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A VETERAN RETURNS
TO THE WARS

In a ceremony to be held today in Seattle, Washington, Senator Warren G. Magnuson, Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, will present to the master and crew of the SS MEREDITH VICTORY a bronze plaque detailing the ship's exploits in achieving the greatest rescue by a single ship in the annals of the sea. In making the presentation, Senator Magnuson will reach back sixteen years into the past to the year 1950 and the Korean conflict. It was during this time of the American involvement in South Korea's fight to maintain its independence that the MEREDITH VICTORY earned for itself the right to be called a "Gallant Ship", by effecting the rescue of 14,000 Korean civilians from threatened communist execution.

The feat occurred at the port of Hungnam, upon which in that bleak December North Korean and Chinese communist armies were converging. While the big guns of the U.S. Navy, field artillery, and carrier based planes held the Communists at bay, discharged supplies were reloaded on board American ships in the harbor, along with tens of thousands of American fighting men.

Within the defense perimeter of Hungnam, however, were thousands upon thousands of Korean refugees, men, women, and children, and for this entire civilian population the Communists had decreed death by beheading for aiding the South Korean, American and other allied forces. Even as American troops were being embarked, the thousands of Korean civilian refugees were being shuttled in

crash boats from the shore to American ships in the harbor in order to save them. Among these ships was the MEREDITH VICTORY, which had been broken out of the Maritime Administration's National Defense Reserve Fleet when the Korean conflict began in order to carry supplies to our forces fighting in Korea. Owned by the Maritime Administration, for which she was operated under General Agency Agreement by a private steamship company, Moore-McCormack Lines, the ship was crewed by American merchant seamen as one of the hundreds of American merchant ships carrying supplies to Korea under the control of the Navy's Military Sea Transportation Service.

In command of the MEREDITH VICTORY was Captain Leonard P. LaRue of Philadelphia, Pa., who ordered the crew to take aboard all refugees possible. Scrambling up cargo nets let over the side, literally thousands of Korean men, women and children climbed to safety. They filled the holds, the tween-deck spaces, the main and boat decks, and clung in the rigging. It was not until more than 14,000 were aboard that the MEREDITH VICTORY steamed out of Hungnam to pass through a 30-mile enemy mine field.

With little food and water aboard, with no doctor, not even an interpreter, for three days the MEREDITH VICTORY made her way down the coast of Korea. During this time she added to her passenger list five babies born enroute. On Christmas Eve, 1950, with her cargo of humanity aboard, the MEREDITH VICTORY arrived at the island of Koji-Do, some 50-miles southwest of Pusan.

In the ship's log, Captain LaRue wrote: "The nearness of Christmas carries my thoughts to the Holy Family-how they, too, were cold and without shelter. Like the crucified Christ, these good people suffer through the actions of guilty men". How great was the impression upon Captain LaRue is attested to by the fact that he later gave up the sea to take religious vows and become Brother Marinus, Order of Saint Benedict, Saint Paul's Abbey, Newton, New Jersey.