Our lines are fast and our spirits are high as we face these challenging times with resolve. The health and safety of our crew has been maintained. While work has progressed these many months under strict health guidelines, we have had to furlough senior members of our staff. But we have optimism that this too shall pass. San Francisco is a great city and has enforced very stringent requirements for all businesses to reopen. And in so doing, at least for now, the city has seen progress in the fight against the virus. Businesses are cautiously re-opening and with some luck, we will too. This has not been an easy time, especially since the fire and it has tested the mettle of our crew. And we are still here and waiting enthusiastically for the go-ahead to open!

On Friday, May 22, five crew members were on board – Shipkeeper Steve Wright, Joanie Rafael, and Bob Jarvis (deck crew), Asher Uchida (engine crew), and Jeff Chartier, who had come down from Oregon to do some necessary work in the engine room. They all stayed on the ship overnight. At about 4:00 AM, Joanie heard glass shattering and got up to investigate. She saw the early indication that the shed was on fire and moved quickly around the House yells, “Fire, fire get up!” Bob Jarvis opened his porthole to verify what he heard, grabbed his keys and his wallet and went out to the gangway. At that point, the ship was still linked to the warehouse electrical power so the crew members lowered the gangway down to about 2 feet above the tarmac before the power went off. (Later they powered up the ship’s generator.)

Heading into the shed to see if they could save their cars, Steve and Bob noted that the fire was near the forklifts and the shed was filling with black smoke. The black smoke in
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Articles are subject to editing and condensing because of space limitations. Any correspondence received by NLSM might be published unless expressly requested otherwise. Please send articles, photos and items to Nancy Schwalen, ‘sschwalen@comcast.net’ and title it ‘For SASG’.

Mailing address: NLSM, 45 Pier, Suite 4A, San Francisco, CA 94133. We welcome crew news and articles of interest about Liberty ships.

‘Steady As She Goes’ Fall 2020

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FAIR WINDS & FOLLOWING SEAS, DAVE

Dave Larsen
June 12, 1935 - June 23, 2020

David Jon Larsen passed peacefully in the arms of his daughters at his home in San Francisco. He was 85. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, David and his siblings Jim and Judy were raised there. The family moved to California in 1948, by way of Denver and they settled in Walnut Creek. He attended Lassen Community College and Cal Berkeley where he enjoyed playing soccer.

Aware of a “taste for salt” he sailed his first ship in 1956 to Europe via a Norwegian Line. He continued sailing off and on through 2010, the last 5 years for the Sailors Union of the Pacific. He served in the Army (1957) where he was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division.

He married Karen Robertson in 1963 in Berkeley and lived in Santa Cruz where he was a carpenter until 1971. He was part of the Felton Guild as a builder and lived on San Miguel Island, for a research mission in the late 70’s. He helped build, then worked at Calera Winery in Hollister and then moved to Half Moon Bay. He volunteered at Ano Nuevo and the Liberty Ship, Jeremiah O’Brien. He moved to SF in 2014 and took over the Andrew Furuseth School of Seamanship where he taught splices and knots.

Cheerful and kind, committed to friends and family as well as to the earth and its history, David was a lifelong learner, builder, researcher, traveller and lover of the sea. He was a good person, the kind you don’t meet too often. David was a grateful member of AA with over 39 years of sobriety.

David is survived by his two daughters, Berit (B) Larsen of HMB and Inga Larsen (Radouane Sadrane) and step-daughter Lael Robertson (Peter Walbridge) of SF, nine grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

His ashes were released to the Sea as a memorial.

❖
Want to save on your income taxes? It is possible to reduce your income tax bill by donating to a charity or non-profit such as the SS JEREMIAH O’BRIEN/National Liberty Ship Memorial directly from an IRA after you reach age 70 1/2, by using a Qualified Charitable Donation ("QCD"). A QCD allows those age 70 1/2 or older to give money to charities directly from their IRAs in a tax advantageous manner. Total annual QCDs from all IRAs cannot exceed $100,000 for an individual. Spouses can each make up to $100,000 of QCD’s. It is not complicated to do; stock brokerage firms can make the donation for you pursuant to your instructions. Either shares of stock or cash can be donated.

Making a QCD as opposed to a normal charitable gift has two main advantages. First, a QCD counts toward satisfying the individual’s Required Minimum Distribution ("RMD") for that year from one or more IRA’s. Second, the distribution is excluded from the taxpayer’s income (normally funds from an RMD count as ordinary income). It is this second benefit that is really valuable under the new tax bill. With few individuals now expected to itemize, the income tax deduction for contributions to charities will be lost on many people. However, if you make a QCD, you get a full exclusion of that income from taxes. So, for anyone 70 1/2 or older, who owns an IRA subject to an RMD, and is charitably inclined, a QCD really works as a way to in effect preserve an income-tax-reducing charitable deduction under the new tax law. And certainly a very worthy cause, the NLSM, directly benefits from the donation.

Of course, the NLSM cannot and does not provide tax, investment or legal advice. For those, you should seek out a qualified advisor; but for people over 70 1/2, a QCD may provide significant benefits to both the JEREMIAH O’BRIEN and the donor. We hope those who might benefit from a QCD will consider it. We thank Investmentnews.com for some of this information.

Forrest Booth, Director NLSM & Partner Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP

Become a Member of the National Liberty Ship Memorial!

Here's a way you can support the ship throughout the year and visit whenever you like. Membership is the one of the best ways to show your support and keep history alive by keeping the O’Brien sailing!

**Student $35** For a currently enrolled high school or college student.

**Individual $50** One year free admission for one individual.

**Family $100;** One year free admission for one family/group: two adults and two children.

**Sponsor $250** One year free admission for one group/family.

**Corporate $500** Free admission to the ship for yourself and a business associate, unlimited access.

All memberships include 20% discount in the Ship’s Store and subscription to ‘Steady As She Goes’. Visit ssjeremiahobrien.org for information!
the shed settled around their cars, making it almost impossible to see where they were going. Jarvis more or less pinballed his way out of the shed, trying to avoid the pillars with their concrete bases. Fortunately, with the light cast by firemen’s high-powered flashlights, Jarvis and Wright were then able to see to get their cars out of the burning shed, both parking their cars in a safer location. Unfortunately, by the time Raphael and Chartier made it to the dock, there was too much smoke to enter the shed to get their cars out.

A woman from the fish-processing sheds said that she saw the first indication of flames and called in fire. If she hadn’t noticed it then (about 4:00 AM), the ship would have been in even greater danger.

The fireman fought the fire from 4:15 AM to 1:00 PM. Fireboat #1 the Phoenix (a hero of the fires after the 1989 earthquake) and fireboat #4 the St. Francis fought the fire by pouring water on the far end of the warehouse and kept the flames from seriously harming the ship. The ship’s lines were damaged but did not melt through (and Matson Shipping Lines donated new lines to the ship after the fire. Thank you, Matson!). The vangs (support rigging for the booms) melted or were compromised. The glass in four starboard portholes cracked.

Bob Jarvis said he was surprised that neither the canvases nor the five wooden hatch covers over the five holds suffered any damage at all.

The SS Jeremiah O’Brien managed to stay safe on four convoy trips across the Atlantic in waters patrolled regularly by German U-boats. She made eleven trips across the English Channel as part of the D-Day invasion fleet. She even survived years in the mothball fleet in Suisun Bay, escaping the threat of being scrapped, thanks to Rear Adm. Thomas J. Patterson, who recognized the need to save one of hard-working Liberties to serve as a living, working museum.

On May 23, 2020 the SS Jeremiah O’Brien survived the dramatic fire in the sheltered San Francisco Bay that threatened her existence again. We, the crew and friends of the SS Jeremiah O’Brien are thankful for the San Francisco Fire Department and the fireboats who saved the ship one more time.
Who’s Who in the Deck Officer Complement 2020

By Captain Stu Quan

As a relative “newcomer,” I started to volunteer on the JEREMIAH O’BRIEN in 2014, I definitely knew the high quality of mariners who worked on the vessel. I admired both Captain Patrick Maloney and Captain Pat Buttner. Over the next few years, I grew to admire their tireless work ethic with the National Liberty Ship Memorial. These gentlemen affected all the departments, volunteers, and passengers in a most positive and supportive manners. In time, the present master, Captain Cevan LeSieur, was assigned this admirable position of ship’s captain.

But who were all those volunteer “mates” who assisted the NLSM during the cruises? What were their duties, and would we ever see them again? Yes, the mates had earned professional credentials that were issued by the United States Coast Guard. Some of the deck officers were still actively sailing on commercial ships. Their duties might take them around the globe, and this is the reason why we do not see or work with the same individuals on a cruise. Dozens of mariners, both men and women, have served as a deck officer on the NLSM.

Firstly, there is the “old guard” of volunteer mates led by Ray Conrady. Not only did Ray organize the deck department “Watch List,” but he has served many, many years on the navigation bridge. On Wednesday(s), you might see a retired S.F. Bar Pilot by the name of Bill Greig. Bill is also helping out with the scheduling of some of the deck maintenance.

Another talented deck officer is Captain Taelson Larrow. Much of his professional life is spent on the SS Cape Horn which is a Ready Reserve vessel that is home-ported in San Francisco. In 2019, additional volunteer mates were the young deck officers named Peter Spencer and Andrew Manning. If your memory can slip back to 2018, we were also assisted by Coleman Rosenburg and Laurenanne Londynsky.

The JEREMIAH O’BRIEN requires a check-list. That is a set of protocols that has to be completed before the ship departs Pier 45. There is an endless list for the Engine and Stewards Departments (which is a story for another date). For the ‘deckies,’ all the requirements are dictated by Coast Guard Sector, San Francisco. A week before getting underway, there has to be a Fire and Boat Drill. Secondly, the USCG sends an inspection team to evaluate the documentation and safety gear on the old Liberty Ship. On most occasions, the American Bureau of Shipping checks in with the Executive Director and Port Engineer. If there are any deficiencies, they must be corrected before the ship is cleared to sail. Specifically, all of us recognize the boundless energy of those engineers and stewards. However, the deck officers must navigate the JEREMIAH O’BRIEN and keep us safe while on those terrific cruises.
Captain Hugh Mulzac and the Liberty Ship
SS Booker T. Washington

By Brian Agron

Hugh Mulzac was born in 1886 on Union Island in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. His mother was an accomplished pianist and his father was a planter and builder of whaling ships and schooners, no doubt the origin of Hugh’s maritime career. Young Hugh served on British schooners right out of high school then attended the Swansea Nautical College in Wales in the UK to train for his Masters license, earning his mates license in 1910. He served as a deck officer on four ships in WWI then emigrated to the United States in 1918 and became a U.S. citizen. In 1920 he passed his U.S. Shipmasters exam with a perfect score.

However, for the next two decades, the only work he could get in the maritime industry was in the steward’s department for several shipping lines, undoubtedly earning for him the dubious title of the most overqualified individual in the maritime shipping industry. There was only one reason why these were the only positions opened to him and that was because he was Black. Then WWII broke out.

The SS Booker T. Washington, MC hull #648 was christened by Marian Anderson and launched on 29 September 1942 and was the first of 17 Liberty ships to be named after African Americans. It was the plan of the Maritime Commission to deliver this ship to Captain Mulzac who was to serve as the first African-American master of an ocean-going vessel. The MC also told Captain Mulzac that he was to have an all-black crew, however Captain Mulzac refused the command and stated “Under no circumstances will I command a Jim Crow vessel.” He later commented in his autobiography “If there was ever a moment when the real meaning of democracy could and had to be demonstrated to the peoples of the world, the moment was now! And what was America’s answer in this hour of need? A Jim Crow ship! Named for a Negro, christened by a Negro, captained by a Negro and no doubt manned by Negroes!”

Being desperate for qualified masters, the MC and the Luckenbach Steamship Company relented and the SS Booker T. Washington became the first Liberty ship with an African-
American master and the first integrated ship with both an African-American and white American officers and crew.

The *Booker T. Washington* made twelve voyages in the north Atlantic, Caribbean and to North Africa. She entered the Reserve Fleet in Olympia, Washington in 1952 and was sold for scrap in June of 1969.

Captain Mulzac had a rather stormy career after the war. In 1947, he had surgery on his leg which, as he said "put him on the beach again". He would never again command a ship. Captain Mulzac was very active in the maritime labor movement which put him at odds with the McCarthy era 'red-baiting' politicians and he was accused of being a Communist and ultimately blacklisted by the shipping companies. As such he was then deemed a security risk and his masters license was suspended. Never the one to buckle under pressure, Captain Mulzac fought back in court and finally in 1960, a federal judge restored his masters license, however he never returned to sea. He passed away on January 30. 1971.

For further reading on Captain Mulzac and used as references for this article:
- wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Mulzac
- owlcation.com/humanities/Hugh-Mulzac-First-Black-Captain
- wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Booker_T._Washington
- www.caribbeanlifenews.com/the-first-black-us-shipmaster
Dear Editor,

I read Jim Conwell's letter about steering on our first day out. Funny, but I don't remember any dishes breaking. I suspect it was stuff in the galley. It couldn't have been plates or bowls in the pantry because I always had them secured either in the dishrack I built before we left or in the original holders over the sink. I had sea experience and knew how to secure for sea.

During the whole time I only had 35 plates and 35 bowls and never enough spoons. Ron Smith did break about 5 or 6 bowls one time when he dropped them before we left. Jimmie and Al were feeding 100 people when we were in the shipyard before we left and occasionally in port overseas.

The only thing I remember falling was Marci Hooper's old ship store's desk in the portside gunners fo’c’sle across from the saloon. It broke away from the bulkhead during a port roll, I believe in the Caribbean or somewhere, and came crashing down.

The most amazing thing about the whole voyage for me was that Pat McCafferty and I never collided in the passageway between the gunner's mess and the galley door. I was constantly rushing clean plates into the galley and he was running with food orders to the saloon and bringing me 55-gallon buckets of dirty dishes and flatware.

The big thing I remember right after we left was several people, including Pat, coming down with a fever and flu-like illness. Some had it several days and then it went away. I never got it. I don’t believe Dr. Haslam ever did figure out what it was and it never came back. Some people immediately pointed their finger at the galley and me in the pantry. That was nonsense because Jimmie was a professional chef and understood all aspects of food handling and nothing ever sat around in the pantry long enough to get contaminated. Plus I had sterilizing agents Russ Mosholder got for me. My big problem was yelling at Jack Carraher to get stuff into me from the engineer's mess in the tropics before the bugs got to it in the heat.

The only other trouble I had was during our 1996 Pacific Northwest cruise when a City of San Francisco official who had no authority over an American-flag vessel tried to get Russ to get me do a procedure requiring three sinks in the middle of a meal with two only sinks and the same 35 plates.

I never broke a single thing. The only thing I did was accidentally drop my personal coffee cup over the side off Panama. My aunt gave to me before we left.

Greg Williams
Pantryman, Normandy 94

Dear Editor,

THE Liberty as you know, was derived from the Ocean class which evolved from a Thompson of Sunderland pre-war design of a tramp ship. In those days, a tramp would take a cargo from A to B and hope to pick up a cargo from B to take to C, and so on and so on. The Captain and
owners’ agents were given the hopeful responsibility of finding cargoes. The whole idea was to minimize voyages WITHOUT cargoes, which doesn’t pay. So, even with six deep tanks, the ballast spaces tended to be inadequate.

During the war, however, most loaded voyages were across the Atlantic from the US to the U.K. but there was little cargo going the other way, hence ships made a ballast voyage in the Atlantic, which is considered internationally to have the worst weather in winter.

Look at the Plimsoll line on the JOB and you will see the lowest line, i.e. the highest freeboard, is marked WNA, 'Winter North Atlantic.' The British Board of Trade therefore instructed that Liberties, (and other UK flag ships) load solid ballast in the tween decks secured with shifting boards, this to reduce rolling, damage to the ship, and discomfort to crew when returning to the US.

In New York this solid ballast was discharged onto the bank side of Manhattan on the East River. Much of this ballast was the rubble of bombed out houses and other buildings from Bristol. Post war, when the East River Freeway was built, its foundations were a little bit of the U.K. Not many folk know this but now we do!

Post war the United States had a very fine man as Ambassador to the U.K., one Raymond Seitz, who wrote his memoirs entitled 'Over Here' in which he mentions the above. Seitz was born in Honolulu, graduated from Yale and joined the U.S. foreign service in 1966 from which he resigned in 1994 as Ambassador. He became a director of various U.K. and U.S. firms and made his home in London with his wife Caroline. His book was first published in 1998 and is a very good read.

David Aris
Cumbria, England

Crew Notice

The Annual General meeting and Election of Officers was held remotely Saturday Oct. 17, there was a good attendance. All candidates for Director on the ballot were reelected.

The next crew Zoom meeting will be on Thursday October 29th, the meeting ID and passcode will be available from the office.

This edition of ‘Steady As She Goes’ will be sent electronically, no printed edition will be available. If you are not receiving your email copy, please contact the office at liberty@ssjeremiahobrien.org.
Work continues on Pier 45, clearing the debris from the fire to facilitate the ship’s return. Progress is being made.

Thank you to the Port of San Francisco!