



AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER



*IF YOU SERVED IN THE
U.S. MERCHANT
MARINE, IN PEACE OR
WAR, YOU ARE
WELCOME TO JOIN
OUR ORGANIZATION.
WE ALSO WELCOME
THE U.S. NAVY ARMED
GUARD.*

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THE PREZ SEZ By Ken Blue

Last month I discussed the training and staffing of merchant ships during World War Two. At last month's meeting, Phelps Hobart told of serving aboard two Navy ships that were merchant ships converted to attack transports. This brings us to the subject of ships in that fast growth of the U.S. Merchant Marine during WWII.

By the mid 1930s The U.S. Merchant Marine had about 400 aging ships. Many of them built during or after World War I, The most notable were the Hog Island freighters and a series of tankers of various design. These were subsidized and built under the WWI War Shipping Board. In 1936, under the Roosevelt administration, the government founded the Maritime Commission to plan and build a new merchant fleet to replace the existing one.

We kept building the "C" ships but with a difference. The U.S. Navy needed ships too. An early attack transport was made by converting the C2 Crescent City into an attack transport. It being successful, they ordered more C2s. C3's found a different use. The converted design became the Baby Flat Tops. I first encountered one of these protecting our convoy from Gibraltar to Norfolk, VA in to fall of 1943. The Merchant Marine did not receive many of those wartime- built "C" ships.

The Maritime service also developed the Victory Ships, about the same size as the Liberty, but with a turbine engine and higher speed. Also, they developed an adaptation of the north sea trawler. Deck house and diesel engine were astern. They were called "knot ships" and they all had names like Square Knot.

Editors note: After two and a half years at sea I quit sailing to attend college. That was because I had gone to sea right out of high school. I had taught myself International Morse code and had my seamans papers ready to go at my High School graduation. Three days later I was at sea.

After my first year at San Jose State I was looking for a summer job and was lucky enough to find a summer berth on the SS Marine Pheonix, a C2 converted to a passenger ship for Matson Lines. We sailed to Suva, Fiji, Auckland New Zealand and Melborn, Australia. There may have been stops at Sidney as well.

I remember our cargo well. We had 1700 Australian war brides aboard hauling them to the states. We had orders not to even talk to them let alone socialize. Mine was the grub shift as low man on the totem pole so I copied code from 12am until 4am which was used in the next days newspaper. I remember getting

brain numb from that with reams of paper on the floor in front of my typewriter. I had no idea what it said.

We returned to San Francisco on my 21st birthday. I sat for my 1st class license. Passed, but never went to sea again. Bob



AMMV meeting of Feb., 2017 Minute by Larry Starn

Members present: Larry. Ken, Bob, Bill & Bea, Bonnie & Steve, Phelps & Teddy, guest: Teresa Robinson. Ray was still too exhausted to make the meeting.

11:15 Pledge of allegiance followed by a minute of silence.

Introduced Teresa Robinson to the AMMV

Ken noted that the convention is coming up in March. As co-hosts Bob, Ken and Frank Mendez of Golden Gate get e-mails every day from the National President who is really working on this one. All seems to be going well.

Sally has decided to that she would go to the convention by train. Bob said the Sands will also send their shuttle to the train station to pick you up if you call them when you arrive.

There was a discussion about the current flooding. The Salvation Army has people in the Nevada County Fairgrounds. Ken's daughter couldn't find a place to park. There was a sink hole the size of two football fields not far from Ken's home.

Phelps did a presentation on the lives of two ships he was on. One was the USS Vermillion, LKA-107-44-69. The other was the USS Algol, LKA 547-44-69. Both saw combat during their service but neither received incoming fire. The Algol was similar to a liberty typ C-2. It carried Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel (Higgins Boats). Phelps got the National Service Defense Medal and received two blue ribbons for rifle shooting. The Vermillion was called the "Steamin Demon" and at full power could go 15 knots. It was a Maritime Commission C-2 built in 1938 with 5 holds. On the Vermillion Phelps was a crypto officer—decoding messages.

Bob said that after the Bombs were dropped on Japan they were ordered to dump some cargo and amunition over the side. The

crew did not like handling the amunition as they had not been trained to do so.

Bob said that in Vietnam one victory ship, the SS Meridith Victory, rescued 10,000 Vietnamese in one desperate operaqtion The captaiin later became a priest. (winter issue AMMV News mag) Another priest will be at the conference to talk about this.

Ken mentioned that before the Maritime Commission there was the Shipping Board. It created the Hog Islanders. The Maritime Commission created the C-1-2-3-4 ships and the T-1-2-3 tankers. The T-3s became navy oilers. The original Cal. Maritime Academy "Golden Bear" was a C-2 originally called the Crescent City and was one of the early attack transports.

We stopped for lunch at 12:10 and resumed at 1:00 p.m.

There were various ships. The LCM was the landing craft mechanical. The LC VP was the landing craft vehicle personnel called the Higgins Boats. 20,000 were built. They were plywood and shallow draft. At the WWII museum in New Orleans is a newly built copy. Floating drydocks transported submarines on the Mississippi river.

During the war Ken was on several Liberty Ships. They were 1800's technology with triple expansion engines, Scotch Boilers and riveted hulls.

A week from Friday Bill Fairfield and Bob Ulrich will go to Woodland High School for their Armed Services Day representing the Merchant Marine. The kids listen and write a report on what they have heard.

This involves the entire Junior class. This is our 6th year at the event.



Letter from our National President, Captain Chris Edyvean

**Dear members of the AMMV Sacramento Valley Chapter:
For those of you who have registered for our 31st National Convention in Reno, I want to sincerely thank you for your planned participation. For those who have not yet committed but might be able to make the trip, consider this my plea for your attention.**

Conventions are a lot of work, and this one is no different. Planning began about a week after the conclusion of the New Orleans convention when I asked Patti Scafidi of our Membership Committee to meet author William Geroux at a book signing event. That was the “seed” that grew into this upcoming convention which is themed to focus on the 75th anniversary of the “Battle of the Atlantic”. Hundreds of emails were exchanged as we researched and communicated with potential speakers and presenters. Now that we are only days away from this event, I must say I am very pleased at the projected success.

We are using the story of the “*City of New York*” (in which a baby was born in a lifeboat after the ship was torpedoed) to gain legislative and media attention. Turns out that the ship’s doctor who delivered the baby was a documented U.S. Merchant Mariner, and thus is the centerpiece of the story. We are expected to have an official from the Maritime Administration on hand and also the Regional Representative for Nevada Senator Dean Heller. We have been in communication with local news media.

In addition to educating the public and our legislators about the history of the WWII Merchant Marine, we must also think about the new House bill H.R. 154. We have a fresh new sponsor in the form of Congressman Al Green of Texas, and his staffers are very excited about working with us on this bill. For so many reasons, it is important that we have a strong turn-out at this convention.

WWII Merchant Marine Vet and famous motivational speaker Dave Yoho will speak again this year, and he is hiring a special film crew to come in and document this convention. (Dave has also been invited to speak at the National WWII Memorial in D.C. on Memorial Day. To have someone from our service with Dave’s skillset, being the Keynote speaker for that event, is very exciting!) Coming to Reno just to see Dave Yoho is in itself worth the trip.

In January, I simultaneously met with David Alberg of NOAA, who will be discussing his sanctuary expansion project, and artist Douglas Alvord, who will be presenting his plans for a full scale size lifeboat sculpture. Both men are worth seeing and speaking with. Our other speakers, Jeremy Hope of the MMP union and Capt. Harry Bolton of California Maritime Academy, are sure to bring us up to speed on current maritime industry and training issues.

If all this isn’t enough, we have AMMV favorites “Sally & Roy” coming all the way out to Reno to do “meet-n-greets” and performances. (There’s a rumor that Willie Nelson will be at the Ladies Lunch!) If you’ve never met Sally & Roy but have seen their photos in the AMMV News so many times – well – here is your chance to meet them. (Just to hear Sally sing “*Heave Ho!*” is also worth the trip!)

This will be a wonderful convention. We’ve had another new banner printed up, this one for support of H.R. 154. I will be conducting an awards ceremony on the 29th, with awards to be given for “Outstanding Newsletter”, “Member Appreciation”, and “Outstanding Volunteer”. There are more surprises, but I can’t give it all away!!! (Did I mention the “Memory Book” had its best year ever in sales??) I sincerely hope to see you in Reno!

Chris



Another of Roy's Tale's " SS Coney" Roy's barely edited notes .

By "Roy Stephens" garffie@pacbell.net (from our newsletter in Sept 2009)

Roy had been a policeman, a marine, a parcel post driver, street car driver, bus driver, cannery worker, warehouseman and for 27 years he was a seaman in the Merchant Marine. I called him from time to time and he would sometimes send me a story about his Merchant Marine experiences.

Finally my calls went unanswered and his phone was disconnected. I assume he was no longer able to live alone or he had passed on. Where ever you are Roy, your stories are always fun to read. I think because they closely parallel our own experiences. Kens Prez Sez column about crewing during the war made me think of this story by Roy.
Bob -----

About my first trip I, and a couple of my old high school buddies, went over to the Sailors Union of The Pacific (SUP) and were going to try to get on a ship... I was twenty years old now and had had my seaman papers since I was sixteen. They needed warm bodies badly and we wanted to go, so off we went all of us on the same ship as Ordinary Seamen. This was to be the only trip I ever made as an Ordinary Seaman.

The three of us were standing on the stern of the JJ Coney as we sailed under the Golden Gate . It was one of those moments that you never forget. Imagine the feeling: a magnificent bridge, a beautiful city for a backdrop and we were on our way out to sea. The waves grew gradually and steadily larger after we left the bay. One minute the bow would be nose down into the trough of a wave and the next minute you would be gazing at the sky...up and down, up and down. Kind of fun at first, but before long I started thinking about that breakfast rolling around in my stomach.

The JJ Coney, (AKA the "Phony Coney") was a coastal tanker built in 1910. A bit old and rusty... Her steering engine was amidships near the main engine room and had chains running all the way back to the rudder. The problem was that the chain tunnel was situated right over the crew quarters and every time the rudder was moved, the chain dragged across the steel plates making loud noises... All day, all night, back and forth...back and forth.

It took us four miserable seasick days to reach Portland . The only memory I really have of Portland was the pure joy of moving into smooth water as we crossed the bar into the river. The sea sickness ended... but only for twenty-four hours while we unloaded.....If we thought she pitched and rolled while we were on our way up, we really had a great time on our way back down the coast. We were empty now and bobbed around like a cork in a washing machine... (It took me years to get over being seasick for the first few days at sea...I used to take a product named " Mother Sill's Seasick Pills" ...You have no idea what fun it is to be standing a watch on the bridge of a ship and having to puke every ten minutes, and of course everyone laughed at me.)

I was standing the noon to four pm bow watch on the Coney as we were going through the Santa Barbara Channel off the Santa Barbara Islands . We had to have a

lookout on the bow when going through the channel to watch for other ships and small craft. This was all new to me. It was lovely day and the sea was like glass. There were two or three other ships going through the channel and I was enjoying the view....Until I saw the tail wake of two torpedoes heading straight for the bow!!... I grabbed the phone to the bridge shouting “ Torpedo! Torpedo!” and took off running for the amidships house expecting to hear the explosions any second. . When I arrived at the front of the house all I could hear was laughter. The mate, the captain and the man on the wheel were laughing and pointing to my “torpedo's” My “torpedo's” turned out to be two porpoises. They make a wake just like a torpedo. Well, I was young and that’s what they looked like to me... I went back to the bow and found my torpedo’s playing with our bow wave Every body on board heard about it and we all had fun with it for a couple of days... Our first voyage came to an end at the tanker pier in Wilmington . The three of us boarded a bus back to San Francisco.

Now that we were great seamen, we were ready for our next voyage. Normally it takes three years at sea before you can become an “Able Seaman”, but our country was in a war and after all, we had eight days time on the Coney. All three of us were immediately given temporary “Able Seaman” ratings and assigned to different ships. (I eventually got my real “Able” rating but it was later after the war was over.)

For landlubbers and new sailors. (A Forecastle(fo’c’sle) is a room...On a ship there are no rooms, only Forecastles. There are no floors, only decks, no ceilings only overheads...no walls , bulkheads... A bullock is a huge cleat on docks to which mooring lines were tied.

For Registration and Agenda forms for the upcoming AMMV 31St National Please scroll down. Also available on our Web site.
ammvsacvalley.com



AMMV 31st National Convention

Reno, Nevada – March 26 – March 30, 2017

Sands Regency Hotel

Notes: All activities listed below will be in rooms on the Mezzanine of the Regency Tower.

Sunday, March 26

13:00 – 17:30 Convention Registration – Regency Room E & F;
Hospitality Room open
18:30 – 20:30 Board of Directors Meeting, room TBD

Monday, March 27

09:00 – 11:30 Opening ceremonies; President's Report; Status of Korean War
Merchant Mariners Veterans application
12:00 – 13:30 Ladies Luncheon; Hospitality Suite opens
13:30 – 16:00 National Elections/Resolutions/By-Laws
16:00 – 16:30 Guest Speaker: Fr. Sinclair Oubre
17:30 – 18:30 Hospitality Suite Open
18:30 - BANQUET; Guest speaker: Jeremy Hope, Pacific Ports Agent,
International Organization of Masters, Mates, & Pilots

Tuesday, March 28

09:00 – 10:30 General Session
11:00 – 16:00 Bus Tour: Lunch buffet at Grand Sierra Hotel; Harrah's Auto Showroom
(tour of antique cars); visit Planetarium at University of NV-Reno
11:00 – 16:00 Hospitality Room open with Sally & Roy; late Registration
(Free night to explore or gamble)

Wednesday, March 29

08:00 – 09:15 Dave Yoho, WWII MM Vet & motivation speaker
09:30 – 10:45 Guest Speaker: William Geroux, author of "*The Mathews Men: Seven
Brothers and the War against Hitler's U-boats*"
10:45 – 11:00 'Remembrance Ceremony' for *M/S City of New York*, torpedoed 75 years
to the day (March 29th, 1942). Baby Jesse Mohorovic born in lifeboat
while awaiting rescue; survivors/descendants of incident to be in
attendance. Dr. Leonard Conly will be posthumously honored as WWII
MM Veteran.
11:00 – 12:30 Lunch break (Hospitality Room open)
12:30 – 15:00 Guest speakers/presenters: Mr. David Alberg, NOAA Sanctuary
Superintendent; Mr. Douglas Alvord, sculpture artist
15:00 – 16:00 "Open Mic"
16:00 – 17:00 Hospitality Room open
17:30 - FAREWELL BANQUET; Guest Speaker: Captain Harry Bolton,
California Maritime Academy, Master of *Training Ship Golden Bear*.
50/50 drawing; awards ceremony; entertainment: Sally & Roy

Thursday, March 30

HOMEWARD BOUND



AMMV 31st annual National Convention Registration
March 26-29th, 2017 (Sands Regency Hotel, Reno, NV)

Name _____ Affiliation/Chapter _____

Spouse/Other _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Convention Fee (No fee for Spouse or Companion)..... \$75 x _____ = \$ _____

Board of Director's Meeting..... *(Sunday, March 26: 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM)*

Business Meeting: Opening Ceremony..... *(Monday, March 27: 9:00 AM)*

Business Session..... *(Monday, March 27: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM)*

Ladies' Luncheon *(Monday, March 27: 12 noon)*

Croissant Crab and Bay Shrimp Sandwich \$18 x _____ = \$ _____

Cobb Salad \$18 x _____ = \$ _____

President's Reception Dinner *(Monday, March 27: 6:30pm)*

Roast Pork Loin, Roasted Potatoes & Asparagus, Carrot Cake \$35 x _____ = \$ _____

Baked Herb Crusted Cod, Twice Baked Potato, Green Beans, Carrot Cake..... \$35 x _____ = \$ _____

Business Meeting..... *(Tuesday, March 28: 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM)*

Reno Bus Tour *(Tuesday, March 28: 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM).....* \$55 x _____ = \$ _____

Harrah's Automobile Collection, Buffet Grand Sierra Hotel, Planetarium, University of Nevada - Reno

Business Meeting General Session..... *(Wednesday, March 29: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM)*

Farewell Banquet *(Wednesday, March 29: 6:30 PM)*

12 oz. Oven Roast Prime Rib, Twice Baked Potato, Asparagus, Tiramisu..... \$45 x _____ = \$ _____

Pacific Salmon Teriyaki, Twice Baked Potato, Green Beans, Tiramisu..... \$45 x _____ = \$ _____

Total Due for Convention Fee, Meals, Event, & Tours..... \$ _____

Make check payable to: AMMV 31st National Convention 2017

Mail Check (No Cash) with completed form to: Cindy Raymond, 2722 Maynes Ct., Santa Rosa, CA 95405

Make room reservations at the Sands Regency 800-233-4939. For special room rates of \$25/night plus \$17 tax, tell them you are with the Merchant Marine Conference.

Free airport shuttle, call upon arrival & check with Bell Desk before departure. Conference dates: March 26 - March 29 (Depart on 30th).