

BOEING MARINE SYSTEMS

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This is a multi-part series of experiences, observations and comments of my 25 years with BMS as a test engineer and manager from 1962-1987. All personal comments are my own and do not reflect the opinions of other employees or the Boeing Co.

Part 3

JETFOIL - THE GOOD

After the first 5 boats, sales of Jetfoils picked up dramatically as potential customers were able to ride on a real boats during testing and builders trials. This brought about the sales of two boats to Venezuela, two boats to Japan and two to England for starters. The first boat in this surge of new boats went to Venezuela. The delivery of boat 006 "Jet Caribe" was an adventure I will never forget. The boat arrived at Lake Maracaibo by freighter in October of 1975 where she was to be prepared for transit to Puerto la Cruz about 600 miles to the east. When our crew arrived in Maracaibo we learned that finances for boat were not complete. The boat was still Boeing property under the American flag and had to leave Venezuela to a neutral country or be seized. The closest neutral country was Aruba Island (Netherlands) off the North coast of Venezuela. There was no time prepare the boat for underway operations so we were tugged 120 miles North to Aruba. We spent about 6 weeks in Aruba preparing for delivery as finances finally came through. We then set out from Aruba across the Caribbean to La Guaira (Caracas) and then the next day to Puerto la Cruz. After several demonstrations and route proving to the Margarita, I left the boat with another crew and returned to Seattle.

The most famous boat of all was boat 007, the "Flying Princess", simply because we all spent so much time on her and she was a Boeing boat always looking for her next venture. The Flying Princess was launched in the summer of 1976 and was originally built for P & O Jet Ferries along with boat 010 which were both Model 100 or normally called Block 1 boats. P & O was aware of the new Block II boats that were be planned and slid there position to 013 and 016 leaving the two Block 1 boats without a customer. The Flying Princess name was coined after it was leased by the Canadian company, Georgian Gulf Cruises, for the Seattle-Victoria six weeks wet charter during the months of September and November 1976. We only made one round trip per day which was less than two hours each way. The Princess Marguerite ferry was on the same run and took over four hours one way. A fly by the "Maggie" was a daily routine that was the high light of the trip. Soon after the boat 007 demonstration boat 008 was launched, tested and then loaded on a ship to Venezuela. Boeing and P & O agreed to lease the Flying Princess in June 1977 for the London-Zeebrugge, Belgium run.

Boeing decided that there was enough time before the P & O lease to accomplish a seven week grand tour of Northwest Europe with the Flying Princess. A team was sent over to Europe to visit all the proposed ports of call and to make arrangements for dock space, fueling and crew accommodations. The Flying Princess was loaded on ship and arrived in Copenhagen, Denmark in March 1977. This demonstration was a monumental task in that the Flying Princess covered

nearly 7000 nautical miles visiting 26 ports, some more than once. Dick Dougan was the captain and I was the designated boat driver and first officer. We also had two other crew members who were responsible for navigation, plotter tracking and radio operation. Our home port was Copenhagen where we visited 17 ports in Denmark, Sweden and Germany. From there we traveled North to Norway and visited 4 more ports including Stavanger which was our staging port for our record setting voyage across the North Sea to Scotland. The crossing was delayed one day due to weather but was made up the next day after our 6 3/4 hour trip to Aberdeen, Scotland. From Aberdeen the Flying Princess traveled down the east coast of England visiting 5 more ports. The demonstration grand tour concluded on May 2 1977 and the boat flew to Oostende, Belgium for the P & O charter preparations.

After the demonstration I stayed in Belgium and England for the training of P & O deck officers that supported the Boeing captains for the charter. I did the route proving and coordinated the with the river and estuary pilots routines that were necessary for the navigation on the Thames River and Thames Estuary. I was the first person to ever pilot a boat up and down the Thames River at over 40 knots. On June 1 1977 P & O passenger service started from Zeebrugge to London which was about 136 miles and took about 3 1/2- 4 hours depending on the state of the tide in the upper reaches of the Thames. We made one round trip per day and the crew and pilots stayed overnight in Zeebrugge. This was very unusual but a necessary situation because we would have to stop at each pilot station four times a day adding at least another hour each way. We really did not need the pilots after the first couple of trips but it was one of those marine labor agreements that could not be ignored. On the Belgium side, our P & O first officers were from Belgium and had pilotage for Zeebrugge and Oostende. Boeing SST crews were shuttled back and forth from Seattle to cover the charter which ended in September 1978 as P & O was awaiting delivery of their Block II boats (013 & 016) due to arrive in 1979.

Back in Seattle boat 009, the "Okesa" was launched and delivered to Sado Kisen, Japan in June 1977. In January of 1978 Sea Flight shut down its inter-island service in Hawaii and boats 001, 003 and 004 were sold to FEH. The Venezuela operation also shut in 1978 due to collisions with marine animals and a host of injury law suits. Boats 006 and 008 were also sold to FEH. The next boat to be launched was the Flying Princess II (010) the other uncommitted P & O boat, and the last Block I. The boat was leased to Washington State Ferries for a 6 week summer demonstration in 1978. WSF and Boeing each put in \$50,000 for the demonstration to be offset by fares from curious would be riders. As soon as the wet charter was agreed to by WSF and Boeing the MMP (Masters, Mates & Pilots) & IBU (Inland Boatmans Union) claimed their right to man our vessel during the demonstration. They wanted an engineer, deck hands and captain on every voyage of the Flying Princess II. This of course was outrageous because we had trained crew members (5) that ran the boat and serviced passenger. These union bureaucrats wanted to double the size of the crew and wanted to be paid their normal union wages which was twice our crews salaries. WSF could not come up with any more funds so Boeing kicked another \$50,000 with a compromised proposal with the unions for one captain observer and one deck hand. They just stood around and got in the way and collected their paychecks. The Flying Princess II visited 8 ports of call on scheduled runs from Seattle to other ports in Puget Sound, Strait of Juan de Fuca, San Juan Islands and Canada. The operation was a success but rider-ship was poor and didn't even pay for the fuel.

Back in Europe P & O awaited delivery of their first Model 929-115-013 boat the "Jet Ferry 1" which arrived in September 1979. P & O wanted a two boat operation so it chartered the Flying Princess for the London-Oostende service.