

TOW LINE

SEPTEMBER 1961

OF DEEP SEA TOWAGE—



SO WE COME to another one-subject issue of *Tow Line*, and again we are concerned with ocean towing—or "deep sea towage," as it is frequently called in this industry. It is a large and important part of Moran Towing & Transportation Co.'s year-to-year business. We like it; we like to talk about it, too.

All manner of non-self-propelled craft require movement across the oceans of the world from time to time, in all seasons—drydocks, dredges, large and small ships, barges, tanks, hulks, etc. Seagoing tugs—floating power plants actually—manned by highly skilled crews, provide the means of performing these exacting and sometimes hazardous jobs.

Such tugs also answer distress calls of disabled ships on the world's sea lanes and deliver them to harbors of refuge.

There is adventure, courage of a high order, frequently drama—in short, all the thrills of men against the sea—wrapped up in such towing assignments.

Ashore, behind the colorful scenes, organization in depth and of great efficiency is required to provide sea-worthy, efficient vessels and crews capable of meeting the not always predictable demands of long voyages under whatever circumstances may be encountered and safely delivering tows to far-off places—from the Arctic to the Equator, from east to west around the globe, or vice versa in either instance.

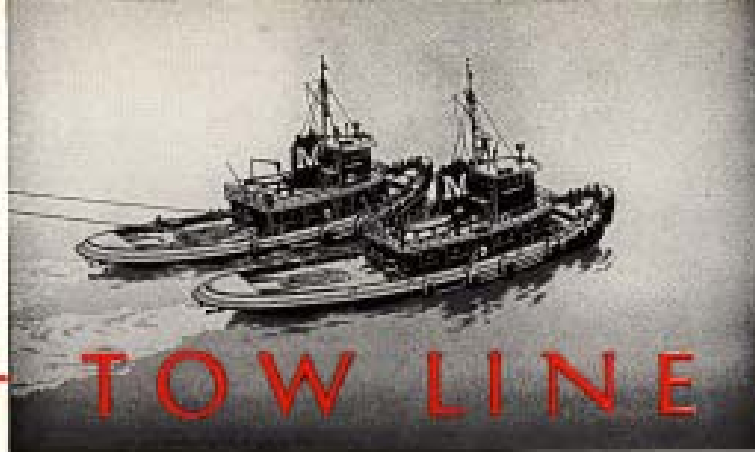
Available on demand for any such seagoing purposes, these sturdy tugs stand ready to serve the needs of international trade as well as the requirements of safety to life and property on the high seas. It is not an easy life, but it is a necessary adjunct to the activities of the world maritime community.

Moran has the tugs, the operating personnel both afloat and ashore, the collateral facilities, the resources—above all, a century of the most extensive and varied experience—to provide "what it takes" when it comes to ocean towing.

In this issue we give you again graphic, impressive evidence of the validity of this company's claim to preeminence in a demanding field of endeavor; but we offer it, not as a unique or even extraordinary instance, but merely as a typical trans-oceanic towing operation.

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by this magazine, may be reprinted with the usual credit line.)

Moran Tugs 'Join the Navy' for Holy Loch Tow

MAY 1ST, 1961, at Mayport Naval Base, Florida, four formidable-looking sections of a giant floating drydock lay with several smaller craft rimming the big basin. All were components of a naval task group assembled for a vital mission—to supplement the Navy's drydock facilities overseas.

A month later they were circling in the Firth of Clyde waiting turns to proceed up the channel to Holy Loch, Scotland, to the Polaris atomic-submarine base established there by the United States as a defensive measure.

The AFDB-7 (auxiliary floating drydock barge) had consisted of seven 5,200-ton sections when completed in 1945 and towed to Guam. It was never put into operation, but subsequently returned to Green Cove Springs, Florida. Singly, the sections are 240 feet long, 101 feet wide and, with stern-mounted cranes, 72 feet high, sea rigged.

It was by order of the Chief of Naval Operations that the four sections, with a lifting capacity of 32,000 tons and actual drydock length of 512 feet, were reactivated for placement in service at Holy Loch. Additional equipment included a large, covered machine shop barge (YRDN-8); a heavy, covered lighter (YFN-32), and two open lighters.

To assist three naval ships in this vital towing assignment the Navy's Military Sea Transportation Service chartered two of Moran's powerful ocean tugs. The veteran of many

trans-ocean tows, 1,900 BHP (diesel-electric) tug *Edmond J. Moran*, was under the command of Capt. Alexander D. Stewart. The newer, smaller *Diana L. Moran*, 1,750 BHP, (diesel-electric) was skippered by Capt. Jens Halling.

Task Group Commander for the ocean tow was Lt. Comdr. T. F. Byrnes, Jr., commanding officer of the *Opportune*. Lt. V. C. Wandres, CO of the *Seneca*, was second in command.

The three naval ships, *USS Opportune (ARS-41)*, a salvage repair ship, and two fleet tugs, *USS Seneca (ATF-91)*, and *USS Atakapa (ATF-149)*, were assigned a drydock section each. Section D of the drydock was assigned to the *Edmond*; while the *Diana's* tow would be the machine shop barge and the covered lighter, in tandem.

A fourth naval ship, the *USS Samoset (ATA-190)*, was charged with retriever duties. She would tail the convoy to assist the towing units and be on the alert should any mishap occur.

Although the problems of an operation of this scope are multifold, the mission was eminently successful.

Prevailing ground swells beyond the St. Johns River entrance to Mayport compelled the tugs to make-up to their tows in the shelter of the basin. During the afternoon they moved out to a rendezvous in the choppy Atlantic beyond the sea buoy. There, Commander Byrnes directed the vessels

(Continued on Page 14)

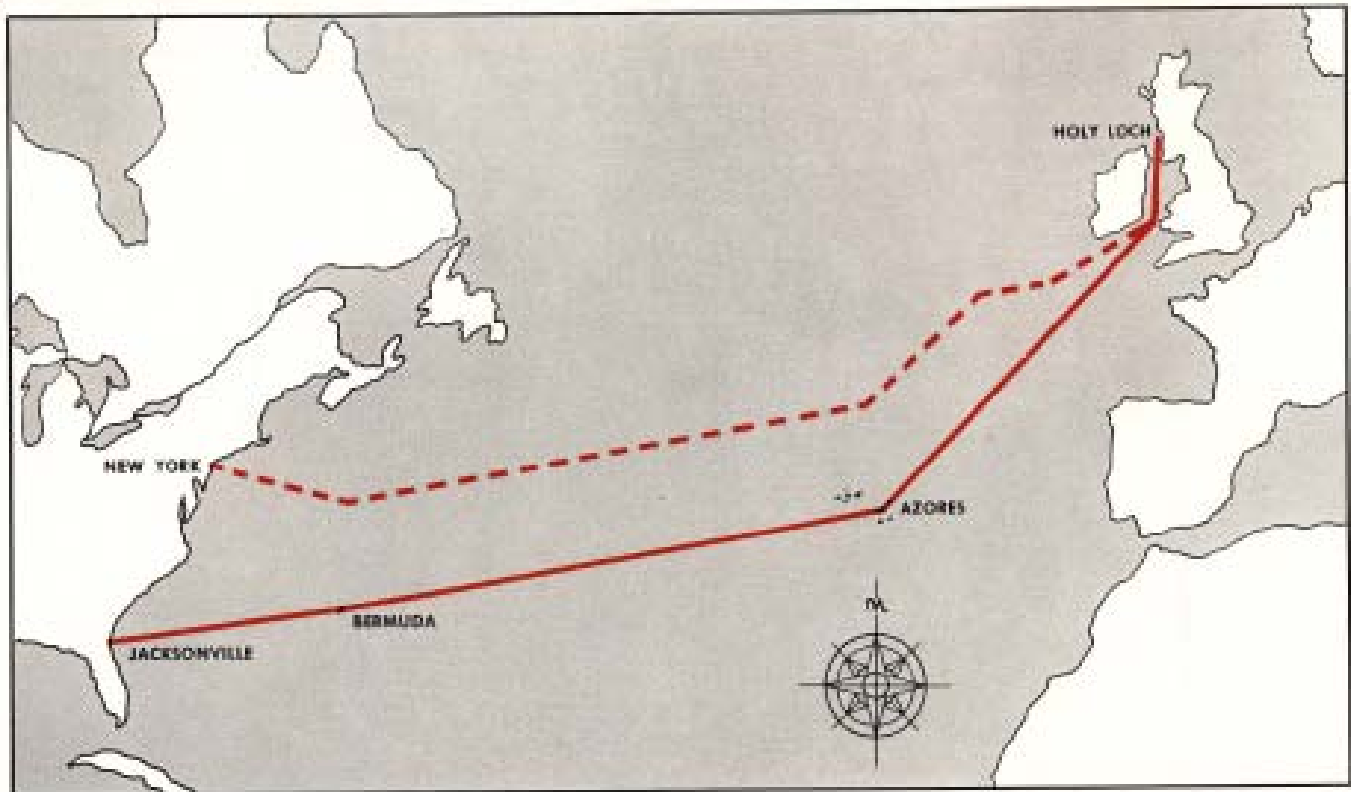




Seated at a chart-covered table aboard the *Opportune*, Task Group Commander T. F. Byrnes, Jr., Lcdr. USN, conducted a last-minute operations conference with commanding officers of the naval and commercial ships involved in the tow. Lt. Philip M. Reitzel (USS. *Samoset*), Lt. James C.

Rowland (USS. *Atakapa*), Capt. Alexander D. Stewart (MT *Edmond J. Moran*), Lt. Victor C. Wandres (USS. *Senecal*) and Capt. Jens Halling (MT *Diana L. Moran*).

After the conference . . .



Capt. Stewart brought the Edmond across the basin to the massive drydock section which lay anchored to a buoy, Chief Bosn's Mate Jack W. Kitchen, in charge of a fourteen-man riding crew in the AFDB-7, reported that his men stood ready to attach the Moran tug's two-inch towing wire to the drydock's chain bridle. All more or less patiently waiting for the word to hook-up and go. Finally, the Edmond's turn came and she started out the basin after . . .







The salvage repair ship, USS, Opportune (ARS-41), got under way. The command ship of the convoy was all but obscured by her section of the drydock as she drew away from us toward the St. Johns river entrance to the Mayport basin.

Local naval tugs, assisting the bulky tows through the narrow entrance, returned to aid the Edmond, as the Diana and her two tandem tows were shaping-up to follow.

"Beyond the breakwater, where the sea becomes deep and rough, we got the 'feel' of the tow," says our Jeff Blinn, who was aboard. "As we eased out our towing cable the heavy drydock gave every indication of good behavior. She followed as she should, and we joined the other units of our convoy.

"The Edmond's engines excepted, the most constantly functioning piece of equipment aboard was the coffee pot. With both engines and pot percolating perfectly, we were not long in finishing the first leg of our journey and executing a right turn at Bermuda toward the Azores and a lot of open sea.

"It was on this seemingly limitless expanse of ocean that . . ."



(Aerial views at left are official U.S. Navy photographs)

"... The drydock sections rode the swells of a following sea like huge turtles at the end of half-a-mile of towing cable. Routine duties and a sprinkling of lively conversation spiced the voyage... the bow dropped from crest to trough, from crest to trough ..."





Holy Loch, Scotland— Bonnie and Strategic

"Mist shrouded the peaks of Arran. Slowly we circled in the Firth of Clyde, waiting our turn up the channel to Holy Loch. Darkness became light on distant, green hills. We headed in for the finale of a remarkable voyage.

"On past Little Cumbrae and Great Cumbrae Isles, past quaint villages on misty shores to Cloch Point we came with hawser shortened, while our crew prepared for final chores. The squat and shiny Scottish tugs drew near to look, later to take over and transport our burden to a designated spot.

"We slowed, stopped, backed while rewinding our cable on the drum of the towing engine. Then we unshackled and left our charge in local hands.

"Free, we moved into the broad loch nestled between high hills to join the Diana in pleasant amenities of the hour."









"... The Edmond and the Diana lay side by side in Holy Loch ... story-swapping time ... mail from home, via Fleet Post Office, before the short run to waiting berths at Greenock. Then hair brushes were exercised and clean shirts broken-out for a shoreside sally ... just for the brief

time required to fuel, provision and take a deep breath before it was cast-off time again.

Together the tugs shoved off homeward, across the North Atlantic to New York—and their next assignments."



Left: "Stewart, reared mostly on Virginia's James River, has become a master of distance—aqueous, and measured in nautical miles."

Right: "...Halling, the talented Dane with the quick greeting... deep-sea skipper equally at home in restricted waters."



into a diamond-shaped formation, which was maintained until the convoy reached England.

With the *Opportune* in the lead and the Moran tugs 3,000 yards off her starboard and port quarters, the convoy had a breadth of almost three and a half miles. The *Atakapa* and the *Seneca* fell into positions almost, but not directly, behind the commercial tugs and tows. The retriever *Samoset* was in her position: rear, center. In this manner, all units could be seen by one another and would be easily visible on an approaching ship's radar from any point of the compass. Also, should there be a breakdown, it would not disrupt the convoy.

With the speed and course set by the Task Group Commander, this remarkable convoy proceeded toward Bermuda. From the beginning it was a thoroughly disciplined naval operation. Only the white, block-letter "M," the green and red colors and their smaller size, distinguished the Moran tugs from the fleet vessels; they had wholeheartedly joined the Navy.

Code names were assigned to the Naval ships and daily routines established, with all vessels reporting their morning, noon and evening positions to the *Opportune*. Radio-telephone communications were maintained throughout the voyage by all units, although signal lights occasionally were used to contact the 14- or 15-man crews aboard the drydock sections.

The *Edmond* reported her position daily to Moran HQ, 17 Battery Place, New York, by radio-telegraph.

The use of code names by the naval ships were a source of amused interest to the commercial tugmen. A call from *Kosher Delta* indicated that the leader of the convoy was on the air. *Gallup Foxtrot*, *Empty Hotel* and *Equal Mike* identified the *Atakapa*, *Seneca* and *Samoset*. Perhaps in deference to "guests," the Moran tugs were called by their full names—and initials.

After a touch of foul weather and a bit of fair, the convoy passed the Plantagenet Banks on the eighth of May. The short leg of the 4,300-mile journey was over.

With the performance of all units considered satisfactory, the convoy then turned from Bermuda toward the Azores—1,900 miles of uninterrupted ocean away.

What followed was a touch of navigational ingenuity. Although a following sea and a favorable tidal current were expected to aid on this leg, the longest of the tow, the main hazard was the weather. Weather reports were a prime consideration to all masters, especially to Commander Byrnes.

Course changes were frequent as the wide and long convoy skirted storms and squalls. Head winds, rain and rough seas from the fringes of more violent storms played tag with fair and moderate weather during the next 19 days. The following sea became a strong head sea after the convoy turned north at Sao Miguel in the Azores.

Radios continued to crackle with vital and not-so-vital transmissions. The strain of a new voyage gave way to anticipation of arrival, and calls for barber clippers and scissors went out to the convoy leader.

With the sighting of Bardsey Island, first landfall since the Azores, the convoy broke ranks. Ahead was St. George's Channel and the Irish Sea and the main shipping lanes. The *Diana* and the *Samoset* split up the tandem tow, each taking a single unit on to Holy Loch. Single file, the tugs with drydock sections followed until, past Dunoon and betwixt Kilm and Strone in Scotland, local tugs put the huge burdens to waiting anchor buoys.

Thus the MSTS convoy had transported, almost diagonally across the North Atlantic, an important tow—an operation of which Moran was proud to be a part.

The Navy fleet remained behind to assemble the drydock sections, while the *Diana* and *Edmond* refueled, re-provisioned and began the long trek home.

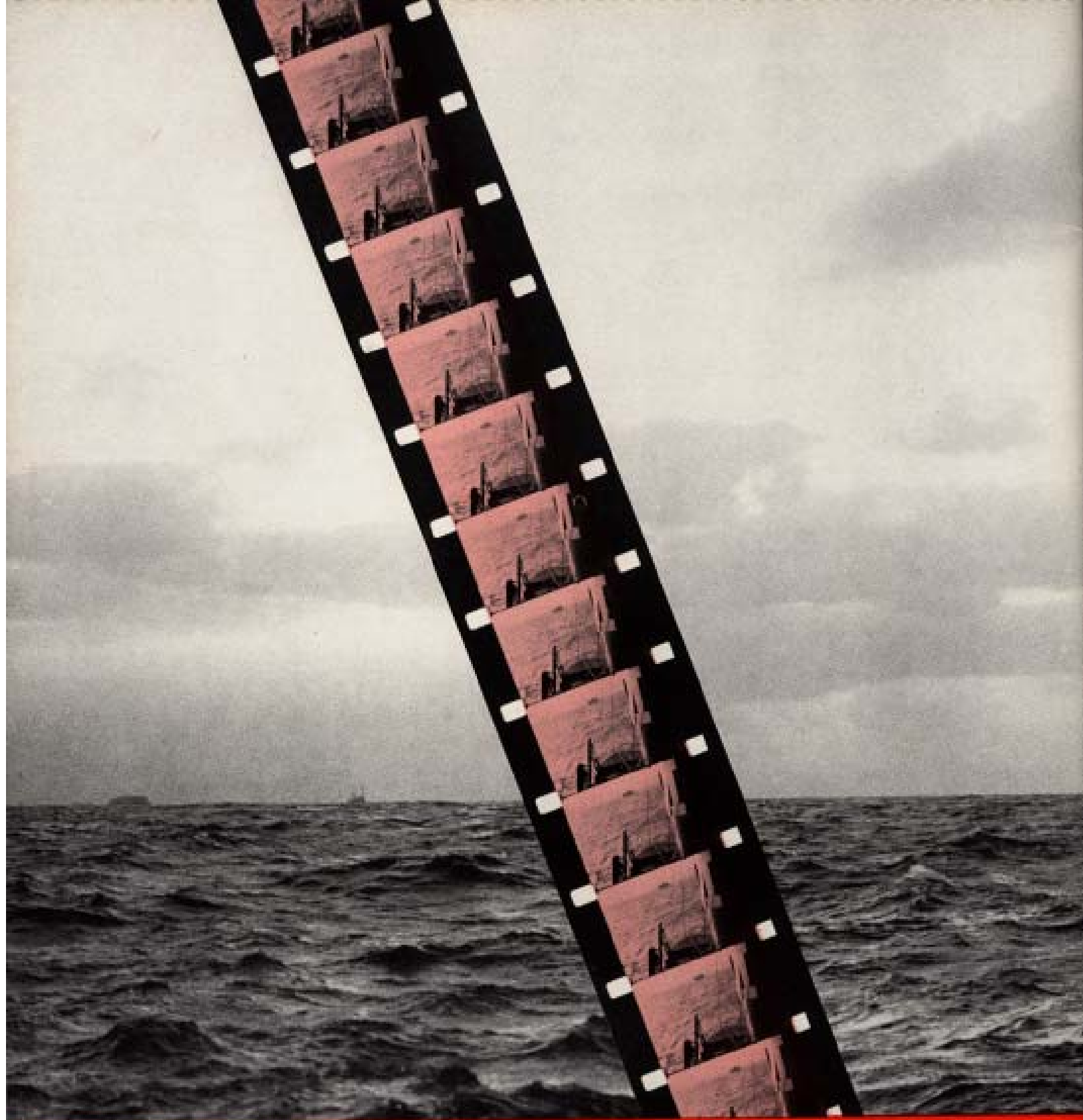


"... Fifteen men on a 110-foot craft not built for pleasure. The on-four, off-eight-hours routine punctuated by fire and lifeboat drills, etc.



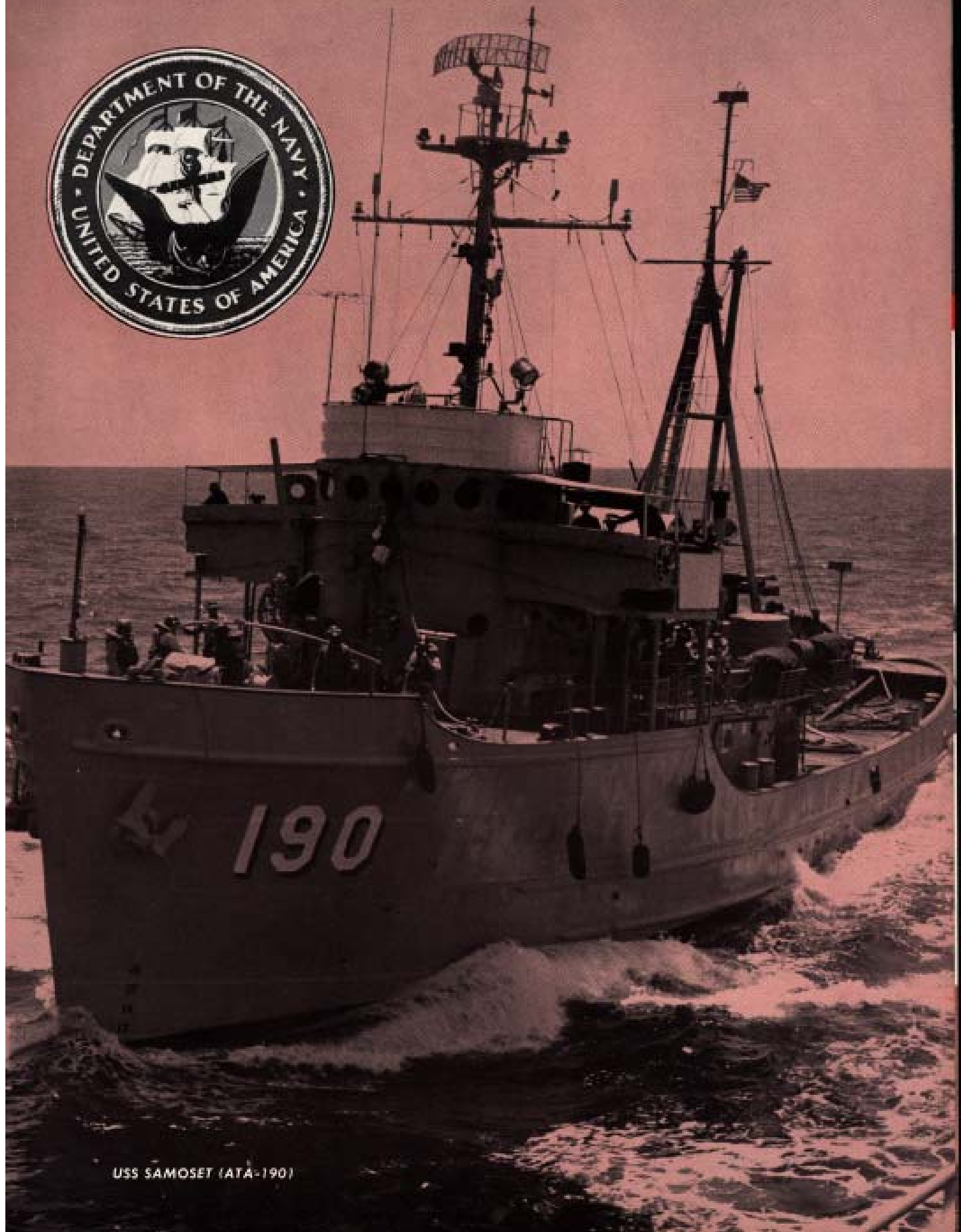
"... While off-watch became by-the-numbers landscape painters... A newly assembled plastic tug model, painted in Moran colors, hung drying in the sun."





"...The color and dramatic moments of the voyage, precariously caught on movie film... the sea, friend and opponent, the tossing tug, the straining hawser and the faces... tense, then relaxed as the feel of a new voyage gives way to anticipation of arrival."

When, completed, this 16mm. movie will be available for use by business, educational and social groups—for the asking. Those who have seen Moran's on-the-spot, Texas Tower No. 4 film will welcome this addition. (Further details in the next issue of Tow Line.)



USS SAMOSET (ATA-190)



CHESTER, PA, TO MARACAIBO, VENEZUELA

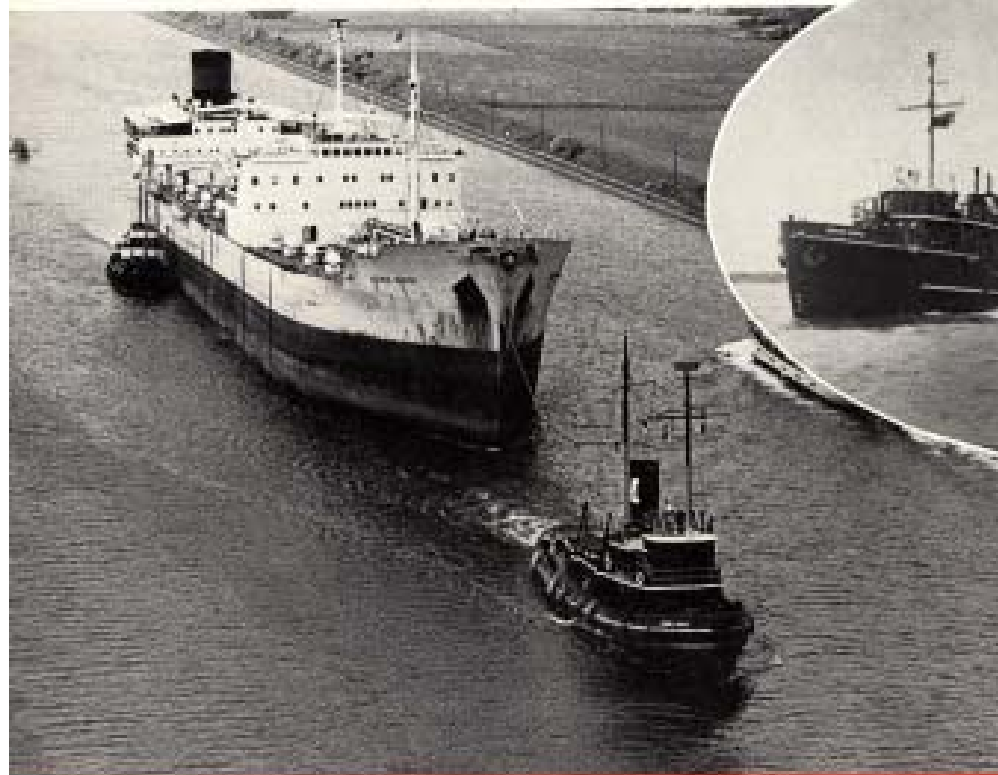


ARGENTINA, NEWFOUNDLAND TO GOOSE BAY, LABRADOR



CUBACAO, D.W.I. TO BALTIMORE, MD.

TYPICAL MORAN



BOSTON TO MONTREAL TO CANAL ZONE

SEA TO NEW YORK TO KIEL, GERMANY

PHILADELPHIA, PA, TO NEWPORT NEWS, VA.





NEW YORK TO THULE, GREENLAND

OCEAN TOWS



CHARLESTON, S. C. TO ST. NAZAIRE, FRANCE



CLEVELAND, OHIO TO JACKSONVILLE, FLA.



CHESTER, PA. TO HAMBURG, GERMANY



NEW YORK TO SAN FRANCISCO



