

DEWEY P. ASTON

(1923-1989)

Operations Manager
The Interlake Steamship Company
(Retired)



Dewey P. Aston, born in 1923, was the son of a merchant marine engineer and grandson of a Great Lakes Captain. He graduated from Lakewood High School in 1941 and spent some of his summers and later, several years as a Great Lakes merchant mariner. At the United States entrance into World War II, he attended the U.S. Maritime Service Officer Candidate School at Fort Trumbull in New London, Connecticut. Through the war years, he served on numerous ocean cargo ships delivering much needed supplies and equipment to the overseas war effort.

After the war ended, he was hired by The Interlake Steamship Company and transferred in 1948 to Duluth, Minnesota. He held a variety of positions in Duluth through 1960, when he became Vessel Agent in Chicago. In 1966, Mr. Aston moved to Vessel Dispatch in Cleveland, Ohio, where he advanced to Assistant Operations Manager in 1968 and Operations Manager in 1969 – a position he held until his retirement in 1985. Dewey P. Aston passed away in 1989.

Mr. Aston's professional career was always marked by detailed research and utmost attention to shipboard and personnel safety. He witnessed the transition of the industry from forward pilothouse, coal-fired triple expansion plants to self-unloading diesel-powered, 1,000-foot ships.

Communications always took precedence because of the reliance on shore-based FM radio stations and single side-band, radio transmissions. Communications with ships was spartan, at best. Marine managers were truly on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week when the ships were sailing! Even family picnics waited until February because nothing, except work, happened until winter lay-up. Computers were just being introduced in 1985 when Dewey retired; nevertheless, he learned quickly and seemed to enjoy being freed from manual calculations and recordkeeping.

Dewey worked in an era when a handshake deal was as binding as today's multi-page legal documents. This sense of honor and work ethic were hallmarks of Dewey Aston. This is a legacy which he wove into the corporate fabric of The Interlake Steamship Company.

He served on the Navigation Committee of Lake Carriers' Association and was active in The Propeller Club of the United States. Though never a shipowner or company executive, he embodied the self-sacrificing dedication and unfailing work ethic upon which the Great Lakes merchant marine industry has always relied.

Mr. Aston was married in 1943 to Elizabeth Wells, who died in 1993. Dewey and Bettie had four children: daughters Cheryl Aston, Lorraine Aston Linqvist, and Annette Aston Agner. Their son, Jay, a U.S. Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam, was killed in action (unaccounted). They have two grandsons, Eric Nelson and Ian Agner.