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STILL THEY SAIL SHIPBUILDING IN TAMPA DURING WORLD WAR II

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**ANOTHER SHIP SLIDES DOWN THE WAYS
...USS MAUNA LOA LAUNCHED APRIL 4, 1943**

-Photo from HAMPTON DUNN COLLECTION

When the planes from Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's carriers attacked the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, the United States was thrust into the cauldron of world war.

Subsequent declarations of war by Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini merely confirmed what the American public already

realized--that they were in a fight for the very survival of the world as they knew it.

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ATTY. GEN. J. TOM WATSON
...Pushed 'Right to Work'

-Photo from HAMPTON DUNN
COLLECTION

Despite the optimism of some Japanese and German militarists over the destruction of the Pacific Fleet, other, wiser leaders were less enthusiastic. Fleet Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the strategic planner of the Pearl Harbor raid, quieted the jubilant voices on his staff, noting that only a portion of American naval strength had been wiped out and warning darker days ahead for Japan, since they had only "awakened the sleeping giant."¹

Yamamoto's depiction of the United States as a sleeping giant was very apt. The collapse of the economy in 1929 and the hardships of the Depression that followed

had demoralized the people of the United States and had hobbled its industry to the point that it appeared to be dead, but the reality of the situation was that American industry was merely hibernating, awaiting some stimulus to bring it to life. Pearl Harbor served that purpose.

Tampa, Florida, like hundreds of other small cities, had suffered the Depression decade fitfully. The city's economy had experienced sputters and sparks of revival, but since its economy was based primarily on agricultural or service industries, Tampa found little in the way of continuous prosperity. Her port, once a bustling hive of activity, was largely stagnant and contributed little to prosperity.

After the explosive development boom of the 1920s, Tampa had struggled through the '30s and experienced only minimal growth. Its population had grown slowly during the decade, with only 7,000 new persons becoming residents of the city. The 6.7% change in population growth from 1930 to 1940 could easily be accounted for by the natural increase in a city of that size. For Tampa's people, the Depression struck hard. The adjusted unemployment rate for white males was 10.8%, but that figure almost doubled when individuals involved in emergency government employment-the CCC, WPA and PWA-were counted. For nonwhites and women, the rate was even higher. With virtually no manufacturing base for heavy industry, citizens relied heavily on the annual influx of tourists to supplement the local economy.²

LIGHT AT END OF TUNNEL

There were occasional bright spots in the otherwise dismal picture. Tampa Shipbuilding and Engineering Company, in



CHRISTENING VESSEL
...Mrs. Jamie Goss, Apr. 20, 1944
-Photo from HAMPTON DUNN
COLLECTION

operation since February, 1917, offered some hope in 1938 when it borrowed \$750,000 from the Public Works Administration to fund the construction of a 10,000-ton dry dock. The company's objective was to compete for shipbuilding contracts available through the U.S. Maritime Commission and authorized by the Merchant Marine Act of 1936.³

The Roosevelt Administration, disturbed by the inability of American shipyards to compete with foreign yards and aware that the clouds of war which had gathered in Europe and Asia might soon cover the United States, prevailed upon Congress to

enact this legislation. The purpose of the act was to fund the construction of ten merchant ships a year for ten years. For American shipyards, which had constructed only two dry cargo vessels between 1922 and 1935, the Merchant Marine Act was a godsend. Not only did it provide a market for new ships, but it also featured a "no lose" cost-plus incentive for builders and operators.⁴

Under the leadership of Ernest Kreher, Tampa Shipbuilding secured the PWA loan, constructed the dry dock and, in 1939, was awarded an \$8 million contract for the construction of four cargo ships. Approximately 2,000 new jobs were created, and for the city's 6,400 unemployed males, the company's success in securing the contracts seemed like the answer to their prayers. The excitement created by the contract award was soon dampened when the company announced that after the construction of a single ship, the *Seawitch*, it was in serious financial difficulty and might not be able to fulfill the remaining contracts.⁵

The inefficient management of the company prompted the Maritime Commission and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which had assumed the PWA loan, to look around for new owners. In the words of a U.S. Accounting Office report in 1942, "Kreher...and his associates were competent shipbuilders, [but] they were incapable of efficiently managing the company's finances."⁶ The heavy demands for ships generated by the war in Europe and the realization that the U.S. might soon be involved made it imperative to find someone new to oversee the administration of the company.

Encouraged by the Maritime Commission and the RFC, a local financier, George B.



MAYOR R. E. L. CHANCEY

...Tampa's Wartime Leader.

-Photo from HAMPTON DUNN
COLLECTION

Howell of the Exchange National Bank, purchased the company for \$500 and became the sole owner. Along with the contracts for three new ships, Howell also acquired \$47,000 in assets and the almost \$1 million in liabilities. Under Howell's leadership, TASC0, as the new company was called, worked to fill the contracts with the Maritime Commission. When war came in 1941, the new management was in place and ready to expand to meet the needs of the nation.⁷

In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, TASC0 quickly converted its peacetime operations to a war footing. Within days, the company began to gear up to meet the anticipated needs of the Navy and to expand its facilities to increase the number of bottoms it could handle at once. Change, however, did not

happen easily. With the shift from peacetime production to wartime construction, TASC0 immediately became embroiled in two major controversies.

NO MISDOING

The first centered around the reorganization of the company and the purchase of all outstanding stock by George B. Howell in 1940. When Howell had assumed control, TASC0 had contracts for three cargo vessels for the Maritime Commission. Immediately after the U.S.'s entry into the war, the company had sold these ships, with the concurrence of the Commission, to the Navy. The transaction, which gave TASC0 a working capital in excess of \$2 million, came under the scrutiny of the U.S. Accounting Office. After reviewing the evidence, the AO charged Howell and TASC0 with illegally selling the ships and with overcharging the Navy to the tune of \$1.2 million. The controversy dragged on, but while bureaucrats and company lawyers argued, the yard continued to build new ships. Despite the heat surrounding the transaction, both the Commission and the Navy supported Howell, and he was ultimately absolved of any misdoing.⁸

The second controversy which involved TASC0 and other shipyards in the state stemmed from the efforts of State Attorney General J. Tom Watson to have a "closed shop" contract between the company and the American Federation of Labor declared unconstitutional. Watson, a flamboyant attorney, had attempted to persuade the State Legislature to outlaw the practice in 1941, but had been unsuccessful. In June, 1942, Watson, using the war emergency as an excuse, attacked the union in court. His pursuit of this cause also included a round of fisticuffs with M. J. Nicholason, the attorney for the National Labor Relations Board.

Although the courts gave him a technical victory and declared the closed shop suspended during the duration of the emergency, the practice continued nevertheless. Watson's efforts were not supported publicly by local leaders, and TASC0 remained unionized throughout the war.⁹

"WAR WORK" EMPLOYMENT

For Tampan, as for most Americans, the war provided a welcomed relief to the economic stagnation of the Depression. For the next four years, workers of all ages and occupations were recruited to provide the manpower needed to produce the materiel the U.S. and its allies needed. "War work" and "war industries" became the single largest employers of laborers, as thousands of large and small plants sprang into existence overnight to meet this need. The 12.5 million Americans who had suffered through the Depression unemployed now found themselves being actively recruited to fill factory spaces. Older workers, forced into retirement during the previous decade, were now coaxed back to work for wages that were significantly higher than their Social Security benefits. TASC0, for example, employed a number of workers in their sixties and seventies who possessed metalworking skills that were considered essential. High school and college students were encouraged to contribute to the war effort by taking part-time jobs.

Perhaps the greatest gains in the labor market were made by women, and thousands of them took on the roles of "Rosie, the Riveter" and "Wanda, the Welder." As the demand for soldiers grew, women workers became more and more essential. Thomas M. Woodward, a member of the U.S. Maritime Commission, noted the importance of women in the labor force on

an inspection of the Tampa yards. Citing a need for 30,000 additional workers in yards along the Gulf of Mexico, Woodward offered the observation that "Women seem to be the answer, the only one, to the problem."¹⁰

Although TASC0 remained the largest single employer in Tampa, its ability to secure the 16,000 workers it needed by 1943 was hampered by the construction of a second major shipyard in 1942. Citizens of the city were delighted with the announcement in the *Tampa Tribune* that a private company intended to spend \$30 million to construct a shipyard in Tampa to produce 24 unique cargo vessels, financed by a U.S. Maritime Commission contract for \$30 million.¹¹

CONCRETE SHIPS

This project, known as the Hooker's Point Yard, was the creation of Matthew H. McCloskey, Junior, a Philadelphia construction mogul and a powerful Democratic politician. Taking advantage of the national shortage of rolled steel, McCloskey proposed the use of concrete for ship construction. Despite the rather lackluster performance of similar ships during World War 1, materiel shortages and the success of German U-boats dictated improvisation. Within weeks of the contract award, McCloskey and his staff moved their operations to Tampa.¹²

Hooker's Point was little more than a sandy spit of land jutting into Tampa Bay. For McCloskey, however, the site had three major advantages. First, it was located adjacent to the ship channel in the harbor. Second, its nearest neighbor was the Florida Portland Cement Company, with a fleet of trucks to haul wet concrete. Third, as McCloskey explained to the local

newspaper, "You've got to get away from frost to pour concrete, and we...can work the year around."¹³

Before work on the ships could begin, the yard had to be constructed from the ground up. Administrative buildings, lofts for creating forms and patterns, machine shops, utility services, service roads and storage sheds were necessary to get the operation going. The most essential of all, however, was the construction of basins to house the ships as they were being built. Unlike conventional shipyards which constructed ships on land and launched them into the water, the Hooker's Point Yard built three concrete-lined basins, 1,200 feet long, 27 feet deep and 82 feet wide, which were connected to the Bay by huge doors. In each basin, three of the 360-foot-long ships were built simultaneously. Launching was simply a matter of opening the doors and letting the water in.¹⁴

HOUSING SHORTAGE

McCloskey's experiment with concrete ships opened 6,000 new jobs in Tampa, and the expansion of a third shipbuilding facility, Tampa Marine Company, also increased the demand for workers. Despite the high rate of unemployment in 1940, Tampa could not supply the labor needs of these facilities, and company officials instituted a statewide recruitment program. When these efforts did not produce enough workers, the campaign was expanded into a nationwide effort.

The campaign to attract workers was never totally effective, and the Tampa shipyards, as well as other industries, attempted to offset the lack of workers by extending the work week from 40 to 48 hours. Wages were constantly increased, and appeals made to operators of nonessential industries to release workers for war industries. The cigar

industry, Tampa's largest employer prior to World War 11, lost 2,000 skilled workers by mid-1943, and the process of attrition continued until the end of the conflict.¹⁵ No doubt this loss of laborers contributed to the decline and rapid mechanization of the cigar industry in the postwar period.

Tampa's rise as a center of shipbuilding in south Florida, coupled with the development of Hillsborough County as a center for training bomber crews, presented the city leaders with a myriad of problems. As the thousands of workers arrived in the city, officials were hard-pressed to find sufficient housing. The housing shortage became even more critical as the military opened new base ' s to train recruits. MacDill Field, Drew Field and Henderson. Field were training centers for bomb crews of the Army Air Force. Pinellas County, across the Bay from Tampa, also attracted minor military establishments, and added to the problem. Despite the wartime restrictions on gasoline, snowbirds insisted on making their annual trek south and further complicated the situation.¹⁶

OPA MONITORS PRICES

City leaders were hard-pressed to meet the needs of the sudden influx of war workers. In order to accommodate the infrastructure needs for the expansion of the TASC0 facility and the new Hooker's Point Yard, they asked for and received huge loans from various government agencies. Public transportation routes were rearranged and new routes were added to ensure that workers could reach the yards from almost any point in town. Hours of operation were expanded in order to serve the late night and early morning shifts. Additional vehicles were added to transport workers forced to live as far away from the city as 50 miles.¹⁷



GEORGE M. STEINBRENNER III
...Now Owns old TASCOS Yards

-Photo from HAMPTON DUNN
COLLECTION

Officials with the Tampa branch of the Office of Price Administration closely monitored the prices of gasoline vendors, and were equally as diligent policing the claims of workers in car pools for extra gas and tire rations. Violators were charged, prosecuted and punished. The OPA also closely monitored the practices of local merchants, and hoarders and speculators were quickly dealt with.¹⁸

Perhaps the most difficult task faced by local authorities was in satisfying the demand for affordable housing. As the yards expanded their labor forces, workers found it difficult to find housing for themselves and their families. Patriotic appeals were frequently made in the newspapers asking

home owners to rent every available apartment or room to house these new arrivals. To ensure that workers were not being gouged by greedy landlords, the Office of Rent Control periodically published lists of acceptable rents established by federal regulations, and just as periodically, the ORC sent inspectors into the field to ensure that no gouging took place.¹⁹

TRAILER FACILITIES

Despite the best efforts of the ORC and local officials, the demand for housing exceeded space available. A variety of plans were put forth, including one that called for the city to turn vacant factory buildings into apartments. Although the plan seemed worthwhile, it was quickly abandoned because the cost of renovations was greater than that of all new construction. Other solutions had to be found.²⁰

The city fathers, led by Mayor Robert E. Lee Chancey, quickly took other steps to resolve the problems. On the same day the *Tampa Tribune* reported the decision to forego the renovation of old factories, the City Council voted to lease 12 acres of the Municipal Trailer Park to serve as a park for 400 two- and three-bedroom trailers for workers and their families. Rather primitive, the trailers had no bathrooms or laundry facilities, and occupants were forced to use a communal building for this purpose. Despite the critical shortage of housing and the relatively low rent [\$28 a month for a two-bedroom unit and \$32 for a three-bedroom one], the trailer park proved unpopular and never operated at full capacity.²¹

For workers at the new Hooker's Point facility, the Maritime Commission constructed 600 housing units adjacent to the yard. The project, known as Maritime

Homes, represented a considerable improvement over the trailers. Each unit included its own bathroom, hot water heater and refrigerator. The project also included a grocery store, beauty shop, barber shop and theater. Restricted to McCloskey workers, the rental prices were only slightly higher than those charged for municipal trailers.²²

RACE RELATIONS PLACID

Negroes in Tampa also benefitted from the housing shortage when the city government and the Federal Public Housing Authority decided in 1943 to spend \$2.3 million to construct 500 low-cost concrete block homes. Justified as a war emergency measure to provide housing for essential shipyard workers, the project was located "in the heart of the largest Negro section in Tampa, and [was] . . . well served by electricity, water, transportation and Negro schools." The original plans were modified and the number of units reduced when Tampa aldermen "asked that three of the big apartment buildings that would have come within 500 feet of Ponce de Leon courts, [a] white development, be eliminated."²³ Even the desperate need for emergency housing was not a sufficient cause to suspend the rituals of segregation.

All in all, however, race relations in Tampa were placid during the war. Although some Negroes were hired in the shipyards, war industries, with their higher wages and strong unions, remained largely a white preserve. A survey of the *Tampa Tribune* for the years 1940-1946 reveals only one issue that carried any mention of black shipyard workers, and that issue pictured them sifting through a trash pile to retrieve scrap metal for reuse.²⁴ The caption to the only picture of black workers in the extant copies of the *Hooker's Point Log*, the McCloskey company newspaper, identified the white

workers, but did not mention any of the Negroes.²⁵

White women, on the other hand, were welcomed as workers. Women joined the work force at the shipyards within a few months of the declaration of war. Although the initial groups of women were used in office positions or in "soft" jobs like drafting or driving, this quickly changed as manpower became more scarce. Quick to admit that "women aren't naturally mechanically inclined," the first female office workers nonetheless insisted that they were 11 equally as capable as men."²⁶ As the need for additional laborers became more acute, women moved out of the offices and into the yards.

FIRST FEMALE IN UNION

On July 28, 1942, a month after the first Tribune article about female workers, the newspaper ran a front page story about Mrs. Alma Brown, the first female member of "the ultra-conservative local No. 432 of the Boilermakers' union, as hard-boiled an outfit as ever pushed a ship into the sea," and the first woman welder to join the TASC0 assembly line. Brown, the product of a 10-week welding course at a local vocational school, entered the yard as a probationary trainee, but her immediate supervisor expected little difficulty in having a woman on the job. "Sure, she'll get along all right," he said, "She's a little bit of a curiosity now to the boys, but when we get five or six more the curiosity will wear off."²⁷

So critical was the need for additional workers by mid-1942, local unions, caught between their desire to maintain control of skilled laborers and the government's demand for more productivity, led the way in admitting women members. Tampa Local

432 of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers admitted Alma Brown to membership weeks before the national leadership submitted the issue to a vote from the general membership. In this way, the 62-year-old prohibition against female members fell by the wayside, and the union leadership found itself rushing to keep pace with its locals.²⁸

By 1943, women welders had become so commonplace in both the TASCOS and Hooker's Point yards that they received little extra attention. By 1944, enough women were employed in the Hooker's Point facility that the company could hold a yardwide contest to select the best female welder and sponsor her in competition with other yards operating in the eastern United States.²⁹

OLDER WORKERS ENLISTED

Older males found work in Tampa shipyards as well. TASCOS actively sought older men with metalworking skills and brought them into its yard. The oldest worker employed by TASCOS was 77 years old in 1943. J.M. Hutchins had entered the blacksmithing trade in 1908, had worked in the Mobile and Pensacola shipyards during World War I and worked at full shift at TASCOS. Hutchins was joined by others who were advanced in age: W. M. Lovelace, 75 years old; R. F. Roberts, 66 years old; and E. L. Broadway, 66.

The special skills these men possessed were critical to the production of steel ships, and they were recruited to work.

"They're men who were doing this kind of work before many of us were born," said Carl Froehking, the shop supervisor. "That many years of experience is something that can't be replaced by any other kind of training. Besides, in times like these, we

need all the men we can get to keep the iron hot."³⁰

A temporary subculture developed around the yards, and company officials supported a variety of recreational and cultural activities for their workers. McCloskey's Hooker's Point facility printed a bi-weekly newspaper, supported various sports programs, provided after-work social programs and generally maintained a paternalistic attitude toward its workers. The construction of housing projects for war workers only tended to promote the concept of separation from the native population of Tampa. Although no copies of company newspapers from the TASCOS yard have been located, references to that yard and smaller yards in the area indicate that a great deal of intercourse took place between the workers of different companies.³¹

"NEW SOUTH" CITY

Workers were not free to move from yard to yard, however. Wartime job assignments, regulated by the federal Manpower Administration, prohibited workers from capriciously seeking new positions. Hanging over the head of all male workers was the threat of losing their critical job rating and having to enter the draft. The threat of military service did not prevent workers from voicing their dissatisfaction from time to time, and all the Tampa yards experienced work stoppages and walkouts from time to time. Absenteeism was an early problem for yard administrators, and remained so during the entire war period.³²

The impact of the war industries on Tampa was revolutionary, particularly in motivating the business and civic leadership of the city. For them, the industrial development brought by the war and the economic benefits created by the construction of

military bases demonstrated the viability of Tampa as a "New South" city.

The rapid industrialization of the Tampa area also forced local leaders to modify their stance on unionization and the rights of laborers. Tampa's reputation as a center of antiunion feeling before the war had focused national attention on the city, but this sentiment was quickly suppressed when the prospect of millions of dollars in government contracts loomed before them. Of course, much of the community acceptance of unions stemmed from the nature of the shipyard work. Although TASCOS was operated by a local businessman, George B. Howell, the Navy Department, adhering to the pro-labor legislation of the New Deal, mandated the use of union labor. Howell and other local leaders had no choice but to accept this mandate. Hooker's Point Yard, owned by northerner McCloskey, also depended on government contracts, and local sentiment played no part in its decision to recognize the right of unions. The conversion of prominent Floridians to the labor point of view was temporary at best, and the state adopted a "right to work" constitutional amendment in 1944.³³

The influx of nearly 31,000 new workers and their families dramatically altered the economy of the city, and changed it from a sonambulant semi-rural city with a primarily agricultural and semiskilled labor base into an aggressive forward-looking city seeking to retain and expand its wartime supply of skilled labor. As early as February 1942, Tampa newspapers were speculating as to what Tampa's future would be after the war. By 1943, corporate leaders at TASCOS, Hooker's Point and the smaller yards in the area were focusing a portion of their time and resources on postwar industrial pursuits.

George B. Howell and the TASCOS yard management team inaugurated a program to design, build and test semitrailers for use by trucking companies in the postwar period. Matt McCloskey, the owner of the Hooker's Point Yard, also invested time, money and manpower in identifying and developing postwar products. Civic leaders promoted the concept of a new industrially-based economy for the postwar years, and the diversity of these ideas indicated that most Tampanians were no longer willing to return to the prewar reliance on tourism, cigars and agriculture. They wanted more.³⁴

The productive capacity and engineering innovations of Tampa yards gave every indication that the possibility of maintaining a postwar heavy industry base was very real. Matt McCloskey's Hooker's Point Yard astonished the shipbuilding world by devising new construction techniques in its use of reinforced concrete to build cargo vessels.

SECONDARY INDUSTRY

Although some concrete ships had been built during World War 1, these ships had proved to be fragile and unreliable. Hooker's Point Yard, using continuous pours made possible by new vacuum pumps and mobile mixers mounted on trucks, applied many of the techniques used in constructing high-rise buildings. When engineers determined that a lighter weight concrete was needed, McCloskey employees identified "Fuller's earth" as a substitute for the heavier sand traditionally used. A secondary industry developed around the mining of this material, and the McCloskey company purchased deposits and opened their own mining operation.³⁵

Concrete ships built by the Hooker's Point Yard provided a viable alternative to steel ships, and when the nation's steel output

failed to keep pace with demands during the early years of the war, these ships helped meet the need for new vessels. Unlike their World War I counterparts, the McCloskey ships performed very well. Powered by 3,500 h.p. reciprocal engines, the "floating skyscrapers" weathered hurricanes, submarine attacks and hard use. Individuals who served on the concrete ships were most complimentary of their stability, durability and overall seaworthiness. McCloskey's continued development of this method of shipbuilding was brought to an end when supplies of steel improved.

Although revolutionary in design and relatively inexpensive to produce, the major criticism of the concrete vessels was the length of time needed to produce them. In an era when Henry J. Kaiser was producing a 550-foot "Victory" ship every ten days, the three to six weeks needed to produce the smaller concrete ship could not be justified. Although some experiments were undertaken to speed up the "curing" time for the wet concrete, no significant reduction was ever achieved. No longer concerned about materiel shortages, the Maritime Commission ended the concrete ship experiment, and in 1944, the Hooker's Point facility joined the rest of the nation's yards and began to construct steel ships of the N-3, coastal cargo freighter variety.³⁶

TASCO STAYS LEADER

Tampa Marine Company, another yard along the Ybor Channel of Tampa Bay, also contributed to the city's war economy. Employing only 200 prewar workers, this yard expanded its capacity significantly during the war years, and between 1942 and 1945, it produced 95 oceangoing tugs. Bushnell-Lyons, another small company, produced steel barges for the Navy. Perhaps the most noteworthy accomplishments of

these yards came from the diversity of ships that were produced.³⁷

Despite the productivity of Hooker's Point, Tampa Marine Company and Bushnell-Lyons, the combination of these yards could not match the productivity of the TASCO yard. Operated under contract to the Navy, TASCO produced an amazing variety of naval vessels, ranging from the 10,000 ton destroyer tenders, *Piedmont*, *Sierra*, and *Yosemite*, to seven ammunition carriers in the *Mazama* and *Mauna Loa* class. In addition to these large supply ships, TASCO also produced 24 coastal minesweepers in the *Auk* and *Admirable* classes, 12 destroyer escorts, as well as a number of self-contained "barracks" barges, repair vessels and cargo ships.

Including repairs made to ships damaged by enemy vessels and conversions made to existing ships, TASCO processed a total of 494 vessels. Its employees received approximately \$105 million in wages and salaries, most of which remained in the Tampa economy. In addition, the company either trained or paid for the training of a large number of Tampa residents in the skilled machine trades.³⁸ The full extent of the yard's production was a closely guarded secret during the war, and Navy personnel maintained a close watch over the facility. The *Tampa Tribune* made note of the secrecy imposed by the Navy when it announced on July 1, 1945: "Navy Takes Lid Off Tampa Shipyards."³⁹

END COMES SUDDENLY

The economic boom created by the entry of the U.S. into World War II ended suddenly for Tampan. With the Allied victory in Europe in April, 1945, and the detonation of the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and

Nagasaki on August 6 and 7, the need for more ships suddenly ceased. By August 12, despite the absence of a formal surrender by Japan, both the Navy and Maritime Commission cut back their orders for ships. Two days later, TASC0 announced a reduction of its labor force by 2,000 workers. On August 17, McCloskey's Hooker's Point Yard announced the loss of its contracts. In rapid succession, the *Tampa Tribune* announced one layoff after another. The phaseout was not a gradual process, and layoffs were frequently for thousands of workers at a time.⁴⁰

By December, 1945, the Hooker's Point Yard was closed permanently, and little war-related activity was going on at TASC0 or Tampa Marine. Both companies had returned to peacetime production, and the strategic planning for the postwar period allowed them to continue operations, although at a reduced level.

George B. Howell, the dominant force behind TASC0, resigned the presidency of the company and returned to the banking business. Matt McCloskey, the developer of Hooker's Point, now shifted his attention once again to traditional construction enterprises, although he did purchase an interest in a Jacksonville shipbuilding company. For the residents of Tampa, the end of the war did not mean an end to the industrial dreams spurred by the war. For the next 20 years, various attempts would be made to keep Tampa shipyards in operation. The irony is that the Japanese, whose defeat was engineered in part by Tampa workers, would now prove to be too strong as competitors for this industry.⁴¹

"RIGHT TO WORK"

For Attorney General J. Tom Watson, the end of the war was a signal to renew his

attacks on organized labor. Within days of the beginning of layoffs by Tampa shipyards, he announced his intention to enforce the "right to work" amendment to the state's constitution.⁴²

There is little in Tampa today to remind residents of the great flurry of activity that was generated by the World War II shipyards. Hooker's Point is gone, replaced by other industries. Maritime Homes, the large complex erected for war workers, has been bulldozed. TASC0 has passed through several hands and now is known as the American Shipbuilding Company, a property of New York Yankees owner, George Steinbrenner. It is as if some giant hand has simply wiped the slate clean, and what was isn't and never will be again.⁴³

Despite the demise of Tampa's shipyards, there are some who remember this great adventure fondly. There are also occasional flashes from the past when ship names are mentioned. Perhaps the greatest tribute to the strength and vitality of the shipyards is found in a perusal of *Jane's Fighting Ships* or other ship publications. Here and there, the notations appear: "built by Tampa Shipbuilding." For most of the ships constructed between 1940 to 1946, age and modernity have consigned them to scrapheaps or reserve fleets, but some, like the *Sierra* and *Yosemite*, still play an active role in today's Navy. For still others, however, postwar existence has meant being transferred to foreign countries. Today, Tampa-built ships are operated by the navies of Taiwan, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Argentina and Turkey. Orphans of the sea, but still they sail.⁴⁴

NOTES

¹ John Deane Potter, *Yamamoto: The Man Who Menaced America* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), 96-135.

² *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), Table C-41, p. 154.

³ L.A. Sawyer and W. H. Mitchell, *The Liberty Ships: The History of the 'Emergency' Type Cargo Ships Constructed in the United States During World War II* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, Publishers, 1970), pp. 11-15.

⁴ Clinton H. Whitehurst, Junior, *The U.S. Shipbuilding Industry: Past, Present, and Future* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1986), pp. 25-42.

⁵ Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Lonely Ships: The Life and Death of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet* (New York: David McKay Company, Incorporated, 1976), pp. 276-277. *Tampa Tribune*, June 17, 1942.

⁶ *Tampa Tribune*, June 17, 1942.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.* See also, *Tampa Tribune*, December 11 and 12, 1942.

⁹ See *Tampa Tribune*, June 23; July 25, 28; August 2, 5, 13, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26; September 12; October 10, 18, 27, 30; November 1, 8, 10, 12, 13, 1942; January 17, 21, 24, 31; February 12, and 17, 1943. For a good treatment of anti-labor act v ties in Tampa, see Robert P. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes in the New South: Tampa, 1882-1936* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

¹⁰ *Tampa Tribune*, May 2, 1943; June 6; July 4, 18; August 22, 1943.

¹¹ *Tampa Tribune*, June 11, 1943. See also, Robert J. Ehlinger, *Matt: A Biography of Matthew H. McCloskey* (Privately Printed, 1987).

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 109-113.

¹³ *Tampa Tribune*, June 23, 1942.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, August 26 and November 17, 1942.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, May 2 and June 2, 1943.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, September 22, 1942; March 18; April 2, 5, and December 31, 1943.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, June 17, 1942.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, June 23; July 26; August 13 and 18, 1942.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, See also, December 25, 1943.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, November 14, 1942.

²¹ *Ibid.*, November 6, 14, 19, 1942; January 17, 18; March 18; April 4, 5, and 11, 1943.

²² *Ibid.*, June 21, 1943.

²³ *Ibid.*, October 7 and December 23, 1943.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, October 16, 1942.

²⁵ *Hooker's Point Log*, December 30, 1944.

²⁶ *Tampa Tribune*, June 28, 1942; December 15, 1942.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, July 28, 1942.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Hooker's Point Log*, February 17, 1945 and March 31, 1945.

³⁰ *Tampa Tribune*, August 22, 1943.

³¹ See 1944-45 run of *Hooker's Point Log* in author's possession.

³² *Ibid.*, September 25 and November 30, 1944.

³³ *Tampa Tribune*, February 16, 1945.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, February 4, and December 16, 1945.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, January 20, 1943.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, June 10, 1944.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1943.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, October 14, 1945.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, July 1, 1945.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, August 12, 14, 17, 18 21, 23 and September 5, 1945.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, February 14 and March 21, 1946.

⁴² *Ibid.*, November 17, 1945.

⁴³ Leland Hawes, "Two Concrete Ships Used at Normandy," *Tampa Tribune*, July 27, 1985.

⁴⁴ *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1986-87* (London: Jane's Publishing Company, Limited, 1988).