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Friday, June 25, 2021 – **VIA ZOOM at 6:00 PM**

UNION-CASTLE PURSERETTE BY ANN HAYNES

For our June meeting, Ann Haynes will share how she came to join the famous Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company as a Purserette at sea. According to Ann, “The lavender-hulled Mail ships sailed from the English port of Southampton on a regular weekly liner service to South Africa, carrying passengers and cargo, and the first Mail ship I joined was TRANSVAAL CASTLE. It was hard work during the six-week voyage, but never dull. Over the years I served on other Union-Castle Line Mail ships such as the CAPETOWN CASTLE and the EDINBURGH CASTLE, and went to unexpected ports, including Ascension Island and St. Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean, as well as Cape Town and other ports in South Africa.”

Ann will share many pictures of the life she led and the uniforms she wore, and talk about her duties on board, including typing numerous passenger lists at every port, taking part in the Crossing the Line (Equator) ceremony, and helping to run passenger entertainments on board, as she sailed to and from South Africa.

Ann wrote home regularly to her parents and took lots of pictures, which became the basis for her book, “Union-Castle Line Purserette.” She is always happy to share with others the memories and pictures of her interesting and enjoyable life.



Union-Castle Line's TRANSVAAL CASTLE approaching Cape Town (above, left) and EDINBURGH CASTLE departing (above, right).
(Ann Haynes Collection)

NEXT EVENTS: Membership Programs via Zoom: August 27 - “Italian Line Glamour,” by Sylvia Barisione

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P&O Cruises' AURORA docked in New York, September 22, 2006.

(Bob Allen)

PREVIEW, FRIDAY AUGUST 27, 2021 - ITALIAN LINE GLAMOUR, BY SYLVIA BARISONE



Zooming in from Miami Beach, Wolfsonian chief curator Silvia Barisone will discuss the Italian Line collections from both The Wolfsonian–Florida International University in Miami Beach, Florida, and The Wolfsonian–Palazzo Ducale Fondazione per la Cultura in Genoa, Italy. Posters, brochures, design drawings, and furnishings will illustrate the history of the Italian Line which began in 1932 when Benito Mussolini merged the Genoa-based Navigazione Generale Italiana with Turin’s Lloyd Sabauda and Trieste’s Cosulich line, founded in 1903 under the Austrian-Hungarian empire.

Featuring its two largest pre-war liners, the REX and CONTE DI SAVOIA, the Italian Line carried out an extensive advertising campaign, drawing attention to technological innovation and luxurious interior décor, characterized by exuberant historicist furnishings. Notably, the REX won the Blue Riband for a record westbound crossing of the Atlantic in 1933. The CONTE DI SAVOIA, aside from its neo-baroque Grand Hall modeled after Colonna Palace, was known for modern interiors by Trieste architect Gustavo Pulitzer Finali. His interiors harmonized with, rather than disavowed, the structure of the ship. Pulitzer Finali paved the way for the innovative and stylish design of the post-war passenger ships, which became ambassadors for Italian creativity throughout the world.

Left: A 1937 brochure cover for Tourist Class on Italia’s REX and CONTE DI SAVOIA (Wolfsonian / FIU Collection)

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

With the resumption of cruising upon us, please send us details of your return to the world’s ocean to share with our members.

SHIP'S LOG: MAY - REVIEW OF PETER KNEGO'S "TORN CASTLE - THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE R.M.S. WINDSOR CASTLE"

By Bob Allen

For our May program, we were delighted to introduce Peter Knego, a first-time WSS PONY Branch presenter. Peter is known around the world as an incredibly knowledgeable ocean liner photographer, historian, collector and enthusiast. He has visited Alang, India nine times and Aliaga, Turkey twice to salvage magnificent artifacts and artworks from dozens of notable 20th Century passenger liners in the process of being scrapped. Peter boarded the forlorn ships and negotiated the purchase of furniture, lighting, decorative architectural elements and artwork by the container full. He recorded several of those trips and transformed the footage into a series of fascinating documentary productions titled "On the Road to Alang."

One such trip in 2005 was the focus of Peter's program. The vessel that he visited and secured artifacts from was Union-Castle Line's R.M.S. WINDSOR CASTLE. Peter started the program by giving us a brief background of how he is able to access these vessels under the difficult conditions as ship is being scrapped. This was possible only because of the complex relationships he developed with managers of the shipbreaking yards over many years. Although presented with modesty, Peter's skill in cultivating and maintaining these contacts is a truly astounding part of this story, without which access to these doomed vessels would be unimaginable. Peter then screened his brand new, wonderfully produced film "Torn Castle," a detailed account of that 2005 adventure.

The film started with an overview of the WINDSOR CASTLE's history. Completed in 1960, she was the penultimate and largest vessel of the Union-Castle Line, which maintained passenger and cargo service between the United Kingdom and South African ports. A merger of the Union Line and the Castle Mail Packets Company Limited formed the Union-Castle Line in 1900. Peter noted that the 37,640-ton WINDSOR CASTLE was the largest ship built in a British shipyard since the QUEEN ELIZABETH (1940). She was a luxurious vessel, with spacious accommodation for 238 First Class and 585 Tourist Class passengers. There was also considerable space for cargo, automobiles, livestock and, of course, the Royal Mail.

Peter's film showed us many of the vessel's interiors and the leisurely lifestyle onboard during the 1960's and 1970's. Most of WINDSOR CASTLE's interiors were created by the renowned British designer Jean Monro, who was responsible for Union-Castle's final three ships – PENDENNIS CASTLE (1958), WINDSOR CASTLE (1960) and TRANSVAAL CASTLE (1962). Unlike the ultra-modern Scandinavian and Italian liners of the 1950's and 1960's, WINDSOR CASTLE had many decorative elements recalling traditional ocean liner design. The overall look was called "Le Style Anglaise," which Peter explained was extremely popular at the time. There was much overstuffed furniture, some covered in chintz with floral and botanical patterns; Monro was affectionately known as the "Queen of Chintz." Expansive murals, mirrors, aviaries and wood paneling covered her bulkheads. Windows and portholes were sheathed in colorful, swag-festooned curtains. Overhead were a variety of brass chandeliers, and elegant sconces adorned bulkheads. Clever lighting and a color palette of cheerful pastels created a soothing yet sophisticated atmosphere for the long voyages. A memorable touch was the unique plaster "tent" over the first class car room, supported by a dramatic pole and featuring a bronze lighting fixture. A favorite room of Peter's was the circular Tourist Class Rotunda (smoking room), complete with a central astrolabe. Fitting for a vessel that sailed across the equator on her service voyages to and from Cape Town, each class on the WINDSOR CASTLE featured outdoor swimming pools, expansive deck space, and a wide variety of recreational diversions for adults and children.

Unfortunately, the luxurious amenities and thoughtful planning of the WINDSOR CASTLE could not save her from three factors that led to her demise after only 17 years of service. The vast increase in fuel oil price following the Arab-Israeli War of 1973-1974 was devastating to Union-Castle, along with many other worldwide shipping lines. The loss of freight business to modern containerized shipping also dealt the line a major financial blow. Finally, reliable, regularly scheduled jet service from London to Cape Town in the 1960's reduced air travel time to 12 hours, compared to 12 days by the fastest ship. Jumbo jet service on the Boeing 747 was introduced on the route in the early 1970's. By the mid-1970's, WINDSOR CASTLE and her few remaining fleet mates were no longer economically viable. Union-Castle ended its passenger services, with WINDSOR CASTLE completing her last voyage in September 1977.

Peter explained how the WINDSOR CASTLE was soon sold to Greek shipping magnate and oil tycoon Captain John S. Latsis and renamed MARGARITA L. She sailed to Greece and then became an oil refinery accommodation ship in Saudi Arabia for the next 14 years. Latsis then brought the MARGARITA L. back to Greece, occasionally boarding her for social gatherings with friends, but she never again operated as a passenger ship. She languished for more than a decade, deteriorating in the hot Mediterranean sun until she was sold for scrap in 2005.

"Torn Castle" continued as Peter cleverly interwove his personal history with the WINDSOR CASTLE as he waited to board the ship in 2005. He tried for years to gain access to the vessel, one his favorite British liners. He was finally successful in 1998, as the ship was once again for sale. Remarkable footage of the old liner, with most of her interiors, fittings and furnishings intact, was juxtaposed with film of her South African service heyday. Peter showed us the town and beaches of Alang, India, one of the world's most active ship breaking regions. Located about 500 miles northwest of Bombay (Mumbai), Alang is oppressively hot and humid, making shipbreaking all the more herculean. In the distance was the sad sight of the beached WINDSOR CASTLE, much of her forward section already dismantled. Peter eagerly prepared to board her for the last time to continue the artifact salvage and documentation. Although photography of the demolition process is strongly discouraged, Peter found that some of the yard's staff were eager to be photographed themselves, which eased some of the tension. Peter explained that the ship breaking industry in India, as well as in Turkey and other locations, was loosely regulated and highly dangerous. He let us know that fortunately much progress has been made in recent years concerning the safety of workers and the surrounding environment.

Peter took us on a fascinating tour of the demolition process in action, which he described an ingenious "feat of reverse engineering." Despite the great sadness and waste inflicted by the demolition of these great liners, Peter learned to appreciate the tremendous skill and effort undertaken in the horrendous conditions required to recycle ocean-going vessels. Interspersed with footage of the war-zone-like demolition of the WINDSOR CASTLE, Peter inserted views of the same beautiful spaces during the liner's early years. He identified remains of railings, columns, furniture, crockery and components of mechanical and ventilation systems.

“Torn Castle” then moved inland to the merchant camps of the Alang traders, who offered thousands of salvaged items from ships demolished nearby. Besides remnants of the WINDSOR CASTLE, we saw remains of many other ships. Peter was tempted to buy brass bridge equipment from the BRAZIL (1958), but the price was too high. He did, however acquire a treasured artifact, rescued from tons of rotting paper – the WINDSOR CASTLE maiden voyage logbook. Towards the end of the film, we returned with Peter to his Oceanside, CA home, awaiting the arrival of a 40-foot container of items he purchased for resale through his website www.midshipcentury.com, or for his personal collection.

The program ended with an intriguing question and answer segment. Peter conversed from a seat in his home, surrounded by many stunning built-in components and furniture from dozens of ocean liners. His home, once featured in The New York Times, is a museum of ocean liner architecture and design that may become, if we are fortunate, the subject of its own film.

Peter’s efforts to bring to life the era of great ocean liners, and his rescue of many remarkable artifacts and furnishings, is a great service to ship lovers around the world. Most liner enthusiasts would agree with Peter’s voice-over narration as he said farewell to the WINDSOR CASTLE one last time. “Great liners like this were once the most celebrated man-made objects of their time. Now, just a handful were left, almost all destined for oblivion. That more people care about war ships, canoes and sailboats than these majestic symbols of power and grace has been a stinging, persistent realization for people like me.”

We thank Peter for this wonderful program and his brilliantly directed and produced film. We look forward to many return engagements and sharing more of his adventures.



RITA, ex-WINDSOR CASTLE being demolished at Alang, India in 2005. “One day, people will ask what became of these great ships and maybe even a few will wonder why it had to end this way.” – Peter Knego (left) The WINDSOR CASTLE at Cape Town in happier days. (right) (Peter Knego / Peter Knego Collection)



WINDSOR CASTLE interiors, clockwise from top left. The Tourist Class Dining Room, with Sidney Smith’s classical mural; the First Class Card Room, highlighting the plaster tent ceiling and bronze light fixture; The Rotunda with the hookah/astrolabe and the Camelopardalis constellation ceiling; the First Class Private Dining Room, where John Latsis enjoyed giving dinner parties; the airy First Class Lounge at tea time. (Peter Knego Collection)

SHIPS IN PORT: 1957 AND CHANGES AHEAD

By Bill Miller

In 1957, I was still a schoolboy, in Miss Marino's 4th grade at Hoboken's Wallace School, but already had a deep love of ships and the New York harbor itself. Often, I'd be at the waterfront watching the ongoing production of all kinds of ships – liners, freighters, ferries, tugs, barges, floating cranes. It was said that a ship -- a deep-sea ship -- arrived or departed from port every 24 minutes and around the clock. Yes, it was so busy, so active, that it was difficult at times to take it all in. And it was all taken for granted, as if it would go on forever, without change.

But tremendous changes were ahead, many of them beginning in 1957. Two changes would affect the shipping business like nothing perhaps since the technological transition from sail to steam. In the business of competing with passenger ships, the airlines equaled for the first time the number of travelers who went by sea on the North Atlantic routes. It was the beginning of the end for those long-established trades between such ports as New York, Montreal and Halifax, and Southampton, Liverpool, Le Havre, Rotterdam, Lisbon and Naples. Then, in the fall of 1958, Pan Am started the first commercial jet service across the Atlantic and the fate of passenger ships everywhere was sealed. Within six months on the Atlantic route, the airlines had two-thirds of the clientele; by 1963, they had as much as 95%. Cunard's big QUEENS, the MARY and the ELIZABETH, as major examples, began sailing with fewer and fewer passengers, losing millions of dollars and finally sailed off into retirement in September 1967 and November 1968. The airlines later dominated all other sea routes as well: trans-Pacific, South Atlantic and all those going east of Suez. Decolonization, spiraling operational costs and the shift of precious and very lucrative cargo from combination passenger-cargo liners to faster, bigger and more efficient containerships also contributed to what, looking back, seems to have been a quick demise. One of the last holdouts in the traditional passenger business, Union-Castle Line's UK-South African passenger and mail run, finally closed down in the fall of 1977. Thereafter, the passenger ship business primarily became the cruise ship business.

Secondly, in 1957, the converted GATEWAY CITY entered service. With a capacity of 226 35-foot containers, she was considered the world's first full containership. Proving very efficient, she was placed, however, in short-sea service between US and Caribbean ports. But her practicality and profitability soon prompted others to build larger and larger ships. Nine years later was dubbed "Year 1" of the international maritime transport of containers. Everyone was caught up in the making the changeover – even great traditionalists like Cunard, P&O and the United States Lines. A year later, in 1967, the first full containership crossed the Atlantic. Almost immediately, "second generation" ships were ordered, for 1,000 and then 1,500 containers. By 1969, the giant SEA-LAND GALLOWAY class was built – 33-knot, high-capacity containerships. That same year, the first barge-carrying ship, the ACADIA FOREST, went into service. Two years later, in 1971, the PARELLA was commissioned. She was the first pure, deep-sea freight ro-ro (roll-on, roll-off) ship. Technologically, the revolution had come. Today, containerships, ro-ros and specialty freighters ply routes across the globe. And as the world population increases so does the need for maritime transport. By 2020, the likes of Italy's MSC, France's CMA-CGM and, out East, Orient Overseas, Evergreen and Yang Ming lines have containerships with 23,000-24,000 capacities. Old-style break-bulk freighters are rare sights these days.

1957 was also the year of the world's first nuclear-powered merchant ship, the SAVANNAH. She was laid down at a shipyard near Philadelphia. Launched in 1960 and then completed two years later, the 14,000-ton, 60-passenger combination ship was said to be the beginning of whole nuclear fleets. Germany, Japan and others were making plans for nuclear ships of their own. Even the brand new LEONARDO DA VINCI, a 33,000-ton luxury liner completed in the spring of 1960, was said to be convertible from steam turbine to nuclear propulsion. Confident, her Italian owners predicted that the changeover would probably take place within five years. But nuclear power in the commercial shipping sector proved troublesome, costly, and inefficient. Never pleasing to the accountants, the SAVANNAH was decommissioned within eight years, by 1970, and was later turned into a museum ship. These days, however, she is laid-up at a backwater berth and awaiting a permanent home.

Those golden days of the 1950s are long gone. These days, when I took out over New York harbor or visit such ports as London, Southampton, Le Havre, Hamburg, Lisbon, Sydney and Hong Kong, it is easy to see the changes. Harbor waters are much quieter, sometimes quite empty. Many of the old docks and dockyards are gone, some replaced by marinas, waterside shops and fancy housing. Those big containerships come and go far less often. They sail from more distant facilities with vast spaces and served by those big, bird-like cranes. But sometimes, I dream -- and I can still see the QUEEN MARY or the ILE DE FRANCE, an American Export freighter and, in dry-dock, a United Fruit banana boat.



The exceptional SAVANNAH at Pier 84 in a view dated April 1968. The HOMERIC is on the right.

(Bill Miller Collection)

SHIP NEWS

By Bob Allen

THE QUEEN OF LONG BEACH: The City of Long Beach took control of the QUEEN MARY, for the first time in decades, on June 4. This followed the failure of her bankrupt operator, Eagle Hospitality Trust, to auction off her lease. Eagle was able to find buyers for leases of all 15 of their properties, with the exception of the former Cunard ocean liner. Long Beach, CA mayor Robert Garcia stated: "For the first time in decades, Long Beach has full control of the QUEEN MARY. We will be fully engaged in the preservation of this historic landmark and are incredibly grateful for the opportunity." The poor condition of the QUEEN MARY has been in the news frequently since a 2017. That year, a report indicated \$289 million would be needed to bring the ship to a condition that would remove threats of her sinking. However, the city is relying on inspection reports released in May that state \$23 million worth of critical repairs would prevent her from sinking. Those repairs consist of bilge pumps, water intrusion warning systems, bulkhead repairs, lifeboat removal, and the installation of an emergency generator. The city plans to spend \$500,000 to begin the testing and design work to implement and expedite these repairs. The city of Long Beach also contracted with Evolution Hospitality to act as caretaker of the 85-year-old Queen, a role they have had as a third-party vendor for management of day-to-day operations. Due to the pandemic and safety concerns, however, the QUEEN MARY attraction and hotel have been closed since March, 2020 and no reopening date has been forecast.

CRUISING IS BACK!: Summer 2021 marks the return of worldwide cruising, following the devastating shutdown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite continued minor shipboard COVID outbreaks, the fully vaccinated crews and largely vaccinated passenger lists are proving that safe cruise travel is possible again. Each cruise line has developed safety procedures, including social distancing, mask wearing, etc., tailored to its own ships' size and itinerary. A majority of cruise lines are requiring all adult passengers to be vaccinated. However, one significant exception is cruises from Florida, the busiest departure location in the industry. Due to legislation supported by Florida governor DeSantis, any cruise line requiring vaccinated passengers will be fined \$5,000 per incident. Therefore, vaccines will only be recommended for departing Florida passengers; pre-boarding COVID testing will be permitted. Royal Caribbean recently announced that it would segregate vaccinated and non-vaccinated passengers in certain venues during the cruise. It remains to be seen if this is a viable arrangement, once it restarts cruises from the state in early July.

LET'S GO EXPLORA-ING: MSC Cruises announced its new luxury division, in development for several years, will be called Explora Journeys. Construction of the first of four planned vessels, EXPLORA I, began at Fincantieri Shipyard in Monfalcone, Italy on June 10. The 63,900-ton, 814-foot vessel will accommodate all 922-passengers in staterooms with private balconies. Four swimming pools, nine dining venues and a variety of bars and lounges will ensure passengers are never without distractions; a crew to passenger ratio of 1.25-to-1 will virtually guarantee attentive service. Explora plans to differentiate its

luxury product by offering extended and overnight port stays, off-the-beaten-track itineraries, and an environmentally friendly operation. According to Explora Journeys CEO Michael Ungerer, “Explora Journeys was designed for guests who want to stay longer, leave later, and travel deeper.” EXPLORA I will be able to use shore power, catalytic reduction technology will greatly lower emissions, and systems to reduce underwater noise will be utilized. Single-use plastics will not be used on board or on expeditions. Exterior renderings EXPLORA I show a surprisingly rakish vessel, with black hull, red boot topping and white upper works. Reversing the recent trend for the “X-Bow” or straight stem, she will have a sharply raked bow. Tiered after decks with a water level platform contrast the cliff-like vertical sterns that have become common on many recent cruise ships. The streamlined funnel features a lotus-inspired logo, designed by MSC Group CFO Alexa Vago, daughter of MSC founder Gianluigi Aponte and wife of MSC Cruises Global Chairman Pierfrancesco Vago. EXPLORA I’s maiden voyage will be in 2023, with a sister ship joining the fleet in the each of the following three years.



The profile of EXPLORA 1 is a departure from many recent cruise ships (top); the reception foyer (above, left) and enclosed pool area (above, right) indicate subtle, sophisticated design intent. (Explora Journeys)

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