

# SHELL'S ARGENTINE TANKER FLEET

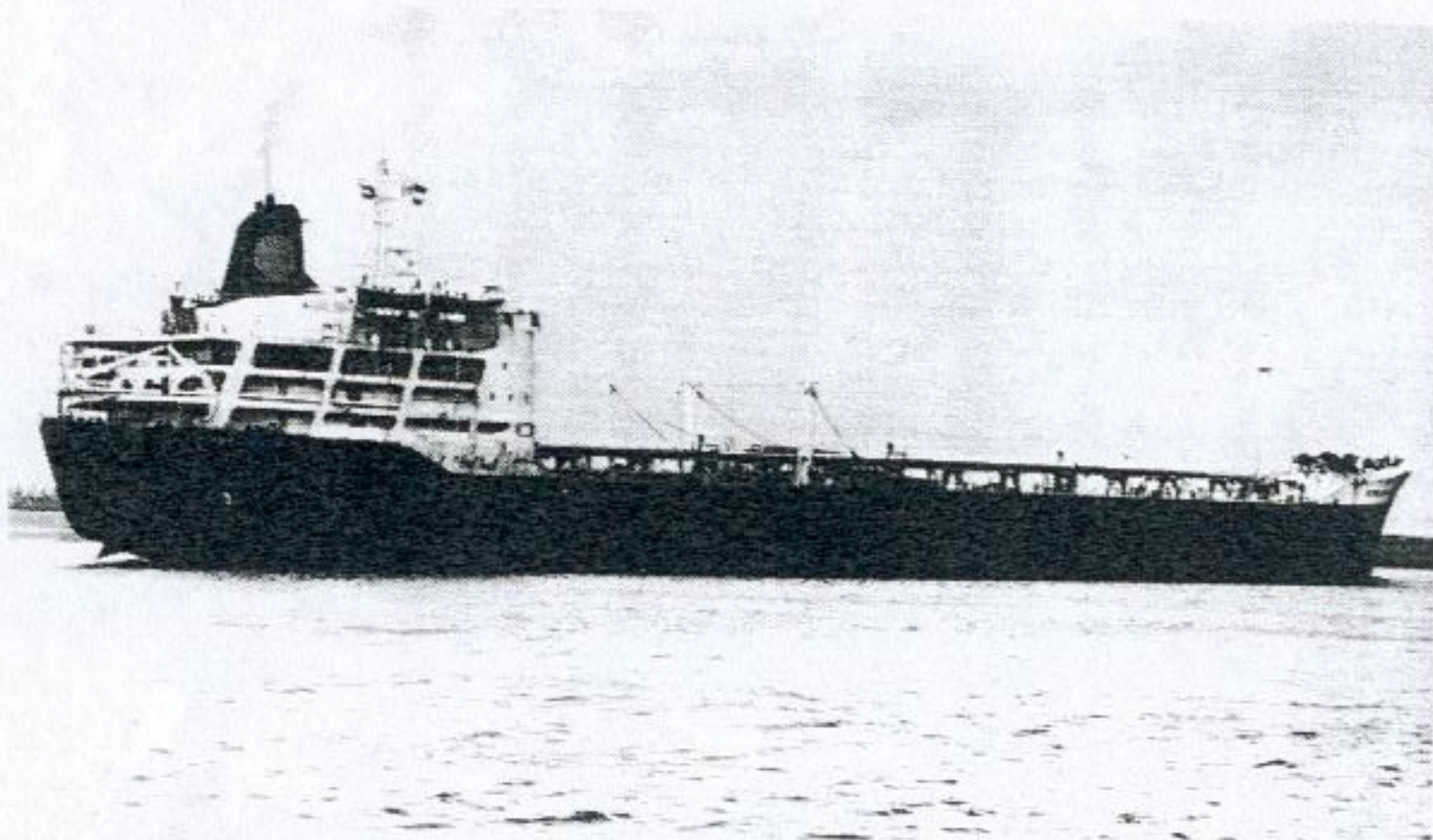
by Michael Pryce

Oil was first discovered in Argentina in 1907 by government engineers who were drilling for water in the Commodore Rivadavia area on the Patagonian coast, a bleak, windswept region short of water, so the oil strike was greeted with gloom by the local population. Argentina then was a major exporter of meat and cereals, with cheap coal providing a profitable return cargo for shipping, and petroleum was still something of a novelty among Argentine consumers, supplying less than five per cent of Argentina's energy on the eve of WW1. Products were imported by a few foreign oil companies, the largest of which was the West Indian Oil Co., a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, formed in 1902 to market throughout Latin America. In 1911, W.I.C.O. purchased control of a small local company which had a small refinery at Campana, and the refinery was expanded to produce kerosene and petrol behind the protection of a tariff wall. As a result, by 1917, W.I.C.O. supplied 95 per cent of Argentina's kerosene and 80 per cent of its petrol.

Anglo-Mexican Petroleum Products Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, became their principal competitor when its Buenos Aires office was opened in 1913, marketing products of Shell's Mexican Eagle Co. Argentina's own oil production started to grow slowly, a port and dock facilities were built at the open roadstead of Comodoro Rivadavia, and production reached 20,600 cubic metres by 1913, by which time storage tanks had been built, and a small refinery to produce fuel oil for the navy. Resentment of foreign oil companies acquiring large concessions of oil rich lands adjoining the Comodoro Rivadavia reserve resulted in the formation of YPF (Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales), the state oil company, which took control of all exploration from the early 1920's. A royalty system protected the state's rights, and some concessions of mineral rights were allowed to foreigners. Both Anglo-Persian and Shell's subsidiary Diadema Argentina acquired Patagonian oil lands during the speculative boom of the early 1920's. In 1925, YPF built a new refinery at La Plata, adjoining the port of Ensenada, at which crudeoil tankers from Patagonia could dock, and which was only 48 kilometers from the country's largest market, the metropolis of Buenos Aires. By the 1930's, Standard Oil encountered much hostility from Argentine politicians, and its production dropped sharply after 1934, so that Shell's subsidiary Diadema Argentina became the largest foreign oil producer in the country, expanding production steadily at Comodoro Rivadavia, and building a refinery at Dock Sud, Buenos Aires. "El Grupo Shell" had some small fuel lighters and tugs for use in bunkering, but to ship crudeoil from Comodoro Rivadavia to Buenos Aires, old tankers from other Group fleets were transferred to Argentine registry, owned by Estrella Maritima Soc. Anon. de Navigacion y Comercio.

The ships were renamed with Spanish patriotic theme names, thus Libertador means Liberator, Conquistador means Conqueror, Problador means Founder or Colonist, Descubridor means Discoverer, Cazador means Hunter, and Explorador means Explorer.

Estrella means Star, thus the naming of the fleet, and the company's name as Star Shipping & Nav. Co. was designed to give Shell's ultimate ownership a low profile. After WW2, and ex "Lake Maracaibo" type, SAN CLAUDIO, was transferred for river work, its shallow draft and twin screws being ideal for such work. In 1949, two new tankers were delivered to Estrella's fleet, CAZADOR and EXPLORADOR, identical to Shell's postwar "L" class. Another ex "Lake Maracaibo" type, RENATA, was transferred for river work in 1954, and the river tankers ended the "DOR" names by introducing SHELL prefixes. In 1961, three "H" class tankers were transferred to the fleet to haul crude from Patagonia, and these retained their Latin Shell names, as did the older and smaller BATISSA in 1964. In 1969, another change of policy saw ESTRELLA prefixes introduced for the ocean going tankers, starting with ESTRELLA ARGENTINA. Comodoro Rivadavia to Buenos Aires was the main route for the larger tankers, but interesting diversions took place from time to time. CONQUISTADOR took a cargo of fueloil from Buenos Aires to South Georgia for the whaling fleet in 1/1958, and CAZADOR and EXPLORADOR made several voyages to Curacao from Buenos Aires. HARVELLA made four lightenings of a total of 50,000 tonnes of crude oil from the METULA, 104,379/68, stranded in Magellan Strait between 28.8.76 and 13.9.76, discharging the salvaged oil into BERGELAND, 52,121/65. ESTRELLA PATAGONIA made several voyages from the Caribbean to Rotterdam for drydocking and survey reasons.



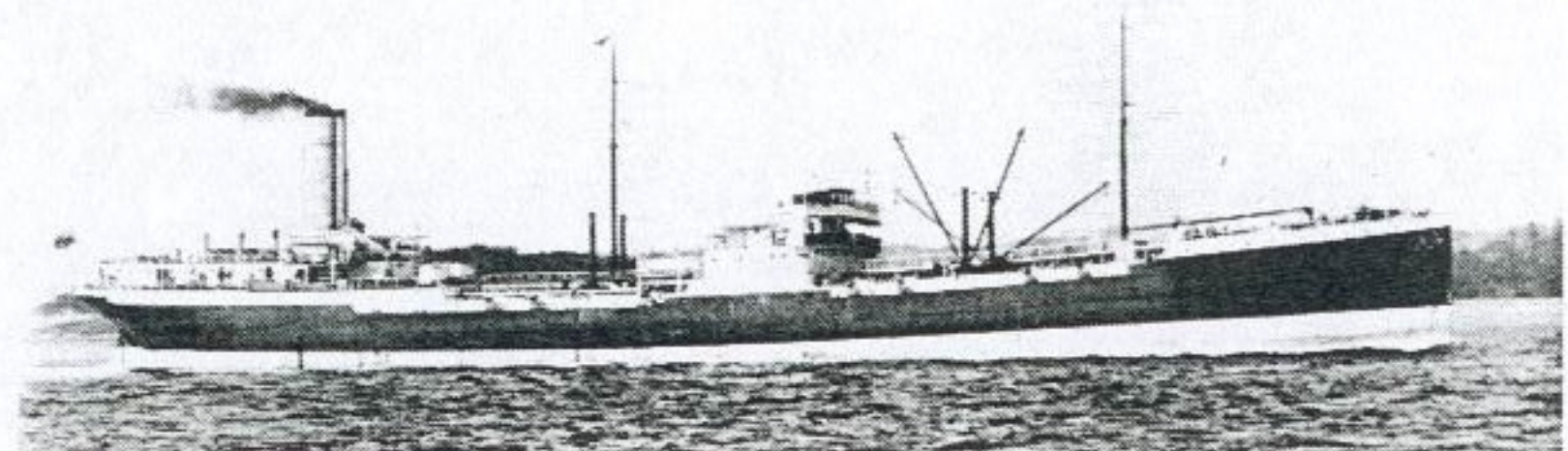
ESTRELLA PATAGONICA

V. H. Young

The smaller tankers operated up the River Parana to Rosario, 227 miles from Buenos Aires, and to Santa Fe, on the Santa Fe River, tributary of the Parana, 90 miles from Rosario. They also serviced Concerpcion de Uruguay, 182 miles from Buenos Aires, on the River Uruguay. Navigational comments from the "pilot book" for the rivers are of interest. "Detached clumps of grass and weeds, many of considerable size are continually floating down the river and are liable to foul the light buoys, which may then be capsized and their lights extinguished. Vessels lying at anchor in the rivers are recommended to keep their hawse pipes covered as a precaution against snakes crawling up the cables from these clumps when foul of the cables."

Since about 1970, Shell Companies Argentina de Petroleo SA has been the registered owners of the tanker fleet, usually abbreviated to "Shell CAPSA", and they also operate the refinery, and undertake exploration drilling. PECTEN Argentina Co. also undertakes drilling and exploration, whilst refined products are marketed by Shell-Mex (Argentina) Ltd., jointly owned by Shell and Canadian Eagle.

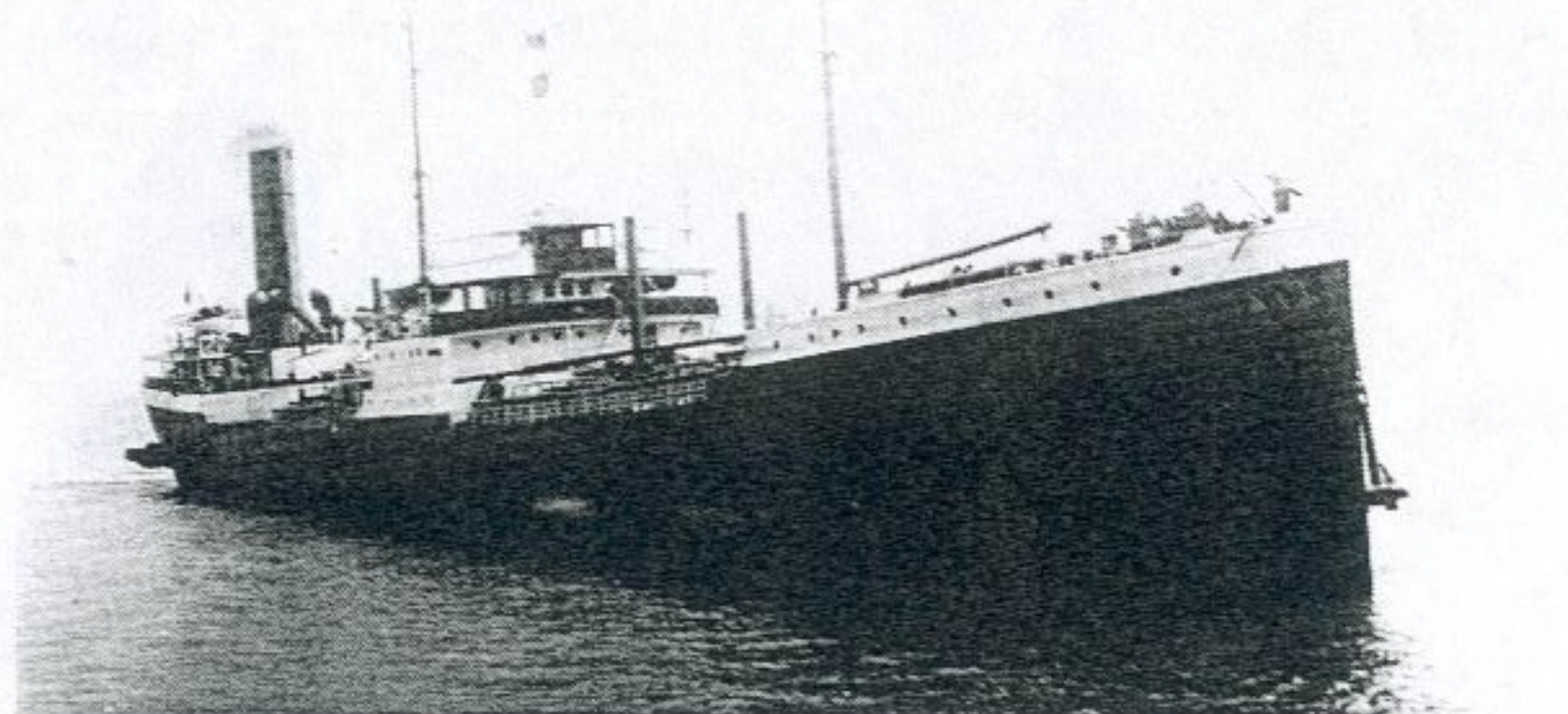
FLEET LIST



NATICA, later LIBERTADOR (II)

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- 1) LIBERTADOR (1931-1945) 5,579g, 3,494n, 7,600 dwt. 406.5' x 51.3' x 252" draft. Tr. Exp. 16.10.1912 completed as NATICA by Swan Hunter, Newcastle, for Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co., at a cost of £81,265. 1931 transferred to Argentine flag, renamed LIBERTADOR. 1935 reverted to Anglo-Saxon, reverted to NATICA, 12/1935 sold to Smith & Houston for demolition at Port Glasgow.
- 2) CONQUISTADOR (1931-1966) 5,807g, 3,310n, 7,905 dwt. 400.3' x 52.1' x 252" draft. Tr. Exp. 6.2.1922 completed as DOSINA by Caledon S.B. & Eng. Co., Dundee, for Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co., at a cost of £304,000. (Laid down for Norwegian owners as a dry cargo ship, purchased on stocks, and completed as a tanker). 1927 transferred to "La Corona", Dutch flag. 1931 transferred to Argentine flag, renamed CONQUISTADOR. 12/1937 collided with Dutch s.s. WATERLAND at Km. 10, Buenos Aires, both ships damaged. 1966 broken up at Buenos Aires.
- 3) POBLADOR (1933-1950) 3,243g, 1,660n, 7,262 dwt. 376.6' x 51.2' x 29'. Tr. Exp. 1918 completed as VALLEJO by Russell & Co., Port Glasgow. 1919 purchased by Anglo-Saxon. 1920 renamed TRIVIA. 1933 transferred to Argentine flag, renamed POBLADOR. 11/1949 sold to local breakers. 1950 broken up at Buenos Aires.
- 4) DESCRUBIDOR (1934-1935) 8,005g, 4,505n, 11,469 dwt. Motor ship, twin screw. 16.12.1929 completed as MIRZA by Atel. & Chan. de la Seine, Le Trait, for "La Corona", Dutch flag, at a cost of £151,000. 12/1934 transferred to

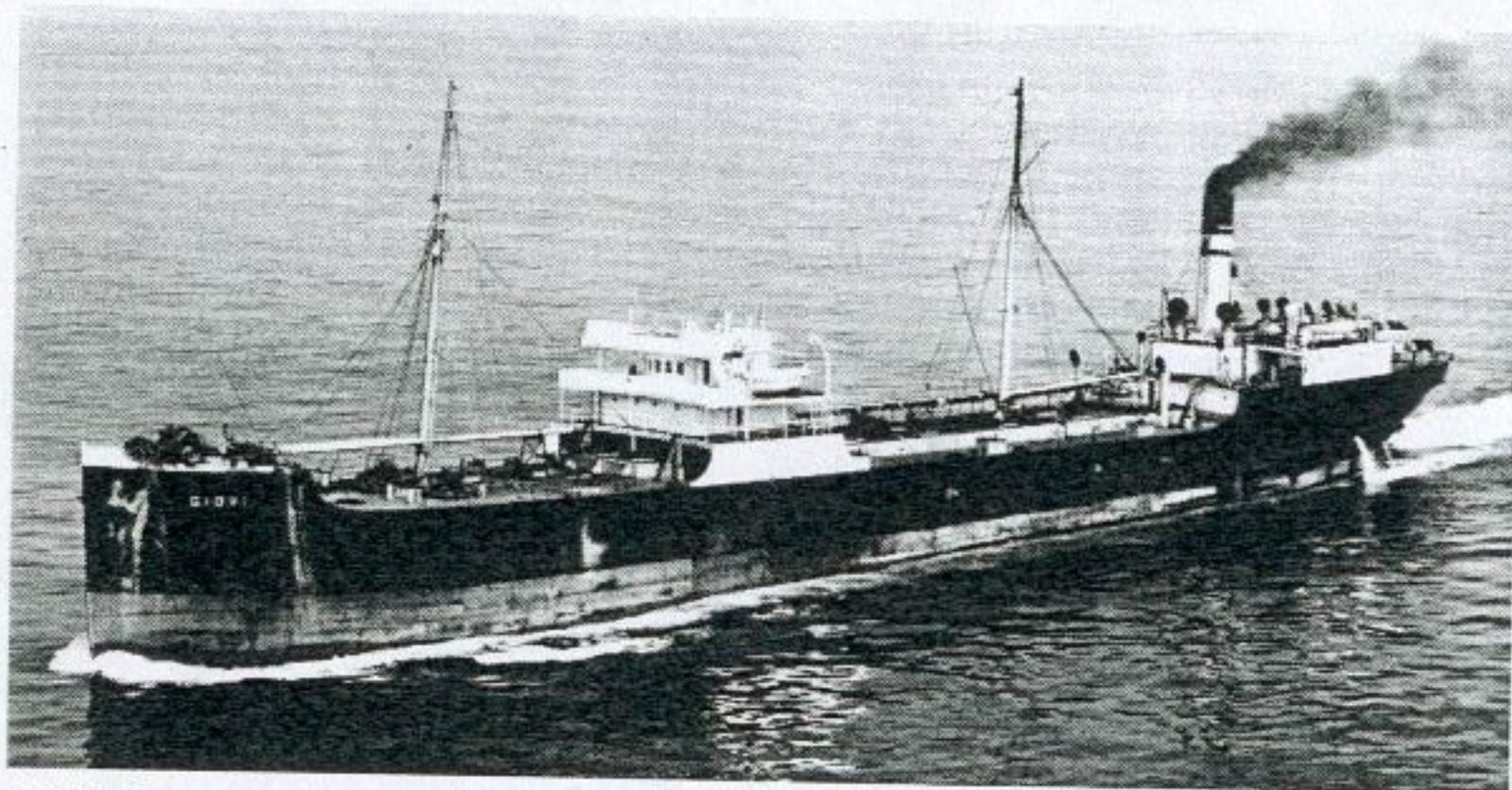


MITRA, later LIBERTADOR (III)

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Argentine flag, renamed DESCRUBIDOR. 1935 reverted to Dutch flag, reverted to MIRZA. 31/5/1957 arrived at Hong Kong for demolition.

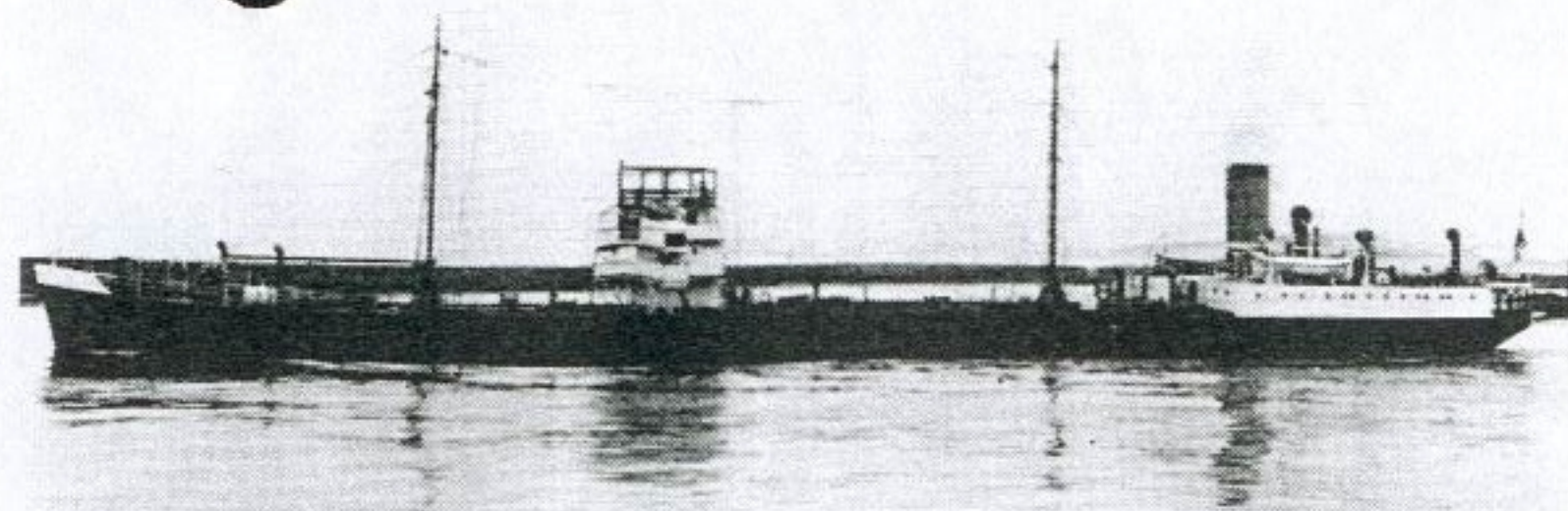
- 5) LIBERTADOR (1935-1949) 5,573g, 3,316n, 7,800 dwt. 406.5' x 51.3' x 28.9'. Tr. Exp. 26.7.1912 completed as MITRA by Swan Hunter, Newcastle, for Anglo Saxon, at a cost of £79,145. 1935 transferred to Argentine flag, renamed LIBERTADOR. 11/1949 sold to local breakers, and broken up at Buenos Aires.
- 6) DESCRUBIDOR (1947-1948) 5,225g, 3,248n, 391.1' x 51.2' x 30.2'. Tr. Exp. 1917 completed as GULFMAID by New York S.B. Corp., Camden, N.J. for Gulf Oil, U.S.A. 1947 to Argentine flag, renamed DESCRUBIDOR. 1948 sold to Fassio Soc. Anon. di Nav., Genoa, renamed GIOVI. 20/5/59 arrived at Savona, Italy, for demolition.



GIOVI, formerly DESCRUBIDOR

*Skyfotos*

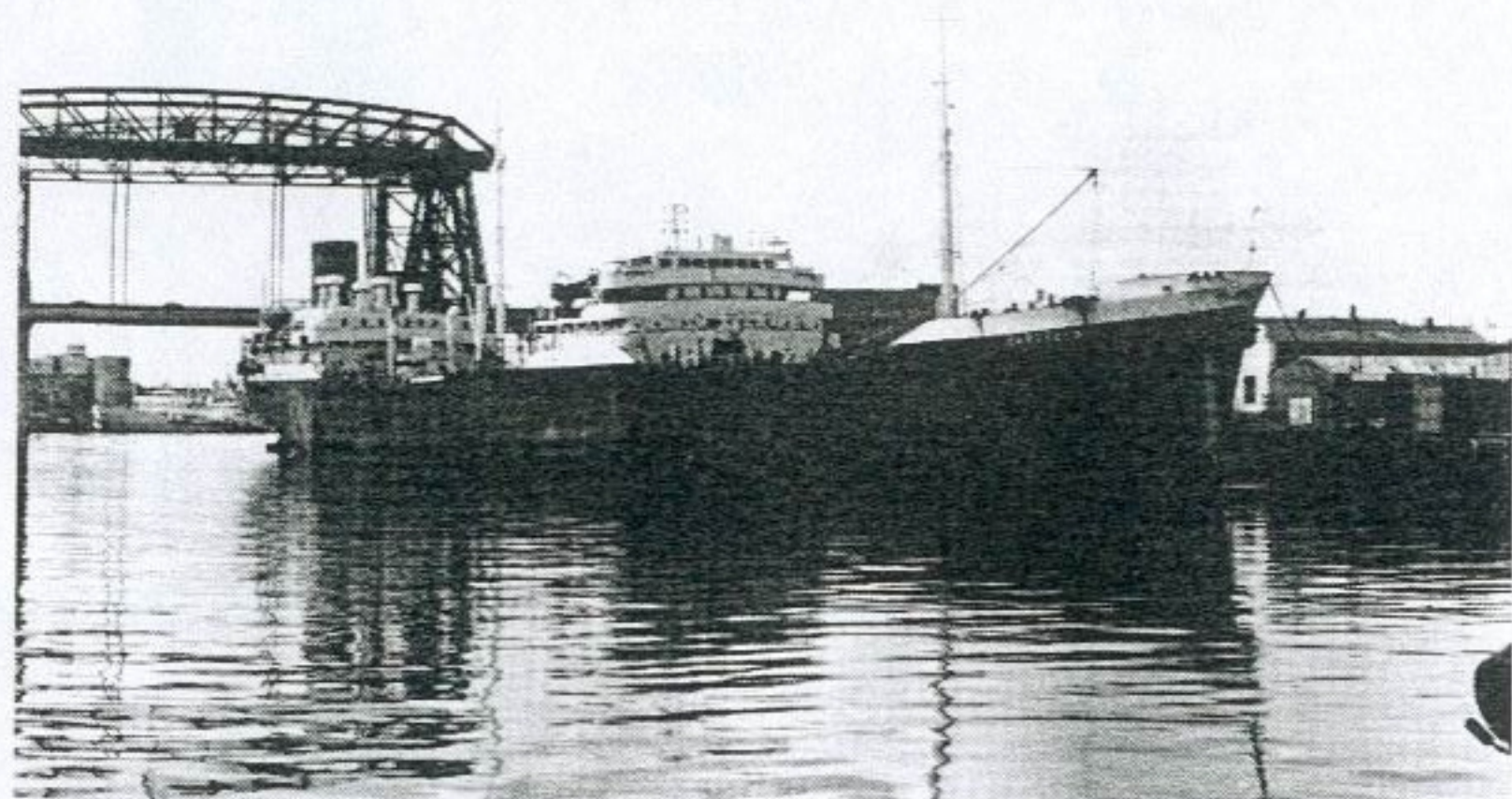
- 7) SHELLNAVE (1949-1984) 2,712g, 1,402n, 3,570 dwt. 304'10" x 51'2" x 13'7". Tr. Exp., twin screw. 1928 completed as SAN CLAUDIO by Armstrong Whitworth, Newcastle, for Eagle Oil. 1949 to Argentine flag, renamed SHELLNAVE. 2/3/1961 collided with destroyer URUGUAY, on fire and sank in shallow water. Raised, towed to Buenos Aires 8/3/1961 and repaired. 3/1984 laid up at Buenos Aires in Riachuelo River. 1985 broken up at Buenos Aires.
- 8) CAZADOR (1949-1971) 6,441g, 3,711n, 9,301 dwt. 440'10" x 54'5" x 25'7". Motor Ship. 15.6.1949 completed as CAZADOR by Harland & Wolff, Belfast for Argentine flag, at a cost of £400,000. 1971 sold to Cia. Argentina de Nav. S.A. de Nav., renamed ATRACHUBUT. 10/6/1982 arrived at Campana for demolition by A.Y.A.S.A.
- 9) EXPLORADOR (1949-1968) 6,478g, 3,743n, 9,236 dwt. 446'2" x 54'6" x 25'8". Motor Ship. 6.7.1949 completed as EXPLORADOR by Harland & Wolff, Belfast for Argentine flag, at a cost of £370,000. 18/2/1967 heavily damaged by explosion and fire at San Lorenzo, nine killed. 1/6/1968 being demolished at Buenos Aires.
- 10) SHELLPLATA (1954-1969) 3,198g, 1,839n, 3,989 dwt. 336' x 56'1" x 13'6" draft. Tr. Exp., twin screw. 24.4.1936 completed as RENATA by N.V. Nederland Scheeps. Maats, Amsterdam, for Curacoasche Scheep. Maats at a cost of £78,000. 1954 transferred to Argentine flag and renamed SHELLPLATA. 1969 sold to Toba S.A.M.C.A., Argentina, renamed TOBA CENTAURO. 1982 sold to Lunmar Nav. S.A., Argentina, renamed MAR BRAVO. Still listed in 1992 L.R.
- 11) KALINGA (1961-1975) 12,144g, 6,936n, 18,012 dwt. 555'7" x 69'5" x 29'9". draft. Steam turbines. 1953 completed as HEMIDONAX by Cammell Laird & Co., Birkenhead, for Shell Bermuda (Overseas) Ltd. 1955 transferred to Argentine flag, same name. 1971 limited to River Plate service, lightening oil from deep draft tankers off Buenos Aires. 1975 sold to MEN S.A. and scrapped for A.Y.A.S.A. 11/1975 demolition began at Campana.



RENATA, later SHELLPLATA

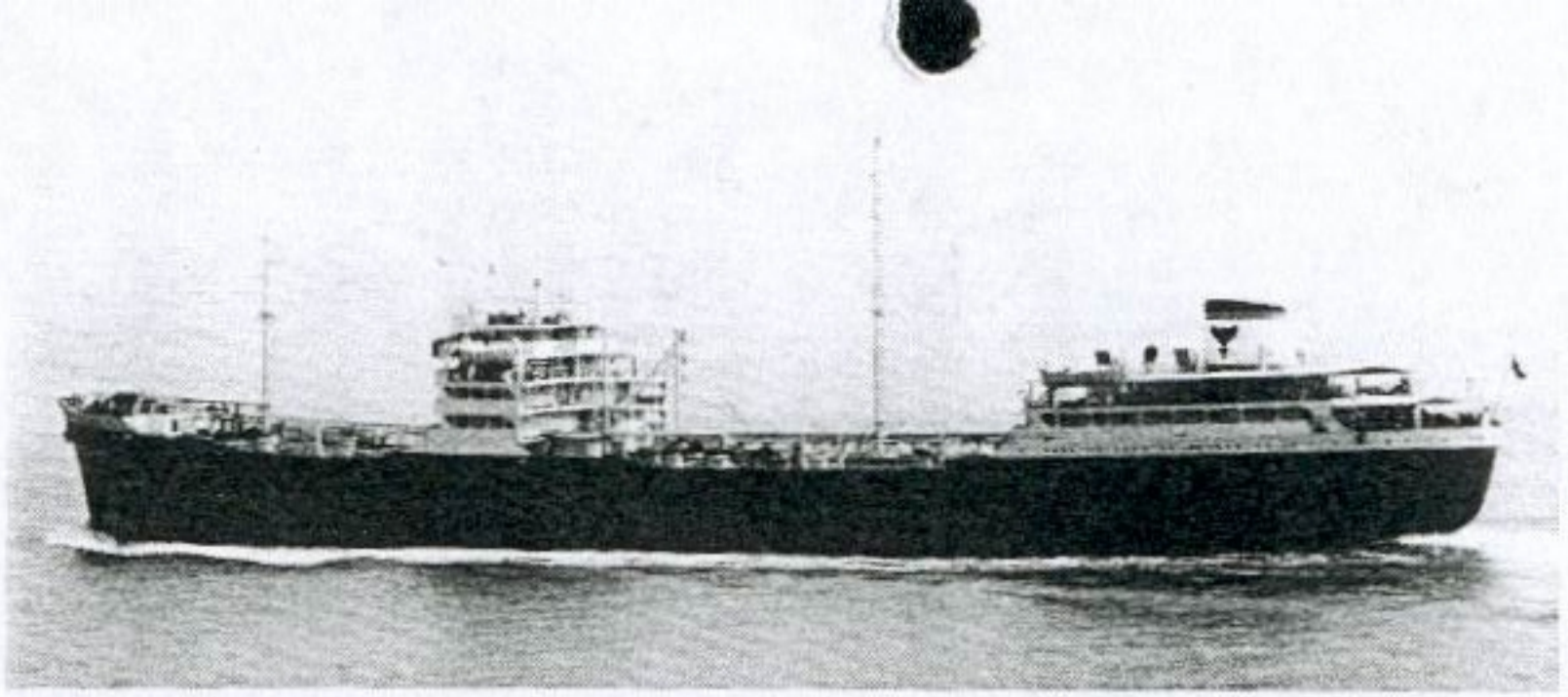
*M. H. Pryce collection*

- 12) KELLIA (1961-1972) 12,127g, 6,935n, 18,009 dwt. 555'8" x 69'6" x 29'9". draft. Steam turbines. 1953 completed as HARPA by Harland & Wolff, Belfast, for Shell Bermuda (Overseas) Ltd. 1955 transferred to "La Corona", Dutch flag renamed KELLIA. 1961 transferred to Argentina flag, same name. 5/1970 laid up, surveys overdue. 1972 sold to Cimba S.A., Argentina, renamed FABIANA, for service between San Lorenzo and Bahia Blanca. 1975 broken up by A.Y.A.S.A. at Zarate (province of Buenos Aires).
- 13) HARVELLA (1961-1984) 12,224g, 6,981n, 18,989 dwt. 555'9" x 69'5" x 28'7". Steam turbines. 1956 completed as HARVELLA by Harland & Wolff, Belfast, for Shell Bermuda (Overseas) Ltd. 1961 transferred to Argentine flag, same name. 1972 in service as lightening tanker off Buenos Aires. 8/1974-9/1974 assisted in lightening and salvage of grounded V.L.C.C. METULA (104,379/68) in Magellan Straits. 10.1984 sold to Borpoma S.R.S., and scrapped by ACINDAR at Villa Constitucion (province of Santa Fe).
- 14) SHELLGUARANI (1963-1975) 61,750g, 1,600n, 1,780 dwt. 295.8' x 50.7' x 11.2'. Motor ship, twin screw. 1963 completed as SHELLGUARANI by Ast. Argentinos Rio de la Plata S.A., Tigre, San Fernando, for Argentine flag. First Shell ship built in Argentina. River tanker designed to work in the upper reaches of Rivers Parana and Uruguay. Still listed in 1992 L.R.
- 15) BATISSA (1964-1977) 3,738g, 2,003n, 5,183 dwt. 357'6" x 48'4" x 21'11". Motor ship 15.2.1944 completed as EMPIRE RUSSELL BY Sir J. Laing & Sons Ltd., Sunderland. 1946 purchased by Anglo-Saxon, renamed BATISSA. 1964 whilst laid up in River Blackwater, transferred to Argentine flag, same name, for service in River Parana. 1/6/1970 heavily damaged by fire and collision with tanker ITALMOTOR (17,174/53) in River Parana, o.v. Rosario to Buenos Aires. Laid up in River Parana. Sold to be broken up in 1975, but was still laid up 15/12/1977, believed broken up by Argentine breakers during 1978.



HARVELLA laid up in Argentina

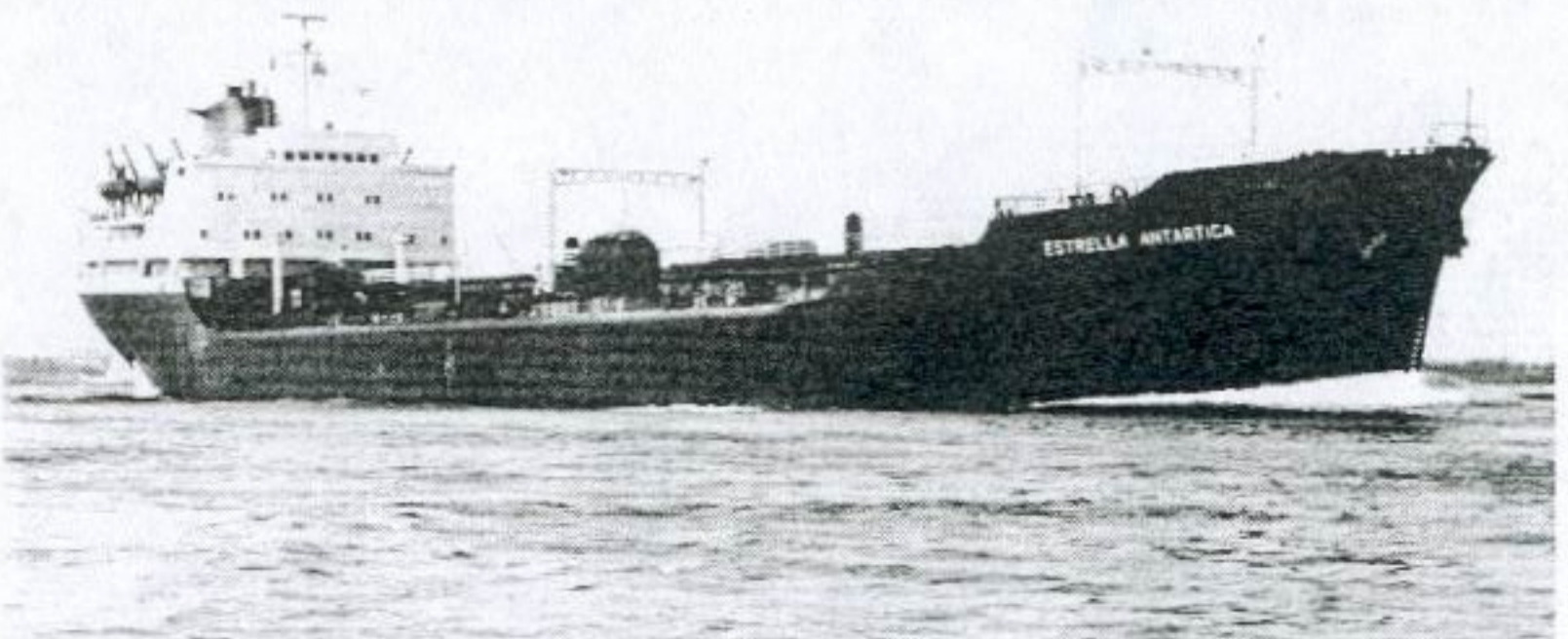
*W. Plokker*



**SAN PATRICIO, later PECTEN**

*Alex Duncan*

- 16) PECTEN (1965-1986) 10,711g, 6,081n, 16,649 dwt. 525'1" x 67'10" x 29'1". Motor ship. 1955 completed as SAN PATRICIO by Furness S.B.Co., Haverton Hill, for Eagle Oil. 1959 to Shell Tankers Ltd., same name. 1965 transferred to Argentine flag, renamed PECTEN. In service as lightening tanker off Buenos Aires 8/12/1986 being demolished at Porto Alegre, Brasil.
- 17) ESTRELLA ARGENTINA (1969-1973) 22,083g, 11,418n, 33,214 dwt. 665'1" x 85'3" x 34'5". Steam turbines. 1960 completed as VIDENA by N.V. Wilton Fijenoord, Schiedam, for Shell Tankers N.V. 1969 transferred to Argentine flag, renamed ESTRELLA ARGENTINA. 1983 sold to Corporacion Argentina de Provision de Aceros, for demolition at Tandanor, demolition commenced 4/1983.
- 18) ESTRELLA PATAGONICA (1970-1989) 24,406g, 12,848n, 38,497 dwt. 664'10" x 90' x 34'7". Steam turbines. 1962 completed as VOLUTA by Furness S.B.Co. Ltd., Haverton Hill, for Shell Tankers Ltd. (Was originally to have been named SAN CASMIRO for Eagle Oil). 1970 transferred to Argentine flag, renamed ESTRELLA PATAGONIA. 1989: sold for scrapping in India and left Buenos Aires in 3/89 as ESTREL bound for Alang.
- 19) ESTRELLA DEL PLATA (1971- ) 2,484g, 1,848n, 4,675 dwt. 356'7" x 62' x 13'11". Motorship. 8/1971 completed by Ast. Argentina Astarsa, Tigre, Buenos Aires, for Argentine flag. River tanker for service on Rivers Plate, Parana, Uruguay. Still listed 1992 L.R.
- 20) ESTRELLA FUEGUINA (1978- ) 12,780g, 7,379n, 21,469 dwt. 170.0 x 22.0 x 9.7 metres. Motorship. 1962 completed as POLYSTAR by Eriksberg BV/AB, Gothenburg, for Elnar Rasmussen, Norway. 1978 purchased for \$1.5 million for Argentine flag, renamed ESTRELLA FUEGUINA. 1989: Sold, renamed FUEGUINA, 1990: Resold to Cob Hill Navigation Ltd., Liberia and renamed CAROLINE COB. Still listed in 1992 L.R.



**ESTRELLA ANTARCTICA**

*J. K. Byass*

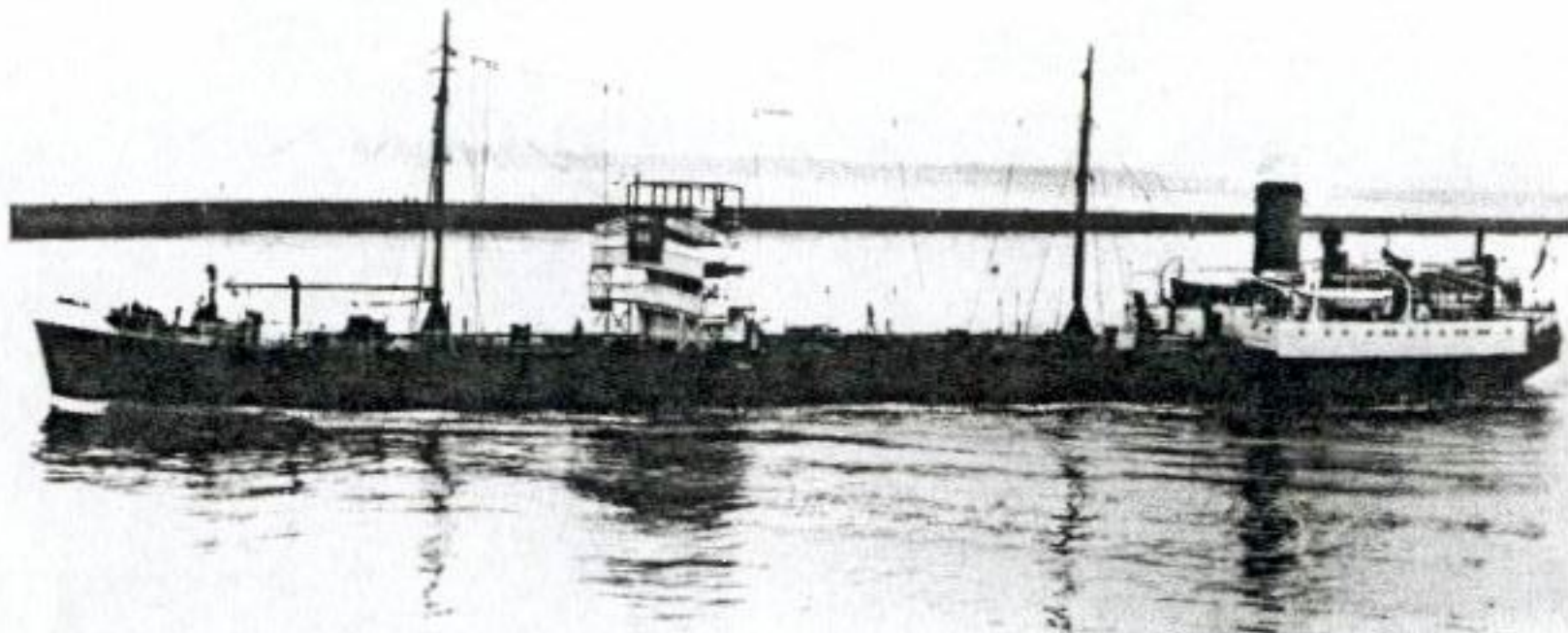
- 21) ESTRELLA ANTARTICA (1979- ) 12,978g, 7,486n, 20,991 dwt. 169.8×21.9×9.7 metres. Motorship. 1/1962 completed as LANDVARD by A/S Akers M/V, Oslo, for Klosters Red. A/S Norway. 1969 sold to Vaboens R/A & Vaboens Shg. A/S Norway, renamed HERSTEIN. 1977 sold to Sea Warden Corp., Greece, renamed FLEET TRADER. 1979 purchased for \$1.5 million for Argentine flag, renamed ESTRELLA ANTARTICA. Still listed 1992 L.R.
- 22) ESTRELLA DEL ALBA (1980- ) 647g, 311n, 1,056 dwt. 58.9×10.7×2.95 metres. Motor ship. 11/1967 completed as PERSO by Appledore Shipbuilders Ltd., Appledore, for Shell-Mex & B.P. Ltd. 1/1980 sold to Argentine flag, renamed ESTRELLA DEL ALBA for service in River Plate. Listed owner in 1992 Agencia Mar. Challaco S.r.L. Still listed in 1992 L.R.
- 23) ESTRELLA DEL PARANA (1981- ) 2,699g, 1,720n, 4,951 dwt. 109.81×19.59×4.25 metres. Motorship. 9/1981 completed by Ast. Principe Menghi, Avallanede, Buenos Aires, for Argentine flag, for service in River Plate. Still listed in 1992 L.R.
- 24) ESTRELLA AUSTRAL (1989- ) 28,259g, 12,487n, 45,718 dwt. 197.03×32.24×10.92 metres. Motorship. 1984 completed as FEOSO AMBASSADOR 2 by Kasado Dock Co. Ltd., Kudamatsu, for Far East Oil Tanker S.A., Panama managed by Feoso Oil Ltd., Hong Kong. 9/1988 purchased for \$18.8 million by Shell Group for Argentine flag, renamed ESTRELLA AUSTRAL. Still listed in 1992 L.R.

## RENATA — An Old Shell Tanker in Argentina

by Michael Pryce

The trunk-deck steam tanker RENATA was completed as Yard No. 241 by Nederlandsche Dok & Scheepsbouw Mij., N.V., Amsterdam, on 24/4/1936 for Curacaosche Scheepvaart Mij., part of the Royal Dutch Shell group. Ship details were: 2,265 gross, 1,817 net, 3,989 tons dwt. Length overall 106.18 metres, beam 17.10 metres and draft 4.50 metres. Twin-screw triple expansion engines gave a service speed of 11.5 knots. Two cargo pumps each had a capacity of 370 tons per hour, and cargo was carried in 6 centre tanks and 4 sets of port & starboard wing tanks. Accommodation for a total of 41 crew was fitted.

The tanker was one of a class of ten "R"-class tankers built to carry crude oil from the oilfields of Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela, to the Shell refinery on the Netherlands Antilles island of Curacao. The other tankers of the class were ROSA (1935), RITA (1935), RAMONA (1936), RODAS (1937), ROSAURA (1937), RUFINA



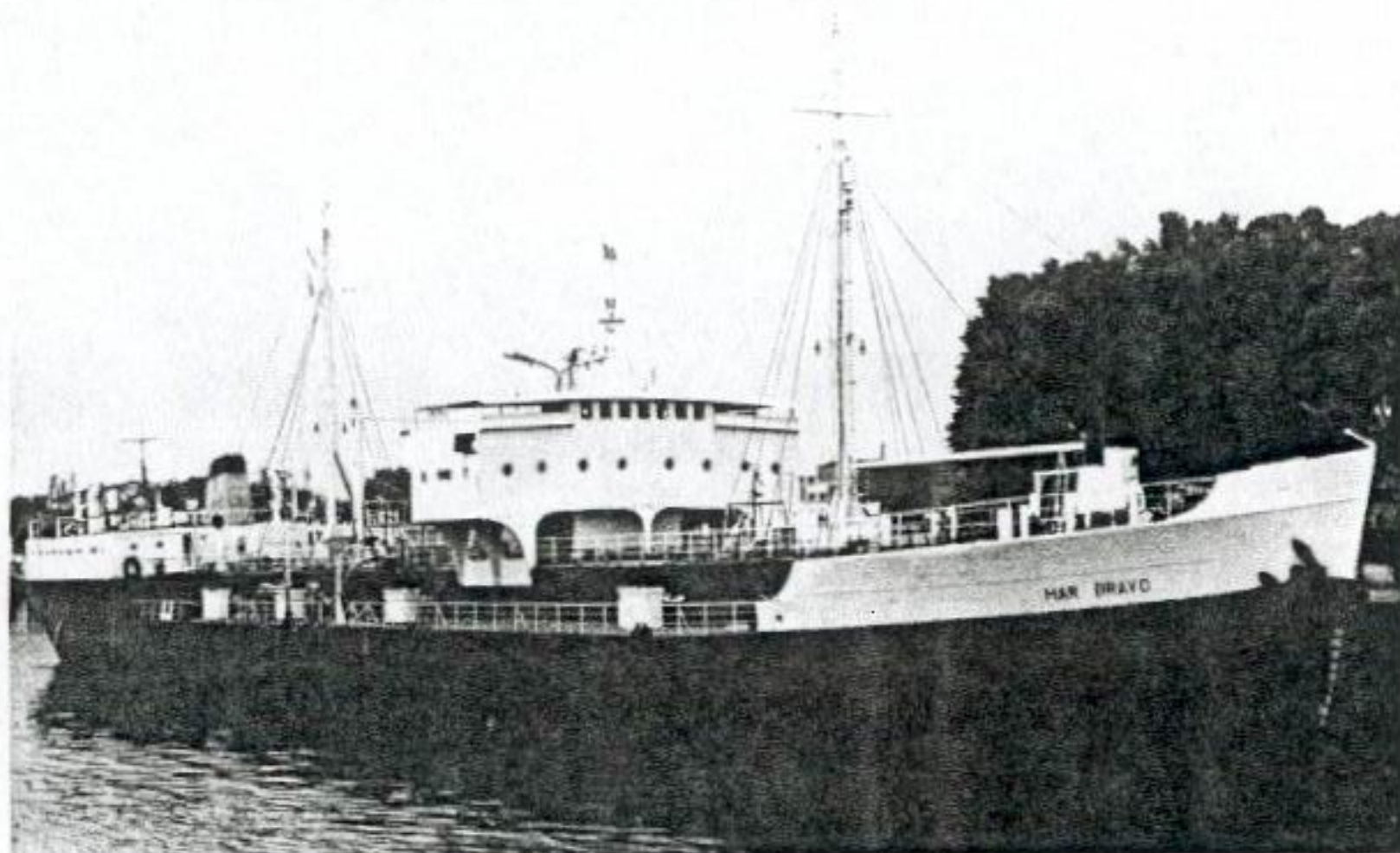
RENATA as built

*M.C. Craandijk*

(1937), REBECA (1938), RAFAELA (1938), and ROSALIA (1938), all completed by Dutch yards, except for the British-built REBECA, RAFAELA and ROSALIA.

During the mid-1950's, dredging of the bar into Lake Maracaibo allowed larger tankers to be used, and some of the older tankers were re-deployed for uses elsewhere in the Shell group. In 1954, RENATA was transferred to Cia. de Navegacion Shell S.A., and renamed SHELLPLATA, for trading in the River Plate area. In 1961 the company was restyled Estrella Maritima S.A. de Navegacion y Comercio., but both were Royal Dutch/Shell group companies.

In 1969 she was sold to Trans-Ona S.A., Argentina, and in 1970 was renamed TOBA CENTAURO, with the company restyled as Toba S.A. in 1972. In 1982 she was sold to Lunmar Naviera S.A.C., and renamed MAR BRAVO, with revised tonnages of 1,839 net and 4,053 tonnes dwt.



MAR BRAVO at Dock Sud, Argentina, 11/12/94

*G. C. Berger*

During 1988 the tanker was re-engined with two Caterpillar oil engines, after which she was of 4,476 tonnes dwt. At the same time, a new funnel was fitted, and new streamlined bridge amidships fitted. In 1991, she was transferred to Petro Tank S.A., Argentina. Her longevity can probably be partly attributed to spending a large part of her trading career in fresh-water areas, which reduced corrosion of her hull.