



TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING

By Peter Munro

My one passion in life is the history of the old merchant ships, mainly three from the Cunard Line, “Lusitania” “Aquitania” and “Mauritania”, all built about 1912. The main purpose was to transport passengers across the Atlantic to America in much style, as well as immigrants seeking a better life. The most modern favorite of mine is the “Queen Elizabeth II”, built in 1967 and at that time was the last of her kind as transatlantic travel by sea was slowing due to air travel. Customers wanted to get there in a matter of hours, not days. Since I was seven years old I always wanted to make that trip. About the same time the “Titanic” made her maiden voyage from Southampton UK., arrive six days later in New York, and to see the same sites our ancestors did so many years before.

I have been boat crazy since I was little. I remember in public school I would drive our librarian nuts. During reading time,

each class would go to the library to pick a book to read. I would always ask my teacher “Mrs. Waddginton, do you have any books on boats?” which she would get for me. Until this day, that shipping era has been in my heart.

Finally in April of 2009, I was able to live my dream. However the famous QEII was sold and replaced by the worlds largest and most sophisticated ocean liner ever built, the “Queen Mary II”. So my journey goes from Ottawa to London, UK, New York, NY, and back to Ottawa.

Arrived in Ottawa for my flight, leaving at 6pm, six smooth hours later we arrived at Heathrow airport in London UK. After getting through customs, I was met personally by a rep from the Cunard Line, who then drove me right to my hotel in London. After I was settled, I then took a bus tour around the city and went for a walk along the River Thames from Big Ben all the way down to the London Tower

Bridge. It was fantastic! The next morning, I was picked up at the hotel where a bus took me to the pier in Southampton to the QM II, an awesome sight. She was huge! I could have sat and stared at her all day. To give an idea of her size, docked at the Brockville waterfront, she would stretch from the Rowing Club down to Ford St and stand 17 stories above the water line. She had a beautiful black hull, with a red stripe and the famous Cunard red funnel, a perfect picture of every kid’s dream of what an ocean liner should look like.

I then check in at the pier, where they take your luggage and issue your room card. They take the necessary info, then you proceed through security and onto the ship where you’re greeted by the crew in the “Grand Lobby”. Absolutely beautiful! Then it was off to locate my stateroom, meeting my room steward, who was very polite and friendly, as were all the crew.

Now it is 4pm and we’re scheduled to leave at 5, arriving in New York at 7am 6 days from now. I must say that this ship being so big, traveling so far and dealing with weather and other delays, she left at exactly 5pm and arrived at exactly 7am perfectly on time.

Daily routine for me, up at 6am, walk around the deck (1 kilometer total) enjoying the fresh sea air, watching the

sunrise. Breakfast in main dining room 8am, you could sit alone or with other passengers. I then went exploring around the ship. Lunch at noon, choosing any of the fine restaurants or have room service in your cabin. The afternoon was much to do, Viewing a special guest on board giving lectures, movies in the theatre, shows in the planetarium, there was also swimming, spa's, games, casino, read in the library or just sit out on the deck and wait for afternoon tea while enjoying the sea air and watching the waves. One day the ocean was very rough, during such times no one is allowed on deck for safety reasons, as the waves were about 20 to 30 feet. During those rough days you hardly felt the ship move, as she had stabilizers to keep her from rocking. There was a slight up and down movement but she was so big you hardly noticed.

Dinner was either at 5:30pm or 8:30pm, your choice. I liked the early one. I was at a table for 10. This seating arrangement was the same every night for the complete voyage with the same people. For lunch or breakfast, you could go anywhere, but dinner was very organized. Guests at my table were great, from USA, UK., and of course Canada. Our table was the Captains table, who joined us for three of the six nights, when not on duty on the bridge. This was fantastic! The food

and service were 110%. After dinner, 9:30 to 10:30 you could stroll on deck, go to the casino or one of the many clubs for a night cap.

When the voyage was drawing to its end and we arrived at the Hudson River in New York, I got up at 4am to watch the Verrazano narrows bridge as the ship went under it with about 1 metre clearance. She then proceeded up the Hudson to her berth at the Brooklyn pier.

It was very interesting to see the same sights our ancestors saw when first arriving in America. It is 7am now and you could relax and have breakfast before going to your assigned waiting area until called to disembark. This prevented large line ups and went like clockwork. Outside, you're directed to a bus to take you to the airport.

To summarize, this was a fantastic trip! People in London were friendly, scenery was unforgettable. England always has a place in my heart and I felt like I was returning home from a long absence. The view from the ship everyday looking at the sunrise was like watching a show. The ocean was the stage and the sky was the performer as the sun's rays danced on the horizon. I would recommend this voyage to everyone. **LH**

BON VOYAGE!!!

