The LOOKOUT

OCTOBER 1956

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE of NEW YORK

THE SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK is a shore center for merchant seamen who are between ships in this great port. The largest organization of its kind in the world, the Institute combines the services of a modern hotel with a wide range of educational, medical, religious and recreational facilities needed by a profession that cannot share fully the important advantages of home and community life.

The Institute is partially self-supporting, the nature of its work requiring assistance from the public to provide the personal and social services that distinguish it from a waterfront boarding house and so enable it to fulfill its true purpose: being a home away from home for merchant seamen of all nationalities and religions.

A tribute to the service it has performed during the past century is its growth from a floating chapel in 1844 to the thirteen-story building at 25 South Street known to merchant seamen the world around.

The LOOKOUT

VOL. XLVII, No. 10 OCTOBER, 1956

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK
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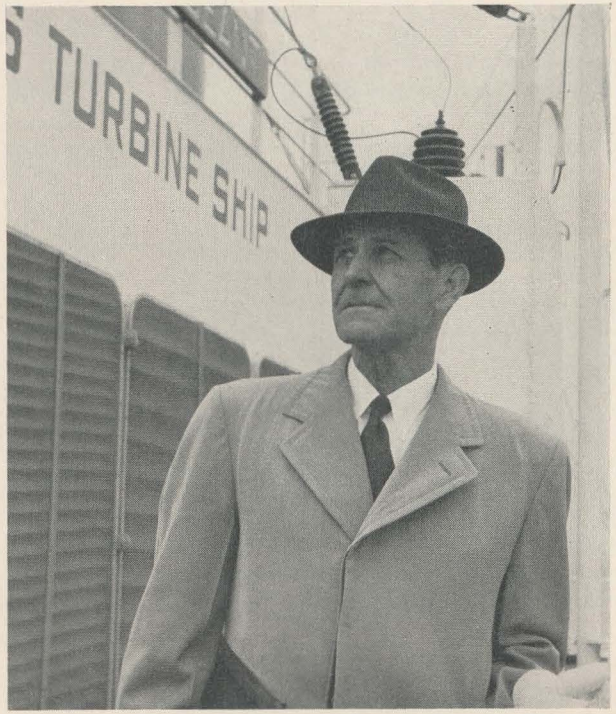
THE COVER: A challenge to winter and the raw North Atlantic are in these bare branches and the familiar figure braced against the blue October sky. This photo of the famed Gloucester statue was made by A. W. Spofford.

Captain Stephen G. Koerber, who sailed on five Libertys during World War II, found the *John Sergeant* an intriguing combination of memories and mysteries.



New Wine for Old Gals

ALL painted up and with her nose done over like a woman with new aspirations, the Liberty ship *John Sergeant* swished into New York last month displaying "G. T. S." in front of her name and sporting a gas turbine under her stack.

It was only last month that THE LOOKOUT had, with a kindly smile, referred to Libertys as "grandmas of the Reserve Fleet," so our curiosity was irrepressible.

Captain Stephen G. Koerber was curious, too, since he had "known her when" — way back in 1942 at her launching from the Bethlehem-Fairfield yard in Baltimore. It was there he had met her sister, the *Daniel V. Willard,* No. 8 out of Fairfield. Koerber had skippered the *Willard,* the *Richard Henry Lee* and the *Raymond V. Ingersoll.* He had last been out with a Liberty in 1951, so he was good company for a visit to the *John Sergeant,* or rather, the *G. T. S. John Sergeant.*

He gave her the knowing eye at Pier 86 and whispered, "I tell you, Mate, she looks a bit long in the nose." Her papers admitted it; 25 feet had been added to help her bear the faster pace of her new turbine. Six thousand is a lot of horsepower, after so many years of only 2500.

As he swung her down Ambrose Channel, Captain Murray, master of the *Sergeant,* let her feel a little bit more of the singing power of the new G. E. gas turbine. Her four-bladed controllable-pitch propeller, the first on a merchant ship of her size, thumped faster. Captain Koerber, standing amidship, gave an approving wink. "She's all right. Not much shake to her, and she's quiet. I thought that turbine might make her wheeze up a storm, but she's all right."

Outside of Ambrose the sea was still rough from Hurricane Flossie, and as the *Sergeant* began to sway, Koerber grinned. "She's still a Liberty, though, just like her sisters. I never saw one that wouldn't roll the change right out of your pockets."

Her deck gear was unaltered. There were a couple of new steam winches at No. 2 hatch, but everything else was the

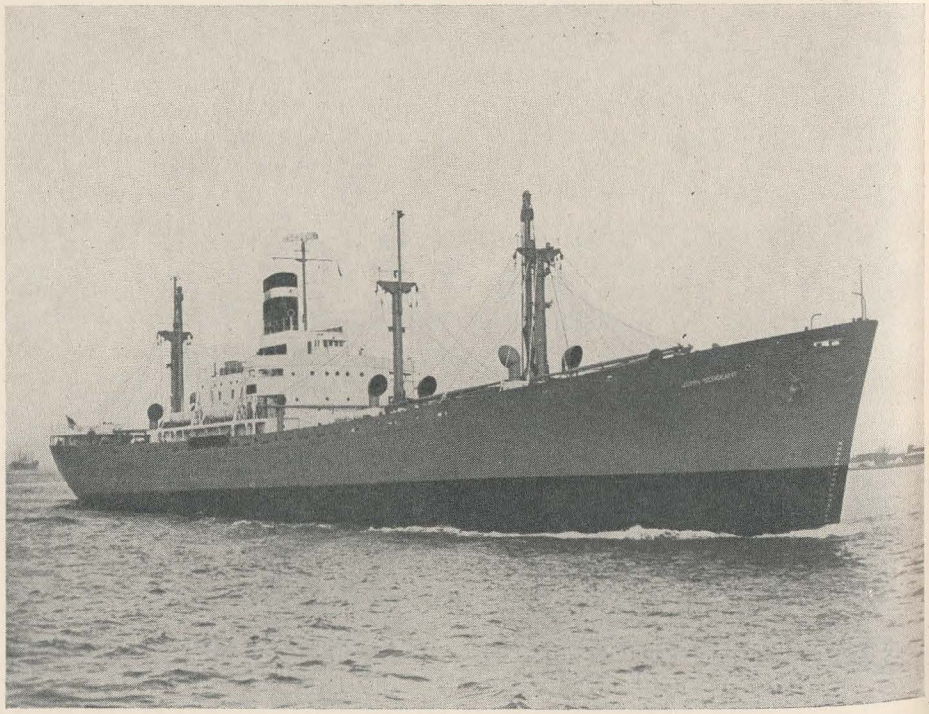
same, the wooden hatch covers, the simple cargo-handling gear, the crank-style lifeboat davits. But amidship, from her stack down she had a new mystery. The stack itself was streamlined and painted with the red, white and blue markings of the United States Lines, slated to test the vessel commercially in the North Atlantic Service for the Maritime Administration.

Captain Koerber surveyed the new engine and propeller controls on the bridge and then apprehensively headed for the engine room. Ten minutes later he reemerged from the strange labyrinth shaking his head. "Well, it's warm down there and kinda crowded. That's all I can say."

The power plant, known as a 6000-HP, regenerative-cycle, two-shaft General Electric gas turbine, is necessarily a mystery to all marine engineers today, inasmuch as the *Sergeant* is the first merchant vessel in this country to have such propulsion. The experts aboard the *Sergeant* were all making happy faces, and Koerber, like the rest of the uninitiated, could certainly find no fault with the way she hummed along. General Electric representatives were confident that their company's previous experience with large turbines assured success for their first major marine installation. At the sea trials the turbine had whirled up 7500 horsepower, enough for 18 knots, so confidence came easy.

Koerber preferred to be out on deck where things seemed more familiar. He was just getting acustomed to the *Sergeant's* faster pace and longer nose when her skipper pulled a crash stop, and suddenly the Liberty was once again a lady of mystery. In just 15 seconds her variable blades were biting backwards at the sea, and in three minutes the *Sergeant* was resting in a boiling white froth. Earlier tests showed that she could go from full ahead to a complete stop in less than three minutes with a headreach of little more than 600 yards. With conventional

With her long bow and her gas turbine the *Sergeant* is good for 18 knots.



drive it takes about seven minutes.

"How about the cost of all this?" someone asked on the way back to Pier 86.

Clarence G. Morse, Federal Maritime Administrator, was on hand to answer. "About 3½ million."

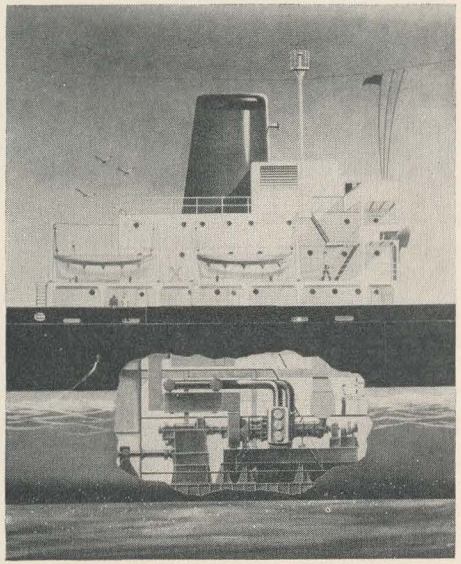
"And at that figure," interjected J. J. McMullen, Office of Ship Construction and Repair, "this is the best investment the Government ever made." He pointed out that much of the cost was due to experimental factors and that additional gas turbine conversions could be made for about 2½ million each.

"We have about 1500 Libertys in the Reserve Fleet," noted Mr. Morse, "and we know that as ten-knot vessels, they aren't worth a damn. However, the three that we have converted so far show that these vessels at 18 knots could be very valuable." He felt that the conversion of "four or five hundred ships for emergency use" was well worth considering.

Mr. Herbert Peters, president of Local 33 of the Marine Engineers Benevolent Association, objected to the idea. "With modern submarines going 30 knots submerged," he said, "as far as speed goes, you'd be as much of a sitting duck in an 18-knot Liberty today as you were in a 10-knot Liberty during World War II." He questioned the soundness of spending so much on old ships when "other countries are building new ones that are faster."

The Maritime Administrator replied by saying he did not find it realistic to think that Congress would spend the money for 500 new ships — desirable as those ships might be. He reasoned that in the event of war it would be better for America to have 500 18-knot ships than less than a 100 faster ones.

Actually, souping up the old Libertys is only one of four major objectives under study in the ship-conversion program. The Maritime Administration also wants to test the sea-keeping traits of the Liberty hull at higher speeds with and without the lengthened bow; to see if cargo handling equipment can be improved, and to develop and test new and more efficient propulsion plants. The *Benjamin Chew* got a new steam turbine and military cargo-handling gear, but kept her old



The *John Sergeant's* engine room is like nothing you ever saw before. It holds this country's first marine gas turbine.

bow. The *Thomas Nelson* was given a long bow, geared diesel engines and experimental cargo-handling gear. A fourth Liberty will get a free piston generator gas turbine and a long bow.

Captain Koerber drummed his 61-year-old fingers on the *Sergeant's* 14-year-old rail. 'I'm afraid some of these new power plants are beyond my time. Atomic power for instance; I'll be in Snug Harbor by then."

A sailor from the *Sergeant* spoke up. "If war started next year this time, I'd bet you this: you wouldn't have to worry about any new power plants. They'd break out the old Libertys just as is, and away you'd go!"

"You mean, *down* you'd go!" chimed in another.

"Well, it wouldn't be the first time."

As the *Sergeant* idled toward her dock she behaved as if there was nothing new under her stack. Yet Koerber had only to run his eyes along her decks, where she was strapped full length, inside and out, and he was reminded that the *Sergeant* was a Liberty with new ambitions.

— Tom Baab

Back from Europe, where he discussed plans for his superliners with port officials, H. B. Cantor says, "Nothing's going to stop me from building those ships!"

A Man With A Plan

TRADITIONALLY conservative Steamship Row has been rocked back on its heels by a man with a slightly sensational plan. Hiram B. Cantor, a New York hotel owner, has announced his intention to build two gigantic (90,000 tons, 1150-foot-long) superliners that would take 6,000 passengers to Europe at a time. Passage, one-way, would be $50.00.

If the Maritime Administration, now studying the plans, agrees to help him build his superliners at a cost of $100,000,000 each, H. B. Cantor says the $50.00 passage to Europe could be a reality within two years. He predicts it would then be possible to leave New York any Monday of the year and arrive on the continent four days later, minus only half-a-hundred dollars plus extras — for food, purchased on a pay-as-you-eat basis, and other services.

The man behind this amazing plan, H. B. Cantor, is convinced that the construction of his ships would not only introduce a whole new segment of the public to the joys of European travel, but would put the American Merchant Marine back on its feet, provide jobs for thousands of seamen, and boost the economies of several European nations. A self-made millionaire in shirt-sleeves (he started "buying and selling rooming-houses" when he was 19 years old), Cantor has been cherishing the dream of a low-cost fare to Europe ever since the early '30s. Going cross-country on a train back then, he was struck by the enormous disparity between railroad and steamship fares for comparable distances. He began then and there to work out a means of getting people across the ocean cheaply and comfortably. Two years ago the passing of certain amendments to the Mortgage Insurance Act made such a scheme feasible. Cantor teamed the services of naval architect Igor Yourkevitch, designer of the *Normandie,* with his own commercial hotel operating know-how, and emerged with the most ambitious ship plans to date.

Comfort without frills is the key word for two big ships which Cantor would call *Peace* and *Goodwill.* "For years," says Cantor, "ship passengers have been forced to pay for too many luxuries they really don't want, and these unnecessary extras made traveling prohibitive for many." However, the plans for his ships are not exactly Spartan. Passengers would sleep in either four, two or single berth staterooms (at prices ranging up to $125), all equipped with private bath, television and air-conditioning. Passengers could swim in one of three pools, enjoy an ice-skating rink, two theatres, a concert hall and shopping centers where merchandise from both sides of the Atlantic would be sold at reasonable prices. They could eat either at a 1,000-seat formal dining room or a 1,500 seat cafeteria, or at various automat-type snack bars, all serviced by a central kitchen. This is where Cantor really figures to save money and cut out frills. He plans on pre-cooked or frozen food served on cheap, disposable trays. Another scheduled economy is the elimination of luxury services by the crew. On the Cantor ships, the ratio of crew to passengers would be one to four; on liners today it is one to one-and-a-half.

Although the $50.00 fare would only cover the cost of maintenance of the ship, Cantor feels that profits from fringe areas — renting of stores and concessions — should make enough money to more than pay back the proposed Government loan in 20 years. In addition, he claims, more than $200,000,000 in taxes would be earned by the United States.

Cantor also envisions the ship as a floating convention hall for the winter months. The convention hall, a double decked glass-enclosed aircraft hanger space (the ships could be converted in wartime to aircraft carriers or division-strength troopships) would be large enough to seat 4,000.

News of Cantor's plans has created a small international furor. Cantor says that a number of European port cities are anxious to have his business, and although at present there are no dry-docking facilities in Europe large enough for the ships, and very few channels deep enough, he reports that the cities are willing to undertake vast improvement programs. The port of Zeebrugge in Belgium, which is at the moment the most likely prospect, would spend $20,000,000 on port improvement should it become Cantor's European terminal.

The reaction from the people and the press — not only in Europe and the United States, but in Australia, New Zealand, South America and South Africa as well, has been remarkable. On a trip to Europe this summer, Cantor says he was mobbed by crowds wherever he went, all trying to put in advance reservations for passage. Since he has been back in New York he has received hundreds of letters begging for reservations, "Right now, I could fill the ship up from three to five years in advance. But I can't accept any reservations until the keels are laid," he says.

Cantor does not believe he would be in direct competition with the other passenger shipping lines or with the airlines. He feels his floating motels would cater to an entirely different group of travelers. Shipping lines on both sides of the Atlantic are looking somewhat askance at the proposition. The feeling is that Cantor is a hotel man, not a shipbuilder, and the two callings have different problems. England's *Journal of Commerce* wrote, "We feel that Mr. Cantor might like to re-orient his position and stick to his hotel business on shore before he gets his feet wet in that very temperamental trade—the Atlantic Ferry."

When someone on the Maritime Administration, now studying Cantor's proposal for the ships, queried him about the possible use of an atomic power plant, Cantor answered: "I didn't come here to discuss science. I just want to build two ships." That's pretty much Hiram B. Cantor's answer to any and all ifs-and-buts — he's determined to build those ships. "And," he adds, "nothing's going to stop me."

Artist's conception of Cantor's proposed 90,000-ton superliner.

The World of Ships

ON THE ROCKS

Twenty-five thousand feet below the level of the sea, there are no monsters but only rocky shelves. So reports the French underwater explorer Captain Jacques Cousteau, who succeeded in obtaining three photographs at this depth on his latest oceanographic expedition for the Paris Museum of Natural History and the National Geographic Society.

Captain Cousteau anchored his research ship, the *Calypso,* at the 25,000 foot depth in the Atlantic off Equatorial East Africa. Specially designed cameras and lighting equipment, capable of withstanding ocean pressures of 17,000 pounds to the square inch, were lowered to the bottom of the sea.

Cousteau reported that the presence of rocky shelves was a surprise, as scientists had believed the sea bottom to be covered with organic mud. "The pictures show no sea monsters, I am sorry to say," he added.

OCEAN PHONE

The first transocean telephone cable is now in operation between North America and Europe and, if you like, you may call London or Paris and have your sweet tones travel across the floor of the Atlantic on twin cables stretching 2500 miles between Clarenville, Newfoundland, and Oban, Scotland.

The cable, laid by the British ship *Monarch* during the summers of 1955 and 1956, is the end-product of 25 years of research to devise a transoceanic telephone cable. Employing underwater amplifiers that can pass through a cable ship's laying gear, withstand tremendous pressures on the ocean floor and operate for at least 20 years without attention, the cable can carry 36 telephone messages at one time and is completely unaffected by weather conditions, the major drawback to the radiotelephone. A call can now be placed to Europe in about ten minutes; via the radiotelephone system, it often took eight to ten hours.

The cable, which cost $42,000,000, will also be used to transmit radio broadcasts, and there is even a possibility that television will cross the ocean via cable too.

NAVEL MYSTERY

A ship carved on a stone stomach may provide the missing link in Thor Heyerdahl's migration theory of the ancient Incas of Peru. Heyerdahl, the man who sailed across the Pacific on the raft *Kon-Tiki* to prove his theory that the Polynesian islands were settled by the Peruvian Incas, has returned from another Pacific expedition with more evidence to back up his claims.

Returning this summer from an 11-months voyage aboard a 450-ton converted fishing trawler, Heyerdahl reported that his expedition had unearthed huge stone statues on Easter Island, completely different from the mysterious ones discovered there before, and forming a link with the ancient statues found in Peru's Ande Mountains.

On one of these statues, the Norwegian anthropologist reported to the *New York Times,* "we found engraved on the stomach a crescent-shaped, three-masted sailing vessel. Small types of such vessels, made of reeds lashed together, are still in use on Lake Titicaca in Peru."

Heyerdahl called this a "sensational discovery," since natives of Easter Island still make tiny rafts of reed of the same type, used today on Titicaca. The reed, called totora, is unknown in Asia, and was probably planted in volcanic lakes by Peruvians migrating to Easter.

RUNNER-UP

The Soviet Union, long a slouch in affairs maritime, has pushed its way up to second place among the navies of the world. A seven-man team of NATO ex-perts, addressing a meeting in Philadelphia last month of the American Association of Port Authorities, reported that the Red Navy had risen from seventh to second place among the world's navies in the past decade.

Only exceeded by that of the United States, the Soviet fleet boasts 25 modern cruisers, 130 destroyers and 400 submarines. The Russian submarine fleet, the experts reported, is rapidly becoming the largest in the world. Russian workers are turning out three submarines every two weeks.

LIFESAVER

The albatross that hung round the Ancient Mariner's neck may have been a curse but the one that landed on an English seaman's chest this summer turned out to be a lifesaver. Seaman John Oakley of the Shaw Savill liner *Southern Cross,* bound for Australia, fell off the stern of his ship into a raging sea. He was so obscured by waves that the lifeboat crew, sent to save him, could not locate him. Oakley was saved by a strange kind of beacon — an albatross landed on his chest and served as a guide to the lifeboat crew.

OVER HILL, OVER DALE

There's no need to worry about the Suez situation any more now that an Englishman has come up with an amazingly simple solution. "Eliminate the canal," says engineer J. J. Snellman.

Snellman's proposal is to build a huge ship, made up of 20 small ships, all linked together. In port, the little ships would unbolt and link up as a train to move overland to another port. Then they would bolt up as a ship again. Israel is the land he would use.

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

A crew of 63 German seaman left New York last month with warm words for the Seamen's Church Institute. "This is the first time we've been treated nicely since the war," they told a staff member.

The men, flown here from Germany to crew a ship, expected to meet the same hostile reception here that they had received in seamen's centers all over Europe, and planned to get out of the Institute as quickly as possible to their ship. They were amazed at the warmth and friendliness of their welcome at 25 South Street. Those who had relatives in New York were put in touch with them by phone. The Women's Council gave them playing cards and games; Conrad Library furnished them with German books. The men were particularly impressed by a sightseeing tour of the city and a visit to several museums, arranged for them by the Institute, but best of all they liked the Cafeteria's food — so much so, in fact, that some of them got into the habit of ordering three servings at one time.

During the same month the Institute was host to two other foreign crews — 18 sailors from Japan and 27 from Peru.

In an emergency, life may depend on these ropes that hold the lifeboats in place.

Photo courtesy Columbian Rope Company

Ropes Against the Sea

IN the early morning hours of July 27th, in a fog-bound eastern sea, over 1,000 passengers were rescued from the dying *Andrea Doria.* The story of their rescue by the lifeboats of the *Ile de France, Stockholm, Cape Ann* and others, is now part of maritime history; playing a less glamorous but vitally important role in that rescue — getting the passengers down the side of the listing ship and into the boats — was one of man's most ancient allies against the sea: rope.

A month later, Captain Jacques Cousteau successfully settled the research ship *Calypso* in what is believed to be the deepest anchorage ever achieved — a depth of four-and-one-half miles. A slim nylon rope held the ship steady.

Rescuing passengers or providing unusual anchorages are only two of the many — roughly about 250 — functions that the maritime and related fishing industry find for the versatile substance known as rope and cordage. Long called a life-line of the shipping industry, rope is as essential today, in a different way, as it was in the time of sail. No ship could dock without lines to moor her to her berth; the puffing tugboats that guide ships and cargoes in and out of the harbor would virtually be out of business without rope. Rope's other maritime uses — like its various sizes, constructions, tensile strengths and weights — are almost legion.

Ropes are used for cargo nets, cargo handlings, auxiliary or life lines, such as the breeches buoy, for lashings, slings, handrails, lifeboat falls, halyards, and so on. Scratch the surface of a ship just about anywhere and you'll find rope. The lockers of a giant superliner probably hold about $25,000 worth of it!

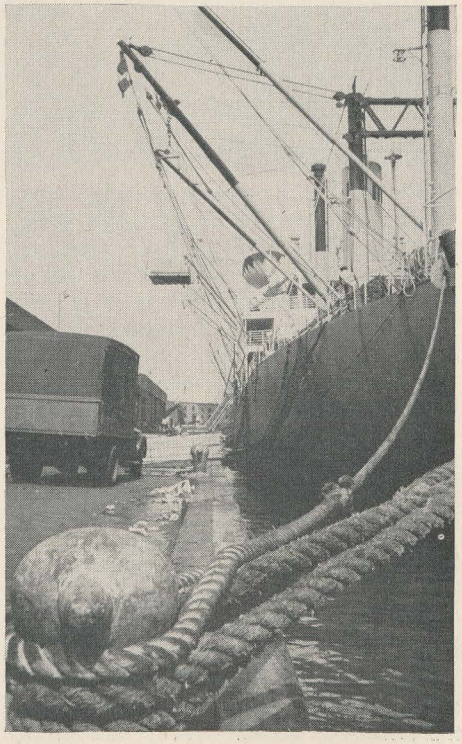
On a sailing ship one didn't have to look to the lockers for rope; it was everywhere. The giant clippers of the 1850's consumed miles and miles of cordage for standing and running rigging; and like their smaller sisters, they also used vast quantities of rope and cordage for tacks and sheets, for boltrope bowlines, clewlines, leechlines, footropes, topping lifts and brails, shrouds and backstays, topmasts and topgallant masts, dipsey lead lines, spare tackles, handy-billys, cargo hoists, downhauls, painters, flag halyards and boat ropes, hausers, jeers, shanklines, ratlines and gaskets. As one writer aptly put it, with the hull the body and the sails the means of locomotion the ropes were the "nerves and tendons" of the ship.

Rope came into its fullest marine usage in the clipper ship era, but it is probably as old as the first ship itself. One historian of the subject says that the discovery of fibre rope "quite possibly antidates the invention of the wheel, the lever and the inclined plane." At any rate, we know that the twisting of fibres into rope is one of the oldest of man's arts; it was practiced among the Egyptians and the Chinese, the American Indians and the Polynesians, the Greeks, Romans and Anglo-Saxons. In our own country, rigging and tackle for vessels had to be brought from England until 1642, when the first ropewalk was set up in Boston. Sixty years later there were 14 ropewalks in that city, and in time others sprang up along the eastern seaboard; Nantucket had three, Newburyport had one, so did Castine, Maine, and there was also one on Broadway, New York, before the Revolution.

The ropewalk, the long covered square-windowed shed became the symbol of the American rope industry. Although modern machines outdated it in the mid-eighteen hundreds, tradition and custom kept it in use until well into this century; one plant used it on special orders until World War 11. Modern machines have speeded up the process tremendously, but the basic principles of making rope have not changed since the first Boston ropewalk of 1642. Fibres must be hackled (combed out straight and foreign matter removed), spun into yarns, formed into strands and layed into ropes. The final rope is always built on the principle of opposing twists; the fibre is twisted right-handed into the yarn, the yarns left-handed into the strand, and the strands right-handed into rope; or vice versa. Occasionally, three right-handed ropes are twisted together left-handed to form a hawser, or cable-laid rope. Although the picture of the ropemaker walking backwards along the ropewalk, spinning the yarn as he walks, with the necessary twist imparted by the man at the wheel, remains a nostalgic one of an earlier day, life at the ropewalk often meant drudgery. Longfellow's poem on the subject became famous:

In that building, long and low
With its windows all arow,
  Like the port-holes of a hulk,
Human spiders spin and spin,
Backward down their threads so thin
  Dropping, each a hempen bulk.

Cables are sometimes used for mooring, but manila line has a desirable "give."



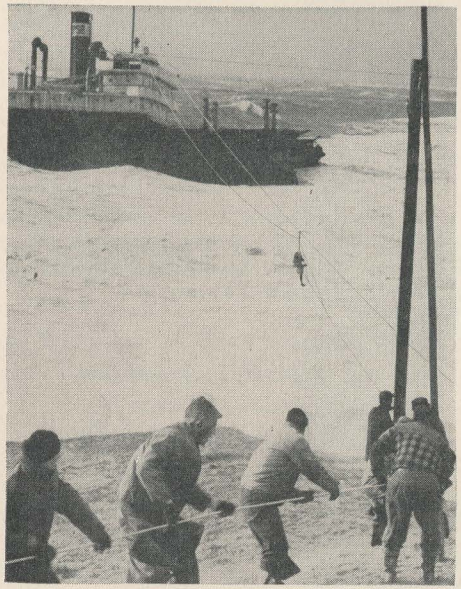


Photo courtesy Columbian Rope Company

The breeches buoy, made of rope and canvas, carries this man to safety.

At the end, an open door;
Squares of sunshine on the floor
Light the long and dusky lane;
And the whirring of a wheel,
Dull and drowsy, makes me feel
All its spokes are in my brain.

The threads the ropewalk workers spun were, at the time of Longfellow's poem, probably fibres of Russian or American hemp; today the chief fibre used is that of the abaca or manila plant. Amazingly resistant to salt or sea water, it outranks its closest rivals, henequen and sisal, for marine use. The synthetic rope fibres, nylon and dacron, are becoming increasingly popular, especially for tugboat use. They are stronger, lighter in weight and longer wearing than manila, but much more expensive. Manila ropes sells for about 40 cents a pound (rope is sold by the pound and ordered by the length), nylon for $2.35 and dacron for $3.17.

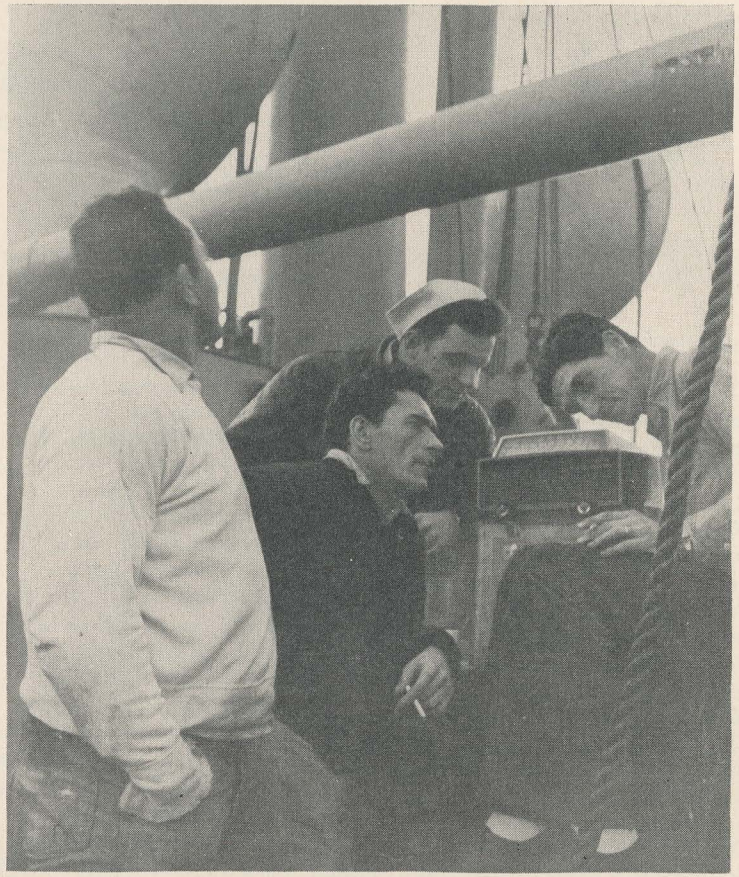
Whatever its fibre, rope is an old friend of the sailor. He has been "learning the ropes" and practicing marlinspike seamanship—knotting and splicing ropes—since the sailors of ancient Greece and China tried the first knots on ropes made of flax or reeds, rushes or hide strips. Knotting has been known for thousands of years; the reef knot, used to ornament the handles of pottery in ancient Greece, became so well known that it almost always appeared on the staff of Mercury and was reproduced in countless pieces of sculpture. However, it was not until comparatively recent times — the days of the Cape Horn sailors — that certain intricate knots were developed. On these long voyages, sailors had hours of leisure time to work their unusual and ornamental weaves. On duty, knowledge of ropes was their most important stock in trade. With the entire locomotive power of the ship dependent on sails, and these sails controlled by lines, the amount of splicing, knotting and general rope work was truly enormous. "We had to know about 100% more marlinspike seamanship than today's seamen do," one old sailor remarks. True, today's sailor doesn't need to know quite so much about working with rope, beyond the ability to make a few basic knots, splices, bends and hitches. Rope no longer runs his ship, but it is still one of the essential tools of his trade.

Neat coils of rope dress the deck of the Spanish training ship, *Juan Sebastian de Elcano*.

Photo by Sherwood Palmer

BASEBALL

The interest of merchant seamen in the scorching National League pennant race and in the subsequent World Series between the Yankees and the Dodgers is reflected in this photo by A. B. Tad Sadowski. For his pictures and articles interpretive of the merchant sailor (see *The Lookout* for March 1956) as well as his outstanding seamanship, Sadowski was named runner-up last month in the 1956 Seaman-of-the-Year Contest sponsored by the United Seamen's Service. Sadowski sails with MSTS, and he is currently a crew member of the USNS *Greenville Victory* scheduled for a trip to Little America.



First prize in the annual contest was presented to Fireman-Watertender Jack E. Burtis of the *S. S. Independence*. He was praised by his shipmates, who put his name in nomination, for playing unofficial Santa Claus, dispensing lollypops, toys, chewing gum and such to foreign children in ports throughout the world.

A. B. Joseph W. Potter of the *S. S. Berwindvale* also placed as runner up, because "his ability and alertness saved the life of a 69-year-old engineer who slipped off a ladder into freezing water."

Summing Up

As staff members were congratulating Mr. Leslie C. Westerman last month on his 30th anniversary as general manager of the Seamen's Church Institute, he observed, "It's a little difficult for me to feel pround about having been here so long, because after all, I have had one of the most interesting jobs in the world."

He pointed out that 31 other staff members had completed more than 25 years each and that the average for the Institute's 256 employees was nearly ten years of service. "Which means," he said, "that we have nearly 2,500 years of experience in this work, and such a fact bespeaks the long and enduring friendships that exist between people on our staff and the many thousand sailors who come and go at 25 South Street each year.

Like many of America's best sailors, Mr. Westerman comes from an inland state, and he finds it a little hard to believe that he has stayed so long away from the Colorado mountains where he was born. "I walked into The Institute one rainy day in 1926. After 15 minutes with Dr. Mansfield, then director, I was sold for keeps."

Book Watch

THE SEARCH FOR CAPTAIN SLOCUM

Walter Magnes Teller

Charles Scribner's Son, New York, $3.95

Now that sailing across the oceans alone in a small boat has become almost a commonplace experience, we are apt to forget what tremendous daring went into the first of these lonely odysseys. When Captain Joshua Slocum's sloop *Spray* landed at Newport, Rhode Island, on June 27, 1898, after a round-the-world voyage which had taken three years, two months, and two days, and covered 46,000 miles, the world gasped incredulously. Half a century and more later, the book he wrote about this voyage, "Sailing Alone Around The World," is still known and read as a minor classic of the sea. The life of the author himself has largely been shrouded in mystery, and it is his story that Walter Magnes Teller sets forth in this engaging biography, "The Search for Captain Slocum."

What drives a man, at the age of 51, to set out alone in a small boat, to do what no man before him has ever done? Slocum's biographer believes it was his need to escape from the frustration and failure of a life which began brilliantly, reached its pinnacle of success before the man was 40, and then slowly and painfully went down-hill. Trouble with his officers and crew, a mutinous voyage, the death of a spirited wife who had roamed the seas with him, and an unhappy second marriage were surely factors. "In a way," Teller writes, "he, like many others, had made history out of being unhappy at home." Certainly, Slocum did not go in conscious search of fame or of material for a book. "I claim only to be the poorest of American sailors and having nothing else to do, made a voyage," Slocum wrote to a friend.

When he returned, however, he could find nothing to do but write a book. All of his other projects — including a remarkably advanced one of starting a schoolship to take young men and women around the world on a two-year study cruise — came to naught. Slocum's "Sailing Alone Around the World" was first published serially in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* in 1899 and then in book form in 1900. It has since become known as a kind of "Walden" of the sea and Slocum has been likened to a less-profound Thoreau. Slocum's retreat may well have been an escape from a life of quiet desperation, as his biographer seems to think, but it was into a head-long and passionate struggle with the sea he loved. The sea finally claimed him in 1909, when he and the *Spray* set out on a voyage to the Orinoco River. They were never heard from again.

As a companion piece to the famous book, Mr. Teller's biography throws the clear light of the fact on the mystical sailor and hard-headed Yankee trader that was Joshua Slocum.

THE ALCHEMIST'S VOYAGE

By Calvin Kentfield

Harcourt, Brace & Co. $3.95

This sometimes preposterous adventure story seems hardly to be, as the jacket blurb puts it, "in the vivid and sonorous tradition of Melville and Conrad," but it is out of the ordinary run of sea stories. It relates the adventures of the crew of the Caribbean freighter *Alchemist* on a voyage that begins quietly enough in New Orleans and ends, grotesquely enough for two of their number, in the fastness of the South American jungle. Stylistically, Mr. Kentfield is a very talented writer, but his message is sometimes as obscure as the murky seas on which the *Alchemist* voyages.

HUSBANDS AT SEA

Dreary blows the weather

And dreary rolls the tide,

While floors are brushed

The children hushed

The dishes washed and dried;

How pale the bread

How bleak the bed

How chill the marrow-bone —

So little good is firewood

When wives are left alone.

Iva Poston