Merchant Seamen are D-Day Heroes

United States, British Civilian Sailors at Peak of Glorious Record for Aid in Invasion

(By Wireless to *The New York Times*)

LONDON, June 9—D-Day would not have been possible without the Merchant Marine. Now that the long-awaited day is history and great Allied forces have been landed in France, it is permitted to indicate the part played by these intrepid civilians, whose deeds for the most part have gone unsung.

Probably it is not generally realized that the Merchant Marine has the largest ratio of casualties of any branch of the services, and many of the names on the list are not classified "wounded" or "missing." They were those of the men whose grave is the sea.

The whole picture of the Merchant Marine's heroic deeds will not be available for some time because of security. Working side by side with the British merchant navy and the Allied fleets, the American Merchant Marine has reached a new peak of glory, and into this latest venture it has brought all the hard-earned experience of such historic episodes as the African landings and the bitterly fought Arctic runs to Russia.

Ships Without Ports

For weeks before D-day hundreds of merchant ships which had been diverted from their regular runs for the invasion service roamed the waters near the British Isles without a port to come to. They were kept outside so the enemy would not see any great ship concentration at any principal port. At the prearranged time they rendezvoused, picked up their priceless cargo and sailed for France.

Undaunted by the threat of air attacks, sea mines, surface fire, submarines or coastal batteries, they fulfilled their mission according to schedule and returned to Britain's shores to start a shuttle service that will not end before Germany's unconditional surrender.

At their sides are a thousand or more British merchant ships with 50,000 seamen, many of whom have old scores to settle—scores that started at Dunkerque and were aggravated at Crete.

These men also were on the Arctic run, they were part of the 500-ship armada at North Africa, they knew what it was to carry men and supplies to the Middle East before the Mediterranean was open and to keep the breath of life in unconquerable Malta.

Craft of Every Type

The ships that went to France were of every conceivable type of transport. Some were former luxury liners that even confirmed 'round-the-world travelers would no longer recognize. Others were no larger than good-sized barges or sea-going tugs. But most were new, the internationally known Liberty ships, designed to meet the needs of the war.

It is a long call since 1819, when the *Savannah*, the first steam-propelled merchantman made a journey from the United States to England, but that was the beginning of what is now the backbone of one of the world's greatest war efforts. Old-timers, the historically minded, like to go back even farther and recall that when the British repulsed the Spanish Armada there were 163 merchantmen among the 197 ships involved.

WASHINGTON

Administrator.

August 8, 1944.

Mr. Michael McCormick,
331 West 24th St., Apt. 1A,
New York 11, N. Y.

Dear Mr. McCormick:

By authority of the Congress of the United States, it is my privilege and honor to present to you the Mariner's Medal in token of the grave injuries you received when your ship, *SS. William Clark*, was torpedoed and sunk November 4, 1942.

Your injuries were sustained in a service which is gallantly upholding the traditions of those hearty mariners who defied anyone to stop the American flag from sailing the seas in the critical days of the birth of this republic—a service which is, today, the vital link upon which our nation depends to transport to our far-flung battlefronts the materiel without which our armed forces could never hope for victory.

You have given in full measure to the cause for which we fight. Allow me, with this expression of the country's deep sympathy, also express to you its gratitude for your devotion and sacrifice.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)   E. S. Land,
Administrator.