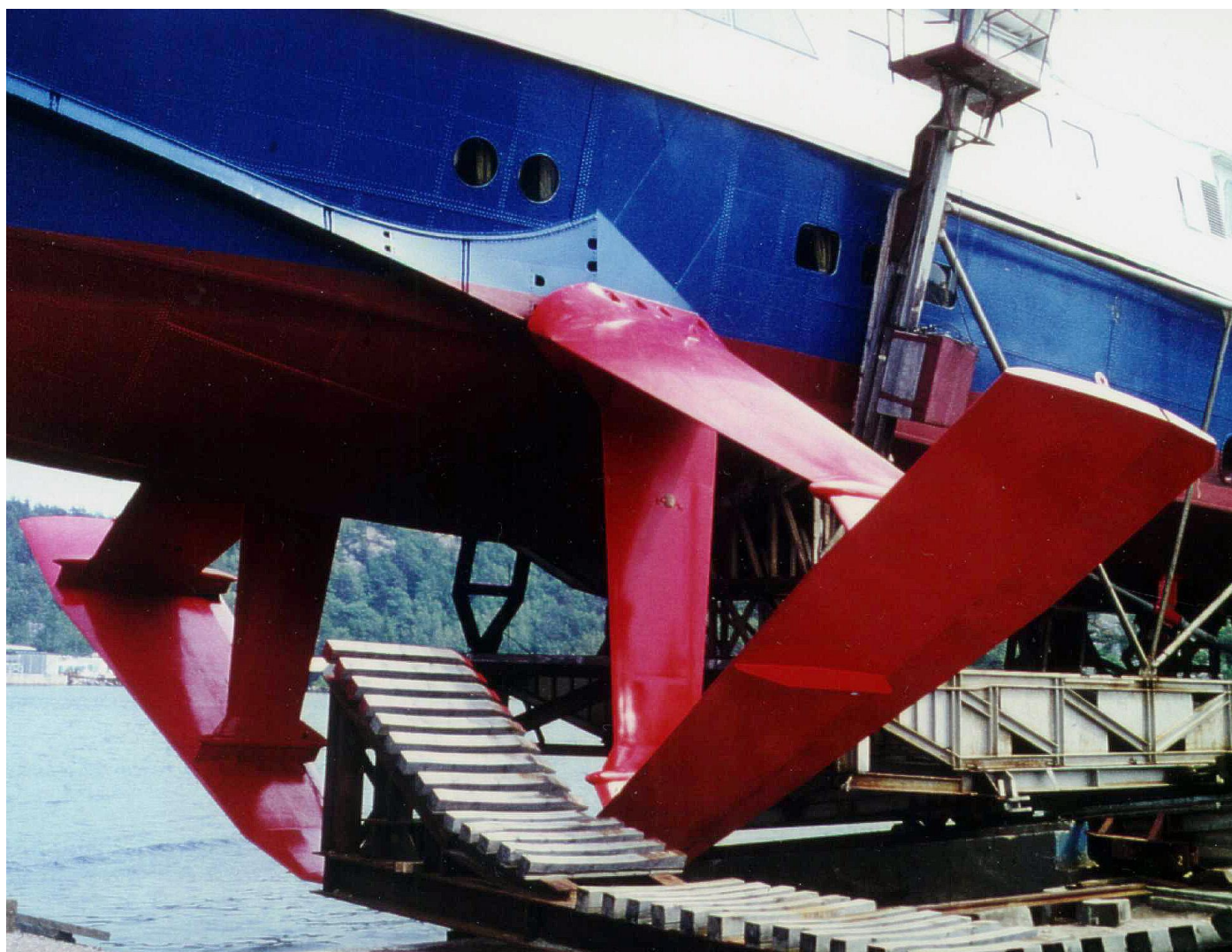


classic fast ferries

15 years

HYDROFOILS HOVERCRAFT SESS & CATAMARANS

JANUARY 2015 ISSUE 54



THE MAJESTIC THREE

15 years

STILL HERE

Who needs a magazine devoted to the history of old fast ferries? A question we asked prospective readers in the very first issue of *CLASSIC FAST FERRIES* in January 2000.

Well, some must have since we are still here, fifteen years later. Admittedly, not without intermissions. For instance, no issues were produced between May 2005 and October 2006 and then again not until 2012. However, for parts of this time were indeed published online news and other short reports not designed as a traditional magazine. Since 2012 we publish a mix of the former and an irregularly issued conventional-style (although electronic) magazine, which will normally deal with a certain theme in-depth. The present issue of *CFF* is a good illustration of this.

Since that first issue, there has of course been changes and developments to routes and vessels then operating. While some old favourites are gone from the face of the earth, new ones have arrived instead. It is particularly good to see a renewed interest in the hydrofoil.

By 2000, three Foilmaster hydrofoils had been delivered by Rodriquez, the first of which in 1994, and since the shipyard has built another ten. More recent developments

include the projected Kometa 120M and Tsiklon 250M and several others from Vympel Shipyard in Russia, and the decision by Sicilian fast ferry operator Ustica Lines to commence building hydrofoils at its own shipyard. The first of the Admiral type, *Carlo Morace*, was launched last February, and currently under construction at Trapani is a second Admiral as well as the first of the larger Super Admiral design. We will certainly return to these!

One thing that has not changed since the inauguration of *CFF*, however, is our craving for old photographs from the early days of the hydrofoil and hovercraft, in particular from areas and operations and of vessels not already covered within these pages.

If you have any such or know of someone who does, please get in touch. They might just be what we have been looking for during all those fifteen years. **cff**

A special thanks to all individuals who have contributed photographs, many of which rare, in this issue.

classic
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ferries

THE ORIGINAL PERIODICAL ABOUT THE HISTORY OF HYDROFOILS, HOVERCRAFT, CATAMARANS AND SURFACE EFFECT SHIPS, THEIR BUILDERS AND OPERATORS WORLDWIDE.

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COVER : CLOSE UP OF THE IMPRESSIVE FORWARD FOIL ON THE SUPRAMAR PT.150 HYDROFOIL
PHOTO: SØREN STRUNTZE

Below : The first PT.150 built, in 1968, being prepared for service in the Straits of Oresund as *Prince of the Waves* in 1973 / SØREN STRUNTZE photo

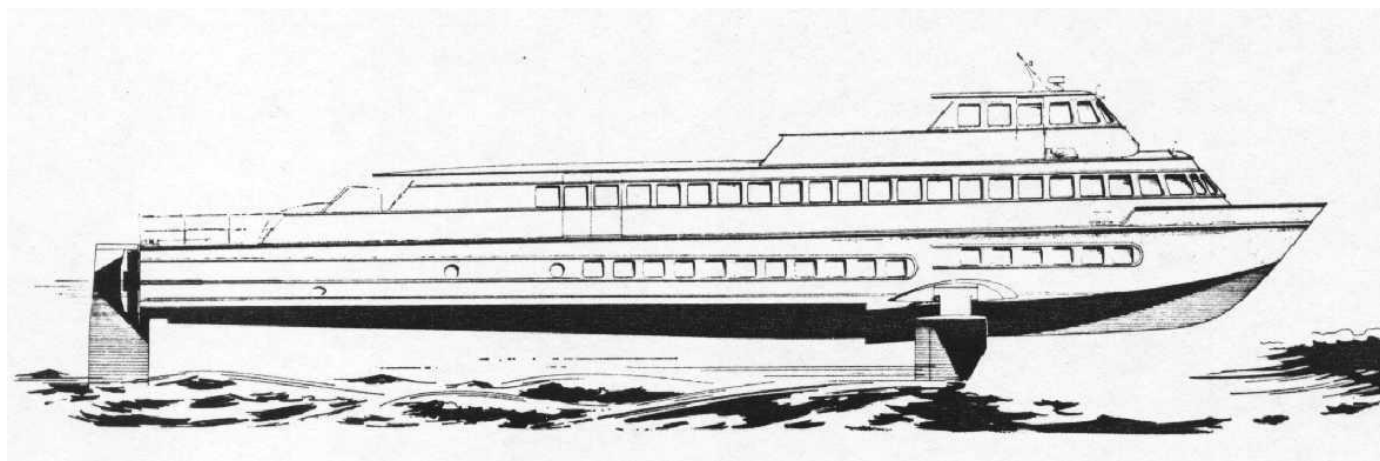
When the 165-ton Supramar PT.150 appeared in 1968 it was dubbed the largest commercial seagoing hydrofoil in the world.

Almost forty-seven years later it still is, in terms of displacement.

It is of course not the whole truth as the design is long since withdrawn from service. Widely travelled, in the following pages is the full story of the many lives of the PT.150

THE MAJESTIC PT.150





Above : Early 1960s impression of a Supramar PT.150

There have been other commercial hydrofoils with a considerably greater length overall than the 37.9 m PT.150, all of which developed in what was then the USSR. The Sputnik (47.9 m) and Vikhr (47.5 m) appeared already in the early 1960s, followed by the Burevestnik (43.3 m) in 1964 and, much later, the Tsiklon (44.2 m) in 1986. For the latter, see the November 2013 *CLASSIC FAST FERRIES*. None of these designs went into production, although work on one more Tsiklon was commenced but never finalized.

Currently under construction in Italy is the first Super Admiral which will have a length overall of 38 m. It is being built by Ustica Lines' shipyard at Trapani, Cantiere Navale Unità Veloci, also being referred to as HSC Shipyard.

The largest hydrofoil built by Rodriguez to date is the 35.8 m RHS 200.

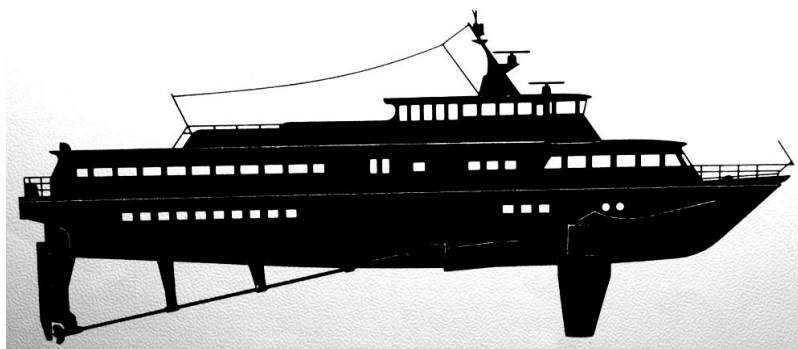
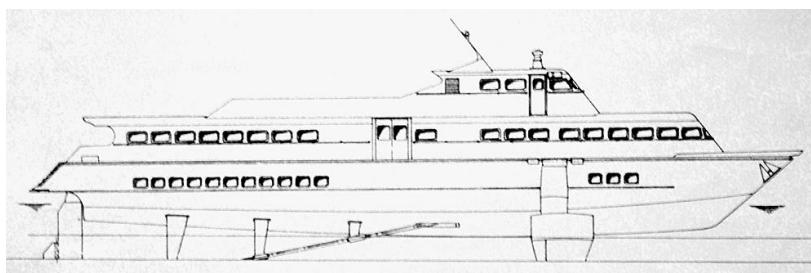
Also reported to be under construction is the first seagoing 35.2 m Kometa 120M at Vympel in Russia. The shipyard is projecting several other designs for operation on open sea routes and rivers, including a restyled and upgraded Tsiklon, designated Tsiklon 250M, which will have a length overall of 42.6 m.

A total of three PT.150s were built between 1968 and 1971, all of which by Norwegian pioneer fast ferry builder Westermoen Hydrofoil. Founded in 1941 as Westermoen Båtbyggeri & Mekaniske Verksted, originally the Mandal based yard was the builder of pleasure boats and, later, vessels for the Norwegian Navy. In 1960 a license agreement was reached between Westermoen and Supramar to build hydrofoils to the Swiss firm's designs for the Scandinavian markets. The first hydrofoil to be completed by the shipyard, a PT.50, suitably named *Westfoil*, was delivered in 1962. The PT.150s were the last hydrofoils to be delivered by the builder, which moved on to producing fast catamarans of the Westamran designs developed in-house.

FROM PROJECTS TO THE REAL DEAL

An early version of a PT.150 was announced by Supramar already in 1963. This was to have a length of 42 m and be powered by a pair of 8,700 hp Bristol Siddeley Proteus gas turbines, located aft, giving the vessel a service speed of 45 knots and top speed of 48 knots. The forward foil incorporated hydraulically operated flaps which would support the craft in reaching foilborne mode easier and quicker and to adjust the flying height. Carrying up to 300 passengers, the design was intended for long-range operation of 150–200 nautical miles.

Projected by Supramar at the end of the 1960s but never realized was an even bigger hydrofoil, the 400-ton PT.400. This was to have a length overall of nearly 60 m and over twice the payload of the PT.150. In a mixed-traffic version it would be able to carry 200 passengers and up to 40 cars. It was to have a range of 500 nautical miles and cruise at 50 knots.



Right : A mid-1960s profile drawing of the PT.150 to be built by Rodriguez, and (bottom) the final design

As completed, the PT.150 had a length overall of 37.9 m and was powered by a pair of Mercedes Maybach MD 1081 diesels, each rated at 3,400 hp, located in a traditional midships position.

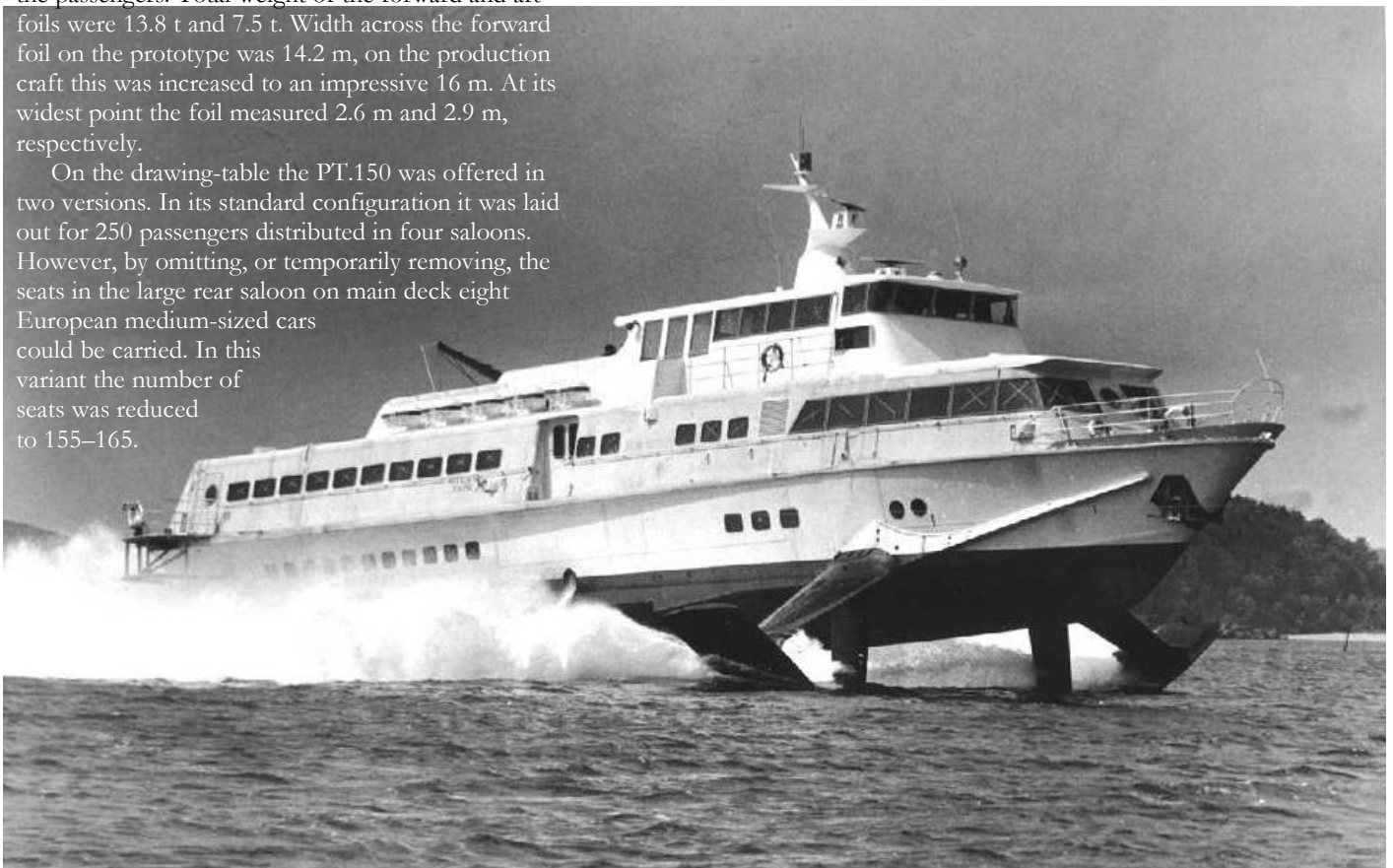
Like on the previous Supramar PT.20 and PT.50 designs, the forward foil was a V-shaped surface piercing type. Carrying approximately 65% of the load, flaps at the trailing edges, as described above, were fitted.

Contrary to Supramar standard however, the rear foil on the PT.150 was a fully submerged design incorporating the Schertel Supramar air-controlled stabilization system, first tested by Westermoen on a rebuilt PT.50 in 1967. This would enable the vessel to remain foilborne even in adverse weather conditions while still offering a comfortable ride for the passengers. Total weight of the forward and aft foils were 13.8 t and 7.5 t. Width across the forward foil on the prototype was 14.2 m, on the production craft this was increased to an impressive 16 m. At its widest point the foil measured 2.6 m and 2.9 m, respectively.

On the drawing-table the PT.150 was offered in two versions. In its standard configuration it was laid out for 250 passengers distributed in four saloons. However, by omitting, or temporarily removing, the seats in the large rear saloon on main deck eight European medium-sized cars could be carried. In this variant the number of seats was reduced to 155–165.

The PT.150 is often being referred to as PT.150 Mk II or Mk III. These are later designations and indicate various modifications and refinements planned for production vessels of a second and third generation PT.150s. Some adjustments were indeed implemented on the two craft that followed on the prototype. Another designation sometimes seen is PT.150 DC. This refers to the planned but never realized mixed-traffic variant.

Below : The prototype PT.150 on pre-delivery trials in Norway in 1968
/ WESTERMOEN HYDROFOIL photo



While originally the prototype PT.150 was indeed intended for the latter and fitted with two hydraulically operated stern doors, the plan was never carried out.

When in 1966 it was announced that the first PT.150 was being built by Westermoen, Supramar expressed great plans for the design. It was believed to be built by several yards serving different markets, including, of course, Rodriquez in Sicily and Hitachi in Japan, both of which were already successfully building the PT.20 and PT.50 designs and had been doing so since 1956 and 1959 and 1962 and 1963, respectively. While a PT.150 was indeed included in some Rodriquez advertising of the time, one source even claimed a PT.150 actually being under construction in Messina, no such craft was ever built by this or any other shipyard.



EXPRESSAN

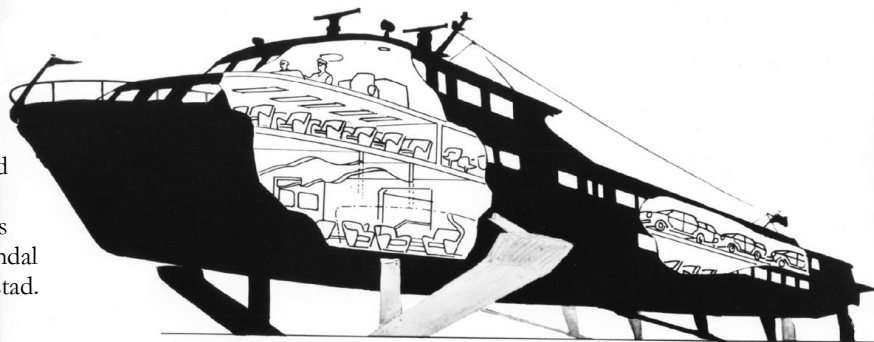
The first PT.150 was launched at the Mandal shipyard in February 1968. It had been ordered for a cross-Kattegat service between Sweden and Denmark by Partrederiet HS Expressan, a joint venture made up of Swedish shipping companies Rederi AB Bifrost and Nya Ångfartygs AB Heimdal and the shipyard of Eriksbergs Mekaniska Verkstad. The daily operation was to be managed by long-established Swedish ferry operator Göteborg Frederikshavn Linjen, GFL, marketed as Sessan-Linjen.

Traditionally, the ferries of GFL had all been named after Swedish princesses. The name of the new hydrofoil, *Expressan*, thus was derived from the words *express* and *sessan* (short for *prinsessan* in Swedish). The operator saw great potential in adding a fast alternative to its conventional ro-ro ferries on the existing Gothenburg–Frederikshavn, Denmark route, especially for daytrippers wishing to spend more time ashore than on board. The hydrofoil was to be introduced on a new, longer route between Gothenburg and Ålborg, a considerably larger city than Frederikshavn, situated centrally in the Jutland peninsular. With a trip time of 2½ hours, four single daily crossings were to be operated, leaving Gothenburg at 08:00 and 16:30 and Ålborg at 10:45 and 19:45.

PROTOTYPE PRINCESS PRESENTS PROBLEMS

At Westermoen things did not go too smoothly, however.

On trials off Mandal in the spring of 1968 the PT.150 attained a speed of only 32-33 knots, which was a far cry from the 39-40 knots service specified in the contract of sale. The main reason being a significant increase in the total weight of the actual craft in comparison with the design displacement,



165 t and 150 t, respectively, and a different power plant and gear installment than intended. The successful model tank test results were of course based on a 150 t displacement and were the determining factor to Partrederiet/GFL to place the order for the hydrofoil.

In addition, late delivery of the engines from the German manufacturer had Westermoen pressed for time in its work of carrying out the required sea trials and resulting adjustments. For instance, three sets of propellers from different manufacturers as well as a new air stabilization and lift control system were supposed to be tested and evaluated prior to delivery.

Faced with the options of either postponing the inauguration in the Kattegat with up to three months, which would mean losing the crucial business during the entire high season, or accepting the reduced service speed for the time being, GFL went for the latter. It was agreed *Expressan* was to be delivered at the end of June 1968 and returned to the shipyard at season's end in September for the concluding work.

Top : Impression of the proposed mixed-traffic PT.150 for 155–165 passengers plus eight cars

Below : *Expressan* as delivered in 1968 / SUPRAMAR photo, both



As a result of the vessel's lower than anticipated speed, GFL decided not to introduce the Aalborg route until this issue had been solved, instead the hydrofoil was to operate on the existing Frederikshavn route.

Following a little over forty hours of sea trials, the largest hydrofoil in the world was accepted by Partrederiet HS Expressan managing director Ulf Trapp at Westermoen on June 26. The hydrofoil left Mandal the following day on its 150 nautical mile delivery trip to Gothenburg, carrying some 100 invited guests. Due to an early hiccup off Mandal which forced the hydrofoil to return to Westermoen to have an oil leakage seen to, *Expressan* did not arrive at its destination until five hours later. This, however, did not put a damper on the spirits on board. Everyone was truly impressed by the quality of the interiors and the hydrofoil's behaviour and performance in the Skagerrack and Kattegat, with the occasional 3 m waves.

GÖTEBORG – FREDERIKSHAVN

Expressan was officially christened at Gothenburg on June 28. Following this ceremony was a short demonstration trip and luncheon ashore for the inauguration guests, among which was one of the founders of Supramar AG, Baron Hanns von Schertel. Meanwhile, *Expressan* took off on its first revenue earning crossing to Frederikshavn.

The scheduled quay to quay time for the 49 nautical mile Gothenburg–Frederikshavn route was 1 hour 50 minutes. Even though performing at less than design speed, still this was almost two hours faster than by the operator's ro-ro ferries. This allowed for two daily roundtrips to be operated by *Expressan*, departing Gothenburg at 08:30 and 15:30 and Frederikshavn at 11:00 and 19:30. In addition, a 60-minute sightseeing ride through the Gothenburg archipelago was operated in the early afternoon.

A one way adult was DKK 33.50 and a same day return DKK 41. The one-hour sightseeing trip at Gothenburg was SEK 10.



Above : The forward saloon on *Expressan*. The furnishings and colours are, of course, very 1960s

Below : *Expressan* coming off foil
Bottom : A couple of days into its short appearance on the Kattegat route, *Expressan* is seen departing Frederikshavn in June 1968. Note the stern doors (cp. with photo on page 14)
/ SØREN STRUNTZE photo





***Hydroliner* at Westermoen Hydrofoil in 1969, being prepared for shipment to the Caribbean. The vessel would be back in Norway within a year. This view gives an idea of the impressive size of the PT.150 in general and the rear foil in particular**

/CHRISTIAN STRUNTZE photo

Passengers embarked through double doors midship on the main deck opening into a spacious foyer. From this was access to all four passenger saloons plus weather deck and the bridge. It also held luggage racks, a cloakroom, five washrooms and a pantry.

The forward saloon on the main deck was laid out for 50 passengers, most of which seated in aircraft-style seats in rows with 3 or 4 abreast. At the very front was a more cosy arrangement of coach type seating and easy chairs around tables. The large, uninterrupted windows, including forward facing view, only added to the modern and roomy feel and this saloon immediately became the most popular.

The large saloon aft of the foyer seated 103, for the most part arranged 3–4–2 abreast. On lower deck the aft saloon accommodated 70 passengers and the bow compartment the remaining 27. The latter was laid out with a combination of individual armchairs and low-back fixed sofa seating around tables giving it a snug lounge feel.

All four saloons had emergency exits and sprinklers were fitted throughout. A life jacket was stowed under each seat and self-inflatable life rafts were carried in containers on deck. In addition a lifeboat was located aft on weather deck. The vessel fulfilled SOLAS requirements and had been built under the supervision of Det Norske Veritas. For each of the 250 passengers the vessel carried 60 kg in safety devices.

Passengers were served hot and cold drinks and snacks in their seat. Meals and sandwiches were prepared on board one of GFL's conventional ferries and delivered to *Expressan* in specially designed containers. Since an international route, a limited selection of duty free goods was offered.

Extensive use of wood panelling, carpeting and colours throughout added to the feeling of quality and travelling air-style.

On bridge deck was an open-air, partly covered observation platform.

The crew comprised five, plus 4–6 cabin attendants.

Craft inspection, including lifting once every fortnight or where required, was carried out at Eriksbergs Mekaniska Verkstad at Gothenburg – or if called upon at the Danish end, by scuba divers.

From a mechanical reliability perspective, and the fact that *Expressan* was a new design, the little over two months of operation was considered a success, with an in-service figure of 97%. Some difficulties with following seas as well as becoming foilborne

when carrying a full load had been experienced. Propellers had had to be substituted a couple of times.

While satisfactory, the load factor of 33% was less successful, the breakeven figure being calculated to 55%. However, the owners were convinced that this would all change once the new service had established itself and was operating at full throttle. The vessel had been very well received by those passengers who did travel on it.

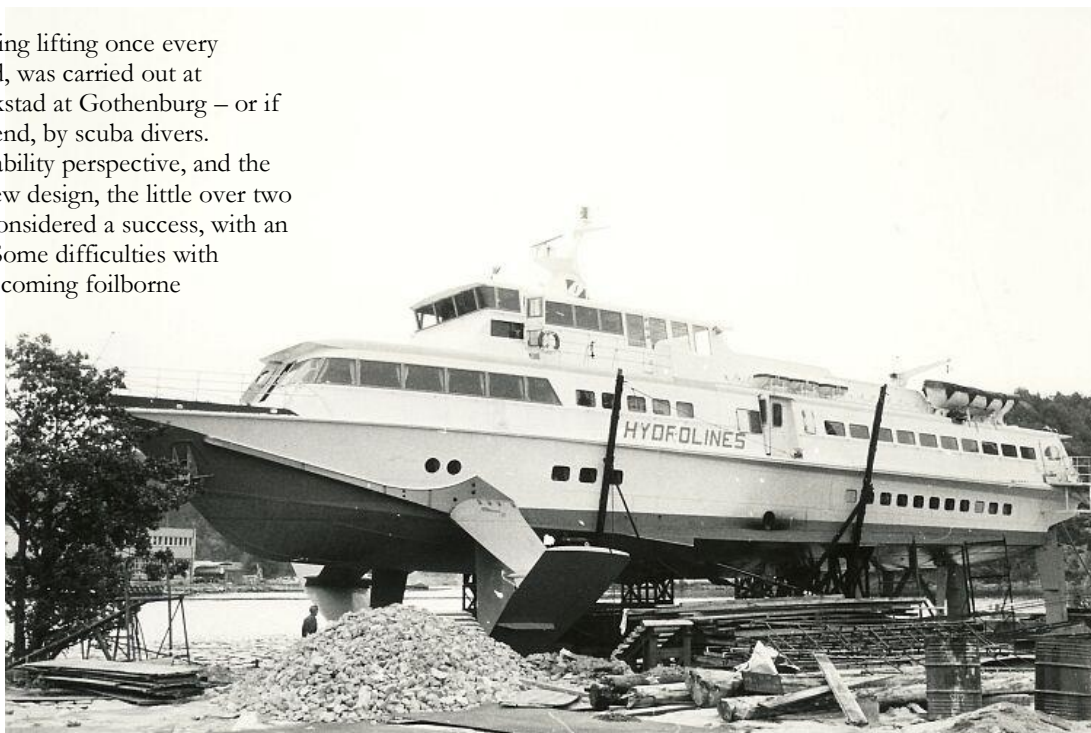
Following a promotional run at season's end to Ålborg to show people there what they had missed out on – and could look forward to in 1969 – *Expressan* returned to Westermoen in early September, as planned.

FAILED WEST INDIES VENTURE

Back at Westermoen the speed goal was not reached, however. Several trial runs and adjustments later, *Expressan* still was a long way away from the contractual service speed, not being able to attaining more than 33.6 knots. A proposal by Partrederiet/GFL to accept the vessel nevertheless at a reduced price – the original investment was in the region of SEK 7.3 million – was turned down by Westermoen. The contract was officially annulled in March 1969 and the vessel renamed *HS 15* by the shipyard. GFL claimed damages of a non revealed sum for infrastructure investments in both Sweden and Denmark as a consequence of the lapsed contract.

Shortly after the cancellation by GFL of the *Expressan* contract, Westermoen announced it had sold the PT.150 to a newly formed Norwegian company, Scanstar Hydrolines, which was to transfer the hydrofoil to the Caribbean to be put into service between St. Thomas and Antigua in collaboration with U.S. based International Hydrolines.

Having received an all white colour scheme and being renamed *Hydroliner*, the PT.150 was towed from Norway to San Juan, Puerto Rico in late August 1969. The unusual cross-Atlantic task was carried out by the Norwegian salvage company Norsk Bjergnings-kompagni and took 24 days.



Right : The former *Expressan* back at Westermoen Hydrofoil in 1969 being prepared for service in the Caribbean as *Hydroliner*



Left : Queen of the Waves on a promotional run prior to delivery in 1970.
At this stage the vessel's Spanish name was *Reina del Mar*; it was subsequently altered to *Reina de las Olas* / WESTERMOEN HYDROFOIL photo

The towlines of the towboat were welded to the hull of the hydrofoil.

The relocation did not prove a success. The hydrofoil, which had since been renamed *Scanride*, operated only a few of the initially announced three weekly roundtrips. Being blamed was the climatic conditions in these waters for which the vessel was not suited. As a consequence of this the hydrofoil found itself back with Westermoen in May 1970. It was now renamed *Norfoil*.

TWO MORE PT.150s

Prior to the above, also in March 1969, an order for two PT.150s had been placed with Westermoen by established domestic shipping company Johs. Presthus Rederi. Based on the experience with the prototype, the new contract specified a service speed of 33 knots. The contract price of the craft was NOK 13 million per vessel.

The first of these was delivered in October 1970. Officially named *Queen of the Waves* but also carrying its Spanish name *Reina del Mar* (subsequently changed to *Reina de las Olas*), the hydrofoil made several promotional visits to ports in Norway, Sweden and Denmark before heading south for the Canary Islands. The positioning trip was made under its own power

and went via Dover, Brest, Lisbon, Malaga, Tangier, Casablanca and Agadir. The service commenced in December between Las Palmas and Tenerife. A 90-minute journey, four daily single trips were operated.

The second Presthus vessel, *Princess of the Waves*, followed in the spring of 1971. Contrary to what was initially intended, this, dubbed *Princesa de las Olas*, did not go to the Canary Islands but to the Balearics, linking Mallorca and Ibiza and Valencia and Alicante on mainland Spain. In June of that year *Queen of the Waves* was transferred from the Canary Islands to join *Princess of the Waves* on the Balearic services.

While very popular with passengers in both areas of operation, a series of teething problems mainly related to the engines started to occur fairly early and resulted in frequent trip cancellations, often at the last minute. The owners decided to terminate the operation based on negotiations between them, Westermoen and the engine builders where it was agreed to have the engines sent back to the factory for examination and reconstruction. It took well over a year from the day the engines were removed from the craft and until they were put back again.

Following this, Presthus decided to relocate both vessels north to Scandinavia. First stop was the Baltic Sea, to introduce a service between Sweden and Finland. The PT.150s arrived in Stockholm in early June 1972 and the operation, managed by a newly formed Finnish company, Princess Line, was inaugurated shortly hereafter.

A test run to Turku, Finland via Mariehamn in the island of Åland was carried out by *Princess of the Waves* on June 13 for crews to acquaint themselves with the route and berthing procedures. Initially two daily roundtrips were operated to Mariehamn; Turku was served only on certain days. The trip time for each leg was scheduled to 2½ hours. The Turku service was discontinued already after a couple of weeks.

Princess of the Waves continued on the Stockholm–Mariehamn route until August 21, when it was announced that Princess Line had gone into liquidation.



MALMÖ – COPENHAGEN

Prior to the folding of Princess Line, an agreement had been signed between Johs. Presthus and established Swedish shipping company Rederi AB Nordö to introduce *Queen of the Waves* in southern Scandinavia between Sweden and Denmark.

The hydrofoil idea was not new to Nordö. In September 1971 the company announced it had placed an order with Rodriquez in Italy for three of the shipyard's latest design, the RHS 110, to be introduced in the Straits of Oresund in May and July 1972. This never came to fruition and the vessels were instead delivered to a Hongkong operator.

Marketed as Gigant Foil, rather a catchy name, *Queen of the Waves* entered service on the 18 nautical mile cross-Oresund route between Malmo and Copenhagen in early July 1972, making 16 single daily crossings. The terminal to terminal sailing time was approximately 40 minutes.

But the PT.150 was far from the only fast ferry in the area.

Already competing on the route were three companies operating five hydrofoils and two hovercraft. The hydrofoils, of the PT.50 and RHS 140 types, were operated jointly by Danish and Swedish state-owned companies Dampskibsselskabet Øresund (DSØ) and Svenska Rederi AB Öresund (SRÖ), which had introduced the first hydrofoil on the route already in 1965.

New on the scene were a pair of Vosper Thornycroft VT-1 semi-amphibious hovercraft, introduced by Centrumsvävarna in March and April 1972. The VT-1 hovercraft and the PT.150 offered similar passenger capacity, whereas the DSØ/SRÖ hydrofoils carried 100–115 passengers.

The resulting price fight was inevitable. To get its foot in on the market, at SEK 4,50 in Economy class (lower deck saloons) Gigant Foil charged the lowest fare. In Panorma class on upper deck a one way adult was SEK 6,00. Before the competition a one way adult on the DSØ/SRÖ hydrofoils was SEK 9,00. This was reduced to SEK 6,00 to undercut the SEK 7,50 on the hovercraft.



Above : For the Spanish service, which was operated in conjunction with Isnasa, Princess of the Waves was dubbed Princesa de las Olas

Left : Queen of the Waves / Reina de las Olas originally entered service in the Canary Islands in 1970
/ Collection of S STRUNTZE



Above : *There wasn't a dry eye in the house when the PT.150s foiled through the harbour at Copenhagen*
/ ERIK HANSEN photo

Below : *For a couple of months in the summer of 1972 Princess of the Waves operated in the Baltic Sea between Stockholm and Åland/Finland* / FOLKE ÖSTERMAN photo





Main : Queen of the Waves was the second PT.150 built and entered service between Sweden and Denmark in 1972 following operations in Spanish and Baltic waters

Inset : The forward saloon on upper deck (top) and the bridge on Queen of the Waves / SØREN STRUNTZE photo, all



Gigant Foil's shortcoming was its one only vessel operation. This changed in September when *Queen of the Waves* was joined on the route by *Princess of the Waves*, which had been released from its Baltic duty. The number of services could now be doubled, or if one of the craft became unavailable the operator did not need to cancel services altogether.

This development coincided with the decision by Centrumsvävarna to withdraw from the Oresund. There was now too much capacity available for the market needs, especially with the low season approaching, and where the competition had been beneficial for the passengers, it was not for the economy of the operator. Also, there had been technical issues with the VT-1s, which is not surprising for a new design.

Having been acquired by Johs. Presthus, the former *Expressen* was now also to be added to the Malmö–Copenhagen operation, mainly as a stand by vessel when one of the other PT.150s was out of service. Born a princess, the vessel had since had a sex change and as *Prince of the Waves* arrived in the Oresund in March 1973.



Towards the end of that year the service by the PT.150s was temporarily discontinued. There were still some technical trouble with the craft, although not the same ones as previously which had been solved satisfactorily. It was decided to use the slow winter months to get things in order for the coming season. Some voiced that the nature of the route had part in, or was perhaps even to be blamed for, the recurring mechanical problems – it was too short for this design. The PT.150 including the machinery was intended to run continuously for much longer at a time rather than the every 60 or so minutes take off procedure.

When the service was resumed in the spring of 1974, the vessels were no longer operated by a competing company to DSØ/SRÖ but had indeed been chartered to them by Johs. Presthus. Not only had the competition been eliminated, by this move DSØ/SRÖ had managed to get three large hydrofoils each with twice the capacity of their own PT.50s and RHS 140s without really trying. The PT.150s were perfect for certain crossings during the day, such as on the commuter runs in the morning and afternoon. Needless to say, this could only have one affect on ticket prices – they were increased. The good news was that all departures now operated from/to the same terminal buildings.

The charter agreement between Johs. Presthus and DSØ/SRÖ lasted for a little over fifteen months and from September 1975 the PT.150s were again operated under the Gigant Foil banner, but not with the same partner as previously, in competition with the state-owned companies.

Top : The first PT.150 built, in 1968, being prepared for service in the Straits of Oresund as Prince of the Waves in 1973

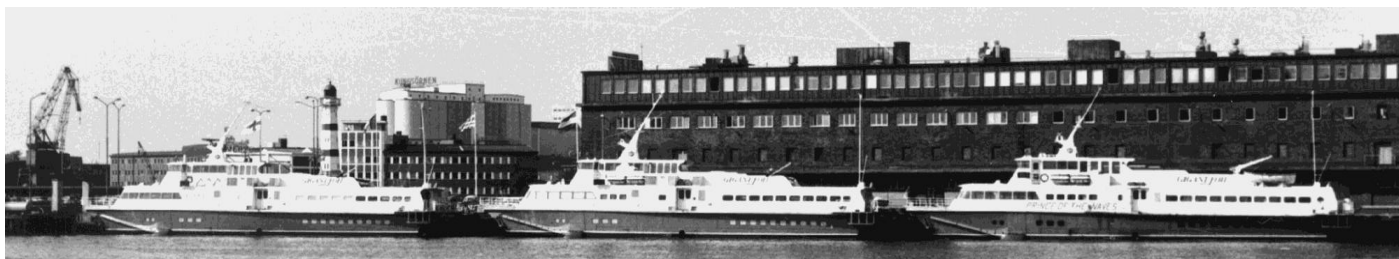
Above : ... and in service on the Malmo–Copenhagen route. Note the rebuilt stern (see photos on page 7 + 8) / SØREN STRUNTZE photo, both



Above : Looking its very best, Princess of the Waves approaches Malmö shortly after the vessel was introduced across the Straits of Oresund in 1972 ...
/ ALF ARVIDSSON photo

Below : ... and arriving at Copenhagen
/ LARS HELGE ISDAHL photo





ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

If the mechanical reliability had not always been satisfactory, the PT.150s were very popular by those travelling on them on the Malmö–Copenhagen run, regardless of who was operating the vessels.

Even so, in August 1977 Presthus decided to withdraw from the Oresund. The reason for this being over-capacity on the route, the logic consequence of which was that the operation could not be made profitable.

In early October the PT.150s were transferred to International Hydrofoil Operation, a fifty-fifty percent company formed by Presthus and another Norwegian shipping firm, Oddmund Grundstad Rederi. As part of the deal the latter now became the owner of *Prince of the Waves*. Trading as Bahamas Hydrofoil Cruises, the vessels were now to be operated in the Caribbean, between Miami and Fort Lauderdale, Florida and Freeport in Grand Bahama.

The three PT.150s left Scandinavia later that same month, in tow of, once again, one of the vessels of Norsk Bjergningskompagni. This was the third cross-Atlantic trip for the first-built PT.150.

The rather adverse weather conditions experienced, including storm from the English Channel to the Azores, were hard on the hydrofoils, in particular *Queen of the Waves* which was in the front of the tow. The PT.150s eventually reached Port Everglades, Florida on November 28, after thirty-five days.

On arrival here the vessels were lifted for inspection and repairs. Some modifications were also carried out to conform with the requirements of the U.S. Coast Guard as well as state and federal anti-pollution standards. For instance, for the safety of passengers, two extra emergency exit doors in the upper forward saloon had to be fitted.

Above : All three Gigant Foil PT.150s alongside at Malmö. From left : *Queen of the Waves*, *Princess of the Waves* and *Prince of the Waves*
/ LARS HELGE ISDAHL photo

Below : Same location but from a different angle and with the vessels tied up in another order
/ SØREN STRUNTZE photo



FLORIDA – FREEPORT

To better suit the American market and route, some alterations to the interiors were also made. The number of seats was reduced to 200, leaving only 56 of the original 97 in the lower deck saloons.

The officers remained Scandinavian whereas cabin attendants were a mix of Scandinavian and American.

A planned early December start up date of the operation could not be met, for all the obvious reasons, and it was announced it was to begin next February. Having had to postpone further, the service finally took off on April 21, 1978.

Departures from Ft. Lauderdale to Freeport and back were daily except Thursday. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday the hydrofoil would leave Ft. Lauderdale at 09:15 and on the remaining days at 10:00. The services back from Freeport differed more. The scheduled journey time was 2½ hours.

From Miami the hydrofoil would leave at 08:30 on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, returning from Freeport at 13:30, 17:00 and 17:30, respectively. Crossing time here was 3 hours.

Below : The three PT.150s were brought from Scandinavia to the U.S. in 1977 and operated for a year between Florida and Freeport in Grand Bahama / BAHAMAS HYDROFOIL CRUISES photo



Rates were the same on both routes. A one way adult was \$26.95 in Economy class (lower deck) and \$31.95 in Panorama class. A roundtrip was \$49.95 and \$59.95, respectively. In addition, a departure tax of \$2–\$3 applied. These fares were below those charged by the air lines with which the company was competing. An interesting detail is that in case of cancellation of the hydrofoil, Panorama class passengers would receive a complimentary air ticket and transportation to the airport.

Panorama class passengers were offered complimentary snacks and beverages; Economy class passengers the latter. For the on board entertainment slot machines and a duty free shop were added.

The Miami route was discontinued only about a month into the operation due to unsuitable terminal

facilities and the greater length of voyage from there to Freeport. Effective from June 2, the timetable was adjusted so that departure times were the same on all days, except Sunday. Two single trips were added on the weekend; from Ft. Lauderdale on Friday at 17:00 and from Freeport on Sunday at 15:30. Also introduced was a one-day excursion trip ticket.

The schedule was based on one PT.150 in service, except on Friday and Sunday, and one in reserve allowing for the third to be in the shipyard at Port Everglades undergoing maintenance. The maintenance staff was brought from Scandinavia, as was a stock of spare parts and special tools.

However, after a while it became clear that the PT.150s, even though the largest hydrofoils in the world, were not suited for operation across the Gulf Stream. While from a safety perspective a crossing in adverse sea conditions could be made, there was the comfort of passengers to consider. The conditions also caused strain on the vessels, which resulted in an increased level of inspection and maintenance and thus costs.

A year after the inauguration, in April 1979, the decision was made to terminate the service.

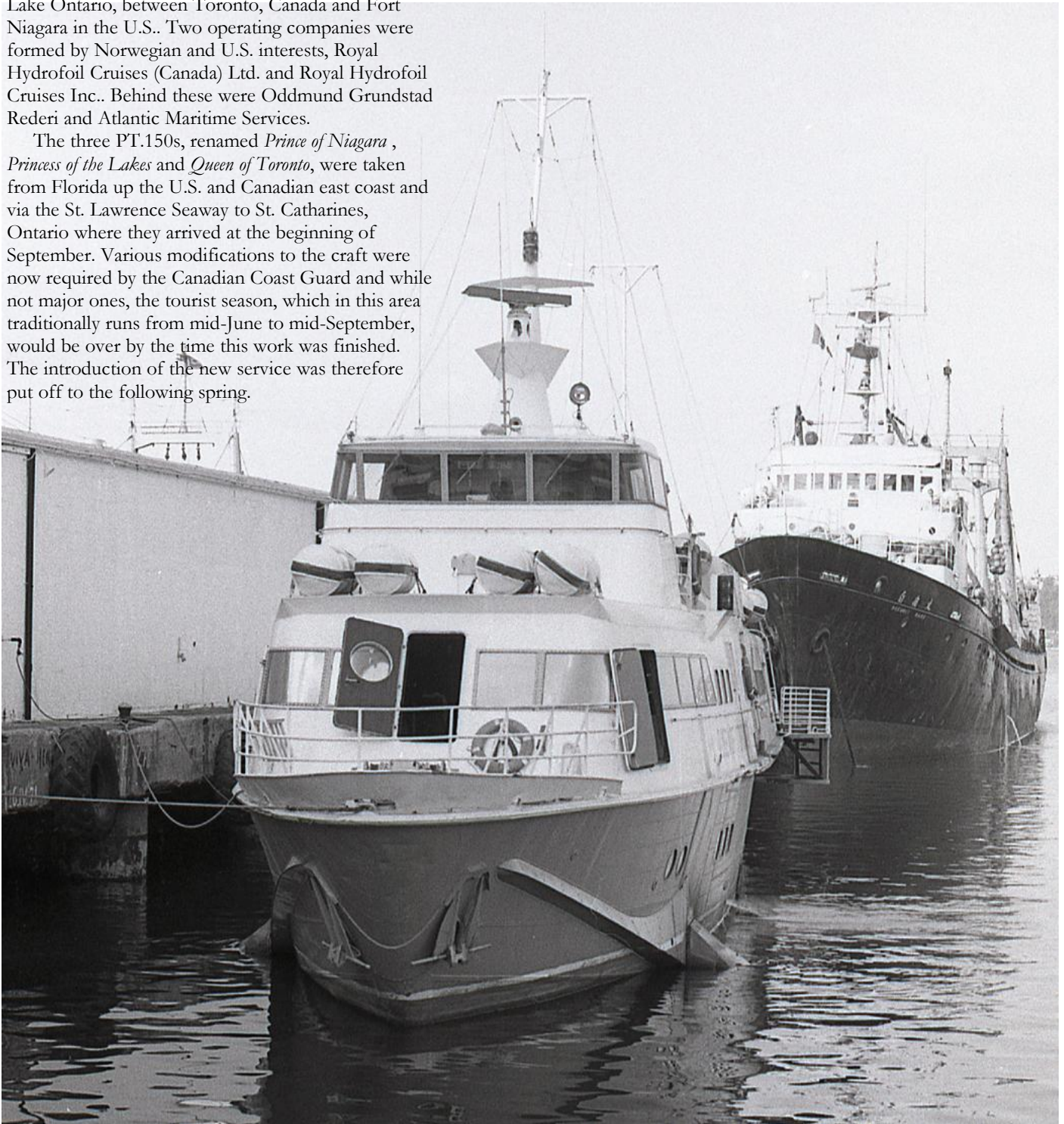
LAKE ONTARIO

The following month the vessels were transferred to Royal Hydrofoil S.A., a Panamanian corporation, which was to put the hydrofoils into service across Lake Ontario, between Toronto, Canada and Fort Niagara in the U.S.. Two operating companies were formed by Norwegian and U.S. interests, Royal Hydrofoil Cruises (Canada) Ltd. and Royal Hydrofoil Cruises Inc.. Behind these were Oddmund Grundstad Rederi and Atlantic Maritime Services.

The three PT.150s, renamed *Prince of Niagara*, *Princess of the Lakes* and *Queen of Toronto*, were taken from Florida up the U.S. and Canadian east coast and via the St. Lawrence Seaway to St. Catharines, Ontario where they arrived at the beginning of September. Various modifications to the craft were now required by the Canadian Coast Guard and while not major ones, the tourist season, which in this area traditionally runs from mid-June to mid-September, would be over by the time this work was finished. The introduction of the new service was therefore put off to the following spring.

Because of a lack of suitable facilities at Fort Niagara, prior to the 1980 season it was decided to relocate the southern destination to the Canadian side of the Niagara River and operate to Niagara-on-the-Lake instead. A bus shuttle was established between the terminal here and the famous Niagara Falls and there was also a ferry link across the River to Fort Niagara. Administration and routine maintenance was also based at Niagara-on-the-Lake, whereas lifting and overhaul of the hydrofoils was carried out at St. Catharines.

Below : *Queen of Toron* to pausing at Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada en route from Florida to Lake Ontario in 1979
/ MAC MACKAY photo





Left : Prince of Niagara idling at Toronto in 1980 / HANNE FREDERIKSEN photo

Since a foreign company, it was necessary to obtain approval by the Foreign Investment Review Agency to conduct business in Canada and by the Canadian Ministry of Shipping to engage in Canadian coastal trade. Pending these approvals, Royal Hydrofoil Cruises was however permitted to start the operation in mid-May 1980.

At first glance the timetable looked rather impressive with a hydrofoil leaving every second hour from both ends between 08:00 and midnight. A closer look revealed however that it was more complex than this. Only three services were operated daily while others only on certain days of the week. Still, a total of 77 weekly crossings were scheduled. This structure may have been hard to memorize for the prospective passenger but made planning a little bit more interesting. The midnight crossing from Niagara-on-the-Lake on Thursday–Sunday proved particularly popular. But the operating costs of this were high as either the crew had to stay overnight in Toronto or the hydrofoil had to make a non-revenue positioning trip back to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The scheduled quay to quay journey time for the 31 nautical mile distance was 1 hour 20 minutes. This included 15–20 minutes off-foil at Toronto and seven minutes at Niagara-on-the-Lake, which is close to one third of the total trip time and thus not ideal for a relatively short route such as this.

A one way adult was CDN \$20 in 1st class (upper deck saloons) and CDN \$17.50 in Tourist class. A round trip was CDN \$40 and CDN \$35, respectively. The fares were later reduced, as was the number of crossings.

Each crew consisted of a captain, co-pilot, engineer, purser and four cabin attendants.

As is usually the case with a new operation, the first season, which extended into October, was not

profitable. The service attracted good loads in July, August and September but ridership before and after this was disappointing. It was believed however that the service would be profitable once it had become more known to both tourists and locals, including commuters, not least because of the time saving and stress factors. Driving or going by bus was close to 2 hours, depending on traffic congestion, and travelling on the conventional ferry was 3–3½ hours.

Plans for the 1981 season included a revised timetable of three return crossings on Monday–Friday and four on Saturday and Sunday in May and June,



Right : Queen of Toronto
*tied up at the Toronto
terminal in 1980*
/ HANNE FREDERIKSEN
photo

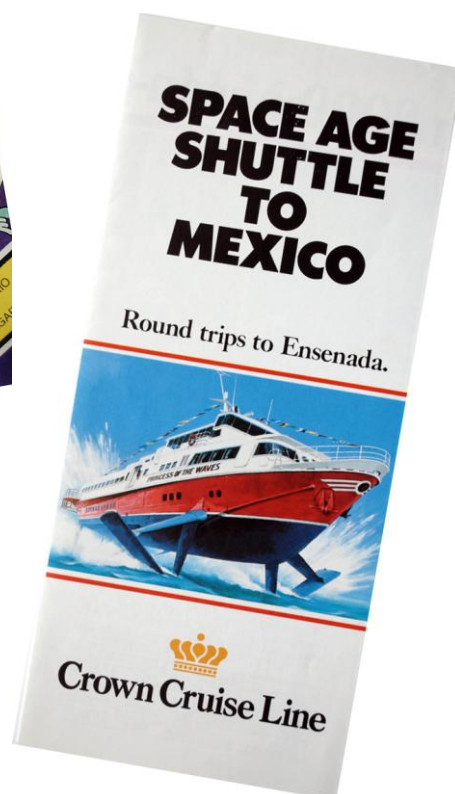
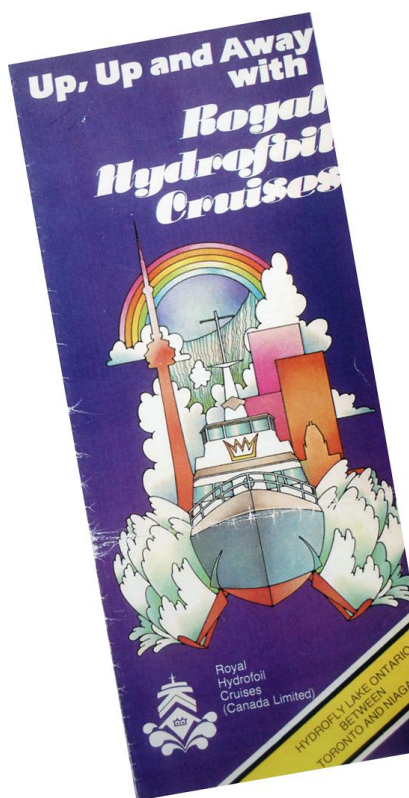


with another added on weekdays and two at weekends in July and August. Extending the route from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Rochester on the U.S. side was also being considered. It was also hoped that the authorities in Toronto would ease on the restriction of having to manoeuvre off-foil through the port to allow for, ideally, a 60-minute trip time across the Lake to make travelling on the hydrofoils an even more attractive alternative to other transportation. Especially to the commuter sector which the company was hoping to attract by offering a fast and reliable service – as well as a favourable monthly pass, much as had been the case on the Malmo–Copenhagen run. Everything indicated a healthy future for the PT.150s on Lake Ontario.

However, shortly before the start of the 1981 season the Foreign Investment Review Agency denied Royal Hydrofoil Cruises' application for doing business in Canada.

Around that time media reported on an incident where a Royal Hydrofoil Cruises employee had discovered a battery and time-trigger on some rocks next to the three hydrofoils while they were tied up at St. Catharines. On closer examination police discovered 40 sticks of dynamite being attached to the vessels. The Niagara Regional Police bomb squad spent five hours removing the dynamite and police divers checked under the hulls but found no more bombs. Police believed a timer failure had saved the hydrofoils from sinking but said they had no suspects or motive in the case at the time.

The owners subsequently decided to have the hydrofoils brought back to Port Everglades as they could offer the best facilities for storing the vessels out of the water.





CALIFORNIA – MEXICO

A year or so later the trio, still carrying their Canadian names, received a new, attractive red paint scheme on the hull and it is probably safe to assume that a new lease of life for the PT.150s was in the planning. Not a lot happened, however, until 1984.

Having been given back its former name, *Princess of the Waves* was acquired by Crown Cruise Line, a newly established cruise operator controlled by Oddmund Grundstad and based in San Diego, California. The PT.150 was towed from the east to the west coast by the cruise ship *Viking Princess*, a former Baltic ferry which had also just been bought by the company.

Initially *Princess of the Waves* operated one roundtrip from San Diego to Ensenada in Mexico on Saturday and Sunday, leaving San Diego at 09:00 and Ensenada at 17:00. Journey time was two hours. On Wednesday and Friday two two-hour sightseeing trips in and around San Diego were operated, departing at 09:00 and 14:00.



Above : The prototype PT.150 was renamed Prince of Niagara in 1979 and as such saw service on Lake Ontario for a short period of time the following year. It is seen here being laid up at Port Everglades, Florida in September 1983

Below : Princess of the Waves was transferred to California in 1984 and is seen at San Diego shortly after arrival here in August
/ GEORGE SCHNEIDER photo, both



Left : First of the PT.150s to lose its hydrofoil status was Prince of Niagara
/ LARS HELGE ISDAHL photo

Below : Having had some rather unsuccessful alterations made to the superstructure, *Crown Islander* is seen at Port Isabel, Texas as recently as in November 2011
/ GEORGE SCHNEIDER photo

A one way adult on the Mexico service was \$37.50 in Club class (lower deck saloons) and \$50 in Panorama class. Roundtrips were \$70 and \$90, respectively. Beverage and food were included in the Panorama class fares. The sightseeing trip, called Fun-Ride, was \$20 and \$25, respectively. Beverages and snacks were available on these as well but not complimentary to Panorama class passengers as on the Mexico service.

The Ensenada operation appears to have been discontinued after a while, possibly only temporarily, and instead the Fun-Rides were operated also on Saturday and Sunday. At a point these trips were cut to one hour and tickets were also halved.

Following the closure of these operations, *Princess of the Waves* was returned to Port Everglades in March 1986, where the two other PT.150s were still sitting ashore.

This would prove to be the end of the career for the PT.150s – as hydrofoils.

EX-FOILS

In late 1986 work started on *Prince of Niagara* to rebuild it into a conventional displacement vessel for use as a liveaboard yacht on up-market multi-day dive and dolphin spotting cruises out of Freeport in the Bahamas. The foils were removed and the original interiors and engines dismantled.

Renamed *Crown Diver* and sporting an all-white paint scheme, the former hydrofoil began business in 1988, initially under the Crown Cruise Line banner and later with Crown Diving Corporation. The former saloons aft on upper and lower decks, now called the Coral and Reef deck, were converted into eleven double and triple passenger cabins, all with private showers, for a total of 33 guests. The forward saloon on upper deck became a buffet style dining room and lounge, called the Coral Lounge, for guests to relax and socialize in. Also on Coral deck was a galley and a photo lab for film processing and video editing.

The lower deck forward compartment was laid out with accommodation for the crew of 7.

All décor was Miami-style art deco with pastel greens, lavenders and pinks, plush carpeting and mirrors.

Aft on Coral deck was a dive staging area with gear lockers and tank filling station. From here a stairway led to the sundeck and outside dining area and ladders to a dive platform which had been added beneath.

Similar conversions were performed on the two other PT.150s. *Princess of the Waves* became *Crown Pearl* and *Queen of Toronto* re-emerged as *Crown Islander*.

The biggest hydrofoils in the world, widely travelled but not overly utilized, were no more. **cff**

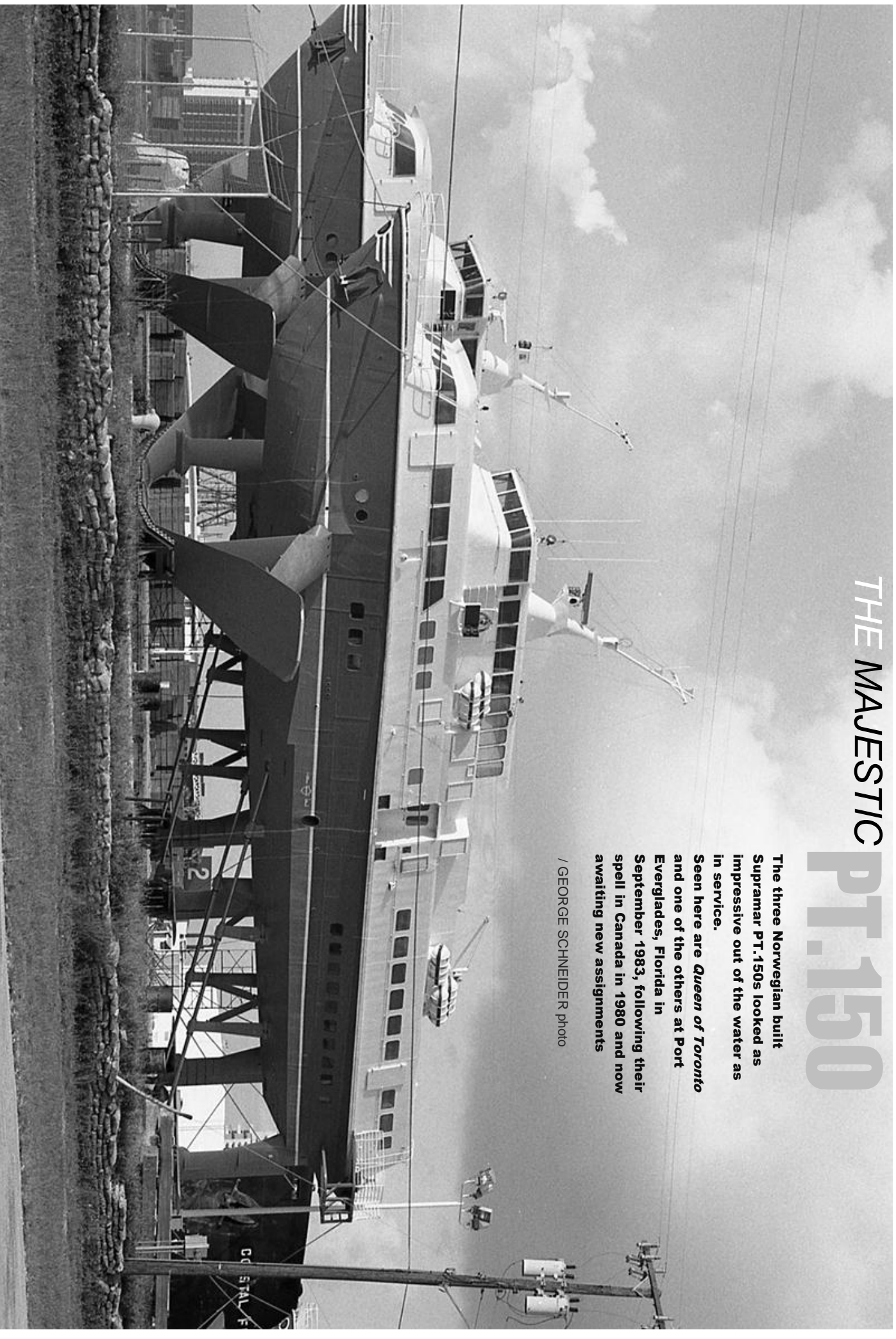


THE MAJESTIC PT.150

The three Norwegian built Supramar PT.150s looked as impressive out of the water as in service.

Seen here are *Queen of Toronto* and one of the others at Port Everglades, Florida in September 1983, following their spell in Canada in 1980 and now awaiting new assignments

/ GEORGE SCHNEIDER photo



THE MANY LIVES OF THE

PT.150

Queen of the Waves arriving at Malmö on a lovely summer's day in 1972. Read all about the many lives of the three PT.150s inside this issue

/ ALF ARVIDSSON photo

