

Cattleboat Picture Story

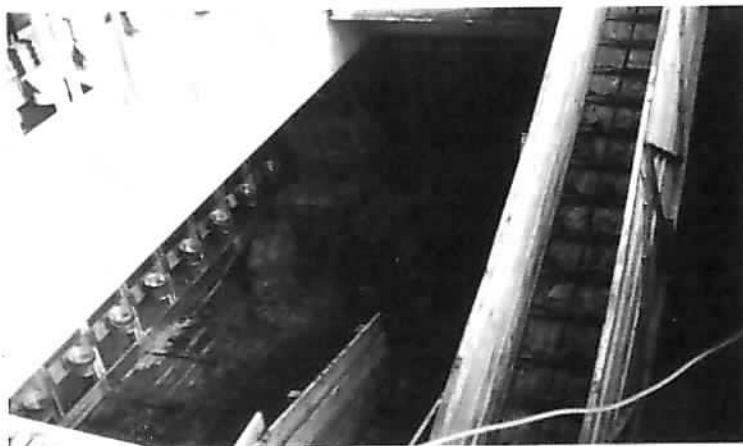
by Raymond Regier

The John J Crittenden



View of the stern of the Liberty ship, John J. Crittenden tied up at dock, probably Portland, OR. Clearly visible is the small raised deck on which a gun, covered with a tarp except for the gun barrel, is placed. Purpose of the gun during wartime was for protection against submarines. Immediately below this deck was the gun crew quarters consisting of four or five rooms, with one bathroom, for about ten navy crewmen. The Kansas sea going cowboys used these quarters during their sojourn. I "borrowed" the small metal sign over the entryway which read "Gun Crew Quarters" and placed it over my dormitory room door at Goessel Hall at Bethel.

Loading Chute



At dock in Portland, Maine, the horses were led down into the lower deck hold via loading chutes such as this.

Horses in their Stalls



This is a view of horses in their stalls on the top deck, with a pan in front of them. The pans were used for water and for feeding oats to the horses. The horses are facing the interior of the ship; their posterior is toward the side of the ship. Their view across the hatch cover would be that of horses on the other side facing them.

View from gun deck



This is a view from the gun deck looking forward. Visible are stables on the port (left) side of the ship; also visible is a covered hatch. When this cover is removed the hold below becomes accessible. Extending horizontally over covered hatch are two poles that are hoisted and thus are used to winch material in and out of the holds. These were used to lift dead horses out of the hold and into the ocean and to lift hay from a lower deck to one higher; they were also used to unload cargo. This photo was probably taken on the return trip because there are no horses to be seen.

Looking aft from amidships



This view of the Crittenden features a walkway on the starboard (right) side of the ship on top of the horse stables. The mess hall was amidships and we cowboys were at the fantail; we took this pathway to and from our quarters. We are looking back so we are seeing the starboard side to our left. In the left foreground is a life raft and a bit further back is a lifeboat. Also visible is the tarp-covered gun at the rear. The Crittenden was a "Liberty Ship". Liberty ships were rapidly and cheaply built during the war; but they had certain disadvantages. The keel, the bottom, of the ship is not sharp as are most ships, but rather they have a relatively round bottom. This feature makes them "roll" in rough seas more readily than would a sharper keeled ship. So we had exciting rides during the storms. One night while lying in my bunk at the rear of the ship, the ship hit a peculiar wave that flipped me up clear of my mattress. A crewmember told me that breaking up in storms sank more Liberty ships than were sunk by enemy action during the war.

Siesta Time



This must have been on the return trip; going out we were too busy for this.

A Life Raft



The ship had several lifeboats and rafts. Here a raft is featured. Among the new words I learned was the word, davit. A pair of small cranes at the ship's side held the lifeboat, not pictured here, in place. I was assigned to help man the after davit on one of the life rafts. Every person on board had an assignment for a place and task in the event of the necessity to abandon ship.

An Event at Ancona Harbor



On the way to Trieste, in the Adriatic, the John J. Crittenden paused in Ancona harbor on the east coast of Italy to pick up a pilot to guide the ship through mine fields that were not yet completely cleared. While the ship was anchored here for a few hours a boatload of men approached the ship with the intent of making some business transactions. They were engaged in black market activities; they wanted to buy cigarettes from members of the ship's crew.

The black market was a fascinating phenomenon to observe. While the ship was docked in Trieste we could go downtown regularly. We would leave the ship, come to a checkpoint at a bridge that divided the dock area from the city, and submit to inspection by a trio of guards. The guards were one American, one British service man and an Italian. The guards were, we understood, instructed to prevent us from bringing contraband from the ship into the city. Contraband usually consisted of cigarettes (most importantly), candy, soap, etc. This was wintertime and we sailors were usually quite heavily clothed – baggy clothes –

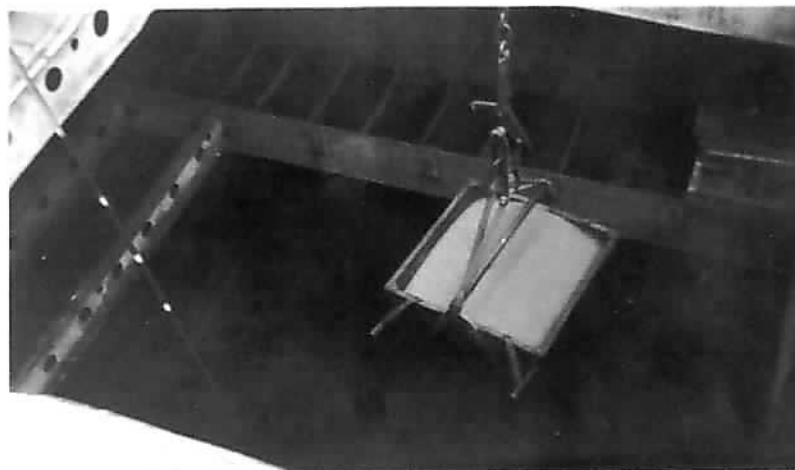
in which we could hide our contraband. Some fellows stuffed numerous cartons of cigarettes into their coverall legs or elsewhere in their garments. The guards were, of course, aware of what was happening; a pack of cigarettes or a candy bar easily bribed them and they let the sailors go through. On the other side of the bridge the kids were waiting. There was always a swarm of them ready to make their black market purchases.

Late one evening when I was at our quarters at the back of the ship I noticed a bit of commotion outside. I saw that there was a US mail jeep on the dock and on the ship near us was one of the ship's cooks with a big bag of sugar (probably 100 pounds, I don't remember). With a rope the cook pulled up a mail sack, put the sugar bag into the back and lowered the bag over the side to the people in the jeep. I presume that I was witnessing a black market transaction on a bit larger scale than most.

Unloading Horses in Trieste



Unloading Wheat in Trieste



Bagging Wheat



Trieste Street Scenes





Trieste Street Market



Trieste Harbor Scenes



Gondolas in a Venice Canal



Ships at Sea



One interesting sight that we occasionally saw was porpoises swimming along side the ship. They would swim, then jump up and swim again. Regular crewmembers told us that porpoises were friends – there would not be sharks in the vicinity if porpoises were there. The instinctive action of porpoises is to drive away sharks, we were told. This, of course, was of greater interest in circumstances where either through accident or naval warfare, sailors might find themselves in the water.



Rough Seas



On February 6, 1947, I wrote the following brief essay for a Constructive English course while I was a student at Bethel College:

Description of an Ocean Wave

One of the most awe-inspiring sights that I have ever seen is an ocean wave in a near storm. I say near storm because in a storm you don't see waves, you try to keep out of sight of waves and when you do look out all you see is cold, salty spray.

You watch a certain section of the sea swell into a huge mountain of water and then just as quickly as it rises it falls again into a deep valley with an oblique wall of gray sea on each side. When the ship, which was so immense when it was in harbor and now seems so insignificant, moves into this rolling, fluid terrain, it is completely at the mercy of this aqueous milieu.

This situation, which is extremely sickening to some and a form of sheer ecstasy to others, continues until for some unknown reason the boisterous winds abate and the sea becomes so utterly motionless that it becomes all but impossible for anyone to imagine that an event such as a storm could exist.

New York Harbor



Upon our return to the United States we entered New York harbor. We docked in Jersey City, just across the Hudson River from Manhattan. After spending a night here, the following morning we accompanied our ship's captain, walking across the bridge to the Wall Street offices of the A. H. Bull Steamship Company. Here we received our wages for three months work: three cents, a penny per month. Then we started our journeys back to our homes in Kansas.

Attendants for Europe-Bound Livestock



Group of men who left Newton, Wednesday, Nov. 14, to serve as attendants for relief shipments of livestock sent to Europe.

Front row, left to right: Edw. J. Pankratz, Newton; Rev. Gerh. Friesen, Newton; Henry H. Unruh, Arthur O. Decker and Walter Ratzlaff, all of Meno, Okla.; J. H. Decker, Ernest Bachman, Herman F. Schmidt and Frank Schmidt, all of Newton. Back row, left to right: Alvin and Milton Schmidt, both of Walton; Alvin Suderman, Newton; Raymond Regier and Willis Voran, both of Moundridge; Alden Voth, Walton.

Rev. Friesen and the three men from Oklahoma accompanied a shipload of horses to Poland, while the others sailed for Yugoslavia, also as attendants for horses. All expected to arrive at their European destinations sometime during the week of December 16.