

## Former Bandstand Regular Bob Alcorn Dances around the World on Cruise Ships

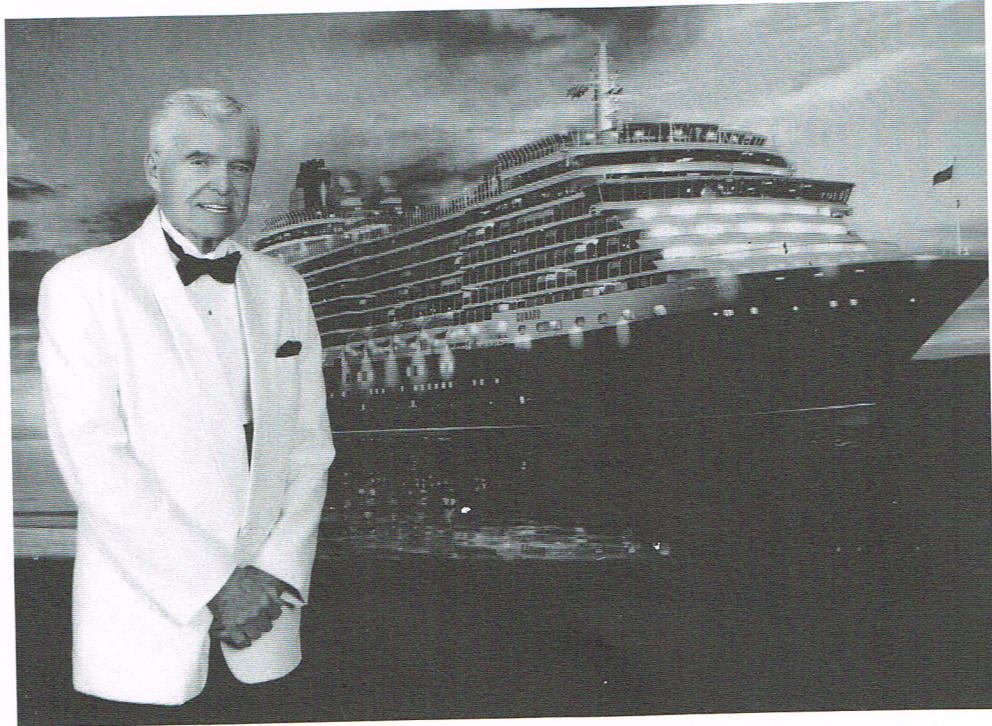
By Bonnie Eisenfeld

For retiree Bob Alcorn, ballroom dancing is a job and a pleasure. He is a gentleman dance host on cruise ships traveling all over the world. Recommended to him by his barber, this job has no salary, but the cruise lines pay all his voyage expenses including air transport, stateroom, clothing, food, drinks, laundry, dry cleaning, gratuities, and everything he needs on board the ship. In return, he devotes his time to socializing with the single women guests, dancing with them every evening and accompanying them on port excursions during the day. Here is Alcorn's view: "Our mission is to bring dance and happiness to the unattached ladies on the cruise ships of the world, thus encouraging them to return for more fun cruises."

On average, there are five unattached female passengers for every unattached male passenger. Thus there is a need for at least four dance hosts. Each evening for three hours starting at cocktail time, dance hosts, ages 50 to 80, dance and socialize with the single women.

During the day, when not on a port excursion, hosts assist the ladies with ballroom and Latin dance lessons—chacha, rumba, tango, salsa, waltz, foxtrot, swing and more. The rest of the time hosts are at leisure and can choose from daytime activities like bridge lessons, lectures, swimming, fitness, foil fencing, deck sports, art classes, concerts, bingo, trivia and movies. Before dinner, the hosts generally take much-needed naps. Identified with special badges, these gentlemen are granted all the same amenities as the guests, but contrary to popular image, do not have all the privileges. There are rules about "fraternizing" with female guests during a cruise. Simply put, it's not allowed. If a host is caught breaking a rule, he is put off the ship at the next port and must get home at his own expense. However, guests and hosts may exchange contact information and get in touch once the cruise is over.

Alcorn has always loved dancing. As a young man in high school in 1955 and 1956, he was a regular on *Bandstand*, the



Bob Alcorn is a dapper dance host for about 2 months a year on many popular cruise lines. (Staff photo: Queen Victoria, Cunard Line)

famed TV dance party hosted by Dick Clark in West Philadelphia. He attended his local parish dances, took group and private lessons, and danced regularly with his sisters. His favorite dance is the jitterbug (also known as swing or jive). In addition, he belongs to The Timoney Irish Dancers, doing Ceili, set dancing and Irish folk dances.

Originally from North Philadelphia, Alcorn earned his bachelor's degree from the Wharton School and his M.B.A. from Temple University, majoring in project management. He worked for DuPont, the City of Philadelphia, the Federal government, Sun Oil, CIGNA, University of Pennsylvania, and First Pennsylvania Bank.

A Center City resident and member of Friends in the City (see article on p. 4 in the March 2014 issue of CCQ), Alcorn now spends about two months a year cruising with Cunard, Crystal, Holland America, Norwegian, Regent, or Celebrity Cruise Lines, or American Queen Steamboat Company (on the Mississippi River.) He prefers to cruise on warm seas in January and February. In total he has been on 75 cruises over the past 17 years,

including two world cruises lasting three to four months each. He's been just about everywhere in the world and loves his retirement job.

As recently as January and February, Alcorn worked as a dance host on a six-week cruise on the Cunard *Queen Victoria*, on the first of a three-part World Voyage. (The total voyage lasts three and a half months.) The ship sailed from England to Hawaii, via the South Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Islands, the Panama Canal, along Central America and California, and across the South Pacific into the Hawaiian Islands. Along the way, the ship stopped at ports in the Azores Islands of Portugal, Florida, Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Alcorn plans to cruise as long as possible. "Doing the cruises makes me feel younger each year. I will keep going until my legs and feet wear out—and when I finally go out, I will go kicking and screaming." His next cruise is scheduled for January and February 2016, most likely to South America. Alcorn says, "Save me a dance on the high seas!"