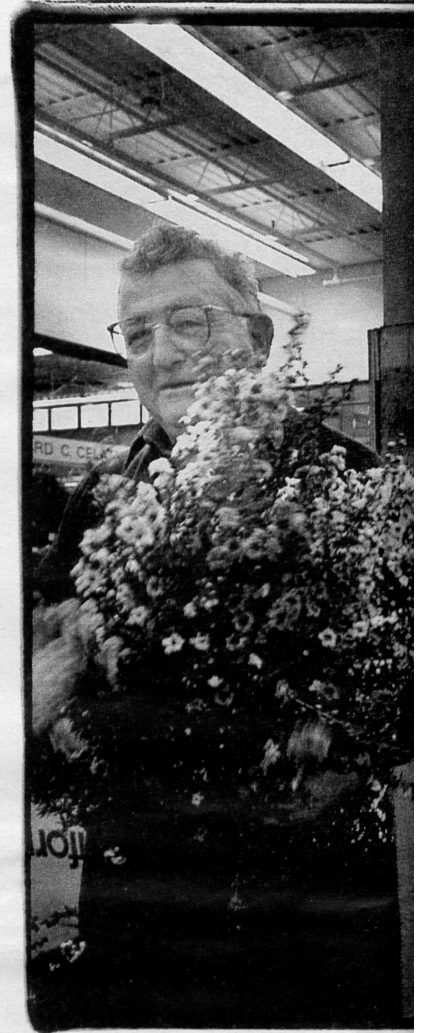


**FOLLOW THE MONEY** A worker sorts \$100 bills at the Federal Reserve Bank. As much as \$100 million passes through the bank every day.



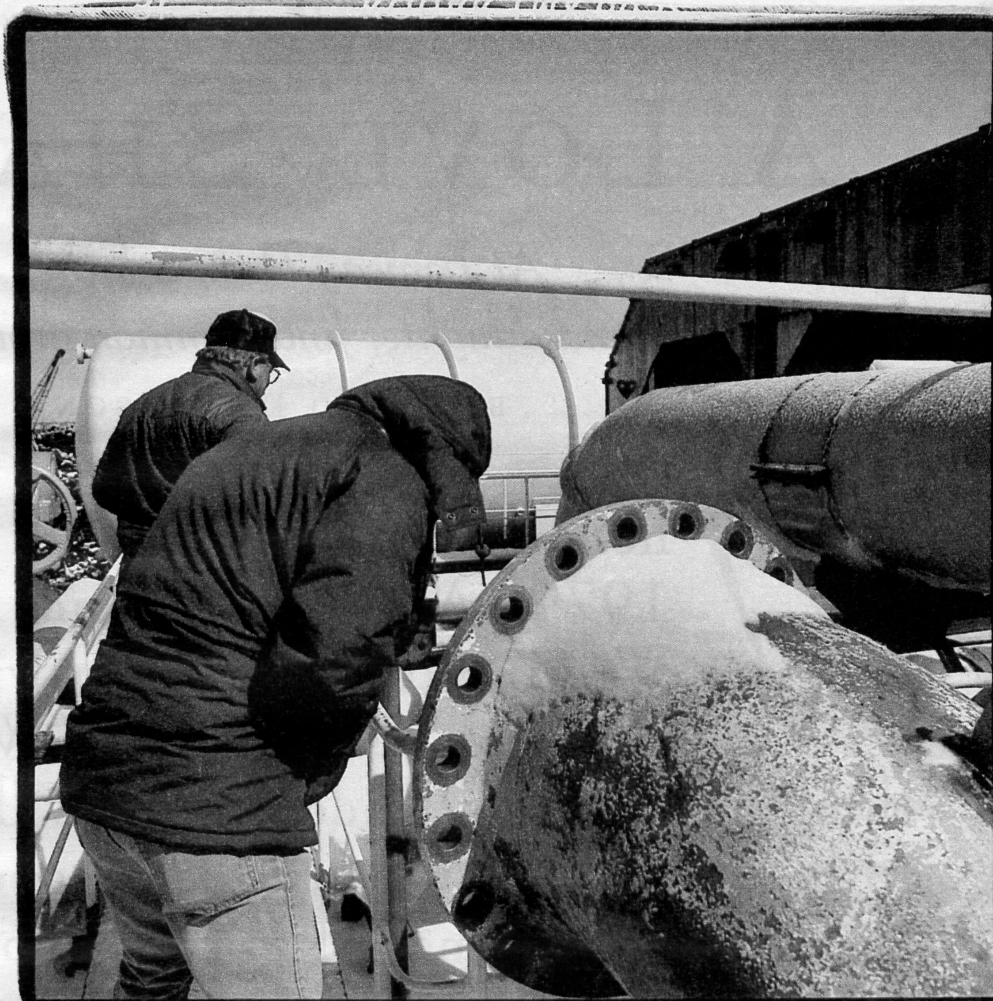
**BUSINESS BLOOMS** Saro Curro at the Flower Exchange, entry point for blossoms in France, Thailand, Italy, and South Am



# WELCOME TO BOSTON

At the end of the 19th century, the harbor was the premier gateway to the city. But today, many of Boston's goods and services often find surprising routes into town.

**FUEL HUB** An Algerian tanker capable of transporting 34 million gallons of liquid natural gas is inspected at the Everett Marine Terminal.



BY DAN GROSSMAN AND SETH SHULMAN

On a spring evening in 1873, some of Boston's civic and business leaders gathered at the Parker House to celebrate the centennial of the Long Wharf Corp. Over a sumptuous dinner of green turtle soup, pate de foie gras, and capons with truffles, the prominent guests offered a round of tributes to the harbor that had brought the city so much wealth. Oliver Wendell Holmes even took the opportunity to honor Long Wharf with lines of verse:

*We drink to thy past and thy future to-day,  
Strong right arm of Boston, stretched out o'er the bay.  
May the winds waft the wealth of all nations to thee,  
And thy dividends flow like the waves of the sea!*

At the time, it seemed particularly clear that Boston's port and the trade it engendered had made

the city great. Back then, the modes of transportation were few, the products of commerce were things you could hold in your hands, and the city's thresholds were obvious. Long Wharf itself once jugged more than a quarter-mile into the harbor, defying Boston's marshy shores and beckoning deep-water vessels from Europe, Africa, and the West Indies. Dusty bales of Southern cotton, pregnant sacks of Caribbean sugar, and crates of fragile European china emerged from the holds of weathered cargo ships.

But as the city outgrew its early boundaries and heaved its coastline seaward with landfill, Long Wharf became shorter and shorter, its reduced size mirroring its diminishing role in city life. Today, it is hard to believe that the grand

*Continued on Page 22*

*Dan Grossman and Seth Shulman are Boston-based writers who specialize in science and environmental issues.*



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- ..... \$33
- LS ..... \$45

regular season, and the Sox need a win to clinch the American League East. They are up by a run in the top of the ninth, but the White Sox are rallying. Amy and I have gone down behind the first-base line for the final out, but everyone is standing in anticipation, and Amy can't see very well. I hoist her up on the railing behind the box seats; my view of the field is obscured.

With two outs and the tying and go-ahead runs on base, I hear Ozzie Guillen's name announced and, seconds later, the crack of the bat. I am watching Amy. Her gaze drifts down the right-field line, and she is holding her breath. A lifetime later, she screams and her arms go over her head as Tom Brunansky makes a game-saving, sliding catch on the warning track. She clasps her hands in front of her, as if in prayer, as the Sox pile out of the dugout. A smile of contentment graces my daughter's face from ear to ear. I can barely see her through the tears. □

## WELCOME

*Continued from Page 17*

old Custom House, on the edge of Boston's financial district, marks the wharf's former terminus. Like a creaking mansion occupied by new tenants, the city's old front door has been boarded up and papered over. In fact, Boston today receives a smaller proportion of goods than ever through its imposing, ocean-facing entryway; if you want to know how commerce approaches the city today, you have to check Boston's hidden service entrances.

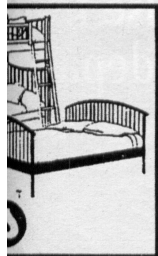
For most people, the idea of an entrance into the city conjures up images of turnpike exit ramps or terminals at Logan Airport. And yet, many of Boston's goods and services find their own special routes into the city. These are the true gateways into Boston today.

Take phone calls, for instance. Telephone wires are everywhere, and many long-distance calls employ orbit-

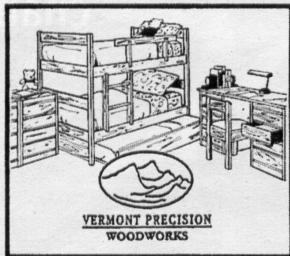
ing satellites. But at a little-known building in East Cambridge, American Telephone & Telegraph Co. operates the largest long-distance telephone switching station in eastern Massachusetts. Here, thousands of simultaneous telephone conversations in many languages converge as they make their way into Boston from all over the world. Similarly anonymous wires converge at a Boston Edison substation near Chinatown, pulsing with electrical current generated by mighty rivers and distant oil wells to supply Boston with electricity. In many respects, entry points like these serve some of the functions formerly left to harbor trade - from importing energy for light and heat to receiving the latest word from overseas. And yet today's gateways are all but unknown - unless they break down.

When the roof of a computer center in Clifton, New Jersey, collapsed under the weight of snow last month, 5,000 automated teller ma-

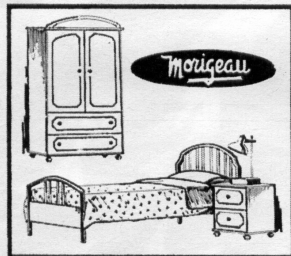
# Boston Baby's Beds N' Bunks has it all!



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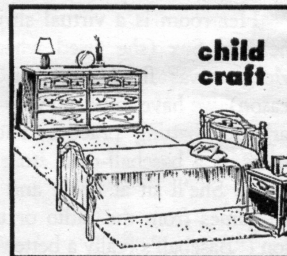
**VERMONT PRECISION** - Solid sugar maple. Matching dressers and desks available!



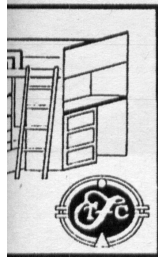
**MORIGEAU** - The finest name in baby and teen furniture. Choose from the largest selection of Morigeau in New England.



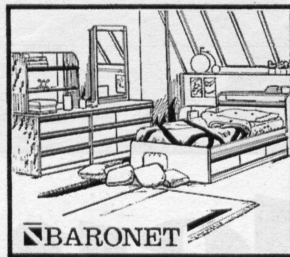
**AMISCO** - Fun and Functional L-shaped bunk converts to twin beds or conventional bunks. Tough enough to handle any kid.



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ity mica furniture. nd styles to choose



**BARONET** - Outrageous, attractive "teen style" furniture. Solid natural maple or white lacquer. Both with colored trim.



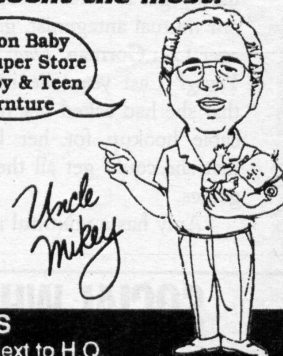
**TIMBERLINE** - Made of the finest quality solid ash, this beautiful bunk with ladder and guardrails can also be used as twin beds.



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chines nationwide were put out of commission, affecting 1 million bank-card holders. The shutdown was prolonged because a backup center was being used by computer operators who had been displaced by the bombing of the World Trade Center, in Manhattan.

In Boston, in 1983, about 20 blocks in Back Bay lost power after water damaged cables under Boylston Street. A year later, parts of downtown, Chinatown, and Back Bay lost power for up to three days after a manhole explosion. And in 1988, about 12,500 customers over

40 blocks lost power after fire burned cables under Newbury Street.

Another important gateway serves incoming mail. Wherever you live in Greater Boston, your daily batch of bills, postcards, and solicitation letters enters the vicinity

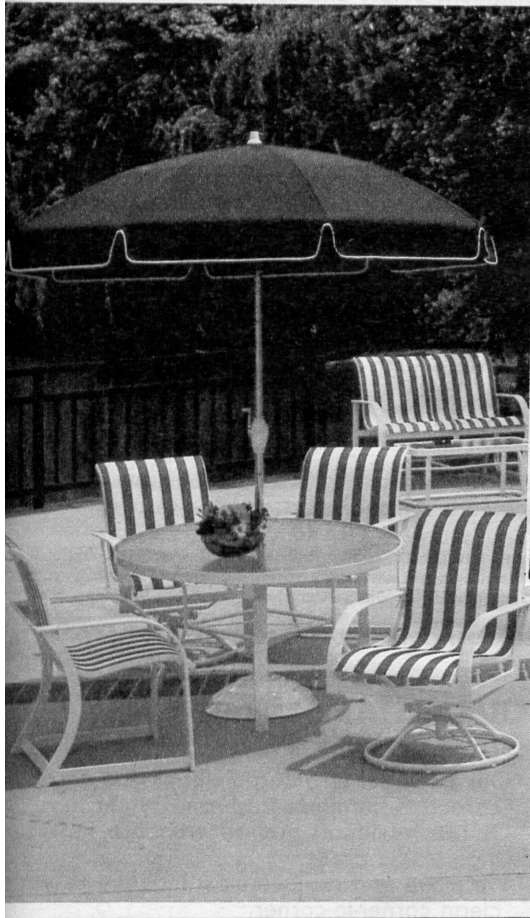
through a vast gateway near South Station, after arriving in the city by truck, train, or plane from a variety of postal hubs. Here, in two adjoining warehouses covering more than seven downtown acres, letters travel through a maze of conveyor belts and high-speed sorting machines that work round-the-clock. Perhaps in homage to the city's heritage, the main postal building's exterior is designed to be reminiscent of a huge ship. The nautical resemblance ends inside, though, where a bustling, factorylike operation processes about 7 million letters and packages every day.

In place of the all-purpose threshold of commerce that Long Wharf once provided, many disparate specialty gateways have appeared. A recent tour of a few demonstrates that no matter what the products, from the exotic to the mundane, their entrance into Boston is full of surprises.

**G**LANCING WESTWARD ACROSS the South End below the Southeast Expressway, you would never guess this to be one of Boston's most verdant quarters. Ancient, sooty brick mill buildings sit flush against sidewalks, housing companies with names like Allied Bolt & Screw. Beyond them, the window-smashed skeleton of an abandoned incinerator dominates the skyline. Nevertheless, a low-lying warehouse here on Albany Street is packed with more roses, more tulips, more snapdragons — in fact, more of every flower imaginable — than the Arnold Arboretum, the Boston Public Garden, and 100 weddings combined. Welcome to the Boston Flower Exchange.

Bostonians' affection for vegetation is well known. In the fall, fiery maple foliage is the city's pride. In the spring, the floral faithful make a pilgrimage to the Arnold Arboretum's Lilac Sunday. Less obvious, though, is the region's prodigious appetite for cut flowers. Each year, millions of flower blossoms are sold in Boston. The Boston Flower Exchange is the city's central gateway for flowers, responsible, asserts the exchange's manager, Warren Bash, for nearly two-thirds of all cut flowers sold in New England. Under a single roof, 22 floral wholesalers offer hundreds of varieties and hues of buds, stems, and stalks to flower purveyors and arrangers of every stripe. There is no other flower market of this kind on the East Coast. Bob Cupp, one of the busiest merchants at the exchange, says he sells about 25 tons of flowers every week,

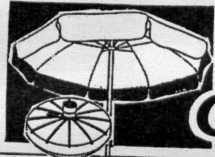
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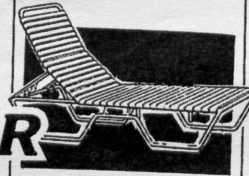
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**DEDHAM, MA** — National Patio & Pool Wholesalers Route One, 450 Providence Highway (617) 326-1322

**HANOVER, MA** — Seasonal Pool & Patio Center Route 53, Columbia Rd. (617) 826-0077

**SHREWSBURY, MA** — Recreation World Route 9, Quinsigamond Plaza (508) 753-9155

**ATTLEBORO, MA** — Seasonal Specialty Stores Rt. One, 1/4 mi. so. of Emerald Sq. Mall (508) 761-9234

**NASHUA/MERRIMACK, NH** — Seasonal Specialty Stores 706 Route 101A Amherst St. (603) 880-8471

**FOXBORO, MA** — Seasonal Specialty Stores Route One, 1000 Washington Street 1-800-649-7665

\*Stock items and prices may vary by store. Rainchecks and bonus choice offers do not apply to closeout, clearance or open stock patio furniture. Available only at participating dealers.

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an amount that sometimes includes about 150,000 roses.

The exchange dazzles the senses. The air is warm and nectar-sweet; the cavernous interior is dappled with flowers of every conceivable color and tint. Although this sensuous splendor invites a visitor to linger, speed and timing are actually all-important to the vendors purveying such perishable goods. Urgent deliveries of liatris, alstroemeria, and gypsophilia are unloaded in cartons bearing stickers from Israel, the Netherlands, and Colombia. Burly delivery men in faded jeans and sweatshirts muscle carts piled with bundles and boxes of flowers to idling vans.

Early one morning, apparently oblivious to this ganglionic chaos, Larry Crume conducts his daily tour of the exchange. His finely tailored pants and flashy suit jacket at first mark him as an outsider, but upon closer inspection, his silk tie bears the sensuous-red likeness of English trellis roses — a membership badge of the most refined sort. Until recently, Crume was the director of floral services for the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, buying flowers for the hotel's public spaces, dining rooms, and florist shop, and more flowers still for the hotel's room-service customers and catered functions.

Today, a Wednesday, is one of the most important days in the week for purchasing, Crume explains. In addition to the flowers needed over the course of the day, he must buy stock for the weekend, when many functions take place. If he waits, the choicest buds may be gone. On his mind is an order he has placed for 400 stems of Hawaiian dendrobium, a rare and expensive orchid, for a weekend function. One wholesaler has already placed an order at the worldwide flower exchange in the Netherlands, but the availability depends on how well plants in the far reaches of the world are producing this week.

Crume's first stop is Kelley Wholesale Florist, which, he says, specializes in exotic flowers. By exotics, Crume means flowers that are rare and beautiful but do not originate in the tropics. Because of his hotel's stately construction and proximity to the Public Garden, Crume says the tropical flowers commonly displayed in resort hotels are not appropriate at the Ritz. Instead, he chooses flowers with the "European look" of a luxury hotel in France, Switzerland, or Italy.

Crume wastes no time. In rapid succession he chooses two bunches each of sandersonia and Dutch lilies,


four bunches of pink Doris Rijker spray roses, and a bucket of deep blue folkenfrieden delphinium. "We throw a lot of these around," he says of the silky delphinium, explaining that the hue of its blossoms matches the "signature color" of the cobalt-blue Ritz emblem, dining-room

chandelier, and stemware. In the cooler, Liz Huller, a Kelley employee, has set aside flowers for an arrangement in the hotel's reception area, tubs of viburnum, watsonia, Asiatic lily, allium, giganteum, eucalyptus, and red dogwood. "Lobby ... lobby ... lobby," says Crume,

pointing to one vessel after another and nodding approval.

Cupp & Cupp, the next stop, is where Crume gets his "bread and butter" such as foliage and general-use roses. The Ritz has a standing order of 650 Thai dendrobium orchids per week at Cupp & Cupp for

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- Nashua, N.H.**  
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the lapels of all members of the staff. "Snapdragons?" asks Bob Cupp.

Cupp's snapdragons are one of his specialties, grown in his father's greenhouse, in Lexington. "Yep," replies Crume, who then proceeds to order cases of other exotic flowers. He pauses to sample the bouquet of a branch of caspia. "Sometimes it smells like bad seafood," he says, tossing it back into its carton.

One more stop and Crume has completed his marketing. In barely half an hour he has procured about 10,000 flowers from California, Guatemala, Maine, the Dominican Republic, and Holland, as well as some grown locally. Before the morning is done, his purchases will be delivered to the Ritz floral studio. He won't know for another day if his order for Hawaiian dendrobium will come through. He is, however, unfazed. "In the flower business," he says, "you always have to have a second and a third plan."

**T**HE AVERAGE LIFESPAN OF A dollar bill is less than a year and a half. After that, the typical, all-purpose buck, greenback, smacker, or simolean is so worn and tattered that it must be yanked out of circulation. Currency, too, must enter the city to get into all those automated cash machines and into the hands of bank tellers throughout the area.

For Boston, the origin of hard currency is the tall, aluminum-clad Federal Reserve Building, across from South Station. Here, from the earliest hours of the morning through the late afternoon, you can see armored cars and some flatbed trucks being swallowed up by imposing, fortified garage doors in the back of the building's low-lying operations wing adjacent to Fort Point Channel. The vehicles reemerge from the fortress-like building via an adjoining drive. Like most things about the Federal Reserve, the process is quiet and unceremonious. Only a careful observer would ever guess that \$60 million to \$100 million worth of currency is passing through these portals every day.

Most of the trucks that enter are bringing in used cash, collected, counted, and bundled by banks throughout the region, cash used to square the member banks' accounts with the Federal Reserve. Some of the trucks, however, are bringing in what Federal Reserve employees call "bricks" — shrink-wrapped bundles, each containing 4,000 new bills — that arrive on special flights chartered by the Treasury Department direct from government printing presses in the District of Columbia and Fort

Worth.

"Everyone wants new bills," says Federal Reserve representative Paul Williams, who likens the Fed's transactions to those at a liquor store where he once worked. With four days' notice, anticipating their customers' demand for cash, local banks place their orders for hard currency. "It's just as though they were ordering a case of Miller and a case of Budweiser," Williams says. "We take their orders and send out the merchandise."

Metaphors identifying money with evil and dirt to the contrary, Williams' tour through the bank is practically antiseptic. Workers handling billions of dollars in checks and cash are separated from visitors by extra-thick, floor-to-ceiling glass walls. Staff members are nervous about letting outsiders enter the processing areas where stacks of money are passing hands. Deep in the bowels of the currency department — or "cash services," in bank terminology — a guard behind a translucent green pane orders visitors to stow their bundles in lockers before entering the observation area.

Inside, bundles of currency are being brought into a place that the bank calls the cage. Workers grouped in threes work under the watchful eyes of dozens of closed-circuit cameras. The threesomes, paired with various high-speed sorting machines, are stationed in separate glass-walled cubicles. Other workers push dollies that look like shopping carts loaded with cash, bringing new work to the caged sorters, and whisking away the processed bills to the bank's vault.

In the foreground of one of the work bays, three women work swiftly in concert, moving tens of thousands of \$10 bills in repetitive motions. The women are processing bundles of \$10 bills received from a local bank. Every bundle of 100 bills, called a strap, is separated, and computer-coded cards record its origin. The straps of bills are fed into a sorting machine that whirls them onto a big wheel, where they are counted and inspected at a rate of 66,000 bills an hour.

Williams explains that teams often like to stick together. At the bank, he says, employees in the cash department often work their way up from processing \$1 bills to higher denominations. For the most part, the jobs use the same machines, but added experience is deemed useful for handling the vastly increased amounts encountered in straps and bundles of \$20 bills.

Walter Sullivan, the Federal Reserve senior vice president who over-



sees the cash services operation, says that many of his employees remain sorters for years, but others can't wait to switch to other jobs within the bank. They often find it exhausting, he says, adding that "it's a labor-intensive activity that takes a good degree of training and skill." No matter what their level of skill, though, there's no getting away from the fact that this is dirty work. Williams says that after handling such a volume of bills every day, "most sorters can't wait to get home to take a shower."

Sullivan says the Fed's high-tech machines help enormously. Only 20 years ago, much of this work was done by hand. Now the machines do almost all the counting. They automatically check for counterfeit bills and even send bills that are old and faded to an automated on-line shredder. Tours of the bank always include a complimentary packet of shredded bills, which Williams says are very popular. He says the bank destroys at least one-fourth of all the used paper currency it receives from local banks - about 1.5 million bills a day.

Exiting the heavily guarded cash-services area, Williams says that despite the visual flourish of its processes, the hard currency handled by the bank is dwarfed by the amounts being transferred upstairs in the Fed's computer operations department. Like the harbor itself, the cash-services department seems antiquated, despite its high-tech equipment. For money coming into Boston, the real action takes place by means of encoded computer messages sent day and night over telephone wires and by satellites. As Williams explains, computers at the Fed in Boston handle a mind-numbing \$120 billion worth of transactions every day - more than 1,000 times the daily flow of cash.

**F**IVE SQUAT TUGBOATS HOVER within the confines of Boston Harbor, off Deer Island. Inside the tall wheelhouse of one, the Vincent D. Tibbets Jr., Capt. George Toomey leisurely pulls a pair of binoculars from a holder and scans the horizon. Every few minutes he adjusts the big gray wheel, correcting the boat's course. From Toomey's low-key demeanor you'd never know he was getting ready to escort Boston's largest and most hazardous cargo ship into port. But he has been working on the sea for nearly 20 years, much of the time piloting huge oceangoing cargo ships and coastal barges. By comparison, work on a tugboat, nudging tankers and

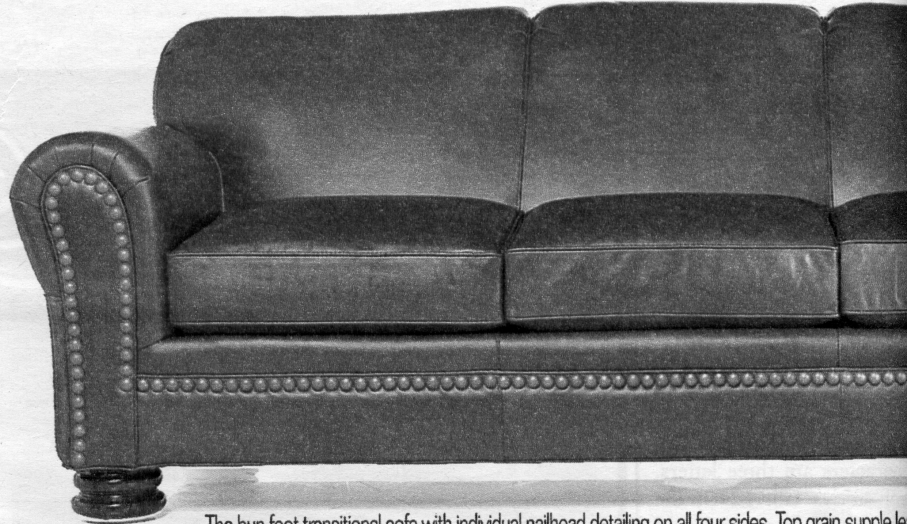
container ships to dock, is easy.

It is midmorning on a Sunday and the harbor is unnervingly quiet. Aside from the tugboat escorts, hardly a ship can be seen moving in any direction. An observer might conclude from the stillness that the harbor no longer contributes at all to

Boston's commerce. But the lifeless appearance is misleading. Actually, the Coast Guard has closed the harbor to all other traffic for the arrival of this particular ocean-faring visitor. Toomey and his counterparts form a skilled and seasoned welcoming party to help Boston receive its

monthly shipment of highly flammable liquid natural gas.

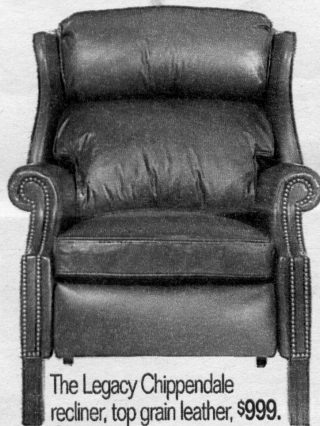
Over the tip of Deer Island a black tower appears. Toomey pushes the twin levers controlling his tugboat's two powerful engines, and the vessel lurches forward with a hydraulic hiss as its turbines come to



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speed. Rounding the point and entering the harbor, the huge tanker, the *Moustafa Ben Boulaid*, begins to come into focus: a long, dark hull, a curved bow, and a tall bridge on the stern. Appropriately, the first thing to become visible without the aid of Toomey's binoculars is a huge, billboard-sized warning emblazoned in white letters across the top of the ship's huge bridge, cautioning, "No Smoking."

As the tanker nears, the five tugs get into position, two for one side, three for the other. "He's really moving!" Toomey notes as he pulls beside the bow. The immense ship's black superstructure is now barely six feet from Toomey's nose. Longer than the John Hancock Tower is tall, the bulwarks fill half of the sky. Weld lines, stitching together the tanker's steel skin, are plainly visible, as are pock marks in the paint and spots of rust. Stretching back across the ship's unbroken starboard in looming characters are three letters, each several stories tall: LNG, the abbreviation for the tanker's liquid natural gas contents.

The *Moustafa Ben Boulaid* is the largest tanker serving Boston Harbor. It is also the most dangerous, which explains the Coast Guard's exceptional declaration of a "safety zone" two miles ahead of the tanker and one mile behind it each time it visits. Throughout the tanker's entry into the harbor, a marine radio in the tugboat's wheelhouse broadcasts repeated Coast Guard warnings as the tanker and its entourage of tugs and patrol boats approach South Boston. "No vessel may move within the safety zone," a stern voice blares. "Violators will be prosecuted."

Boston residents and industries consume a lot of natural gas. Boston Gas, the largest natural gas utility in New England, distributes about 100 billion cubic feet of fuel each year to about one-half million customers in Boston and 73 neighboring communities. Three pipelines bring gas from sources as distant as Texas; they are tapped at 25 "take stations" ringing the metropolitan area. The pipelines provide most of the city's natural gas. But these conduits cannot keep up with demand on the coldest days of winter. So, to make up the difference, the utility also keeps natural gas in reserve in liquid form in three large tanks, one in

Dorchester (the familiar landmark just off the Southeast Expressway), one in Salem, and one in Lynn. When cooled to a frigid 260 degrees below zero, methane shrinks considerably, to about one/600th of its volume, creating liquid natural gas. Boston Gas cools methane, produc-

ing some of its LNG at the sites of these tanks, drawing the gas from the pipelines during the summer when residential demand is down. But the rest of the utility's LNG is imported from Algeria - shipped via special tankers like the *Moustafa Ben Boulaid*.

The practice of shipping the highly flammable LNG into the city caused controversy in the 1970s. Many still question the safety of storing so much LNG in such a densely populated area. Jay Fay, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor emeritus and a former

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head of the Massachusetts Port Authority, which operates Logan Airport and two container shipping terminals at Boston Harbor, cautioned as early as 1972 that a ruptured LNG tanker could create a cloud of fire 100 times greater than the blaze that consumed the *Hindenburg* zep-

pelin in 1937. Fay says he still believes that the Boston Harbor site is "a bad place for an LNG facility." But Armand Santacroce, a representative of Distrigas, the firm that handles the LNG importation, says that the region's demand for energy justifies even more LNG traffic.

Santacroce minimizes the hazard. "There's never been a drop spilled," he says.

Slowly but surely, Toomey and the other tugboat captains guide the tanker to its destination, the Everett Marine Terminal, a dock just upstream of the Tobin Bridge. Along-

side the dock lies the city's true doorway for the tanker's frigid cargo: a shiny complex of five huge Rube Goldberg contraptions called Chiksan arms. The arms consist of moveable stainless-steel and aluminum pipes connected by joints and supported with steel cables. When the tide is down and the tanker sits low against the dock, the tubes are folded against each other like a closed jackknife. As the tide rises, the pipes separate, like scissors opening. Lined with Teflon gaskets, the joints connecting the pipes are flexible yet leakproof, even at the supercooled temperatures necessary to transport the LNG.

Ascending a swaying aluminum gangway alongside the tanker's towering hull, Santacroce proudly explains the operation of the enormous Chiksan arms nearby. He says that an initial cold blast of LNG could damage the elaborate pipe connectors, so the LNG is dribbled slowly into them at first until contact with the chilled fluid cools the metal. Huddling nearby along the ship's gunwales are the workers who, moments before, cranked down the last bolt to secure the conduit between Algeria's supply and Boston's demand. "You can see it coming," Santacroce says, reaching the deck and pointing at the Chiksan arms carrying LNG from the ship's interior. Sure enough, a white coating of frost creeps along the silvery pipes — as the metal cools and moisture in the air freezes — engulfing fittings and valves and joints. All around, a swirling mist of chilled air engulfs the frosty jugulars as Boston's fossil-fuel transfusion begins.

Although we don't dwell on it often, the goods and services we buy — even the dollars we use to purchase them — have often come to us from great distances. As Bostonians, residents of a port city, this is part of our heritage. We think nothing of the fact that the gas that heats our hot water was sucked from the ground in Algeria. We don't notice that the bills in our wallet most likely bear the markings of many disparate Federal Reserve banks around the country from which they originally emanated. To a great extent, though, we can take these things for granted only because others don't. Floral merchant Bob Cupp underscores the point about flowers, but his notion holds true for many of the products we use every day: "Your basic bouquet consists of stems that could have been picked less than 36 hours before in four or five different continents — all in your little vase — just to make you happy." □

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