

Legislation - vets

Schwabe COLL

Smith

January 12, 1945

Mr. J. Ward Smith
9 West 9th Street (Penthouse)
Tulsa 3, Oklahoma

Dear Sir:

I have your letter of recent date enclosing press clippings relative to inclusion of Merchant Marines in the provisions of the "G. I. Bill of Rights," etc.

I am glad to have your views on this matter and shall be glad to give the same thorough and conscientious consideration whenever the question is before Congress for action.

In the meantime, I am making a study of the status of these men in order to determine what I think can and should be done for them.

I trust that you feel free to write me at any time on these and other subjects of interest and offer such suggestions as you think appropriate in the premises.

Yours very truly,

George B. Schwabe, M. C.

GBS:CG

January, 2nd, 1945.

Congressman George Schwabe,
Washington, D.C.

Dear sir;

In re: of our telephone conversation the day you left, I am sending you two clippings from today's Tribune. I think these will tell more of what the boys want and why they want it, more than any words of mine.

As a father with a seventeen year old son, somewhere in the Pacific on a troop transport you can appreciate my interest.

There are over five hundred boys from Tulsa alone in the Merchant Marines at the present time and more going every day, so you see it is of vital interest to all Tulsans.

yours for a victorious New Year,

J. Ward Smith

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J. Ward Smith". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

9West, 9th, st. (Penthouse)
Tulsa, #3 Okla.

Tanker Explosion Kills Marine Men

LEONARDO, N. J., Jan. 2.—(AP) Two U. S. merchant marine men were killed, six injured and eight listed as missing in an explosion and fire aboard the Sun Oil company's tanker "Sunoco" off the New Jersey coast at 1:06 a. m. (eastern war time) today.

The navy public relations office in New York City reported the 246-foot vessel was smoking badly but still afloat in Sand Hook Bay 4,000 yards off shore a short distance north of here at 9 a. m.

The fire was being fought by navy, coast guard and New York City fire boats.

The tanker, which had taken on a load of liquid benzol at Perth Amboy, was being towed to Philadelphia when the explosion occurred. The cause was not immediately known. Lt. John Overall, navy public relations officer in New York, said.

Five Tulsans in Merchant Marine Want GI Rights Too

By GENE POWELL

The men who man the ships that carry supplies to our fighting forces feel they are entitled to as much recognition as the navy and army men, five merchant marines, home in Tulsa for the holidays, declared today.

In fact, the five sailors declared, they feel they "haven't been done right by" and should be included in the so-called G. I. bill of rights.

"We have \$5,000 war risk insurance, but no job protection," second Mate R. C. Manley, 1426 S. Elgin av., said. "Many merchant marines left college to man ships, but they aren't included in the educational rights of the G. I. bill. They want the government to send them to college after the war too."

The second mate, a clear-eyed young chap, has seen nine years in the merchant marine. He has been on ships that have been torpedoed on two occasions. But he wouldn't talk about that. Neither would the other four—all young fellows who have the appearance of college sophomores.

All have been in the merchant marine for at least two years, and foreign names dripped of their tongues with unconscious ease.

Able Seaman John Wheeler, 124 E. Columbia av., explained that while the merchant marine needs older men, it is impossible to get them because there's no job insurance for them. They aren't guaranteed their old jobs back again, he pointed out, like service men. So a man with a family and a good job is reluctant to leave it, with no protection for his family while he is gone, no disability insurance, no job insurance and no hospital or medical care for his family.

"If we don't get some older men, the kids we get will make old men of us," Mate Manley put in. "You can tell an older man what to do, and he'll do it. It's hard to get a kid to do it right the first few times."

The merchant marine sailors believe their families should get government allotments the same as soldiers and navy men, and should be entitled to hospitalization and medical care, too.

Then, they would like to have some sort of service disability in-

insurance and some "mustering out pay," they declared.

O. M. White, 3224 E. Fifth st., an oiler, asserted a merchant seaman must be killed to collect on his insurance. If he were disabled he would have to sit on the beach with no chance of making a living.

"And that isn't fair," he asserted. "For the merchant marines run the same risks as navy men."

Third Mate R. S. Johnson, 1913 N. Elwood av., recalled one seaman who is partially paralyzed, but has had to go back to sea "in order to live."

R. J. Letson, 4215 E. Second st., a radioman on a merchant ship, wants everyone to know that there's good feeling between the merchant sailors and navy men. At first, he pointed out, when the navy took over the merchant marine, there was a little friction, but now the sailors are good friends.

"We weren't used to navy regulations," Mate Manley explained. "But now we go on shore leave together and get along fine."

Manley again urged that people be told that the merchant marine needs more men; that ships are lying in dock because there aren't sufficient men to take them over.

Oil field workers, especially riggers, are naturals for merchant marine service, he said, explaining the riggers are the best cable and line spicers there are.