The *United States* steams out of New York harbor at the start of an Atlantic voyage at the height of her career. – Jack Shaum collection.

With her sleek good looks, speed and luxury the *United States* had just the right touch of 1950s glamour and exclusivity to attract the rich and famous. As captain, Tucker was a natural at the social side of his job. The captain and staff captain each had a table in the First Class dining room and every night, with the exception of sailing day and bad weather, they were at the table. The evening usually started with one or two cocktail parties followed by dinner. "My favorite drink was soda and a twist of lime and I ate very carefully, the food was so good." His guests ranged from "freeloaders" (the nonpaying crowd that showed up when the ship was in port) to Hollywood celebrities and royalty. He was a gracious host who knew how to make his guests feel comfortable even under unusual circumstances. "One day I was entertaining some Coast Guard people and we were having club sandwiches. I looked into where I bit into the sandwich and there was half an earthworm. So I swallowed what I had in my mouth, put the piece of sandwich back down on my plate and never said a word, all for the glory of U.S. Lines," he said. Not all of the crew members were as socially adept. "We took Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia, down to show him the swimming pool and gym. The Emperor asked Maxi the gym attendant 'What's this?' 'Oh that's a heat lamp to give you a tan; do you want to try it?'"

At the end of World War II, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were loyal Cunard line passengers sailing on the sedate *Queen Elizabeth*. In 1950s they moved over to United States Lines and were regulars on the *United States*. Captain Tucker believes they preferred the ship because they were left alone. On the Cunard Line, he was the former King of England and the subject of royal attention. The Duke was the only passenger with an open invitation to the bridge. "We would get a call asking if it was all right for the Duke to visit. Of course the answer was always yes, Tucker remembered. He would show up on the bridge in his plaid sport coat, plaid socks and wild slacks and later in my quarters we would sit down and have a scotch and water and talk. He was a great raconteur, told great golf stories."

If there was a down side to the job, it was being away from his family. U.S. Lines had strict expectations of its officers. Captains were expected to make Christmas trips as an example to the crew. The Tuckers had two children and celebrated two Christmases, one on December 25 when he was at sea, the other when he was on leave from the ship. The company did not want its officers distracted by family matters while at sea. Contact with home and family was discouraged. It was a common practice for shipping lines to allow wives to sail with working husbands but U.S. Lines prohibited the practice. "It wasn't easy," recalled Penny Tucker, who many times was left alone with family problems and emergencies such as sick children or broken furnaces. "I owe her big time," said the captain. "She never complained. We made a