

BOEING MARINE SYSTEMS

By Bruce Bryant, IHS Member

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 4

JETFOIL - THE BAD

P & O Ferries was all set to start service from London to Oostende in the summer of 1979 with their new Block II boat (013) the Jet Ferry 1 and the leased Flying Princess. Due to delays related to the dock location in London, from St Katherine's locked in dock to a site next to the Tower Bridge, the service date was pushed to February 1980. The Flying Princess was moored in Oostende, Belgium and had been reconfigured for the P & O charter since the end of the Europe demonstration which concluded in September 1978. With no work scheduled until 1980, Boeing negotiated an offer to support the newly established cross-channel operator Jetlink Ferries. Seajet had started service from Brighton, England to Dieppe, France in 1979. Boat 012, the Normandy Princess had been performing poorly and the Flying Princess was used for backup during the high season.

The Block II boats, (Model 929-115) 011 and on, were a bit faster and had slightly better rough water performance. This was due to reshaping the foils from thick and rectangular, to thin, swept and tapered the way they should have been in the first place. What the project group was thinking when they designed the Block I foils is a mystery. Even though the Block II showed signs of improvement by being a couple of knots faster, it was still a sea state four boat.

While in Europe I was assigned to train crews and route prove the new Seajet operation and aid in the certification of the Normandy Princess in 1979. Soon after the start of passenger service, boat 012 experienced a turbine failure requiring dry docking and the Flying Princess was put into passenger service. While the Normandy Princess was in dry dock I went to Dublin, Ireland to support the installation of the new B & I docking facility on the River Liffey. A new operator, B & I, was starting service with a single boat (015), the Cu Na Mara, from Dublin to Liverpool across the Irish Sea in 1980.

These were the trying times in Europe's Jetfoil history. The P & O service was finally launched in February 1980 with Jet Ferry 1 and the Boeing leased Flying Princess. In June P & O's second boat Jet Ferry II (016) arrived and replaced the Flying Princess. The two new boat operation from London - Oostende ended that year with only one season of operation and the boats were sold to FEH. The unemployed Flying Princess was leased to Trasmediterranea, the Canary Island service between Las Palmas, Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz, Tenerife pending delivery, in 1981 of the company's first owned boat (018), Princesa Guayarmina. The B & I one boat operation started service from Dublin to Liverpool in May 1980 with a scheduled two trips per day. Within a couple of months it was obvious that it was not intended to operate in the Irish Sea. They were lucky to make two trips a week and only ventured out when the weather was calm. After a hopeless first season the Cu Na Mara was dry docked for the winter and stayed there until it was sold to Sado Kisen, Japan in 1986. The Seajet operation from Brighton to Dieppe across the English Channel

also shut down after the 1980 season and the Normandy Princess was sold to FEH.

Another Jetfoil worthy of mention was HMS Speedy, a special version of a Block II boat (929-320-014), which was delivered to the Royal Navy in 1979 for the Fishery Protection Squadron. The P296 was a special military version that was outfitted by Vosper's in Portsmouth, England. The Speedy was no match for the nasty weather and sea state in the English Channel and North Sea and was decommissioned in 1982. Eventually Speedy was sold to FEH in 1986 and converted to a passenger configuration. On the Bad side, all services in Europe, Hawaii and Venezuela were shutting down and ten boats including the Flying Princess were eventually sold to FEH and one Sado Kisen.

Back in Seattle in April 1980 , the third very popular trans Canada demonstration got underway from Seattle to Victoria with the Flying Princess II. The leased Jetfoil made two round trips per day and the Princess Marguerite ferry made one and shared the same berthing on both ends. The BC Steamship Co and Boeing shared the costs and supplied the crews. These seasonal ventures were successful and popular but again not very profitable. That winter the Montevideo Jet (017) was delivered to Alimar in Argentina for the Buenos Aires- Colonia and Montevideo fast ferry service. Another glitter of hope came when RMT (Regie voor Maritime Transport) started a two boat (019 & 020) service between Oostende and Dover in 1981 across the Strait of Dover which are the narrows between England and France. This route had limited exposure to rough water by hugging the North coast of France then due West across the Strait to Dover. The service to Dover was changed to Ramsgate in 1994-98. I trained the RTM crews and consider this Jetfoil service to be one of the more successful ventures and probably would have lasted longer if the Chunnel hadn't been built.

My on again, off again European assignments were concluded in 1981 and I went back to flight testing newly launched Jetfoils for delivery. Jetfoil construction continued in 1981 with five new boat deliveries to the Canary Islands, Belgium and Indonesia. The PHM program finally got underway with the construction of boats 02 through 05 after five years of testing and playing checkers with Pegasus. The pier 91 facility in Seattle was moved to a newly refurbished pier 90 and was hub of activity in 1981 with PHM's and Jetfoils lining the dock.. In July the second Tramed boat Princesa Guacimara (021) was launched and scheduled for delivery in the Canary Islands by the end of the year. Prior to her shipping I was captain for a short demonstration for BC Steamship Co on the Vancouver- Squamish (Whistler Ski area) route on Howe Sound. The last boat built in 1981 was the first of five Indonesian Jetfoils. The Bima Samudera 1 was launched in October 1981 delivered to PT Peln in December for passenger service around Jakarta, Indonesia. After about a year of service in Argentina the Boeing Co bought back boat 017 and it was shipped back to Seattle in May 1982. The lack of ridership was sighted as the reason for the shut down. This was the first Jetfoil to be repurchased by Boeing since most of the used boats went to FEH. She was renamed the Aries and repainted red and white. I don't recall why they named her Aries since one of the PHM's had the same name but I recognized the FEH paint scheme. That's ironic because boat 017 was eventually sold to Tokai Kisen of Japan. Since Boeing was still trying to sell Jetfoils, Boeing negotiated with Alaska State Ferries to use the Aries for a summer and winter evaluation in Southeast Alaska. The summer demonstration in August- September 1982 would last for 4 weeks with service to 10 ports of call. The first order of this venture was to create a navigation plan that would take us up and back the inland passage to Southeast Alaska and all the passenger demonstration routes. It took over a month to update the charts, write the navigation plans and to schedule each day of the demonstration. This included about one week of transit time up and back from Southeast Alaska and about three weeks visiting 10 different ports.

The next venture with Aries was the actual trip to Southeast Alaska.

