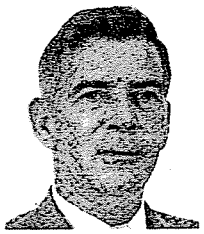
ESSO FLEET NEWS

PUBLISHED BY THE MARINE DIVISION, HUMBLE OIL & REFINING COMPANY

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# Brass Bounder to Master to Annuitant



*Captain Bernard Roberts, who retired June 1 with 25½ years' service in the fleet, wrote this account of his early seagoing years and his thoughts on becoming a Humble annuitant. It makes interesting reading. (Ed.)*

"My sea career began in the fall of 1918, just prior to my 16th birthday, when I joined HMS *Essex*, an obsolete British cruiser stationed at Devonport Naval Base. She was used to train merchant marine personnel and naval ratings in the art of gunnery. After passing this course, I received notice shortly after the Armistice to join the SS *Trelawny* at Barry Dock, Wales.

"I joined this vessel as an indentured apprentice, destined to 4 years of servitude for $2 per month the first year, $3.25 per month the second, $5 the third and (big deal) $8.50 the fourth year. 'Brass Bounders' we were called, as our uniforms were of the usual brass button type and as future merchant navy officers, the brass or gold stripes were added as we made the various grades. Then too, there was an awful lot of brasswork to be shined. After those 4 years, if served satisfactorily, we were eligible to sit for a 2nd mate's certificate.

"We sailed from Barry Dock bound for Port Said and Beirut. In the Bay of Biscay we encountered a winter gale which tore our lifeboats loose and smashed up things in general, including my innards. I became violently seasick, a condition I was unable to shake for several years. We returned to Queenstown, Ireland, for repairs and never in my life, before or since, have I beheld grass so green — possibly a reflection from my face after the bout with seasickness. I would venture to say that this landfall was the most welcome sight in all my 45 years at sea.

"After clearing Ireland, we resumed our voyage to the Mediterranean, then through the Suez Canal to Bombay, thence a 3-month shuttle between Colombo and Calcutta. From that run we went to Australia and loaded bagged flour for Leghorn, Italy, a trip which took 74 days—tramp that she was.

"Having no refrigeration, we were on 'salt junk' from the second day out, with bread twice a week — no eggs, fruit or fresh vegetables. As an occasional treat, we had a meager helping of canned boiled beef — 'Harriet Lane' — so named in honor of that noble woman who was responsible for the 'pound and pint' on ships' articles. On Sundays we had the traditional plum duff, a boiled pudding so heavy we dared not venture too close to the ship's side after eating. There was the usual lime juice to prevent scurvy. Our water was rationed. Icewater was unheard of, as was hot water. A bath was a bucket of seawater on deck, or rainwater if you were lucky. I had to furnish my own mattress (donkey's breakfast), blankets, cup, plate, knife, fork and spoon. I could go on and on about conditions in those days but suffice it to say, we have come a long way over the years."

After serving his apprenticeship, Captain Roberts sailed as AB and Jr. officer in British ships. He came to this country in 1925, shipped out in freighters and tankers and by the time he joined Esso's *Wm. Rockefeller* (Sept. 7, 1934) he had his U. S. citizenship and a second mate's license. He was AB and Bos'n until June 1937, when he went out in the *Fred W. Weller* as Second Mate.

Captain Roberts sailed as Second and Chief Mate for the first 3 years of World War II, getting his first command, the *Chester O. Swain* (WET, Inc.) in Nov. 1944. He was promoted to permanent Master in May 1958 and had the *Esso Scranton* for 4 adventuresome years. His last ship before retiring was the *Esso Washington.*

"My reactions to retirement," Captain Roberts concluded, "are very similar to when I embarked on my sea career — wonderment and perhaps a little anxiety as to what the future holds. For a

*(Continued on page 3)*

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Mrs. Cornelis Van der Poel with Van Lyn Dilly Boy, her Triple Grand Champion lilac point Siamese cat.

## About Cats -- The Van Lyn Cats

*Even though this periodical is published for the men in the fleet, we have quite an audience with the ladies, we have been told. So, you fellows may skip this item and go to something else. This is for the womenfolk. (Ed.)*

Girls, we'd like to tell you about Lynne Van der Poel, wife of Cornelis Van der Poel, Third Mate in the *Esso Washington*. Lynne is one of the top cat breeders in the United States. Her Van Lyn Cattery, of St. Petersburg (formerly of Maryland) has an outstanding record of champions. Among them are:

Triple Grand Champion Van Lyn Dilly Boy — All-American lilac point top Siamese male, 1960 and top short hair male in South for two consecutive years. The only cat ever to win both All-American and two Inter-American honors.

Quadruple Grand Champion Van Lyn Platine — first female ever to win four grand championships — two-time All-Southern winner, All-American, 1959 and Top Female (all breeds) in South, 1959.

Triple Grand Champion Coolidge Moonmist of Van Lyn — Inter-American and All-Southern winner for three consecutive years.

Grand Champion Van Lyn Tangelo — Inter-American Abyssinian, 1962.

Grand Champion Van Lyn Red Robin — All Southern Red Tabby male.

Jupiter C of Van Lyn — All-American Russian Blue male, 1959.

This is a mere sampling of the "parade of royalty" from the Van Lyn Cattery. Mrs. Van der Poel estimates that "we have bred at least 200 champions and 50 grand champions. I am proud to say that not only have we raised all the breeds but also have taken All-American honors with Manx, Siamese, Domestics, Abyssinians, Russian Blues and All-Southern honors with several others. No other cattery has ever taken so many different honors."

"We have been raising top winning cats for the past 8 years," Mrs. Van der Poel said, "but have had cats for a long while before that. When we lived in Maryland I kept about 100 cats — often more during kittening season — but in Florida I have only 20 or so."

Adult cats are fed twice a day at the Van Lyn Cattery, consuming 50 lbs. of stew beef a week plus horsemeat and chicken. Kittens get regular human baby foods. They are born in the house in specially-built pens about the size of a play pen. They are carefully watched during their first few weeks. Sometimes they have to be fed a baby formula every 2 or 3 hours around the clock for 3 weeks. When kittens are housebroken, they are moved to the cattery and are ready for shipment at 3-4 months. Van Lyn kittens sell for $60-$100, depending upon the color and show ratings of the parents. The lilac and chocolate points are higher priced than other colors.

Mrs. Van der Poel gives considerable credit to her husband for her success. "He is fond of cats and has a special pet of his own — Cor-Lynne — a blue cream Persian," she said. "He helps a great deal when he is home. Without his cooperation, I could not have put on the successful shows which our club sponsored nor won as well at the shows."

## Tanker Contract Awarded

Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co. will build Humble's 66,700 dwt. tanker, Joseph Andreae, General Manager of the Marine Division, announced June 25.

The ship will be the largest in the Humble fleet and third largest tanker under the U. S. flag. It will be 800' long, 116' wide, have a draft of 40' and a cargo tank capacity of 576,000 bbls. The bridge and accommodations will be aft and emphasis will be on simplification both in construction and maintenance.

Keel laying is scheduled for Jan. 1964, the launching in October of that year and delivery in December.

## Major Medical Goal Reached

The number of seagoing men signing up for Major Medical insurance has exceeded the insurance company's minimum requirement of 75% of the members of the hospital-surgical-medical plan. Coverage under Major Medical will therefore commence on July 1 for those enrolled. The month of November will be the next period in which applications for Health Service, Inc. and Major Medical coverage may be made.

ESSO FLEET NEWS is published for the seagoing employees of the Marine Division, Humble Oil & Refining Co.: Joseph Andreae, General Manager; Sydney Wire, Assistant General Manager.

W. E. Gardner, Editor.

Contributions and suggestions are invited and should be addressed to The Editor, ESSO FLEET NEWS, Humble Oil & Refining Co., P. O. Box 1512, Houston 1, Texas

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## Attention Messmen! Opportunity Knocks

While all the effects of the acceptances of the Company's Special Voluntary Early Retirement and severance pay offers are still uncertain, it seems fairly clear that we will have scarcely enough Second Cooks, Oilers and FWTs. This presents advancement opportunities for men now sailing as Messmen and Utilitymen. Those who were formerly Wipers need a little study and perhaps some coaching by a shipmate to successfully pass the Coast Guard examination for the higher engineroom ratings. A recommended textbook is MARINE POWER PLANT GUIDE, published by Cornell Maritime Press, Cambridge, Md. ($5.13).

Messmen who have had some cooking experience and who would like to move up to Second Cook should make these facts known to the Chief Steward. Pick a time when he is in a good mood (yes, there are such times) and say something like this: "Sir, I greatly admire your skill in commissary matters and I respectfully request an opportunity to prove my ability in cooking and baking." Then, if you do satisfy the Chief Steward that you are qualified as a Second Cook, ask him for a letter of recommendation and send it to the Port Steward. That will get you on the prospective Second Cook's seniority list provided you also get your "Steward's Dept. F.H." endorsement from the Coast Guard.

## Captain Roberts *(Continued from page 1)*

time I guess I will miss the purity of the sea and sky, the deck of a heaving ship and the excellent shipmates I have been so fortunate to sail with. And believe me, there are none better than those sailing with Esso.

"As for things to do — I have a 22′ cabin cruiser, good fishing from my 100′ dock (at Daytona Beach, Fla.) and plenty of puttering to do around the house and garden. Also, an auto trip occasionally and perhaps a trip abroad.

"I would like to wish all my shipmates in the Esso fleet Happy Sailing and to those friends on Humble's shoreside, Happy Motoring. If in your meanderings you should happen by Daytona Beach, stop in for a visit, the welcome mat will be out."

## TAFFRAIL TALK

The *Esso Boston* (Captain George E. Christiansen and Chief Engr. Joseph Musante) observed and reported to the Navy a trawler with a Russian name and communist insignia on June 15. The *Boston* was southbound when she sighted the stranger on a 220° course about 135 miles east of Daytona Beach.

Elmer C. Brown, recently Second Mate in the *Esso Newark*, has accepted a position with Arabian-American Oil Co. as Harbor Pilot at Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia. He will work with Ralph E. Langen, who left the fleet in Feb. 1962 and, it is understood, will be joined in Sept. by another former Esso man, Herbert C. Schulz. Captain Schulz is now a Narragansett Bay — Long Island Sound pilot.

* * *

Arthur D. Baldwin, who has about 15 years' service in the fleet as Chief Cook and Steward and has been on educational leave for several years, has received a master's degree from the School of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management, Michigan State University. It is expected that he will join the Port Staff as Acting Asst. Port Steward on July 1.

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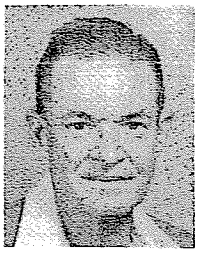
About 35 ladies, members of the Desk and Derrick Club of Corpus Christi, were given the "grand tour" of the *Esso Jamestown* on Sunday, June 16. It was difficult to tell who enjoyed the occasion more, the visitors or the officers and crewmen. The Desk and Derrick Club is a national organization of women who work in the oil industry. The Corpus Christi chapter's visit to the *Jamestown* rounded out a program on marine transportation that included a recent address by our Marine Division's Norman B. Avenell, Assistant to Manager, Operating Dept.

## OBITUARY



JOHN V. F. BROWN, 64, former Chief Engineer, died June 23 in Baltimore. He leaves a wife and married daughter.

Mr. Brown shipped out in both world wars, surviving the torpedoing of the *Wm. Rockefeller* in June 1942. He retired Jan. 1, 1958, under an early retirement program, with 27 years of Company service, the last 8 as Chief in the *Esso Lima*.



ARTHUR C. GERDING, 56, who retired on disability, Aug. 29, 1960, died in his home city of Baton Rouge on June 18. He is survived by his wife, Velma and two children, Mrs. Fred Calhoun and Arthur, Jr.

Mr. Gerding had nearly 25 years' service in the fleet, most of it as FWT. He sailed throughout World War II and had almost 7 postwar years in the *Wallace E. Pratt*.

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## RECENT RETIREMENTS



THIRD ASST. ENGINEER CHARLES BRUCE was a stationary engineer in New Jersey from 1929-47, except for 5½ years in the U. S. Army Transport Service during and after the War. He served as Third, Second and First Asst. and participated in Mediterranean, African, European and Pacific operations.

Mr. Bruce's Esso career totaled 15 years between Jan. 1948 and his retirement, May 1. Most of his assignments were as Third, Second and First Asst., his last being in the *Esso Lexington*.

Born in Philadelphia 65 years ago, Mr. Bruce is married and lives in Island Heights, N. J. He and his wife have a daughter, Alice Ruth.



THIRD ASST. ENGINEER FRANCIS E. PRICE sailed as a licensed Engineer during all his 16 years in the fleet. He began in Nov. 1946 as Third Asst. in the *Esso Charlotte*, served 2 years in the *Esso Roanoke* and had his first assignments as Second and First Asst. in the *Red Canyon* in 1950 and '51. He continued in these three ranks up to his retirement, May 1.

Mr. Price and his wife live in Waynesboro, Pa.



CHIEF STEWARD GEORGE M. BAPTISTA retired June 1 with (1) a 40-year career at sea, (2) a solid 21 years, 10 months in the Esso fleet and (3) almost 20 years as Steward.

Born in Mass. in 1898, Mr. Baptista joined the Coast Guard in 1923 and served 10 years as messman and chief cook. He worked in M. & J. Tracy coal colliers before "changing to oil" — Esso's *J. A. Mowinckel* — on July 14, 1941. He was in 6 vessels throughout World War II, sailing as Chief Cook until his promotion to Chief Steward in the *Vistula* on Aug. 19, 1943.

Mr. Baptista's home is in New Bedford, Mass.



CHIEF COOK EUGENIO J. GONSALVES wrote that "My wife, Maria, daughter, Evelyn, 4, and I will probably visit the Cape Verde Islands, then I will sit back and enjoy my retirement here in Pawtucket, R. I. I will never forget all the friends I have made while working with Esso."

Born in Portugal, Mr. Gonsalves has been going to sea for 39 years. He sailed in the Mystic S. S. and Gulf Oil fleets before joining the Company's *E. M. Clark* as Second Cook on Dec. 14, 1941. That assignment ended when the ship was torpedoed and sunk, March 18, 1942. He survived another torpedoing the following year when the *John Worthington* was hit (but not sunk) and shipped out in 6 more vessels during the War.

Mr. Gonsalves retired June 1 with 19½ years' service, the last 6 as Chief Cook.



MAINTENANCE MECHANIC/SECOND PUMPMAN HENRY C. RATHKE was born in Danzig and went to work there as an apprentice machinist when he was 14. He became an engineer, worked in Copenhagen for a year and after coming to the U. S., sailed with Beacon Oil Co. from 1924-31. He was pumpman in a U. S. Navy salvage vessel from 1932-41, then had 3 years with Merritt, Chapman & Scott.

Starting with the Company in the *Esso Bolivar* in May, 1944, Mr. Rathke served as FWT, Oiler, Storekeeper and Jr. Engineer. For 11 years prior to his retirement, June 1, most of his assignments were as MM/2nd Pumpman. He had 18 years of service.

Residents of Toms River, N. J., Mr. and Mrs. Rathke have 5 children, aged 27 to 40.

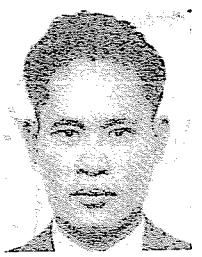
ABLE SEAMAN ADOLF C. OERTEL's Company service began in Aug. 1925 when he sailed as Messboy, OS and AB in the *Fred W. Weller*. He had one assignment as Fireman in 1932 but all the others were as AB. He was on the port relieving staff for the first 2 years of World War II and aboard 3 vessels for the second 2. His retirement June 1 rounded out just over 30 years of credited service.

Born in Germany, Mr. Oertel lives in Leonardo, N. J. with his wife, Eva.



OILER JOSE A. NAVA expects to visit the Philippine Islands and perhaps stay if he likes it. He was born there and started his seagoing career in the U. S. Coast & Geodetic Survey vessel *Marinduque*, working in the Philippines. He was coal passer and machinist 2C, from 1919 to 1932.

Mr. Nava came with the Esso fleet on April 20, 1939. It is 24 years, 1 month and 11 days from that date to his retirement, June 1, and that's the amount of his credited service. He always sailed as Oiler and never lost a day's pay. He shipped out in 5 vessels in the War, surviving the sinking of one, the *M. F. Elliott*, on June 3, 1942.



FIREMAN-WATERTENDER SERAFIN Z. ROBLES. After serving a 4-year apprenticeship in a machine shop in Iloilo, P. I., Mr. Robles went to sea. Starting in 1928, he sailed in numerous cargo ships, tankers and transports, joining Esso in Dec. 1940. He shipped out in 10 vessels during the War and, in his 21 years in the fleet, served as FWT, Oiler, Storekeeper, Second Pumpman and Machinist.

Retiring June 1, Mr. Robles plans to "fix up" his home in Canada and do a little farming, fishing and hunting. He and his wife, Louise, live in Elizabeth, N. J. and have 5 children.

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