



**The Ship That Would Not Die: USS Queens, SS
Excambion, and USTS Texas Clipper (Centennial
Series of the Association of Former Students,
Texas A&M University)**

Stephen Curley

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Starting its life as an attack transport in World War II—and one of the last five left afloat by war's end—the USS *Queens* saw action at Iwo Jima and other hot spots in the Pacific theater. After the war, the ship became the SS *Excambion*, one of the “Four Aces” of American Export Lines: the only fully air-conditioned ships in the world at the time.

In 1965, the versatile *Excambion* underwent yet another transformation—into a floating classroom. Recommissioned as the USTS *Texas Clipper*, the ship began a third life as a merchant marine training vessel with its home port in Galveston. For the next three decades the *Texas Clipper* would be home to merchant marine cadets, and by the time it was retired in 1996, it was the oldest active ship in the U.S. merchant marine fleet. Finally, the *Texas Clipper*, after protracted bureaucratic wrangling, was designated to be sunk in the Gulf of Mexico as an artificial reef to provide habitat for marine life. In 2007, the ship was towed to its final resting place, seventeen nautical miles off the coast of South Padre Island. Now, 136 feet below the surface, the venerable *Texas Clipper* lives on as the home to a wide variety of underwater species. Filled not only with meticulously researched technical and historical data about the ship's construction, service record, crew procedures, and voyages, *The Ship That Would Not Die* also features lively anecdotes from crew members, passengers, and officers. More than 140 color and black-and-white photos illustrate the ship's construction, its wide variety of shipboard life, the exacting process of making the *Texas Clipper* ready to become an artificial reef, and its final sinking in the Gulf of Mexico.

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