

Bill Lee – AMERICA’s Unofficial Historian



Born within sight of the SS *AMERICA*'s shipbuilding cradle, Bill attended her launching ceremonies in August, 1939 at the tender age of three. That inspiration, coupled with a childhood of frequent visual and audible memories of her – both as *AMERICA* and *WEST POINT* - created the basis for his life-long affection for this former Queen of the American Merchant Marine.

Bill entered the NNS Apprentice School in 1954, just in time to work briefly on the *AMERICA* a year later when she was at the shipyard for one of her annual voyage repair sessions. On numerous occasions, he was present on a riverfront bluff as the *AMERICA* visited her birthplace. And he was there in 1964 when she sailed away – forever – to begin a new career as Chandris Line's *AUSTRALIS*.

By that time, he was completely engaged in work involving navy nuclear propulsion plants for aircraft carriers. Bill considers his greatest achievement during almost 30 years as a shipbuilder being a part of the design team that created the nuclear propulsion system for the highly successful NIMITZ-class carriers.

After a 45-year career in shipbuilding and other industrial enterprises, Bill retired in 1998. Now living in the Charlotte, North Carolina area, his avocation is to research and write about ships in general; and the SS *AMERICA* in particular.

He also communicates with an ever-increasing number of people, worldwide, who have similar interests. These fellow enthusiasts, or 'Amerifans', as Bill likes to collectively refer to them, often call him *AMERICA*'s Unofficial Historian. Their numbers include several members of the ship's wartime crew.

Bill's two-year effort to propose, then help create the SS *AMERICA* Library onboard the cruise ship *Pride of America* culminated with the library's dedication in New York Harbor in June, 2005.



A year later, in appreciation of his many articles about their ship, Bill was named the Official Historian of the USS *WEST POINT* Reunion Association.

At their annual reunion in 2007, Bill was further recognized for his efforts to keep the memory of their ship alive when that appreciative group named him a honorary *WEST POINT* crewmember.

There is no higher honor for an Amerifan ...