
Preface

I am often asked, “What compelled you to write this book?” After all, there already exists many fine books on the important subject of logistics in warfare, albeit many out-of-print or hard to find. However, after nearly two decades of reading, researching, and writing three other books about the Pacific theater in World War II, I felt compelled to complete this third volume in my trilogy, *Amphibious Operations in the South Pacific in World War II*, for two reasons.

First, to honor all the men and women—military and civilian—who served in logistical support roles for our front line combat personnel in World War II. I felt these non-combatant service personnel were (and are) often overshadowed by those who served in combat. However, statistics show that there were ten supportive personnel for every one combatant in the U.S. Armed Forces in World War II.*

Second, since the mid-1990s, with the able assistance of Samuel Loring Morison (grandson of famed World War II naval historian, Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison), I had been gathering books and archival documents on the subject of logistics in warfare. I noted, of all the fine books already written on the subject, each one was primarily focused on a particular component of what I now term the “Pacific express.”

Since the majority of these books or documents were authored in the mid-twentieth century, I could now compare their contents with new and declassified information. (Remember, during the war, most information was classified or “top secret.”) I now had answers to many of my questions.

* Warfare and Armed Conflicts, A Statistical Reference (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Record Administrator) 584.

So rather than write a new book on the subject, I decided to change course and tie all these fine, earlier works together under one cover as a *collection* of works by other writers, all experts on their respective subjects—such as Admirals Worrall Reed Carter, Emory Scott Land, and Richmond Kelly Turner—as well as published authors like Frederic C. Lane, John Gorley Bunker, Bruce L. Felknor, and David H. Grover. Now, as editor, I condensed or excerpted text from these experts and structured this book much like a reading and reference work to save busy readers and researchers time. Therefore, each chapter stands alone with its sources identified at the beginning, and any applicable notes, figures, tables, charts and photographs at the end.

I am very grateful to all my sources for allowing me to condense, excerpt or quote from their fine works. Particular attention has been paid to acknowledge all these sources in detail, both in the chapters and the Bibliography. Many of these works, having been published following World War II, are now out-of-print. However, copies may still be found from online booksellers like Amazon.com. Other works, such as Frederic Lane's *Ships for Victory*, have been reprinted.

Due to space limitations, it is not within the scope of this book to single out and honor the contributors of all logistics support personnel who served as part of the “Pacific express.” However, if this book somehow stimulates history buffs and descendants of World War II veterans to continue their search for knowledge through the fine sources used here, this editor's purpose will have been fully achieved.

Editorial Method

Each chapter follows a similar format. The chapter opens with an “Editor's note” describing the chapter's focus and a few words about the excerpted material and its author(s). The guest authors' texts are left unaltered, even when modern usage may dictate something different, e.g., a different spelling or capitalization of a word. Only minor changes in punctuation have been made. Extremely long paragraphs may have been

divided into shorter ones for easier comprehension by the reader. Excerpts may include notes that appeared in the original sources; however, the note numbers will be different in this book. In some instances, the note numbers from the original source are indicated by a second superscript Arabic numeral. Notes added by the editor are at the bottom of a page and are indicated by asterisks or other symbols. When parts of a work have been omitted, the omissions are indicated within the text by three ellipsis dots. If an omitted section of an excerpt may be important to the reader, a brief summary is provided by an Editor's note. For consistency of style, in treating units of measurement (gun bores, speed rates, tonnage), military ranks, and dates, a military writing guide was followed. The editors hope this explanation will help the reader get the most out of this book.

The Story Behind the Story

I've always loved going to sea. In 1993, I launched the writing of *Bluejacket Odyssey, 1942–1946*, while on a six week freighter trip to South America, and the results were very productive. So in 1999, I booked passage on another freighter for a 90-day, round-the-world trip.

My objective was to lay out all the material I had gathered for this third volume in my trilogy, *Amphibious Operations in the South Pacific in World War II*, and to develop a working Table of Contents. The tentative title was to be *Pacific Express—America's World War II Military Supply System*. I had a concept in mind for this volume: a collection of the best writings on the subject of logistics in warfare by other historians. I would then excerpt or condense and, where applicable, update if new information was available. I already had permission from several publishers, such as the Naval Institute Press, to draw on material they had published. (I'm a believer in not reinventing the wheel.)

The MV *Cho Yang Atlas*, of German ownership and registry, was new, having been delivered in 1998. The ship was large; 965 feet, 63,645 dead-weight tons, and designed to cruise at 24 knots. In spite of her size, the

Atlas crew numbered just 27; German officers with a South Pacific (Gilbert Islands) crew.

Four nice cabins accommodated up to eight passengers. My cabin was a two-room suite, outside facing, carpeted, and air-conditioned. My “living room” had a sofa, mini-refrigerator and bar, and electronics that included a TV and VCR. Passengers shared the dining room and lounge with the ship’s officers.

The main ports-of-call on the 90-day itinerary were Long Beach (embark), Calif.; Oakland, Calif.; Kaohsiung, Taiwan; Hong Kong; Singapore; Suez Canal (transit); Le Havre, France; Rotterdam, Netherlands; Hamburg, Germany; Suez Canal (transit); Columbo, Sri Lanka; Port Kelang, Malaysia; Hong Kong (second call); Pusan, South Korea; Osaka, Japan; Tokyo, Japan; and Long Beach (disembark), Calif.

The many days at sea were exactly what I wanted—peace and quiet to work at my desk; occasional breaks in a chair on deck; social contact at meals with the officers and other passengers. For exercise, I did two or three laps, stem to stern, around the main deck once or twice a day, regardless of the weather.

I stayed in touch with my beautiful wife, Sandra, by fax. She had been invited to join me, but elected to stay home. (When I returned, she surprised me with the completion of remodeling work we had been putting off and a new car.)

This freighter trip proved to be as productive as the first one. I not only developed a working Table of Contents for *Pacific Express*, I completed the first draft writing and condensation of 75 percent of the material. From various ports-of-call, I mailed pages to my excellent manuscript typist, Jan Adelson, and she had the manuscript keyed before I returned home. Later, when the manuscript was nearly completed, Spencer Boise (who had read several previous manuscripts) gave *Pacific Express* an initial read and provided constructive comments about its format and content. (A freighter trip may not be for everyone, but it’s perfect for a writer or reader. For those who are tempted, I can recommend Freighter World Cruises, Inc., www.freighterworld.com.)

For various reasons, the nearly-completed manuscript sat on the shelf for eight years. In 2008, Sandra came to my rescue and offered to help me finish it. With her background in writing and publicity, and attention to detail in editing, it was a good match. There aren't enough words to thank her, but I keep trying.

Welcome aboard. I hope you enjoy your cruise on the *Pacific Express*.

—*William L. McGee*