

2012 – S.A. Agulhas II back in port after its first visit to Antarctica – captured by Peter Persicaner

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Peter Persicaner lived in South Africa (Port Elizabeth and Cape Town)

for most of his life , and from an early age developed a passion for islands in the South Atlantic and Antarctica and the ships that served them. I visited Tristan da Cunha and spent a week on the island in 2006 , while on a *RMS ST HELENA* cruise which also circled Gough Island. It is my firm intention to visit Tristan da Cunha again in the not too distant future on the *S.A. AGULHAS II*. Peter contacted the Antarctic Legacy of South Africa to share his images and his “ramblings” with

the project.



His

images of the *S.A. Agulhas II* are now available on the archive. Below a few of the images taken by Peter of the “*S.A. AGULHAS II*” on February 19th , 2013 when the vessel returned to Cape Town after her first visit to Antarctica.



“ I go a long way back in my "memory bank" as far as South African-flagged

research- / expedition-ships are concerned . I remember being on the quayside to welcome the *R.S.A.* to her home-port of Cape Town from the shipbuilding yard in Osaka , Japan on the last day of December , 1961. The *R.S.A.* was dressed overall with every conceivable flag available onboard , and with her bright red hull and orange , white and blue funnel and masts , looked immaculate as she slowly , but proudly , made her way into the Duncan Dock and to G berth. The quayside was filled to overflowing with politicians , administrators , port officials , etc. not to mention the wives , girlfriends , children

and relatives of the 23 officers and crew who had not seen their men for a long , long time. (Image - Huub Czanik, available on ALSA archive) What a day to be in Cape Town ... the timing could not have been better , since most of the crew and officers were able to look forward to spending New Year's Day with their loved ones !! I waited patiently for all the dignitaries to disembark , and in the early afternoon went onboard and met Captain Ken McNish , John Orrock (Chief Officer) and Mr I. Sato (who was the "Guarantee Chief Engineer" provided by the vessel's builders , Fuginagata Shipbuilding in Osaka. I presented a plaque to commemorate this auspicious occasion to Captain McNish , who graciously thanked me. The next 4 -5 days were hectic to say the least , since the *R.S.A.* had to be loaded with cargo (diesel oil , foodstuffs , equipment , medical supplies and numerous other commodities such as 5 husky puppies and 5 full-grown huskies essential for the maintenance of a smoothly functioning scientific station in Antarctica) , since the *R.S.A.* was



about to embark on the first of many voyages "down south".

Supporting Captain McNish on her maiden voyage to Antarctica were 12 officers (which included Commander Jack Netterberg [who served as "Ice Pilot"] and the indefatigable Mr Sato , who must have wondered what he was doing going down to Antarctica instead of being back home with his family in Japan) , a crew of 22 , a Public Works Department Team of 13 and the SANAE III team of 13 scientists , radio-operators , surveyors , meteorologists , etc. How they managed to accommodate everyone onboard is still a mystery to me . I can only presume that "comfort" as we know and accept it today was not the norm back in the early-1960's !! The first voyage to Antarctic by the *R.S.A.* was anything but smooth-sailing , since very bad weather hampered progress . not to mention being trapped in the pack-ice shortly after departing the SANAE base for home.(Image - E Lautenbach, available on ALSA archive) Over the years that followed Captain's McNish and Funk sailed the *R.S.A.* down to the ice , and to Marion Island , Gough Island and Tristan da Cunha on many occasions before the *R.S.A.* was replaced by the new *S.A. AGULHAS* in 1978. Although the *R.S.A.* was no longer an "active" expedition- / research-vessel , she fulfilled many useful roles before being broken up .. and I never missed an opportunity to visit her regardless of where she was berthed in the port. I , too , have wonderful memories of the "*S.A. AGULHAS*" , and recall meeting Captain Leith (whose daughter [Wendy]was the "Weather Lady" on SATV in the 1970's and beyond). Shortly after the "*S.A. AGULHAS*" entered service , one of the crew lamented that they did not have a "sound system" in their lounge ... and later on that same afternoon , the local SHIP SOCIETY ensured that this "fault" was rectified. I thank you most sincerely for putting up with the ramblings of an old man , who still loves the sea and ships as much as he did in his youth , and who looks forward with unbridled anticipation to every "next visit" to his BELOVED Cape Town. Kindest nautical regards." (Text and images of *S.A. Agulhas II* supplied by Peter Persicaner. Other Images from ALSA archive)

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