

Chip Seng Co. Ltd (est. 1958)

Chip Seng Shipping Co. Ltd (CSC), Singapore
Chip Nam Co. Ltd, Hong Kong (1960)
Venders Nav. Co. Ltd (VNC), Hong Kong (1963)
Triple Nav. Co. (Panama) S.A., Panama (1963)
Tasanee Nav. Co. Inc., Panama (1964)
An Lee Nav. Co. Pte Ltd, Singapore (1972)
Fides Maritime Pte. Ltd, Singapore (1972)
Integrity Corp. S.A., Panama (1975)
Fides Corp. S.A., Panama (1976)
Kai Fa Nav. Co. S.A., Panama (1977)
Producer Corp. S.A., Panama (1977)

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Introduction

Chip Seng was a shipping and trading company founded about 1958 by Wee Mon-Cheng (b. 1913), who had arrived in Singapore in 1936 as an economics graduate from Amoy University to take up a teaching appointment, then become a journalist (ST, 25/2/65). Postwar he became a shipping clerk and rose to Assistant General Manager of Chip Hwa Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd (45 Telok Ayer Street), whose stronghold was the rice trade between Burma and the Straits [see oldchinaships.org/Singapore]. Having gained experience and accumulated some capital, in 1958 he set up his own firm a few doors along on the 1st floor of the Hok Tek Building at 63A Telok Ayer Street (ST, 30/1/81).

In the 1964 *Straits Times Directory*, Chip Seng & Co. listed as 'Importers, Exporters and Commission Agents, Shipping Agents and Shipbrokers. Chairman was (Mrs) Kuah Leong Bee, Managing Director Wee Mon-Cheng, Import Manager Tan Bak Sai, Secretary Koh Kay Teck, and head of the Shipping Department Tan Hock Chin. The cable address was 'FAITH'.

By 1961 Wee was so well regarded that he was asked to become Business Adviser to the Chartered Bank and in November of the following year set up Wee & Co. Ltd as moneylenders, bank advisors and guarantors (ST, 27/11/62). By 1965 he was chairman of a mosquito coil manufacturer (ST, 17/4/65), in 1966 director of a new chocolate factory (ST, 29/1/66) and in February 1967 of Hong Leong Finance Ltd (ST, 22/2/67).

Meanwhile Chip Seng acted as local agents for Dowa Line, U. Manju Line and New Taiwan Navigation, from 1969 also Oyama Line, Golden Buffalo Lines (E. & S. Africa) and Tohto Line (Persian Gulf). Ta Sin Navigation Co. Ltd were counterpart agents in Hong Kong for these and other Japanese and Taiwanese lines.

Wee Mon-Cheng went on to be appointed Singapore's Ambassador to Japan from mid-1973 to 1980, from 1979 also jointly ambassador to the Republic of Korea. In late 1980 he returned to Singapore to become Senior Advisor to the Chartered Bank and resume his business and philanthropic activities, also being appointed Chairman of the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, though his reputation would be damaged by charges of tax evasion and an eventual \$2 million penalty (BT, 13/3/84).

Shipowning

Chip Seng's first known shipowning venture was the purchase in mid-1960 of the former James Nourse tramp *Johilla* (1937), which was registered to Hong Kong affiliate Chip Nam Co. Ltd as *Singapore Pearl*. She was then deployed in the rice trades from Rangoon and Bangkok to the Straits and Indonesia, latterly under the Panamanian flag as *Sentosa*.

On 8 June 1963 Venders Navigation Co. Ltd was registered in Hong Kong with a modest capital of HK\$100,000 held by local merchants Loke Mun Chong (600), Chien Kiang (200) and Ying Shu Yung (200). Venders in turn linked to flag-of-convenience owners Venders Navigation Corp. (Liberia) Ltd and Triple Nav. Co. (Panama) S.A., all listed as c/- Chip Seng Co. in Singapore. Triple Nav. acquired the 2144-grt Norwegian-flag China coaster *Mui Hock* (1936), which as Venders was chartered for operation in Indonesia, at least until 1965.

On 7 September 1967 Triple Nav. took delivery at Hong Kong of the RIL passenger-cargo vessel *Keerkring* ex *Van Riemsdijk* (1948), which was re-registered in Panama as *Venice* and chartered to Indonesia's state-owned interisland operator Pelni for express passenger service over much the same route that she had operated for the KPM until the end of 1957. In May 1972 she completed almost five years on charter to Pelni and was sold to Joint Maritime Co. Ltd of Hong Kong to become *Hero* and join her older half-sister *Hysan* ex *Maetsuycker* (1937) in the cattle trade between Java and Hong Kong.

The last ships owned by Wee/Chip Seng through Fides Corporation Pte Ltd in Singapore were four Japanese cargoliners, all given names prefixed by 'Fides' or 'Faith' (also the firm's cable address). The 7586-dwt *Fides Orient* ex *Yamaasa Maru* '75 (1958) and 11,516-dwt *Fides Venture* ex *Gloria Maru* '76 (1958) were both delivered to Taiwan breakers in early September 1979, followed a year later by the 10,618-dwt *Fides Progress* ex *Bolivia Maru* '77 (1960), marking the end of a 20-year shipowning venture that never moved beyond secondhand conventional tonnage.

Sources

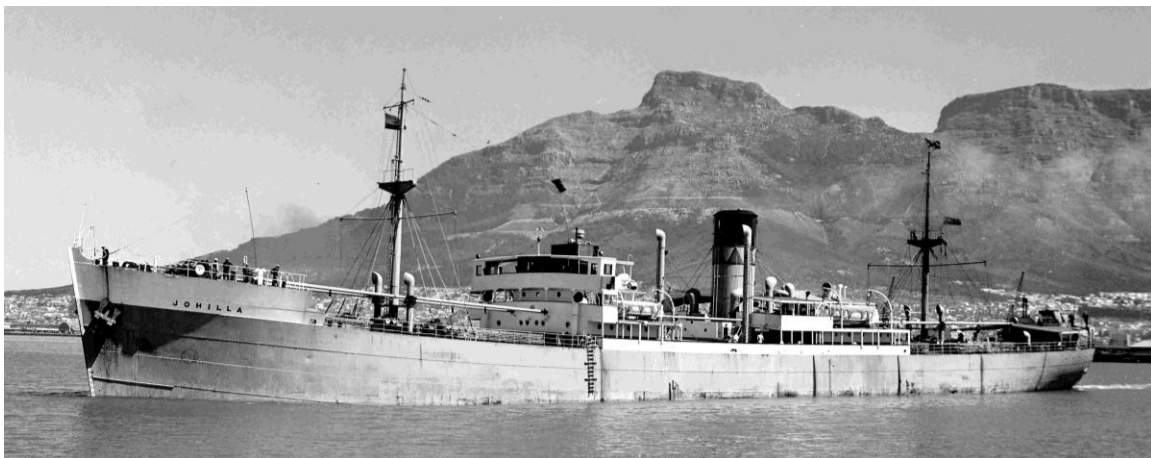
The prime source on Wee Mon-Cheng and his activities are Singapore newspapers, notably *Straits Times* and *Business Times* at <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/digitised>, also the 1964 *Straits Times Directory*, company records from the HKSAR Companies Registry at <https://www.e-services.cr.gov.hk>, and the *South China Morning Post* online through Proquest. Details of ship registrations and movements is drawn from *Lloyd's Register*, *Lloyd's Shipping Index*, the annual Schell registers/Miramar (www.miramarshipindex.nz), and the short history of Chip Hwa Shipping & Trading at www.oldchinaships.org.

I thank Malcolm Cranfield, Russell Priest/Nautical Association of Australia, and Bill Schell for their ready assistance with photographs.

Fleet List

SINGAPORE PEARL (1960-62) 4057 (7520)/37-2 (395.5 x 52.9', T3cy + LPT/11k)

Built by Barclay, Curle & Co. Ltd, Glasgow for James Nourse Ltd, London as JOHILLA. Mid-1960 sold to Chip Nam Co. Ltd. (Chip Seng Co. Ltd), Hong Kong r. SINGAPORE PEARL. 9/62 t/f to Cia. de Nav. Darien, S.A., Panama r. SENTOSA. 1/64 sold to Hongkong Shg Co. (Panama) Ltd (South East Asia Shg & Tdg Co. Ltd/George Zee, Hong Kong), Panama r. DOREEN. 1968 sold to Holly Nav. Co. S.A. (China Pacific Nav. Co. Ltd, Hong Kong), Panama r. PRIMAL VENTURE. 9/68 broken up at Hong Kong by Mollers' Ltd.



SINGAPORE PEARL as James Nourse's JOHILLA leaving Cape Town, November 1955 (J.K. de Vries/NAA).



Chip Seng's SINGAPORE PEARL ex JOHILLA at Singapore, c.1961, still with London registry (R. Gabriel).

SENTOSA (1962-64) 4057/37 see SINGAPORE PEARL (1960-62)

LA TRINIDAD (1963-64) 1200 (1439)/25-9 (225.0 x 34.0', M6cy/10k B&11

Ordered from Burmeister & Wain, Copenhagen (#318) but contracted out to Svendborg Skibs & Msk, Svendborg (#31) and completed for Adelaide S.S. Co. Ltd, Adelaide for South Australian Gulfs trade as MULCRA (reg. Melbourne). Postwar Port Adelaide-Melbourne trade. 17/8/61 stem/plate damage from striking wharf at Osborne, Adelaide River, docked for repair and inspection prior to sale and 9/61 del. to San Raimundo Cia Naviera S.A. (Lanena Shg Co. Ltd/Ty Engan, Hong Kong), Panama r. LA TRINIDAD, sd to Yokohama for refit, thence via Moji (1050t cement) to Hong Kong (7/11) and placed in HK-Phnom Penh cattle trade. 1963 sold to Tiong Lam Hang Shg Co. S.A., Panama. 1963 sold to Cia. de Nav. Darien, S.A., Panama. 6/64 t/f to Tasanee Nav. Co. Inc. (CSC), Panama r. TASANEE. By 12/70 o/c (in course of sale?) to Ngoh Hong Hang Pte Ltd, Singapore for Singapore-Phnom-Penh trade. 3/72 sold to Ngoh Hong Hang Pte Ltd, Singapore (reg. Panama) r. ANDES. 1973 t/f to Veng-An Shg Co. S.A., Panama (same trade) r. VENG AN. 21/11/76 arr. Jurong for demolition.



Motorship LA TRINIDAD ex MULCRA (1925) off Belawan, 25 August 1963 (Dr. George Wilson).



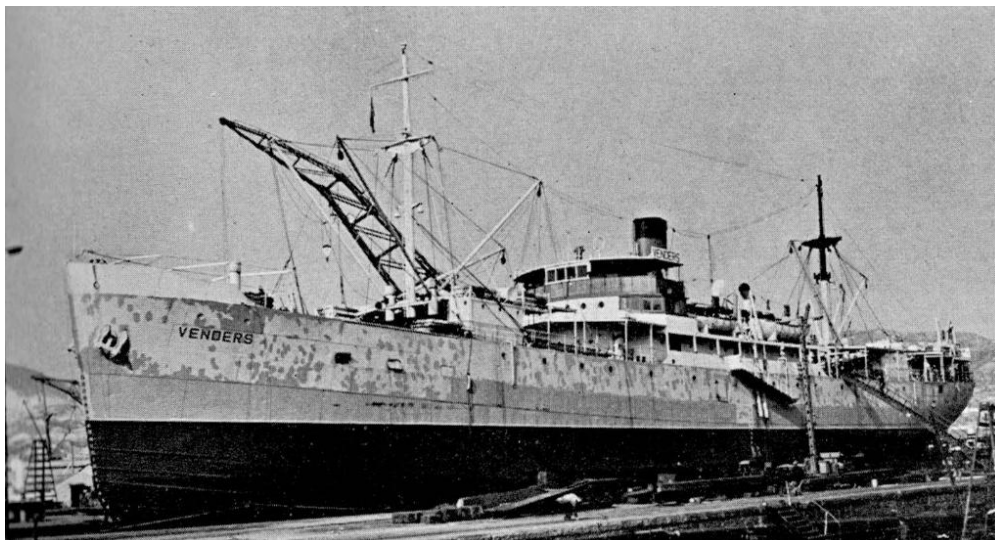
LA TRINIDAD at Singapore as VENG AN c.1975 (J, foremast shortened (J. Mathieson/NAA).



VENG AN well laden at Singapore on 22 Feb. 1975 with damaged stem (B. Nicol/NAA).

VENDERS (1963-69) 2144/36-6 (283.6 x 44.2', C4cy/207ihp/11k)

Built by Nylands Verks., Oslo (#326) for A/S Arne Sveen's Red. (A. Sveen mgr), Oslo as MUI HOCK, 6/36 trials 12.8k. 8/4/40 arr. Hong Kong from Shanghai, in service Hong Kong-Bangkok, Singapore and Rangoon until 1/1/42 arr. Colombo, 11/41 Durban, 1/42 New York etc. 14/8/52 sd Bangkok (1100 pass.) to resume sailings to S. China. 1953 on charter to Ngow Hock/Siam Rice Co. for pilgrimage Thailand-Jeddah (600 pass.) 9/4/54 stranded off Telok Ayer basin, Singapore, 19/4 refloated under own power. 1963 sold to Triple Nav. Co. (Pan.) S.A., Panama r. VENDERS for charter to Indonesia. 1965 off charter. Mid-2/69 under demolition in Hong Kong by Fuji Marden.



VENDERS on the slipway at Taikoo Dockyard (*Taikoo Dockyard*, Summer 1965).



VENDERS southbound in Malacca Strait with deck passengers fore and aft under improvised awnings, white 'V' attached to red funnel (P. Foxley/W. Schell).

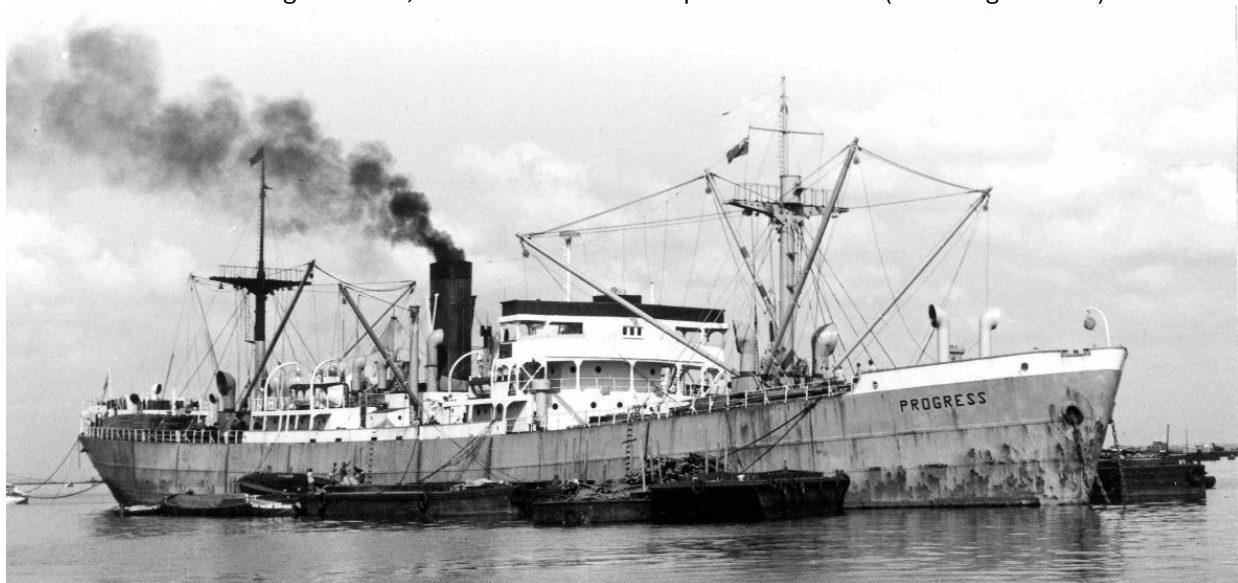
TASANEE (1964-72) 1200/25 see LA TRINIDAD (1963-64)

PROGRESS (1964-66) 7132 (10,330)/43-5 ('North Sands' type, 441.6 x 57.3', T3cy/11k by Canadian Allis-Chalmers Ltd, Montreal)

Built by Burrard D.Y. Co. Ltd, Vancouver (#171) for MOWT (Haldin & Philipps Ltd, mgrs), London as FORT CARIBOU. 1946 t/f to MOT (Goulandris Bros. Ltd, mgrs). 1948 sold to G. & T. Shg Ltd, Montreal. 1950 sold to Soc. Armadora del Norte S.A., Panama r. FALCON. 1953 sold to Cia. Maritima del Este S.A. (Basil J. Goulandris & Sons, mgrs), Panama. 1954 t/f to San Pedro Cia Armadora S.A. 1961 reg. t/f to Andros (Gk). 6/64 del. at Hong Kong to Cia de Nav. Sofia S.A. (Tunas (HK) Ltd mgrs), Panama r. GUNA. 11/64 del. at Hong Kong to Triple Nav. Co. (Pan.) S.A. (Venders Nav. Co., Hong Kong), Panama r. PROGRESS. 3/11/66 inbound from Calcutta (ballast) wrecked in cyclone 2 m. S. of Madras.



Greek-flag PROGRESS as FALCON anchored Hong Kong, 18 June 1964, just prior to delivery to Tunas Ltd and renaming as GUNA, then months later to Triple Nav./Venders (Dr. George Wilson).

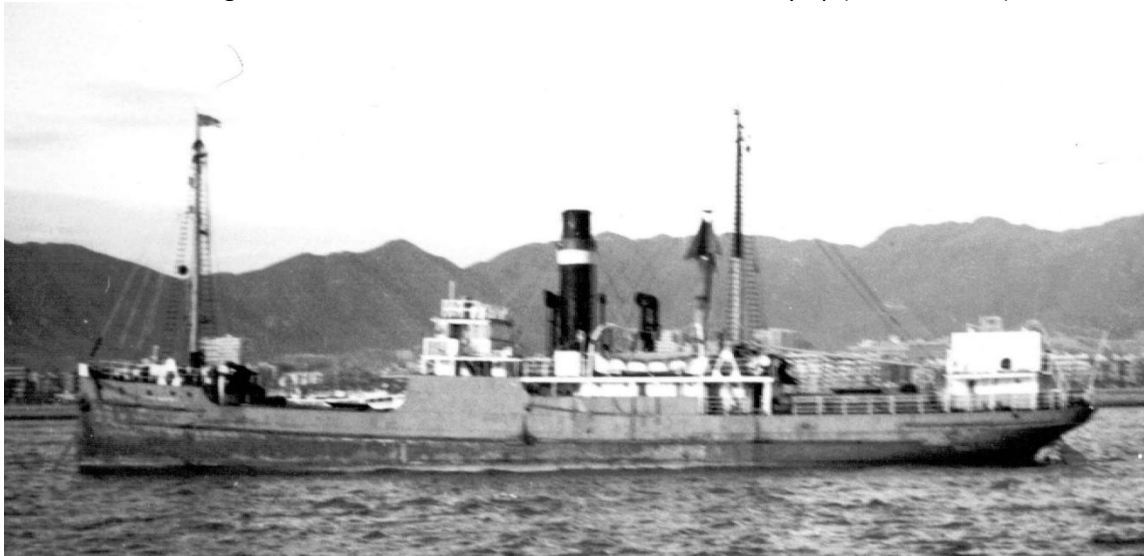


Canadian-built 'Fort'-type PROGRESS ex GUNA ex FALCON discharging timber at Aden, 1965 (R. Sherlock/W. Schell).

IMPALA (1965-66) 960 (1014)/25-1 (212.6 X 34.7', T3CY/10½k by D. Rowan & Sons, Glasgow)
 Built by Lithgows Ltd, Port Glasgow (#774) for North Coast S.N Co. Ltd, Sydney as BONALBO. 7/54 on liquidation NCSNC sold to Patson Pty Ltd, Sydney and chartered to Hethking S.S. Pty Ltd. 5/57 sold to Panamanian Oriental S.S. Corp. (Wheelock, Marden & Co. Ltd, Hong Kong), Panama r. LEEWANA, 24/7 sd Newcastle via Noumea for Hong Kong (19/9). 1958-62 on charter in Indonesia. 1962 r. IMPALA. 1/63 operating Penang-SW Thailand. 1965 sold to Triple Nav. Co. (Pan.) S.A. 19/12/66 o/v Saigon-Da Nang wrecked off Cape Varela, 21 of 30 crew lost.



IMPALA as North Coaster BONALBO at Sydney, c.1950 before P&O liner *Himalaya* fitted with smoke deflector, RN salvage vessels *Caledonian*/*Cambrian Salvor* in tandem lay-up (Ron Hart/NAA).



IMPALA at Hong Kong as Wheelock Marden's LEEWANA, probably 1962, larger stern house (pr T. Rayner).

PROSPECT (1966-67) 7200 (10,657)/44-5 (441.8 x 57.1', T3cy/11k by Ellicott Mchry Corp., Baltimore) Built by Bethlehem-Fairfield S.Y. Inc., Baltimore (#2367) for WSA for Lend-Lease to MOWT (Ellerman & Papayanni Lines Ltd, mgrs), London as SAMTORCH. 4/46 charter t/f to MOT. 4/47 sold by USMC to Ellerman & Bucknall S.S. Co. Ltd, London r. CITY OF STAFFORD. 10/61 sold to Stuart Nav. (Bahamas) Ltd (Wheelock, Marden & Co. Ltd, Hong Kong), Nassau (reg. London) r. KUNIANG. 1962 t/f to Sycamore S.S. Co. Ltd. 12/62 reg/ t/f to Hong Kong. 1963 mgrs World-Wide (Shg) Ltd, Hong Kong. 1964 t/f to Jupiter Shg Co. Ltd, Hong Kong. 25/9/64 driven ashore at Shikama, Kobe by typhoon 'Wilda', 12/10 refloated, c.28/10 arr. Hong Kong for repair, 12/64 loaded Dalian to Chalna. 1/66 sold to Trefoil Nav. Inc. (VNC, HK), Liberia r. PROSPECT. 13/4/67 arr. Kaohsiung for demolition, 10/7 work began.



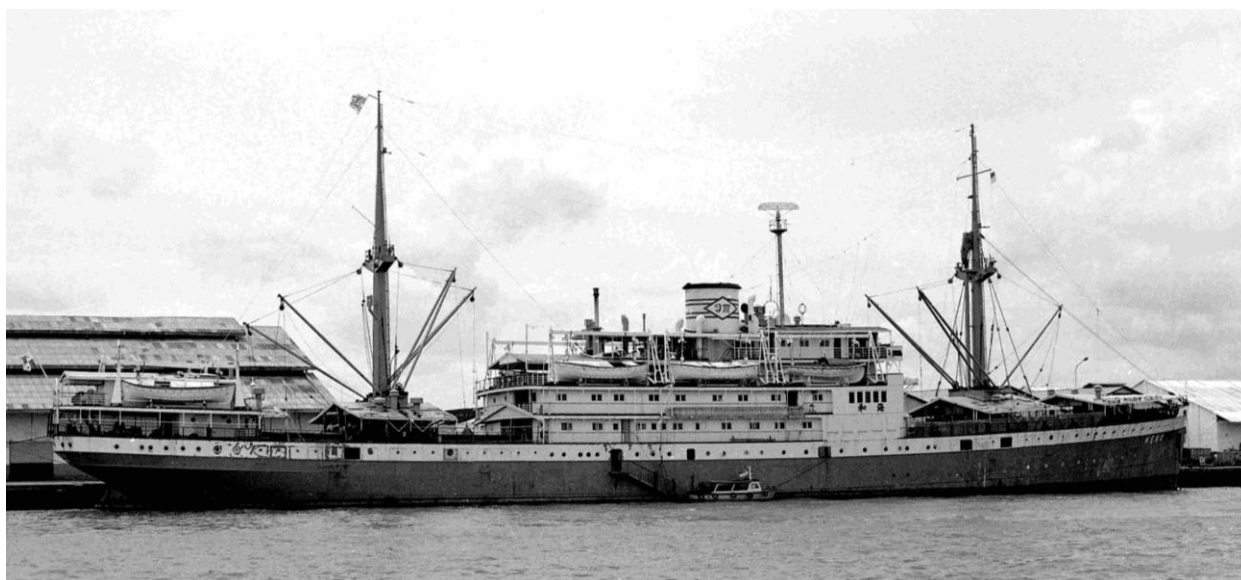
'Liberty'-type PROSPECT departing Swansea as Ellerman's CITY OF STAFFORD (coll. M. Cranfield).

VENICE (1967-73) 4963 (3797)/41-48 (368.4 x 53.3', M6cy/13½k Werkspoor)

Built by N.V. Nederlandsche Dok (#85) for Kon. Paketvaart Mij, Amsterdam (reg. Batavia), 4/7/41 launched as VAN RIEMSDIJK (II), not fitted out; 10/44 (with engines) towed to Ymuiden en route to Germany; 7/4/45 partially sunk at Ymuiden during an Allied air attack; 11/10/46 wreck raised and towed back to the shipyard for repair and completion. 3/11/48 commissioned at Tanjung Priok (51 cabin, 1200 deck pass.). 11/48 o/c to RIL to relieve *Van Heutsz* in Deli-Straits-China Line. 10/49 reverted to KPM for Java-Belawan-Java-Makassar line, reg. t/f to Amsterdam. 27/11/57 sd Singapore for Java, Makassar, ??? 1958 deck. pass. accommodation increased to 1885. 5/60 Swatow-Hong Kong-Bangkok-Straits-Rangoon line. 7/60 sd Singapore for Netherlands for refit by Verolme shipyard, Rozenburg for use as Air Force barrack ship, 28/9 as KEERKRING (white hull) embarked Air Force personnel for Biak, Dutch New Guinea. 11/62 charter terminated, 24/11 arr. Singapore for reconversion to trading vessel. 1-11/63 Rangoon-Straits line. 11/63-56/64 o/c to P.T. Pelajaran Sang Saka, Jakarta for interisland trade. 5/64 to Bay of Bengal-South China Sea line. 1/1/67 t/f to Kon. Java China Japan Lijen (RIL), Amsterdam and t/f to China-East Africa Service. 7/9/67 del. at Hong Kong to Triple Nav. Co. (Panama) S.A. (Venders Nav. Corp. (Liberia) Ltd c/- Chip Seng Co. Ltd, Singapore), Panama r. VENICE for charter to N.V. Pelni, Jakarta for interisland passenger service. 5/72 sold to Hysan Corporation Panama, S.A. (Joint Maritime Co. Ltd, Hong Kong), Panama r. HERO for Indonesia-HK cattle trade. 7/7/79 arr. Kaohsiung for demolition by Chi I Enterprise Co. Ltd [marhisdata.nl has a set of photos prior to salvage; see also *RIL Post*, Oct. 1967].



VENICE in Malacca Strait as KPM's KEERKRING, mid-1960s (P. Foxley/W. Schell).



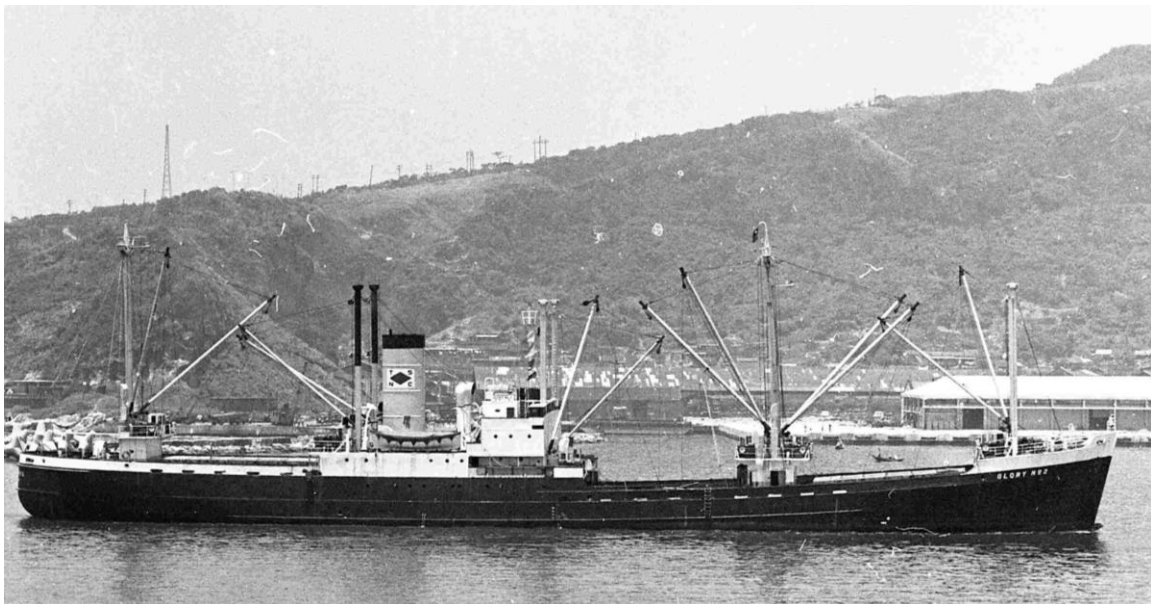
VENICE at Surabaya, 29 Dec. 1973 as Joint Maritime cattle carrier HERO (H. Dick).

AN FU (1972-77) 3495 (5305)/47-4 (345.2 x 50.5', M6cy/11k Sulzer)

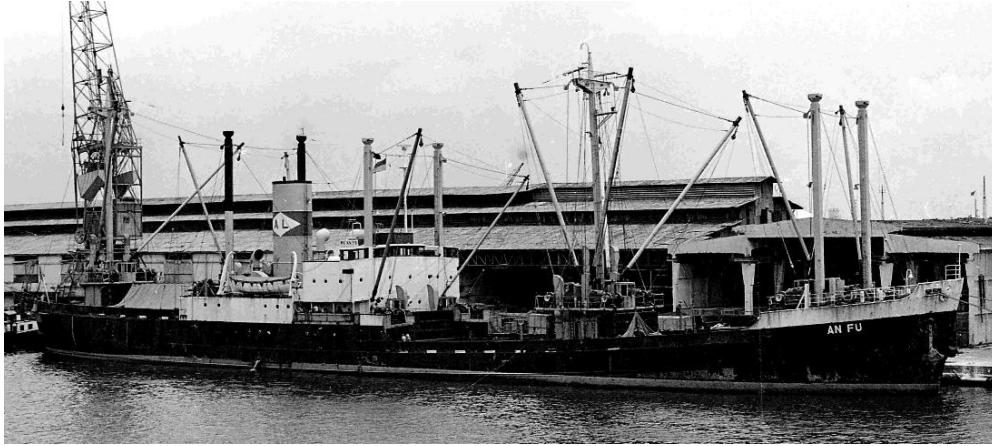
Built by A. Stephen & Co. Ltd, Glasgow (#613) for Union Steam Ship Co. of New Zealand Ltd, Wellington as KOMATA. 14/6/67 del. at Auckland to San Miguel Nav. Co. S.A. (John Manners & Co. Ltd Hong Kong), Panama r. ANTONIO REGIDOR. 7/8/67 at Hong Kong del. to Cheh An Nav. Co. S.A. (New Taiwan Marine Tptn Co. Ltd, Keelung), Panama r. GLORY No. 2. 3/72 sold to An Lee Nav. Co. Pte Ltd (CSC), Singapore r. AN FU. 1/11/74 blown ashore on Sado Is. while sheltering from bad weather, 18/11 refloated. 4/77 t/f to Kai Fa Nav. Co. S.A., Panama r. FORD, 3/5 sd Hong Kong for Pontianak. 29/12/77 arr. Kaohsiung for demolition.



AN FU as KOMATA seen from Harbour Bridge departing from Sydney, 17 March 1966, in Union S.S. Co. colours and showing long hatches with retractable McGregor covers, being an early example (J.Y. Freeman/NAA).



AN FU as GLORY No 2 at Keelung, 16 June 1970, houseflag lettering TS/NC (W. Schell).



AN FU ex KOMATA at Tanjung Priok, 18 Sept. 1973, funnel marking 'A L' ('An Lee') (H. Dick).



AN FU in Malacca Strait in 1977 as FORD, same 'A L' funnel, hatch covers retracted (W. Schell).

FIDES FRIENDSHIP (1972-76) 7684 (11,212)/58-3 (458.0 x 60.1', M7cy/13½ by Uraga Diesel Kogyo, Tamashima)

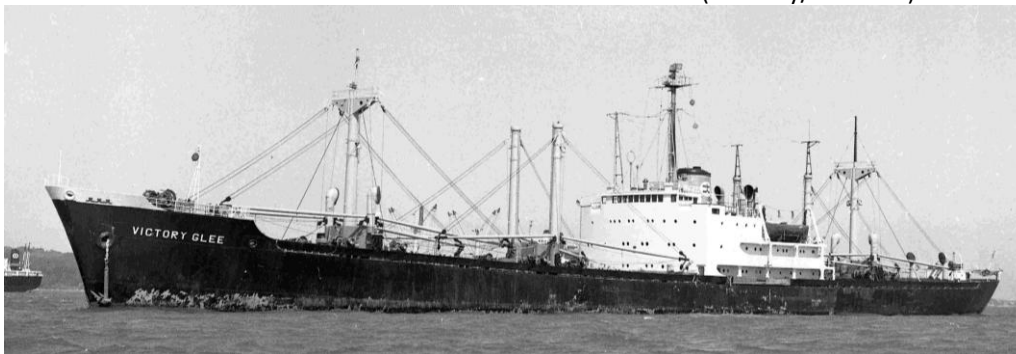
Built by Iino SB. & Eng. Co. Ltd, Maizuru (#40) for Iino Kaiun K.K., Tokyo as MISHIMA MARU. 1964 t/f by merger to Kawasaki Kisen K.K., Kobe. 10/72 sold to Fides Maritime Pte. Ltd (CSC), Singapore r. FIDES FRIENDSHIP. Late 1975 sold to Chieh Sheng Maritime Co. S.A. (Ta Lai S.S. Co., Taipei), Panama r. VICTORY GLEE. 15/4/76 sd Kobe for Khorramshahr (genco), 6/6 sprang leak in Arabian Sea, 7/6 foundered in 17.37N, 71.50E (1 life).



FIDES FRIENDSHIP as Iino Line's MISHIMA MARU at Boston c.1960 (J O'Leary-W Schell).



FIDES FRIENDSHIP in Malacca Strait on 'K' Line charter (P. Foxley/W. Schell).



FIDES FRIENDSHIP as Chieh Sheng's VICTORY GLEE at Singapore, 1976 (S. Klassen/W. Schell).

FIDES ORIENT (1975-79) 4907 (7586)/58-5 (396.1 x 54.11', M6cy/12.5k by Niigata Eng. Co. Ltd, Niigata) Built by Hitachi Zosen K.K., Mukaishima (#3836) for Yamashita Kisen K.K., Tokyo as YAMAASA MARU. 1/64 t/f by amalgamation to Yamashita-Shinnihon Kisen K.K., Tokyo. 4/75 sold to Integrity Corp. S.A. (CSC), Panama (reg. Singapore) r. FIDES ORIENT. 1978 t/f to Brilliant Nav. S.A., Singapore. 19/2/78 hull cracked in 12.25N-121.02E) off San Jose, Mindoro, 20/2 beached, 23/2 refloated, then sold to Brilliant Navigation S.A. (Northern Star Shg Co. Ltd, Hong Kong), Panama but not repaired. 3/9/79 arrived at Kaohsiung in tow for demolition by Chi Young Steel Enterprise Co., 14/9 work began [Schell].



FIDES ORIENT in Malacca Strait (P. Foxley/W. Schell).



FIDES ORIENT at Singapore in 1976 (B. Nicol/NAA).

FIDES VENTURE (1976-79) 8298 (11,516)/58-2 (479.11 x 62.7', M6cy/16k MAN)
 Built by Mitsubishi Nippon Heavy Ind. Ltd, Yokohama (#821) for Mitsubishi Kaiun K.K., Tokyo as GLORIA MARU. 1964 sold to Nippon Yusen Kaisha, Tokyo. 5/76 del. at Singapore to Fides Corp. S.A. (CSC), Panama (reg. Singapore) r. FIDES VENTURE. Prior 1/9/79 sd Hualien for Kaohsiung for demolition by Gi Yuen Steel Enterprise Co., 5/9, work began.



FIDES VENTURE as Mitsubishi Line's GLORIA MARU at Boston, 29 Dec. 1973 (E. Boyd/W. Schell).



FIDES VENTURE in Malacca Strait (P. Foxley/W. Schell).



FIDES VENTURE at Singapore, 31 July 1977 (B. Nicol/NAA).

FIDES PROGRESS (1977-81) 8174 (10,618)/60-3 (469' 3 x 60' 6", M6cy/14k MAN by Kawasaki D.Y. Co. Ltd, Kobe)

Built by Osaka Zosensho K.K., Osaka (#151) for Kawasaki Kisen K.K., Kobe as BOLIVIA MARU. 3/77 sold to Producer Corp. S.A. (CSC), Panama (reg. Singapore) r. FIDES PROGRESS. 30/12/80 sd Singapore to breakers, 1981 broken up at Gadani Beach (unconfirmed).



FIDES PROGRESS at Toronto, 30 Aug. 1963 as 'K' Line's BOLIVIA MARU (F. Sankoff-W Schell).



FIDES PROGRESS at Singapore, 2 July 1977, plain funnel (B. Nicol/NAA).



FIDES PROGRESS at Singapore, 3 April 1980 (V. Young/W. Schell).