

"WHAT THE AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE MEANS TO MY COMMUNITY"

JOHN KENNEDY TOOLE
2226 CAMBRONNE STREET
ALCEE FORTIER HIGH SCHOOL
AGE 15 YEARS
NO. OF WORDS _____

ATTESTED BY: _____

"WHAT THE AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE MEANS TO MY COMMUNITY"

The gateway to New Orleans and the entire central section of our nation is the flowing giant - the Mississippi. Along its banks log settlements have blossomed forth into great centers of commerce, industry and wealth. The majestic skyscrapers attest to the value of this river. People's lives and fortunes have been woven in with the swirling eddies and treacherous currents of this munificent river.

The Mississippi has witnessed eras of poverty, settlement, and prosperity; its constant occupation has kept our nation strong and virile. For almost 250 years the Mississippi has been in active use as an artery into a rich central hinterland. From the midwest the farm products have found markets on the river. The east and northeast have sent their manufactures to the river for quick sale; thus the "Mighty Father of Waters" has worked for us.

However, let us see how other nations have helped to keep us strong. From South and Central America, coffee, bananas, chocolate, rubber, tin, and bauxite that the Americans consume or use during the year are usually brought directly to the Mississippi. All the rich resources of the Latin Americas can readily find a market along the river. This is where our vital Merchant Marine ties in. Were it not for the Merchant Marine, New Orleans could never have risen to the position of second port in the United States.

New Orleans is the vital center of the southern United States. Here

the products of Latin America find northern markets and the products of North America find southern markets. This is strength in action for the United States.

Let us not believe that only Pan-American trade passes through the great southern port. At the wharves of New Orleans one can see ships representing every nationality and country. Obviously our Merchant Marine has made a favorable impression upon the foreign powers whose commerce is necessary for American high standard of living.

Some believe that our freedom and the prosperity of our port rests wholly on the success of our efforts in offensives abroad and defenses at home. The more discerning realize that true freedom has its roots deeply implanted in trade. Therefore, our nation must seek all avenues for strengthening and increasing it. The Merchant Marine provides the broadest and most easily traversed avenue toward this goal.

Today, our Merchant Marine is busily engaged in the task of improving our relations with foreign nations by providing the most dependable and economical service. Our modern sailing fleet has led the way in world shipping and has shown the world that there is nothing like American free enterprise to insure progress. Into the humblest ports steam the representative American ships impressing the inhabitants wherever they dock. Through its establishing better relations with foreign countries, the Merchant Marine has extended the "good-neighbor" policy of America everywhere that our boats can possibly navigate. In times of crises, these countries will be the most reluctant to defy the one country that has consistently provided them with the good, sound trade.

The American Merchant Marine has erased every obstacle that could

prevent it from actively operating in all ports, excluding those behind the "Iron Curtain." The most ingenious attempts have been made by American shipping to conquer every barrier that might fall between us and world trade. Commodore Perry displayed the grit and determination of our shipping by his vigorous and successful efforts to open the trade door of Japan which had been a closed nation for two hundred years.

The millions of dollars that annually pour into the United States from our efficient Merchant Marine have strengthened our nation's finances and thereby provided us with the money necessary to defend ourselves against those enemies who constantly wish to oppress democratic government.

The consistently good port service offered by New Orleans has been one of the factors responsible for its success. Indirectly, we have made other nations' Merchant Marines work for us this way. Foreign countries are always satisfied with the efficient handling of their ships and merchandise in American ports.

It has been 138 years since a foreign invader has trod American soil in an attempt to endanger our freedom - that was the Battle of New Orleans. This does not mean that there is no possibility of it ever happening again, but America must be prepared in order to meet any menace that might arise. Probably the first move of the enemy would be to cripple our ports on which the security of the country rests. Here the Merchant Marine would prove of inestimable value. During our wars abroad the Merchant Marine, converted to an efficient war fleet, was responsible for a number of brilliant victories. It is doubtful that any enemy could reach our ports by sea with the strong resistance offered by the Merchant

Marine to conquer. Here, in active use, the Merchant Marine would display how ably it could suppress a naval invasion. During World War II, subversive submarines at the mouth of the Mississippi were unsuccessful in retarding our Merchant Marine.

Since the birth of our Merchant Fleet in the early days of our nation, our Merchant Marine has proved an invaluable asset in keeping our nation free. History can readily trace important roles that our Merchant Marine has played in keeping our nation strong and virile.

The one thing that separates us from Communism, dictatorship, and other suppressive governments, the sea, has been successfully managed by our Merchant Marine.

To the Merchant Marine, New Orleans owes its supremacy as a port and city. The pride of the "Deep South" can directly trace its eventful past and promising future to the work of a great organization, the American Merchant Marine.