

PORT POURRI



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CAPE TIMES

Brian Ingpen hosts a weekly column in the **Cape Times**, called **Port Pourri**, where he shares with his readers the news about happenings in the Western Cape ports. He lives with his ear to the ground and his insights into the port vibes make for excellent reading. On this site, he shares his column and adds some photos as a bonus for an insider's view on the port life.

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Top: Oceanic II alongside Number 2 Jetty, Cape Town.



TOP: Megan Goby and Jono Whittington of Rennie's Ships Agency with the plaque presented to them aboard **Oceanic II** in recognition of their sterling efforts to ensure that the vessel's stay in Cape Town was smooth.



LEFT: Cosco Shekou arriving in Cape Town recently.

Scheduled for midnight on Sunday, the departure of **Explorer**, the floating university campus that was here over the week-end, was delayed by seasonal fog until Monday morning.

Among several unusual callers in the next few days is another vessel with around 200 students aboard, **Oceanic II**, that arrives early today from the Far East for a six-day visit.

Those aboard participate in the Scholar Ship programme that offers a range of courses compiled by academics from a number of universities, and of course, excursions ashore broaden the horizons for most of the young passengers.

Backed by Royal Caribbean Cruises, famous for their Caribbean and Mediterranean cruises, the ship has an interesting schedule that began in Hong Kong and continued to Shanghai, Thailand, India and the Seychelles, and, from Cape Town, she heads for the Cape Verde Islands, Barcelona, Istanbul, Lisbon and Amsterdam.

It's a most appropriate way for students to learn first-hand about the countries they visit, and are exposed to the political, economic and social issues faced in regions far from their homes. Perhaps a lecturer aboard or the ship's senior officers will also impart details of the wider shipping industry so that when these people take their places later in commerce or academia, they will appreciate that shipping is the life-blood of the global economy.

Making a couple of hundred bright young folks more shipping-literate is a major spin-off of such an interesting voyage.

Oceanic II has been here previously in various guises. Ship-spotters will recognise her as the former **Kungsholm**, the two-funnelled Swedish-America liner that was built on Clydeside in 1966, and called while cruising in the 1960s. Bought by P&O in 1978 she underwent an extensive refit that included the removal of the forward funnel, and renamed **Sea Princess**, she came here several times.

Late in 1999, a reincarnation of Union-Castle Line chartered her from P&O - she was then **Victoria** - for a circumnavigation of Africa to commemorate the centenary of the amalgamation of the Union and Castle Lines to form Union-Castle in 1900. To much fanfare and bearing the familiar Union-Castle funnel colours, **Victoria** arrived in Cape Town just after Christmas in 1999 and saw in the new millennium at the Waterfront where she will also berth this time.

Although it will be a tight squeeze to bring this 201-metre ship to outside Number 2 Jetty, Cape Town's senior pilots are a most competent lot, following in the footsteps of their predecessors who managed to fit all manner of ships alongside that jetty during the two world wars and during the two Suez closures. Some fairly long regular callers - notably Shaw Savill's **Ceramic** that was torpedoed with tragic loss of life in the North Atlantic in December 1942 - and whale factory ships have also berthed there over the years.

It will be full-house in the Victoria Basin at the Waterfront over the week-end, and well worth a visit. Apart from the Scholar Ship vessel, the German frigates **Hamburg** and **Koln**, and the large supply vessel **Berlin** that sailed from Simon's Town last Monday for exercises with the South African Navy, will arrive on Friday morning, treble-banking inside Number 2 Jetty with one South African frigate at Number 6 Quay. The warships will be open to the public on Saturday and Sunday afternoon. The German tanker **Westerwald** will return to Simon's Town where she will be joined by the other ships for the Naval Festival from 14 March. Again, the public will be able to board some of the ships during the festival that is always a popular event, generating traffic volumes for which the roads in the area were never designed.

Today, the port will be busy. **Pride South Seas**, the rig that has been refitting at A Berth for several months and that now looks very smart is scheduled to sail under tow by the tug **Eems**, weather permitting. Since all the harbour tugs will be used in the operation, other ships will have to wait for a few hours while the rig is manoeuvred out of the harbour. Ship-spotters will enjoy the flurry of movements that are bound to follow this lengthy operation.

And speaking of rigs, residents along the Atlantic coast will see **Sedco 702** undertake a crew change off port limits tomorrow, necessitating several helicopter flights to the ship. Refitted recently in Singapore and now boasting eight thrusters, she has a dynamic positioning capacity and can operate in waterdepths of about 7000 metres, a vital capability as the frenetic search for oil extends further offshore in many parts of the world. Escorted by the tug **Fairmount Expedition**, **Sedco 702** is bound for Nigeria on a three-year charter to Shell.

Also heading that way after a protracted voyage from Singapore is the smart tug **Jascon 10** that came into port on Sunday morning, towing the accommodation-crane barge **Jascon 30**.

Imagine the revenue generated by these vessels - millions of dollars earned by contractors involved in the refit of **Pride South Seas**, thousands of Euros spent on stores and fuel by the German naval ships and spent by the German crews both in Cape Town and Simon's Town, as well as large amounts of money entering the country courtesy of other callers mentioned, including the students undertaking the Scholar Ship programme.

All good for the local economy!