



Friday, April 26 - 6:00 PM

At the Community Church Assembly Room, 40 East 35th Street, Manhattan

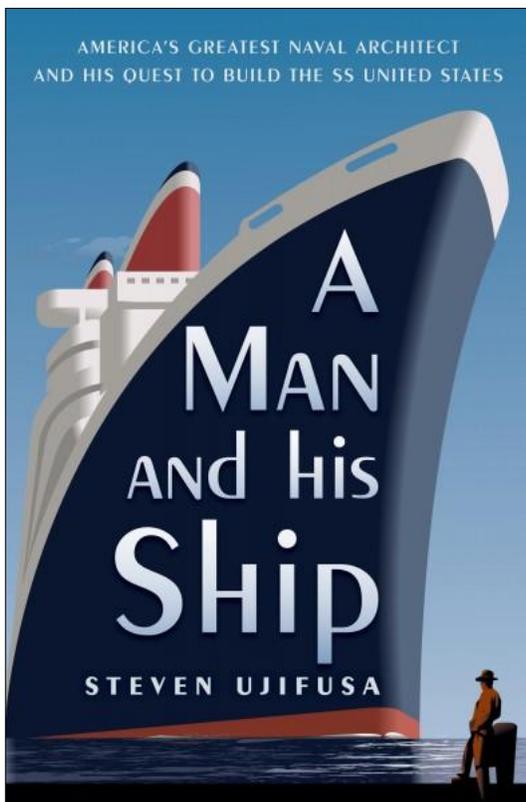
A Man and His Ship: America's Greatest Naval Architect and His Quest to Build the SS United States

Steven Ujifusa will give a book talk on *A Man and His Ship*, published by Simon & Schuster. It was recently named by The Wall Street Journal as one of the ten best nonfiction books of the year (2012).

It's the sweeping story of William Francis Gibbs' quest to build the fastest, finest ocean liner in history—set against the politics, culture, and enterprise of twentieth century America. Taking readers back to a golden age, when America's industrial might, innovative ambition, and maritime dynamism were unmatched, Steven Ujifusa's groundbreaking debut sheds light on a forgotten genius and the sleek vision to which he gave birth. Forced to drop out of Harvard following his family's sudden financial ruin, Gibbs overcame debilitating shyness and lack of formal training to become the visionary creator of some of the finest ships in history.

Steven Ujifusa is an historian and a resident of Philadelphia who has written numerous articles on architecture and urban history. When he is not writing, he enjoys singing, photography, rowing on the Schuylkill River, and travel. A native of Chappaqua, New York, Steven received his undergraduate degree in history from Harvard University and a joint masters in historic preservation and real estate development from the University of Pennsylvania. He has appeared on National Public Radio and CBS *Sunday Morning*, and has given presentations at the National Museum of the US Navy, the Harvard Club of New York, Independence Seaport Museum, the Boston Athenaeum, and the Maryland Historical Society.

Following the talk, Steven will sign copies of his book (\$30).



Jacket cover of A MAN AND HIS SHIP (Designed by Laurie Carkeet; illustration by John Mattos)



s.s. UNITED STATES departing Southampton, during the 1960's. (Bob Allen collection)



s.s. UNITED STATES First Class Observation Lounge. Gibbs required fireproof interiors designs of aluminum, steel, and glass. Bright fiberglass fabrics and fresh flowers provided color and drama. (US Lines / Bob Allen collection)

NEXT MEETINGS: Friday, May 31 – Life Aboard the P&O ss CANBERRA, by Ted Scull; Friday, June 28 – Planning & Executing Expedition Voyages, by Ben Lyons.

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THE PORTHOLE, published by the Port of New York Branch, World Ship Society, welcomes original material for publication. Address to the editor, Bob Allen, at oceanvoyag@aol.com or via the PONY mailing address.

SHIP'S LOG

Spring is here, more or less, and one's fancy turns to thoughts of – what else? – cruising. And our March meeting took us on a short but magical cruise on the last remaining 1960's ocean liner, the MARCO POLO, as spectacularly photographed and beautifully described by our Porthole editor, Bob Allen.

Bob was introduced by Marge Dovman, who gave us some fun facts about his background and maritime interests. One good biography deserves another, and Bob, an architect and veteran of 96 cruises, began with a history of the MARCO POLO, which started life as the ALEXANDR PUSHKIN. She was one of five Soviet trans-Atlantic liners named for Russian poets, built to bring foreign currency into the Soviet Union. The PUSHKIN's history was a series of charters and cross-charters as well as a complete renovation, receiving her present name in 1993. She is now Greek-owned, and sails for Cruise & Maritime Voyages, a British-market line.

Bob and his partner, Rob Rothberg, boarded at Tilbury for a five-day cruise to English Channel ports. But first there was an overnight stay in London at the Victorian-era St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel, constructed over the St. Pancras train station and beautifully restored to its 1890's appearance. Another design gem was architect Charles Mewes' Royal Automobile Club, which boasts a swimming pool he later duplicated on Hapag Lloyd's 1913-built IMPERATOR.

Along with outstanding architecture, Bob took us on a tour of the ship, both in her former Soviet guise, and as she appears today. He pointed out the ship's pleasing shapes and other 1960's characteristics, such as mosaics and bright colors. Today, the ALEXANDR PUSHKIN's bell is all that remains of her former life. Bob pronounced the vessel "a lovely ship to wander around on," with her "wonderful ocean liner spaces," curves, sheer, intimate scale, teak decks, pleasant décor with Far Eastern touches, and, of course, those architectural elements. He sounded as if he would have been quite happy to have stayed aboard very much longer.

Arriving at their first port, Amsterdam, the two headed off, of course, to the Maritime Museum, where they encountered not only intriguing architecture, but a roomful of rare maritime books, where they were allowed to wander and photograph freely. They found the Amsterdam waterfront very conducive to ship watching.

The next day, tidal problems postponed the scheduled stop in Rouen and enabled an unscheduled stop in Honfleur, which attracted with two charming boat basins and many old buildings, some dating from medieval times. A very rainy next morning was spent in Rouen, and then the MARCO POLO sailed the 75 miles downstream to the mouth of the Seine in fog, passing tiny towns, each with attractive architecture and its own ferry landing, all of which Bob found fun to see from the river. The day also featured a lecture by a hotel staff member about the ship's origin as the ALEXANDR PUSHKIN, making obvious the pride the crew took in their historic vessel.

In the next port of Antwerp, the pair disembarked rather than return to Tilbury, so they could have more time to explore Belgium. Then, naturally, Bob went back to the pier to watch the ship's (beautifully photographed) nighttime departure. They spent several days exploring Antwerp's Flemish architecture and its Zurenborg district with its spectacular Art Nouveau and Beaux Art structures, and also travelled to historic Bruges to take a picturesque canal cruise.

In keeping with the MARCO POLO's Russian origin, we ended the evening with borscht, pirogie, black bread, and other Russian goodies.

Bob will be rewarded for this marvelous program with a copy of "The Edwardian Liners" as soon as some shipping difficulties are ironed out.

Marge Dovman

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES: January, 2012 – March, 2013

SHIP	FROM	TO	VOYAGE	PASSENGER(S)
QUEEN ELIZABETH	New York	San Francisco	Panama Canal	Don & Ann Eberle
VIKING RIVER CRUISE	Chalon, France	Avignon, France	Southern France Rivers	Don & Ann Eberle
NIEUW AMSTERDAM	Venice	Venice	Croatia & Dalmatian Coast	Don & Ann Eberle
CRYSTAL SERENITY	Barcelona	Miami	Transatlantic	Don & Ann Eberle
STATENDAM	San Diego	San Diego	Hawaii & Polynesia	Don & Ann Eberle

YOUR DAILY PROGRAMME

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM www.southstreetseaportmuseum.org or 917-492-3379. Now part of The Museum of the City of New York. Due to repairs required after Hurricane Sandy, the Galleries at 12 Fulton Street closed as of April 7. For additional information on the reopening of exhibits, ship visitation and other events, contact the museum.

VANCOUVER WSS & VANCOUVER MARITIME MUSEUM www.worldshipsocietyvan.ca for information or if you visit, contact Glenn Smith: 604-684-1240, email glenn.smith@worldshipsocietyvan.ca. **MAY MEETING — Wednesday May 8, 2013:** Program TBD. Meetings are held at the Vancouver Maritime Museum at 1905 Ogden Avenue (Kitsilano Point).

NEW SOUTH WALES WSS: MAY MEETING will be held on **Thursday May 16, 2013**. The program will be a "Memories of QE2", by Peter Sage. Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Complex in Lord Street, Roseville at 8:00 PM. Contact the branch at PO Box 215, Strathfield, New South Wales 2135, Australia.

THE NATIONAL LIBERTY SHIP MEMORIAL, INC. www.ssjeremiahobrien.org or liberty@ssjeremiahobrien.org or 415-544-0100. 1275 Columbus Avenue, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94133-1315. See the SS JEREMIAH O'BRIEN at Pier 45 at Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, CA, or join one of the day cruises under the Golden Gate Bridge and around San Francisco Bay. 2013 sailing dates are: May 18 – Maritime Memorial Cruise; October 12 – San Francisco Fleet Week Cruise and Parade of Ships; October 13 – San Francisco Fleet Week Cruise. Contact the museum for prices, sailing time and tickets.

MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY OF NEW YORK www.mas.org Join a waterfront walking tour led by Theodore W. Scull, in conjunction with the Municipal Art Society of New York's third annual Jane's Walk NYC, to be held Saturday and Sunday, May 4th and 5th, Ted will lead a two-hour walk entitled *Hudson River Waterfront: Transformation from Ocean Liners to Recreation*. (No charge, walk is free) Date: Sunday, May 5; Time: Two departures: 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM & 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Meeting Place: Pier 40 at W. Houston & West Streets; Ending: Chelsea Piers at W. 23rd St. Description: Explore the Hudson River waterfront, recalling past shipping activities such as the ocean liner trade, import/export cargo handling, and railroad-owned fleets of barges, car floats, tugs and ferries. With the leader's experience working on Pier 40 beginning in the 1960s, hear about the revolutionary changes that hit the passenger and cargo shipping industries and the swift decline of the waterfront for maritime uses and the painfully slow transformation to what recreation uses we see today. Historic remnants of the ocean liner trade will be revealed; see where the *Titanic* should have docked and where the *Carpathia* brought back the survivors, where immigrants arrived and from where passengers sailed to all parts of the world or commuted daily across the river on fleets of railroad ferries. For a complete listing of walks for May 4th & 5th go to: <http://mas.org/programs/janeswalknyc/>

NEW YORK HARBOR CRUISES

NEW YORK WATER TAXI, www.nywatertaxi.com or 866-989-2542. Harbor cruises departing from both South Street Seaport Pier 17 and Pier 84 at West 44th Street. Hop on – hop off service throughout New York Harbor is offered as well. Contact via website or telephone for departure times and prices.

CIRCLE LINE DOWNTOWN, www.circlelinedowntown.com or 866-989-2542. Harbor cruises on the ZEPHYR from April to December, and aboard New York Water Taxi from January to March, departing from Pier 17, South Street Seaport. Contact via website or telephone for departure times and prices.

CIRCLE LINE, www.circleline42.com or 877-731-0064. Circle Manhattan and other harbor cruises, departing from pier 84 at West 44th Street. Contact via website or telephone for departure times and prices.

NEW YORK WATERWAY, www.nywaterway.com or 800-533-3779. Trans-Hudson ferry service and special-event cruises. Contact via website or telephone for departure times and prices.

THE BAZAAR IS COMING

The June edition of the WSS Ocean Liner Bazaar will take place on Saturday, June 8 2013, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM at the Abigail Adams Smith Auditorium, 417 East 61st Street (between 1st & 2nd Avenues), New York, NY. See the enclosed flyer for additional information.

THE PONY BRANCH OF WORLD SHIP SOCIETY IS CRUISING AGAIN!



Join the WSS Pony Branch on a group cruise from New York to Bermuda on the new m/s NORWEGIAN BREAKAWAY, seen above in a rendering provided by Norwegian Cruise Line. We will be sailing from New York to Bermuda on a 7-day Labor Day Weekend Cruise, departing Sunday, September 1, 2013. For more information, please see the flyer included with this edition of The Porthole.

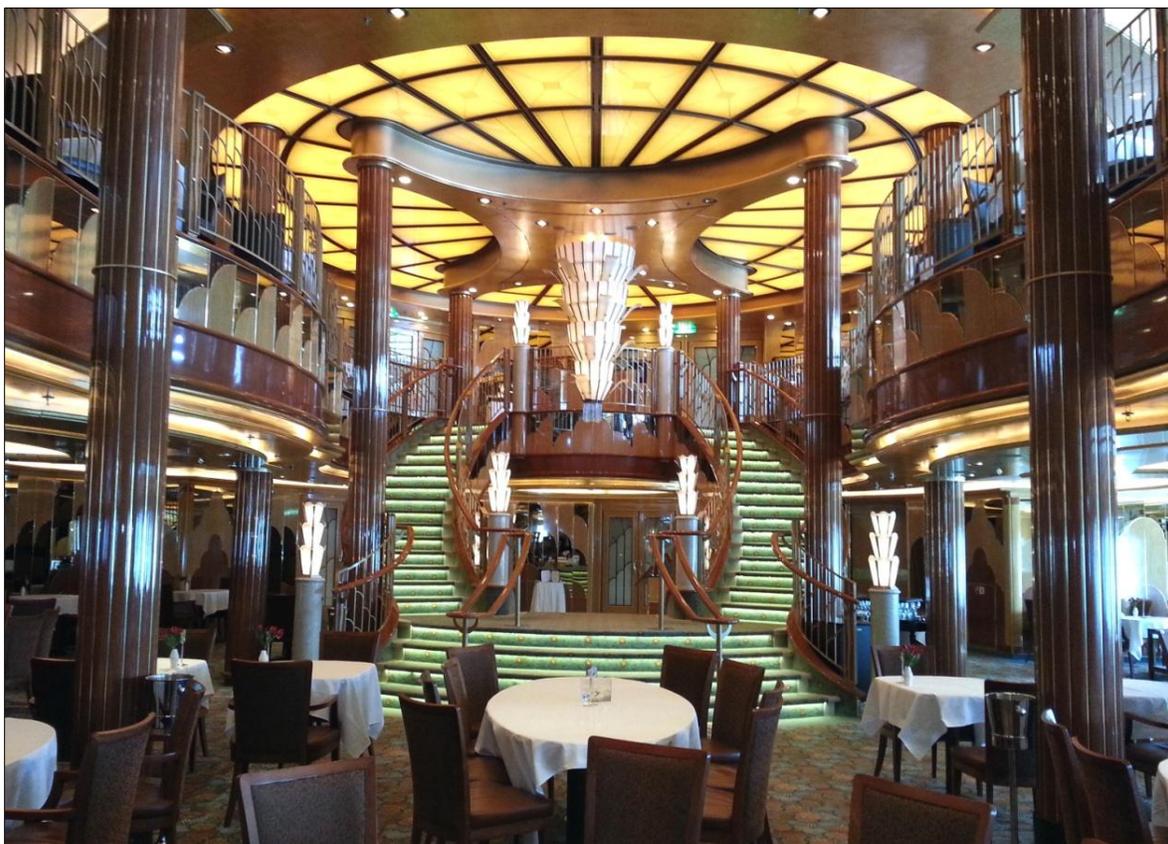
MEMBER PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

Share your favorite ship photos by sending them for publication in The Porthole!



QUEEN ELIZABETH departing her midtown Manhattan berth on March 30, 2013

(Paul Klee)



QUEEN ELIZABETH's Art Deco-inspired dining room, taken prior to a Transatlantic crossing from New York on March 30, 2013

(Marjorieann Maturzek)

THE WORLD'S LARGEST PRIVATE YACHT VISITS NEW YORK

By Stuart Gewirtzman

The luxury motor yacht ECLIPSE is seen here at Pier 90 at the Manhattan Cruise Terminal on March 17, 2013. Built in 2010 by Blohm + Voss Shipyards in Hamburg, Germany (at a final cost reportedly exceeding \$1 billion), it is currently the world's largest private yacht, measuring approximately 533 feet in length and 13,000 GT. The ECLIPSE is owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, best known outside Russia as the owner of the Chelsea Football Club in the UK. With a crew of 70, the ECLIPSE can accommodate 36 guests in 18 staterooms, including a master suite. The yacht's exterior and interiors were designed by Terence Disdale Design (UK), and amenities include two swimming pools (one of which converts to a dance floor), hot tubs, a gym, a spa, a sauna, a movie theater, conference facilities, a beauty salon, a children's playroom, and a log-burning fire table on the upper aft deck. In addition to being equipped with three launch boats and a mini-submarine capable of diving to 160 feet, the ECLIPSE can accommodate up to three helicopters, one on each of two helipads and a third in a hanger beneath the fore deck. The ECLIPSE is also reportedly equipped with security features worthy of James Bond, including intruder detection systems, a missile defense system, armor plating and bullet-proof windows around the master suite and the bridge, and an anti-paparazzi system that can detect and blind cameras using lasers. The Eclipse arrived in New York on February 13, 2013, and published reports have indicated that it will be remaining at Pier 90 through mid-April. Docking fees for a three-month stay at the Manhattan Cruise Terminal have not been publicly disclosed.



ECLIPSE at New York's Passenger Ship Terminal.

(Stuart Gewirtzman)

SHIP NEWS

MORE TROUBLES FOR TRIUMPH: CARNIVAL TRIUMPH broke away from her dock at BAE Systems Ship Repair during a storm with 70-mph winds in early April. The vessel came to rest against a nearby cargo ship, and reportedly suffered damage to her bow and stern sections. TRIUMPH is at the shipyard being repaired after losing power and drifting in the Gulf of Mexico in mid-February, under the glare of international media. No workers or crew on the TRIUMPH were injured, but a shipyard worker was apparently swept to sea and is presumed dead after the guard shack he was in blew into the water. Before this incident, TRIUMPH was scheduled to return to cruise service on June 3; it is not known if that date will now have to be delayed. In related news, Carnival Chairman Micky Arison was recently required to answer questions from U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller regarding safety on Carnival Corporation cruise ships. Rockefeller presented a list of 90 incidents over the past 5 years that Carnival filed with the USCG; however, only 7 were actually classified by the Code of Federal Regulations as "serious marine accidents" requiring Coast Guard intervention. These events were the TRIUMPH fire in 2013, the CARNIVAL SPLENDOR fire in 2010, the sinking the COSTA CONCORDIA in 2012, two minor collisions, a case of appendicitis requiring airlift, and an instance of a passenger jumping overboard. Regarding the mechanical condition of the TRIUMPH and the cause of the February fire, records indicated that earlier electrical problems suffered by the ship were unrelated to the 2013 accident, and that the failed fuel return line that caused that fire was not worn, and had been replaced less than six months before the incident. However, these facts were not the focus of network television coverage of the Rockefeller probe into Carnival's troubles, which created much negative publicity for the company.

DIVINA IN DADE: MSC Cruises announced that of their 146,000-ton, 3,500-passenger DIVINA (2012) will begin year-round Caribbean cruise service from Miami, FL in November 2013. Originally intended to be a winter-season only deployment, this will be the first ever year-round positioning of a MSC ship in the US market. DIVINA is the fourth of MSC's five FANTASIA-

class vessels; the final unit, PREZIOSA, was named at Genoa and entered service just a few weeks ago. The FANTASIA-class is the largest in their fleet of 12 ships, and represents the culmination of a 6-billion US dollar building program for MSC.

SWAN HELLENIC'S HISTORIC VOYAGE: In a cruise industry where celebrating tradition is rare, British-market cruise line Swan Hellenic will be sending their single vessel, the 12,449-ton, 1996-built MINERVA, on a special cruise. To celebrate the company's 60th Anniversary next summer, the MINERVA will retrace the approximate route of the line's 1st voyage, a Greek Islands cruise in August, 1954. The 14-night cruise departs Naples on August 14, 2014, visits many popular Greek Islands, and includes a transit of the Corinth Canal before ending in Piraeus. MINERVA will also commemorate the 70th Anniversary of D-Day and the 100th Anniversary of the beginning of World War I with a 12-night "Reflections of France" cruise, including a viewing of the Normandy beaches where the D-Day landing took place.



Swan Hellenic's MINERVA

(Swan Hellenic Cruises)

DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE TO LAUNCH THE ROYAL PRINCESS: Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge and consort to Britain's Prince William, will be launching the new ROYAL PRINCESS in Southampton on June 13, 2013. It was twenty-nine years ago that Prince William's mother, the late Diana, Princess of Wales, launched the first ROYAL PRINCESS (now ARTANIA). Recent royal cruise ship Godmothers have included HRH Queen Elizabeth (QUEEN MARY 2 and QUEEN ELIZABETH) and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall (QUEEN VICTORIA).

THE END OF THE ROAD:

There was more sad news last month of well-known cruise ships sailing off to the scrapyards of Turkey and India. THE CALYPSO (ex-CANGURO VERDE, DURR, IONIAN HARMONY, SUN FIESTA, REGENT JEWEL, CALYPSO) was built in 1967 as an 11,000-ton car ferry operating for the Italian Tirrenia Lines. In 1994, Greek owner Regency Cruises rebuilt her as a cruise ship, but never operated her due to their weak financial position, and she was chartered to Germany's Transocean Tours as CALYPSO. Following Transocean's demise, CALYPSO was purchased by Louis Cruises and eventually chartered by Thompson Cruises before being sold for scrap.

RIO (ex-SOUTHWARD, SEAWING, PERLA, THE AGEAN PEARL) was a 17,000-tonner built for Norwegian Cruise Lines in 1971 as their largest and most luxurious "White Ship." She served NCL for more than 20 years, and was not eclipsed in size within their fleet until the advent of the NORWAY (ex-FRANCE) in 1980. She was to have had sister ship, SEAWARD, but that vessel was sold while under construction and became P&O Lines' first purpose-built cruise ship, SPIRIT OF LONDON (1974). SOUTHWARD, and other cruise ships built in the late 1960's and 1970's, were sometimes known as a "wedge ships" due to their angular features and relatively wide hulls. However, as she aged, SOUTHWARD was considered one of the more attractive ships of the period, with flowing lines and swept-back funnels. She is now being scrapped in Aliaga, Turkey.

The 46,087-ton ATLANTIC STAR (ex-FAIRSKY, SKY PRINCESS, PACIFIC SKY, SKY WONDER), also being demolished at Aliaga, was one of the most interesting vessels of the 1980's. Upon completion in the spring of 1984, she was the first purpose-built cruise ship to exceed 40,000-tons, and the largest ship ever built exclusively for cruising. While these milestones may seem pointless in today's megaship environment, the 1980's were a time of transformational growth in the cruise industry, and the FAIRSKY was more than one-third larger than the NIEUW AMSTERDAM of the previous year, and more than double the size of the average cruise ship built in the 1970's. She was constructed in France for Sitmar Cruises, a company that started as SITMAR (Societa Italiana Transporti Marittima SpA) by Russian entrepreneur Alexandre Vaslov in 1938. SITMAR originally shipped coal through the Mediterranean, but became very successful on the Europe to Australia immigrant and passenger trades, post-World War II. After the jet plane overtook the liner business in the early 1970's,

SITMAR completely rebuilt the former Cunarders CARINTHIA (1956) and SYLVANIA (1957) as the FAIRSEA (1971) and FAIRWIND (1972) for West Coast cruising under the Sitmar Cruises banner. After a modest start, these 25,000-ton sister vessels became hugely popular by the mid-1970's, renowned for their luxurious yet cozy interiors, friendly Italian crew, and superb cuisine. Many cruise buffs viewed Sitmar as a West Coast version of the famous Home Lines, and some even felt a nostalgic hint of the Italian Lines atmosphere on board their ships. In 1980, Sitmar contracted for FAIRSKY, their first newly constructed liner, to achieve their expansion goals. She was basically an enlarged, improved version of the earlier sisters, with a similar layout, décor and – surprisingly – propulsion system of steam-driven turbine engines. It was reported at the time that the engine room operation would be economical, since the crew of the earlier ships had such familiarity with the system. However, the FAIRSKY was the last passenger ship ever built with steam turbines, and within a few years was at an operational disadvantage in an industry where advances were being made mostly in diesel and diesel-electric propulsion. After the 1988 merger of Sitmar and Princess Cruises, she became SKY PRINCESS, and then operated out of Australia as PACIFIC SKY starting in 2000. In 2006 she was sold to Pullmantur and became SKY WONDER, cruising the Adriatic and Mediterranean. By late 2008 she was laid up, largely due to her expensive and high-maintenance engines. During a brief period of cruising for the Portuguese market in 2009, she broke down and was laid up at Marseilles – this time permanently. It is unfortunate that such a fine ship should go to the scrappers at the age of 29, after only 25 years of continuous service. She was a modern classic that will be greatly missed by her admirers, and represented the final age of steam-driven ocean liners.



Despite her being known as one of the “wedge ships,” SOUTHWARD had a distinctive profile and very sleek lines (Bob Allen collection)



FAIRSKY anchored off Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, 1986

(Bob Allen)



m.s. WILLEM RUYSS

(Royal Rotterdam Lloyd / Bob Allen collection)

“The motor vessel WILLEM RUYSS, flagship of the Royal Rotterdam Lloyd, is considered by seafarers to be a lucky ship – the good omen being the manner in which she escaped destruction during the war years.” So began a 1958 promotional brochure for this most handsome and unusual vessel, which had a history not always lucky, but certainly interesting. She was designed for the busy colonial liner route from The Netherlands to Indonesia, and construction began in 1939; competitor Nederland Line introduced the ORANJE on the same route that year. But with the outbreak of World War II in 1939 and the Nazi invasion of Holland in 1940, work ceased; then the Nazis ordered it to continue. The Dutch underground successfully undermined the pace of construction, and it was amazing that the incomplete vessel did not become a casualty of a bombing raid. After the war, Rotterdam Lloyd (now Royal Rotterdam Lloyd, by decree of Queen Wilhelmina) completed the ship, which sailed to Indonesia on her maiden voyage on December 2, 1947. WILLEM RUYSS was a stunning ship, futuristic in her design with aluminum lifeboats carried low in a nested position, multiple open promenades, a streamlined, glazed forward superstructure, and two low, rounded, teardrop-shaped black funnels. Well-balanced upper works, tall fore and main masts, grey hull, raked bow and spoon-shaped stern completed her elegant appearance. Her interiors were no less impressive, making fine use of back-painted glass and Delft tile murals, wood carvings and veneers, dramatic lighting and a wide variety of modern furniture. The First Class Social Hall was a revelation, featuring a sweeping grand staircase with cuttlefish-shaped balusters and wooden mermaid newel posts, opposite a glazed forward-facing bulkhead. The Observation Lounge / Balcony, ringing the entire room, had a 180-degree arc of full-height windows overlooking the bows, and featured more casual sunroom-style furnishings. WILLEM RUYSS was one of very few ships to have a double-height, forward facing lounge.

Less than two years after the WILLEM RUYSS' maiden voyage, the Dutch East Indies gained independence from The Netherlands, and passenger traffic slowed considerably. Yet in the pre-jet plane 1940's and early 1950's, there was still enough business to keep both the beautiful new ship and her rival ORANJE sailing the old colonial route. The two ships were often running to and from Europe on opposite schedules, which resulted in a near-disaster in 1953 when they collided while passing at close range, presumably for the entertainment of their passengers. ORANJE's bows were badly damaged, but there was no loss of life in the accident, and both ships were quickly repaired. By 1958, passenger traffic on the long run to Indonesia had declined substantially, so Royal Rotterdam Lloyd and Nederland Line agreed to jointly develop a round-the-world passenger service. During the winter of 1958-59, WILLEM RUYSS was modernized to include full air conditioning, additional cabins (in lieu of cargo space), and a simplified passenger accommodation of 275 First Class and 770 Tourist Class. Additionally, her funnels were raised by about 10 feet, to better disperse smoke and keep her spacious open decks and outdoor pool as soot-free as possible. Returning to service on March 7, 1959, WILLEM RUYSS sailed on some of the most interesting itineraries of her career, from Rotterdam to Egypt, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Panama, Florida, Bermuda and England before returning to Rotterdam. However, the service became unprofitable in the jet age, and the WILLEM RUYSS and ORANJE were both sold to Flotta Lauro of Naples in 1964, for further use on emigrant liner voyages from Italy to Australia and New Zealand, as well as some cruising. Both ships were reconstructed with tall

winged funnels, new masts, expanded public rooms and thoroughly modern Italian décor. Ironically, both ships suffered fires during reconstruction, delaying their new careers until spring, 1966.

WILLEM RUYSS emerged from rebuilding as ACHILLE LAURO, while ORANJE became ANGELINA LAURO. After several profitable years, the jet once again ended the need for the long line voyages, and ACHILLE LAURO was rebuilt as a full time cruise ship in early 1972, suffering yet another serious fire in May of that year, with the damage requiring months to repair. Three years later, in 1975, she was in a collision with the small Lebanese freighter YOUSEFF, which sank with the loss of one life, and another fire broke out on board in 1981. ACHILLE LAURO then captured international headlines on October 7, 1985, when four members of the Palestine Liberation Front hijacked the vessel off the coast of Egypt, demanding the release of 50 Palestinians from Israeli prison in exchange for the ship of hostages. They directed the ship to head for Tartus, Syria, but they were refused permission to dock there. Next, they killed a wheelchair-bound Jewish-American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer, and threw his body overboard. After returning the ship to Port Said, Egypt two days of negotiations ensued, and the hijackers agreed to leave the ACHILLE LAURO in exchange for safe passage to Tunisia. Once airborne on an Egyptian airliner, they were intercepted by the US Air Force and directed to land in Sicily, where the hijackers were arrested. Subsequently, the Italian government collapsed in the wake of the incident. Somehow, the ACHILLE LAURO continued on, despite her new notoriety and Flotta Lauro's financial troubles, which were somewhat resolved when the company was purchased by Mediterranean Shipping Company (owners of today's MSC Cruises). While on an Indian Ocean cruise on November 30, 1994, ACHILLE LAURO caught fire yet again, this time due to an undetected engine room explosion. Once the fire was discovered, it was unable to be brought under control, and it became necessary to abandon ship. She sank off the coast of Somalia, with the tragic loss of four passengers, on December 2, 1994 – 47 years to the day since her triumphal maiden voyage. It was a bitter ending for a glorious ship that did not have the lucky career once forecast, but certainly a dramatic one.

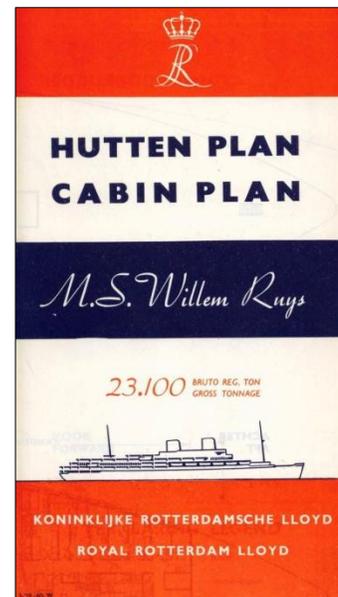


Stylized cuttlefish enjoy a sweeping view forward as they swim along the balusters of the Observation Lounge Balcony (above), while the interconnecting stair is guarded by carved wood mermaid newel posts (right). The writing room gallery (below) was paneled with a beautiful back-painted glass mural and features late-Art Deco lighting standards. (RLL / Bob Allen collection)



Original Owner: Rotterdamsche Lloyd, Rotterdam
Builder: De Schelde, Vlissingen, Holland
Route: Rotterdam – Jakarta (Batavia), Indonesia
Service speed: 22 knots
Pass. capacity: 344 1st; 320 2nd; 131 3rd; 74 4th (as built)

Dimensions: 631' x 82.3'
Gross Tonnage: 21,119 (as built)
Maiden Voyage: December 2, 1947
Last Voyage: November, 1994
Demise: Sank in the Indian Ocean off Somalia, after an engine room fire, December 2, 1994.



The original WILLEM RUYS brochure, before Rotterdam Lloyd became "Royal"; the deckplan, from after the 1959 renovation.

(Royal Rotterdam Lloyd / Bob Allen collection)



The introductory ANGELINA LAURO brochure for the Australian service from 1965 contained a beautiful aerial rendering of the ship.

(Flotta Lauro / Bob Allen collection)

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