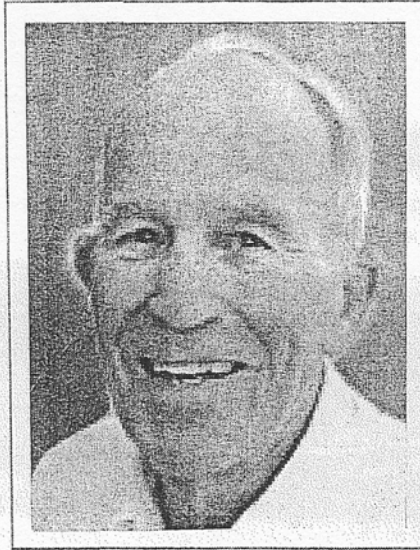


CAPT. JOHN F. LECORN



DECEMBER 23, 1916

✱

JANUARY 26, 2003

CAPTAIN JOHN F. LECORN
(1916-2003)

ISMA Pennant No. 10512
Initiated on January 3, 1984
Member of Detroit Lodge No. 7 for over 19 years
Retired Car Ferry Captain, Wabash/Norfolk & Southern Railroads
Retired Fireboat Captain, Detroit Fire Department

OBITUARIES

2D The Detroit News | Friday, January 31, 2003

John LeCorn, 86, retired seaman

By George Hunter
The Detroit News

SOUTHFIELD — On Dec. 8, 1941, John LeCorn followed the same path as thousands of Americans, reporting to the nearest recruiting station to join the Navy in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attack the day before.

But he was turned down — because his work as captain of a Great Lakes vessel was deemed too vital to the war effort for him to leave.

So Mr. LeCorn spent the war years transporting iron ore down the Great Lakes to the Ford Rouge plant to make trucks, tanks and other weaponry.

Still, Mr. LeCorn kept trying to join the Navy.

"Eventually, they cut a deal with him," said his son-in-law, Patrick Bruetsch. "They allowed him to

join the Coast Guard (as a lieutenant junior grade). They gave him a commission and a uniform — but no paycheck" since he was being paid by the shipping company.

Mr. LeCorn died of complications from lymphoma on Sunday, Jan. 26, 2003, at Providence Hospital in Southfield. He was 86.

Mr. LeCorn first went to sea when he was 17, lying about his age in order to get work as a deck hand on a cargo ship. That was the start of a 49-year career as a seaman.

"He was still at Southeastern High School in Detroit when he



Mr. LeCorn

first went to sea," Bruetsch said. "That was during the summer. His principal talked him into coming back the next year to get his diploma, which he did. He graduated — then went right back on the water, and never left."

While working for the Norfolk and Western shipping line, Mr. LeCorn worked his way through the ranks to master before becoming captain of his own ship, the *Tampico*.

In 1969, Mr. LeCorn retired from Norfolk and Western and went to work on the Detroit Fire Department's fire boat, the *John Kendall*. He did that until former Detroit Mayor Coleman Young decommissioned the boat.

Then, it was back on the Great Lakes, this time working for Ford Motor Co. as captain of the *William Clay Ford*, which hauled

iron ore from Duluth, Minn. to the Ford Rouge plant.

Mr. LeCorn retired in 1982, settling down to spend time with his 10 grandchildren.

"He was wonderful with his grandkids," Bruetsch said. "He'd find out what each kid liked, and he'd take them there. If they liked Mickey Mouse, they'd go to Disneyland; if they liked baseball, he'd take them to Cooperstown."

Survivors include his wife of 60 years, Ardis; three sons, John, David, and Stephen; two daughters, Janet Roselle and Diane Bruetsch; and 10 grandchildren.

A funeral service was held Wednesday at Mariner's Church in Detroit.

You can reach George Hunter at (313) 222-2359 or ghunter@detnews.com

CORRECTIONS TO DETROIT NEWS OBITUARY

The obituary shown above contained some factual errors about Capt. LeCorn's long career on the Great Lakes. The obituary contained 15 paragraphs and the corrections pertain to the following paragraphs found in columns 3 and 4 of the obituary:

Paragraph 9 should read:

"While working for Nicholson Steamship, Capt. LeCorn worked his way through the ranks to master becoming captain of his own ship the *Tampico*." (Note: he was working for Nicholson, not Norfolk & Western, when he received his first command.)

Paragraph 11 should read:

"Then, it was back on the Great Lakes, this time working for Ford Motor Co. as a mate on the *John Dyskstra*, *Benson Ford* and *William Clay Ford*, which hauled iron ore from Duluth, Minn. to the Ford Rouge plant." (Note: he was working as a mate, not as a Captain, for Ford Motor Co., and he worked on more than just the *Wm. Clay Ford*.)

Paragraph 12 should read:

"Capt. LeCorn returned to the Detroit Fire Department in 1979 when the new fireboat *Curtis Randolph* was commissioned. He retired in 1982, settling down to spend time with his 10 grandchildren." (Note: the obituary forgot to mention that Capt. LeCorn had returned to the Detroit Fire Department before he retired in 1982.)

The rest of the otherwise fine obituary appears to be factually correct.

EULOGIES FOR CAPT. JOHN LECORN

I am probably the poorest equipped LeCorn to speak to you today. I'm not much of an eloquent speaker, and all my sisters and brothers spent an awful lot more time with my father than I did. I spent most of my 30 years in the Air Force overseas. But I'd like to give this a shot today, so please bear with me, and I'll be short.

First, I'd like to speak for my mother. My father was a wonderful husband to Ardis - 60 years of loving, 60 years of sharing, 60 years of growing older together. How many couples are so lucky? What a truly great blessing! She loved him with all her heart and he her. So many years of sacrifice, all my father's extra shifts down on the car ferries to help us get what we wanted, what he wanted for us, all the weekends he spent doing odd jobs, providing us with what we needed, putting us all through private school, making sure we all had good educations so we could compete with the rest of the world. Thanks, Mom.

He was certainly a loving father. What a great dad! I think the values that all us sons and daughters treasure the most are the values that he instilled in us early and have certainly stayed with us all these years and he made us the successes that we have become. He certainly was a humble man, and I think he certainly has inculcated that in all of us. He certainly was a great mentor and I think those in his profession that are here today would recognize that. I certainly applied it in my profession.

But most of all, he was a great family man. He made sure we had great vacations every year when I was young, all the way up through high school, took us camping, taught us how to fish, how to put up a tent, showed us all of Michigan, those are the things that I really remember. What a great pop! He taught us the value of an honest day's work, made sure we had high personal standards, gave us a strong civic duty. But above all else, he taught us respect, respect for all others and the respect that you receive in return.

But most of all I want to remember my dad as the guy who used to grab a 3-fingered mitt and asked me if I wanted to go play catch. I can't put a price on the wonderful years we had growing up and what a great family to grow up with, the super summers we had up at Lexington learning how to ski and fish, and all those things he provided for us, a great boat and wonderful company. That's the father that I'm going to remember.

But what a truly great individual. I don't think I can speak to his professional accomplishments as well as some here. But I don't think I need to. All of you know my father and all the hard years that he put on the boats. But I think the one thing that sticks in my mind that kind of epitomizes my father is that when he was laid off, when they closed up the *Kendall* and he had to go back to work - he didn't really have to go back to work, there really weren't any of us kids around any more, we were all off doing our own thing - but he took a job with American Steamship on the *Joe Young*. It was a really tough job. He got a third mate's job, I believe, and delivered stone. At 60, it was awful, and he really suffered. He didn't have to do that for Mom; he didn't have to do that for his kids; he did that for himself. He wasn't ready to quit working, and he worked several other years with Ford and what not.

Pop, the thing I'm going to miss the most is your great smile, your great attitude, your great love of life. Thank you.

**Given by David LeCorn, Capt. LeCorn's son,
at Mariners' Church on January 29, 2003**

I'm Tom and I'm one of John's grandchildren. Like Dave, I remember the 3-fingered mitt. Being one of John's grandchildren makes me a very lucky and special person and all of us grandchildren feel the same way.

The two most important things in my grandfather's life were his family and, of course the lakes and boats. And his grandchildren were all such different people with difference needs and interests, but he reached out to us individually. He supported us all individually, and he was always so deeply involved in our lives. I spent a little time this week looking for something appropriate to read. We all said the 23rd psalm a little bit earlier, but I found a little different version of it that I think he would have enjoyed. I'll read it to you:

The Lord is my pilot; I shall not drift. He leadeth me across the dark waters.

And steereth me in the deep channels. He keepeth my log and guideth me

by the star of holiness for His Name's sake.

Yea, though I sail amid the thunders and tempests of life, I shall dread no danger,

for Thou art with me. Thy love and thy care, they shelter me.

Thou preparest a harbor before me in the homeland of eternity.

Thou anointest the waves with oil and my ship rideth calmly.

Surely sunlight and starlight shall favor me all the days of my voyaging,

And I will rest in the port of my Lord forever.

**Given by Thomas Bruetsch, Capt. LeCorn's grandson,
at Mariners' Church on January 29, 2003**

(eulogies continued on other side)

(eulogies continued from other side)

First off, I want to say I'll never be able to top those fine words about John, but I want the family to know that the ISMA, all the members, each lodge, will remember him as a good member of the Lodge. And as Grand President of the Lodge, I shall see that his name is in the roll of the passed-on members when we have our Convention next week.

I sailed with John on the John Dykstra, on the old Benson Ford, and the William Clay Ford. He was a good shipmate, and he did come out after he was in retirement. That isn't where I really found out about John.

Every other Monday from December through the month of March when he lived in Marine City, he spent one Monday with me. We would drive down to the Shipmaster's weekly meeting. It was an hour and 15 minutes, but with John it seemed like 10 minutes to make that trip. It was one story after another - how he sailed on the Tampico, how he sailed the Adrian Island, and some of these ships that people don't even talk about any more. They're long gone.

I found out many things about John. All the time I knew him aboard the ship and traveling back and forth, I never heard him ever knock a fellow man. I believe he went through life and never made an enemy. Nobody would ever be his enemy because he never knocked anybody.

I know that life goes on, and I also know that life must end. We never know where, we never know how, and we never know why. I'll remember John and I know that when I drive home today, John will be with me telling me some stories that he always told me on our trips down. I'm going to miss him, and I know the members in Lodge 7 will miss him. I hope that he's up in heaven or that harbor with the port anchor down - 2 shots of chain out - and John, save a spot for me up there.

I want to read these few words that were given to me when my wife passed away. I think it's appropriate, and it's called "Know No Fear":

When life fades away, I shall not know fear.
For in that last hour, my God will be near.
Just think of the joy when after all odds,
I grope for a hand, and find it is God's.

Again, to the family I extend my deepest sympathy and the Shipmasters' deepest sympathy in the loss of John. Thank you.

**Given by Capt. Patrick Owens, Grand Lodge President,
at Mariners' Church on January 29, 2003**

REMARKS BY THE RECTOR

No matter where we are in our pilgrimage of faith, we are always standing in the need to say, "Lord, I believe. Cast out my unbelief."

The last days of Capt. LeCorn - tortuous, tempestuous. The bell that we have at Mariners', the Octorara bell, and you masters know about it, the largest bell for a great laker - the Octorara, WWI. The military requisitioned it and the Octorara was refitted. It served gallantly in the South Pacific and came back shot up - tortuous, tempestuous - served her country well. And you remember Commander Peale of the Coast Guard, who had known about the Octorara when he served here, saw the Octorara in the graveyard of a San Diego shipyard. He requisitioned the bell, sent it back, and the Yachtswomen took the battered bell and it's now in dress parade and, again you masters know that when a ship goes to sea and war they remove the ceremonial bell and that's why we have the bell today. And I'd like to think that as this bell is rung--rung only for those who have served the waters, that regardless of what life has been, however tortuous, however unfair it might have seemed, whatever storms we have been asked to sail through, we have never lost the faith.

That wry, gentle smile of Capt. John, I shall always remember.

At this time, the children of Capt. John will come forward and they will toll the bell and at this time, of course, the voice of the bell is the voice of the resurrection, "Oh grave, where is thy victory?" And the bell - the sacred bell - it will be rung 3 times in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

**Given by Rev. Richard Ingalls, Rector of
Mariners' Church, on January 29, 2003**

(eulogies continued on other side)