

San Francisco - November 4 1960

Mr. Jerry McMullen:

Dear Sir: I am in receipt of your letter of Oct. 29, asking permission to use for publication the quotes of my interview with Mr. McNairn. We had quite a long talk. I asked him if the matter was for publication; he said "no", just for historical background. Our talk was tape recorded and from me "right off the cuff." My English, for reasons you understand, is not of the best and my language unpolished. However, as a news reporter you can make do and publish what you see fit.

In 1917 I shipped Chief Mate in the Star of India which was my last sailing ship at the cannery. I was to run a tugboat. The old sailing ship was quite familiar, but the men were a strange lot, scraped off the beach in wartime. It was a big change for me from the steamers of the five previous years. The old Star did not make many more trips to Alaska after 1917 as it was nearly impossible to get men to sail the ship. Before the war, the fishermen, mostly Scandinavian sailors, were the sailing crew who for what was called rum money, \$25.00, sailed the ship to Alaska and back besides discharging and loading the cargo. The Star was a small ship even for those days. We left San Francisco with about 200 men aboard, half of which were so-called cannery gang, the rest were fishermen and beach gang and cooks, etc. It was a motley crew. A Chinaman who was the prime contractor for the company, recruited his wherever he could, Chinese, Japs, Mexicans, Filipinos. The other part of the crew, all hired by the company, were the mechanics, technicians, carpenters, the steward and his department, the ship's officers and about 50 fishermen who sailed the ship. The Captain was in full charge and responsible for the safety, if not comfort, of all, besides the safe navigation of the ship, and the medical officer when needed. Now, the Captain in any ship, then and now, is supposed to be highly rated, and likes to dwell in his Ivory Tower and not be bothered with trifles. So if a smart Captain, he delegates all he can of his responsibilities to his officers through his Chief Mate who is expected to carry out his orders, even impossibilities which takes a bit longer.

There's where I came in as Mate of the India, as doctor and surgeon, and to settle or smooth all disputes. Although I have been a shipmaster for nearly 30 years and in two wars, my sympathies are all with the poor Chief Mate who has to do what may be called "pick and shovel" jobs both for himself and the Captain. Besides he is the one who has to get work done on the ship and that automatically makes him an S.O.B. The Mate's job in a ship is a lousy and unthankful one -- it is now as it was then.

Now back to the old days of the Alaska salmon fleet. There were big crews up to 300 -- a lot of drunkenness and fighting until things settled down. After getting up there, hard work and long hours -- but then a good fisherman could make on the average about \$500.00 in about 4 months, very good for those days. The fishermen who stood watches and sailed the ship were all good sailors and had it easy. Three watches and 20 or more men per watch and a wheel turn about twice a week -- good old days.

In closing this long and garrulous letter, which I hope you can make out, I want you to pay my profound respect to the memory of Captain Marzan who passed away about 20 years ago. He was an old school shipmaster and a gentleman. He did not do much after the sailing ship went out of business. He tried steam but his sailing ship license was only good for 2nd Mate and he felt out of place. He lived quite near me and we saw each other often. He suffered no long illness -- he died in his sleep.

I am now 81 -- my memory is good and I recall clearly things and events of my 53 years at sea. I've been told to write a book which I can't, but I would have a title -- MEN-AND-SHIPS-NOW-AND-THEN SHIPS AND MEN NOW AND THEN.

The above was handwritten but my daughter who is a secretary edited it and was not satisfied with my spelling, and I guess it looks and more readable in type. You may use part or the whole of the above as you see fit.

Sincerely yours
Carl J. Carlson *over*