

## SEAFARERS' PHOTOGRAPHS ENCAPSULATE LIFE AT SEA

**QE2** came, her passengers spent a considerable sum ashore, and she sailed for Southampton via Walvis Bay, Las Palmas and Madeira. Since she arrived in the dark and sailed in fog on Monday evening, her passengers would have been denied seeing Table Mountain from the sea. I understand that such is the popularity of this famous vessel, that for berths on this voyage, over 400 people were on the waiting list.

A remarkable aspect of her call was that, in the absence of a serviceable bunker barge or wharveside bunker pipes, she had to arrive in the wee hours of Sunday, and berth at Eastern Mole to bunker. Since that berth is remote from the city and the Waterfront, as well as not being able to accommodate the tour buses, she shifted at breakfast time to E Berth so that passengers could disembark for their tours or board taxis to the airport, while others could join the ship.

My dockland ears hear that the local bunker barge, **Pelican**, will not be returning to service here, not unexpected as she is a single-skinned old timer. Reports indicate that retrenchments in the company will follow, and **Pelican**, with the Richards Bay barge **Dolphin Coast** - once Unicorn's mini-tanker **Eland** - will head for West Africa.

What would have happened if the south-easter had ratcheted up to a formidable speed for two days, preventing the liner from moving to her usual berth to disembark passengers. This scenario would have been the owner's and agent's worst nightmare, as tour buses, taxis, chandlers' lorries and engineering companies' vehicles would have had to negotiate the area around the Eastern Mole that is hardly conducive to such traffic.

Surely someone should have foreseen that **Pelican** would pass her sell-by date, and plan accordingly? Although neither was involved in the **Pelican** operation, Unicorn and Smit Amandla Marine have ordered barges from China and Durban respectively, but it will take a while before the new vessels enter service.

The wind factor is no thumb-suck. I had a pleasant morning chatting to a reader, Captain Colin Quixley who reminded me of the time when **QE2** anchored off Sea Point for 48 hours owing to the south-easter, and on one occasion nearly ended up smashing into A Berth when the wind took charge as she entered the Duncan Dock. All four of the port's steam tugs battled to hold her in the wind, and only skilled piloting and great ship-handling on the part of the tugmasters prevented a calamity.

One of the few seafarers who took a camera to sea, Quixley's interesting sea-going career is reflected in photo albums and diaries, beginning aboard Safmarine's Victory ship **Constantia**, and ending with his last command, the collier **Johan Hugo** that carried power station and locomotive coal from Maputo to Cape Town from 1966 to 1984.

His second ship was the trampship **Cape Agulhas**, one of two new ships that Safmarine managed for their American parent company, States Marine. With the delivery crew, Quixley - then a cadet - flew in a chartered KLM Constellation aircraft from Johannesburg via Mauritius, Bangkok and Manila to Tokyo whence the bullet train took them to Kobe where the vessel was about to be commissioned.

Photographs taken aboard **Cape Agulhas** on a passage between Japan and San Pedro in California support Quixley's diary entry in September 1959 that the vessel was rolling severely, the worst being a 41-degree roll to port.

From the mast of **Cape Agulhas**, he photographed some of the transit through the Panama Canal. Paging through his albums, I found views of his ship discharging ore into barges in Antwerp, or loading cotton or sugar bags from bumboats in Central American ports, while other snaps show a deck cargo of Canadian timber.

His journal also contains a letter from radio personality Eric Egan whose popular Springbok Radio breakfast show was picked up aboard **Cape Agulhas** in the North Pacific Ocean! Quixley had mentioned this unusual reception feat in a letter to his mother, who passed his letter to Egan.

His record of life at sea is invaluable.

But talking about contemporary bulk cargoes, another Chinese-owned Freedom-class bulker, **Long An Cheng** - inward from Richards Bay - loaded a parcel cargo of steel for Europe. A common practice that suits the range of bulk cargoes moved through South African ports, parcel cargo shipment entails vessels loading either a number of bulk commodities for various consignees, or loading a part-cargo of one product - such as steel in Richards Bay - and topping up at another port.

Dominating the dockland skyline is the rig **Atlantic Venture**, towed from the US Gulf by the smart **Fairmount Summit**, one of the tugs that brought **FPSO Dalia** this way last year. **Atlantic Venture** will be refitted here.

The queue of containerships in the roadstead over the week-end indicated the effect of the gale late last week. Containers can be handled in most weathers, except when strong wind causes the containers to swing, making it both dangerous and difficult for the gantry operators to work the boxes, thus delaying the ships alongside and causing the queue.

Sailing for the Far East on Saturday was the red-hulled 240-metre **Luetjenburg**, chartered for the Safari service to replace **SA Helderberg**, drydocking after her recent collision off Singapore.

A busy few days in the port.