

Some of our fire fighters will tell their grandchildren about the fire of October 17th, 1944. Forty-one tons of Japanese ammunition, returned to this country for investigation, were stowed in No.3 Hatch of the FREDERICK C. HOWE, moored at Anchorage W-3, when a flare was accidentally ignited in the hold. Five Fire Division units were dispatched to this fire which was extinguished without disaster by releasing the vessel's steam system into hold and pumping water from two hose lines for twenty-five minutes.

The Necessity of an efficient Coast Guard Fire Division was again shown when on October 21st, 1944, a large fire occurred involving three U.S. Navy LSMs moored at Berth 223. Berth 223 is located in the heart of the Los Angeles-Long Beach Harbor Area, around which five Marine Petroleum Terminals, with facilities for berthing eleven oil tankers simultaneously are in operation. Twenty-one men were rescued and sixteen persons met their death either directly from burns or by drowning after leaping overboard into the harbor waters. At least fifty persons, both Navy personnel and civilian workmen were burned so seriously as to require medical attention or hospitalization. Despite the magnitude of this fire the LSM vessels were saved from total loss. Exposure fires were prevented and the wharf suffered only minimum damage and soon returned to full operation.

There were other fires involving large wartime industry. Among them the Calship "Riggers' Lost" fire, the Todd-Los Angeles Shipyard outfitting dock fire and others will be remembered by our fire fighters. It is estimated that CG fire fighting units have answered an average of ten fire alarms weekly. Most of these fires have been extinguished while still in their incipient stages.

Fire prevention also plays an important part in our Fire Division operation. Oil spills have often occurred during oil tanker loading operations at petroleum terminals. One can readily imagine the fire and explosion risk created when highly volatile petroleum products such as aviation gasoline or toluene are released in the harbor. To relieve this condition fireboats play high pressure monitor streams on the water's surface to "break up" the oil covered patches and emulsify the oil with water. One such spill of major proportion took place on the 13th of June, 1945, when an oil line near Berth 127 burst, spilling approximately 600 barrels of pressure distillate into the harbor waterways. Inflammable vapors from this spill made welding operations in three major shipyards impractical, forcing their suspension for approximately ten hours while three Coast Guard fireboats and a trailer pumper unit dispersed the distillate.

To protect the 100 miles of wartime waterfront activity, which provided 90 percent of the oil used by the nation's Pacific Fleet, and had total exports exceeded only by New York Harbor, the CG Fire Division now has ten completely modern fireboat stations equipped with radio and telephone communication. Its Fire Prevention Detail consists of eighteen enlisted men under the supervision of Lieutenant T.E. Downey, an insurance underwriter on military leave. They make daily inspections of all fire risk activities. Fifteen manned, radio equipped, trailer pumper units are on constant vigil, standing by ships loading or unloading ammunition in this harbor. Off watch they stand by in their respective fire stations.

Ten fireboats capable of pumping a combined total of 22,000 gallons of water per minute protect the waterfront facilities in Los Angeles-Long Beach Harbor. The 126 foot CG Cutter HELLWOOD has been converted into a fireboat especially equipped with a five ton CO<sub>2</sub> extinguishing system to combat oil fires. A fireboat is also maintained at Newport Beach Harbor and another is stationed at the Navy Ammunition and Net Depot, Seal Beach. There are 370 men assigned to operate all this modern fire fighting equipment.

Inevitable military transfers of personnel have caused more than 615 men to at one time or another be carried on the Division's roster. At the present time, men attached to the Division have massed a total of 2,224 months overseas duty, and our monthly battalion review discloses many citations and purple heart awards.