French American International School Students Visit the O’Brien

As part of a new education outreach project to San Francisco schools, a group of middle school students from the French American International School in San Francisco visited the SS Jeremiah O’Brien in January. The students, accompanied by their history teacher Mounah Harifi, visited the ship to learn more about Liberty ships and the role they and the Merchant Marine played in World War II. NLSM Docent Angelo Demattei led the tour of the ship and told the students about the history of the O’Brien and the threats it faced during WWII. The students tour will become part of the history projects they are creating this year. Many thanks to Angelo Demattei, a WWII veteran, for an insightful and fascinating tour for these students!

Join us for the First Cruise of 2016!

VETERANS MEMORIAL CRUISE, MAY 21ST

The 2016 SS Jeremiah O’Brien cruise season kicks off with the Veterans Memorial Cruise on May 21. Our May cruise is an annual tradition, commemorating the gallantry of our WWII and Korean War veterans who have served in defense of America’s freedom.

As we honor those veterans of the US Armed Forces, let us also never forget the courageous men and women of the US Merchant Marine.

Since 1775, the U.S. Merchant Marine has proudly answered the call to make the world a better and safer place, exemplifying their motto “In Peace and War.” Recognized by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as our Nation’s “Fourth Arm of Defense,” the U.S. Merchant Marine remains ever ready to rapidly deploy armed forces personnel and their equipment worldwide to defend our freedom.

U.S. Merchant Mariners also frequently contribute to international humanitarian efforts, as they did in 2010, delivering humanitarian packages to earthquake-stricken Haiti. They have supported international efforts to stop
New Book Coming Out Soon

Next month there’s a new book in our ship’s store – recently I read an advance proof of a book by William Geroux that will go on sale in late April – *The Mathews Men: Seven Brothers and the War Against Hitler’s U-Boats*. Over the years I’ve read several books about merchant mariners and their experiences during WWII – now this is one of my favorites for bringing the history of those times to us in the personal accounts of the sacrifices made by seven extraordinary brothers and other mariners who sailed with them.

Mathews County, Virginia touches Chesapeake Bay, and most of the men of that region have traditionally made their living from the sea since the founding of America – fisherman, tugboat men, lighthouse keepers, and yes, Merchant Marine. This one small county sent one of the largest numbers of sea captains and US merchant mariners to World War II, and the losses felt by Mathews County families was unfortunately profound.

Not only does Geroux give the reader the personal stories collected from his interviews with family members and surviving veterans, but also insights from his thorough research of several U-boat captains and Admiral Karl Doenitz, the head of the German U-boat command. The author’s recounting of both sides of the mariners’ battle along the eastern US coastline and in the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean, Mediterranean Sea and Barents Sea provides a very rich and gripping documentary of the difficult and dangerous conditions of weather, water and warfare faced by these men.

We’ve included several articles in this issue to vessels and planes of “the other side” of WWII. When speaking about losses of the Allies, it helps to understand what our soldiers, Marines, airplane pilots, and mariners, all veterans, were facing throughout the war years. *The Mathews Men* examines the strategies, strengths and challenges of both sides and ties high-level decisions to the very personal stories, leaving the reader with a fuller understanding and appreciation of “how did this happen?” William Geroux writes:

> For seven months [in 1942] the U-boats had had their way in American waters, sinking more than three hundred merchant ships and killing thousands of merchant seamen. They had sent millions of tons of Allied food, supplies, munitions, and fuel into the sea, playing havoc with the enemy’s supply line. Doenitz already knew where he wanted to shift the U-boats. He kept a few in the Caribbean, the Gulf, and the South Atlantic, but sent most of them to the North Atlantic air gap, beyond the range of Allied planes. Doenitz thought an all-out attack on North Atlantic convoys in the air gap could win the Battle of the Atlantic for Germany. Ending the assault on America’s coast did not end the U-boats’ assault on merchant shipping. (Viking Books: Penguin Random House, 2016)

Five of the seven WWII voyages of the SS *Jeremiah O’Brien* originated from the East coast, most from or to New York, so there’s a very good chance that some of her crew were also from Mathews County, but after a preliminary research, I was not able to confirm any of the *O’Brien* crew or Armed Guard were in fact Mathews mariners. Nevertheless, like Geroux’s book about mariners from Mathews County, the *O’Brien* continues to sail long after the war as a memorial to all Merchant Marine and US Navy Armed Guard, who experienced similar wartime experiences, both tragic and triumphant. I hope you find this issue of *Steady as She Goes* as interesting as I did in reading *The Mathews Men* and perhaps you will visit the *Jeremiah O’Brien* this spring to pick up a copy and tour the *O’Brien* as way of remembering and honoring our veterans, wherever they call home.
IN MEMORIAM

Marty Wefald, chief bos’un on the SS Jeremiah O’Brien for 20+ years, crossed the bar January 19, 2016. Marty joined the Merchant Marine at 18 and sailed the world. In the 1950s he met his wife in San Francisco and never left. Retiring early at age 57 from the US Forestry Service as a systems analyst, Marty enjoyed the camaraderie of the volunteer crew on the O’Brien; a big highlight in his life was being a part of the crew who sailed the SS Jeremiah O’Brien back to Europe for the 50th anniversary in 1994 commemorating the Allied invasion of Normandy.

Marty’s wishes were to have part of his ashes scattered from the O’Brien which will be done on the May 21st Memorial Salute to Veterans cruise.

HEARD ELSEWHERE: HERO

At 97, Jack Beritzhoff of San Rafael has almost seen it all. A veteran of two wars, he was wounded in World War II and later served in the Korean War, yet the United States hasn’t officially recognized his courage and sacrifice in WWII. As a member of the U.S. Merchant Marine, 250,000 strong, he helped bring supplies to American forces and allies. Many of these merchant seamen were torpedoed by U-boats in the Atlantic and attacked by Japanese planes in the Pacific. Some, like Beritzhoff, were wounded, while others died and were held as prisoners of war. President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised the seamen GI benefits, but he died before fulfilling the commitment. In 1988, 43 years late, the Merchant Marine were granted veteran status and finally able to receive services from VA hospitals; however, they missed out on the rest of the GI Bill. Today, only 3,000 Merchant Marine that served in WWII are alive and they’re waiting for the passage of the Mariners Act of 2015, H.R. 563, which includes nominal remuneration. Jack Beritzhoff and his brethren seamen are true heroes and deserve a salute from America. Call or write your congressional member to let him know that you support the bill. It’s been 71 years. How much longer should our brave Beritzhoff be made to wait?—Nikki Silverstein

Reprinted From: Pacific Sun, January 20-26, 2016

Jack Beritzhoff of San Rafael was a member of the US Merchant Marine 1942-1952, serving in both WWII and the Korean War. He is the author of the 2012 book, “Sail Away: Journeys of a Merchant Seaman.”

 Reserve Your Memorial Bench on the O’Brien

We’ve met and made friends with so many supporters of the SS Jeremiah O’Brien over the 35+ years since she left the Reserve Fleet. One of the best ways to honor your loved ones is with a memorial bench aboard the ship. We now have 7 of the 30 benches reserved for special bench plaques commemorating the lives of volunteer crew and long-time supporters of the O’Brien. Your reservation for a memorial bench helps to finance major projects and operations of the ship, while providing a remembrance of a loved one who enjoyed cruises on the O’Brien, volunteered on board as a crewmember, or loved sailing. If you would like to reserve one of the remaining 23 benches for your family, please give Eliz Anderson a call today at 415-544-0100 or email her for more information eliz@ssjeremiahobrien.org.

The Military Vehicle Preservation Association (MVPA) International Convention is coming to Pleasanton, CA, August 11-13, 2016. This 41st Annual show and vendor event for privately owned, former military vehicles will be held at the Alameda County Fairgrounds.

Although we can’t bring the O’Brien to Pleasanton for this show, the promoters have scheduled one of their offsite buses to bring a group of participants from the O’Brien to visit them on Friday, August 12. MVPA will share information about the O’Brien and its mission at the convention with military vehicle enthusiasts from 50 states and many countries.

The event will feature military collectibles for sale, including 200 military bicycles, motorcycles, jeeps, trucks of all sizes and types, armored halftracks, tanks, helicopters, and even a Vietnam-era Patrol River Boat, plus a WWII Higgins LCVP landing boat. There will be living history displays, seminars, and excursions each day, along with meetings and dinners. Some activities are for MVPA members only, but the event is open to the public. A three-day wristband is $40, a two-day wristband is $25, and a $10 ticket on Saturday.

The MVPA is a non-profit corporation based in Independence, MO, that was established in 1976, with a mission to provide an international organization for military vehicle enthusiasts, historians, preservationists, and collectors interested in the acquisition, restoration, preservation, safe operation, public education, and display of historic military transport.

For more information go to www.MVCCNews.net or contact John Neuenburg, Co-Chairman of the 2016 Convention Committee, at in_garage@hotmail.com or 415-847-2801.

Veterans Memorial Cruise . . . from page 1

Please join us in honoring our World War II and Korean War Veterans

VETERANS MEMORIAL CRUISE ABOARD THE SS JEREMIAH O’BRIEN MAY 21, 10am-2pm

The excursion takes us just outside the Golden Gate Bridge and back around San Francisco Bay before returning to port at Pier 45. Music will be provided by the Natural Gas Jazz Band.

Continental breakfast, hot dog lunch and ice cream are provided complimentary.

World War II and Korean War Veterans sail free of charge on the Veterans Memorial Cruise. Please register by either calling the office at (415) 544-0100 or complete the order form

LIMITED TIME OFFER: Tickets are $125 Adults, $75 Children, $300 Family (up to two adults and two children). After March 31, 2016: Tickets will be $140 Adults, $85 Children, $375 Family.
ANGelo's aircraFT a follow-up to
“Stories of the Pacific” Fall 2015
by Brian Agron and Richard Mantegani

In October 1945, Angelo Demattei, a 19-year-old radio operator on the SS Hope Victory sailed into Sasebo Harbor in Kyushu, Japan. The Hope Victory was to take on important cargo and return with it to the United States. Although initially bound for San Francisco, the Hope Victory was diverted mid-ocean, and the cargo was delivered to San Pedro in southern California instead. But what was the cargo the ship transported?

Sixty-nine years later a photograph of Angelo on the Hope Victory appeared in a Steady As She Goes newsletter article and created a mystery. The picture shows Angelo and his buddies standing in front of a plane described as a Japanese ‘Zero’, a name often mistakenly given to any WWII Japanese fighter plane. In fact, there were a number of different types of military aircraft captured after Japan’s surrender that were sent to the US for testing and further evaluation. Some of those eventually wound up in a few museum collections. We knew the fighter plane pictured wasn’t a ‘Zero’ since that model had a three-lared propeller and this one had four blades. And there are other things in the photo that suggested it was a different aircraft, like the shape of the canopy and the long barrels of the 20mm cannon in the wing. After consulting a book on WWII Japanese fighter aircraft, we were confident in the identity of the plane, but wondered what Angelo could tell us about it.

Angelo graciously provided us with additional information including several more of his original photos taken in Sasebo harbor in 1945. At that time, using a camera was forbidden, so some anonymous Navy personnel were paid to take photographs. The pictures showed not one, but three different Japanese fighter planes on board the Hope Victory. Now faced with a triple mystery, we hit the books again to properly identify the other aircraft. Here’s what we discovered:

The aircraft originally pictured in issue 70 of SASG, and at the beginning of our article was in fact a Kawasaki N1K2-J Shiden-Kai, assigned the Allied codename “George” 21, a late model fighter-interceptor and fighter bomber. It is one of the finest of its type produced in WWII.

The Shiden-Kai “George” 21 was the redesigned and much improved newer model of the original NIKI-J Shiden “George” 11, itself an excellent fighter interceptor. The first completed Shiden-Kai 21’s arrived in Japan in late 1944. This plane was faster (369 mph) than its predecessor, and could carry two 550-pound bombs. Its landing gear, under carriage, and wheel brakes were much improved as well. Normal flying range was 1,066 miles, but when carrying a drop tank this impressive fighter could fly for 1,450 miles, a far superior range to the model 11’s 888 miles. Although its 18-cylinder, 1,990 horsepower, aircooled Nakajima Homare 21 radial engine was never improved (fortunately for the Allies), the Shiden-Kai 21 was, in fact, the finest Japanese single seat fighter aircraft produced during WWII, yet only 428 were completed by the war’s end. In the hands of a capable pilot, it could outperform any of the American fighter planes it encountered in the Pacific theater including the fabled P-51 Mustang. A noteworthy recorded example of this has a Shiden-Kai “George” 21 flown by Warrant Officer Kinosuke Muto being jumped by no less than 12 US carrier-based Hellcats. Muto shot down four of them before the rest broke off the engagement and returned to their ship. There is a Shiden-Kai “George” 21 currently on display in the Smithsonian collection of WWII military aircraft. Could this be the same aircraft in Angelo’s photo?

The next of Angelo’s aircraft pictured below actually is a Zero, or more exactly a Mitsubishi A6M5 series Type 0 Zero-5en (codenamed “Zeke”).

The Zero was easily the most recognized and famous Japanese airplane of WWII. More Zeros were made – over 10,000 – than any other, and it changed the face of naval aviation when it first appeared over China in 1940.

Originally designed and used as a carrier-based interceptor, this agile and highly maneuverable fighter ruled the skies at the outset of the war in the Pacific, but its effectiveness steadily declined as newer Allied fighter planes like the Corsair and Hellcat were introduced. Attempts were made to improve the Zero throughout the war with more powerful engines, better armament, cockpit armor continue on page 6
and self-sealing fuel tanks. However, the Zero continued to be out-classed by its opponents as the war progressed.

The third aircraft shown is a Mitsubishi J2M3 Raiden 21 “Thunderbolt,” code-named “Jack.” Note the difference in the canopy design, which merges straight back into the fuselage, unlike the “George” and Zero, which have a bubble canopy.

This was the first single seat Japanese fighter designed solely for the role of an interceptor. Unlike the Zero, maneuverability was secondary and the primary focus was on improving speed and rate of climb. The J2M3 Raiden 21 in the photos clearly shows the wing mounted 20 mm cannon, along with the more streamlined, tapered, and extended front cowling that reduced drag. The Raiden “Thunderbolt” was powered by a 1,820 horsepower radial (vs the typical Zero's 1,130 hp) engine and could climb to 19,685 ft. in 5.4 minutes. That was over two minutes faster than a Zero. The Raiden had a top speed of 371 mph at this altitude and made its debut during the battle for the Marianas in September 1944. It was used in the defense of the home islands until the war ended.

Like most Japanese fighters the Raiden suffered from bugs and operational difficulties throughout its life. This was often the result of the Japanese rushing planes into production to meet the demands of war. Scarcity of materials and the eventual success of the American strategic bombing offensive against Japan would limit production of the Raiden as it did virtually all other Japanese aircraft. Although 3,600 were ordered, just over 500 were delivered.

Now that we have identified the aircraft carried onboard the Hope Victory, the question still remains: what happened to the fighter planes after they arrived in San Pedro Harbor? So far, our research has revealed that a number of captured Japanese aircraft of various types were shipped to the United States on US naval vessels for evaluation. Yet, there is no record showing any of these aircraft being brought back to the US on a Victory ship. Our research into the fate of ‘Angelo’s Aircraft’ will continue, and that may be the subject of another article in the future.

Sources: War Planes of the Second World War. Fighters, Volume Three.

THE UGLY DUCKLINGS
Japan’s Liberty Ship Equivalents of WWII
by S. C. Heal

The two world wars of the twentieth century gave real meaning to the term standard ship. Prior to 1916 when British losses started to take on crisis proportions, little thought had been given to standardization in shipbuilding. This was a process by which simplification through prefabrication would speed up shipyard production. The American, British and Canadian efforts in this area in the two world wars are well known and fully documented through a variety of programs, but of them all, nothing equaled the staggering 2,700-plus units of the U.S. Liberty Ship program.

The American Liberty Ship, when first presented to President Franklin Roosevelt, brought forth the reactive response, “what an ugly duckling.” In truth, the Liberty Ship was an adaptation of a British design, the roots of which went back many years. While she was no beauty, she nevertheless was a relatively handsome, well-balanced and efficient design that was a critical factor in winning the war because it lent itself to massive standardization in an industrial war economy.

Japan’s entry into the war was accompanied by many miscalculations, one of which was to skirt around the issue of merchant ship wastage in wartime. They knew they would take losses, but not on the staggering scale that quickly developed once the American submarine offen-
The Ugly Duckling . . . from page 6

sive started to take effect. What Germany’s Krieg-marine accomplished with huge losses for the Allied side, particularly in the North Atlantic, the U.S. Navy truly achieved against the Japanese in the Pacific. Japan’s losses of ships and personnel on a proportional basis far exceeded those of any other WWII participant.

It was not until 1937 that Japan started to consider the possibilities of a merchant ship replacement program in war. The responsibility for this fell to the planning section of the Imperial Japanese Navy. The IJN was well aware that a large proportion of the highly efficient and fast merchant ships built in Japan from the late 1920s on would be taken up by the navy and army in time of war as auxiliaries. After the Allies placed the embargo on their exports of oil and strategic materials following the Japanese invasion of French Indo-China in mid-1941, conversion of ships started as soon as possible. It amounted to the first gutting of the merchant marine.

By 1943 Japanese losses had taken on crisis proportions. The lifelines, which stretched like a giant capillary, from Japan to every one of the many thousands of islands and distant shores that it had occupied, were under increasing attack. As the allies pushed back the extremities of the Japanese Empire in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and the Aleutians, constant harassment of enemy shipping by air was added to the submarine peril. The High Command at the IJN had pinned its faith on the mighty battle-detriment of providing adequate escort vessels to its convoys.

The battleships Yamato and Musashi and their two incomplete sisters represented an outpouring of immense national resources so all-consuming that it represented a huge drain on shipyard capacity and steel production, not to mention keeping an army of shipbuilding personnel fully occupied for several years. The building of these giant ships was a mighty achievement in terms of firepower and naval construction, with the biggest guns ever sent out to sea, but they were milestones around the neck of the national wartime economy.

It was inevitable that merchant marine needs and the parallel need for escort ships would suffer. It was not until 1943 that the first emergency building program for merchant ships based on the 1937 designs got underway. It was a stopgap while planners got down to the serious business of mass production. They took a handful of the 1937 designs and revamped them for series production in much the same way that the Liberty Ship was adapted.

What came off the drawing board were lean, mean designs that paid minimum regard to normal ship construction standards. However, these new heavily prefabricated ships came out in 1944 and production records were achieved in that year only. By the beginning of 1945 production was faltering badly due to constant bombing attacks, not so much against the shipyards, but more against the sources of primary production. Steel deliveries to the shipyards were in critically short supply, so that only a minimum number of ships was possible in the third annual program of 1945.

Among these designs was the Type-A, a vessel with machinery aft that in dimensions was the equivalent of the Liberty Ship. The design paid little regard to the niceties of naval architecture. She really was one of the “ugly ducklings” of World War II, and to this day many Japanese historians are embarrassed in remembering these ships and the role they filled. The embarrassment is so deep that the wartime standards barely get even a passing mention.

However, the “Ugly Ducklings” served the purpose that the Japanese High Command belatedly recognized. The Japanese were in an even tougher spot than the British at the height of the U-boat war. The British had friends and allies in North America and around the world, but the Japanese for their part were alone, save for their distant German allies, fighting not only China, but the might of America with its British Commonwealth and Dutch allies. The “Ugly Duckling” was in every way an expendable ship to throw into the breach.

The photo of Hisagawa Maru shows a Type 2A as built, while the side elevation plan gives a plan view of the arrangements of the ships. They were no beauties and the title conferred upon them by this author as the ugliest of the “Ugly Ducklings” is well earned. Slab-sided and without sheen, the Type A looked a little like a beached whale when seen from near water level, but at main deck level or above they looked better. The funnel was little more than an exhaust pipe that was out of proportion to the ship. The box-like midships bridge structure was a feature that continued in many postwar ships, particularly tankers and bulk carriers. Prefabrication was used heavily throughout and everything was designed with a totally utilitarian look. The stern was cut off in a near-perfect triangle because the hull had no deck camber and the sides lacked either convex or concave sections.

The biggest economy in the Type 2A that required heavy reconstruction in the post war years was the lack of a double bottom in all sections of the ships except the boiler and engine rooms. Such items as boat davits and ventilators were obviously designed for easy fabrication by any metal shop outside the shipyard. The cargo handling booms, instead of being built from tubular steel, were built up using the lattice method.

Of the 140 Type A ships built in the three annual programs, only 43 survived to see the return of peace. The losses among the other classes wartime emergency ships were proportionately equally high. The overall loss of all merchant ships was about 85 percent even allowing for wartime replacements. The loss to the Japanese merchant marine crews was equally devastating with 62,000 dead, a figure which equaled the losses of all Allied merchant marine crews. The total tonnage lost was about 8.5 million
The Ugly Duckling . . . from page 7

tons, exceeded only by Great Britain as the owner of what was, at the outbreak of the war, the world’s biggest merchant shipping fleet. It was four times that of Japan. The British lost 32,000 war dead at sea compared to the 62,000 lost by Japan, and thereon hangs a message.

Such a huge loss of personnel might be ascribed to the well-known Japanese disregard at the time for their own lives and spirit of sacrifice in the Emperor’s name. However, it also indicated the vulnerability of the Japanese merchant ships, significantly unprotected by effective anti-submarine and anti-aircraft measures, and lacking an adequate rescue service for crews that had to abandon ship.

When peace returned, the overall Japanese economy was in a shambles. Military personnel had to be returned from its far-flung empire, and the population was existing at a starvation level. The country needed every ship it could put back into peacetime service, so the Type-A ships went through a metamorphosis. Only 27 of the original 140 ships were fitted with triple-expansion reciprocating engines. All the rest had turbines with a designed speed of up to 14 knots. So far as can be determined, all were coal burners when built, and those that survived the war were converted to oil.

Some were taken in hand and converted to cargo liners, with which the Japanese shipping companies resumed their prewar liner routes. The ships were effectively rebuilt under the supervision of the American Bureau of Shipping in order to gain a recognized classification. Some restrained their designed profile with machinery aft and were placed in the tramp trades. Others were reborn for cargo-liner service with machinery moved amidships, a new long bridge deck and superstructure, and improved cargo-handling equipment. All had those terrible single bottoms replaced by tank tops built in place to form a complete new double bottom. The creation of the double bottom was probably the main factor in their newly achieved classification by which ABS gave them a life of 20 years from year of construction.

As cargo liners with superstructure and funnel amidships, their appearance was much improved and many of the ships visited North Pacific ports and became quite well known until new postwar ships were delivered as replacements, after which all the Type-A vessels were soon downgraded to tramps. Although Japanese companies and historians preferred to regard them as relatives they did not want to know, the ships gave good service for a full twenty years with almost none of the postwar survivors getting into any sort of serious trouble through marine casualties.

Given the circumstance under which these war-built ships came into being, my personal view is that the builders, owners and the Japanese people have no need to be ashamed of them. The ones who should be ashamed were the military authorities, who in close alliance with the national business establishment—the Zaibatsu—abetted the war and, due to their miscalculations, placed Japan and its security in jeopardy from the beginning. So badly did they perform that it can hardly be surprising that the wartime standards had to be thrown together with the aid of much prisoner-of-war labor.

Most of the above Allied ships were powered with triple-expansion steam reciprocating engines, the British examples generally coal-fired except for a number of diesel-powered units. There were several British types that closely approximated the Empire A and B listed above. The original North Sands design that became the basis for the Ocean, Fort/Park, Liberty, and River ships was also for coal-fired ships, including the Australians, were converted to oil after the war.

Of all the Allied types, the one with the least variation in measurements was the U.S.-built Liberty Ship; in fact, no variation has been noted in registers. This may be due to the mass production, assembly-line methods adopted by the Americans, with all yards using blueprints from a single source. British practice used far fewer drawings, relying instead on the experience of the skilled shipyard trades. The new American yards established for the Liberty program, lacking a large pool of such skilled labor, tended to require drawings for everything, which aided exact duplication and allowed completion of a vessel in as little as 14 days after the keel was laid. Japanese shipyard practices, in terms of expertise, probably tended to be closer to the British than to the American.

About the Author

S.C. “Syd” Heal was born in England but has resided in Canada for over fifty years. He served in the Royal Navy in World War II, mainly in Southeast Asia and the Far East theaters. He achieved command in medium sized landing craft. Until retirement in 1990, he held executive positions in the marine insurance, marine transportation and real estate industries. Ugly Ducklings, his book on the Japanese standard ships, was released by the U.S. Naval Institute Press and Vanwell.

[Reprinted from Steamboat Bill magazine, the Journal of The Steamship Historical Society of America, Number 45, Sprint 2003. Website: www.sshsa.net Editor-In-Chief jmshaum@friend.ly.net]

General arrangement plans for a Japanese Type 2A standard freighter. – Courtesy of the Mitsubishi Corporation.
Juliette Low

[Editor’s Note]: In 1912, Juliette Gordon Low (1860–1927) founded Girl Scouts of the USA, an organization that today serves millions of girl members and alumnae, and reflects the arc of her remarkable life.

An ardent believer in the potential of all girls and the importance of fostering their individual growth, character, and self-sufficiency, Juliette is credited with establishing and nurturing a global movement that has changed the world. A meeting in 1912 with Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scouts, inspired Juliette to establish the Girl Scouts that same year. Telephoning a cousin from her home, she announced, “I’ve got something for the girls of Savannah, and all of America, and all the world, and we’re going to start it tonight!”

From that first gathering of a small troop of 18 culturally and ethnically diverse girls, Juliette broke the conventions of the time—reaching across class, cultural, and ethnic boundaries to ensure all girls, including those with so-called disabilities, had a place to grow and develop their leadership skills.

Low left an enduring legacy and received a timeline of honors including the 1944 launch of a Liberty Ship named in her honor, the SS Juliette Low, hull number 2446.

The SS Juliette Low – Few women have been as honored by the United States government as has Juliette Low since her death. In World War II, a Liberty Ship was named for her, and christened at Savannah by Daisy Lawrence. Captain O’Toole of the SS Juliette Low wrote Daisy Lawrence that, on their third trip out, with a high priority cargo, in their haste to load and catch up with the convoy the deck cargo of thirty-five ton tanks had been only partially secured.

“When we got outside the harbor, the ship started to roll and those tanks started going places. Believe me, we had a time! Engineers, cooks, messboys, radio operators, even the purser were all out there with ropes, chains, cables and anything else that could be found, trying to secure those tanks.”

“Several times I was tempted to turn back. But from all I have read of Juliette Low, nothing ever daunted her. When the going was toughest, that’s when she went the hardest…. It was her spirit that kept us going, and General Eisenhower received a most valuable cargo on time.”

Excerpted from Lady From Savannah: The Life of Juliette Low
By GLADYS DENNY SHULTZ and DAISY GORDON LAWRENCE

BOOK AN OVERNIGHT FOR YOUR SCOUT OR YOUTH GROUP

Many Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and youth groups have spent a memorable overnight aboard the SS Jeremiah O’Brien. Our overnight program includes an in-depth tour of the ship, pizza dinner, safety at sea instructions, and an educational board game about the convoys of WWII developed by one of our volunteer crew, Mike Garner. Youth sleep in replica canvas cots just like those used to transport soldiers during WWII on Liberty ships outfitted as transport carriers. Morning breakfast includes bagels with cream cheese, fresh fruit, and milk (coffee for the adult chaperones of your group, of course!)

To book your youth group for a hands-on experience with history, contact Kyle Day, O’Brien Overnight Coordinator at kday@ssjeremiahobrien.org.
**LETTERS**

Just thought I would send this note to describe one of the ship’s admirers. I was in the Merchant Marine for five years (1944-1950). I joined at 17 and two months later I turned 18 and spent 11 months in the Pacific War Zone. When I signed up they made me an A.B. seaman. I took to steering like a duck to water.

Was close to being killed four times—evaded and ran away from two enemy subs, almost drifted into our own minefield leading into the Panama Canal but was able to repair the steering cable in the nick of time, and finally, survived the hellacious typhoon off the area of Philippines 1945. The other killer typhoon was 1944 same area. Look up (adm.) “Halsey’s Typhoon” I believe (.com). Very interesting.

I steered our 185’ship, which was an Army mechanic repair ship consisting of 50 Army aircraft repair soldiers. I took the wheel at 2 in the morning. It was dark, and I was to steer my watch for 2 hours. The seas built up very fast and I wound up not keeping on course, as there was no course. It was just a matter of me keeping our ship from being capsized and sunk. No one can be saved or rescued at night in a typhoon— you simply drown. Also, we were alone. While I was steering, two destroyers and three mine sweepers capsized. 940 sailors drowned. It was a sad night. I reminisce at times and can vividly see myself fighting the waves in the dark. I was 18 and-a-half years old. I steered for five hours! The first mate was on my watch and told me he wanted me on the wheel until it got calmer. I said sure!

After the war I stayed in the Merchant Marine for four more years, and 11 ships later. Between 1946 & 1947 I shipped out on five Liberty Ships, hauling grain, coal and general cargo to Panama, Italy, the Caribbean, Venezuela, Caracas, and Dutch Guinea.

I volunteered on Jeremiah O’Brien about 15 years ago. In those days, I believe after 75 hours volunteering you would earn a free harbor cruise. I put in about 50 hours. The trip from Santa Rosa was getting harder for me, and I was getting older – I’m 86 now but get around well.

I did, however, volunteer for the 3-4 day trip to Carquinez old ship storage area to get the “generator” in order for the O’Brien to make the Anniversary D-Day trip. I almost volunteered for that trip.

August P. Roth - Santa Rosa, CA

I enjoyed the voyage May 18th, 2015.
During WWII I served on two merchant ships as a signalman in the Armed Guard. I served on the SS Sherwood Anderson Liberty Ship and on the SS Fort Erie, a T2 Tanker.
I was on the Fort Erie in the Indian Ocean when the war was over. Before we could get oil in Abadan, Iran, we had to stop and remove all guns and dump them in the Indian Ocean.
Thank you for all the work you do.

Don Guenther - Mesa, AZ

November 2, 2015
I was forward deployed on the O’Brien as a PACE instructor teaching psychology and management courses.
It was a special, memorable experience for which I am grateful.
The ship was mainly in Yokosuka, Japan though we did once do sea trials.

Marian Wingo - West Jefferson, NC

Many thanks for SASG recently received [Winter issue, No. 71]. It reminded me that I do not seem to have renewed my membership for some time.
I have always had a soft spot for JO’B which I visited some time around 2002 as well as for the Liberties in general.
The Liberties were ubiquitous still in 1949 when I first went to sea and every other ship seemed to be one.
After I went ashore in South Africa I attended many of them, loading grain into some, digging coal out of others as well as handling general cargoes and other matters. I even adjusted the compasses on one!
JO’B is a memorial to US Merchant Seamen lost in War but, when thinking of her, I like to also remember those men, my predecessors in the British and other Allied Merchant Marine who similarly were lost.
You all do a fantastic job keeping the ship in such beautiful condition and I wish you well in your continued endeavor.

Sincerely,
John Drought - United Kingdom

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**Corrections box:**

Byron Bader, one of our Officer’s Club donors, was incorrectly identified as “Bryon Bader.” We apologize, Byron, and will be more careful next time.

We also had some printing errors with our mailing lists – some of you may have thought we assigned a new roommate for you! Our apologies, and hopefully have the names and addresses straightened out.
THANK YOU DONORS!

Thank you to our donors for helping the SS Jeremiah O’Brien to keep sailing – an asterisk indicates part or all of this donation is earmarked for purchasing fuel and oil for the ship.

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THANK YOU DONORS!
WINE ON THE BAY
COMING IN AUGUST!

Heads up wine lovers! The NLSM is in discussions with Rosenblum Cellars to hold an exclusive wine tasting event on the Jeremiah O’Brien in August. Rosenblum Cellars has some of the highest rated, most-awarded Zins from California’s most highly regarded vineyards. Not just Napa and Sonoma, but all over the state. In addition they also make popular Rhône-style red wines like Syrah, Petite Sirah, Grenache, as well as Rhône-style white wines and dessert wines. The event is being planned for August with live entertainment, food trucks and a large selection of delicious wines. Stay tuned for details.