

THE CAPTAINS' LOG

Stories of Saban Seafarers and their families - from the writings of Will Johnson



Captains' Suites



About the author

Will Johnson was born on Saba. From the age of 13 he went to school in Curaçao. In October 1960 he went to Sint Maarten, where he started writing columns for the weekly Windward Islands Opinion a year later. In 1968 he founded the Saba Herald, which existed for twenty-five years, and the monthly magazine The Labor Spokesman. Later he wrote for the magazine Weekender from The Daily Herald and he founded the website The Saba Islander. He also wrote various novels and political books.

A teacher by profession, he was also active in politics. From 2004 to 2007, he was closely involved in the political reforms of October 2010 .

In 2010 he left active politics, but remained as chairman of the Windward Islands People's Movement.



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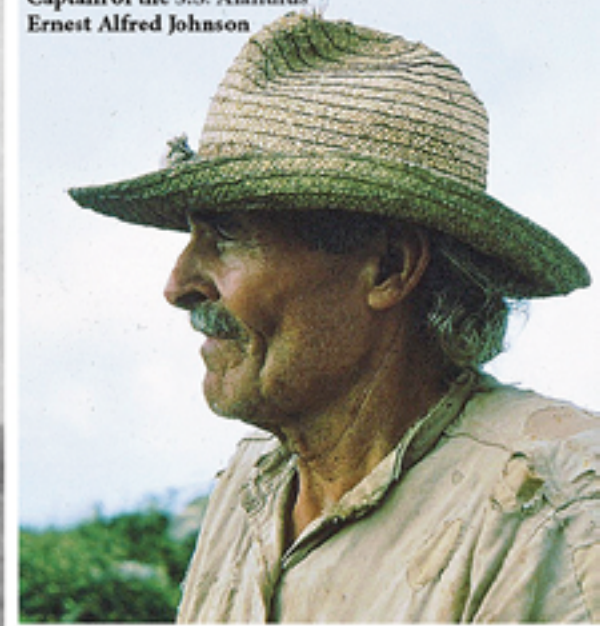
Captain Ernest Alfred Johnson

Rescue of a submarine crew



S.S. Alanthus standing by the partially sunken USS S-5, September 1920

Captain of the S.S. Alanthus
Ernest Alfred Johnson



In my book "Tale's from my Grandmother's Pipe" I have already written about a unique sea saga involving Captain Ernest Alfred Johnson of Saba. This took place just after World War I.

Captain Ernest Alfred "Freddie" Johnson was born on Saba on Sunday June 15th, 1884. His father was William James Johnson and his mother was Judith Eleanor Dowling. In 1906 he married Mary Ellen Hassell whose parents were Abram Thomas Hassell and Mary Ellen Darsey.

He lost his father at a young age. His brother John William "Sonny" Johnson told me that he and his father had gone fishing in the cliffs in a place known as the "Vipers Hole" also known as "Wiba Hole." His father slipped on a rock and the ensuing fall crushed his head on the rocks below. Sonny was a little boy and he scrambled up the cliffs to "Booby Hill" where they lived, to bring the sad news. It took hours before a boat could get around the island to retrieve the body.



The above pictures are a true love story of E.A. Johnson and Mary E. Hassell. E.A. Johnson promised to marry Mary E. Hassell when she was then a girl 7 years old. He never saw her again until she was 17 years old. He was roaming the sea and was shipwrecked. The storm drove me back to meet her in 1904. 103 days through a hell but it was a heaven to me to meet the

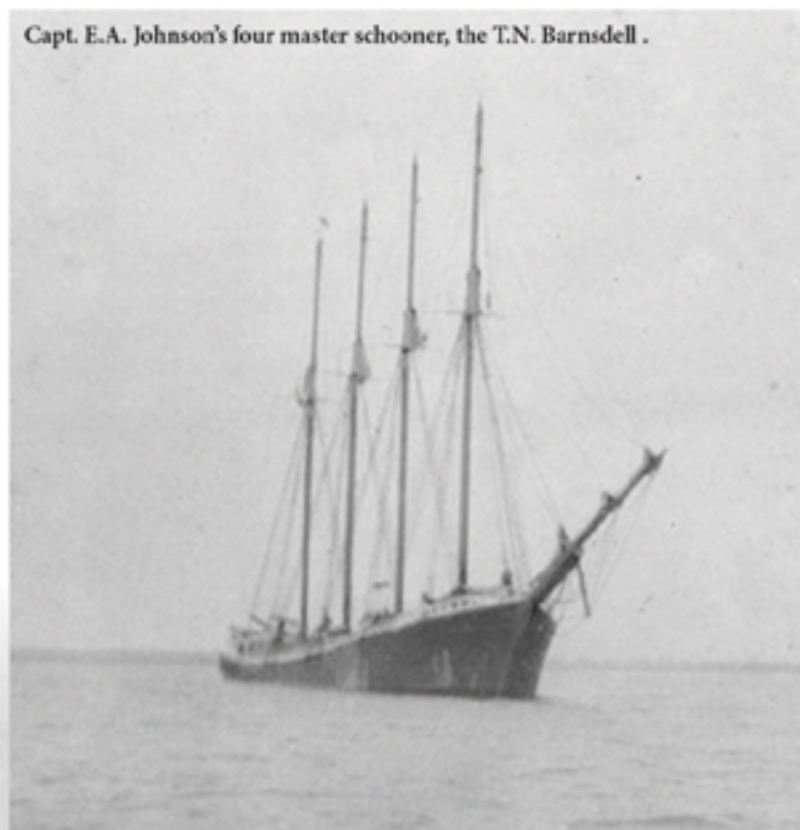


E.A. JOHNSON 2nd officer of SS Saratoga ward line ship. He served on the ward ships from 3rd officer to 1st from 1915-1919. I saved 4 Ward line ships from disasters through my dreams. SS SARATOGA SS ESPERANZA SS MATANZAS SS CAUTA

Captain Freddie went to sea early on as a teenager. When he was old and lived in his home on Booby Hill which he built in 1906 with lumber brought on a Saba schooner from New York, he became a celebrity of sorts. Dr. Goslinga who was Inspector of Education at the time interviewed him and put together a manuscript called "21 knot Johnson". Years later the famous Antillean author Dr. Frank Martinus Arion fell in love with the manuscript and wanted to publish it. He even came to Saba and made a presentation in the Youth Center in The Bottom and made a plea for the manuscript to be published. But it came to nothing.

Captain Johnson had an eventful career. He even owned a large four master schooner, the T.N. Barnsdell. His nephew William (son of his brother William a.k.a. Buck) was a commander of a large battle ship during the Vietnam War.

Capt. E.A. Johnson's four master schooner, the T.N. Barnsdell.



The village of Booby Hill where Capt. Johnson was born and lived his last years.

The most remarkable event of Captain Freddie's career though was the rescue of the crew of the submarine USS S-5.

During the month of August 1920, the S.S. Alanthus, under the command of Captain Freddie, and the S-5 submarine, 231 feet in length were in Boston harbor. At the time the S-5 was the largest submarine in the United States Navy.

As the dawn of that fateful morning of 31 August broke, the sub started on her journey to Baltimore. While she was closing in on Delaware's Cape Henlopen in 170 feet of water, her Commander Cooke, decided to dive. The S-5 began to descend to the dark waters below. Slowly she went down to 50 feet, and at 60 feet she tried to level off but was unable to do so. She continued to plunge in the dark depths. An air induction valve, which had been opened, was unable to close.



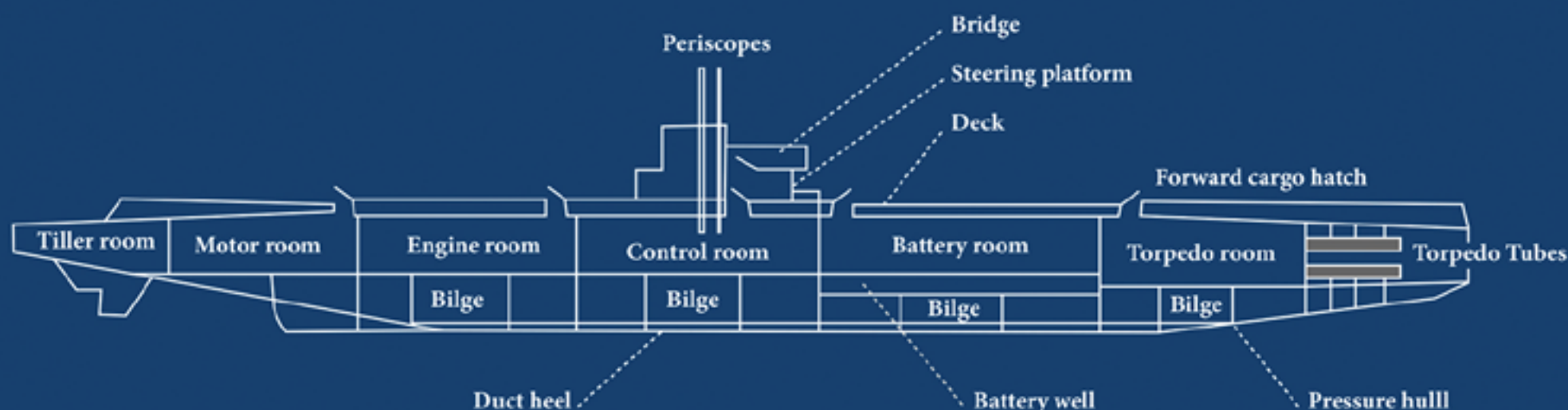
In an article in *Undersea Warfare*, the Official Magazine of the U.S. Submarine Force, additional information was revealed on this historic incident.

Somewhat after 1900 hours, several men who had found refuge in the motor room – now the top most compartment – reported a startling observation: the sound of waves beating against the hull! The truth dawned: Given S-5's length, the depth of water where she was marooned, and the angle she made with the horizontal, 20 feet of the boat's stem was protruding above the surface! However, the after escape hatch was still 30 feet below water, and even if the boat were completely vertical, the hatch would barely break the surface. Cooke immediately realized that there was only one final possibility – to cut their way out.

Partially sunken USS S-5, September 1920



Schematic diagram of USS S-5



Abaft the motor room was one very small compartment – the tiller room – where the rudder post and steering gear were located. Around 2000 hours, Savvy Cooke made his way upward from the control room, and with several crew members and a manual breast drill, entered the tiller room for an attempt to bore through the three-quarter inch, high-strength steel that separated them from the outside world. Despite the cramped conditions and awkward angle of attack, the men had succeeded within twenty minutes in drilling a quarter inch hole through the hull, which revealed that indeed the stem was well out of water and – not surprisingly – that night had fallen.

With only a selection of drills and miscellaneous hand tools to work with, Cooke decided to proceed by drilling a circle of closely-spaced holes and employing a hammer and chisel to knock out the intervening metal. With perseverance, this would eventually result in a large enough opening for a man to wriggle through, but considering how long it had taken to drill the first hole, it would likely take over three days to finish the job.

Nonetheless, Cooke organized the crew into working parties to take on the back-breaking task, and the drilling began in earnest within an hour.

The crew kept at it all night long, and by sunrise in the morning of Thursday, 2 September, had opened up a slot through which they could scan much of the horizon in the gathering dawn. Two ships appeared, too far away to be of any help. Meanwhile, the atmosphere inside the boat was becoming increasingly foul, and the effects of oxygen-deprivation and carbon dioxide asphyxiation were worsening rapidly. The men panted for breath and could barely summon the energy needed to climb up into the stern and take their turns drilling on the hull. Moreover, as air escaped through the widening hole, the decreasing internal pressure allowed more water to leak into the hull, and the boat began slowly sinking back toward the bottom. The crew's race against time accelerated.



Crew of the S-5

By 1400 Thursday afternoon, 24 hours after S-5 nosed into the bottom, Cooke and his drilling teams had only achieved a triangular hole six by eight inches, and most of his men were either incapacitated or unconscious from lack of oxygen.

Then, when all seemed lost, another ship appeared, much closer than the first two, and Savvy and his men searched frantically for a way to attract attention. Ultimately, they found a ten foot copper pipe, fastened a sailor's tee-shirt to it, thrust it out through the hole in the hull and waved desperately for help.

The ship was a small coastal steamer, SS Alanthus, bound from New York to Newport News under the command of Ernest A. Johnson, a veteran merchant mariner. Although Alanthus was actually moving away from S-5 at the time, by an extraordinary stroke of luck, a man on deck glimpsed the distant outline of the submarine's stem and its fluttering white flag. Alanthus immediately came around to investigate.



Captain of the S.S. Alanthus
Ernest Alfred Johnson



Johnson brought Alanthus as close to the hull as he dared and had himself rowed over in a small boat to the submarine's protruding stem. Johnson shouted: "Where bound?" and Savvy Cooke shouted back: "Hell by compass." Johnson immediately recognized the urgency of the situation and the need to act quickly. He returned to his ship, maneuvered her against the submarine, and tethered S-5's stern to Alanthus with a manila hawser, chain slings, and cables. Next, he ordered a wooden platform erected to give working access to the submarine's stern, and his engineers improvised an air pump to replenish the atmosphere in the stricken boat. With some of the immediate danger relieved, Captain Johnson then turned to the problem of getting Cooke and his men out of the submarine.

Johnson had left Alanthus' radio operator in New York, so he had no way to call for help. Moreover, he had no drills or cutting tools onboard, so to continue enlarging the escape hole, his men under Chief Engineer Carl Jakobsen had to depend on using the S-5's own badly worn equipment, passed out through the small opening. By 1700, Jakobsen's crew had resumed drilling from outside the hull, but progress was agonizingly slow. Luckily, at about the same time, another much larger ship appeared on the horizon. It was the 4,800 ton passenger steamer, the SS General George W. Goethals, which Captain Johnson succeeded in alerting with an emergency flag hoist. Goethals' Master, Captain E.O. Swinson, brought his ship to the scene and anchored nearby. Fortunately, Goethals was considerably better equipped than Alanthus, and was able to radio the Navy for assistance. All up and down the eastern seaboard from Philadelphia, Norfolk, New York, and New London, Navy ships prepared to cast off and head for the scene.

Swinson sent his Chief Engineer, William Grace, and the latter's first assistant Richard McWilliams, to help with the drilling, and they brought a manual ratchet drill that proved much better suited to the task. Since S-5's crew was still in considerable danger, and the first Navy rescuers wouldn't arrive until 0400 Friday morning, the two merchant captains agreed to continue with their own effort, and Grace and McWilliams took over the drilling shortly after 1900. The two engineers attacked the job with a will and grace – an able man was able to drill a new hole every four or five minutes. By midnight, they had completed an 18 inch circle of holes, and an hour later having chiseled out the remaining metal, drove in the resulting chunk of hull plating with a sledge hammer. After nearly 36 hours trapped in the disabled boat, S-5's crew was free!

The men made their way out one by one and were ferried to an improvised infirmary in Alanthus's galley, where two doctors from Goethals provided emergency treatment. Because of the debilitated condition of the crew and the need for each of them to climb much of the length of the submarine to get out, evacuating the 40 men was a difficult and laborious process, only completed after 0330, just as the first Navy ships began to arrive. Savvy Cooke, awake for nearly two days, was last to leave his command.

Captain of the S.S. Alanthus
Ernest Alfred Johnson



The last of over a half-dozen Navy ships to reach the scene in the early morning of Friday, 3 September was the battleship USS Ohio (BB-12), which appeared at 0900. By then, Goethals had already left the scene, and Cooke and most of his men were asleep but recovering quickly onboard Alanthus. The small freighter was asked to make a first attempt to salvage the submarine by towing her to shallow water nearer land, but the task was too much for her limited power. Thus, after S-5 was made fast to Ohio and the rescued crew transferred, Alanthus left for Newport News to the cheers of the fleet. Late in the afternoon, Ohio herself attempted to tow the submarine nearer to shore, but after several hours with Ohio at full power and S-5 apparently dragging along the bottom, the towing cable parted. At that time, only four miles had been made good toward land, and operations to save the boat were suspended.

Although the Navy gave up their attempt to salvage S-5 in 1921, her hulk was rediscovered in 1989 by civilian sport divers 48 miles southeast of Cape May, New Jersey, and it remains a challenging dive site today.

The circle of plating cut labourisly from S-5's hull to allow Cooke and his men to escape was preserved and may be seen today in the Navy Museum at the Washington, DC, Navy Yard. It is approximately two feet in diameter and 3/4ths inch thick.

Subsequently, the Secretary of the Navy rewarded Captains Johnson and Swinson, and engineers Jakobsen, Grace and McWilliams for their part in the rescue.

Captain Freddie lived on with his memories at his home on Booby Hill and is buried in a private cemetery above his house on Bobby Hill together with his beloved wife. That his memory should not be forgotten we record this heroic story for posterity!

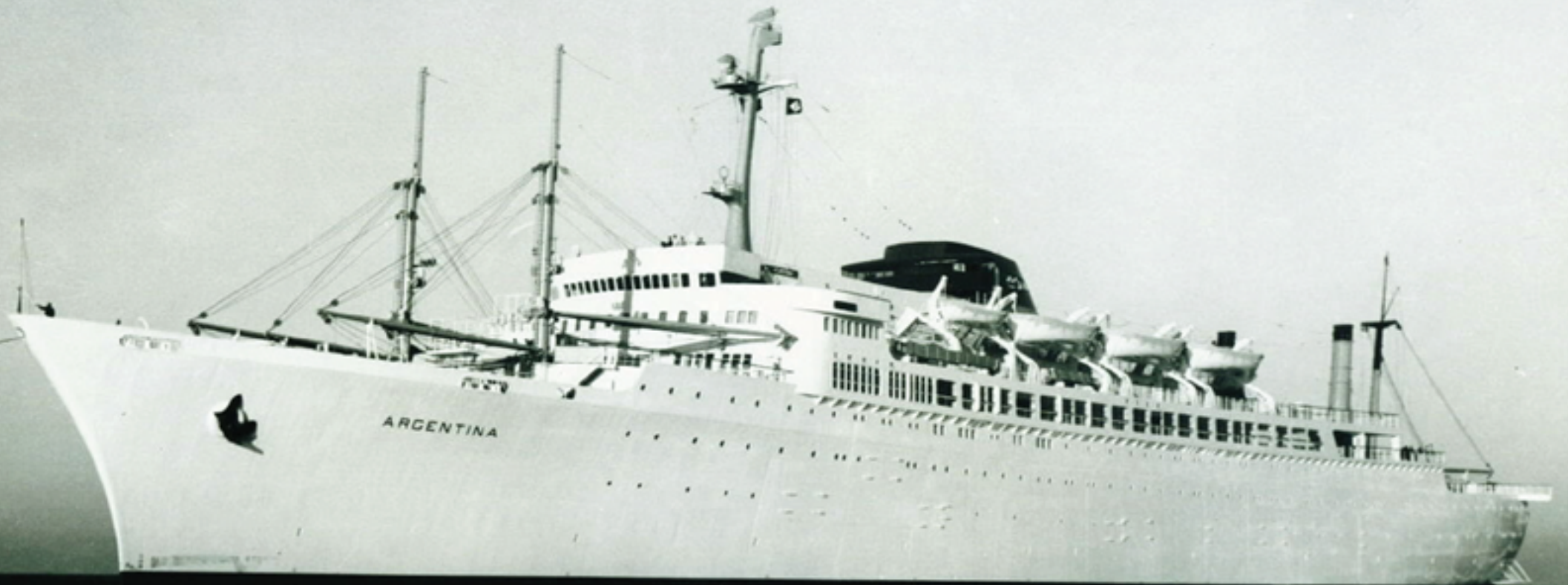


A nice view of Booby Hill in 1964. Photo by Father Boradori. Village where Capt. Freddie was born and after a life of adventures at sea he returned to and is buried there.



Commodore Thomas Simmons

Our Own Commodore...

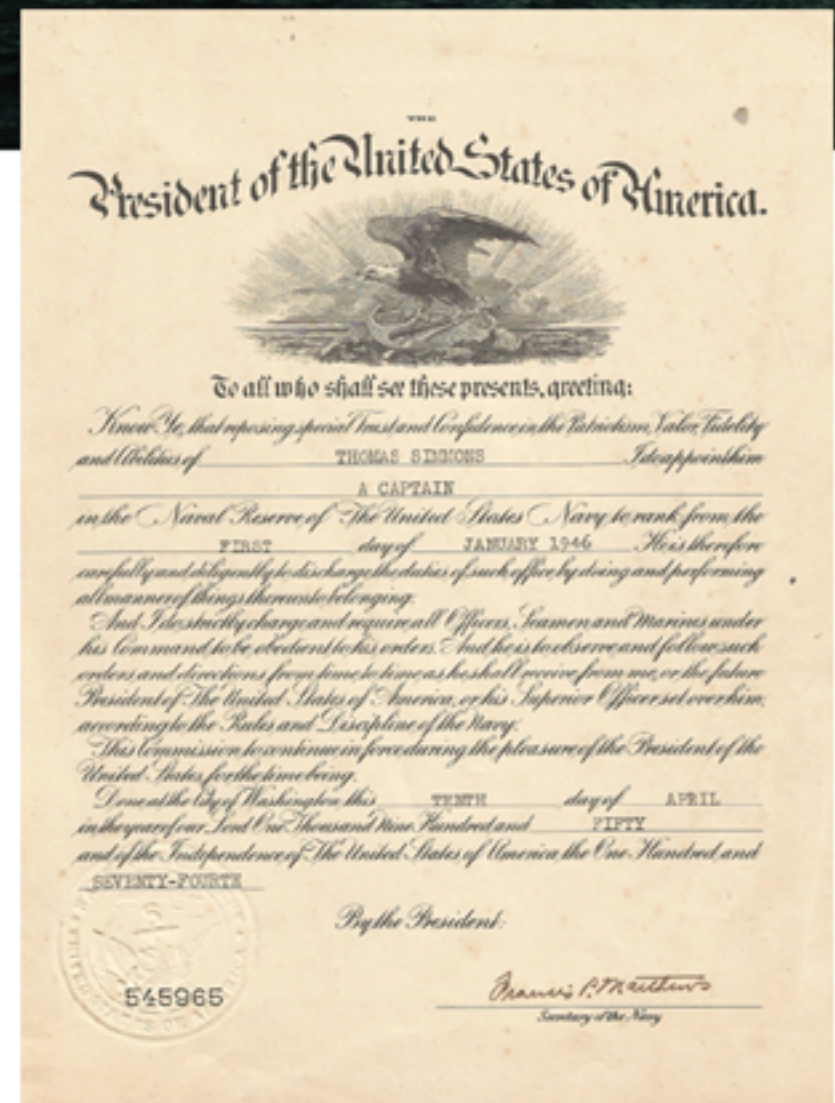


Moore-McCormack Lines S.S. Argentina

He was born on Saba on April 4th, 1895 son of Margareth Jane Simmons and Joseph Benjamin Simmons. The sea was very much into his blood. His mother 'Maggie Jane' was born in New York to a Saban father who was lost in the North Atlantic and her mother was a Manning from Barbados. Many Sabans married into Barbados families back then as there was so much trade and contact with Barbados.

He also lost two brothers at sea. On a plaque in the Christ Church Anglican church in The Bottom one can read: "In loving memory of John Simmons, age 52 years, David Simmons, age 40 years, Richard R. Simmons, age 22 years, Isaac Simons age 16 years. Lost at sea September 1918. 'We cannot Lord thy purpose see but all is well that's done by thee.'"

They were on the Danish registered schooner the 'Blanford' from St. Thomas. The vessel and its crew were lost coming out of Miami and bound for these islands.



Like most young men of Saba at the turn of the century, Commodore Tom Simmons started his career at the age of sixteen on a ship sailing through the West Indies and along the coast of the United States. Many of these schooners, although registered in territories belonging to the English (e.g. Barbados), Swedish (St. Barth's), and Danish (St. Thomas), were owned by Sabans, and many by Simmons' family.

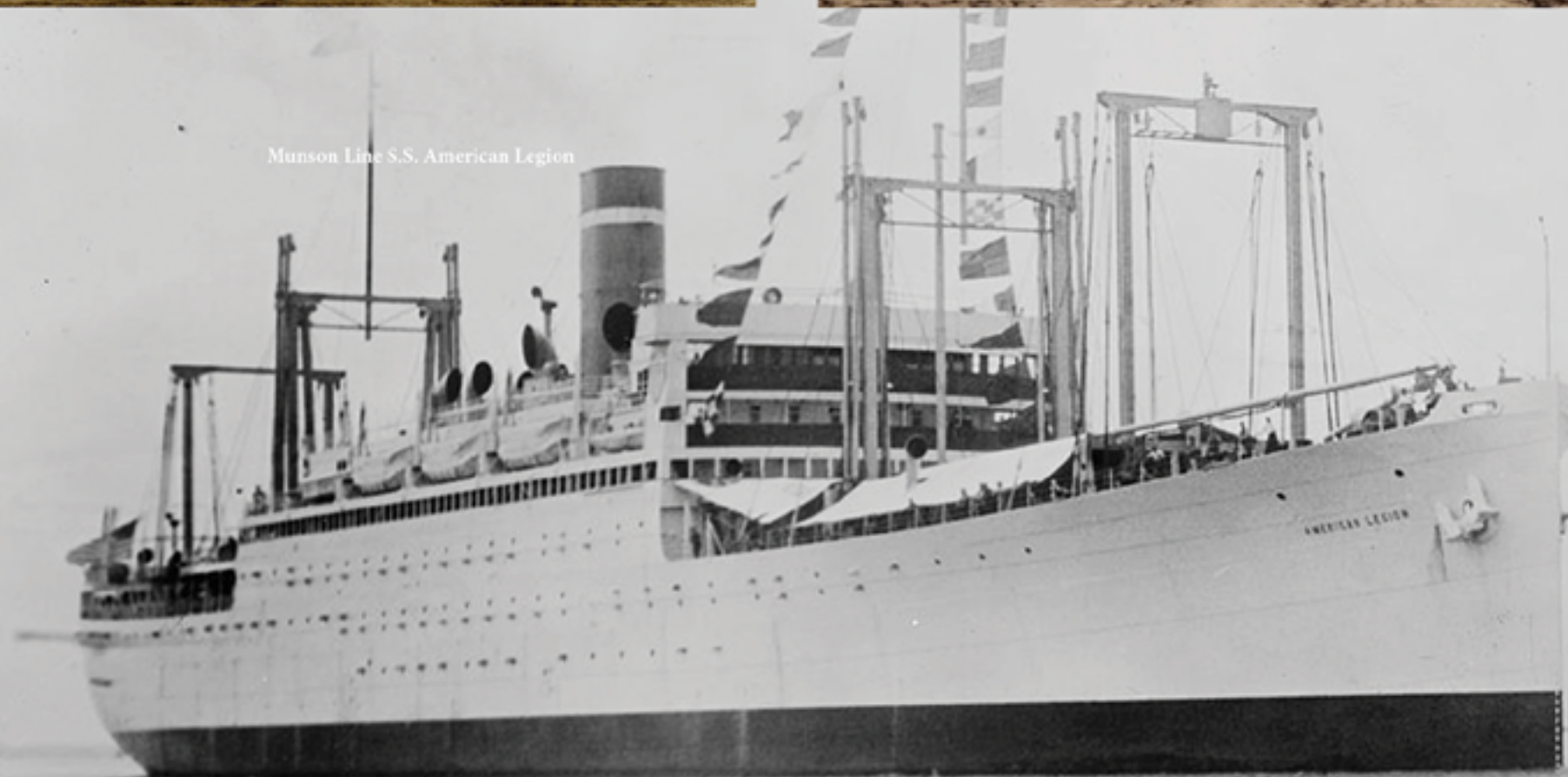
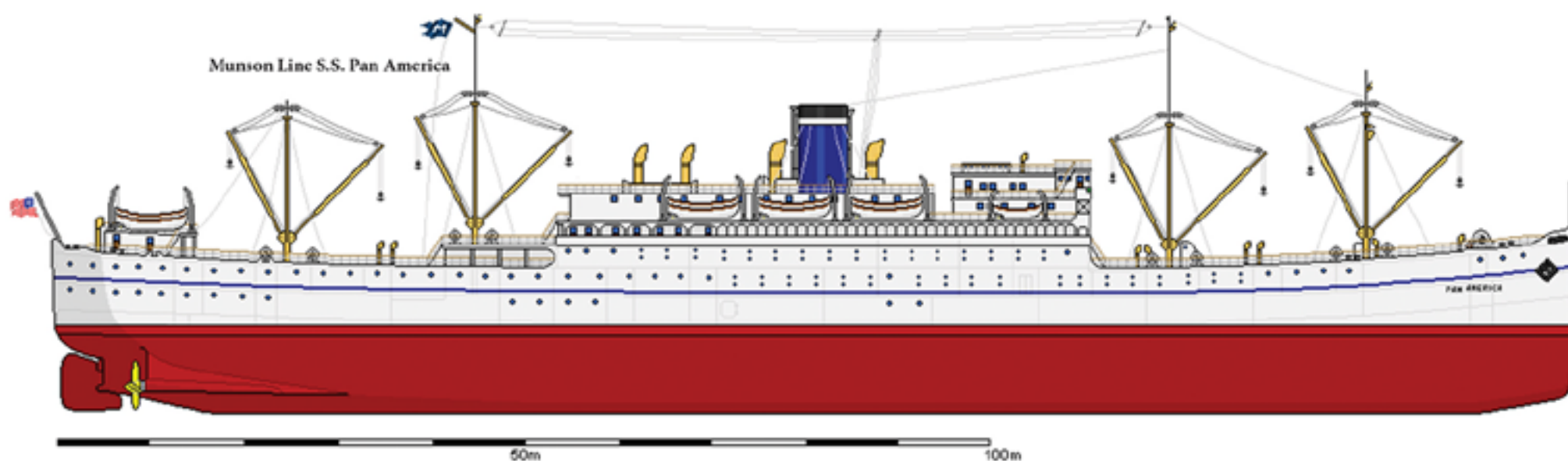
He worked his way up to second mate on schooners and then joined the American Hawaiian Line as quartermaster. In 1917, he went over to the Munson Steamship Line as third officer on the passenger Liner Murio. He later became captain and was in command on the maiden voyage of the old 32,000 ton Argentina, as well as the new 22,000 ton luxury liner by the same name. Before joining Mooremack he had been in command of the passenger ships Pan America, Western World, Southern Cross and American Legion.

The old Argentina, under his command, was the first troop ship to enter the ports of Australia during World War II, and also to stand by for D-Day in England.

He later became Commodore of the Moore-McCormack Line. He spent fifty-two years at sea and was awarded the highest decoration by the government of Brazil given to a foreigner.



Moore-McCormack Lines S.S. Argentina



During World War II, he continued in command of the Argentina while it was in military service as a troop carrier. After the war, he and the Argentina went back into the South American cruise trade until the Argentina was retired in August of 1958. When the new luxury liner Brazil made her maiden voyage in 1958, Commodore Simmons was on the bridge. He also captained the first trip of the sister ship - the new Argentina, where he remained.



Moore-McCormack Lines S.S. Brazil

Commodore Simmons' wartime recollections were, he said, completely full of lack of excitement. He never mentioned that his S.S. Argentina was the first troop ship to carry U.S. troops to Australia, the first at Oran and among the first into England for stand-by for the D-Day invasion of Europe. But one instance stood out in his memory; he was Captain of the old Argentina returning with troops from Australia through the Caribbean during a period when enemy submarine action was particularly intense. At full speed, all precautions, red alert, a lookout spotted a raft. It was lonely, pitiful, occupied by one feeble scarecrow of a man. At the alarm, Tom Simmons turned his ship, slowed and — despite a natural reluctance to expose the ship, plus adverse comments from military experts aboard — quickly rescued the sole survivor of a torpedoing. Then he turned the Argentina back on her course and sped safely away. This act of mercy was typical of the Commodore. But more typical was his shrug of the shoulders in denying that it was anything "special" that anyone else wouldn't have done.

Commodore Simmons' last trip took him amidst friends in the Caribbean port of Barbados, in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. Then he and the Argentina sailed to South and East Africa, through the Suez, to the Mediterranean and homeward via Italy, Spain and Portugal. These were familiar friendly places to Tom Simmons, faces of friends whom he relished visiting. At many of the ports, officials, old cronies, travelling companions and the 'Simmons people' planned commemorative ceremonies marking the 50th and retirement year of service of Commodore Thomas N. Simmons.

A grandfather over a dozen times, Commodore Simmons enjoyed his holidays at his home on Long Island. But the sea was part of him and anyone could see from his Argentina that he was a man of the sea.

Commodore Tom Simmons was married to Enid May Simmons by whom he had six children. Her father was Solomon (Butchy Coonks') Simmons who was a captain of square riggers. Her mother was the daughter of a Scotsman who lived in Montego Bay Jamaica and she had two sisters and one son. The son remained in Jamaica while the daughters went to New York. One married Captain Cameron Dudley Simmons and the other one married Tom Simmons.

He retired in 1963 and later moved to Florida where he died on March 27th, 1970 at Palm Beach Gardens.



FICHA INDIVIDUAL

Paq America S/S ARGENTINA
Molson Steamship Lines AMERICAN REPUBLICS LINE

Nombre del tripulante Thomas Simmons
N. Americano edad 40 años
de Joseph y de Margaret
Estado civil Casado sabe leer? si sabe escribir? si
Estatura 1 m. 79 cent.
Color del cabello Gris
Nariz (chica, grande, regular, recta, etc.) regular
Color de ojos azul
Color de piel blanco
Señales particulares

IMPRESIONES DIGITALES

Puesto que ocupa en el buque Capitan
Puerto en que se embarcó Nueva York
Contratado por viaje redondo si hasta
Nueva York o indefinidamente
Tiempo que navega 25 años
Posee libreta de navegación expedida por las autoridades
Nación Estados Unidos de América
Fecha June 19th. 1930
No. de registro Master's License No.
Observaciones
Lugar y fecha 27 de Mayo 1932 Nueva York

IMPRESIONES DIGITALES

Firma del Tripulante.
CAPTAIN'S OFFICE
U.S.S. ARGENTINA

FICHA INDIVIDUAL

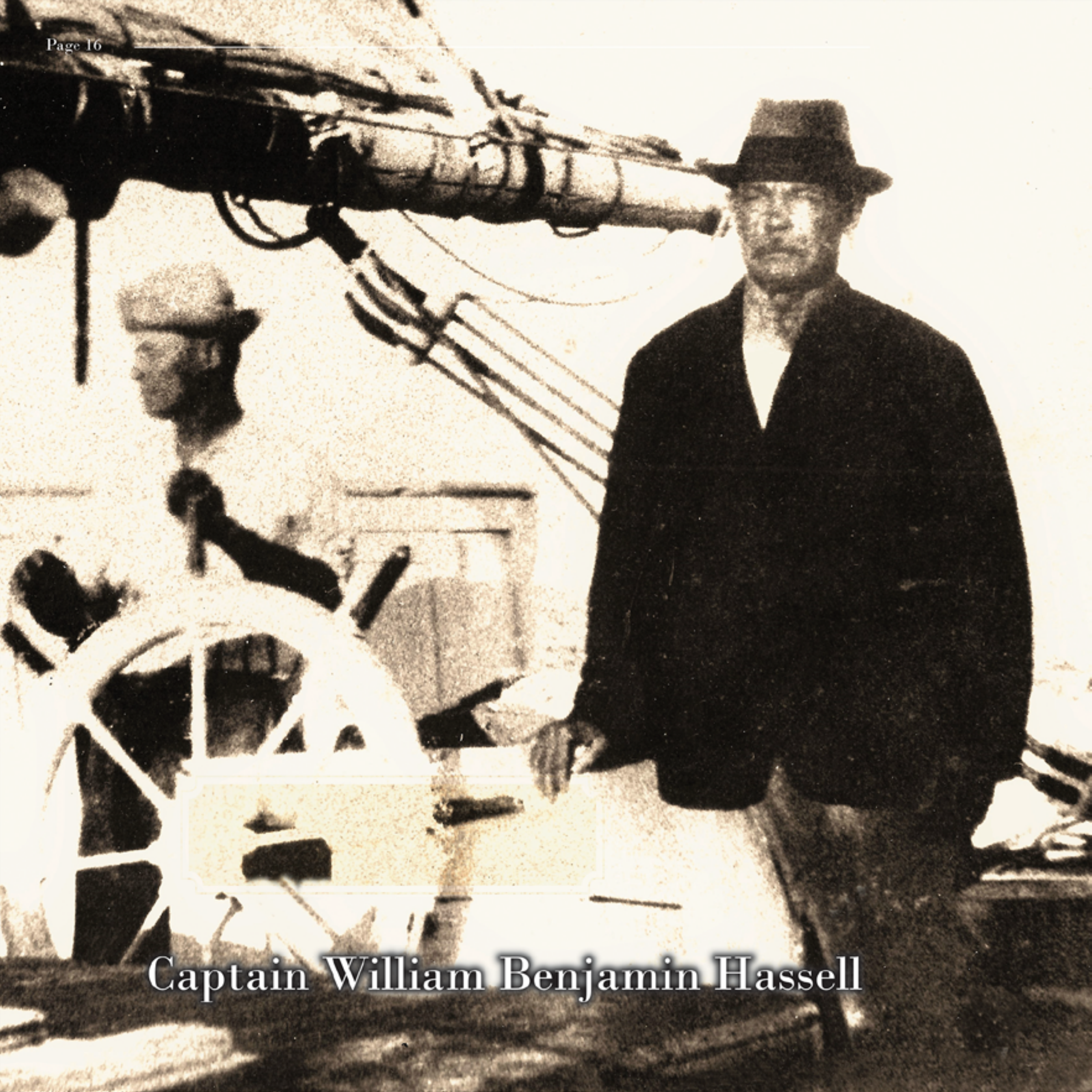
ARGENTINA
Moore-McCormack Lines, S/A
Nombre del tripulante Thomas Simmons
EUA edad 57 años
de Joseph y de Margaret
Estado civil Casado sabe leer? si sabe escribir? si
Estatura 1 m. 79 cent.
Color del cabello Gris
Nariz (chica, grande, regular, recta, etc.) Regular
Color de ojos Azul
Color de piel Blanca
Señales particulares Ningunas

IMPRESIONES DIGITALES

Puesto que ocupa en el buque COMANDANTE
Puerto en que se embarcó Nueva York
Contratado por viaje redondo si hasta
o indefinidamente 40 años
Tiempo que navega
Posee libreta de navegación expedida por las autoridades Nueva York
Nación E.U.A.
Fecha 5/7/45
No. de registro Licencia
Observaciones Ningunas
Lugar y fecha Alta Mar

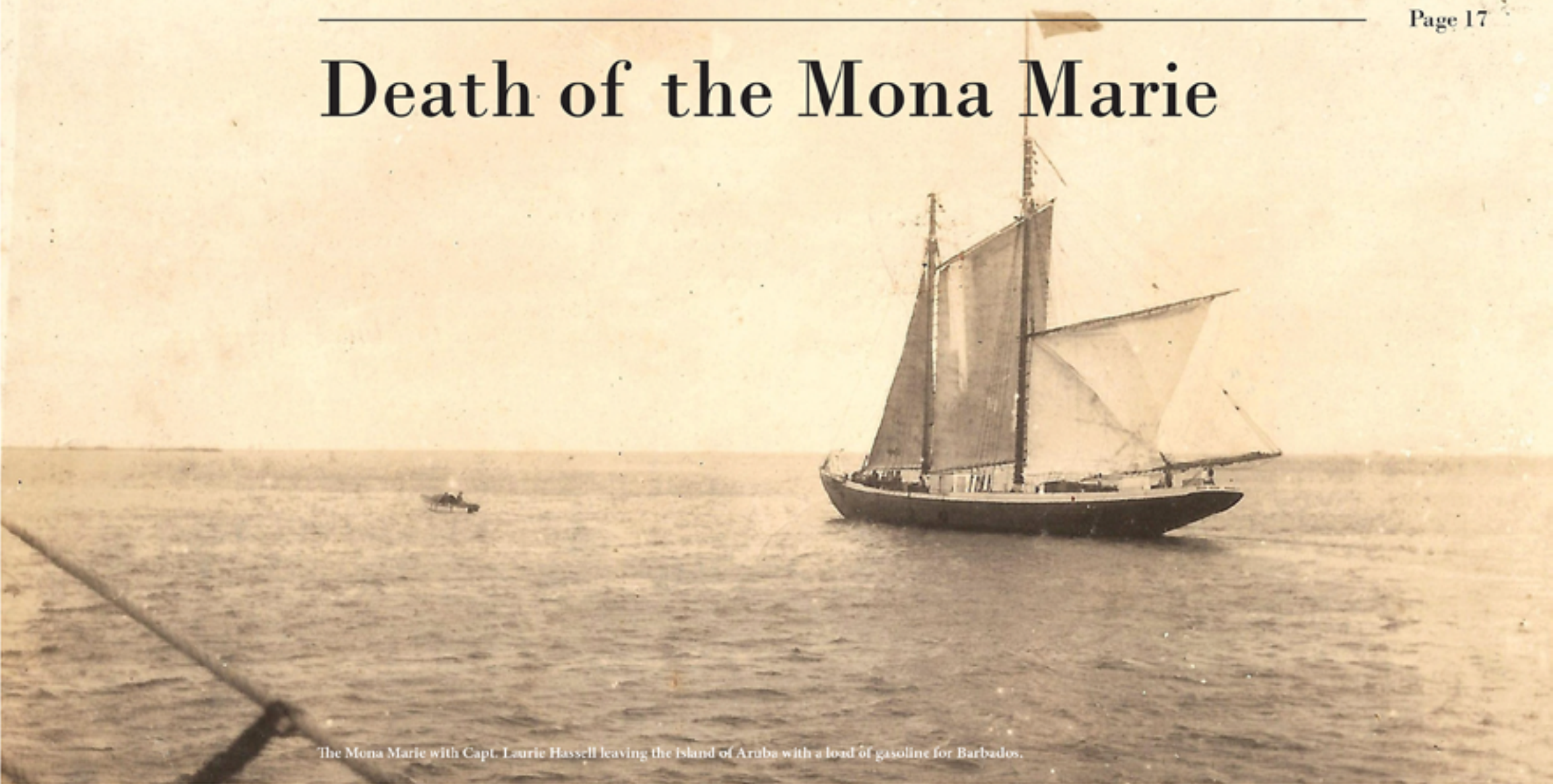
IMPRESIONES DIGITALES

Firma del Tripulante.
REPUBLICA ARGENTINA
FEB 1939



Captain William Benjamin Hassell

Death of the Mona Marie



The Mona Marie with Capt. Laurie Hassell leaving the Island of Aruba with a load of gasoline for Barbados.

The first part of this article is taken from the Barbados Advocate and was written by Tom M. Knowles. The second part is an amusing tale by the captain's son Laurie, himself a captain, of the ill-fated Mona Marie, under his command.

Tom M. Knowles: "While in my early teens, inter-island commerce was mainly handled by the schooner-owning fraternity. Many of these old sea-dogs had originally hailed from Saba, a tiny 5.1 square mile Island in the Dutch Antilles.

Men like the Vanterpools, the Johnsons, the Hassells and the Everys were synonymous with the schooner trade. They had to work hard to make a living and were highly respected by the mercantile community.

Capt. Ben Hassell was one of the leading figures in this marine trade. He and his wife Mary Love, came to Barbados from Saba over 70 years ago. They had 8 children – Herbert, Johnnie, and Ida who became Mrs. Bruce Goddard.

The next five were all born in Barbados and included Carl (now in Victoria), Laurie (now a retired tug captain from our port), Lloyd, (killed in the Dieppe raid), Ben, now living in Michigan and Alfred who had the dreadful experience of seeing his brother, Lloyd, killed in Dieppe.



The "Mona Marie" in the Bocas off Trinidad. Capt. Laurie's brother Ben, who was a radio operator on one of the Canadian passenger boats, took this photo.

Laurie and Lloyd's father Ben, owned more than 20 schooners during his lifetime. Amongst these were the 'Mona Marie', the 'Maisie Hassell', the 'Dutch Princess', the 'Lena', the 'Rhode Island' and the 'Mary C.Santos.'

After leaving college Laurie tried to get a job in Aruba, but after three fruitless months, he went to Curacao and joined the 'Rhode Island' serving nine months before the mast. His father had sent him a sextant and urged him to learn navigation.

After completing his service he joined the 'Rhode Island' signing on as Mate, from Barbados.

Eventually Laurie became captain of the 'Mona Marie' a fast two master which his father had bought for the princely sum of Bds\$5,000! He skippered this schooner through the Windward and Leeward Islands, going as far North as Turks and Caicos Islands on occasion. On one of these runs from Turks island to Barbados, he established a record crossing of 6 days less 3 hours.

This lovely schooner met a tragic end. On Sunday, June 28, 1942, she was about 50 miles South West of Barbados heading for Trinidad, with a cargo of empty oil drums."

The following letter I received from Laurelton (a.k.a. Laurie), Lower Black Rocks, St. Michael, Barbados, dated June 13th, 1996.

"Dear Will,

Received your letter of the 19th May and was very glad to hear from you.

I was born in Barbados on the 21st December 1913, was married on the 17/8/1936, which is the same date that my Father and Mother were married in Saba (but not the same year).

My Father wrote me while I was with Aldrich Dowling on the schooner 'Rhode Island' in Trinidad to come home as he had bought a Nova Scotia vessel called the 'Mona Marie' which had gone to Opporto Spain with codfish and on its way back to Canada she broke some of the wheel gear and put in to Barbados.

The 'Mona Marie' as I remember was 142ft overall and 26ft beam. No Bowsprit. She was termed as a "Knock About". She had two masts and a quarter deck beam. In other words she was not a flush deck. Two hatches and she could carry 230 tons.

Capt. Laurie in the back closest to the sail leaving Aruba with a cargo of gasoline for Barbados.



I was made master on the 7th April 1933 (aged 19). We left for Demerara (British Guiana), had two days over and left on Easter Monday of that year for Home.

The old man suffered from diabetes and he picked a pimple on his nose and it turned septic. We arrived in Barbados on the Tuesday evening and he died the next day.

I was on my own at the age of 19 years and 4 months. I made trips to Puerto Colombia, Haiti, Curacao, Bonaire and Aruba. We used to carry cotton seed, salt and transhipment cargo from England to the islands.

Now some experiences in port and at sea. In 1934 I carried my future wife and her sister and another friend for a trip to Guiana. On my way in I went to see that the anchors were ready. As I got up by the forecastle, a young boy that I had as a deck boy was standing by the forecastle companion way and not helping. So I ordered him to help the others with the chain and anchors. He told me "Captain, I so tired I could sleep with the dead now."

After we anchored and while lowering the main sail he fell overboard and I heard one of the crew say "O God the boy overboard."

The tide was falling so I jumped over and managed to hold him and told him to keep quiet and we could hold on to the anchor chain of another vessel that was anchored just astern of us, but he tried to get on top of me and on the second time I went under I knew I was drowning. I managed to get his hands off of me and he disappeared. It was 3 Am.

The Mona Marie was one of the four Saban owned schooners competing in the first race around the island of Barbados.



The Mate jumped with the board that we put the boom in when the mainsail was lowered and sail made up.

The crew then launched the boat and picked up the mate and I. I reported the matter to the authorities. On the Thursday morning the police came and told me they had found the body but it was in very bad condition and if I did not want to go and see it I could send someone else. But I went with them to the mortuary and as I removed the covering there was only three notches of the back bone and pelvis and the shanks all the other parts of the body were missing. All the flesh was eaten off by the sharks.

Capt. Frank Hassell of the schooner Edward VIIth was over there at the time and when he came to Barbados he told the harbour master Commander Wynne that he would not jump in the Demerara River for his mother.

On my return back to Barbados the Harbour Master told me he was going to recommend me for a medal attempting to save a life. I told him not to worry as if I had saved him no one would know. I do have a medal and certificate signed by King Edward VIIth when he was Duke of York.

The sinking of the schooner 'Mona Marie'

I left Barbados on the 28th of June 1942 at 11 o'clock for Trinidad having arrived here a few days earlier with some wallaba wood from Guyana for a bakery.

At about 5.30 pm I was aft with a friend of mine who was going back to Trinidad and then to Venezuela where he was working.

As I looked around I saw a submarine coming from the horizon on my starboard side so I immediately called the crew and told them what to do if we were attacked.



Capt. Laurie, son of Capt. Ben, pictured here sitting on the railing of the Mona Marie of which he was the Captain at the age of 19.

I went below in the cabin and got the Union Jack which was the flag we used to fly as the flag was registered in Canada and some ships papers. I gave them to Stanny Hendricks to put in the boat which had a motor. We had put in an extra tank of gas earlier.

As the crew got the boat ready to lower, the submarine came up and started to shoot at us with the machine guns. One of my crew got shot in the arm and another in the back, but not too serious. As it was getting dark you could see the tracer bullets passing through the sails and some even passed over me a few feet as I was lying on the deck. As the shooting stopped I got up and found out that Stanny on his way back aft had fallen overboard, so I threw him a life ring to hold on to it until we got back to him.

We got in the life boat and cast off as the vessel was hove to but still had slight movement forward. The sub came up and I came alongside just aft of the cannon tower and we climbed aboard the sub as the bullets had bored holes in the boat and it was sinking.

We were met by two men on the deck of the sub. One spoke perfect English and the other you could understand. They ordered us to go forward right by the big gun. The Commander of the sub told them what to ask me and then they relayed it to him in German.

As Stanny was dressed in white the fellow thought he was the captain, but Stanny pointed to me. They wanted the name of the ship, the cargo and where we were bound. I told them. Then they asked me if I had any wheat or coffee, so I knew they were short of grub.

By then the lifeboat had sunk so I asked the fellow to ask the commander to put me back aboard to get my other boat. He replied that the captain would put us back aboard and give us five minutes to cut away the sails. I said we could not do it in five minutes give us ten minutes. He turned back and said the captain says five minutes and then we shoot.

They then sent us right to the front of the submarine and the fellow went with us to give the captain the distance but every time he stopped him short. So then Stanny said to me the captain getting vex (he Stanny could speak Portuguese, French, Spanish and English so he could understand a little German as well).

So I told the fellow to tell the captain to let the submarine drop astern and let us get up over the stern.

He did it and eventually we got aboard and lowered the boat. I stayed to cut away the sails then jumped overboard and swam to the boat.

They then started shooting with the big gun trying to sink the vessel but as she had in empty drums she just listed to starboard. They fired ten shells and then turned towards us and shot five shots at us which dropped in the water a few feet away. It seemed that they would hit us. That is the only time I was scared. They then turned fired ten more at the vessel. By then I had altered my course and they fired three shots where they had seen me go the first time but by then I was in a much different place.

We pulled all night and the next evening we saw St. Vincent and eventually landed the Tuesday morning on the Island of Mustique at about 1.30 am. (June 30th, 1942)

No I do not have a copy of the 'Tales from my Grandmother's Pipe', but I would like 2 copies. Thanking you in advance, I remain,

Laurie Hassell."



The Mona Marie in the Bocas off the island of Trinidad.

The Barbados Advocate states further:

"Here they landed in a calm little bay, hauled up their lifeboat and Laurie and Hendricks tried to shelter under it while his men went for help.

Mosquitos were voracious and everyone was happy to be welcomed by Mr. Oliver in his home in the hills. Here they had coffee (there was no milk), sugar and biscuits and they went to bed.

Next morning the sea was raging in their little bay and Mr. Oliver assured them that no one in St. Vincent would believe they had landed safely there last night.

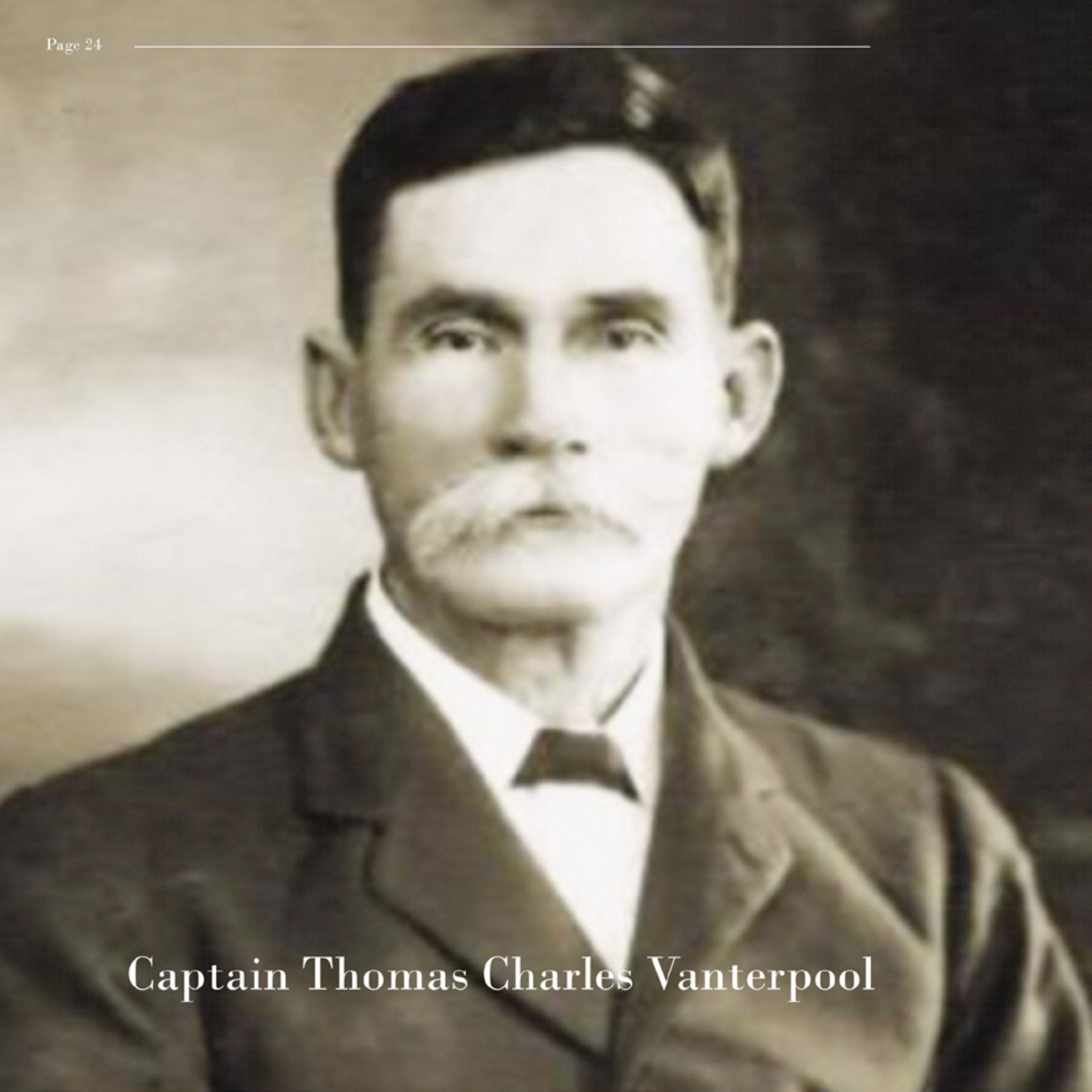
On Wednesday morning, they went by sailboat to St. Vincent arriving at 3 pm and met by Supt. Cozier of the Colonial Police Force. 'Massa Fred' Hazel (Hassell) looked after their welfare until they left for Barbados by schooner. In the meantime, the two wounded crew-members had been satisfactorily treated at the St. Vincent hospital."

So perished the Mona Marie but in a subsequent article I hope to tell you about her happier days.

Capt. Laurie died some years after this letter to me. After his death I received a letter with drawings and photos from the real Mona Marie in Nova Scotia after whom the schooner had been named. I would have loved to have shared that information with him as his love for that vessel was like the love of a man for a beautiful woman. And, talking about beautiful women, Captain Laurie must have been a charmer when he was young. He showed me some photographs of his wife and she must have been the real "Pride of Barbados" when he met her.

Another 19-year-old captain from Saba was a cousin of my mother. He was Capt. Will Simmons. At the age of 19 (around 1900) he was Captain of a large four master schooner the Andrew Adams and used to sail around the world. His entire crew was from Saba - Rupert Hassell (Chief Mate), Rudolph Simmons (Second Mate), Dory Heyliger (Engineer), Peter Hassell (Sailor) Ronald Hassell (Steward), Peter Every (Sailor) and Carl Hassell (Cabin Boy).

To all teenagers I say look at the lives of these old timers and remind yourselves "Yes we can."



Captain Thomas Charles Vanterpool

The Vanterpool Family

Thomas Clifford with his father Thomas Charles Vanterpool and his son Allan.

Thomas Charles Vanterpool (Captain Tommy) was born on August 20th, 1865 on Saba. His wife was Johannah Dinzey Leverock, daughter of Lt. Governor Moses Leverock.

He and his two surviving brothers became captains and owners of large schooners which traded between the West Indies and New York. Captain Tommy who owned the home which is now the residence of the Lt. Governor, also owned a large number of schooners in his lifetime. The largest was the Mayflower which was 147 feet long and weighed 190 tons. This schooner was built in Gloucester, Mass., to compete in the "Bluenose" races. My uncle Captain Charles Reuben Simmons who was captain of the Mayflower from 1928 to 1930, told me that in 1929 he left St. Kitts with 375 passengers, under sail, and arrived 48 hours later on Curacao. Once he carried 460 passengers from Dominica and St. Lucia with this schooner and was promptly fined on arrival for carrying too many passengers. They were being recruited by the Shell Company as labourers.



Thomas Charles Vanterpool

The Ina Vanterpool, 105 feet long and 191 tons was lost off St. Eustatius on September 16th 1926. Captain Tommy paid f162.500 for this three master schooner. She was built by Captain Lovelock Hassell in Jamestown Barbados and could carry 100 tons of cargo. Besides carrying freight and passengers, Captain Tommy also had the contract to carry the mails between the Northern Dutch islands and Curacao.

The Schooner Estelle, of Saba Island, owned by Capt. T.C. Vanterpool



His schooner the Estelle was the subject of an interesting report by Judge Polvliet who described a twelve day passage from Curacao to Sint Maarten with 26 passengers on board. The cook was a 13 year old boy from Saba, Diederick Every, who later lived in Baltimore. I met him when he was in his late eighties and interviewed him about life as a cook on a passenger schooner.

The schooner Lena Vanterpool once saved the life of her master Captain Tommy. As the story goes he used to smuggle out escaped convicts from Cayenne who paid their passage in gold garnered from the rivers of French Guyana. An old black woman on shore used to signal the Captain when prisoners were ready to board. On that particular night, the old lady signaled imminent danger. Captain Tommy did not wait to pull up the anchor, but ordered it cast away when he spied a French man-of-war rounding the point and coming in his direction. It is claimed that the Lena Vanterpool sailed so fast that when she reached Barbados the oakum had been washed out of her seams.

At one point when the French man-of-war was getting too close for comfort the captain ordered more sail and pleaded with his schooner "Go Lena go, your master is in trouble. Spread your wings and fly like an eagle." He had ordered the crew if the French caught up with them to put him in a barrel and throw him overboard.

The Vanterpools besides the home families had many 'by-sides' in all the islands. I will not mention how many children they had. It was the subject of much concern among the white Vanterpool descendants in the USA when I ventured an estimate once. But believe me that the two brothers Captain Tommy and Captain Ernest took the biblical encouragement to heart and they went forth and multiplied. And multiplied, a lot!

On the subject of gold! The late Commissioner John Woods once told me that his father Ben told him the following story. Captain Ernest gave him a sealed galvanized pail to bring to his house in The Bottom. It weighed a ton and he thought he would die by the time he got there. When the wife saw the pail she said: "I cannot believe this. Another pail of gold! What does Ernest intend to do with all this gold? The ceiling is full and under all the beds is full. I have to remind him that you cannot eat gold". I tell people that this is the house where gold lost its value.

The Vanterpools did not survive on Saba. Captain Tommy's son Professor Thomas Clifford Vanterpool became a famous scientist in Canada and won many awards and he has descendants there. Captain Tommy's granddaughter Sheila Lampe, formerly married to Tawa Yrausquin, lives on Aruba.

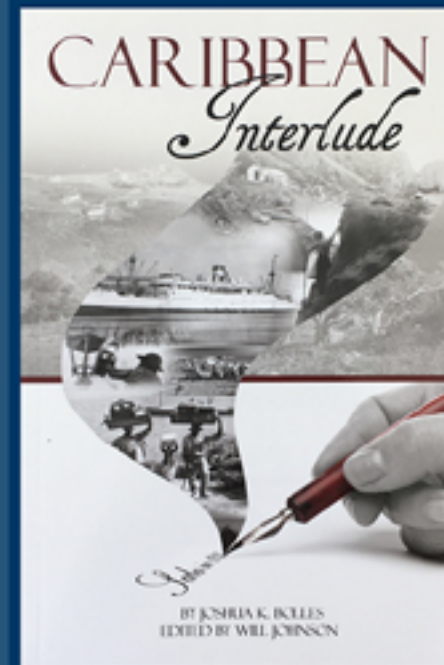
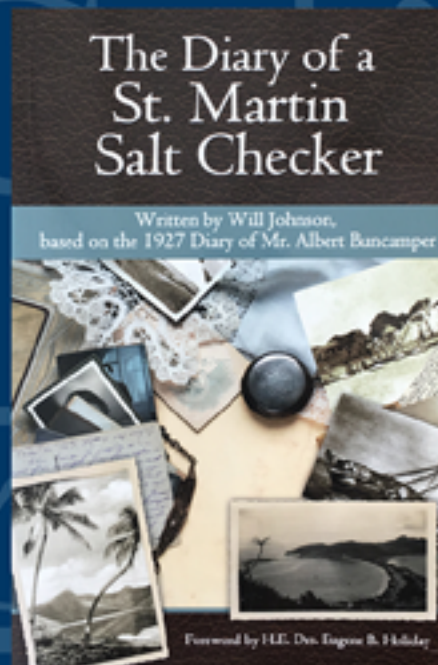
The following announcement signaled the last of the Vanterpools of Saba. This is taken from the Virgin Islands Daily News of June 6th, 1950 on St. Thomas. "Mrs. Ina Simmons and the Engle Simmons family thank all friends and acquaintances for kindness and sympathy shown in the death of their beloved father and uncle Thomas C. Simmons."



The house that Thomas Charles Vanterpool built on Saba - now the Lt. Governor's residence

The Vanterpools did Saba proud, and when you admire the residence of the Lt. Governor of Saba please take note that it is a replica of the house that Captain Tommy built. The original was infested with termites and the new one rebuilt in the same style in the nineteen sixties.

If you'd like to read more about Saba and her neighboring islands' histories these titles from Will Johnson are readily available on-island:



Will's other publications include: "Dreaming Big" and "For the Love of St. Maarten". He is the author of "Under the Sea Grape Tree" periodically published in St. Maarten's leading Newspaper "The Daily Herald." He also has an online blog "The Saba Islander" you can visit the site at: www.thesabaislander.com

Captains' Suites

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