



the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



OCTOBER 1970

Potpourri

The 34th annual conference of the International Council of Seamen's Agencies will be held in the Institute building October 19-21. The Council is composed of organizations in the Western Hemisphere.

Its representatives meet each year to discuss goals and problems common to Council members and how to promote the best interests of seamen. The SCI is a Council member.

The Rev. Dr. John M. Mulligan and Peter Van Wygerden of the Institute staff have been active in setting up this year's conference.

* * *

The Rev. Laurent Van Dijck, a Belgian priest from Antwerp who serves both as a chaplain and language instructor aboard a Belgian cadet training vessel, visited the SCI for two weeks in August.

He has been serving on the cadet ship for three years; prior to this he was a priest in a home for the handicapped in Sicily.

Father Van Dijck believes the Belgian system of training men to become officers in the merchant marine is the best in the world.

"The young men get practical on-board ship training under the close supervision of experienced instructors while the ship is performing as a conventional cargo ship during conventional voyages throughout the world," he pointed out.

The three-year cadet training course is government-subsidized and the trainees occupy quarters on a special deck on the ship apart from the regular crew. The cleric teaches French and English with the aid of voice tapes and other modern language instructional devices.

* * *

Thomas McCance, a New Yorker, wrote *The Lookout* to comment on a coincidence. Mr. McCance said in his note: "I was interested to read in the July-August issue the account of the tragedy of the *Hornet* by J. R. Crane. This was of particular interest because Henry Ferguson, one of the two passengers on the *Hornet* referred to in the article, was my wife's grandfather. We have a copy of his diary as well as a copy of Captain Mitchell's diary."

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COVER: "Mooncussers" prepare to board wrecked ship grounded on a rocky beach — to strip the vessel of cargo, valuables and equipment.

Ever hear of MOONCUSSERS?

by Abbie M. Murphy

"Mooncussers," as the term was used in the 18th Century, designated a special group of villains and no others. It was a term coined for those men who lured ships on to the shore by means of false lights. They then murdered the

crew and plundered the wrecked ships.

Naturally, dark and moonless nights provided the perfect background for such nefarious doings, and no doubt the plunderers did cuss a brilliant moon when they could not work under cover of the darkness they wished for.

Cape Cod, Massachusetts, extending like a mighty arm out into the Atlantic, is a place of legends and stories of all kinds . . . but Cape Codders, at least, do not especially enjoy the tales of mooncussers on their shores.

"All that stuff", they maintain, referring to latter day mooncussers, "comes out of books!" Not so, many authorities maintain . . . they were there, certainly. And these authorities go on to tell that the term "mooncussers" was passed on to their "brethren" who followed them: the Cape Cod "wreckers".

As the years passed, and maritime activity reached a peak in New England, many ships were wrecked on the treacherous shoals and bars of the Cape, with its peculiar and variable tidal action. Terrible storms roared in upon it.

Especially dangerous for shipping was the so-called "back side" of the Cape. This locale is the exposed "Great Beach" or Nauset Beach, now a national park site. It is here that the powerful Atlantic pounds unmercifully, shifting the coastline, swirling about in furious tides and eddies, and, especially in a "northeaster", forcing the best of ships and the most skillful of masters on to the terrible Cape reefs, where the doomed vessel pounds herself to pieces.

The laws of ship salvage originated in Rhodes, about 900 B.C., and were observed for centuries as a guide to the disposition of goods taken from wrecked ships. These early laws were strict and clear, but they were not always observed; "From every part of Europe," we are told, "the plundering of vessels wrecked on nearby shores seems to have been carried on without mercy through the Middle Ages."



No written work was published on American salvage law until 1858, when Judge William Marvin of Key West published a treatise on the *Law of Wrecking and Salvage*. This continued to be the authoritative book until 1958, when *Martin J. Norris's* modern work, *The Law of Salvage*, appeared.

So much for salvage law.

As far as Cape Cod is concerned, at least, there is reason to believe there was much more to tell about the flouting of these laws by the "wreckers" than there is to note with regard to their strict observance. It is these "wreckers" who inherited the title of "mooncussers", probably because it was felt that such a colorful title shouldn't be allowed to disappear. Cape Codders deny the existence of either type of mooncusser on their sands.

True it is, though, that poems published about these old stories are rarely founded on investigated facts, and one poem, though not concerned with Cape Cod matters, shows how easily people and communities may be maligned.

It was written by Whittier, and dramatic as it is, the poet afterwards admitted that it was not based on fact. It was called "*The Palatine*" and concerned a shipwreck off Block Island, R.I.

*"Into the teeth of death she
sped —
May God forgive the hands that
fed
The false lights over the rocky
head!
Down swooped the wreckers like
birds of prey
Tearing the heart of the ship
away,
And the dead had never a word
to say.
In their cruel hearts, as they
homeward sped,
'The sea and the rocks are
dumb', they said;
'There will be no reckoning
with the dead'."*

Actually, the poem was written with

the *Princess Augusta* in mind; it was wrecked in 1738.

"This," say the defenders of Cape Cod, "is the kind of thing that immortalized the hokum!"

Some authors maintain that "wrecking" was a respectable calling on the Cape, and so it was, when the laws were followed. Many stories of heroism are told of Cape wreckers and the countless lives they saved. When, however, all possible life-saving had been accomplished, and the rescued seamen were safe in Cape Cod kitchens, the "salvage" activities started. "Wreck plundering" was a more exact term for much of it. One writer says, "No generation of Cape men showed any hesitancy in stripping a vessel clean, once her crew were safe."

The hot denials of such plundering are weakened a bit by the story attributed to Keeper Collins of the Nauset Lights in which he was supposed to have said in the 1850s that he was having a hard time overcoming the objections Eastham men raised to the proposal of erecting a lighthouse on their beach, because it "would harm the wrecking trade."

The towns of Eastham, Truro, Wellfleet, Orleans and Chatham are always mentioned when mooncussing is discussed. All are located on very dangerous stretches of shore, and as one writer tells us, "wherever sail passed by a dangerous locality in great numbers, there was a wrecking ground."

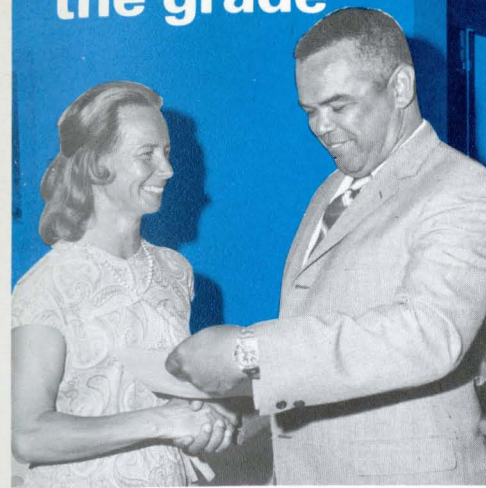
More than 1100 known wrecks have occurred on Cape Cod.

The "wreckers" which Cape Cod would like to disown are those men who hurried to the beach before daylight of a winter's morning at the first news of a wreck. They were anxious to see what part of the cargo they could get for themselves. There seemed to be no "headmaster" of plunder. They just went to the beach, and proceeded with their "business."

It is said that one Truro wrecker moved to Orleans, and set out to show

(Continued on page 7)

a seaman makes the grade



The SCI Merchant Marine School has helped a great many A.B. seamen upgrade themselves to become ships' officers — both deck and engineering — the majority attaining a mate's rating, advancing by steps from a Third Mate to a Second to a First by study and sea experience through the years.

Fewer of the students eventually achieve the elite status of a master's rating — a captaincy.

Merle Paynter, an affable seaman who lives with his wife and young son in White Plains (a suburban city north of New York) when he isn't at sea, and who received his first academic and practical seamanship training at the Institute during the Fifties, recently obtained his master's certificate from the U.S. Coast Guard at the conclusion of a two-week examination called a "sitting" — in the parlance.

(The Coast Guard conducts all examinations relating to the seamanship competency of U. S. seamen and issues certificates appropriate to the rating.)

Because now-Captain Paynter wanted his evenings unencumbered for study and preparation for the next day's "sitting", he took a room at the Institute during the examination period rather than commute to Manhat-

(Left) Mrs. Eugenia Brown, registrar for SCI Marine School, gives Captain Paynter Institute certificate customarily awarded students who achieve advance in grade.

(Below) The new captain (second from left) is congratulated by three of Marine School faculty for his achievement. From left: Capt. Gerald Van Wart, Paynter, James Mills, Donald Van Wart.



tan each day from his suburban home.

"I spent a good deal of time in the old South Street building when going to the school there and became very familiar with it, but it took me no time at all to feel equally at home in this new State Street building," he commented. "The accommodations are just great."

Captain Paynter — "Better not call me 'Captain' until I get my first command; the first one is difficult to get for a new master" — is a native of St. George's, Bermuda.

"Living near the water as I did, I've been splashing around in it or sailing on it as long as I can remember."

The 41-year-old captain began as an apprentice pilot with the Bermuda government, then came to the U.S. in 1956. He has recently been sailing as chief mate aboard a freighter, the *Indiana* of the Transamerican Steamship Corporation on runs to Bermuda and Northern Europe.

"I will always be grateful to the Institute for the good training in seamanship fundamentals taught me in the SCI Marine School. I just might never have gone this far if it hadn't been for the Institute," he said.

Soon, hopefully, Captain Paynter may be able to say, in truth, "I am the captain of my ship."

—H. G. Petersen

by Dane John

Ships' Bells Ring with Mysticism

In the days of sailing ships a vessel's bell was treated with respect by the crew because it was thought to represent the ship's soul. Seamen believed that the ship's bell always rang as the vessel sank; and if it rang of its own accord, even if all seemed to be going well, this warned that the ship would meet disaster.

The origin of the bell aboard ship is thought to be the ancient Chinese gong carried on their vessels to mark the half hours of the watches and to give orders. When the Normans and other sea rovers invaded or landed on a foreign shore they heralded their arrival by the ringing of a bell aboard ship.

The deck bell aboard sailing ships was usually mounted on an ornamented frame made in brass, gun metal or cast iron, in the form of a dolphin, other sea creatures, or a motif topical for the vessel. It was painted either in

green and gold, or black and gold, while the bell was kept highly polished, gleaming and bright.

Bells recovered from ships wrecked on rocky or dangerous coasts have often been used as church bells locally. The SCI has such a bell, associated with a sea tragedy, that of the *Atlantic*, a steamer which exploded and sank off Fisher's Island in Long Island Sound in 1846 with a loss of forty-eight lives.

The recovered bell was then hung in the belfry of the Floating Church of the Holy Comforter, subsequently hung in the various SCI chapels down through the years and today is mounted on a stand in the second floor foyer of the Institute.

There are a number of other ships' bells in this general building area, including that of the ill-fated liner, the *Normandie*.

In the five churches of the Scilly

Isles, four of the bells were saved from wrecks. There are also many legends of bells ringing beneath the sea. Danish raiders are said to have seized the bells from Whitby Abbey, Yorkshire, but their ship foundered offshore and the bells were lost. It is claimed that if a person stands on the shore at certain times of the year the bells can be heard tolling.

At Yarmouth, Norfolk, England, there is a belief that a cargo of bells was lost when the ship carrying them sank in a storm but that they can be heard ringing from beneath the waves.

Similarly, some bells bound for Tingtagel Castle, Cornwall, went down when the ship foundered at Boscastle, but to those who care to listen on certain mornings of the year, the sunken bells are said to ring out sweet and clear above the sound of the waves.



Ever hear of MOONCUSSERS? (Continued from page 4)

how superior in the way of wrecking skills were the Truro men. When a wreck finally pounded on the bar, it hit the beach in two pieces. Not a soul did the Truro man see on shore. He hurried to get aboard to show the Orleans men how "wrecking" should be done. When he reached the cabin, he found seventeen Orleans men there, who cleaned it out properly. He gained new respect that day for the talents of Orleans men.

When the *Nancy M. Foster* got aground on Shovelful Shoal, around 1917, the crew went over the side clinging to whatever piece of debris was handy. One of them boarded a plank and headed for shore. When he got close enough he saw about 100 "hard-looking customers" waiting for him. A terrible thought struck him. "What

town is this?" he called. "Chatham", they hollered back. "Goodbye", he yelled, then quickly put about and headed out to sea.

(Harwich and Chatham are natural rivals, and of course this story is told by a Harwich man.)

The day of the "mooncussers" whether recognized villains or wreck plunderers, is definitely over. Today's salvage vessel is a floating workshop, run in a very workmanlike manner. Manned by hardy and dauntless men, these modern salvors are quick to answer any signal of distress, and salvage what they can of the ship's cargo, at an agreed price.

Mooncussers may have been operating on Cape Cod at some past time, but you will never prove it by Cape Codders.

Some of SCI's collection of ships' bells to be seen on second floor foyer.

by James M. Powles

The Mississippi River from the mouth of the Yazoo River to Grand Gulf. Until Vicksburg fell in early July 1863, this section of the Mississippi was the scene of concentrated action.

BLACK TERROR of the MISSISSIPPI

The night of February 25, 1863 was quiet and cold. The Confederate forces defending the strong fortress of Vicksburg, Mississippi, were all asleep except the rebel pickets who were standing their lonely posts constantly alert for any sign of the enemy.

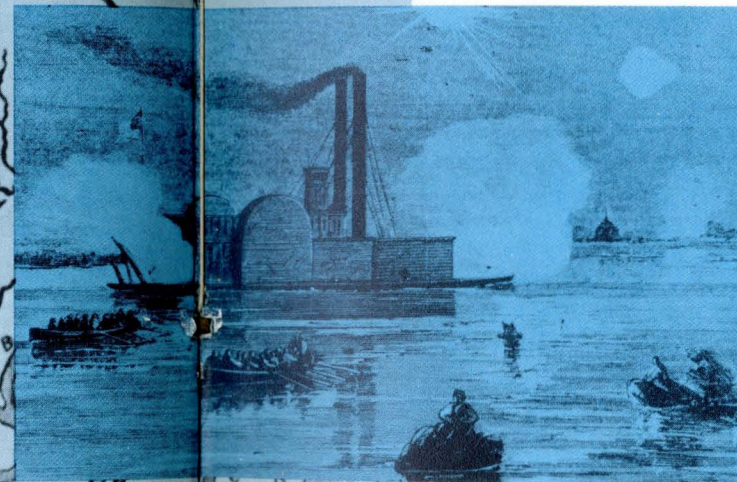
Vicksburg and its vast array of defenses was pinned in a powerful Union vise. A large Federal army under General U. S. Grant was encamped around the perimeter of the city while up the Mississippi River lay the Union gunboats and ironclads of Acting Rear Admiral David Porter. The Union forces wanted Vicksburg very badly since it was the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi and if it fell the Union would have control over one of the South's main arteries of supply.

Walking along the shore of the river above Vicksburg, a Confederate sentry gazed aimlessly at the swift-flowing waters of the mighty Mississippi. His thoughts were interrupted as he caught sight of a dark shadow moving downstream. For several seconds he stood breathless as it came closer and gradually materialized into the largest, most powerful ironclad warship he had ever seen. Catching his breath, the sentry took off to sound the alarm.

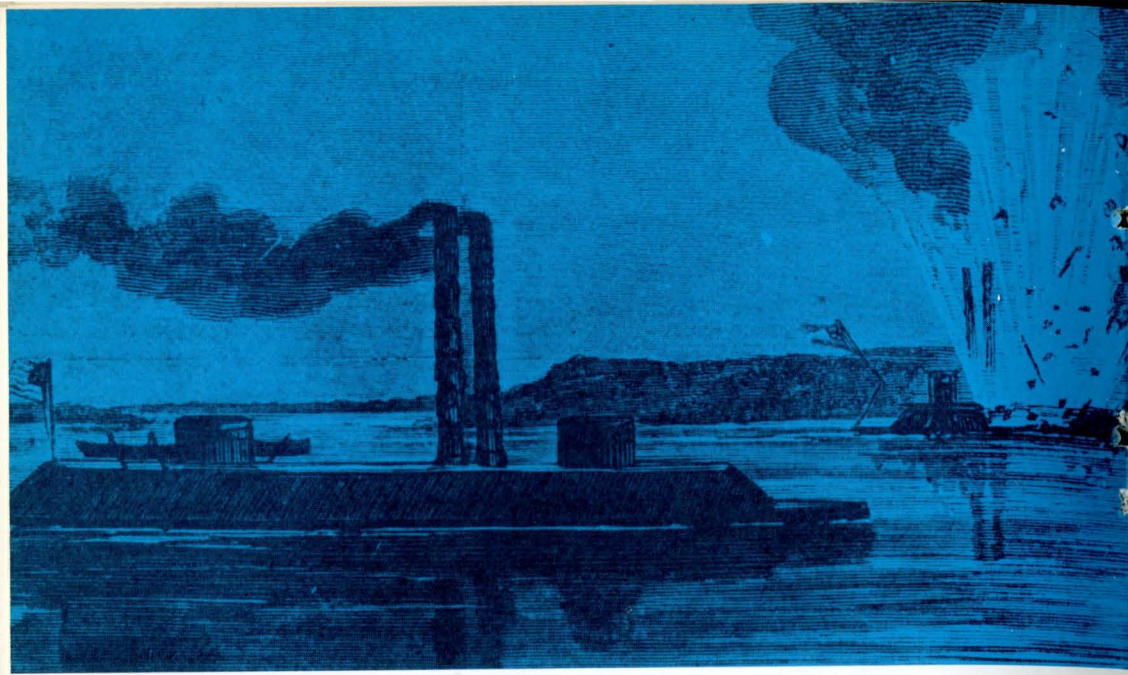
Within a short time Vicksburg was alive with the sounds of men and horses being deployed. Artillerymen were roughly awakened and sent immediately to their guns to make them ready for the intruder. On the inland side of the city the Confederate soldiers facing Grant's army were put on alert. General J. C. Pemberton, commander of the city, was not going to take any chances.

This ironclad could be trying to run past the city's batteries as did the Union's *Indianola* and *Queen of the West* a few days before, or it could be the beginning of a massive Union attack.

As the huge "ironclad" came within range of the first Confederate battery she was met by a tremendous bombard-



Indianola runs aground near Jefferson Davis plantation below Vicksburg and is surrendered to rebels.



"Black Terror" causes Indianola to be blown up by Confederates.

ment. Moving down-river with the current, the vessel received the same heated reception from each battery she passed.

Shot plunged into the water beside the warship sending geysers of water over her and others whistled past her two tall smokestacks.

Not all the shells missed; some crashed into her huge black casemate while others ripped the two boats hanging near the stern into kindling.

Finally the ironclad passed out of range of the last battery and pressed on out of sight. The Confederate gunners along the river could not believe what they had seen; despite their murderous fire, the ironclad had casually steamed through it all seemingly without serious damage and not bothering to fire her many guns in reply.

Far upstream Admiral Porter relaxed as he heard the thunder of Vicksburg's cannons. He fervently hoped the rebels poured every ounce of powder and shot they had into the ironclad.

It was not that the Admiral cared little of his men or ships but the ironclad could be literally blown out of the

water and not a single life would be lost aboard her.

For this "warship" was nothing more than a magnificent hoax set up by Porter.

* * *

This hoax began several days before when the formidable Union ironclad *Indianola* was sent down below Vicksburg to aid the Union gunboat *Queen of the West* in her effort to cut the rebel supply line from the Red River. The *Indianola* had successfully passed Vicksburg and reached the area of the Red River only to find that the *Queen* had been captured.

The *Indianola* then attempted to go back up river and report to Porter, but was attacked by the Confederate river defense flotilla which included the recently captured *Queen*.

Although putting up a good fight, the *Indianola's* stern was stove in by the Confederate ram *Webb*. Sinking rapidly, the ironclad was run aground on shore near Jefferson Davis' plantation and surrendered. Shortly thereafter, the *Indianola* was set upon by a rebel salvage crew bent on refloating

her so she could be enlisted into the Confederate river flotilla.

Word reached Admiral Porter that night of the loss of his two vessels and he immediately called a conference of his staff. The *Queen* and *Indianola* in Confederate hands posed a serious threat to the Union fleet and the campaign against Vicksburg. Porter knew he must keep the Confederates from refloating the *Indianola*, but how?

It would be foolish to send another ironclad down to destroy the *Indianola* since a third vessel might well suffer the same fate as the *Indianola* and he was not ready to move in force. After much discussion with his officers, Porter hit on a plan.

* * *

The next day a convincing replica of an ironclad was built alongside an old wharf. An old coal barge and logs were assembled into a 300-foot hull. On to this went a huge "casemate" of logs painted with black tar. Empty meat barrels were piled one on top of another to form two tall "smokestacks" and at the bottom of each was placed a pot of oakum and tar which when set afire would produce thick black smoke.

Near the stern two "paddlewheel" boxes were attached, painted with the words, "Deluded People, Cave In" in large letters. Just aft of the empty paddlewheel boxes two old boats were hung. As a final touch, thick logs were cut and placed in the casemate to resemble cannons of the largest caliber.

The dummy ship was constructed and ready to go by dusk and the Admiral and his staff gathered at the wharf to watch the black monster cast off. Like all ships, she needed a name and was given one by the onlookers, the *Black Terror*. As the towboats slowly maneuvered the fake ironclad away from the wharf, her two flags could barely be seen in the fading light.

At the stern flew the Union flag, and a pendant with a skull and crossbones waved at the bow. At midstream the

towboats cast off their lines and the current caught the "ironclad", pushing her downstream toward Vicksburg.

The next morning, following the bombardment of her by the Confederate batteries, she drifted aground below the city. Fortunately the area was under control of Union soldiers who worked to free her — which they did after several hours. Meanwhile at Davis plantation word was received from Vicksburg of the passing of a "giant ironclad". The crew working on the *Indianola* were ordered to destroy the ship if the Union "warship" approached.

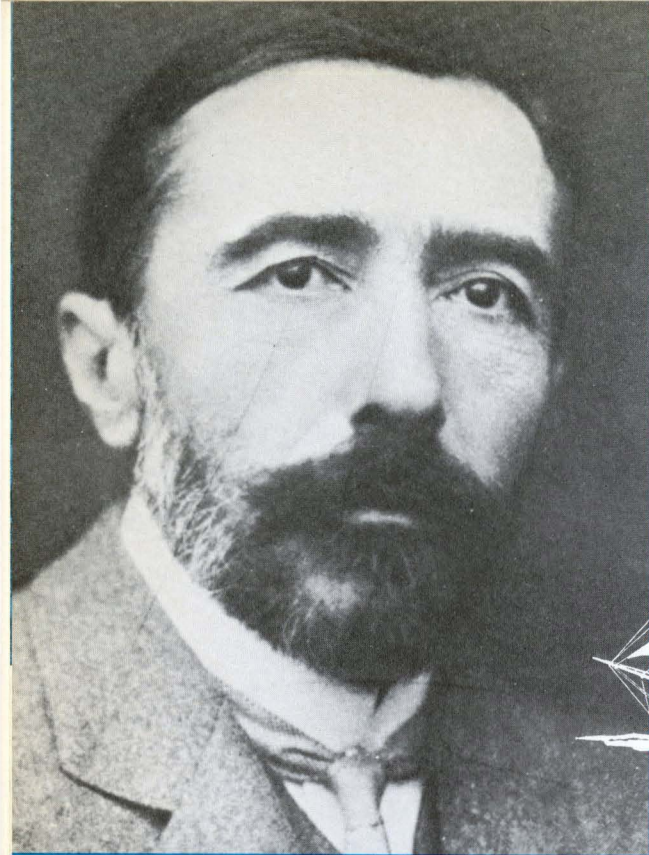
At the same time the captured *Queen of the West* reached the town of Warrenton (just below where the dummy vessel had run aground) to pick up pumps and other gear needed to raise the *Indianola*. Suddenly the black monster was sighted from shore.

The *Queen* hurriedly cast off to warn the Confederate crew on the captive *Indianola*. For a time the *Queen of the West* gained no distance on the sham ironclad but gradually she increased steam and drew ahead.

The *Queen* reached Davis plantation far ahead of the black monster. With news of the approaching "ironclad", the rebel crew aboard the *Indianola* had no choice but to blow her up. With a tremendous roar and brilliant flash, the *Indianola* was shattered, useless to either side. The *Queen*, along with the *Webb*, beat a hasty retreat downriver.

The ersatz "ironclad" never reached the *Indianola*; she ran aground again above the Davis plantation and later was found by Confederate soldiers. When the southern people learned of the hoax and its disastrous results, they were shocked and highly critical of their forces.

To Admiral Porter goes the distinction of having transformed a near disaster into victory with a make-believe warship. The *Black Terror* was one of the smartest ruses of the Civil War.



Sea Novelist Was A Gun-Runner



"The Torrens" 1875,
Joseph Conrad's
last ship.

Joseph Conrad

by Alan Major

The name, Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski, may not mean anything to most persons, but his pen name of "Joseph Conrad", writer of seafaring novels, is better known. His life on the sea and elsewhere was as adventurous as anything he ever wrote; in fact, many of his early escapades formed the basis of some of his books.

The SCI library is named in his honor and contains several of the writer's memorabilia, personal letters, portions of original manuscripts, etc. The serenity of facial expression on a large carved wooden bust of Conrad mounted on the library wall belies the turbulence of his early life.

Korzeniowski was born in 1857, the

son of a Polish revolutionary. His youth was spent in Poland and the Ukraine until at the age of 13 he arrived in Marseilles and joined the French merchant navy. 1876, however, saw Korzeniowski, now 19, involved in more infamous activities. As a crew member of a French schooner running cargoes of guns and ammunition into Spain, from France, to a remote beach near Barcelona, in support of the cause of the Carlist Pretender to the Spanish throne, Korzeniowski was nearly killed.

On one trip the schooner was intercepted by a Spanish warship. The crew knew it would receive no mercy if the vessel was boarded and captured, but

would be put to death without trial. As a last desperate move, the captain deliberately ran the vessel on to the rocky coast, allowing the crew to scramble to safety.

For a few days they lay low until the hunt for them died down, then Korzeniowski with his two shipmates made their way over the border into France and split up. Korzeniowski decided to go back to Marseilles.

Here he met the desirable young Hungarian girl friend of the Spanish Pretender, Paula de Somogyi. She was at once madly attracted to the handsome, adventure-seeking Korzeniowski. For him she was everything he desired in a woman. Soon they fell in love, left Marseilles, and travelled to a cottage Paula knew in the Alps. Here they spent several weeks in an idyllic existence. But Paula also had had many other male admirers and one morning one of them arrived at the cottage.

At first there was an uneasy truce between the two men, but that night, as the wine flowed, Paula flirted with both of them and an argument began. Korzeniowski, trembling with rage, challenged the other man, "If it's a fight you need let's duel like gentlemen not brawl like ruffians." The other man accepted and chose pistols.

Paula begged Korzeniowski not to go through with it, but he refused because his Polish pride told him he would never be able to live with himself if he withdrew. Next day at 9 o'clock the two men met in a lonely field near the cottage. The rival was confident; he was an expert shot. The two men took the traditional twelve paces and turned to face each other's pistol barrels.

Korzeniowski gallantly aimed at the other's pistol hand, but his opponent was no gentleman and aimed at Korzeniowski's heart to kill. The bullet missed the heart by only inches, and he lay near death for several days, nursed by Paula. After several weeks of care and nursing the wound healed and Korzeniowski recovered, but all his savings

had been spent on riotous living before the shooting and on doctors' bills.

Realizing Korzeniowski had no money, the faithless Paula fell out of love with him and returned to her Spanish Pretender in Marseilles. But he was probably also tired of Paula, as Korzeniowski later heard she had left the prince and married an opera singer. Despite this, Korzeniowski never forgot Paula. Years later he wrote a novel, "The Arrow of Gold," based on his gun-running experiences and brief life with Paula.

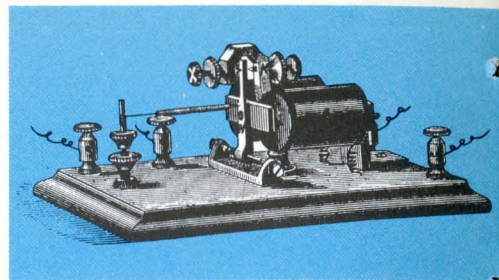
After this event in his life was over, Korzeniowski went back into the French merchant service until, in 1878, he landed at Lowestoft, England. He learned English, took British nationality and obtained a job as mate on an English ship. Later he rose to become a master mariner in the British merchant service. In 1884 he left the sea and began to write novels.

Realizing his long Polish surname would be unsuitable to use on the cover of his books, he took the English versions of his two middle Christian names as his pen name—Joseph Conrad. He had a beautiful prose style and his novels are remarkable for their vivid descriptions of the seafaring life. His novels are still in print in Britain and much read.

Some of them are "Almayer's Folly," 1895, "An Outcast of the Islands," 1896, "The Nigger of the Narcissus," 1897, "Lord Jim," 1900, "Typhoon," 1903, "Romance," 1903, "The Mirror of the Sea," 1906, "Under Western Skies," 1912, "Twixt Land and Sea," 1912, "Arrow of Gold", 1919.

From 1919 Conrad lived in a large rambling mansion, "Oswalds," alongside the village church at Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, England, but still only a few miles from the sea. After his death in 1924 he was buried in the cemetery at Canterbury, within sight of the cathedral.

MARCONI



Many months of work plus numerous disappointments found Marconi ready at last, in December, 1901. He had already built the world's largest radio transmitter near the coast at Poldhu in Cornwall (it had a power of no more than 25 kilowatts, compared with the many hundred kilowatts of a modern broadcasting station), and his helpers there were instructed to send the Morse signal for S (three dots) every 10 minutes for four hours daily.

On the North American side, driven out of the United States by the jealous cable companies, Marconi had set up a terribly primitive receiving station in a tiny stone hut at Signal Hill, Newfoundland, pretending he was merely signalling to offshore shipping. With Kemp and another assistant, Paget, at his side, he flew a 600-ft. long aerial wire from a large kite in a fierce Atlantic gale. The wire was fastened to a pole, and the men retreated inside, hopeful that they would hear the signals coming over the ocean from Cornwall.

Shortly after noon on December 12, Marconi recounted, "I placed a single ear-phone to my ear and started listening. I was at last on the point of putting the correctness of all my beliefs to the test. The experiment had involved risking at least £50,000 to achieve a result declared impossible . . . the chief question was whether wireless waves could be stopped by the curvature of the earth. All along I had been convinced

that this was not so, but some eminent men held that the roundness of the earth would prevent communication over such a great distance as across the Atlantic. The first and final answer to that question came at 12:30.

"Suddenly . . . there sounded the sharp click of the 'tapper' as it struck the coherer, showing me that something was coming, and I listened intently. Unmistakably, the three sharp clicks corresponding to three dots sounded in my ear . . ." Kemp also listened and confirmed; radio had travelled 2,170 miles and there was clearly now no limit. The curvature of the earth had been overcome by a process of natural "bouncing" of the waves back to earth from the ionosphere about 100 miles above the ground.

From that day on, the world lay at Marconi's feet. He continued to concentrate on wireless at sea, and over the next decade saw the total of lives saved in shipwreck by radio rise to many hundreds, culminating in the terrible Titanic disaster in 1912, when 703 souls were rescued by ships summoned over the air. An equally significant incident had occurred in 1910, when the murderer Dr. Crippen was arrested as he landed from a ship in Canada, thanks to a police message sent by radio, the first of uncountable wrongdoers to curse the name of Marconi.

"Do you hear them talking of genius?" Marconi said years later to his daughter. "There is no such thing.

Man Of Destiny

© Copyright 1969 by David Gunston

by David Gunston

Genius, if you like to call it that, is the gift of work continuously applied. That's all it is." And so it was to this most painstakingly persistent of all modern scientific discoverers.

Thanks to his Irish-Italian stubbornness and strong will and his unquenchable belief in what he was doing and the rightness of it for all mankind, Marconi refused to listen to the trained experts, for they all said it would not work. But by hard slog and a refusal to give in, he made it work.

He saw wireless used for the first time as a weapon of war in 1914-1918, then he bought his famous streamlined ocean-going yacht, *Elettra*, whose sleek white form and secret floating laboratory inspired an Italian poet to call her "the shining ship that works miracles, penetrating the silences of the air."

Soon after the success of the Transatlantic link in 1901, Marconi realized that even the new medium of radio cannot stand still but must progress and expand, and he saw that the future lay not in long-waves used then but on ever shorter short-waves that now link all humanity every minute of the day.

On board the *Elettra*, sailing the southern oceans alone but for a small picked crew, Marconi applied his mind to this and related problems, and in the years before his death in 1937 not only foresaw but worked out in practical detail the possibilities of world-wide broadcasting of speech and music, of radar and direction-finding for ships

and aircraft, of television and ultimately of interplanetary radio link-ups all of which we so take for granted today.

Marconi's often maligned "solemn and ponderous attention to detail" paid off, not only for himself and his backers, but for every single human being who has lived since. If "one world" is a concept still far from fruition, at least he gave us the means to that end. The last of the great amateurs of science, a man who saw practical utility in the oddest electrical phenomenon, who had vision where others scoffed or were dubious, the modern world itself with all its achievements is the memorial to Guglielmo Marconi, "the supremely significant character of our epoch."

* * *

The Institute cooperated in a pioneering radio experiment which had a direct and needed application to saving lives at sea. In 1921 the late Henry A. Laughlin of Philadelphia gave \$5,000 to install a radio station in a chart house on the roof of the Institute building at 25 South Street. As a station with the call-letters of KDKF, also known as MEDICO, it was staffed by the U.S. Public Health Service day and night to give medical advice to ships at sea whose passengers or crewmen had sustained injuries or become ill.

—Editor

Address Correction Requested

WILD COMMENTS

The mind often grieves
in wild comments
a beauty there is
it strives to own
clouds over sunlight
cold winds from the sea
the bay, the port,
the uncontrolled green
movement of waves;
the endless lure
surrounding us
peace and contentment
that can be achieved
sailing an endless
fathomless sea
where no leaves grieve
or fall from trees.

— D. M. Pettinella

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