or hostile Italian troops around. Nonetheless, I went ashore frequently, taking in the damaged and still-standing sights. People everywhere, mostly small boys, were trying to sell all kinds of shabby merchandise, including their not-so-shabby sisters. I think I escaped bodily injury, or at least robbery, when such a young urchin offered to sell me gold jewelry very cheaply. He beckoned and I followed him until he turned up a narrow, crooked alley, and I then decided against going any further. I turned and went back despite his insistence that I come with him just a little bit further.

Naples was really a sad town, so I decided to go to Florence. I hitched a ride on a Jeep driven by an Army guy. We got to Florence after a harrowing drive endangered not by the enemy, but by our driver screaming over the partially destroyed roads, many above sheer cliffs. I stayed at the Athenaeum Hotel. Several weeks before my arrival, General Mark Clark glorified the hotel when he entered it by driving his jeep up the flight of entrance steps and through the glass doors into the lobby.



Present day view of the Athenaeum hotel in Florence, with glass doors replaced

The hotel was in good shape and even had a recreation room operating. The Italians were very friendly to the American troops who were everywhere. I remember playing ping-pong with a beautiful little, black-haired Italian girl who spoke good English. The game was interrupted when a second lieutenant decided to remove the panties from a blonde-haired cutie nearby. She resisted strongly, hurling the unforgettable epithet at him while grabbing back her panties, "You are similar to shit!" Not bad for Itinglish. Anyway, it worked, the amorous Lt. left, and we resumed our game. I remember staying at the hotel several days, and playing a lot of ping-pong. But I was still too naïve to take advantage of it, and she even scared me away from ping pong by telling me she wanted to marry an American and go to the U.S.

The shops in Florence had merchandise, and I bought presents for my sister. I had been told back on our ship, never pay the asked price for merchandise, always bargain. I went into a fancy shop and found a lovely pair of white, elbow-length leather gloves for my sister, Evelyn. I asked the price, and it was high. Nervously, I countered with a price only about ten percent lower. The sales girl burst out laughing, and loudly said real fashion shops do not bargain, eliciting laughter from another salesgirl. Thoroughly embarrassed, I hastily paid the price asked, seized the package as soon as it was wrapped, and fled. Anyway, Evelyn loved the gloves, and even wore them. I then went to the Ponte Vecchio, and roamed through the exquisite jewelry stores. Nothing was cheap, but I did buy a few nice things for my relatives. I bought a silver pillbox for myself because it was pretty, never realizing I would eventually be using it!

After three days, I got a ride back to Naples and re-boarded. On January 18, 1945, we left Naples. By then, the Axis had pretty much been driven out of Italy, and we knew we would win the war. In a buoyant mood, we arrived back at Gib January 21. Nonetheless, we kept an eye out for enemy

planes, probably directed from La Linea, Spain, which was in plain view just across the bay from the Rock, and was the known lookout of the Germans spying on our Mediterranean ship movements. Unmolested, we formed into a convoy the next day and started for home. However, the convoy soon peeled off to head north toward the English Channel, and we continued westward alone. After a calm trip, we arrived in New York Harbor, sailing right past Hoffman Island, on February 1. Sealing the radio shack, Ray and I took the familiar route to Baltimore, flush with sign-off pay. I don't yet want to get into that contentious issue of Merchant Marine pay versus Army or Navy pay, but will address that gross (and net) misconception later.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF MARINE INSPECTION AND NAVIGATION

Certificate of Discharge

Serial No. **1837403**

Name of Seaman Gilbert Levin (In full)
Citizenship U.S.A. Certificate of Identification No. z 475638
Rating 3rd-Radio-Operator (Capacity in which employed)
Date of Shipment 12/5/1944
Place of Shipment Baltimore, Md.,
Date of Discharge 2/2/45
Place of Discharge New York City
Name of Ship S.S. TOWANDA VICTORY
Official No. 246898 Class of Vessel Steam (Steam, Motor, Sail or Barge)
Nature of Voyage Foreign (Foreign, Intercoastal or Coastwise)

Gilbert Levin (Signature of Seaman)
M.V. Mundy (Master of Vessel)
I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above entries were made by me and are correct and that the signatures hereof were witnessed by me.
Dated this 2 day of Feb. 1945
R. Hunter (United States Shipping Commissioner or Master of Vessel)

NOTE—Whenever a master performs the duties of the shipping commissioner under this act, the master shall sign the certification on the line designated for the shipping commissioner's signature.

Form 718A Rev. © 1937

Discharge from the first trip on the Towanda Victory

I was a returning hero, but treated as walking wounded because of how thin I had become. My father, in particular, made every effort to fatten me up. He asked if I didn't want to join the Army like my brother Ben, who had then been in Australia serving as a pharmacist with the Army's 118th Johns Hopkins General Hospital Unit for three years. I had a wonderful time home, visiting relatives, friends and dating in my regal uniform. I enjoyed all this for about two weeks, then Ray and I railroaded it back to New York, where we both signed articles for another trip on the Towanda Victory. This time, I was Second Radio Operator, and Ray was Third. February 18, 1945, our heavily loaded ship left New York in a large convoy. We then learned we were going to Le Havre, France, to deliver war materiel for our troops plowing across France and entering Germany. This trip, Captain Mundy obeyed orders, and maintained our assigned position in the rows and columns of ships. Protective planes swooped over us a couple of times each day until we were too far off shore. Then, we relied solely on the several destroyer escorts and one destroyer accompanying us. Of course, we carried our U.S. Navy Armed Guard of 11 sailors who would operate the cannon and guns in battle. However, having watched them at target practice, I was not too comforted in our ability to fend off an attack. During one of their practice sessions during our first trip, when we had been sailing alone, I had challenged the Gunnery Officer, laughingly offering to jump overboard and be a target for five dollars. He got quite annoyed and seemed about to throw me overboard as the target, with or without the bet.

Another notable incident having to do with firing of a sort occurred on our passage. Victor Skorapa, a rough and tough Czech-born twenty-one year old, who said he had served as a partisan in the Czech uprising, was a deck officer. We always called him “the Partisan.” On our first trip he had signed on as fourth mate. He was promoted to third mate on our second trip. He and I used to play chess on the flying bridge while he was on afternoon watch. Once, when I put him in check, he got so mad he grabbed my thumb and bent it until I thought it had been broken. One sunny afternoon he was on watch when he had a sudden, urgent need to visit the head. Normally, one under such stress would use the deck phone to call for someone to spell him off for a few minutes while he made the necessary trip. The Partisan, however, didn’t care for that protocol this particular time. Perhaps the urgency forbade it. At any rate, the Partisan achieved his relief by “firing” over the side. Unhappily, on the deck below, Chief Mate Vic Ryan, was striding along to oversee some task, and was caught in the slipstream. He wondered what it was at first, then cast his eye upstream and saw Skorapa still in action. Unhappy day for the Partisan! The Czech was checkmated for the rest of the voyage, bearing the brunt of many tough assignments. Worse yet befell him, but not because of the Chief Mate. Upon our return to the States, an FBI agent was waiting for him to investigate him as a spy. I never found out what happened to the Partisan.

The synthetic rain event is celebrated in “It Wasn’t Raining California Sunshine.”

IT WASN'T CALIFORNIA SUNSHINE

The sun was shining bright
Upon a new spring day;
The vessel, trim and tight,
Sped merrily on her way.

The mate was working on the deck
He didn't have a care.
Was not the ship being kept in check
By the well-renown “Pierre?”

But upon the bridge the Partisan
Was troubled by a woe,
For, like when your 1A card is in,
He really had to go!

Things were getting hot,
The sight was quite appalling.
Duty held him to the spot,
But loud was nature's calling!

Yet the Partisan, not dismayed
Turned to his lucid brain,
And he once again displayed
The form that brought him fame.

The mate thought it was strange
When it began to "rain"
For not a fleecy range
Obscured the sky's blue plain.

At first he was perplexed
When it began to pour,
But he turned a vivid crimson next,
And let out a thunderous roar.

For this is what he found
When his eye glanced up the beam,
It wasn't rain in which he nearly drowned,
But the Partisan's slip-stream.

Now there's a moral to this story that I'd like to clearly state
Never piss to windward
Or you'll never make first mate.

I don't recall the nautical details of the crossing, so it must have been uneventful, and the weather must have been satisfactory. However, even in calm weather keeping in formation in a big convoy is hard work, especially at night. I recall many mornings when several strayed vessels had to be placed back in order. Fortunately, we suffered no collisions as had happened in other convoys. On March 2, our convoy arrived safely in Le Havre, and split up into separate anchorages. The next day, our ship raised anchor and, sailing with the strong tide, headed cautiously up the narrow Seine River. The River and surrounding green country were beautiful, and I watched as much as possible. I also was impressed with frequently seeing family-occupied, motor barges carrying small amounts of freight up and down the River, living aboard their vessels of commerce. This was a new way of life to me. It took us most of the day to squirm some seventy-five miles up the Seine to our destination, Rouen. What a beautiful town! I still think its cathedral is prettier than Notre Dame.

After taking in the town where the English burned Jeanne D'Arc at the stake in 1431, I decided to strike for Paris. Ray Smith declined to go for fear temptation would threaten the sanctity of his engagement with Irene Fromm back in Baltimore! Can you believe that? So, Bob Comey, the Junior Third Mate, and I took a train to the City of Light, some 150 miles further up the Seine. We got out at the famous Gare du Nord. I remembered being very impressed with the color-coded scheme painted on the walls and overhead to guide travelers to the correspondingly colored-coded train line. Paris, getting back into its own after the German occupation, was all I had imagined: beautiful, wide-open streets, parks, vistas, monuments, people hustling around, Left Bank bookstalls, restaurants and night clubs. I went up the Eiffel Tower, and got a good look at the awe-inspiring city.

I couldn't believe I was walking down the Champs d'Elysees, under the Arc de Triomphe, in the Tuileries, past the Place Vendome, into the Louvre, Montmartre, Tour d'Eiffel, l'Opera, Notre

Dame, and all the rest that I could manage in our three days' stay. Of course, this included night visits to Maxim's and the Moulin Rouge. The girls and costumes were just dazzling! And we did meet two girls while strolling down the Champs d'Elysees. They helped us on our sightseeing and purchases of gifts for the family. Gisele da Rold was my blonde "date," and Denise Collet, a dental student, was Bob's brunette. Even though Gisele and I stayed in contact by mail over the years, and she visited me with her son in Los Angeles some ten years later, no nuances beyond a few kisses are intended here, and Ray could have been perfectly safe. He sure missed a grand time, for which I hope Irene made up in their subsequent marriage.

On March 10, unloading completed, we departed Rouen to wend our way back to Le Havre. Here, we joined a convoy, and departed the next afternoon, heading up and across the English Channel to the Isle of Wight off the Port of Southampton. That night proved to be my most vivid wartime adventure. The Channel had been nicknamed "E-boat Alley," because of the frequent raids on Allied shipping by German E-boats (their version of our PT boat), which darted out of occupied French ports. Beginning at twilight, they attacked our convoy. During the night, our General Alarm sounded 17 times, each time signaling an attack. Our convoy's DEs, aided by other naval vessels, carried out a ceaseless dropping of depth charges, testimony that subs were also there. Constant firing and screaming sirens was heard. Our Armed Guard went to battle stations, but never had to fire, as no enemy penetrated to the Towanda. I came out on deck to take it all in. When nearby depth charges exploded, our hull responded with a large "boinggg!" like it might cave in. Through it all, as I indicated earlier, I felt nothing could happen to our ship, our secure home. And nothing did. I really felt like a spectator, rather than a participant. The battle ceased after an hour or two, and I don't believe our forces suffered any losses. By the time of that attack, the German Luftwaffe had been so badly beaten it did not participate. Whether we got any of the enemy, I'll never know.

The next morning, we departed alone, heading around the bottom of Britain, north into the Celtic Sea, then up the Clyde River to Cardiff, Wales – where, much later, I would return as a Cardiff University Honorary Professor in the Center of Astrobiology (which center later transferred intact to the University of Buckingham), a subject that didn't even exist in the era of WWII! We remained in Cardiff four days, and, as a good radio operator, I locked up the shack and went ashore. At the opposite end of the spectrum from Paris, Cardiff had its own beauty and charm. I was particularly taken with the Cardiff Castle, sitting majestically on the top of a hill in a park-like setting. The Castle had its beginning about 2,000 years ago, likely started as a fort by the invading Romans. Today, it is a huge stone edifice where many public events are held. Such an event, a dance for the Allied troops was held while we were in port. I attended. Sixty years later, Mother and I were back in that castle upon our visit to Cardiff University, and I had fun teasing her about the beautiful redhead I had danced with in this very place that long-ago night!

March 17, the Towanda Victory left the Isle of Wight anchorage in convoy, heading for New York City. A rough, wintry North Atlantic made keeping convoy station difficult. I was sometimes called upon to send Morse code lantern signals to nearby ships to be sure they didn't intrude into our space. Our convoy arrived safely in New York Harbor March 26.

**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
Certificate of Discharge**

Serial No. **G2104929**

Name of Seaman Gilbert V. LEVIN
(In full)

Citizenship U.S.A. Certificate of Identification No. z 475638

Rating 2nd-Radio-Operator
(Capacity in which employed)

Date of Shipment 2/3/1945

Place of Shipment New York

Date of Discharge 3/31/45

Place of Discharge New York

Name of Ship TOWANDA VICTORY

Official No. 246898 Class of Vessel Steam
(Steam, Motor, Sail or Barge)

Nature of Voyage Foreign
(Foreign, Intercoastal or Coastwise)

Gilbert V. Levin
(Signature of Seaman)

M. Mumby
(Master of Vessel)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above entries were made by me and are correct and that the signatures hereto were witnessed by me.

Dated this 31 day of 3, 1945

M. Beichler
United States Shipping Commissioner.
(or Master of Vessel)

NOTE -- Whenever a master performs the duties of the shipping commissioner under this act, the master shall sign the certification on the line designated for the shipping commissioner's signature.

NCG 718A Rev. © 1937
SHIPPING COMMISSIONER
STATE OF NEW YORK

Discharge from the second trip on the Towanda Victory

Surprisingly, I had earned the Captain's respect despite my gross error at the beginning of my first voyage. He said he was pleased with me, and asked me to sign on again. I did, but Ray signed off the Towanda Victory, and our wartime companionship ended. I had a chance to go home for the weekend. The ship loaded oilfield equipment, pipes, etc., and we left on April 8 to sail coastwise alone to Galveston. Galveston proved to be a fun port. It was a "dry" city, but there were many private "clubs," where you could bring your own booze, easily obtained, drink and revel to music. The beach, recovered from its last devastating hurricane of 1943, was a delightful place to be. I went there one sunny day with our third engineer, Dimitri, whose last name I "Freudingly" forget. There, we met a very pretty blonde girl. I even remember her name, Buzz Sawyer. I was busy charming her, making good time, when Dimitri, desiring to get into the act, pointedly volunteered, "you know he goes to the synagogue." That promptly ended two relationships: Buzz and me, and Dimitri and me. However, it didn't help Dimitri's case with Buzz, for she promptly left us both. That was one of the rare moments when I encountered Anti-Semitism in my maritime career.

Learning that, my brother, Ben, after being away four years, was coming home on leave, I signed off in Galveston, and left my beloved Towanda Victory on April 29, 1945.

**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
Certificate of Discharge**

Serial No. G 2989828

Name of Seaman Gilbert V. LEVIN
(In full)

Citizenship U.S.A. Certificate of Identification No. Z 475638

Rating 3rd-Radio-Operator
(Capacity in which employed)

Date of Shipment 4/8/45

Place of Shipment New York

Date of Discharge 4/28/45

Place of Discharge Galveston, Texas

Name of Ship S.S. TOWANDA VICTORY

Official No. 246898 Class of Vessel Steam
(Steam, Motor, Sail or Barge)

Nature of Voyage Foreign
(Foreign, Intercoastal or Coastwise)

Gilbert V. Levin
(Signature of Seaman)

M. O. Mundy
(Master of Vessel)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above entries were made by me and are correct and that the signatures hereto were witnessed by me.

Dated this 30 day of April, 1945

H. S. Penikert
United States Shipping Commissioner
(or Master of Vessel)

NOTE—Whenever a master performs the duties of the shipping commissioner under this act, the master shall sign the certification on the line designated for the shipping commissioner's signature.

NCG 718A Rev. © 1940

Discharge from the third trip on the Towanda Victory

Carrying my worldly possessions in my duffle bag, I went to New Orleans, by bus, to get a train for Baltimore. The train station was crowded, and I stood in line waiting my turn at the ticket window. Just ahead of me were two attractive girls chattering away. Suddenly, one of them turned to me and said, "We are going to Los Angeles, but would rather go by car so we could stop along the way. Would you drive us in our car?" Wow! How could anyone get so lucky? After a tantalizing debate with myself, fraternal love won out over youthful lust, and I politely declined, but have wondered ever after about what that trip would have been like. I got my ticket, soon boarded the train, and took the long, hot ride to Charm City.

I had accumulated enough leave (two days for every seven at sea, max. 30) to stay home for a nice spell. Soon after I got back to 1630 Moreland Ave, VE Day, May 7, brought great joy to us. Several days later, that joy was greatly compounded by the arrival of my brother, Ben. I was on the front porch when a Diamond Cab pulled up. Benny stepped out, got his luggage out of the trunk, and held out the fare. The cabbie refused to take it, instead thanking Ben for what he had done for the Nation. Looking trimmer and more fit than I had ever seen him (Ben had always been heavy), Benny ran up the steps and we embraced. I quickly dragged him into the house to see my father. Henry looked at his newly svelte son, and immediately broke into tears. "Half a boy, only half a boy they sent back to me!"

Henry spent a lot of time pumping food into Benny, but, other than that, we all had a very nice time together. Soon enough it was time for me to sail again. With leave nearly expired, my urgency to get back to sea is expressed in the poem, "2-B Fever," (with no apology to John Masefield), 2-B being the draft board's classification allowing me to go to sea rather than join the Army!

2-B FEVER

I must go down to the seas again, the draft board has told me why;
And all I ask is a T.L.T.* and a ship that's torpedo shy;
And the key's click, and the pentodes' hum and the old mill's shaking;
And the cans' staccato pounding my ears, and the sparks as the circuit's breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of that three-man board
Is a loud call and a clear call that cannot be ignored;
And all I ask is some overtime, and batteries to recharge,
And blown fuses, and extra shifts to help my roll grow large.

I must go down to the seas again to that vibrant dit dah life,
To the plain code and the mixed code, and some poor Frenchman's wife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow rover,
And to go over the side with the monkey's paw** when the damn trip's over.

**TLT = Temporary Limited Radio Telegraph License*

***Monkey's paw is the knotted rope weight on the end of the hawser – the first thing to hit land when docking.*

So, on June 10, back I went to Joe Rubin at the union hall. He said there was a Liberty Ship, the Henry Jocelyn, owned by the Calmar Steamship Corporation, a subsidiary of Bethlehem Steel, in Baltimore that needed a radio operator, did I want it. I said I would like to go see the ship first. Joe impatiently countered, “What do you want to see, if the old man has whiskers?” Nonetheless, I cabbled down to Canton and searched out the ship. I was shocked to find a tired, old rusty bucket, whose hailing port and name barely showed through the rust on the stern. Daunted, I, nonetheless, climbed the gangway ladder, showed my ID to the guard, and sought the Captain. He was John Phillips, a rotund, jolly 39-year-old, just recently made skipper. I met the other radio operator, Harold Pfaff, hailing from Renovo, Pennsylvania, a town of several hundred near Lock Haven. There was no third operator, so the third watches would be stood by the auto alarm. Of course, I could gain no idea where the Henry Jocelyn was headed; perhaps even the Captain didn't know at that time.



SS HENRY JOCELYN

I went home to ponder the matter. The next day, I was in Joe Rubin's office again, asking whether another ship was available. None was. My leave was up, so it was the Henry Jocelyn or the draft board. Preferring rust to mud, I went back to the rusty bucket and signed on as Second Radio Operator. Until loading was finished and we departed on June 15, I explored my new home. Even were it new, the Liberty Ship could never compare to the Victory. Termed "the ugly duckling" by Franklin Roosevelt, who ordered them built, the ships were, indeed, ungainly in appearance and ability. Their propulsion, giant three-story reciprocating steam engines, had been designed in England in 1898! Since it peaked in WWI, the U. S. maritime industry had fallen to the point where it couldn't supply a new design for engines in time for the rapidly expanding merchant fleet. That led to the selection of this long-proven dependable design, which could be built of materials not competing with those required by the newer, more sophisticated turbine engines being built for the Navy, and, later in the War, for newer cargo vessels. The Towanda Victory was powered by a more than 5,000 hp steam turbine, as opposed to the 2,500 hp Liberty "up and down." The respective rated speeds were 17 and 11 kts. What a choice! But I had no choice, so I signed up on "Old Oxides" for what came to be the adventure of my life.

Meanwhile, I had a letter from my Maritime pal, Moe Burman, then a second assistant engineer, informing me of his sad fate trapped in the African tropical seas on shuttle duty for many months. Hoping this would not happen to me on the Henry Jocelyn, I penned a poetic lament, which I mailed to Moe.

FROM THE PERSIAN GULF TO MOZAMBIQUE

I'm Barnacle Gil and I've sailed the sea
On a cardboard box and a telegraph key,
I've a stomach of iron and cold steel for a liver,
Still unborn is the man to make my timbers shiver.

But the other day I heard a horrible tale
The most ghastly thing since I first set sail.
My hands began shaking as the story unfurled,
And my mournful cry pierced the depths of the world.

My breath came in pants and my knees shook like dice,
And my soul was engulfed in cold verbal ice
That flowed from the lips of a seafaring man
Who just got back from a trip to Iran.

Like the Ancient Mariner, I now feel the pain,
And I know I must tell the story again,
So sit tight in your chair and hang on to your teeth,
But don't look for a moral, for there's none underneath.

There's a guy who sailed on a Liberty Ship,
Whistling a tune about a two month trip,
But cruel fate dealt him a sharp rebuttal

In the terrible form of a nine-knot shuttle.

From the Persian Gulf to Mozambique
Is a trip that that takes full many a week.
The sweltering heat leaves you wracked with pain,
And the 'skeeters bite, till they drive you insane.

From the Persian Gulf to Mozambique
Just once around leaves a strong man weak,
The most god-awful trip that all men dread
From the Bay of 'Frisco to the shores of the Med.

From the Persian Gulf to Mozambique
Shuttles the guy of whom I speak.
Two months have passed and many more
Since last he saw his native shore.

From the Persian Gulf to Mozambique
His hopes are becoming increasingly bleak
Of crossing the sea to return to his wife,
And leading a normal civilized life.

When the war is over and the boys come home,
They'll carry a tale from across the foam,
Of a Second Assistant becoming antique,
From the Persian Gulf to Mozambique

On June 15, 1945, the Henry Jocelyn left Baltimore alone. Our cruising speed was not the advertised 11 kts., but a measly 8 kts. Little did I appreciate this speed, as, later on, the Jocelyn was reduced to 4 kts. for a good piece of our voyage. The engine really needed attention. On June 29, we passed through the Gibraltar Straits, and, still alone entered Naples Harbor July 3. There was no time for a formal celebration of July 4. That day, we left "alone, alone, all alone" to go up the coast to Livorno (Leghorn). There, we unloaded our precious, war-winning cargo, believe it or not, 9,000 tons of beer (one million cases)! That cargo had caused some trouble during the trip. Our Army Security Officer, who regularly inspected the cargo, detected that several cases were missing. He told the Chief Mate, who lay in wait in one of the holds the next day. Surely enough, two of our ABs, Benjamin and Beckner, appeared through a ventilation duct and began taking more beer. The Chief Mate used his 5-cell flashlight and beat the beJesus out of Benjamin. Benjamin was black-eyed and head swollen for a week. Perhaps the punishment was a little harsh, but it ended the thievery. Beckner took his revenge. Some days later, when he was on bow lookout, he had to go. Instead of using the phone to call for relief so he could go to the john, he defecated in the hawse pipe. Making his rounds, the Chief Mate found the mess the next day, deduced who the culprit was, and made him clean it up. The incident is documented in my ditty, "Here Comes the Henry Jocelyn."

THE HENRY JOCELYN

Here comes the Henry Jocelyn,
She is sure an awful sight!
You can tell that rusty bucket
In the daytime or the night,
She's put her bow in every port
From the Rock to Penang Light,
As the HJ steamboats on!

Glory, glory, Henry Jocelyn,
Glory, glory, Henry Jocelyn,
Glory, glory, Henry Jocelyn,
As the HJ steamboats on!

Now, Benjamin and Beckner were
The sinfulls of the lot,
Benny used the hawse pipe
When he should have used the pot,
But we'll get those little bastards
When the Jocelyn hits the dock,
As the HJ steamboats on!

Glory, glory, Henry Jocelyn,
Glory, glory, Henry Jocelyn,
Glory, glory, Henry Jocelyn,
As the HJ steamboats on!

We unloaded our liquid ammunition, and loaded a lot of war-related equipment and supplies such as pipes, barrels of oil, and a variety of other goods now surplus in the European theater. We left Livorno on July 28, still alone. We crossed the Med, and, on July 30, dropped the hook in Oran Harbor. The Captain went ashore and received orders that, the same day, set us on course for Gibraltar. But this time we were not going home.

Instead, we took the long, lonely passage down the South Atlantic into the beautifully colored Caribbean. We sensed we were heading for the Panama Canal for transit to join the war in the Pacific, but had no official word. On the way, we crossed the Equator, and those of us doing so for the first time underwent moderate initiation rites in becoming Shellbacks. As I recall, we just got sprayed with water and had to crawl around a little, nothing like some of the serious and injurious initiation rites practiced elsewhere. The Purser awarded us appropriate certificates attesting to our new honor. Mine is adorning my home office wall. I was fascinated watching dolphins escort us just ahead of our bow, and seeing flying fish rise from the pastel waters to soar only several feet above the water for lengths of 100 yards or more. Some of the crew shone flashlights at night to lure

the flying fish to jump over our gunnels and land aboard. The seamen claimed they made for delicious breakfasts. I marveled at the rainbow colors of the fish, but did not partake.

Something far more important than a fish fry occurred during this trip. The atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and on August 15, just before arriving at Cristobal, I received word over my radio that Japan had sued for peace. I informed the Captain, and he put the Henry Jocelyn hard over into a tight turn with the ship's whistles blowing and the bells ringing. After several celebratory circles, we straightened out and made a very happy entrance to the eastern (actually northern) port city for the Panama Canal.

However, not all was well with the Henry Jocelyn. Our cruising speed had fallen to four kts., which is why our trans-Atlantic journey had taken so long. It was decided by the Chief Engineer, and confirmed by the Captain, that we had to replace defective tubes in the ship's boiler. It was about 110 deg. F in the shade then, and there was no shade in the engine room. In order to expedite the process, the Skipper decreed that all men (including the radio operators!) should pitch in so we could work 'round the clock. In the stifling heat, we removed defective tube after tube from the boiler, and inserted new tubes. The new tubes had to be beveled into place at each end. This was a painstaking, slow job, requiring hard arm work to rotate the beveling tool, and I remember it well.

Aside from installing tubes, I was able to take in a little nightlife in Cristobal. In particular, there was a nightclub, where an American ex-patriot, Rhoda Chase, sang nightly. Being impressed with her singing, I got up the courage to speak to her. I asked what she was doing in Panama, since I thought her singing was good enough to make it big in the States. She explained that she had been in a car accident that left her with a scarred face, ending her hoped-for career in entertainment in the U.S. However, here in Panama, she could get by on her vocal ability and her American background. I thought it a shame, because (tone deaf or not) I felt she had brilliant talent. She sang her nightly sign-off song, "We'll Meet Again," beautifully, and I was sure she could have made it in the U.S., tiny scar and all. Somewhere I have her autographed photo.

Then, there was another nightclub, which featured a "Panamanian strip tease." One of the lovelies went too far and provoked an on-looking sailor to attack her, right in front of God and everybody. SPs in the audience immediately pinioned him and hauled him off to the Navy clink, wherever that was. The show went on, and we learned a lot about Panama.

One hot, sweltering night, while the repairs were continuing, Captain Phillips showed his mettle. Earlier in the day, several of the Armed Guard had committed some major shipboard offense, so bad that the Captain had his deck hands "arrest" the sailors and commit them to the ship's brig- the laundry room, which had a lock on its door. I remember chatting with the Captain on the flying wing of the bridge, as we frequently did nights. Suddenly, up the ladder came this six foot-four burly Petty Officer from our Navy Armed Guard detachment. He went up to the Captain and demanded that his imprisoned Navy crew mates be set free, saying the Merchant Marine had no authority over the U.S. Navy. The Captain explained that he was Captain of the vessel, and ordered the intruder off the bridge deck. The Petty Officer suddenly pulled his Navy-issue 45 pistol from its holster, aimed it at the Captain's head, and said, "Let's go and unlock those guys." Before I even had time to tremble, without a moment's hesitation, Captain Phillips swiftly shot out his right arm and grabbed the 45 right out of his attacker's hand. Whew! I had witnessed something that would

later be termed a James Bond incident! How could that roly-poly guy move so fast? Captain Phillips then calmly marched the Petty Officer to join his mates in the improvised brig, where, as I recall, they spent the next four days. The Captain's stock immediately went up for me, and for all our crew as the news quickly spread.



The Modern Panama Canal

By August 24, we were finished installing the tubes, and had buttoned up the boiler. We got steam up, and the Jocelyn took her place in the line of ships waiting to be taken on the 50-mile passage to Balboa on the Pacific side. As soon as our turn to enter the Canal came, a whole troop of U. S. Marines jumped aboard, followed by a pilot. They completely took command of the Jocelyn, and we, her Captain and crew, became mere passengers, observing the maneuvers through the steaming jungle-fringed Gatun Lake into and through the narrow Canal proper. Emerging at Balboa, we debarked our visitors and immediately entered the wide, blue Pacific, again as a lone vessel. I then learned we were heading for the Philippines, some ten thousand miles away! It was now obvious we were going to enter the Pacific war, if we managed to elude Japanese submarines along the way. New tubes and all, now at top speed, this trip took 36 days. This is when I fell in love with the sea. The beautiful, blue, calm ocean world mesmerized me. I would sit, coffee cup in hand, out on the bridge wing accompanying the Second Mate, Leonard "Bill" Maley, on his midnight to 4 a.m. watch, and chat with him. Staring from the sea to the star-spangled sky while sensuously rocked by the gentle swells, I gave no thought to any hazards that may lurk for us. The trip was pure magic, a time in nirvana, an experience

I have never forgotten.

One negative to this lovely, but long trip was that we ran out of liquor for our ritual cocktail hour, a strict ritual for the officers when the sun sank below the yardarm. The third engineer, William Layton Hamilton Burdette III, radio operator cohort, Harold Pfaff, and I had jointly bought a bottle in Panama. One dry cocktail hour, the Chief Mate, John Yarwood, abruptly said, "Sparks, you ought to have some liquor. Go fetch it!" I went back to my cabin, took out the bottle, and poured one-third of it, my share, into a pitcher and took it to the Chief and the several other hopeful Officers.

The Chief took one look at it, and refused it, saying, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, not bringing the bottle!" My explanation as to my shared ownership was to no avail, and my erstwhile good relationship with the Chief suffered for a while. However, when the dry spell eventually ended, the Chief Mate was back at our daily ritual, as always, toasting with his "I Hocka Benzoid!," the meaning and etiology of which are lost in time.

Bill Burdette and I became good friends. I was fascinated with his full name, William Hamilton Burdette III! Bill told me he was from a long line of staunch Virginians. He kept sailing as an engineering officer after the war. He met a pretty girl and married her in Baltimore, a wedding I attended. They settled in Baltimore, where I visited them when he was in port, but, in the course of time, we lost touch.

Long trips result in food boredom, and ours was no exception. Our steward, Andy Turchen, did his best for us, but we were dissatisfied with his fare and named him "Hungry Turchen," which name stuck throughout the trip. Even before we ran out of steak, the Chief Mate had his complaint: he always ordered his steak well done, and it always came back rare.

THE MATE'S LAMENT

Oh very rare is a day in June,
And rarer still a pleasant tune.
How rare is the sight of a pretty lass,
And rare is the feel on dew on the grass.

All these things the poets compare
To find out which is supremely rare,
But the rarest thing on the land or the sea
Is the "well done" steak they serve to me!

I had volunteered to copy the BBC daily news, which was read at dictation speed so it could be readily copied and shown to the troops around the world. I posted the news on a bulkhead near the shack. On September 2, I had real news to post: Japan had formally sued for peace and agreed to surrender! With VJ Day came the end of the grisly World War II. We would not have to invade Japan, where we knew we had been ultimately heading, and we would not have to take the great losses that would bring. In addition, we no longer had to be concerned with Japanese subs, except for an errant one or two that might not have heard, or wanted to obey, the news. Even without the benefit of liquid cheer, we partied mightily. On September 28, we passed the island of Leyte, the site of the greatest naval battle in history, together with fierce land action, where my brother Ben had gone with the Hopkins 118th General Hospital to tend the sick and wounded. (I recall his later telling me about foolishly joining the pilot of an observation plane to look over the active battleground.)

On September 30, we entered Manila Harbor. What a sight! The huge bay was filled with some 500 ships of every description; all had been getting ready for the now unneeded invasion of Japan. We dropped the hook near the Kinka Maru, a sunken Japanese vessel that we were told had silver coins

and bullion aboard. It was constantly guarded by an attached boat with armed Marines. With the abrupt end to the war, the authorities did not know what to do with us. We sat at anchor nearly six weeks. Of course, I locked up the radio shack, and undertook daily explorations of Manila, or what was left of it. The town had been greatly damaged by small arms fire, testifying to the fierce urban battle that had been waged. The famous Jones Bridge across the Pasig River had been destroyed by bombs, except for one of the trusses. The roadway was completely gone. On one of my adventures, I foolishly climbed up the truss and, carefully balancing my way, crossed the river far below to get to the center of town. Had I fallen, I probably would have been poisoned to death by the horrible pollution before I had time to drown. Finding the town all shot up, I retraced my precarious steps and went back to my side of the bay, where I caught a water taxi back to my floating home.

Aboard, we started playing poker for modest stakes. Captain Phillips participated along with the Chief Mate, the Chief Engineer and the Purser. One evening, I got lucky. I cleaned out the Captain, who asked for one more hand. He ran out of money betting that hand. I had noticed a lovely carved teak head of a native that he had bought ashore. I said I would accept that as a bet he wanted to make to call me in that last hand. He went to his cabin and came back with the head. I won. I still have that head. In fact, I liked the native teak carving so much, I went ashore and bought several very pretty carved teak boxes, which I also still have.

Poker was fine, but our restless crew needed more active entertainment. We were able to restock for shipboard happy hour very quickly, but we wanted adventure ashore. And there were plenty of gin mills, including one named the Green Parrot (not too unlike Sidney Greenstreet's Blue Parrot in Casablanca). A bunch of Jocelyn crew were whooping it up there one night, when the bartender said something Bill Maley didn't like. Bill seized an open bottle on the bar and hurled it into the mirror behind the bar, shattering it and the peace. An instant riot of the "just add alcohol" type ensued. Bottles, chairs and heads were broken. Harold Pfaff and I surreptitiously backed out a side door and beat a strategic retreat just as the SPs arrived in force. They took eleven of our guys in a paddy wagon, and hauled them off to the horrible Bilibid Prison. This was the very prison that held the infamous Tiger of Malaya, General Yamashita Tomoyuki, awaiting his trial, and his subsequent much-deserved execution. Sprung the next day, the imprisoned Jocelyn crewmembers had earned a reputation conferred by their co-prisoner. They were sentenced to contribute about \$3,000 to restore the Green Parrot, but I don't think they ever did.

On one great evening, Danny Kaye and Lippy Leo Durocher, early and tempestuous manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, came to Manila to put on a stage show for the troops. They performed at the famous Rizal Stadium, which had somehow survived the battle of Manila. Danny was hilarious with many of his incredible routines, both meme and vocal. Leo Durocher showed how he kicked dirt on the umpire's shoes in arguing against a bad call. Of course, The Lip had been expelled from the game many times, when, as manager of the Dodgers and other teams later, he ran up to the umpire with a dusty protest. The show really perked us up.

During one trip ashore, I passed a shop with birds in the window. I went in and bought a Philippine Love Bird, a small, colorful mini-parrot, some birdseed and a wicker cage. I brought my find back to the Jocelyn, and hung the cage in the radio shack, inviting my shipmates to see it. One of them scolded me, saying it was a shame to keep the little thing cooped up, and said I should release it to the wild before we sailed away from its home territory. I slept on the matter, and, upon waking,

decided to let the bird go. I went to the radio shack to get the cage. Lo and behold, there was a tiny egg in it! Now what? If I let the bird go, the egg would never hatch. If I kept the bird and it did hatch the egg, I would have two birds to set free, but, surely, the baby would not be ready to fly off before we were back at sea. I had a bright idea. The temperature in the auto alarm cabinet was pretty near body temperature. I could put the egg in the auto alarm and let the bird go! Then, if and whenever the egg hatched, I could raise the bird in the cage until it could fly and we were someplace where I could release it. Done! I took the cage out on deck and opened the door. The bird promptly flew out and toward shore. I then put the egg in a small cardboard box and placed it within the auto alarm cabinet, being certain it could not interfere with the operation of the alarm. I inspected the egg daily. There was no sign of anything going on. No sign ever appeared, and after some weeks, I gave up and disposed of the probably unfertilized egg.

Uncertainty and rumors spread about what lay in store for our rusty bucket, now rusty beyond belief, despite the occasional, half-hearted attempts to have the ABs scrape, chip and paint the worst spots. We suspected something was up when, in response to orders from the authorities ashore, the Chief Mate directed the deck crew to offload all our cargo – by dumping it right into Manila Bay! We must be making room for something. But we were not. Once empty, the Jocelyn raised hook on November 8, and, now, with wartime restrictions relaxed, the Captain told us we were off for Australia! Next to going home, that sounded fine to everyone. I thought I might look up some friends my brother had made during his long stay near Sydney, but learned our destination was Perth, on the opposite side of the huge continent-island. I celebrated the end of our boring stay in Manila Harbor with my epic poem, “Flotsam and Jetsam.”

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

For many a day in Manila Bay
We swung upon the chain,
And impatience grew among the crew
To put to sea again,
But, with burning sky, the days rolled by,
And hope began to wane.

While naught was heard, we waited word
To tell us what to haul;
In circles wide, we rode the tide,
A sea-going carousal;
On visions steed we sought to read
The writing on the wall.

On his ancient loom, old morbid Gloom,
His darkest cloak did weave,
With coarsest thread of fear and dread,
He gave us no reprieve,
And, by threat of crime, warned Father Time,
"Knit not the raveled sleeve."

And each new dawn its rumor spawn
Of some new port of call,
From 'Frisco Bay to South Cathay,
Our fancy made them all,
But every one was quickly done,
And subject to recall.

Throughout each day, the WSA*
Our Captain gave no peace,
Till from one attack he carried back
A little black valise;
It was evident that this now meant
Our waiting was to cease.

The same night the signal light
Caught us in its beam,
"At eight a.m., you'll turn the stem,
Be sure to have up steam."
And all the men were happy then,
As in a wond'rous dream.

From its muddy nook, the rusty hook
Fought hard its hold to keep,
But, inch by inch, the anchor winch
Reclaimed it from the deep,
And the clanking chain took up the strain,
Although the pull was steep.

A tinkling laugh from the telegraph,
The Jocelyn gave a shudder,
And a great tureen of boiling green
Appeared about the rudder
With a sparkling dome of milky foam
From some Neptunic udder.

Though tricky spots at a slow eight knots,
We passed Corregidor,
Then safe outside, with throttle wide
Picked up one knot more.
By sweat or tears, the engineers
Could no more speed outpour.

We sipped our tea in the Sulu Sea,
And trusted to the mates
To follow the breeze through the Celebes,
And find the Makassar Straits,

While in the shack, with rustling pack,
We played a game of eights.

One morning fine we crossed the line,
Our cheers are ringing still.
For the worst was done, the battle won,
The rest was all downhill;
Through prayers forlorn our hair was shorn,
(You should have seen old Gil.)

Within stone's throw of Borneo,
We sailed the Java Sea,
And native girls, bedecked in pearls,
Beckoned from Bali.
But, with might of will, we followed still
The course that had to be.

Through reef and mine, the treacherous brine
Did part beneath our bow,
But fate was kind, our mates divined
The safest track to plow;
With shouts of joy it's "land ahoy!"
Prepare for shore fun now!

Lava, they say, finished Pompeii,
Atoms brought 'Shima to Earth,
Earthquake and fire did often conspire
To rob other cities of mirth.
But there'll be soon a far greater ruin
When the Jocelyn gets finished with Perth.

*WSA = War Shipping Administration

On the way to Down Under, I picked up some radio signals when we came within range of local armed forces radio stations on Peleliu Island in the tiny multiple-islands nation of Palau. Fierce fighting had taken place there between the Americans and the Japanese. The radio now was advertising surplus items for sale, as the base was closing down. The war might be over, but there were still perils ahead for us. Our route took us across the Celebes Sea, through the very narrow Torres Strait that snaked a dangerous, serpentine passage through rocky islands. As luck would have it, it was a pitch-black night when we approached it. This made for a very nervous time, and the Captain and the Chief Mate made every possible use of the compass and d'ed (deduced) reckoning, based on the day's progress, guiding the helmsman minute by minute. There were neither shore lights nor buoy lights to guide us. The engine room was signaled, "Slow ahead," maintaining just enough speed to keep our steerage. Tense moments passed slowly with all ears cocked for that crunching sound we feared. Finally, the dawn crept up. By its earliest light, we saw that we were dead center in the strait, with rocky islands readily visible to both port and starboard. Whew!

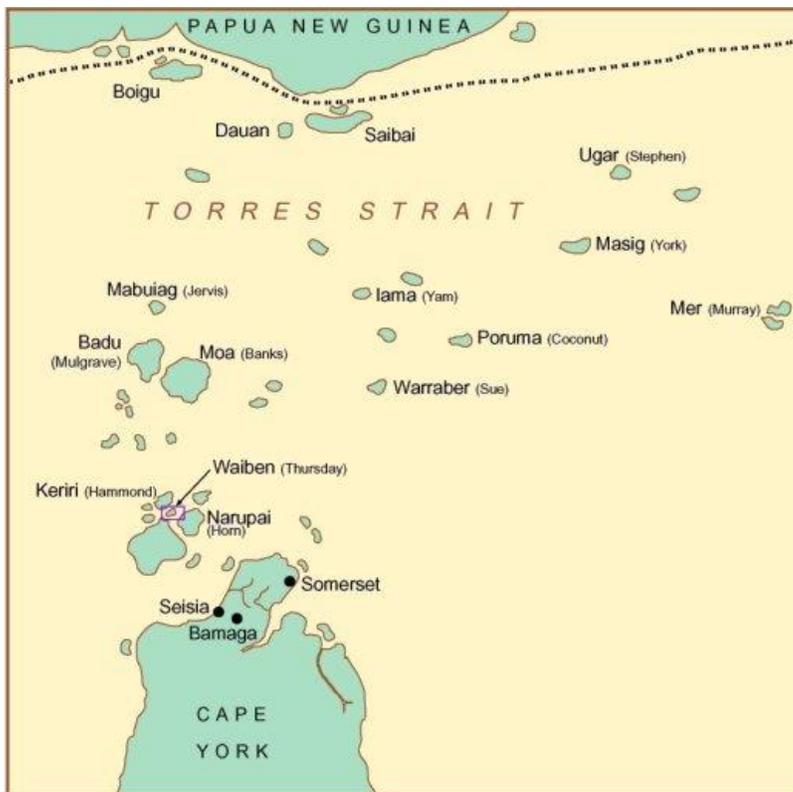
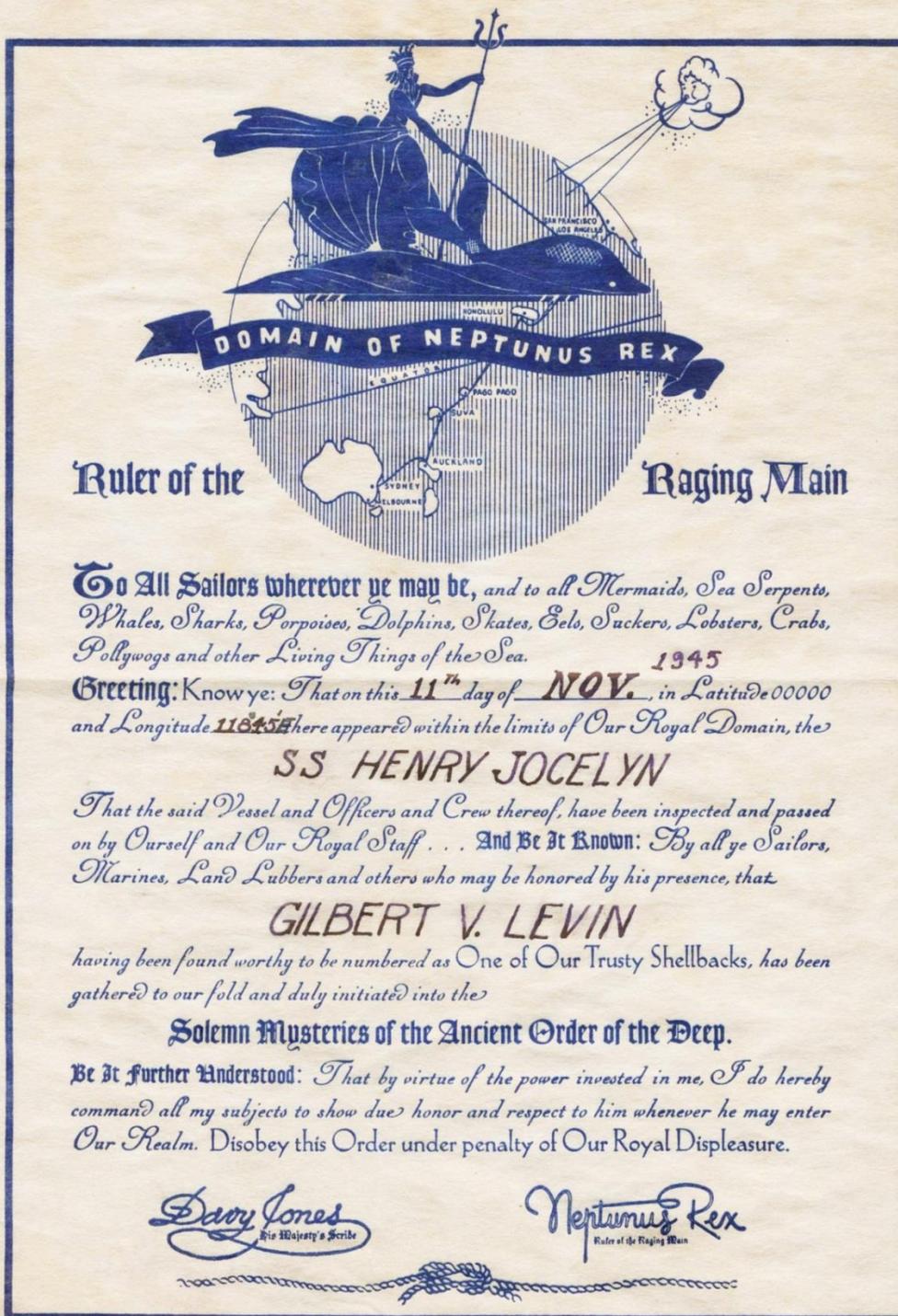


Chart of the Torres Strait

Once more in the clear, on November 11, we crossed the Equator again, and although we had crossed it before, we celebrated again; now calling ourselves "Sea Dragons," a term I think we originated because I see it nowhere else in this capacity. It got terribly hot, and an open porthole did little to help. We did have small electric fans, but they merely transferred the hot air from one place to another, offering no relief. I decided to use my engineering knowledge. Getting a large empty coffee can from the galley, I loosely stuffed it with wetted rags. Then, I wired the can to the fan and mounted the contraption in the porthole to suck in outside air. The idea was that the water in the rags would evaporate, thereby consuming the 540 kcal/g latent heat of evaporation thermal heat from the air, reducing its temperature – evaporative cooling of the air entering my cabin. This was another example of something working perfectly in theory, but failing miserably in practice. All I got for my effort was a wet settee under the porthole.



Celebrating my second crossing of the equator

Sailing on in quiet seas, we soon transited from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean. Then, “Land Ho!” Tiny Rottnest Island at the mouth of Freemantle Harbor, the port for Perth, Western Australia, came into our sight November 21. We promptly passed it and took up an assigned dock at Freemantle. Having heard so many wonderful tales about Australia from my brother, I was in a frenzy to get ashore. I took off as soon as I could, and, having heard Ben’s ravings about Aussie beer, headed for the first pub. I strode up to the bar and ordered a draft. It was quite larger than drafts back home. It was also much better, so I had another. Then I decided to look around Freemantle, and exited through the door. It was bright noon, but I walked right into a lamppost. No great damage to either object, I carried on back to the ship. The next day, several of us took a cab to Perth. We had FUN in Perth!

Quoting from the poem “Flotsam and Jetsam”:

Earthquake and fire
Did often conspire
To rob other cities of mirth,
But there’ll be soon
A much greater ruin
When the Jocelyn gets finished with Perth.

My doggerel is a bit over the edge, but, man, did we ever have a good time in Perth! Who wouldn’t? First of all, they loved Americans. Secondly, they Loved Americans. And, did they have clubs and bars! Morning, noon and night, the beer never quit. Swan Lager became my favorite, so much so that I ordered a “case” to be sent to me at the ship. I would take it home to share with Benny, and to ask him how Western Australian beer stacked up against the Sydney brews he raved about. Early one morning I was called on deck, and a burly Aussie wheeled an enormous box to the gangway where he had two assistants carry it up to the boat deck where I was waiting. “Sign here,” he said. “For what?” I astonished. He then told me this was the case of beer I had ordered. Hang on. A “case” of beer Down Under consists of 60 one-quart bottles! They never heard of the pantywaist 12 oz. bottles that content us. I got help in opening the crate, and transferred the precious cargo to my room. I distributed the bottles among the drawers under my bunk with consequences to which I shall return.

Thanksgiving Day arrived while we were in Perth. Hungry Turchen managed to buy and prepare a lovely turkey. Some of us didn’t want to wait for the official turkey meal. Somehow, the turkey disappeared. This mishap is related in “The Eternal Mystery,” and “Fouled Fowl.”

THE ETERNAL MYSTERY

"Who killed Cock Robin?" resounds throughout the ages,
"First the chicken or the egg?" has puzzled all the sages,
"Who will win at Hialeah?" has broken many men,
"How high is up?", "Will Franklin run again?"

When judgment day breaks through the blinding night,
All the answers shall be bathed in light,
But one question will remain forever dark and murky,
The eternal problem "Who copped the steward's turkey?"

FOULED FOWL

Fair is fowl,
And foul is fair,
And only brave men
Get their share.

Fair is fowl,
And foul is fair.
The bird that was
Lies thin and bare.

Australia is great horse racing country, and several of us went to the track at Perth. With us was "Hungry" (we still claimed he starved us, even though we now ate quite well) Andy turchen, our Steward. In one race, we bet on a horse named Fortune Teller. Poor horse, a fortuneteller he wasn't. In the backstretch, the horse tripped and fell. After the race, we walked out to inspect the injured animal. A broken leg was apparent. Without a word, Hungry pulled out a pistol from his coat and dispatched Fortune Teller with a shot to the head. Track officials immediately converged on the spot and produced a paper, saying, "Doctor, will you please sign this?" "I'm no doctor," said Hungry, "I'm the Steward off the Henry Jocelyn!" We didn't win anything that day, but I still have some of my losing tickets.

To be closer to the action, several of us rented rooms in the Wentworth Hotel. Our purser, a married school principal from Big Stone Gap, Pennsylvania, was among us. A purser is responsible for ordering and paying for supplies, and keeping payroll records, and also serves as the ship's pharmacist/doctor. Some school principal! He was a 24-karet lecher. Whenever we reached any port, as soon as he could leave the ship, he bulletted straight for the nearest gin mill/house of ill repute. He would stay there until time to get back aboard. However, something must have happened at the Wentworth Hotel, for he was ejected by the management, and told not to return. Yet, his sinful

experience may have proved valuable for me. At the Wentworth, Harold Pfaff and I met two nice girls, and we went to the beach with them, and saw them frequently during our stay. My beautiful blonde was Mavis Branson. Harold's lovely and witty strawberry blonde was Cecilie (I can't remember her last name). I really fell for Mavis, whose picture I still have. One night, Harold, Celeste, Mavis and I were having drinks at the Wentworth bar. Ignoring his "debarment," the purser was drinking there also, and spotted us. Later that night, he sought me out and told me that, through his connections, he knew that Mavis was a prostitute, and had gonorrhea. I couldn't believe it. But that ended it for me, fortunately before I had any reason to regret it. I have often wondered about her. Writing this, I Googled her house, 4 Iolanthe St, Basseandean, W.A., and found a picture of the house at that address – very handsome and estimated in value at about \$600,000. The neighborhood looked fine. Could the purser have been pulling my leg? Never know.

I have avoided two major sports in my life: golf and horseback riding. Golf came early. When I was 17, my brother, Ben, let me accompany him and his friend on a round of golf at a neighborhood course. I was terrible, finishing at about 150. As a result, I declared golf to be a silly waste of time: "If I want to take a walk, why carry all these heavy sticks along?" It was in Australia that I shed horseback riding. Harold, Cecilie, Mavis and I went horseback riding, renting our horses from a stable at the beach. Everything was going fine, when my big red horse decided to head into the Ocean. I pulled on the shoreward rein, and kicked the horse's flank. No dice. The horse entered the water and started swimming out to sea. I just let the non-controlling reins drop, and the horse promptly turned shoreward. Without any interference from me, Big Red just ambled back to his stable and stopped, as did my horse-riding sport, never to be attempted again. I experienced the opposite result when our same gang rented a small motor boat in which we plied the Swan River on a beautiful day. With nice lunch boxes and Aussie beer, we had a grand day of it. As with horse riding, that lesson also stuck with me, but this one providing future enjoyment for me and my family.

While we cavorted in Perth, the Jocelyn was being loaded at Freemantle. The inventory of our submarine base there was being consigned to the Dutch in Indonesia. Carrying a whole shipload of it, we set sail for this exotic land on December 12. Little did we know we were entering a strange three-sided war. With all the turmoil of WWII and its termination, Indonesia had become very unstable. For more than 200 years, this highly populated, intensely Muslim country had been run as a Dutch colony. With the defeat of the Dutch by the Nazis, the Indonesian native population thought it could be free. "Freedom Fighters" began attacking the Dutch authorities on the islands, brewing a revolution. The British now back in Singapore after the end of the war, sensed oil-rich Indonesia might be open for grabs. Accordingly, they sent hundreds of British Marines from Singapore to Indonesia. A three-way conflict broke out, each side against the other two. Our secret mission was to aid the Dutch by giving them the military cargo we carried. Ironically, I remember on the trip to Indonesia hearing a broadcast by President Truman in which he said he regretted the conflict in Indonesia, but assured Americans that the U. S. would play no role in it. I still think of Truman as one of the most honest politicians we have had. His duplicity in this matter makes me wonder what is being fed to us by today's politicians!

We left Freemantle and pleasantly sailed up the Indian Ocean. One night, lying in my bunk, I heard a loud "pop." A few minutes later, another. I couldn't image what had caused the noises – until I smelled beer! I hastily got out of the bunk and opened one of the drawers beneath it. Beer! The drawer was awash with it. As I looked, another bottle blew its top and disgorged its yeasty content.

It then dawned on me. The Aussies did not pasteurize their beer! As we had drawn closer to the Equator, the rising heat had increased the growth rate of the living cells, which produced more carbon dioxide, until – pop! No way was I going to get any of these precious sixty one-quart bottles home. So, I knocked on all the cabin doors on my deck and the deck above, offering liquid largesse. It was a race, drinking versus popping. I don't recall the score, but suffice it to say, we won enough times to make for a very happy crew for the next several days. Benny would just have to take my word for how good Swan Lager was.

On December 21, we arrived at Tandjong Priok, the port for Batavia (now Jakarta). We tied up at a dock and soon began unloading. Still foolish and adventurous, I went ashore and met the people. I soon sided with the native Indonesians, and made friends with some, having them down to the boat for snacks. Others of us invited Dutch soldiers and British Marines. As long as they were on our ship, civility prevailed. Off the ship, things were different, even where we were concerned. One night an argument broke out between a Brit and one of our mess men, a tiny Swede. The Brit invited the mess man out to the dock. He obliged, and, from the deck, I saw the British Marine pick up a 2 by 4 and hit the mess man over the head many times. Our guy just shook his head, and climbed back up the gangway. We were all amazed, and credited his resistance to his hard Swedish head. A couple of nights later, one of the Freedom Fighters I had befriended came down to the ship with a rifle. I learned that it was business as usual during the day, but war by night. He told me he was going to hunt Dutch soldiers that night, and asked if I wanted to come along. I then realized I had become too involved in the local politics, and bowed out as gracefully as I could. Thereafter, I kept my nose clean.

A Dutch pleasure liner, the *Plancius*, came into port, and tied up to a neighboring dock. The Captain kindly invited our Officers over for an Indonesian dinner. I was included. The dinner was lovely, traditional Indonesian rijst tofel, served on linen tablecloths. The drinks were lovelier. I was introduced to Dutch Bols (“stone jug” because that’s all that can contain it) gin. The first one went down so easy, that I gulped another, and another ... “Just like water.” The time came to go home, and I clearly remember, even now, walking out, toward the gangway ladder, and perceiving the moon shadow cast across the deck by a boom, calmly following it thinking it was the gangway – right over the side! It was 30 feet straight down, and straight down I went. But I was luckier than Captain Mundy had been. A small craft, something like a PT boat, was snuggled between the *Plancius* and the pier. I hit that boat, except for one leg, which hung over the side, now threatened to be crushed between the two vessels, should there be waves or other water movement. I carefully brought my leg aboard, and assessed the damage. I was wide-awake and felt no pain. I stood, still no pain. I walked back to the *Jocelyn* and slept through most of the next day. God does protect drunken radio operators!

Next came a ship-transforming event. I told you how cruddy the *Jocelyn* was when I boarded her in Baltimore, and how little effort we made to improve her appearance. By the time we were in Indonesia, you could multiply her original dowdiness by ten. But it didn't bother any of us. One day, the Captain came back from shore with a middle-aged lady whom I supposed was a visitor. No such luck! She was Mrs. Walter A. Foote, wife of the U. S. Consular General in Indonesia, and she was staying. The State Department gurus in Washington had decreed it too dangerous for Mrs. Foote to stay in Indonesia, and they were sending her home as a passenger on the *Henry Jocelyn*. Well, she may have started off as a passenger, but she was soon Co-Captain of the vessel. Once

seemingly comfortably settled in her cabin, she ventured forth to inspect the whole vessel. Her initial request was simple enough – she wanted curtains for the porthole in her cabin. She went ashore the next day and procured them, and got “Chips,” the ship’s carpenter, to hang them. However, that was just the beginning. It turned out to be curtains for all of us, starting with her demand that curtains be installed in the Officers’ Mess.

Chips was put to work on that task, something he had never dreamed about in his long service in making and fixing countless shipboard items. But her requirement went far beyond that, affecting the whole ship and our shipboard life. Next, she was horrified at the filth on our ship, and harassed the Chief Mate into a true cleanup. Chipping and painting went on at an unprecedented rate. She did have a human side. Like us, she liked her 5 o’clock cocktail, and joined us on the shady side of the bridge deck each afternoon. Right off, she told us to watch our language. Sailors to watch their language! Next, she thought we needed proper furniture, and ordered the Mate to procure wicker chairs and a dainty cocktail table. She thought (out loud) we should dress a little better, wear our uniforms. Wear uniforms! We had joined the Merchant Marine so we would not have to wear uniforms, except, that is, on scouting trips ashore. Mrs. Foote stayed with us the whole trip, and I suppose we were all the better for it, but we sure didn’t realize it at the time!

We spent Christmas in port with little celebration. New Year’s Day proved different. Soon after twilight, we heard the sound of gunfire – BIG gunfire. We raced out to the deck and could see the flashes that preceded each boom. We deduced it was a naval bombardment. The next day we learned that the British cruiser HMS Suffolk had come to support the British Marines by pounding the Dutch enclave with cannon fire. I was glad the Suffolk didn’t know that the Henry Jocelyn was helping the Dutch! Despite the constant three-way hostilities, we continued neutral and maintained pleasant relations with all sides of the combat. In my forays ashore, I bought Indonesian hand-carved black and silver jewelry and silks for Evelyn and presents for other family members. We remained in port until January 26, 1946, by which time Mrs. Foote had pretty much cleaned us up to her satisfaction.



Mrs. Walter A. Foote, wife of the U. S. Consular General in Indonesia

With the war over, we became more of a commercial vessel. Probably under orders from the Calmar Steamship Corporation, we set sail that day for Singapore, legendary Singapore! Three days out, on January 29, we crossed the Line for the third time, now old hat, no ceremony. January 29th saw us in Singapore, but only to pick up orders. The next morning, we arrived at Port Swettenham (now Klang) in the State of Selangor, Malaya (now Malaysia). We were to pick up a load of rubber. The crude rubber came in large blocks, something like a yard cubed. Coolies moved these on their backs, depositing them into our cargo nets for hauling aboard and placing into our holds, where other coolies stacked them under the direction of our deck officers. During the time we were there, several of us went to the horse races at Kuala Lumpur, some 20 miles away. We had a fun time, but I don't recall winning anything.

The coolies were unenthusiastic and loading was slow. We didn't leave Port Swettenham until February 12, bound for Penang, this time to top off our load with tin ingots. Penang is only several miles up the Penang River East of the larger port of Georgetown. A short distance up the river makes it sound easy. It isn't! The river is narrow, and its navigable channel very restricting. But, that's not all. The river makes several sharp bends, one of which swerves too abruptly for a ship of our size to make the turn. Our pilot knew just how to deal with this. With Captain Phillips tearing his hair out, the pilot calmly directed the helmsman to drive the bow of the Jocelyn right up the far muddy bank of the river. Then he signaled the engine room to back off slowly, while ordering the helmsman to swing our stern, thereby effecting a turning radius much smaller than we could have made on our own. "Slow ahead" followed, and we were on our way up the river to dock shortly thereafter.

In touring the area, the next day or so, I mounted a beautiful green hill, and gazed down upon the prettiest landscape I have ever, including since, seen. An indescribably gorgeous scene lay below me. A lake so exquisite it shamed Baltimore's famous Loch Raven sparkled in the afternoon sunshine. Although Malaysia is one of the malaria capitals of the world, that day there were no insects to plague me. All was in perfect harmony, me and the world, for the several hours of nirvana I enjoyed there. I still see that vision in my mind's eye, and marvel at it. It is my platinum standard for landscapes.

Penang is the home of the famous Teahouse of the August Moon, and I thought I should visit it. However, an old salt aboard convinced me that the lesser-known Teahouse Samantha was superior, so Harold Pfaff, our Army Security Officer and I went there. We had dinner, which was served by beautiful waitresses, while even more beautiful geishas sat with us and attended our every whim, including attempting to feed us. Long ago, I had learned that geishas were specially trained to entertain and enchant men, but to go no further. Alas, that proved to be misinformation. At the end of the meal, my geisha made the international hand signal inviting greater participation. It had all been a myth! Foolishly still wasting my youth, I beat a hasty retreat back to the ship.

Tin loading was more mechanized than rubber loading, and we were ready to leave Penang on February 18. Back we went to Singapore, this time to stay for six great days, and nights. As soon as we could get off the ship, Harold Pfaff and I headed for the famed Raffles Hotel. Entering that beautiful remnant of the Victorian era, we made straight for the Long Bar. I surveyed the classic room, noting the bamboo fans hanging on rods crossing the ceiling. They constantly move back and forth to stir the air in the generally hot environment. Their motive power was supplied by young

boys who pushed vertical rods attached to the horizontal fan-bearing rods. I mention this only because, when I returned to the Long Bar some half a century later, all the change I could see was that the boys had been replaced by electric motors driving long fan belts that moved the same horizontal rod with its bamboo fans back and forth!

Comfortably ensconced at the Long Bar, I promptly ordered a Singapore Sling, which for years thereafter became my signature drink. We had such a nice time at the Raffles that we returned the next day with our duffle bags and rented rooms. We had a grand day, sightseeing, eating and drinking. That evening we retired to our respective rooms to get some needed rest. But, rest we did not get. Soon after I was in my room, there was a knock at the door. I cautiously opened it, and there was young maiden asking if she could come in to keep me company. Remembering the pictures of VD-infected parts Major Campbell, our Hopkins ROTC Officer, had drawn on the blackboard, I declined, and gently closed the door. That didn't end the matter. Knocks and whispered entreaties came at my door almost every hour during a sleepless tempting night. Now, you doubters, go back to the note at the beginning of this tale, and you will understand that, if I hadn't kept the door shut, I wouldn't be reporting this incident! Such are the follies of youth!

I had another "sexual experience" in Singapore. One evening I was taking a rickshaw, they were still drawn by coolies, sightseeing ride. Just at dusk, we were passing an intersection where I saw a female figure standing near the corner. The light was dim, but we locked eyeballs and much information was exchanged in a twinkling. I could pierce the darkening shadows enough to see that she appeared to be an angel of beauty and delight in both form and face. Observing this exchange, the coolie hesitated in his stride. However, goodie two-shoes bade him to resume his stride. Impressions are funny peculiar. Through all these years, I recall that erotic moment and can conjure up that vision.

I don't remember why we stayed in Singapore so long, but we didn't leave until February 26. Hooray! We were finally off on the long trek home. We would go West, and, in doing so, complete a circumnavigation of the globe. I was to exceed Magellan's feat, provided we didn't hit an errant mine someplace in one of the former combat areas! Luckily, we did not. However, we did have a piece of bad luck. An 18-year mess man, Jim, became ill during the trip from Singapore. His unknown disease defied treatment by our purser/pharmacist mate. The Captain decided the boy needed a hospital. Accordingly, on our way toward the Suez Canal, the Jocelyn made a detour to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). The nearest port with a hospital was Colombo. I radioed ahead, and a boat came out to meet us as we approached the harbor. Our young crewmate was placed in a cot and gingerly lowered over the side to the boat. The boat quickly sped off to land. I kept in touch with the hospital, and sadly, two days later, I got a message that Jim had died. We never learned what the disease was. Very upsetting news to all of us.

Resuming our course after this diversion, we entered the Gulf of Suez and proceeded to arrive intact at the port of Suez, the Eastern (well, actually Southern – these canals never go in the right direction) side of the Suez Canal. We picked up a pilot, and immediately proceeded up the Canal, through the Great Bitter Lake, and once again into the man-made portion of this 120-mile waterway connector of Europe and Asia. When we arrived at Port Said, it was March 20.

During the long trip from Singapore, the Jocelyn's boiler had failed again, ultimately reducing us to four kts., no more than walking speed. This meant more repairs and delay. A commercial firm was hired this time, so I was free to explore. I immediately noticed two things about Egypt: flies were everywhere, to the point where the natives never even bothered to shake them off; and "salesmen" were almost as plentiful as the flies, constantly invading our ship, knocking on doors to sell us "diamonds" and other "precious" items. As you shooed them away, their price dropped in proportion to square of their distance from you. I was tempted to go to Palestine, where the Zionists were fighting the British and Egyptians (who were also fighting each other) to form Israel. But Palestine was just desert, so Harold Pfaff, a shipmate named Lou Visintainer, and I decided to rent a cab and go the 125 miles across the desert to Cairo, where we planned to stay a couple of days. We started late in the afternoon, not realizing how slowly the cab would go across the mostly unpaved roads. As darkness fell, our cab driver stopped at a shack where he got some food, and kindly offered two cheese and pickle sandwiches on flat bread to us. Harold and I feared eating so many flyspecks, so we politely declined.

We then resumed our trip. It was now dark, and we suddenly saw a light upon the road. Its source was a beat-up military vehicle with several Arabs standing beside it holding rifles. They bid our driver halt, and he did. Then, right out of the movies, they held a lantern up to each of our faces, and demanded to know who we were and what we were doing there. We showed them our seaman's passports, which they pretended to read, and they passed us on. This unsettling experience repeated itself about every ten miles until we got to the outskirts of Cairo. We had the driver drop us off at the Shepherd Hotel, where we secured rooms. We slept soundly that night. As I fell asleep, I contemplated what might have happened if the Arab militia knew who I really was.

I got up the next day and looked out the window of my room. That's when I lost my religion! I couldn't believe the masses of people, all in white sheets, sleeping on the pavements and in the gutters of streets. And, even from my distance, I could see they were all covered with flies! God, how could you do this?? I decided no god could, ergo, no God. That lesson, with significant reinforcement over the years, has held.

I find it hard to imagine why everyone does not examine the world's ungodly inequities, and come to my conclusion. I guess there must be a religion gene, and that mine has mutated in anticipation of a coming enlightened era. But, I won't pursue philosophy in this tale of adventure. That's another tale for another time.

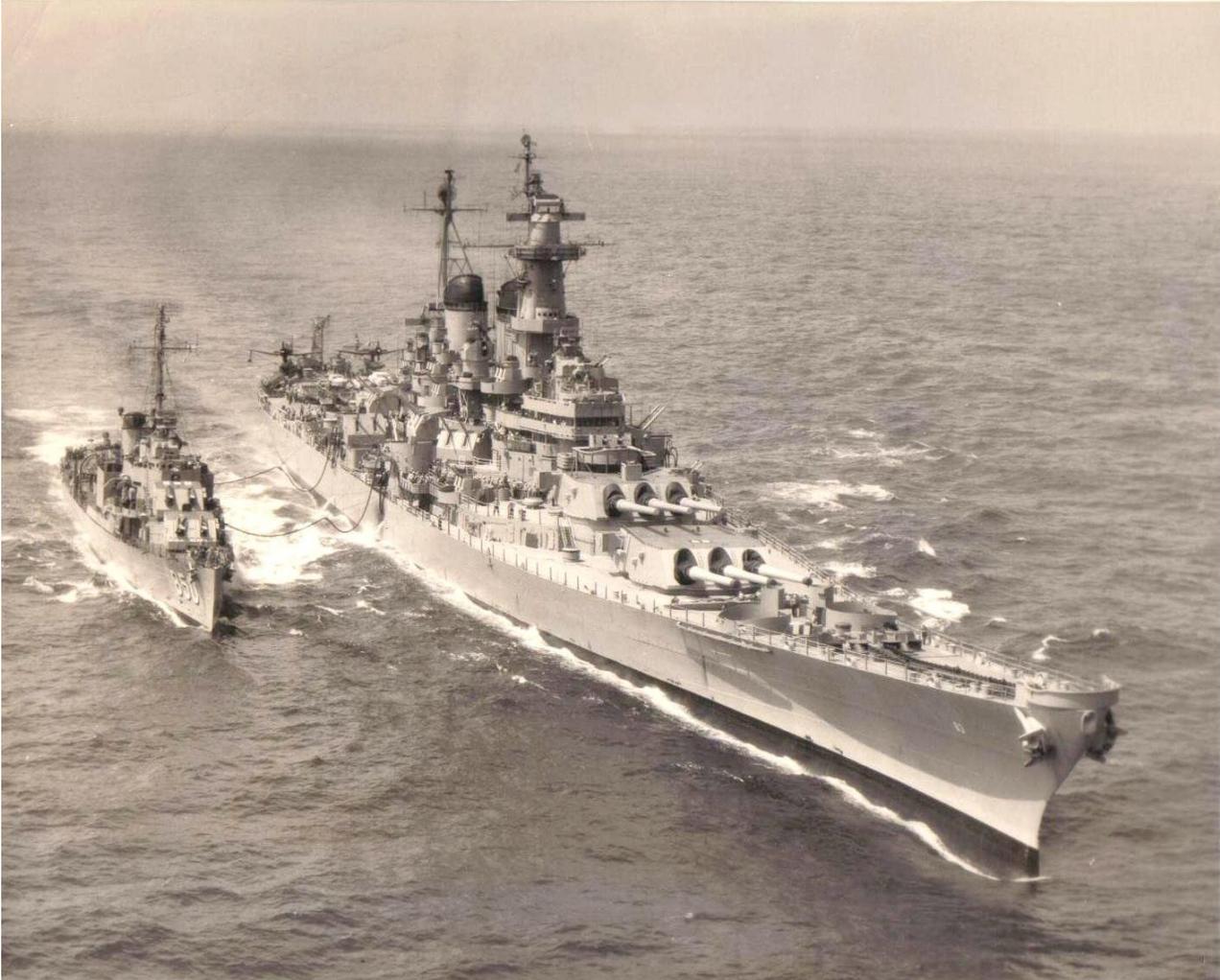
After breakfast, we went on tour. We went to the Pyramids. I climbed the huge blocks halfway up the 450-foot high Great Pyramid, and entered the tunnel leading to the proposed, but never occupied burial place of the queen. I felt claustrophobia, and was anxious to get out and down. Going down was much more difficult than ascending. Great care had to be taken in what amounted to jumping down from block to block. Shortly prior to our visit, a tourist had missed and been killed in the fall. Of course, we got on camels. I still have a picture of that, but, fortunately, it does not convey the smell of when one of those beasts turns its head and breathes in your direction. We saw the Sphinx, and all the rest of the stuff at Giza. The next day, we explored downtown Cairo and its shops. I bought a few trinkets, including a Secret Ring of Cairo consisting of six slender, twisted bands of sterling that can be arranged to form a ring – once you know how. I still have that somewhere.



From left to right, Louis Visintainer, myself and Harold Pfaff at the pyramid of Giza

We returned to the ship the next day, retracing our roots, but in the daylight, finding no roadblocks. Back aboard ship, the pestering by vendors resumed. I was talked into buying a hookah and a small bottle of brandy to put in the water to flavor the smoke. And, in case that were not pleasure enough, I was talked into buying about a half cc of hashish to put directly in the pipe of the hookah. I tried the conglomeration, but, like Bill Clinton, I never inhaled, and experienced only a smoky, brandy-like taste on my tongue where the smoke hit. (I took the remainder of the hashish home and tried it straight in a tobacco pipe I smoked. No effect. And, that completes my whole life-long experience with “recreational” drugs of any type. As with religion, I can’t understand why people do that to themselves.

March 23 dawned and we left Port Said, heading into the Med. Our blue water cruise took us to Gibraltar on April 1, and this time we sailed right past the Rock. We should have stopped! For a couple of weeks, to avoid what I describe several paragraphs below. We were taking a northern great circle route that took us through the North Atlantic, where winter remained in full force. Two days out, we saw a speck on the Eastern horizon. It rapidly grew in size until we could distinguish a huge battleship with a bone in its teeth. I went to the signal lantern and blinked out the traditional hailing between passing ships, in Morse Code, “What ship? Where bound?” The response came: it was the U.S.S. Missouri, bearing the body of the Turkish Ambassador., who had died in Washington, back to his homeland. It was thrilling to see that monster sailing in all its glory.



The USS Missouri.

In about a week, we entered the North Atlantic and, as might be expected, the weather began to kick up. And kick up. Higher than a Rockette. The wind was out of the East, and it and its obedient waves just kept growing. After several days we were in what we later learned was a force eleven gale, one notch short of classification as a full hurricane (I think we went over that notch at times). The Jocelyn bravely headed right into the wind and waves, the latter cresting higher and higher. Mornings brought no clearing or lessening of intensity. Bouncing around uncontrollably made cooking impossible. Only cold meals could be served. The tablecloths were wetted with water to keep the plates from sliding over the guardrails to the heaving deck. Even so, my seasickness did not return! This clearly demonstrated my permanent cure, something some of my shipmates had not attained. Meals were lightly attended. But, I ate on, even coming to raid the galley for night lunch – an array of cold-cuts the union required be made available late nights.

One of the mess men became bizarre as the weather became more unpleasant. He packed his gear in a suitcase, and went out onto the main deck. He walked up and down the length of the ship, hanging on to the guide ropes that had been set out, shouting, “I want to get off!” He kept this dangerous march up several hours until the Chief Mate ordered a couple of deck hands to drag him to safety.

I continued to stand (sit) my watch in the radio shack. However, my chair kept bouncing from the transmitter desk to the bulkhead behind me. At the end of one watch, I opened the door to leave the shack, thinking to go out onto the bridge deck and see how the storm was progressing. My chair followed me. Responding to a timely lurch, it vaulted over the four-inch door threshold, and pursued me down the companionway. I turned left toward the door to the deck, and it did likewise. I opened the door and stepped out into the gale, and, would you believe it, the chair bounced over that even higher door threshold and started careening around the bridge. A laughing Captain Phillips saw me wrestle the chair back into the ship. For the rest of the storm, I tied my chair to a desk fitting, which at least kept it, and me, from being slammed into the bulkhead.

In one three-day period, the Jocelyn at, full power to contend against the onslaught of enormous waves, made a total of only 75 miles. The whole sky was filled with spray. But spray was nothing. Waves of green water soared all the way up to the bridge deck, where they broke against the forward portholes. The ship plunged up and down with the waves. You would suddenly be looking up at the spray sky, and the next minute or two, you would be staring down into the rapidly approaching depth of the violent sea. The Jocelyn's propeller came out of the water with every plunge, and we then heard the rpms increase ominously. The bow would rise on the next wave and the prop would be submerged again to deliver whatever forward motion it could. There were times that I thought we might actually be going backwards! Finally, one afternoon, we sensed a diminution of the intensity of the wind and waves. The weather kept calming. Straightening things up as best we could, we returned to a routine passage.

On April 18, 1946, we passed our long-ago home, Hoffman Island, and tied up to a pier in New York City. What a trip! More than ten months on that rusty bucket! Once and a-half around the world! I did not hesitate in deciding to sign off. Taking my possessions, I immediately entrained for Baltimore, planning to come back to the ship for the formal signoff and payment scheduled for the coming Monday, my final episode on the Jocelyn.

Homecoming was truly wonderful. Ten months away had sharpened the family's tolerance of me. My father, brother, now discharged from the Army, sister and new brother-in-law, also named Ben, welcomed me most lovingly. After their marriage, Evelyn and Benjamin Yevzeroff had moved into our Moreland Avenue home until they, both working pharmacists, could save enough for a home of their own. Ben Y. really believed in eating. When he saw my string-bean physique, he vowed to beef it up. He took me to Wilson's Seafood Restaurant for late night "snacks" each of the nights I was in Baltimore. Starting then, showing his obvious gusto, Ben Y. taught me to eat, a lesson, unfortunately, I have never forgotten.

Monday morning I was back in New York. I got off the subway and made my way to the pier to board the Jocelyn. What the heck? The Jocelyn was not there! Why had they moved her? I soon met other crewmembers coming for the sign-off. Very puzzled, we scrounged around for information, and, somehow learned what had happened. Simple. The S.S. Henry Jocelyn, while being unloaded had sunk at the dock! When sufficient rubber and tin had been removed to let the ship shift a little, a crack in her stern gland had opened up and the harbor had come in. This was undoubtedly damage caused by the storm. What if the stern gland crack had expanded when the Jocelyn was being so rudely buffeted? Instead, our safe home had borne the strain until safely in harbor, then she quietly settled to the bottom, with kingposts and boom still above water. Calmar

had the Jocelyn raised and taken to a nearby dry-dock for repairs. We learned that signoff would be in a Manhattan office to which we repaired. On April 21, 1946, some ten months after departing Baltimore, I signed off, and was enriched with \$2,400.

Serial No. G 2947530

NCG 718A Rev. ©

**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
Certificate of Discharge**

Name of Seaman LEVIN, Gilbert H.
(In full)

Citizenship USA Certificate of Identification No. Z 475638

Rating 2nd Radio Operator
(Capacity in which employed)

Date of Shipment June 12, 1945

Place of Shipment Baltimore, Md.

Date of Discharge 4/21/46

Place of Discharge New York

Name of Ship SS HENRY JOCELYN

Official No. 243937 Class of Vessel Steam
(Steam, Motor, Sail or Barge)

Nature of Voyage Foreign
(Foreign, Intercoastal or Coastwise)

Gilbert Levin
(Signature of Seaman)

John W. Phillips
(Master of Vessel)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above entries were made by me and are correct and that the signatures hereto were witnessed by me.

Dated this 23 day of April, 1946

[Signature]
United States Shipping Commissioner
(or Master of Vessel)

NOTE - Whenever a master performs the duties of the shipping commissioner under this act, the master shall sign the certification on the line designated for the shipping commissioner's signature.

My Discharge from the SS Henry Jocelyn a few days after she sank

Now for my view on the “excessive” pay of Merchant Mariners. We have been maligned with this epithet since WWII began. It was claimed that our base pay, augmented with hazardous zone pay, far outdid the meager salaries of our soldiers and sailors. That simply is not so. Our daily pay rate may have exceeded that of G. I.s, but we got that rate only on days we worked. Days on earned leave were not paid. The great many Merchant Mariners, whose ships were sunk in the war, were surprised to learn that their pay ceased the moment they hit the water. No matter how many days they drifted at sea, until back on active duty on a ship, their pay and benefits were bupkis. Despite assurances to the contrary by President Roosevelt, confirmed by Truman, WWII Merchant Marine veterans were never given the G.I. Bill of rights accorded all other veterans. Finally, in 1997, Congress passed a virtually worthless bill for veteran Merchant Mariners that it claimed was their G.I Bill. It gratuitously made us members, therefore veterans, of, of all things, the U. S. Coast Guard, but without the G.I. Bill benefits that Coast Guard vets receive. It paid no money, paid no college tuition, made no mortgage guarantees, provided no health benefits, or virtually any other thing of monetary value. So, when I went back to Johns Hopkins to complete my bachelor’s degree, I was the only one in our returning class that paid tuition. As late as 2009, Senate Bill S663 was introduced to right some of these omissions for WWII veterans of the Merchant Marine, not that there are many of us left to receive them! However, The Chair of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, has persistently prevented a vote on the Bill, keeping it blocked up in Committee. I wrote to him, (see Appendix 1) explaining the situation as I see it, to no avail. He thinks that, if the Merchant Marine gets the G. I. Bill, the precedent will allow many other groups, presumably, such as the Girl Scouts, to ask for it. OK. I’ve made my pitch. Back to my adventure story.

After thanking my lucky stars that the stern gland held together after being split by one of our dives in the storm, I returned home to 1630 Moreland Avenue. My story of the sinking of the Henry Jocelyn made wonderful telling – many times! The two Bens and I had great times clowning around, EATING, and doing many other fun things together. My father was very happy at this reunion, and Evelyn, now protected by her ever-loving husband, could stand up to her brother Ben’s constant brotherly taunting.



US Maritime Service Identification Card

The war was over, but the draft continued. One other thing veteran Merchant Mariners did not get was freedom from the draft. There are countless stories of Veteran Merchant Mariners, after long stints at sea, being drafted into the armed services. I didn’t want to become one of those stories, so, after using up my earned leave, I shipped out of Baltimore on the S.S. Purdue Victory, owned by the North Atlantic & Gulf Steamship Company, on June 1, under Captain C. W. Colbeth. I was delighted to get another Victory Ship, and much enjoyed the trip, this time as Chief Radio Operator. Destinations were no longer a secret, and I knew we were going to Antwerp, Belgium with a cargo of general merchandise. When I told my brother-in-law, Ben, of my destination, he said that a good friend, Max Knisbacher married to a cousin of his, Rita, both of whom I knew, who had relatives who had survived the war in Antwerp. They were Max’s brother-in-law, Eluzar Strassberg and his wife, Frieda, who lived at 67 Rue d’Angleterre, Brussels St. Giles; and Max’s uncle, P. Szydlow, who lived at 131 Rue d’Artefelde, 3rd floor, in Brussels. There was also another brother-in-law, Oscar Strassberg living in the Berchem section of Antwerp. They all had lived through the Nazi onslaught by being hidden in the home of a Christian neighbor. They stayed in the attic the entire war, except on rare occasions when Frieda ventured outside for necessary personal shopping. She had blue eyes, and escaped detection. Ben’s friend, giving me his parents’ address, said he would be delighted if I could look them up in Antwerp. The crossing was smooth, and we arrived in Antwerp without incident. I soon left the ship, and went to the address Ben’s friend had given me.

I found Ben’s cousin-in-law’s parents at home. They were delighted to have me visit with news of their son and his wife. The father was in the diamond cutting business, and showed me his plant, but, not attracted to diamonds, I did not buy what would certainly have been a real bargain. A couple of days later I took a bus to Brussels, and toured the city. I don’t have any record of when the Purdue Victory left Antwerp, nor our next port, although I think it was Le Havre, and, from there across the Channel and up the Thames to dock at the Port of London. I was not favorably impressed

with London. I didn't venture about much, and wasn't too impressed with what little I saw. I was undoubtedly influenced by the weather, which was bad, as usual. I was reminded of the G. I., who, upon arriving there in a downpour, and seeing all the tethered dirigibles, asked ".Why don't they cut the cables and let the damn place sink?" We left Europe and had a pleasant crossing to dock in Philadelphia on July 18, where I signed off, and took the train to Baltimore. I reported back to Max and Rita, telling them their relatives were fine. The news brought great happiness.

5 UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
Certificate of Discharge

Serial No. G 2799297

Name of Seaman GILBERT V. LEVIN
(In full)

Citizenship USA Certificate of Identification No. Z 475638

Rating Ch. Radio Operator
(Capacity in which employed)

Date of Shipment 5/31/46

Place of Shipment Baltimore, Md.

Date of Discharge July 18, 1946

Place of Discharge Philadelphia, Pa.

Name of Ship "Purdue Victory"

Official No. 247618 Class of Vessel Steam
(Steam, Motor, Sail or Barge)

Nature of Voyage Foreign
(Foreign, Intercoastal or Coastwise)

Gilbert V. Levin
(Signature of Seaman)

W. W. Colbeth
(Master of Vessel)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above entries were made by me and are correct and that the signatures hereto were witnessed by me.

Dated this 18 day of July, 1946

John Joseph Stefan
United States Shipping Commissioner
(Master of Vessel)

NOTE—Whenever a master performs the duties of the shipping commissioner under this act, the master shall sign the certification on the line designated for the shipping commissioner's signature.

U.S. SHIPPING COMMISSIONER
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Discharge from my trip on the Purdue Victory

At the end of this trip, the War Shipping Administration's U.S. Maritime Service issued me a "Certificate of Substantially Continuous Service." Merchant seamen who had served during WWII, and met certain minimum requirements of service, were given these certificates in appreciation, and as an inducement, not an order, to the draft boards to go easy on drafting the certificate owners. At this point, I decided to take my chances, and went to my draft board waving the Certificate of Substantially Continuous Service. However, to my unhappy surprise, the draft board promptly called me for a physical. Believe it, or not, the examining physician reported that I had flat feet and declared me 4F (the category of those physically unfit for service)! Had I fought the war needlessly, or was the physician or the draft board slyly acknowledging that I had done my duty? I pondered the matter, and decided, either way, I was glad to have helped win the war, a conviction that has grown with time and with increasing pride.

WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Certificate

Issued Pursuant to Public Law 87 • 78th Congress

This is to Certify That Gilbert Victor Levin has on this date completed a period of substantially continuous service in the Merchant Marine, commencing April 10, 1944, within the meaning of Public Law 87, 78th Congress (57 Stat. 162), and the Rules and Regulations issued pursuant thereto by the Administrator, War Shipping Administration. This certificate is issued for the purpose of establishing reemployment rights under said Public Law.

Mr. Levin is eligible to be relieved from any future consideration for classification into a class available for service under the Selective Service System.

Grinnville Conway
Administrator
War Shipping Administration

ATTEST:
A. J. WILLIAMS, Secretary
War Shipping Administration

DATED AUG 13 1946

No 36128

This certificate and a kind doctor kept me from being drafted into the Army despite my WWII Merchant Marine service

Well, here I was, a free man! What to do? School didn't begin until October. I began to think things through based on the worldly knowledge and experience my travels had afforded me. Do you know what?" I asked myself, and answered, "I like going to sea!" What's wrong with that as a career? At that time, Moe Burman was back in town, and he had no intention of going back to school. Instead, he got a job on a tugboat in Baltimore as engineer. One night, over a bottle of Old Grand Dad, my brother Ben, his best friend Dave Stern, Moe and I got to speculating about entering the shipping business. We could buy a surplus boat, the way Aristotle Onassis had assembled his fleet of Liberty Ships, getting them from the U.S. for only \$125,000 (of borrowed money) down. We envisioned tramping between Baltimore and Cuba with loads of cement going down, and rum and sugar coming up. We were almost serious, enough, at least, to talk to some guy who knew how to set it up, and who would participate with us. When we sobered up, Benny convinced me to complete my degree at Hopkins before going off the deep end.

In October 1946, I was back at the Johns Hopkins School of Engineering, starting my senior year. Surprisingly, I found I was a much-improved student, and sailed through with flying colors to get my B.E. in Civil Engineering May 1947. Now I faced the decision of getting a job as a newly minted engineer, or taking some summer job and going back to school in the Fall to get a Master's Degree. I did both. Still enchanted with the sea, I went back to see Joe Rubin, and asked if there might be an opening on a ship scheduled for a trip that would get me back in time for school. He told me of a ship leaving for Cuba on June 24. I loved the idea of going to Cuba, and got the idea of persuading my brother to go to Havana on vacation, and meet me there. Ben had friends, the Lubitch brothers, who owned the local gasoline station, who had been to Cuba, and we had spent a rummy night together in the Poconos, hearing them rave about it. Ben and his friend Dave Stern agreed to fly to Havana. So, on June 23, I signed on as was Radio Operator (there was only one aboard ship with the war ended) on the T2 tanker Mount Tamalpais. Its destination was Puerto Tاراfo, a port on the North coast of Cuba about two thirds towards the Western end of the island. We sailed on schedule, under Captain C. M. Bamforth, a stately gentleman in his mid-sixties. He was very pleasant and sociable, not at all "The Old S.O.B" that all skippers are designated. We arrived at Puerto Tاراfo, Cuba, June 26. Ben and Dave flew to Havana a couple of days later. Now that I could use my commercial radio equipment, we stayed in touch on my way down the Atlantic.



T2 Tanker

I contacted Benny by Western Union after he and Dave were settled in their hotel, the National. I found I could get to Havana by train that left from Camaguey, about 30 miles inland from Puerto Tarafa. I would take a cab to the station. I left the ship in high spirits, but as I walked away, two Cuban soldiers who flanked our gangway called on me to halt. They said I could not leave the ship, because certain arrangements had not yet been made. Now, I realize those “arrangements” were a bribe, but that didn’t occur to me then. I was not about to defer my trip to see Benny, so I calmly started walking away. One of the guards pointed his rifle at me and demanded I come back. Crazy with youth, I just kept walking away. He did not shoot, and I got a cab. The railroad station was teeming with people. I bought a ticket and waited for the train. It was about an hour late. When it came and opened its doors, I could see it was already full of passengers. Many more and I slugged our way aboard. There was no place to sit. I put my duffle bag on the rack, and hung on to a strap, which I was lucky to get in the face of lots of competition.

The train started out slowly, and it was soon apparent that it wasn’t going to go much faster. About four hours into the trip, I must have showed signs of weakness. A lady sitting just below where I was hanging said, in perfect American, “Would you like to sit down for a while?” Before I could answer, the man next to her, her husband, stood and gave me his seat, which I gratefully took. It turned out that the gentleman was a high official in the Cuban Department of Agriculture, and the woman was his American wife. We had a very pleasing conversation, traded addresses, and even exchanged a couple of letters when I was back home. He and I traded seats all the way to Havana – some 400 miles and 24 hours later! Exhausted, we left the train, and lo, and behold, here were Ben and Dave, who had patiently waited for the many hours the train was behind schedule.

We had a great time in Havana. Drinks were 15 cents, and the rum was first rate, as were the cigars at about a nickel a pop. Food was excellent, and equally cheap. We sallied from nightclub to nightclub. At one, a beautiful singer was holding forth. A man saw us admiring her, and came over to our table. “Do you like her?” he asked, “She’s a good girl, but I can get her sister for you.” What

a town! The three of us meant for tight reins on each, so we just kept admiring the scenery, drinking, eating and smoking.

When it was time to go back to my ship, I was not about to take the train. I found out that commercial air flights went between Havana and Camaguey regularly. I booked passage, and the three of us departed Havana airport about the same time, I for Camaguey and they for Baltimore. We were in the air about 20 minutes when a fierce thunderstorm broke around the plane. In a few minutes, the pilot announced the storm was forcing us down. Fortunately, we were in a DC3, one of the most revered aircraft ever built, and it took the buffets of the storm. We landed safely in a flat cow pasture, and got out of the plane, stepping into the fierce rain, deep mud, and cow dung. The pilot said, as soon as the storm was over we would take off again. Looking at the muddy field, I didn't want to risk a take-off. Nor did several other passengers. Four of us banded together, and managed to get a cab to take us to Camaguey. As we drove off, we saw the plane taxi and take off without trouble. We were hours getting to our destination.

I got back to the ship and found the manual loading of sacks of sugar in process. One morning, I got out of my cabin to witness a young girl walking down the boat deck companionway trailed by a couple of crewmembers. Captain Bamforth suddenly appeared, and shouted at her, "If you don't have the common decency to come up to the Officers' deck, get off the ship." The girl came up, and she and the Captain got into a conversation. After a few minutes, the Captain, said, "OK, honey, come on into my cabin and let's examine your flower." She complied, and I gained new respect for age.

I don't remember what our cargo was. However, the re-loading took a long time, and we weren't ready to leave Puerto Tarafó until July 27. On July 29, we were at our port of discharge, Norfolk, Virginia, where I signed off and took the bus to Baltimore, where I met up with Benny, and we relived our great trip – many times, improving each time as our memories got better.

Serial No. **64791030**

**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
Certificate of Discharge**

Name of Seaman GILBERT V LEVIN
(In full)

Citizenship U S A Certificate of Identification No. Z 475638

Rating RADIO OPERATOR
(Capacity in which employed)

Date of Shipment 24 June 1947

Place of Shipment NORFOLK VIRGINIA

Date of Discharge 28 July 1947

Place of Discharge NORFOLK VIRGINIA

Name of Ship MOUNT TAMALPAIS

Official No. 248703 Class of Vessel STEAM
(Steam, Motor, Sail or Barge)

Nature of Voyage FOREIGN
(Foreign, Intercoastal or Coastwise)

Gilbert V. Levin
(Signature of Seaman)

C. N. Bamforth
(Master of Vessel)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above entries were made by me and are correct and that the signatures hereto were witnessed by me.

Dated this 29 day of July, 1947

J. J. [Signature]
United States Shipping Commissioner
Master of Vessel

NOTE - Whenever a master performs the duties of the shipping commissioner under this act, the master shall sign the certification on the line designated for the shipping commissioner's signature.

NCG 718A Rev. @

Discharge from my trip to Cuba on the Mount Tamalpais

Back home, I still had considerable time before the fall term began. The eternal Joe Rubin directed me to another Liberty Ship. The Arthur Fribourg, owned by the Arrow Steamship Company, and to depart from Baltimore. I was reluctant to go back to a Liberty after having sailed Victories and the nice T2, but I needed the money for tuition and books, since nothing would come my way from Uncle Sam. Under Captain O. Refremsly, I sailed from Baltimore on August 10, and docked at Baytown, Texas on August 21. I remember the heavy smell of oil that hung like a pall over the entire trip up the Houston Ship Channel to Baytown. The Fribourg was sailing on, beyond Baytown, and, had I stayed aboard, I would not have been home in time for classes. So, I signed off that day, and luckily caught a berth the next day as radio operator on the T2 tanker North Point, skippered by Captain S. J. Cooper, right there in Baytown. She was headed to New York City, and I could cope with that. For the last time in my maritime career, I sailed past Hoffman Island. Signing off on August 31, I took the familiar square-wheeled Pennsy back to Baltimore.

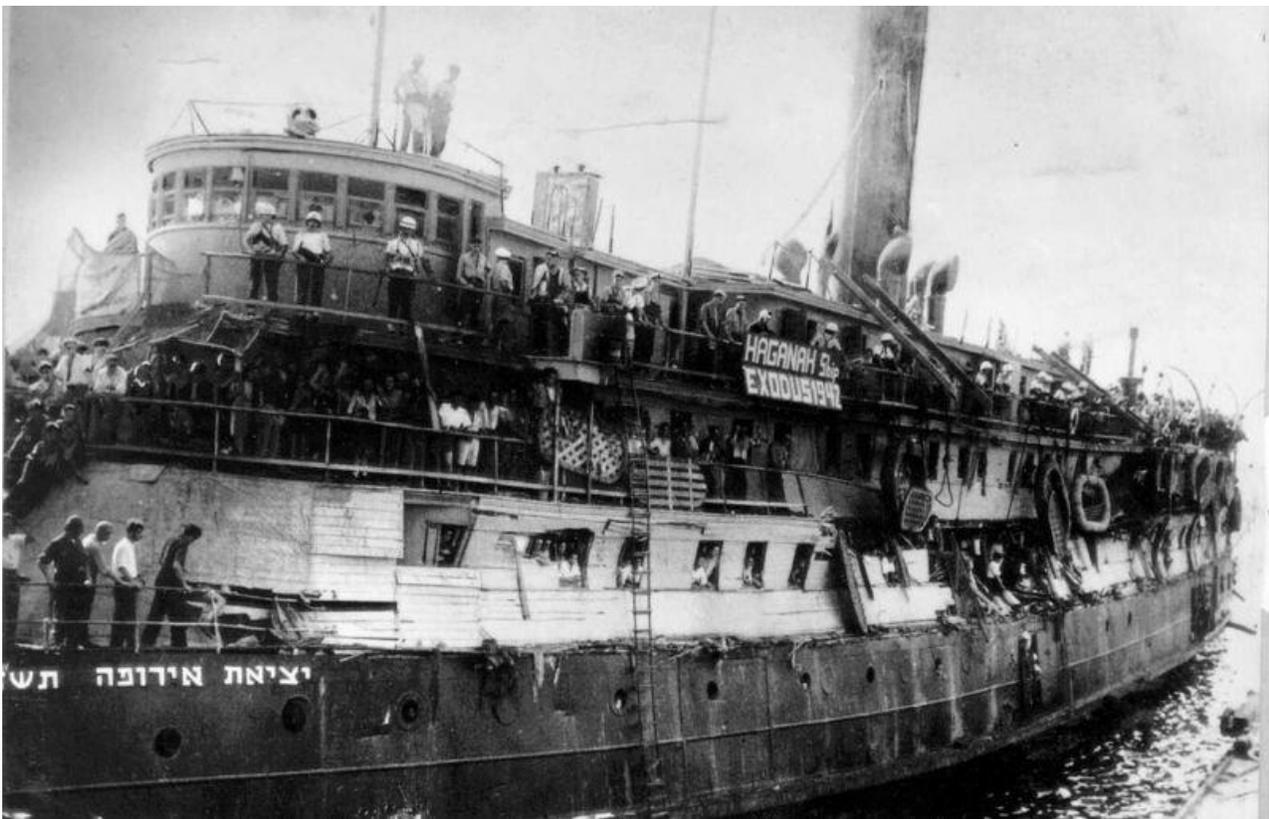
Serial No. G 4555492 NCG 718A Rev. @ 10/1/46	UNITED STATES COAST GUARD Certificate of Discharge	Name of Seaman <u>GILBERT VICTOR LEVIN</u> <small>(In full)</small>
	Signature of Seaman <i>Gilbert V. Levin</i> <small>(Signature of Seaman)</small>	Citizenship <u>USA</u> Certificate of Identification No. <u>Z475638</u>
	Signature of Master <i>S. J. Cooper</i> <small>(Master of Vessel)</small>	Rating <u>RADIO OPERATOR</u> <small>(Capacity in which employed)</small>
	I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above entries were made by me and are correct and that the signatures hereto were witnessed by me.	Date of Shipment <u>8/25/46</u>
	Dated this <u>1st</u> day of <u>September</u> , 19 <u>47</u>	Place of Shipment <u>BAYTOWN, TEXAS</u>
	Signature of Shipping Commissioner <i>S. J. Cooper</i> <small>United States Shipping Commissioner (or Master of Vessel)</small>	Date of Discharge <u>9/1/47</u>
	NOTE - Whenever a master performs the duties of the shipping commissioner under this act, the master shall sign the certification on the line designated for the shipping commissioner's signature.	Place of Discharge <u>NEW YORK</u>
		Name of Ship <u>S.S. NORTH POINT</u>
		Official No. <u>246687</u> Class of Vessel <u>STEAM</u> <small>(Steam, Motor, Sail or Barge)</small>
		Nature of Voyage <u>COASTWISE</u> <small>(Foreign, Intercoastal or Coastwise)</small>

Discharge from the T2 tanker SS North Point

of my condo in Palm Beach, overlooking the sunlit turquoise sea. As the strong inshore breezes blow, I feel I am once again aboard the Towanda Victory, up at its windy bow. Straining just a So ended my maritime career, but not my lust for the bounding main, even if constrained to the Chesapeake Bay.

However, my maritime life came close to being extended – or quickly really ended. In late 1946, towards the end of my first term back at Hopkins, Moe Burman, not at school, but still an AE Pi fraternity brother, called me to meet him at the fraternity house that evening.

When I got there, there were several men talking to some of the brothers. The strangers said they were crewmembers from the ship Exodus, formerly the President Warfield, a Chesapeake Bay excursion vessel. They told us the Exodus was now owned by the Zionist group, the Haganah, and was preparing to go to Europe to pick up a load of Jewish refugees, and sneak them into Palestine against the British orders. We were told to keep mum lest we give away the plan, which would then be stymied by the authorities. The public statement about the refitting of the old wreck was that it would go to China on a trading mission. The Exodus visitors included a protestant preacher crew member, John, whose last name I have regrettably forgotten. When asked why he was going on such a dangerous mission, he said he felt his faith demanded he do the righteous deed. The Exodus men said they were looking for members to join them in the voyage. Moe and I expressed interest, and we were invited down to the ship in the Baltimore harbor. Several days later, we did go aboard. She was really a terrible old hulk. Flat-bottomed for the shallow Bay waters, she shouldn't be risked at sea. Yet, she had gone into Omaha Beach during the Normandy invasion, survived and made it back. John was there and introduced us to the Captain and some of the other officers. We saw the charts of the Pacific and China put aboard as a ruse. Finally, the skipper said they could use a radio operator, but did not need another engineer. We went home to ponder that. I decided not to go without Moe, and returned to my studies. So, that's how close I came to going down in history, or, perhaps, just going down!



The Haganah ship Exodus, formerly the Chesapeake Bayliner President Warfield



Many Refugee Jews ultimately arrived in Israel after many hardships

FINALE

So nearly ends my telling of my sea-going career, but not quite. I am now sitting on the 6th floor balcony little, I see those Spanish galleons of yore just a few miles off my coast, where they literally sailed on their way home laden with treasure from the likes of Peru. I visualize those iron men struggling with their frail wooden boats (“boats” because today they could be hauled aboard a ship). In storms of the magnitude I see many times. They not infrequently lose the battle and add their bones and South American silver, gold and jewels to the shallow waters. Interspersed with these visions, I see today’s world of modern freighters stacked high with the containers (of which I originally, or at least independently conceived!) I see sleek tankers more than twice as long as the Mt. Talmapias, and huge city-size liners heading for Port Everglades on Saturday nights to end their cruises. I feel all this in the wonderment cast by the sea. So, I am a sailor yet.



My rainbow-equipped Palm Beach balcony – see the galleons?

For whomsoever might be interested, I have had other careers. They may be glimpsed on my website <gillevin.com>. One of these careers even took me, or my avatar, farther than all my voyages in the Merchant Marine – all the way to the planet Mars! It even made me earn my PhD on the way! To learn more about this and other careers, go to my website gillevin.com> and tab “Mars Research.” In fact, much of my time is now spent in defending my claims to discoveries of liquid water and living microorganisms made on the red planet. There are also tabs for my careers in “Health and Environment.” I cannot complain of boredom, and, as my 92nd year approaches, I look forward to new interests. Life is amazing!

Epilogue 1. Return to the Sea (of sorts)



I did return to the sea in a fashion, at least to the Chesapeake Bay. A classmate at Hopkins, Walter Lyon, had an uncle, Mike Straus, Chief of the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, who owned a two-masted schooner, the Strombus, on which he regularly plied the Bay on summer weekends. Walter

introduced me to Mike and his family, and they invited me on many weekends to sail with them during the summers of my second and third years at Hopkins. We sailed hard during the day, and, at night, poked our bow into many of the delightful anchorages of the Chesapeake to spend the night aboard. I really liked it, and vowed someday to get a boat of my own. After the war, the opportunity came at an unusual time, when I was married and had two young sons, Ron, the son who eventually persuaded me to write this, and Henry, his infant brother, a strange circumstance under which to enter the hazard of boating. Marian Bloomquist, a.k.a. Karen Salisbury, a Newsweek Magazine reporter, had made the fatal mistake of interviewing me about the health of swimming pools one newsless day in August of 1952. Her first contact, the U. S. Public Health Service, had recommended me to her as the swimming pool expert and public health engineer in the D. C Health Department. The interview was fine, most enjoyable, but the story never ran, embarrassing me no end to all the friends I had advised that I was to be featured in Newsweek, perhaps on the cover. Some real news intervened. However, although the story never ran, I did - right after Karen, and never let go of this beautiful, tall blonde Vasaar product.

Back to our theme. One day, a few years after Karen and I were married, a good friend of mine, Ralph Fuhrman, who was also interested in boating, came to me saying he had located a sailboat for sale. Tongue in cheek, I went with him to see the boat at the Washington Sailing Marina, just below the Reagan DC National airport on the Potomac River. The boat was an old 18-foot wooden Hampton class sloop, the hull of which had been covered with a layer of fiberglass. The owner asked \$600 for it. I was intrigued enough to agree with Ralph that we would consider it. I went home and discussed it with Karen. After much backing and forthing, we agreed that it made no sense to enter the boating hobby with an infant son. However, not willing to forego the then current Kennedy romance of small boating, we decided to do it if Ralph agreed. He did, and we did. We named the boat "Diatom," because of its glass shell, which that tiny microscopic single-celled creature also had.

At first, sailings were limited to me and Ralph, as we got the hang of the boat. Then, stretching the season a little bit, one Thanksgiving weekend, I took my friend, Vincent Smith, out with me. We were not far from shore when a squall hit and knocked the Diatom flat. As Vincent fell into the cold water, and started drifting away, he told me he couldn't swim. Great! I left the upside-down hull and swam to him. Grabbing him by the arm, I towed him back to the boat, where we hung on to the inverted gunwale. Presently someone at the marina saw us, and came out in a boat to get us. Shamefully creeping back into our house, I did not mention the incident, but went right upstairs to get into dry clothes. While I was showering, Karen inspected the top of the bureau and spotted the sopping-wet wallet. When I came out, she chided me, saying she wondered what was happening on the River when she saw the strong winds blow through our backyard trees. I recite this accident in detail, because in the ensuing half-century of my skippering sail boats, I never lost a passenger, nor had another one cast adrift.

As I became more confident, I took Karen and Ron on the Diatom. That started us on an arc of yachts, each larger than its predecessor. We made sailing the principal means of keeping the family together during summer vacation from school. Ron loved it. His younger brother, Henry, liked it, and the last of our kids, Carol, came to dislike it strongly, claiming we used it to keep her from her (no good) girlfriends (which we did!). In general, however, we all had many enjoyable times in our succession of boats following the Diatom. I joined the Annapolis Yacht Club after bringing the

Pagoda to Annapolis. However, I seldom competed in its weekly races, but frequently competed at its sumptuous dining tables. Similarly, I later joined the Palm Beach Yacht Club, but could only eat there since we had no boat in Florida.



Diatom – Hampton 18 Wood & Fiberglass



Pagoda – Coronado 25



Pagoda – 25-foot Coronado sloop. This “huge” boat caused us to move our sailing from the Potomac to the Chesapeake, ultimately to buy a home near Annapolis, on Aberdeen Creek.



Mandarin – 34-foot Columbia sloop. This deck of this new boat leaked like a sieve when it rained. When we complained of this to the salesman, asking for repairs, he responded, “That is a user problem.”



Turandot – 40-foot Lancer sloop, a wonderful boat, fully innovative, the first production sailboat with a swim platform.



Moongate - 35-foot Bayliner, a power boat (!), as age interfered with maneuvering sails, we changed from “rag vendors” to “stink potters.”



Cixi – 50- foot Carver cabin cruiser.

The definitions of pleasure boating proved true: 1. we poured a lot of money down a hole in the water; 2. it was like standing under a cold shower tearing up thousand dollar bills. But it was fun! Finally, Old Man Time, not reason, won, and, we sold the Cixi, and then our lovely Annapolis house.

For most of the 50 years we sailed the Bay, we belonged to the Annapolis Yacht Club, a wonderful organization, whose building was just consumed by fire. When we focused on Palm Beach, we joined the Palm Beach Yacht Club, where our sailing has been confined to its incredibly wonderful dining room.

Epilogue 2. HIRA

One day, in 1990, I got a telephone call from Dr. Richard Waechter, a Hoffman Island Radio Academy graduate and fellow WWII veteran. He said he and John Murray, another vet from Hoffman Island, were forming the Hoffman Island Radio Association (HIRA), and asked me to join. Our first meeting, of about five of us, was in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. We elected Dick Waechter President. Our first formal meeting was in Baltimore, in 1992, when 52 Hoffman Island vets showed up and joined. Dick and his wife, Rose, worked hard and got us well organized and launched. In 1995, John Murray was elected president, and his wife, Ingrid, supported his efforts. Our membership peaked in 2008, with 184 Hoffman Island vets having signed up. We held annual meetings at Mystic, Charleston, San Diego, Norfolk, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Fort Lauderdale, Pittsburgh, Las Vegas, Hyannis, Tampa, San Pedro, Baltimore (MITAGS), Cleveland, and, perhaps best of all, on the Caribbean Cruise Ship Voyager of the Seas, where we met for our 13th reunion.



Meeting of the Hoffman Island Radio Association in San Diego.

We had many lovely meetings and became good friends. We were all very distinctively different from each other, reflecting the great diversity of backgrounds from which Merchant Mariners came. After all, what normal, sane person would join such an outfit? Those different personalities are what made our association so rewarding, and so much fun. For example, one member brought us each a small vial with a sample of Santa Monica beach sand. Another carved our lightning radio operators emblem in wood and distributed them (I still have mine). We met in port cities around the country. Rose Waechter, Dick's wife, took over as our true organizer for these events. Bill Yerger served as Archivist (for the mementos we assembled), and as Editor of the quarterly journal, "Tales of Hoffman" relating bits of news about members, and with columns from the current HIRA President, and from the Founder, Dick. "Tales," sadly carried sad tales of "Silent Keys," reporting on the inevitably growing number of members that "crossed the bar."

I regret that, pressed by starting a new business, I did not become more deeply involved in HIRA. I never volunteered for a position, nor even wrote the brief biography requested of each of us to be published in the journal. However, in 2009, I was nominated for President. I accepted, and was elected. I did devote more effort to the organization, mostly directed at getting the Merchant Mariners of WWII recognized as equals to the other military forces, including my dueling with Senator Akaka. Over the years, HIRA membership reached a peak over 100. Time ineluctably

pressed on, and our ranks diminished. Our 2010 meeting in Cleveland produced only 7 members, the rest being incapacitated or dead. It was apparent we were running out of steam and life. The question of disbandment was raised. We decided to take the matter under advisement, and to submit our votes on it. Rose sent out 106 ballots, of which 82 were returned "Yes." Only one "No" was submitted. Two ballots were returned as "Silent Keys." I then issued the formal notice of our disbandment to all surviving members and associates. The following news release was issued, appropriately on July 4, 2010. Our inventory of relics from our experiences was to be donated to an appropriate museum. Rose and I stayed in touch by phone, trying to arrange one more informal meeting of any who wished to and was able to attend. Each attempt had to be postponed for some reason, generally health-related. The informal get-together has yet to be held.

HIRA HEGIRA (Apologies to Robert Herrick!)

When as in ships we used to sail,
Defying submarines and gale,
We made the brutal Axis fail.

We then formed HIRA happily
To relive our days at sea,
Meeting and greeting annually.

But Father Time, relentlessly,
Rudely refuses to let us be,
Calling one by one to QRT.

(end of transmission)

L'envoi:

Dit dah dit dah dit dah dit dit dit dah dit dah **(end of message, end of session)**

NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, contact:

Gilbert V. Levin, President
Hoffman Is. Radio Assn.

WWII VETERAN MERCHANT MARINE “SPARKS” DISBAND
Group Dwindles Still Seeking Veteran Status Recognition

JULY 4, 2010
WASHINGTON, DC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Hoffman Island Radio Association (HIRA), World War II sea-going Merchant Marine radio operators (“Sparks”), announced today that it has voted to disband because of deaths and increasing incapacitating illnesses of its aging members.

Hoffman Island is a small island at the mouth of the New York City harbor, where the U. S. Maritime Service Radio Academy was established to train volunteers in radio theory, practice and the Morse code during WWII. Those who passed the difficult course reported as Radio Officers to the ships of the Nation’s rapidly growing merchant navy. Founded in 1991, by Richard Waechter, its first President, HIRA soon admitted veteran radio operators trained at the Gallups Is. Radio Academy, in Boston Harbor, the only other Radio Academy, and then members of the U.S. Navy’s Armed Guard, who manned the cannon put on merchant ships in the latter stages of the war. (Until then, the fore and aft cannon were manned by the Merchant Marine crew.) Wives and HIRA family members were admitted as Associates. HIRA reunion meetings were held annually at various port cities, where sea tales were swapped with great camaraderie.

Shipboard radio operators were essential in obtaining routing instructions, warnings and, of course, in sending out “SOS” following torpedoing. Today’s merchant ships no longer carry radio operators. Their “radio shacks” have been replaced with telephonic communications. Only amateur radio operators keep the Morse code alive, because of its static-piercing clarity over great distances at low power.

The Merchant Marine became the first U.S. armed service upon the capture on June 12, 1775, of the British schooner HMS *Margaretta* near Machias, Maine by Colonial seamen in response to the battles of Lexington and Concord. Since then, the Merchant Marine has played a key role in every U.S. war, carrying the millions of tons of munitions and the millions of men that won World War II. Constant targets of Axis submarines, surface raiders and enemy aircraft, the Merchant Marine suffered the highest WWII death rate of any service (3.90% v 2.94% for the U.S. Marines, (<<http://www.usmm.org/cd.html>>). Nonetheless, the all-volunteer Merchant Marine was the only service not granted the GI Bill. In 1988, the mariners were recognized as veterans, inexplicably placed within the Coast Guard, but still refused the major benefits of the GI Bill.

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Since then, the House of Representatives has repeatedly passed a bill to grant those benefits, but the corresponding Senate Bill, S663, has been just as repeatedly blocked from a full Senate vote by Senator Daniel Akaka, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. HIRA's president, Gilbert V. Levin, appealed to Akaka with the attached letter, but never received an answer. "We are the Rodney Dangerfield of the U.S. services," said Levin, "Even the Coast Guard, from Commandant Admiral Thad Allen on down, refused to respond to our repeated invitations to address our final meeting."

Epilogue 3. Shipping Out Again

Ron has always been fascinated with my sea-going career. In addition to his verbal urging me to write something down, he applied subtle, powerful visual pressure. As Christmas and birthday presents, Ron had beautiful and precise models of the Henry Jocelyn and the Towanda Victory made for me. The Henry Jocelyn is about 30 inches long, and the Towanda Victory is 42 inches long. Every detail, down to the stays, shackles, winches, hailing ports, even my radio antenna, are there. These very expensive works of art continually capture me, pressing me back into service. I look at them, and suddenly I appear on their decks. I walk up to the bow, take in the strong, fresh breeze, and watch the dolphins below me. Then I walk back to the deckhouse, go up the ladder to the radio shack and enter it. Putting on the cans, I hear the signals and voices of the past become the present. I am back at sea, and the wide world of adventure is in front of me!

I could have joined the Navy, and completed my bachelor's degree in uniform, with all tuition and living expenses paid. I would have had the G.I. Bill, and all the benefits that provided. I kid Karen that I could even have been given a G.I. Bride. But I chose not to. It was the right choice for me, providing freedom from discipline and bringing marvelous adventure. I am certain I met more types of people, learned to get along with them, and saw more places than the Navy would have provided. With passing years, my pride in having served in the U. S. Maritime Service grows as I gain more perspective on what we accomplished – we merchant mariners played a major role in saving the world from fascism. Still, I remain piqued that Uncle Sam went back on his word by denying all the rewards granted all other servicemen even though they had been promised to the men of the U.S. Maritime Service. I have written letters to Congressmen expressing my feelings. Perhaps, they are best stated in the little poem which I included in my letter to Time Magazine on August 11, 1954, entitled "Half a Monument."

Apt. 335
2480 16th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.
August 16, 1954

The Editor
TIME MAGAZINE
9 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York

Dear Sir:

The monument which you so blithely allowed the Marines to share with the Navy in your photographs featuring the Washington area, is actually dedicated to the Navy and Merchant Marine. While we former merchant mariners lament the mistake, we understand how glamour begets glamour and neglect begets neglect.

Very truly yours,
Gilbert V. Levin



Monument to Navy and Merchant Marines, Ladybird Park, Arlington, VA

Half a Monument

We didn't get the G.I. Bill,
We didn't get the Bonus,
You call us "non-vets" still,
And cloak us with the onus.

The unsung game we played with death,
Forgot by mem'ry's failing -
Forgot, how Victory held her breath
Upon each blacked-out sailing.

A thankless nation's conscience gave
But half a monument -
Bronze gulls to mark the wave
Where six thousand of us went.

But TIME forgot our name was listed,
Will time forget that we existed?

Appendix 1. Letter exchange with Sen. Akaka

August 20, 2009

Senator Daniel K. Akaka
Chair, U. S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Senator Akaka,

I have just been elected President of the Hoffman Island Radio Association. We are war veterans of the U. S. Maritime Service. Our name stems from tiny Hoffman Island in New York Harbor, where a Radio Academy was established to train World War II volunteers to become sea-going radio operators. They were badly needed on our then rapidly expanding fleet of merchant ships so essential to conducting - and winning - WWII. One end of the New York Harbor anti-submarine net was anchored on our island, from which we could see ships sailing forth into harm's way, a daunting path we soon followed. As President of this rapidly dwindling group of victorious veterans, I am writing on their behalf to ask you to align with your fellow Senator, Evan Bayh, and support U. S. Senate Bill 663, known as the Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2009.

As a 17-year old, I remember President Franklin Roosevelt on the radio, soon after we entered the War, praising the bravery of our merchant seamen, and promising that they would receive the same benefits that America bestowed on its armed forces veterans. I remember it, because it was this talk that got me interested in the Merchant Marine, and, ultimately, led to my enlisting. Reading your on-line biography, it seems we share a number of wartime experiences: leaving school to enlist, being on the front lines (sea lines in my case) of action, and completing technical training (civil engineering for me) after the war. Unfortunately for me, the similarities end there, as I was the only war veteran returning to the Johns Hopkins University that had to pay tuition! My fellow returning classmates soon made me aware of all the other components of the GI Bill that I missed out of. They kidded me that apparently the Government thought the Merchant Marine had it too soft! Recalling the 17 attacks on my ship in one transit up the English Channel, and that, had our ship gone down, our pay would have immediately ceased, I found, and find, that irrational line hard to believe. Instead, I believe we were all in the War together, doing our assigned duties, with little to choose concerning everyone's small remuneration. What really separated us was the GI Bill. For the surviving veterans of the U. S. Maritime Service, it is much too late for them to benefit significantly by being included in the GI Bill – but one very important benefit would be realized. It is the knowledge that the United States of America, at long last, recognizes the vital role and the enormous sacrifices of life and limb we made to keep our country free.

On perusing your website, I am very encouraged that you will support the Bill to include us. In addition to sharing key aspects of our experience, you acknowledge the importance of the GI Bill to you. You say, "... I find myself reflecting on what the original GI Bill did for me as a young veteran. When I returned from World War II, the GI bill gave me the opportunity to build my life on the foundation of a quality education

... The G.I. Bill will go down in history as one of those that has a profound impact on quality of life and attitude in the United States.”

Senator Akaka, as late as it is, we want to be part of that history. The modest amount of money and benefits we would receive is not our objective. It's all about the recognition for our service, which they would convey. Your fine website concludes with 'He continues to work ... to improve veterans' care and benefits through oversight and legislation.' Please do so for our neglected veterans!

Thank you for your service and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gilbert V. Levin
President
Hoffman Island Radio Association

From: McCarthy, Jennifer (Veterans Affairs) [Jennifer_McCarthy@vetaff.senate.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, July 06, 2010 6:20 PM
To: Levin, Gil
Subject: Response to Your Letter to Senator Daniel K. Akaka regarding S. 663

Gilbert V. Levin
President
Hoffman Island Radio Association

Dear Mr. Levin:

Thank you for contacting me regarding S. 663, the Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2009. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I appreciate your commitment to this legislation and hope you will accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your letter.

As you may know, S. 663 was introduced on April 29, 2009, and referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. In prior Committee meetings, or "Mark Ups," to consider pending legislation, S. 663 has not been among those ordered to be reported for full Senate consideration. Any Member, however, is free to bring up the bill for this purpose either at a future Committee Mark Up, or as an amendment to a pending measure on the Floor of the Senate.

My concerns over the legislation relate to the precedent it would set relative to the many other groups who were not members of the U.S. Armed Services during World War II, but nevertheless played a valiant role in the war effort.

In addition, I am concerned over the implications of creating a benefit not based on need or disability that is equal to the rate of benefits paid to a veteran with a 70% service-connected disability.

Please know that I have pressed the Department of Veterans Affairs to redouble efforts to ensure that those who served in the Merchant Marines are aware of their eligibility under current law for the full range of veterans' health care and other benefits and services. Knowing that there are some World War II Merchant Mariners who are of limited means, this is especially critical.

Those who served in the Merchant Marines during World War II contributed greatly to the success of our war effort. Their sacrifices, along with those of the other men and woman who fought in defense of the nation, must never be forgotten.

I commend you for all your work to ensure that radio officers who served on U.S. Merchant Marine ships receive the recognition they earned through their vital assistance to the nation during World War II.

Sincerely,

Daniel K. Akaka
Chairman

July 31, 2012

Dear Senator Akaka,

I appreciate your getting back to me. I apologize for my delay in responding, but I have just undergone two bouts of surgery. To better respond to you, I have interlineated my comments in CAPS at the appropriate places in your letter below. Any further comment from you would be most welcome, especially in the form of permitting the Senate to vote on whether or not these few valiant, rapidly diminishing WWII combat veterans, with a wartime death rate exceeding that of the U. S. Marines, should be accorded the Nation's respect and recognition granted to all other WWII armed forces veterans.

Thank you.

Very sincerely,

Gilbert V. Levin

From: McCarthy, Jennifer (Veterans Affairs)
[Jennifer_McCarthy@vetaff.senate.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, July 06, 2010 6:20 PM
To: Levin, Gil
Subject: Response To Your Letter to Senator Daniel K. Akaka Regarding S. 663

Gilbert V. Levin
President
Hoffman Island Radio Association

Dear Mr. Levin:

Thank you for contacting me regarding S. 663, the Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2009. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I appreciate your commitment to this legislation and hope you will accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your letter.

I UNDERSTAND HOW BUSY A SENATOR'S DAYS ARE. HOWEVER, SINCE THE LETTER TO WHICH YOU RESPONDED ON JULY 6, 2010, WAS WRITTEN TO YOU ON AUGUST 20, 2009, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT YOUR PRIORITY IN RESPONDING IS INDICATIVE OF THE PRIORITY TO WHICH YOU HAVE RELEGATED ITS SUBJECT MATTER, THE RECOGNITION OF MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS OF WWII.

As you may know, S. 663 was introduced on April 29, 2009, and referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. In prior Committee meetings, or "Mark Ups," to consider pending legislation, S. 663 has not been among those ordered to be reported for full Senate consideration. Any Member, however, is free to bring up the bill for this purpose either at a future Committee Mark Up, or as an amendment to a pending measure on the Floor of the Senate.

I RESEARCHED S.663, AND LEARNED IT WAS YOUR PERSONAL DECISION THAT KEPT THE BILL FROM BEING SUBMITTED TO THE FULL SENATE FOR VOTING. I PRESUME ANY NEW ATTEMPT WOULD SUFFER THE SAME FATE AT YOUR HANDS.

My concerns over the legislation relate to the precedent it would set relative to the many other groups who were not members of the U.S. Armed Services during World War II, but nevertheless played a valiant role in the war effort.

PLEASE NAME SOME OF "THE MANY OTHER GROUPS" WHO PLAYED AS VALIANT A ROLE IN THE WAR EFFORT AS DID THE MERCHANT MARINE. PERHAPS, UPON REVIEW, THEY SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN THE GI BILL. HOWEVER, I DOUBT YOU WILL FIND ANY SO ENTITLED WHO PUT ON A U.S. UNIFORM, FACED TORPEDOS, BOMBS, SURFACE ATTACKS AND MINES, WITHOUT WHICH GROUP THE WAR WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST.

In addition, I am concerned over the implications of creating a benefit not based on need or disability that is equal to the rate of benefits paid to a veteran with a 70% service-connected disability.

MY POINT IS THAT THE BENEFITS SHOULD BE EQUAL. I SEE NO BASIS FOR ANY OTHER TREATMENT.

Please know that I have pressed the Department of Veterans Affairs to redouble efforts to ensure that those who served in the Merchant Marines are aware of their eligibility under current law for the full range of veterans' health care and other benefits and services. Knowing that there are some World War II Merchant Mariners who are of limited means, this is especially critical.

THERE IS NO NEED FOR THAT EFFORT. I ASSURE YOU THE VETERAN MERCHANT MARINES KNOW ABOUT THEIR ENTITLEMENTS, KNOWLEDGE GAINED FROM THE HARD KNOCKS OF RUNNING INTO THEIR DISENTITLEMENTS. WE SHOULD NOT BE TALKING ABOUT A MEANS PROGRAM. MANY OTHER GOVERNMENT AND CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESS THOSE ISSUES. THE BILL YOU HAVE THWARTED IS FOR RECOGNITION AND HONOR, ANY MONETARY ASPECT IS JUST TO ESTABLISH PARITY WITH THEIR FELLOW VETERANS TO OVERCOME THE UNWARRANTED AND DISRESPECTFUL LINE YOU MAINTAIN BETWEEN THEM.

Those who served in the Merchant Marines during World War II contributed greatly to the success of our war effort. Their sacrifices, along with those of the other men and woman who fought in defense of the nation, must never be forgotten.

I commend you for all your work to ensure that radio officers who served on U.S. Merchant Marine ships receive the recognition they earned through their vital assistance to the nation during World War II.

YOUR COMMENDATION WOULD BE FAR BETTER SERVED BY YOUR ACTION IN RELEASING AND SUPPORTING S.663. PLEASE DO IT BEFORE THE VALIANT FEW REMAINING HAVE JOINED THE HISTORY THEY MADE, BUT WITHOUT THE APPRECIATION OF THE NATION THEY SERVED AND SAVED..

Sincerely,

Daniel K. Akaka
Chairman

Gilbert V. Levin
Chevy Chase, MD
June 2012

Appendix 2. Proclamation from the City of Litchfield Park, AZ

**CITY OF LITCHFIELD PARK
P R O C L A M A T I O N**

WHEREAS America has a proud maritime history, and the United States Merchant Marine has played a vital role in helping meet our Country's economic and national security needs.

WHEREAS Our commercial maritime tradition dates back to the founding of our Nation; and it continues to play an important role today, moving passengers and freight, protecting our freedom, and linking our citizens to the world.

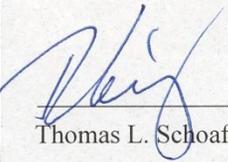
WHEREAS Since 1775, merchant mariners have bravely served our Country, and in 1936, the Merchant Marine Act officially established their role in our military as a wartime naval auxiliary. On March 15, 1938, the U.S. Merchant Marine Cadet Corps was officially founded.

WHEREAS Merchant mariners have served in every conflict in our Nation's history. The U.S. Merchant Marine helps provide our Nation's Armed Forces with crucial supplies and equipment. These brave men and women demonstrate courage, love of Country, and devotion to duty, and we especially honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our Nation. The United States is safer and the world is more peaceful because of the work of our merchant mariners, and we are grateful for their service.

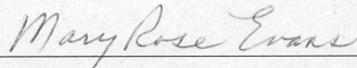
WHEREAS Merchant mariners also contribute significantly to the U.S. maritime transportation system. Those in the maritime industry, including merchant mariners, enhance waterborne commerce and help promote America's economic growth. Today, we honor the courage, determination, and service of our Nation's merchant mariners and remember the many who have given their lives in defense of our Country. Their work reflects the patriotism and devotion to duty that make America great.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Thomas L. Schoaf, Mayor of the City of Litchfield Park, Arizona do hereby recognize the 74th Anniversary of the founding of the Merchant Marines. I call upon the people of Litchfield Park to celebrate this observance with us.

Dated this 15th day of March, 2012


Thomas L. Schoaf, Mayor

ATTEST:


Mary Rose Evans, MMC, City Clerk



Given to Gilbert V. Kevin
by Mayor Schoaf 3/15/12

Appendix 3. Merchant Marine Song



Heave Ho! My Lads! Heave Ho!

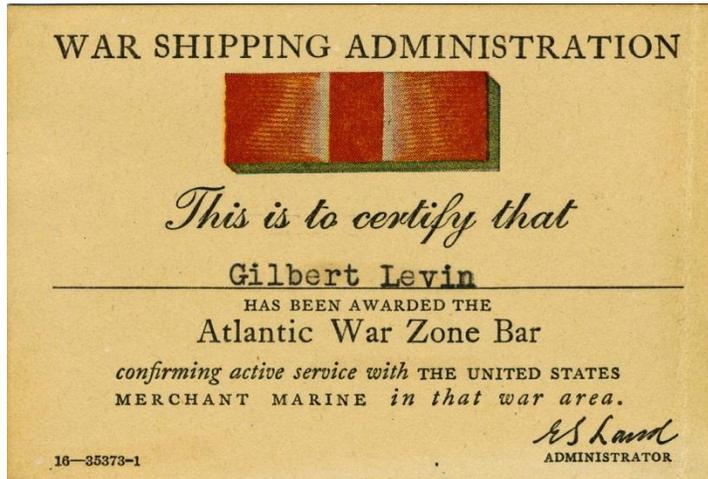
Give us the oil, give us the gas
Give us the shells, give us the guns.
We'll be the ones to see them through.
Give us the tanks, give us the planes.
Give us the parts, give us a ship.
Give us a hip hoo-ray!
And we'll be on our way.

Chorus

Heave Ho! My Lads, Heave Ho!
It's a long, long way to go.
It's a long, long pull with our hatches full,
Braving the wind, braving the sea,
Fighting the treacherous foe;
Heave Ho! My Lads, Heave Ho!
Let the sea roll high or low,
We can cross any ocean, sail any river.
Give us the goods and we'll deliver,
Damn the submarine!
We're the men of the Merchant Marine!

Jack Lawrence (composer of Heave Ho) was born in New York City in 1912, and later lived in Connecticut. He donated the copyright to Heave Ho! to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, a government agency. He composed his first song "Play Fiddle Play" in 1933. His compositions include: Tenderly, Ciribiribin, What Will I Tell My Heart?, With the Wind & The Rain In Your Hair, Yes My Darling Daughter, Poor People of Paris, Sleepy Lagoon, Hold My Hand, Sunrise Serenade, All or Nothing at All.

Appendix 4. My WWII Medals



Appendix 5. Crew Lists

Crew of the Towanda Victory, First Voyage

Sheet No. 1

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIENS EMPLOYED ON THE VESSEL AS MEMBERS OF CREW

Required under Act of Congress of February 5, 1917, to be delivered to the United States Immigration officer by the representatives of any vessel having such aliens on board upon arrival at a port of the United States

(Include names of American citizen seamen as well as aliens in order to facilitate inspection of aliens)

U.S. Vessel: U.S.S. TOWANDA VICTORY, sailing from port of Hooper, January 7, 1945, arriving at New York, February 1, 1945

(1) No. in crew list	(2) Whether crew member on last voyage to U.S.	(3) NAME IN FULL		(4) Length of service at sea	(5) Position in ship's company	(6) SHIPPED OR ENGAGED		(7) Whether changed prior to arrival	(8) Age	(9) Sex	(10) Race*	(11) Nationality	(12) Height	(13) Weight	(14) Physical marks, scars, or other	(15) REMARKS Qualify answers under items 14 and 15 as to "U.S. citizen" in item 10. (If not citizen, specify last name.)	(16) Action of Immigration officer (If this refers to any of items 14 and 15, see instructions.)
		Family name	Given name			When	Where										
1	✓	MOODY	Melvin Y.	31 Years	MASTER	Dec. 8/44	Balto.	Yes	51	Male	U.S.A.	U.S.A.	6-0	155	None		
2	✓	RYAN	Victor G.	10	Ch-Mate	12/44			30				5-7	138			
3	✓	OLSEN	Ole	40	2nd-Mate	8/44			61		Scand.		5-11	210			
4	✓	LAWREN	George E.	4	3rd-Mate	8/44			57		U.S.A.		5-5 1/2	140			
5	✓	SCORLAPA	Victor	1	4th-Mate	8/44			21				5-11	170			
6	✓	GRUBER	Frank D.	14	Ch-Bullie-Op	8/44			32				5-10	135			
7	✓	MAYN	Raymond	2st		8/44			19				5-8 1/2	140			
8	✓	LAVIN	GILBERT V.	1st		8/44			20				6-4	185			
9	✓	MITCHELL	Jess M.	6	1st Purser/Ph.M	8/44			39				5-10	155			
10	✓	LAVAN	Vincent A.	1st	Ch-Cadet	8/44			18				5-6 1/2	125			
11	✓	BRADEN	Thomas G.	Boat'n	12 Years	8/44			59				5-9 1/2	157			
12	✓	LITVIN	Samuel	3 Years	Capt.	8/44			23				6-0	240			
13	✓	HARRIS	Stephen J.	32	A. B.	8/44			49		Russian	U.S.A.	5-10	180			
14	✓	LANE	Maurice W.	6		8/44			22		English	Australia	5-7	145			not reported - where leave not reported - Aug.

FEB 1 - 1945 **TOWANDA VICTORY**

Crew of the Towanda Victory, First Voyage (Continued)

Line	Crew	William	3 1/2	O.S. Acting A. S.	8/44	23	U.S.A.	U.S.A.	6-1 165
15	OSBER	William	✓ 3 1/2		8/44	23	U.S.A.	U.S.A.	6-1 165
16	WASHINGTON	Lewis H.	✓ 1 1/2	O.S. Acting A. S.	8/44	23			5-6 150
17	OLMO	Harold	✓ 2		8/44	20			5-11 180
18	TIBBLEY	Cornelius A.	✓ 2		8/44	21			5-8 140
19	WASHINGTON	George L.	✓ 2	O. S.	8/44	23			5-5 150
20	KINDL	Joseph L.	✓ 2		8/44	28			5-11 140
21	TOOMEY	Philip E.	✓ 2		8/44	32			5-6 140
22	WATKINS	James G.	✓ 1 1/2	De-Maint.	8/44	25			6-1 170
23	TULLY	John F.	✓ 10		8/44	29			5-8 150
24	ZIEDLER	Harold R.	✓ 6	Ch-Engineer	8/44	25			6-0 190
25	KINDL	Robert M.	✓ 6	1st-Assst-Eng.	8/44	27			5-7 150
26	MAIDEN	Arthur	✓ 3	2nd-Assst-Eng.	8/44	25			5-5 138
27	ROSE	Victor W.	✓ 1	3rd-Assst-Eng.	8/44	25			5-9 140
28	FRENCH	William O.	✓ 1	4th-Assst-Eng.	8/44	20			6-0 190
29	CROW	Charles K.	✓ 1st	Eng-Deck	8/44	18			6-2 150
30	DARLMAN	Oscar H.	✓ 5	Ch-Electr.	8/44	51	Seamd.	MAR-USA	6-0 200

See list of rates on back hereof.
 Normal rates of pay for crew members (3), (4), (5), (6), and (7)
 is payable by a line of two dollars for each dollar. See other side.

James D. Murphy
 2-1-45

Line
 Crew
 Local Agents: *Blue & Shumaker*

2 Agents on 52 U.S.C.

Crew of the Towanda Victory, Second Voyage

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

Sheet No. 1

LIST OF MEMBERS OF ALIENS EMPLOYED ON THE VESSEL AS MEMBERS OF CREW

Required under Act of Congress of February 5, 1917, to be delivered to the United States Immigration officer by the representatives of any vessel having such aliens on board upon arrival at a port of this United States

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U.S. VESSEL NAME: **TOWANDA VICTORY** from port of **San Pedro de Macoris, D.R.**, arriving at **New York**, **Mar 30, 1945**

Include names of American citizen seamen as well as aliens in order to facilitate inspection of aliens

(1) No. on list	(2) Whether member on list is U.S. citizen	(3) NAME IN FULL		(4) Length of service at sea	(5) Position in ship's company	(6) SHIPPED OR ENGAGED		(7) Whether discharged at arrival	(8) Age	(9) Sex	(10) Race*	(11) Nationality	(12) Height	(13) Weight	(14) Physical marks, scars, etc., or diseases	(15) REMARKS	(16) Action of Immigration Inspector (if alien)
		Family name	Given name			When	Where										
1	Yes	MORBY	Morris V.	31 years	Master	2/3/45	Port of New York	Yes	51	Male	U.S.A.	U.S.A.	6-0	155	None		
2	Yes	RYAN	Victor O.	30	Chief Mate				30				5-7	158			
3	Yes	OLSEN	Ole	40	2nd Mate				61		Scand	Scand	5-11	210			
4	Yes	SKOGLA	Victor	2	3rd Mate				21		U.S.A.	U.S.A.	5-11	170			
5	No	DOUGHERTY	Peter	8	4th Mate	2/6/45			21				5-7	155			
6	Yes	OROSSER	Frank R.	11	Chief Radio	2/3/45			38				5-10	135			
7	Yes	LEVIN	Gilbert V.	3	2nd Cook				20				6-4	185			
8	Yes	SMITH	Raymond	1	3rd Radio				39				5-8 1/2	140			
9	Yes	MITCHELL	Jess M.	6	1st/2nd				39				5-10	155			
10	Yes	LAVAN	Vincent A.	1	Deck Cadet				18				5-6 1/2	125			
11	Yes	BRADEN	Thomas G.	12	Boat'n				39				5-9 1/2	157			
12	Yes	TULLY	John F.	10	Carpenter				29				5-8 1/2	150			
13	No	KEPNER	Harry F.	1	A. B.				39				5-8	160			
14		TOOLEY	Clyde E.	15					39				5-8	137			

MAP 33 1945 TOWANDA VICTORY

Crew of the Henry Jocelyn

Sheet No. 1

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIENS EMPLOYED ON THE VESSEL AS MEMBERS OF CREW

Required under Act of Congress of February 5, 1917, to be delivered to the United States Immigration officer by the representatives of any vessel having such aliens on board upon arrival at a port of the United States

Batavia 1/24/46

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APR 18 1946

NEW YORK, N. Y.

arriving at

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from the port of

(1) No. in list	(2) Whether included in list	(3) NAME IN FULL		(4) Length of service on vessel	(5) Position in ship's company	(6) SHIPPED OR ENGAGED		(7) Whether to be included in list	(8) Age	(9) Sex	(10) Race*	(11) Nationality	(12) Height	(13) Weight	(14) Physical marks, peculiarities, or scars	REMARKS
		Family name	Given name			When	Where									
1	Yes	Phillips	John J.	10 yr	Master	1/2/46	Balto.	Yes	40	M	American	USA	70	210		
2	"	Yarwood	John J.	12 yr	Jr. Mate	2/28/46	New York	"	40	"	"	"	70	160		
3	"	Maley	Leonard	2 yr	2nd Mate	1/2/46	Balto.	"	42	"	"	"	76	166		
4	"	Fogue	Charles M.	2 yr	Jr. Mate	3/28/46	New York	"	41	"	"	"	71	166		
5	"	Fraff	Harold M.	2 yr	Jr. Mate	1/2/46	Balto.	"	40	"	"	"	71	166		
6	No	Levin	Gilbert F.	0 mo	2nd Mate	6/12/46	Balto.	"	41	"	"	"	76	180		
7	Yes	Holmer	James H.	1 yr	Purser	10/14/46	Portland	"	33	"	"	"	68	146		
8	No	Javiness	Paul	10 yr	John	6/8/46	Balto.	"	34	"	"	"	69	170		
9	"	Sackett	George L.	20 yr	A. B.	6/1/46	"	"	34	"	"	"	71	160		
10	"	Looper	Joseph W.	1 yr	A. B.	6/11/46	"	"	35	"	"	"	66	130		
11	"	Inaley	James H.	8 yr	A. B.	6/12/46	"	"	40	"	"	"	70	196		
12	"	Beckner	Thomas J.	1 yr	Rating	6/2/46	"	"	17	"	"	"	70	166		
13	Yes	Kruysmar	Benjamin	0 mo	A. B.	2/24/46	New York	"	16	"	"	"	67	160		
14	No	Magyar	Michael	5 mo	Rating	6/12/46	Balto.	"	25	"	Canaan	USA (Nat)	64	146		
15	Yes	Bukowski	Ervin J.	0 mo	A. B.	2/24/46	New York	"	18	"	American	USA	71	176		

Crew of the Henry Jocelyn (Continued)

No	Name	Age	Sex	Rank	Service	Port of Origin	Remarks	Pass No.	Remarks
16	Helmkey	William J.	6 mo	U. S.	6/14/40	Balto		65	140
17	Fittman	Fred L.	6 yr	Maintenance	6/1/40			64	100
18	Robert	William C.	2 yr	U. S.	12/7/40	Ferth, Pa.		29	170
19	Wadson	Earlman H.	10 yr	Chief Engineer	1/5/40	New York		29	190
20	Musser	George A.	10 yr	1st Asst. Engineer	6/1/40	Balto		68	180
21	Powers	William J.	2 yr	2nd Asst. Engineer	6/20/40	New York		73	170
22	Burdette	Rayton H. Jr.	5 yr	3rd Asst. Engineer	6/20/40	Balto		69	180
23	Broadstreet	George	10 yr	Deck	6/1/40	Balto		67	140
24	Anderson	Karl E.	10 yr	Oilier	6/2/40			64	160
25	Hakins	Ross A.	1 yr	Oilier	6/20/40			20	166
26	McCreer	Edward	2 yr	Oilier	6/6/40			20	166
27	Jastro	John	10 yr	2-#2	6/1/40			64	190
28	Swoboda	James J.	6 yr	2-#2	6/1/40			42	160
29	Lilly	Elmer J.	3 yr	2-#2	6/12/40			33	160
30	Barrett	Robert J.	6 yr	Tipper	6/2/40			48	140



Approved



H. Smith
 APR 18 1946
 Inspector

* See list of names on back hereof.
 Normal information in columns (2), (6), (7), and (8) is
 furnished by a list of men dollars for each ship. See other side.

Owners: *Calmar S/S Co*
 Local Agent: *Calmar S/S Co*

APPENDIX 6. G.V. Levin Professional Resume

Dr. Levin is an environmental engineer with BS, MS and PhD degrees from the Johns Hopkins University. Currently retired, he serves as Adjunct Professor, Beyond Center: for Fundamental Concepts in Science, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, and as Honorary Professor of Astrobiology, University of Buckingham, Buckingham, UK.

Levin began his professional career as public health engineer serving successively for the states of Maryland, California and Washington, DC. In addition to the last capacity, he was concurrently Adjunct Professor in Public Health, and Biochemistry Research Associate at the Georgetown University School of Medicine. In its Department of Biochemistry, he successfully implemented his concept of using radioisotopes for the rapid detection of microorganisms. In 1955, he co-founded and served as Vice President of Resources Research Inc. in Washington, DC., an environmental consulting and research firm. There he first became engaged in space biology, gaining support as one of NASA's earliest exobiologists. In 1959, he won a NASA contract for developing his radioisotopic technique to look for microbial life on Mars. In 1963, Resources Research Inc. was sold to Hazleton Laboratories, a life sciences company in Falls Church, VA. There he started up the Life Sciences Division, where, as its Director, he continued to pursue a variety of research projects, including his life detection techniques.

In 1967, he founded Biospherics Research Inc., serving as President of this broadly ranging company with primary lines of business in biotechnology and Information services. The Biotechnology Division undertook a number of his original research projects under government and commercial support. The projects ranged from space biology to wastewater treatment to pollution control and monitoring instruments to low-calorie sweeteners and therapeutic drug development. His wife, Karen Levin, who had been a Newsweek Magazine reporter and writer, joined the firm later in 1967 to found the Science Writing Division. Becoming the Information Services Division, this arm of the Company provided nationwide telephone hotline services for commercial and government agencies, counseling on disease, health, pharmaceutical, and wellness issues. Under contract with the National Cancer Institute, the Division answered millions of the public's calls ("1-800 for Cancer") for 20 years.

At Biospherics Research Inc, Dr. Levin further developed his life detection experiments, along with practical terrestrial applications. He produced a carbon-14-based life detection instrument named "Gulliver" that became a centerpiece of NASA's exobiology program during the 1960's. NASA appointed Levin as Team Member on the Mariner 9 IRIS experiment which reached Mars in 1971. His role was to seek evidence of life by monitoring atmospheric gases, such as methane, from Mars orbit.

In 1968, Dr. Levin's experiment, Gulliver, was selected by a national panel to go to Mars on the Viking Mission. He was named Experimenter, and Biospherics Inc. was funded to develop the instrument under his direction. In 1976, the twin spacecraft Viking 1 and 2 successfully landed the instruments on Mars where the experiments were performed remotely. After the mission, he and Dr. Patricia A. Straat, his Co-Experimenter, published that the nine Labeled Release experiments conducted on the soil of Mars were consistent with a biological response. Continuously studying evolving data on this issue, in 1997 Levin finally rendered his conclusion that the Viking LR had

detected living microorganisms. He published this in a paper, “The Viking Labeled Release Experiment and Life on Mars,” (Instruments, Methods, and Missions for the Investigation of Extraterrestrial Microorganisms, SPIE Proceedings, 3111, 146-161), which was published simultaneously in a book by Barry E. DiGregorio, “Mars: The Living Planet.” Among his other work for NASA, Levin was Principal Investigator of a return Mars sample study, and was a Member of the NASA-appointed Planetary Quarantine Advisory Panel advising the Agency how to avoid interplanetary microbial contamination.

Levin was a member of the NASA MOx Instrument Team that put its experiment on the Russian ‘96 Mission to Mars, which experiment was designed to resolve whether the Viking LR response was caused by biology or chemistry. Unfortunately, the spacecraft crashed when attempting to leave Earth orbit.

In 1977, Dr. Levin was awarded NASA’s Public Service Medal and the AAAS Newcomb-Cleveland Medal for his research in space biology. He is a member of the Johns Hopkins National Engineering Advisory Council, and, in 1989, received The Whiting Medal from the Johns Hopkins University, Whiting School of Engineering. Levin has over 170 papers published in science and technology journals; over 50 patented inventions. His activities spanned microbial detection and identification, microbial wastewater treatment processes for the biological removal of phosphorus and nitrogen (currently in use in the U.S. and abroad), for the enhancement of wastewater BOD removal, nonfattening sweeteners, and safe-for-humans pesticides, oil-in-water monitoring instruments, saline water conversion, detection of blood infection, and the automated monitoring of primary productivity in water bodies. His work on nonfattening sweeteners led to a successful FDA Phase 3 Clinical Trial of one of the compounds as a stand-alone drug for the treatment of Type 2 diabetes. Therapeutic uses for other of the compounds were awarded patents.

Levin served as a Trustee of the Johns Hopkins University, and is a member of the Johns Hopkins Library Advisory Council. He has received awards from Hopkins, the AAAS, NASA, and the Industrial Research Magazine. He is a member of the Cosmos Club of Washington, DC, and is listed in Who’s Who in America.

Education

B.E., civil engineering, Johns Hopkins University, 1947

M.S., sanitary engineering, Johns Hopkins University, 1948

Ph.D., environmental engineering, minors in public health and chemistry, Johns Hopkins University, 1963

Professional History

2007 to 2008: Director of Science and Technology, Spherix Incorporated, Beltsville, Maryland.

2003 to 2007: Executive Officer for Science, Spherix Incorporated, Beltsville, Maryland

1967 to 2003: CEO, Chairman and Founder, Biospherics Research Inc., now Spherix Inc.

1965 to 1967: Director, Life Systems Division; Board of Directors, Hazleton Laboratories, Inc.

1963 to 1965: Director of Special Research, and Scientific Director of Bioengineering Department, Hazleton Laboratories, Inc.

1961 to 1963: Biochemist, District of Columbia Department of Sanitary Engineering

1956 to 1960: Clinical Assistant Professor in Preventive Medicine, Georgetown University School of Medicine

1955 to 1963: Vice President, Co-Founder, Resources Research, Inc., Washington, D.C.

1955 to 1961: Adjunct Professor in Public Health, Georgetown University School of Medicine

1955 to 1961: Research Associate, Department of Biochemistry, Georgetown University School of Medicine

1951 to 1956: Public Health Engineer, District of Columbia Department of Public Health

1950 to 1951: Assistant Sanitary Engineer, California Department of Public Health

1948 to 1950: Junior Assistant Sanitary Engineer, Maryland State Department of Health

Publications

Over 170 technical and scientific articles.

Patents

Over 50 worldwide patents in the fields of pollution control, health, microbiology, diagnostics, therapeutics and food additives.

Memberships

American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Public Health Association, Fellow
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Water Works Association
International Society for Optical Engineering
Annapolis Yacht Club
Palm Beach Yacht Club

Registration

Registered Professional Engineer in the District of Columbia and Maryland

Awards and Honors

I.R. 100 Award (*Industrial Research Magazine*), 1975
NASA Public Service Medal, 1977
Newcomb-Cleveland Award, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1977
Whiting Medal, Johns Hopkins University, Whiting School of Engineering, 1989
American Men and Women of Science
Who's Who in America
Sigma Xi
JHU Distinguished Alumnus Award, 1996
Cosmos Club

Additional Professional Activities

BioScience, Editorial Board, 1963-66
Johns Hopkins University, Trustee, 1982-85
Johns Hopkins University, National Engineering Advisory Council, 1983-present
Johns Hopkins University, Library Advisory Council, 1982-2005
Johns Hopkins University, Industry Advisory Council, 1982-85
NASA Planetary Quarantine Advisory Panel, 1960-75
National Science Foundation, Environmental Engineering Proposal Review Panel, 1975-
Presidential Savings Bank, Bethesda, Maryland, Director, 1986-1996
Prince George's Co. Public Schools, Science & Technology Task Force, Member, 1988-1990
Prince George's Community College, Science & Technology Resource Center, Member,
Advisory Council, 1991- 1994
Suburban Maryland High Technology Council, Steering Committee, Trustee, 1990-1992

Acknowledgement:

Not only did my son, Ron, prevail upon me to sit down and write this memoir, he also obtained many of the photographs and helped format this book, for all of which, despite my protesting, I am now grateful.