The Mississippi River Valley will welcome another sternwheeler in June 2017 when the 166-passenger *American Duchess* begins paddling from New Orleans north to Memphis and beyond. The firm’s President and COO Ted Sykes, operating the *American Queen*, and in the Pacific Northwest, the *American Empress*, says that its present sailings are running virtually full and hence the need to expand.

The new vessel, presently a casino boat, is being rebuilt into a cabin-spacious design that will feature 550 square-foot Owners and Loft Suites, 480 sq. ft. Deluxe Suites, 240-330 sq. ft. Veranda Suites on down to still Roomy Interior Staterooms measuring 180-200 sq. ft.

*American Duchess* will offer three Owner’s Suites of 550 square feet. In addition, the vessel will have four two-level, 550-square-foot Loft Suites – a first for American rivers. Scenic has a similar concept in Europe. The Loft Suite’s upper level will have 200 square feet including the sleeping area and bathroom, while the 350-square-foot lower level will have a spacious seating area with pull-out couch (for third and fourth berths), as well as a dining table and guest bathroom.

The four-deck *American Duchess* will have open seating for all guests within two dining venues, the Grand Dining Room and The Grill Room. Menus will offer regionally inspired cuisine similar to that of the *American Queen*. Entertainment-wise, the ship will have an auditorium capable of seating all passengers for a show, lecture or musical entertainment.

The interior décor, design and décor elements will be revealed at a later date, but the project manager will be a familiar face -- David Kelley who was in charge of the interior designs of the *American Empress*. As for the power plant and hull, the line wants to continue to operate all American-flagged vessels. To do that, it needed to purchase an American-made hull.

It found that in a former Florida gaming vessel, which was well-known to the company’s parent firm, HMS Global Maritime, which owns 85 U.S. flagged vessels. AQSC expects to keep the ship’s powered American-built hull, its Caterpillar engines, bow thrusters and the “abundance of power” the ship has. “Then, we’ll scoop out and build a new superstructure on top. So essentially everything but the hull (originally constructed in 1995) and the power plant will be new. The work will be done in an American yard so the new 340-foot-long vessel will meet all requirements of the Jones Act, a requirement for American flagging.

*American Duchess* will sail the Mississippi and her tributaries; *American Queen* will typically sail in one direction, the new vessel the other direction. New for the line, *American Duchess* will offer overnight stays in port including downtown Nashville as well as shorter round-trip itineraries from the “Music City” and New Orleans.

The printed preliminary schedule shows the June 4 departure from New Orleans to Memphis and a June 11 departure of the reverse itinerary as the first of the revenue cruises. That itinerary will continue through mid-July and then the ship will sail nine-night voyages between St. Louis and St. Paul or Chicago.

(Continued on page 14)
EDITORIAL

As we rush towards the end of this crazy year I am happy to report that the cruise industry remains a solid, growing and evolving entity.

During my cruises in 2016 I was often asked what my favorite line or ship was and why it stood out. This is probably the most difficult question I am ever asked, yet many would think it is one for which I would have an instant easy answer. The reason I find an answer so difficult to come up with is because the industry has gone from changing in stages, to an industry that evolves on a continual, almost seamless basis. Cruise lines today constantly monitor not only their own performance and sales metrics, but also that of their competitors. As more millennials join the cruising crowd, each evolves their product to fit the needs of this new, changing audience.

While a cruise aboard one of the small deluxe vessels of Oceania, Regent or Seabourn certainly hold a special place in my heart, one of the things I enjoy most about cruising is the unique features each of the lines offer whether their ships are big or small. I have always loved sailing across the Atlantic aboard one of Cunard’s Queens, and have recently fallen in love with America’s heartland as seen from American Queen Steamboat’s unique product.

Therefore my answer to this question is one I will pass along here to you. Expand your horizons. Try a new ship, a new line or a new itinerary. If you’re brave enough, try a line that’s something you might normally shy away from. The world of cruising today is an amazing vacation experience, one I would have never imagined all those years ago when I started cruising, and one I enjoy more each and every day. Happy Cruising!

Sincerely,

VISIT US ON FACEBOOK!

Please consider stopping by for a visit. Our Facebook page can be found at: http://www.facebook.com/OceanCruiseNews

CONTACT US

To contact us quickly and easily please email us at: membership@wocls.org
LOOKING BACK

A look at what was making news in Ocean & Cruise News, Five, Ten, Fifteen and Twenty years ago.

Five Years Ago – October 2011...Carnival Cruise Lines unveils Fun Ship 2.0, a multi-year effort to offer new dining choices, more exciting bars and lounges, and better entertainment options through innovative partnerships and new branded spaces....Norwegian Cruise Line's announces that its new state-of-the-art 4,000 passenger ship, Norwegian Breakaway, will make New York City its year-round home port....NCL also announces that pop icon and famous artist, Peter Max, will paint the signature hull artwork for the Norwegian Breakaway, scheduled for delivery in April 2013.

Ten Years Ago – October 2006....Seabourn Cruise Line announces it has signed a letter of intent to build two new, ultra luxury ships, for delivery in spring 2009 & 2010....NCL's Norwegian Sun becomes the first cruise ship to sail a regularly scheduled cruise from the port of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina....NCL announces that Rosie O'Donnell, the talk show host and actress, has been named the godmother of its newest ship from NCL, Norwegian Pearl.

Fifteen Years Ago – October 2001....Orient Lines' announces that its shore side operations are moving to Miami from London, England to be combined with those of sister company, Norwegian Cruise Lines....American Classic Voyages files for Chapter 11 reorganization and says it will stop operations of all its vessels except for the Delta Queen.

Twenty Years Ago – October 1996....Cunard Line announces that it is selling the Cunard Countess to Awai Cruise Line of Indonesia for $23 million....Renaissance Cruises places an order for two 740-passenger ships with an option for a third....Disney Cruise Line starts to take reservations for its first ship the Disney Magic scheduled to enter service in April 1998....Clipper Cruise Lines announces that it will be offering European river cruises in 1997 aboard the chartered 100 passenger ms Switzerland.
laundry. Instead, they are free to bask on sugar-sand beaches, indulge in gourmet meals, or relax and rejuvenate at the Canyon Ranch Spa Club. Of course, this winter home also comes with a gracious staff of more than 800 to look after every detail from laundry and housekeeping to keeping your refrigerator stocked with your favorite libations and snacks. Snowbirds in Residence is offered on two exclusive departures and guests will enjoy a wealth of amenities and added-value extras to ensure their total comfort in their home away from home, all for a price that is extraordinarily affordable.

For more information about Oceania Cruises, guests should visit www.oceaniacruises.com, call 855-OCEANIA (855-623-2642) or contact a professional travel agent.

Since re-entering service after her remastering in June 2016, *Queen Mary 2* has received several accolades and awards which underline the success of the significant work completed on the Cunard flagship.

*Queen Mary 2*’s remastering cost in the region of $132 million, and was one of the most ambitious and remarkable renovations undertaken by Cunard in modern times. The newly-renovated *Queen Mary 2* takes its new art deco design inspiration from the original *Queen Mary*, which debuted into service 80 years ago.

For more information about all of the remaining 2016 and exciting 2017 Cunard voyages, or to book a voyage aboard any of the Cunard liners, please contact your Travel Consultant, call Cunard Line at 1-800-728-6273 or visit Cunard Line online at www.cunard.com.

2016 marks fifty years since the *m/s Sunward* made her first voyage from Miami to the Caribbean on December 19, 1966, signifying the birth of Norwegian Caribbean Lines. Today, the company now known as Norwegian Cruise Line
is a leading global cruise brand with 14 purpose-built ships sailing to more than 300 destinations worldwide. To celebrate this golden milestone, Norwegian is inviting their guests, travel professionals, partners and team members to share fifty years of memories made through the company’s #NorwegiansFirst50 Anniversary Campaign.

Those who wish to sail during Norwegian’s official 50th anniversary this December can reserve their stateroom now to join in the fun, with eight-day cruises departing on December 18 from New York to Florida & The Bahamas on Norwegian Breakaway; from Miami to the Western Caribbean on Norwegian Getaway; and from Tampa to the Western Caribbean on Norwegian Jade. On December 19, cruisers can set sail from the Big Apple on Norwegian Gem to the Eastern Caribbean on a 10-day holiday cruise and from Miami on Norwegian Pearl, for a 10-day bucket list Panama Canal adventure. These anniversary cruises also offer a special holiday bonus of $100 in onboard credit, perfect for purchasing last-minute holiday gifts in one of the onboard boutiques or to toast to the New Year with a relaxing and indulgent spa treatment, and more. Best of all, it’s combinable with Norwegian’s Free At Sea offer, to make for a merry holiday vacation experience for all.

To book an award-winning cruise with Norwegian, contact a travel professional, call Norwegian at 888-NCL-CRUISE (625-2784), or visit www.ncl.com.

Use your shipboard credit to indulge in a treatment at the Canyon Ranch SpaClub® after an exhilarating day of touring or treat yourself to a shopping spree in the onboard boutique as you discover America’s Last Frontier like never before.

Visit Regent Seven Seas Cruises online at RSSC.com for full Terms & Conditions of this offer, to view all of their exciting and luxurious itineraries and to book your 2017 Alaska voyage today!

There's no denying the transformative power of song. Nowhere is that more evident than in the musicals of Broadway and some of Disney's most beloved animated classics. One of these legends of song has exclusively partnered with Seabourn for an extraordinary program.

Seabourn’s newest production, 'An Evening with Tim Rice', is being created exclusively for Seabourn in association with Belinda King Creative Productions. It will debut on board Seabourn Encore in January 2017, when her inaugural voyage sails from Singapore. The curtain will then go up across the rest of the Seabourn fleet next year, culminating on board the Seabourn Ovation, when she launches in spring 2018.

For more information about Seabourn’s new entertainment programs, to explore their incredible selection of world-wide itineraries, or to learn more about what separates the award-winning Seabourn fleet from the rest of the cruise industry, please contact a professional travel advisor, call Seabourn at 1-800-929-9391 or visit Seabourn online at www.seabourn.com.
SHIP OF THE MONTH: SEVEN SEAS MARINER
by Tom Cassidy

Long a favorite with World Ocean & Cruise Liner Society members, Regent’s luxurious all suite, all balcony, Seven Seas Mariner was voted “Ship of the Year” by our members last year making her one of our very rare two time winners. While this is a very impressive distinction, it does not come without a cost, as it sets the bar very high for future visits and of course this review.

I was lucky enough to sail again recently aboard this fascinating ship and to experience first hand for myself what Regent Seven Seas Cruises and the crew of this vessel have done to earn this ship such high praise amongst our members in the past, and more importantly to see if they can continue to uphold, or even expand upon this level of service.

It is often a lot easier to chase after the gold ring than it is to retain it. This is true both within your own product line as well as within your industry as a whole. The bar by which you are judged continues to rise. Even the best, most innovative product today will soon grow stale. To be able to rise to the top, and stay there for any duration of time is a true accomplishment, especially in today’s quickly improving and evolving cruise industry.

THE LINE – Regent Seven Seas Cruises began life as Radisson Seven Seas on New Year’s Day in 1995 as a joint venture between Carlson Hospitality Worldwide (of Regent and Radisson hotel chain fame) and Seven Seas, a cruise company marketing the then popular ship Song of Flower. In 1999, Radisson Seven Seas put together a joint venture with V-Ships in order to launch three new ships: the Navigator in 1999, the Mariner in 2001 and the Voyager in 2003. At this time the very popular Song of Flower was retired.
Over the years that followed Radisson-Regent Seven Seas Cruises have also operated the popular twin-hulled Radisson Diamond and the Paul Gauguin which was based in the South Pacific.

By 2006, Radisson’s trio of new ships had gained a very loyal following when they decided to implement a corporate name change to Regent Seven Seas Cruises. A short year later, in December 2007, it was announced that Carlson Hospitality had sold Regent Seven Seas to Apollo Management L.P. for their Prestige Cruise Holdings division. Apollo Investments also own Oceania Cruises and 50% of Norwegian Cruise Line. Carlson retains ownership of the master Regent brand, along with the operations of Regent Hotels & Resorts around the world.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises and Oceania Cruises were placed under the ownership of Prestige Cruise Holdings, Inc. (PCH), a corporation controlled by Apollo which manages certain cruise portfolio assets of Apollo. NCL Corporation remained a separate holding outside of PCH.

And in 2014 Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. announced it had entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Prestige Cruises International, Inc. (“Prestige”), the market leader in the upscale cruise segment and parent company of Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises, in cash and stock for a total transaction consideration of $3.025 billion, including the assumption of debt. The deal combined one of the world's biggest mass-market lines with two leaders of the upscale side of the cruise market.

Most recently, this July, Regent Seven Seas Cruises added the new all balcony and all suite, super luxurious Seven Seas Explorer to the fleet with a sister scheduled to follow in 2020.

**THE SHIP** – The smart looking, gleaming white Seven Seas Mariner entered service in 2001. She weighs approximately 48,000-ton, carries 700 passengers and a crew or 445 and has a service speed of 20 knots. She was the first all-suite, all-balcony ship in the world, and also was the first to offer dining by the famous Le Cordon Bleu of Paris in one of the onboard restaurants. She is one of the most spacious cruise ships afloat, and her staff to guest ratio of 1 to 1.6 provides the highest level of personal service in the six-star tradition of Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

The Mariner offers her passengers 8 passenger decks starting with the lowest deck, Deck 5, forward this deck contains the lower level of the “Constellation” theater which is the ship’s 2-level main show lounge for music and show productions, with cabaret dancing and a 9-piece orchestra. The Theater has tiered seating and during the day operates as the Constellation Lounge serving the Regent Cruises’ enrichment programs. Mid-ship is the 8 deck high Atrium featuring 4 glass-wall panoramic elevators.

Located in the Atrium is the Reception & Concierge desk that provides 24-hour guest assistance and purser services. Also located here is the Destination Services desk. Continuing aft on Deck 5 is the Mariner Lounge which is the ship’s piano bar, with a resident pianist playing in the evening. Beyond this, on the port side, is “Prime 7” the classic dinner-only Steakhouse restaurant (reservations-only) with American prime steak favorites. Prime 7’s decor features a luxurious setting with classy leather wingback chairs, rich fabrics, stylish draperies. Amidships you enter the elegant Compass Rose Restaurant, the main dining room for the ship, featuring open-seating breakfast, lunch, dinner. Last on this deck is the rear stair tower with 2 elevators.

Deck 6 is the Mariner’s Promenade Deck which provides a wide open promenade on both sides which unfortunately does not wrap around the ship, instead offering two independent open deck areas. Forward on this deck is the upper level of the Constellation Lounge followed by the ships atrium. Continuing aft the port side offers a sort of gallery or non-defined corridor connecting the other public room which are located on the starboard side. First is The Stars Lounge which is the ship’s Disco & Nightclub, however on this trip it served double duty providing a supervised playroom for the
younger cruisers on this Alaskan trip.

Next is the very popular Coffee Connection a specialty coffee and patisserie bar serving light refreshments, snacks. The Coffee bar also offers light Breakfast (cereals, fruits, pastries) and light Lunch (cold meats, cheeses, rolls and spreads,) and in the afternoon – sandwiches, cookies, cakes and fruits. You can pass through the Coffee Connections into the computer room or the ships library. Also aft are conference rooms. Continuing aft you have the rear stair tower followed by the Connoisseur Club on the port side which is the ship’s smoking lounge and cigars club featuring comfortable leather chairs, vintage cognacs and Cuban cigars, On the starboard side is Signatures Restaurant, an authentic dinner-only French specialty restaurant (reservations-only) with Le Cordon Bleu menu and serviced by seasoned chefs. At the back of Deck 6 is the Horizon Lounge with its large dance floor overlooking the sea. The Afternoon Tea here is served with fresh-made scones, cakes and other delicacies.

Deck 7 is the Spa Deck and contains the Mariner’s Spa and fitness center (gym) forward of the ships atrium. Aft of the atrium port side is the casino and boutiques. The remainder of Deck 7 contains a mix of suites. And Decks 8, 9 and 10 are all passenger suites. A nice touch on this luxurious ship is that each passenger deck provides a self-service laundry room. Deck 10 also contains the ships bridge.

Deck 11 is the Lido/Pool Deck with suites forward of the atrium. Aft of that the Mariner Pool area complete with a large heated swimming pool, 3 Whirlpools and a nicely laid out poolside area with loungers for sunbathing and shaded seating. Here you can enjoy drinks and frozen delights by the Pool Bar or grilled specialties, including made-to-order burgers, seafood, sandwiches, salads, also milk shakes, hand-made desserts, ice cream at the Pool Grill. All the way aft is La Veranda / Settee Mari which is the ship’s buffet restaurant for casual breakfast and lunch and waiter-service dinner (the Settee Mari dining experience). The Veranda restaurant also has a pizzeria and an outdoor seating area for al fresco dining on a shaded open-air terrace. In the evenings, “La Veranda” buffet becomes the “Settee Mari” restaurant a casual dining venue with a la carte menu and premium Italian wines (all complimentary). In evenings this room is first come first served, no reservations accepted.

Deck 12 is the Sports Deck with the Observation Lounge overlooking the ships bow. This room serves as the ship’s second grand piano bar with live piano and solo singer performances in the evenings. During the day this is a quiet relaxation spot offering stunning 270° panoramic views of the ports of call and sea views from its floor-ceiling windows. Aft of the atrium is the ships full-circle Walking/Jogging Track (11 laps = 1 mile) and the Regent Mariner’s sports deck area has a mini-golf putting green, Golf Nets, 2 starboard deck games courts (Shuffleboard, Bocce) and a Paddle Tennis court.

Regent is currently investing $125 million to upgrade and refurbish the Navigator, Voyager and Mariner in 2016 and 2017 with new furnishings and decor in suites and public spaces to bring them in line with their new Seven Seas Explorer.

THE CRUISE – My cruise was a 7-night Alaskan Heritage cruise departing from Seward (Anchorage), Alaska and sailing south to Vancouver, Canada. To make sure I did not miss the ship I flew into Anchorage the afternoon before sailing and spent the night in Anchorage using the Regent bus transfer to get to Seward the next morning. The bus, or more aptly motor coach, was nice but not as upscale as one would expect from Regent. Every seat was full and the air conditioning was working poorly making it a somewhat uncomfortable trip to the ship. Typically, this is about a 2-hour trip but on this day there were forests fires in the area which meant some slower traffic and lane/road closures so that the trip took over three hours. In all fairness to Regent, these motorcoaches are somewhat typical of what is available in the region.

Once we arrived pier side embarkation was swift and smooth but with our boarding at about
CRUISE FACTS — SEVEN SEAS MARINER

Passenger Capacity: 700
Number of Crew: 455
Tonnage: 48,000
Length: 710 feet
Beam: 93 feet
Draft: 21 feet
Builder: Chantiers de l’Atlantique, France
Entered Service: 2001
Registry: Nassau
Maximum Speed: 20 Knots
Propulsion: Diesel
Passenger Decks: 8

Ocean & Cruise News Classification: High Deluxe, 6-Star +

Passenger Cabins
Master Suites ..............................................2
Mariner Suites.............................................6
Horizon Suites.............................................6
Concierge Suites.......................................150
Grand Suites ..............................................2
Seven Seas Suites.................................12
Penthouse Suites..................................60
Deluxe Suites........................................112

Services and Amenities: Four restaurants (plus pool grill/bar and 24-hour room service), Coffee Connection, two-level show lounge, Four additional lounges, cigar club, library, internet facility, medical center, launderettes, one swimming pool with two whirlpools cruise consultant, shore excursion and reception desks, card room, CanyonRanch SpaClub spa/gym/salon, boutiques, flat screen in-room tvs w/interactive services including nearly 200 movies, jogging track and casino.

Restaurants: Compass Rose Restaurant, Signatures, Prime 7 Steakhouse, La Veranda, Sette Mari and pool grill.

Grading System: A basic score of 2 indicates the ship being graded is performing to the general standards of the classification. A score of 3 indicates it is performing above what is normally expected for the classification. A score of 1 indicates it is performing below what is normally expected for the classification. A + or – is used to indicate minor differences, but not enough to warrant a higher or lower whole number.

Level of Activity ........................................2
Air/Sea Program .........................................3
Alternate Dining .......................................3
Menu Selection ........................................3
Food Presentation ......................................3
Food Preparation .......................................3
Quality of Food..........................................3
Quality of Ports.........................................3
Passenger Conveniences............................2+
Stateroom Comfort.................................3
Overall.....................................................3

Suggested Tipping: None. All staff gratuities are included in the cruise fare.

Strong Points: Extremely friendly and capable crew, outstanding dining venues and food preparation, high space and guest/crew ratios, All-inclusive fares.

Weak Points: None
2pm we found that the suites were not ready so we ventured up to the Pool Bar for a refreshing drink. All drinks are “on the house” aboard Regent Seven Seas and we enjoyed an outdoor lunch poolside at the Pool Grill while we waited. Service pool side was perfect and the suites were ready for occupancy within an hour, at which time we went down to unpack and unwind before sailing.

The next day, our first full day on the Mariner was spent cruising the Hubbard Glacier. The weather was cloudy with some light fog but Captain Melani did an excellent job getting us close enough to the glacier so that our excellent naturalist could point out highlights and share his wealth of historic information.

While Alaska is a very scenic and historic area to visit the weather can be unpredictable. This is, of course, no fault of the cruise line. My seven-day cruise was a crazy mix with one day being sunny and hot while the very next day was cool with scattered rain and fog. It all adds up to the magic of Alaska but requires some diverse clothing and some creative pre-cruise packing to be prepared for anything!

Day 2 brought us to Sitka for the day where we tendered rather than docked. As part of Regent’s All-Inclusive Pricing program most shore excursions are also included in your cruise fare. This is a very welcomed treat and something you must seriously consider when comparing your cruise options. As a cruiser with countless cruises under my belt, I have learned first-hand how all the extras often add up to more than the initial price of the cruise. Not with Regent Seven Seas! All of Regent’s tours are of excellent quality and in fact are the same tour Regent formerly charged for. For real explorers there are still a few tours that will cost extra but they are the longer, more exotic and deluxe tours. I found the all-inclusive tours are just fine!

The next two days in succession we visited the capitol of Alaska, Juneau followed by Skagway the next day. After Skagway our itinerary called for us to travel to Ketchikan on our way down the inside passage to Vancouver but that did not happen. The Mariner experienced some propulsion problems and so out of precaution, we returned to Juneau the next day for repairs instead of docking at Ketchikan.

The captain and crew where very upfront about the problem and kept us well informed. The shore excursion office quickly put together a variety of tours for Juneau but as repairs took less time than expected there was only time to wander around Juneau for a short while on our own. By mid-afternoon we were ready to sail again. Due to the fact we now had to make up time, we skipped Ketchikan and instead headed directly for Vancouver. This gave us extra time at sea cruising the scenic Inside Passage with extra time to enjoy the ship, the splendid scenery and even witness and occasional whale sighting.

Due to our new schedule our early morning arrival in Vancouver on the next day was moved back to 2pm. The day was splendid with clear skies and sunshine and afforded us a very beautiful daytime entry into Vancouver. It did however play havoc with some passenger’s airline reservations.

While the missed port and mechanical hiccup were an unwanted surprise, they are unfortunately part of life in the cruise industry and even the best maintained cruise ship. This is where the small size of the Regent ships, the outstanding staff and the well coordinated teamwork really shines. The Regent staff did an outstanding job of helping those passengers who needed to change reservations do so with as little worry as possible. The line also offered passengers a credit on any future Regent Seven Seas cruise to apologize for the inconvenience.

PUBLIC ROOMS & ACTIVITIES – For a smaller ship, with no extravagant show rooms or rock climbing walls, I found the entertainment and activities to be excellent. In earlier years that was not a claim I could make, but Regent has put a lot of effort into improving their onboard entertainment and it shows.

"The Regent Signature Orchestra," the cruise line’s nine-piece orchestra aboard each of their
three ships, is to the best of my knowledge the largest aboard any luxury cruise line. In addition to lending concert-quality musical support to each of the production shows on board, the orchestra provides intimate performances as a smaller group at other times aboard ship.

When night falls the Constellation Theater offers production shows from Jean Ann Ryan Productions. The Jean Ann Ryan Company gave us some spectacular stage shows worthy of any mega-cruise ship. In addition to the production shows, live entertainment might include vocals, piano and guitar and more. Most shows take place at 9:30 p.m. and last about 45 minutes, so passengers can either go to bed early to be ready for their early morning excursions or hit the late night lounges for drinking and dancing and more entertainment.

The Horizon Lounge has a small dance floor and room for a full band. It is a very relaxing lounge during the day if you just want to relax and read or watch the beautiful Alaska scenery go by from someplace inside. It is a very popular spot at night for drinking and dancing with the orchestra. The Observation Lounge is also a popular relaxing and scenery viewing spot during the day and perfect for pre-dinner drinks and evening fun. Once the sun sets you’ll find the house pianist Nick playing his tunes to a nice crowd. The Stars Lounge is the ship’s disco of sort and dance club with its DJ Juke and late night karaoke and on this Alaskan trip was also smartly used for the Club Mariner program schedules as a teen center/playroom during the day.

Be sure to check out each day’s activities in Passages which is delivered to your room each evening. It is well laid out, easy to read and full of interesting information as well as the ship daily activities. You will find the next day’s issue on your bed with a mint each evening.

Typical Mariner passengers appear to be 50+, affluent and very well-traveled. There are many veteran RSSC cruisers aboard most sailings as Regent has a very loyal following. Alaska though seems to attract a younger crowd with many extended families aboard and more children than on a typical Regent trip.

Regent excels in the fact that all onboard gratuities are included with your fare. You also enjoy an all-inclusive beverage program including soft drinks, hot beverages and select wines and spirits served throughout the ship and a stocked bar with your favorite spirits within your suite. Also, just recently, Regent has included free wireless internet to all. This makes the initial higher prices Regent charges not as high as you might expect when comparing your full cruise expenditures at the end of your cruise.

The dress code aboard Regent Seven Seas is called “Elegant Casual” which would include skirt, or slacks (no jeans) with blouse or sweater, pant suit or dress for ladies; slacks (no jeans) and collared shirt for gentlemen. Sport jackets are optional. On this shorter 7-night trip there were no Formal Nights but on longer Regent cruises there are.

**SUITES** – All accommodations on Seven Seas Mariner are suites. All suites feature an ocean view and a private balcony.

The smallest suite aboard the Mariner is a Deluxe Veranda Suite. These are 252 square feet plus a 49-square-foot balcony. Penthouse Suites are larger at 376 square feet with a 73-square-foot balcony while the Horizon Suites, located at the back of the ship overlooking the stern and ships wake are 359 square feet and have a very large 268 square foot balcony. Suites from Horizon level up also offer a Personalized Butler and daily canapes among other special perks.

Each of the six Mariner Suites (650 square feet, 89-square-foot balconies) features a true bedroom separated from a large living room. Each also includes a full bathroom, plus a half-bath. Passengers who stay in this cabin level and above are guaranteed reservations each night in one of Mariner's complimentary specialty restaurants, either Signatures or Prime 7 which is a very nice perk.

The ships two Grand Suites (903 square feet,
84-square-foot balconies; each includes a separate bedroom, sizeable living room with large picture windows and two full bathrooms. Each of the two 1,204-square-foot Master Suites can accommodate up to five passengers and includes two bedrooms, two full baths, a large living room and two balconies, a 71-square-foot side balcony off one bedroom and a giant 727-square-foot front balcony adjacent to the living room and another bedroom.

Passengers in all suites get a welcome bottle of Champagne, fresh fruit replenished daily, complimentary shoe shine service, 24-hour room service (including a dinner service, where meals are served course by course), sewing kits and a free, personalized refrigerated mini-bar setup that's refilled each day with soda, beer, tonic and water. You'll also get a personalized liquor setup.

Upon boarding a bottle of champagne awaited me in my suite along with a nice selection of fresh fruit and appetizers’. The suite was spacious, well-appointed and comfortable. The walk-in closet had plenty of space for clothes and luggage with a variety of hangers and closet rods of varying heights; the large marble bathroom included a tub and a separate shower as well as ample shelves for toiletries; the king bed was very comfortable; the living area had a sofa, table with two chairs, a desk and desk chair; there was plenty of lighting and a curtain could be drawn to divide the bed from the seating area; the balcony had two deck chairs and a table and proved to be one of our most popular places from which to watch sea and sky or to enjoy an in suite breakfast.

There are six suites equipped with facilities for disabled passengers, and several suites feature walk-in shower stalls.

SERVICE & CREW –The Mariner experience is very personal thanks to its friendly yet very professional crew, with a majority of the staff quickly learning your name and preferences almost from day one. The crew is multi-national and provides excellent service, meeting and exceeding the needs and demands of the passengers 24 hours a day.

Captain Serena Melani runs an efficient and friendly ship. She is Regent’s first female Master and has been at sea since she was 16 years old. The ship’s General Manager, Michael Coghlan, is a good friend of many WOCLS members who have not only traveled upon Regent but also going back to his earlier years at Cunard, Silversea and Oceania. Both did excellent jobs of handling and informing us during the mechanical problem and their love of their job and the ship was obvious.

FOOD & DINING – The elegant Compass Rose aft on Deck 5 is the main dining room on Seven Seas Mariner. The Compass Rose is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and offers single, open seating, allowing passengers to determine when and with whom they wish to dine. The Compass Rose does not take reservations, but with numerous tables for 2, 4, 6, or 8 passengers, it has plenty of flexibility for different sized parties. Dinner is usually served between 6:30 and 9:00 pm, with most passengers arriving between 7 and 8pm, just in time to dine and catch the evening show.

Menus feature a wide selection of dishes and, as I discovered, if you want something that isn't listed, just ask. If possible, special requests are granted. Dinner menus include an assortment of selections as well as "always available" pasta, steak, poultry, or seafood selections. Low Carb, Light & Healthy, Vegetarian, No-salt selections are also available. Complimentary red or white wine is available and the international staff is quite knowledgeable about the food and wine they serve.

Prime 7, the ships classic steakhouse, features comfortable leather seating in a green and gold color palette surrounded by granite and woods can also be found on deck 5. The menu features prime aged steaks and chops as well as poultry and fresh seafood. It easily revivals any New York City steakhouse. Prime 7 is open for dinner only from 6pm to 9pm. While there is no additional cost, reservations are always required. It is by far one of the best steakhouses afloat and well worth a visit.
Signatures on Deck 6 is a classic French a la carte restaurant operated under the auspices of Le Cordon Bleu. Choose a traditional French specialty such as escargots or canard à l’orange or select from the Menu du Monde featuring cuisine from around the world as well as France. Reservations are required here as well and it is best to reserve on-line ahead of your cruise, especially for a shorter 7-night cruise, as space and times are limited.

La Veranda on Deck 11 aft offers both indoor and al fresco open seating for casual buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner. Each evening the port side of La Veranda, transforms into Settee Mari featuring an extensive menu of authentic antipasti and Italian specialty items paired with distinctive Italian wines. Dinner is a buffet and menu combination. Settee Mari is open for dinner only and reservations are not required however it is very popular and fills up quickly. It is open from 6:30pm to 9pm and one evening I arrived at 7:30pm and was told there would be a 40-minute wait. Perhaps in the future both sides of the La Verandah will be available for dinner to handle it’s popularity.

The Pool Grill features a hot and cold buffet, panini sandwich station and coffee and dessert area in addition to a state-of-the-art barbecue grill and there is an ice cream station for dessert.

Room service is available 24 hours a day and is much more extensive than what you will find on many other ships. Along with made-to-order eggs for breakfast and a range of entree items for lunch and dinner, guests may order from ship’s restaurant menus for all three meals! Given this, in-suite dining is actually quite popular. Should you choose this as your dinner option, you will love that it is served course by course in your suite, just like you were in the restaurant. Now that is the suite life!

Food isn’t confined only to restaurants. A favorite spot on board is the Coffee Connection for specialty coffee drinks, tea, and snacks throughout the day. Afternoon tea, often themed, is served every day in the Horizon Lounge. And you have to try the best pizza at sea in La Veranda.

On Sunday we had a sumptuous Caviar & Champagne Breakfast which was held in both the Compass Rose Restaurant and in La Veranda. It was a very elegant and very Regent Seven Seas event.

**CONCLUSION** – In an era when mass-market cruise ships are getting bigger and bigger, Seven Seas Mariner is a refreshing option. She carries only 700 passengers in an elegant yet casual style. Her compact size, luxurious accommodations, refined public areas and friendly and courteous crew combined with her generous all-inclusive pricing makes Regent’s Seven Seas Mariner feel like a luxury boutique hotel at sea. It is no wonder that WOCLS members have voted her “Ship of the Year” on more than one occasion.

In reading member’s report card’s about their Regent cruise experience, first time Regent cruisers often report an initial hesitation with their purchase because Regent is clearly priced higher than today’s mass market cruises. Yet these same members report when they have compared the total price spent upon returning home, versus what they spent for their last mass market cruise, of similar days and itinerary, the difference wasn’t as great as it initially appeared due to Regent’s all-inclusive pricing. To date, I have never come across a member that has regretted their purchase, which explains Regent’s extremely high loyalty factor.

If you’re looking for a more refined cruise experience and would like to get away from today’s mega-liners, Regent Seven Seas would be a very good choice for you. Whether you choose Regent Seven Seas Mariner, Navigator, Voyager or Explorer you will enjoy that special small boutique hotel feel while travelling to some of the most interesting and diverse itineraries in the world today.

Upon boarding Regent’s Seven Seas Mariner I seriously questioned whether Regent could continue to impress me in an industry that seems to evolve so quickly on every level. I can honestly say I was not disappointed. Regent has evolved, modernized and become even more impressive than she was before!
A LANDMARK DAY
IN ITALIAN SHIPBUILDING
by Tom Cassidy

September 8, 1960 was a landmark day for Italian shipbuilding. On this day in 1960 work was begun on the Italian Line’s beautiful Michelangelo at the Ansaldo yards slip #1 where the Rex and Andrea Doria had previously been built. The Michelangelo would be the last ship to be built on the ways at Ansaldo.

On the same day at CRDA’s San Marco yards work was begun on the Michelangelo’s sister, the Raffaello. And on the same day work commenced on the construction on two 27.000-ton liners for Lloyd Triestino at CRDA’s (Cantieri Riuniti dell’Adriatico), Monfalcone yard. These would become the twin Guglielmo Marconi and Galileo Galilei. Four great Italian liners, the last of their kind, born on the same day.

The Michelangelo and Raffaello were built for the Italian Lines express service between New York City and Naples with calls at Gibraltar, Cannes and Genoa along the way, at other times the pair went cruising, mostly out of New York and Fort Lauderdale to the Caribbean but later in their careers, as passenger loads dropped they cruised to Rio for Carnival and even Scandinavian waters.

The Italian Line decided that these ships would be the most beautiful and luxurious liners on the high seas. They offered nothing less than 30 lounges, a two level 469 seat cinema, 3 night clubs, 18 lifts, a garage with room for 50 cars, as well as 6 pools that interestingly had infra-red heating for the surrounding areas. The weighed 45,000 tons each and were 902 feet long and had a width of 102 feet. They carried 1,775 passengers in the traditional three classes; First, Cabin and Tourist and a crew of 775.

The Michelangelo was launched on September 16, 1962 and departed on her maiden voyage from Genoa to New York on May 12, 1965. Raffaello was launched on March 24, 1963 and sailed on her maiden voyage to New York in July 1965. But the projections that the sisters would be enjoy long and profitable lives were incorrect. By 1970 they were losing money with the Italian government heavily subsidizing the Italian Line for these losses. On some sailing the 775 crew members outnumbered the paying guests.

So after a relatively short 10-year Trans-Atlantic career, which ended due to three factors; the Jet age, the ever increasing running costs, and the Italian Government withdrawing its financial support. As a rescue attempt, in 1974, Italian Line entered both ships on cruise duties with only an occasional Trans-Atlantic voyage. But profits continued to decline, which spelled the end of these two remarkable ships.

In 1975 The Italian Government totally withdrew its financial assistance after which the Raffaello undertook one more Trans-Atlantic voyage, a sailing that was filled with those who loved these two great liners. Amongst them was another fan of the ship, the Duchess of Windsor. Raffaello departed New York on April 21, for her final Atlantic crossing. After disembarking her passengers, she was laid up at La Spezia on June 6. Michelangelo was at first laid up in Genoa on July 5, 1975, but was moved to La Spezia, and moored alongside her sister, on September 15, 1975.

The sisters were then bought by the Shah of Iran in 1977 to become permanently moored military barracks in Iran. Sadly, during the Iraq/Iran War the Raffaello was targeted by the Iraqi’s who relentlessly bombed her until she sank in shallow waters. While the Michelangelo was not sunk but did not fair that much better than her sister in that over the next 13 years, she was badly neglected, which saw the hull and
superstructure rusting away and she was past the point of repair. Finally, in 1991 the Iranians decided that she was too old for any further use, and she was sold to Bangladeshi breakers. She arrived at the Chittagong breakers yard on June 7, 1991, and was scrapped the following year.

The smaller but equally stylish Galilei and Marconi where placed on the Lloyd Treistino’s Italy to Australia service in 1963. Both ships with their increased speed, reduced a month long voyage to just twenty-three days. These two streamlined liners introduced new standards of luxury to immigrant travel. Later the Guglielmo Marconi was transferred to the Naples-Brazil-River Plate service of Italia Line and in 1979, both ships were transferred to Italia Crociere as full-time cruise ships. This was not a success and both ships were laid up, later to be sold to Chandris Line and Costa Crociere respectively.

Chandris Lines purchased the Galileo in 1983, shortening her name from Galileo Galilei to just Galileo. At first she operated with the traditional Chandris funnel marking, bit, in 1989 she was renamed Meridian for Chandris subsidiary Celebrity Cruises. She receives a new stylized =X= on her funnel, and had dark blue marking on the upper part of the hull. She cruised successfully for Celebrity Cruises until 1997, when she became too old, considering the new builds. She was sold to the Singaporean Sun Cruises. In May of 1999, Sun Vista, ex-Galileo Galilei, sank off the Malaysian coast following an engine room fire. There were no fatalities.

The Marconi was sold to Costa Lines in 1983. After a two-year rebuild, the ship reappeared as Costa Riviera for Costa Cruises in 1985. Costa Riviera alternated between Caribbean and Alaskan cruising during her time with Costa Cruises. Then in 1993, American Family Cruises was launched, a joint venture between Costa and Bruce Nierenburg, to operate cruises aimed at young American families with children. AFC were not successful, and the ship sailed for Genoa in September 1994 where she was converted back to the Costa Riviera, and began cruising her last years in Europe until Costa Riviera was sold for scrap in 2001.

THE PANAMA CANAL’S BUSY SEASON

More than 230 cruise ships will transit the Panama Canal during the 2016-2017 cruise season, which begins on October 4, 2016 with the transit of the Coral Princess.

Smaller cruise ships will also transit through the waterway, including the Voyager Safari and National Geographic’s Sea Lion, with shorter seven- and eight-day itineraries, respectively, along the west coast of Central America.

During this season, Regent Seven Seas, Holland America Line and Noble Calidonia will have ships transiting with new itineraries through the Canal. Regent’s Seven Seas Explorer will transit on January 2, 2017, Holland America Line’s Eurodam on April 13, 2017, and Noble Calidonia’s Hebridean Sky on April 17, 2017.

After completing more than 160 successful transits through the new locks, the Panama Canal is now accepting booking requests for Neopanamax passenger vessels for transit dates beginning April 1, 2017. To date, 11 reservations have been made for passenger vessels to transit the Expanded Canal starting October 2017, for the 2017-2018 season.

(Continued from page 1)

Then, nine-night voyages between Memphis and Nashville are planned for September and between Memphis and New Orleans in October and November. Next are seven-night round-trip Nashville voyages in early December and a few more seven- to nine-night voyages and a six-night round-trip New Orleans voyage on December 28. The new vessel will do a “Nashville Christmas Markets” cruise in mid-December, much the way the line has initiated a Louisiana-style Christmas Markets cruise on the southern Mississippi.

Rates will include shore excursions, complimentary wine and beer with dinner, coffees, bottled water and soft drinks at all times, and entertainment described as “Worthy of Broadway.” As an American-flag ship, crew will be all-American.
MONTHLY NOTES AND COMMENTS

Norwegian Cruise Line will once again pioneer a new era of Alaska cruising beginning June 2018, as the company announced that its next new vessel, named Norwegian Bliss, will be the first cruise ship custom-built with features and amenities for the ultimate Alaska cruise experience. Norwegian Bliss will cruise to America's Last Frontier from Seattle and will be the first Norwegian Cruise Line ship to make its debut in the Emerald City.

Richard Branson thinks the word "cruise" is "awful." In fact, the man behind brands like Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Hotels says he's never set foot on a cruise ship. So, "Virgin Cruises" officially became "Virgin Voyages." The moniker change was made to reflect that a journey aboard a Virgin ship will be more than just a cruise. The company also announced it has signed a shipbuilding contract with Fincantieri, which will build all three of the ships slated to debut between 2020 and 2022. The three vessels will be identical, coming in at 110,000 tons and holding 2,700 passengers.

Viking Ocean Cruises welcomed its first ship, Viking Star, into New York harbor as part of its inaugural North American voyage. The 930-guest ship docked at Manhattan Cruise Terminal after sailing past the Statue of Liberty with a reception by New York Fireboats. On October 11, Viking officially commemorated its first United States port of call in Boston, with a traditional maritime plaque ceremony attended by local officials and dignitaries. This is the first time Viking has sailed into North American ports, which are part of the company's new itineraries exploring the Americas and the Caribbean.

Carnival Cruise Line has signed an agreement with landlord Urban Commons and the City of Long Beach, Calif., to expand the Long Beach Cruise Terminal facility to accommodate larger ships in the future and enhance its terminal operations. The deal will nearly triple the size of Carnival's current terminal facility from approximately 66,000 square feet to 142,000 square feet. Currently, the recently enhanced Carnival Inspiration and Carnival Imagination operate year-round three- and four-day Baja cruises from Long Beach while Carnival Miracle sails seven-day voyages to the Mexican Riviera and 14- and 15-day cruises to Hawaii and Alaska round-trip from Long Beach.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises is revolutionizing its gourmet dining experience fleet-wide by transforming its signature restaurant, Compass Rose, into the largest specialty restaurant at sea. The new concept and menu for Compass Rose offer an unprecedented, fully customized epicurean experience with an unequaled variety of gourmet options available nightly. Guests on Seven Seas Explorer and Seven Seas Navigator were treated to a preview of the Compass Rose menu during a multi-week test period, and it will remain as the standard menu for those two ships moving forward. The menu is scheduled to debut November 9, 2016 on Seven Seas Voyager and Seven Seas Mariner on May 13, 2017, following each ship’s scheduled dry dock.

Miss USA Deshauna Barber has been named godmother of Carnival Cruise Line’s newest and largest ship, Carnival Vista. Barber made history earlier this year when she became the first woman serving in the U.S. military to win the title of Miss USA. Barber will officially name the 133,500-ton vessel during a shipboard ceremony that is part of an overnight gala event honoring Operation Homefront and featuring an exclusive invitation-only concert by seven-time GRAMMY-award winning country music superstar Carrie Underwood.

Hurtigruten has named its two new hybrid powered expedition ships at Kleven Yards. The first two ships have been named Roald Amundsen and Fridtjof Nansen after the two most influential Norwegian polar pioneers from the era when the company itself first started offering adventure travels. The ships are due to be delivered in 2018 and 2019.