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One Man's Holland America Line: A Personal Retrospective from NIEUW AMSTERDAM to KONINGS DAM

by Karl Zimmermann

Friday, November 18, 2015 - 6:00 PM

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

On December 7, 1949, Karl Zimmermann boarded the S.S. NIEUW AMSTERDAM in Rotterdam with his parents, homeward bound to New York after three months in Germany while his father worked for the Economic Cooperation Administration. This began a relationship with the Holland America Line that has stretched over seven decades. Its most recent expression will culminate on November 9th when he and his wife Laurel disembark at Ft. Lauderdale after a 16-day crossing on Holland America's newest, the KONIGSDAM. Between those events, he has sailed in ten Holland America Line ships, ROTTERDAM V and ROTTERDAM VI among them, and recently the PRINSENDAM, plus five HAL vessels in subsequent cruising careers.

Although he had crossed aboard the 1952 MAASDAM as a Holland America ship, it was four transatlantic crossings in the 1980s with his family on that vessel as the Polish Ocean Lines' STEFAN BATORY that rekindled his love of ships. As the only current cruise line other than Cunard that fully embraces its deep history, Holland America remains a Zimmermann favorite. His talk will showcase the last century of the line's history, with a personal slant. Zimmermann is a travel writer and author of numerous books, including *Ocean Liners: Crossing and Cruising the Seven Seas*, intended for young readers.



Holland America Line's magnificent s.s. ROTTERDAM arriving at her midtown Manhattan berth during the 1990's.

(Karl Zimmermann)

NEXT EVENTS: Member's Holiday Party: Saturday, December 10. Membership meetings: January 27, 2017; February 24, 2017; programs TBA

ADDRESS: PO Box 384, New York, NY 10185-0384

E-MAIL: wsspony@gmail.com

WEBSITE: www.worldshipny.com

MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Holland America Line's PRINSENDAM at Gibraltar on June 26, 2014.

(Karl Zimmermann)

MUSEUMS, LECTURES AND HARBOR CRUISES

CONTACT THESE INSTITUTIONS BY EMAIL OR PHONE FOR CURRENT EVENTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM www.southstreetseaportmuseum.org or 212-748-8600.

MYSTIC SEAPORT www.mysticseaport.org or 860-572-0711.

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 Per their website, monthly meetings have been eliminated for the foreseeable future.

NEW SOUTH WALES WSS: Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Complex in Lord Street, Roseville. Contact the branch at PO Box 215, Strathfield, New South Wales 2135, Australia for additional information.

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.

PROJECT LIBERTY SHIP www.ssjohnwbrown.org or 410-558-0646. Visit or sail on the World War II vintage Liberty Ship, based in Baltimore, MD. Contact for dates and more information.

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 44 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.

CIRCLE LINE, www.circleline42.com or 877-731-0064. Circle Manhattan and other harbor cruises, departing from pier 84 at West 44 Street.

NEW YORK WATERWAY, www.nywaterway.com or 800-533-3779. Trans-Hudson ferry service and special-event cruises.

THE NATIONAL LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM www.lighthousemuseum.org or 718-390-0040 – **PLEASE NOTE NEW PHONE NUMBER!** Contact for schedule of cruises and other events.

THE WORKING HARBOR COMMITTEE www.workingharbor.com or 212-757-1600. Cruises to both remote and well-travelled parts of New York Harbor - the Hudson River to view tugboat races, Gowanus Bay and Erie Basin in Brooklyn, and a circumnavigation of Staten Island.

THE NOBLE MARITIME COLLECTION, www.noblemaritime.org or 718-447-6490. Maritime lectures and art exhibits at the Sailor's Snug Harbor Cultural Center on Staten Island, NY. The 28th Annual Art Auction will take place on Saturday, November 19, 2016.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

SHIP	FROM	TO	VOYAGE	PASSENGER(S)	DATE
BELLE OF LOUISVILLE	Louisville, KY	Louisville, KY	Ohio River Cruise	Bill & Laura Donell	10/16
KONINGS DAM	Civitavecchia	Ft. Lauderdale	Transatlantic Crossing	Karl & Laurel Zimmermann	11/16
KONINGS DAM	Civitavecchia	Ft. Lauderdale	Transatlantic Crossing	Charles & Marjorie Zuckerman	11/16
KONINGS DAM	Ft. Lauderdale	Ft. Lauderdale	Bahamas Cruise	Bob Allen	11/16

IT'S PARTY TIME!

This year's WSS PONY Holiday Party will be on Saturday, December 10 at Arte Café, 106 West 73rd Street in Manhattan. The event will be from 12:30 – 3:30 PM (correction from flyer); please make your reservations soon, by sending in the flyer from last month's Porthole.

TIME TO RENEW!

It's time to renew your WSS – PONY membership. Don't miss the exciting events scheduled for 2017 – more delightful talks, a shipboard luncheon and a group cruise are in the planning stages! Please send your renewal form back to WSS – PONY as soon as possible.

SHIP'S LOG - SEPTEMBER

Members who let a mere rainy day keep them from our September meeting deprived themselves of one of our most interesting programs, given by one of our most well-travelled members. Appropriately clad in what he called his "safari clothing," our branch secretary, Greg Fitzgerald, introduced Tom Rinaldi, who would take us on another of his amazing voyages in search of exotic, little-known vessels.

This time, it was to the East African countries of Malawi and Tanzania to sail on two historic vessels that service otherwise isolated ports on the lakes that fill in the Great Rift Valley. Both date back to the days of European colonialism: the ILALA II was built in Scotland from 1949 to 1951 for service on Lake Malawi, while the LIEMBA was built in Germany between 1913 and 1915 to sail on Lake Tanganyika in what was then German East Africa, now Tanzania. The LIEMBA was a ship with a past, having been scuttled during World War I, then raised by the British in 1924 and returned to the lake. And her story was the basis for "The African Queen." Tom feared the LIEMBA was on borrowed time, so was most interested in making this trip.

Tom found planning the trip particularly complicated, especially trying to fit it all into two weeks – or should it be three weeks? He solved the problem neatly by quitting his job and opting for three weeks. Once "on the road," Tom found his biggest problem to be getting from one lake to the other, and another to be pre-dawn arrivals and departures of the means of transportation, not only ships but trains and vans. He described his voyage as being "constantly in the shadow of uncertainty."

Photos of maps showing transportation routes introduced us to the areas Tom was visiting. The train from Dar es Salaam to Kigoma, where the LIEMBA was waiting, was the basis of the transit system between the lakes. Tom's photos showed us that the Kigoma train station was a classic, but the train itself was no longer the luxurious conveyance it once was.

Disaster struck at the end of his 40-hour train trip. He was informed by means of a sign fastened to a tree that the LIEMBA would not be sailing until further notice. However, he was able to tour the ship and so had a supply of his always-great photos to show us. Both first- and second-class accommodations appeared simple but comfortable, but third class had to share space with the shaft alley. Most of the latter travelers, Tom assured us, were not aboard very long. More photos showed the vessel's appearance in all phases of her life, including the effects of having been submerged for some time. Also evident were the results of a 1990's renovation.

Since he was unable to sail south, a bus took Tom towards the northern end of Lake Malawi, where he stayed at a genuine railway hotel in Mebya. The next leg of the trip was by minivan, which dropped him off six miles from the ILALA II embarkation port of Chilumba, Malawi. Two local bike riders who offered their assistance solved this dilemma: one carried Tom, the other his luggage. How to pass the 12 hours until boarding time for the ILALA II? The ticket agent befriended Tom and invited him home to dinner with his family.

Happily, the ILALA II did sail, giving Tom more than a voyage to Monkey Bay on a historic ship. He also had another chance to meet many local people, since the entire town turns out when the lake ferries come into port.

We then saw a series of postage stamps depicting all of the Lake Malawi ferries, which are modest, having been built for these very small ports. And as a historical note, we learned that ILAWA I was named after the place where David Livingstone died.

We appreciate Tom's taking us along on this, his latest and beautifully photographed adventure. And no, there were no African tidbits among the refreshments, but we were quite happy with the American goodies that were served.

Marge Dovman

SHIP NEWS

FROM FUNCHAL TO HAVANA: The elegant Portuguese coastal liner FUNCHAL, one of the oldest liners afloat, may be on the verge of a new career cruising from the United States to Cuba. The 9,600-ton, 1961-built ship was owned by Portuscale Cruises, which unfortunately had to shut down for financial reasons in 2015. FUNCHAL had been thoroughly renovated and brought up to current SOLAS standards by Portuscale in 2012, making the 500-passenger liner ideal for future service. She is particularly appropriate for Cuba service, where only smaller cruise ships can be accommodated due to lack of modern cruise port infrastructure. It has been reported that a memorandum of understanding has been signed with an unidentified buyer, with the purchase scheduled for completion in late November. If the transaction takes place, the new owner would further renovate the FUNCHAL, and start service to Havana, presumably from Miami, in April 2017. US government approval would be required for the operation; at present, only Carnival Cruises' Fathom brand, and Victory Cruise Lines has regulatory approval to sail to Cuba from the United States.



The 1961-built FUNCHAL, currently owned by non-operational Portuscale Cruises, my have a new life sailing Miami-based cruises to Cuba.

(Portuscale Cruises)

SEA THE VISTA: Carnival Cruise Lines' latest cruise ship – the 133,500-ton, 4,000-passenger CARNIVAL VISTA – was christened on a sunny, mild November day at Pier 88 in New York. Her godmother is Deshauna Barber, the first Miss USA who is also an active servicewoman. It all tied together with Carnival's yearlong salute to military families, who were well represented at the ceremony. Operation Homefront, an organization dedicated to the support of veterans and their families, is co-sponsor of Carnival's salute, whose theme is "Honor. Family. Fun." As for the ship, VISTA represents a continued departure from the sensational (and popular) over-the-top Joe Farcus designs of Carnival's first thirty-plus years. Bright, colorful and modern, her interior design would be at home on other mass-market lines such as Royal Caribbean or Norwegian. The CARNIVAL VISTA follows a summer season in Europe with two New York departures to the Caribbean, before repositioning to Miami for winter Caribbean cruises.



Subdued, modern design is evident on next-generation Carnival Cruise ships, as seen above in CARNIVAL VISTA's Horizons Dining Room.

(Carnival Cruises)

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