Thanksgiving and Looking Forward to 2022!

It’s been a hard year but we have lots of reasons to be thankful

Forward to 2022!

We’ve survived the obstacles of the past year and a half - the covid crisis shut us down for a year and a half - and the massive inferno of May 23, 2020 which decimated the concrete parking structure just 30’ away, destroyed our ‘Doghouse’ and came close to incinerating the ship completely. But we’re BACK! You can’t keep a good ship down.

This past October we cruised two blissful days on Fleet Week. The blue skies and light Pacific breezes were calming. The metal hull of our Liberty ship was a reassuring bulwark against all enemies - foreign and airborne. The sounds of the bands filled the air, ‘Silicon Gulch Jazz Band’ on Saturday and ‘The Brassworks Band’ on Sunday. Our proud ship survived D-Day, and it survived the twin disasters of 2020!

All 2” boiler tubes in our steam engine were replaced in 2020 by the Engine gang, there were 1,200 of them. And when we lit off the boilers and pulled away from the dock, those boiler tubes performed spot-on perfectly. The crew likewise, quickly got back in the swing of operating our seventy-eight year old ship; the
At the November meeting of the Board of Directors, we voted in and welcomed Forrest Booth to take the helm of the NLSM, as Chairman of the Board and President of the Corporation. It was a seamless transfer, as Forrest has been the Vice President of the Board. He is well versed in all aspects of the ship - its officers and activities. Forrest is no stranger to Liberty ships; during the Viet Nam war he was a Navy officer on the Liberty USS TUTUILA (ARG-4), serving on board from 1970 to 1972. He became very familiar with operating and maintaining what was even then an old ship from WW2. Forrest describes the TUTUILA as a Xerox copy of the JOB!

Forrest is an actively practicing Admiralty and Maritime Lawyer, working at Kennedys in San Francisco. In his capacity on our Board, he has served as Insurance advisor and coordinator to the Executive Committee. 2022 is going to be a busy year since this year we are scheduled to go into drydock, most likely at the Mare Island Shipyard. Once every five years, we have to get inspected from stem to stern by the different agencies so that we can maintain our 'in-class' designation required by the American Bureau of Shipping and approvals by the Coast Guard. Also, a lot of maintenance and repair work needs to be done. It is NOT an inexpensive proposition! Fundraising will be front and center for the ship in 2022.

Dave Nolan, our outgoing Chairman, will remain a volunteer to lend his expertise in ship management and procedures. We thank you Dave for your leadership and calm guidance in serving our ship, and we look forward to continuing to work with you.
To Forrest, we of the crew and the Board are here to help in any way we can to help make your first year a very successful one!

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Other Ways You Can Support the N.L.S.M.
by Forrest Booth

Did you know that you can support the JEREMIAH O’BRIEN and also save yourself money on your tax bill at the same time? There are two ways you can do this. First, you can donate shares of stock which have appreciated in value while you have owned them. If you paid (for example) $100 for some shares, and they are now worth $500, if you donate them to the N.L.S.M. you can take a charitable donation tax deduction for the full value of the shares, ($500), not just what you paid for them. But if you sold the stock, you would owe tax on the $400 gain you had realized.

Second, if you have an Individual Retirement Account (an IRA), you can direct that some or all of this year’s Required Minimum Distribution (“RMD”) be paid to the N.L.S.M. You will not have to pay any tax on the funds that go to the N.L.S.M. For those who have IRAs and are over the required age, this year an RMD will have to be taken from their account; last year, due to COVID-19, no such distributions were required, but that was a one-time exemption that no longer applies. So an RMD paid to the N.L.S.M. this year will save income tax on whatever amount you direct to be paid to the JEREMIAH O’BRIEN. And in California, the top tax bracket is about 50%, so the savings for some people could be substantial.

This is not to be considered tax or legal advice; consult a tax professional for that. The N.L.S.M. cannot give such advice, but the options discussed above could be beneficial to some individuals and the N.L.S.M. at the same time, a “win-win” for both.

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Message from our Executive Director

Dear Volunteers, Members and Friends,

First, I want to say thank you during this holiday season. To everyone that has volunteered, donated, visited, or just followed and shared our story. It goes without saying that our organization has a lot to be thankful for and we wish you the best during this season. We were able to return to Pier 45, successfully reopen to the public this year, have our first cruises, restarted our youth overnight program, and completed some of the most intense overhaul work aboard on our cargo gear and boilers the ship has ever seen. These are huge achievements up against the backdrop of a global pandemic and fire. So thank you to everyone!

Next year will likely be just as challenging. We have a lot of work set out before us with fundraising and preparing for dry dock at the end of 2022. We are under no illusions that closing the vessel for over a year has slowed our progress and next year’s Dry Dock will be difficult and expensive as we continue to address tanks and void spaces with coatings that will keep the SS Jeremiah O’Brien sailing for years to come.

This all means we will be stepping up our events and opportunities in 2022. Something that we are excited about and hope you will join us.

Its always been our community that has supported us with this huge preservation mission and we will certainly continue to need that support.

Matt Lasher
docents managed the ticket sales on the pier without getting blown away (our giant parking shed was a huge windbreak, it turns out, now it’s gone) but no problem.

The cargo rigging had gotten scorched in the fire making it unusable. (What’s a cargo ship without cargo gear?) So in another huge accomplishment, our Deck gang replaced all that rigging, and it too works perfectly.

So now we have an almost ‘new’ old ship and we plan to gear up and really get going this year.

Lastly, our ‘frequent floater passengers’ (thank you Facebook friends) returned to cruise with us en masse. We could not do it without our wonderful passengers! A huge thank you to them!!

To all who supported us through the years and to the companies that donated their services to us and to our amazing crew, THANK YOU! We are a unique enterprise that I sometimes think is akin to tilting at windmills, but it’s been 42 years of operations and due to providence and the ‘Luck of the O’Brien’ we are still going strong!

Now fall is here, winter is soon to come and we’re looking at Drydock in 2022 and there are still lots of questions. Where do we go from here? Ever onward, as the O’Brien always has.

On September 1st, 2021 the ban on international flights was lifted and slowly our overseas visitors are starting to coming back. This summer, we’ve had so many visitors from California and many western states, who came to enjoy San Francisco’s maritime, cool climate during the heat of the summer. We’re lucky that way, although we docents might freeze on Pier 45, it’s also quite refreshing to our visitors looking to cool off.

Happy Holidays, New Years and beyond. And if you find yourself in San Francisco at Fisherman’s Wharf, stop on by for a tour of our ship. We are happy to greet you! ❖

ON THIS DAY AND MONTH IN 1943

Ship’s Log
In a convoy in a total of 60 merchant ships from Halifax, Nova Scotia:

December 1st, the O’Brien was separated from the main body of the convoy. Only five other ships were in sight. A hurricane warning was issued. The sea watch on the after gun was secured and brought to the flying bridge and at 1000 everyone in the quarters aft was moved amidships because of heavy seas. With saltwater coursing from one end of the ship to the other, Capt. Southerland feared for their safety and he was right. Only a few hours later, the wooden catwalk built over the after deck cargo of tanks and trucks washed away....by the following morning the seas had moderated enough that watches could be posted. But now they faced a new problem. There wasn’t a ship in sight, the convoy was lost. Such contingencies were covered in the sailing orders. ‘If separated, a ship was to sail to a rendezvous position. However due to an error in the rendezvous position, the O’Brien found only empty ocean at the appointed time and place…’

On December 3 two merchant ships and an escort vessel were sighted. Receiving word from the escort that the convoy was astern, the O’Brien slowed down to let the bulk of the fleet catch up and eventually she regained her position.”

On December 6, a warning was received from the convoy via flag hoist that enemy submarines were known to be operating in the vicinity.”

From ‘The Last Liberty’ by Capt. Walter Jaffee.
A book review

Captain Jaffee’s latest book is a most excellent read! This is the amazing biography of the first African American to earn his Master’s License and one of the first to become the Master of an American Merchant ship.

This is a story of a man who started sailing as a boy on Island schooners, sailed the world’s oceans on Windjammers and Steamers and the trials and tribulations of being a black man in America (and the world) in the first half of the twentieth century. Overcoming tremendous adversity, he rose to become the Captain of the brand new Liberty Ship the SS Booker T. Washington, only to have his post war career dashed by McCarthyism in the fifties and sixties.

The book is much more than one man’s story. It is a fascinating tale of living and working conditions on American Merchant Ships. Intertwined in this story is the rise of the American Maritime unions, increased protections for American Seamen, the build up to WW2 and living and working on Liberty Ships. The author presents the changing world pre and post war. Mixed in with all of this is shipping and cargo operations as well as war time convoy operations as well as cold war politics.

If one was looking for a concise history of the twentieth century American Merchant Marine, Maritime unions, Colonialism, Racism, and cold war politics you have to look no further than “BLACK NIGHT”. This is a fascinating tale, anyone interested in Liberty Ships won’t be able to put it down!

-Bill Greig ❖
Be Part of Something Historic Aboard the SS Jeremiah O’Brien
‘volunteer@ssjeremiahobrien.org’

If you have some time to spare and the idea of working on a historic ship appeals to you, consider volunteering on the O’Brien!
Docent, Deck, Engine, Steward and Storekeeper Departments are seeking volunteers.

Volunteering on the Jeremiah O’Brien is a wonderful way to start the New Year! Share a few hours with other volunteers on a vintage ship amid beautiful views of Alcatraz and the entire San Francisco bay, while saving a world famous, operating relic of World War II.

If you would like to apply, please go to volunteer@ssjeremiahobrien.org and send a message with your name and email address and we will get back to you.

Or you can stop by the ship at Pier 45, where Taylor Street meets the bay and ask for an application at the Doghouse. Closed Tuesday & Wednesday.

WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS!

RESTARTING THE OVERNIGHT PROGRAM!
The first overnight program in over two years was held Saturday, November 13th. Crew member Tom Bernard has volunteered to get the program running again.

The November 13th event was for a Cub Pack and consisted of 22 youth and 17 adults for a total of 39 paid attendants. Thanks to Steve Wright who purchased the fresh food for the group and volunteers Mike Garner, Evelyn Marquis, Bob Arakel, Carolyn O’Brien and Tom Bernard. The ‘sleep aboard’ started at 4:30 pm and includes dinner and breakfast and lasted until next morning around 10:30 am. when the group left the ship. The kids and adults slept on the bunks in Hold #3, just as the troops that were transported during WWII! To hear of the history of the ship during WWII and sleep on a real Liberty ship is an experience these kids won’t soon forget!

To find out how your group of 20 or more can schedule a Sleep Aboard aboard event, please contact the ship at 415-544-0100 and leave a message.

Playing the Convoy Game in #2
The Murmansk Run
Germany's Double Cross of its Ally Russia
A timeline of events that led to WWII

Between 1941 and 1945, Arctic convoys sailed from the United Kingdom, Iceland, and North America to northern ports in the Soviet Union – primarily Archangel and Murmansk in Russia.

1933 January - The Stage is Set
Germany in 1933 - with the rise of a new regime under Adolph Hitler, there came an end to the Weimar Republic, which had been the German parliamentary democracy established after World War I. The 'new' Third Reich built the first concentration camps, imprisoning its political opponents, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews and others classified as “dangerous.” Life in post-WWI Germany morphed into a dangerous, authoritarian state and its leaders had unspoken ambitions of world conquest. The next five years from 1933 to 1938, Hitler tightened his grasp on power.

1938 September 30 - The Munich Agreement & ‘Appeasement’, a settlement reached by Germany, Great Britain, France, and Italy permitting German annexation of the Sudetenland in western Czechoslovakia. This reflected the policy of ‘appeasement’ in an effort to get ‘peace in our time’. On October 1, 1938, Hitler took the Sudetenland, thus weakening the entire Czech border. Adolf Hitler justified the invasion by the so called ‘suffering’ of the ethnic Germans living in those regions.

1939 March 30 - Nazi Germany took the remainder of Czechoslovakia, breaking the Munich agreement it had signed with Great Britain and France the year before. Germany’s armed forces paraded through the former Czechoslovakian capital, Prague. Thousands of German troops and mechanized units took part in the two-hour march.

The invasion jolted British and French leaders and convinced them that Adolf Hitler could not be trusted to honor his agreements and was likely to keep committing aggressions until stopped by force or a massive deterrent.

1939 August 23 The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

With the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Nazi Germany and Josef Stalin's Soviet Union created a 'Nonaggression Treaty'. It was named after Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and gave Adolf Hitler a free hand to attack Poland without fear of Soviet intervention. Germany promised to not attack Russia; likewise Russia agreed to not attack Germany.
Being one of Angelo’s pupils I was charged with writing an obituary for him, noting his life and accomplishments which were many. No doubt it would end up much like what had already been published in the newspapers. Therefore I decided not to simply repeat a ‘resume’ but instead talk about the man I came to know after being locked in the old Doghouse for one day a week for several years.

I first met Angelo on 10 September 2015, the second day of my ‘docent training’ and I immediately realized this was not going to be easy. Angelo was gruff and blunt from the start. He would ask me a question and if I did not know the answer he would either tell me or demand that I go out and find the answer. I quickly learned that Angelo did not suffer fools, or ignorant people either. “Get Captain Jaffee’s book and read it. When you are finished, read it again.” he snapped at me. So I did and when I told him I did he started quizzing me about it. Though tough, I liked his approach to teaching and soon found myself motivated to do well to win his approval. He was really an ‘old school’ father figure to me and others of the crew.

Angelo also had a way with the public which could be delightful or shockingly blunt. He would stand outside in front of the Doghouse and greet the visitors who wandered down to the ship. ‘Barker’ is the term we use to describe this docent function. If they expressed an interest in the ship he was all charm and light, letting them know he was a WWII veteran who served on ships like the O’Brien as a radio operator. If they said they came down just to look at it but not to go onboard, Angelo would snap back and say “Well, you’ve looked at it, now get out of here!” But if an attractive woman should come down the pier, Angelo would be all charm and flattery. Angelo had an unabashed eye for the ladies for sure which was admirable for someone in his ’90s. One day I asked him if he had ever been married and he said he never was, though almost was married three different times. “If you really want to pick up women,” he said to me, “go to a bar in a hotel next to an airport. You know why?” I shook my head no. “Because that is where all the stewardesses will go looking for company or a good time before they fly out the next day.” That was a side of Angelo I feel privileged to know.

There was a day when I got into an ‘argument’ with Angelo and it involved the O’Brien’s hull number. He asked me if I knew the hull number and I responded that the number was 806. “You’re wrong!” he snapped. “It’s 230! Look it up!” I reached for Captain Jaffee’s book on the Doghouse’s shelf. Quoting chapter and verse I pointed out
Arthur ‘Art’ Thanash
1932 - August 7, 2021
“A Sailor’s Sailor and a Friend to All”

On August 7, 2021 Arthur gracefully set sail on his voyage to heaven where he was welcomed by his beautiful wife Roberta, his sisters Frances, Mary and Charlotte, and parents Peggy and George Thanash of Thessaloniki Greece. Arthur was born in Buffalo NY and at an early age he and his family moved to wonderful San Francisco.

Arthur attended grade, middle and high school in San Francisco graduating from Polytechnic High School in 1950. He joined the Navy upon graduation and proudly served in the Korean War for two years. Upon discharge from the Navy in 1952 Art joined the Sailors Union of the Pacific beginning a career lasting over 60 years in the United States Merchant Marine. He traveled the world many times over and was awarded the Merchant Mariner of the Year award in 2010. Arthur took a break from shipping in the late 60’s where he became an icon in the North Beach nightclub scene and helped pioneer the topless revolution, literally becoming an integral part of San Francisco history. Art also volunteered for many years on the historic SS Jeremiah O’Brien, one of two remaining WWII liberty ships that delivered goods and supplies to troops storming Normandy Beach on D-Day. In the midst of it all, Arthur loved and took such pride in being the best father and family man. He is survived by his loving children Anastasia and George Thanash.

Art had a long career at sea and sailed for Matson. He always had a smile and a kind word for everyone on the crew.

Fair Winds and Following Seas shipmate, we will miss you.
The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact cemented Hitler’s basic needs for raw resources and food that he needed for his quest of the domination of eastern Europe. However, it was later discovered that, Hitler and Stalin had also established a secret protocol dividing Central and Eastern Europe into “spheres of influence.” According to the agreement, Russia would have control over Latvia, Estonia, and Finland, while Germany would gain control over Lithuania and Danzig. Poland would be partitioned into three major areas. The Warthland area, bordering Germany would be annexed outright to the German Reich, and all non-German inhabitants expelled to the east. More than 77,000 square miles of eastern Polish lands, with a population of over thirteen million would become Russian territory. The central area would become a German protectorate, named the General Government, governed by a German civil authority.

With the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Hitler was assured that the German armies could invade Poland virtually unopposed by a major power. After conquest of the east, Germany could later overtake the forces of France and Britain in the west thus avoiding a two-front simultaneous war. This was Hitler’s ‘brilliant’ plan, but events did not turn out that way. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact brought devastation to the regions that were carved up, resulted in the deportation and killing of thousands from those areas, and paved the way for the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe behind the Iron Curtain after the war’s end.

Through the spring and summer of 1939, Hitler stepped up his demands on the Polish government in Warsaw, and pushed for allowing Germany to reclaim the port city of Danzig. The Germans were leery of a campaign that could easily lead to the nightmare faced in World War I – a two-front war, in which Germany would be fighting Russian troops in the east and French and British troops in the west.

August 25 - The public part of the Moscow agreement was announced with great fanfare on August 25, 1939, the day Hitler had planned to launch his “blitzkrieg” (quick, surprise attacks) strike east into Poland. Earlier this same day, however, Great Britain and France, knowing the Nazi-Soviet agreement was pending, reacted by formalizing their pledge to defend Poland if it were attacked.

Hitler was incensed by this Alliance and quickly cancelled his order for the invasion. Then, in a wild gamble that France and Great Britain would not meet their treaty obligations to Poland, and knowing he had nothing to fear from the Soviet army, on September 1, 1939 Hitler ordered his troops to strike east into Poland.

1939 - September 3 WORLD WAR II BEGINS
France and Great Britain declared war on Germany on September 3rd, honoring their treaty with Poland.

1940 - June
Great Britain and France are at war with Germany. Then Germany invaded France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. France fell to the Germans by mid-July, likewise the Benelux countries quickly fell.

The German army was short of fuel. Even though Romania and Hungary supplied a large proportion of Germany’s needs, it was not enough to satisfy the appetite of the Wehrmacht’s gas-guzzling tanks and fighter planes. Rommel's eastward push across northern Africa was designed not just to cut off Britain’s supply route through the Suez Canal - but above all, to break through to the Middle East and gain control over the region’s vast reserves of oil.

1941 - June 22  The Betrayal
Hitler decided to scrap the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Stalin and sent some 3 million Nazi soldiers pouring into the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. He and his generals were convinced that the Red Army could be defeated in two or three months and that by the end of October the Germans would have conquered the whole European part of Russia and Ukraine west of a line stretching Archangel to Astrakhan. The invasion of Russia was given the code name ‘Operation Barbarossa’.

Operation Barbarossa, the German attack on the Soviet Union, was the greatest military operation of the Second World War. For the campaign against the Soviet Union, the Germans allotted almost 150 divisions containing a total of about three million men. Among those units were 19 panzer divisions, and in total the Barbarossa force had about 3,000 tanks, 7,000 artillery pieces, and 2,500 aircraft. It was one of the largest and most powerful invasion force in human history. Hitler had invaded Russia to seize more resources, but he found himself in a position he vowed to avoid - fighting wars on two fronts. The Russian response was even more massive with a display of millions of Soviet troops that repelled the bloody attack. But because Stalin had trusted Hitler at first and was shocked at the betrayal, Stalin's early response to Hitler's invasion was slow and disorganized. That was to change however.
1941 - August 14 ‘The Atlantic Charter’

The first involvement of the United States in the wartime conferences between the Allied nations opposing the Axis powers actually occurred before the U.S. formally entered World War II.

In August 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met secretly aboard the USS Augusta, a warship in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland and devised an eight-point statement of war aims known as the Atlantic Charter, which included a pledge that the Allies would not accept territorial changes resulting from the war in Europe. The charter outlined goals in the war, emphasizing the principles of freedom, self-determination, peace, and cooperation. Amongst other items privately discussed were the ‘U.S. Navy supporting merchant ships on Atlantic Convoys’ and the defeat of Germany upon the United States' entry into the Second World War.

Germany Declares War on the U.S. Then, on top of everything else, Hitler took the bold move to attack American convoys without inhibition, and declared war on the U.S in the belief that Roosevelt would be too preoccupied with countering the Japanese attacks in the Pacific to trouble overmuch with events in Europe. The German declaration occurred on December 11, 1941. The German Reich had to contend not only with the arms production of the British empire and the Soviet Union, but also with the rapidly growing military and industrial might of the United States. U.S. President Franklin D Roosevelt had begun supplying Britain with growing quantities of arms and equipment, guaranteed through a system of "Lend-Lease".

To win the war, the Allied Powers had to make sure that Russia didn’t fall.

1941- 1943

The Atlantic convoys to Murmansk and Archangel carried an estimated $18 billion dollars and four million tons of cargo from the U.S, Great Britain and Canada to Russia. The convoys, beginning at two points of departure, Reykjavik, Iceland and Loch Ewe, Scotland. The Murmansk Run was a gantlet of German aircraft, submarine and battleship attacks. And the German 'uber-battle' ship Tirpitz, was hidden near the fjords of Trondheim and laid in wait for the slow moving convoys. The Tirpitz was massive, it had a top speed of 34 knots, armed with 38 cm guns with a range of just over 22 miles and powerful anti-aircraft defenses. However, due to inadequate fuel supplies, the ship rarely moved.

Once the Soviet Union was supplied with armaments, fuel, supplies and food that the convoys provided, the Russians repaid the enormous debt to the Allies by repulsing the German fighting forces on the Eastern front. In time, this, the Russian winter, the huge supply of Soviet combatants and the massive effort which resulted in 6,410,000 Soviet casualties (450,000 Poles, Romanians, Bulgarians, and Czechs), the war turned the Allies way, leading to the German surrender.

The North Atlantic Arctic Convoys sailed between August 1941 and May 1945, sailing via several seas of the Atlantic and Arctic oceans; the convoys consisted of British, American and Canadian ships. Some 800 ships made the Murmansk run in 41 convoys. More than 100 sank from German attacks, mines, storms and accidents. At least 3,000 Allied soldiers died.

May 8, 1945 Germany Surrenders ❖
Note to readers - How the U.S. got involved in the Murmansk Run is of particular interest to the members and crew of the NLSM. While the O’Brien did not make the actual Murmansk Run to Russia, it did supply those ships by making five trips to Loch Ewe, Scotland, the jumping off point for the Murmansk Run.

Years ago, among the crew of the JOB were some of the sailors who had made the Murmansk Run on other ships, they are all gone now. The Murmansk Run was one of the most perilous transits in maritime history. Their stories of being on lifeboats, waiting for rescue were unbelievable, yet true. This was a time of bravery and heroism, acting in a maelstrom that none of us can imagine. Their tales of bravery need to be told and live on.

If you are fortunate enough to find yourself in Loch Ewe, Scotland, it is worth a trip to the North Atlantic Convoy Museum to see the history of that period – and even a few relics from the Jeremiah O’Brien! And if you are in San Francisco, come aboard and see the displays in our #1 Museum about the wartime convoys.

Footnotes:

United States Holocaust Museum webpage, Timeline of Events 1933 - 1945.
History.com
Radio Free Europe -Radio Liberty
U.S. Office of the Historian
Wikipedia, The Arctic Convoys: WWII Database

Announcing Our 2022 Cruising Schedule

May 21, 2022 Seaman’s Memorial Cruise
The Jeremiah O’Brien Sails to Honor Those Who Served on the Sea and all branches of the military
October 8 & 9th, 2022 SF Fleet Week Cruises
Saluting the U.S. Navy!
Cruise tickets make great Christmas presents! They can be purchased at Eventbrite.com