

## **AMERICAN MARITIME AND NAVAL ACTIVITIES IN MINDANAO AND SULU (1941-1945)**

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The American seaborne activities in Mindanao and Sulu could very well be divided properly into two levels; the American participation in merchant marine activities and the naval operations, portraying the American share in the development of the merchant marine as well as the American contribution to the war effort that brought out economic development of Mindanao and Sulu.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the maritime activities of the Americans in Mindanao and Sulu from the year 1941 to the year 1945 in order to appreciate the true meaning of these activities in maritime trade and naval operations.

It is also the intention of this paper to describe the spirit of camaraderie of a few Americans in Mindanao who endeavored to maintain the bonds of friendship between the two countries particularly during an unstable period of this country's history.

After the Philippine-American war at the turn of this century, many soldiers of the United States Army opted to be discharged in the Philippines. Many of them went to Mindanao and engaged in the agricultural development of the Island. Others were in shipping business, thus contributing immensely to Philippine and world shipping!

### **The Pre-War Americans in Mindanao**

It must be recalled that after the Philippine-American war, many Americans who served in the US Army and Navy who saw action in the Philippines opted to remain in the Islands for they admired the warmth of the Filipino friendships and saw prospects in the verdant forests and fertile valleys. Many of them got married here, and many went south—to Mindanao.

Many went to farming and operated large plantations, others went to lumbering and in the business of exporting logs. There were those who engaged in distributing machineries and heavy equipment, and still others in mining. Many Filipinos of course were benefited as American capital were invested in the economy of Mindanao. In the process, bot-

toms were needed, thus contributing to the maritime industry of this island. The American coconut plantation owner for instance in Davao, the American lumber operator in Zamboanga and Cotabato, and the American-owned and operated del Monte pineapple canning plant in Bugo, Misamis Oriental, all contributed to the growth and development of merchant shipping in Mindanao.

The Americans were scattered all over Mindanao and Sulu in the field of business, in the field of education or in preaching the gospel of the Lord. In Davao alone, there were fifteen large plantations when the war broke out. When Gen. Leonard Wood was the governor-general, he encouraged American old-timers and those about to retire to go down to Davao. Even now, descendants of these American old-timers in Davao are loyal to his memory.

In the rich Padada valley, William "Billy" Gohn of the East Mindanao estate shipped his products to Manila through the pier at Sta. Ana in Davao City as Mrs. Orville Wood initiated the establishment of a wooden wharf in Malita, Davao. In Madaum in what is now the province of Davao del Norte, International Harvester operated a hemp plantation whose products were shipped to New York and Boston. The fine quality abaca fiber turned into the famous Manila rope demanded a high price abroad. The Davao Americans increased the quality of their copra products according to European market demands, and this attracted European vessels to call at Davao. The Americans in Davao operated the most efficient copra cooperative in the Philippines before the war for they understood America's great dependence on Philippine copra.

The American community in Davao seemed to be the most affluent among the Americans in the entire archipelago. According to a survey conducted by the American Chamber of Commerce before the war, they formed a unique group—they were either college students or degree holders and belonged to the higher strata of Davao society.

Almost all of the American plantation owners had a motor boat or a motor launch. Major C.D. McGee from Malita, Davao sighted while aboard his motorized baroto early one morning, a strange formation of alien fleet or armada in the Davao Gulf. He immediately wired the authorities of the presence of that mysterious armada. Upon further investigation, the authorities believed that the ships were Japanese conducting naval maneuvers at the mouth of Davao Gulf. As a result of this, Major McGee, a retired U.S. Army officer who owned a coconut

plantation in Malita, Davao was called to Davao City to give more details of the incident to government probers. President Quezon was convinced that there was a need of creating a marine group for national defense. This was how the off-shore patrol (OSP) of the Philippine Army was organized. The OSP is now the Philippine Navy.

The Americans in Malabang, Lanao owned and operated large coconut plantations, while the Philippine Dessiccated Coco-Corporation in Zamboanga was controlled by the Blue Bar Philippine capital of Americans from the States. George Kerr and Dr. J.W. Strong were wealthy Zambo planters and popular among the Zamboanguenos.

H. Gasser who headed the Tambis Gold Dredging Company in Surigao likewise contributed to the growth of shipping in Surigao while nearby, foreign vessels anchored to load lumber in Nasipit and Anakan. But the largest of the Mindanao mills was the Findlay Mill in Kolambugan, not far from here. Jos. S. Johnston operated and managed four big mills in Zamboanga, while Findlay had extensive operation in both Lanao and Cotabato. Logs were shipped by these companies to Japan on Japanese bottoms.

The Philippine Packing Corporation which managed the del Monte pineapple plantation was another American firm which contributed to the development of shipping in Northern Mindanao. The port of Bugo was regularly visited by ocean-going vessels. Mr. Crawford of the Philippine Packing Corporation was a respected member of the Cagayan de Oro and del Monte communities. The Cagayan de Oro harbor was declared an alternate port for the Pan-Am clippers and high octane gas was deposited at the Philippine Packing Corporation plant in Bugo.

The missionaries of the various Protestant denominations also maintained their seacraft for missionary purposes. One of these was the "Gospel Ship," skippered by Capt. Ellis Shofield. It was a semi-diesel ship 120 feet long cruising at nine knots. A Protestant medical officer Dr. Paul Culley was always aboard this gospel ship visiting towns in Palawan, Tawi-Tawi, and even northern Borneo as in charge of this medical and dental floating clinic. When the war broke out, the USAFFE commandeered this ship and converted it into a patrol boat. This same missionary boat was used in troop movement, distributing USAFFE soldiers in Zamboanga.

In Zamboanga, another motor boat with a cruising speed of 16 knots belonging also to a Protestant mission was readily donated. The

"Now" was used as a patrol boat ferrying USAFFE soldiers from Zamboanga City to the northern towns of that province, and sometimes to Sulu. The skipper, Capt. Andres Suzara is still alive today, and proud to recall his exploits as skipper of the "Now."

Suzara said that he used to pilot American as well as European vessels to the port of Zamboanga to load copra before the war.

### **Naval Activities Immediately After Pearl Harbor**

In January 1941, the State Department advised American civilians to leave the Philippines because of expected troubles in the Far East. There were those of course from Mindanao who heeded the warning, but many still remained. Despite the tension in the Orient, the Americans in Mindanao attended to their business seemingly undisturbed.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Admiral Thomas Hart, Chief of the Asiatic Fleet dispersed his fleet from Manila to Borneo. The seaplane tender "William Preston" was in the Davao harbor. Japanese dive bombers swept in from an island to the east, Palau, and attacked the seaplane tender and two PBY's in the harbor. The ship evaded the bombs but the two seaplanes were sunk and the first American in the Philippines, Ensign Robert Tills, was killed. He was the first American casualty of the Pacific War.

The motor torpedo boats under Squadron Commander John P. Bulkeley, USN, roamed around northern waters after MacArthur succeeded in taking off from the del Monte Airfield. Plans were made to move the three torpedo boats from Iligan to Dansalan, now Marawi, to place the PT boats in Lake Lanao to support General Guy O. Fort's 101st division. It was planned that the Lake would be the last naval battleground of the PT boats as the Japanese planes were expected to fight them. But this did not materialize.

The Mindanao Americans actively supported the shipping activities of the USAFFE when U.S. Merchant Marines were engaged in blockade-running to continuously bring in supplies from Australia and to the Visayas. These supplies were eventually shipped to Corregidor and Luzon.

### **The Blockade Runners**

On December 30, President Roosevelt issued a directive concerning the possibility of a major effort to relieve the Philippine garrison.

Brigadier General Leonard Gerow, head of the war plans division in Washington, submitted a very important memorandum concerning Mindanao. Gen. Gerow realized that the Philippines "was the key to the Far East position of the associated powers." In order to prevent Japan from completely conquering the Philippines, and to restore the US position, Gen. Gerow submitted "a general strategic concept of operation."

Two of these were: covered and supported by strong naval and air forces, land a force on Mindanao to secure bases there, and "operating from bases on Mindanao, reopen the line of communications and launch a drive to the north." His conclusion was a recommendation "that operations for the relief of the Philippines be not undertaken."

On January 7, 1942, Gen. MacArthur urged that "the blockade-running" ships be forced through Mindanao immediately.

It had been contemplated by military strategists that if and when Luzon and the Visayan Islands fell, the strategic island of Mindanao at the deep south would be held open as the back door of the Philippines with guerrilla forces. Even as Bataan and Corregidor were beleaguered, Washington was still eyeing Mindanao as the door through which supplies would be coming in to launch a victorious drive against the enemy.

After the original landing of the Sakaguchi detachment of the Japanese Imperial Forces at Davao on December 20, 1941, the Japanese did not succeed in any additional pressure because of the stalemate in Luzon. Between that time and the fall of Bataan, General William F. Sharp, held the enemy at bay; he kept these Japanese pinned down in the general vicinity of Davao itself. He surrounded them with elements of his force which was controlled from del Monte, his headquarters in Bukidnon, while the bulk of his main units was deployed along the beaches to meet any inevitable landings.

And so, supplies from the United States through Australia were direly needed, and to reach Bataan and Corregidor, an "advanced base" was to be established. Many transport ships were dispatched to this "advanced base" but its specific location was never known until the unloading of cargoes was effect. This "advanced base" turned out to be Mindanao, where smaller inter-island ships were directed to stand by to ferry the supplies to Corregidor and Bataan.

The SS "Coast Farmer" a three-thousand three hundred tonner, 324-feet long and 40-feet wide, was carrying 3,000 tons of Army

ration from San Francisco on February 2, 1942. Destination: "advanced base." A single-screw oil burner, she was under the command of Capt. John A. Mattson, a veteran skipper on the China trade. Mattson's officers were Johann W. Wilkie, chief mate; James W. Housom, 2nd mate; Henry Motes, 3rd mate; Charles Kelleman, radio officer; and George Smithers, chief engineer.

The "Coast Farmer" crossed the Pacific, touched on Australia to Halmajera, to the eastern coast of Mindanao and sighted Dinagat Island off Surigao on February 18, 1942, miraculously sneaking in through the enemy blockade. The following day, she anchored at Gingoog Bay where she was met by a motor launch flying the stars and stripes. Aboard that motor launch was C.E. Walter, a Mindanao American old-timer who was sawmill superintendent of the Anakan Lumber Company. Walter conducted two colonels of the USAFFE under General Sharp who were designated by the Commanding General to receive the "Coast Farmer," and to supervise the unloading of cargoes to be deposited in the bodega of the Anakan Lumber Company.

Walter was well-loved not only by the employees and families of the employees of the lumber company, but by prominent citizens of the community as well. When the war broke out, he readily offered the motor launch of the company which was utilized as a patrol boat of the USAFFE. It was Walter who piloted the "Coast Farmer" to bring her close to the landing of the Anakan Lumber Company, to facilitate the unloading of the much-needed cargoes.

Capt. Mattson was escorted to del Monte by the two USAFFE colonels to confer with General Sharp, and to map out a strategy for more supplies from Australia. How the "Coast Farmer" succeeded in slipping out of Gingoog under the nose of the Japanese Imperial Forces, is another story. For while she was at Gingoog Bay, she received an SOS message from another vessel carrying supplies on the way to Mindanao. But the "Coast Farmer" was helpless; she had to escape from enemy detection so as to continue her task for the allied cause.

For Gen. MacArthur and the Fil-Am troops on Bataan and Corregidor, the landing of the "Coast Farmer" in Mindanao provided a much-needed boost in morale. The trip conducted by the lone cargo ship, and the delivery of desperately needed foodstuffs, medicines, and ammunitions at Anakan was significant—it proved that the enemy blockade could be pierced through. But Gingoog was 600 miles from

Bataan. While the "Coast Farmer" succeeded in breaking through in spite of heavy hazards, there still remained the much riskier job of unloading and shipping to Corregidor and Bataan the goods carried by the ship. Yet this was done easily because of the Americans in Anakan.

Capt. Mattson was anxious to get out of Mindanao and was promised by General Sharp with an escort that never showed up. Col. Chastaine and Walter boarded the "Coast Farmer" before sailing time. When the men shook hands with Capt. Mattson, Walter had a sort of "lonesome feelings," and the colonel felt uneasy about the ship's voyage back to Australia.

The ship left as Mr. Walter turned his gaze toward the eastern horizon. It was a warm day with not a cloud in sight, and Mattson's ship was swallowed by the darkening horizon. Why did not Mr. Walter leave with the ship to Australia? He chose to stay behind.

Another merchant vessel was the "Admiral Williams" whose cargo of tins and other war materials were brought to Cagayan de Oro, to avoid enemy capture, after the fall of Cebu.

After the fall of Corregidor, Washington was still considering Mindanao as the "advanced base" to be used by the US forces as the staging area for a "hidden resistance" against the enemy with the help of the American old-timers on this island.

Few weeks after the surrender of Gen. Sharp of the Mindanao force, the now-famous naval battle of Midway, was stage. Admiral Yamamoto went to Midway to annihilate the remaining forces of Admiral Nimitz. The Japanese announced to the whole world the victory that never was. After that battle, Yamamoto retreated to his cabin aboard his flagship, the "Yamato" and did not come out until the flagship docked in Japan. After he left his flagship, the wounded survivors were furtively brought to secret wards of Japanese hospitals. Remnants of the battle of Midway were seriously warned not to talk about the Midway naval battle. Until the end of the war, very few militarists in Tokyo knew that in June 1942, after the surrender of Mindanao the Japanese Imperial Navy had been irreparably damaged and the Imperial Navy suffered a fatal wound.

The naval victory in Midway, became a shot in the arm of the American forces and all eyes were turned to Mindanao. This island was soon to play a vital and decisive role through the maritime activities of the remaining Americans in Mindanao in transforming this island into a,

truly "advanced base." This will be illustrated presently.

### **Guerrilla Activities**

The story of the formation of the headquarters, 10th Military District, is the story of Wendell A. Fertig. He was an American mining engineer in the Philippines before the war and was called to active duty with the corps of engineers early in 1941. From Bataan he was evacuated to Mindanao to continue airfield construction. Following the surrender of Gen. Sharp, he went into the hills of Kolambugan, not very far from here, to avoid capture. Capt. Luis P. Morgan, an American mestizo got in touch with him, and thus, the guerrilla forces in Mindanao was born.

On January 2, 1943, Capt. Jordan A. Hammer and Capt. Charles M. Smith and Athol Y. Smith arrived in northwestern Australia from Mindanao on a small sailboat. After army headquarters under MacArthur learned of Fertig's activities, Commander "Chick" Parsons, US navy reserve, was dispatched to Mindanao to deliver supplies to Fertig.

"Chick" Parsons, a long-time resident of Manila, was an official of the Luzon Stevedoring Company and an expert in shipping business. He was once employed by Major Ralph of the Zamboanga Lumber Company. He was a "natural" for the subsequent large-scale submarine runs into Mindanao. On the same trip with Comdr. Parsons was Capt. Charles M. Smith who was assigned to establish intelligence contacts with the Davao Area. The party left Australia on February 18, 1943 and landed at Tukuran, Zamboanga on March 5, 1943 with seven tons of supplies from an operational trip of a submarine. This was the first shipment of US supplies to the Philippines, and Commander Parsons went ashore in Tukuran uncertain of conditions. He returned to the vessel at dawn with a lighter flying the American flag. Initially, supply shipments totalled only about seven tons per trip. Later more adequate means were made available, and shipments were increased in size and frequency.

After the success of this February landing of Cdr. Parsons, radio contact was established between SWPA headquarters and Fertig. The latter then was officially designated commander of the guerrilla forces in Mindanao. He was instructed to perfect his organization. Learning from experience, Fertig immediately organized a systematic water transport system in preparation for supplies coming in from Australia.

The most notable landing took place at sundown when a vessel tied up at a guerrilla-held concrete pier. A guerrilla orchestra was out to

greet the arrival and all hands pitched in to assist in the unloading of a record shipment. When the unloading was finished, a stateside coffee and sandwiches were served on board. The supplies were enroute to various ports of Mindanao by sailboat, motor banca, and truck the same night.

About 500 tons of supplies have been shipped to Mindanao since that first trip in February 1943 up to the time of the submission of this report and compiled in the office of Major Gen. Charles Willoughby on January 31, 1945. As local security and banca or sailboat contact with other islands were excellent, Mindanao was developed as a supply base for other guerrilla units. Thus, it was not surprising to see people in Mindanao and the Visayas smoking "I shall return" cigarettes, lighting with "I shall return" matches, and eating American chocolates or guerrilla soldiers carrying Garand rifles. These American maritime activities during the war generated more faith to the return of the Americans, and the supplies raised the morale of the people.

In the matter of food and other supplies, Mindanao was fortunate in having many comparatively untouched food growing regions. Pineapples were available in quantity from the American owned del Monte plantation, potatoes and temperate climate vegetables grew well in Bukidnon near Talakag and Claveria, coffee were available in the Pangil Bay area and on the east coast of Surigao. The main difficulty was transportation—carabao trails and water transportation were developed and the 10th military district under Fertig planned and coordinated exchange between areas as much as local transport facilities permitted. For instance, a carabao trail was opened from the interior to the coast, and sailboats were used to bring foodstuffs to other coastal regions. Fertig was fortunate to have the services of Mr. Edward Kuder, a Muslim expert who was appointed civil affairs director. Mr. Kuder was one of the remnants of the early "Thomasites" who, together with John Stumbo and Colin Mackenzie brought education to the Maranaos and Maguindanao up to the outbreak of the war.

But in the shipment of foodstuffs and supplies from Lanao to other parts of the island, there were also casualties suffered by the Americans—one of this tragic incident was that of Capt. William Knortz. He was one of those who took advantage of old man river Agusan, the main artery to the hinterlands. He was attached to the headquarters, 10th MD as liaison officer. He was trustworthy, daring,

and efficient, and was one of the best officers in the entire Mindanao guerrillas. He volunteered to deliver army supplies from Lanao to Agusan when the banca in which he was using capsized; he drowned.

Not very well-known to many up to this day, the Mindanao guerrilla forced by the events of the time, organized a "navy" of its own, and called it the USFIP navy. Helping this navy were the coastwatcher stations operated by Americans who were experts on this type of guerrilla warfare. One such coastwatcher station was in Camiguin under Lt. Richard Thommes. He was under headquarters staff commanded by Col. Ernest E. McClish, AUS.

The USFIP navy played a significant role in the supply system in Mindanao. But the local merchant marine also did play its important part in the success of the operation. A big motor launch was conscripted and renamed the "Capt. Knortz" to perpetuate the memory of the intrepid Captain who lost his life in line of duty. The flagship of the USFIP navy was the "Athena," a large two-masted motor banca skippered by Capt. Vicente Zapanta. The banca was equipped with a homemade smooth bore cannon. This cannon was later transferred to another vessel, when she was armed with a 20mm cannon and two fifty caliber machine guns. Other well-known vessels of the navy in Mindanao waters were the "Treasure Island," a prewar inter-island passenger launch with high superstructure and 75 HP diesel engine; the "Rosalia," a light tug with 50 HP engine; the "Nara," the motor banca "So What" and the "Narwhal."

In the mopping up operation launched by the Japanese in northeastern Mindanao when they succeeded in occupying the area and controlling the waters, the guerrillas burned the *Athena* in mid October, 1944.

In the Davao-Cotabato area, Maj. Herbert Page, an American old-timer commanded a division. He was assisted by Mr. Fred Johnson, one of the most progressive planters in Southeastern Mindanao.

It must be recalled that when Cdr. Parsons landed in Tukuran, Zamboanga, with Capt. Charles Smith, the latter left Parsons to proceed to Caburan in Davao. Using a small motorboat and operating at night time, he succeeded in locating Mr. Fred Johnson. His contact with Fred Johnson aided him much in setting up a radio, and on April 4, 1943 contact was established with Australia. Smith stayed with Johnson and returned with Parsons to Australia in July, 1943 at a designated secret

rendezvous. This was the same Johnson who helped Capt. Smith in setting up a radio station which made contact with Australia.

Over the Sulu Archipelago, R.C. Chamberlain, a corporal in the medical corps arrived on Tawi-Tawi from Corregidor in 1942. He gathered vintas and collected supplies from Borneo. He established a secret passage from Tawi-Tawi to Borneo using vintas which later was used by the escaped Australian prisoners from Borneo to Tawi-Tawi.

### **The Naval Campaign to Recover Mindanao**

General MacArthur was far from satisfied with the liberation of Leyte and Luzon. From the time of his promise to return to the Philippines, he had envisaged driving out the enemy from the entire Philippine archipelago.

Mindanao was Gen. MacArthur's initial target in his original military plans to liberate the Philippines, but due to the revisions of war strategy in September 1944, it was the last island to be liberated.

The original plan was to launch an amphibious landing in the Illana Bay area on April 12, 1945. SWPA was well-posted on the American maritime activities in Mindanao ever since the first successful submarine landing was made. However, due to shortage of shipping, the amphibious operation was finally carried out on April 17, 1945. The task was assigned to Admiral Noble.

Earlier however, Rear Admiral Forrest B. Royal was given the naval command of Zamboanga, Feb. 20, 1945. The Fertig Guerrilla submitted intelligence reports that there were about 8,300 enemy troops in Zamboanga Peninsula, and since the Zamboanga shorelines were characterized by fringing reefs and coral, initial landings had to be made by LVTs, first week of March on Calarian beach.

Rear Admiral Berkey's "Phoenix," "Boise," and six destroyers participated in the Zamboanga operation. PT boats were dispatched to Basilan and on 10 March, Admiral Royal's group arrived off Zambo City.

The PT boats found several fruitful targets around Zamboanga and these fast fighting boats destroyed a number of enemy small craft, including suicide PT boats. After the successful liberation of Zamboanga, the navy ships helped in the Jolo and Tawi-Tawi operations. With the liberation of Tawi-Tawi and Jolo, the Americans were ready to liberate Borneo, where at the start of the war, many British and

Australian prisoners escaped to Tawi-Tawi.

The Parang landing opened the possibility of utilizing the Pulangi River for the movement of troops and war supplies. Approach and deployment were executed on schedule as Admiral Rigg's cruisers shelled the beach as well as Cotabato City.

The Mindanao River forks about 15 miles from the coast and has two mouths. Landing crafts of the Army's 533rd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment were the flotilla of LCMs converted as gunboats going up as far as the town of Pikit. In the morning of April 18, the USS "Cleveland" and the "Sigsourney" bombarded Tamontaka as the Pulangi Navy took off both branches of the river.

The river campaign was highly successful and this hastened the liberation of Mindanao. Admiral Noble aboard a U.S. coast guard cutter—the "Spencer"—shifted his naval operations to Davao Gulf. 1500 tons of supplies and 1,000 troops were ferried from Parang to Digos. This movement was covered by the cruiser, "Denver," shelling enemy installations at Balut Island.

This was the first of several "administrative movements." The next was to Talomo five miles southwest of Davao City. And on May 14, PT boats and LCM gunboats saw naval action in Piso Point in Lupon town. This was the last refuge of the enemy motor torpedo boats which were entirely wiped out in the famous battle of Piso Point on May 15.

Readm Struble lifted the 108 BCT of the 40th Div. from Ormoc and entered Macajalar Bay in Northern Mindanao. On May 23 the liberators established contact with the enemy that ended major enemy resistance.

The Mindanao campaign was brief and brilliant, deserving more detailed study than we can present today as a concrete example of perfect coordination between the American liberators and the Filipinos. By September 7, 1945 the highest enemy commander signed the surrender document for Mindanao.

### **The Liberation**

When Mindanao was completely liberated, a program of rehabilitation was immediately launched. It was not really difficult for the liberators to establish the civil government as the return to normalcy was anticipated with great optimism, what with the efficient handling of public affairs under the Fertig leadership.

People in Mindanao started to renew socio-economic activities, and once again turned to agriculture and commerce. There was therefore a need to rehabilitate the shipping industry inasmuch as inter-island ships were totally damaged during the war, crippling domestic shipping.

American merchant vessels started reaching Manila from the United States in 1945. These were the ships that were fielded by the War Shipping Administration to the Philippines right after Gen. MacArthur gave his assurance that enemy resistance was completely wiped out.

The War Shipping Administration was created by an executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Feb. 7, 1942. Perhaps this decision to create the WSA was influenced by the urgent recommendation of Gen. Gerow—to launch an operation to assist the Philippines, by establishing an “operating base” in Mindanao in 1942.

The President’s creation of the War Shipping Administration was “to assure the most effective utilization of U.S. shipping for the successful prosecution of the war. There were twenty-two F/S vessels of two-hundred tons, and five F-boats of sixty tons diverted to the Philippines by the shipping administration for inter-island trade. The “Masthead Knot,” a 2,500 tonner, and the “George W. Tucker,” a 2,000 tonner, were among the twenty-nine merchant vessels assigned to start the rehabilitation of the Philippine merchant marine, arrived in Manila on August 21, 1945 even as the American military forces were still actively eliminating the last remnants of enemy pocket resistance in Luzon.

The American President Lines, as agent of the war shipping administration, was appointed to operate the twenty-nine ships. Mr. Joe S. Johnston was sent to Davao City to handle the Lines’ shipping business, while the Houson Orth and Stegenson, Inc. took charge of the Zamboanga City business. Other ports served by the merchant vessels were Nasipit, Cagayan de Oro, Misamis (Ozamis City) Jimenez and Cotabato.

In the meantime, American plantation owners, and sawmill operators and other firms were back on their feet to recover what they lost during the enemy occupation. A program was undertaken which benefited not only the Americans, but also the Filipino employees and wage earners in these establishments.

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2. Atty. Ramon Kimpo – Pre-war provincial board member of Davao and legal counsel to several American old-timers in Malalag and Malita, Davao.
3. Col. Rafael Ramos, PC (Ret.) – was military governor of Lanao during the Commonwealth and was the first head of the Offshore Patrol, now the Philippine Navy.
4. Col. Antonio Lanzar, PC (Ret.) – Pre-war PC officer assigned to Zamboanga, Cotabato and Davao. He was appointed governor of Davao after Liberation.
5. Capt. Andres Suzara, MM. Wartime harbor pilot of Zamboanga.
6. Jack McKinsie – son of an American old-timer residing in Cotabato.
7. Emilio Alcuizar – old-timer in Iligan City and old journalist, Editor of the *Lanao Mail*.
8. Johnny Tompkins – son of an American old-timer from Sindangan, Zamboanga.
9. Zotico “Tex” Carrillo of Camiguin, now secretary to the Mayor of Gingoog City.

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