

## OBITUARY CAPT. DOMINGO BUECHELER

The story begins at the start of the last century, when his father Rudolf, born 1876, left Switzerland to seek his fortune in Argentina. He worked as a farmer near Santa Rosa, Provincia La Pampa, southwest of Buenos Aires. There he met Eliza, who was the daughter of a Russian farming family. Rudolf and Eliza were married. While in Argentina, the couple had Domingo and also three of his sisters, Elina, Margaret and Anita - all now passed away. At the time of his birth, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1926, Domingo's Mother was 22 and his father was 50. At the beginning of the 1930s, ill fate struck the farm. A volcano in Chile erupted and covered all the farmland with thick white ash. The farm had to be abandoned. The family returned to Switzerland in 1932, travelling by ship from Buenos Aires to Hamburg, a three-week journey. They travelled on the modern combined passenger & cargo ship MONTE OLIVIA of Hamburg-Süd, an unforgettable trip for young Domingo.

The time after arrival in Switzerland coincided with the worldwide economic depression and was a time of much hardship and poverty for his family. Rosita, the one remaining sister was subsequently born in Switzerland. Domingo, a clever and ambitious boy commenced early to think about his career choice. The early sea voyage back to Europe may have influenced Domingo to become a seaman, although some family members tried to talk him out of it. In May 1941 Domingo Buecheler now aged 15, left home and began his apprenticeship on the training ship LEVENTINA of the Swiss Shipping Company Ltd. (Schweizerische Reederei AG) in the port of Basel, together with 11 other boys (course 04/1941). After the 4-month course finished he joined his first river barge MALOJA, and then the SILVAPLANA to bring coal and coke from the coal mines on the Ruhr to Basel. The hard work on the barges was relatively well paid, enabling him even to support his parents.

In 1942 he got an employment as ordinary seaman on the deep sea steamer LUGANO. End of September 1942 he travelled with his close friend Ruedi Schori from the training ship from Switzerland to Lisbon, a trip of several days by train. The LUGANO was an old coal-burning steamer, built 1898 in Newcastle, England and usually employed to carry grain from the US-East Coast to Europe. On a visit to New York, due to a German stamp in his Swiss passport, he was interrogated by the FBI as being a suspected German spy. His friend Ruedi Schori suffered a fatal accident on board in October 1943 and was buried in Philadelphia. Soon Domingo Buecheler became an apprentice and was trained by the radio officer, which was then followed by his first assignment as 3<sup>rd</sup> mate with a special permit. In late 1944/45 he was sent to the maritime school in Lisbon and joined afterwards the CARITAS I, a Red Cross freighter.

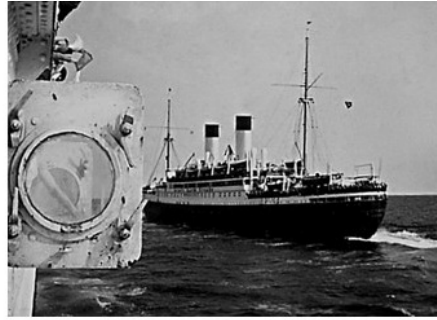
In January 1947 he finally got permission to study for his 2<sup>nd</sup> mate certificate in Warsash, near Southampton, England. As no Swiss flag vessel was available after school he got, through the support of his employer, a 3<sup>rd</sup> mate's job on a British "Empire" vessel, before joining the old CRISTALLINA (ex-EIGER). Other vessels of the Swiss Shipping Company followed and in 1952 he received his master's certificate.

Capt. Domingo Buecheler spent his entire professional career with the Swiss Shipping Company and rose through subsequent years to the position of Master. He most probably served on all vessels of the company and retired in 1986 with the age of 60 years. This proved to be a good timing for Capt. Buecheler, as the company sold their last two deep sea ships one year later. His favoured ship was the old BASILEA, built in 1952 and sailing under Swiss flag for 26 years. He was very proud, that during his entire time at sea he never lost a man of his crew.

In the early 1950s, he met his wife, Kathleen, in Durban, South Africa. She didn't speak Swiss German, he spoke English, and so they settled first in Surrey, England, where his two sons Tony and Robert were born. In 1965 the family moved to Brighton on the Sussex coast. At times, Domingo Buecheler did voluntary work as a visitor at nearby St Dunstan's, a home for blind veterans who lost their sight in the war.

After his retirement in 1986 and, now alone, he relocated to Folkestone, Kent, during which time he was a great support to his grandchildren. Then to Newport Pagnell, north of London, where he would feed the birds and water the communal gardens. He was passionate about caring for birds and gardens. In

his final years he was well cared for in a private care home and he passed away peacefully on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021. Domingo Buecheler is survived by two sons, two grandchildren and two great grandchildren.



MONTE-OLIVIA seen from MONTE-SARMIENTO. Photo-Johnny-Hungerbuehler-1937