

Thomas Crowley, Honored Marine Man of the Month



Mr. Tom Crowley, Jr. and Mr. Tom Crowley, Sr., Dean of the tug boat industry. Long will the shipping industry remember when a picture was taken of Tom Crowley and his son Tom together, at the Mariners Club when Tom Sr. was honored Marine Man of the Month. Tom Sr. celebrated his 90th birthday on December 3, 1965.

By Sam Pursley, Master of Ceremonies

This year we have honored such great men as Ray Bowes, Bill Warren, Lloyd Flemming, Vic Bahorich, Charlie Luddy and Bill Blake. Each of these fine gentlemen accepted our award with pride and enjoyed the presentation. I assured them and the members that their enjoyment was in each case second to my own.

Thanks to the persistent efforts of our genial V.P. Henry Dolle, I am privileged and proud to present to you our Marine Man of the Month for November 1965. He is none other than the Dean of West Coast Ports, THOMAS CROWLEY.

It would take several hours even to scratch the surface of this gentleman's background. Most of us have known of Mr. Crowley all our lives. We know

him to be a fighter, an honest, reliable upstanding citizen of the highest character and whose charitable deeds are many.

Mr. Crowley's Father was a deep water sailor who came from Cork, Ireland. From New York, his mother crossed the continent to San Francisco by train and his father by ship.

Thomas Crowley was born in San Francisco, Dec. 3, 1875. He is 89 years and 11 months young today. The family lived on the north end of Telegraph Hill and he attended Public Schools. Before he was 10 years of age he had to learn the fine arts of fisticuffs and to protect himself against the Italian kids who lived on Telegraph Hill. One Italian boy in particular had some goats who liked to run through the Crowley place

and eat the plants. As time went by these children had several bouts over the goats till Tom went down to the Bay in his pulling boat and the Italian kid, A.P. Gianinni started working in a bank.

Mr. Crowley started his working career in 1890 as a Boat Boy in the bay for the Sailor's Boarding House. In 1892 with \$80 capital he started his first business enterprise by buying his own Whitehall Boat. This British - built boat was 18 ft. long and had a beam of 4 ft. 8 in. Using the boat under sail or oars, he transported passengers and supplies to ships in the Bay and often made a dollar or more a trip.

Even in the early years his interests were diversified. In 1900 many Gold Seekers enroute to the Klondike stopped in San Francisco for supplies and passage. Mr. Crowley made \$600 buying fur clothes from the whalers and selling them to the miners.

In 1904, John Twigg and Sons built Mr. Crowley a 36 ft. launch with a gas engine that was made by the Union Gas Engine Company. This launch, the "Jenny-C", would carry 35 passengers and a crew of two. They transported passengers and supplies to all the ships in the bay.

Mr. Crowley was married in 1907. He and Mrs. Crowley were blessed with a son and three daughters. The son Thomas and a son-in-law Copsy Escher have distinguished themselves in the water transportation business. A fine man and our friend, Capt. Wm Darraugh, lately of Red Stack, worked over 50 years for Mr. Crowley and Jack Jenkins has been his right arm since 1920.

Let's go back to the bay and boats. From 1904 to 1918 Mr. Crowley kept increasing his launch and barge fleet when he acquired the Red Stack Company, which at that time had about 12 steam tugs. Shortly afterwards the Black Stack Tug Company, which was owned by the J.O. Spreckles Company, was merged with the Red Stack Company.

As time passed, Mr. Crowley expanded his interests to other ports. He bought the Drummond Literage Company and the Cory Davis Tug Company in Seattle. This gave rise to the Puget Sound Tug and Barge Company presently operating out of Seattle.

He still has interests operating on a Slow Bell out of San Diego. This reduction in business is due to the recent completion of oil pipe lines in that area. He

and His Life Story

started giving Wrigley competition in San Pedro with one tug. For a time our friend Lloyd Flemming worked for Mr. Crowley in this operation. Today the San Pedro Tug and Barge Company is well known.

Had Mr. Crowley not started in San Pedro, the world might have missed the wonderful movie series and the book Tug Boat Annie. Seems that a writer observed Tillie Bunker shouting orders and assignments to tug boat captains and was inspired. This observation, and with the help of Capt. McGillvery and Tillie Bunker, the idea of Tug Boat Annie was born.

We know of and appreciate this gentleman's many interests on the West Coast. Many of his direct and indirect employees are here today to pay him homage. He is a self-made man and everyone can envy his success. All of us admire his knowledge, his foresight, good business sense and his determination. This gentleman stands for fair play and principal

regardless of who his opponents might be, even the U.S. Government.

Seems that Government vessels were rendering services to vessels not in danger and in direct competition with commercial enterprises. Mr. Crowley traveled to Washington, and though he may have lost the particular battle, he won the war. Today no Government vessel will put a line aboard a vessel unless there is danger of the loss of life and property or no commercial source of help available.

Sure would be nice if we could get the Government out of shipbuilding and ship repair as long as qualified commercial facilities are available.

Through the years most of Mr. Crowley's ventures have prospered and grown, except. . . Years ago he had the Smith-Rice Riggers build the first derrick barge that operated on the Bay. Things did not develop as fast as was expected and Mr. Crowley sold his interest in the barge

to Charlie Rice. Look at this business today.

Mr. Thomas Crowley's charitable deeds to his fellow man and organizations are many. By towing a boat from San Diego and assisting in its repair, he has made it possible to train many Sea Scouts and give them many days of pleasure.

The greatest deed of charity pertains to a theft in which our guest was the looser. A drunken deck hand looted tools from the Bay Cities Repair Shack on Pier 5. He was caught by the police. Later Mr. Crowley observed a woman with two children hanging around the pier. When questioned, Copsy Escher informed Mr. Crowley that they were the family of the jailed deck hand and that they were broke. The lady left the pier with a check for \$250.

Gentlemen, it is with pride and pleasure that I present to you Mr. Thomas Crowley, and to him a certificate of our esteem.



Buddies

Many years ago, Tom was pictured on the golf course with his good friend, Peter Jurs. Pete was an engineer for Bethlehem Steel Corp.

Cobbie's Anniversary

Shown at "Cobbie's Golden Anniversary" dinner on Aug. 15, 1950, honoring Edmond D. Coblentz, are (left to right) Cobbie, Tom Crowley, and William C. Empey, Sr., late publisher of The Guide, the West Coast's foremost daily shipping paper. This photo was loaned to May Day by Wm. C. Empey, Jr., present publisher. The autograph reads: "Aug. 15, 1950. To a pair of waterfront 'crimps' from another crimp. -- Cobbie." And in the upper right hand corner is inscribed: "50th Anniversary (Golden) -- St. Francis Hotel. Aug. 15/50".

