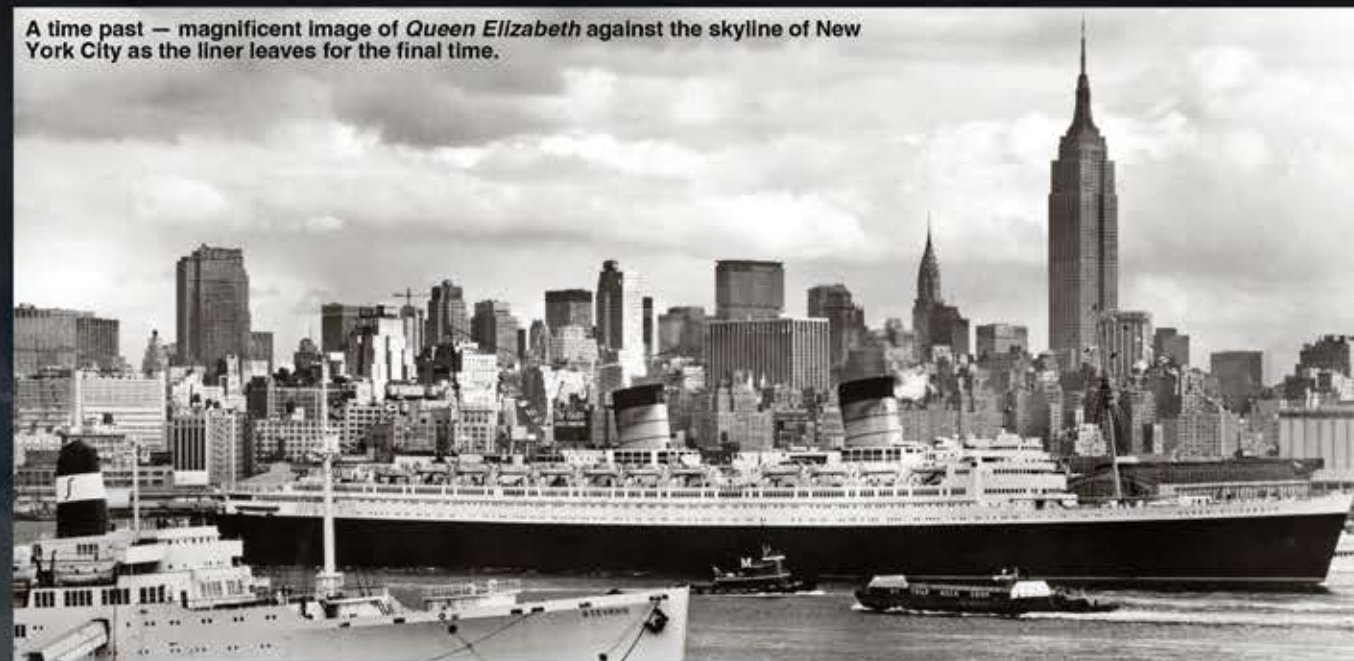


END OF A QUEEN

AS THE WORLD MOVED INTO THE JET AGE, THE MAGNIFICENT OCEAN LINERS THAT PLIED THE ATLANTIC RAPIDLY BECAME OBSOLETE. A CHINESE BUSINESSMAN HAD AN ELABORATE PLAN TO REPURPOSE THE QUEEN ELIZABETH
BY ROBERT T. SMITH

A time past — magnificent image of *Queen Elizabeth* against the skyline of New York City as the liner leaves for the final time.



She was tired. No doubt about that. Yet, she still carried herself with a stately grace — a grace that her replacement had little hope in ever achieving. The de Havilland Comet and the Boeing 707 issued in the age of transatlantic travel by jet but those early jets could not even remotely come close to capturing the allure of grand ocean liners such *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary*. These ultra-comfortable giants of the sea had set transatlantic records in

both peace and war but, like every other form of mechanical transportation, the time had come for them to step aside.

These two magnificent ships sailed in competition with the *SS America* and *SS United States* but the clock was speeding up and the general public wanted cheaper ways to travel and they wanted to undertake their travels in faster and faster steps. It was a change many did not anticipate would happen as quickly as it did. At first, the jets attempted to

make flying the Atlantic a first-class experience but the demand for more profit increased the number of seats inside the “aluminum tubes” until the first-class section was just a small portion of the overall volume.

Other factors such as rising fuel and labor costs were eating into Cunard’s corporate profits but perhaps there was a way to keep at least one of the liners going. For a short time, the *Queen Elizabeth* attempted to take on

a dual role. Along with her usual New York to Southampton run, the liner was utilized as a cruise ship between New York and Nassau. Beginning in 1965, she had a new Lido deck installed along with updated air conditioning, an outdoor swimming pool, and other enhancements aimed at the new market. The ship was under the command of Commodore Geoffrey Trippleton Marr and Cunard hoped to keep the revised ship sailing into the mid-1970s. The plan did not prove successful and one of the main reasons was something that should

have been obvious from the beginning. Her draft was too deep for entering many island ports and she was too wide to transit the Panama Canal.

Queen Mary was retired in 1967 while *Queen Elizabeth* undertook her final transatlantic trip to New York on 5 November 1968. It was a gala crossing but it was also sad. Not only was a great ship sailing into history but so was an entire generation that had enjoyed her style and luxury. There was a replacement on the horizon — *Queen Elizabeth 2* but it

just wasn’t the same. She was smaller, more economical, but also lacked the *panache* of the earlier vessels.

Towards the end of 1968, *Queen Elizabeth* was sold to a company called the Elizabeth Corporation. Fifteen percent of the new company was controlled by a group of businessmen from Philadelphia while a whopping 85% was retained by Cunard. The company had a plan — the ship was going to be sailed to Port Everglades in Florida where she would be converted to a hotel and tourist attraction. This was a similar

The fire aboard *Seaview University* quickly spread and clouds of toxic black smoke soon rose into the sky over Victoria Harbor.