

# Ocean Times

## Chapter Notes

Southern California Chapter of the Steamship Historical Society of America **Bruce Vancil, President**

**What a summer!** But that's history now. Greetings all. We hope you are off to a fun and memorable Autumn. We have some great programs planned including our annual Fall Tea set for the first Saturday in November, the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, to be exact. See the meeting notice box at right for details.

As I started to say, what a summer! The management of our home aboard the Queen Mary was poised for a change, which has taken place. Delaware North has taken over management from Hostmark Hospitality Group. What other changes might be coming are yet to be seen. It is hoped that Delaware North will continue to see the value of having a nationally organized, locally implemented historical society housed and active aboard. Our exhibits and activities have been enjoyed by so many for many years and we hope that it continues.

July and August saw a tremendous amount of activity revolving around an offer to donate some deck fittings from QM's stern by a local collector and historian. The task of orchestrating the acceptance of the gift, transporting the items, one weighing 5,000 pounds, to the site and organize it all within a schedule that was mutually agreeable for all parties involved. It all worked out and came to pass as desired. See the article in this edition for details.

We turned our attention to new tasks of organizing a dinner celebration for the the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the QM's launch. It was a great delight to see that the actual anniversary date would come on a Saturday – perfect for a party!

September 26, 2009 saw a wonderful educational/musical presentation by

Larry Maurer entitled simply, "Swing" Guests arrived for a tour of the ship conducted by Everett Hoard, one of our newest board members. Then "Swing"

activities more available to our members, we are collecting email addresses. These will be used for "blast" emails that will include event flyers to provide more advanced notice of opportunities as well as helping save money on postage.

Please send an email to Bruce Vancil at [steamer@pacbell.net](mailto:steamer@pacbell.net). Your address will be saved and included in the list. One planned benefit of using

email is you will be able to receive a full color copy of the Ocean Times via email in a PDF format. You will continue to receive the hard copy, but color that can be archived on your computer's storage could be nice, too!

Like I said, so much has happened. Now, on to the last quarter of the year. Please know that your board of directors has been working on an exciting program of activities that will make 2010 a year top be remembered.

**NEXT MEETING: Saturday, November 7, 2009  
1:00 - 3:00pm aboard the RMS QUEEN MARY**

**Annual Semi-Formal Pre-Holiday Tea  
Business Attire Please**

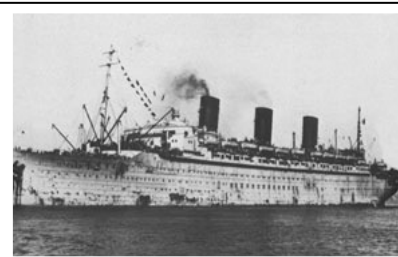
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**Caronia Room (former 3<sup>rd</sup> class cinema) "B" Dk Fwd.  
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presented in the Caronia Room. Then off to a cocktail reception in Sir Winston's lounge where member Scott MacDonald performed some of his lovely and stirring original music on the piano – the one from the ship's 1<sup>st</sup> class main lounge. Thanks Scott – that was great. Once sufficiently relaxed, it was off to the private space set with a great "U" shaped table arrangement with a superb view over the starboard side, of the city skyline.

Guests took turns telling of their involvement with the Queen Mary, an activity instigated by Lovetta Kramer – what a fantastic suggestion – it was fun. Everyone from seasoned QM veterans to those visiting for the first time told of their new or enduring admiration of the ship and it's history.

A raffle featured an original menu, a launch booklet, a Benson's Candy tin and a signed print of a painting by Bob Aul – the same vertically oriented view of the Queen Mary's bow seen in the last issue of Ocean Times. By the evening's end we recognized the occasion in real style, provided an enjoyable evening for our guests and raised a bit of money for the education program. All in all, success on all three fronts. There will be more to come so stay tuned. To help make these

**WARTIME PASSAGE ON THE ILE DE FRANCE  
by Bill Miller**



Transport by ship in the dark days of the Second World War created many unique, unusual, other very strange, even frightening situations. Ships were painted in

wartime dress, in gray paints mostly, and all as the great ocean liners lost their deep comfort and high luxuries. They were pressed into service as troop transports. Priscilla Norton remembers a crossing in the Nazi sub-infested waters of the North Atlantic aboard the legendary ILE DE FRANCE, then being used, however, as a huge Allied troopship. That passage had a notation, especially for 23 yr old Priscilla --- she was one of only 5 females onboard among the 10,000 men, mostly GIs headed overseas.

"I was multi-lingual and assigned to the OSS, the Office of Strategic Service. But I was not important enough to fly to Europe and so was sent ship," she recalled as we sat together in a lounge aboard Cunard's QUEEN VICTORIA, a ship that would carry Priscilla on a 105-night luxury cruise around the world. Young Priscilla had always "loved the water," as she put it, and had sailed in the 1930s to & from Europe aboard such liners as the PENNLAND & WESTERLAND, the ROTTERDAM and the big German super liners BREMEN & EUROPA. "I was specially recruited to go to France. It was September 1944 and the War itself would last another 8 months to go. I was sent by troopship, onboard the famous ILE DE FRANCE. But it was all cloak & dagger at first. It was all top secret. I had to wait a full week in New York City and was made to move hotels several times. We had our military luggage moved for us, but our civilian clothes could be moved by Manhattan taxis. One day, we were finally ordered to a pier on the West Side. We boarded the ILE DE FRANCE, which was painted entirely in gray and which was docked next to another gray troopship, the QUEEN ELIZABETH, which was taking on 15,000 soldiers. Our ship was not identified, but as we boarded we could see the name ILE DE FRANCE, which had been painted over. I was excited. Family friends had sailed to Europe on the ILE DE FRANCE in the late 1930s."

Like all big, high-capacity troopships, the 43,000-ton ILE DE FRANCE traveled on a top-secret route, blacked out & with radio silence. Like other ships, the ILE was a prime target to the sinister Nazi subs. The ILE, which was managed by the Cunard Line during the second half of the War on behalf of the

Free French forces, took over a week to cross the North Atlantic. "We sailed on a very northern, quite cold route to Gourock in Scotland. We landed at the Firth of Forth," recalled Priscilla some 66 years later. We were not allowed to mention the name of the ship, but when I later wrote home, I mentioned 'red roses in the carpet'. My family might remember that from our visit to the ILE years before. I was assigned to a single cabin with a tub bath & shower. But it was rearranged with bunks for 9, but there were only 6 occupants on that trip.

Otherwise, the ship was heavily laden with people during that crossing. There were meals twice a day, breakfast and dinner, but you could make a sandwich at breakfast and then have it as lunch.

There was no alcohol. It was officially forbidden. The crew was mostly British, provided by Cunard. The British captain invited the 5 women for drinks, non alcoholic ones, of course. Actually, it was quite scary to be with 10,000 soldiers & crew!"

There were "rituals" to wartime travel, especially for a young woman on a soldier-filled troopship. "You needed a 'protector' and I managed to have three or four of them. No contact was allowed with the enlisted men, but you had to go through the all-male areas at least twice a day on the way to the mess," she added. "Of course, we were also aware of possible torpedo attack followed by a quick sinking.

There were a few officers onboard who had been in World War I and recalled their duties back then. The ILE was almost unrecognizable during that crossing. She had been totally changed & altered from the comfortable glamour of pre-war. The big piano was still in the converted main salon, however, and so there were lots of sing-alongs. Some songs were actually too sentimental and brought a few tears.

But the ship was always noisy. The loudspeakers were going constantly.

And there was smoking everywhere.

We had blackout curtains on the windows. We carried our lifejackets at all times and used them as seats, which was officially forbidden. But we

huddled everywhere. We played lots of Bridge to pass the time. I won \$35 at Bridge, but gave it to the boys for drinks. A bottle of black-market Scotch was \$35, which was a huge amount of money back then. And there was lots of gambling amongst the men. It took 10 days to cross and then we had to wait off Gourock for 2 days. By then, everyone seemed restless and very anxious."

Priscilla was later posted to Paris and then sent home by air just as the War ended, in May 1945.

## A Maritime Homecoming

Queen Mary Gets Deck Fittings Back  
by Bruce Vancil



**A crowded deck off limits to passengers, shown is Queen Mary's stern with deck fittings during service.**

August 20, 2009 – Long Beach, California. - It had been 20 years since Queen Mary management, of that time (and now long since gone), made plans to use the ship's stern to build a new pool for hotel guests. It seemed perfect. It could be isolated from the general public with access from the hotel's interior that made it very controllable for hotel guests. The mass of docking equipment and machines had to be removed to make the deck usable for guests. The machines were disconnected; many fell to the cutter's torch to make them small enough to remove. The space was cleared of all but a few pieces at the edge of the deck that could be used as tables or seating, but alas, the pool was never built. There was much consternation, if not outrage, among the maritime history community that something unique and original was lost forever. Who could have predicted a homecoming . . . of any sort?

There were a few pieces that were not cut up. Saved in a deal with management and the scrapping company, a local enthusiast (who has asked to remain anonymous) purchased the items and hired a truck to haul them to his home. Museums and other places were approached but declined. Home was the only place where they were sure to be preserved. There they remained for all these years until August 8, 2009 when they were returned to the Queen Mary.



One of two 2.5-ton capstans is lifted by helicopter off the stern of Queen Mary, June 13, 1989.

Photo: Ken Marschall

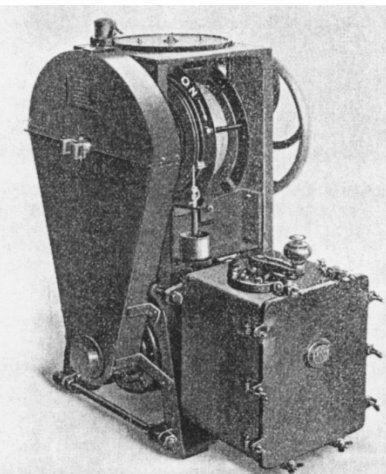
The owner had expressed interest recently in having the items returned to their rightful home. He contacted to the Steamship Historical Society of America, Inc.'s Southern California Chapter (SSHSA) to arrange a deal that would result in the homecoming. The project was supported by the Queen Mary Leadership Coalition (QMLC), a group of local preservation experts, including members from SSHSA, Art Deco Society of Los Angeles as well as many others.

Negotiations were careful and detailed to ensure that desired outcome and August 8<sup>th</sup> was selected for the move. Queen Mary management, QMLC, SSHSA Board of Directors members had come to an agreement on how this would be accomplished. SSHSA, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization, agreed to provide the donation receipt. Local volunteer Rob Cohen volunteered his help and the use of his flatbed tow truck. Friends of SSHSA Stan

Hutchinson and Don Lynch agreed to sponsor the cost of the forklift needed for the pieces weighing as much as 5,000 pounds.

Items returned included a Capstan (steel) with cover ("red brass") used to wind in the mooring lines during docking procedures, a Capstan controller (steel, bronze and glass), a Pillar fairlead (steel and concrete), the ship's one and only "Kelvite" sounding machine (steel), and a Mushroom ventilator trunk and head (steel).

Photocopy (unknown source)



Photo, Kelvin, Bottomley & Baird

**A WIRE-SOUNDING MACHINE** (above) of the Thomson type. After sounding, the wire is wound in by an electric motor. Sir William Thomson, who invented the modern magnetic compass, conferred another boon on seamen when he introduced in 1878 his improved sounding apparatus. In place of the hemp line of the hand-lead his machine uses thin piano wire coiled on a reel fitted with counter gear and brakes: releasing the brakes allows the line to run out freely under the weight of the lead sinker, and a brass "feeler" pressed on the line enables the operator to put on the brakes as soon as the lead touches the bottom. The ship's speed being known, the amount of wire out gives a measure of the depth of water.

It was a lovely, sunny day and the truck and forklift arrived that morning, ready to work. They made short work of loading the items on the flatbed. I am amazed at the skill the forklift drivers displayed spinning things around in the narrow, single wide driveway. Thanks to their experience, we were loaded and off in no time.

At the Queen Mary, there was a welcoming committee, of sorts, consisting of QM crew overseeing the delivery and SSHSA members and friends delighted at the occasion and the opportunity to photograph the return.

The donation was processed through the SSHSA who immediately donated

the items to the Queen Mary to be returned to the official inventory of artifacts.



Capstan returns to the Queen Mary  
Truck load of deck fittings  
Photo by Bob Aul

For now, the large items are displayed on the wharf with a few smaller pieces that can be moved without heavy equipment are in a security storage area waiting to be refurbished and put on display, possibly in the ship's Historic Exhibits.



It is hoped that this will be only the first of many such donations that could return artifacts to the Queen Mary that people have acquired over the years. Such artifact recovery programs are being conducted in historic hotels and venues all over the nation and beyond.

**For all you collectors – check this out!**

**Joyce Arellanes will bring new material to the next meeting to include the following lines: Odessa Black Sea Shipping (Russian), Cunard (Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, & more), Moore McCormack, Gdynia (Polish-American), French (SS France, &**

*more.) Dutch Lines, British Columbia Companies, e.g. BC Ferries, etc. and other new materials. For requests she can be reached at (626) 963-5155*

## The POPE And PATRICK

by Shawn J. Dake



**GENERAL JOHN POPE**

Ships are always built to meet the demands of their times. During the second World War that demand was for vessels that could quickly transport large numbers of troops across the oceans of the world to the European and Pacific theaters of operations. While most of the glamorous ocean liners of the era were converted to troop transports, the United States of America also embarked on a major building program to supplement the troop-carrying capacity for both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army. Although constructed to be more utilitarian than stylish, the P2's as they were known, were among the most attractive passenger ships to come out during the war. There were two different types of P2 transports. The first group was made up of 11 ships in the P2-S2-R2 class, which were frequently referred to as "Kearny-built," reflecting their origins at the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company in Kearny, New Jersey. The second set were the "Alameda's," which were designated as P2-SE2-R1 by class. This group was made up initially of eight ships, all built at the Bethlehem Steel Company in Alameda, California. Two additional ships of this type were completed after the war ended as the liners PRESIDENT CLEVELAND and PRESIDENT WILSON. Out of all these historic ships only two remain afloat today. They include one of each type, and their names are the GENERAL JOHN POPE and the GEN. EDWIN D.

PATRICK. At the twilight of their careers they remain together, side-by-side, in the backwaters of Suisun Bay at Benicia, California, their lives and mooring lines still intertwined.

The GENERAL JOHN POPE was the name ship of the class; the first P2-type vessel to be built at Kearney. P2 was simply the designation for passenger ships having twin screws. The ship was named in honor of Major General John Pope, a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, Class of 1842. He served in the Civil War and gained fame as a surveyor on the transcontinental railroad and of the northwest boundary between the United States and Canada. The turbine steamship GENERAL JOHN POPE, laid down as Yard Number 268, was launched on March 21, 1943, and commissioned on August 5<sup>th</sup> of that year for the U.S. Navy. Her naval designation number was AP 110. This ship, and her Kearny-built sisters, were 622 feet, 7 inches in length, with a beam of 75 feet, 6 inches, with a draft of 25 feet. Her gross tonnage was 17,833 tons. Propulsion was supplied by De Laval geared turbines generating 18,700 SHP for a cruising speed of 19 knots. The ship had two sets of boiler and engine compartments, along with extra thick shell plating, which made it safer during wartime, but costly to operate if used commercially. During the War, the ship had a carrying capacity of 5,220 passengers and 476 crew.



**GEN. EDWIN D. PATRICK in MSTs colors**

The maiden voyage took place during September 1943 with a roundtrip voyage from Norfolk, Virginia to Scotland's River Clyde. On October 6<sup>th</sup> the ship left Norfolk and transited the Panama Canal for a voyage to Brisbane, Australia and New Guinea. The return voyage brought her to San Francisco in late November. Until June, 1945 the ship would primarily sail from the City By The Bay on voyages throughout the Pacific; ranging from a short roundtrip to Honolulu, to long

cruises to ports as distant as Bombay, India. With the demands of the War changing, the GENERAL JOHN POPE left San Francisco on June 2, 1945 on a voyage to Marseille, France via the Panama Canal and Gibraltar. The goal was to redeploy troops from the European theater to the Pacific where they were urgently needed. The ship returned through the Canal bound for Eniwetok, Marshall Islands and Manila, Philippines in July. On August 15, 1945, the Japanese announced their surrender, marking the end of the War in the Pacific. By the end of the month, the POPE was kept busy returning veteran combat troops from the Western Pacific to American soil on the West Coast. On one westbound trip across the Pacific, the ship brought occupying forces into Yokohama Bay. By May of 1946, her work in the Pacific was finished, and the ship left San Francisco for New York, arriving on May 28<sup>th</sup>. In June, 1946 the U.S.S. GENERAL JOHN POPE was decommissioned and transferred to the U.S. Army. Alterations for peacetime use by the Army were done at Bethlehem's Hoboken shipyard from June until September. Under the Army the ship carried the designation USAT. The vessel was operated by a civilian crew until she was laid up like so many other transports in the late 1940's.

The P2's seemed to be ideal for conversion to passenger ships and the POPE was considered for this role in 1950. The outbreak of the Korean War obliterated those plans and the ship rejoined the Navy bearing the number T-AP 110 under the new Military Sea Transportation Service, abbreviated as MSTs. The first trip was from San Francisco to Tokyo and throughout the conflict the ship made numerous voyages to Japan and Korea earning six battle stars for her service. Between February and May, 1953, the ship was made considerably more comfortable with a thorough refit that saw the installation of air-conditioning and new safety features including changes to the arrangement of the lifeboats and davits. Two years

later the need for troop transports had declined to the point that the POPE was placed in Reduced Operating Status and was eventually laid up with six other transports in the Ready Reserve Fleet at Everett, Washington. In September, 1958, the ship was stricken from the Naval Registry and handed over to the Maritime Administration (MARAD), then transferred to lay up at Olympia, Washington. She would ride at anchor for seven years before fate intervened with a new war.

The United States was getting more deeply involved in the Vietnam War, and in August, 1965 the GENERAL JOHN POPE was again acquired by the Navy. The ship continued in service for MSTs until she was deactivated in 1969 and placed in the Maritime Administration Reserve Fleet at Suisun Bay in May, 1970. The old trooper has been there ever since. The ship remained on the Naval Vessel Register until October, 1990. Lloyd's Register of Ships for 1991, listed her under ownership of the Government of the United States of America. In September, 1992 full title was transferred by the Navy to MARAD. Officially the ship remains in a "Non Retention, Historic Hold" status, basically meaning the government doesn't want the ship but recognizes that it has historic value. The GENERAL JOHN POPE, well into her seventh decade afloat remains the last remaining example of a fine class of ships, the P2-S2-R2.

Also resting at Suisun Bay, just 25 miles as the crow flies from her birthplace, the GEN. EDWIN D. PATRICK began life as Yard Number 9505 at the Bethlehem Steel Company in Alameda, California. The fifth member of her class, construction began on November 29, 1943. The original name of this ship was the ADMIRAL C.F. HUGHES, and she was launched on July 27, 1944. This ship and her California sisters, were intended for use by the Army, but before completion were assigned to the Navy, to be operated on Army schedules, primarily in the Pacific. The ship was named after Admiral Charles Frederick Hughes, who served in the Spanish American War and World War I, eventually becoming Chief Of Naval Operations. A turbo-electric vessel, with twin screws, the ship was delivered to the U.S. Navy on January 31, 1945 and designated by number AP 124. She was

under the command of Captain Trebes of the U.S. Coast Guard. This ship and her Alameda-built sisters were 609 feet in length, with a beam of 75.5 feet, and a draft of 25.5 feet. The gross tonnage was 17,000 tons. The dual General Electric engines were supplied with steam from four boilers delivering 18,000 SHP for a cruising speed of 19 knots. The ship was designed to carry up to 5,200 troops, but as built the capacity was 4,527 troops with a crew of 367.

The maiden voyage of the ADMIRAL C.F. HUGHES sailed from Los Angeles on March 13, 1945, bound for Pearl Harbor on Oahu. The crossing took five days. The ship then returned to San Francisco. Her first long voyage departed from San Diego calling again at Pearl Harbor before continuing on to Guam. Having entered service relatively late in the conflict, the ship was dispatched in May on a voyage via Panama, to Marseilles, France to reposition troops to the Pacific. She transited the Panama Canal westbound at the end of June and continued to Manila and Leyte in the Philippines and Biak and Hollandia in northern New Guinea. On V-J Day the ship was headed toward San Francisco on the return voyage. The remainder of 1945 and into 1946 were spent deployed in the Pacific sailing primarily to the Philippines although one trip included a voyage to Yokohama. On May 3, 1946 she was transferred to the War Department, and handed over to the U.S. Army Transportation Service. Conversion for use as a post-war transport took place in San Francisco. Rebuilding included the elimination of the forward well deck, creating a flush main deck extending to the superstructure, a small enclosed promenade aft of the open promenade, and adding a small lounge on the aft deck. With a new color scheme, the ship looked every inch a civilian passenger ship. On August 30, 1946, the vessel was placed in commission under the new name USAT GEN. EDWIN D. PATRICK. The ship was renamed in honor of the General who was Division Commander in the Philippines during World War II before being killed in action during 1944. From 1946 until 1950 the ship brought troops home and ferried occupation forces to destinations around the globe. On March 1, 1950 she was turned over to

the Navy and given the designation number T-AP 124 for service with MSTs. During the Korean War, the troopship earned three battle stars while serving in the campaigns titled North Korean aggression and Communist China aggression. Following that war the ship carried both military and civilian passengers to overseas bases in Japan, Okinawa and other Pacific destinations. Unlike many of the other P2 transports, the GEN. EDWIN D. PATRICK continued to operate without long periods of being laid up. The ship also saw service in the Vietnam War. Time finally caught up with the veteran ship and she was withdrawn from service in 1967. On September 30, 1968 the ship was laid up in the reserve fleet at Suisun Bay, and title was transferred to MARAD. In 1969, the ship was stricken from the Naval register. For a period from March 1990 until September 28, 1992, the title went back to the U.S. Navy while the ship was being stripped of her fittings. Since then the vessel has been listed as owned by the Government Of The United States Of America under the jurisdiction of the Maritime Administration. In 2005, the ship was slated for demolition but there was an outcry over the asbestos and other toxic substances aboard, which ironically have given her a temporary reprieve.

The P2's, particularly while under the colors of the U.S. Army Transportation Service and MSTs, presented very handsome profiles. As this quote from a postcard written aboard a P2 in 1948 mentions, "it's just as pretty on the inside as on the outside." The general arrangements varied between the P2-S2-R2 vessels and the modified P2-SE2-R1 ships, but both types consisted of nice cabins and public areas for passengers, and more basic accommodations for military personnel. The latter class of vessels looked more like civilian ships, although the former had originally been intended for postwar conversion to that use. Even the ship's crews were dual purpose, being divided between U.S. Civil Service employees and the military department, made up of

U.S. Navy personnel. Other than the troop berthing spaces and mess hall down on Decks 3 and 4, the ship's were fairly comfortable, if modest passenger liners. The Main Deck was the primary center of activity. In MSTs service there was a passenger lounge and dining saloon. Passenger staterooms were forward. In addition, there was a children's playroom, the purser's office, chaplain's office and the office of the C.O. of the Military Department. The Exchange in the lobby amidships, was the cabin passengers store. Here travelers could pick up essentials and souvenirs. A perennial favorite was a packet of postcards called "The Ship I Sailed On" which illustrated the features of each vessel. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Deck also contained passenger staterooms along with the hospital, barber shop, passenger laundry, crew berths and the auditorium which doubled as a chapel and theater. Overall the interior furnishings were similar to other U.S. passenger ships of the time, minus the artwork and frills. Thousands of civilians, military and dependents traveled to distant lands aboard these ships in both war and peace.



**PRESIDENT CLEVELAND**

Of the Kearney transports, only one was converted to a full-time passenger liner. The GENERAL W.P. RICHARDSON first went to American Export Lines as the LA GUARDIA. The ship then continued a long and checkered career as the LEILANI, PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT, ATLANTIS, EMERALD SEAS, SAPPHIRE SEAS and OCEAN EXPLORER 1. Two other ships, the GENERAL W.H. GORDON and the GENERAL M.C. MEIGS were used briefly by American President Lines on their passenger services. They wore the APL funnel colors but a design plan for their full conversion to passenger status, under the designation P2-S2-R10 was never carried out. They did revisit the idea of using a P2 again

when the PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT was added to their fleet in 1962. At one time or another American President Lines ran all five of the P2 type ships to see commercial service, if one counts the ninth and tenth ships from the Bethlehem Alameda Shipyards, yard numbers 9509 and 9510 which became the PRESIDENT CLEVELAND and PRESIDENT WILSON respectively. While the GENERAL JOHN POPE and the GEN. EDWIN D. PATRICK never had the opportunity to sail for a civilian shipping line, they did serve their country well during a tumultuous time in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Remarkably they are survivors in another era when all of their fleet mates are gone. They float silently, tied together on their starboard sides, their majestic bows overlooking the stern of the other. The davits are stripped of lifeboats, some of which sit upside down on the decks. Their gray hulls are spotted with rust, but their twin funnels and masts still reach toward the sky. The final chapter in their remarkable story remains to be written.



**GEN. EDWIN D. PATRICK with  
GENERAL JOHN POPE laid up in  
Suisun Bay, California**

## **OASIS OF THE SEAS THE WORLD'S LARGEST CRUISE SHIP**

by SHAWN J. DAKE

The maiden voyage is just days away, and last minute preparations are taking place aboard Royal Caribbean International's newest ship, the OASIS OF THE SEAS. The debut of a new cruise ship has become a common occurrence, but this time everything is different. This is a ship that is revolutionary. A ship that will definitely change the face of cruising. For one thing, it is by far the largest passenger vessel ever built. But size alone is not



**OASIS OF THE SEAS on sea trials,  
June 10, 2009**

what sets this ship apart. The combination of the expected contemporary cruise features and the innovation of distinctive, open-air neighborhoods, goes farther than any ship before it, in realizing the concept of a City At Sea.

Let's first get the superlatives of size and statistics out of the way. The OASIS OF THE SEAS will be the first cruise ship to exceed 200,000 tons. To put this in perspective, it was only 13 years ago in 1996 that a ship over 100,000 gross tons was placed in service. The projected gross tonnage of the new Royal Caribbean giant is 225,282 tons. The length is an astounding 1,184 feet and the maximum width is 154 feet. The highest level is Deck 18 where the signature Viking Crown is located, yet the draft of the ship is only 30 feet. Cruising speed will be 22 knots. As for passenger capacity, the ship has 2,700 staterooms with a double-occupancy capacity of 5,400 passengers. With all berths filled, that number climbs to 6,300 guests, plus crew.

Royal Caribbean executives have frequently stated the obvious when they mention that "we build very large ships." Before the arrival of the OASIS OF THE SEAS, they operated the three largest passenger ships in history with the INDEPENDENCE OF THE SEAS, LIBERTY OF THE SEAS and FREEDOM OF THE SEAS, each one approximately 160,000 gross tons, with a capacity of 3,634 passengers double-occupancy. The new ship represents a giant leap from that level. One of their many promotional phrases states: "This is where the impossible becomes possible and the unimaginable become real." Back in 1990, a billion dollar ship project was

announced under the proposed name of *Phoenix World City*. The ship would be an unheard of 250,000 gross tons and have three massive "hotel towers" on her decks. Onboard would be a 2,500 seat theater, a deck called "Main Street USA," tropical gardens, sidewalk cafes and a dozen restaurants. The concept was shopped around for over a decade and even attracted the attention of a major hotel chain, which altered the name to *Westin World City*. While that proposal never saw the light of day, the OASIS OF THE SEAS not only carries on that grand concept, but in many ways expands and improves upon it. Despite its size and unique deck plan, this ship still looks like a ship. The once unimaginable, will begin sailing with passengers on December 1, 2009.

Perhaps the most unusual thing about this ship, beyond its size, is the open-air spaces between huge blocks of balcony staterooms in the superstructure. From Deck 6 aft and from Deck 8 midship, these spaces tower like a canyon between skyscrapers all the way through to Deck 16. This forms two of the seven neighborhoods aboard, the most unique of which are Central Park and Boardwalk. Central Park is located on Deck 8. It is a pedestrian mall complete with flowers and trees. Lining the sides are retail shops and five restaurants, four of which carry extra tariffs ranging up to \$35. These include 150 Central Park, the most upscale and trendy dining venue aboard; Chops Grille, a Royal Caribbean signature steakhouse; Giovanni's Table, a casual Italian restaurant; Vintages, another signature establishment for wine, cheese and tapas; and finally the Park Café, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner in a casual setting. Perhaps Central Park's coolest feature is the Rising Tide Bar which descends down through three decks, while transporting patrons from the open air to the interior of the Royal Promenade. While the "floating bar" is at the upper levels fountains entertain strollers below. All day and night the bar levitates on its vertical journey through the three deck height of the Royal Promenade to a view of the eight deck space towering over Central Park. It literally takes drinking to a whole new level. Central Park also has more than 300 staterooms that line both sides of the perimeter, with more ocean view and inside cabins in the forward section.

Two decks below on Deck 6, Boardwalk is designed to resemble an old-fashioned amusement park, complete with a Carousel and games. The area should attract families with kids and teens. The restaurant choices here tend toward the casual, including a Johnny Rockets Diner, the Seafood Shack along with a donut shop and ice cream parlor. Retail shops are geared toward kids who can shop for clothing, candy and build their own plush animal. Fortunately there is also the Boardwalk Bar, so adults can take their minds away from the money their children are spending. On either side of the aft end of Boardwalk are two massive, multi-deck, rock climbing walls. The grandest and perhaps most talked about feature, is the AquaTheater. Located where the fantail would normally be, this dual purpose area contains the largest and deepest freshwater pool at sea. During the day guests can swim and sun around the pool. By night, it becomes a spectacular outdoor theater seating 600 guests. Live shows will feature performers leaping from a diving tower with two springboards and two 10 meter high dive platforms. Acrobats will perform in the air and water, against the backdrop of the ship's wake and the Caribbean night sky. Underwater cameras will capture the action and project images on two giant LED screens flanking the 6,000 square foot stage. Under the pool are three scissor lift-like devices that cause the pool depth to rise or fall depending on the performance or daily functions. The pool itself is 51.6 feet wide by 21.9 feet fore and aft. It has a maximum depth of 17.9 feet. When not presenting live entertainment, choreographed fountain shows with hundreds of water nozzles, some capable of shooting water 65 feet high, will be synchronized with music and lighting. In concept this should be an incredible entertainment venue, providing the wind and the weather cooperate.

The Royal Promenade brings forward a concept that was begun with the VOYAGER OF THE SEAS class ships, and has become a fixture on all of the larger Royal Caribbean vessels. This is the largest interior Promenade at sea. Like the others, it is a mixture of shops, restaurants and bars. Not unlike Disneyland's popular Main Street Parade, this "street" features themed parades including Mardi Gras, Jungle

Fantasy and the Mad Hatter's Ball. For the first time, there is also a mezzanine level overlooking the space below. Besides the aforementioned Rising Tide Bar, another new attention grabber is the polished metal globe above the entrance to the Globe and Atlas Pub. As artwork it would be pretty impressive by itself, but this globe unravels to create a platform suspended 10 feet above the Promenade, when the parades and entertainment festivities are in full swing.

By now you probably have gotten the idea that the superlatives aboard OASIS OF THE SEAS are too numerous to mention. Just a few more of note. This ship will have a Zip Line extending diagonally, nine decks above Boardwalk. There will be two FlowRider surf simulators, located high on the back of Deck 16, conveniently bordering the appropriately named Wipe Out Bar. The Studio B Ice Rink is back and is two decks in height. The Dazzles nightclub and disco tops that at three decks high. The main show lounge is called the Opal Theater and will seat 1,380 guests in its state-of-the-art facilities. The Opus Dining Room is the primary restaurant on the ship. It stretches through three decks in sections that correspond to their deck numbers, Dining Rooms 3, 4 and 5. It is situated in the aft section of these lowest passenger decks. Passengers have the option of traditional dining seating, or the optional My Time Dining where they can come to the restaurant anytime between the hours of 6:00pm and 9:30pm for dinner. For those choosing the latter option, pre-paid gratuities are required. Below the dining room on Deck 2 is the Medical Facility along with crew quarters.

Stateroom accommodations aboard the ship offer a staggering selection of 37 different cabin categories. To make it a bit simpler, for our purposes they consist of four basic types, Interior Cabins from 149 to 172 square feet, Outside Cabins of 179 to 191 square feet, Balcony Staterooms of 182 square feet with

most balconies at 52 square feet and finally Deluxe Accommodations and Suites ranging in size from 287 to 1,524 square feet. The Royal Loft Suite is the plushiest accommodation on the ship, spanning Decks 17 and 18, within the Viking Crown. The Main level has a dining room area with bar and a grand piano, along with a bath and shower. The Loft level houses the Master bedroom and bath. A stairway connects the two levels in a contemporary, open design. Also within the Viking Crown are two Sky Loft Suites and 25 Crown Loft Suites, all of which are two-decks high and include spacious balconies. Also notable are the Presidential Suite and the Royal Suite on Deck 12 which are 1,142 square feet and 1,274 square feet respectively.

A ship the size of the OASIS OF THE SEAS creates problems with infrastructure as only a limited number of ports can handle not only her dimensions, but the influx of up to 8,460 passengers and crew. In Port Everglades, Florida, a new terminal designed specifically for this ship, has been constructed. Regular 7-night cruises will call at major Eastern Caribbean ports that have proven over many years that they can handle vast numbers of tourists. Those cruises will take the ship to St. Thomas, St. Maarten and Nassau. A new port is being designed at Falmouth, Jamaica for the ship but the facilities will not be ready in time for the inaugural debut in the Western Caribbean in May, 2010. Instead the ship will initially call at Labadee, Royal Caribbean's "private island" port in Haiti, with stops at the Mexican ports of Costa Maya and Cozumel. The maiden revenue voyage for the OASIS OF THE SEAS will be a four-day cruise to Labadee on December 1, 2009, priced from \$699.00 per person.

Funding for a ship estimated to cost \$1.2 billion, also presented challenges. Full guarantees that the ship would be financed were not obtained until April 15, 2009. Approximately 80% of the financing was initially guaranteed by Finnvera, the export credit agency of Finland. Finnvera later upped the guarantee for OASIS OF THE SEAS to 95%, providing 40% of the financing themselves, with the remaining 60% coming from three European banks. Finnvera is owned by the government of

Finland. This is the first time in recent memory that a government agency not only guaranteed a cruise line's debt but also provided a portion of the actual financing. A sistership, ALLURE OF THE SEAS, which is set to debut in December, 2010, still needs to obtain similar financing.

"Project Genesis" was the code name used by Royal Caribbean when the order for the ship was placed in February 2006. The keel for OASIS OF THE SEAS was laid on December 11, 2007 at the STX Shipyard in Turku, Finland. Construction on the second ship, ALLURE OF THE SEAS began a year later on December 2, 2008. The ships were named by George Weiser of Michigan who won a naming contest from among more than 91,000 entries. The OASIS OF THE SEAS touched water for the first time when she was floated on November 21, 2008 and moved to the wet dock for final fitting out. The company also took the opportunity that day to announce the ship will be commanded by two Captains; Tor Olsen from Norway and William Wright who is American. Both are long-time veterans with Royal Caribbean International. On June 8<sup>th</sup> the ship departed from the STX builder's yard at Turku to begin her sea trials. Trailing above, tethered by a steel cable was a blimp-like balloon being tested for possible passenger flights. While the sea trials went well, the same could not be said for the unmanned test balloon which broke free, drifting off and eventually landing in the sea. That passenger activity has been sent back to the drawing boards. It does illustrate that no ideas are too far-fetched for inclusion on this ship, specifically designed to entertain passengers.



OASIS OF THE SEAS on sea trials, June 10, 2009

It is certain that there will be no neutral attitudes when it comes to this ship. Some will think it is just too big, while

others will flock to it for the same reason. The idea of a floating resort destination and traveling amusement park for the whole family, have been talked about in the cruise industry for quite some time, but they have found their ultimate expression in the OASIS OF THE SEAS. Over the past 150 years, passenger ships have been evolving to reach this pinnacle with the largest cruise vessel the world has ever seen. What was once a futuristic dream is now reality. The future is now.

### Call for Nominations for SoCal Chapter Board of Directors for 2010.

Self nominations are now open for the Chapter Board of Directors. If you wish to join and serve your fellow members, let me know.

Email me at [steamer@pacbell.net](mailto:steamer@pacbell.net) and we'll get you on the ballot.

Current skills needs are:

Marketing and Communications including web sites, social networking, creative services, printing, etc.

Business Development – finding donors, making the ask and closing the deal.

Positions are, and you may run for any you like include officers –

President  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Secretary

Or be a Member At Large and head one of the committees –

Development,  
Marketing,  
Education,  
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It's great fun and a wonderful way to serve the mission of SSHSA.

**Can we count on your help?**