

coming:

\$50 fare to Europe by superliner!

by James C. G. Conniff

DOES A \$50 FARE to Europe sound like a pipe dream? It isn't. Twin 90,000-ton superliners, the SS Peace and SS Good Will, are so close to reality that the energetic, farsighted New York hotelman who fathered the idea will sign a contract shortly for laying their keels.

So, with 6,000 other Americans on a one-way, four-day passage, you could figure on going to Europe for the price of a clutch job on your car. What's more, you will enjoy the same spaciousness as today's luxury liners, with more comforts thrown in than even our finest motels offer.

Motels, in fact, along with other low-cost accommodations for the go-minded American public, are what got H. B. Cantor started in his campaign to beat down the doors of transatlantic travel tradition and throw open the scenery, culture, cooking, and allure of the Continent to us all, instead of just the wealthy for whom passenger ships have been designed up to now.

Cantor is president of Carter Hotels, a New York-Boston area commercial chain catering to patrons who want comfort at economy prices. His 35 years of success in providing it made him wonder if the same principle couldn't be applied with equal success to the "floating hotels" called ships.

"After all," he told me, "bus lines offer a cross-country fare of \$69.50. You can fly coast-to-coast by nonscheduled airliner for \$88. By 1960 the jetliners should cut operating costs 40 percent and lower fares in proportion, though it will be a while before jets hit commuter-fare levels. Right now you can go from New York to London by conventional airplane for \$360 round trip. But you can't go by even the cheapest ship for anything like that."

To remedy the huge gap in low-cost ocean travel, Cantor decided we needed a "cafeteria ship." It would have to be big enough to carry thousands of people without cramping, yet so fast that volume traffic would permit the operators to transport them for \$50 each. The 83,673-ton Queen Elizabeth, Cantor knew, has a passenger capacity of 2,233, with one-way fare many times \$50. His "cafeteria ship" would have to do much better than that and still stay within physical limits of port facilities on both sides of the water. Was it possible?

Vladimir Yourkevitch, designer of the Normandie, said it was. When he had listened to Cantor's idea

When two mammoth
6,000-passenger steamships
are completed, almost anyone
will be able to afford
a transatlantic vacation.

All passengers may use superliners' lounge areas.



for a superliner, he liked it so well he recommended construction of two superliners. Why? Because with that much space and speed on two ships you could operate a two-way shuttle across the Atlantic and, by offering departures every four days, guarantee both volume traffic and the \$50 fare that would be necessary to attract it.

Cantor was delighted. The endorsement of one of the world's leading naval architects meant that his idea was much more than a dream. Eager for details, he learned from Yourkevitch that a vessel to do the job would need to be 90,000 gross tons (almost 7,000 tons heavier than the Queen Elizabeth). It would be 1,152 feet long, against the Elizabeth's 1,031 and our United States' 917.

By Yourkevitch's estimate, each superliner will



Superliners will serve food in mammoth cafeteria.

Prefabricated staterooms will cut costs considerably.



develop 300,000 horsepower for a top speed of 30 knots and a cruising speed of 30. By comparison, some aircraft carriers can turn up as much as 200,000 horsepower.

Passenger capacity? To meet Cantor's requirements of safety, comfort, and dollar return, Yourkevitch worked things out so that 6,000 passengers can be accommodated with ease on each ship. A crew of 1,350 will see to their wants.

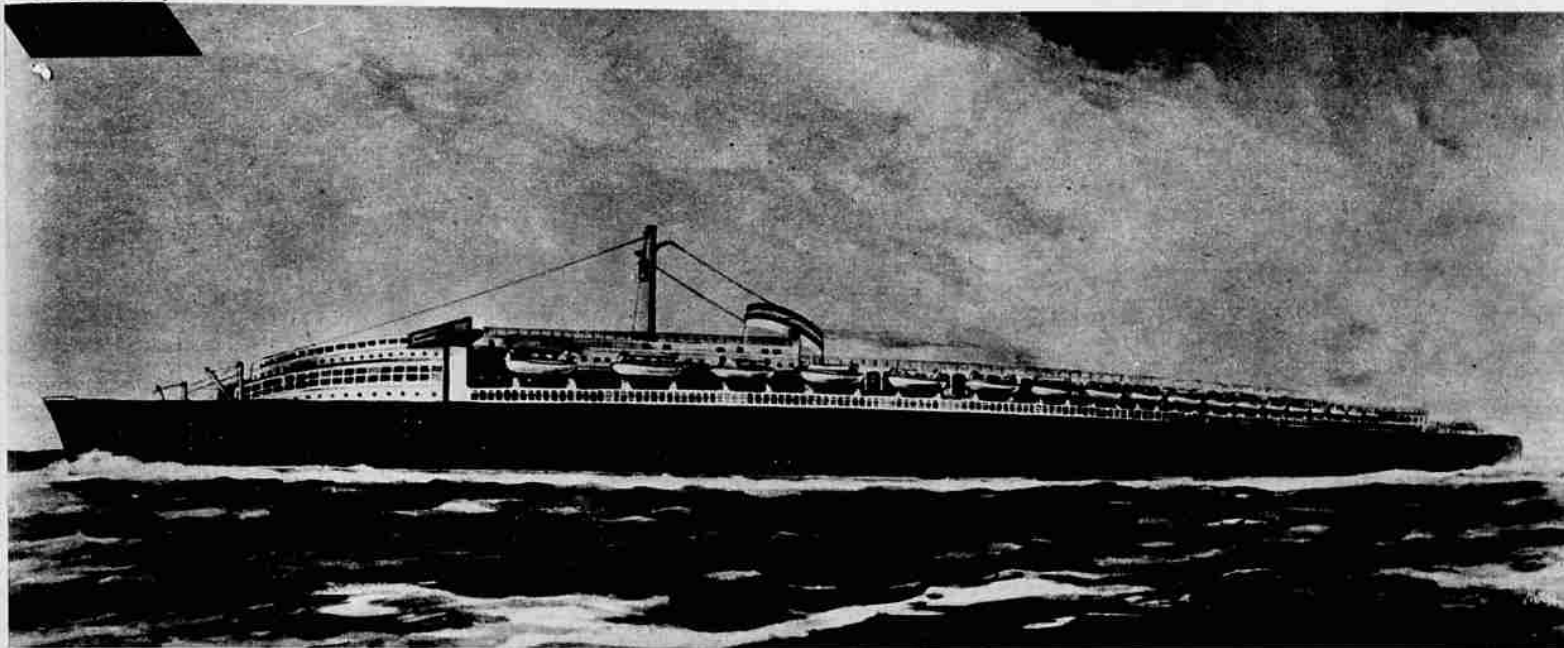
Though elimination of "luxury frills," which has convinced most people don't want and can't afford, is a prime concern with Cantor, he will nonetheless air-condition both ships and equip each cabin with individual controls. In addition, every one of the presently projected 2,750 cabins on each ship will have its own 21-inch TV set.



Hotelman Cantor had a dream.



Family Weekly



Those cabins got Cantor's closest attention. They are where the passenger lives, he feels, and they should be as much like home, with a filip of adventure, as modern design and budgetary limits can make them. The flexible plan he worked out with Yourkevitch can be adjusted or modified when construction gets under way, but for now it lists 2,000 two-passenger staterooms, 100 singles, 300 triples, and 350 for four persons each. Along with air-conditioning controls, private closed-circuit television, décor of bright eye-pleasing colors and light woods, and room to relax, every cabin on the world's largest, fastest steamships will have its own bathroom, complete with stall shower.

YOURKEVITCH warmed to Cantor's bid for youth groups and family trade, but privately wondered whether such handsome quarters might run away with the cost factor. He needn't have. From his sleeve, Cantor drew an ace. During his many years of hotel operation, the New York tycoon watched a trend in transient hotels that finally erupted after World War II into the motel boom. Many of the 58,000 motels that now blanket the U.S., Cantor knew, built their more than 1,000,000 rooms via the prefab route. Some hotels did the same thing. Why not do it with the superliners?

Cantor went to the Pullman Company to find out. Executives there assured him it would be no problem. When each of the twin mammoth bottoms is ready to receive them, Cantor's thousands of prefab staterooms—all fixtured, decorated, draped, rugged, and furnished—will be trucked to the yard, hooked up with lines already installed in the hull and bolted into place. Cost: a small fraction of what it takes to outfit luxury liners half the size by today's painstaking hand and piecemeal methods.

Will all those cabins leave room for much else in Cantor's superliners? Yes. For one thing: a cafeteria. A large kitchen at the center of each ship will serve 1,500 people at a clip there, and another 1,000 in a formal dining room. In addition there will be two self-service canteens on each deck, and four bars and cocktail lounges. Since food will be an extra item over and above the \$50 fare, Cantor has made these arrangements so that his clientele can eat well at a top figure of \$4 per person per day, or \$16 maximum for the entire voyage.

But that's only a start. Each ship will also have: two indoor swimming pools and another outdoor

one; a skating rink; two theaters; outdoor sports equipment; a concert hall; and facilities for religious services. There will be shopping centers with merchandise from both sides of the Atlantic for sale at economy prices. A convention hall for business groups will have a capacity of 4,000; rollaway doors will permit partitioning it for smaller gatherings and conferences.

The top deck of each liner will have a clear space of 450 feet by 80 feet, to the rear of the smokestack, for outdoor sports and sunbathing. Under it will be a double-decked, glassed-in aircraft-hangar space, which in peacetime will be the convention hall described above. In time of war both ships—with 20 airtight compartments apiece to make them as unsinkable as possible—can be converted within three days to aircraft carriers or division-strength troopships. No costly major renovations would be necessary for the conversion.

CANTOR IS DETERMINED that every passenger who boards the Peace or the Good Will shall enjoy the utmost safety that scientific ingenuity can offer. Besides radar, fathometers, ship-to-shore radio and similar electronic safety devices, each ship will carry standard lifeboats to accommodate all 7,350 persons aboard, plus life jackets for everyone. In each lifeboat there will also be two extra inflatable lifeboats of Swedish design which have been tested as even safer than wooden lifeboats and can take care of all hands should the original double-enders broach and swamp or otherwise meet disaster in heavy seas. Each wooden lifeboat and each of its auxiliary inflatables—which blow up instantly with a twist of an attached metal bottle of carbon dioxide gas—carries a week's supply of rations, water, flares, and drugs.

Cantor has set up a Carter Hotels subsidiary called Sea Coach to operate the superliners and is already planning low-cost, two-week vacation packages. All-expense tours can be arranged for as little as \$330. If he desires, the tourist need lay out only \$30 in cash. The rest he can pay off in 10 monthly installments.

While the 56-year-old Cantor is a ball of fire on every other aspect of his superliners, he is conservative about accepting reservations until the keels are laid and the ships are abuilding. The bookkeeping headache is part of it. Legal problems are another. Probably a sense of playing hard-to-get enters in.

In any case, the Dutch Travel Verein has happily ignored Cantor's ban on reservations and offered him a fat cash deposit to tie up thousands of cabins for its members for three years from the date of first sailing of the big ships.

Cantor says Adm. John Will, head of the Navy's Military Sea Transportation Service in Washington, is so keen about the saving the superliners would mean to the Government in its world-wide transfers of personnel that the admiral is guaranteeing Sea Coach 150,000 passengers a year.

One offer among many of a kind that particularly pleases Cantor is his assurance from Youth Hostels that it will implement its international travel programs with up to 200,000 bookings on his superliners each year. He realizes that among the millions of Americans who would love to travel in Europe, but till now could not afford it, students and young people have always ranked high.

For a start, the 95-percent-untapped transatlantic tourist market will find his twin superliners operating between Boston and Zeebrugge, Belgium. One reason: Boston has superb port facilities that are far less jammed than New York's. Another reason: Boston is 174 miles nearer to Europe. As for Zeebrugge, it is a roomy, good-weather port with uncluttered access to the Continent in every direction.

Eventually, with port improvements, which the "cafeteria ships" themselves may bring about, New York will probably become an alternative destination. Within his lifetime, Cantor expects to extend his superliner service to South America and the Pacific "Isles of Paradise."

But right now he faces some interesting snags. As far as building the ships and putting them into service is concerned, Cantor is confident of succeeding. What troubles him is getting it done the right way. In Cantor's book, that means seeing to it that his marine giants sail under the Stars and Stripes instead of some foreign flag.

How could that happen? Very easily. Yourkevitch estimates that it will cost \$135,000,000 to build each superliner. For decades now the law has empowered the Federal Maritime Board of our Maritime Administration in Washington to subsidize ship construction. Cantor's vast project unfortunately goes beyond the law's scope, but it is so obviously worthwhile for millions of ordinary American citizens, so fraught with prestige for our badly lagging position as a first-class merchant marine power, and of such