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EDITORS' NOTE

Guardsmen Around the World

In June, George Silk was sailing his 17-foot *Thistle* in a race on Long Island Sound when a squall hit him. He got his mainsail down in time and scudded toward the finish line on a jib in 70 knots of wind. It was a squall he knew how to handle—Silk's father and grandfather sailed around the Horn from Scotland to New Zealand in the '70s in a clipper that was dismasted and crossed the roaring forties in a jury rig—and Silk himself has been sailing boats since he was a young boy on the New Zealand coast. It was also the kind of sudden wind that calls the U.S. Coast Guard to action, and George has probably seen more Coast Guardsmen in action on more scattered bases than any man alive. He has been photographing the service for more than a year. The first of his two color essays on the Coast Guard appears in this issue.

The Coast Guard is not much bigger than the New York City police force, but its bases are spread all over the globe, and the two stories led Silk from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and several times around the world. As a sailor he had always taken the Coast Guard for granted, but as he worked on the story of this tight-knit service he found it had a strong *esprit de corps*. This worked to his advantage; when the Guardsmen found he was determined to tell the whole story of their lonely and often dangerous jobs they passed the word ahead of him. "I was handed around from Joe to Jack," says Silk. "As soon as the word got out that I was serious I went from friend to friend. Those were the best credentials I could have had."

Since he got back, Guardsmen have been sending him mementos of his trip. One, knowing Silk's love of fishing, sent him a frozen salmon. Another, out in the north Pacific, sent him a huge shell of a clam said to be able to trap a man and drown him. From the Eskimo grandson of Admiral Peary's Negro valet he got some carvings done in walrus jawbone, and he is wondering how to display a huge glass ball from a Japanese fishing net inscribed "To Mr. Silk from the crew of the Umpqua River station." But what he best remembers is a night he spent on the Coast Guard cutter *Barateria* on stormy ocean station duty off Newfoundland. "When evening came," says Silk, "we settled down to watch a movie, an ancient film called *Reap the Wild Wind*, which is about shipwrecks and hurricanes. The crew seemed fascinated by the movie storm, but I was worried about the one we were in. One 30° roll knocked me out of my seat and threw me across the room. I went to bed, remembering all those shipwrecks in the picture, when all of a sudden there was this deafening booming noise. I stumbled to the wardroom, thinking of the *Titanic*, and asked an officer what was up. He said it was the foghorn. I went back to bed and was seasick. Next morning I sheepishly admitted this. 'Doesn't surprise me,' said the exec. 'So was half the crew.' That almost made me feel a member of it."



SILK AND CLAMSHELL

George P. Hunt
GEORGE P. HUNT,
Managing Editor

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In Luci's hospital room the proud grandfather meets Patrick Lyndon Nugent

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