

Panama Canal Review
1979-1981

+
986.3005
P187



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Florida, George A. Smathers Libraries

<http://www.archive.org/details/panamacanalrevie1981pana>

THE
PANAMA CANAL
COMMISSION
REVIEW
OCTOBER 1, 1981





On the Cover

Dominating the cover is a photo by Mel Kennedy of two ships from the Far East completing their transit of Gatun Locks as maintenance work proceeds on schedule. Moving clockwise: a closeup of the cupola on the San Francisco Church in the Casco Viejo, by Arthur Pollack; Panama's exhibit featuring the Canal at EXPO-SHIP '80 in Hong Kong, by Willie K. Friar; the approach to the river station at Candelarias, by Ed Armbruster; the SS "Cristobal" leaves Cristobal pier, by T. G. Kaye Richey; a walk on the Great Wall of China, by Willie K. Friar.

Inside front cover: As the cruise ship "Island Princess" moves northbound through Pedro Miguel Locks, passengers crowd along the upper railing for a spectacular shipboard view; by Mel Kennedy. Inside back cover: After 42 years of government service, it's the end of the line for the SS "Cristobal," seen at her familiar berth at Cristobal's pier 8; by Kevin Jenkins. Cover design: Mel Kennedy.

At right, a southbound vessel moves through Pedro Miguel Locks as work on the locomotive tow track system is in progress. Renovation of the tow track systems at all three locks is a multimillion dollar Canal improvement project.



From the Administrator of the Panama Canal Commission

Celebrating its second anniversary and nearing the end of the transition period defined in the Panama Canal Treaty, the Panama Canal Commission has forged ahead in meeting its commitments while maintaining a continuity of efficient service to Canal users.

Although the challenge of change continues to be a part of life at the Panama Canal, it is a challenge that is being successfully met. A "can do" attitude prevails and Commission employees continue to respond effectively to the demands placed upon the waterway as the tonnage of shipping moving through the Canal reaches record levels.

While the current outlook is promising, the Canal must continue to offer efficient service at a competitive price if it is to remain an economical means for shipping an important share of world trade. With this in mind, a number of steps have been

taken during the past year to increase Canal transit capacity and to improve the service provided to Canal users.

These extensive Canal modernization and capacity improvement programs, financed by revenues, are beginning to show results. They are evidence of our commitment that the Canal will remain a vital link in the world transportation chain. It is a commitment that is dependent to a great extent upon the availability of skilled employees who are dedicated to the enduring mission of the Canal. To that end, the Commission has set in motion extensive training programs that will insure future personnel needs will be met within the context of the new relationship between the United States and Panama.

Noteworthy for the administration of the waterway was the confirmation in June of this year of the Honorable William R. Gianelli as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. In this capacity Mr. Gianelli is responsible for monitoring the operation of the Panama Canal Commission and serves as chairman of its binational Board of Directors.

Since the Canal Commission operates as a business that must pay all costs and conduct a break-even financial operation, it is subject to the pressures of inflation and other economic and business fluctuations. I am optimistic that, through continued management emphasis on keeping costs to a minimum and retaining a dedicated and well-trained work force, the Panama Canal will remain a viable artery for world commerce.

W. M. Richey

THE
PANAMA CANAL
REVIEW

OCTOBER 1, 1981

ADMINISTRATOR
D. P. McAuliffe

DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR
Fernando Manfredo Jr.

ACTING DIRECTOR
OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Willie K. Friar

EDITOR
Vicki M. Boatwright

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Fannie P. Hernandez

ART DIRECTOR
Mel Kennedy

ILLUSTRATION
Carlos Méndez

PHOTOGRAPHY
Panama Canal Commission photographers who contributed to this edition of the REVIEW are Alberto Acevedo, Don Goode, Kevin Jenkins, Arthur Pollack and T. G. Kaye Richey. Other photographers whose works appear in these pages are Edwin Armbruster, who supplied nearly all of the photographs for the "Canal Water Watchers" story; James E. Ferrara; Willie K. Friar; Mel Kennedy; Angelo J. Mariano Sr., staff photographer for the Port of New Orleans, who supplied photographs of the SS "Cristobal" and the Water Transportation Division staff in New Orleans; and Susan K. Stabler.

Official Panama Canal Publication

In This Issue

The *Parfitt* and the *Alianza* will help push Canal transit capacity upwards.
Page 8

Canal Water Watchers
by Jan Meriwether
Utilizing every mode of travel from horses to helicopters, the men and women of the Commission's Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch manage the Canal's watershed. Their work takes them into the jungles, up the rivers and on the lakes of Panama as they monitor the Canal's water supply.
Page 10

Beauty in Two Sizes
The Resplendent Quetzal and the Harpy Eagle
One of the most beautiful birds in the world and the most powerful eagle on earth can be found in Panama today.
Page 20

Casco Viejo
A Walk Into Panama's Past
by Susan Hall Liang
A walking tour of the Casco Viejo offers a view of the bustling present alongside the silent past. Historic buildings put to present-day use and ruins undergoing restoration enable the visitor to trace three centuries of Panama's history.
Page 24

Two New Tugs A Capital Idea





From the Panama Canal to the Great Wall
by Willie K. Friar

A new U.S.-China trade agreement has increased the amount of cargo moving through the Canal bound for China.

Page 34

China shipping was the focus of both EXPOSHIP '80 and the Far East Trade and Shipping Conference held in Hong Kong.

Page 40



Kites are fun . . . and work . . . but mostly fun!

by Susan K. Stabler

Kite flying is a 2,000-year-old tradition that originated in China and found its way to the Isthmus.

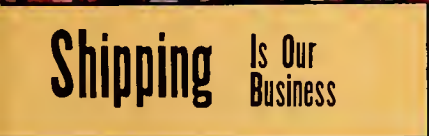
Page 44



Industrious Immigrants: The Chinese in Panama
by Janet Len-Rios

Helping to run the Panama Canal is part of the Chinese-Panamanians' contribution to the growth and development of their adopted country.

Page 47



The statistics speak for themselves

Page 54



SS "Cristobal" The End of the Line
by Fannie P. Hernandez

Canal residents hold fond memories of voyages aboard the SS *Cristobal*. Her retirement marks the end of the Panama Line.

Page 56

From the Editor

If you've been wondering where the PANAMA CANAL REVIEW has been since last October, let me assure you, it's been around—to shipping and trade exhibitions in Hong Kong and China with its former editor Willie Friar, to remote river stations in Panama's jungles with Jan Meriwether and members of the Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch team, to New Orleans aboard the SS *Cristobal* with Fannie Hernandez and to the Casco Viejo in the heart of Panama City with Susan Liang.

It is my hope that these stories and the others contained in this issue of the REVIEW are successful in conveying to you, the reader, the continuing importance of the Panama Canal to world commerce; the essential role being played by the Canal employee in the safe and efficient operation of the waterway; the richness of the culture and the beauty of the country in which we live; and the wealth of memories being stored up by those of us fortunate enough to be a part of it all.

The preparation of the REVIEW has always been an effort of love on the part of many people. Chief among them are the staff members, who put in long hours of hard work during trying times to make story ideas and photo possibilities a reality. Thanks go also to Nan Chong, Pat Booth and Beverly Williams of the Commission's Library/Museum and Economist Richard Wainio for their assistance in researching vital information. A special debt of gratitude is owed to the Commission Printing Office's José S. Alegría, whose knowledge of typography and advice on layout were invaluable in the production of this magazine.

All articles and illustrations in the PANAMA CANAL REVIEW may be reprinted in full or in part without further permission by crediting the PANAMA CANAL REVIEW as the source. The REVIEW is normally published twice a year. Yearly subscription is \$3.50 for third class mail and \$6.50 for first class mail. The price for back issues is \$1.75 for third class and \$3.25 when sent by first class. For subscriptions, send money order made payable to the Panama Canal Commission to PANAMA CANAL REVIEW, Panama Canal Commission Office of Public Affairs, A.P.O. Miami, Fla. 34011. The editorial office is located in Room 100 Administration Building, Balboa Heights, Republic of Panama.

THIS SUMMER THE Panama Canal Commission added two new tugboats to its fleet, the *H. R. Parfitt*, named for the last governor of the Canal Zone, and the *Alianza*. The *Progreso*, sister ship to the *Alianza*, is scheduled to arrive in November. The tugs are the first of four

currently being procured as part of a Commission capital improvement program to increase the Canal's daily transit capacity.

The *Parfitt*, built by Thunderbolt Marine Industries of Savannah, Georgia, at a cost of \$4.9 million, is one of the most versatile tugboats in the world and the largest of its kind

in the Western Hemisphere. Its outstanding feature is a unique cycloidal propeller system that enables the tug to direct its thrust in any direction without changing its heading. In place of the standard screw propeller blade, the *Parfitt* is equipped with two 40-ton, five-blade Voith-Schneider propulsion units. The *Parfitt's* high degree of maneuverability makes the tug particularly well-suited for operating in the confines of the locks and channels.

With its 4,000 horsepower, the *Parfitt* has a capacity for pulling 80,000 pounds ahead or astern and 60,000 pounds sideways.

Six Canal tug masters were specially trained to operate the new tug by Capt. Arthur Robert Naismith, an expert on loan from the Harbor Board of New Zealand. Naismith accompanied the *Parfitt* to the Isthmus from Georgia, following its christening in Savannah.

The \$3.9 million *Alianza* was christened at the Dredging Division in Gamboa shortly after its arrival.

The *Alianza's* conventional propulsion system with twin propellers in Kort Nozzles is more efficient than an open propeller system. Although the *Alianza* cannot direct its thrust sideways, its 3,000-horsepower engines are able to pull in excess of 90,000 pounds ahead and 70,000 pounds astern. The *Alianza* is the first tug purchased by the Commission to have flanking rudders, which allow the tug to be steered while backing. Built by Bollinger Machine Shop and Shipyard, Incorporated of Lockport, Louisiana, the *Alianza* is the seventeenth member of the Commission's tugboat fleet.

The *Parfitt* and the *Alianza* are both on duty with the Canal Support Division assisting ships in Gaillard Cut, at the north end of Pedro Miguel Locks and in Miraflores Lake. The *Alianza* is also working at the south end of Miraflores Locks.

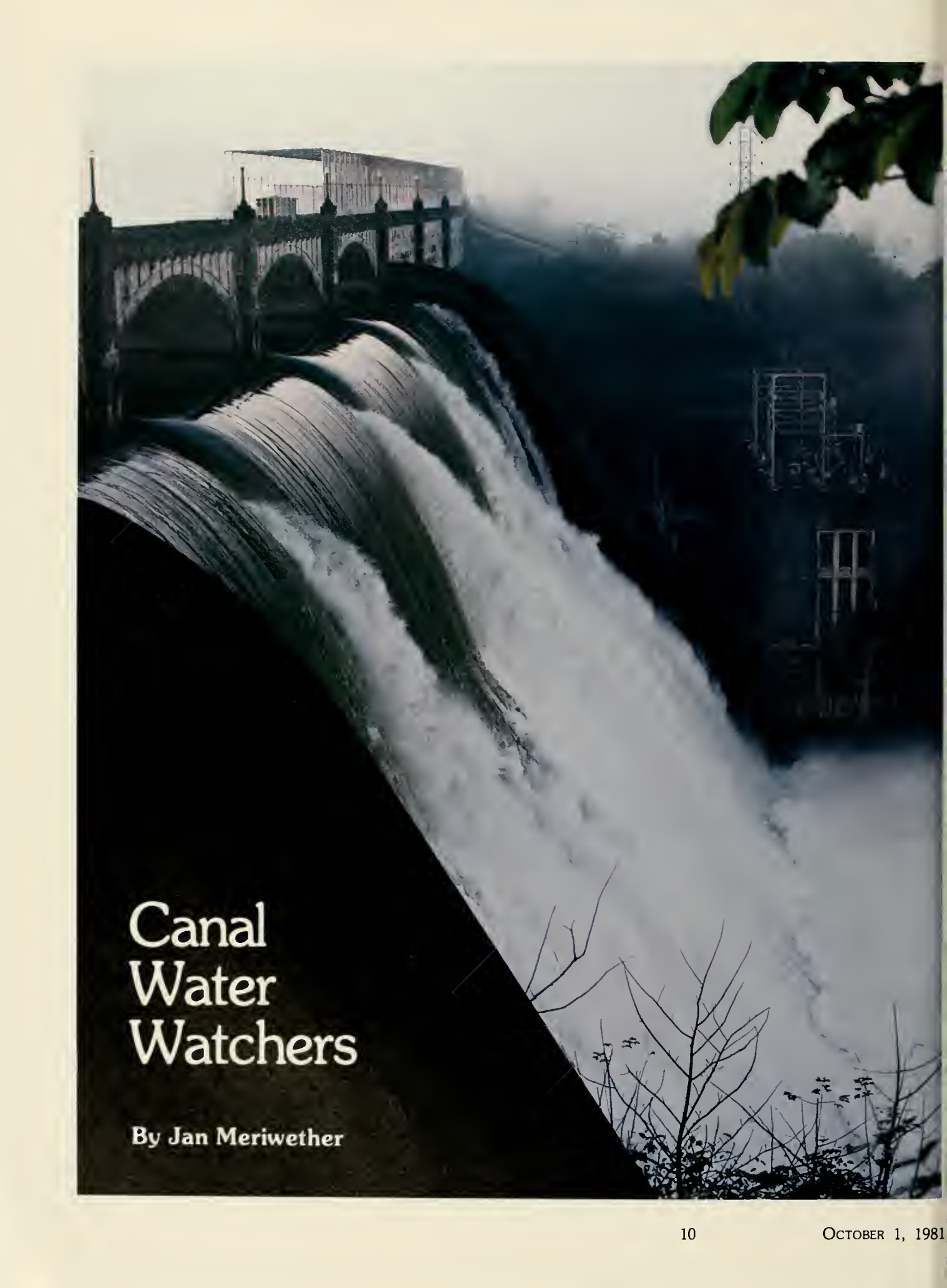
In addition to the new tugs, other Canal improvements either completed or planned by the Commission include the purchase of additional towing locomotives, the improvement of lighting at the locks and a ship tie-up station to be located north of Pedro Miguel Locks.

Two New Tugs A Capital Idea





Above, the tug "H. R. Parfitt" gives a push to assist an Israeli container ship into the locks chamber, while the "Alianza," at left, demonstrates its firefighting capabilities. Opposite page, the blue and gold house flag of the company that built the "Alianza" is removed and the Panama Canal flag raised in its place following the tug's christening.



Canal Water Watchers

By Jan Meriwether

THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE PAN-ama Canal is its water supply, and the responsibility for managing this vital resource is shouldered by the men and women of the Panama Canal Commission's Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch. Utilizing computers and helicopters, as well as machetes and horses, the branch's mission is to meet the water management objectives of the Commission: assuring that enough water is available for navigation in the Canal, while simultaneously carrying out an effective flood control program.

The 41 employees of the Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch cover more territory than any other Commission group as they monitor the 1,289 square-mile Gatun-Madden Lake watershed. Runoff from the watershed nourishes the rivers, principally the Chagres, that fill man-made Madden and Gatun lakes. These lakes supply the water essential to the operation of the Canal and the generation of hydroelectric power. Billions of gallons of water are required daily since, for transit operations alone, every ship that moves through the waterway uses 52 million gallons of fresh water, which flow through the locks and into the ocean.

One of the basic duties of branch personnel is to collect and record hydrologic and meteorological data, or data relating to water on and below the earth's surface and in the atmosphere. Early records indicate that the United States' decision to build a canal across Panama rather than Nicaragua was greatly influenced by hydrologic studies of area rainfall, river flows, flooding and lake levels.

The earliest known attempt to systematically collect such data in Panama was a rainfall recording

station set up on Taboga Island in 1861. The Panama Railroad and the original French canal company, *Compagnie Universelle du Canal Interocéanique*, kept hydraulic, or river flow, and climatological records, although these records were often fragmentary and inaccurate.

French engineers wisely recognized the importance of this data to any construction project in a country where deluges can deposit inches of water in a matter of hours and gentle streams can be quickly transformed into dangerous, raging rivers. Rainfall stations were established by the French at Balboa, Gamboa and Naos Island, as were stream gauging

stations on the Chagres River at Gamboa and Bohio. Records of water temperatures, tidal variations and barometric pressure were also kept by the French, who used the finest instruments available. One of their original barometers is still functioning perfectly in the Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch office in the Administration Building, a testimony to the quality of the French instruments.

When the second French company, the *Compagnie Nouvelle du Canal de Panama*, was begun in 1894 for the purpose of constructing a lock-type canal, efforts to collect accurate hydrologic data were increased, and

At left, the early morning stillness is broken as the drum gates at Madden Dam are lowered, releasing a thundering cascade of water which will help clear the Chagres River of aquatic weeds and lower the level of Madden Lake. At right, one of the earliest stilling wells, which still houses a water-stage register to measure the level of Gatun Lake, is situated in Gamboa.





This aerial view shows two of the major rivers in the watershed, the Pequeni and the Baqueron, whose flow into Madden Lake has been greatly reduced by lack of rainfall during the dry season.

self-recording instruments were used for the first time. The collected data provided a valuable foundation to U.S. planners when the task of building the Panama Canal changed hands in 1904.

Brig. Gen. Henry Abbot, a consulting engineer for the second French

company and a member of the U.S. Board of Consulting Engineers to the Isthmian Canal Commission and the U.S. Senate, had begun basic studies of river and water storage hydraulics for a lock-type canal as early as 1894. General Abbot was a firm believer in the importance of gathering such data so that accurate forecasts could be made about the canal's water supply. He also believed that the key to building a canal across Panama was understanding the hydraulics, or flow, of the Chagres River. General Abbot was of the opinion that the failure of

the French to appreciate the importance of controlling the waters of this powerful river was largely responsible for their lack of success. Gathering data on the mighty Chagres River and its tributaries and making forecasts about the water supply to operate a canal were the primary responsibilities of the Isthmian Canal Commission's Bureau of Meteorology and River Hydraulics, which was created in 1905 and was the forerunner of today's Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch.

While the "Met and Hyd" unit has

been moved around on the organizational chart many times since 1905, its mandate to report on "all natural phenomena which may affect the water supply and the consequent navigation of the Panama Canal" has remained in effect.

Over the years, new rainfall and river gauging stations have been set up throughout the watershed to provide a more precise picture of the water situation in the Canal area. The instruments installed at the stations are self-recording, and the data is periodically gathered by employees



Watershed Stations: The continual gathering of hydrological data in the 1,289-square mile Canal watershed requires an extensive network of data-collecting stations. As the map illustrates, the Met and Hyd Branch currently operates thirteen rainfall stations, seven river stations and four lake stations, as well as the Agua Salud study area.

who in the early days spent days traveling by boat on the rivers and by foot through the beautiful but often inhospitable jungle to reach the remote locations.

A river or lake station consists of a small building to house data-collecting instruments and provide living quarters for crews when they have to work in the field for an extended period of time. Although today these stations are still isolated in the jungles, modern means of transportation, such as helicopters, have made them more easily accessible and improvements, such as screens on the windows and gas stoves, have made the stations more comfortable.

The backbone of the Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch's data collection system has traditionally been the digital recorder, which is hooked up to a system of floats and weights to measure water levels or rainfall amounts. The 35 digital recorders now in use in the watershed take measurements and mark readings on paper tapes every 15 minutes. Another water-level rec-

ording instrument, the analog recorder, is similar to the digital recorder except that it provides a continuous trace on a paper tape of the river or lake elevation much like an electrocardiograph machine traces the continuous beat of a person's heart. Together these instruments provide the hydrologist with an accurate picture of the rise and fall of water levels in the watershed.

The transmittal of that data to the office in Balboa Heights was drastically altered by the installation of a telemetering system in 1966 that thrust the branch into the computer age. With telemetry, the water level of the river or lake elevation and rainfall amounts measured by the digital recorders are translated by an electronic encoder into audio signals that are transmitted by radio to the terminal. Currently, all of the river, lake and rainfall stations throughout the watershed automatically telemeter every 15 minutes reports of hydrology data taken by the digital recorders to the terminal in Balboa Heights.

During the 30 years prior to 1966, employees known as "observers" actually lived at the remote stations to monitor instruments and report information to the main office. They kept in touch by telephone and later by radio after it was discovered that phone lines were practically impossible to keep up in the jungles. With telemetry, observers went the way of pith helmets and white starched suits, but stories about these hardy individuals, who lived isolated in the jungle with only the bare essentials and the company of the Indians and sometimes family members, still circulate.

Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch Chief William Shaw likes to tell a story about one colorful character named Noon who was known for his dry humor. It seems that a chief of the branch was in a boat upriver from Noon's station when the boat tipped over, spilling the chief and his gear into the swiftly flowing stream. At the same moment, Noon received a call from the main office inquiring into the whereabouts of the chief. Looking upriver and quickly assessing the situation, Noon calmly replied, "He'll be along any minute now. His chair and cushion just floated past the station."

While digital recorders and the telemetering system have greatly facilitated today's data collection, many aspects of the hydrologist's and technician's jobs have not changed over the century. Personnel must still trek into the jungles to check and maintain the instruments at the stations. In addition, they collect data tapes from river, lake and rainfall recording instruments on a monthly basis, and, as the saying goes, getting there is half the fun.

Because of the remoteness of the stations, travel accounts for about 20 percent of the branch's field activity. Four-wheel-drive vehicles, horses, cayucos, piraguas (a widened cayuco) and even helicopters are all used to venture out into the field. The most frequently used mode of transportation besides one's own two feet, is the cayuco, a long narrow boat carved from a tree trunk and used by the Indians for centuries. No craft has been found better suited for navigating jungle rivers.

The Choco Indians provide the Met and Hyd Branch with unfinished





Just getting to the remote jungle stations such as the one at Candelaria, at left, is a challenge which can involve, opposite page from bottom, pushing a cayuco up a rock strewn riverbed or traveling in four-wheel-drive vehicles and in helicopters. At top, river travel is routine for palanqueros José Durango, in foreground, and Amadeo Riquelme and for maintenance leader Doroteo Guerrero, at rear, who go prepared for whatever lies ahead.

rough cayucos which branch personnel then complete. The longest cayuco used by the branch is 47 feet. "Palancamen," or pole men, stand in the bow of the cayuco and guide it with long poles, though motors are used for speed and for maneuvering up rapids.

The nature of the work of the Met and Hyd Branch requires its employees to spend a great deal of time out in the watershed. The field office, located at the north end of Pedro Miguel Locks, coordinates all field work and is constantly buzzing with activity as crews prepare to go out into or return from the jungles, rivers and lakes. Crews usually visit each station twice a month during the dry season, and the work is often dirty, exhausting and hazardous. But for every flooding river, poisonous snake, biting insect and muddy trail encountered, there are also the beauties of crystalline rivers washed in sunshine, unspoiled tracts of jungle and peaceful solitude. Members of the Met and Hyd Branch family seem to thrive on this type of outdoor activity.

Field crews take along their supplies, since very few provisions are stocked at the stations and there is no electricity for refrigeration. The crew member who is randomly appointed "cook" must prepare meals over a small propane-gas stove, and the concoctions devised range from disastrous to delicious. Sancocho, a hearty soup made out of whatever is available, is the traditional fare for lunch. One group, however, found a little something extra in their bowls

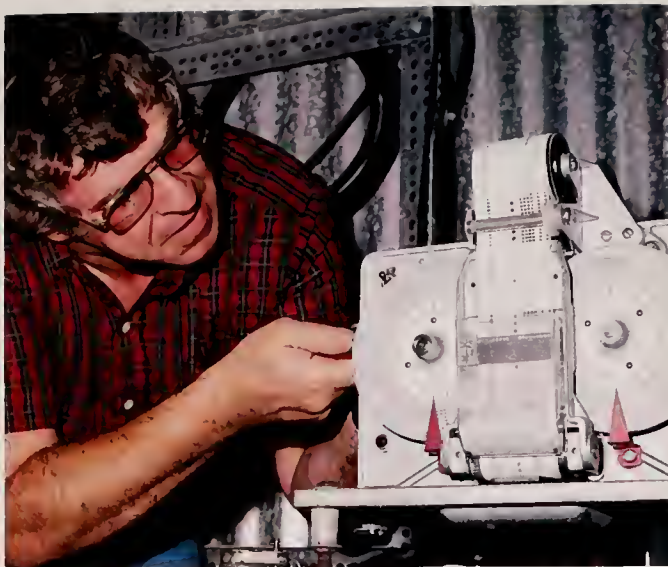
after the cook unknowingly boiled an unfortunate lizard who fell into the uncovered pot. As one man said, "If it weren't for the claws and tail dished out with the meat and vegetables, cooky might have gotten away with it."

Because Panama's climate is divided into a dry and rainy season, the branch's work is seasonal. Most repairs and painting of stations and equipment and the clearing of trails into the jungle are scheduled for the dry months. As the rainy season, or flood season, approaches, the branch gears up for the added responsibilities, tasks and worries which the torrential rains and swollen rivers bring.

The heavy rains that normally occur from October until late December or early January are vital to the operation of the Canal because they help to fill Gatun and Madden lakes. While these lake levels must be kept as high as possible during the rainy season in anticipation of the dry season, there is always a very real danger of flooding.

A flood hydrologist is on duty at all times during the flood season to forecast runoff and river and lake levels. During this period, appearances can be deceiving; the sun may be shining over Balboa while deluges over the watershed are creating flood conditions. In the flood season, field crews spend a week at each river station every month to physically measure the flow of water past the station. River gauging cannot be done by self-recording instruments. The task requires a person to go out in a gauging car suspended over the river on a cable. When this is done at night over a rapidly rising river, the job takes

Although the design of the gauging car, at right and top center, has improved over the century, its function remains the same. Polanquero Emilio Valencia, opposite page, balances himself in a gauging car while preparing to lower a current meter into the swollen river to measure the flow of water. Above left, hydrological technician Ed Armbruster makes a delicate adjustment to a digital recorder, workhorse of the data collection system.



on an added dimension of danger.

When lake elevations reach a critical level, Met and Hyd personnel direct the spilling operations at Gatun and Miraflores spillways and at Madden Dam to safely discharge any flood waters which could damage locks machinery and Canal facilities. Each year the Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch holds a flood control exercise within the Commission to assure that the appropriate personnel are informed and prepared in the event of a real flood that could necessitate closing the Canal.

The mighty Chagres River, which presented such a formidable challenge to the builders of the Panama Canal, provides most of the huge volume of

water necessary to operate the locks. The course of the Canal through Gatun Lake follows the Chagres riverbed. The Chagres, however, is also the greatest source of flooding. Hydrologists never underestimate the awesome potential of this powerful river, which can rise as much as 15 feet per hour during heavy rains.

In 1966, the Chagres was running high enough to wash out the gauging car cable hanging 43 feet above normal river level at the Chico River station. A hydrologist who was at the station described a sound like roaring thunder as the river rushed by with a force strong enough to shake the station and frightening enough to send him scurrying for higher ground.





Data collection in the field involves a wide range of activities and personalities; opposite page, supervisory hydrologist Frank Robinson visits the Agua Salud study area; above left, hydrologist Luis Alvarado immerses himself in the survey of riverbed levels while, above right, a gaily bedecked Gloria Bazcorizo, a Choco Indian, signs her monthly pay slip from the branch for collecting sediment samples in the river.

In addition to its regular duties, the Met and Hyd Branch conducts special projects such as the Agua Salud study area, a five-square-mile area in the middle of the Madden-Gatun watershed with physical characteristics that make it representative of the entire area. Instruments set up on this tract of land collect data such as rainfall, streamflow, soil moisture and evaporation that will be used to establish

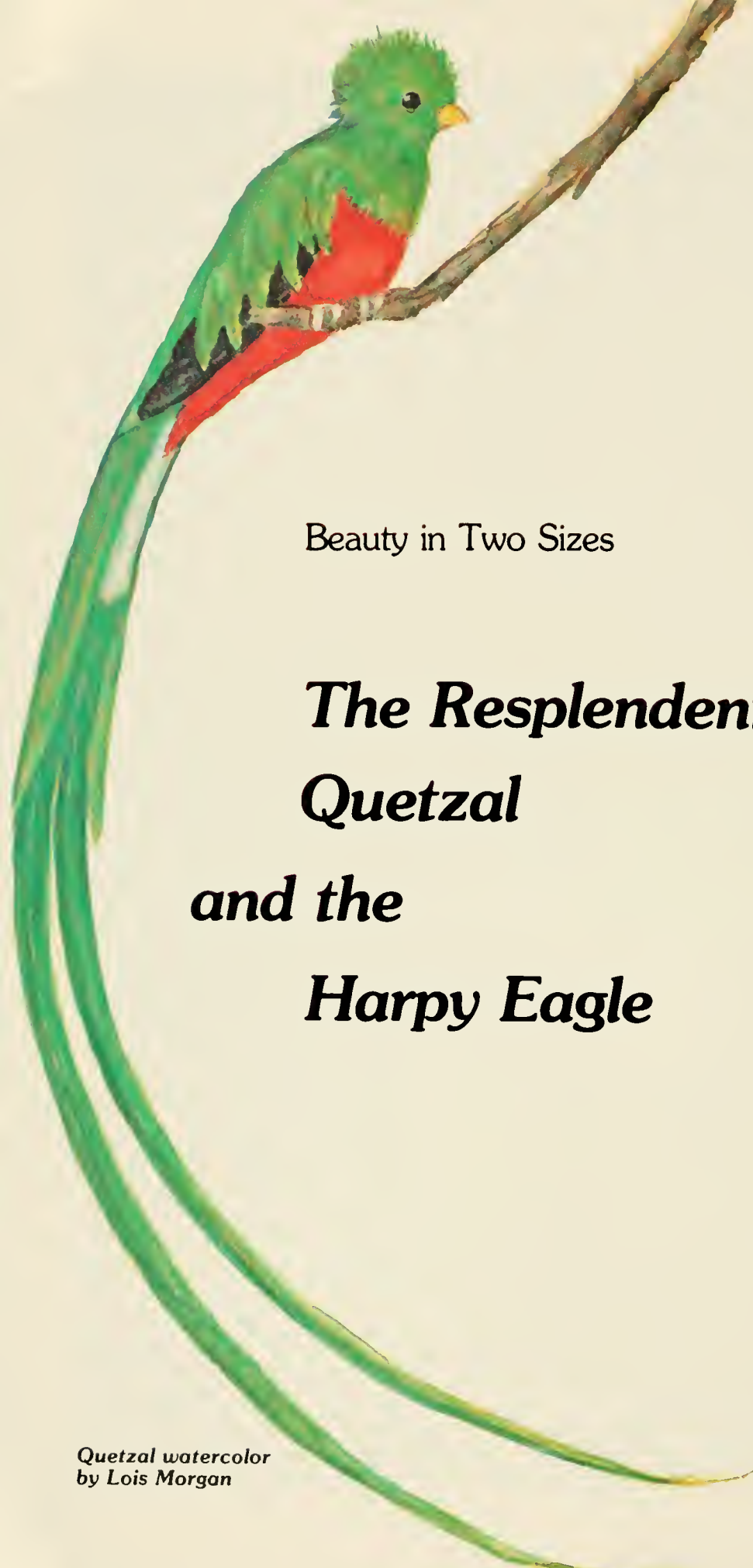
the parameters for a special computer model. Once the computer model has been adjusted to accurately represent conditions in the Madden-Gatun watershed, the branch hopes to use it as a tool to forecast stream flows and resulting lake levels faster, more reliably and less subjectively.

Another project that will reap future benefits for the Canal operation is a sedimentation study currently underway to collect data on the nature and amount of sediment in the river channels. Much of this sediment is washed downstream and deposited in Madden Lake, thus affecting the lake's water storage capacity.

In addition to their own sampling, Met and Hyd personnel have enlisted the aid of Indians and village school teachers to periodically collect sediment samples from the rivers and turn them over to field crews passing by on their way to river stations. With the data gathered from the project, the branch can better predict the future availability of water.

While the Meteorological and Hydrographic Branch's mission to manage the water supply of the Panama Canal is unique, it does cooperate with and exchange information, professional opinions and technical assistance with its counterparts in the United States and Panama, including the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Weather Service and Panama's Renewable Natural Resources Bureau (RENARE), the Institute of Hydraulic Resources and Electrification (IRHE) and the National Institute of Water and Sewerage Systems (IDAAN).

The Met and Hyd Branch seems blessed with high morale and a special camaraderie among its members. Some branch personnel attribute this to the sheer enjoyment derived from their work, with its wide variety of duties and working environments. But more than just the pleasure of the work is the recognition of the vital role which the branch plays in the successful operation of the Panama Canal.



Beauty in Two Sizes

The Resplendent Quetzal and the Harpy Eagle

Quetzal watercolor
by Lois Morgan

IN THE COOL, MOIST CLOUD-forests of western Chiriqui Province, one can catch a rare glimpse of a fabled creature once deified by ancient civilizations. Magnificent in its glittering plumage of green and crimson, the resplendent quetzal has been linked to human history for centuries.

Also known locally as the "guaco," the resplendent quetzal belongs to the trogon family, brilliantly colored, solitary birds that inhabit the tropical forests of the Americas, Asia and Africa. While members of this family are not often spotted by backyard bird-watchers, since trogons avoid establishing habitats near townsites and people, they are, nevertheless, quite numerous in Panama. However, the resplendent quetzal, thought by many to be one of the most beautiful birds in the world, is becoming increasingly scarce.

Although most trogons are devoid of ornamental plumes, the male quetzal is an outstanding exception. This bird owes much of its fame to the elongated plumes which extend over and beyond the tip of its tail. The two central plumes of this "tail covert" are much longer than the bird's body. An iridescent golden-green, they measure from 15 to 30 inches long and take about three years to grow to their full length.

The feathers of the resplendent quetzal are loosely attached to the bird's body and come out easily. It has been reported that a male quetzal will take flight from a branch by lifting off of it backwards rather than forwards to avoid pulling the delicate tail coverts over the rough wood. The female quetzal, like the females of most other bird species, is not nearly as striking as her dazzling mate. She lacks the long, graceful tail coverts, and her coloration is much duller.

Quetzals, like woodpeckers, nest in holes in decaying tree trunks. This arrangement does not seem to present a problem to the male quetzal, who enters the nest and apparently sits so that its tail is held upright against the rear wall with the long tail coverts continuing upward and over its head so that the tips extend out the entrance. Quetzals have been observed, however, with broken and damaged tail coverts, perhaps as a result of this nesting position.

(Continued on page 22)

WHILE WESTERN PANAMA is the habitat for one of the most beautiful birds in the world, the tropical lowlands and mountains of the Darien represent one of the last refuges for the largest and most powerful eagle on earth, the harpy eagle.

This magnificent bird of prey was reported to be fairly common in Panama over 100 years ago, and sightings of harpies were once recorded on Barro Colorado Island and in Pacora, La Campana, Fort Sherman and Puerto Obaldia in the San Blas.

Today, it takes the determination of an ardent bird-watcher to get a glimpse of a harpy. Hunting and extensive habitat destruction have driven them to the most inaccessible areas, where they make their nests in the tallest trees, usually well over 100 feet high.

For Dr. Nathan Gale, a veterinarian and past president of the Panama Audubon Society, getting a look at a harpy eagle in the wild meant flying to the isolated Darien town of El Real, traveling upriver from there by cayuco for two days, then scaling the rugged Tacarcuna Mountains, where persistence finally paid off.

Although the jungles of Panama are alive with brilliantly colored birds, the harpy eagle is an exception, sedately clothed in gray, black and white. The back, wings, tail, neck and head are varying shades of gray, while the breast feathers are white and the undersides of the wings are white with horizontal gray bars. Toward the back of its head an adult harpy boasts a double crest of dark feathers which, when raised, gives the eagle a



particularly fierce appearance. What the harpy lacks in coloration, it more than makes up for in brute strength.

The word harpy comes from the Greek "harpyiai," which means "snatchers." In classical mythology, harpies were fearsome creatures, usually represented by vulture-like birds with female faces. A harpy eagle sweeping through the branches at 40 to 50 miles per hour to snatch a monkey or sloth from a tree with its razor-sharp talons is worthy of its name.

Like most birds of prey, the female is larger than her mate, in this case, about one third larger. An adult female weighs up to twenty pounds and is approximately three feet long. A wing span of from 5½ to 7 feet makes the harpy a powerful and agile flyer, but it rarely navigates in the open sky. Instead, the eagle deftly maneuvers in and above the jungle canopy while looking for prey in the treetops.

Besides sloths and monkeys, the harpy's quarry includes opossums, coatimundis, porcupines, snakes and, at times, large birds such as macaws. The eagle's huge and powerful feet

Its distinctive double crest raised, the male harpy at the Panama City racetrack zoo patiently sits for a portrait. The harpy photos which accompany this story were shot by T. G. Kaye Richey, seen below finishing up his assignment as the eagle's trainer keeps a sharp lookout.

with their three-inch talons usually mean instant death to unwary prey.

Dr. Gale has had a wealth of experience with this awesome bird. He once kept an injured female harpy in his backyard while trying to locate a suitable residence for it. A part of one wing had been shot away by a hunter in Santa Fe in the Darien Province, and the hunter was subsequently trying to sell the bird. Hearing about the harpy's plight, Dr. Gale chartered a plane and flew to Santa Fe with plans to buy the eagle, repair its wing, and then get the bird into a captive-breeding program. During the trip

(Continued on page 23)



Resplendent Quetzal

(Continued from page 20)

To the ancient Toltec and Mayan tribes in Mexico and Central America, the quetzal was revered as Quetzalcoatl, the god of creation and fertility. With the Aztecs, reverence for the quetzal reached its peak. Quetzalcoatl comes from the Aztec word "quetzalli," meaning "precious feather" and "coatl" meaning "snake," thus, the god was also known as the plumed serpent. Over the years, Quetzalcoatl emerged into a god with human form who adorned himself with the beautiful plumes of the quetzal. To the Indians, these plumes became coveted objects whose use was limited by law to royalty and nobility. Aztec law also made it illegal to kill a quetzal, and the Indians were supposed to capture the bird alive, remove the tail coverts and then release the bird so that it could grow another set.

Some historians think that the myth of Quetzalcoatl was largely responsible for the defeat of the Aztecs by the Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés, who conquered Mexico in the early 1500s. Montezuma, the Aztec emperor, believed that Cortés was the god Quetzalcoatl incarnate returning to his people as had been prophesied in a legend. Cortés, who placed quetzal plumes on his helmet, was received with honors; and by the time the Aztecs realized their mistake, he and his men had captured the city.

Indian legend also offers an explanation for the intensity and contrast of coloration of the male quetzal, with its crested head, upper plumage and chest of iridescent green, and lower breast and belly of deep crimson.

The Mayans believed that after the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado and his mercenaries had slain over 20,000 Mayas on the battlefield of Quetzaltenango (an area of Guatemala with a Mayan name meaning "place of Quetzals"), the quetzals flew to the earth and covered the dead Indians with their green feathers. The birds soaked up the blood of the dead and have been crimson on the underside ever since.

After the Spanish conquest, the quetzal was hunted relentlessly and



became so rare that some Europeans considered it a legendary bird that never really existed. The quetzal was rediscovered by Europeans in the nineteenth century and its skins were sent to Europe to collectors and to be used in fashions. Although today the quetzal is protected by law in some countries, such as Panama, its numbers are still decreasing due to the continued hunting of the bird for its plumes and the destruction of the bird's natural habitat as forests are cut down for farming and pastureland.

It is ironic that the quetzal, the national bird of Guatemala and the name of that country's monetary unit, is far more numerous in Panama than in Guatemala, since the destruction of the original forest over Guatemala's central highlands has resulted in the quetzal's near total disappearance from that area.

Most sightings of the quetzal in Panama have been in western Chiriqui, but the bird has also been spotted in Bocas del Toro, eastern Chiriqui and Veraguas. Scientists and amateur bird-watchers alike travel to these areas to observe this rare bird, since, with a little hiking and perhaps the help of a local guide, the quetzal's habitat is usually accessible.

One of the better-known areas for seeing the quetzal is on the Fernández farm in Cerro Punta near El Volcán in Chiriqui. The family has reserved a part of their farm for the birds and for a small fee will take people to the area. The government of Panama has also set aside the Volcán Barú area, a favorite habitat of the quetzal, as a national park.

The quetzal, once thought to guide the destiny of an entire civilization, today must allow its own destiny to be determined by human kind.

Above, even though few quetzals remain in Guatemala today, the quetzal motif continues to be popular in fabric and jewelry designs, as well as appearing on Guatemalan money, which is named for this lovely bird. Opposite, the gentle inquisitiveness of the harpy's face can be deceiving, but there is no mistaking the deadly potential of the powerful talons.

Harpy Eagle

(Continued from page 21)

home, he placed a sack over the struggling bird to keep its head and wings immobile and held the eagle on his lap, grasping its legs to keep the deadly feet motionless. "The worst thing I could imagine was that I would be cooped up in a small airplane with a harpy eagle loose," Dr. Gale remarked.

It isn't easy to have an extra mouth or beak to feed, especially when it consumes two to three pounds of meat a day. Dr. Gale relates that sympathetic Panama Canal police officers often left bags on his doorstep containing wild animals which had been killed on the road. When roadkills were not available, he fed the voracious bird two pounds of beef kidneys daily. Although the harpy eagle learned to recognize Dr. Gale, like all wild birds of prey it never became tame.

The female harpy now resides at the zoo located on the grounds of Panama City's racetrack, Hipódromo Presidente Remón. Along with a male harpy obtained from a man in the Volcán area, it is housed in a special 20- by 40-foot cage. There are plans to move both birds into a larger cage at Parque Nacional Soberanía (Summit Gardens), where they will be cared for by Panama's Renewable Natural Resources Conservation Agency.

Dr. Gale's experience with the harpy eagle actually began prior to his coming to Panama. While serving as the assistant director of the Los Angeles Zoo, he and some colleagues collaborated with the movie industry in the production of a film entitled "Harpy." The zoo sponsored the movie company's purchase of two harpy eagles, a male and a female, to star in the film. The plot centers around a man, played by actor Hugh O'Brian, who wants to do away with his wife. He comes up with the ingenious and sinister scheme of using a great harpy eagle to do the job. The bird is trained to attack a wig, which he later presents to his wife as a gift. Unfortunately for her, a harpy eagle rarely misses its prey.

The two harpy eagles were trained for the movie in the arid Mojave Desert of eastern California. The birds

became the zoo's property after the filming was completed, but there was one problem: the harpies had learned to attack so well that they became unapproachable. Frank Todd, a friend of Dr. Gale and the former curator of birds at the Los Angeles Zoo, made the mistake of climbing on top of the eagles' chain link cage to get a look at a newborn chick, the first ever born in captivity. He was attacked through the fence by the male harpy, and extensive surgery was required on his face where the talons had struck him.

The harpy's regal if not fearsome

appearance, as well as its tremendous power, make it a very impressive creature. According to research by Julián Chan, a historian with Panama's Government Tourist Bureau, the harpy eagle is recognized unofficially as the national bird of Panama.

The power and beauty personified by the harpy eagle and the quetzal make them two of Panama's more remarkable birds. For as long as the Isthmian forests and jungles remain intact, these birds also will survive to awe and inspire future generations.





2. La Catedral Metropolitana
The Metropolitan Cathedral



4. Palacio Presidencial
Presidential Palace



1. Altar de Oro
Golden Altar



5. Instituto Bolívar
Bolívar Institute



3. Correos Nacionales
Postal Administration



6. Teatro Nacional
National Theatre



8. Palacio de Justicia
Palace of Justice



9. Plaza de Francia
French Plaza



7. Iglesia de Santo Domingo
Church of Santo Domingo



El Casco Viejo de la ciudad de Panamá

A Walk Into Panama's Past

Story by Susan Hall Liang

and featuring

Robert and Alida Emerick

IF YOU ARE SHOPPING OR sightseeing in Panama City and venture off the beaten path into that part of Central Avenue beyond Santa Ana Plaza, you'll find yourself in the San Felipe section, also known as the "Casco Viejo." Here, if you know where to look, you can step three centuries into Panama's past. Unlike the historic ruins of Old Panama and Fort San Lorenzo, life has gone on in the Casco Viejo, and history lives alongside hanging laundry, laughing children, and noisy neighbors.

For the Casco Viejo, which translates into "Old Shell," is the site upon which the present city had its beginnings. Situated on the tip of a peninsula that juts out into the Bay of Panama, the Casco Viejo was the central setting for the second period of Panamanian history, which began with the moving of the city from Old Panama after it was reduced to ashes during the attack of the pirate Henry Morgan in 1671.

Located a short drive or walk farther down Central Avenue from the downtown commercial section of Panama City, the area includes Cathedral Plaza, the National Theatre and the French Plaza. If you want to walk there from Central Avenue, you can recognize Santa Ana Plaza by its thousand shoeshine boys and the men discussing politics. Central Avenue exits Santa Ana to the left of the "Coca Cola" cafe, passes the headquarters of Citibank, narrows at La Merced Church and opens again as it enters the heart of the Casco Viejo: Cathedral Plaza, dominated by the cathedral's twin towers encrusted with mother of pearl.

Narrow streets lined with pastel-painted houses; balconies bearing occasional cascades of flowers; tree-shaded plazas; thick stone arches; weathered stone ruins; a carved wooden altar totally overlaid in gold



In the Casco Viejo, flower-bedecked balconies offer shade from the tropical sun.

leaf—all these and more survive in the Casco Viejo to tell the story of the tumultuous history of Panama as it grew from a small walled city into the crossroads of the world.

Currently, renovation work is underway on many of the historical buildings in the Casco Viejo and the neighborhood is taking on a new brightness. However, much of the area is yet in disrepair, and the streets are never as clean as we would like them to be. But the people of the Casco Viejo, many of whose one room combination living-dining-bedrooms are fully visible to the passerby, keep a lookout over what goes on in the street and are always ready to offer directions and a friendly smile.

On a quick tour of the area the careless glance will note only that this

is an old section, and not much more. But given an hour or two for a leisurely stroll, you can trace the path of Panama's growth from a province of Spain's viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, to a state and later a department of the Republic of Colombia, and finally, following its separation from Colombia in 1903, to the independent republic we know today.

The move to a new site had become necessary when Morgan's attack on Old Panama convinced the city fathers that the 150-year-old site was indefensible.

The original Spanish settlements on the Isthmus were on the Atlantic coast, called the "Castilla de Oro," at Nombre de Dios and Porto Bello. Vasco Núñez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus in 1513 and there, standing "silent, upon a peak in Darien," first saw the Pacific, which lay to the south, and called it the "South Sea." Walking into its waters, he claimed all that bordered the sea for the monarchs of Spain.

Shortly thereafter Pedro Arias de Avila, also known as Pedrarias Dávila, another Spanish explorer and Balboa's rival for power on the Isthmus, had Balboa beheaded and became the undisputed leader of Castilla de Oro. Pedrarias then decided that he needed a city on the Pacific coast with a suitable harbor that would serve as a base for transisthmian traffic from the lands he hoped to discover further south.

Thus on August 15, 1519, the feast day of Our Lady of the Assumption, the first City of Panama was founded. In the next century and a half it became one of the principal cities of the New World, growing to a population of 10,000. Pedrarias' foresight was confirmed as the Isthmus became the chief route for travel and shipment of treasure from all of Latin America south of Mexico, and Pan-



Commission employees Alida de Obaldia Emerick, great-granddaughter of the second president of Panama, and her husband, Robert, begin a walking tour through the Casco Viejo at the French Plaza, at right. Below, while there they examine one of the plaques honoring the French canal construction effort. Later, at far right, they view the Golden Altar, carved four centuries ago and embellished with dazzling gold leaf.

ama became one of Spain's leading trade centers. But finally, the very wealth of the city, symbolized by its reputation as the "City of Gold," became a temptation to Morgan and brought on its destruction.

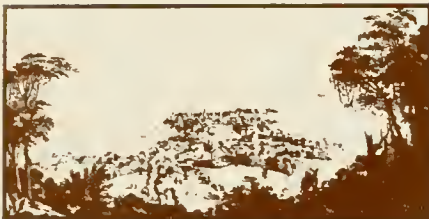
Authority to rebuild a new city at another site was quickly given by the reigning queen of Spain, Mariana of Austria. Construction was begun near the base of Ancon Hill, with plans for a great wall surrounding the city, a moat across the peninsula and cannon guarding both the sea and land approaches. The official transfer of the city to its new site was made on January 21, 1673.

One good place to begin a walking tour of the Casco Viejo is the French Plaza, at the southern tip of the peninsula. This plaza, dedicated to the French effort to build a sea-level canal, is bounded by part of the original seawall. Vaults, or "bóvedas," in the seawall give this section of the wall its old name, "Las Bóvedas." Up until the early 1900s, this area was a fort and the vaults were used as jails, primarily for prisoners sentenced for minor crimes. The legend that there is a deeper set of vaults into which prisoners were put to be drowned by the rising tide lacks any basis in fact.

Placed within a colonnade in the seawall are twelve marble plaques inscribed with a history of the French Canal construction years and the names of distinguished individuals who served in that effort.







In the plaza stands the white, neo-classical Palace of Justice, with the words "IVSTITIA" and "LEX," Latin for "justice" and "law," chiseled into the upper front wall. Part of the palace once housed Panama's Congress and today it is the home of the Supreme Court of Panama and other lesser courts.

Above the vaults is the seawall promenade. At one time the wall stretched its arms along the shore, then joined and closed off the city at 10th Street, where there was a gate called the "puerta de tierra" (the land gate) through which the city communicated with the outside.

The "puerta de tierra" gave access to a drawbridge that spanned the moat. The city became an island every night when, at the 9 o'clock curfew, the bridge was drawn up and no more traffic was allowed through.

The wall around the city stood 20 to 30 feet high and was 10 to 13 feet thick. Along the wall were 15 sentry boxes. Part of one of the two bastions that defended the "puerta de tierra" still remains. Known as the "baluarte de Jesús" (The Bastion of Jesus), it can be seen at 10th Street near A Avenue.



About three blocks west of the French Plaza at the corner of Fourth Street and A Avenue, are the ruins of one of the first churches built in the new city, the Church of Santo Domingo. In this church the first Bishop of Panama and Diocesan Prelate Lucas Fernández Piedrahita celebrated the first pontifical mass for

the young city of Panama. Over the years, the church was destroyed by fire several times and subsequently rebuilt. After the Colombian government divested the Church of its belongings, Santo Domingo was put up for auction in 1857, sold, and eventually fell into disrepair.

Inside the ruins of Santo Domingo is



the famous flat arch. Built without a keystone and with the slightest of curves, the arch has held for over two centuries and was instrumental in the decision to make Panama the location for a canal to unite the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Engineers accepted the arch as proof that Panama, unlike other Central American nations, was free from the threat of earthquakes.

Next to the Church of Santo Domingo is a small side chapel, built many years later, that now serves as the Museum of Religious Colonial Art. Worth noting in the museum is the hand-carved, polychrome, wooden statue of Our Lady of the Rosary. Considered miraculous by many of the faithful, the statue is a relic of the first city of Panama. Every October on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary a mass in her honor is said in the museum.

Farther west of Santo Domingo, on the corner of Ninth Street, is the San José Church, also known as the Church of the Golden Altar. It is a favorite tourist attraction.

The altar came from an earlier church built by the Augustinian Recollect Fathers in the first city of Panama. Legend has it that it was saved from Morgan by a certain Brother Joseph, who covered the altar with tar and then had the temerity to ask Morgan for a charitable donation to help finish its construction. Morgan is said to have exclaimed, "This brother is more of a pirate than I!" and then to have given the amount requested.

The church was later used as a school and finally abandoned until priests of the Augustinian order, which had been banned from the country along with other religious orders by the Colombian government in 1833, were allowed to return to take over the church in 1898.

They began work on restoring the church and in particular the ornately carved altar, which they covered in gold leaf. Considered an especially lovely work of art, the altar is totally creole in construction, i.e., made by Central American artisans using local motifs such as vines and flowers.

As is customary with Spanish cities, at the center of the Casco Viejo is a plaza where the cathedral and government buildings were constructed. It is



Sculptures of angels grace the cupola of the beautiful San Francisco Church in the Simón Bolívar Plaza, above. Opposite page: Above, in mute testimony to the skill of artisans of yesteryear, the flat arch, once the support for a choir loft in the Santo Domingo Church, still holds after two centuries. Below, not far from the Palace of

Justice, Bob and Alida stroll along the seawall promenade in the French Plaza, where 17th century soldiers once made their rounds, ever vigilant for pirate attacks.



known alternatively as Independence Plaza, because it was the site of Panama's declaration of independence from Colombia in 1903, and as Cathedral Plaza.

The first stone of the cathedral was laid in 1688, and work on its construction continued sporadically

for over a century before it was completed. The cathedral has one center nave, four lateral naves and two towers encrusted with mother-of-pearl from the Perlas Islands. The bells in the towers are considered to have a particularly beautiful tone and still ring out today calling the faithful to mass.



Next to the cathedral are the ruins of the Jesuit convent and college. Completed in 1751, the University of San Javier was short lived, however, as the Jesuits were expelled from Panama less than 20 years later. The building was burned in a fire in 1781, and the ruins that can now be seen on A Avenue are all that is left of one of the oldest universities in the Americas.

Also in the plaza, on the south side, stands what was originally the Grand Hotel. It was built in 1875 with a mansard roof, a sign of the French influence of the times. Bought by the French Canal Company, the building served as their canal-construction administration building until the United States acquired it along with all the other assets of the French Canal Company for forty million dollars. The Isthmian Canal Commission, the U.S. Government agency responsible for construction of the Panama Canal, used the building as its first headquarters. It now serves as the Zone One post office building of Panama.

Next to the post office is the Municipal Palace. On this very spot stood the old "cabildo" (town hall), where Panama's independence from Spain was declared in 1821 and from Colombia in 1903. The original structure was demolished and replaced by the present neo-classical building in 1910. It not only serves as the assembly hall of the Panama City Municipal Council, but also houses the offices of the Panamanian Academy of History and the Museum of History, which has many exhibits, including a 1596 map of the city of Portobelo, in addition to other maps and documents of historical interest.

Directly across from the cathedral stands the Hotel Central. Built in the 1880s, its first owners were the Erhman brothers, members of a prominent Panamanian family of French origin. The wooden hotel has seen better days. Once its guests were gold prospectors traveling to and from California; agents of the French Canal Construction Company; and in later years, employees of the Isthmian Canal Commission. In the cafe of the hotel, political and social leaders of Panama often met to discuss issues of the day. Today it hosts occasional tourists of modest means, and all that is left to remind one of the hotel's former charm and gaiety is the original



In the picturesque Simón Bolívar Plaza, at top left, stands a monument to the famous South American liberator. At top right, the wooden staircase is the only reminder of the Hotel Central's former splendor. Above, once the Union Club, this building is now a club for the National Guard. Opposite page: Above, the cathedral

towers, encrusted with mother-of-pearl, glisten in the sunlight. Below (left), shade trees and benches offer a place to sit and rest in the Cathedral Plaza. Below (right), this post office once served as the administration building for the French canal company.



The Emericks pause at one of the refurbished private residences in the Casco Viejo, at right. Then it's on to the Presidential Palace, below, where graceful herons give an elegant air to the palace courtyard, at far right. Opposite page: The tour ends with a stop at the National Theatre, where the magnificent doors at the entrance only hint at the opulence of the interior.



staircase in the main lobby.

Two blocks north of the plaza, on 5th Street, is the Presidential Palace. The palace was built by Judge Luis de Lozada Quiñones, one of the two members of the "Real Audiencia" (Royal Court) present in Panama when the governor unexpectedly died in 1673. The judge did not hesitate in taking over the reins of government.

Lozada decided to build a combination home and office at the best point in the city. He commandeered materials sent from Spain for the construction of the new city, diverted funds sent from Peru for the same purpose, seized slaves who had been assigned to the construction of the defense moats and used them all to build his own home.

Constructed of hewn stone, the house was larger than any other of the time. It had sufficient space to store

the gold brought from southern ports, as well as goods on their way from Spain to the merchants of the southern colonies, and its location enabled the judge to keep a sharp eye on ships trading with Peru.

The City Council complained to the king of this abuse of public funds and labor, adding that Lozada was too busy building his own house to take care of public matters.

Charles II, in response to the complaints, placed the Bishop of Panama in charge of the government; but it was not until Lozada's death that the building passed out of his control and became the Pacific Customs House.

Later, the building was used as a storehouse and for a few years it was a school. Finally, in 1875, it was set aside as the residence for the Colombian governors of the Department of



Panama, and from 1903 on, for the president of the newly independent republic. In 1922, President Belisario Porras ordered the refurbishing that gave it the Moorish characteristics that it now has.

In the palace today are a number of beautiful staterooms decorated with murals by the Panamanian artist Roberto Lewis, and on the third floor is a penthouse, occupied by the president and his family. But most impressive is the patio just inside the entrance to the palace, with its small fountain and its pillars encrusted with mother-of-pearl. Since 1922, live herons have moved gracefully about the fountain in the patio, giving the edifice a second name, the Palace of the Herons.

Southeast of the palace, on a small plaza on 3rd Street, stands the Bolívar Institute, a coeducational high school.



In this building, originally the San Francisco Convent, is the room where the "Sociedad Bolivariana" meets. This room, recently restored, was the seat of the Panama Congress organized by Simón Bolívar in 1826. A ceremony here in 1956, attended by President Eisenhower and the heads of government of all the Latin American nations, commemorated that congress.

Bolívar, considered the father of the independence of South America from Spain, called the congress to discuss the formation of a union of Hispanic-American states. Although Bolívar himself did not attend and the congress was unsuccessful, his ideals are still alive today and considered the hope of the future by many Latin American nations. In the small, charming park in front of the institute is a statue of Bolívar, notable not only

for its beauty but also because it is said to be the only such monument in Latin America that depicts Bolívar in civilian attire.

One block over from the Bolívar Institute is the National Theatre. Built in 1907, the theatre was recently completely restored and has an elegant beauty. The structure is neo-baroque and the interior is decorated in gilt and red velvet, with ceiling murals painted by Roberto Lewis. The theatre has excellent acoustics and five levels that seat 995 people.

The National Theatre faces the sea. Two blocks to the south is the French Plaza, where we began. The entire Casco Viejo is not much more than ten blocks by five blocks square.

The current renovation program being carried out by Panama's Institute of Tourism includes reinforcing foundations and restoring decorative



and structural elements of buildings and ruins. Where needed, walls are being injected with epoxy cement for strength, while others are being covered with a special sealing material for protection against the elements. Plans call for jasmine and lemon trees to be planted in renovated parks, in addition to eventual illumination of these historical sites.

At an approximate cost of \$2.5 million, the project is meant not only to beautify the Casco Viejo but also, and primarily, to preserve the historical buildings and plazas that recall Panama's varied and fascinating past.

For the city's past as a crossroads for enormous wealth, gold and merchandise of all kinds three hundred years ago augured the role Panama plays today as the crossroads of the world, with the ships and goods of many nations transiting the Canal.

From the Panama Canal To the Great Wall



China Trade and the Panama Canal

Story and photographs

by Willie K. Friar

IN SIZE, SHE WAS DWARFED by tankers that shuttle Alaska North Slope oil through the Panama Canal, and her cargo was small compared to the payloads aboard the giant containerhips that tower over the locks.

Still, the *Wumen*, a 475-foot-long, 66-foot-beam general cargo ship, attracted attention at the Canal. She flies the flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and transits by vessels under this flag were rare occurrences prior to last year, with the number ranging from zero in the early 1970's to a maximum of one per year in fiscal year 1977. In fiscal year 1980, however, Chinese-flag transits increased to 29, nearly 300 percent over the prior year, and in 1981 that number is expected to more than double to approximately 65 transits.

Even more important has been the increase in Canal trade moving to and from China in all vessels, regardless of flag. That trade rose from less than 1 million long tons annually in fiscal years 1976 and 1977 to 3.2 million long tons in fiscal year 1979, jumping to 8 million tons in fiscal year 1980. This year cargo originating in or destined for China will likely exceed 11 million long tons, accounting for nearly 6.5 percent of all Canal trade.

Two events have been instrumental in causing the increase in China's use of the Panama Canal. One has been the tremendous growth in the size of the Chinese merchant fleet and the other was the implementing of United States-China trade agreements in 1980.

The Chinese-flag merchant marine has grown from some 250 vessels, totalling about 1.2 million deadweight tons in 1970, to over 850 vessels and nearly 7 million deadweight tons today. Additionally, ships controlled by the People's Republic of China, but registered in Hong Kong and elsewhere, are believed to total 2 million-plus deadweight tons and, last year,



**SELECTED COMMODITY MOVEMENTS ORIGINATING IN OR
DESTINED FOR PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

FISCAL YEAR 1980

(long tons)

TO CHINA	
Wheat	2,730,653
Corn	1,264,508
Soybeans	846,302
Sugar	435,957
Cotton	360,010
Phosphates	284,759
Manufactures of iron and steel	227,224
Paper and products	210,901
All other	646,569
Total cargo to China	7,006,883
FROM CHINA	
Ores	596,195
Gasoline	315,614
All other	91,511
Total cargo from China	1,003,320
Total cargo to and from China	8,010,203
Total Canal commercial cargo	167,214,955
Percent of total Canal commercial cargo	4.8%

Carrying cargo to China

In centerfold, two People's Republic of China vessels pass through Pedro Miguel Locks July 28, transporting U.S. wheat from New Orleans to China. The *Yunghai*, which carried 31,966 long tons, paid \$26,898 in tolls; and the *Huayang*, shown entering the left chamber with a cargo of 24,388 long tons, paid \$22,718. At left (above), after passing through the Canal, the *Wumen* lies at anchor in the Huangpu River, having completed a voyage halfway around the world. She transited October 23, carrying general cargo from Houston, Tex. and Jacksonville and Panama City, Fla. Agent at the Canal for the *Wumen* and all COSCO ships is Pacific Ford, S.A. Aided by a tug, the U.S. flag ship, *Pride of Texas*, at left, moves through the Canal en route to China with 34,430 long tons of wheat. Owned by the Connecticut Bank and Trust Company, the vessel is represented at the Canal by Boyd Bros. Steamship Agencies, Ltd.

the country had a further 1-1.5 million deadweight tons on charter.

A significant part of that tonnage is being utilized in China's trade through the Panama Canal, primarily to and from the United States. Trade between the United States and China has increased sharply since the implementation of bilateral trade agreements between the two countries in 1980. Among the most publicized features of the arrangements were the extension of most favored nation (MFN) status to China and the grain trade agreement. Together these agreements have resulted in China becoming the fourth largest market in the world for U.S. agricultural products.

The United States-China grain agreement committed China to purchase and the United States to supply from 6 million to 9 million metric tons of wheat and corn annually, over the four years beginning January 1, 1981. China can purchase more than 9 million metric tons, but must notify the U.S. Government before doing so.

U.S. grain has been shipped to China since the resumption of trade between those countries in 1972, but the annual volume has fluctuated

widely from no grain in some years to approximately 4 million tons in fiscal year 1974 and 4.8 million in 1980. Through nine months of fiscal year 1981, grain trade to China through the Panama Canal has totalled some 5.2 million long tons and is expected to reach approximately 6.5 million tons by year-end.

The grain agreement regulates trade between the two countries, thus assuring a sustained high level of movement through the Canal. Furthermore, increases beyond the amounts guaranteed by the agreement could occur. Under the terms of the agreement, 80-85 percent of the grain is wheat, while only 15-20 percent is corn. Since corn is used primarily as a feed grain for animals, this low proportion of corn to wheat suggests no major increase in imports for feed purposes is planned for the next several years; but if the Chinese diet changes to include more meat (as has the Japanese diet in the last few decades), corn purchases from the United States could rise sharply in the years ahead.

China's continuing growth in population, which is now close to one billion people, could mean an increased demand not only for agricultural commodities but for other United States exports as well, depending on future political and economic developments in China.

The United States Department of Commerce, recognizing China as a potential market for U.S. equipment and technology, sponsored the U.S. National Exhibition in Peking in November 1981. This exhibition gave American firms the first opportunity in more than 30 years to promote their products and services at a U.S. trade fair in China.

The equipment included in the exhibition was selected to present the most advanced technology the United States has to offer in the areas of China's most urgent needs.

Two hundred forty firms took advantage of this opportunity to display their products, meet with officials of various Chinese industries and get a firsthand look at the country and its people.

On the following pages are scenes at the exhibition held in the Peking Exhibit Hall, which was crowded with students and business people throughout the 11 days it was open.



U.S. exhibition in Peking

Counterclockwise from left: Inside the Peking Exhibit Hall, U.S. and Chinese flags drape the wall above displays of U.S. equipment and services. The soaring white steeple of the trade fair building makes it a landmark in the capital. A group of Chinese men gather around a computer display to listen to the commentary of an American exhibitor. Officials of the China Ocean Shipping Company sign a menu in a Peking restaurant before presenting it to the writer of this article. COSCO, the PRC government agency responsible for Chinese shipping, assisted in the preparation of this story by making arrangements for meetings with shipping officials in Peking, Canton, and Shanghai as well as providing many opportunities for photographs. Begun in 403 BC, the 3,750-mile long Great Wall, like the Panama Canal, is one of the great engineering achievements of the world. The only manmade structure that can be seen from earth's orbit, it is believed to have once stretched 31,500 miles.



EXPOSHIP '80: Panama and the Canal on Exhibit



THE PANAMA CANAL COM-
mission joined Panama in par-
ticipating in EXPOSHIP' 80, the
international shipping exhibition held
in Hong Kong, November 17-21,
featuring goods and services from all
segments of the shipping industry.

In addition to contributing a photo-
graphic display of the Canal and a
videotape of a Canal transit to
Panama's impressive exhibit, the
Commission provided brochures in
English, Spanish, Chinese, and Jap-
anese for the more than 500 delegates
from all over the world who came to
the exhibition and to the Far East
Trade and Shipping Conference held
November 19-20.

The exhibition, organized by the
publishers of *Seatrade* and set up on
the roof of the Ocean Terminal in
Kowloon overlooking the dramatically
beautiful and busy harbor of Hong
Kong, afforded delegates the oppor-
tunity to see the latest technical
developments in shipping and a
chance to discuss international mari-
time problems and the future of the
shipping industry.

The focus of the exhibition was on
China, and the first day of the
Shipping Conference had as its
theme, "The Maritime Development
of the People's Republic of China and
the Hong Kong Connection."

Topics covered included: "China's
Shipbuilding Industry and its Require-
ments."

EXPOSHIP '80 in Hong Kong

At left (above), a U.S. Navy vessel
and a Chinese junk are silhouetted
against the twilight sky in Hong Kong
Harbor as EXPOSHIP '80 delegates
return by ferry to hotels on the island
of Hong Kong. At left, Marcela de la
Espriella de Martin, wife of the Consul
General of Panama in Hong Kong,
cuts the ribbon opening the Panama
exhibit, while her husband, Gary
Martin (at left), their two children and
members of Panama's official delega-
tion look on. At right, wearing
Panama's colorful national dress, the
"pollera," the Martins' daughter Lill
Judith poses for photographers with
one of the exhibition's guides in front
of the Panama exhibit.





Seatrade international shipping exhibition

Clockwise from right: Scenes at Seatrade's EXPOSHIP '80 include Hong Kong's exhibit, which had tourism as its theme; the flags of the world's maritime nations flying from the roof of the Ocean Terminal in Kowloon, where the exhibition was held; one of Hong Kong's famous floating restaurants; the People's Republic of China exhibit, which featured China's shipbuilding industry; former secretary of the Panama Canal Commission Tom Constant and his wife, Clarine, with George Fisher, deputy director of the Panama Port Authority, and Gilberto Harris, of Panama's Directorate of Maritime Affairs in New York, visiting Panama's pavilion; and a section of Panama's exhibit, one of the largest, which featured the Canal, the Colon Free Zone, maritime activities, fishing and tourism.



By Susan K. Stabler

BETWEEN THE MONTHS OF December and May, when Isthmian breezes can whip a newspaper off the front stairs or unwind a wrap-around skirt in less time than it takes to say "Dry season!" local residents are given to flights of fancy.

The sighing of palm trees and the clacking of bamboo are all it takes to alert Panama's kiting enthusiasts that there's a good tail wind blowing and it's time to tie one on.

Since 1976 high-spirited Atlantic sidlers have held a Charlie Brown Kite-flying Contest each year to coincide with the annual Christmas tree burn in Coco Solo. The contest's founder, Dr. Mel Boreham, says that kite fliers of all ages turn out for the event, from great grandparents down to, in one instance, a year-and-a-half-old toddler.

While it is a day of fun for everyone and the competition is friendly, preparations for the kite contest are not, shall we say, *taken lightly* by the participants. Weeks before the event, books on kite building and flying are put on reserve in the Cristobal High School Library. There, would-be contestants sketch plans and take notes on various flying techniques in

hopes of outdoing the competition on the big day.

Prizes are awarded mostly along traditional lines—most colorful kite, longest tail, highest flier, best home-made kite and so on—but recognition has been given spontaneously in new categories as the situation required.

A "Greatest Tangle of Twine Award" seemed appropriate, for example, when five kites tangled into one line, creating a knotty airborne problem. And "The Flight of the Phoenix Award," named after the bird in Egyptian mythology that became a symbol of resurrection after it self-destructed and then rose alive again,

Kites are fun . . .

was fittingly bestowed upon one youngster for his homemade entry. The kite, made with a frame of dry, brittle tree branches, flew for only a few moments before crashing to the ground, whereupon its young designer/builder patiently repaired it and flew it again.

Some contestants, like David and Scot Hudson, go so far as to order elaborate aerial toys from the United States for the contest. Their dual-line, acrobatic kite known as a "Sky-ro-Gyro" trails a majestic, 70-foot red tail, and cost, according to Scot, "sixteen dollars and fifty cents, plus postage."

Kite competitions such as the one held locally are tame in comparison to the Nagasaki fighting-kite contests developed hundreds of years ago in Japan and still held today. The object of the game could aptly be termed "divide and conquer." Each participant has a small paper kite, usually less than a yard long, that will fly in any direction at great speed, with or without a tail. The handheld line of the fighting kite is glazed with powdered glass or porcelain, using egg white or

some other viscous substance as an adhesive. The line becomes a high-altitude razor which, when guided by the hand of a skilled competitor, can saw through an opponent's line and set his kite adrift.

Some adept kite fighters are able to encircle and snare a severed kite and bring it back to earth to claim as spoils.

Kite fighting has spread to other countries, and India, in particular, lays claim to excellence in this sport. But it must be said that kite fighting is no child's game: competition is bitter, often ending in violence, and the sport has long been banned in Malaysia for that very reason.

The invention of kites is usually credited to the Chinese, but kites have had a sky-hold in nearly every corner of the world for more than 2,000 years. Early Malaysian fishermen lightly suspended their baited lines from leaf-shaped kites to avoid frightening away the fish. In Polynesia, kites have for years been thought of as a means of making contact with the heavens. Polynesian kites are most often made with native bark cloth called "tapa" in combination with wood, rushes, feathers and shells, which produces a rattling in flight.

Kites appeared in Europe around the fifteenth century. By the eighteenth century inventive western minds saw no end to the possibilities for their use. Kites became tools of scientific inquiry, such as in the case of Ben Franklin's famous kite experiment during a lightning storm. With thermometers attached, kites were a means of determining temperatures at different altitudes. Kite flying also played an important role in the development of the first airplane by

the Wright brothers. They experimented with changes in the positioning of lifting surfaces on a specially developed kite to determine the effect of different configurations upon flight.

Records of the earliest uses of kites in the Orient reveal that they occupied an important place in religious and social life. Kites were used to determine fates and make prophecies, to announce births and other happy events, and to fight wars and celebrate victories.

Chinese folklore abounds with tales about kites. In fact, the most widely

and work . . .

accepted theory of their origin is contained in a legend about a Chinese general named Han Hsin (196 B.C.). The general is said to have flown a kite over the walls of a palace he had under siege in order to gauge the distance between his men and the fortress so that a tunnel of the correct length could be dug to allow his troops to enter.

Kites were used to military advantage again two hundred years later, according to legend, when the

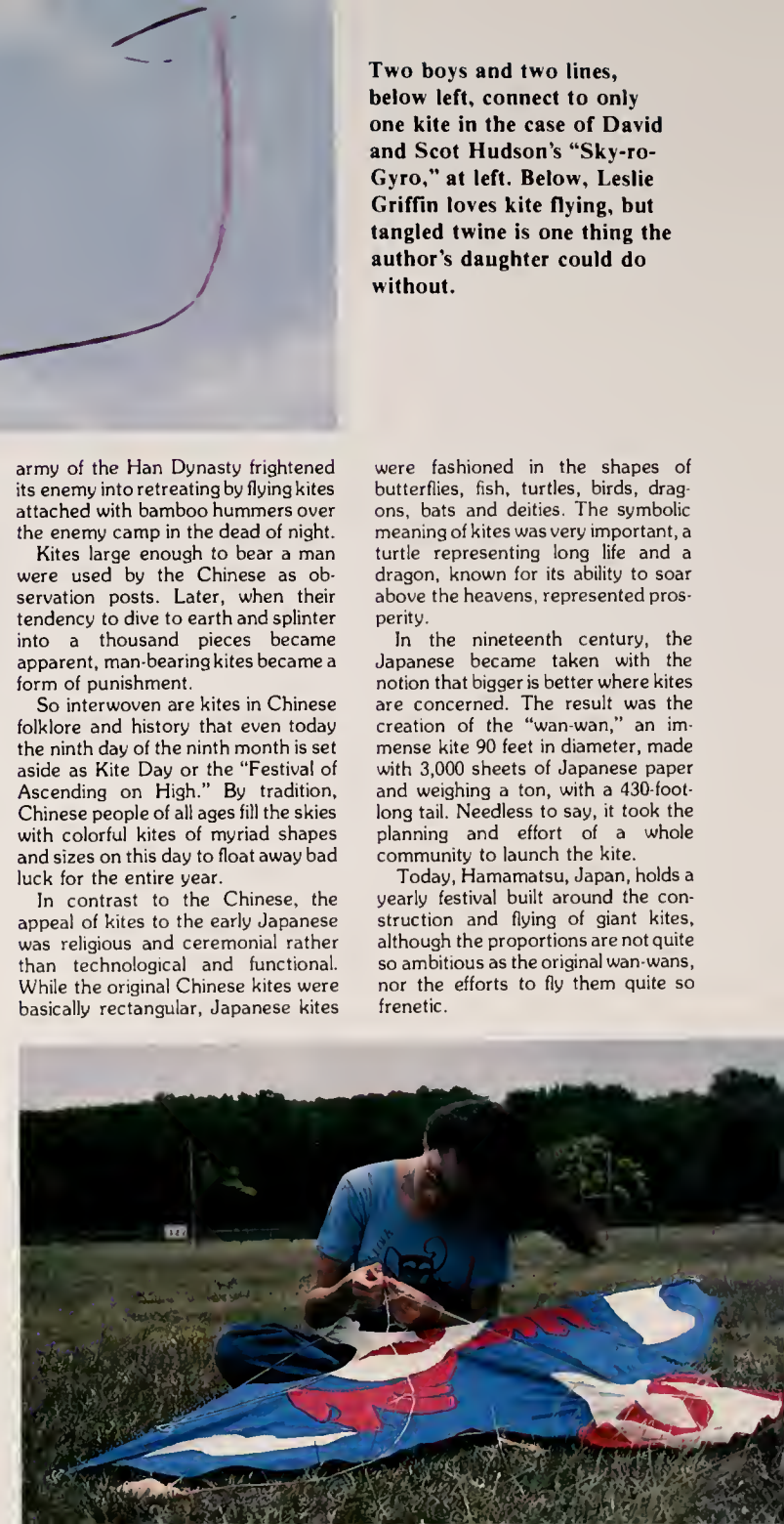
army of the Han Dynasty frightened its enemy into retreating by flying kites attached with bamboo hummers over the enemy camp in the dead of night.

Kites large enough to bear a man were used by the Chinese as observation posts. Later, when their tendency to dive to earth and splinter into a thousand pieces became apparent, man-bearing kites became a form of punishment.

So interwoven are kites in Chinese folklore and history that even today the ninth day of the ninth month is set aside as Kite Day or the "Festival of Ascending on High." By tradition, Chinese people of all ages fill the skies with colorful kites of myriad shapes and sizes on this day to float away bad luck for the entire year.

In contrast to the Chinese, the appeal of kites to the early Japanese was religious and ceremonial rather than technological and functional. While the original Chinese kites were basically rectangular, Japanese kites

Two boys and two lines, below left, connect to only one kite in the case of David and Scot Hudson's "Sky-ro-Gyro," at left. Below, Leslie Griffin loves kite flying, but tangled twine is one thing the author's daughter could do without.





but mostly fun!

Kites are an essential part of the celebration of several special days in Japan each year, including the May 5 "Boys' Festival." On this day, fish-shaped kites are flown on a bamboo pole in front of each Japanese home, a separate kite for father, mother and each boy in the family. The fish represented is the carp, the Japanese symbol for courage.

While no other part of the world can top the Orient in the creation of exotic and unusual kites, the United States is still the front-runner in kite production and sales. Kite flying is enjoying a comeback in popularity in the Western world, along with a general resurgence in interest in the out-of-doors.

Although the world has changed dramatically in the thousands of years since the first kite winged its way heavenward, kite flying has changed hardly at all. Nylon line may have replaced fiber twine, but flying a kite is still one of life's simple pleasures.

Whether you are an Atlantic-side community member participating in the Charlie Brown kite contest or a Japanese community member helping to launch a wan-wan, the truth remains that kites are fun. For when a kite soars, the human spirit soars with it.

The hoisting aloft of fish kites is part of the traditional "Boys' Festival" celebration at the Japanese school in Panama City. Each kite represents a family member.



**INDUSTRIOUS IMMIGRANTS:
THE CHINESE IN PANAMA**

by Janet Len-Rios

AMONG OLDER PANAMANIANs, THE WORD "Chino" not only refers to Chinese persons, but also to the corner grocery store, a remnant of the early decades of this century when more likely than not the corner grocery was run by a Chinese. Since that time, the role of the Chinese in Panama has extended far beyond the corner, into every facet of Panamanian life.

No one is quite sure when the first Chinese arrived in Panama. Indeed, in a book entitled "Columbus was Chinese," author Hans Breuer postulates that in prehistoric times both the North and South American continents were for centuries the recipients of Asian immigrants, both by way of the then-existing land bridge across Alaska's Bering Strait and as a result of fishing expeditions which were blown off course, then carried by wind and current across the ocean. There is considerable evidence in support of both of these theories.

In any case, modern Chinese have been in Panama since the late 1800s.

What brought them to the Isthmus in the first place? As nearly as can be ascertained, they did not so much leave China headed for Panama as they left home in hopes of a better life elsewhere.

War with Britain, followed by a humiliating defeat by the tiny island nation of Japan, as well as internal problems, had left China in chaos and confusion. The Chinese left China in fairly large numbers around the late 1800's and early 1900's for the same reasons that people have left their homelands for centuries—to seek relief and new hope when things became unbearable at home. It is estimated that as many as 100,000 Chinese may have passed through Panama during this period on their way to other destinations in Latin America.

As a race, the Chinese have been one of the most stereotyped. Interestingly, however, the stereotype has changed over the years. While the early Chinese residents of Panama were thought of as being mysterious, aloof and lawless, they are now viewed as being industrious, intelligent, courteous and patient, with great respect for their elders and for the family.

It is not difficult to surmise how the original stereotype developed, for the Chinese came from a culture where everything—language, both written and spoken, dress, religion, and customs—was totally different from anything known in this hemisphere. These differences made them both unapproachable to others and clannish among themselves, further isolating them and making them objects of distrust and suspicion.

The history of the Chinese people in Panama, as in other parts of the world, has had its ups and downs. Chinese labor, which contributed so greatly to the construction of the railroads in the United States, was also contracted to help build the Panama Railroad. Sources differ on the exact

Janet Len-Rios, the Commission's SPILLWAY editor, is married to Felipe A. Len-Rios, a Chinese-Panamanian employed as a civil engineer in the Engineering and Construction Bureau.

Felipe's father, the late Antonio Len, emigrated from Canton, China to Chiriquí, Republic of Panama in the mid-1920s. There he met his wife, Filomeno Rios de Len, who now resides in Colon. The Len-Rioses have two Chinese-Panamanian-American children, Antonio and Maria.



number of Chinese that came, but it was probably around a thousand.

The Chinese workers gained immediate favor with their employers because of their industriousness. Despite their small stature, they equalled or bettered the work output of any other nationality group working on the railroad.

The participation of the Chinese on the railroad was short-lived, it turned out, as were many of the Chinese themselves. What happened is an oft-told tale.

According to the story, after only a short time on the Isthmus, the Chinese were suddenly possessed with a "melancholy" that caused them to commit suicide by the hundreds, hanging themselves by their long braided hair from trees or impaling themselves on sharp instruments.

The fact of the suicides is apparently true, although no one is entirely sure of how or why they happened. Some say that the depression was the aftermath of malaria; others insist that it was caused by the withdrawal of a daily ration of opium promised the Chinese workers in their contract.

There is no absolutely verifiable explanation for what happened, and it is likely that a combination of events led to the suicides. Life was not easy on the Isthmus for anyone, but it may have been particularly hard for the Chinese because of the immense cultural gap that existed between them and the native population, as well as between the Chinese and other groups hired to work on the railroad. Combined with this were the heat and rain, sickness and death that plagued all of the construction workers.

To avoid further incidents, the railroad company quickly gathered as many as it could of the remaining Chinese and sent them to the Chinese colony in Jamaica, hoping that there they would find the combination of cultural and environmental factors that would enable them to survive.

Apparently some Chinese worked on the French canal effort, but Chinese workers were not used by the United States in the building of the waterway. Chief Engineer John Stevens was very enthusiastic about the Chinese and invited bids on contracts to hire up to fifteen thousand Chinese laborers. However, a great hue and cry arose over having the laborers imported into the Canal Zone to work for a government that since 1882 had excluded the importation of Chinese labor into its own country.

Of the Chinese that came to Panama during the French

Chinese influence in Panamanian culture

On page 47, a traditional method of watering is used at the Chinese garden in Margarita. Clockwise from top left, a carnival dragon donated to the Museum of Panamanian Man forms part of its Chinese exhibit; Sybil Harley Lam receives acupuncture treatment from Dr. Julio César Wong; architectural embellishments add to the Oriental flavor of a local restaurant; José Chan shows his sister-in-law Margarita and niece Cristi an ancient way of doing mathematics; Virginia Tam León-Guerrero views a display at a recent People's Republic of China exhibit in Panama; and beautiful imported porcelain ware is available in many local stores.

canal construction era, it is believed that very few actually worked on the construction. Most opened small shops—groceries, laundries, barber shops and liquor stores.

Chinese business success is somewhat legendary in Panama. The Chinese, like anyone else, like to make money, but their business philosophy is conservative, and they have always been willing to work long hours and be satisfied with a small but steady profit margin.

Long before there were any roads, the Chinese were among the first to bring produce out from the interior of Panama for sale in the cities. Traveling by cart, the Chinese traders would carry staple items such as hardware and cloth into the interior and exchange them for the products of the countryside.

Besides shopkeeping, the Chinese were also involved in agriculture and operated truck gardens, referred to locally as "Chinese gardens," supplying fresh fruits and vegetables to the construction workers. During the time of the American canal construction the Chinese were issued special licenses to operate in the Canal Zone, where they grew produce for the commissaries and also delivered fresh vegetables from door to door in baskets hanging from yokes that they carried across their shoulders.

Perhaps it is the Chinese' great liking for a wide variety of fresh vegetables that led them to become gardeners. In Panama, they have introduced a number of vegetables not commonly used in Panamanian cookery, among them the different types of mustard greens, spinach, bean sprouts and the delightfully crunchy "Chinese yam." The vegetables are cooked perfectly to retain a flavor, color and texture that would please even the most Western palate.

Laboring with the same diligence that earned them their reputation as good workers in railroad days, the Chinese gained a reputation for being superior gardeners, producing crops with their old-fashioned methods on plots of poor, clay soil when more sophisticated instruments, employed on better soil, failed.

Mention the word "Chinese" and the first thing that many people think of is food, for the memory of eating good Chinese cuisine tends to linger, even if, as the joke goes, that "full" feeling doesn't. The Chinese are recognized as being masters of the art of cooking, and Chinese food has a reputation not only for being delicious, but also for being easy on the budget. Here in Panama, the classified section of the telephone directory contains listings for some two dozen Chinese restaurants, and Chinese eating establishments tend to "mushroom" wherever the Chinese settle.

The Chinese are by tradition family centered. An old Chinese saying states that the best worker you can employ is a family member, and most Chinese enterprises have been family run. While the Chinese have always revered

Tea and company

Denise Manfredo, (standing at left in top photo), wife of Commission Deputy Administrator Fernando Manfredo Jr., entertains visiting family members at her home in Balboa Heights. Mrs. Manfredo is a fourth-generation Chinese Panamanian.



their scholars, they did not always believe in a great deal of education for the ordinary individual, feeling that an educated child might seek employment away from the family. Children, therefore, were educated to the level where they could serve well in the family enterprise, and that was all.

One reason why early Chinese immigrants kept to themselves was a fear that in associating with others their children would lose their traditional Chinese values and forget old ways. Until the late 1930s, the Chinese living in Panama tried, whenever possible, to send their children back to China for at least part of their education in hopes that the experience would reinforce and enrich their Chinese identity.

This initial reluctance to meld into the culture may have been a factor contributing to the aura of mystery and fear that surrounded early Chinese immigrants in Panama and was perhaps an ancestral memory of centuries when China was literally closed off from the outside world.

A measure of that mystery and fear was the name given to the central street in the section of Panama City where most Chinese lived, Salsipuedes, which translates "get out if you can." The Chinese community in Panama has changed considerably since the days when Salsipuedes was a narrow lane lined with Chinese shops. Today only vestiges of the old Chinatown remain near the public market area around Salsipuedes and Calle Carlos A. Mendoza. Here one finds various Chinese stores, including barber shops, restaurants, drygoods stores, laundries and retail groceries that carry a wide selection of Chinese food items, such as huge bags of dried mushrooms, seaweed, all kinds of teas, various Chinese sauces and spices, almond cakes, pickled mustard greens, chirimoyas and a favorite treat of Isthmian children, Chinese plums.

While more Chinese shops are located in this area than in other places about the city, Panama in reality has no Chinatown. The Chinese population has melded into the community and lifestyle of Panama, and the average Chinese household looks no different from any other household.

True, if one looks closely, the porcelain figure of a laughing Buddha or the three traditional figures representing longevity, fame and fortune may be found among the household treasures in a Chinese-Panamanian home, but in most households where these objects appear they are regarded as symbols of tradition and decoration rather than

Chinese in the Commission

Clockwise from bottom left, Alicia Chen is a position classification specialist in the Personnel Operations Division; Ricardo B. Chen is chief of the Industrial Division's Engineering Branch; Jorge Fong, a surveying technician, works out of the Surveys Branch in Pedro Miguel; Victoria Lee is a secretary-stenographer in the Admeasurement office; power systems dispatcher Santiago Chang works at the Balboa Substation; and Alberto Wong is a sanitary engineer at the Mount Hope filtration plant.

having any religious significance. The majority of Chinese in Panama are practicing Catholics.

National societies exist among some members of the Chinese population in Panama, with membership in most based upon the area in China where the member or the member's ancestors originated. Some societies have tried to maintain aspects of Chinese culture and tradition among the young by promoting the Chinese language and from time to time sponsoring programs of a cultural nature featuring local Chinese artists and performers; but most of these clubs are now mainly social in nature.

The Chinese Association of Panama is an organization of Chinese businessmen in Panama City that sponsors, among other activities, a Chinese float in the yearly carnival parade; makes donations to local charitable organizations in the name of the association; and provides for elderly Chinese who have no families or other means of support.

The children of Chinese in Panama no longer return to China to be educated, and while a generation or so ago most Chinese grew up trilingual, speaking fluent Spanish, English and Chinese, this is no longer the case. As often happens with the children of immigrants, they learn the language of the country where they live, not the country of their origin. Few of the new generation speak Chinese, although many still do learn English, the language of business and technology.

Chinese now reside in every area of the country, every sector of every city and span all socio-economic levels of Panamanian society. No longer can they be thought of only as cooks, gardeners or shopkeepers. The Chinese are also doctors, scientists, computer technicians, lawyers, engineers and entrepreneurs.

While the Chinese were not involved in the construction of the Panama Canal, they are now involved in its operation.

The Panama Canal organization currently employs a number of Chinese-Panamanian men and women in a wide spectrum of jobs, including employment in all phases of the financial management operation, as well as in technical and engineering positions. They are also among the trained workers entering the Commission's ranks through the apprentice program. The Canal, however, has yet to see its first Chinese-Panamanian ship pilot.

Past contributions by the Chinese to the development of the Panamanian way of life have been considerable. The Chinese are now contributing with their learning as professionals to the technical advancement and economic growth of the country and to the well-being of its inhabitants. By working hard to better themselves, they have become valuable citizens able to contribute to a country they have adopted as their own.

Chinese traditions in Panama

Right (top), looking regal in a dress encrusted with pearls, the Chinese community's 1926 carnival queen, Emma Chan, poses for an official portrait. Right (bottom), the Chinese community participates with a float in the 1981 carnival parade. At far right, the wife of a local businessman enacts the ritual of lighting incense sticks in a Chinese temple in Panama City.





OCEANGOING COMMERCIAL TRANSITS BY NATIONALITY

Nationality	9 Months FY 1981		9 Months FY 1980	
	No. of Transits	Long Tons Cargo	No. of Transits	Long Tons Cargo
Belgian	75	1,182,341	72	1,538,179
British	649	7,596,779	662	7,816,184
Chilean	143	849,705	142	841,380
Colombian	105	964,462	119	735,600
Cuban	90	396,939	59	269,736
Cypriot	80	311,729	67	362,048
Chinese, Nationalist	103	1,328,615	85	950,086
Danish	202	2,224,305	254	2,609,125
Ecuadorian	208	853,531	206	960,212
French	66	831,014	74	905,261
German, West	190	2,664,734	259	2,430,633
Greek	1,175	18,327,219	1,128	17,732,588
Honduran	72	119,960	57	105,896
Italian	107	1,034,637	137	1,437,958
Japanese	879	7,389,990	834	7,688,206
Liberian	1,328	22,581,841	1,363	25,171,916
Netherlands	150	1,139,779	170	1,322,035
Norwegian	296	4,330,696	351	4,999,106
Panamanian	1,087	10,018,149	880	7,564,325
Peruvian	181	1,879,508	166	1,625,014
Philippine	118	1,570,661	87	1,007,573
Polish	72	319,677	70	209,957
Singaporean	126	1,318,624	123	1,258,217
South Korean	126	2,026,236	120	1,803,905
Spanish	95	514,873	85	289,243
Swedish	114	897,940	147	1,181,272
United States	1,584	26,262,876	1,370	21,793,857
U.S.S.R.	405	1,365,026	410	1,553,855
Yugoslavian	97	1,108,058	71	739,313
All other	489	5,465,652	417	5,164,081
Total	10,412	126,875,556	9,985	122,066,761

OCEANGOING COMMERCIAL TRANSITS OVER PRINCIPAL TRADE ROUTES

Trade route	9 Months FY 1981	9 Months FY 1980
East Coast United States—Asia	2,445	2,313
East Coast United States—West Coast South America	1,357	1,159
East Coast United States—West Coast Central America	1,224	1,033
Europe—West Coast South America	923	985
Europe—West Coast United States/Canada	597	708
United States Intercoastal (including Alaska and Hawaii)	379	275
West Indies—West Coast South America	285	333
West Indies—West Coast Central America	280	266
East Coast Canada—Asia	249	227
East Coast United States/Canada—Oceania	240	283
East Coast South America—Asia	238	212
South America Intercoastal	235	232
All other	1,960	1,959
Total	10,412	9,985

OCEANGOING COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC BY MONTHS

Months	Transits		Tolls (in thousands of dollars) ¹	
	FY 1981	FY 1980	FY 1981	FY 1980
October	1,158	1,122	\$24,418	\$23,817
November	1,175	1,036	25,149	22,031
December	1,167	1,079	25,628	23,246
January	1,132	1,120	24,491	23,732
February	1,008	1,048	21,690	22,681
March	1,234	1,164	26,705	24,792
April	1,155	1,135	24,369	24,632
May	1,245	1,179	27,408	25,632
June	1,138	1,102	24,402	24,164
Total	10,412	9,985	\$224,260	\$214,727

¹Before deduction of any operating expenses
Statistics compiled by Office of Executive Planning

Shipping



Is Our Business

PANAMA CANAL TRAFFIC

TRANSITS (Oceangoing)	9 Months FY	
	1981	1980
Commercial	10,412	9,985
U.S. Government	64	65
Free	8	5
Total	10,484	10,055
TOLLS	9 Months FY	
	1981	1980
Commercial	\$224,311,111	\$214,786,255
U.S. Government	842,717	1,055,018
Total	\$225,153,828	\$215,841,273
CARGO ² (Oceangoing)	9 Months FY	
	1981	1980
Commercial	126,875,556	122,066,761
U.S. Government	213,350	298,546
Free	—	—
Total	127,088,906	122,365,307

¹Includes tolls on all vessels, oceangoing and small
²Cargo figures are in long tons
Statistics compiled by the Office of Executive Planning

Maiden Transit

The unusual *Super Servant I*, seen here on its first transit through the Panama Canal, lifts a lot more than eyebrows. The vessel's unique design enables it to partially submerge itself horizontally so that heavy floating equipment, such as barges and oil derricks, can be moved onto the cargo deck, after which the vessel resurfaces. Built in Japan, the *Super Servant I* is owned by the Dutch company Wijsmuller. The agent at the Canal is C. B. Fenton and Co., Inc.

PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES SHIPPED THROUGH THE CANAL

(in long tons)

Atlantic to Pacific

Commodity	9 Months FY 1981	9 Months FY 1980
Coal/coke	12,706,104	10,350,669
Petroleum and products	8,481,889	8,510,873
Corn	7,976,535	9,437,695
Wheat	5,934,816	1,857,044
Soybeans	5,404,085	5,344,906
Phosphates	4,227,943	4,346,031
Chemicals and petroleum chemicals	2,170,604	2,067,836
Manufactures of iron and steel	1,678,361	1,253,562
Sorghum	1,283,182	2,379,274
Fertilizers, unclassified	1,201,173	1,024,059
Metal, scrap	1,099,248	1,725,152
Sugar	955,547	803,231
Paper and products	922,089	528,931
Ores, various	757,052	686,724
Caustic soda	615,064	754,645
All other	9,853,422	9,594,178
Total	65,267,114	60,664,810

Pacific to Atlantic

Commodity	9 Months FY 1981	9 Months FY 1980
Petroleum and products	28,292,891	25,775,964
Lumber and products	3,458,474	3,781,218
Manufactures of iron and steel	3,458,249	4,403,071
Ores, various	3,232,562	4,642,994
Wheat	2,253,213	1,104,786
Sulfur	1,783,540	1,549,749
Food in refrigeration (excluding bananas)	1,539,087	1,567,772
Sugar	1,406,797	1,333,166
Coal and coke	1,365,241	1,637,003
Pulpwood	1,185,003	1,299,425
Metals, various	1,078,169	1,185,083
Autos, trucks and accessories	1,060,661	989,324
Barley	999,398	550,750
Bananas	915,429	890,333
Paper and paper products	513,540	457,100
All other	9,066,188	10,234,213
Total	61,608,442	61,401,951

COMMERCIAL AND U.S. GOVERNMENT CANAL TRANSITS

	9 Months FY 1981			9 Months FY 1980
	Atlantic to Pacific	Pacific to Atlantic	Total	
Commercial:				
Oceangoing	5,462	4,950	10,412	9,985
Small ¹	423	221	644	637
Total	5,885	5,171	11,056	10,622
U.S. Government:				
Oceangoing	31	33	64	65
Small ¹	112	52	164	209
Total	143	85	228	274
Grand Total	6,028	5,256	11,284	10,896

¹Vessels under 300 net tons, Panama Canal measurement, or under 500 displacement tons. Statistics compiled by Office of Executive Planning

Story by
Fannie P. Hernandez

SS Cristobal

The End of the Line

Widely acclaimed as one of the safest, most modern and beautiful ships in the world when put into service in 1939, over the years the SS "Cristobal" carried thousands of passengers and countless tons of cargo to and from the Isthmus. Her retirement in September at age 42 signified the end of the historic Panama Line.

At right, bearing silent witness to the ship's final transformation from passenger liner to cargo carrier, containerized cargo sits on the decks of the "Cristobal," seen here on the Mississippi as she departs New Orleans for Panama.



SS Cristobal

WHEN THE SS CRISTOBAL eased away from the Cristobal piers for the last time on September 19, 1981, she left behind a wealth of memories for thousands of Canal employees, many of whom began and ended their Isthmian careers aboard her. No longer the vital supply link between the Isthmus and the United States, no longer the most efficient (and most festive) way to transport employees, the last of the "Three First Ladies of the U.S. Merchant Marine" sailed off for New Orleans to be turned over to the U.S. Maritime Administration. Her sister ships, the *Panama* and the *Ancon*, had been retired in 1956 and 1961, respectively, and at 42, the *Cristobal* was the oldest vessel in the U.S. Merchant Marine still active in blue waters.

Although in her later years the passenger capacity was reduced to 12 and her principal function was to carry cargo, in the first 10 years she spent plying the waters between Cristobal and New Orleans the *Cristobal* was first and foremost a passenger ship, often carrying a full load of 216, with cars, household goods and commissary supplies a necessary sideline. In one year she would make 27 round-trip voyages, carrying some 5,000 passengers, 1,500 vehicles, 5,000 tons of household goods and 154,000 tons of other freight.

She is remembered by most as a family ship, friendly, homey, sometimes a little bouncy, but sympathetically so. She was famous for her food, and passengers on diets would deprive themselves for a week in advance so they could guiltlessly give way to the terrible temptation of her menu.

Happy days gone by are reflected in these photos taken aboard the "Cristobal" during the 1960s: outstanding cuisine served in the softly-lit dining room was a major attraction of the voyages, but the swimming pool and shuffleboard were the real kid-pleasers.

In those days the ship carried a doctor, and overeating competed with sunburn and seasickness as the most common ailment. But most of his business came during the first 24 hours. After that, people got their sea legs, gave up trying to eat everything on the menu, and settled down to shuffleboard, splashing in the pool, and getting to know the people they'd been casually saying hello to on the job and in the commissary for the past two years. Many a lifelong friendship dates from a voyage together, and the Canal organization was better for those informal ties that crisscrossed the organizational chart.

During the summer months, in order to accommodate families with school-age children, sailing dates were adjusted with an eye on the school calendar. Long-time Isthmian resident Jeneth Baker, who also sailed on one

served on the main deck, the kids came running, slicking down their wet hair to sip bouillon from china bowls.

Meal times were announced on chimes and dinner was the social event of the day. One dressed for dinner, the men in coat and tie, the ladies in long dresses, and the children in their Sunday best. The mirrored dining room was colorful and cool. The chandeliers sparkled, and there was a lamp on each immaculately-laid, table. Impeccably-attired waiters always were willing to please the whims of passengers.

Mrs. Baker remembers the captain's Saturday night dinners as the highlight of the voyage. The *Cristobal's* menus offered Alaska King crab, lobster, filet mignon, prime ribs, sirloin steak, oysters, shrimp, Virginia ham, smoked fish, turtle soup, gumbo soups, health foods and a variety of

fling before hitting the books. From time to time, they became a little rowdy and a few deck chairs went over the side, cushions were tossed into the pool, and, on at least one occasion, apples and oranges were thrown into the *Cristobal's* steam whistle.

The *Cristobal* was known as a happy ship. The atmosphere conveyed on board was one of ease and well-being. Her crews shared a great pride and affection for the vessel. They stayed on for years and contributed immensely to the ship's personality. Captains, cooks, engineers, electricians, stewards and stewardesses and other members of the *Cristobal's* family left an indelible mark in the minds and hearts of the passengers who sailed with them.

Without a doubt, anyone who ever sailed with the remarkable Mary



of the ship's last voyages, described with nostalgia her first voyage on the *Cristobal* as a child one summer nearly 30 years ago. In those days the ship went to New York instead of New Orleans, with a stop at Port-au-Prince, Haiti. More than half of the passengers boarding at Cristobal were children, recalls Mrs. Baker, all spilled up in their best clothes, but it didn't take them long to find the pool and get changed into their bathing suits. The voyage was a festive one, with children running all over the ship, making friends, playing games in and out of the pool, and getting into mischief. In the evenings, while their parents partied or rendezvoused in the bar, the children, in pajamas, ate popcorn and watched movies in the lounge.

The beautiful, tiled pool was the most popular spot on the vessel. When the mid-morning snack was

fresh fruit. It all added up to the finest food available. After one evening meal the captain asked Mrs. Baker's father what he wanted for dessert and he replied that he really preferred another juicy steak. That is exactly what he got.

After dinner there were "horse-races" on the promenade deck, bingo games and other games and it was customary for many passengers to stroll around and around the deck with their small children in tow.

At the end of summer, to make leaving home to return to school less painful for the college students, the *Cristobal* offered "college specials," with Lucho Azcárraga or a local combo going along from time to time to provide musical entertainment. Those voyages were lively indeed, with dancing and the fun and antics of carefree young people on their last

Fawson will long remember this spirited, vivacious, caring human being whose official title was "stewardess," but who for 19 years served also as nurse, baby-sitter, confidant, lifeboat drillmaster, waitress, laundress and general problem solver. According to one passenger, "Mary did everything but steer the ship."

Born in Coventry in the Midlands, Mary worked for Britain's Civil Defense for five years during World War II, as a Red Cross nurse by day and as a munitions worker by night.

A war widow, Mary began her career in the British Merchant Marine in 1957 and, prior to boarding the *Cristobal* on June 7, 1963, had served on the British Railway's SS *Isle of Sook* to the Channel Island of Jersey; the R.M.S. *Edinburgh Castle* to South Africa; the *Southern Cross* and the R.M.S. *Rongitoto*, often seen at the



F



SS Cristobal

Canal; the Grace Line's *Santa Paula* and the *Brazil* of the Moore McCormack Line.

With her philosophy "to do good to every human being who comes my way," Mary took a personal interest in each and every passenger on the ship. To assure the happiest and safest voyage possible, she took it upon



herself to offer lifeboat drills. Passengers who sailed with Mary will remember her sincerity as she lined them up in the upper lounge, checked each life jacket, and went through the motions of how to jump into the water or into a lifeboat safely and how to survive in the water. She was so convincing and protective that Commission employee Dorothy Manthorne, who sailed with Mary on several occasions, remarked, "I would not be afraid to go down with Mary on

board. I feel sure that she would see to it that we were all saved."

When the *Cristobal* became a freighter, the scope of Mary's duties was reduced, but the enthusiasm with which she continued to serve the ship's twelve passengers and its officers never diminished.

The responsibility for piloting the *Cristobal* the 1,403 nautical miles between Cristobal and New Orleans over the last 15 years rested with her master Capt. Joseph P. Krieg. Relieving him as captain was Robert Jensen, who joined the *Cristobal's* crew in 1967. Between the two of them they experienced a fair share of excitement aboard what Jensen liked to call "the Queen of the Caribbean."

One unforgettable experience took place on an evening in August of 1969, when the gale winds of Hurricane Camille, one of the most devastating storms to ever hit the United States, carried the *Cristobal* on a wild, three-mile ride away from her anchorage in the Mississippi. With more than 200 Isthmus-bound passengers aboard, 96 of them children, the *Cristobal* veered past other vessels, her anchor chains dragging, and eventually went aground on the river bank.

What ensued was quite literally a nightmare, as life-jacketed passengers gathered in the pitch-black darkness of the lounge, badly frightened but remaining calm. Red, muddy water blew in through the promenade windows, and the lounge and all the decks were awash with seawater and rain. Clothes, bed linen and mattresses were soaked as the state-rooms flooded, and water sloshed

across the corridors. Trucks and trailers carried as cargo broke from their moorings and overturned. The bolted benches in front of the ship's stack were pulled away by the force of the wind and blown from the vessel. The ship's wind gage blew out at 165 mph.

Boatswain Isaac Wing recalled his fear that the ship would catch fire as sparks flew from short-circuited elec-



trical equipment. The *Cristobal's* position on the river bank shifted several times during the course of the night; but despite overturned tables and chairs, broken china and slippery floors, miraculously, no one was injured.

By morning, the storm had passed and two tugs arrived to pull the *Cristobal* off the bank of the Mississippi. Captain Krieg took her into port for assessment of the damage, and most of the passengers were flown to the Isthmus.

The following week the **Panama Canal Spillway** carried a story on the hurricane that included a verbatim transcript of a letter written from on board the *Cristobal* during the storm by 13-year-old Gary Tochtermann, the son of a Canal couple. "Don't ever get in a hurricane," he wrote to a friend. "I'm not exaggerating either. It is worse than I can describe."

Not all of the noteworthy happenings on the *Cristobal* were traumatic, as in the case of the hurricane. Some were merely exasperating, others poignant and a few, downright funny.

Once, for example, the *Cristobal* was northbound off the coast of

Nicaragua when a small boat signaled the ship to slow down. Thinking the boat was in distress, the *Cristobal* reduced speed, at which point the boat's occupants held up lobsters they wanted to sell or trade.

On another voyage, a young soldier who subsisted solely upon the snacks served on deck at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. was asked by the steward on the third day out why he didn't go to the dining



room for meals. He replied that he didn't have the money to pay for them.

Passengers also provided some humorous moments aboard ship. One woman who boarded in Haiti wore a life jacket and slept in a chair on the promenade deck the entire trip from Port-au-Prince to New York City.

Beginning in 1961, when the Panama Line's terminus was moved from New York, the Canal's business in New Orleans was handled by representatives of three Panama Canal divisions; Water Transportation, Procurement and Accounting. For 20 years the careful judgments and intelligent decisions made in the New Orleans office were responsible for the smooth and economical flow of all goods, from groceries to paper clips, to the Panama Canal.

Working with their counterparts in the Water Transportation Division's *Cristobal* office, the members of the New Orleans shore staff also had responsibility for assisting the *Cristobal's* passengers in clearing customs and immigration and getting their baggage, pets and vehicles off the vessel without delay.

Sometimes it took more than one try to accomplish that task. Cargo



specialist Jean Piedescalzo, who numbered among her duties the job of getting *Cristobal* passengers and their belongings from the ship to the terminal, recalls one particular man who debarked with six dogs in tow. In the confusion of getting the dogs off the ship and into Jean's waiting van, the man forgot his wife. Jean had to make another trip back to the ship to pick her up.

Patience and good humor have been characteristics of other staff members who served the Panama Canal community in such ways as helping to find lost shipments of household goods and arranging hotel reservations and air transportation for passengers who missed the *Cristobal's* sailing.

On one occasion the staff went so far as to track down a bejeweled pet poodle that had jumped from the arms of a boarding woman passenger into the Mississippi River and had swum upstream against the current until he was out of sight. The crews aboard two tugboats went out to search for the dog, but came back emptyhanded. It took reassurances from the shore staff that everything possible would be done to find the dog to convince the

hysterical woman to board the *Cristobal* without her beloved pet. Food was put in various areas of the port, and on the third day the pooch appeared, apparently no worse for his taste of life on the Mississippi. The poodle was sent by plane to his mistress on the Isthmus.

Heading up the shore staff was general agent Joseph Quintas, who had regular dealings with local employees of the Storehouse and Water Transportation divisions in expediting supplies to the Canal.

With the retirement of the *Cristobal*, the job of carrying supplies to the Panama Canal and its employees

People and places are part of the "Cristobal's" past: counterclockwise, stewardess Mary Fawson, a friend to all passengers; in the wheelhouse, Capt. Joseph Krieg and WTD Acting Chief James Bird, who was once the "Cristobal's" purser; the vessel's first home port; everything from groceries to locomotives shipped to the Canal from New Orleans.



SS Cristobal

and transporting their vehicles and household goods has been taken over by a vessel under contract with the Defense Transportation System. The Water Transportation Division has been abolished, but the New Orleans office continues many of its past functions as part of the Storehouse Division.

While it's the end of the line for the 42-year-old *Cristobal*, the memories she left with Canal employees will last a lifetime.

The staff members of the Water Transportation Division's New Orleans office, at right, pose for a final group portrait, and the Carlin family, below, waves a tearful goodbye.



THE RETIREMENT OF THE SS *Cristobal* this year brings to an end 133 years of U.S. Government-sponsored steamship service between the United States and the Isthmus of Panama, a service that had its beginnings in March 1848, a year before the discovery of gold in California. Even then, the Congress of the United States realized the value of the Isthmus of Panama in providing a rapid means of communication between the east and west coasts of the country (which at that time numbered 29 states) and authorized the Navy to contract for the carrying of mail by steamer from New York and New Orleans to California and Oregon, via the Isthmus.

The same realization of the value of the Isthmus as a convenient route to the west coast led the following year, in 1849, to the commencement of work on a railroad across the Isthmus. The Panama Railroad Company was, however, a private corporation, established under an act of the New York legislature and incorporated under the laws of New York. One can imagine the jubilation of the stockholders when the news came later that year that gold had been discovered in California.

During the construction of the railroad, the company chartered more than 100 vessels to carry supplies and soon realized that it would be convenient to have ships of its own. One of its first maritime ventures was in 1850, when it began operating two small steamers on the Chagres River. One of them was used to tow barges in connection with the construction work, but the other was put to work carrying passengers upriver to a point below Gorgona, about halfway across the Isthmus, from which point travelers rode mules or walked the rest of the way.

The Panama Railroad Company was a money maker from the start, and travelers paid \$5 just to walk the right of way before the trains started running. Soon after the railroad opened, in 1855, the company saw a need for its own steamship line to serve shippers and to promote business for the railroad. The next year the company founded the Central American Line, which in time operated steamers on a route which included all of the Pacific coast ports between Panama and Acapulco.

The End of the Line



In 1881, the French Canal Company obtained control of the Panama Railroad Company, but the company continued to function under principally United States management. The Railroad got out of the steamship business for a while, content to depend upon the services of the Pacific Mail Company, a private, government-subsidized line; but in 1893 the Railroad started the Columbian Line between New York and Colon, and in 1896, it was renamed the Panama Railroad Steamship Line.

Among the ships acquired when the Columbian Line was founded were the *Allianca*, the *Advance*, and the *Finance*, which ten years later were to transport thousands of workers to the Isthmus to take part in the construction of the Canal. In 1904, when the United States purchased the French holdings, the railroad and its steamships became the property of the United States. In 1905, the steamers *Mexico* and *Havana* were purchased from the Ward Line and renamed *Colon* and *Panama*, and in 1908, the freighters *Shawmut* and *Tremont* were purchased from the Boston Steamship Company and renamed *Ancon* and *Cristobal*.

These namesakes of the last three Panama Canal ships were used in those early days to carry heavy cargoes of machinery, cement and other building materials for the construction effort. The *Ancon* made history when she left Cristobal pier on the morning of August 15, 1914, to make the first official transit of the Panama Canal. Actually, her sister ship the *Cristobal* had transited the Canal some days earlier, on August 3, in an unpublicized test to make sure that everything would work. Credit also goes to the *Allianca*, which was the first ship put through a lock. She was locked through Gatun Locks from sea level to Gatun Lake and back on June 8, 1914.

A slump in world trade in the early 1920s, together with the decline in cargo to the Canal Zone following the end of the construction of the Canal, resulted in a reduction in the fleet of the Panama Railroad Steamship Line. The *Allianca* and *Advance* were taken out of service. The *Finance* had sunk

in New York harbor in 1908.

The *Ancon* and *Cristobal*, recon-ditioned for passenger/cargo service at a cost of \$1 million each, continued to provide service from New York to the Isthmus until 1939. That year they were replaced by three first-class, cargo/passenger ships, the *Cristobal*, the *Panama* and the *Ancon*. These sister ships were constructed by the Shipbuilding Division of Bethlehem Steel at Quincy, Mass. at an approximate cost of \$4 million each, paid for out of the earnings of the Panama Railroad.

The *Cristobal*, the third and last of the ships to be constructed, slipped into the water on March 4, 1939, after Mrs. Clarence S. Ridley, wife of the Canal Zone Governor, shattered a bottle of champagne on her bow. The *Cristobal* sailed from New York in late August, her arrival eagerly awaited by many an Isthmian ready to make the return trip to attend the World's Fair.

The new ships were the first to be built in an American shipyard under the stringent safety regulations outlined by the United States Maritime Commission. Widely acclaimed as the safest and most modern of their time, the vessels were, in the words of the Panama Railroad Steamship Line's Vice President T. H. Rossbottom, "a fleet of ships as beautiful and modern and advanced in New World comforts as American skill and ingenuity could make them."

Completely fireproof from stem to stern, they marked the beginning of a new era in shipbuilding in world standards of safety, efficiency, and attractiveness and were unique in the spaciousness and comfort of passenger accommodations. Differing only in their interior decor, they featured air-conditioned public rooms, a bathroom for each stateroom, and furnishings of fireproof materials. They had eight veranda suites overlooking the sea, with a cluster of four large staterooms around each veranda; unusually wide, glass-enclosed promenades; spacious sun decks; a tiled swimming pool; a children's playroom, and many other innovations seen only on the transatlantic luxury liners of the day.

The vessels, each with its dove grey



The original SS "Ancon," seen at far left (top) and above, helped carry 1,500 Barbodian laborers to Cristobol in 1909 and in 1914 made the first official transit of the Canal. The "Cristobal" and the "Allianco," at left (top and bottom) had actually made prior test runs. The construction of three new ships for the Panama Line in 1939 was a news-making event across the United States. U.S. Secretary of War and Mrs. Harry Woodring took part in the "Ancon's" christening, at far right. The ship's luxurious interior, at right (top to bottom), was typical also of the "Cristobal" and "Panama." The "Ancon," seen at far left (bottom) in Pedro Miguel Locks, set a glorious record of wartime service.



hull, white superstructure and tan funnel with silver bands, were the cooperative effort of well-known naval architect George Sharp and Raymond Loewy, a famous industrial engineer of his time.

In the years prior to the acquisition of the three new vessels, the old *Ancon* and old *Cristobal* had offered 10-day, roundtrip voyages between Cristobal and New York, with Port-au-Prince, Haiti as a port of call on both southbound and northbound sailings.

When the new ships were put into service, the Panama Railroad Steamship Line shortened its name to the Panama Line and for the first time advertised its steamship service to lure the tourist trade. The New York to Panama cruises featuring sight-seeing tours of Port-au-Prince became very popular. In addition to passengers, the ships carried tons of bananas from Central America and raw cotton, coffee, sugar, plantains and lumber that were loaded on at Port-au-Prince. The vessels were earning their keep.

When the war came, the *Panama* and *Cristobal* were taken over by the U.S. Army Transport Service and converted to troop carriers. But probably no American merchant ship had a more distinguished war career than the *Ancon*. She was the first and best known of the U.S. Navy communications ships and for two years was the only headquarters communications vessel in the European Theater. She traveled further, was in more major operations and carried more famous political and military leaders than any other ship of her type. The *Ancon* had many close calls in combat, but, miraculously, while ships alongside her were torpedoed and sunk, she was never hit.

She participated in the invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Salerno and Normandy. When the war ended in Europe, she was converted for Pacific duty, miles of wire and tons of sensitive radio devices installed below and above deck. She took an active part in the Okinawa campaign and on September 2, 1945, it was from the *Ancon* that the news of the final surrender of Japan was flashed to the world from Tokyo Bay. Aboard were 90 war correspondents, photographers and newsreelmen representing the United States, England, China and Australia. Among them

The End of the Line



were John Mason Brown, who was to write "To All Hands," a summary of invasion experiences on the *Ancon*, and Quintin Reynolds, who wrote about the *Ancon* in "The Curtain Rises." With a glorious record of service to her country, the *Ancon* was returned to the Panama Line on February 25, 1946.

The *Panama*, renamed the *James Parker*, called frequently at Cristobal during the first part of the war. Later, she was on the Atlantic run as far as South Africa and then operated between the United States and the Atlantic Theater of War. Just before her return to civilian service, the vessel was again converted, this time for carrying brides and babies. On one voyage, the *Panama* also brought back \$80 million worth of paintings that the Germans had looted from various European capitals. Space was made for the art works in the air-conditioned dining room, and later they were delivered to the National Art Gallery in Washington, D.C.

When the *Panama* was returned to the line after the war, passengers and cargo went aboard for the first post-war sailing out of New York on September 20, 1946. Half an hour before sailing time, a maritime strike was called and the *Panama* was held in port. For 14 days the passengers lived aboard the ship courtesy of the Panama Line.

The *Cristobal* was returned on June 14, 1946, after four years and five months of military service. The vessel's first war duty was to carry troops to Australia, where she reloaded and carried field artillery to New Caledonia. She transported troops to Suez and took part in the invasion of Casablanca and operated in the Mediterranean area, landing troops at Utah Beach after the Normandy Invasion. When the war ended, the *Cristobal* transported the wounded and war brides and children of 17 different nationalities to the United States.

On July 1, 1951, following 102 years of service, the Panama Railroad Company was abolished by executive order of President Truman. As the result of an administrative reorganiza-

tion, the railroad and the steamship line became separate divisions of the Panama Canal Company.

The Panama Line was affected by a general decline in world shipping and began to lose money. The 16-year-old *Panama* was withdrawn in the interest of economy and sold in 1956 to American President Lines to become the *President Hoover*. The *Panama* was later sold to Demetrius Chandris, a London-based, Greek shipowner of cruise vessels, and sails under the new name of *Regina Prima*.

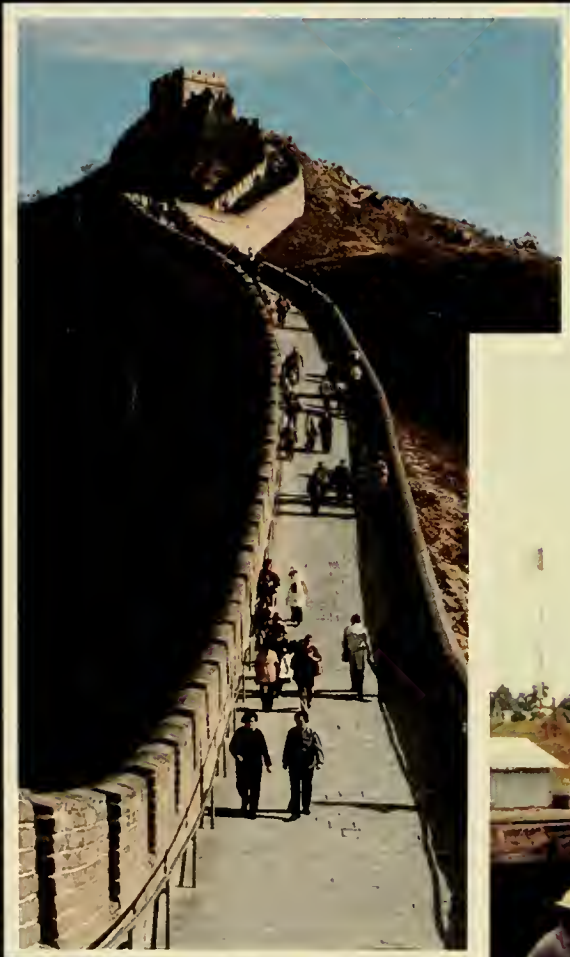
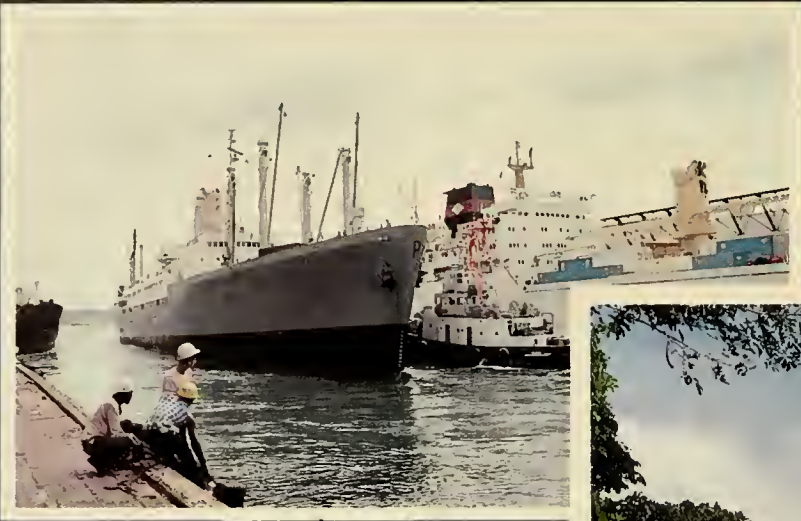
Through the years, there was opposition by the steamship industry to the U.S. Government's operation of the Panama Line. However, Congress accepted the argument that the strategic Canal needed its own supply service that could readily be rerouted in an emergency and kept under the Canal company's control at all times. In 1932, President Hoover recommended that the line be abolished, but the House voted to retain it. The old controversy continued, however, and after months of heated hearings, on December 24, 1960, President Eisenhower ordered the Canal organization to stop carrying commercial cargoes and non-government passengers, effective February 10, 1961.

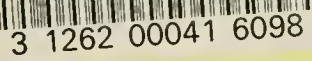
Ten days later, the *Ancon* sailed out of New York for the last time. The Panama Line's terminus was moved from Pier 64, North River to facilities made available by the U.S. Army Transportation Terminal at Poland and Dauphine streets in New Orleans. A new and shorter run between the Isthmus and New Orleans was inaugurated by the *Ancon*, renewing old ties that had been established before the Gold Rush days.

In June 1961, the *Ancon* was retired and a year later was turned over to the Maine Maritime Academy, where she served as a training ship for 10 years. In 1973, the once proud "Mighty A," as she was known during the war, was dismantled, her machinery and equipment sold and her hull cut up for scrap.

The service between Cristobal and New Orleans that was begun by the *Ancon* was taken up by the *Cristobal*, and the rest is Canal history.







Due	Returned	Due	Returned
APR 01 1987	JAN 18 1987		
MAY 11 1987	APR 16 1987		
OCT 17 1988	SEP 30 1990		
MAR 16 1992			
APR 07 1992			
MAR 27 1992			
APR 01 1992	APR 13 1992		

