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Is world's most photographed vessel

Hampton Dunn

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



IS WORLD'S MOST PHOTOGRAPHED VESSEL

By HAMPTON DUNN

TAMPA --- Through two world wars, the Tampa Shipyard turned out fighting ships, many of them earning fame in sea battles. But the most unique vessel built by the yards, and itself quite famous, was not a real warship --- it was "The Jose Gasparilla," flag ship of Tampa's gay Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla.

The only ship in the world built in modern times solely for piratical purposes, this is also the world's most photographed ship. A replica of West Indiaman of vintage of 1800, the Krewe vessel is used once a year, in February to transport the play-like Pirates as they "invade" Tampa and cap off the exciting event with a triumphal parade through downtown streets and thence to the Florida State Fair grounds.

More than 700,000 persons pack the streets and every vantage point to watch the frolicking Pirates "take" the community. Nearly everyone has a camera and shoots from every angle possible. Many thousands of other persons watch the spectacle over television.

The Jose Gasparilla was built in the Tampa Shipyard during 1953 and 1954 and was commissioned on Jan. 5, 1954. She has a displacement of 300 tons. The overall length is 164 feet, six inches and she has a 35-foot beam. Three masts tower some 100 feet skyward. During the invasion Pirates perch precariously high in the rigging and scare the crowds with their daredevilry. The all-steel ship has cannon at all ports; and they actually fire salutes. More than 300 flags and pennants of every color wave. During Invasion Week the ship is moored at the University of Tampa docks and visitors are welcomed aboard. This ship replaced an old wooden ship which was condemned by the Coast Guard.

