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Voices of Earth and Sky: The Vision Life of The Native Americans and Their Culture Heroes

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Launched in 1934 and 1938 respectively, the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth*, at over 1,000 feet in length and more than 80,000 tons displacement, were the finest ships of their day. Requisitioned shortly after World War II broke out, they performed heroic service as troop carriers. In Churchill's words, "the Queens challenged the fury of Hitlerism in the battle of the Atlantic. Without their aid, the day of final victory must unquestionably have been postponed."

Central to the author's well-illustrated, fast-forward account of the Queens' war-time lives is this crucial fact: these ships, designed to carry some 2,100 passengers served by a crew of a thousand, could at a maximum carry 15,000 military personnel. With the United States' entry into the war and the transport of hundreds of thousands to troops to Britain, the German leadership was truly concerned. In fact, Hitler offered a reward of 1 million Reichsmarks (towards $50 million in today's dollars) to any U-boat skipper who sank the *Queen Mary* or the *Queen Elizabeth*, aware that the loss of 15,000 men at a stroke could severely impede or even shatter the Allied war effort.

Butler captures the high-stakes drama of the Queens at sea, always at risk of the U-boat torpedoes that were already sinking British shipping wholesale. Standard evasive action was to involve the *Queen Mary* in cutting an escort destroyer in two. The author provides engaging details about the two ships, their differing personalities, the victualing and supplying of these high-speed floating cities, the rigors of shipboard and U-boat life (seventy-five percent of all submariners perished), and explores the role the Queens' troop—ferrying capacity played in the overall war strategy. He also offers little-known information on the ownership of the Queens during the war and on their sadly truncated post-war careers. Relevant political and financial history is concisely presented. Sadly, even as the *Queen Elizabeth* and her French, Italian, and German rivals were being built in the late 1930s, the heyday of Atlantic crossings had passed, victim of economics and American immigration law.

Butler illuminates a vital chapter of World War II history, giving readers a fine voyage through exciting waters. Enthusiasts for more relaxed shipboard days should check John Brinnin and John Maxtone-Gaham in the author's useful bibliography.

PETER SKINNER (March / April 2002)

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