

Faithful Dog Keeps Vigil At Docks For Dead Master



"JACK" MAKES HOME IN ORE PILE

This story was submitted by Ray Burlingham, and is a clipping from A. Lindgren's scrap book. It is datelined Conneaut Harbor, Ohio, April 16, 1940. This story should nudge the memories of some of our old-timers. Here it is. (A little detective work 83 years later uncovered a picture of "Jack" and her story in the Painesville Telegraph, dated April 17, 1940.) This is the story of a lonely dog.

Dog Keeps Vigil At Docks for Dead Master Painesville Telegraph Photograph published on Find-a-Grave (This story was submitted by Ray Burlingham, and is a clipping from A.

This story, a life drama of hope and courage takes place at Conneaut Harbor on one of the world's busiest ore docks. It begins last Independence Day, when the Steamer Norway was alongside the harbor dock. Aboard the ship was a sleek female police dog with a sharp muzzle and pointed ears. Her proud master was the second cook, a man named Berger Torsen, of Ashtabula. The way to a dog's heart

is his stomach, and a ship's galley can be a canine paradise. Berger therefore, was tops! On this particular July 4, Berger left the boat leaving his dog behind in the cabin. The sailor never returned. That night during a heavy storm, he accidentally plunged into the harbor channel and was drowned. Without her master, the dog made one more trip up the lakes. She protested Berger's absence so vigorously that the crew put her off on the next arrival at Conneaut Harbor. The dolorous animal remained on Dock Four as the weeks passed. Almost daily she would ascend the ore piles, hunch down and peer steadfastly at the water, her head between her forefeet. She attracted the attention of Deckmen and Bessemer and Lake Erie Switchmen. Justus Hankson was one of the first to "adopt" her and for the sake of a name, called her "Jack." But Jack was reluctant to make new friends. She was extremely timid and would flee behind the ore piles if anyone moved in her direction. Dockworkers at mealtime came to place scraps of food near the piles and after they had gone, Jack would come to eat. The days grew bleak, the winds howled, the storms came, but Jack stayed.

She found a sheltered spot in one of the piles and maintained her constant surveillance. Her hair grew long and shaggy and her feet and body turned the color of ore. One day an accident befell her. She lost her footing and became pinned between an ore pile and the tie wall. Her plight was discovered and she was lassoed with a rope and hauled out. The rescuers were George M. Hill, an electrician, Harold Starkey, bridge oiler, and William Kitinoja, watchman. To this day the dog has refused companionship, keeping a daily vigil of the water. Always agile and alert, she will come within a few feet of some of the men, especially if she is offered food. Jaimer Rankinen, operator of the haulage house, and Alex Kantola, night foreman, managed to have her come within range of a camera the other day. The entreat, however, was a big chunk of bread. ¹⁷ "She's a friend of everyone on the docks," Mr. Rankinen explained. "And we all think she will become reconciled to the fact her master is gone and let us be her friends." But the dog lives in fervent hope her master will return. (Dock Talk, February 1969)

A little more detective work indicates that Berger Torsen arrived in New York Harbor on the ship Cymric from Norway on May 4, 1903. He was naturalized in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in April 1921. His naturalization record shows that he was born on February 5, 1880 in Norway. The records show that Berger Torsen (Thorsen) worked on several ships after he arrived in the United States. Berger's 1917 World War I draft registration describes his physical characteristics as a medium build, short, with light brown hair and brown eyes. He lived with his brother Jens on Ninth Avenue in Milwaukee at the time that he registered for the draft and he worked as a steward for the Interlake Steamship Company. The 1930 census reveals that Berger still lived in Wisconsin, this time in West Allis, and he

listed his occupation as a steward on a retail freighter. Berger Torsen is buried in East Conneaut Cemetery and compassion hopes that his faithful dog Jack was buried with him.