Meet the New General Manager

Matthew Lasher has been approved by the Board of Directors to be the new General Manager. He will step into the position July 18 and work with Eliz for several weeks before she leaves September 1, 2016.

Matt comes to us by way of San Diego, having recently relocated to the Napa area with his wife and two children. He is a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, so we know he is “fit for duty” and ready to start his new career with the National Liberty Ship Memorial. In fact, he has already been on board to take part in the May 31 emergency response training with the officers of the ship and to meet our contacts with Patriot Maritime Compliance and State of California Fish and Wildlife Office of Spill Prevention and Response.

Next time you see Matt on board, be sure to introduce yourself; he’s eager to get to know everyone and help the organization to support the SS Jeremiah O’Brien.

Summer Bay Cruise and Wine Tasting

**Sunday, August 21, 2016**

Boarding 11:00 am, Sailing 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Tickets are $165

Heads up wine lovers! Join us for a special summer wine tasting cruise on Sunday August 21! Set sail on the SS Jeremiah O’Brien for a spectacular afternoon Bay Cruise and Wine Tasting. Take in stunning views of the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, Angel Island, Bay Bridge and the San Francisco Skyline, while sipping wines from some of Northern California’s best wineries.

Enjoy a specially curated wine tasting featuring award-winning wines donated by Acacia Vineyards, Beaulieu Vineyard, Beringer Vineyards, Chateau St. Jean, Etude, Provenance Vineyards, Stags’ Leap Winery, Sterling Vineyards, and St. Clement Vineyards. Artisanal cheese donated courtesy of Nicasio Valley Cheese Company, with a delicious lunch provided by La Boulangerie. This summer wine tasting cruise, organized by John Campbell of Campbell and Rose, is a supporting fundraiser for SS Jeremiah O’Brien and will help contribute to our 2017 Dry Dock fund.

During the cruise, guests will have the chance to explore this historic ship’s galley, crew quarters, gun mounts, exhibits and the triple expansion steam engine—all while enjoying spectacular views of the San Francisco Bay.

The cruise departs from Pier 45 in Fisherman’s Wharf and returns again to Pier 45. Under the command of Capt. LeSieur, the O’Brien sails out under the Golden Gate and back inside the bay continuing along the San Francisco waterfront for a remarkable view of the city by the bay.

Hidden Gems of San Francisco Bay Cruise and Wine Tasting

**August 21, Noon-4pm**

Tickets are $165

You can register by calling the office at (415) 544-0100 or completing the enclosed order form. Look forward to seeing you in August!
A Fond Farewell

Back in 2002 I was listening to the news while dressing for work in Sacramento – there was a 20-second blurb about a Liberty ship, the SS Jeremiah O’Brien, coming to the Port of Sacramento that would be open for public tours on the weekend.

I could not believe my ears... my father, a WWII Merchant Marine veteran, had told me that all the Liberties had been scrapped, and in fact most were gone by the late sixties. I was so excited to hear not only a few were left, but that one was coming to the Port of Sacramento! I called friends to join me for the tour – it was thrilling to see a ship like some my father had sailed, and to walk her decks.

Fourteen years later, I’ve given the O’Brien five years of volunteering in the deck department as an Ordinary Seaman, seven years as Office Manager and Corporate Secretary, and two more years as General Manager. I’ve worked on many events and cruises over the years as well as handled the administrative side of operations.

Now I’d like to spend some more time with my grandkids and family; I’m retiring August 31, 2016, so this is my farewell to all the wonderful supporters of the O’Brien that I have met over the years. I can’t possibly name them all, but I’d like to thank a few special people for all their support of not only the ship but also my role promoting the O’Brien:

Norm and Dorie Balko, of Missoula, Montana, who have joined us for several cruises and will be on board for Fleet Week 2016; John and Shirlee Blount of Arizona who always stop in the office and say hello whenever they’re in town; Edward Burton, Thomas Ender, and the late Bob Milby, all members of the original WWII crews of the O’Brien whom I have had the honor to meet and know; Phil Crumley and his Natural Gas Jazz Band who have performed on many of our cruises; Madame Odette LePendu who has tirelessly promoted the ship here and in France; the late Capt. Mark L. Shafer who, with his wonderful wife, Dulce, promoted the ship to many friends and local organizations; and of course the late RADM Thomas J. Patterson, one of the founders of the National Liberty Ship Memorial who was instrumental in saving the O’Brien, and Mrs. Thomas J. Patterson, better known as Dorothy, my good friend who now resides in North Carolina.

I thank everyone for their encouragement and support over the years.

Fair Winds and Following Seas,
Dry Dock Committee Update:
Keep the SS Jeremiah O’Brien sailing the San Francisco Bay!

Pat Dupes-Matsumoto

How do you get a grant for a big grey ship? It isn’t easy! Unfortunately, very few grants exist for the purpose of rehabilitating 73-year-old ships. So when we find that rare one, we prepare for it and work hard to make our best effort to get it.

Sixteen years ago, the National Liberty Ship Memorial (NLSM) received a $200,000 Save America’s Treasures grant for extensive work on the ship’s engine and replacement of the original crow’s nest. The project had been identified by a team consisting of the captain, engineers, welders, a cost engineer, and the ship’s grant writer. Cost estimates were obtained and a budget was created. A retired chief engineer spent hours giving a detailed crash course on Liberty Ship engines to the grant writer.

This was a 1:1 matching grant; the NLSM had to find $200,000 to match the amount of the grant. This time it was easy; much of the extensive work was going to be done by the ship’s engineers and welders, the value of their qualified work on the grant project, computed by industry standards, would become the ship’s match.

Newly educated on the engine, and with the budget and the source for the match set, the grant writer hit the computer keys to explain what would happen to this irreplaceable national treasure if the proposed work was not completed. Three days of writing later, ten copies of the application, photographs, diagrams, budget, and supporting documents were assembled to be shipped off to Washington DC. But it was in the middle of the post 9/11 anthrax scare. The Federal Government would accept no packages by US mail, so Fed Ex came through.

The waiting began – five months of worry before Admiral Tom Patterson got the call that the SS Jeremiah O’Brien would not only get funding for the engine work, but we had received the third largest grant awarded that year!

Today, there’s a new grant the NLSM is working toward, the NPS Maritime Heritage Grant. And once again we’ve assembled a team of engineers, consultants, board members, the ship’s officers and grant specialists to identify a project and prepare an application. And again it’s for about $200,000 for the 2017 dry dock.

**This time the team has identified badly needed restoration work on the ship’s tanks as our most needed project. But this work has to be done in dry dock and it will be so specialized that very little of it can be done by the ship’s crew. That means that we won’t be able to match the amount of the grant by crew labor. The NLSM will need to raise the funds to match the grant for which we’re applying, as well as the other costs of dry dock.**

**This year, the dry dock appeal is very urgent. In order to protect the ship’s tanks and prevent further corrosion, this work must be done soon. We hope you’ll join with us in keeping the SS Jeremiah O’Brien sailing by generously contributing to the 2017 dry dock fund.**

Captain’s Report

Capt. Cevan LeSieur

It was an honor serving as captain on the May 21st Memorial Cruise as we saluted our veterans and paid tribute to the Merchant Marine and US Navy Armed Guard who sailed and protected Liberty ships during WWII. This was my first cruise as captain for the Jeremiah O’Brien. It is evident that all the hard work that is done by our volunteers pays off. It was a solemn but beautiful day for a cruise. Things are busy on the ship during the summer as we are taking advantage of the good weather so that we can keep her in good shape. Next year we will be taking the Jeremiah into dry dock. Please consider donating extra if possible so that we can do all that needs to be done for the vessel. We look forward to the rest of our cruise season this summer. Thank you for supporting our ship.
Steady As She Goes

Fun 4th of July Fireworks Show
Kyle Day, Events and Youth Coordinator
The 4th of July was a great success. In spite of the fact that it was a cold, overcast Monday night, 326 visitors came to watch the fireworks, eat hot dogs, and drink lots of hot chocolate. Thanks to the fantastic volunteer crew, we had a great time and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the event.

Many thanks to Bob Arakel, Carolyn O’Brien, Jack Mona, Steve and Nancy Schwalen, Keith Jobe, John Hassenplug, John Schindler, Robert Meier, Dr. Alan Galitz and Kevin Shannon. They braved the night fog, large crowds and heavy traffic after the show, not to mention ensuring everyone on board was safe and enjoying themselves and the ship was kept in good order.

I would also like to thank John Knight, Pierre Hurter, Greg Adams, Jim Miller, Pat Lee, Brian McAuliffe, and Joan Raphael for assisting with the preparations before the fireworks, and also helping with cleanup. And a special thanks to Phil O’Mara, who helped keep things moving during the day, to Steve Wright, who operated the donkey boiler, and especially to Eddie Holleman who made all the hot chocolate and coffee.

Bravo Zulu!

Welcome New Volunteers!
Robert Meier, Docent
Marilyn Bruner, Engine Department

WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS!

Fun 4th of July Fireworks Show

History Fun Day with Docent Brian Agron
The Segway folks were thrilled with their tour of the ship with Brian Agron. We can’t wait to see hoards of Segway riding tourists rolling down the pier to tour the ship. Many thanks, Brian!

From all of us at Electric Tour Company, thank you for hosting History Fun Day! Our new guides are well equipped with a TON of information and a fantastic insider’s opinion on your establishment! We will highly recommend your business to all of our guests and tell them all that you have to offer its visitors!

Our docent, Brian, was fantastic! He was engaging, informative and went above and beyond to accommodate us! Our experience was amazing because of his professionalism. Please, give him our gratitude.

Here are a few pictures from our experience. I’m working on a highlight video as well but that may take some time. Let me know if you’re interested in viewing that as well.

Once again, thank you for everything! We hope to work with you again next year!

Trisha Lane

Book a Speaker Today!
Enlighten and entertain the members of your next club meeting with one of our knowledgeable speakers from the SS Jeremiah O’Brien. Learn about the history of the Liberty ships and stories about the O’Brien’s past and present. Book now by calling the office at 415-544-0100 or send us an email with the date and location of your next meeting.
The Mark 29 Anti-torpedo Device and the SS Jeremiah O’Brien

by Brian Agron and Richard Mantegani
Brian Agron, Volunteer Docent

In the Battle of the Atlantic during WWII, there was a great push to counter the threat posed by German U-boats, and several tactics were employed including convoy escorts and long-range air patrols. Another tactic was the deployment of anti-torpedo devices such as the “Mark 29”, and the Jeremiah O’Brien was one of several Liberty Ships selected to carry the device. The first Mark 29 was installed on the SS Atlantida (IX-108), and it also was installed on the Liberty ships Charles M. Schwab and Samuel H. Walker, and on the oil tanker USS Radian (AO-18). The Mark 29 proved to be so problematic to operate, however, that its use was discontinued and almost forgotten.

The gear consisted of a hydrophone, which was towed from the stern to detect the sound of an oncoming torpedo, and paravanes which were towed from both sides of the ship near the bow. The photo below shows a paravane being deployed from a British ship during WWII.

The Mark 29’s towing cable was 305 feet long, and from it five streamers were pulled parallel with the ship (from outward inward): the detector streamer; two explosive streamers (100 feet from the ship’s side); and two short stabilizing streamers. When deployed, the Mark 29 was wired to a listening panel in the ship’s control room. When the sound of an approaching torpedo was detected, the paravanes were armed, and the explosives then would be detonated automatically to destroy the torpedo.

The Mark 29 device did not always function reliably, and in addition it took about four hours to stream and another four hours to recover the gear. In order to perform these tasks, the ship had to slow well below convoy speed and thus would fall behind, making it almost impossible to catch up after the gear was retrieved. To make matters worse, if the explosive streamers were not at the correct distance from the ship, they could damage it when detonated and in addition, when armed, the Mark 29’s explosives could be set off by sounds not made by a torpedo.

These faults did not endear the Mark 29 to ships’ crews. On one voyage, the Charles M. Schwab had to drop out of convoy in the North Atlantic. There was a terrific explosion while the ship was in the ice flows; however, it was not a German torpedo that had stuck them, but one of the Mark 29’s streamers detonating. The crew solved the problem by throwing the entire Mark 29 gear overboard. The USS Radian, an oil tanker, had her hull plates damaged from a Mark 29 detonating a torpedo 100 yards off her starboard quarter. Despite the device’s problematic operation, a Mark 29 did manage to destroy two torpedoes intended for the Samuel H. Walker. The concussions from the explosions, however, damaged the Walker’s propeller shaft.

Touring the Jeremiah O’Brien, you can see modifications that were made to install and operate the Mark 29. There are several alarms, one of which is in the engine room above the Engineer on Watch station; the others are in the aft gunner’s house and in the First Mate’s quarters.

The largest remnant of the Mark 29 is a two-cylinder steam powered air compressor taken from a steam locomotive, located against the bulkhead between the engine room and the #3 cargo hold. To the right, is a compressed air storage tank from which an air-line travels through both the #2 and #1 cargo holds, terminating on the main deck by the bow and capped with a brass plug. The exact function of the air compressor is not known, but compressed air probably was used to power a winch or some such device that deployed and recovered the Mark 29’s paravane.

On your next visit, look for these modifications on the Jeremiah O’Brien as quiet testimony to a problematic and dysfunctional piece of gear that history would most like to forget.

References:
5. Biography of Raymond N. Cadoret, who served on the Charles M. Schwab. armed-guard.com
6. USS Radian (AO-18), wikipedia.com

Special thanks to crew member Chris Friedenbach for the ‘Mark 29 tour’ on board the SS Jeremiah O’Brien.

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

continue on page 6
CROSSED THE FINAL BAR

Walter Duering
1924 – May 22, 2016
Long-time Deck Volunteer on the O’Brien and member of IBEW Local 340, Sacramento, for 73 years

Joe Rath
1926 – May 29, 2016
WWII Merchant Marine veteran who served in the Mediterranean and Pacific Zones and supported the O’Brien.

Robert Flynn
1921 – May 29, 2016
US Navy, WWII veteran and long-time supporter of the SS Jeremiah O’Brien

Jack Beritzhoff
1918 - April 21, 2106
US Merchant Marine 1942-1952, who served in both WWII and the Korean War.

Edgar Allen Lingenfield, Jr.
1924 - March 25, 2016
Volunteer on the O’Brien for many years and member of the 1994 Return to Normandy Voyage

Capt. Mark L. Shafer USN (Ret.)
1929 – April 18, 2016
Former Director of the NLSM Board for many years; served in two wars, the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Active in many organizations, his warm and pleasant style will be missed by many who had the honor to know him.

Bohannon Family Memorial Bench Dedication

June 26, 2016 we had the honor of meeting with the family of the late Rosina “Mel” Bohannon – her husband, Bert Bohannon, and her children, for the dedication of their family memorial bench on board the SS Jeremiah O’Brien. Mel always enjoyed the O’Brien summer cruises and especially liked having a beer with her lunch on those cruises about the SF Bay, so the family asked that their bench be placed near the beer station. Each family member took a turn on fastening one of the four screws holding her memorial plaque, then celebrated her life with a toast of her favorite beer. Angelo Demattei, docent extraordinaire and WWII veteran, topped off their visit with a tour of the ship. Since the weather was so pleasant and the view of San Francisco from the ship is perfect, the family stayed most of the day and reminisced about all the good times they shared as a family on past O’Brien cruises.

There are still a few benches left that have not been reserved – if you’re interested in having a family memorial bench on board the SS Jeremiah O’Brien, contact Matt Lasher, General Manager, at matt@ssjeremiahobrien.org or (415) 544-0100. We receive many requests from people who wish to have their loved one’s ashes scattered from the SS Jeremiah O’Brien on one of our cruises, and yes, we do have that service available, but only on our annual Veterans Memorial cruise in May.

We truly regret being unable to accommodate all requests because so many of our WWII veterans are passing on these days. The Board of Directors had to make this difficult decision back in 2006, giving priority for this service to volunteer crewmembers, or current NLSM members only.

Sources:

Stories from the SS David Dudley . . . from page 5

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.

Stories from the SS David Dudley Field Liberty Ship
Christopher Keiffer, NMN
USCG Merchant Marine

We were delighted to meet Christopher Keiffer, a 92-year-old WWII veteran and his grandson, Ryan, from Hopland, California, on our May Veterans Memorial cruise. Christopher Keiffer, a Fireman and Watertender who served aboard the SS David Dudley Field Liberty ship, as well as other ships, during WWII. His son, Robert Keiffer conducted an interview with his father to capture his stories and share them with us. Here is an excerpt from that interview.

I was assigned to the David Dudley Field Liberty ship in September 1943, after three months at the maritime training school at Avalon, Catalina Island. I relieved the existing fireman and watertender in the engine room. (A watertender is a crewman aboard a steam-powered ship who is responsible for tending to the fires and boilers in the ship’s engine room.)

We left the San Francisco harbor and sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge fully loaded with military cargo and stopped at Pearl Harbor for refueling. I spent a couple of days off duty with friends before we headed to Suva, Fiji Islands. Everything was “blacked out” at night: all exterior lights were out and all porthole windows were covered. Cafeteria food was good: they fed us coffee, chocolates, eggs, and minute steaks.

From Suva we went to Enewetak (Eniwetok) Island and Kwajalein Island, dropping off war supplies at each location. We sailed down to the New Hebrides Islands (now the nation of Vanuatu), where we picked up water from a spring on one of the islands. The water was sent to the dock via bamboo pipes. Then we headed to Milne Bay in the lower part of New Guinea.

Milne Bay was as large as the San Francisco Bay, and had every type of ship imaginable. I recall seeing the wreckage of Japanese ships, including the Fuku Maru, which had been bombed by the USAAF. Bulldozed Japanese planes had been cleared from the runway area in preparation for the US to lay down matting for the US airstrip. [The Battle of Milne Bay, which took place 25 August – 7 September 1942, is considered the first major battle in which Allied troops decisively defeated Japanese land forces. As a result of the battle, Allied morale was boosted and Milne Bay was developed into a major Allied base, which was used to mount subsequent operations in the region.]

We followed the fighting up to Lae, where the U.S. Marines had just captured the area and airfield. In Lae we delivered blankets, mosquito nets, K-rations, clothing, canned goods, and other supplies.

Some of our crew members, during their off time, caught rides on the Douglas C-47 Skytrain or Dakota, a military transport aircraft developed from the civilian Douglas DC-3 airliner up towards Finschhafen, where there was active fighting going on. The planes flew at treetop level to keep the Japanese fighters from diving on them. Three of our shipmates (one Navy gunner and two Liberty shipmates) never came back; their plane was found crashed and burned.

We later sailed to Brisbane, Australia to pick up supplies to take back to New Guinea. As we were heading to Finschhafen we got into a massive electrical storm. During a flash of lightning, the lookout on deck spotted a Navy landing tank craft ship that was on a collision course with us. I was in the engine room and the alarm came from the captain to prepare to abandon ship. Eyewitnesses said later that the two ships were so close that a person could have jumped from one to the other. Fortunately we missed each other.

We returned to Townsville, Australia, and picked up supplies, then to Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand before heading back to the New Guinea coast. We sailed in convoy with four ships on the port side and four ships on the starboard side and a destroyer escort on each side. The entire convoy slowed at one point so that two servicemen could be buried at sea from one of the other ships. The destroyer escorts both went to port side and away from us and were depth-charging for a Japanese submarine. During this convoy, the second engineer came on duty and switched the settling tanks from port side to the starboard side and in the process all eight of the burner flames went out. We lost our position in the convoy and got heck from the commander. Apparently, the third engineer had used the pumps to pump salt water from the bilges and when the second engineer switched the tanks the salt water put all of the flames out. I had to scramble and flame the boilers with a flame torch to get them lit, and shortly got all eight burners going and the ship finally got back into position in the convoy. My next four hours were spent gently feeding the “waterlogged” lines continue on page 9
THANK YOU DONORS!

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

**Benefactors - $5,000+**

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in memory of Jeffrey Wiener

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in memory of my father,
Richard Degnan, WWII Merchant Marine
Col. William Cope, USAF, Ret.,
in memory of Mrs. Phyllis Ann Cope
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in memory of Mark Shafer
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in memory of James “Bucky” Walter,
past President of Vulcan Chapter
Daniel E. Theis,
in memory of all veterans
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Dr. Phil Crumley
Carol Lloyd
Capts. Lynn & Lawrence Korwatch
John Hogan
Todd A. Thiemann,
in memory of John W. Thiemann
Byron Bader,
in memory of WWII Merchant seamen
Thomas C. Wilson,
in memory of the SS Cushman Davis
Sherille Sue & Tony Vlassopulos
in memory of my father,
John H. Vlassopulos
Frank Mendez,
in memory of Lupe V. Mendez
Bernadette A. Martell,
in memory of Harvey G. Martell, Chief
Engineer on Liberty ships 1943-1945
Dennis & Barbara Irwin,
in memory of CDR Amos Carey,
Chaplain, USN

Warren R. Perry,
in memory of Mark Shafer
Vicki Mitchell McGowan,
in memory of Mark Shafer
Raymond J. Donohue,
in memory of Mark Shafer
Mary Ann & Jack Opel,
in memory of Mark Shafer
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in memory of Mark Shafer
Capt. Pete Bowser,
in memory of Mark Shafer
Kendall Watts and Robert Derry,
in memory of Mark Shafer
Christopher Keiffer*,
in honor of the WWII crew of the
SS David Dudley Field
Jimmy Schmidt,
in honor of James A. Schmidt,
on the SS Nataniel B. Palmer Liberty ship
Molly & Allen Autry,
in honor of Jack Caldwell,
crewmember of the Augusta on D-Day
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Our ship eventually left the convoy and went to Hollandia, New Guinea to drop off our supplies. During this time we were on the deck with 11 jeeps with twin 50-caliber machine guns on each jeep, and a crew of Army Rangers headed to the Japanese-held islands to do undercover reconnaissance work. They told me that sometimes they were within arms-length of the Japanese on these islands but the Japanese did not discover them. We then headed to Goode-nough Island and picked up fuel and water and returned to Lae. In Lae we loaded the ship with condemned ammunition (#4 hold). After two or three days of loading, one of the last cargo net load hit the hatch cover and ripped open. One lone case of hand grenades fell from the net, dropped down to the #4 hold, hit the shaft alley, and broke open. Hand grenades rolled all over and one, as witnessed by me personally, detonated, but was a dud and simply fizzled with smoke and did not go off. If it had exploded the entire hold would have blown up thus blowing a hole in the ocean the size of Manhattan! We were lucky!

During our trip back to Australia many of the crew had fun using the condemned ammunition to shoot at anything and everything they could find floating nearby--mainly using Thompson 45s and 30-06 Springfields. We fueled and watered there and returned to San Francisco using a “butterfly watch” with ship’s holds filled with seawater for ballast. It was called a “butterfly watch” because the engineer had to adjust (reduce) the steam pressure if the propeller above water. It took us just over a month to sail to San Francisco.

We entered San Francisco Bay on July 17, 1944, entering under the Golden Gate Bridge side-by-side with a new Victory ship, the S.S. Quinault Victory. As we entered the Bay our ship headed to Hunter’s Point and the Victory ship headed north to Port Chicago. It was this Victory ship that was part of the catastrophic explosion that blew up with the S.S. E.A. Bryan and 320 enlisted and civilian workers, mostly African Americans.

I was discharged from the S.S. David Dudley Field on July 19, 1944 and went home on leave for a short while until I was assigned to the Motor Vessel Cape Fear in September 1944.
I joined the Merchant Marine in St. Louis, Mo in January 1945 and trained in Sheepshead Bay, New York, completed in late April 1945. Since the war ended in early May in Europe, they saw a sudden need for shifting the focus on the Pacific. So we had a load of trainees, ready for ships loaded onto a train and sent to San Francisco. I did a few weeks stint in Alameda on Mess duty, and had the opportunity to look up my relatives living in Martinez Calif. On May 25 1945 I signed on the SS Granville S Hall.

My trip on the SS Jeremiah O’Brien [Fleet Week October 2015] was to celebrate my anniversary of my first ship. As for the trip on the SS Jeremiah O’Brien, it seemed just like the first trip I made under the Golden Gate Bridge. Of course, we came back after an hour or so, while the first time I left took me to the usual stops in the Pacific: Eniwetok, Ulithie, and Okinawa.

We were at Okinawa when the atomic bombs were dropped. The General Alarm woke me in late evening, and in my rush to my gun position on the bridge, I was surprised to find every gun on all the shore batteries were firing tracers into the sky. For a minute I thought the Japs were coming back, until our second cook and baker at about 350 lbs knocked me through the blackout curtains and we finally discovered what was going on that ended the war. On to Korea, Pusan and Seoul, and back to Portland, Oregon and payoff.

My next trip was from Portland to Sicily, Catania and then Siracusa with a load of wheat. The country was starving and it took the British troops who were overseeing that part of the world, to keep the civilians from storming the ship for some of the wheat.

Then the big Maritime Strike, in early May 1946, where I did my Strike Duty in San Francisco. You may remember I had relatives in San Francisco, so we had another visit. Then I made a trip from San Francisco to Baltimore, Maryland, the long way around. Then I discovered coastwise tankers moving from the Gulf of Mexico to the East coast – I caught a Conoco tanker, cruising for 10 to 12 days at a time, which was a sailors delight, and a Good Feeder. We sailed from Lake Charles, Louisiana to the East Coast cities with a whole boatload of citizens from Mamou, Lafayette and Lake Charles, all native to the region, and the Cajun food was the best. I did eight months on that one, and then took an eight-month vacation from shipping.

That’s just long enough to get in trouble on shore. I did a time in the taxi business, spending money on a new 1949 Kaiser (nice car). Found a girlfriend (not as nice as the car). I was living in Chicago and it was too cold for me. And, the girlfriend ended up not coming home for a couple nights, and it didn’t take long to figure that out, plus the taxi business had already gone broke. So I did what sailors do, I found a ship, the SS Louise Lykes.

This is the ship I was on as a heartbroken sailor from small town Collinsville, Illinois. I went uptown in Genova, Italia to celebrate my birthday on 17 April 1949. Of course I was young and didn’t understand the rebound thing, when the prettiest little girl in Genova smiled at me AND, it turned out all right this time – we married. I sailed until 13 November 1956, when my wife and three children made the final trip to New York, and I also left my last ship in New York to put that oar on my shoulder and head for terra firma AGAIN !!!

Here is wishing the best to everyone in California and all who are working to keep the memory of Merchant Marines alive by supporting the House bill: HONOR THE WWII MERCHANT MARINE of 2015 BILL HR 563 submitted by Janice Hahn CA -44, and co-sponsored by several California congressmen.

I Remain Orville Sova, SS Samuel Parker Chapter of AMMV Port of St Louis Mo.

Orville wrote the above letter to me June 10, 2015 and passed away November 6, 2015 - Eliz***

We had a great tour of the O’Brien a few weeks ago. We bought two senior tickets, but my wife doesn’t turn 62 until November. We feel we owe you ten dollars so we are mailing it to you.

Thanks,
Anonymous***

Hi Eliz!

Please accept a small donation from me in memory of Mark Shafer. Mark introduced me to this great ship ‘way back in 2002. How I came in contact with Mark in the first place is unknown, but, be that as it may be, it got me started with a five-year “career” as a docent. A wonderful experience.

Am unable to enjoy the cruise but am possibly on board for Fleet Week. Regards to you and your staff!

Pete Bowser***

Dear Friends,

I have not been in San Francisco on the Jeremiah O’Brien since 2011, but I always remember the good time when the O’Brien went to France with Admiral Thomas J. Patterson of whom I was Liaison Officer.

Jean Paul Caron and I continue to be enthusiastic about the Jeremiah O’Brien, so I thank you for the Steady as She Goes, which is very interesting.

Please give our warmest wishes to all the veterans.

Sincerely, Dr. Gerard Ducable, Maire Honoraire d’Isneauville, France ***
Our AMMV Chapter in Birmingham, Alabama, is sending a donation for the SS Jeremiah O’Brien in memory of our beloved past President, James “Bucky” Walter.

One of our members visited the ship this past year and brought back stories of his experience which inspired our chapter to make this donation. I was a SF Bay area resident for 32 years and am fully familiar with the JO’B; I knew RADM Tom Patterson very well. My best wishes for your continuing success,

George Bruno***

I saw the obituary for Capt. Mark L. Shafer in my local newspaper. I would like to donate in his memory. I have been a military collector and history buff for over 60 years. I have been aboard the SS Jeremiah O’Brien on several occasions, and find that you have done an excellent job in preserving the history of the Liberty ships of WWII. As an ex navy man I can appreciate the hard work that goes into maintaining a ship.

Stephen Decatur Rohde***

Eliz,

We always enjoy our Fleet Week Trips on the Jeremiah O’Brien as we join our long-time friends in the Natural Gas Jazz Band for a wonderful “Day on the Bay.”

Once more, we wish to donate to the SS Jeremiah O’Brien on behalf of our other two close and dear ships, as a memorial to our past sailors and for the education of our future generations.

We look forward to our future visits to our sister ship, SS Jeremiah O’Brien, which you are taking care of so lovingly.

We’ll see you on Saturday, October 8, 2016, for Fleet Week,

Lt. Patrick J. Campbell, SC, USNR, (Ret.)***

Dear Eliz,

Thank you so much for your letter and enclosure of the 7th of June – we are Tony & Sue by the way – Sue, to whom I have been married for 48 years, a girl from Kentucky who has just taken British citizenship whilst still keeping her USA passport.

It is so kind of you to send the photo of the SS Stylianos N. Vlassopulos, our Liberty ship. In 1954 I was 24 and a member of the Baltic Exchange working for my father, John N. Vlassopulos, with Vlassopulos Bros in the city of London. By then I had sailed with my family to Hampton Roads to load coal for Cardiff, and to buy many things just after the war, like a portable radio to wow the other boys at my school!

I had also worked on the ship from Genoa to north Africa with ore to the west coast of UK. My father had adapted the whole stern area where the gunners were, as a private set up for us. What a disaster: imagine the movement at the very stern of the ship – we were all sick!

I have a model of a Liberty ship in my bedroom which I built from a kit and many of the photos of when the ship was launched in 1943, so your photo will go in the cabinet as well, I am so happy to have it; there are so many memories never to be forgotten.

Thank you again very much, so thoughtful. I am 84 now, soon to be 85 and the memories come flooding back.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Vlassopulos***

My father has in his final wishes to have some of his ashes put in the ocean, hopefully from the SS Jeremiah O’Brien. He was a Merchant Marine and then served in the Army in the Korean War. He was also a docent on the SS Jeremiah O’Brien when it would make the trip to the port of Sacramento.

I need to know if this is possible, and do I need to do anything to grant his wish. He is still alive but he has had some health issues and we just want to have our ducks in a row.

Warm regards,

Betty***

Dear Betty,

I am sorry to hear that your father is now having some health issues. After looking through our records, I’m not finding anything indicating Larry Lydon was a docent or deck hand on the O’Brien, but that is not necessarily proof that he wasn’t; some of the earlier records have been lost.

I do see that your father was, during 2008-2013, a member of the National Liberty Ship Memorial and came on some cruises. If he, or you, would consider re-establishing his membership, we can reserve a place for his ashes to be scattered from the ship when the time comes.

About 2006 the board of directors came to a very difficult decision - they realized that so many of the veterans were passing on that, unfortunately, we could no longer accommodate every request for scattering ashes. We therefore decided that the privilege would be extended to only volunteer crew members and/or NLSM supporters with currently paid membership dues.

Eliz

John Drought

National Liberty Ship Memorial (NLSM)

2350 Taylor Street, Suite 6

San Francisco CA 94133-1818
JOIN US FOR FLEET WEEK CRUISES OCTOBER 8th and 9th!

San Francisco Fleet Week is an annual public event that honors the contributions of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces while advancing cooperation and knowledge among civilian- and military-based Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response personnel.

The O’Brien participates with the SF Fleet Week Cruise around San Francisco Bay, including the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, and the Bay Bridge for amazing views of the San Francisco waterfront, the visiting Navy ships, and the always breathtaking air show featuring the US Navy Blue Angels.

Live music is provided by Natural Gas Jazz Band on Saturday, and the Las Galinas Sanitary District Non-Marching Band on Sunday. Complimentary food and drink is included with your ticket: Continental breakfast by Tommy's Donuts, hot dog lunch by Annie's Hot Dogs, ice cream dessert by It's-It Ice Cream. Water, soda, beer, and wine are also provided.

Don’t miss these amazing cruises! Book your ticket today on our website at www.jeremiahobrien.org.

HELP GET US TO DRY DOCK!

The O’Brien offers several cruises on the San Francisco Bay each year, where thousands of guests have the chance to explore the ship’s galley, crew quarters, gun mounts, exhibits and the triple expansion steam engine—all while enjoying spectacular views of the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, Angel Island, and the San Francisco Skyline.

To keep the ship sailing, it is necessary to take the vessel out of the water and perform necessary maintenance, a complex and expensive job. We have launched the SS Jeremiah O’Brien Dry Dock Campaign to raise the $1.5 million needed for mandatory maintenance and repairs in 2017 to keep her in class and certified for sailing. These repairs take place every five years and ensure that the O’Brien meets the requirements and regulations of the U.S. Coast Guard and the American Bureau of Shipping so she can continue to sail the bay.

Please donate today to keep this living, vibrant historical ship sailing the bay!

Donations can be made on our website at www.ssjeremiahobrien.org

Or, mail your contribution to: The National Liberty Ship Memorial
2350 Taylor Street, Suite 6
San Francisco, CA 94133-1818

For information about corporate sponsorship opportunities, please contact john@campbellandrose.com or pat@campbellandrose.com