

## SS Excambion (1948 - 1959)



The first fully air-conditioned ships in the world were the postwar Four Aces, the jewels of the fleet operated by American Export Lines. The Four Aces included *Excalibur*, *Exeter*, *Exochorda* — and *Excambion*.

In December 1947, *Queens* arrived at Bethlehem Steel's shipyard in Hoboken, New Jersey, for conversion to a combiliner that would carry both cargo and passengers. On June 22, 1948, *Queens* was renamed *Excambion*. The ship had 3 masts, 2 pairs of kingposts, 16 cargo booms (cargo would prove more lucrative than passengers). It could carry 4,400 tons of freight (362,000 cu. ft.) in five holds, and 30,000 cu. ft. of goods needing refrigeration.

On December 3, *Excambion* left on its maiden voyage as a cruise ship under command of Captain W.W. Kuhne. Fares started at \$850. On routine 6-week roundtrips, the ship carried a crew of 125 and up to 125 passengers from New York City to Mediterranean ports like Barcelona, Marseille, Naples, Beirut, Alexandria, Iskenderun, Latakia, Piraeus, Livorno, and Genoa.

By 1956, due to Mid-East violence, outbound voyages attracted only about a third of the normal number of passengers, but return voyages were packed with refugee families of American soldiers and diplomats. On December 9, 1957, *Excambion*, substituting for the Moore-McCormack ship *Brazil*, took its only non-Mediterranean voyage to South American ports.

On March 12, 1959, *Excambion* completed its last cruise as a liner. American merchant marine passenger service was being phased out because of competition from the new jet passenger service. For the next seven years, *Excambion* was laid up in the Hudson River Ready Reserve Fleet anchorage at Jones Point, New York.