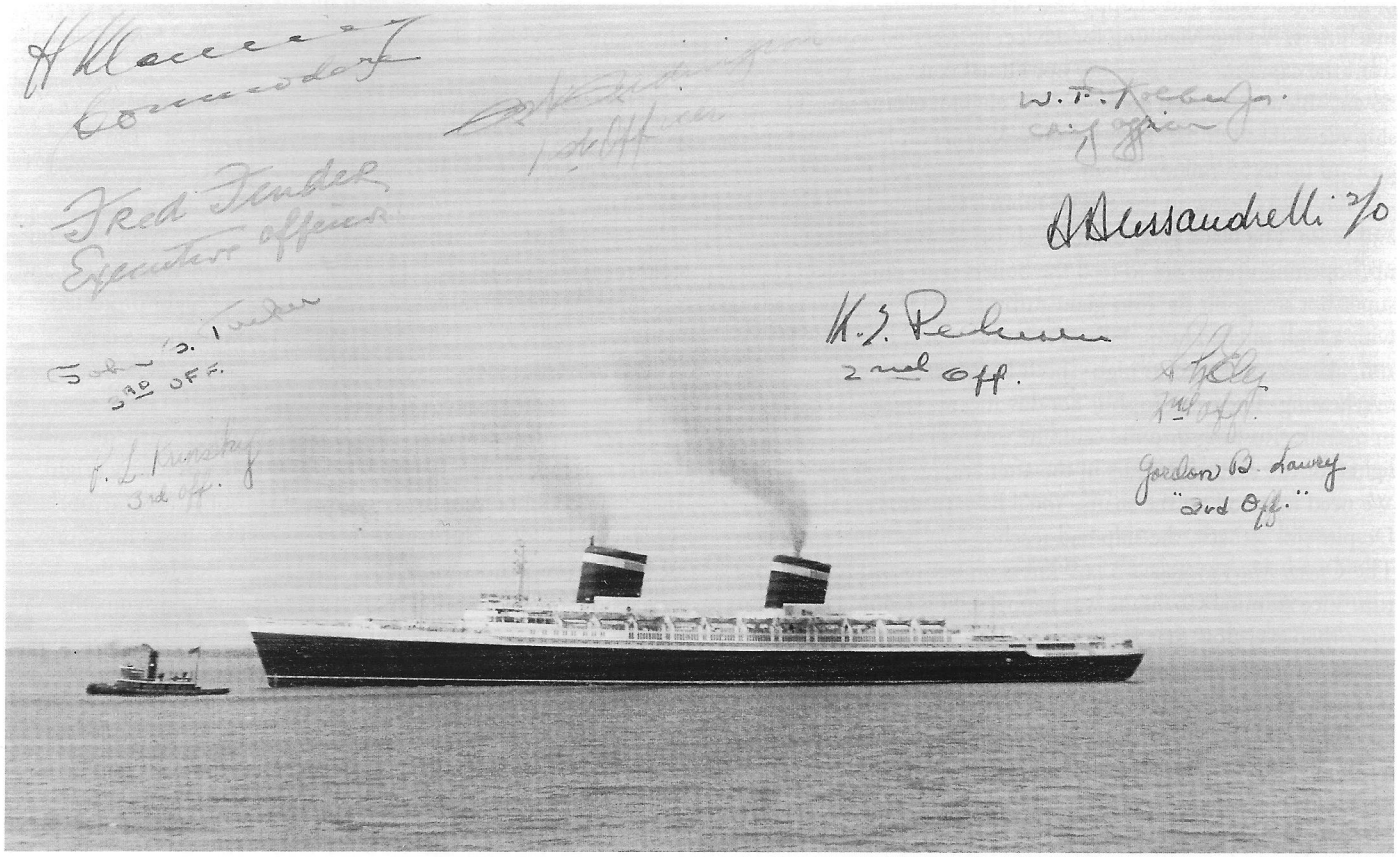
best decision I ever made". Shortly after that, Tucker received some choice assignments, starting in 1951 as third officer on the *America*. "I liked the *America*. She was a nice ship but a bit short up front. In heavy weather they rued the day she was designed with a short bow. I hate to say this but the older *Washington* could walk away from the *America* in heavy seas," Tucker said.

His next call from the marine superintendent was an offer to sail on the new *United States*. "Get your second mate's license and I will get you a job as third officer on the ship," the man said. He was to join a select group of nine deck officers for the trials as well as the maiden voyage. They would sail under the command of the legendary Captain Harry Manning.

On May 14, 1952, the new *United States* made her debut in the Atlantic Ocean with a shakedown cruise. It included three days of builder's trials followed by two days of official trials. The three days were a tense time for the naval architect and builder as the quality of their design and workmanship was put to the test. The trials were set up 150 miles off the Virginia coast. "Why so far out?" I asked the captain. "Speed trials were usually held close to land where markers were set a mile apart and the speed determined by the time it took to travel between the two points. The *United States* was so fast that it required trials out at sea in at least 100 fathoms of water," he said. A new system developed by the Raydist Company measured speed using radar impulses between ship and fixed buoys.



(Above) John S. Tucker as third officer aboard the liner *America* in 1951. (Below) The *United States* heads out of Newport News on her trials in May 1952. The photograph is autographed by all the licensed deck officers assigned to the ship at that time, who also made her maiden voyage. Commodore Harry Manning's signature is at the top left and Tucker's is third down on the left.