

# **ACROSS THE BIG WATER ON STEEL BOATS AND OTHER STORIES OF MY LIFE**

by  
David Long



## Dedication

This story of my days of youth is dedicated to my son David Long, Jr., who also sailed in the Merchant Marine.

His last ship, the S.S. Poet, sailed to the Philippines, Japan, Korea, and Sri Lanka with general cargo. When they returned to the states, David signed off and came home. The Poet loaded grain for Egypt in Philadelphia and sailed down the Delaware and out to the Atlantic. She was never heard from again. No distress calls, no S.O.S. - nothing.

Forty seamen gone. No one has ever found out what happened. Such is the way of the sea -



Ernie Pyle's grave. Okinawa, Japan - 1945  
Cover Picture: S.S. Charles Sumpter, Liberty ship,  
Singapore - 1949

### **To a Sailor's Mother**

No doubt you are wondering  
When your boy will come home  
And you've anxiously waited  
While he continues to roam.  
When at night you retire,  
In your heart is a prayer,  
For your curly haired boy  
Who is far away out there.  
Waiting for the mailman  
Wondering where he might be;  
Your little boy that grew up  
And went down to sea.  
He isn't much of a hand  
To write letters you know;  
An occasional few lines,  
Here and there on the go.  
But as he sails his ships  
O'er the Seven Seas.  
He's as near to his God  
As you at home on your knees.  
He has answered his calling,  
The call of the sea,  
No man can resist it,  
And neither could he.  
Foreign lands he will travel  
But this you must know:  
He always will love you,  
Wherever he might go.

Gaetano J. Carulli, Bk. No. 46679

As the cold northern winds start in this second week of January, I have to stop, think back, and take a long look at my life.

Once you look at fate, you at last realize you are not immortal.

My life so far has been a good, wonderful, eventful go-around. My goals and ambitions have been always to look over the next hill onto bigger and better things.

I have traveled the world, visiting forty-some countries and five continents, crossing the ocean, the equator and the international dateline several times. I've walked in the acropolis in Athens, visited the pyramids of Egypt, walked across the Tiber River in Rome, seen the jungles of central Africa, and the rain forest of South America. I've witnessed war at Okinawa, have seen Japan's Mt. Fuji, and sailed around the world. I've seen many, many strange sights, done fascinating things, and decided to record my life to show the changes that have taken place during this lifetime.

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I was born in Baltimore Hundred Sussex County, Delaware on November 2, 1927. Our homestead was a sixty-seven acre farm which my father tilled with two mules all his life. I was the youngest of six children: three girls and three boys.

Looking back, the year I was born Lindbergh flew the Atlantic, times were good, and country life was quiet but happy. Cal Coolidge was president.

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In our area at that time, cars were limited. Many people used horses or mules or simply walked. There were no televisions. Radios were not too efficient even if you were lucky enough to own one. Entertainment was usually visiting neighbors, going to church, and having a big chicken and dumplings dinner on Sunday. Money was always scarce.

My early years went smoothly and quietly. The stock market crash in 1929 and the following depression made life a little more difficult for my father and mother. You could hardly sell farm crops, and, if you did, the prices were so low you never ended up with much money. To get our necessities, my father sometimes took chicken or eggs to the market to exchange for salt, sugar, coffee, and other basics. Christmases were happy events, even if we didn't get much. One thing, living on the farm, we always had plenty to eat although we didn't eat much steak. We raised pork, chicken, and ducks and had plenty of vegetables, which were our staples. We were fishermen too, so we had fish. Our transportation was an old Model T and the horse cart.

In the early '30s, the Navy had a radio station at Bethany Beach. Two of my sisters married sailors from that station.

The station was sold in the '40s or '50s to Ray Hickman.

In 1933, Roosevelt and his New Deal had taken over in Washington from Hoover. Roosevelt did put some money in circulation through the Works Progress Administration and other public works projects. It was a big help to our area. My father worked at what is now the Assawoman Wildlife Area building roads, ponds, and pavilions. The pay wasn't much - a couple dollars a day - but it sure helped out.

In 1933, I was six years old and started grade school at the old Roxana school, part

of which is now the Roxana fire house. The school had grades one through eight. Mrs. Dorothy Pepper taught one through three, Mrs. Florence Doby taught four through six, and Mr. Tillman Johnson taught seven and eight. Mr. Johnson was our principal. We had a freestanding coal stove for heat, and we had an old outdoor toilet or privy.



In 1934, the new school, what is now the school administration offices, was completed and we went there. Boy, did we move uptown! We had central heat, indoor bathrooms, and even a cafeteria! This was great! We had the same class setup though and the same teachers. From grades one through twelve, my school bus driver was Mr. Harry Godwin. He drove the same bus for twelve years. I can still see him peering through the large mirror over the windshield looking straight into your eyes if you were a little out of line or were teasing the girls.

In the summer, I was expected to help my father on the farm. I would plow and cultivate with our mules or hoe crops when necessary. We raised lots of truck crops like tomatoes, strawberries, peppers, cucumbers, potatoes, etc. It was necessary for everyone in the family to help with the picking or harvest. For the strawberry season we would go to Philadelphia and get some of the homeless, we called them bums, to help with the picking.

We would go to the beach sometimes. The Fourth of July was a big-day. We would all load up in the old '34 Ford and head for Ocean City early in the morning. At that time there was no beach highway between Fenwick Island and Ocean City, so we had to go around by Berlin. You could always count on a couple of flat tires, the car boiling, and large traffic jams. But to get to Ocean City, it was well worth it. After my sister, Edna, married Wait, the sailor from the radio station, Walt was transferred to the U.S.S. Indianapolis as a radio gunner on her scout plane. One day off the coast of Cuba his plane crashed and he ended up blind. He was discharged from the Navy, and they made their home in Philadelphia. It was lots of fun going to the big city to visit them - lots of new sights, sounds and tastes.

In the '30s, we started raising a few broilers (chickens). Our house would only hold two-thousand, five-hundred chickens, all the water had to be pumped by hand, and the stoves were all coal stoves. In those days, you kept the chickens twelve to fifteen weeks before you sold them. Heavy beach sand was used as litter. It cost three dollars a truck load. Cleaning out the houses after you sold the chickens was hard work. The beach sand was good and wet and fifteen weeks of manure on top of it! My father used it on our crops as fertilizer.

During my summer vacations, I usually worked on the farm, but -one summer I worked at a feed store - unloading 100-pound bags of chicken feed from freight cars and storing the bags in feed houses or delivering them to chicken farms. My last summer I spent working at Mumford's Sheet Metal plant alongside German prisoners of war who had been captured in North Africa.

In 1940, I graduated from Roxana School. I started high school in Selbyville in 1941. High school was lots of fun. Our classes at Selbyville High were small (only nine

students in our graduating class). I played baseball and some basketball on our school teams.

During some fall weekends, Carl Wilgus, Gene Bunting, Clayton Ringler and I would go to Philadelphia to see Penn play football and just fool around. They were fun trips. We stayed with Clayton's aunt or my sister, Edna.

They were the war years during high school, and all the boys who were physically able knew they would go into the service after school. Our class graduated the first week of June 1945. The war was about over in Europe but still going strong in Japan.

I wanted to go to war very badly. I had a brother, Tink, who had been a prisoner of war of the Japs ever since the Philippines fell in early '42 and another brother, Horace, who was a combat engineer with the seventh army fighting through Europe. I couldn't wait.



The day after graduation my buddy Carl Wilgus and I went to Philadelphia to enlist. I asked people for the fastest way to get to the war zones, and many of them said the Merchant Marine. So, I joined up with the U.S. Maritime Service, which was the training branch of the Merchant Marine. Carl joined the Navy and went to flight school to become a pilot. He retired as a commander.

After signing up and being given a physical, I was told to go home, and they would call me. They called about the middle of June. I met some other guys in Philadelphia, and off we went to boot camp at Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Boot camp, which was modeled after the Navy's boot camps, was something else! You had to line up and march everywhere you went. First you got your shots, and they weren't too gentle! It was a big deal getting uniforms, shoes, and linen for your bunk. You stenciled everything! They weren't fussy about your clothes and shoes fitting too well. I can still feel those blisters my "golden slippers" made!

We would leave our barracks early in the morning, line up, and march to the mess hall, march back after chow, ten minutes or so for the bathroom, etc., and then line up and march to class. Then we marched to the mess hall, marched to the parade ground, and marched, marched, marched.

For the first couple weeks, we couldn't leave our barracks at night. Later we could go to PX (post exchange) or the movies, but we couldn't leave the base. Rumor had it that our section would go to the West Coast and man some of the ships for the invasion of Japan.

Our classes there included seamanship and survival training. You had to cross ropes on the ceiling over the pool, dive under a lifeboat and come up in burning water (oil on fire), and learn how to get a breath of air before diving again.

Our obstacle course was also a rough one. You went over it every day. You also had to box. Charlie Keller of the New York Yankees was our fitness officer. By the way, you also had to salute anything that moved. (Really only officers!)

We also had gunner training. The Navy was in charge of that. I remember the twin

fifties giving me a black eye. We trained in a real lifeboat out in Sheepshead Bay. The three main courses covered the engine rooms, deck, and steward dept. They tried, to teach you a little about each of these, because, although you could choose which area you wanted, you did not necessarily get what you wanted.

I chose the engine room - The lowest rating in this was a wiper, who just cleaned up and would help the engineer with repairs. After wiper, you became fireman-watertender and then oiler.

Sometime in July, they told us we were going to the West Coast. We were really excited about leaving Sheepshead Bay and getting to travel.

After a couple of weeks in camp, you would have a big inspection and parade on Saturdays. If you did OK on both, you were given weekend liberty. I would try to get home because it was fun to go to the Ocean City boardwalk with your uniform on! Sometimes, we would just stay in New York and go to the movies or to the USO or other canteens.

We left for Baltimore by train in August. In Baltimore, we marched from the train station to the dock where we got our first look at the old U.S.M.S. American Engineer. The U.S.M.S. American Engineer was an old hog islander built during World War I and then operated by Merchant and Miners Fifty-Five Co. on the U.S. Coastwise trade. You could look at her, and see she was old, but we were excited. We got aboard and found our bunk room, which was very crowded with four tiers of bunks all over the place.

We sailed from Baltimore for Panama. Our group was broken up, and I was sent to the engine room to work in the fire room (boiler room). She had ancient machinery including low-pressure firetube boilers. She had a regular ship crew aboard, and they were supposed to teach us trainees. I caught on fast in the fire room and could soon maintain a constant steam pressure and water level. She was oil fired.

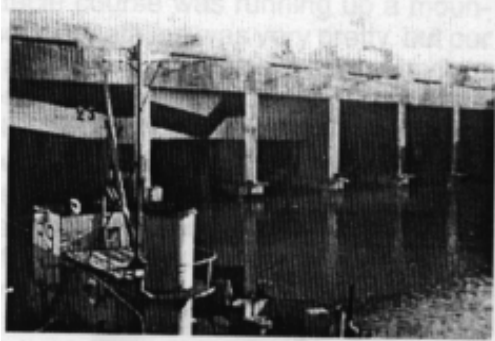
After about a week at sea, we docked in Colon, Panama, and we're all given liberty. This was a very exciting time for us. We all dressed up in our whites and off, we went!

Colon was full of sailors and soldiers from ships coming and going through the canal. We hunted for souvenirs and drank a beer - didn't have to worry about age down there. We only worried about S.P.s (Shore Patrol) and saw the sights. It was the first tropical place I had seen - hot and lots of palm trees!

After a great liberty, we returned to the ship and prepared to transit the Panama Canal. Going through the canal was quite an experience for a seventeen year old. Lots of ships were coming back from Okinawa with battle wounds, many caused by kamikaze (suicide) planes. It was something to see all their kills (Jap flags representing ships their crews had

sunk or plane they had shot down). When we were going through the locks the ships were only a few feet away. Our convoy finally arrived at Panama City at the west end of the canal. We dropped off the pilot and sailed down the coast of Central America. The Pacific was beautiful, blue, and calm. Our ship could only make about eight knots, so we only traveled about two-hundred miles a day. I was on watch then, still learning in the fire room. After a few days, the scuttle was that we would stop in Mexico to bunker.





German sub Pens in La Pollice, France  
S.S. Michael De Kovats - 1946

Sure enough, we stopped in Manzanillo for fuel. No shore leave was allowed. All sorts of Mexican vendors came out to the anchored ship, and many kids came out to dive for coins. They were like fish! We finished bunkering and departed for California. The captain had one of the mates set up fishing line to trawl. The end of the line was hooked to length of pipe, and this was placed next to an empty oil drum. If a fish hit, it was supposed to knock the drum over making a big noise. Then, someone would pull in the fish. I worked! We caught several big dolphin!

The weather was hot, and it was very hot sleeping partly because we were so crowded. We got to San Pedro California, after a while. We were all told to pack our sea bags and get ready to depart ship. We marched to the SS Avalon, a Catalina ferry, boarded her, and were carted off for Catalina. The Maritime Service had taken over a large hotel near the casino. We were all given bunks and then a couple days leave. Most of us took the ferry back to San Pedro and went to L.A. and Hollywood.

I went to the Hollywood canteen and saw several movie stars and was treated very nicely. I toured around for a day and then had to return to Catalina. I remember we had P.T. and our obstacle course was running up a mountain to Zane Gray's house. Catalina was very pretty, but our stay was short, only a few days, and then we went back to the mainland and boarded a troop train to San Francisco. The train was old and rough. They gave us box lunches to eat. After a while, we got to Oakland. They took us across the bay to Montgomery Street in San Francisco. This was the Maritime Services' shipping station. My stay in San Francisco lasted only a few days. We had lots of liberty and really enjoyed the city and the surrounding area. During this stay though, I didn't feel too well, so I went to the doctor, and they put me in the Marine hospital with possible appendicitis. During that time, James Wilgus from Selbyville visited me. I had no idea, how he knew I was in the hospital. If I ever see him again, I'm going to ask him. Hope he remembers after all these years.



Peter Paul Paqen and me at St. Peters  
in Rome, S.S. Serlis Friberg - 1947

The war in the Pacific with Japan was over now. It had ended during my voyage on the American Engineer. I felt good that the war was over. The Merchant Marine suffered many casualties. In fact, the number was second only to the Marine Corps' in proportion to its size. Also, when a kamikaze plane hit a ship, it was very hard to leave the engine room if you were on watch. There were chain ladders in addition to regular ladders, and you could escape to the shaft alley if you were lucky.

After I got out of the hospital, I was called to the shipping office and told I was shipping out to the Far East on a victory ship, the S.S. Wake Forest Victory, as a fireman/watertender. I was given a union card for the Marine, Firemen, Oilers, and Watertenders Union of the



Pacific (MFOW). The ship was operated by war shipping Adm.

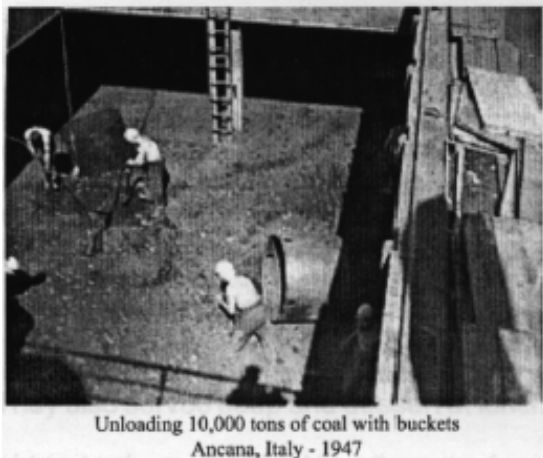
They also gave me my seaman's papers, passport and backpay (forty dollars a month). They gave me instructions on where the ship was docked - in Alameda, California - and told me good luck. I packed my sea bag and headed out.

You can imagine my excitement when I found her. She was painted all gray and, although the war was over, she still had her guns aboard. I went aboard and signed on for the voyage as fireman/watertender. My seaman's papers only called for a wiper, but the Coast Guard gave me a waiver to sail as a fireman for the trip.

I finally found my forecandle (room). There were three firemen on board, and we all slept in the same room. I had the top bunk. I reported to the chief engineer, and he wasn't too happy that I had so little experience and no experience at all on high-pressure boilers. I was given the eight to twelve watch. Always at sea on watch, you work four hours on and eight hours off. I went on watch, and we prepared to sail. Everything was new to me, and no one was there to show me, too much about the way she operated.

As the engineer opened the throttle to the turbines, you had to keep the steam pressure up and the water level up in the gauge glass. When the steam pressure started to drop, you increased the flow of oil to your burners or, if all the burners were not lit off, you lit them off. If you needed more fuel to keep up, you had to put larger tips in your burners to increase the flow of oil.

The water was automatically set for the most part. You could increase the speed of the fuel pump if necessary. You could also balance the water in the boilers with check valves. The victory ships had high-pressure boilers and we carried four-hundred, forty psi (pounds per square inch) steam pressure. This gave us about ninety rpm (revolutions per minute) at the propeller shaft. The Liberties were low pressure (two-hundred psi), running propellers at sixty rpm.



That first watch was long. I let the pressure get to high and the safety valves popped with a mighty roar! They scared me something awful. Right then, I wished I was back in Roxana! The chief engineer came down and rained hell on me, but he showed me what to do, and I caught on real fast. In the engine room, there is an engineer, oiler, and F. W. T. on watch at all times. My engineer and oiler were real nice, and we got along great, becoming good friends. We finally left San Francisco Bay and headed out into the Pacific. I found out we had supplies for our troops in Okinawa. Sea duty was pretty routine. After they got the engine set, the speed didn't change, so you could set your control and sort of take it easy. However, you could never leave the fire room unless you had a relief. During the watch, you had to clean burners and suction and discharge strainers from the fuel-oil liner.

The enlisted men from the black gang (engine room) had their own mess hall with a mess man to serve them. After standing in line at the chow hall in the Maritime Service,

this was great. The food was good. We ate full meal three times a day, and at night there was always some night lunch. The officers (mates and engineers, gunnery officers radio officers and purser) ate one deck above us, but they ate the same food. You would always have at least two main entree choices. They also served soup and dessert at lunch and dinner.

We (the eight-to-twelve watch) had to relieve the four-to-eight watch for dinner, which only took twenty minutes. The oiler on watch would always call the next watch about a quarter after the hour. You tried to relieve the watch at ten minutes to the hour.

There was not much to do but read and sleep during our leisure time. Some guys played cards. You couldn't have a personal radio, but sparks would tune in Armed Forces Radio, B.B.C., or anything he could get in English and send it down through our speakers in the mess hall.

All the crew except for me was from the West. We had mostly Mormons aboard. They were generally nice. Sometimes during the day the gunners would let us shoo oil drums they would toss in the ocean. We enjoyed that.

We passed the international dateline where you lose a day going and gain one coming back. There was not much to see except ocean, ocean, and ocean. Sometimes you saw flying fish.

As I remember, the trip lasted seventeen days, and for the last three we were in one heck of a typhoon. It was very rough. The cooks couldn't cook. You couldn't keep the food on a table because of the rolling. They would wet the tablecloth to help hold the dishes. We would prop up the outside of our bunks with coffee cans to keep from falling out.

The war had ended, but we still got a mine bonus. There were lots of mines around the Pacific. We got two dollars and fifty cents a day extra because of this danger.

At last we arrived at Okinawa. We anchored in Buckner Bay off Brown Beach II. The first thing we saw were partly sunken ships, including one destroyer and a couple of merchant ships. The destroyer was an old four-stacker. The merchant ships were Liberties. They were all bombed. I don't know if kamikazes got them or not. We later went over to a merchant ship and got some jackets. She was on the bottom.

The first day a Navy launch came out and brought us mail. That was always a happy day. We also were allowed to go to shore and look around.

The SeaBees came out to unload the ship onto barges and military police came aboard to guard the cargo, which was mostly food, clothing, and spare parts. We had some ammunition in the number one hold.

As soon as I could, I caught a SeaBee launch ashore to look around. Leaving the landing area, I walked around and saw a burned out tank. There was a shoe lying to the side, and I picked it up. It had a foot in it! The tank was American.

The army was cleaning up wherever I went. Using bulldozers, soldiers were digging trenches, dropping wrecks and equipment in them, and burying them. I walked along a fence in one village. The Marines had set Jap heads on the fence posts and had even put hats on their heads. A marine told me they were imperial Japanese marines and had given our boys a very hard time.

You did not see too many civilians. They were, very rough looking, like they needed a meal and clean clothes. You could hitchhike anywhere. The Army or Marines would pick you up. I hitched a ride to Suicide Cliffs and walked around after climbing up.

Some of the caves still held Jap bodies. I remember one Jap sitting on a rock in a cave with his rifle across his knees, burned black by a flame thrower. You had to be careful because the Army was working trying to find all the booby traps.



Liberty ships in Hamburg, Germany  
1947

At the edge of the cliffs, many Japs and civilians committed suicide by jumping off. You could still see lots of uniform clothes below. They were still cleaning up the pieces.

The tombs were also a battlefield. The Japs hid in the tombs and had to be rooted out. There was a lot of destruction. Ernie Pyle was killed near there. I have a picture of his grave. He was later moved to Hawaii.

There sure wasn't much to do in Okinawa. You soon got very tired of what you saw ashore. We, the ship's crew were invited to a USO show. No big names were

there, just some guys and gals trying to entertain the troops. It was held on the side of a hill. The Marines had put down sand bags to sit on. The entertainers had a makeshift stage at the bottom of the hill. All in all, we were in Okinawa for about two months, unloading our cargo. I had my eighteenth birthday on the island.

After the SeaBees finished with the Okinawa cargo, we set sail for Guam with the rest of it. It didn't take long to get to Guam. The weather was warm and beautiful. We anchored, and the SeaBees came out with mail. I got one of the few letters on the ship. It was from my good friend and schoolmate Elmer Daisy, a SeaBee. I looked at the return address and found out it was the same outfit that was unloading our ship!

As soon as I could, I went ashore and hitched a ride up to the SeaBee camp. I asked around and found Elmer in the cook tent. He was really surprised. He didn't know I was within ten-thousand miles of him. We spent lots of time together over the next few days. He, of course, lived in a tent. He had made himself a bed from a two-by-four and used inner tubes cut in strips as springs for his mattress. He had a pet monkey, which all the guys liked.

He would eat on the ship sometimes. One night we had a very rare steak dinner. I invited him, and we were eating and all of the sudden he pulled something out of his mouth. It was a huge staple! I still don't know how it got in the steak. We laughed about it in later years. Elmer would borrow a jeep, and we went all over the island. Admiral Halsey had his headquarters on a big hill overlooking the Pacific. It was a nice spot.

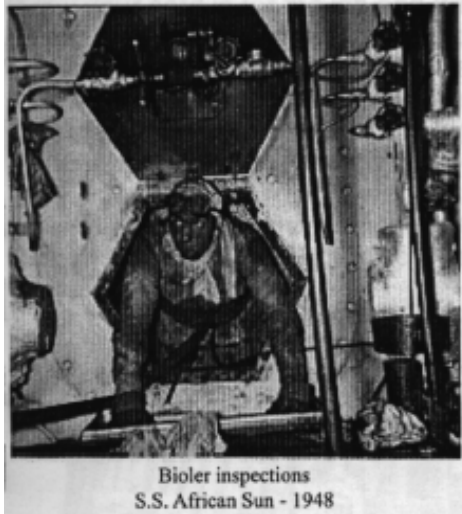
We discharged our cargo and loaded some military cargo for Hawaii and the west coast. Then we set sail again.

Our next port was Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. We took a cargo officer, an Army captain, with us. His only duty was to guard several, large cases, which were said to contain invasion yen and were said to have been used for the Japanese invasion. We were taking them to Pearl Harbor. They were stored in the strong box in number three hold and was code named "Troy Horse." Part of the deck gang got some wood and

stenciled "Troy Horse" on it and left it around number three hold. We really upset the army captain! When we got to Pearl and unloaded, he found all the yen were still there!

We went ashore when we were not on watch. Honolulu was nice to visit, but it was packed with military personnel. We took in all the sights we could and soon were ready to sail. Next stop was the U.S.A.! Our four-plus months of voyage were coming to an end. It had been seven months since I had been home.

We set sail for San Francisco. When we docked, all sorts of fresh food came aboard, and the cooks got busy. It was wonderful to have fresh milk and eggs (not powdered) and all the fruit and other goods. The shipping commissioner came aboard the next day, and we were paid off and discharged.



After a day or so of having fun in Frisco, I went down to the ferry building at the foot of Market Street and took the ferry to Oakland. I bought a coach ticket for forty seven dollars and fifty cents on the Acheson Topeka and Sante Fe for New York. The coach was real old, and the engine was steam-powered. We stopped in New Mexico and Arizona to the Harvey House. The train would stop, and everyone would get off and go eat, The engineer would blow the whistle, and we would all return and take off. We did this for two days.

In Chicago, I changed to Pa. Railroad heading to New York. It was really cold for me! We had been in the warm Pacific, and I came east to winter in January!

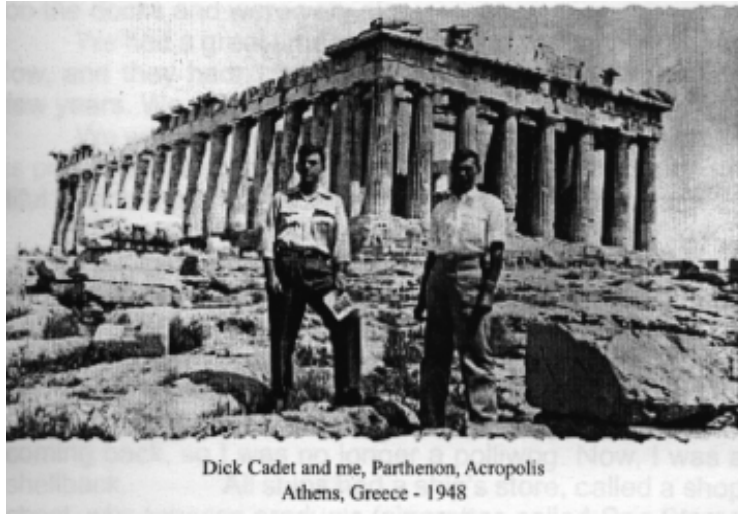
I was really glad to get home and see my family and friends. Both my brothers were home. Tink had to spend about a year in the hospital. He was treated badly as a prisoner of war. I guess he was lucky to survive.

It was really cold at home. I went to basketball games and local hot spots. After a couple weeks, I went to New York to see about shipping out again. I had registered at our M.F.O.W. hall when I first got off the train in New York. When you shipped through the hall, the person with the senior registration card got the job he wanted. There was a large blackboard with the ship's name, where she was going, and what type of replacement crew she needed. If you threw your card in for the job and got it, they would give you a card for the chief engineer and you would go to the ship. For every trip, U.S. Public Health Service officials gave you a physical exam, and the U.S. Coast Guard shipping commissioner, signed you -on, for the trip. If you were willing to wait for a senior card, you, could go just about anywhere in the world

I was registered as fireman-watertender or oiler. When we came back to San Francisco, I sat (took the exam) for fireman/watertender and oiler with the U.S. Coast Guard and got my certification. On the Wake Forest Victory, the Coast Guard had given me a waiver to sail as fireman-watertender.

My card wasn't too old, but a job came up on the Tuskegee Victory for F.W.T. going to Lisbon, Portugal. I threw in for it and got it! I felt like an old veteran now.

I joined the ship in Staten Island. There is one thing I want to say about the warehouses on those piers where the cargo is temporarily stored. When you walked through them, you got every smell in the world. There were spices from the east, ebony from Africa, raw rubber from Malaysia, and jute from India - just a mixture of everything. You never forgot those warehouses. The Tuskegee Victory was similar to the Wake, Forest. She had a very good crew. In those days, most of the crews' members were between eighteen and twenty-three. The officers were a bit older, but not much.



Dick Cadet and me, Parthenon, Acropolis  
Athens, Greece - 1948

We were in Lisbon for three months unloading and then loading cargo for the U.S. They had lots of problems on the docks and were very slow.

We had a great time in Lisbon. The cost of things was low, and they hadn't seen many Americans over the last few years. We met very nice people.

We would go to Escroil, a resort on the coast. (Lisbon is on a river a few miles from the coast.) They had a beautiful casino there that was very famous before the war.

Time went fast, and we finally sailed for New York. I signed on again, and went to Rosario, Argentina to load grain for Europe. Argentina had their share, More than their share, of labor trouble. They would start to load and then go on strike. This went on and on.

After a couple months, we were loaded and sailed for Antwerp, Belgium. We crossed the equator going down and coming back, so I was no longer a polliwog. Now, I was a shellback. All ships had a ship's store, called a shop chest, with tobacco products (cigarettes called Sea Stores sold for one dollar or less a carton without tax), necessary work clothes, toilet articles, chewing gum, and some candy. The larger the ship the larger the store. If we had a purser aboard, he ran it. If not, the captain or chief steward was in charge. They took the amount you spent from your earnings. Also, when you got in port, you could draw against your wages - usually once a week.

Antwerp was a large city and a very important port for Europe. We were there about two weeks and really enjoyed our stay. We returned and were paid off in New York, and I went home for a vacation. It was still lots of fun in Ocean City at the Pier Club and Jacksons Casino. Next, I signed on the Atlantic Importer, a T-2 tanker for Atlantic Ref. Co. (now called Arco). I stayed on her for several months. We would run to Orange (Fort Arthur), Texas, Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela, Aruba, and some other Texas ports. They were short trips, lasting only twelve to fourteen days, and then we were back in Philadelphia. Our port time was short, only about twenty-four hours, to load or pump the cargo out. I sailed as F.W.T., oiler, and pumpman.

Atlantic was a very good company to work for, but I wanted to see more of the world. My old union, M.F.O.W., was mostly on the west coast, so I joined the National Maritime

Union (N.M.U.) and signed on the Julius Friborg, a Liberty ship, in Philadelphia. We went to Norfolk and loaded a full cargo of hogs heads (very large barrels) of tobacco. After we finished loading, we headed out into the north Atlantic for Liverpool, England. After a rough trip over, we arrived in Bickenhead on the Mersey River across from Liverpool.

There was not much to say about Liverpool at that time. They were still rebuilding, and no one was sorry when we had finished unloading and returned to the U.S. Let me tell you that a light Liberty ship in the north Atlantic in the winter was rough duty. You put some water ballast in the cargo holds, but you still, got plenty of rock and roll.

We got back to Norfolk and prepared to load coal for Ancona, Italy. After about fourteen days at sea running between nine to ten knots, we arrived at the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar). We anchored out at sea to bunker. The SS Co. loads as much cargo as they can and buy their fuel wherever they're going.

All sorts of Arabs and people from Gibraltar came aboard and spread their wares and booze on deck. You could get the most awful cognac there. I truly believe they must of peed in the bottle. After bunkering, we went on to Ancona on the Adriatic Sea. I've been to Italy several times, I really liked the Italians, but the time we were in Ancona, the commies were trying to take over Italy, and there was lots of trouble and mistrust among the Italians. The coal was unloaded using our winches. Crews went down into holds with wicker baskets to gather the coal. You can imagine how long it took to unload ten-thousand tons. Coal was so valuable that they even had a diver on the bottom to recover what little bit fell over the side.

My next trip was to Antwerp, Rotterdam, Holland and Hamburg with general cargo. We had plenty of time in port, and it was a good trip. The cities were really torn up, but they were getting straightened out a little. The European Recovery Act (the Marshall Plan) really helped Europe. I think they would have starved without it. I saw German girls who had been married to German army guys (who were killed) beg Americans to come home with them, so they could get a few marks or cigarettes (which were more valuable than money) or anything to eat. It was pitiful, but they had lots of pride too. Everyone in the crew sold cigarettes for going ashore money. You could get a very good price for a carton of Sea Stores! There really wasn't, much to buy on shore though, except in the clubs.

One trip, I signed on the S.S. Hawaiian Citizen in New York for a trip to Hawaii. The Citizen was a C-3 type owned by the Matson Navigation Co. It was a very nice ship. Most of the crew was from Hawaii. At the Hotel Lexington in New York, they had a Hawaiian revue and the guys from the ship knew most of the entertainers, so we hung out at the Lexington. We had lots of good times there. The trip to Hawaii lasted a little over two months.

Next I took a Liberty to Japan. After a long voyage, we arrived in Tokyo Bay and proceeded to the dock in Yokosuka, the big naval base near Yokohama. We went to Tokyo several times. The old houses had been built out of 'paper and wood and were just about all destroyed during the war. I remember going to the old Imperial Hotel where I bought a set of jade earrings, which I later gave to my wife.

During the next couple of years, I sailed Liberty ships to Europe. One of the ports I remember was Civitavecchia, Italy, which was the port for Rome. The city was really a wreck. The British invaded Italy there. We went in at Anzio.

I enjoyed Rome and all the ancient memorials and buildings - St. Peter's, St. Angab, the Colosseum, the old Roman aqueducts. There was so much to see.

In those days, Americans were kings of the road. You got lots of attention. You knew in Italy (or so it seemed) everyone had a relative in New York. Money was still easy to come by, and the Italians would buy, anything American.

I signed on a Grace Line C-2, the SS Santa Cecilia, loading for the west coast of South America with general cargo. I signed on as junior engineer. We also carried about fifty passengers. We passed through the Panama Canal and our first port of call was Buenaventura, Columbia, then Guayaquil, Equador, Callao, Peru (the port for Lima) was nice. It was built in the early 1500s by Juan Pazarro. I bought a Lima blanket there. We went on to Antofagasta and Valparaiso, Chile. It was a nice trip with plenty to see.

I shipped on the Parsimara, a United Fruit banana boat. It was a beautiful, fast ship with great quarters but a terrible feeder. We went through the canal, loaded in Columbia and Golfoto, Costa Rica, and unloaded in San Francisco and Seattle. Then we reversed the trip and unloaded in New York. The whole trip only took about six weeks.

We had cargo for La Pallice (La Rochelle), France one trip. Lots of the French towns had old ports, which were very ancient but very picturesque. They were sort of like the inner Harbor of Baltimore today. Lots of their ports on the English Channel or the Atlantic had sub pens that the Germans had built. They must of had ten feet of reinforced concrete over the pens. They were just holes large enough for the subs to get in. I could see why bombing wouldn't have an effect on them.

Brest was another of our ports of call. I met a French girl there who lived with her family in one of the canal barges. I visited the barge several times and even went for a short trip with the family. Everything was very compact in their living quarters but very clean.

We also visited La Harve and Dunkirk. Dunkirk was completely destroyed, and they moved the city over to new land. All you could see of the old town were piles of rubble and outlines of basements.

Amsterdam was a great city. You went most places by boat or water taxi. Canals went all over the place. We visited Amsterdam during the Christmas season. When we left for the states, there was a fierce storm in the Atlantic. The S.S. Flying Enterprise with Captain Kirt Carlson was taking, on water, and they abandoned her, except for Capt. Carlson. We were a light Liberty ship, only a few miles away, but there was nothing we could do. We had enough trouble with the storm as it was. You stood a throttle watch in the engine room. Liberties used tow-pressure, steam reciprocating engines, and when the propeller came out of the water, you closed the throttle to keep the engine from running away and tearing up. It was an ongoing thing in extreme weather.

We would go up the Wese River to Bremerhaven and Bremen in Germany. There were still lots of ships sunk in the river. The Germans were recovering fast, which was remarkable, seeing how they were torn up.

We also tool cargo to Hamburg up the Elbe River. Hamburg with St. Paulie, the Refferbund, and Two Mark Alley was unforgettable.

The liberties were very simple to operate In the engine room. If you took care of the machinery, you had very little trouble. Always in port you would break sea watches on

eight hours and at sixteen off. You worked seven days a week, but you could always get someone to do a watch for you if -you wanted to go out in the country or somewhere else. In the Merchant Marine you grew up fast. You were expected to do your work or watch if you were sixteen or sixty years old! You learned quickly. You really were on your own.

One trip we were coming back from Europe on a Liberty and got orders to go to Long Beach, California. We passed through the canal and were paid off in Long Beach. Then we signed on again to go to the Persian Gulf. We loaded a complete shipload of forty foot pipes thirty-four inch in diameter with thirty-two inch pipes inside them.

That was the most boring trip I had at sea. From Long Beach we were fifty-seven days at sea with no stops at all. The engine just kept going up and down for fifty-seven days. The food was poor. It was very hot and most of the fans didn't work. In the engine room, we just sat under a ventilator. The room was so hot you slept on deck most of the time. One thing I remember was how hot the shower was. The tank was below deck, and you could never get any cool water for a shower. We rigged up a salt-water shower, which helped, but it left a scum on your body.

Our destination was Ras El Manbib, Saudi Arabia. We saw a sea monster in the Arabian Sea that was like a huge snake with very large eyes. He reared up from the sea eight to ten feet. We also had a sandstorm in the gulf. We were seven-hundred miles from land. The sand covered everything. We had to put covers over the vents to try and keep it out of the engine room.

We stopped at Ras Torina and picked up about one hundred crew boys to work the cargo. For the next month, they just lived on deck, sleeping any place they could find. They had one big pot, like the old lard pots we used at hog killings, and they all ate out of it, using their right hands. They cleaned themselves with their left hands. They stopped six times a day, faced Mecca, and prayed.

We could not go ashore in Saudi Arabia. We tied up to a manmade island about three miles from shore. Towers were built, and they hauled the pipe ashore with cables. The pipe was for oil pipeline to Sidon, Lebanon on the Med.

We were glad to leave when they were finished. Our next stop was Bombay, India, where we loaded some tea. I couldn't say much for India except if you like extreme hot weather and unusual smells you might like it.

Our next stop was Georgetown, Penang in Malaya. This was very beautiful country, like out of a book. The people were very, very friendly.

Our last stop was Singapore. Everyone went to the old Raffles hotel and had Singapore Slings. We had good times in Singapore.

Then we were at sea again, heading for Los Angeles. We paid off there, and I came home to Ocean View.

Another trip that I remember clearly was to Africa. I signed on, Farrall Lines C-2 general cargo ship as an oiler in New York. After loading in New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Norfolk, we sailed for Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. During the war it was, said Esso tankers pumped their cargo of fuel oil to tanks up the hill while German subs were refueling on the other side of the hill. The islands belong to Spain. After Las Palmas, we sailed to Dakar, Senegal, - then Freetown, Sierra Leone; then Monrovia, Liberia; Abidjan, Ivory coast, (now Ghana); Porto Novo, Slave coast; Lagos, Nigeria; Douala, Cameroon; Luanda, Angola; and the last stop, Walus Bay, Southwest Africa.



Most of the towns then were very primitive. We usually went to the British Seaman's Club to shoot pool and drink some beer. The beer was full of quinine, and you felt as if your head would blow off the next day. Lots of our cargo was discharged in dug-out canoes with men using spears to row. We went up rivers, and monkeys sometimes jumped on our decks or in our rigging. In Walus Bay, we loaded frozen lobster tails. We carried twelve passengers, mostly missionaries. That was some trip!

I now had plenty of time at sea to qualify me to sit for my third assistant engineer's license. (in order to sit, you had to have spent three years of watch-standing, qualified time at sea.) This test was given by the Coast Guard and was pretty hard. I went back to Sheepshead Bay to go to upgrading school to prepare for the test. After a four-week cram course, I went to the Coast Guard offices in the Customs House in Philadelphia. They qualified my sea time, and I started the exam the following morning at nine in the morning. I spent five days taking that exam. (This was normal at that time.) On Friday, I finished, and late that afternoon I found out I passed with a ninety-two percent. I was very happy.

They swore me in, and I received my license as a third assistant engineer. I was twenty-one.

After some time at home, I shipped on the S.S. Santa Rosa, an early cruise ship owned by Grace Lines. I shipped as licensed junior engineer. It was great living in officer country! We made twelve-day trips carrying five-hundred passengers to the Caribbean, the Port of Spain, Trinidad, and Curacao, La Guayra the port for Caracas, Venezuela. I only made two trips on her.

Next I signed on with American Export Lines out of Jersey City. They shipped me on the S.S. Exeter, a one hundred, twenty passenger/cargo ship running to the Mediterranean. This was a great ship. I had my first air-conditioned room, and we, the officers, ate from the first-class passengers' menu. It was the best food I had ever eaten! The run was great too. The first port of call was Marseilles, France. I remember the Rue Des Can Berra most of all. The next stop was Naples, Italy, which was one big party, then Genoa, Italy and the home of Christopher Columbus, and then Piraeus, Greece, the port for Athens. After visiting John Bull's (a waterfront, famous bar), we would go to Athens on the streetcar. We went to the acropolis, the Parthenon, and many famous sites. Our next stop was Istanbul, Turkey with the Blue Mosque, St. Sophia, the Palace of the Golden Horn, and the ancient bazaar. I'll never forget (the Chateau Briand at) the old Parc Hotel. Then, we went on to Beirut, Lebanon, which was a beautiful city then. We hung out at the King George Hotel. (This was before their war.)

After this we went to Alexandria, Egypt, where I went to the Pyramids with the purser and passengers. After Alexandria, we went back to Italy, then Barcelona, Spain, and then on to New York. This was a great ship on a great run and one of the best times I had in the Merchant Marine. It had been my ambition to make one-thousand dollars per month sailing on my license. I now was in that group. That was a good feeling. In 1950, this was good money for an old farm boy. If I had only saved a part of it and put it in I.B.M., G.M., or Dupont, but I was having too much fun - only twenty-one and with a long way to go.

After two trips on her, they promoted me from junior third assistant to third assistant and transferred me to the S.S. Examiner. She was a prototype built for the Navy and

one of a kind. She had a turbine with three stages instead of two. After the HIP and IP, the steam was reheated and then went to the LP. She had many different operating differences.

On my first trip on her, we went to Casablanca, Morocco and Alacant, Spain. We always paid off and signed on in Jersey City. After every trip you were paid off and could quit if you wanted or sign on for another. Once you signed on, however, you had to make the voyage. On later trips, we went to Spain, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. It was like a history lesson traveling to Greece and Turkey - to go through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus and to see all the ancient ruins. During one trip, we were in Alexandria (Iskenderun) , and we went to Antioch. We saw the catacombs where the Christians would hide from the Romans In one cave, there was an altar, and it said John the Baptist preached there. There was also a crusader castle at Antioch. Alexander the Great founded Alexandria. Sometimes we would go up in the Black Sea but never to Russia.

The Examiner would go through the Suez Canal and into the Indian Ocean. Some stops were Aden, Bombay and Columbo, Ceylon. Also Cypress was one of our ports of call, but Latakia, Syria was a terrible port. You could get hurt there.

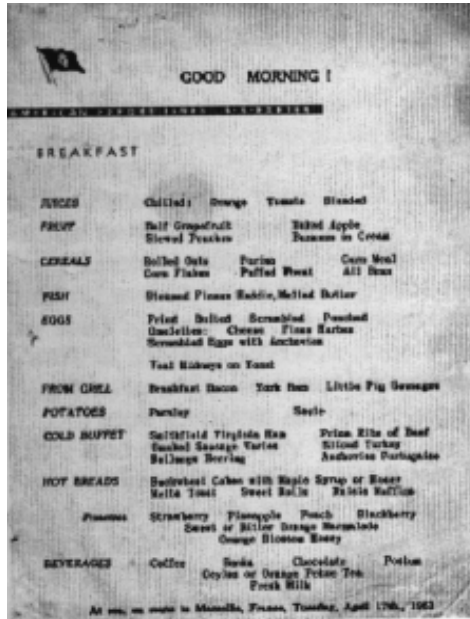
After quite a while on the Examiner, I went home and met up with my buddy Harry Daisey. We did some pretty heavy partying and decided to ship out together.

By this time, the high water mark of the U.S. Merchant Marine had passed. You could no longer see U.S. ships in every port. We had given or sold ships cheaply to foreign countries. Their crews made twenty-five percent of American crews' wages. They didn't have to have all the inspections and safety features the Coast Guard made U.S. have. So, they were taking away much of the American shipping business.

Anyway, I joined the M.E.B.A., an engineers' union, and Harry, and myself shipped on a Liberty to Europe, carrying coal. We made several trips to Europe. I sailed as third assistant, and Harry sailed as second assistant. After a, while, we got off and went home for a while. Then we shipped again on the S.,S. McKittrick Hills, a T-2 tanker. We flew to Montreal, Canada to join her. We went to the Mediterranean and loaded at Sidon, Lebanon. We picked up some of the same pipeline I had helped take to the Persian Gulf a few years before.

We stayed on the McKittrick Hills quite a while, going around the world during one trip, from the East Coast to the Persian Gulf, to Japan, Hawaii, and back to the East Coast. We paid off, and I came home. I met Betty Jean, my future wife, and we fell in love and married in. July 1953, I shipped again after a long break at home. I joined the S.S. Republic, also a T-2 tanker, and we ran along the coast. I was home every twelve days, if only for one night. (We had relief engineers In port.) We sailed on foreign articles one trip, went to the Persian Gulf and Japan, and back to the Persian Gulf before we came home. This was an awfully long trip for a newlywed. I paid off and came home and got an apartment in Millville. Betty Jean got pregnant and was sick the entire nine months, so that ended my seagoing days.

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The Merchant Marine has changed so much over the years. There are very few ships left under the American flag. From a highwater mark of some five-thousand ships, there are now less than four-hundred.

Also, the ones that are left are tankers and container ships mostly. A container ship will stay in port from twelve to twenty-four hours, and they're usually docked far from town so you don't get to do much sightseeing like we did in the old days. They are also much larger and much more complicated to operate. There are very few steam engines on new ships. Diesel engines have taken over for the most part.

After renting an apartment in Millville, I obtained a job operator at the central heating plant for the Air Force Base in Dover. This was my first contact with Plant Engineering, Inc.

At Dover, I worked shifts, and, on my two days off, I would usually go to Philadelphia and do night engineering work around there. The regular ship engineers would have a relief engineer in port, so they could take some time off. This extra money helped our budget. Betty Jean had a dental hygienist for Dr. Carer in Selbyville, but she soon had to resign because of her illness.

Our babies, twins, were born August 31, 1955, in Millville. David Jr. and Dawn Sara. We were, and are, very proud. I worked at the heating plant for about a year and then had the chance to go to Ft. Lee, Virginia to run a service contract for Plant Engineering. We loaded up and took off for Petersburg, Virginia. This area was to be our home for the next sixteen years.

I became an engineer superintendent for Plant Engineering and traveled bidding jobs and, if we were successful, starting them up. We worked in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. It was a good job with very little interference from our home office in Dover.

I took a course at the College of William and Mary in 1970 and received my Virginia real estate license. All the time we lived in Virginia, we knew it was just a temporary thing and that we would return to southeastern Sussex County in time.

In 1971, we decided to come home. We had a summer house in Ocean View but decided to sell it and build a new home, which we did.

I received my Delaware real estate license and worked Sussex Properties and East Coast Resorts until I received my Delaware brokers license in 1976. I decided to open my own business, D.J. Long Real Estate, which I ran until I semi-retired in 1988.

Since then, I have caught a lot of fish and walked many miles through the woods hunting. From my dock, I can be in the ocean fishing in less than half an hour. We travel when we want, but someone once said, "I don't have to travel; I live in Ocean View." I agree this is the spot. When you get to the top of the Indian River Bridge and look south at the ocean, the dunes and the bay, what could be better or look better? When we see this, we know we are home.

- END -