



Figure 1: The President Coolidge in her Dollar Steamship Company markings; a publicity shot taken around the time that Alice Chong was a passenger aboard her on her first voyage from Honolulu to China in 1933.

(Private Collection)

Across the Pacific with Alice Chong, 1933-1945

by Brian Dervin Dillon

Introduction

In a previous issue of *Ocean Times** I introduced my father-in-law, David Chong (1911-1993), to readers as an exemplar of ABC (American-born Chinese) maritime history. David was one of 32 children born at the mouth of the beautiful and isolated Lawai Valley on the south coast of Kauai. With his youngest siblings and his parents, he moved to Honolulu, Oahu, shortly after World War I. David's life was intimately connected with the Pacific Ocean. As a waterman he learned to swim from Duke Kahanamoku, then he worked as a seagoing stevedore on the Hawaiian sugar ships. Finally, he worked at Pearl Harbor as a civilian employee of the Navy before, during, and for another 29 years after the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack. David Chong was an unsung hero of that fateful day, for he went into the water six times and saved that many sailor's lives. However, one of his older sisters was *even more heroic* than he. And,

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also in this issue ...

Adventures in Advertising!

When Funnels Weren't in Fashion

APL's Unbuilt Superliner

*Editor's note: See "David Chong's Life on the Pacific" in the July 2020 issue of the *Ocean Times*.

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MEETING NOTICE

The August 3, 2024 Chapter Meeting will be aboard the *Queen Mary*.
(1 p.m., Pacific)

Chapter Member Kent Sanctuary will present on his 1957 crossings as a passenger on the *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary*.

If you cannot attend in person, a Zoom meeting link will be sent out in advance.

(Details subject to change.)



Call for Speakers!

If you have a topic you'd like to present to the membership, at our meetings aboard the *Queen Mary*, we'd love to hear it!

for more information:

Jim Shuttleworth
jjimpinxit@gmail.com

Join, Renew, or Give as a Gift ...

SSHSA-SoCal Membership

for more information:

TreasurerSSHSAsoCal@gmail.com

David Tew
65 Pine Ave.
PO Box 349
Long Beach, CA 90802

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Chapter Notes

Kate Vescera,
President

Greetings Everyone!

(For details on our last

meeting, go to page 22.)

As we plan ahead, please note our November Chapter meeting will be held on November 9, 2024, to coincide with the SSHSA National meeting which will be held on the *Queen Mary* from November 8-10, 2024. We are tentatively planning that the Chapter meeting will be held from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm in the Tea Room on the Sun Deck aboard the *Queen Mary*, but please stay tuned for more details about that. We are also planning for Board Member Peter Knego to present at the SSHSA dinner on November 9.

This will be the first time a National meeting has been held on the West Coast since 2013. We hope that you will attend both our November Chapter meeting and the National meeting. There will also be a cruise on the *Carnival Radianc*e immediately following from November 11-15, 2024. Non-SSHSA members are welcome to attend, so please invite anyone who you think would be interested. You can find additional information on SSHSA's website at [http://www.sshsa.org/media/Events/SSHSA 4Day Cruise and annual SSHSA meeting.pdf](http://www.sshsa.org/media/Events/SSHA%204Day%20Cruise%20and%20annual%20SSHSA%20meeting.pdf)

In connection with the National meeting, we are looking for people have interesting ship related items or collections who would be willing to open their homes to hosting an event during that weekend. So if you live in Southern California and would be interested in discussing, please let anyone on the Board know.

Please also join us in welcoming our new Secretary, Peter Strand. We really appreciate Peter taking on this role.

As a reminder, we have a new Chapter address, which is 65 Pine Ave., P.O. Box 349, Long Beach, CA 90802, so please send all mail to this new address going forward. If you have not renewed your membership yet, please send your dues to this address, c/o Treasurer David Tew.

We are still endeavoring to expand our online presence, which has been growing considerably, so please follow our Facebook page @shiphistorysocal and our Instagram page @ship_history_socal.

We are continuing our efforts expand our membership and develop new Board of Directors members and new program/project committee members. We are particularly looking for someone to assist with finding and scheduling presenters for our meetings and someone to handle the raffle, so please contact any Board member if you are interested in helping with those roles, or any other leadership position.

Hope to see all of you soon!

Best,

Kate Vescera

Coming up in 2024 ...

Rebirth of the Italians

'Round the World
in 1924

Not a Chinese Junk

OCEAN TIMES SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We enjoy a mix of stories involving Pacific and/or Atlantic liners/lines, military ships, and first person narratives.

Images need to be at a resolution of 300 dpi in JPG/JPEG format.

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OCEAN TIMES

EDITOR Wayne Yanda
editor.oceantimes@gmail.com

EDITORS EMERITUS
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Hello! Welcome to July's "stateroom reading."

For our cover story ...

Many people have made their mark on history in one way or another, and just as many don't get their story told. Alice Chong was a marvel. Her story, by member Brian Dervin Dillon, reads like an adventure novel. You can't believe it's true, but it is. In fact, it will soon be a book!

Funnels generate a lot of discussion; maybe second only to balconies. Decades before the *Rotterdam* of 1959, even before the Delta liners of 1946, ships without traditional funnels were being built. Member Jim Shaw takes us back to when it all started.

I am a fan of the unbuilt – the plans and schemes that never came to fruition – the "what may have been" of it all. Of course, I have on my bookshelf copies of *Damned by Destiny*, by Williams and De Kerbrech, as well as the sequel, *Great Passenger Ships That Never Were*. With that in mind, the July *Ship Shot* focuses on one of the three attempts by American President Lines to build a superliner.

I enjoy picking up the odd vacation slide – so many of them find their way to eBay – and the shot on the Back Page is one of them. The *Oriana* has always struck me as something of a camel, which

as you all know, is a horse designed by committee. But you cannot deny that she has character. If you have an image in your collection with an interesting story, pass it along! (For example, next year we'll be running a rare image of the *Normandie* as she sailed into NY for the first time.)

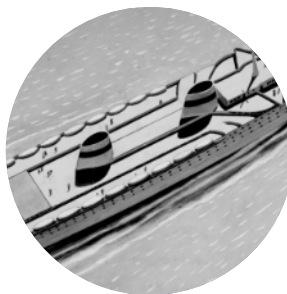
Finally, we at the *Ocean Times* have been debating on doing something to mark the 90th anniversary of the *Queen Mary's* maiden voyage; we just don't know what. What is there left to be said?

That's where you come in.

Did you ever sail on her? Were you on hand in 1967 to welcome her when she sailed into Long Beach? Did you work on the conversion into a hotel?

There's plenty of time until 2026, so take a moment, reflect, and reach out. Thanks!

Until next time,
Wayne Yanda



We mark the passing of member Jim Shaw after a brief illness. A prolific contributor to the *Ocean Times*, *Ships Monthly*, *Steamboat Bill*, and *PowerShips*, Jim was also the West Coast Editor for the latter until he stepped down earlier this year, due to his health.

He leaves behind his wife, Sheila, and sons Ian and Nathan, as well as the many readers who enjoyed his work.



Figure 2: Hawaiian-born Alice Kim Chong (1909-1972) at center rear, smothered in leis, aboard the *President Coolidge* in Honolulu.

This photo was taken on July 20, 1933, the day she sailed to China the first time. Having just graduated from the University of Hawaii, she left Honolulu to teach English at the Bridgman Academy, an upscale girl's high school in Peking.

Alice spoke Hakka Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian, and English. While in China this first time she learned two more Chinese languages, Cantonese and Mandarin.

Alice's twin sister Mabel, like her a 1933 University of Hawaii graduate, at left, their disapproving mother at right. At front are Dora (left) and Hazel (right), brother Ben Chong's oldest daughters.

(Alice Chong Collection)

continued from page 1

just like her younger brother David, she has been overlooked by historians, at least until now.

My wife's auntie Alice Kim Chong (1909-1972, Figure 2) was a very intelligent, brave, resolute, persistent, hard-working, and modest person. She was, without any doubt, the most remarkable American woman of World War II. For Alice, like her eventual boss Claire ("Flying Tigers") Chennault, the war began in 1937, four long years before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. She crossed the Pacific from Hawaii to China twice. The second time she kept on going eventually traveling all the way around the world after eight long years behind enemy lines in China, finally returning home to Hawaii two years after the war ended.

Alice Kim Chong was the *only* American-Born Chinese female war correspondent, publishing article after article in the Honolulu newspapers. Her byline was "Behind the Lines," and her reporting from war-torn China, beginning in 1938, was picked up by other national and international newspapers. Alice Chong was also the *only* woman who not only taught at Ginling College, made famous worldwide by the Rape of Nanking in 1937-1938, but also later worked for General Claire Chennault at the old Flying Tigers air base at Kunming. There she did hush-hush top secret intelligence work that helped make Chennault's 14th U.S. Army Air Force the terror of Japanese air, land, and sea forces in China during the final years of the war. Alice somehow survived her eight years of conflict in what many today

call "the forgotten theater" of World War II. After flying "over the Hump"—the Himalayas—to British India, she was unique once again as the only Chinese female civilian employee of the U.S. Army to come home on a neutral Swedish repatriation ship.

Alice Chong in Hawaii and China, 1909-1936

Alice and her twin sister Mabel both grew up on Kauai speaking Hakka Chinese at home, and Hawaiian and Japanese with their friends, relatives, and playmates. Their father's first two wives were Hawaiian sisters, and his first 22 children were all Hawaiian speaking. The twins' mother was their father's third, Hakka Chinese wife, who was younger than some of her husband's own half-Hawaiian children. By the time of the twins' birth, the Chongs were the only Hakka Chinese family in the Lawai Valley, and their three comparatively new neighboring families were all recently-arrived Japanese. The older Chong kids grew up trilingual, at least until they moved to Honolulu, and began attending school where English was taught. The twin Chong girls, Alice and Mabel, never heard their fourth language, English, spoken until they were both ten years old.

The twins were inseparable, but had very different interests: Alice's lay in the humanities, Mabel's in the sciences. Both graduated from McKinley High School in Honolulu in 1929, and both immediately entered the University of Hawaii. The twins graduated from the U.H. four years later in 1933, at the height of the Depression. Mabel eventually got a job with the territorial government as a research scientist, specializing in insect parasites, while Alice searched in vain for a teaching job. With no prospects for an American-born Chinese female English teacher either in Hawaii or on the American mainland, Alice instead investigated teaching opportunities in China. In Asia her race and gender did not "count against her" as was the case in anti-Asian America.¹ Alice got a job offer from an upscale girl's high school in Peking,² and was off like a shot across the Pacific for the first time in July 1933, only a month and a half after earning her B.A. in English.

Alice's first trip to China was aboard the *President Coolidge*, a ship so new that, as the old saying went, its paint was barely dry. The *Coolidge* and the *President Hoover* were sister

ships, both designed in 1929. The *Hoover* was launched first in 1930, and the *Coolidge* was completed a year later in 1931. The sister ships at the time of their launching were the largest commercial vessels ever built in the United States. The *Coolidge* that Alice Chong boarded in Honolulu in 1933 (Figure 1) was 654 feet long, 81 feet in the beam, and 34 feet from keel to top deck, not counting her superstructure. She weighed almost 22,000 tons gross. She boasted two swimming pools, a gym, a movie theater, a beauty parlor, and even a floating stock exchange for those few passengers who had not been wiped out by the 1929 economic collapse. The *Coolidge* was a luxury liner capable of carrying between 1,000 and 1,200 passengers, 350 of them in first class cabins. The ship also carried a very large crew of 300, very few of whom were seamen, mechanics, or engineers; most were stewards, maids, cooks, and busboys.

Both the *President Coolidge* and the *Hoover* were operated by the Dollar Steamship line on their transpacific route until 1937 when the *Hoover* ran aground during a typhoon off Taiwan and was taken out of commission. The following year the *Coolidge* was taken over by the American President Line.

The transpacific route of the Dollar ships in the early 1930s began at San Francisco, California. Its first stop was Honolulu, Hawaii, normally five or six days away. The next stop was Manila, in the American protectorate of the Philippines, up to another entire week's steaming from Hawaii. Then came stops at foreign ports, first in Japan, either Kobe or Yokohama after another two days steaming, and then either directly to Shanghai, its final stop, or first to Hong Kong, and then on to Shanghai. Rather than returning directly to San Francisco, the Dollar line vessels retraced their route in reverse order. It took three weeks to a month to make a complete transit outbound and inbound, including overnight stops at most ports for refueling and re-provisioning and for passengers to get off, and new ones to get on. The *Coolidge* was a very fast ship, and set speed records for the two longest legs of the transpacific voyage, San Francisco to Honolulu, and Honolulu to Manila.

The *President Coolidge* was a vessel familiar to many American missionaries, teachers, and diplomats stationed in China, and also to ABC expats either visiting the land of their ancestors,

or, like Alice Chong, who had employment or business connections there.³ Alice was not the only American-Born Chinese passenger on her first trip across the Pacific. Aboard were some of her Honolulu friends and even U.H. schoolmates including her close friend Margery Ho, who was also going to try her luck teaching in China. The Hawaiian-born Chinese on the *Coolidge* called themselves the “Kanak” (for *Kanaka*, the Hawaiian word for “people”) to distinguish themselves from ABCs from the U.S. mainland, and from native-born Chinese returning home. As she wrote in one of her many letters home, Alice noted that the ukuleles came out on the second day of the voyage (Figure 3), and that she and all of her “Kanak” shipmates sang their way across the Pacific, in Hawaiian, of course.

Japan had invaded Manchuria in 1931, and now, only two years later, was threatening all of North China proper, including Peking. This was the reason why Alice's mother, who had left South China as a teenager in the mid-1890s and never been back, was so apprehensive (Figure 2). Despite the gathering war clouds, the Hawaiian Chinese contingent aboard the



Figure 3: Members of the Hawaiian Chinese contingent aboard the President Coolidge in 1933, en route from Honolulu to China.

As Alice Chong noted in her letters home, the ukuleles came out on the second day, and everybody played and sang Hawaiian songs all the way across the Pacific.

The girl in the foreground is the Chong twins' old school chum Margery Ho.

Sharp-eyed viewers will note that the lifeboat on the davits at top center is “on loan” from the SS San Francisco.

Some American-born Chinese, facing few employment opportunities in their home country as a result of the Great Depression and institutionalized anti-Asian racism, opted instead to find jobs in China, where their educational attainments were highly valued.

(Alice Chong Collection)

Coolidge treated their voyage as an adventure. All were optimistic about their chances for good jobs and enhanced personal freedom over the much more limited U.S. opportunities in 1933.

Alice spent three very productive years in China, teaching at the Bridgman Academy. She also tutored the children of a rich Peking doctor in English, and also worked as a salesgirl in an upscale “curio” shop in Peking’s Legation Quarter catering to wealthy tourists. During weekends and vacations she explored first Peking, then North China, then much farther-flung parts of the country. Alice also learned two more Chinese tongues: Mandarin, the old language of the Chinese imperial court, and used by millions in North China, and Cantonese, the language spoken by millions of South Chinese up and down the Pearl River drainage near Hong Kong and also by most Chinese in the western U.S., especially California. Alice also investigated alternative job prospects, and visited Ginling College in the Chinese capital, Nanking.⁴ She made a good impression on the faculty and administration of this institution, the foremost women’s college in all of Asia, but was told that in order to be considered for a teaching position there, she must have a Master’s Degree in English.

So, in 1936, Alice returned to Honolulu and enrolled as a graduate student in the English Department of the University of Hawaii in order to qualify for her “dream job” at Ginling College, Nanking. A year later, after she had finished her coursework but before her thesis was accepted, she received a telegram from Ginling telling her that completion of the M.A.

degree was no longer necessary. She was offered a position as an English teacher for the Fall 1937 semester if she could be in China before it began in September. Alice left Hawaii on the *RMS Empress of Canada* (Figure 4) on August 13, 1937, her destination Shanghai, and then Nanking.

Alice Chong in Wartime China, 1937-1945

The *RMS Empress of Canada* that Alice Chong steamed away from Honolulu on for her second voyage to China was the first of three eventual and completely different ships of that same name.⁵ The vessel was a triple-stacker launched in 1920, built for Canadian-Pacific Steamships by Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company on the River Clyde in Scotland. She was 653 feet in length, and weighed 21,517 tons. Her sister ships were the *Empress of France* and *Empress of Britain*.⁶ Alice’s timing was exquisitely bad, and potentially deadly. Her ship left Honolulu on the *very day* that Japan began to wage all-out war by land, sea, and air on China’s largest city, Shanghai. The *Empress of Canada* and all aboard her were heading for the holocaust.

As before, Alice Chong quickly became a part of the small American-born Chinese contingent aboard the vessel. Her most important new friend was Ettie Chin (Figure 5) a slim, and vivacious Physical Education teacher also heading for Ginling College, Nanking, to begin there just like Alice. Ettie was from Worcester, Massachusetts, a Smith College graduate, and had just earned her M.A. at the University of Michigan. Her P.E. specialty was archery, and, since Alice Chong had been a crack shot on the small bore rifle shooting team at the University of Hawaii, the two Ginling teachers were better-equipped than most female academics to defend themselves if the situation ashore went from bad to worse.

The *Empress of Canada* was prevented from docking in Shanghai by the Japanese naval blockade (Figure 6) and had to anchor offshore. There she sat for several days, her engines still running should a quick getaway become necessary, while her captain tried to persuade the Japanese authorities to let his ship into port. Meanwhile, over a thousand Chinese refugees from Shanghai came aboard, from anything that would float, rowboats to inflated truck inner tubes. While at anchor offshore, Alice watched wave after wave of Japanese planes

Figure 4: The RMS Empress of Canada at her home port of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada on June 1, 1936.

Alice Chong crossed the Pacific a second time on this big, beautiful ship during the summer of 1937.

(Photo courtesy of the City of Vancouver, B.C., Archives.)



bomb Shanghai, killing thousands of innocent civilians.

Finally, after several days of impasse, the *Empress of Canada* diverted to British Hong Kong, which was, at least for the moment, safe from Japanese attack. Alice and Ettie went ashore to visit Alice's aunt, her mother's younger sister who was also the third wife in a polygamous marriage. Her husband was a wealthy Hong Kong businessman. Marooned in Hong Kong, both Alice and Ettie got temporary teaching jobs at the True Light Middle School in Kowloon. This girls' school had been evacuated from Canton, one step ahead of the Japanese invaders, and relocated to territory controlled by the British.

Meanwhile, the students and most of the faculty of Ginling College had also been evacuated from Nanking, which by the end of 1937 was bearing the brunt of Japanese savagery. Thousands of Chinese soldiers captured by the Japanese were murdered en masse, sometimes simply by tying them together then marching them into the Yangtze River to drown. Innocent civilians, men, women and children alike, were also murdered by the tens of thousands over a three-month period, and tens of thousands of women and children were raped in production-line fashion. During this time of unmitigated horror the Ginling College campus became a tiny island of dubious safety, a sanctuary in the middle of what was truly hell on earth. Under the leadership of a single stay-behind American teacher, Minnie Vautrin, up to 10,000 Chinese women and children took refuge on the girls' school campus. There, Vautrin tried to keep them out of the hands of Japanese soldiers who constantly invaded the campus to kidnap women and children to rape and murder.⁷ On one horrible night in Nanking more than a thousand Chinese women and girls were raped by Japanese soldiers, including a hundred dragged away from the Ginling campus.

Recently, no fewer than three different movies have been made about the Rape of Nanking, all of them featuring Ginling College to a greater or lesser extent.⁸

The Ginling student body and most of its faculty had escaped from Nanking just before the Japanese Army entered the city. They relocated within the British concession in Shanghai, which offered temporary protection from the rampaging Japanese. Eventually, both



Alice Chong and Ettie Chin were able to make their way from Hong Kong to Shanghai, where they finally took up their posts as Ginling College's newest teachers. But no Chinese, either native-born or American-born, was safe anywhere in the city outside the dubious protection of the British concession. Bombings, assassinations – even of Chinese college teachers and administrators – casual murders and rapes continued throughout the city by out-of-control Japanese troops. Unburied dead lay in the streets just outside the Ginling Shanghai campus, sometimes for weeks on end. So Alice joined her fellow faculty members in planning yet another relocation of the girls' school, this time all the way to the western fringe of China, to Chengdu, in Sichuan Province, where everyone hoped they would be safe from the Japanese.

The escape of the Ginling girls from Shanghai during the early summer of 1938 was of epic proportions. It was led by multilingual Alice Chong, whose Japanese conversational ability got the all-female group through one Japanese checkpoint and roadblock after

Figure 5: A group of ABC (American-born Chinese) aboard the RMS Empress of Canada in August, 1937, steaming towards all-out-war in China.

Alice Chong at top, her fellow soon-to-be Ginling College teacher Ettie Chin at lower right, and Ettie's two brothers at center. The other two women not identified.

(Alice Chong Collection)

another. The trip to what everybody called “free China” consumed more than two months. Alice’s Ginling contingent was repeatedly bombed by Japanese aircraft as it made its way south, then north, and finally west, by truck (Figure 7), steamship, train, riverboat, and bus, more than 2,800 miles in all. Alice didn’t lose a single member of her group during this dangerous trek. She undoubtedly saved the lives of the girls she led to safety. Once Ginling College-in-Exile was established at its third wartime location at Chengdu, its students and faculty were finally safe from attack by Japanese ground forces, but not from enemy bombing raids from the air.

Alice Chong taught at Ginling-in-Exile at Chengdu for five years, also sending many reports home to the Honolulu newspapers on the ongoing war in China (Figure 8). She explored western China on her days off and during longer periods of time while on vacation from teaching. She also got to know all of the pilots in the Chinese Air Force. They were being trained by the recently-cashiered U.S. Army Captain Claire Chennault who, three years later, would lead the fabulously successful Flying Tigers in the air war against the Japanese.⁹ She also came to know and to befriend American-educated Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, one of the strongest supporters of Ginling College, and a wide range of American missionaries, military observers, and journalists making “hit and run” visits to China. When Wendell Wilkie, at the behest of his political rival Franklin Roosevelt, visited China to demonstrate American resolve as an ally against the Japanese, Alice Chong served as his guide and translator.

By 1943 Alice wanted to do more for the war effort, so she left Ginling College and, at the invitation of Claire Chennault, now a two-

star American General, moved to the old Flying Tigers air base at Kunming in Yunnan Province. Once there, because of her unique qualifications as a linguist in Chinese and Japanese, and her intimate familiarity with Chinese geography, culture, and attitudes, she became the 14th U.S. Army Air Force’s intelligence expert. Alice translated “hot” radio intercepts from Japanese and Chinese into English, and also advised the Kunming top brass on the reliability of intelligence gathered by stay-behind Chinese patriots in Japanese-controlled territory. Her contributions became critical to targeting decisions made for 14th U.S. Army Air Force bombers and fighters. Her cover job was the Kunming “base librarian” but she became General Chennault’s *secret weapon*.¹⁰ Immensely popular and outnumbered by men at Kunming sometimes as much as 800-to-1 Alice made many life-long friends among the 14th U.S. Army Air Force pilots, air crew, and ground crew (Figure 9).

Unfortunately, Alice’s boss, General Chennault, was fighting two completely different battles in China. The first war, of course, was against the Japanese, by 1943 in its sixth year. The second struggle, however, was against recalcitrant and hostile top brass within the American military chain of command. Chennault’s most implacable bureaucratic foe was “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell, his superior, who begrudged him every round of machine-gun ammunition for his fighters and every gallon of gasoline needed by his bombers. The two men cordially despised each other. Chennault, in fact, named his pet Dachshund puppy “Little Joe” after Stilwell, since, as he commented to Alice Chong, “Both were low-down sons-of-bitches.” Stilwell also alienated Chiang Kai-Shek and Madame Chiang, both of whom were strong Chennault supporters. In the inevitable

Figure 6: Japanese Hatsuhara-class destroyer, probably the Nenohi, shadowing the RMS Empress of Canada as she approached Shanghai in late August, 1937.

The Japanese Imperial Navy blockaded Shanghai, and refused entry to Alice’s ship. She took this photograph surreptitiously over the rail while more than 1,000 refugees from China’s largest city came out to the Empress of Canada on anything that would float, trying to escape the Japanese shelling and bombing of their city.

Alice’s ship was forcibly diverted to Hong Kong, which undoubtedly saved her life. After laying waste to much of Shanghai, the Japanese moved on to Nanking, where they committed unspeakable atrocities that earned them the censure of the entire world.

(Alice Chong Collection)





Figure 7: English teacher Alice Chong sits on the front bumper of a British truck along with 14 of her Ginling College students and 4 fellow faculty members in Shanghai during the early Spring of 1938.

Ginling College had been evacuated from Nanking, and was in temporary quarters within the British concession in Shanghai, safe, for the most part, from the Japanese who were laying waste to all other parts of China.

Multi-lingual Alice led the Ginling girls and her fellow faculty members during their epic escape from Shanghai during the summer of 1938, using her language skills to talk them through many Japanese roadblocks and checkpoints.

Alice's party traveled more than 2,800 miles by truck, steamship, train, riverboat, and bus until they reached "free China" on the opposite side of the country. Ginling-in-Exile was resurrected in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

The new campus was beyond the reach of Japanese ground forces, but still within range of air attack. The Ginling group survived many Japanese bombings during their epic trek and then for the remaining seven years of the War. Alice's friend and fellow American-born Chinese teacher Ettie Chin stands at far right.

(Alice Chong Collection)

showdown that came late in 1944, Stilwell, not Chennault, was relieved of duty.

The price that Chennault had to pay in order to get rid of "Vinegar Joe" was a deal with the Devil, and that Devil was Wild Bill Donovan. Donovan was head of the OSS, the cloak-and-dagger predecessor of what became the CIA two years after the end of the war. Donovan supported Chennault against Stilwell, but his *quid pro quo* was a flood of inept, incompetent, and ineffective OSS operatives inundating Chennault's Kunming air base. The OSS had done good work in the European theater, but none of its operatives had the experience, much less the language skills, to contribute anything useful to the war against the Japanese. Douglas MacArthur, the head of the Army, and Chester Nimitz, the head of the Navy, had both refused to admit any OSS agents within their own Pacific theaters since the beginning of the war, so Donovan used the Chennault CBI (China, Burma, India) connection as his *only* opportunity to have *any* kind of participation in the Pacific/Asian theater.

None of the bumbling OSS men and women who took up residence at Kunming in late 1944 spoke or read Chinese, much less Japanese. The so-called "qualifications" of one of them, Julia Child, the "French Chef" of much later TV cooking show fame, were typically insipid: simply "a desire to travel." With nothing to do except spy on each other and gum up the works of the 14th U.S. Army Air Force, the cloak-and-dagger crowd soon began empire-building. Before too long it also began to question the "qualifications" of anybody who had not gone through formal OSS training back on the Atlantic Seaboard of the USA, as far away from China as you could get on planet earth.

By early 1945 Alice Chong had run afoul of the pettifogging OSS do-nothings, who demanded that she undergo the same kind of "intelligence" training they had. She was dismissed as a "mere civilian" and racism also probably motivated some of the lily-white, recently-arrived, chair-warming theoreticians to question her status within the Kunming command structure. She stuck it out as long as she could while victory in the long, drawn-out

war was still in doubt. By the spring of 1945 however, with the collapse of Nazi Germany and the Japanese retreating on all fronts, it now seemed obvious that the Americans and their Chinese allies would win the war in the Pacific and in Asia. So Alice decided that rather than engaging in battles of wits with unarmed OSS opponents, it was finally time to go home.

Conclusion

Alice Chong flew out of Kunming “over the hump” to India on a U.S. Army C-47 Dakota supply plane, but then was stranded in Calcutta for two months. She was unable to convince anybody in charge, British or American, that she should be sent home through normal military channels. Because she was not in uniform, nobody believed that she was an American citizen, much less a civilian employee of the military. Once again, the powers that be simply saw her Chinese face, and either didn’t care about or didn’t believe her recitation of eight long years of service behind enemy lines in China. She was treated just like any other civilian, and presumed to be a Chinese national by most American officials she encountered, who had never met, much less talked to, an American-born Chinese woman. Bureaucratic inertia at best, or anti-Asian hostility at worst, stereotyped her as just one more Chinese refugee from the Japanese war among the thousands trying to make their way to the United States.

In British India Alice Chong was finally admitted aboard a neutral, Swedish ship reserved for civilian refugees. The *Gripsholm* (Figure 10) was a “repatriation” vessel that during the six prior years of the European war had made many trips across the Atlantic, hauling noncombatant diplomats and internees from hostile nations to their own home countries. She had even made a few similar trips across the Pacific, taking interned diplomats to Japan from the allied nations and vice versa. The *Gripsholm* had been built in 1924-25 by Armstrong, Whitworth & Company of Newcastle, Great Britain, for the Swedish-American

Figure 8: One of Alice Chong's "Behind the Lines in China" newspaper articles published in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, and picked up by other national and international papers.

Alice was the only American-born Asian female war correspondent of World War II. She contributed many such accounts of the war in China between 1938 and 1943.

This one was published on October 29, 1938, more than three years before America finally joined China in the war against the Japanese.

(Alice Chong Collection)



Line. She was the very first large passenger ship built for rapid transatlantic voyages powered by diesel engines, instead of steam. She was 573 feet in length, had a 74 foot beam, and weighed nearly 18,000 tons. During her years as a civilian liner, she had accommodations for 127 first class, 482 second class, and 948 third class passengers. In peacetime her crew numbered 360, most of them cooks, waiters, maids, and stewards, not sailors or engineers. When she became a neutral wartime repatriation ship, her passenger complement was typically in excess of 1,500 while her crew shrank accordingly.

On the *Gripsholm*, Alice Chong once again found herself to be absolutely unique in a very unusual situation. She was the only woman aboard who had served in a military capacity in the war still being waged against the Japanese. All of her fellow-passengers were non-combatants. Most of them were missionaries

and their families who had been marooned in countries or territories cut off by Japanese expansion through Asia and the Pacific, or who had been civilian prisoners of war only recently liberated from Japanese internment camps.

The Japanese were still fighting when the *Gripsholm* left Calcutta. The Japanese government let the ship’s captain know that they no longer considered her a “neutral” vessel. Her passengers were fearful of torpedoes fired by last-ditch Japanese submarines, despite her very ostentatious markings as a neutral, non-combatant ship. The *Gripsholm* docked in New York harbor on August 3, 1945, and Alice Chong stepped onto U.S. soil for the first time in almost exactly eight years. She had gone completely around the world since her second voyage to China began in August of 1937.

Somehow she had survived the long, bloody war in China that killed more innocent people there, over a longer period of time, than anywhere else during World War II. Three days after Alice disembarked in New York, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, and eight days later the Japanese finally surrendered.



Alice enrolled in Columbia University in New York City, determined to finish the long-delayed M.A. degree interrupted by her Ginling College college teaching career so many years earlier. Sick of war, she returned to the cultural roots of her childhood. Alice's research was anthropological, not military, political, nor economic. She earned her degree with a thesis on Native Hawaiian Folklore. Alice Chong returned to Hawaii in 1947, and taught in local high schools for the rest of her life. Her longest stint as an English teacher was at her old alma mater, McKinley High School in Honolulu. She lived quietly with her twin Mabel, and neither sister ever married. Few of the thousands of high school students who had Alice Chong as their English teacher over a twenty-year period suspected that her life had been anything but ordinary. Nevertheless, a steady stream of former Flying Tigers and 14th U.S. Army Air Force personnel always visited Alice when they were in Hawaii. When Alice Chong died in 1972, the 14th U.S. Air Force Association held a special memorial service for her, calling her: "A true friend and comrade who typified the ideal of American womanhood and patriotism."

Figure 9: Alice Chong (at center front) with some of her 14th U.S. Army Air Force buddies, both officers and enlisted men, aircrew and ground crew, on the old Flying Tigers air strip at Kunming in late 1944.

After teaching at Ginling-in-Exile first in Shanghai, then at Chengdu for five years, Alice wanted to do more for the war effort. She became General Claire "Flying Tigers" Chennault's intelligence expert, doing on-the-spot translations of "hot" radio intercepts from Japanese and Chinese sources, and advising bomber pilots on target feasibility from knowledge gained from years spent traveling all over China.

Note the "blood chit" inside the flight jacket of the flying colonel in the back row. These requested help from friendly Chinese should American pilots be shot down over Japanese-held territory.

(Alice Chong Collection)



Figure 10: The Gripsholm, the neutral, Swedish vessel that Alice Chong came home on after eight long years in war-torn China.

Most of her fellow-passengers were American refugees, missionaries who had been "marooned" in China, India, Burma, Malaysia or French Indochina. Many of them had barely survived the war in Japanese prison camps, and none had taken an active role in the war effort as had Alice.

Before taking Alice Chong home to America the Gripsholm made many ocean crossings as a "repatriation" vessel, effecting diplomatic prisoner exchanges between the warring nations. Alice came ashore from the Gripsholm in New York on August 3, 1945, just three days before the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

(Internet image in the Public Domain)

Across the Pacific with Alice Chong, 1933-1945

End Notes

1. Anti-Asian America: The outrageous, racist, anti-Asian legislation that had been the law of the land on the American mainland in California as early as the 1850s, and then on the National level after 1882, was exported to the Territory of Hawaii after American annexation in 1898. Far from fading away, even more stringent anti-Asian legislation was passed by the U.S. government in 1924, only nine years before Alice Chong went to China to seek employment opportunities denied her in the U.S. and even within its Hawaiian Territory. Anti-Asian legislation would not begin to be overturned until World War II, when embarrassed American politicians were asked by American-educated Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, representing our Chinese ally fighting the Japanese, when they intended to remove such offensive and unfair laws targeting American Chinese.

2. Peking vs Beijing: Few English-speakers are aware that there are more than 80 different Chinese languages, which all use the same ideographic writing system. This is unlike any European language, each one of which is tied to a specific and unique phonetic writing system. The earliest English translations of spoken Chinese were made for South Chinese languages, like Punti or Cantonese, which was spoken on the Pearl River drainage, where the British Colony of Hong Kong was eventually established. The Chinese capital, at different places at different times during Chinese history, was at Nanking during Alice Chong's first visit to China. Only after the Communist takeover in 1949 was the capital moved back to what South Chinese called Peking. The Communists now demanded that everybody call it "Beijing" the English phonetic translation of the Mandarin language term for that city. So the older English translations of Chinese place-names used in this article are historically, if not politically, correct.

3. Later Days and Death of the President Coolidge: The *Coolidge* continued to serve as an important lifeline for refugees evacuating Chinese cities threatened or under attack by the Japanese during and after 1937. After America finally joined the war in December of 1941, the *President Coolidge* became a troop ship. She served in this capacity entirely in the Pacific theater, and was instrumental in ferrying the earliest American military personnel to Australia in 1942. Her luxury appurtenances were stripped out, and she was modified to carry up to 5,000 troops in her new, military, role. In late October of 1942, owing to a complete lack of communication, the U.S. Navy refused to inform the captains of "civilian" vessels like the *President Coolidge* of deep, dark, military secrets, like where their own anti-ship minefields were located. She entered an American-laid minefield in the New Hebrides off Espiritu Santo Island and struck two mines. As she began sinking her very competent captain drove her onto a shallow offshore reef. Fortunately, 5,340 men were safely evacuated from the *Coolidge*, many of them simply by walking ashore through waist-high water. Only two were lost to this incredible blunder by the

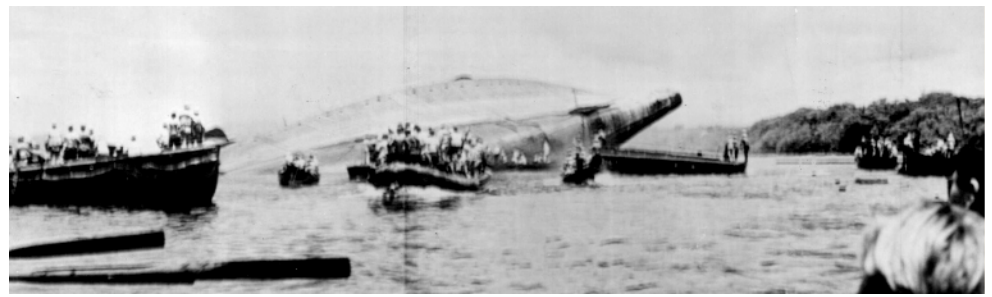


Figure 11: The *President Coolidge* slips beneath the waters, stern first, off Espiritu Santo Island on October 26, 1942.
(Private Collection)

U.S. Navy. Unfortunately, the ship slid off the reef after only 78 minutes, then sank in shallow water and was a total loss (Figure 11).

4. Ginling College: Was founded by Christian missionaries, and its curriculum was in English. When Alice Chong was hired its faculty was half Chinese, half American/English. Its head was Dr. Grace Wu, the Chinese-born alumnus of the very first Ginling graduating class. Dr. Wu maintained very close contacts with American universities, and was one of the best-educated Chinese women of her time. The Ginling student body was recruited from the most progressive and wealthy families of the Chinese Republic, about half of whom were Christian. For more information on the history of Ginling College see Thurston and Chester 1956; Feng 2009.

5. The Second and Third Empress of Canada: The second vessel of that name was a double-stacker launched in 1928, originally named the *Duchess of Richmond*. *Richmond* was re-named *Empress of Canada* in 1947. She steamed CP's UK-to-Canada Atlantic route until 1953, when she caught fire in her dry-dock during routine winter maintenance. A carelessly discarded, lit cigarette was the cause of the conflagration, and she was a total loss. The third and final vessel named *Empress of Canada* was a single-stacker launched in 1960, once again for CP's UK-Canada route. She crossed the Atlantic many times during a dozen years of service until she was sold to the Carnival Cruise line in 1972, and then moved to her new home port of Miami, Florida.

6. Later Days and Death of the Empress of Canada: Alice's original *Empress of Canada* steamed the transpacific route from her home ports of Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia, until the outbreak of the European War. Converted to a troopship in 1939, she then shuttled commonwealth troops all the way across the Pacific and the Atlantic to the European theater of war. On March 13, 1943, off the coast of South Africa, she was torpedoed and sunk by the Italian submarine *Leonardo da Vinci*. In a macabre form of poetic justice, most of her passengers were Italian prisoners of war. Approximately half of the nearly 400 souls lost when she went down were Italian nationals.

7. The Rape of Nanking and Minnie Vautrin: Chang, 1997; Rabe 1998; Hu 2000.

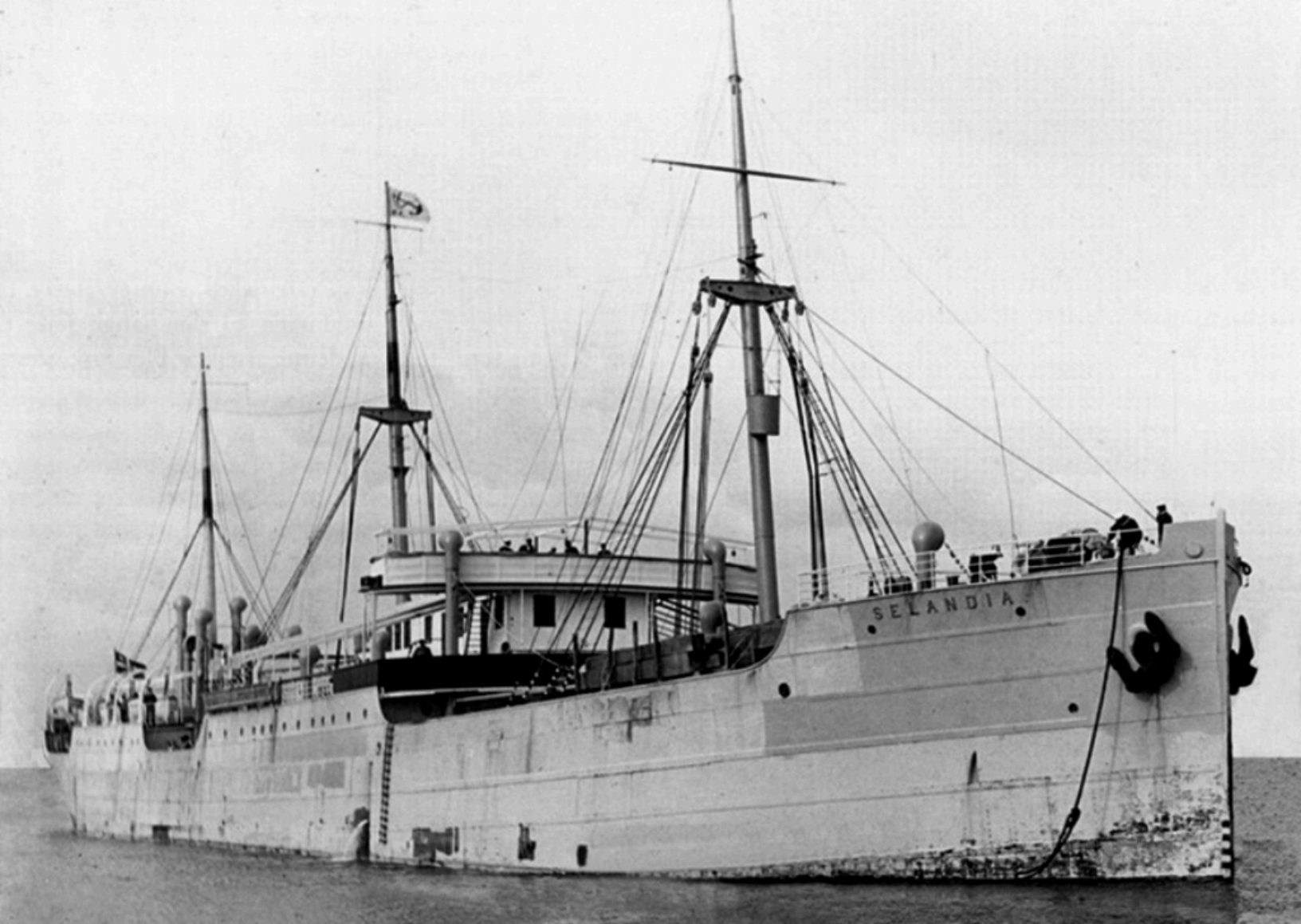
8. Recent Movies About the Rape of Nanking: These films, in their order of appearance, are *Nanking* (2007); *City of Life and Death* (2009); and *Flowers of War* (2011).

9. Chennault and the Flying Tigers: Time, 1943; Chennault 1949.

10. Alice Chong at Kunming: Alice Chong was one of only two women who were full members of the 14th Air Force Association. The other was her good friend and roommate, Eloise Witwer, a missionary from Burma who worked as Chennault's secretary and had, in fact, driven a truck over the Burma Road to Kunming shortly before it was closed by the Japanese.

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East Asiatic Line's Selandia, as completed in 1912.

When Funnels Fell Out of Fashion

James L. Shaw

In 1912, when Denmark's East Asiatic Company introduced their revolutionary diesel-powered cargo ship *Selandia*, disparaging comments were heard concerning the vessel's appearance. It seemed she lacked the very emblem of the age of steam – the funnel.

Instead of the tall, thick smokestack so common to coal burners of the period, Hans Niels Andersen's new ship had "exhaust stacks," slender pipes which blended in so well with the masts that they could not even be discerned at a distance. The resulting silhouette was of a ship that distinctly "lacked" something. EAC engineers, however, were quite proud of their elimination of the funnel and fully expected the new "exhaust stacks" to be the hallmark of diesel ships as the funnel had identified steam.

In the late 1920s, the East Asiatic Line began building a series of diesel-powered cargo-passenger vessels for the Asia trade. Like

*Editor's note: This story originally appeared in the Fall 1993 issue of the *Intercom* (World Ship Society – Port of New York Branch).



The Jutlandia of 1934 with her exhausts alongside the mainmast.

their forerunner, the *Selandia*, these ships came down the ways without so much as a hint of a funnel. The exhaust pipes were cleverly attached to the aft mast, thus making them almost invisible to the casual observer – until smoke denoted their presence. The ships themselves, the *Meonia* and *Lalandia* of 1927, the *Jutlandia* of 1934, and the *Falstria* and *Selandia* (II) of 1938, were comfortable, white-hulled vessels which gave good service on EAC's route to the Far East.

Though several of the ships were laid up during the second World War, and the *Falstria* could not even be finished until 1945, the vessels offered post-war cargo shippers and travelers a dependable service between Northern Europe and Southeast

Asia until the early 1960s. Ironically, EAC chose to build most of its later diesel-powered ships with smokestacks, and to this day, the cargo carriers of EAC have funnels – needed or not.

Only the Americans were daring enough to try and continue the funnel-less trend in mass. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a number of American vessels – all steamships – were built without funnels.

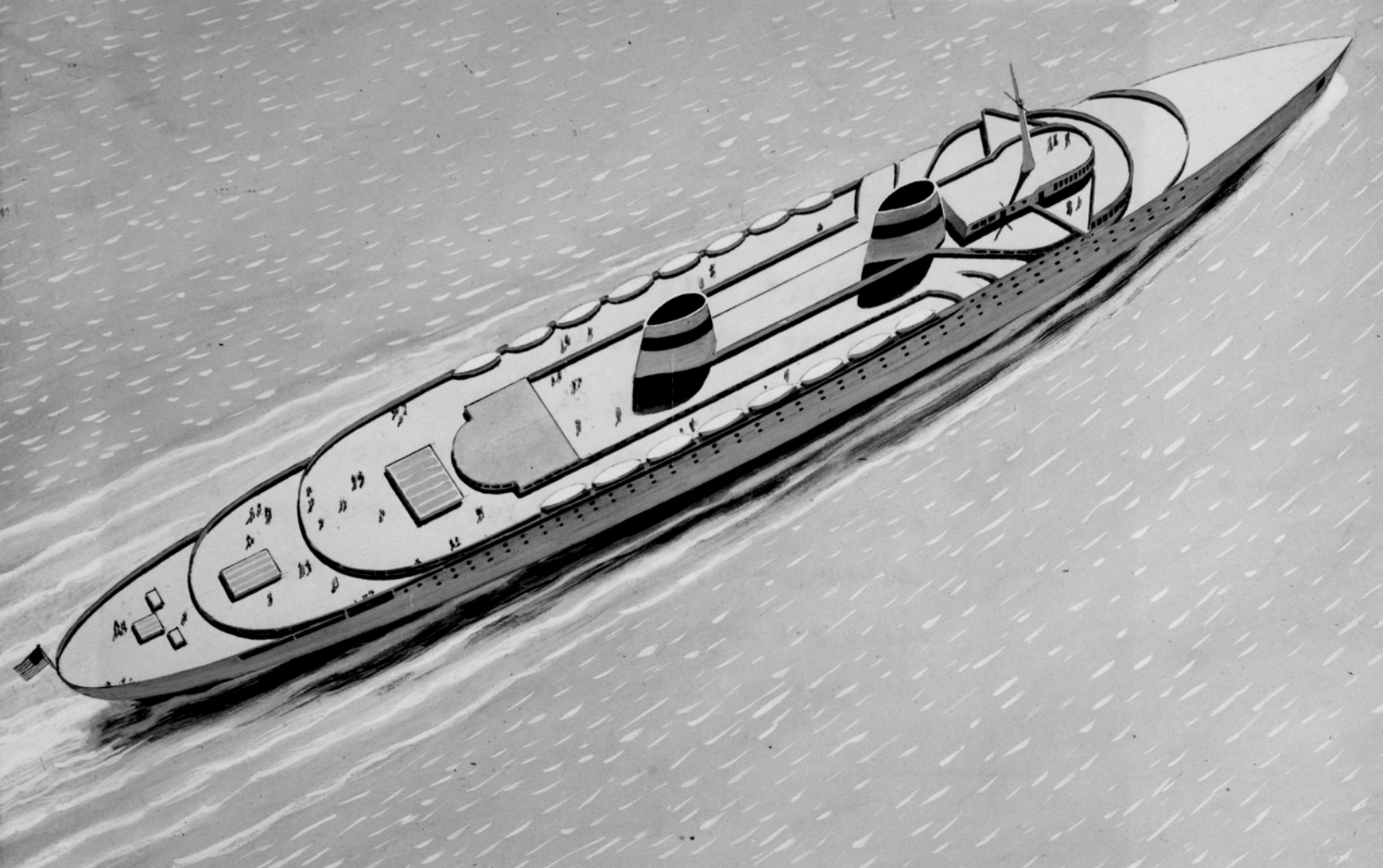
The most notable of these vessels were four large

combination passenger-cargo liners constructed for the New York-based Grace Line in 1962. The *Santa Magdalena*-class, as they became known, were proficient carriers, even though they had only a "toothpick" of an exhaust stack. The resulting appearance of these ships, however, caused such an uproar of snide remarks among passengers and crew that Grace was finally forced to fit conventional funnels to all the vessels in 1967 – a victory of traditional marine fashion.

Today, needed or not, the funnel is still a featured element of ship design – even though some of its modern renditions leave much to be desired.

Before and after. A member of the Santa Magdalena-class as built, and after public pressure forced Grace Line to make the exhaust stack look like a proper funnel.





APL's Unbuilt Superliner, Take 2

With the loss of the President Coolidge during World War II, American President Lines was without a proper superliner for its transpacific service. (Her sister, the President Hoover, ran aground near Taiwan in 1937, and was declared a total loss.)

The U.S. Maritime Commission shopped around their P-4-P design, which could be converted to an aircraft carrier. This included stacks situated toward the starboard side to facilitate the process. American President was slated for two, to be named President Lincoln and President Wilson. After several delays, only one yard, Seattle-Tacoma Shipbuilding Corporation, bid on the project. The Navy abandoned the concept, but it served as a launching point for the design shown above, from 1946.

With a planned service speed of 28 knots, they could make Japan in eight days, nonstop; a few days more for calls in Honolulu and

Manila. Long and lean at 920 feet by 86 feet, 4 inches, there wouldn't be a top heavy "wedding tier" superstructure, therefore, they carried a relatively low passenger count of 1,100, serviced by a crew of 520.

This design was scaled down for Moore-McCormack's New York to South America run, and American Export's Mediterranean service. At the end of the day, the lack of revenue-generating cabins was a stumbling block.

APL's third attempt at a superliner, the President Washington, involved a design based on the transatlantic speed queen, the United States. Funds were allocated in 1958, but vetoed by President Eisenhower. I came across deck plans and design specs for the Washington during a recent research trip, and an in-depth story is in the works.



story & image
by Wayne Yanda



Captain Richard Abele discusses the search to find the USS Grunion at our May meeting.

(inset) Captain Abele and SoCal Chapter President Kate Vescera with Susan Abele's book Slide Trail: USS Grunion on Eternal Patrol at Kiska.

(photos by Jim Shuttleworth and Kate Vescera)



Scenes from SoCal's May Meeting

by Kate Vescera

A big thank you to Captain Richard Abele for his fascinating presentation at our May 4, 2024 meeting on the search expedition to find the wreck of the USS *Grunion* in Alaska. Unfortunately, we had internet connectivity issues, so we were not able to present the meeting on Zoom. We apologize to those of you who were not able to attend because of that. Thank you to everyone who braved the cruise terminal traffic to make it to the meeting. We had a pretty good turnout in spite of the traffic and we will try to avoid that issue in the future.

We also had a raffle which was very popular and included many interesting and varied items. Thanks again to Board Members Jim Shuttleworth and Terry Tilton for all of their hard work in putting together the raffle. If you have items that you are interested in donating for the raffle, please contact Jim Shuttleworth.

At our next Chapter meeting, Chapter Member Kent Sanctuary will be presenting on his 1957 crossings of the Atlantic aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary* as a passenger. We hope to see you there in person, or on Zoom!

Also, we are still looking for people who would like to present at our upcoming meetings in 2025 and beyond. If you are interested, or have ideas about possible presenters, please contact Jim Shuttleworth for more information. We have had presentations on a wide range of topics, including personal trips and experiences, and we also welcome presentations on collections of items, or ships and maritime history topics that you are interested in.

Adventures in Advertising!

As the curtain was coming down on the transatlantic era, Cunard took extraordinary measures to boost the passenger loads of their aging *Queens*.

This ad, from the July 1962 issue of *National Geographic*, advised one to “slow down” on the *Queen Mary*, once the fastest liner in the world. (Oh, the irony.)

Using messaging more suited to the cruise ships that would soon sail with increasing regularity out of Miami, this was clearly an exercise in desperation.

Some of the smaller liners, and the *Elizabeth*, would receive overhauls to match the “vacation island” concept. But it would take more than an outdoor pool to stem the losses Cunard was racking up as it struggled to chart the path forward.

slow down... and live it up on **Cunard's** vacation island

Don't hurry your way to Europe...go Cunard! Enjoy a five-day resort holiday in the world's largest superliners Queen Elizabeth or Queen Mary—it's included in your ticket. Be as active as you want—or as relaxed. Fill your days at sea with sports, swimming, films, nightclub entertainment...or settle back and let time and the sea float your cares away. You'll be delighted by Cunard's lavish international cuisine and flawless service; by the comfort, the fun, the new friends you'll meet. It's perfect for the whole family—kids, too. Or enjoy a more leisurely crossing (at lower fares) in one of five other Cunarders from New York or Montreal. For the ultimate in fun, treat yourself to the extra niceties of Cunard *First Class*. They're worth the small difference in Getting there is half the fun...GO fare aboard Cunard's





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Sailing Day in Honolulu, 1964



With the Aloha Tower dominating the skyline, three major liners sailed from Honolulu on March 14, 1964. This image, taken from the Lurline, as she was heading back to the mainland, shows the Oriana making steam as she's about to depart for Vancouver. APL's President Cleveland would soon head back to San Francisco.

Despite the merger of P&O and Orient Line in 1960, the Oriana still sported her corn-colored hull; a fixture introduced by the Orion in 1935. An announcement in the March 11, 1964 edition of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin stated that by July, all Orient Line hulls would be white.

Oriana wouldn't be transferred to the P&O fleet until 1966, and it was then when the Orient Line name was dropped.

President Cleveland would be off to the scrappers by 1974. Lurline (ex-Matsonia, ex-Monterey) was sold to Chandris in 1970, and renamed Britanis. Several changes in ownership followed, and she sank en route to the breakers in 2000. Oriana would outlast them all. Retired in 1986, she became a floating hotel, first in Japan, then China, before being irreparably damaged in a storm in 2004, and scrapped the following year.



Southern California Chapter members continue to support *PowerShips* with the Spring 2024 issue having articles about Royal Mail Lines' "Three Graces," a comparison of shipping lines' press release illustrations to the actually built vessel, and a very cold T-2 tanker. Quite a mix.

Member **Bill Miller** continues his "Lives of the Liners" series, presenting the story of the "Three Graces," Royal Mail Lines' post-World War II liners *Amazon*, *Aragon*, and *Arlanza* on their South American service.

Recently departed member, and *PowerShips* West Coast Regional Editor **Jim Shaw** provides us with comparisons of shipping lines' conceptual renderings prepared for press releases of their upcoming new-builds to views of what actually slipped down the builder's ways into service. Sometimes the early visions became reality, sometimes not.

Past Chapter member **Don Persson** retells his story of being a crew mate on the ss *Robert E. Hopkins* as the ship challenged an ice-filled Hudson River to deliver much needed gasoline and heating oil to the City of Albany, NY in the cold winter of February 1957 in *An Iced-Up T-2 Tanker*.

