



THE HOSPITAL SHIP COMFORT ARRIVES IN NEW YORK



The hospital ship COMFORT arrived in New York on the morning of March 30. She has 1,000 beds, which will be additional space for victims of the coronavirus. (Tom Rinaldi)

Please turn to page 3 for a story about America's hospital ships, reprinted by special permission from Captain James McNamara.

APRIL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND PROGRAM CANCELLED

Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the April membership meeting and program is cancelled. We are hopeful that our monthly meetings will resume in May. We will continue to provide updates as information becomes available.

NEXT EVENTS: Membership meetings: Thursday May 28, "Passage to Papua" by Tom Rinaldi; June 18 RESCHEDULED - "Icon of Identity: The ILE DE FRANCE on the World Stage" by Christian Roden. PONY Branch cruise: December 8, 2020 on the QUEEN MARY 2.

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ROTTERDAM VI at Curacao, Netherlands Antilles in February 2020. Davis Hume's review of his cruise on the Holland America Line flagship appears on page 5. (David G.Hume)

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Arrivals and Departures will return once both the cruise lines and governmental agencies lift the cruising ban.

PREVIEW, THURSDAY MAY 28, 2020:

At The National Opera Center, 330 7th Avenue at 29th Street, 7th Floor, Manhattan – 6:30 PM

"PASSAGE TO PAPUA: 10 DAYS ACROSS SOUTHEAST ASIA BY SEA"

By Tom Rinaldi

The Indonesian State Shipping system - Pelni, as it is known to its passengers - is one of the world's very last operators of passenger liners in the traditional sense. In terms of distances covered and passengers carried, it has no equal among providers of point-to-point waterborne transport today, with a formidable fleet of nearly 30 vessels sailing scheduled routes that last a week or more from end to end. Late last year, WSS PONY Branch member Tom Rinaldi set out to book passage by Pelni from Singapore to Papua, a trip that would cover some 3,000 miles in ten days aboard two vessels. But with the company's services declining in recent years as low-cost airlines capture an ever-greater share of its traffic, the challenge was to get there before it was too late. In this month's program, Tom will offer an introduction to this living vestige of the world's vanished liner services, and relate how he fared getting there from here.

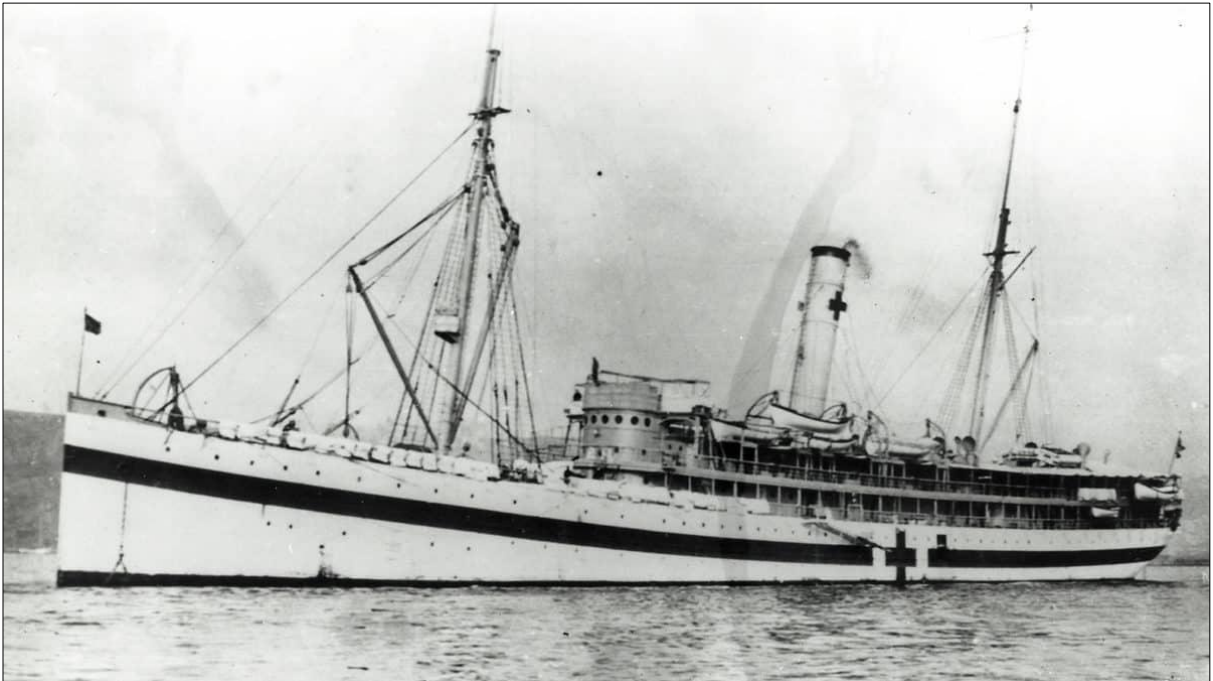


The GUNUNG DEMPO is one of the vessels Tom Rinaldi travelled on during his "Passage to Paupa." (Tom Rinaldi)

Maritime History Notes: America's Hospital Ships

The Comfort and Mercy, now assisting America through the COVID-19 pandemic, started as crude oil tankers.

By Captain James McNamara



USS Solace, shown here during the early 1900s, was the first hospital ship of the U.S. Navy.

(Photo Courtesy: Capt. James McNamara)

In the past few weeks, there have been numerous media reports about the two hospital ships, the USNS Comfort and the USNS Mercy. They are the two largest hospital ships in the world. However, both started their service as crude oil tankers.

The ancient Greeks earn the credit for having the first dedicated hospital ship, Therapia, which served in the Athenian navy. The Romans were not far behind, also having a fleet of hospital ships, the first one believed to be named Aesculapius.

Since those early days, hospital ships of various descriptions were part of most naval fleets. What is believed to be the first British hospital ship was the Goodwill, built in 1608.

Over time, most naval ships carried a surgeon or a surgeon's mate. One of the most famous ship surgeons was Dr. Amos Evans of the USS Constitution, which is known as "Old Ironsides." Dedicated hospital ships became a permanent part of the U.S. fleet during the Barbary War when Commander Edward Preble ordered the USS Intrepid, a wooden-hulled bomb ketch, to be converted in 1803.

In preparation for the Spanish-American War, the U.S. Navy received its first steam-powered hospital ship, USS Solace, and the Army received its first, the Relief, both in 1898.

By the start of the 20th century, many countries had hospital ships, most of which were converted from passenger or cargo ships. The most famous of those was the sister of the Titanic, named the Britannic. Like its infamous sister, the Britannic never completed its maiden voyage to its intended service on the North Atlantic, since it hit a floating mine in the Aegean Sea on its way to pick up wounded soldiers during the Dardanelles campaign in 1916.

During World War I, the U.S. Army and Navy both maintained fleets of hospital ships. Those ships, over time, provided humanitarian assistance and disaster relief on numerous occasions. Coincidentally, in 1918, the world was suffering through the Spanish influenza pandemic and two naval hospital ships, named the Comfort and Mercy, were ordered to New York harbor to assist in that crisis. It should be noted that those two ships were the first to bear the names Comfort and Mercy.

In 1933, the Relief was dispatched to Long Beach, California, to assist in the aftermath of a massive earthquake.

During World War II, the U.S. Navy maintained a fleet of 12 hospital ships, while the Army had 26. Many of these ships were former passenger and cargo types, including six Liberty ships (a class of cargo ship that were mass-produced in the United States during World War II).

The largest U.S. hospital ship was the diesel-powered Saturnia (captured from Italy) that was renamed Frances Y. Slanger. After the war, the ship was returned to the Italian Line.

In 1945, the U.S. Navy received six new hospital ships of the Haven class, based on a C-4 design. Those ships served throughout the Korean and Vietnam wars and into the early 1970s.

When the U.S. Department of Defense established the Rapid Deployment Force in the late 1970s, it was deemed necessary to have floating medical facilities. Many designs for the ships were considered, including the conversions of barge-carrying ships and even the retired passenger vessel, SS United States.



The steam tanker Worth, while en route in 1976 to load its first cargo of crude oil, would be converted 10 years later to the U.S. Navy hospital ship, USNS Mercy. (Photo Courtesy: Capt. James McNamara)

It was finally decided to use two of the 1976-built San Clemente class tankers, Rose City and Worth, both built by National Steel in San Diego. The two tankers were converted at San Diego and renamed USNS Comfort and USNS Mercy, the third time those proud names were used.

Both the Comfort and Mercy are 894 feet in length, 106 feet in beam, and 64 feet in depth, which is the maximum dimension allowed for passage through the Panama Canal. The ships can steam 17.5 knots and are fitted with 12 operating rooms and have a capacity for 1,000 beds.

By 1987, both ships were delivered and started their humanitarian and medical assistance duties throughout the world.



USNS Mercy, formerly the steam tanker Worth. Note the helicopter pad and the tanker's deck house at stern, which was incorporated into the deck structure. (Photo Courtesy: Capt. James McNamara)

Citizens of the United States should be particularly thankful that in 1918 Comfort and Mercy came to the aid of New York City during the Spanish flu pandemic and now, 102 years later, another Comfort and Mercy are assisting New York and Los Angeles during our current pandemic.

MARITIME ENJOYMENT WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

By Pat Dacey

While you are home practicing social distancing but still feeling that maritime urge, there are many maritime sites to search online, but the following two are great resources that can provide hours of maritime enjoyment. The first is the Image Porthole of the Steamship Historical Society of America. As part of their online collection database, the Image Porthole consists of 6,437 ship images that can be browsed online or individually searched by keyword or by using an advanced search option.

<https://sshsa.pastperfectonline.com/photo>

The second site is the home of the Hudson River Maritime Museum, which is currently closed due to Covid 19. The museum offers online exhibits to include, Tugboats: Workhorses of the Hudson River and The Hudson River Day Line: 1863 – 1971. The museum also offers a series of maritime video lectures that you can view through a link to YouTube including an excellent presentation, “Hudson Valley Ruins: Forgotten Landmarks of an American Landscape” with Thomas Rinaldi and Robert J. Yasinsac.

<http://www.hrmm.org/>

PANAMA CANAL CRUISE ON HOLLAND AMERICA LINE’S ROTTERDAM, FEBRUARY 24 – MARCH 11, 2020

By David G. Hume

For a long-anticipated transit of the Panama Canal, we booked a sixteen-night cruise on Holland America Line’s ROTTERDAM commencing on February 24 from Fort Lauderdale. This cruise had scheduled port calls at Willemstad in Curacao, Oranjestad in Aruba, Puerto Caldera in Costa Rica, Corinto in Nicaragua, Puerto Quetzal in Guatemala, and Huatalco and Puerto Vallarta in Mexico before arriving in San Diego on March 11. Because of a severe storm along the west coast of Mexico, the ship was diverted from Huatalco to Manzanillo, but otherwise the cruise went as scheduled.

After arriving at the airport in Fort Lauderdale, we took a taxi to the ship at the nearby port. We left our suitcases with the attendants at the entrance to the terminal and proceeded to the check-in counters inside. We waited in line for about 20 minutes before being issued our key cards. We were able to board the ship at about 12:15 PM. Our cabin on the Main Deck (Deck 2), was available immediately. After dropping off our hand luggage in the cabin, we went to the Lido Market on the Lido Deck (Deck 8) for lunch.

In Port Everglades, Costa Cruises’ COSTA LUMINOSA was docked across the pier from the ROTTERDAM and Silversea Cruises’ SILVER WIND was in front of it.

The ROTTERDAM was built by Fincantieri in Trieste and entered service in 1997, the same year that its predecessor, ROTTERDAM (V) dating from 1959, was sold to Premier Cruise Line to become the REMBRANDT. The ROTTERDAM was the first of four ships in the R Class, the others being the VOLENDAM, ZAANDAM and AMSTERDAM. The ROTTERDAM and AMSTERDAM are sister ships. Each has two funnels situated side by side rather than fore and aft, an arrangement which mirrors that of ROTTERDAM (V). The VOLENDAM and ZAANDAM have only one funnel. The ROTTERDAM is 781 feet in length and has a beam or width of 106 feet. The ship has a gross tonnage of 61,849. The ship can accommodate 1,404 passengers. On our cruise, there were about 1,230 passengers and 572 officers and crew. The service speed is 22.5 knots, with a maximum speed of 25 knots. During our cruise, we covered 5,050 miles at an average speed of 17 knots, but we travelled at 19-22 knots over many long stretches of the voyage.

The bridge of the ship is located on Navigation Deck (Deck 7). On our cruise, the Captain was Bas van Dreumel and the Staff Captain was Harm-Jan Arnold. The Hotel Director was Bert van Meckelenbergh and the Cruise director was Tia Conley.

Most of the public rooms on the ship are located on Decks 4, 5, 8 and 9. Passenger cabins are located on Decks 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7. A wraparound promenade is located on Lower Promenade Deck (Deck 3). Here there are many deck chairs with pads. After the advent of Lanai Cabins, which open up onto the promenade, most of the deck chairs on the port and starboard sides of the ship are reserved for the use of those passengers in such cabins. As a result, many of the reserved deck chairs go unused for large parts of the day.

At the forward end of Deck 4 is the lower level of The Mainstage, the principal theater on the ship. It is used for lectures as well as entertainment. Three shows were presented by Holland America Line’s Step One Dance Company, six dancers performing to pre-programmed music and videos. There were also performances by three different comedians, one of whom, Mike Robinson, was a talented ventriloquist. In addition, we had several musical entertainers. The most popular of the musical entertainers was the group Savannah Jack, who sang rock and country hits from the 1950’s through the 1980’s. We had seen them before on another Holland America Line ship and were glad to see them again.

Among the highlights of our cruise were three lectures by Captain Albert J. Schoonderbeek. He was a captain on Holland America ships for many years and is now the Fleet Master. In this capacity, he is part of Holland America Cruises’ On Board Team Support Officer Program. He rotates among the ships to help train officers and crew. On our voyage, his lectures were “The History of Cruising” and “Blue Riband: Heyday of the Atlantic.” He maintains a blog which provides insights from a captain’s point of view on the ports and ships seen during the cruise. His blog can be found at captainalbert.com.

Immediately aft of the lower level of The Mainstage is the Photo Gallery and Photo Shop, located on the port side. Proceeding further aft brings you to the second level of the Atrium. In this area are the Guest Services desk and the Shore Excursions desk on the starboard side and a small Art Gallery on the port side. The three levels of the Atrium contain a large, ornamental clock tower surmounted by a statue of Atlas holding a globe with blue stars on it.

Beyond the Atrium on Deck 4, the Wajang Theater is on the starboard side. This theater holds only about 100 persons and is used for movies and special events. On the port side is the entrance to the Pinnacle Grill, an extra-tariff restaurant, where we

dined one evening. The lower level of The Dining Room is at the aft end of Deck 4, but one cannot access it except by going down to Deck 3 or up to Deck 5, since the galley occupies the space immediately aft of the Pinnacle Grill. At dinner time, the lower level is used for anytime dining and the upper level is reserved for early and late seatings.

We found the food in The Dining Room to be excellent, although we often found the desserts to be overly sweet. On several occasions, we left after we finished the main course and went to the Lido Market for a greater selection of desserts. The coffee served in The Dining Room and the Lido Market was very good, a far cry from our experience aboard the PACIFIC PRINCESS in November.

At the forward end of Deck 5 is the balcony of The Mainstage. Directly aft on the port side is a shop for logo items and a separate shop for liquor and toiletries. On the starboard side is the Ocean Bar, which continues adjacent to the upper level of the Atrium. Beyond the Atrium on the port side is the Casino, while on the starboard side are a jewelry and watch shop and Billboard OnBoard, a mixed-use venue serving as a sports bar in one area and an evening entertainment venue with two pianists playing popular songs.

Further aft on the port side of Deck 5 is the Hudson Room, which serves as a card room, and Explorations Café, which serves as a library and specialty coffee bar. Explorations Café also contains board games and picture puzzles. On each day a different crossword puzzle and Sudoku puzzle were available. Beyond Explorations Café is the Microsoft Studio, where classes on Microsoft software are provided. On the starboard side is the Merebella Luxury Collection of fine jewelry, the Lincoln Center Stage and adjacent Explorer's Lounge, which provides additional seating for the Lincoln Center Stage, and the King's Room, a meeting room for small groups. Programs of classical music were presented in the Lincoln Center Stage. At the stern of Deck 5 is the upper level of The Dining Room. Classic Afternoon Tea is served here in the afternoon.

Skipping over Decks 6 and 7, which have passenger staterooms, we come to Deck 8. Directly over the bridge is the Fitness Center and the Greenhouse Spa and Salon. Immediately aft are the Lido Pool and Lido Bar, covered by a magrodome, which was partially open during our cruise. Further aft is the Lido Market. A portion of the Lido Market, on the starboard side, is set aside as Canaletto, a specialty Italian restaurant available for a small fee. We thoroughly enjoyed our dinner there. At the stern of Deck 7, New York Pizza is on the port side, where you can get pizza and salad, the Bar at the Retreat is on the starboard side (one of the few places where smoking was allowed) and The Retreat is in the center. The Retreat consists of two hot tubs and a wading pool. The original full-sized pool was removed years ago when extra cabins were added to the stern of Deck 7.

At the forward end of Sports Deck (Deck 9) is the Crow's Nest, a location for sipping cocktails while overlooking the sea and listening to light entertainment. Immediately aft is a small jogging track encircling the magrodome. Further aft are the Sports Courts, one on either side of the funnels, and Club HAL and the Loft, for young passengers. We used the Sports Courts one day.

We had two days at sea before arriving at our first port, Willemstad in Curacao. Already in port just outside the town were Royal Caribbean Line's EXPLORER OF THE SEAS and Norwegian Cruise Line's NORWEGIAN SKY. We sailed through a channel which divides the town. The Queen Emma pontoon bridge over this channel had been swung aside to let us pass. We then proceeded under the Queen Juliana Bridge to the commercial port on the far side. Here we turned around and went back under the bridge and docked in the center of town, one hundred yards from the pedestrian-only pontoon bridge, which by this time had been swung back into place. The commercial buildings lining the channel are painted in bright pastel colors. We used our time to stroll through the streets of the town and visit several stores.

Our next port of call was Oranjestad in Aruba. Docked immediately behind us was Oceania Cruises' SIRENA. Here again we elected not to take any of the tours and strolled around town.

After leaving Oranjestad, we had another day at sea. I visited Explorations Cafe and found a book to read.

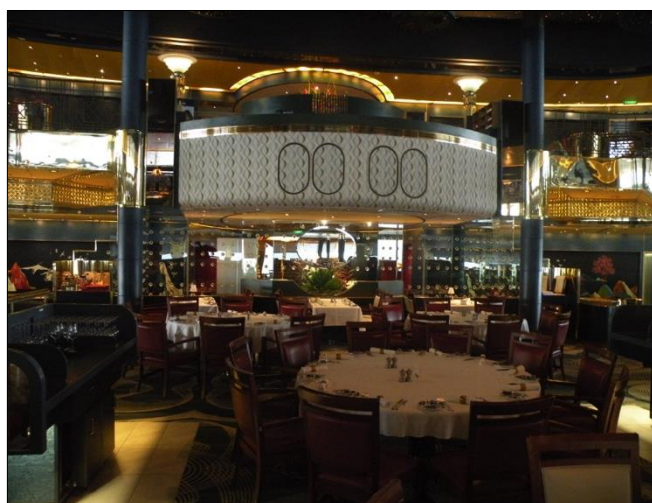
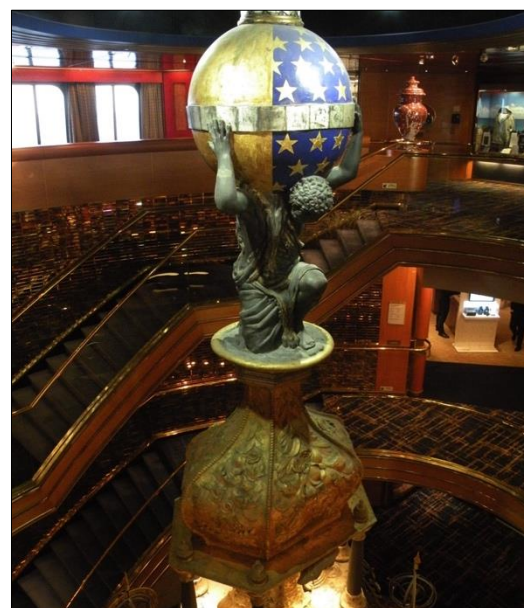
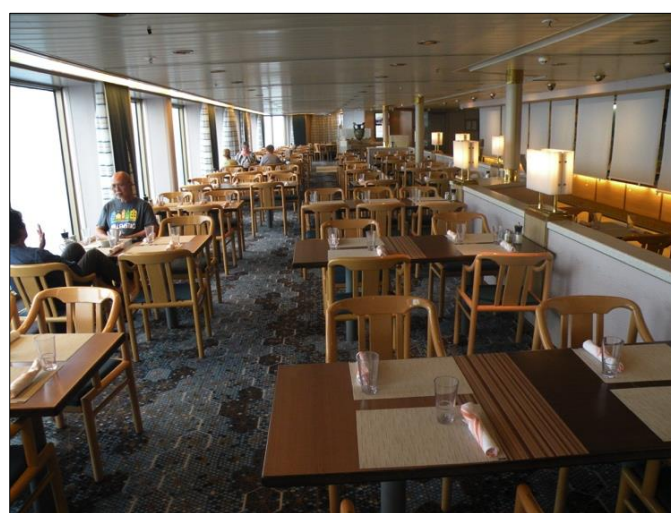
In darkness at 5:30 AM the next morning, we started our approach to the Panama Canal. We passed under the Atlantic Bridge. The sun had risen by the time we entered the first of the three Gatun Locks. Directly ahead of us was Wind Star Cruises' WIND STAR. Behind us was a car carrier and Regent Seven Seas Cruises' SEVEN SEAS SPLENDOR. We could also see a large container ship heading to the three Agua Clara Locks to the left. The Agua Clara Locks are for Neopanamax ships which exceed the size of the Gatun Locks. The Agua Clara Locks were built for one-way traffic only, so incoming and outgoing ships must take turns.

The Gatun Locks provide for two-way traffic, with ships going in each direction. It took us approximately 20 minutes to go through each lock, rather than the usual 10 minutes, because a drought in the peninsula had led to lower water level in Gatun Lake. To save water, rather than filling up the locks from Gatun Lake, the locks were being crossed-filled, with the water in the lock of an outgoing ship being used to fill the lock of an incoming ship.

As we went through the Gatun Locks, it was fascinating to watch the electric towing locomotives, known as "mules," tie up to the ship on each side. Contrary to popular belief, the mules do not pull ships through the locks. Movement through the locks is provided by a ship's engines. The mules are used for braking control and to keep a ship from hitting the sides of the locks. Mules are not used in the new Neopanamax locks. Tugs are used to guide the ships through these locks.

After passing through the three Gatun Locks, we entered Gatun Lake. We sailed through Gatun Lake for about three hours. During the time of our transit in the canal, the foredeck on Deck 4, which is normally closed, was open to passengers, as was the observation deck forward on Deck 6. On the foredeck, passengers were offered Panama rolls and coffee. Soft drinks were also available for purchase. We chose the higher vantage point of Deck 6, where we were also served Panama rolls.

After passing Gamboa, we went through the Culebra Cut, formerly known as the Gaillard Cut, and passed by the terraced Gold Hill on the port side. We then sailed under the Centennial Bridge. Next, we entered the Pedro Miguel Lock. On our right, we could see the first of the three Cocoli Locks for the Neopanamax ships. From the Pedro Miguel Lock, we entered Miraflores



ROTTERDAM VI interiors, clockwise from top left: the Lido Pool, amidships under a glass dome; the Lido Restaurant; the Atlas sculpture in the Atrium; the Pinnacle Restaurant; the Rotterdam Dining Room; the Ocean Bar.
(David G. Hume)

Lake. A short time later we entered the first of the two Miraflores Locks, which took us to the Gulf of Panama. We then passed under the Bridge of the Americas and into the Pacific Ocean at about 5:00 PM.

We had a day at sea after our transit of the Panama Canal, before we arrived at Puerto Caldera in Costa Rica. We had chosen a full-day tour to San Jose to visit the National Theater and the Gold Museum, but this tour was cancelled because not enough people had booked it. As an alternative, we took the free shuttle bus to Puntarenas and walked around this small town. The SEVEN SEAS SPLENDOR was docked at the pier in Puntarenas.

The following day we docked in Corinto in Nicaragua. Docked behind us was SEVEN SEAS SPLENDOR. We took a tour to Leon, a Colonial city founded in 1524 by Spanish conquistadors. The city had previously been the capital of Nicaragua for 200 years before Managua became the capital in 1851. The city lies at the base of the Momotombo volcano.

Our next port of call was Puerto Quetzal in Guatemala. Across the harbor, we could once again see SEVEN SEAS SPLENDOR. We opted to take a tour of Antigua. We walked around Central Park, saw the nearby Government Palace and the Church and Convent of La Merced. There were many other churches throughout the city, but several had been severely damaged by earthquakes. We also visited the Jade Museum and Factory.

From Puerto Quetzal, we were originally scheduled to go to Huatulco in Mexico. However, due to a forecast of gale force winds and waves of up to 24 feet, the captain decided to skip this port of call, go around the storm and head further north to the port of Manzanillo. During our day at sea, we experienced some motion, but nothing significant as we proceeded at 20 knots. Later that night, however, the ship's speed was cut to 14 knots when we passed through the storm. The ship pitched during this time, but rolled very little. Since our cabin was amid ship, we were spared most of the motion.

Since a visit to Manzanillo had not been scheduled, the local authorities visited the ship as soon as we docked to confirm that there were no cases of Coronavirus on board. On the pier, random checks were made of passengers as they made their way into town. This port is highlighted by a large, blue, forty-foot high sculpture of a sailfish. After briefly walking through town, we headed back to the ship.

Our final destination in Mexico was Puerto Vallarta. Here we took a walking tour of the town, starting with the Malecon, a street along the waterfront of Banderas Bay. We then walked up a hill to get a vantage point overlooking the entire city. Next, we passed by the former home of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, which is now a hotel, Casa Kimberly. We then took a bridge over Gringo Gulch and headed back to the waterfront. Along the way we stopped at a jewelry store, where we were offered complimentary tequila drinks.

From Puerto Vallarta, we had two days at sea before arriving in San Diego. We cruised along smoothly at 19 to 22 knots. I finished my first book from the library and then started and finished a second book.

We docked in San Diego as scheduled and, since no one on board had the Coronavirus, we were allowed to disembark without incident. We took a van to the near-by airport and checked in to our Delta flight to New York. The plane left on time with only half the normal capacity of passengers and arrived early at JFK in New York. Considering the reports we had heard about the quarantine of passengers aboard Princess Cruise Line's DIAMOND PRINCESS, we were relieved to be able to get home on schedule.

SHIPS IN PORT: 6 NIGHTS AT DOCK – CUNARD'S MEDIA & PARTHIA

By Bill Miller

It is rather hard to imagine in today's cost-efficient, quick same-day turnarounds of even the biggest cruise ships that there was a time when ships, even passenger ships, remained in port for as long as six or seven days. I well remember the Cunard Line sister ships MEDIA and PARTHIA, which would call every two weeks and arrive on Saturdays and then not sail until Fridays. Often, I would see one of them, looking tidy and immaculate, as it passed the Hoboken shoreline just before 4 o'clock, having made a 3:30 departure from Pier 92 at West 52nd Street in Manhattan.

A Cunard affiliate, the Brocklebank Line, had two big freighters on order just as World War II ended, in 1945-46. Cunard, wanting to restore something of its prewar Liverpool-New York service, took the ships over and had them redesigned as combination passenger-cargo ships with 250 all-first class passenger berths and six holds of cargo – unique vessels in the Cunard fleet. They became the MEDIA, added in August 1947, and the PARTHIA, which first arrived in April 1948. The 13,340-ton MEDIA was, in fact, the first new Atlantic passenger ship to be completed after the war.

Both 531-ft long sisters became very popular, especially because of their comparatively intimate accommodations and their relaxed 8-10 day crossings. Their voyages sometimes included diversions, however, including calls at Norfolk in Virginia and especially to load British-bound tobacco at Bermuda and at Greenock in Scotland. In their early days, they used Pier 56 in the Chelsea Piers, but when Cunard berths were crowded, they sometimes had to be shifted across the Hudson and over to the Eighth and Ninth street piers in Hoboken.

The 18-knot MEDIA and PARTHIA were known to be "poor sea boats." One Cunard crewmember told me, "The PARTHIA began rolling the moment she departed from Pier 92 or the Princes Landing Stage at Liverpool." In 1952, Cunard tested the first fin stabilizers used on the often-ferocious Atlantic on the MEDIA. It was a considerable success and soon such stabilizers went to all Cunarders and many other Atlantic liners.

In 1961, when speedy jet aircraft grabbed more and more travelers, and when cargos began to go in faster, larger freighters, the money-losing MEDIA and PARTHIA were sold. The MEDIA became the vastly rebuilt Italian immigrant ship FLAVIA, later a Florida-based cruise liner, enduring until 1989, when she was destroyed by fire at Hong Kong. The PARTHIA became the REMUERA and then the ARAMAC for British owners, trading in the Pacific until scrapped on Taiwan in 1970.



Luxury Liner Row, June 1960: The MEDIA is in the foreground, berthed at Pier 92, with the CARONIA, QUEEN MARY, BRITANNIC, LIBERTE, AMERICA, SATURNIA and CONSTITUTION behind. (Bill Miller Collection)

SHIP NEWS

By Bob Allen

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HAL!: April 2020 marked Holland America Line's 147th anniversary. HAL began operations on April 18, 1873 when a newly formed company, Nederlandsche-Amerikaansche Stoomvaart Maatschappij (NASM) took over the financially ailing Plate, Reuchlin & Company. NASM (or Holland America Line in English) began operations with the transatlantic liners ROTTERDAM (I) and MAAS. These twin 1,694-ton iron-hulled steamers were built in Glasgow, Scotland for Plate, Reuchlin & Company in 1872. Despite many challenges for the new company in the late 19th Century, the rising tide of both immigrant and tourist travel had the firm on secure financial footing by the early 1900's. In 1906, it introduced the large and popular NIEUW AMSTERDAM I, followed by the elegant ROTTERDAM IV, which was one of the world's largest and most luxurious ships when she began service in 1908. A long parade of remarkable ships followed in HAL's transatlantic fleet, including the STATENDAM II (1917), lost in World War I; sister ships VEENDAM II and VOLENDAM (1922/1923); STATENDAM III (1929); NIEUW AMSTERDAM III (1938); sister ships NOORDAM II and ZAANDAM II (1938/1939); WESTERDAM (1946); sister ships RYNDAM II and MAASDAM IV (1951/1952); STATENDAM IV (1957) and finally the ROTTERDAM V (1959). Holland America Line ceased transatlantic service in 1971, and rebranded as Holland America Cruises. It began cruise operations with the ROTTERDAM V, which was designed as a dual-purpose liner-cruise ship, and the rebuilt STATENDAM IV. Added to the fleet in 1973 were the rebuilt sister ships VOLENDAM II (ex-BRAZIL, 1958) and VEENDAM III (ex-ARGENTINA, 1958). Also in 1973, HAL commissioned the purpose-built PRINSENDAM, lost at sea in 1980, but miraculously without loss of life. Despite this setback, Holland America contracted for a new pair of luxury cruise ships, NIEUW AMSTERDAM IV and NOORDAM III (1983/1984). The sister ships were vastly expanded versions of the PRINSENDAM, and replaced the aging VOLENDAM II and VEENDAM III. Expansion continued with the acquisition of competitor Home Lines in 1988; its flagship HOMERIC (1986) became HAL's WESTERDAM II, its largest vessel. In the extremely competitive cruise industry, however, the line's growth and new tonnage were not enough to ensure survival. After a period of financial uncertainty in the late 1980's, Holland America was acquired by the Carnival Corporation in 1989, and soon blossomed as a leader in the 21st Century cruise marketplace. In honor of the commemoration of the anniversary, Holland America Line's president, Orlando Ashford, released the following statement: "It's important during these challenging times to still celebrate important milestones, and our 147th anniversary reminds us that Holland America Line has one of the deepest histories and richest legacies in the cruise industry. We stand on a solid foundation built by those that came before us over nearly a century and a half, and just as they weathered uncertain times, we will as well. Holland America Line will be back taking guests around the world as soon as we can, and we can't wait to welcome everyone back on board."



Clockwise from top: ROTTERDAM V anchored in Grassy Bay, Bermuda on June 23, 1977; on board NIEUW AMSTERDAM III in New York, January 16, 1971; NIEUW AMSTERDAM IV at San Francisco, September 30, 1983. (Bob Allen)

VIKINGS DISCOVER AMERICA AGAIN: Viking River Cruises has started taking reservations for its upcoming Mississippi River cruises, which will commence in August 2022. Viking has designed a completely new vessel, the 386-passenger VIKING MISSISSIPPI for these cruises, which will operate between New Orleans, LA and St. Paul, MN. Three itineraries, ranging between 8 and 15 days are being offered. Viking CEO Torstein Hagen announced details of the new service on March 30; he stated: "At a time where many of us are at home, looking for inspiration to travel in the future, I am pleased to introduce a new, modern way to explore this great river. We invented the concept of modern river cruising when we got our start 23 years ago—first on the rivers of Russia and then in Europe. Since then, many people have come to appreciate the unique exploration that comes with river cruising—but currently there are very few options to do so on American rivers. Our guests are curious travelers, and they continue to tell us that the Mississippi is the river they most want to sail with us. The Mississippi River is closer to home for many of our guests, and no other waterway has played such an important role in America's history, commerce and culture." Don't expect the interior of VIKING MISSISSIPPI to look like Tara from *Gone With the Wind*; like the rest of the river and ocean fleets, the new vessel will feature a modern Scandinavian aesthetic.



Viking River Cruises will operate the purpose-built, 386-passenger VIKING MISSISSIPPI on her namesake river in 2022. (Viking River Cruises)

SAGA REPRIEVE: Saga Cruises is negotiating a delayed delivery of its former flagship, SAGA SAPHIRE (1981, ex-EUROPA, SUPERSTAR EUROPE, SUPERSTAR ARIES, HOLIDAY DREAM, BLEU DE FRANCE). She is to be the first dedicated cruise ship operated by the huge Turkish company ANEX Tour; her maiden voyage was originally scheduled from Antalya in mid-2020. Saga's goal would be to retain the popular SAPHIRE so that she can sail her sold-out farewell cruise, which was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.



SAGA SAPHIRE departing Dover, UK on July 4, 2103.

(Bob Allen)

COVID-19 UPDATE: The pandemic continues to have a devastating effect on the worldwide cruise industry. Most operators have pushed back potential return-to-service dates, some projecting summer and fall resumption, while others have cancelled summer programs. Major players have furloughed workers (Royal Caribbean International) or moved to a shorter workweek and reduced salaries for employees (Norwegian Cruise Line). Financial stress is mounting for cruise operators who have to maintain ships, pay debt service and staff during an undetermined period without revenue. Carnival Corporation reportedly has been exploring fundraising options. These include stimulus from governments other than the United States, which has not included such funding in recent assistance packages designed to help offset the pandemic's harsh economic consequences.

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