The Millergram is designed and formatted by Tim Noble, our good friend from Melbourne, Australia and a former navigating officer with the Blue Star Line.

BOOKS: More scribbling! I am penning yet another new book these days, Maritime Royalty: The Queen Mary & the Cunard Queens, timed for the 80th anniversary (May 1936) of the beloved Queen Mary’s maiden crossing from Southampton to New York. It will be a slightly larger book than usual, more of a glossy commemorative. It will be published by Fonthill Media over in the UK.

Some sad news! Mainmast Books over in the UK is closing down as of Apr 1st. Mainmast were a longtime seller of maritime books – certainly one of the very best, in fact – and a highpoint for books on liners. They had a huge and diverse monthly list. Competition with internet book selling cast the decisive blow. A great loss!

CARGO SHIPPING: Caused by the likes of downturns in the Chinese economy, worldwide cargo shipping is in a slump. Hundreds of containerships are currently laid-up, awaiting cargo. Meanwhile, Denmark’s Maersk Line – the biggest containership operator in the world plus other, vast maritime holdings – has seen its profits crash by over 80%. In response, Maersk has sacked 4,000 employees, both ashore and afloat, and also called South Korean shipbuilders to cancel the building of some projected 20,000-capacity containerships.
CARNIVAL: Italy's Fincantieri shipbuilders has joined forces with Chinese shipyards near Shanghai to build the first generation of Carnival cruise ships especially for the Chinese market. Overall, it is a multi billion dollar project. Another Chinese shipyard is developing conversion skills – altering existing ships for the Chinese market.

CHINA: Expansion! While Costa has formed its Costa Asia division, Carnival Cruise Lines will commit two of its big liners, the Carnival Miracle & Carnival Splendor, to year-round China cruising beginning in 2018. Meanwhile, Norwegian Cruise Lines has allocated $30 million to further development of its China cruise operations.

One goes, another arrives! Chinese operator HNA Cruises, using the 47,000-ton Henna (the former Jubilee of Carnival), pulled the plug on its China cruise program. Meanwhile, Diamond Cruises is starting up this spring with their Brilliant of the Seas (the former Olympic Explorer of Royal Olympic and later Louis Cruise Lines' Celestyal Odyssey).

COMPAGNIE POLYNESIENNE: Looking for something different! A Chinese shipyard has recently delivered the 7,500-ton Aranui 5 for these Tahiti-based owners – and for 14-night cruises among the Marquesas, Tuamotu & Society islands in the South Pacific. Actually a "working" passenger-cargo ship, the 413-footer has mixed passenger accommodations: 32 suites, 31 deluxe cabins, 40 tourist cabins, 5 dormitories and even a deck class. The two-week voyages range from $2,800 in a dormitory to $8,600 in the best suite.
CRYSTAL CRUISES: Revival: In early February, LA-based Crystal Cruises and its parent Genting Hong Kong announced plans to study reviving the legendary SS United States. The 53,000-ton former flagship of the US merchant marine and speed champ of the Atlantic was completed in 1952, sailed for 17 years until 1969 and, in sadly neglected condition, has been laid-up for over 46 years. Crystal plans to rebuild and restyle the 990-ft long liner, changing her original 1,725 beds to 800 (in high luxury) and then having the ship back in service in two years, by 2018. The overall project would cost an estimated $500 million. Genting has just bought the Lloydwerft shipyard in Bremerhaven, Germany and it is expected that some of the refit work for the United States would be done there.

Further news: On March 1st, mega-rich Genting bought 3 other German shipyards for further cruise ship construction.

Meanwhile, Genting’s fourth cruise arm (Star, Norwegian Cruise & Crystal) is well into creation. Called Dream Cruises and aimed at the Asian market, the first of two 150,000-ton liners for 3,300 passengers each is now under construction in Germany. They will be named Genting Dream & World Dream.

DISNEY: Expansion! Disney has ordered two 135,000 tonners from Germany’s Meyer Werft shipyard.

FATHOM: This new cruise venture where passengers volunteer while ashore kicks off this May. Weekly itineraries aboard the luxurious, 700-passenger Adonia (formerly with P&O Cruises and, since built in 2001, has been the R Eight, Minerva II and Royal Princess) depart from Miami to the Dominican Republic or Cuba. The Cuban cruises are reportedly very popular. This is an interesting project from the ever-successful Carnival Corporation.
HOLLAND AMERICA: "It's good to be on a well run ship!" Holland America was once proudly known as the "Spotless Fleet". It was all about impeccable Dutch maintenance and care. "In the 1950s, Holland America had the cleanest, best maintained liners in all of New York harbor," remembered the late Captain Joseph Mazzotta, US Coast Guard commandant of the port. "Their ships sparkled and shined – not a touch of rust or scrape of paint. I visited them in over in Hoboken and later at Pier 40 in Manhattan. It was always a great pleasure to go aboard Holland America liners." Well, that spotless quality continued. In 2015, no less than 7 members of the HAL fleet received perfect scores of 100 on their United States Public Health

And there was heroism too. On June 10th 2015, the Noordam rescued 41 persons from the 79-ft long sightseeing vessel Baranof Wind, which was experiencing mechanical problems while cruising in Alaska's Glacier Bay. The unexpected guests were welcomed aboard, given lunch and later dropped off at Bartlett Cove.
**OCEAN LINER COLLECTIBLES**: The *France*, commissioned in 1962, was the last of the great French liners. A super liner, she was noted for style, decor, service and — expectedly for the French — her cooking. "You can never, ever diet on a French Line crossing," reported one very experienced trans-ocean traveler. Retired by the French Line in '74 and then given a long, second life as the cruise ship *Norway* (before being demolished out in India in 2009), the appeal and even the mystique and fascination with the 66,000-ton, 2,000-passenger *France* continues. A monogrammed, porcelain coffee cup & saucer sold recently for $250.

**OCEAN LINER HISTORY**: Sixty years ago: At the Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson shipyard on England's East Coast, shipyard crews were busily adding the finishing touches to the new pride of the Norwegian merchant marine — the 18,500-ton *Bergensfjord*. She would join the Norwegian America Line schedules in the May of 1956. Appraised highly for her clean-looking, comfortable and welcoming Scandinavian interiors, the 577-ft long ship was designed for dual purposes — crossings between Oslo, Bergen, Copenhagen & New York for about six months of the year; cruising the world — from a quick 6-night jaunt down to Bermuda to 120 nights around the world — for the other six months.

On a bright morning, tugs, fireboats and even a blimp welcomed the gray-hulled liner as she graciously entered the Lower Bay and then the Hudson River before berthing at Pier 42 in Greenwich Village, at the foot of Morton Street. Horns hooted, flags fluttered and a gala welcome aboard luncheon was held onboard.
The *Bergensfjord* – carrying 126 first class & 752 tourist class on crossings or a very clubby 420 all-one class on cruises – became a great favorite, joining the *Oslofjord* and the veteran *Stavangerfjord* in Norwegian America schedules. In 1965, a stunning, new national flagship, the *Sagafjord*, joined the fleet. The *Bergensfjord* was expected to remain until 1973, when yet another fancy new liner, the *Vistafjord*, was due. But in the winter of 1971, the French Line had a blow: They lost their *Antilles* to a fire while off Mustique in the West Indies. They were all but desperate for a replacement liner. Accordingly, they offered the Norwegians more money than they could refuse – in November 1971, the *Bergensfjord* became the French *De Grasse*. Used for Le Havre-West Indies service as well as cruise services, this phase was in fact quite short – a mere two years. Highly unionized, expensive French passenger ship operations plus a drastic rise in fuel oil prices were the deciding blows. By September 1973, the *De Grasse* was reportedly sold for $13 ½ million to the Home Lines but then to Israeli buyers, who wanted the ship for use as a moored hotel at Tel Aviv. These plans never materialized.

Instead, the former *Bergensfjord* went back to Norwegian ownership, to Thoresen & Company Limited, but under the less costly Singapore flag. The ship was renamed *Rasa Sayang* ("Flower of the East") and was sent off to Eastern waters, to run cruises from Singapore to Indonesia & other southeast Asian ports. Such far-off cruise voyages offered on a year-round schedule were a gamble at the time. After all, Americans & Europeans had to make long flights to and from Singapore.

Life for the *Rasa Sayang* became troubled and complicated, however, and finally very sad. On June 2nd 1977, the then twenty-one-year-old ship caught fire while at sea and was abandoned by both passengers and crew. Later towed into Singapore and repaired, she was now offered for sale. New Greek buyers, Sunlit Cruises, which used the Cypriot flag, brought the ship to Greece for projected Eastern Mediterranean-Aegean cruising as the *Golden Moon*. The project never took off and, in 1979, the ship was supposedly being chartered to a Dutch travel firm for cruises from Rotterdam as the *Prins van*
Oranje. This never materialized either. Sitting in a Greek backwater and waiting, the ship was sold in the summer of 1980 to other Greek owners, who planned to charter it to London-based CTC Lines. CTC's plan was to revive her for South Pacific cruising but from Sydney as the Rasa Sayang. A full refit was planned, but, on August 27th, an engine room fire erupted and then spread to engulf the entire ship. Moored at Perama in Greece at the time, the blistered, blackened vessel was later towed to nearby Kynosoura and then sunk in shallow water. A quarter of the capsized, former Bergensfjord poked above local waters for years.

**P&O AUSTRALIA:** Quite a sight! The 5 liners of P&O Australia met last November outside Sydney and then assembled in a grand review in the inner harbor.

**ROYAL CARIBBEAN:** Difficult cruise! It was intended to be a usual 7-night cruise from New York to the Bahamas & Florida. But within a day, the 167,000-grt Anthem of the Seas hit severe winter weather off Cape Hatteras. The ship was battered and the passengers confined to their cabins. The ship never made it to a port of call, but instead reversed course and was back in New York harbor, to Cape Liberty at Bayonne, New Jersey, within three days. Four people were injured and there were damages to passenger cabins & public areas, and flooding in the crew quarters. The weeklong cruise was cut to 4 days and the disappointed passengers given a full refund and a 50%
credit on a future RCI cruise. The incident made headlines. But all was well – the 4,800-passenger ship was back in service within four days.

But then more troubles: On a following cruise, in late February, the giant *Anthem* had to cut it all short once again, skip ports & hurry home to Bayonne. This time, there were mechanical issues, another impending storm and – adding to troublesome matters – an outbreak of the dreaded Norovirus.

**PONANT CRUISES:** Following an engine room fire and then full evacuation of the 11,000-ton *Le Boreal* while in Antarctic waters, the 264-passenger but power-less luxury ship belonging to French owners was towed to Punta Arenas in Chile for inspection and preliminary repairs. But more attention was needed. Quite unusually, the yacht-like ship was later placed in a floating dry dock and towed to Europe for full repairs.
**SAGA CRUISES:** Moving forward! Saga, the UK-based cruise line for passengers over fifty, has ordered its very first brand new liner – a ship of some 56,000 tons and 768 feet in length. She is due in 2019, coming from the Meyer Werft shipyard in Germany. Formed in the late 1990s, Saga has made due with secondhand cruise ships such as the former Sagaffjord & Vistaffjord and currently with the 446-bed Saga Pearl II (the former Astor) and the 706-passenger Saga Sapphire (ex-Europa).

**THAILAND:** The remotely known cruise ship *Ocean Dream* sank on Feb 27th while anchored off Laem Chabang in Thailand. The 17,000-ton ship had been laid-up for some time. The ship had also been unattended for a year or so after her final owners, Chinese-based Ocean Dream Cruises, went bust.

The 840-passenger ship was in fact something of a "pioneer" to modern cruising – and a ship with a very varied history. Intended to be Norwegian Caribbean's *Seaward*, she was bought while under construction by P&O and finished in 1972 as the *Spirit of London*. Two years later, she joined P&O-owned Princess Cruises and changed to *Sun Princess*.

In 1989, she was sold off and joined Florida’s Premier Cruise Lines to begin a stint as the *Starship Majestic*. Next phases: The 17 ½-knot ship became the *Southern Cross* in 1995 for UK-based CTC Lines and then two years later joined Greece’s Festival Cruises to sail as the *Flamenco*. When Festival collapsed in 2004, it was on to becoming the *New Flamenco* and then *Flamenco I*. But by 2007, her cruising days seemed to be all but over – with her last phase being
used as a moored accommodation ship for miners in New Caledonia. She was actually sold off to Indian scrappers in 2010, but then the deal failed and her next stop was to be auctioned-off to Chinese interests, Thailand-headquartered Ocean Dream Cruises, operating short cruises for Thai passengers. That venture collapsed a year ago, the Company promptly closed and the ship was all but abandoned at her moorings.

**TURKEY:** Vintage passenger ship: She was barely known on this side of the Atlantic, but the classic passenger ship Akdeniz – once owned by the Istanbul-based Turkish Maritime Lines – has recently gone to the scrappers in India. The 8,800-ton ship was sixty years old, having been built by the Germans in 1955. Carrying cargo as well, the 474-ft long ship had space for passengers in three classes – 95 in first class, 112 second class and 648 in dormitories in third class. She and a sistership, the Karadeniz, plied the Turkish coastal trade and, in her early years, also ventured out into the Mediterranean trading to Piraeus, Naples, Genoa, Marseilles & Barcelona. In her final years, she was made all one-class (for 444 passengers) and did some Mediterranean & Black Sea cruising. A handsome looking ship, she was retired, however, in 1997 and passed over to the Technical University of Istanbul for use as a moored accommodation ship. Mostly, she housed cadets for the Turkish Maritime Academy. That work ended last year and the ship no longer needed.

**VIRGIN CRUISES:** Upping their original plan, this new, Florida-based cruise line has now increased its order (with Italy's Fincantieri) for three instead of two 110,000-ton, 2,800-berth cruise ships.
PHOTO SALON

Noted Dutch Passenger Ships of the Past

Top to bottom:

*Oranje*  
(Nederland Line);  
*Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*  
(Nederland Line);  
*Willem Ruys*  
(Royal Rotterdam Lloyd)
Top to bottom:

*Statendam* (Holland America Line);
*Prins Willem van Oranje* (Oranje Line);
*Tegelberg* (Royal Interocean Lines).
HEARD ALONG THE BOAT DECK:

Cruise Review 2015

The cruise business is booming! Near to the end of 2015, no less than 34 cruise ships were being built – or at least firmly in the planning stages or on order. That's a record! European shipyards, specialists in cruise liner construction and in Italy, France, Germany, Finland and Japan, are all but crammed – fully booked with billions of dollars worth of construction.

Six liners were added to worldwide cruising in 2015, 9 will join in 2016 and then 6 in 2017 and 8 in 2018. Alone, the mighty Carnival Corporation has at least 9 new liners on order and these are to be divided amongst several of its subsidiary lines.

Cruising numbers have been steadily increasing: from 19 million five years ago, in 2010, to 23 million this year. It is expected to exceed 25 million by 2020. In a recent survey of 100,000 American vacationers, 42% voted that a cruise was the very best overall vacation against 14% citing a land-based vacation and 9% for a resort vacation.

The typical cruise passenger in the US is 49 years old, married, has a college education and earns an average of $114,000 a year.

Three-to-seven day cruises are the most popular, appealing to families of two adults and two children. Some 62% of all American cruise passengers are repeaters. In a similar survey, the top three benefits of a cruise were cited. 70% select a cruise because it is the very best way to see several locations. 60% cited the rest, relaxation and "get away" qualities offered by a cruise. Another 60% named the pampering during a cruise as a top benefit.

Carnival Corporation – with some 105 ships and over a dozen subsidiaries – generated the highest income in 2014 with nearly $16 billion. Royal Caribbean and its subsidiaries followed at $8 billion. Norwegian Cruise Lines did $3 billion followed by MSC with $1.5 billion, Disney $950 million, Thomson $700 million and Asia's Star Cruises just a tad under Thomson.

The list of newbuilds is all but mind-boggling. Royal Caribbean leads the list with no less than two 227,000-ton liners under construction. Slightly larger versions of the highly successful Oasis of the Seas and Allure of the Seas, the first of these 1,188-foot long mega-liners, to be named Harmony of the Seas (shown below) and building at St Nazaire in France, will be delivered in 2016. Costing $1.5 billion, it will be the biggest passenger ship of all time and will carry a maximum of 6,360 passengers. Meanwhile, and while not quite as large, several new Carnival ships will carry up to 6,600 passengers – the highest cruise capacities yet. Also under construction, Aida has at least four new liners coming into service – a pair of 183,000-tonners and another pair of 124,000 ton ships. Costa will add its biggest liners yet, a pair of 183,000 ton liners, while Royal Caribbean is planning for two more Quantum of the Seas class
4,900-bed ships. Both MSC and Norwegian Cruise Lines each have four liners on liner while Star Cruises and Celebrity each have ordered pairs of new vessels. A new entrant is Virgin Cruises, beginning with a trio of 110,000 tonners, carrying 2,800 passengers each. Perhaps the greatest expansion for 2015 was Crystal Cruises, a part of Genting Hong Kong from last May. Crystal had what might have been the biggest cruise news ever. Crystal revealed an almost startling five-prong plan: (1) Three 100,000-ton cruise liners for 1,000 passengers, with 1,000 crew and with a top deck for suites that guests can buy; (2) Crystal yacht/expedition cruise using two 62-bed luxury ships; (4) Crystal luxury river cruises in Europe; and (5) around-the-world luxury tours in a luxurious Crystal jet.

Other notations included the opening of the Cuban cruise market and with the likes of Carnival and MSC quickly making itinerary plans. Historically, Cunard turned 175, Princess had its 50th anniversary and Crystal its 25th.

Specialist cruising is thriving as are riverboat voyages, especially in Europe. Food/cooking and wine theme cruises remain the most popular. Wellness, fitness, history, poker and even motorcycle cruises are increasing in popularity. More specifically, family reunion cruises are also on the rise.

Surveyed passengers reported preferences in selecting a cruise. A cruise providing an experience to remember had the highest score followed by the ability to stay connected during a voyage. Third was the ability to travel in groups followed by the service provided by staff and crew and, finally, the food.

Ten years ago, passengers selected ship by its reputation as the primary reason for selecting a particular voyage. Five years ago, this changed to itinerary. In 2015, it was price – followed by itinerary and, in last place, reputation of the ship.
36% of American cruise passengers selected the Caribbean as their favorite destination followed by 20% for the Mediterranean, 11% for Northern Europe and 6% for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. China is growing in vast numbers. It is expected to become the 2nd largest worldwide cruise market and, perhaps by 2025, surpass the biggest of all, the 18 million cruisers in the US. The growth of the Chinese markets includes plans to begin building passenger liners in specially prepared Chinese shipyards. At least a half dozen Chinese cruise lines have sprung up recently. And with high interest from established cruise operators, China cruising might be equated to a convoy. Princess Cruises, for example, has assigned the 2,675-passenger *Sapphire Princess* to year-round Chinese cruise service. Meanwhile, Royal Caribbean is way ahead in China cruising with four and soon to be 5 giant liners. The 4,180-bed *Quantum of the Seas* has joined fleetmates *Voyager of the Seas*, *Mariner of the Seas* & *Legend of the Seas*. They will be joined by another 4,180-berth ship, the upcoming *Ovation of the Seas*. Costa is 2nd runner-up with four big liners in Chinese cruise service: *Costa Fortuna*, *Costa Serena*, *Costa Atlantica* & *Costa Victoria*. 
Among the top ten busiest cruise ports for 2015, Miami has the slight edge over nearby Port Everglades. Port Canaveral, also in Florida, was third busiest followed by Nassau, Cozumel, Barcelona, Civitavecchia (for Rome), St Thomas, St Maarten and Venice. Barcelona is now the busiest cruise port in Europe.

Sun drenched ports and luncheon buffets on deck, Broadway shows and robotic bartenders, rock climbing walls and bumper cars – cruising and cruise ships are expanding like never before!
RECENT NEW BOOKS
BY BILL MILLER: 2009-2016

Updated February 2016


POST-WAR ON THE LINERS from Fonthill Media, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK, published fall 2015.


EAST OF SUEZ: LINERS TO AUSTRALIA IN THE 1950s & '60s co-authored with Tim Noble; from Amberley Publishing Co, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK, published Winter 2014.

GREAT FRENCH PASSENGER LINERS from The History Press, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK, published September 2014.

GREAT FRENCH PASSENGER LINERS from The History Press, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK, published September 2014.


