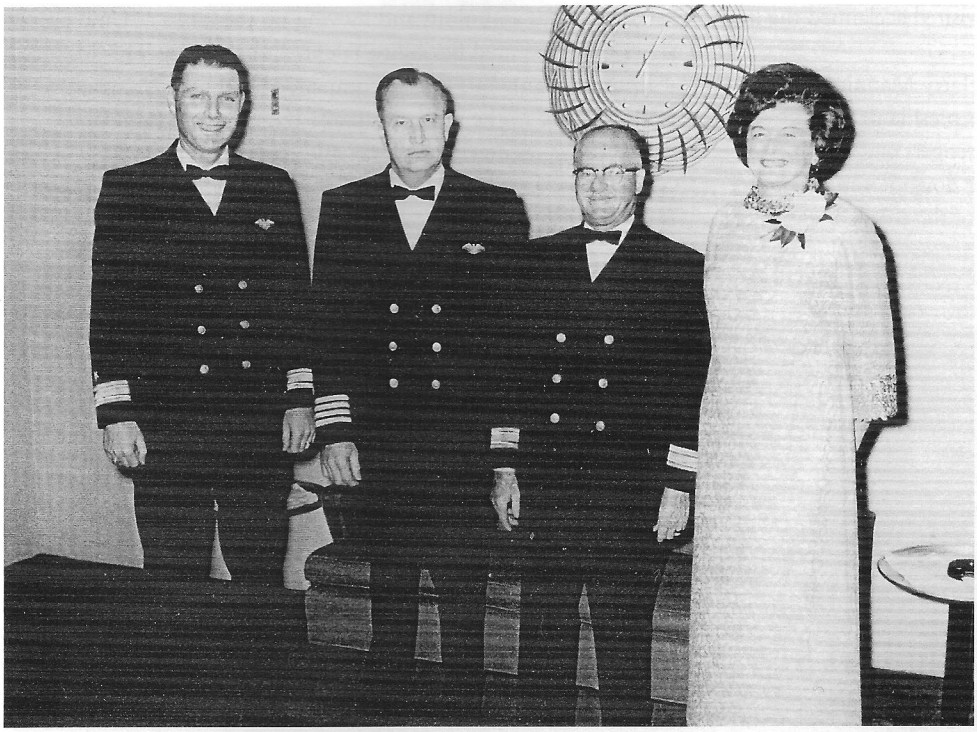

(Above) Captain Tucker is at the left in this First Class receiving line on the *United States* in the late 1960s. Executive Officer Roy Fiddler is at Tucker's left and Chief Engineer John Logue is to Fiddler's left. The social directress at right is not identified. (Below) Captain John Tucker is on the port bridge wing of the *United States* as the liner departs from Pier 86 in New York in the late 1960s.

the ship was at sea, Gibbs would call for an update on the ship's performance. After exchanging gruff greetings, they would talk about ship news in a language that was not easily translated into proper terms. Kaiser was an old-time engineer who smoked big black double Maduro cigars and lots of them. "He was a good scout and a funny guy who might be a little on the crude side. I always went to his parties but took a place near the door in case the jokes got out of hand," Tucker said.

The first week in New York, the officers and crew were busy with public tours and VIP parties. A record crowd of 70,000 showed up for the first public tour. Under the supervision of officers and crew, visitors boarded the vessel aft on the promenade deck. Then they were guided through five decks, viewing cabins and public rooms from Tourist to First class. All was going well until chaos broke out on Main Deck. "She had a Navy-style fire system on board with piped water kept at 165 pounds of pressure at all times. Well, with all these thousands of people on board, one of the Main Deck drain plugs in the six-inch copper pipe blew out, said Tucker. It filled the overhead panels, which then dropped down on the visitors, drenching them with hundreds of gallons of water. To top it all off, Dorothy Collins and the Lucky Strike hit parade were broadcasting live from the ship that night and their technicians were running electric wire all over the place. What a mess! "

Rats were another problem. While at the shipyard, workers had disposed of lunch pail scraps within the deep recesses of the ship and the new ocean liner came with rats. "One night up in the ballroom they were all dancing away when here comes this rat right across the dance floor. Great public relations! On another occasion a woman opened a stateroom dresser drawer and a rat jumped out. She fell over backwards," Tucker remembered.