



Grogan Stops The Show

► WHEN THE NEW SUPERLINER SS *United States* pulled out of Pier 86 on her maiden voyage recently, some of us Power editors went down to watch her depart.

After she backed out into the stream and headed toward the Narrows, we left the shouting crowd and made our way to Bedlam's Bent Propeller Bar around the corner.

Most of the water-front characters had beaten us to the draw, for the bar was already crowded. Seemed that everyone was talking at the same time. About what? About first voyages, blue ribbons, and about the various crossing records. Even Robert Fulton's first voyage was towed into the arguments.

Only one person, Marmaduke Surfaceblow, consulting engineer extraordinary, kept out of the noisy chatter. He leaned on the bar, staring at the bottle of Sandpaper Gin before him.

"The *United States* might make a record crossing, but I was chief of one vessel that never missed a sailing date," announced an old-timer standing next to Marmy.

"Bilgewater on keeping sailing dates," barked Marmy, suddenly coming to life. "I'll tell you about First Assistant Engineer Tuffy Grogan, who kept his ship from sailing for two days while he engineered a big deal ashore."

That did it. Things quieted down in a hurry, for Marmaduke Surfaceblow

was evidently about to sound off. Marmy slowly pulled himself up to his full six-feet four-inches height. Then he looked belligerently around at his expectant audience and started blasting away.

"Back in 1901 I was third assistant engineer of the SS *Mongolia Queen*," barked Marmy. "She was the flagship of the old American Asia Line, with home offices in San Francisco."

"The *Mongolia* had two 4-legged triple-expansion engines and six double-ended Scotch boilers. Each engine had a 50-inch-diameter low-pressure cylinder at either end, with a high- and low-pressure cylinder in between. Those engines were 3400-hp apiece, and cranked away at 120 rpm on 220-psi steam."

"They were the pride and joy of Tuffy Grogan, her first assistant engineer. Grogan was a marine engineer what was a marine engineer. A big two-fisted Irishman, Tuffy had the reputation of being the noisiest first assistant—with the quietest engines in the line. And he would square off and bust the first guy who hinted that he had sailed with quieter machinery."

"When Grogan was down below at sea, he was always whipping his flashlight out of his hip pocket and placing one end against an engine column. Then he'd press his ear against the glass and listen. After spending a few minutes at various columns, he'd put his

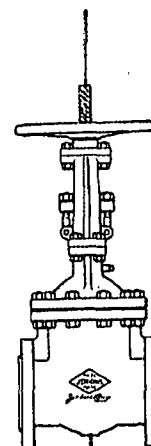
'stethoscope' into his hip pocket, come over to the log desk and address me as seriously as a doctor announcing his decision after an important diagnosis."

"Third," he'd say. "When we left Singapore tomorrow morning, I want you to key up on the port engine's by crank bearing. If you have time before the deck department is through working cargo, you'd better take a few thousandths out of the starboard forward low-pressure crosshead for good measure."

"Grogan was usually right. He caught the slightest noisy bearing before it had a chance to develop into a knock. But he was a sharp operator in more ways than one. He had all kinds of rackets ashore. That included everything from selling scrap-brass condenser tubes, old valves and brass piping, to doing a little smuggling of firearms and cigarettes."

"He'd go ashore in Shanghai and not show up for several days, until just before sailing time. Then he'd return with two or three natives following him up the gangplank, all loaded down with packages."

"We pulled into Shanghai one trip only to learn that our usual five-day stay had been cut to two days. That upset Grogan's plans and he was burned up plenty. Seems he had a 'big deal' working ashore and had already
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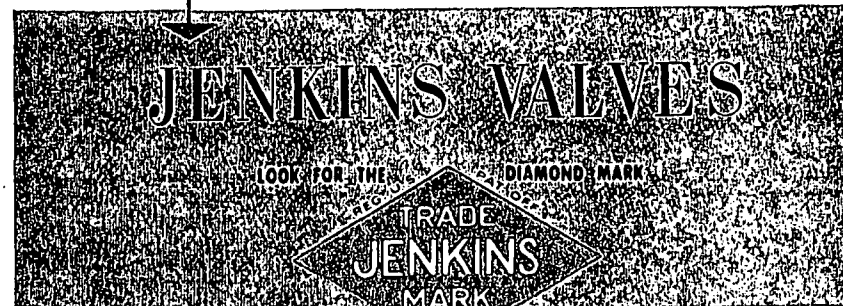
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