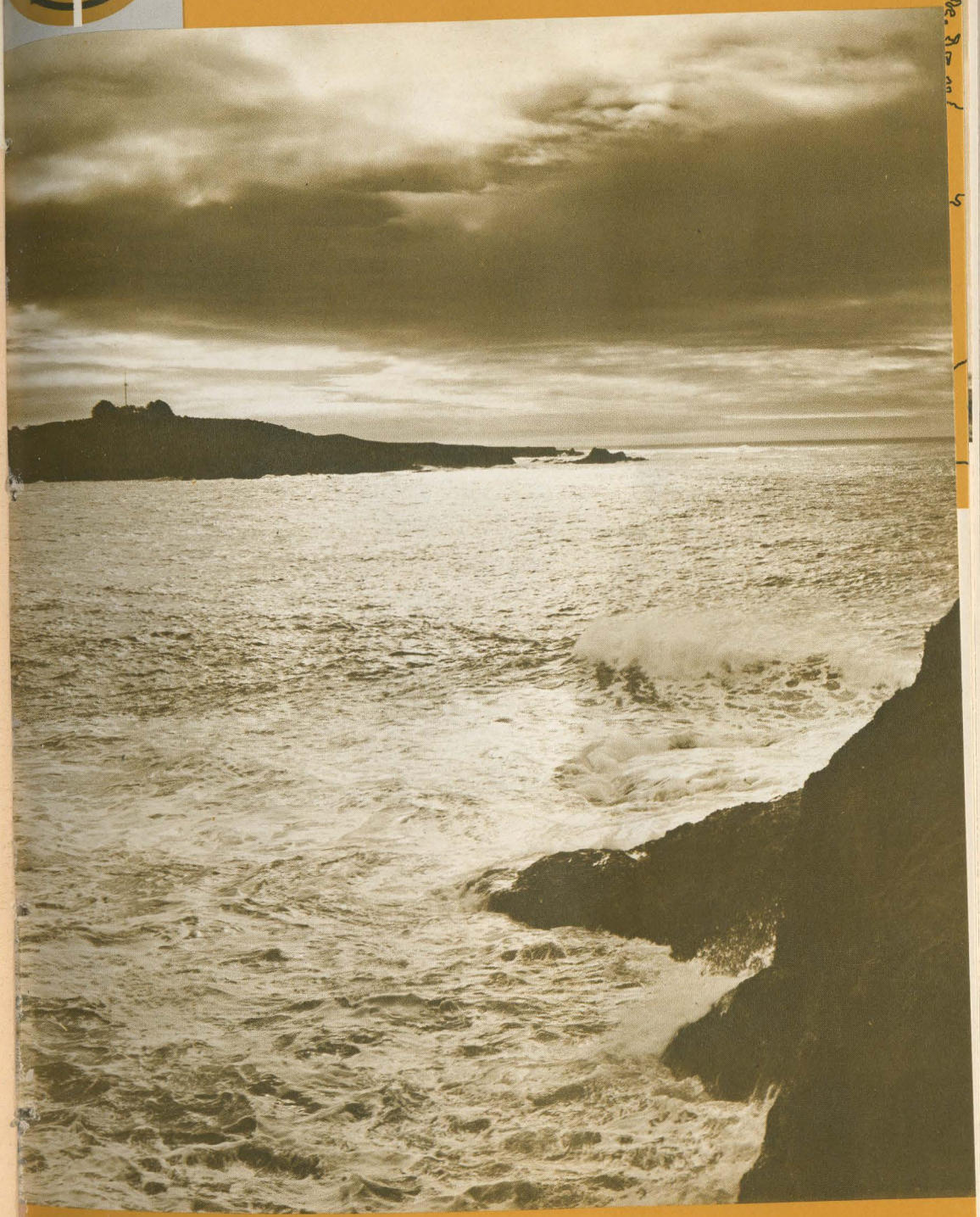
the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

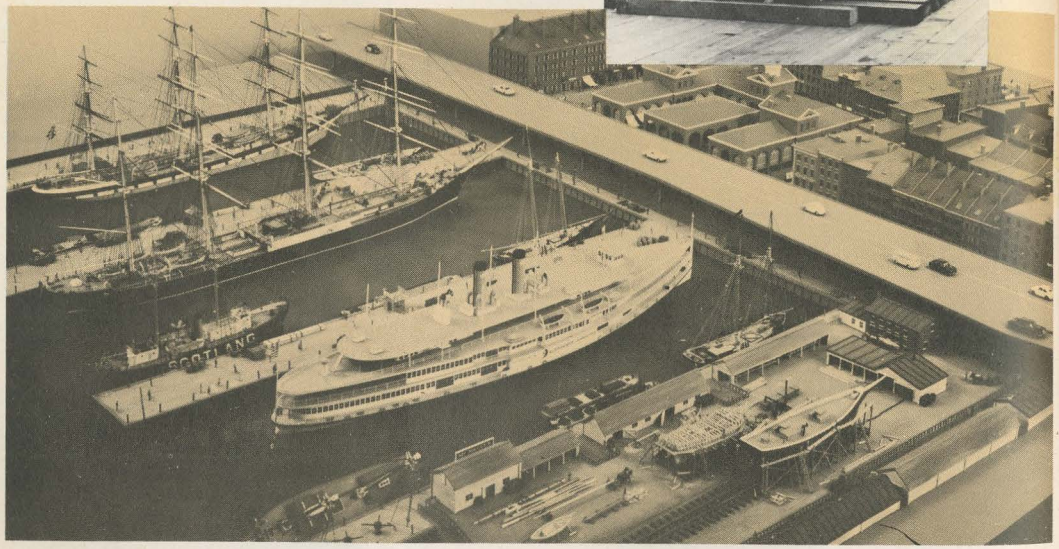


SEPTEMBER 1968

The Titanic memorial lighthouse which was formerly mounted atop the SCI South Street building, has been acquired by the South Street Seaport Museum and will be restored and re-sited within the Museum enclave when it becomes further developed. Lighthouse is shown as it rested on pier in Fulton fishmarket area shortly after it was received from old Institute building. ▶

▼ *South Street Seaport Museum* as it is projected to look when restored to its early 19th century appearance. It is predicted it will attract an excess of one million visitors a year when completed.

Plans are to have several oldtime sail ships moored at the waterfront as well as a typical Hudson River excursion boat, the *Alexander Hamilton,* and the *Scotland,* a lightship which once guarded the entrance to New York harbor.



the LOOKOUT

Vol. 59, No. 7 September 1968

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK
15 State Street, New York, N.Y. 10004
Telephone: 269-2710

The Right Reverend
Horace W. B. Donegan, D.D., D.C.L.
Honorary President

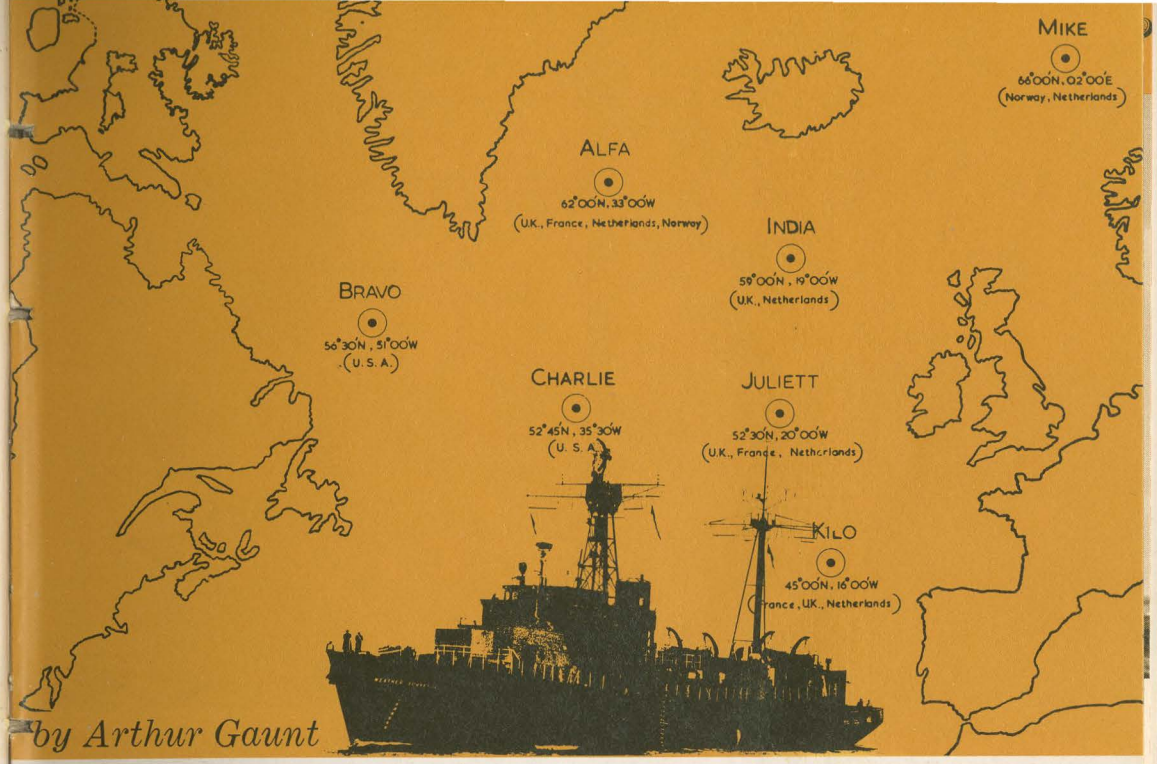
Franklin E. Vilas
President

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

Harold G. Petersen
Editor

Published monthly with exception of July-August and February-March when bi-monthly. Contributions to the Seamen's Church Institute of New York of $5.00 or more include a year's subscription to The Lookout. Single subscriptions are $2.00 annually. Single copies 50¢. Additional postage for Canada, Latin America, Spain, $1.00; other foreign, $3.00. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.

COVER: Lowering sky and turbulent sea warn of the fall and winter storms to come. Photo by Robert F. Campbell.



by Arthur Gaunt

Ships On Weather Watch

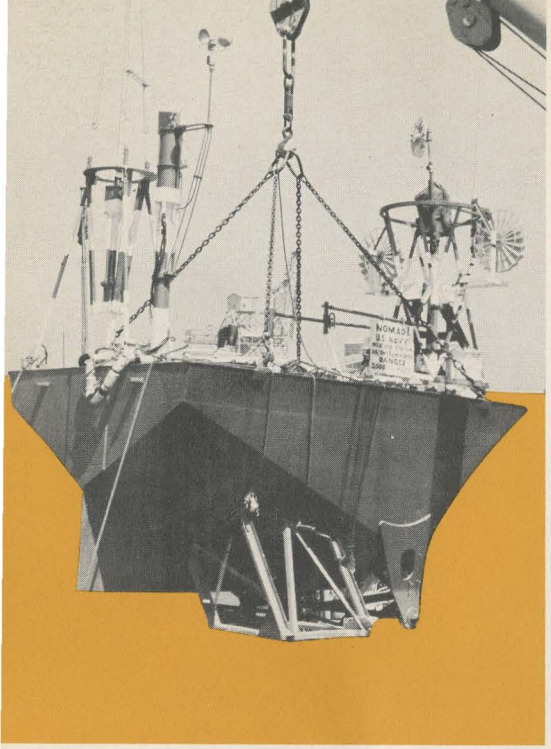
The lighthouse keeper's life is notoriously lonely, yet no more so than that of the crews aboard the ocean weather ships which form an important part of today's worldwide weather forecasting service. The World Weather Watch, which has been undergoing development by the World Meteorological Organization since 1966, is making use of such vessels provided by various countries.

Present-day wide-range weather forecasting, indeed, is a striking example of international cooperation for the benefit of mankind. Nine of these floating meteorological stations are strung out across the Atlantic. They have been provided by the U. S. A., the United Kingdom, France, Holland, Norway, and Sweden, and other countries help by contributing towards the cost of the service.

The creation of our weather forecasting set-up, moreover, began with a sea disaster, for it was the loss of British and French warships during a violent storm in the Black Sea more than 100 years ago which gave the stimulus for this step. The tragedy led to an awareness that many lives could have been saved if news of the approaching storm had been telegraphed to the port of Balaclava.

As a direct result of this realization, national meteorological services were established in Europe. In 1853, again by the initiative of mariners, an international meeting on weather reporting was held in Brussels. The gathering was the first international conference on meteorology, and may be said to mark the birth of international meteorology as we know it nowadays.

The ocean weather ship, however, is of much more recent origin. Before 1939 weather observations from the sea were provided almost entirely by voluntary observers aboard merchant ships, or came from a relatively small number of naval vessels.



Nomad I being hoisted for transportation to the spot where it has been automatically reporting weather conditions by radio.

Such observations, though valuable to the forecaster, are necessarily restricted in nature. They relate to surface conditions only, and the ships are moving, which means that they may not be exactly where the meteorologist needs them.

As flights across the Atlantic became a commercial possibility, it became clear that the existing observation service would have to be expanded, if aircraft were to be provided with accurate information of weather conditions at sea, both on the surface and in the upper atmosphere.

In 1939 France had a stationary meteorological ship, the *Carimare,* in the North Atlantic, and Germany had a similar vessel, the *Ostmark,* in the South Atlantic, in connection with the air routes to South America.

But the biggest fillip to the weather ship arose during World War II, when large numbers of aircraft were being ferried to Britain. For security reasons merchant ships were unable to radio "met" information, since they would have thus revealed their positions to enemy submarines.

The Allies therefore established a chain of naval weather ships, mostly corvettes, to provide the required weather reports by radio. Being well armed against submarine attacks and able to move quickly if necessary, they helped to run the vital meteorological service.

After the war, although merchant ships were able to help again, the surface observations they were able to make proved insufficient for the expanding North Atlantic airlines. So a chain of ocean weather stations was decided upon, these to occupy fixed positions away from the normal steamer routes.

Merchant vessels still supply some of the information, about 120 reports being received from them each day, but the observations from weather ships fill some of the unavoidable gaps in the network.

In addition to the Atlantic stations there are others in the Pacific, and the nations cooperating in this marine weather watch, by providing either meteorological ships or cash, include Germany, Canada, Australia, Denmark, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Spain, Pakistan, and Venezuela, in addition to the countries already mentioned. Even Switzerland chips in with cash, although she has no seaboard.

It requires at least two ships to maintain continuous operation of one station. Three are needed if the station is a long way from a convenient operating base. Thus the U. S. A. provides eleven vessels for the four Atlantic stations which are her responsibility.

On station, each ship makes surface meteorological observations every hour, both day and night, similar to those made by a merchant ship every six

(Continued on page 14)

INDONESIAN STAR

A rusting freighter, the 5,000 ton *Indonesian Star,* its Panamanian flag hanging limply from its halyard, swung aimlessly at anchor in the Narrows off Staten Island in the blazing July sun.

Its crew of 27 men, all Korean nationals, lounged apathetically about the ship. Some stared in silence at the shore. A few played a card game. Others dozed in their bunks. Dispirited men. A dead ship.

There was tension aboard; taut like a bow-string. One hundred and fifty persons back in Korea were dependent on the pathetic earnings of the 27 crewmen for existence and the crewmen had not been paid since April . . . and then but only a small portion of the monies owed them.

Some of the dependents of the crew had died because of privations caused by the inability of the crewmen to send them money.

Desperation gripped the stricken crew.

The vessel, with the men aboard, had been anchored in the same spot for five months, detained through a court order by creditors with claims against the owners of the ship — some said at the time — of over a half million dollars.

When Peter Van Wygerden, veteran SCI ships' visitor, went aboard the *Indonesian Star* (once called *Galveston Merchant*) that sweltering July day, he was not quite prepared for what he heard and saw.

He had been given some information on the ship by the Rev. Chul Ho Awe, chaplain for the New York Bible Society, and by representatives of the National Maritime Union and the American Korean Foundation, all of whom had been in contact with the *Indonesian Star* crew and whose organizations had given substantial help to them.

Nonetheless, virtually no food or water remained aboard. Roaches and other vermin infested the vessel. Some men required medical treatment.

Few cared to leave the ship because of the lack of funds and other reasons. There was no clean laundry. A number of the men had no appropriate clothing

for New York's tropical summer.

The SCI man was appalled.

He immediately reported his findings to SCI's director, Dr. John M. Mulligan, and Dr. Roscoe T. Foust, who called the Institute's administrative staff into an emergency meeting, together with representatives from other shoreside agencies, to see what combined resources could be mustered to alleviate the plight of the men on the *Indonesian Star*.

It was decided that SCI would, because of its long experience in seafaring matters, serve as the coordinator for all individual and agency relief efforts.

The action then became intense.

SCI took the men off the ship and to the Institute for a series of real meals. The Koreans were invited to utilize the other SCI facilities — the gymnasium, the showers, the club rooms and the International Club. The NMU did likewise.

In addition, SCI had both the ship's laundry and the men's individual laundry "done". The Institute provided suitable summer clothing for some of the crew. A supply of foodstuffs and other necessities contributed by SCI and individuals was ferried to the ship.

The men requiring medical and dental attention were treated at the United States Public Health Service Hospital in Stapleton, Staten Island — this arranged by Chaplain Richard Bauer who is the SCI Resident Chaplain at the hospital. The National Maritime Union also helped in this.

The publicity generated by the Institute's leadership in succoring the *Indonesian Star* crew created a sudden avalanche of donated goods, food and services from still other organizations and individuals. A great deal of it came from Staten Island residents who also ferried the supplies to the ship with their privately-owned boats.

Ship visitor Van Wygerden, as the chief coordinator, suddenly found himself in a maelstrom of activity. His phone rang incessantly — both at his SCI office and at his home in Westerleigh, Staten Island. No time for either sleep or a regular meal. A vacation had to be postponed.

A group of crewmen from the *Indonesian Star* at the Institute after a shower, a meal, and a warm welcome from the SCI staff. Shown with crewmen are (rear) Dr. Foust, Mr. Van Wygerden and Dr. Mulligan.

A myriad of details assailed him. Food to be picked up and transported. Donated money to be accounted for. Explanations to well-intentioned callers that the men needed fresh vegetables and fruits in addition to rice. On the phone: *Yes, fresh water had been brought aboard. Yes, money could be used for some theater tickets. Yes, fresh meat was needed. Yes, some of the men would welcome a stay with families ashore.*

Yes. No. Yes, thanks. Yes. Maybe. I will find out and call you back. The men now have adequate clothing. Yes. I don't think so. Yes, we will try to pick it up with our station wagon. Yes . . . no . . . yes . . . thank you. . .

Weary Peter Van Wygerden also found himself being interviewed by the news media who suddenly found the story very big. The SCI man appeared on radio and TV broadcasts. All the major wire services "picked up" the story and sought him out for more interviews and late details. Long distance phone calls came from all parts of the country.

The *Staten Island Advance*, a first-class daily newspaper, in an editorial, commented in this way:

"It was a Staten Islander, Peter Van Wygerden of Westerleigh who is associated with the Seamen's Church Institute in downtown Manhattan, who first apprised his neighbors that the Korean seamen had barely enough food to keep alive, and no medical supplies or soap. . ."

In late August arrangements were made to air-lift the seamen to their homeland.

Before the group's departure for Korea, it came to the Institute for a worship service in the chapel conducted by the Rev. Mr. Awe. The men then gathered in the International Club for farewells to the SCI personnel who had aided them.

The chief engineer for the *Indonesian Star* and the spokesman for the crew said simply, "Each of us, as we return to our cities, towns and villages, will never forget your kindnesses and the great service of your Institute."

by Harold G. Petersen

a marriage is solemnized . . .

The first wedding to be held in the State Street SCI chapel occurred in late August, conducted by one of the Institute chaplains, the Rev. William Haynsworth.

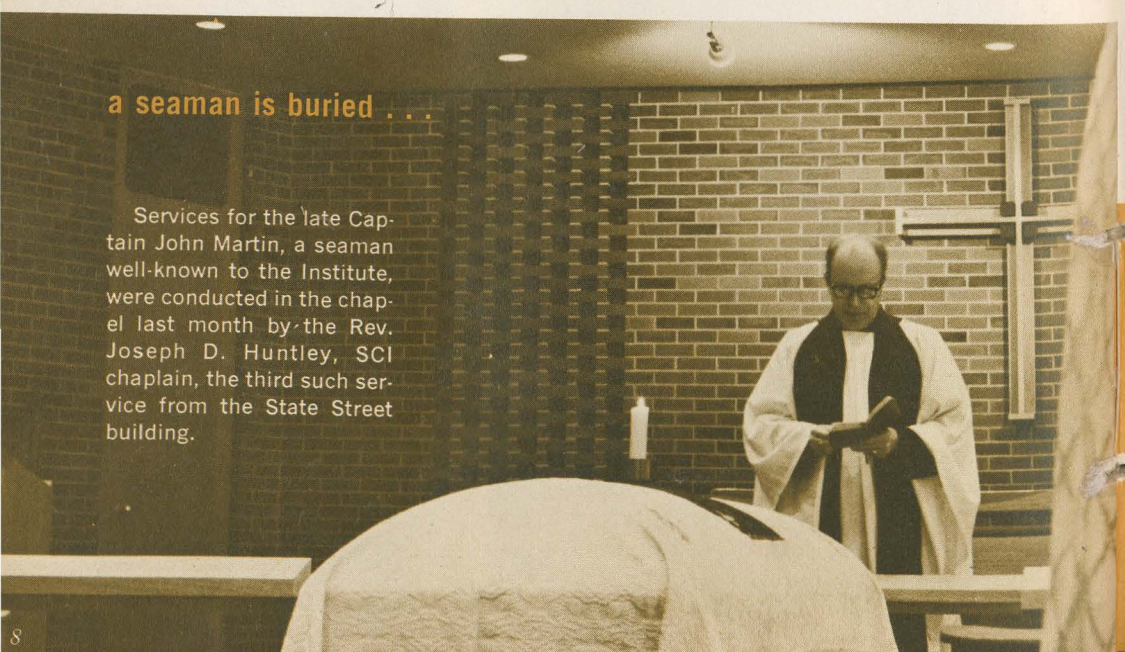
A small group of SCI personnel witnessed the affair and the couple was given a gift by the Women's Council.

The principals were seaman Michael N. Bolger, 24, and Catherine A. Woodside, 19, both of Bellmore, Long Island.

Mr. Bolger, an A.B. in the merchant marine, is seeking qualification for Second Mate by attending the SIU School for upgrading and has taken the radar course at SCI's marine school.

The groom worked on fishing vessels when only thirteen years old, he said, then served for four years in the U. S. Navy; he emerged a bosun's mate.

We are a kaleidoscope of the waterfront



a seaman is buried . . .

Services for the late Captain John Martin, a seaman well-known to the Institute, were conducted in the chapel last month by the Rev. Joseph D. Huntley, SCI chaplain, the third such service from the State Street building.

Above: Looking into Institute cafeteria from foyer past historical ships' bells.

Reprinted from Via Port of New York

Right: Section of SCI library on fourth floor. Library is known for its collection of volumes relating to seafaring including marine technical subjects.

Reprinted from Via Port of New York

PHANTOMS of the SEA

by George R. Berens

In 1957 our ship was in Cape Town, South Africa, at the time when the local newspapers came out with a rather engrossing story that occupied the front pages for two days. Many people in the Seapoint and Camps Bay (beach resorts and suburbs of Cape Town) area had seen a square-rigged sailing ship out to sea, apparently heading in to Table Bay.

Reports of this sighting from individuals on the waterfront, and from reporters dispatched to the scene, indicated that upward of two hundred people had seen this ship. Apparently it had been in view for a period of about an hour, and then had disappeared completely.

Port authorities knew of no windjammer due in Cape Town. Their interest led to an intensive inquiry which disclosed that the nearest known deep sea sailing vessel was over fifteen hundred miles away from Cape Town. The seas of this region being the realm of the legendary "Flying Dutchman", the press came out with many stories of this well known phantom ship.

This occurrence interested me so much that I made inquiries of some acquaintances and found several who claimed to have seen phantom ships in the Cape Town area. One such was a stevedore supervisor who had twenty years of seafaring experience before settling down ashore to employ his skill and knowledge in the loading and discharging of ship's cargo. He told me that one day he and a friend had seen from the docks a square-rigger just outside the breakwater.

Later in the day he enquired at the Port Office what sailing ship — a very rare visitor to Cape Town in these times — had entered the port. He was told that no windjammer had entered, nor was any expected. None had been seen by port officials. I heard a half-dozen eyewitness accounts of the sighting of such eerie ships from practical-minded people whose occupation kept them in the vicinity of the waterfront.

It puzzled me how all these people could have seen imaginary ships. One or two imaginative minds might have had visions, but scores of individuals had claimed to have seen these elusive wraiths.

Surely there must be some valid explanation for such sightings. Of course, the centuries-old story of the "Flying Dutchman" would, no doubt, influence many. It is a legend that has been passed along on the waterfronts of the world for so many years that its origin and authentic facts are lost.

The "Flying Dutchman" legend has it that a Dutch ship sailed from Amsterdam in 1680, bound for Batavia, Java, in command of a hard-drinking, blasphemous captain by the name of Van der Decken. Off the Cape she ran into heavy weather, lost most of her sails and had her rudder damaged. Passengers and crew had entreated the captain to seek a port of refuge, for the ship was in such condition that she could do little but drift in the Cape rollers. Still Van der Decken ranted and raved, and defied the elements and even, it is said, the Almighty to prevent his ship from getting by the notorious Cape of Storms. For this, the story has it, Van der Decken was condemned to cruise off the Cape for all eternity, alone in a ghost ship.

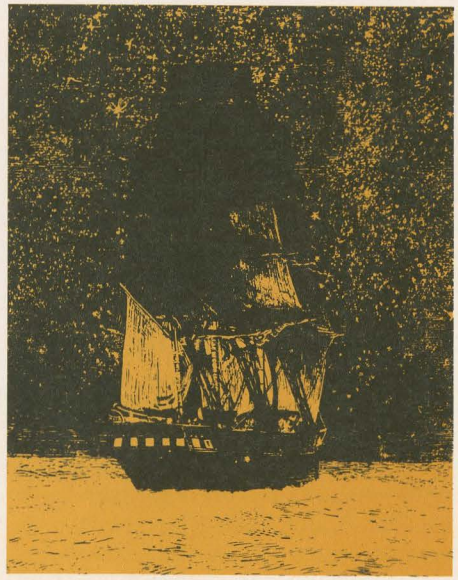
And still in storm, as
sailors say,
Sere and wan and white
as a bone,
The phantom ship drives
against the gale,
And an old man stands on her
poop alone.

The "Flying Dutchman" has been much written about, and many are the published reports of phantom ships having been seen in the seas off the Cape of Good Hope. Lawrence G. Green, in his 'Tavern of the Seas' tells of one such ghost ship sighted in False Bay in 1939. Many people saw a large sailing ship standing in under full sail. It was calm, and rather misty that day, and yet the ship seemed to be making good headway with all sails filled. He writes, "It may have been a trick of the mirage, faithfully reproducing a ship sailing far over the horizon." But such an explanation could hardly apply to the ship seen by so many people approaching Cape Town in 1957.

What are these phantoms of the sea, many of them reported from reliable sources, and probably very many more never reported because those who have seen them are afraid of ridicule?

Phantom ships and other wraiths of the sea are like the "flying saucers" and UFOs so often reported by land observers. There are many sightings of such coming from trustworthy and authoritative sources. Yet there is nothing definite to explain many of them. All these objects whether seen in the air or on the surface of the sea cannot be hallucinations, or illusions engendered by overactive imagination.

Perhaps it is as that old shellback, Count von Luckner said, "Sailors are superstitious, and they are right. They have the experience on the sea, and plenty of time to think and get right thoughts. There are many things of mystery in this world, and the sailor understands them best of all."



The Other Sir Francis

by Brenda Gourgey

Nearly four hundred years before Francis Chichester was knighted by Elizabeth II, one of England's most famous seamen knelt before the first Elizabeth wondering what was going to happen to him.

As Francis Drake had known since December 13th, 1577, the day he set out to sail round the world, the chances were that he would be arrested and hanged as a pirate.

The mere idea of the venture had been impudent and dangerous. England at that time was a weak, even backward, country, struggling to hold on to independence in a Europe dominated by the giant power of Spain. King Philip of Spain controlled, too, a vast rich empire in America, an empire in which Elizabeth I wanted a share. But she had to be careful. England was swarming with Spanish spies and Elizabeth masked her real intentions — to establish trade with the Indians of South America—by giving Drake false orders, carefully worded so as not to implicate her.

The Queen was a consummate liar and the Spaniards doubtless guessed that she was a sponsor of the voyage. They could, however, always comfort themselves with the thought that Drake's tiny fleet would never return. The dangers he faced were immense. He could be killed by savages, or die from the sudden, strange fevers to which Europeans were so susceptible. Above all, there were the dangers of the sea — gales in the Atlantic, the eerie fogs and tearing hurricanes off the Brazilian coast, swirling tides and headwinds in the Magellan Straits. These dangers had claimed many explorers, Magellan and da Gama amongst them.

With remarkable luck, Drake crossed the Atlantic without incident and late in August arrived at the Magellan Straits. Drake's luck held as he steered safely through but on September 8th, as his three ships reached the Pacific, a mighty gale blew up. *Elizabeth* was driven back into the Straits, *Marigold*, the smallest ship, foundered, and Drake's *Golden Hind* was left to run before violent winds which forced him further and further south into unknown, uncharted seas. During a lull in the month-long storm, Drake landed on an island whose latitude he calculated as 56 degrees: Drake had discovered Cape Horn.

When the gale finally died, *Golden Hind* sailed up the western coast of South America where, on December 5th, Drake burst upon the unsuspecting Spanish settlement at Valparaiso. There, he captured a ship loaded with gold and wines and in the weeks that followed, terrorized the coast, raiding settlements, capturing ships and, finally, to prevent pursuit, cutting the cables of the Spanish fleet at Lima.

As the galleons drifted out to sea and Drake escaped northwards, the impotent Spaniards sat down to write furious letters home to Spain. Worse was to come: on March 1st, 1579, Drake captured the treasure galleon *Cacafuego* off the coast of Peru; no one had ever taken a larger amount of booty — gold, silver, jewels, pearls and money worth half a million pounds were taken off and stuffed into the hold of the *Hind*.

With ironic courtesy, Drake returned to the *Cacafuego's* captain his empty ship and sailed on northwards to the Californian coast. There, he landed and claimed the territory for England, naming it "New Albion". He then erected a plaque, which was discovered in 1937 near modern San Francisco.

After five weeks careening his ship and taking on stores, Drake weighed anchor and sailed for home. But not the way by which he had come. The Spaniards from Mexico to Chile prepared to defend themselves in case he should return, and Drake set off across the Pacific, which no Englishman had ever sailed before.

He passed the Philippines and early in 1580 reached the Moluccas where the *Hind* nearly met disaster. She struck a reef and stuck despite the frenzied efforts made to free her. After twenty hours, it seemed they were going to fail, for *Hind* heeled alarmingly to the starboard. Then, quite suddenly, the wind veered: the crew hoisted sail and *Hind* floated off into deeper water. Thanks to her double-sheathed hull — the planking was protected by elm-planks nailed to felt—the ship suffered little damage. Drake sailed on, without incident, to the East Indies, across the Indian Ocean, and round the Cape of Good Hope to Sierra Leone, until on September 26th, 1580, he entered the longed-for waters of Plymouth Sound. He had been away three years.

No one was there to greet the first Englishman to sail round the world, only a few fishermen from whom Drake learned, with relief, that Elizabeth I was alive, and ruler of England still. But she was unable to acknowledge him. For more than a year, an enraged King Philip had been branding Drake a pirate and demanding his head and the return of the *Cacafuego's* treasure. For more than a year, Elizabeth had been sympathizing, denying responsibility.

Now Drake was home, her embarrassment was acute, and four months passed before she made up her mind what to do. Late in March 1581, *Hind* was sailed to Deptford, and on April 4th, the Queen came down in person. The Spanish ambassador was with her. He smiled triumphantly as the Queen told Drake she really ought to have him hanged, and when she commanded him to give up his sword and kneel, the ambassador probably thought the event was imminent. He should have known Elizabeth; she took the sword, handed it to the French ambassador and asked him, on her behalf, to dub Drake a knight. In one stroke, Elizabeth made it clear that Spain faced two determined foes, France and England. She crowned the insult, too: she kept the treasure.

SHIPS ON WEATHER WATCH *(Continued from page 6)*

hours. Upper wind observations are also made every six hours and upper atmosphere observations of temperature, humidity, and pressure every twelve hours.

The information is transmitted in international code (which is standardized so that it can be understood by a meteorologist anywhere in the world) by radio to land-based forecasting stations. There it is assessed and plotted on big maps, together with similar observations made ashore, to form part of the complicated pattern of weather data.

By studying these maps the meteorologists are able to issue bulletins for shipping and aviation, and for the general public, indicating the present weather situation over each particular area, and to forecast any probable changes during the next 12-24 hours.

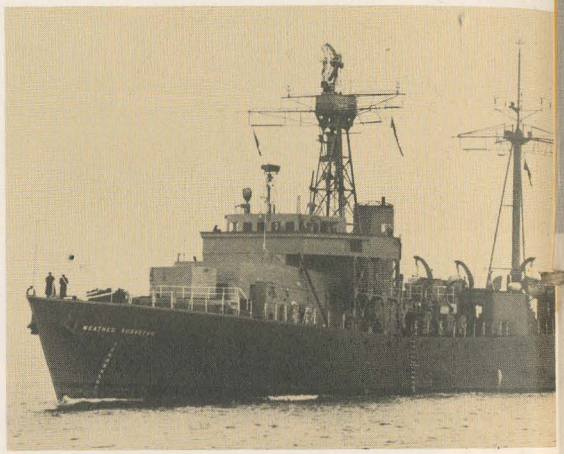
An interesting point is that although weather ships serve at fixed stations, they need to be under way all the time, for they operate in waters far too deep for anchoring. Consequently a certain amount of fuel has to be used each day. And they are equipped with special long-range radio aids to navigation, enabling them to determine their position accurately when an overcast sky makes observations of heavenly bodies impossible.

The countries operating such ships use different types of vessels. The U. S. A. employs various classes of coastguard cutters with a length of between 327 feet and 355 feet. The French vessels, about 240 ft. long, were specially built for the job; the Netherlands have a specially constructed modern ship and a converted frigate for weather duties.

The Norwegian vessels are former "Flower" class corvettes, which did such wonderful work escorting convoys during the war. Britain used to operate four of these ships, but has replaced them with converted "Castle" class frigates.

Will the manned weather ship shortly become obsolete? Unmanned ones, which make observations automatically and send reports by radio at regular intervals, have already been successful in some areas. They can operate for years unattended.

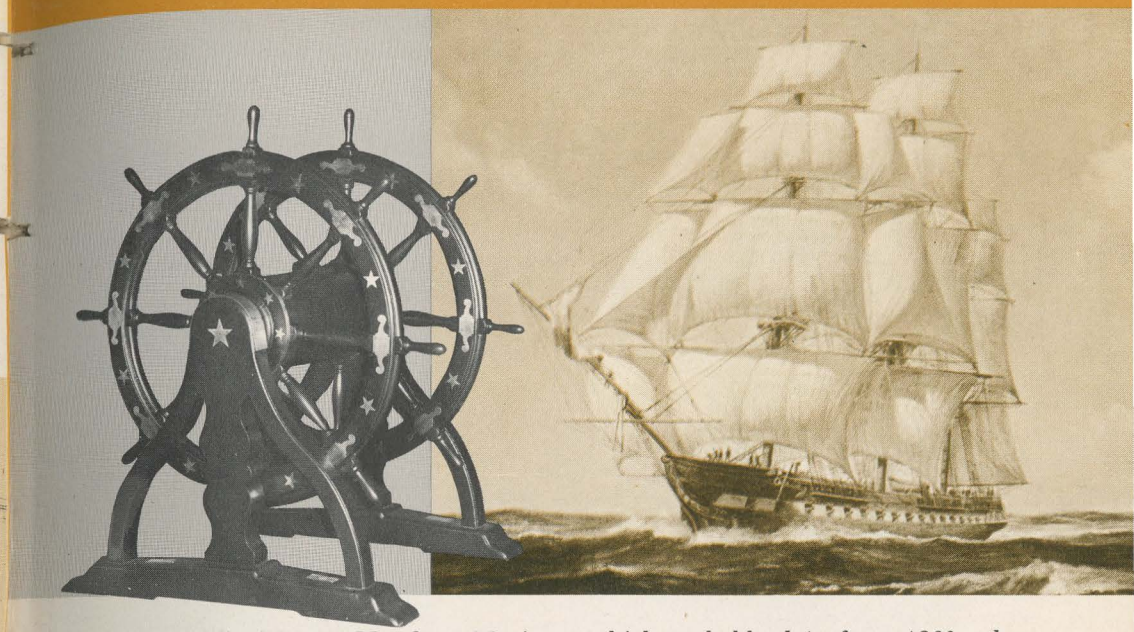
Nomad I, a robot weather station 300 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico, was put into operation as long ago as 1961. It has since played a most useful role in weather forecasting, including warnings of hurricanes. America has also been experimenting with a giant buoy fitted with equipment which will radio information about the meteorological situation.



British ship, *Weather Surveyor*. She is also equipped for air-sea rescue operations.

But there are some jobs which the self-operating weather station cannot carry out. All the manned weather ships are equipped for air/sea rescue work. If an aircraft or vessel gets into difficulties in the vicinity of a weather ship, the meteorologists are immediately alerted and preparations are made for rescue duties. In the case of an aircraft the general principle is that it is guided to the weather ship by means of the various radio navigational aids.

THE CONSTITUTION'S WHEEL



The United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York, is the owner of the double wheel that once steered the frigate *Constitution*, the most famous ship of America's old wooden navy.

The wheel of "Old Ironsides" reposed for many years in the barn of the family of the late Captain Elbert Stannard at Port Washington, New York.

Before the wheel was acquired by the Kings Point Academy, occasional coats of oil had reduced the color of its mahogany barrel and spokes of ash to the same deep brown. Its brass scrolls and stars became a dull green. One of the spokes broke, and there were cracks in the drum and deep grooves where the rudder ropes slipped and strained.

On the rim were several deep gashes which probably date from 1860, when the Constitution visited Annapolis. Midshipmen of the Naval Academy were so eager to get souvenirs that they were restrained with difficulty from hacking the wheel to pieces. Craftsmen at Kings Point restored it to its pristine elegance.

The wheel — or rather, wheels — set on each end of the mahogany barrel, are about five feet in diameter. When set upon its wooden supports, it stands nearly six feet high. In the old days it used to take the strength of two men to steer by it in fair weather. During storms, five men, it was said, managed it with difficulty.

The wheel of the gallant duelist of the War of 1812 was presented to the Academy by the Stannard family.

SHIPS ON WEATHER WATCH *(Continued from page 14)*

Then, if it has to make a forced landing, it can do so alongside the ship. Each weather ship is fitted with a radio beacon and radio direction finders, to help the aircraft in determining its position relative to the ship.

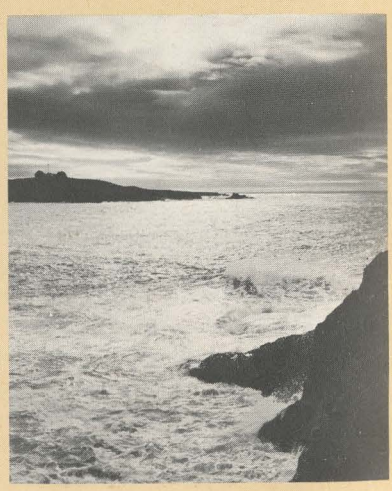
The Ocean Weather scheme, which these ships help to operate, is a rather unique example of international cooperation. It is run for operational and scientific purposes, but it has its humanitarian aspect, too.

15 State Street
New York, N. Y. 10004

Address Correction Requested

AT NEW YORK, N. Y.

SEASHORE



The sun sets over the dancing sheen
Spreading gold on the glint of the sea.
The world of night sends a silver ray
To meet the gold of the dying day
And the new-born stars swing free.

The darkness of storm lies over the winds,
The clouds boil black in the sky.
The curving waves charge high on the land
And the breakers crash on the washing sand
While the blown sea-spume flies high.

The beauty of peace, the grandeur of storm,
The moods as the sea winds blow —
The ocean lives in its calm and its might
As the crests come thundering down from their height
Or the slow tides ebb and flow.

Agnes Allen Miller