

As the U-boat commander watched, one of the missiles struck home.

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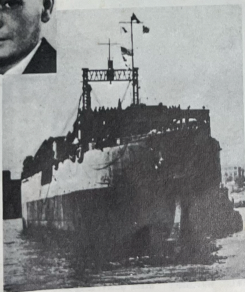
Orders had gone out from President Roosevelt himself,
and factories had worked day and night to load . . .

THE SHIP THE NAZIS HAD TO GET

By JAMES H. WINCHESTER



← Captain Kenneth George Towne, who commanded the *Seatrain Texas*, shown below. The ship was a hybrid, half car ferry and half ocean-going freighter, capable of carrying a tremendous amount of cargo.



OF ALL the ships that sail the seas, from Reykjavik to Rangoon, from the Cape of Good Hope to Nome, none looks less glamorous than the S.S. *Seatrain Texas*. In the coast-wise trade, between Texas and New York, she's as functional as a bathroom plunger, long on space, short on looks, built for ruggedness rather than grace or comfort.

No excited or admiring glances from those in skyscraper windows or on ferryboat decks, no riotous welcomes from spouting fireboats or blasting whistles ever greet her as she plods her workmanlike way through the cluttered waters of New York harbor on her bi-monthly visits.

But well they might, for the *Seatrain Texas*, for all her lack of glamour, is a ship that changed the course of history.

Night had not yet turned to dawn on the morning of July 29, 1942 when 16 low-riding freighters, ghostlike in their war gray paint in the clinging darkness, slipped away from the Army's sprawling New York Port of Embarkation piers in Brooklyn. One of them was the *Seatrain Texas*, loaded to her Plimsoll Mark with 250 heavy tanks, half a hundred tank destroyers and assorted weapons enough to equip a division.

