



# the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



JUNE 1964



## seaman of the month

### ► Willy Claeys

When Belgian seaman Willy Claeys arrived at the Seamen's Church for his second visit last Tuesday, he was exhausted from his flight from Luxembourg and put to bed immediately. Even after the regular Wednesday night movie Willy was feeling alone and everything but a "new American" which he was, until he confronted SCI's Dixie chaplain James Savoy, whose "Where y' all from?" soon dispelled the loneliness and led to animated conversation over hot coffee in the cafeteria.

Before the next day passed, Willy was introduced to staff, to our Dutch-speaking shipvisitor Peter Van Wygerden, and was deposited in the Public Relations office as a "likely candidate."

When we heard his story, we concurred.

Our SOM first visited New York two years ago while aboard the Belgian freighter *Vinkt*. He liked our city and began preparation for the time he could return permanently to pursue American citizenship. He shipped on Swedish ships where he felt he would have an opportunity to learn English. After two years he picked up the essentials of Swedish and English, and this January applied for a visa to come to America. His application took three months for processing, and with it he is here to "sail American" and to become an American. While he is here he

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## and baby makes three

A "Captain's Paradise" would be more truly a situation in which the ship's master is allowed to take along his wife and family, rather than having wives in two different ports as was the situation in a British comedy of recent vintage.

One captain living the former paradise, at least during a recent voyage, was a long-time SCI friend and handsome captain of the Greek freighter, *Hellenic Sky*, Nikos Karagiorgis. Accompanying him on this trip was his young and beautiful Athens-born wife, Anastasia, and an apple-cheeked, eight-month-old daughter, with the name, Faedra, straight from Greek mythology.

LOOKOUT became better-acquainted with the third generation sailing family through SCI's Greek-born shipvisitor, Chris Nichols. Nichols and several SCI staff members have been guests aboard the old but sturdy Liberty ship which carries general cargo between U.S. ports and the Persian Gulf and India. SCI's Christmas gift boxes were placed aboard the *Hellenic Sky* last year.

Faedra, the youngest member of the Karagiorgis family comes by her "seawings" naturally, for her father became a seaman when he was only 18 on the island of Syros. His grandfather was captain of a sailing ship from the island of Cassos, and his uncle was a sea captain. His father, retired some years now, was a ship's engineer.

"The baby is the crew's darling, and sort of mascot," reports Nikos, who speaks fluent English. "They all play with her, and she is the major topic of conversation and attention, particularly when they all gather for lunch in the officers' messroom."

The crew is happy with the presence of Mrs. Karagiorgis in a traditionally masculine domain, for she adds a warm, feminine touch to the monotonous hard life at sea. She is most welcome when a major holiday approaches, as was the occasion this



trip when Greek Orthodox Easter found the *Hellenic Sky* on the high sea. Mrs. Karagiorgis helped the ship's cooks with the traditional holiday lamb dishes and delicacies to help the crew observe the religious day with a touch of home cooking heavily infused with *nostalgia* (a word, incidentally, going back to the days of Homer's epics 3,000 years ago and the first Greek sailor, Ulysses).

She also led the crewmen in the traditional Greek folk-dance, the "syrto" during the festivities which followed the holiday meal.

Asked what she does in her spare time, Anastasia reported, "I like to read good novels and I must say that I enjoyed the books you put on board our ship last time the *Sky* was in New York."

The captain and his family, who now make their home in Greece's major seaport, Piraeus—Athens' "twin city"—left behind another daughter, Katerina, two years old, in care of her grandparents.

"I would love to have her with us," Anastasia sighed. "Nikos and I miss her terribly, but she walks around now and it would be dangerous having her on the ship. Faedra, on the other hand, eats all the time and doesn't even mind 10-meter waves in the Atlantic." We asked whether feeding the baby pro-

*Continued on page 19*

MORE THAN 600,000 merchant seamen of all nationalities, races and creeds come to the port of New York every year. To many of them The Seamen's Church Institute of New York is their shore center—"their home away from home".

First established in 1834 as a floating chapel in New York Harbor, the Institute has grown into a shore center for seamen, which offers a wide range of educational, medical, religious and recreational services.

Although the seamen meet almost 60% of the Institute's budget, the cost of the recreational, health, religious, educational and special services to seamen is met by endowment income and current contributions from the general public.

## the LOOKOUT

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SEAMEN'S CHURCH  
INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

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BOWLING GREEN 9-2710

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COVER: Maine's rocky coastline, captured here by photographer Max Hunn, becomes popularly attractive as vacation months approach.

Can you find...?



Columbus' ship, The Maria Galante

The First Steamboat with

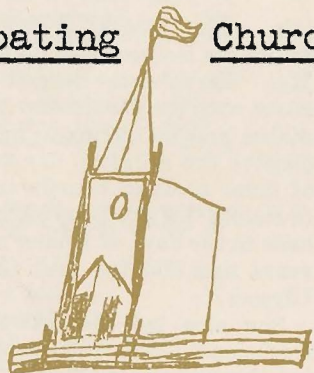
- 1 Smokestack
- 2 Masts
- 1 Paddlewheel



Boat with a dog and a teakettle on it.



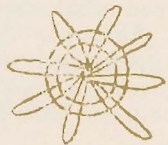
The Floating Church



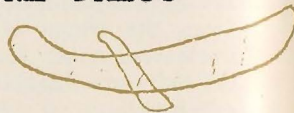
A Chinese Ship called a "Junk"



A steering wheel



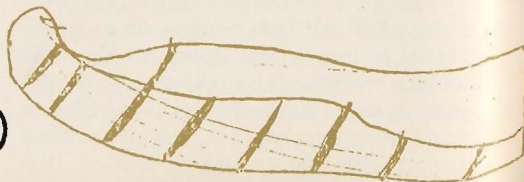
An Indian canoe



A whale harpoon



One man boat from South America (made of yellow reeds)



An interesting approach to the academic problem of making a museum tour more meaningful to pre-school children in the 5-6 age group was recently brought to the attention of the Marine Museum staff.

In January a young teacher from one of New York's private schools anticipated a visit to the Marine Museum for a group of 20 of her pre-school charges. Already acquainted with the facilities of our Museum through several previous visits, she made one further visit alone with her sketch book. She listed the unique and quaint items in the collection which she felt would naturally attract the attention of small children. Using this list, she began to sketch some of these objects, reducing them to essential lines needed for identification.

With these sketches, she returned to her school and reproduced them on a mimeograph. When she and her pupils visited the museum some weeks later, she provided each with a copy of the sheet of simple sketches which are pictured here. Children were asked to hunt through the museum collection and correctly identify the sketches with the models. When real objects were found, each child was to affix a golden star by the corresponding picture. Later she added a verbal description of these models to make the visit even more interesting to the children.

Although not a gifted artist, the teacher succeeded in producing a simple picture-identification project which delighted her group and provided the museum with visual materials. In the planning stage now is a series of visual and written quizzes which would be suitable for students of various age levels.

A written quiz was used recently when a group of 30 students from St. Hilda and St. Hugh's Episcopal School visited the Museum. However, this quiz was designed on the assumption that the children had a more useful background in basic ship construction and in maritime history. It asked students to locate the three Columbus ships, a portolan chart, a "caravel" ship. The final question asked for a drawing of their favorite ship from the museum collection.

A noticeable increase in adult and school age attendance in the museum was noted for the first five months of this year. For the first five months museum attendance was nearly 10,000 people, more than half of whom were of school age. The exhibit of the FDR collection of old lithographs and a display sponsored by the New York Ship Craft Club greatly added to the attractiveness of a museum visit. The staff offers a short orientation lecture about the museum collection for groups who make prior arrangements through the Curator's office.



**MUSEUM GETS OIL PAINTING**

The Marine Museum benefited last month from the gift of a valuable framed oil painting, circa 1874, of the graceful schooner "Rosa Eppinger." Through the generosity of Thomas T. Taber, retired president of the American Life Insurance Co. and a devoted hobbyist, the painting and money to restore it to first-class condition were donated.

An interesting personal note was added to the obscure history of the painting by Mr. Taber himself, who wrote: "The painting hung in the home of my aunt for many years. She was a Taber who married Captain Benjamin C. Kirk of Glen Cove, Long Island. My guess is that either the Tabers or the Kirks had some connection with the Bayles family.\*"

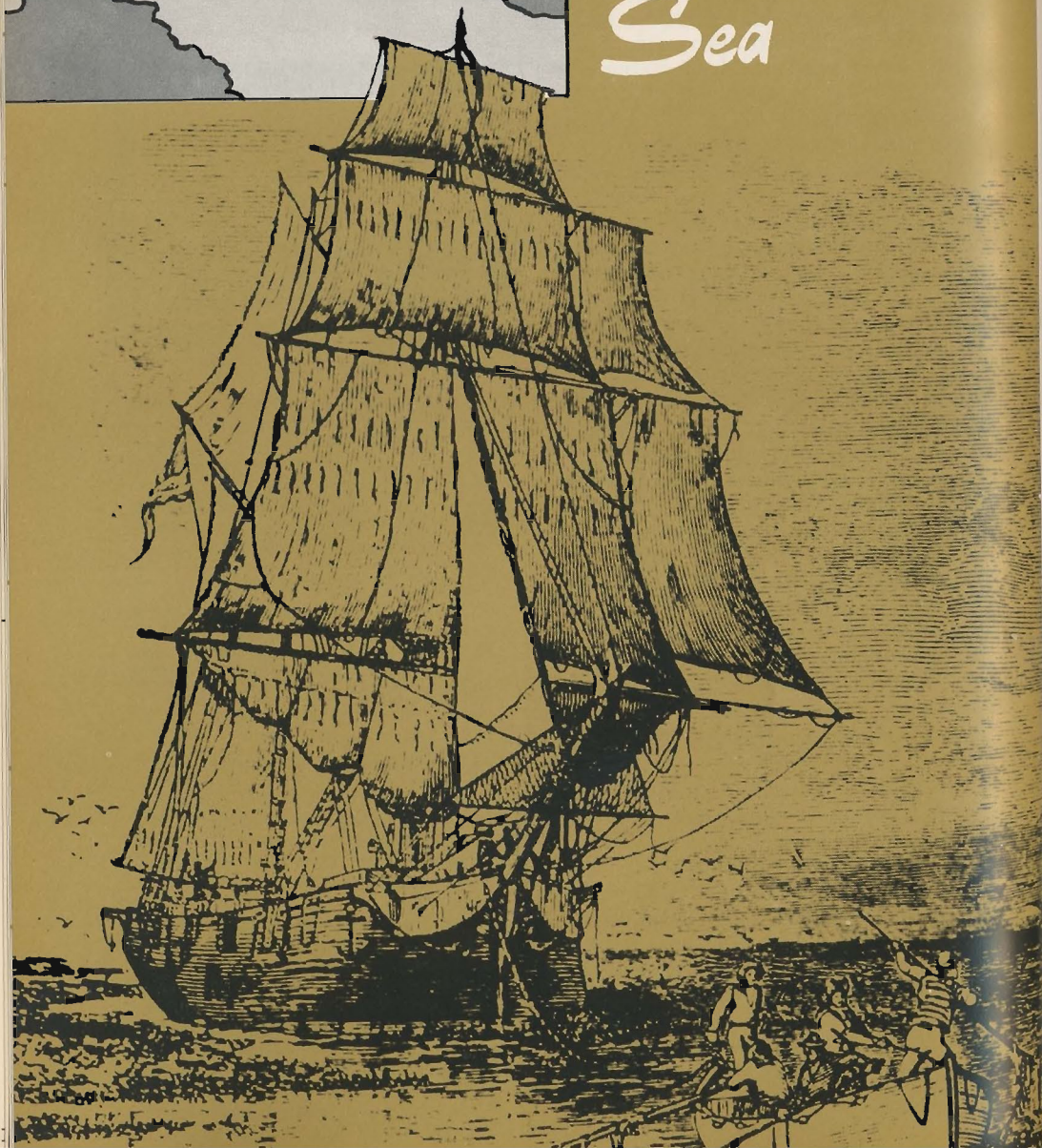
"My father told me years ago that his father had invested money in a number of ships. My father's brother was lost at sea on one of the ships in which the family had invested, and because of that, my grandmother and grandfather would never allow my father to go to sea, as he always wished to."

Before the painting was hung, the Museum asked a world authority on vessels, Captain W. J. Lewis Parker, Inspector for the Port of Boston, to provide more information about the "Rosa Eppinger." He noted that the ship was launched in 1874 and engaged upon a maiden voyage to Charleston. She was completely wrecked by a cyclone in 1880 while returning from Cedar Keys, Fla.

\*Shipbuilder Jas. M. Bayles & Son, Port Jefferson, Long Island.

## strange latitudes:

# The Sargasso Sea



Chaplain William Haynsworth has offered LOOKOUT this fascinating story about the Sargasso Sea and will provide future stories about other places where strange phenomena are involved—the Inland Sea of Japan, the Straits of Magellan, the Humboldt Current and the Indian Ocean.

Can you recall memories of your high school days and bring to mind some of the details from the strange adventure of a seafarer as told in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*? Remember how the lost ship is becalmed in the southern latitudes of a "rotting sea" and how the Ancient Mariner, cursed and beset with misery, is momentarily distracted by the marine life, "blue and glossy green and velvet black," coiling and thrashing through the charmed waters of that strange sea?

There is such a mysterious sea crowded with strange sea life. Geographically, a line drawn from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay to Gibraltar would skirt its northern border. It engulfs the Caribbean Islands and extends across the Atlantic to within a day's sailing of the Azores. In size it is roughly as large as the United States. It is one of the "deserts" of the universal sea, a shallow lense of tepid water floating atop the colder waters of the main ocean. The principal currents of the Atlantic sweep around, but do not invade, this wide area. Winds avoid it and rain seldom falls here. Since there is almost no inflow of fresh water either from melting ice or from the coastal areas, the Sargasso Sea is the saltiest part of the Atlantic which, in turn, is the saltiest of all oceans.

Columbus was the first navigator to sail across it. A day or two after he had sailed west from the Azores he struck the weed. The sea became one great meadow of green and yellow Sargassum weed. The Sargassum (also known simply as gulfweed) which produces berry-like clusters of buds, was named by the Portuguese for their small grapes called *salgazo*.

The ancient theory was that the weed grew among the reefs and rocks

of the Azores and indicated to the sailor the near danger of shoals. Columbus' crew at first feared that they were approaching reefs and later, they were certain that their caravels, the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*, would become "frozen" in the weed. The further west Columbus sailed, the more prevalent became the Sargassum. It was Columbus who christened this vast area the "Sargasso Sea," and it must have required enormous courage to set a course which the learned men of his day declared would plunge a ship off a "tidal shelf" into an abyss of nothingness, and to continue to sail toward such an imagined doom through a thick sea of weed!

Old wives' tales report of how the Sargasso Sea is a graveyard for the hulks of lost ships and their ghost crews trapped in beds of Sargassum and doomed to drift in endless concentric circles around and around the great expanse of the Sargasso. All such tales are myths which never had any basis in fact. The weed could not ensnare any kind of vessel. It is interesting to note how hard such legends die. As late as 1952, a lone and naive navigator, Alain Bombard, sailed alone on a raft across the Atlantic and made every effort to skirt this area for fear of being trapped by the weed!

The Sargassum varies in color from a bright yellow to shades of pale green, dark green and brown. It has vegetated in these waters for millennia and, over eons of time, species of sea life have developed special features of attachment to accommodate themselves to living on a "life raft" of gulfweed. Should they become detached from the weed, they would certainly perish in the cold, dark waters of the seafloor which lies three miles below! Nature has camouflaged many of the denizens of this weedy jungle. The Sargasso

"When the ocean was one great meadow of a green & yellow weed, and the caravels wasted time trying to find open water, fearing lest they be 'frozen' in sargassum."—

Return to Spain of the Nina and Pinta—Christophoro Colombo, 1496.

sea slug, a snail without a shell, can scarcely be detected from the gulfweed as its soft, shapeless brown body creeps over the weed in search of its prey. The Sargasso fish *Pterophryne* has copied exactly the texture and color of the golden berries of the gulfweed. The flying fish makes nests of the weed to contain their eggs, which bear an amazing resemblance to the berries of the Sargassum.

Marine biologists have made extensive studies of the sea life which live on the weedy surface of the Sargasso. Theoretically it was assumed that, below the thin lense of the warm water, the depths of this sea were devoid of life. In 1932 William Beebe descended to a depth of over three thousand feet off the coast of Bermuda. Peering through the three-inch-thick quartz windows of his bathysphere, Dr. Beebe described such wonders as had not been seen by anyone else: "Every descent and ascent of the bathysphere showed a fauna rich beyond what the summary of all our 1,500 nets would lead us to expect. The Sargasso Sea is accounted an arid place for ocean life, but my observations predicate at least an unsuspected abundance of unknown forms."

The late Rachel Carson in her best-selling book *The Sea Around Us* presented two theories to account for the presence of the drifting weed of the Sargasso Sea: First, the weed was torn by hurricanes from the coastal beds off Florida and the Caribbean Islands and swept into the calm basin of the Sargasso Sea; second, that the weed is a self-perpetuating colony adapted to life in the open sea. Miss Carson believed that the answer may lie in a combination of the two theories, and she suggested that new plants driven by the force of hurricanes do come into the calm of the sea each year to augment this vast area where such plants can find virtual im-

mortality. She further suggests that the same weeds seen here today might have been seen by Columbus and his men! I would point out, however, that for some unexplained reason Miss Carson ignored the findings of an expedition sponsored by New York City's Museum of Natural History in the 1930's. Dr. Albert E. Parr, who directed the investigations, reported that 90% of the weed consisted of two species that are naturally floating and would never be attached to rocks. Based on such findings, Dr. Parr suggests that the weed is a self-perpetuating deep-sea plant which has been floating on the surface of the Atlantic within its present scope since primeval days.

Whatever the theories of the professionals suggest, the Sargasso Sea is still a strange latitude, an "undulating meadow" of magical beauty which was first traversed by three small ships almost five hundred years ago!

Piece of Sargassum, gulf weed, with stemlike stipe, leaflike blades, and berrylike bladders, or floats. (From H. J. Fuller and O. Tippe, *College Botany*, rev. ed., Holt, 1954)

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Four noons a week there is nothing in the Roper Lounge but sunshine.

But when seamen and visitors begin rubbernecking for a source of the noise, snapping their fingers to the Bourbon Street licks of Larry Pratt's Friday lunch hour Dixieland devotees, the pastoral Roper Lounge is considerably altered.

For more than a year the Institute has assured a "cultural home" for musicians from neighboring business firms whose mutual interest in Dixieland music brings them together weekly to "belt it out." It's a place where, in the words of organizer and director, Larry Pratt, "we can play loud without inviting complaints or the law."

The group which sometimes be-

lawyers, investment brokers, salesmen, insurance executives, advertising men and bankers who make Friday exoduses from firms like Chase Manhattan, Merrill Lynch, American Express and others. From time to time the group has welcomed celebrated yachtsman, Cornelius Shields, whose distinguished investment firm bears his father's name. On Friday he is the Benny Goodman of 25 South Street.

And on more than one occasion SCI's Director, The Rev. John M. Mulligan joins the group to improvise with brushes, snare drum and cymbals, doing what Krupa himself might envy.

Pratt is primarily a jazz pianist, but doubles on trombone when talent is scarce. His musical avocations ex-



## SOUTH STREET FIVE



moans only four in attendance or boasts as many as seven, is about as non-directional as possible. It has few regulars, no official name, and performs nowhere with regularity. It meets to entertain its own. And while sophisticated jazz has all but replaced the Bourbon Street beat in popular American music, Pratt and his group of purists prefer to keep alive the vibrant, unrestrained and undisciplined Dixieland.

Although he loathes to be called "leader," Yale man and lawyer Larry Pratt generates the most enthusiasm for the weekly jazz fest. From his office at the legal firm of Willkie Farr Gallagher Walton and Fitz Gibbon, emanate calls for new talent, male or female, from SCI's neighborhood. Pratt reported that although the group boasts few conservatory-trained musicians, some of the members were very active with college bands. Professionally representing a broad spectrum of backgrounds, they include

tend beyond the SCI jazz group to another combo which performs regularly at dances held in the Polish National Home. He has been directing this group for 17 years. The first performance of his South Street jazz ensemble before an audience took place recently when they were invited to a fund-raising event, playing from the steps of the Sub-Treasury building on Wall Street. The musicians performed

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# THAT EVENTFUL YEAR... 1945



## the sixth in an historical series

The year 1945 will be remembered by SCI as the year when its merchant seamen returned home having shared in the winning of the Second World War by keeping America's military adequately supplied.

Through the early months of the year SCI's lounges and clubrooms were crowded with seamen, coastguardsmen and naval personnel, desperately seeking ties with home, and professional volunteer entertainers rallied to the call of lonely men in need of morale building.

The first of the 1945 celebrities to visit SCI was clarinetist Benny Goodman who brought his quintet and vocalist, Jane Pickens, to entertain battle-scarred seamen at SCI, and by short-wave to ships at sea. The program was broadcast transatlantic via BBC and NBC.

Not only did our seamen supply the battle lines, but they contributed money during Victory Bond rallies in the Roper clubroom each Sunday with hostesses from the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. With each bond purchased by a seaman went a kit of personal items packed by SCI's volunteers. And to launch the 6th War Loan Drive in 1945, the largest vessel ever transported through streets of New York, the 77-foot PT 39, as heavily armed as it was when on Pacific duty, was towed from the foot

of Old Slip along South Street, bristling with guns, torpedoes, and the crew.

Throughout the early part of the year SCI provided shelter for seamen returning from war and some who were injured in one of the worst disasters in New York Harbor when Pan-American tanker *Panlio* collided with tanker *S.S. Spring Hill*. The latter, loaded with 120 thousand barrels of high octane gasoline, exploded and caught fire, which spread to Norwegian tanker *Vivi* anchored 50 yards away. The collision resulted in 17 deaths; 120 seamen injured. SCI provided warm clothing for survivors some of whom blessed luck while swimming through flaming water. But not 27-year-old seaman Glenn Francis Blanton, who said: "Luck, nothing! It was God. I kept telling my ship (*Spring Hill*) 'If you go down, I go with you.' But I kept telling God, 'If we stay up the credit is yours.'" Blanton hid in the ship's refrigerator to avoid the enveloping smoke and flames.

A modernization fund for the Institute was launched to raise \$250,000 to enlarge SCI's lobby and to improve other parts of the building. Directed by Emmett McCormack, treasurer of Moore-McCormack Lines, the campaign exceeded its goal by \$35,000. Present at a kickoff luncheon at the Whitehall Club were 100 shipping

At opening of SCI's new Danish Seamen's Club, coffee and smørbrød were served to a seaman (left) by actor Jean Hersholt (then "Dr. Christian" of radio fame), Metropolitan Opera tenor Lauritz Melchior, and musician-comedian Victor Borge.

Toasting the announcement of V-E Day were seamen visiting in the Belgian Seamen's Club, who would soon be able to return to their homeland.

Throughout the War, Sunday night teas in the Roper Room, often staffed by girls from AT & T, were well-attended. Pictured: Helen Adams of Rumson, N.J., and Coast Guardsman Joseph Pisarra.

men, Vice-Admiral Emory S. Land, Chairman of the U.S. Maritime Commission, Captain Jonathan M. Wainright of American South African Line, and Clarence G. Michalis, SCI Board President.

SCI noted many innovations in 1945, including a new club for more than 2,000 Danish merchant seamen who had not seen their homeland since the Nazis invaded Denmark in 1940. The club, featuring Scandinavian decor, was opened in February. It added one more lounge room to those already established for British, Belgian, and Dutch seamen. Following a program in the Chapel, more than 250 distinguished guests heard Danish Minister Henrik Kauffmann predict that the hour of Europe's liberation was near. He thanked SCI Board President Clarence Michalis for "being a very fine landlord—since he does not charge us rent for the space where our new club is." (See picture)

Kauffmann's prediction came true on May 1 when Germany surrendered unconditionally. SCI Board Vice-President, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had commended the merchant marine for forming the essential link between the home front and the millions of men in the overseas forces. He noted that 5,800 seamen had died, were missing or had become prisoners of war while carrying out

their assigned duties.

On V-E Day, a dance was scheduled for eight o'clock in SCI's auditorium, but many of the seamen arrived early to listen to the radio. LOOKOUT reported: "When the big news broke, the Institute engineering instructor invited all to go up on the Flying Bridge of the Merchant Marine School. What a sight. It was still daylight, and we could see planes circling over the Statue of Liberty. As the light darkened, we saw rocket flares shooting up in the sky, and pennants and flares flying from all the ships in the South Street piers, just 14 stories beneath us. Whistles from harbor tugs and from freighters and tankers, were deafening. The din was terrific, but thrilling."

It was noted in The LOOKOUT of 1945 that when the first returning merchant seamen who had been imprisoned for two years in a German prison camp kissed American soil, he requested that SCI send a shipvisitor to sell him Traveller's Cheques. He didn't intend to travel, but he had quite a bit of family allotment money which had accrued during the time he had been in a camp for seamen near Bremen.

V-E day was observed quietly and reverently at 25 South. Merchant seamen from Holland and Denmark had been close to their radios since the

news flashed of the liberation of their countries from the Nazi yoke. One Danish captain shouted: "I want to thank God I can now expect to see my dear wife again after five long years. Just once have I heard—through the Red Cross—that she is alive. I've remembered what King Christian said—'So long as there is a God above, He will protect our Denmark.'"

Before the war on both fronts had ended, however, SCI provided hand-knitted sweaters, socks and comfort bags, and comfortable lodging to the last wartime torpedoed crew—survivors of Belgian freighter *Air Mail* (Picture)

In its first official post-war act, the Institute put a tiny gray kitten named "Coursey" on board the beautiful square-rigged sailing ship *Danmark* which returned home for the first time since the war, accompanied by 200 books for officers and crew.

Through the bulletin boards of SCI, the War Shipping Administration issued urgent appeals to merchant seamen, officers, stevedores and longshoremen to "stick to their jobs." It met with a good response and the doors of SCI swung open all day long with seamen carrying duffel bags and suitcases, reporting for work.

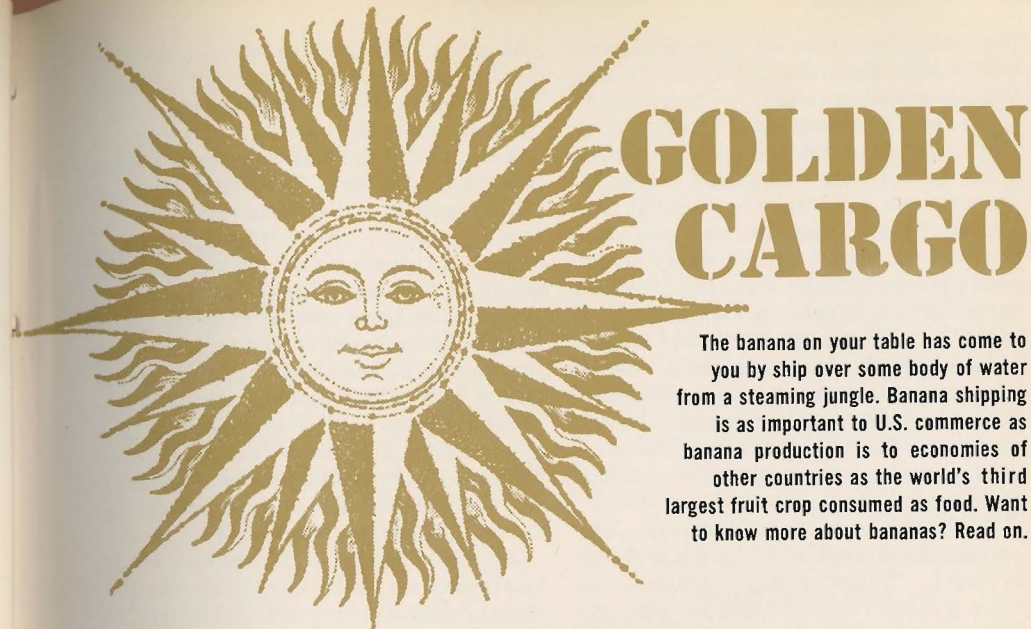
Whereas the Institute had rejoiced with seamen at the termination of the War on both fronts and full employ-

ment, it was saddened early that year when news came from Warm Springs that President Franklin D. Roosevelt was dead. SCI acknowledged his devoted years of service on SCI's Board on behalf of seamen and of his assistance to Dr. Archibald Mansfield in his fight against vicious exploitation of sailors.

Less solemnly, The LOOKOUT observed its 35th birthday by printing a letter written by Mrs. Archibald Mansfield, wife of the Institute's former Superintendent. "Thirty-five years ago my husband said to me, 'I have been worrying a great deal lately. I want to get to more people. This work should be known all over the country, not just in the east, not just these states near us. I had a dream. Why not a small magazine?' That was the birth of The LOOKOUT."

On another front the Amateur Comedy Club of New York celebrated its 60th Anniversary with a benefit performance of a Cape Cod comedy about life in the early 1800's—"Feathers in a Gale"—at Hunter College. Proceeds of the benefit which went to SCI totaled \$2,100. Featured in the cast was marine artist Gordon Grant whose great seascape hangs over the altar in the Chapel of our Saviour.

It is doubtful that any other single year of SCI history was as traumatic or eventful as 1945. And those events should not be forgotten.



The banana on your table has come to you by ship over some body of water from a steaming jungle. Banana shipping is as important to U.S. commerce as banana production is to economies of other countries as the world's third largest fruit crop consumed as food. Want to know more about bananas? Read on.

Your great-grandmother never saw a banana. Before early 19th Century, bananas were unknown to American housewives, and for that matter, anywhere else in the temperate zones. It wasn't until a sea captain, returning from voyages to tropical America, loaded as "extraordinary cargo" some strange yellow fruit from the docks in Jamaica.

Captain Lorenzo Dow Baker, master of fishing bark *Telegraph*, bought 160 bunches for a shilling a bunch from native peddlers. He sold them later alongside his ship when it reached Jersey City for \$2 a bunch. The perishable "golden cargo" survived with difficulty the long distance from tropics to East Coast ports. At the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876, a few bananas, wrapped in tinfoil, were sold to intrigued buyers at 10¢ apiece.

Captain Baker's profitable sale in Jersey City led him to believe that he could capture the housewife's taste with this wholesome tropical fruit in the same way the fruit had caught his fancy on the wharfs of Jamaica. He was right.

Baker and other partners formed an agency in 1885—the Boston Fruit Company—which evolved into the United Fruit Company. The demand for bananas in America increased

while the U.F.C., principally a shipping company, began developing the vast lowlands of central America. Eager governments made available large tracts of jungle territories for the profitable banana agriculture and the railroads and port facilities that would be needed.

In B. B. (before Baker) the banana was little known outside the humid, tropic zones of Southern Asia and the large islands of Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Philippines and Formosa. It was most likely introduced to Egypt and Africa by early traders. The banana which we find on our store shelves, *Gros Michel*, was brought to the New World by French botanist Pouat in 1836. The Conquistadores, however, had found platanos or cooking bananas as early as 1504 in Santo Domingo, first capital of Spanish America.

#### THEY'RE ROTTEN WHEN RIPE

Today, however, the yellow fruit makes up a full 1% of American diets—that's about 17 pounds per person.

Wars have been fought over bananas. Thousands of seamen were torpedoed on banana routes during World War II. They are essential to America's shipping prosperity. They are the most popular fruit after apples and citrus. When they're ripe they're rot-



Last party of seamen survivors from a wartime fatality before V-E Day to come to SCI were these crewmen from Belgian freighter *Air Mail*, torpedoed by a U-boat off Cape Hatteras. They were given hand-knitted sweaters, socks and comfort bags packed by Central Council volunteers.



Popular radio moderator Ted Malone (center) of "Blue network's "Between the Bookends," talks to seaman artists and writers club members at SCI. He is flanked by Folsom, a winner of a poetry contest sponsored by SCI Artists and Writers Club, and G. M. Sullivan, President of the American Poetry Society.

ten and when they're rotten they're really ripe. Bananas, then, are to say the least, controversial.

We learned many facts in preparing this story from Mrs. Grace Chapman, Director of the Women's Council, whose husband was stationed at the United Fruit Company research station in Tela, Honduras for many years.

"There used to be a saying in those early days: 'Every passenger on a banana boat coming from the states was a guest, but returning, every banana was a passenger and every passenger was a pest', which she explained by describing the constant care which seamen must provide the banana cargo.

"I learned to make bananas into everything except writing paper," she laughed. "What always amused us were guests from the States who exclaimed that they couldn't wait to taste their first banana 'ripe from the tree.' Little did they know that when bananas ripen on the plant they are inedible, split and are infested with worms. It amazed them to learn that all bananas are picked stone-hard green, and ripen when they arrive at their destinations."

Bananas, because they are 76% water, constitute the most delicate and easily damaged fruit marketed anywhere in the world. In their life-span from plantation to market, they are fertilized, sprayed, slashed, padded, cut, washed, sprayed again, cooled, warmed again, cooled, cut again, put in polyethylene bags and cooled again.

#### RELATED TO THE LILIES

We traced the origin of the banana from tropic lowland, from the time the succulent banana rhizomes (fleshy roots) are planted in a tangle of decaying brush and jungle vine. The roots, resembling lily bulbs to which bananas are related, planted in rich volcanic soil soon send several shoots rising toward the blistering sun. Natives prune away excess sprouts so that only the most vigorous stem develops which comes to fruition only once. When the plant reaches from 15 to 30 feet, a bud emerges, exposing the flowers from which fruit grows.

The weight of the developing fruit causes the stalk to turn down while

individual bananas turn upward. At this stage natural catastrophies take their tolls—floods, blowdowns, chill, disease and insect pests.

Leaving the fruit to sun-ripen would destroy its flavor. The stalk is cut while green, transported by mule, tractor trailer, truck and sometimes oxcart, to the point where jungle meets water and ships are waiting.

Fruit destined for European markets is picked earlier than fruit coming to the U.S. because it must ripen later. Mrs. Chapman recalls this as "English bananas." Time between cutting and shipping must be expeditious. Unlike other fruits, bananas cannot be "held" in cold storage awaiting favorable market conditions.

Before loading, the banana stalk is washed in mild chemicals to dissolve insect sprays, washed again to remove them. More often than not at this point it is bagged in polyethylene or boxed to prevent damage and scarring during shipment.

#### CARE BY SEAMEN IS ESSENTIAL

At this point seamen begin coddling "Chiquita Banana." Once aboard scientifically equipped ships, bananas are cooled to reduce "field heat" of the tropics as soon as possible. Care must be taken because skin of the banana chilled below 53 degrees will turn black. (Remember that old jingle,

"Never put bananas in the refrigerator"?) Color change does not affect the quality of the fruit, only its attractiveness and obviously its marketability. Before bananas arrive in New York in the dead of winter, they are pre-warmed a few hours as protection against chill.

The banana's vulnerability increases at the point of delivery, and they are unloaded on conveyor belts lowered into the holds of the vessels. Belts carry padded, rubberized canvas pockets. Leaders in the field—United Fruit and Grace Line—use "telescoping" belts which may extend from the ship's sideports to railroad cars without interruption. The banana cargo from just one of today's large ships may require 250 or 270 refrigerated railroad cars to carry it to its destinations.

Once at its destination and placed in the hands of "jobbers" who ripen the fruit in large warehouses at controlled temperature and humidity, the fruit is ready for sale and consumption in another five days.

To develop new markets for increasing banana imports, shipping companies experiment with the fruit and its by-products.

#### SCI TESTED EARLY RECIPES

The SCI kitchens have played an important role in testing new banana recipes. Using proportions suggested

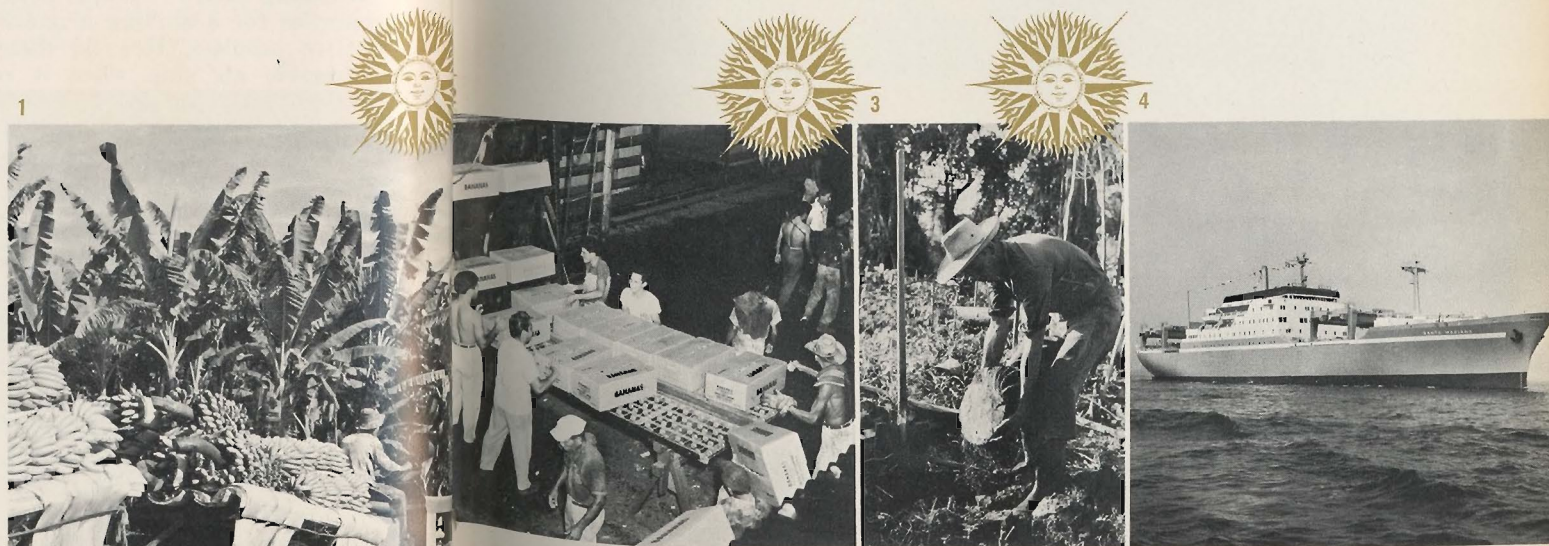
by the Recipe Testing Laboratory of the United Fruit Company, banana bread was first served to SCI's restaurant patrons umpteen years ago. Successful? It has become a regular item for sale in the restaurant's Galley Shop each Friday. A further comment on SCI's banana baking prowess: when the United Fruit Company held a stockholders' luncheon in miles-distant New Jersey, the steaming loaves of banana bread were ordered from SCI's kitchen. On another occasion the Institute chefs demonstrated the preparation of "banana scallops" at the United Fruit display at a National Hotel Convention.

With the permission of SCI's dietician, Carol Terwilliger, LOOKOUT shares a favorite SCI recipe called:

#### Holiday Banana Bread

|                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1¾ cups flour      | 2 eggs                 |
| 2¾ tsp. baking pd. | 4 ripe bananas         |
| ½ tsp. salt        | ½ cup chopped walnuts  |
| ⅓ cup butter       | ¼ cup seedless raisins |
| ⅔ cup sugar (br.)  | 1 cup candied fruit    |

Cream shortening, adding sugar and eggs. Continue beating for one minute. Peel bananas. Add to egg mixture, mixing until blended. Add nuts, raisins and mixed fruit. Add flour, baking powder and salt which have been sifted together. Blend *only 30 seconds*, DO NOT OVERBEAT. Bake at 350° for 70 minutes. Frost.



1 Shredded banana trunks protect tender fruit being transported from jungle to pier. ■ 2 Ripening gold is unloaded at United Fruit's terminal to be sped to markets. ■ 3 Banana production begins when fibrous root is planted in warm, volcanic soil. ■ 4 Grace Line passenger-cargo ship, Santa Mariana, visits exotic banana ports from Port Newark.



# We are a kaleidoscope of the waterfront

*A look-in on the world's largest  
shore home for merchant seamen...*

**FOND RETURN**—Rudolph Van Reen, former First Mate on Bird's Antarctic Expeditions in 1933-35, now retired with his wife in Pennsylvania, fondly returned to SCI this month for a visit. Reen wrote SCI asking whether he and another old seaman cronie could stay with us while visiting the World's Fair, although they were no longer active seamen, SCI extended the red carpet for Reen who studied for his license in our Marine School and whose experiences in Antarctica were reported in the LOOKOUTS of 1938. Above, old salt studies giant compass embedded in lobby floor.



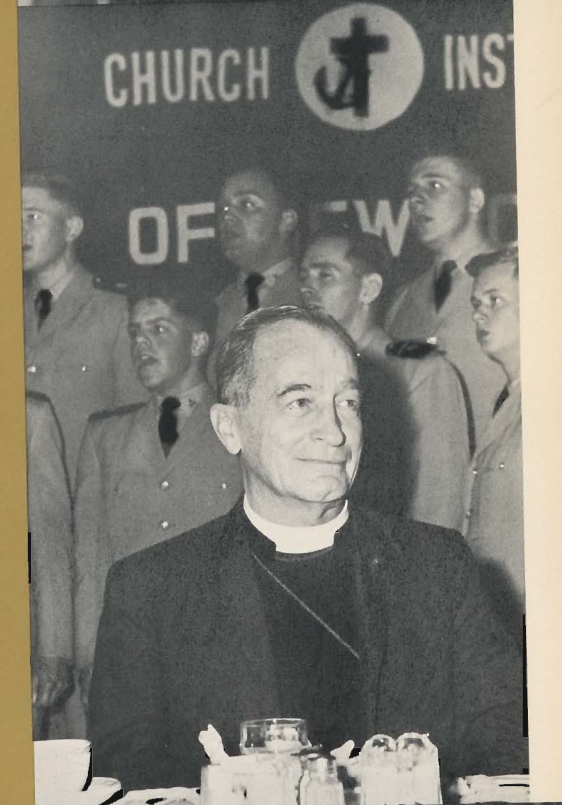
**OLD NAVY**—Preceding a preview of the collection of paintings and old prints collected by the late President Roosevelt last month, 115 shipping and business leaders from the downtown community attended a luncheon in the auditorium where the exhibit was set up. An additional 20 cadets, part of the singing group and honor guard, were seated. Guests of honor included SCI Board President, Franklin E. Vilas; Board Chairman, Clarence G. Michalis; Bishop Horace W. B. Donegan (pictured elsewhere), and representing Mayor Robert F. Wagner, First Deputy Commissioner, The Hon. Robert W. Watt



**BIRTHDAY NIGHT**—More than a million seamen from all over the world have enjoyed SCI's popular International Seamen's Club dance nights since they were begun six years ago, and during an especially festive evening, a crowd of more than 225 toasted the Club's birthday, including seamen from Sweden, Norway, Italy, Colombia, Spain, Portugal, Holland, India, France, Indonesia, Greece and of course, the United States.



**OUR HONOR**—SCI's Honorary President and New York's Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Horace W. B. Donegan, displays obvious pleasure at a preview luncheon for FDR's collection of maritime prints held recently in the auditorium. Vocalizing behind him are members of "The Privateers," a singing group for the New York State Maritime Academy at Fort Schuyler, who provided incidental music during the luncheon.



**OLD TIMERS**—SCI provided historically important photograph of the old waterfront for a diorama created by the Revolver Company of New Jersey for a business show in New York's Coliseum recently. The company which manufactures material handling equipment has been in existence since 1904 and has supported generously the work of the Institute.



**HOME IS THE SAILOR** by Jorge Amado. Translated from the Portuguese by Harriet de Onis. 298 pp. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$4.95.

Into the village of Periperi, to stir the lives and hearts of the villagers, comes a redoubtable figure—Captain Vasco Moscoso de Arago of weather-beaten visage and far-seeking eyes, resplendent in pea jacket, spinning tales of his wondrous adventures at sea. The townspeople are entranced out of mundane reality with these tales of danger, loyalty and romance on the high seas. But doubt begins to grow in the minds of some about the Captain's veracity, and the narrator (between amorous complications of his own) undertakes to find out the truth. The climax comes when the Captain finds himself actually at sea and in command of a ship for the first time.

The truth and the fiction of the Captain's adventures are woven into a delightfully Rabelaisian tale, which ends with the Captain undaunted and unreformed and the narrator asking, "Where is truth, please tell me—in the tiny reality of each of us, or in the immense human dream?"

#### **SOUTH STREET FIVE**

*Continued from page 9*

a second time last month at SCI's preview luncheon for FDR's print collection, "Old Navy."

Whether the "oldest permanent floating dixieland jazz band east of the Mississippi" floats or sinks for the hot summer months has not yet been determined; but in the meantime, before July, lunch-hour musicians who would be interested in joining the "South Street Five" are invited to call Larry Pratt, HA 2-3100.

SCI's Director, The Rev. John M. Mulligan, wields a mean drumstick.

**WANDERER: An Autobiography** by Sterling Hayden. 434 pp. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$6.95.

Sterling Hayden had made 35 motion pictures, held a multifilm contract and was earning an average of \$160,000 a year, when suddenly he walked out. He walked out on his contract and a shattered marriage, and in defiance of the courts set sail with his four children on the schooner *Wanderer* bound for the South Seas.

*WANDERER* is the story of that voyage, but of a great deal more, too. It is the story of Sterling Hayden, who began life in solidly middle class Montclair, New Jersey and was for eight years deck hand on sailing ships, doryman off the Grand Banks, mate and captain. Then came Hollywood, success, big money—and a growing dissatisfaction with his life and himself. This is the painful and intimate story of a man who was and is a rebel, a dissenter, and a seeker, a man who has yet to find himself in success, adventure, love, drink or escape to the South Seas.



#### **SEAMAN OF THE MONTH** *Continued from page 2*

will live at the only place he knows as "home"—the SCI.

Presently, SCI is helping the seaman with the bureaucratic obstacles and complications standing between him and the union hiring halls. While awaiting his "Z" card which he needs for employment, he is pouring over Coast Guard Manuals.

The only seaman in his family, Willy was attracted to the merchant marine after serving in the Belgian Navy. He has sailed for 11 years since his 19th birthday, and has seen most of the world's ports, including many of ours. His first trip to the U.S. brought him to Newport News. That trip—unforgettable—was on an old Liberty ship *Jean-Marie*.

"The ship was ancient; it was winter and the weather was dreadful," he recounted. The crossing from London to Newport took 32 days. The ship encountered a fierce storm in the Azores and little progress was made for 10 days. In the worst attack of the storm, the doors of the poop were torn off and waves washed into the sleeping quarters.

"The mattresses were moved forward, but they were wet for days," he remembered. On the return trip one seaman suffered a severe facial laceration. With no doctor aboard, seamen

#### **AND BABY MAKES THREE**

*Continued from page 3*

vided any problems. "No real problems, thanks to the jars of baby food—a great American invention!"

Far from being excess baggage, Anastasia helps Nikos by doing jobs similar to those done by the purser on larger ships—accounting, bookkeeping, noting overtime pay and keeping work records.

Nikos added that during the long watches on the bridge her company dispels the monotony and makes his time pass quickly. "She looks for light-houses and navigational lights as we approach land; I don't know how, but she makes them appear faster. . . ."

Mrs. Karagiorgis returned the compliment by saying that her husband

attempted a superficial patchup, and a watch was assigned to keep his head from striking the sides of his bunk during the violent roll of the little ship. That fellow seaman's suffering was the devil's touch to a horrible voyage.

He added a bit of dubious humor, however, by remembering that the ship carried sand on deck as ballast, and because of the violent pitching of the storm-tossed ship, sand sifted everywhere and the food during the voyage had a certain "gritty" texture.

Never give up the ship; he didn't. He made four trips on the *Jean-Marie* until he got his AB certification.

While at sea his favorite pastime is wireless radio (he arrived in our office carrying new batteries for his set). He learned wireless operation from a seaman buddy and eventually taught himself Morse code. Ship officers have asked why he doesn't get licensed as a radioman, but he responds "That would take all the fun out of it."

Willy still looks like the 19-year-old he was when he first shipped 11 years ago. His enchantment with shipping has not decreased and he has no inclinations to settle down with a shore job.

And will he remain at SCI?

"This is a seaman's house. I feel comfortable here and I'll make friends."

is a great help with baby's feeding; but in defense of his male dignity, Nikos interjected "Let's not elaborate on that!" And he flashed a smile.

"I cannot travel with my husband all the time and we must part again, of course. But sailing with him once in a while helps keep our family life more balanced. I am better equipped to understand his problems. That's just one (loneliness) of the problems of being a sailor's wife, but I wouldn't change it as long as this is what Nikos was meant to do best. His officers and his crew look up to him with such pride, and this makes me even prouder," said the captain's pretty, young wife.

Little Faedra, sitting on the radar-scope, just smiled.



#### OLD SEAMAN

The adventurous years when he followed the sea  
Are the old man's legend and poetry;  
In deep-voiced tales he travels once more  
To Seattle, Cairo and Singapore.  
Companionship with the wind and tide  
Gave him leathery skin and a rolling stride.  
The ocean's moods have alerted his eyes,  
Wrinkle-set and weather-wise.  
They will always reach, as will his heart,  
Through crowds and cities, waters apart;  
For the sea whose spell is the wild unknown  
Will never cease to beckon her own.

*by Ruth H. Cowley*

#### SEA GIANTS

Ah! Colossus of Rhodes, Wonder of the ancient world;  
Towering statue of the Sun-god, Helios,  
You stood there proudly;  
Gazing disdainfully over the Aegean Sea  
Scorning the tiny ships which daily passed  
Between your mammoth-pillared legs,  
Titan-thewed legs which spanned the harbor of Rodi,  
The entrance to the Dorian lands of Greece:  
The city-states of Camirus—Lindus and Ialusus.  
Rodi, which once felt your ponderous feet, Colossus,  
Later felt the tramping tread of conquerors,  
From Alexander to the present day.  
Many other feet it felt,  
Of common men, and great.

But giants also trod those shores.  
These were the mariners with rolling trudge;  
Unloading their cargoes from across the seas,  
Treasures of silk, copper and spice,  
And many others without number.  
These sea-farers were the giants, oh Colossus!  
For you, majestic mountain of bronze.

Fashioned by the clever hands of Chares,  
Stood for but a brief span only.  
Then you toppled into fragments,  
Humbled by a shaking of the soil.  
While they, small giants of men,  
Were not vanquished by the earth,  
Nor yet by roaring winds and turbulent waters.

They braved the terrors of the unknown seas,  
Their lives entrusted to their own frail handiworks—  
The wooden hulls of tiny ships  
With spindly masts, full-bellied sails.  
Wresting the treasures the boldly bore  
From perilous places on dangerous shores,  
They carried them precariously  
To the haven spanned by your metallic muscles.

Yes, Colossus, these were the true giants, not you.  
For you are legend only and none may gaze upon you.  
These others? Legend also,  
But there are others like them  
Still performing their gigantic tasks  
For all to see, though few appreciate.

*by E. Lewis Russell*

**Seamen's Church Institute of N. Y.**

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