



Engineer "Patty" Goode critically takes the pulse of 1200-horses-worth of dazzling diesel in the *Paterson's* power room

Oh! for the life of a sailor—

ON THE ERIE

By W. George Thornton

“WELCOME aboard,” calls Captain Harold Hasbrouck, as we enter the wheel house of the Erie tug *Paterson*. Already the pride of the Erie fleet and its newest addition is swinging into the stream, the skipper deftly manipulating the gleaming brass steering wheel with one hand and the propulsion controls with the other. Two covered barges were made fast to our port side; another rode on the starboard. In a moment a bow wave of white foam is breaking across the *Paterson's* prow as her 1200 H.P. diesel-electric drive takes us toward the snaggle-toothed skyline of lower Manhattan at better than 12 knots. The grey-green waters of the harbor course along the smoothness of her all-welded hull and at the stern break into a churning white wake that trails behind to mark our course across Henry Hudson's River.

It is only a few minutes before we are literally within the shadows of the spires of lower Manhattan. Now Captain Hasbrouck skilfully and quickly maneuvers the two barges of the port tow alongside a barge tied at the end of Pier 3, North River. Deckhands Bert Jostrom and Charles Senn, under the direction of Captain Joe Hopka who is acting today as mate, work fast to secure the tow to the barge, then return aboard and cast off the lines.

Under way again, Hasbrouck turns the *Paterson* and her remaining tow in a short arc and heads “round the horn” as the tip of the island at the Battery is sometimes called by rivermen. A few minutes later we are entering the East River, heading for Java Street, Greenpoint, Brooklyn. The skipper frequently sounds the air horn as we make our way through the heavy harbor traffic. Constantly, he moves the wheel as with the experience of 32 years in the harbor he chooses a course to minimize the resistance of current, wind and tide.

The *Paterson's* crew is oblivious to

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Captain Hasbrouck maneuvers downriver, passing tows of other railroads en route. Nothing obstructs his view

Acting as mate on the Paterson, Captain Hopka reports to Jersey City by radio and is told to await orders

Gotham's skyline gleaming in the morning sun and proceeds with their usual duties. Deckhand Senn turns to washing the pilot house windows with a long handled brush and pail. Jostrom is on the afterdeck splicing a new line about a truck tire which will be hung overside. It will serve as a fender to protect the *Paterson's* hull.

In the engine room, deep in the tug, Engineer Patrick Goode keeps close watch over the throbbing diesel and whining generators as well as the oil-fired boiler which provides heat in cold weather. Oiler Freddie Ward is busy shining the brass gong and engine room bell. Together they keep the engine room so spotless a man can kneel on the floor without soiling his trousers (we actually did

it so we know whereof we speak).

Moving upstream we plow our way beneath the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges. Craning our necks upward at the sight, humans look like specks; automobiles, trucks and the cars of the elevated seem mere toys as they cross above us.

On the Brooklyn shore we move past the navy yard and see carriers and battlewagons with "tin cans", as the gobs call destroyers, tied up alongside. On the Manhattan side we note the Stuyvesant and Peter Cooper Housing Projects which are cities within themselves. We are abreast of the 39-story United Nations Building as we swing our tow alongside a barge at Java Street. Our work completed, mate Hopka reports to Jersey City by radio and is in-

structed to await further orders.

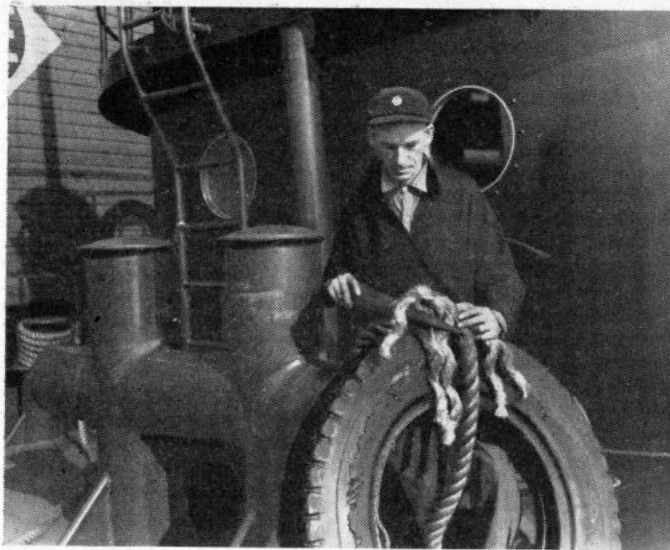
The wait affords an opportunity for a closer inspection of the *Paterson*. Jostrom points with pride to such features as the all welded structure, the red non-skid steel plates of the deck, the sound-absorbent ceiling of the engine room, the ship-shape appearance of the entire tug. He's proud, too, of the white Erie diamonds on the sides of her stubby stack.

He invites us to the galley and, considerate of our shins and mindful of safety, he instructs us in the proper manner of stepping through the raised doorway. Coffee is brewing on the electric hotplate of the functional, clean white harbor-going kitchen with its round table and stools for six. We note, too, a refrigerated



Ready to leave the East River and swing round the Battery, the Paterson has said farewell to the bridges

The Paterson comes abreast of the great United Nations building at Turtle Bay, Lackawanna tug does same



Deckhand Jostrom uses a maple fid in splicing a line around an old truck tire to make a fender for the tug



As a car float reaches the Jersey City float bridges, Deckhands Senn and Jostrom cast off the hawser line

drinking fountain and disposable paper cups. We pinch ourselves and ask "Are we really afloat?" Aft of the galley we discover a locker and shower room for the crew. A nice one. Likewise, we are shown the after cabin with its wide leather settee, individual reading lamps and wash-room.

By now our instructions have come to us on the ship's radio from Jersey City. The *Paterson* is to pick up a car float at an adjoining slip and return it to Jersey City. In a matter of minutes Senn and Jostrom have it lashed to the side. It is more than twice the hundred foot length of our tug. Captain Hasbrouck backs into the stream and heads downriver. He takes his leave of the mahogany paneling of the

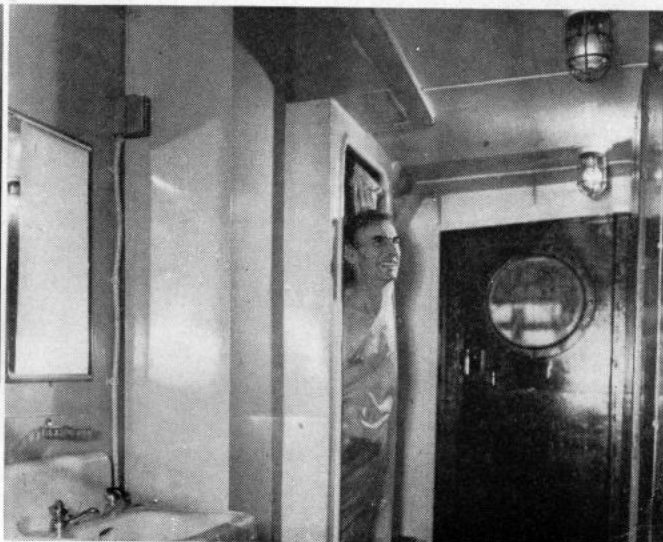
pilot house interior and turns the wheel and his high stool over to Hopka. Hopka has been with the Erie for 15 years and holds the rank of lieutenant, senior grade, in the U. S. Naval Reserve. "Hoop", as he is sometimes called, served on a LST during the war and at advanced amphibious bases. In the fall of 1948, when serving as captain of the Erie tug *Binghamton*, he played a midnight rescue role when a steamer cut down and sank another tug and tow in mid-harbor.

Hopka works his way carefully downstream, seeking the slackest water and at the same time avoiding upriver traffic. It is just noon when, with Hasbrouck again at the wheel, we ease our car float with its 15 cars into float bridge No. 1 at Jer-

sey City. It has been just three hours since we came aboard. As Senn and Jostrom cast off, we go ashore. We wave "goodbye" as Hasbrouck backs the *Paterson* out into the harbor. We watch as she moves upriver toward Weehawken. We wish we were still aboard. In a few brief hours we've come to admire the *Paterson* and those who man her. When we turn to leave, we remember the words spoken by Jostrom as we chatted on the deck: "You spend as many waking hours aboard as you do at home. You might as well make things as pleasant as you can. It isn't hard to keep a vessel ship-shape when you have a crew like ours. Every man is willing to do his bit. We've a mighty fine boat—the finest in the harbor, and it's a big harbor too."



Skipper Hasbrouck checks tow and position light control panel on wheel house wall. Note radio loudspeaker



Deckhand discreetly kept trousers on as he posed for this shot in the shower. The shower is "abaft the galley"