

Eddie Steamship Ltd., Oak Maritime (Hong Kong) Inc. Ltd., and Sincere Navigation Ltd.



## The Story of the Hsu Family's Shipping Dynasty.

By Geoff Walker

Shanghainese shipowners have dominated the Hong Kong shipping industry since the 1950s, shortly after the Chinese Communists took power in the People's Republic of China, in 1949. Many Shanghainese with shipping interests saw little future under the new regime in China, so relocated their businesses mainly to Hong Kong but also Taiwan. **Charles Eddie Hsu** was one such shipowner.

Since the 1950s and within this group the Hsu family forged its lineage in the shipping sector and has developed into a multi-generational shipping dynasty. This shipping family can trace its origins back to 1922, when family elder **Charles Eddie Hsu**, an ambitious businessman with diversified interests ranging from aerated water to ports development, ventured into shipping and bought his first vessel in Shanghai, then established **Eddie Steamship**, four years later.

In 1922, Charles bought his first vessel in partnership with fellow Ningpo business mogul, Chu Pao-san and named it "**Chou Shan**" (**Chusan**) after a town in their native Ningbo. In 1926, Charles established "**Eddie Steamship**" employing three vessels – "**SS Yisun**", "**SS Eddie**" and "**SS Yitai**" which were mainly engaged on the Shanghai, Canton, Hong Kong, Amoy, and Swatow service. He also became involved in Port and infrastructure development at Sanmen Bay, but unfortunately, "**Eddie's**" vessels which were engaged in carrying most of the project cargoes were regularly set upon by pirates, whilst on passage to the development location. These debilitating incidents, coupled with the increasing Japanese aggression at the time, caused project investors to withdraw, resulting in significant losses for the family, and the "**Eddie Group**" of companies subsequently collapsing in 1935.



One of Charles Eddie Hsu's early acquisitions, the "**SS Kondor**" (renamed "**Tat Fung**").

The eldest son of Charles, **V.K. Eddie Hsu** had joined the firm in the 1920s, his focus being on restoring the "**Eddie Steamship Company**" to its former glory, following the group's collapse. The Japanese Navy seized the family's vessel "**Kondor**" in 1941, but after negotiating with the Japanese military, the vessel was released back to the family. Within one week of the end of the War, the "**Kondor**" which had been renamed the "**Tat Fung**", resumed servicing the route between Ningpo and Shanghai. When the Communists came to power in 1949, the family relocated their business interests to Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The early 1950s was a buoyant time for shipping companies like "Eddie" as the Korean War and the post-War reconstruction in Japan and other Asian countries, created a demand for transportation of

grains, raw materials, and machinery. By 1959, the year before V.K. parted ways with his brother W.H., the number of vessels in Eddie's fleet had increased to 8. Following the split of V.K. and W.H in 1960; V.K. formed **Oak Steamship** in 1961, incorporated in Hong Kong, and **Sincere Navigation** incorporated in Taiwan in 1968 with the support of his family. V.K. was succeeded by his son **Steve Hsu Gee-king**, in 1975. In addition to his sons, V.K. was also aided by his son in law **Watson Tang Hua-chien** and longtime lieutenant **Fred Tsai**.

In the late 1960s, V.K.'s family teamed up with the family of Hang Seng Bank chairman Ho Sin-hang and fellow Shanghainese shipping magnate T.Y. Chao of the Wah Kwong Venture Shipping group, to form **Continental Mariner**.

V.K.'s enterprise progressively expanded **Oak Maritime, Continental Mariner and Sincere Navigation** while W.H. took over **Eddie Steamship** and weathered many market upsets, and at one stage turning it into the world's largest independently owned bulk cargo carrier, before the shipping crisis of the 1980s brought the group to its knees and required bailout from the Taiwanese government.

In the 1980's, the Four Asian Tigers enjoyed rapid industrialization. **Sincere Navigation** realizing the Japanese market was limited for further development, decided to expand, and focus more towards the European and American markets, and replace the smaller Handysize bulk carriers in its existing fleet, with larger Panamax, and Capesize, bulk carriers. Due to the rapid transition in its operating strategy and forward thinking by management, the company was successful in surviving the shipping crisis in 1985, which caused such turmoil and the collapse of many other shipowners. The Group concentrates in the transportation of bulk materials such as ore, coal and crude oil. The customers include iron ore suppliers, steel companies and shipping industry operators in domestic and overseas markets.

In the late 1980's, Sincere Navigation became one of the largest private operators of Capesize vessels in



Asia. In 1987, Sincere Navigation acquired Karson Navigation Corporation and Tai Hsing Navigation Corporation and reorganized their companies to form the "**Sincere Navigation Corporation**" as the parent entity.

Left, a more recently acquired VLCC "**Kondor**" for the Sincere Navigation Group. Built in Shanghai in 2012 the vessel has a deadweight tonnage of 296,714 and is registered under Marshall Islands flag. She has a loaded draught is reported to be 19.8 meters. Her length overall (LOA) is 330 meters, and her beam is 60 meters.



An impressive profile image of the VLCC Kondor of Sincere Navigation Group



Another ship's name, that dates back to the fledgling years of "Eddie Steamship", is the more recent 2005 built "**Chou Shan**" belonging to Sincere Navigation Group. Built in Taiwan, the 175,569 dwt., Capesize, double hulled bulker, has a LOA of 289 meters.

Below, an alternate view of the "**Chou Shan**" seen partially laden. Her length is more optically obvious in this view.



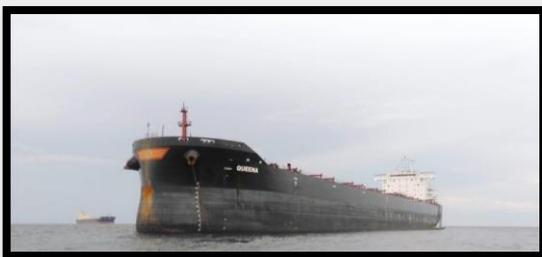


Above, two images of the Capesize Bulk carrier **SAMC EDDIE** built in 2002 and is now registered in Panama. 175775 tons DWT and her draught 17.3 meters. Her length overall (LOA) is 289.03 m and her beam 45.01 m. She was acquired by Eddie Steamship Co Ltd from the Taiwanese China Steel Corporation

In 2019 **Eddie Steamship**, registered in Taiwan, established a joint venture with Chinese state-run shipping group Shandong Shipping and formed a new asset management company. The new company **Shandong Shipping Asset Management Corporation** is registered in Hong Kong. Shandong Shipping and Eddie Steamship will take 38% and 20% of the shares respectively, in the joint venture, the remaining 42%, reportedly will be held by an entity called Ocean Asset Shipping.

Eddie Steamship also acquired the 2002 built Capesize bulk carriers **China Steel integrity** and **China Steel Responsibility**. These vessels are operated under a “Contract of Affreightment” (COA) with Shandong Shipping Asset Management Corporation (SAMC) joint venture, where Eddie Steamship is the owner and operator with SAMC as charterers. Both vessels are close sister vessels of the SAMC Eddie, captioned above.

Eddie Steamship is reportedly to have expanded its fleet with the acquisition of up to 5 “Kamsarmax” bulk carriers. “Kamsarmax”, are a new innovation in bulk carrier design, larger than Panamax, and which are suitable for berthing at the **Port of Kamsar** (Republic of Guinea), where the major loading terminal for Bauxite is restricted to vessels not exceeding 229 meters.



The “Kamsarmax” bulk carrier “**Queena**” operated by the Sincere Navigation Group – Taiwan. Built in 2016 with a deadweight tonnage of 82082 tons, and a max LOA of 229m, and beam of 53m.



Fourth generation shipping tycoon, **Jack Hsu**, managing director the **Oak Maritime Group**, (Oak Steamship established 1962, and renamed Oak Maritime 1992), assumed control of the company upon his father's retirement, and has become one of Asia's best-known names in shipping. The group is also represented through its affiliated offices in Vancouver, Canada, but the principal office, **Sincere Navigation Corporation**, is a publicly listed company, based in Taiwan. General management is coordinated through Oak Maritime's office in Hong Kong where Jack Hsu is based. The group currently operates a fleet of over 20 modern vessels, predominantly bulkers, with some tankers. The combined fleet has an average age of just 8.2 years. Jack Hsu is also the chair of the **Sincere Navigation Group**.

### **MV Mineral Oak**



Built in Shanghai in 2010 this 177,921 dwt Capesize Bulker is registered under the Hong Kong flag and has an LOA of 292 meters. Operated by Oak Maritime – Hong Kong, part of the Sincere Navigation Group of Taipei.

The professional operation and progressive growth achieved by this dynamic maritime group, has been successful in retaining the confidence and support of international and institutional investors, as well as those within the global shipping industry, which has been instrumental in it receiving numerous accolades from the universal shipping sectors of industry in general.

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References: The Industrial History of Hong Kong Group, National Maritime Archives, Hsu Family Public archives, SPLASH, Fleetmon, and various online data available in Public Domains, from which much material has been sourced.

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