

LIFE OF CAPT. CRAMER J. GALLOWAY

By RICHARD SPIRO, Oct. 8-9, 1966

The more than 70 years spent on tugs, passenger boats and ferries that ranged the rivers of the Northwest have not dimmed Capt. Cramer J. Galloway's love for these inland waters.

The large dining room window of his home in Rainier affords a superb view of the river that was his workshop for so long a time. Rarely does the captain return home without stepping first to the window and scanning with binoculars the endless panorama of river traffic.

He was born Aug. 26, 1883, on the piece of ground where the

Longview Public Library now stands. The town was called Freeport, head of navigation then, and site of the first schoolhouse in Cowlitz County.

His father, Johnny C. Galloway, operated the steam ferry, Alice V, that shuttled between Kelso and the Oregon shore. "I was practically born on the river," Galloway said, "and there was never much doubt about the career I would follow."

That career began in earnest in 1897, when 14-year-old Cramer Galloway went to work on the Nestor, a towboat owned by Capt. Milton Smith. A sternwheeler like all the other towboats of that era, the Nestor was engaged in the necessary task of hauling logs to the sawmills that lined the banks of the Cowlitz and Columbia rivers.

From that beginning, Galloway never looked back. There was the tug, Fanny, under Capt. Johnny Brown, the Cowlitz, Cascade, and the Vulcan, which offered him his first job as mate. When first built, it was the fastest boat on the river.

He had received his mate's license in 1904, and the coveted master's license was issued shortly after World War I. "All my licenses were First Class," Galloway said, with justifiable pride.

Capt. Milton Smith retired, his son, Wilbur, took over, then sold out to Shaver Transportation company in the early 1930s. Galloway worked for all these owners, including an 8-month stint for Shepard Towing company of St. Helens.

During one phase of his career, Galloway was associated in another St. Helens based tug and barge enterprise with Hamlin McCormick, the man chiefly responsible for much of the industry that lends credence to the St. Helens' title, "The Payroll City."

All the years on the river did not produce any adventures in the sense of disastrous sinkings or collisions, which, after all, is a tribute to the captain's skill and ability. Skippers who lose their commands are not likely to enjoy long careers as towboat men.

There was adventure of a different sort in the competent performance of the tasks that contributed to the Northwest's growth. Some of the work Galloway handled is no longer on the agenda of modern tugs. The huge cigar rafts, for example, that once were made up at Cathlamet Bay and taken over the bar, for ocean-going tugs to pick up and deliver to California ports. As captain of the Louis 111, Galloway made many trips down river with the cigar-shaped log rafts.

And he served as captain, pilot or mate of the countless towboats that hauled log rafts as we know them today — the Bailey Gatzert, once a passenger boat; Paloma, Wentworth, Hercules, Sampson, Biddle and the mighty Logger, biggest and most powerful sternwheeler towboat ever to operate on the rivers of the Northwest.

A sawdust burner, with double engines and a crew of 14, the

Logger was built at Rainier, and owned and operated by Capt. Milton Smith. It knew the Cowlitz as well as the Columbia, towing many a raft from Ostrander to the burgeoning sawmills.

To gain experience, Galloway would switch from towboats to the steamers that plied the river. There was the Telephone, and the Harvest Queen, which knew Galloway as cub pilot. He made the Portland-The Dalles run on the Bailey-Gatzert, built in 1890 as a passenger boat, and converted into a tug in 1907.

He was a young deck hand on boats that hauled wheat to Celilo, and Indians from the fishing grounds there to Umatilla. Chief Tommy Thompson rode the boat often, and Galloway knew him well. "I was raised among the Indians," the captain reminisced, "and got along well with them. Thompson was a fine man — friendly to white people."

A sense of history pervaded the years — assignment on the St. Johns ferry while the now-familiar bridge was in process of construction. And for three years Galloway piloted the towboats, Hercules and Biddle, hauling rock from above Fisher's Landing near Vancouver for the building of the north jetty at Ilwaco, work that began in 1917.

The years came and went with the tides, and change made itself apparent on the river. More and more, the diesel engine was replacing steam, and the sternwheelers gave way slowly, then more rapidly, to the propeller-driven tugs.

Preferring the towboats he had known for more than a half-century, Capt. Galloway turned to ferries that bridged the gap between Astoria and Megler. Starting in 1950, he served at various times as captain, pilot and mate on the Chessman and Tourists No. 2 and 3.

The Chessman was the biggest, designed originally to carry 400 passengers and 45 automobiles. In its last days, it could still accommodate the same number of human passengers, but automobiles have become larger and 40 of them were all that could be fitted aboard.

Galloway enjoyed the tour of duty on the ferries. He likes to meet people, particularly those from the different parts of the country. Many of those he met during the crossing of the Columbia still write to him.

He especially enjoys children, and when his work permitted he could usually be found in the center of a group of interested and inquiring youngsters.

He recalls one time, about 1955, carrying one of the medical Mayo brothers from Oregon to Washington. With his son, the doctor was en route to visit property he owned in Canada.

Dedication of the new Astoria bridge on Aug. 27, 1966, signaled the end of the ferries. As was entirely fitting, Galloway was an honored guest of Capt. Ole Lilloren in the Chessman's

pilot house during that final voyage. It was an honor he shared with Oregon's governor, Mark O. Hatfield.

The fact is, had it not been for a fishing trip that resulted in his slipping on some rocks and injuring himself slightly, Galloway would have been aboard the ferry in an official capacity.

Holder of Coast Guard License No. 10-12, as master of a steam or motor vessel on the Columbia river and its tributaries, Galloway is definitely not retired. He passed with flying colors the physical test when his license needed renewing in 1963.

It is not likely that the captain's record of more than seventy years on Northwest rivers will ever be equalled. Young men today do not start careers at age 14 nor do many continue working into their 80s. Cramer Galloway's life has spanned much of the history of this region. His friends are legion and those who know him deem themselves honored and privileged.

The Rainier Review of Sept. 10, 1970, recorded the death of Capt. Cramer J. Galloway, caused by a heart attack on Sept. 7. He had been fishing at the mouth of the Cowlitz river when he became ill. He died as he was brought back across the Columbia river to Rainier. The funeral was Sept. 10 at Rainier.