

# VWOA NEWSLETTER

Email Issue #45

Francis T. Cassidy Editor

2009



## VWOA Member Captain Olav Aune

Captain Olav Aune and his wife Liv are active supporters of VWOA and both have participated in presenting VWOA Awards to other organizations in recognition of their achievements in providing seagoing services.

The presentation of Author Frank Delaney at the VWOA Award Luncheon in 2006 on the topic of his published book **Simple Courage: A True Story of Peril on the Sea** made a great impression on Captain Aune and thus he submitted a story on **REFLECTIONS** for presentation to our VWOA Members.

Over the many years that I have spent on board ships as a professional sailor, I have had the opportunity to read books.

In those years, the variation of books, found in a vessel's library has increased in scope due to the support from many sources, such as the Seamen's Church Institute and commercial book organizations. Now, after having read

..Simple Courage... by Frank Delaney, the book given to me by a friend, I submit the thought that this book should be in every ship's library. A story about the US freighter S.S. "Flying Enterprise", shipwreck in the North Atlantic, December 1951-January 1952.

The research of this book is outstanding. The book is skillfully written, giving the reader the sense of being present, as the story unfolds... in a relatively short time frame.

My judgment is based upon real professional experience in handling the stowage of general cargo, properly, safely while maintaining ship stability at all times.

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I have served as chief officer/master on board many vessels. And, I have argued with cargo handlers in ports, worldwide regarding safe stowage of cargo.

A vessel is always subject to temperature changes while en route. This will affect the cargo condition, in one form or another. As the vessel changes latitude, longitude, air and sea temperature, adequate cargo ventilation is a must. The local cargo handlers are not expected to fully understand this cargo problem. They are used to the customs of the port and here lies the reality that could cause confrontation and affect safe cargo stowage.

At the time of the Captain Carlson saga, I was chief officer onboard a cargo vessel trading the oceans of the world carrying twelve passengers and any dry cargo thinkable. The duty confronting us was enhanced by Captain Carlson's understanding of duty. Even today, when I'm holding my 10<sup>th</sup> issue.. US Master License Unlimited.. I'm reminded of the master's plight when taking command of a USMM vessel...SAFETY FIRST !

## REFLECTIONS

by Author Captain Olav Aune

When I answered the ringing telephone, in the late summer of 1956, the company's VP was at the other end. Captain, he said... do you speak German? When I answered no, he proceeded by saying.. But you do speak several languages and you have been to

Germany? All of which I confirmed. Then it is settled, he said, "Tomorrow, I want you to fly to Hamburg, Germany, via Montreal, Canada, where you will meet the fleet commodore who is also traveling to Hamburg. I want you to look after our new vessel that is being built at the Deutsche Werft, Hamburg. She is in the late stage of construction. I will join you there in a few days time. Have a nice flight! "

I was rather dumbfounded. I had never met the commodore, but from what I had heard of him, he had his own preference when it came to choose his senior officers. And, I was sure, that I was not one of them. I had only worked for the company less than two years. Therefore, a coveted new ship belonged to the "old timers." Further, I was quite settled in my present job as chief officer/relief captain on board the Gypsum Prince, a bulk gypsum carrier of 11000 gross tons, which had been built, after the war, at the federal ship yard in Kearny, New Jersey. I also was dating a beautiful young lady that I was hoping to marry.

The Canadian Airline flight was five hours into its Trans Atlantic flight when something went wrong. The commodore, sitting next to me had dipped off. He was a nice man in his sixties, but I didn't think he looked all that healthy. When I looked through the "port hole", I saw the airplane's left inboard engine afire and the cabin started to get very warm. The pilot soon came on the PA system where

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he announced that he was dropping altitude as he had lost two engines. The left inboard and the right outboard were burning and he had trouble extinguishing the fire in the burning engines. He also activated the drill for crash emergency landing at sea.

I kept an eye on the left burning engine and it suddenly went out. The pilot came back on the PA and announced that the engine fires were out and that he had leveled off at 12000 feet. He further announced that a RAF plane was on its way to escort the flight until reaching shore. I was thinking... at least the world would know where the flight went down.

The reaction of the passengers to this fast developing situation and possible change in place of landing was diverse. Screams and loud prayers were the norm. Then there were those who wanted to get out of their seats. The stewardesses did a terrific job controlling the situation. The real "behavior saver" however, was the announcement over the PA system, that liquor would be served free, to all who wanted to drink. Due to weather conditions the flight proceeded to Heathrow Airport, London, and made a safe landing.

The commodore and I found our next connection, at Air France and flew on to Paris, where we changed over to the German Lufthansa that brought us nonstop to Hamburg, Germany. Arriving at the Europe Hotel in Hamburg, where we were going to

reside... I was thinking... I hope that this is not the start of a bad omen. The commodore had been very quiet during the calamity. I was therefore quite surprised when he asked me to have dinner with him after we had cleaned up.

During the dinner, the commodore made it clear that he would only come to the ship yard when needed. Otherwise he would be at the hotel where he could be reached. It was therefore my responsibility to see that the daily construction progress met the Lloyd's of London Bureau Standards, which were the guidelines for the vessel's construction.

At 0500, the next morning, I was picked up outside the Hotel Europe, by the ship yard's construction supervisor of the vessel. He spoke good English and drove us straight to the Deutsche Werft.

At the yard, he took me to a meeting room where I was introduced to all present as the owners' representative. All present had construction responsibilities in one form or another, like foremen. I was told that they all would assist, in any way, to have any upcoming problems corrected. During the meeting, breakfast was served. Without asking for it, a stout, fraulein, put a soup plate before me and told me to eat. When I asked the supervisor what kind of "soup" it was... he told me "chocolate soup". Until we sailed on December 6, 1956, after a successful trial run,

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this became my routine... except for Sundays when the yard was shut down.

A new ship, on her maiden voyage, always encountered problems, SS Gypsum Duchess, of 4000 net tons was no exception. When the ship sailed, two of the ship-yard men stayed on board. One was an engineer and one an electrician. They were left to assist the crew in correcting any problem countered. The one problem they could not assist in... was the health of the crew.

After passing the Lands End and heading west into the Atlantic, we encountered one storm after another. The weather reports that the wireless operator brought to the chart room showed a North Atlantic Ocean infested with storms.

The commodore spent a lot of time in his cabin. Though, at lunch time he was always there. He was always sociable and stayed on top of problems that were encountered, as the vessel beat its way westward. A week into the voyage, I left the bridge at 2000 hours on course 260 true speed 6 knots. We had SW gale, wind of 50-60 knots and 25-35 foot seas. The young 3<sup>rd</sup> mate who took over the watch was handpicked by the commodore. They had sailed together before. He was A pleasant young officer and I told him that I had not seen the commodore since lunch time.. Don't worry, he answered... He usually comes to the bridge and stays the watch with

me. If he does not show up, I will inform you. At 2230 hours I was called to the bridge. I left in a hurry, for the bridge. In the darkness of the pilot house it took a few seconds for my eyes to adjust. The 3<sup>rd</sup> mate said: "I think it is something wrong with the commodore".

I ordered the pilot house lights to be put on. There I saw the commodore wedged between the "front pilot-house bulk head" and the magnetic compass with his right hand gripping the casing of the Flinders bar. He was gasping for air. I immediately directed the 3<sup>rd</sup> mate to fetch the oxygen mask and a container from the hospital... Aided by the lookout and helmsman, I put the commodore in a half sitting position using the pilothouse life preservers as support. The 3<sup>rd</sup> mate returned quickly with the oxygen mask and container. I put the mask on and administered the oxygen... After a few seconds the commodore started to breath normally. During all this action, the vessel was on the "Iron Mike". Assisted by the watch crew, we carried the commodore to his cabin where I left one man to look after him. I suspected the commodore had a heart attack. I checked his body temperature, pulse rate and vital signs which I noted on a pad, which I gave to the wireless operator, who had been standing by. I then directed him to send a message, stating our condition and position, to all ships and to the US and the Canadian Coast Guard. At the time the vessel was about 800 miles East of Halifax, N.S.

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The weather had not improved. The vessel, though full ballasted, was taking a pounding.

My immediate concern, however, was the available amount of oxygen that we had on board. At the present rate of consumption, the oxygen would be gone in two days. If the weather improved, the vessel could make port. However, in present weather conditions doing six knots, we would run short.

The wireless operator did an outstanding job informing shore stations and ships of our needs. The closest ship that could give aid was a Canadian destroyer, with doctors and oxygen onboard. The destroyer was about 400 miles away and had the same weather conditions as we had. A rendezvous position, however, was agreed on. The wireless operators from both ships stayed in contact and both ships proceeded towards the position at their best and safest speed.

The two vessels arrived at the rendezvous at 1600 hours GMT on December 14, 1956. The weather had not improved. Putting a life boat in the water was too risky. The Kodiak, that the destroyer had made ready, was also no match for the running sea. Therefore, the thought of cross deck transfer of a doctor was abandoned. However, oxygen was still needed and the destroyer had a quantity that could be transferred.

After several fruitless attempts to get contact, the two vessels decided to steam on a course,

with wind and sea broad on the beam. At this attempt, heaving line contact was made. By making the heaving line into a big loop, safe weight of oxygen bottles were transferred. Upon completion, the voyage was resumed.

The Bay of Fundy, N.S. Canada, has one of the highest tides in the world. Depending on moon quarter, the sea water is being propagated into the bay with no place to go, but up to 35-40 feet. Loading berth, at Hantsport, N.S. was located in the inner bay.

Arrival timing was very important, as vessels could only load once every twelve hours. On arrival, a vessel had to trim the draft to 14 feet, to safely cross the bar two hours after the start of flood. The steaming time from the bar to the loading berth was one hour. When the weather abated and I was able to give an arrival time, it appeared that the vessel would get a twelve hour delay. When I explained the situation to the commodore, that I might have to land him in another port, so he could receive proper doctor treatment, he got very upset. I thought, for a moment, that he was going to have another attack. His anxiety abated when I told him that the vessel was heading for loading port.

The SS Gypsum Duchess arrived, Hantsport, N.S., safely and the commodore was taken ashore in an ambulance to get medical attention. The vessel also got a new captain.

The vessel arrived in discharge berth, at the US Gypsum Plant, New Brighton, Staten Island, NY in late December, 1956 the newest vessel in the fleet was visited by many important dignitaries. I was going on leave. Before leaving the vessel, however, I was told to take all my clothes with me. I had been reassigned to another vessel.

My new vessel, the SS Gypsum Empress, was a good assignment. For many months she traded Kingston, Jamaica and New Orleans, LA and Jacksonville, FL. Caribbean seas in the winter time beats the North Atlantic.

In the early summer of 1957, the vessel's orders were to load at Hantsport, N.S., Canada. After clearing, the Cape Cod Canal, the wireless operator sent the estimated loading time at Hantsport, N.S. He brought back an acknowledgement and also a request. The loading time of 11000 tons of gypsum was 1 hour and 30 minutes in this port. The vessel had to get out of the bay before going aground on a falling tide. In this port, the captains' stayed on board and seldom went ashore... The wire request was from the retired commodore: It read: "Was it possible for the captain to come by his house so he could meet the commodore's wife"?

I remember, seeing tears in their eyes, when I left.

**THE END**



**REAR ADMIRAL J. ROBERT LUNNEY  
NY NAVAL MILITIA (Ret.)**

## **2009 VWOA AWARDS LUNCHEON**

The 84th Annual Awards Luncheon will take place on Sunday, June 7, 2009 at the Top Deck of the Seamen's Church Institute, 241 Water Street, New York.

The Reception and Cocktail Hour will start at 1 PM followed by the Luncheon at 2 PM. You will have a choice of grilled salmon, half of roast of chicken, or filet mignon for the main course.

The theme will be Meredith Victory (1945), a Victory ship which evacuated 14000 people from Hungnam to Pusan, Korea in one three day trip during the Korean War.

Please make your Luncheon Reservations, (**Forms Previously Provided**) which must be sent to the VWOA Treasurer, J. Michael Shaw, to arrive no later than May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

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## WVOA MEMBER NEWS

We at WVOA want to thank you for your favorable responses to your WVOA Email Newsletter. We can only continue this form of Celebrating the Past if all of our WVOA Members make known some of their personal special events that contributed to their career in Wireless.

We want to hear from YOU. Dig into your memories and share them with the rest of your WVOA Members.

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*Update from Director Miles D. MacMahon on the status of the WVOA Monument which normally resides in the Battery Park of New York City.*

Hello again WVOA Members:

I was on the phone with Pat Kirshner at The Battery Conservancy this morning. The monument is still safely in storage. Now that the subway construction is complete at the Battery, the Conservancy is ready to proceed with the planning stage. The plan remains to install the various small monuments around the periphery of the park. The idea of a "Path of Heroes" is up in the air but the commitment remains to have an outstanding display in place. The aim is to present each monument in the best possible way. The Conservancy is looking forward to an ongoing dialogue with WVOA.

In about six months, they hope to go to bid for the design stage. They plan to meet with us

and other constituencies to formulate the specs. The design will take an estimated five months. The hope is to have construction begun by this time next year.

Pat said that the fountain would be part of the new installations and mentioned the possibility of having it flowing.

I spoke of the fact that the many separate plaques made the monument vulnerable to monument raiders. She said that had never been a problem at the Battery, but that we could discuss alternative designs for attaching or protecting the plaques.

## WENDELL'S NEWS CORNER

*An interesting series of query and responses to a visitor of the WVOA Web Site*

Memo to: James Jolly:

Peter Dutton, a Non WVOA Member from the United Kingdom, sent us the following message after reading your WVOA submitted **Introduction by James A. Jolly PhD** Was published in the #31 January 2008 Newsletter which is available for reading by all visiting the WVOA Web Site.

He does not know any information about you other than that published in the Newsletter.

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We at VWOA do not disclose any VWOA Member additional details. We would be interested in any follow-up you could provide. If you want to contact him, please do so. We have nothing in our VWOA files about the SS Umtata, other than what you have published and what is available in various Internet Searches.

If you do not want to contact him, please let us know and we will provide a timely response to his questions to assure him contact with VWOA was made.

Many thanks for continued help in VWOA matters.

Francis T. Cassidy  
VWOA Chairman

----- Original Message -----

From: [Peter Dutton](mailto:Peter Dutton)

To: [ftcassidy@optonline.net](mailto:ftcassidy@optonline.net)

Cc: [wenben@nyc.rr.com](mailto:wenben@nyc.rr.com)

Sent: Wednesday, January 14, 2009 7:00 AM

Subject: SS Umtata

I read with great interest your VWOA Newsletter Email issue #31 2008, as my Father (Sidney Walter Dutton) was Master of the SS Umtata originally torpedoed by U161 in Port Castries St. Lucia when I according to Kriegsmarine records, four persons were killed (out of 177) and then sunk by U571 whilst under tow by the MS Edmond J. Morgan (all crew of 90 saved).

My Father survived the war, latterly working for the British Consulate-General in New York.

Unfortunately he died in March 1946 just under two months before I was born.

I have been researching my Father's merchant navy career, and if anyone has memories of the towing, sinking or crew rescue I would love to hear from them.

Peter Dutton [peterdutton@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:peterdutton@ukonline.co.uk)

14th January 2009

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----- Original Message -----

From: James Jolly

To: [peterdutton@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:peterdutton@ukonline.co.uk)

Sent: Monday, February 02, 2009 9:55 PM

Subject: SS Umtata

Mr. Peter Dutton:

Greetings from California. Thank you kindly for your email. I may not be able to assist you very much in your quest to learn more about your father's activities during WWII. As you may expect I am now eighty seven years old and my memory of the 1942 period, some 67 years ago has become a bit dim. Even so I am most willing to try to help. My first question to you, were you able to locate in the archives the log of the S.S. Umtata? Was your father, the master of the ship, able to bring the log with him when he was forced to abandon the ship? That log would hold a wealth of information.

You probably know that records show that during 1942 there were 1006 Allied merchant ships sunk in the Atlantic (The War at Sea 1939-1945, by Capt. S.W. Rosskin). Many were off of the East Coast of the US. The S.S. Umtata was one of the 1006.

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By sailing in the Gulf Stream, a ship could take advantage of the fact that the Gulf Stream was moving at two or three knots. This could be added to the ships speed and could be a substantial benefit. The Gulf Stream flows quite near the coast in the area along the Southern part of Florida. This was the path chosen by the master of the tug, M.T. Edmond J. Moran, that was towing the S.S. Umtata.

The weather was quite calm on the night of the torpedoing of the SS Umtata. It was well into the night when the explosion took place. Not much more can be said than appeared in Vol 31 of the VWOA Newsletter. The tow line was cut. Every effort was made to pick up the crew of the S.S. Umtata. The navy escort first attempted to find and destroy the submarine, but soon gave up the chase and helped to pick up the crew who were in the water. Fortunately, the water in that tropical region was warm and not a threat to the survivors. The S.S. Umtata sank very rapidly because of the heavy weight of the iron ore that it was carrying. All of the survivors were taken to the port of Miami, which was nearby.

Should you have specific questions, then please contact me directly by email and I will try to answer them for you.

Sincerely yours, James A. Jolly, Ph.D.  
W6RWI@ARRL.NET

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----- Original Message -----

From: [James Jolly](#)

To: [Peter Dutton](#)

Cc: [Francis T Cassidy](#)

Sent: Friday, February 06, 2009 4:49 PM

Subject: 1942 dates

Greetings Peter:

To my delight I was able to find some additional information in an old letter. This is more accurate information and included some dates. The S.S. Umtata was towed to San Juan PR after taking departure from St. Lucia. The ore in the S.S. Umtata was tungsten not iron. The departure from San Juan, PR was June 19, 1942. It took about two weeks of travel to reach the area near Florida. The S.S. Umtata and the M.T. Edmond J. Moran spent the night in a protected anchorage near Key West, FL., before continuing the voyage, North. The next day they proceeded North with three US Navy escorts for protection. On July 7, 1942 at about 0200 hours the S.S Umtata was torpedoed. By 0600 all 92 survivors had been picked up, some by the M.T. Edmond J. Moran and some by the US Navy escorts. All were then taken into the port of Miami, FL. On July 9, 1942, the M.T. Edmond J. Moran departed Miami, FL. for Port Everglades, FL.

These dates may prove useful as you continue your research.

Quite aside from the topic, I would be interested in learning how you came to have read the VWOA #31 Newsletter.

Sincerely yours, James A. Jolly, Ph.D.

----- Original Message -----

From: [Peter Dutton](mailto:peterdutton@ukonline.co.uk)

To: James Jolly

Sent: Sunday, February 08, 2009 3:12 AM

Subject: Re: 1942 dates

Very many thanks, this information should certainly help.

A friend of mine, who knew of my starting the research, came across the Newsletter while surfing the net using our local library facilities which in certain cases can allow wider access than using a home computer.

Yours sincerely, Peter Dutton

[peterdutton@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:peterdutton@ukonline.co.uk)

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----- Original Message -----

From: <[rayminichiello](mailto:rayminichiello)>

To: <[ftcassidy@optonline.net](mailto:ftcassidy@optonline.net)>

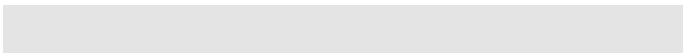
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2009 12:21 PM

Subject: Newsletter #44

> Francis:

> As usual, your Newsletter was of keen interest. Maybe it is because we out here are of an age that likes to scan the names, to seek, identify with, friends we once knew.

> Tnx, Ray Minichiello



From: Clay & Margaret Scott

To: [Wendell Benson](mailto:Wendell Benson)

Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2009 11:51 AM

Subject: Emailing: 000\_0096.JPG, 100\_0248.JPG

Just a couple of photos that I wanted to share and introduce my friend Liza. Liza is a family pet. She is a half collie and a half sheltie small collie and is a most kind and friendly friend that is now about 15 years old.



LISA & CLAY SCOTT



FAVORITE PHOTOS OF OLIVE J. CARROLL

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SHIPS, CLAY SCOTT SAILED ON  
AS RADIO OPERATOR  
NAME OF SHIP DATE CALL LETTERS

SS JOSEPH PULITZER 1947 KHLV

SS BENJAMIN WATERHOUSE 1948 KWQT

SS THOMAS SUMTER 1948 KFXS

SS JOHN MORTON 1951 KFIJ

S/T MANDOIL 1953 KUJV

SS HENRY STEVENSON 1953 WQFK

SS MORMACDAWN 1954 KPRW

SS W. L. MCCORMICK 1955 KVLQ

SS DIDDO 1955 KKR B

SS GULFOIL 1955 KKJS

SS GULFMEADOWS 1956 KXFE

SS GREECE VICTORY 1956 KWL T

We at the VWOA Newsletter would like to hear from you and try to pass along to the rest of the VWOA stories of events that you have experienced and that you feel the rest of the membership would enjoy hearing about. Send us a picture or two and we will try to include it in one of our Email Newsletters.

We would prefer to hear from you by Email at:

[ftcassidy@optonline.net](mailto:ftcassidy@optonline.net)

Or

[wenben@nyc.rr.com](mailto:wenben@nyc.rr.com)

but if you must, send mail to:

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