

The Seven Seas Tattler Issue 1.12 - May 2018



Welcome to the May edition of the Tattler.

You are invited to provide feedback and ideas at any time to jonathanagolding@gmail.com - your input will be appreciated.

The club faces an interesting and challenging year. At the recent AGM the chairman reinforced the difficulties we face in terms of membership, attendance and income, but also touched on some of the strategies the committee is developing to meet the challenges. Tattler welcomes the new committee members and wishes them well with their endeavours.

Tattler hopes to provide updates on the variety of actions assigned at the Strategic Planning session held earlier this year.

Club Manager's Report

100 Club Winners for April

G.R. Marlow - R300

M. Barnard - R300

H.A. Farrow - R300

D.C. Law-Brown - R1000

Next Happy Hour and 100 Club Draw will be on Tuesday the 8th of May 2018.

Birthdays

The Club wishes all of the following a happy birthday

5th May R Adm (JG) D. Mkhonto
10th May Prof G.J. Kruger
15th May Mr A.H. Collingridge
16th May R Adm (JG) D.R Faure
17th May R Adm A. Soderlund (Ret)
21st May Mr D.E. Mac Kenzie
23rd May Mr M. Salida
24th May Mr M. Steytler
28th May Mr S.P.G. Luyt
29th May Mr G.R. Glen
30th May Capt (SAN) B. Carter

May in Military History

May 1, 1946 - the SANF was reconstituted as part of the Union Defence Force with compliment of 60 officers and 806 men. Its fleet consisted of the three Loch Class frigates, two boom defence vessels (HMSAS Barbrake and HMSAS Barcross), one minelayer (HMSAS Spindrift) and 12 harbour defence motor launches. In 1947 the Algerine Class ocean minesweepers HMSAS Bloemfontein (ex HMS Rosamund) and HMSAS Pietermaritzburg (ex HMS Pelorus) arrived, both of which were commissioned in September that year.

May 1, 1960 - An American U-2 spy plane flying at 60,000 feet was shot down over Sverdlovsk in central Russia on the eve of a summit meeting between President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Soviet Russia's Premier Nikita Khrushchev. The sensational incident caused a cancellation of the meeting and heightened existing Cold War tensions. The pilot, CIA agent Francis Gary Powers, survived the crash, and was tried, convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison by a Russian court. Two years later he was released to America in exchange for an imprisoned Soviet spy. On his return to America, Powers encountered a hostile public which apparently believed he should not have allowed himself to be captured alive. He died in a helicopter crash in 1977.

May 2, 2011 - U.S. Special Operations Forces killed Osama bin Laden during a raid on his secret compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The raid marked the culmination of a decade-long manhunt for the elusive leader of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization based in the Middle East. Bin Laden had ordered the coordinated aerial attacks of September 11th, 2001, in which four American passenger jets were hijacked then crashed, killing nearly 3,000 persons. Two jets had struck and subsequently collapsed the 110-story Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, while another struck the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C. A fourth jet also headed toward Washington had crashed into a field in Pennsylvania as passengers attempted to overpower the hijackers on board.

May 4, 1942 - Capture of Madagascar. An important victory that the South Africans participated in was the capture of Malagasy (now known as Madagascar) from the control of the Vichy French. British troops aided by South African soldiers, staged their attack from South Africa, landing on the strategic island on 4 May 1942 to preclude its seizure by the Japanese.

May 6, 1527 - The Renaissance ended with the Sack of Rome by German troops as part of an

ongoing conflict between the Hapsburg Empire and the French Monarchy. German troops killed over 4,000 Romans, imprisoned the Pope, and looted works of art and libraries. An entire year passed before order could be restored in Rome.

May 6, 1944 - Nazi Germany orders an additional 1,800 laborers from France to help staff the Mittelbau-Dora slave labor camp near Nordhausen, Germany. The workers are needed to step up production of the V-2 bombs that will terrorize Britain for much of the year.

May 7, 1915 - The British passenger ship Lusitania was torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland, losing 1,198 of its 1,924 passengers, including 114 Americans. The attack hastened neutral America's entry into World War I.

May 7, 1945 - In a small red brick schoolhouse in Reims, Germany, General Alfred Jodl signed the unconditional surrender of all German fighting forces thus ending World War II in Europe. Russian, American, British and French ranking officers observed the signing of the document which became effective at one minute past midnight on May 9th. Jodl was then ushered in to see Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who curtly asked Jodl if he fully understood the document. Eisenhower then informed Jodl that he would be held personally responsible for any deviation from the terms of the surrender. Jodl was then ushered away.

May 7, 1954 - The French Indochina War ended with the fall of Dien Bien Phu, in a stunning victory by the Vietnamese over French colonial forces in northern Vietnam. The country was then divided in half at the 17th parallel, with South Vietnam created in 1955.

May 8, 1942 - During World War II in the Pacific, the Battle of the Coral Sea began in which Japan would suffer its first defeat of the war. The battle, fought off New Guinea, marked the first time in history that two opposing naval forces fought by only using aircraft without the opposing ships ever sighting each other.

May 9, 1944 - Luftwaffe installations on French soil are pounded by Allied aircraft in an attempt to render them harmless prior to D-Day. On the Eastern Front, the Soviet Union recaptures the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol.

May 11, 1862 - To prevent its capture by Union forces advancing in Virginia, the Confederate Ironclad Merrimac was destroyed by the Confederate Navy. In March, the Merrimac had fought the Union Ironclad Monitor to a draw. Naval warfare was thus changed forever, making wooden ships obsolete.

May 13, 1943 - During World War II in North Africa, over 250,000 Germans and Italians surrendered in the last few days of the Tunis campaign. British General Harold Alexander then telegraphed news of the victory to Winston Churchill, who was in Washington attending a war conference. The victory re-opened Allied shipping lanes in the Mediterranean.

May 13, 1944 - The Allies finally break through the German Gustav Line, the western segment of the Winter Line, and begin their march northward through Italy.

May 19, 1943 - During World War II in Europe, Royal Air Force bombers successfully attacked dams in the German Ruhr Valley using innovative ball-shaped bouncing bombs that skipped along the water and exploded against the dams. The dams had provided drinking water for 4 million persons and supplied 75% of the electrical power for industry in the area.

May 26, 1940 - The Dunkirk evacuation began in order to save the British Expeditionary Force trapped by advancing German armies on the northern coast of France. Boats and vessels of all shapes and sizes ferried 200,000 British and 140,000 French and Belgian soldiers across the English Channel by June 2nd.

May 28, 1941- Jan Smuts was appointed a Field Marshal of the British Army, becoming the first South African to hold that rank. Ultimately, Smuts would pay a steep political price for his closeness to the British establishment, to the King, and to Churchill which had made Smuts very unpopular among the conservative nationalistic Afrikaners, leading to his eventual downfall, whereas most English-speaking whites and a minority of liberal Afrikaners in South Africa remained loyal to him.

May 29, 1453 - The city of Constantinople was captured by the Turks, who renamed it Istanbul. This marked the end of the Byzantine Empire as Istanbul became the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

May 30, 1943 - During World War II in the Pacific, the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska were retaken by the U.S. 7th Infantry Division. The battle began on May 12 when an American force of 11,000 landed on Attu. In three weeks of fighting U.S. casualties numbered 552 killed and 1,140 wounded. Japanese killed numbered 2,352, with only 28 taken prisoner, as 500 chose suicide rather than be captured.

May 31, 1902 - End of the second Anglo Boer War. The Second Boer War, also known as the Second Anglo-Boer War, the Second Freedom War (Afrikaans) and referred to as the South African War in modern times took place from 11 October 1899 – 31 May 1902. The war was fought between Great Britain and the two independent Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (referred to as the Transvaal by the British). After a protracted hard-fought war, the two independent republics lost and were absorbed into the British Empire. In all, the war had cost around 75,000 lives – 22,000 British soldiers (7,792 battle casualties, the rest through disease), 6,000–7,000 Boer Commandos, 20,000–28,000 Boer civilians, mostly women and children due to disease in concentration camps, and an estimated 20,000 black Africans, Boer allies, who died in their own separate concentration camps. The last of the Boer forces surrendered in May 1902 and the war ended with the Treaty of Vereeniging in the same month.

May 31, 1941 - Evacuation of Crete. British destroyers HMS Napier & Nizam are both bombed and damaged by near misses on the return journey to Alexandria, Egypt. British cruiser HMS Phoebe, minelayer HMS Abdiel and destroyers HMS Jackal, Kimberley & Hotspur depart Alexandria at 6AM and evacuate 3710 troop overnight from Sphakia. 54 senior officers including General Freyberg leave for Alexandria in 2 Sunderland flying boats.

Featured Officer - Johan Retief

Vice Admiral Johan Retief SD & Bar PG SM MMM was the Chief of the South African Navy from 2000 to 2005.

Retief was born on 20 March 1946 in Cape Town, matriculating at Hoërskool Jan van Riebeeck in Cape Town.

Career

He attended the South African Military Academy after completing his Citizen Force training and graduated with a Bachelor of Military Science degree in 1967 and was judged the Best Student in that year.

He was appointed an Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer and was selected to attend the Torpedo and Anti-Submarine course at HMS Vernon in Portsmouth, United Kingdom.

He joined the Strike Craft Flotilla, initially as training officer at the inception of the project in 1975. He was the Commissioning Captain of SAS Jim Fouche and attended the Naval Command and Staff Course in 1981. After Completing a year as Staff Officer Surface Warfare, he was appointed Director Naval Operations in 1985. After attending the Joint Staff Course in 1988 he served as Senior Staff Officer Research at the Intelligence Division and then as Military Secretary to the Minister of Defence General Magnus Malan and Ministers Roelf Meyer and Gene Louw.

He was promoted to Rear Admiral and appointed as Chief of Naval Operations with effect from 1 January 1993 until 30 April 1996, after which he served as Inspector-General of the South African National Defence Force.

He was promoted to Vice Admiral and appointed Chief of the South African Navy on 1 November 2000.

Featured Ship - Scharnhorst

Scharnhorst was a German capital ship, alternatively described as a battleship and battlecruiser, of Nazi Germany's Kriegsmarine. She was the lead ship of her class, which included one other ship, Gneisenau. The ship was built at the Kriegsmarinewerft dockyard in Wilhelmshaven; she was laid down on 15 June 1935 and launched a year and four months later on 3 October 1936. Completed in January 1939, the ship was armed with a main battery of nine 28 cm (11 in) C/34 guns in three triple turrets. Plans to replace these weapons with six 38 cm (15 in) SK C/34 guns in twin turrets were never carried out.

Scharnhorst and Gneisenau operated together for much of the early portion of World War II, including sorties into the Atlantic to raid British merchant shipping. During her first operation, Scharnhorst sank the auxiliary cruiser HMS Rawalpindi in a short engagement (November 1939). Scharnhorst and Gneisenau participated in Operation Weserübung (April–June 1940), the German invasion of Norway. During operations off Norway, the two ships engaged the battlecruiser HMS Renown and sank the aircraft carrier HMS Glorious as well as her escort destroyers Acasta and Ardent. In that engagement Scharnhorst achieved one of the longest-range naval gunfire hits in history.

In early 1942, after repeated British bombing raids, the two ships made a daylight dash up the English Channel from occupied France to Germany. In early 1943, Scharnhorst joined the Bismarck-class battleship Tirpitz in Norway to interdict Allied convoys to the Soviet Union. Scharnhorst and several destroyers sortied from Norway to attack a convoy, but British naval patrols intercepted the German force. During the Battle of the North Cape (26 December 1943), the Royal Navy battleship HMS Duke of York and her escorts sank Scharnhorst. Only 36 men were rescued, out of a crew of 1,968.

Construction and characteristics

Scharnhorst in her 1943 configuration.

Scharnhorst was ordered as Ersatz Elsass as a replacement for the old pre-dreadnought Elsass, under the contract name "D." The Kriegsmarinewerft in Wilhelmshaven was awarded the contract, where the keel was laid on 16 July 1935. The ship was launched on 3 October 1936, witnessed by Adolf Hitler, Minister of War Generalfeldmarschall Werner von Blomberg, and the widow of Kapitän zur See Schultz, the commander of the armored cruiser Scharnhorst, which had been sunk at the Battle of the Falkland Islands during World War I. Fitting-out work followed her launch, and was completed by January 1939. Scharnhorst was commissioned into the fleet on 9 January for sea trials, which revealed a dangerous tendency to ship considerable amounts of water in heavy seas. This caused flooding in the bow and damaged electrical systems in the forward gun turret. As a result, she went back to the dockyard for extensive modification of the bow. The original straight stem was replaced with a raised "Atlantic bow." A raked funnel cap was also installed during the reconstruction, along with an enlarged aircraft hangar; the main mast was also moved further aft. The modifications were completed by November 1939, by which time the ship was finally fully operational.

Scharnhorst displaced 32,100 long tons (32,600 t) as built and 38,100 long tons (38,700 t) fully loaded, with a length of 234.9 m (771 ft), a beam of 30 m (98 ft) and a maximum draft of 9.9 m (32 ft). She was powered by three Brown, Boveri & Cie geared steam turbines, which developed a total of 159,551 shp; 118,977 kW and yielded a maximum speed of 31.5 knots (58.3 km/h; 36.2 mph) on speed trials. Her standard crew numbered 56 officers and 1,613 enlisted men, augmented during the war to 60 officers and 1,780 men. While serving as a squadron flagship, Scharnhorst carried an additional ten officers and 61 enlisted men.

She was armed with nine 28 cm (11.1 in) L/54.5 guns arranged in three triple gun turrets: two turrets forward, one superfiring—Anton and Bruno—and one aft—Caesar. The design also enabled the ship to be up-gunned with six 15-inch guns which never took place. Her secondary armament consisted of twelve 15 cm (5.9 in) L/55 guns, fourteen 10.5cm L/65 and sixteen 3.7 cm (1.5 in) SK C/30 L/83, and initially ten 2cm (0.79 in) C/30 anti-aircraft guns. The number of 2 cm guns was eventually increased to thirty-eight. Six 53.3 cm (21.0 in) above-water torpedo tubes, taken from the light cruisers Nürnberg and Leipzig, were installed in 1942.



Featured Major naval battle - Jutland

The Battle of Jutland (German: Skagerrakschlacht, the Battle of Skagerrak) was a naval battle fought by the British Royal Navy's Grand Fleet under Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, against the Imperial German Navy's High Seas Fleet under Vice-Admiral Reinhard Scheer during the First World War. The battle unfolded in extensive manoeuvring and three main engagements (the battlecruiser action, the fleet action and the night action), from 31 May to 1 June 1916, off the North Sea coast of Denmark's Jutland Peninsula. It was the largest naval battle and the only full-scale clash of battleships in that war. Jutland was the third fleet action between steel battleships, following the smaller but more decisive battles of the Yellow Sea (1904) and Tsushima (1905) during the Russo-Japanese War. Jutland was the last major battle in world history fought primarily by battleships.

Germany's High Seas Fleet intended to lure out, trap, and destroy a portion of the Grand Fleet, as the German naval force was insufficient to openly engage the entire British fleet. This formed part of a larger strategy to break the British blockade of Germany and to allow German naval vessels access to the Atlantic. Meanwhile, Great Britain's Royal Navy pursued a strategy of engaging and destroying the High Seas Fleet, thereby keeping German naval forces contained and away from Britain and her shipping lanes.

The Germans planned to use Vice-Admiral Franz Hipper's fast scouting group of five modern battlecruisers to lure Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty's battlecruiser squadrons into the path of the main German fleet. They stationed submarines in advance across the likely routes of the British ships. However, the British learned from signal intercepts that a major fleet operation was likely, so on 30 May Jellicoe sailed with the Grand Fleet to rendezvous with Beatty, passing over the locations

SPOTLIGHT ON DAVE DE WET (In his words)

This month we look at the incredibly interesting life of Dave de Wet. My word, Tattler is in awe of the man's memory and the great breadth of his sea-faring experience. Enjoy the read!

FAMILY

My parents were both brought up in the Strand and attended Hottentots Holland School. I was born in Somerset West on 28 Feb 1941. Dad was then a SAAF pilot serving in North Africa. He ended the war decorated with the DFC and AFC. Our first ancestor in SA was Midshipman Jacobus de Wet who arrived in Table Bay onboard the NIGTEVEGT on 19 Aug 1693. My mother was a Davidson, descended from Vikings who raided and then settled Scotland. My Grandpa George arrived in SA from Dundee in 1890 aged six.

My first name David was to honour the Davidsons. My second name Pierre is the French version of my father's name Pieter to honour my Huguenot ancestors and de Wet is our Dutch family name. I was followed by my brothers Phillip and Pieter and sister Carol. We boys attended Wynberg Boys Junior and High Schools and Carol the Girls schools.

Wynberg was great school and my claim to fame there is that I took the Junior Cross Country record on a scorching hot day and was a sergeant and silver bugler in the school band in STD 8.

I wanted to become a sailor, so at age 12 I reported to SAS UNITIE in Table Bay harbour and joined the SA Sea Cadet Corps. This became my great interest and hobby.

Then Dad came along with a brochure of the South African Nautical College General Botha at Gordon's Bay. Wow! I could do STD's 9 and 10 there learning about things I loved and then go to the Naval Gymnasium. Those two years were super. I became a Senior Cadet Captain, the silver bugler in the band, captain of the boxing team, coxswain of the pulling team, took the cross country record, and won the Queens Gold Medal.

During 1958 I decided that I wanted to see the world first so I withdrew my application for the Naval Gymnasium and selected T&J Harrison Line of Liverpool as the shipping company I would like to do my cadetship with. They had a fleet of 28 ships of various types.

CAREER ONE

My first ship was the SS TRADER, an old pre-war steamer. The officers were from Liverpool and the crew from Barbados. They all spoke English as their native language, as did I. The only person I understood was the other cadet who hailed from London. It took a couple of weeks to master the strange accents.

My cadetship was spent doing voyages on different ships with mostly West Indian crews, sailing from UK ports to the West Indies, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and Southern Africa regions. I loved the tropics and had adventures ashore in exotic places. After my cadetship and sailing as Fourth Mate, I signed off in Cape Town and immediately started my studies at Granger Bay.

After two months I passed my certificate and then went to talk to the Navy and saw a Lt Cdr M Kramer. I was immediately rushed from place to place filling in forms as an officer selection board was sitting the very next day.

I appeared before the board, was given the thumbs up, told that it would take a few months for the papers to go through Pretoria, and to get a temporary job. Minor issues like rank and pay weren't mentioned. I phoned the Marine Manager of Thesens Coasters and told him my story. He said to join the HERERO COAST in two days' time. I asked him what I would be sailing as. He replied Chief Officer and put the phone down. From Fourth Officer to Chief Officer in one step and we hadn't even met each other. Three months trading on the coast followed.

On 27 November 1962, as a new Acting Sub Lieutenant, I joined the training ship SAS BLOEMFONTEIN moored in Simons Bay. Slt T Honiball took charge of me. A visit to Manuel the tailor was followed by a call at the Seven Seas Club to apply for membership. On BLOEMFONTEIN I read standing orders and so forth and learned the trick of saying "Carry on Chief" when a CPO made a report to you and you had no idea what was to happen next. Then I was appointed to SAS TRANSVAAL, a Loch class frigate, and had to learn all the NATO terminology and naval onboard procedures before I could be entrusted with a watch as OOW. It was a case of on the job training for all the junior officer tasks that came to me, like Boats Officer, Canteen Officer, Mess decks Officer, Transport Officer and then Gunnery Officer, Forecastle Officer, and Armaments Accounting Officer.

What with keeping the 1200 – 1600 and 0000 – 0400 watches, doing divisional work, preparing for shoots that were to take place and being at action stations when not on watch, life was really tough. In January 1964 I attended the SLT Qualifying Course (the course I should have attended before doing those previous jobs). I was able to enjoy the course and do very well.

After the SLQ course I was appointed to NAVAL COLLEGE (previously the General Botha) as a Training Officer for the officer candidates selected from the Naval Gymnasium, being trained there alongside the General Botha cadets. I found myself teaching coastal navigation, navigation instruments, and seamanship subjects. I also worked with the National Institute for Personnel Research (NIPR,) who had for years been highly successful in developing selection techniques for pilots for the SAAF, and had now been engaged to do the same for navy officers.

In between courses I spent short periods on the new frigates and also on SAS SOMERSET when she was needed for longer term tasks away from Simons Town. The most interesting one was to assist SA Harbours and the SA Navy diving team with the salvage of a tug which got holed and sank in East London harbour.

While we were in East London, I was advised that a Naval Watch keeping Examination Board was to be held two days after our scheduled arrival back in Simons Town. This was very awkward as I had no access to the classified documentation I needed to study. When we got back I rushed around the new frigates borrowing books and getting experts to run over the weapons systems and procedures with me. Having had plenty of good appropriate experience, the Board I had feared was a piece of cake. There were 13 candidates and only two passed which did my reputation no harm.

My next appointment was to SAS WALVISBAAI, a Ton class minesweeper in October 1965 as Navigation and Communications Officer. Service in minesweepers was fun and most of the officers were junior and single, so we had the energy and the time to party. Our two-ship entry into Knysna for the Republic Festival in 1966 was exciting and the celebrations noteworthy.

In August 1966 I was appointed to SAS SIMONSBERG as PF Training Officer at the New Entry Training School until April 1967 when my promotion group started our Lieutenants Qualifying Course. This was the biggest group to date and we enjoyed a high powered series of most interesting courses until December when our promotion to Lieutenant and our new appointments came through.

To my complete surprise I was appointed to NOIC SIMONSTOWN for duties as Flag Lieutenant to the Chief of the Navy VAdm HH Biermann SSA OBE. I spent a year in that post and it provided a fascinating insight into the workings at the top level. At one point in 1968 the Admiral called me into his office and announced that he and his retinue were invited to visit the Argentine Navy. "You will be my retinue" he said and laughed. That visit was fascinating. The military was running Argentina at that time so wherever we went it was with flags flying, motorcycle outriders waving the traffic away and security vehicles ahead and astern of us.

The Admiral was awarded a neck decoration by their President for his work in fostering relations and joint exercises with Argentina and I was awarded the Medalla de Oro de la Armada Argentina for being a fine fellow. It pays to move in the right circles.

At the end of 1968 my selection as First Lieutenant designate of Submarine No 2 was announced and I was appointed to SAS SIMON VAN DER STEL temporarily for watchkeeping duties for two months before starting various submarine related courses in preparation for transfer to France at the end of 1969. In April I was again appointed to SAS SIMON VAN DER STEL as Acting Executive Officer. That was fun, being second in command of a destroyer as a junior lieutenant, even though only temporarily.

This was the year that I courted a sweet girl from Rhodesia, Marian Coombes, who was training to be a nurse. We got married in the chapel at NAVAL COLLEGE in Gordon's Bay and left for France some months later.

The designated captain of our submarine was Woody Woodburne who was a diver, surfer, and had hunted game in Swaziland. He knew the sea and had the killer instinct. If we, the crew, could get the submarine to peak efficiency, he would sink the enemy and make the escape. I made a deal with the Coxswain, WO Eddy Joffe, that we would do all that we could to be the best, and could play good cop bad cop as required. Ha. He said "I'll be the bad cop". With a great team of guys, we became the best foreign submarine to be worked up in France and, off the record were told that we were better than many French submarines.

Back in SA we settled down and then conducted the first seaborne operation by Special Forces leading to the establishment of two Reconnaissance Commandoes. Senior Officer Submarines, Cdre M Kramer summonsed me to his awesome presence in January 1973. He wanted the Submarine Flotilla to establish a full Personnel Department and wanted me to do the job. For the next two years, that's what I did. Training was adapted to suit the user/maintainer system followed by the French, and special submarine mustering's were established. What Kramer wanted, he got.

The first Submarine Commanding Officers Course to be run in SA was then held and I was the only student. Peter Fougstedt ran the shore phase and Woody Woodburne the sea phase, and they pounded their wisdom and experience into my head. SAS MARIA VAN RIEBEECK had completed the first full submarine refit done in SA and I took command on 4 February 1975. I was a senior Lt Cdr, about to turn 34 years old, the father of two lovely daughters and life was good. We carried out the first successful live torpedo firing and sank SAS VRYSTAAT south of Cape Point on 14 April 1975. We worked at developing doctrine and procedures for submarine launched mines and for special operations with Recce's; and conducted intelligence gathering around ports to the north.

In September 1976 I was plucked out of MARIA and appointed to NOIC SIMONSTOWN for duties with NHQ, Dir. of Planning to take over from Woody Woodburne as Project Officer SA for Projects PICNIC and CORONA, the acquisition of corvettes and submarines from France. Then I was sent back to the Flotilla in Feb 1977 to handle a number of projects at flotilla level including facilities for the

new submarines.

The new corvettes and submarines were then cancelled when France acceded to the UN Arms Embargo on SA, and I took over command of SAS EMILY HOBHOSE from Dolf Auer on 16 September 1977. In April 1978 I was appointed as Squadron Operations officer with the focus being on a half-life refit for the Daphne's, running Submarine Commanding Officers Courses, and the operational efficiency of the boats.

One highlight was the four weeks Lt Cdr "Chubby" Howell and I spent with the Israeli submarine squadron. The upshot was that the Israeli's sent two officers to attend the next submarine OC's course, and were so impressed that their flotilla commander himself attended the next one.

In 1980 I attended Naval Staff Course No 13 at Muizenberg. What a stressful/amazing period that was. On completion I was appointed as Officer Commanding Submarine Flotilla and promoted to Captain shortly thereafter. Staff Course had brought home to me how ignorant I was, so I signed up for a part time Diploma in Business Management and again underwent a great learning experience. Under pressure from Warrant Officer H Porteus to have management principles taught to the Warrant Officers, I got some Citizen Force MBA graduates to draft up a similar course, and ran a voluntary, unofficial, after-hours WO's Management Course. WO's from other units heard of this and asked to join. It was a big success and a repeat course run. What fine, professional men they were. The difficulties the navy had professed to have with such a course suddenly evaporated and an official one was developed.

Then my life was turned upside down. Unicorn Lines was an amalgamation of Smiths, African and Thesens Coasters. Their Marine Director responsible for 17 ships, Captain Basil Algar was due to retire. They asked Safmarine, a shareholder in Unicorn, to help find a successor, and Capt Jim Buchanan, their personnel head phoned me. I told him I was very happy in the navy. Let's go ahead with the recruitment process Jim said, and if you get a firm offer you can then decide. I got a firm offer. At a family meeting none of us had a firm view, so we tossed a coin; Navy and Pretoria or Unicorn and Durban. The coin came up Durban and my resignation went in. The Reserve Force turned down my application to join as they felt I was too senior, but they later relented and joined on 10 Sept 1984 and I could then rejoin the Seven Seas Club.

CAREER TWO

On 1 February 1983 I started with Unicorn at their Marine HQ on Maydon Warf. I thought I would just follow Capt Algar about and absorb wisdom, but he had other ideas. He made me follow the superintendents about for a few weeks and then made me a Marine Superintendant in charge of the non-engineering aspects of a few vessels. I muddled my way along and got the hang of things.

In 1984 I was appointed to the board as an executive director and became the Marine Director, responsible for the maintenance and crewing and efficiency of the fleet, and for some other marine related commercial activities like life raft sales and services, which section grew over the next few years as other companies were added.

My first actions were based on what I knew from the navy. The organisation structure was changed and weekly Captains Rounds of the headquarters buildings and workshops introduced. There was resistance at first but order, cleanliness and safety improved steadily. Regular briefings and newsletters kept everyone informed. The elected head of the Marine Works Council (we weren't unionised) was a fine fellow whom I treated as if he were the Master at Arms or Coxswain. Minor

issues were sorted before they became problems. We had zero absenteeism during the strikes and labour unrest of that time.

Training of merchant navy cadets was an expensive business and the dropout rate of cadets and officers was around 17% per year. We paid for the training and lost them to associated activities like the ports, agency, stevedoring and marine survey. The Dept of Education said that the cost per student of the new General Botha at Granger Bay was unacceptable and suggested that the Cape Technicon take over the facility. On an overseas trip I visited the expert on British MN training, an ex GB cadet, Professor David Moreby who had pioneered the Brit change over to technicons and then to universities of technology for the provision of maritime education. He kindly agreed to come over to SA and brief the industry and GB Old Boys on the subject. The end result was that the changeover took place. In order to benefit from the new training levy being introduced on industry we needed to form a Maritime Industry Training Board to approve training programs for cost recovery purposes. I lobbied the industry and got it going and then got stuck with the Chairman's job.

Unicorn's coastal trade needed revitalising and two beautiful French built RORO ships, which were laid up in France were purchased. Getting them commissioned and into the trade was an interesting challenge. They had surplus accommodation so I introduced a very limited coastal passenger service on these and other vessels. This was more of an adventure type of experience and the aim was not profit but to promote maritime awareness amongst the general public. Safmarine followed suit on the foreign going side.

I became Chairman of the SA Shipowners Association. At another point Unicorn was requested to play a more active role in the Association of Shipping lines. I innocently attended a meeting and found myself elected as Vice Chairman, and not long thereafter the Chairman resigned and I was stuck with the Chairman's job. We as Unicorn saw the need for a National Maritime Policy and supported the call by the Chief of the Navy, VAdm G Syndercombe and Mr Bernal Floor of the University of Stellenbosch to establish a committee to reach an understanding on what was required. The annual National Maritime Conference was born and the Floor Committee got to work. I was designated to support and follow this process, and also look after our interests on the SACOB Transport Advisory Committee.

After five years as Marine Director I became Director Projects and Planning in April 1989 to get a better idea of where coastal shipping was going, what vessel configuration would best serve those needs, and to follow and influence maritime and transport policy issues. In January 1991 I took over as Director SA Liner Services running the coastal container and RORO services and managing the fleet of containers and RORO equipment.

My wife Marian had purchased a business in Durban but this was not prospering. Our two daughters were in their late teens. Marian decided that I was surplus to her requirements and that's how I came to meet and marry Iris McGuicken, a half Scots, half German girl with a teenage son. That boy could have been a problem, but Ryan and I got on like a house on fire. His German grandfather had served in and was sunk on U300 during the war, so it was easy to convince Ryan to become a submariner as well. Grandpa had survived the sinking and became a POW in Scotland.

I became Director Special Projects in 1993 where numerous African port privatisation possibilities were pursued along with other interesting activities such as assistance to the SAN with the acquisition of a replacement for SAS TAFELBERG.

In January 1997, I moved to Grindrod as Director Terminals and Projects to consolidate our group logistics offerings and seek expansion of our various terminal activities. Terminals in Maputo and Walvis Bay became options and then the privatisation of the port of Maputo and most of its

terminals was advertised. A nice international consortium of like-minded people came together and we worked long and hard to put a strong and successful bid together. I was also Chairman of an internationally owned Mozambique Ships Agency company which was struggling to stay alive.

Then in 1999 the world economy took a downturn and shipping took a big hit. All the divisions became borderline, which wasn't a problem as the group was strong, and we were negotiating the purchase of Island View Shipping. However, we were taking delivery of a new-build tanker without a fixed charter, and rates had dropped to rock bottom. The bleeding from this could take us down. It was time for quick and firm action. I had to negotiate our way out of the Maputo Port consortium and the other projects in the pipeline. My job was disappearing. I was 58 years old. My second wife Iris was taking voluntary retrenchment. This was an ideal time for us both to take a break and the company was agreeable. I also had to extricate myself from the chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Maritime Transport. This was a committee to keep the minister of transport advised. We did some good work amongst ourselves, but the minister was bogged down with taxis, overloaded trucks and broken roads and didn't know the difference between a VLCC and a Bunker Barge.

The new plan was to spend a year caravanning throughout SA and then to re-assess the situation. Then we were struck a mighty blow. Iris was found to have advanced cancer in one kidney and in the lymphatic system. We expected three months of life and were pleasantly surprised as this was progressively extended to nearly two years. There were numerous "last visits" and last other things to repeatedly enjoy and appreciate.

Some six months or so after I had left the group, their situation had stabilised, and a new opportunity presented itself. I was recalled on a consultancy basis to examine the feasibility of a building a big bulk terminal in Richards Bay. It was a go and further work followed. The group later ended up back with the old projects which we had dropped, as they were natural fits.

RETIREMENT

When Iris passed on in 2001 I was 60 years old. I did a little travelling and then got a phone call from Chris Moon who said they needed temporary help at the Warfare School in Simons Town teaching Navigation and Meteorology. I agreed and Alan Green, the OC of SAS SIMONSBURG arranged a call up. Change was everywhere. Keeping up was becoming more difficult as my neural synapses were rusting and clogging. But then I realised that teaching was about principles that don't change. The telling of true stories of all one's mistakes and disasters helps to make the lessons meaningful. The perfect job for an old guy. My call-ups stopped when I reached 65. What a lovely time that was, and the club became my second home again. A Russian cruise with Keith Meyer and visits to Australia, Vietnam, and China, were interspersed with some consulting with Capt/Dr Jock Deacon and his team to produce a draft White Paper on Maritime Transport Policy, and also teaching maritime subjects at the Durban University of Technology and the SA Maritime School and Transport College.

Teaching English to foreigners seemed like a good idea so I enrolled for a University of Cambridge CELTA course held in Durban in 2006 at age 65. I nearly came short. My short-term memory was wonky and I would have to repeatedly look up definitions of things that I knew and would then immediately forget them again. We taught immigrant/refugee types who wanted free lessons with tea and sandwiches. The instructors said that it usually only young students who connected with the class, but that I was saved by my sense of humour, and got a pass, haha. The Philippines was on my bucket list to visit. I contacted a guy who had been my junior and in my division at GB some 50 years previously, who, after a varied and adventurous life had married and settled there and asked his advice on what to see and do. "Report to me on arrival" was his response; which I did in January

2008.

His wife looked me over and decided I was marriage material and set about introducing me to her unmarried friends from her university days. That's how it happened. That's why I have a third lovely wife and a bright, eight-year-old daughter. That's how we came to buy a 1.3-hectare property on the slopes of a mountain overlooking the sea on the Island of Negros near the city of Dumaguete. That's how I learned that subsistence farming is for the birds. The large industrial scale farmer can always undercut the peasant.

We weren't very happy with the local junior school near that property in the Philippines, so we decided to come and live in SA in the Deep South for three years so that our daughter Tarryn could do pre-school and Grades R and One in Fish Hoek to get her English sorted out. Then we would review the situation. Well, we got here in October 2013. Lucita, my wife from farming stock, has settled happily in suburbia. Tarryn loves FHPS and I enjoy talking nonsense with my old buddies at the Seven Seas Club so we are still "reviewing the situation"!

IRISH COMPASSION

A man was sitting on a blanket at the beach. He had no arms and no legs.

Three women, from England, Wales, and Ireland, were walking past and felt sorry for the poor man.

The English woman said, 'Have you ever had a hug?' The man said, 'No,' so she gave him a hug and walked on.

The Welsh woman said, 'Have you ever had a kiss?' The man said, 'No,' so she gave him a kiss and walked on.

The Irish woman came to him and said, 'ave ya ever been fooked laddie?' The man broke into a big smile and said, 'no'.

She said, 'Aye - Ya will be when the tide comes in.'

And One for Theo

'Doc I can't stop singing 'The Green, Green Grass of Home'

'That sounds like Tom Jones syndrome.'

'Is it common?'

'It's not unusual.'

And there we close it for this month. Tattler wishes all members and their families a most happy and healthy month. And to those in the Cape, may it rain plenty!