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GENERAL BOTHA OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

<http://www.generalbotha.co.za>

February 2010

JOINT NEWSLETTER

Has your address changed? Please send your updated details to Tony Nicholas Chairman Cape Town (details above).

Do you have an interesting article for this newsletter? Please send your contributions to Dennis Henwood, dhenwood@iafrica.com Phone: +27 (0)21 6716373. Fax: +27 (0)86 6706710.

Can you read this Newsletter? If not please let us know. We can send you larger print if it is necessary.

Well, here we are in 2010, and a happy New Year to you all! Here in SA we have been pumped up with an event happening in the middle of the year, and all we hear is "World Cup 2010". One wonders what will happen after 2010. It is as if the World is going to stop and nothing further will happen or planned there after!! The other day, here in Cape Town, the Rugby board only just managed to salvage a Super 14 Rugby fixture. The event will clash with a World Cup fixture in the city and FIFA had decreed that no other major sports event is allowed to take place coincidentally. Thankfully sanity prevailed and Rugby got its way. Please take note of the advertised events for your region detailed below, and please make your commitment by booking and paying well in advance as requested. We look forward to some great reunions and gatherings, and most of all the report backs that we can all read about in the next newsletter.

The Simon's Town Dockyard has been refreshing the ships' crests displayed on the Selbourne dock wall. Jimmy Cook and his team from Atlatech very generously spent time re-painting the GB crest – Thank you Jimmy.

In this edition we have a bumper newsletter with news and interesting stories about Obies around the world. The tug Wolraad Woltemade is mentioned twice. What a great ship she was and fondly remembered by many Obies. Sadly we have to report that she left our shores last December having been sold to an Indian owner who re-named her *ICON*. She sailed from Cape Town and last reported on the beach in India being scrapped. There are also rumblings about starting branches in China and Auckland. Well the more gatherings we can have, the better – the legend lives on!

I had the pleasure of working together with Mike Brown (1960/61) on a survey job. Mike tells me that he lives on a boat presently moored next door to George Stibbe (1960/61) in France. A small world when you come from a famous training establishment and 50 years down the track you end up as neighbours in a foreign marina! We look forward to seeing you both at *your* 50-year reunion in Cape Town next month. Lastly there is the question Patrick Atwood asks of the famous piano at Granger Bay, and coincidentally part of the answer can be found in Ivor Little's recently published book "Above Board and Under Cover" which we review further on in the newsletter. Enjoy the read – *Scribe*.

FORTHCOMING CAPE TOWN EVENTS

- **Tuesday 9th March**, 1230 for 1300 – Pub lunch, Royal Cape Yacht Club.
- **Saturday 6th March 2010**, 1030 for 1100 – Annual General Meeting, Kelvin Grove Club, Camp Ground Road, Newlands, next door to Newlands Cricket Club.
- **Saturday 6th March 2010**, 1230 for 1300 – Commissioning Day Lunch, Kelvin Grove Club, Camp Ground Road, Newlands, next door to Newlands Cricket Club. Partners welcome. Dress: club blazer and tie preferred or ladies equivalent. Price R210 p.p., cash bar. Note this price is lower than last year. Should any member find difficulty with the price please contact a committee member. **What is vitally important to us is that you attend the function. Wives and partners are welcome.** We look forward to seeing you all there.
- **Sunday 7th March 2010 @ 1000** – War Memorial Service, at our cenotaph, corner of Heerengracht and Hertzog Boulevard, Cape Town. Followed by sumptuous refreshments at the Mission to Seafarers. In case of inclement weather the service shall be held at the Mission to Seafarers, Duncan Road, Table Bay Harbour. Dress - club blazer and tie preferred or lounge suit, with medals, or ladies equivalent. Wives, partners, girlfriends all welcome.
- **Booking for the Commissioning Day Lunch** is important, please RSVP by Wednesday 3rd March 2010 to: Kathy or Louise Nicholas: phone 021-788 5957 mornings or evenings; or by Email: cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za; or Facsimile: 086 604 0811.
Pre-payment for the Commissioning Day Lunch would be appreciated by our over stressed Treasurer. Payment details in the Slop Chest section of this newsletter (Page14).

The GBOBA, Natal, AGM & Commissioning Day Dinner

TIME: Friday 19th March 2010 18h00 for 19h00
VENUE: Westville Country Club
COST: R100 – includes wine
BOOKING: Derek McManus W - 031 3039563
H - 031 7673719
Ernest Nellmapius ernestn@saol.com

KZN BRANCH NEWSLETTER DURBAN - JANUARY 2010

Greetings to all our readers from a cool and wet KZN. No doubt our summer is still on its way and if you like the heat come and visit us over the next two months.

We continue to enjoy excellent monthly lunches at the RNYC so Obies come down to the bay on the first Wednesday of every month. There are usually interesting visitors from afar and the lunches are an excellent way of catching up with old friends and general goings on in the maritime world. Neil Brown and Dave de Wet visited towards the end of last year and it was good seeing them again.

The Sea Cadets requested financial support and the Committee agreed to a donation to them for the purchase of equipment etc.

The Christmas lunch held on Tuesday 15th December at the Westville Country Club was a great success with 32 Obies and friends in attendance.

The venue was spacious and very conducive to networking and exchanging of yarns both before and after lunch.

We enjoyed an excellent buffet meal with a nice selection of starters, main and deserts with plenty for seconds. During the meal we enjoyed wines and port for toasts at the end. Many of the Obies related interesting stories and jokes so there was a happy buzz throughout the lunch.

Thanks a lot to Derek for organising the venue and others who helped with arrangements etc.

The old post box will be cancelled as it is no longer viable. In future please use **PO Box 22015, Glenashley, 4022**

FROM THE BRIDGE OF ss CAPE TOWN - Chairman Tony Nicholas

Another eventful year has passed across our bows and I look forward to reporting at the forthcoming AGM. I trust we shall enjoy your support at this important event followed by our Memorial Service on the Sunday. This year we face some challenges in arranging the Memorial Service and as usual Old

Boys have come to the rescue, many thanks from the committee to them. Therefore there is no reason for any local members not to show your support at these events. Yet again we have a class reunion attending, 1959/60, hosted by Eddie Bremner. Many shipmates are travelling from overseas which is most commendable. Planning for 2011 class reunions, 1960/61 – 1971 – 1981, continues and I urge all class mates to take note of the details communicated in this publication and under separate cover and make your travel arrangements early. The support from these reunion classes is overwhelming. The association continues to support students of Maritime Studies at Simons Town School, presenting binoculars to a worthy student namely Nathan Magerman who incidentally collected a bag full of awards at the ceremony. We also hosted our “local” widows at our year-end lunch in December which as usual was successful and greatly enjoyed by the ladies. These initiatives are only possible through your, the Old Salts, continued support of the association. Your support is greatly valued by the committee and again thanks to you all; may the Legend Live On.

SOS

NAME	CLASS	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS
David Sharrock	1974	Mulbarton, Johannesburg
Charles Harmon	1947/48	Parow, Cape Town
David Mac Cullum	1957/58	Kelvin, Johannesburg.
Norman Young	1939/40	Harare, Zimbabwe

Dennis Hayhow [and GBOBA] is looking to re-establish contact with an old friend of his from their sea cadet days in Brakpan, Leslie **Keith Richardson** cadet no 1528 class 1947/48. “I know he did not go to sea. I last saw him when he came to Durban to commission the crane on the south pier, that was years ago”.

An old friend [and GBOBA] is looking to re-establish contact with **David Sturgess** 1955/56. “I am trying to locate a friend from the '60's. I believe that he went on to become a tanker captain. We met during the early/mid sixties aboard the ocean-going tug Collins Sea (Marine Diamonds), operating off the coast of South West Africa.”

All my efforts to contact the above have failed. Please all assist in locating these AWOLS.

SCRANBAG

K.D. ELLAM 1985 #2863. Ken attended a Cape Town monthly lunch recently and although we still have his residence as Fish Hoek he shall be moving his family lock stock and kitchen sink to Singapore soon. Following a period serving at sea with Swire’s he has been appointed ashore based in Singapore as Marine Superintendent for Swire Salvage. Please keep in contact Ken and we look forward to some interesting newsletter material.

MBG WILLMAN 1956/57 #2028. Our Old Boys network really works. After Glenn had gone AWOL I received a welcome letter all the way from Spain where he lives on a sheep farm. A far cry from the Bothie, he writes: “I retired in 1960 having completed a ten year stint as a lecturer with Saudi Aramco Marine Department. Apart from a ten year period in chemical tankers, VLCC & ULCC the highlight of my career was the appointment to the Safmarine Tug Division when Wolraad Woltemade and John Ross were still on the drawing board. The complexity of shoving two Mirlees K Majors into the hulls was feat in salvage and towing circles that many said could not be done successfully and so it was to prove with neither vessel ever to achieve the full potential of the drawing board calculations. I can still hear the shouts of the surveyor appointed by the British Ship Research Association yelling at the bridge of the Wolraad to stop towing when at 110% output, the bollards of the jetty at BP Loch Finnart outside Glasgow started to move in the direction of the tug during the bollard pull trials when strain gauges showed in excess of 200 tonnes pull.”

Barry J. SMITH 1974 # 2489. “I, along with my wife Hazel have jumped Stress Ship and now lead a wonderful sedate life! For about six months we work in Alberta, Canada with the Rocky Mountains as a back yard looking out for forest fires. What an incredibly stress less job! Miles from civilization, no boss, no dress code, no office politics . . . just our lonesome selves with an incredible view from the office window! The remaining time is spent on our sailboat in Nanaimo, a small harbour on the east

coast of Vancouver Island. Now if only this whacky weather would oblige, we'd do more sailing. Snow sailing . . . believe me . . . it's not a whole lot'ta fun!"

G.R. STIBBE 1960/61 #2190. Although we still have George's residential address as Suffolk, England, he recently wrote in; "Since 2006 cruising waterways in France". This is on a very comfortable looking cabin cruiser Snow Goose. We look forward to some entertaining newsletter material from George and Celia.

Ken DOWNIE 1987 #2900. "I've been in Australia for about 2 ½ years now. Had a call from Charlie Kingon 1980 a few weeks back and assuming he's coming back here on the SAFMARINE MERU I intend catching up when he is next in Melbourne. Previously I was the National Operations Manager for Hanjin in Sydney. Left Hanjin to join start up venture intending to create a viable coastal shipping service. Sadly the company went belly up after only a few weeks as the GFC loomed! I now work for Patrick Stevedores as an Operations Planner at their Melbourne head office. We run ship planning and crane allocation from a National Operations Centre from where we look after Fremantle, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane Terminals."

R.J. MACKIE 1977 #2591. Richard went AWOL recently but a lead was provided by Konrad Eriksen. "Sorry life been hectic the last 2 years, and have been studying. My kind management allowed me to go do my Masters F.G. under full pay in 2008 so it was all full on last year. Had to do the WHOLE one year course Mates/Masters, anyhow all good. Since April 2005 I've been working on the NZ coast for cement company Golden Bay, who own one ship!! Which translates to 4weeks on, 4 weeks off plus one month annual leave as well!!" Some people have it easy.

G.A. KINGS 1979 #2647. Graham joined Safmarine as Cadet in 1978. Attended G.B. 1979. Served mostly on salvage tugs, John Ross & Wolraad Woltemade. Resigned from Safmarine September 1985 and joined the training centre for seamen, ultimately becoming Senior Lecturer of Electronic Navigation Systems. Also obtained national higher diploma - post school education. May 1991, Principal of the Rossing Foundation Adult Education Centre in Luderitz. January 1993, non-maritime courses ceased and the centre became the dedicated "Maritime training centre for Namibia." Most vivid memory of Namibia, being introduced to Queen Elizabeth (1992 visit). August 2000 returned to Cape Town. 2002 posted with NOSA to Hong Kong. Returned a year later to NOSA Cape Town office where he became office manager. 2009 Quality Manager: Auditing for NOSA.

R.B. SHEARER 1960/61 #2186. Following a number of years as a harbour pilot in Cape Town Roger has recently retired I am reliably informed. Now he has no excuse not to attend some Bothie functions or reunions. What did you do before joining the harbour service sir?

G.M. BYROM 1985 #2858. George has been in Kenya for over two years coming from Richards Bay working for Wilhelmsen Ships Service Ltd as Country Operations Manager for Kenya & Tanzania. Guess I should point my 4x4 in his direction for a visit soon.

R.H. LOVELL 1975 #2497. "Noted I made an appearance in "Scranbag". Yes, I have taken up the position of Marine Manager/Harbour Master in the port of Esperance on the South East Coast of Western Australia. It has approximately the same latitude as Plettenberg Bay. Esperance is a beautiful harbour in the Recherche Archipelago. Hundreds of miles of sugar-white sandy beaches, impossibly blue waters. It is the cleanest port I have ever seen. Children play on a white beach and swim in the harbour, while across the harbour a Cape-size Iron Ore carrier loads in a dust-free environment." Idyllic methinks.

P.C. ZANDEE 1964 #2259. Pim retired last April, he writes; "Got appointed to the SCR (Special Casualty Representative) list at Lloyds. Have just returned from Madagascar where I represented one of the International Group of P&I Clubs as "Marine Emergency Response Coordinator" for one of their entered bulk carriers that touched a shoal patch rounding Southern Madagascar, opened up the E/R, flooded, abandoned and then some hours later drifted aground where three days later she suffered severe structural damage separating the E/R and superstructure from #5 hold spilling bunkers. On standby to do a wreck reduction next month but what with political instability in that country nobody is making any decisions thus probably spend Xmas at home. Lekker work! Keeps me from being underfoot." Indeed.

R.A. DICKINSON 1976 #2549. From Australia Ron has relocated to China, Vopak Terminals in Shandong, wherever that may be. There are two other Obies in China, **Roy Shipp** 1949/50 in Hong Kong and **Alex Sharp** 1961/62 in Shanghai. Sufficient numbers to launch a China branch? I am sure the three of you have some interesting anecdotes for the newsletter. Please tell.

R.B.F. KROS 1947/48 #1522. We recently reported that Raymond had published another book. For those who are interested Ray now has a website on which one can source all the books he has penned. Web site: www.spiritual.co.za email: info@spiritual.co.za.

Brian DAWKINS 1982 #2757. “Doc” contacted us with an update; “1996 - Chief Officer with De Beers Marine, Cape Town, Diamond Mining. 1999 - Left de Beers and opened a Restaurant. Continues to go to sea on contracts. 1980 to 1984 Safmarine, 1984 to 1986 Oil rigs, 1986 to 1998 - De Beers Marine (Chief Officer) 1998 to 2002 Contract work, reluctant restaurateur, NHD Marine Studies. 2002 - 2009 - Swire Pacific Offshore (Master), 2009 Senior DPO / Bargemaster on oil rigs in Brazil. I miss the working ships though so will probably return to that section of the industry again sometime. Relocated to Knysna where there's always a cold beer for old shipmates.” Contact detail available to take up the offer of a cold beer.

THE LEGEND LIVES ON

Pete van Gysen 1976, Neville Gibbs-Jones 1974, Ron Murray 1980 and myself [Nicola Murray] met recently as a Steering Committee to discuss the possibility of starting a Arabian Gulf GBOBA to bring Old Boys and Associates in the region together. Pete van Gysen offered to head up the group, with myself being Secretary. Our mission is to hold two functions a year, with the first being hosted in Qatar.

John Baxter 1961/62 has recently settled in Auckland, he writes; “I would really like to start up a branch here if possible. When I lived in Morayfield (about 80 kms north of Brisbane) my house sort of became the braai / meeting place for Obies in that area, so why not try and do the same here?” Peter O’Hare and Andy Fotheringham were planning to fly over from Australia for the inaugural Auckland GBOBA braai meeting.

I look forward to your entertaining report back, and good luck to both teams.

CLASS REUNIONS

Class 1959/60 is being coordinated by Eddie Bremner and he has shared their provisional itinerary with us for March this year. “Wednesday 3rd March everyone arrives. We will be staying at the Rocklands Guest House in Simons Town. I have arranged a welcoming braai for the evening (this will be an “icebreaker” seeing as we have not seen each other for 50 years). Thursday we will be travelling by bus to Bothie [Gordons Bay] for the morning parade and a visit to the establishment. The rest of the day will be flexible. Friday we will be visiting the S.A. Naval Museum and the Bothie exhibits before going on for a visit to a frigate, submarine and maybe the submarine simulator. In the evening we will be attending a cocktail party with the SAN before attending the Concert in the Drydock. Saturday we will attend the Bothie AGM and lunch. Sunday morning we will attend the Memorial Service. Sunday evening we will go on a Sunset Cruise from the V & A. If anyone still has any energy left after this we will have supper in the Waterfront.” [Chairman’s note: It would be a good idea to let me know of slop chest requirements to ensure I have sufficient stock on hand.]

Class 1971 [together with 1960/61 & 1981] planning forges ahead; dates planned are from 3rd to 8th March 2011. I trust all have begun their travel plans for this extravaganza. A reasonable response from the 1971 class but I expect more, FALL IN BOTH WATCHES! Dave Winser recently comments from the high seas: I did initially mention that it was pretty unlikely that I could get out there for March-11 as work and other related matters have been high on my agenda recently. However, just to recap on this, I will certainly keep it in mind and if I can – I will. If so, will bring my other half. So Don mentioned a rowing race – where are the whalers now? Must say, it would be grand to see everyone after 40 years. The mind boggles. Other than Neville, Freddie, Terry and yourself I haven’t seen anyone since ’71 and ’74. I’m still with London Ship Managers (reefers) although did have a break from them in 2009 for eight months when I tried another direction, also at sea, which wasn’t that

successful. Anyway back with them for time being so difficult to nail me down whether I'm able to make March-11. I'm on here (Al Mareekh) until the end of February then back home for a couple of months. Presently bound Iran via Gibraltar for bunkers stores etc thence the blasted Suez Canal and through pirate alley to the Gulf. Guess the Iranian need their bananas too." Dave, even sailors have leave and we are providing enough notice for you all to plan in advance. No excuses, give the missus a holiday down here, I promise the sun shall shine.

Further detail shall be communicated to the classes.

ANCHORS AWEIGH

J. TODD 1947/48. After G.B. James joined Anglo Saxon Petroleum Company [Shell Tankers] and after obtaining First Mate FG sailed with two north east coastal companies. In 1957 he joined the River Tyne Police in the U.K. and served on the force until 1977 when returned to sea as Master with Effluent Services on various ships until 1991. Passed away 18/01/2010.

C.T. CLARKE 1947/48. 1949 Cedric joined a firm of Chartered Accountants as an Audit Clerk. Six months later he spent eight months as Cadet on S.A.R.& H Ship ss Aloe. Thereafter returned to accounting and later commerce. 1958 qualified as Chartered Secretary and Spent 13 years with Caltex. Various positions, including retail manager for Central African territories, leaving in 1968 as Real Estate Manager. 1968 joined Estate Agency, Syfrets Trust Co, Ltd, Advancing to Property Sales Manager. 1973 joined the Board of Executors to become Managing Director of their property companies. 1980 self employed as an Investment Property Broker. Cedric held various positions on the Institute of Estate Agents before retiring and lived in Australia. Past Committee Member of the Association. Sadly passed away 07/01/2010.

N.T. WINSHIP 1944/45. Following my SOS in a recent publication it has been reported that Noel passed away about five years ago. We have no further detail of Noel and contributions welcome.

P. BROWNE 1952/53. Well know personality to many of us, Pat Browne passed away at his home in England peacefully 22nd November 2009. After Bothie, January 1954 to May 1969 he served at sea with Safmarine, latter five years as Master. Then May 1969 to 1993 he was ashore with Safmarine as Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent, Marine Manager, Executive Manager before retiring in 1993. Pat was previously a member of the War Memorial Fund Managing Committee and was a strong supporter of the GBOBA. He shall be missed. A memorial service shall be held at the Mission to Seafarers in Cape Town Friday 9th April at 15:00.

D.R. FANE 1940/41. Dennis passed away on the 23/02/2009, in Durban. After leaving the Bothie he joined the P.T engineering department in Cape Town. He then moved on to Port Elizabeth where he joined the Crusaders Football club, and played a lot of rugby. Later he joined the corporate world in Durban, where he met Anne. They then moved to Johannesburg, where he joined Shell until he retired in 1960. Anne writes: "We have two daughters and two grandsons. They were always fascinated about his stories he told with affection, about his life on the Bothie." Eulogy; Dennis is a character. Never short of a story about his exploits as a young boy aboard the training ship the General Botha or his travels around the Eastern Transvaal during his time with Shell. Other favourites included his rugby playing days in the Eastern Cape, his travels around Europe as a young man, his love affair with a pretty young dental nurse fresh off the mail ship from England and his many adventures with his family in the Berg and at Port St Johns. Dennis has an anecdote for every occasion and a nickname for everybody and everything, some of which cannot be repeated in Church. His old-fashioned values were sometimes at odds with a modern, politically correct world but when these worlds collided, the result was usually a fresh and colourful moniker for the offending party! Growing up as part of a small and somewhat distant family, Dennis developed the mental and physical toughness that enabled him to cope with the loneliness of life as an only child and the rigors of life aboard the General Botha. Dennis excelled as an athlete and rugby player and was an exceptionally fit and strong man right through his middle-years, still showing off by doing one-handed push-ups well into his fifties. He even challenged his physician to a wrist-wrestling match recently and won! But beneath this tough and occasionally uncompromising exterior, was a kind and sensitive soul. Determined that his new family would be different from his own, Dennis was completely devoted to Ann and utterly dedicated to Pam and Nats.

His fanatical support of the girls at their school galas is the stuff of legends, and family holidays were a regular and cherished event. Dennis was immensely proud of his family and was thrilled to have Matthew and Marc emulating his feats at water polo and at rugby. Dennis would often shed a tear at even the suggestion of a farewell, or while reminiscing over a family occasion or while watching the Springboks sing the National Anthem, and it is this sensitivity and compassion that endeared Dennis to so many people and produced a family that is so close and supportive. News of his passing reduced everyone that knew him to tears and drew messages of condolences from around the globe. He was loved and admired and will be sorely missed.

N.J. THOMPSON 1934/35. Norman passed away in 2003 after an eventful and interesting career. However his daughter, who had not seen him for many years, is looking for information of her father. Perhaps those of you who knew Norman could write to Wendy Ivison at wendyivison@hotmail.co.uk "The last time my father made contact with my family was in 1976 when his ex-wife (my Mom) was terminally ill. Since then I have attempted to locate Dad but with no success. As the years have gone by rather than an attempt to contact him my thoughts were whether he was still alive. A couple of weeks ago I did a repeat of my search on Google. This time I entered Dad's full name along with Walvis Bay where I believe he was Harbour Master, and Durban where I thought he was Harbour pilot, about 1950, when Mom, my sister and myself came back to the U.K. Lo and behold if his name didn't appear. I clicked and there he was. An entry under "Anchors Aweigh". I had such mixed feelings - excited to know he had been found and so sad that it was too late. Such is life. I am so glad that you placed the February 2004 newsletter on the Internet. Without the General Botha Old Boys Association I doubt if I would ever have achieved my goal. I am so grateful to you. I never knew that he was an Old Boy and I am pleased to know that he lived to a good age. Will any of your members remember him? I would love to hear from anyone who knew him or members of the family still in the Durban area. I know Dad had three bothers and adopted sons."

THE CADETS' PIANO

Patrick Atwood 1980 writes from New Zealand; I have a most unusual query which I'm hoping one of the Old Boys will be able to answer for me. I have wondered for some time about this, but never got around to asking what happened to the old piano that was in the cadet's lounge at Granger Bay. What was unusual about this piano is that it had a folding keyboard. I have subsequently found out that this type of piano was made for saving space and tended to be built for sailing ships that carried passengers; hence my interest in finding out what happened to it. It had had a hard life at the hands of the cadets! Not too many of us were able to play the piano, but that did not stop the occasional attempt. This leads me to my next (and more challenging – if that could be possible!) question: does anybody know the history of this piano? Did it come off a ship and, if so, which one? How did it land up at the General Botha; did something happen to the ship on her way past the Cape? I think it's unlikely that a ship would just get rid of its piano and there can't have been many (if any) ships with that kind of paraphernalia broken up in Cape Town. Should anyone be interested, I have come across the following info regarding this type of piano: The bass strings of this type of piano produced a somewhat percussive sound because they are shorter than usual. The earlier models were built with wooden frames, which are usually un-restorable to play, as the old wooden frame cannot stand the pressure of the strings tuned to pitch (several tons). However, if the frame was strengthened with metal beams then it is possible to tune, but the sound produced is a little different from the metal frame piano. I would be most interested to hear if anyone can shed any more light on this Bothie artifact. I don't expect that too many of us in our younger days will have given it much thought.

Denys Pitcher 1943/44 and former Captain Superintendent of the Ship writes in reply; The piano Patrick recalls came to Granger Bay when the GB assets were transferred from Gordon's Bay in 1966. It did service in the cadets lounge for a number of years. I recollect that some time between 1974 & 1978 a resident from Green Point who lived in the flats close to the GB offered to donate a piano to the cadets. I can't recall his name, his connection to the GB or the reason for the gift. His offer was accepted because by this time the folding mechanism of the old piano was defective and it was difficult to tune. It was then disposed of [if this had not already been done.] I do not know its earlier history or

its subsequent fate. To imagine that its former home was a sailing ship might be a little romantic – but who knows? The Green Point man’s gift now stands in the foyer of the Hotel School at Granger Bay though its location suggests that no-one ever sits at the keyboard any longer. I think it has now been silent for many years probably grieving the absence of lively cadets. Sketchy though this is, it could jog the memory of others who might wish to add their thoughts.

To add to the mystery Ivor Little 1953/54 and former staff member of the ship wrote in his recently published book titled *Above Board and Under Cover*; On another day Senior Cadet Captain, Sean Day 1967, spotted a distress flare next to Green Point lighthouse and as Duty Officer I took the small ex-Navy motor cutter, a good little sea boat, and a couple of cadets to investigate and found a wooden fishing boat completely disabled with engine trouble drifting off the lighthouse. We passed a line over and started to tow although, much to the consternation of her crew, instead of heading for the Docks and Fish Quay we towed them into Granger Bay. Phil Nankin [1941/42 and Captain-Superintendent of the Ship at the time] was waiting on the quay-side and promptly wanted to know what on earth I was doing? “I am claiming salvage” I replied! – Nearest port of refuge and all that”. Needless to say, we did not get a monetary payout from the owners, who pleaded poverty, but we did get a donation of a second hand piano for the cadets’ recreation room as a gesture of appreciation!

So now we know how the second piano was acquired but what of the history and subsequent fate of the original folding piano. No doubt there shall be further chapters of this intriguing story which we await eagerly from you Old Salts.

The next **GENERAL BOTHA Southern Lunch** will be held on Tuesday, 20 April 2010 at 1200 for 1300 at the Seven Seas Club, Simon's Town. Please telephone Brad Wallace-Bradley on 021-786-1957 or Ian Manning on 021-782-1559 to inform them of your intention to attend. Deadline for reservations: 1700 on Friday 16 April 2010.

The Seven Seas Club dress code requires shirts to have collars (i.e. no T-shirts or sweaters) and shoes to be worn with socks.

Gauteng Branch Annual Commissioning Day Luncheon

The Gauteng Branch will be holding its Annual Commissioning Day luncheon at the Golden Harvest Inn at Golden Harvest 2 complex, C R Swart Drive, Bramhoff on Sunday 28 March. Time 12h30. Dress smart casual. Wives, family, guests and visitors welcome. The price has yet to be determined along with the menu, but we are old frequenters of this venue and can promise a three-course meal at a reasonable price per head. Local members will be advised separately as further details become available. Ivor Little (ivorandanne@mweb.co.za).

Australia Branch News – Peter O’Hare

Our pre-Christmas lunch was held in Sydney in November. John Fisher and Wendy flew in from Adelaide for the day. Unfortunately their plane was very much delayed in departure from Adelaide resulting that they arrived for lunch at 1500, had a plate of food and a wine and then had to make their way back to the airport at 1600.

Other attendees were Rudie Auer, Grenville and Suzette Stevens, Peter and Jenny O’Hare, Stan Damp and Jinny Parsons. Charles Parsons was not able to attend.

Our Annual Commissioning Day lunch will be held in Sydney on Saturday 20th March at the Fortune Village Restaurant at the Bowlers Club, 95 York Street in Central Sydney.

Regards to all and please get in touch if you are going to be “Down Under”

Grenville Stevens (2189 60/61) Chairman

Andy Fotheringham (2525 ’76) Vice Chairman

Peter O’Hare (2247 ’64) Hon Secretary, peteroh@bigpond.com, Telephone 0417 028809.

UNITED KINGDOM BRANCH - Ted Fisher

Gentlemen.... I literally have next to nothing to report!! Snow and all associated weather problems have been the main national topic of conversation!!

The joint GBOBA/CONWAY Christmas Lunch in Lyndhurst went well as reported to me by Donald Neaves.....attendees Doug Wrathmall, Alan Garton, Donald Neaves, Rob Myburgh together with a visitor Harold Lincoln from the United States all accompanied by their ladies. Sorry I missed the do, however, Barbara and I did enjoy our 5-day Danube cruise from Vienna through to Budapest, Bratislava and return to Vienna.

Ahead is the Master Mariners Sea Pie Supper in Southampton on Friday next 5 February. Details were given in the November Newsletter so, if you have not contacted Donald Neaves by now you are too late!!

Further ahead I shall be looking to arranging the Spring/Summer lunch, probably again at Goodwood Chichester West Sussex. Some may say why always in the South? Well, in all my 11 years as UK Scribe, we down in this part of the country gather the same faces round the table. Obies are scattered far and wide within the UK, none are getting any younger, costs, travel with road congestion etc a nightmare. That said, those within the London Thames Valley, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex/Kent borders are within a two hour drive..... I'm always open to suggestions from members.....fresh impetus??

Before I'm corrected we had a very enjoyable function in London's Covent Garden some nine years ago well before the London Congestion was introduced. On that note, Cheers for now & best wishes to all. Ted Fisher, Tel: 01903 744400, Mob: 07702 635017, Email: tedefisher@aol.com.

Donor List for 2009 – Bruce van der Meulen (Treasurer)

Many thanks to those that have voluntarily donated to the OBA, and to those coerced by the treasurer at the various functions:

Roger Layzell, K S Collins, Chris Sutton, Ted Page, Jimmy Binos, EW Jupp, K Fuller, L Sumpton, A Struthers, D Pitcher, P Bitzer, B vd Meulen, Phillip Prist, Mike Neill, Sueann Evans, MA Hoffman, GC Leale, Niel Brown, J Hookins, Gordon Stockley, Brian Greenwood, CA Kroon, T van der Poll, James Robinson, RJ Spencer, John S Orrock, Pat Browne, KD Ford, A Ford, Andre Steenkamp, Phil Wade, Trevor Kilburn, AD Forster, Barry Cullen, Liz Hodes, Hugh James, Jim Tully, TNF Skead and Michael Duff, E Bolton, B E Harding, D S Pike, KB Kroon.

A special thanks to those that have made repeated and regular donations: L van Rouental and Richard Hogg.

And finally thanks to the following unidentified donors who provided the following cryptic clues as to their identity: a for 2611, and Gonubie on the 12 th May.

Okkert-Ernst (Okke) Grapow

Barry Cullen writes about Okke and his varied and highly adventurous career:

As a cadet at the "General Botha" (we were both there, 53/54) Okke soon demonstrated an independent nature along with abiding interests in navigation, seamanship and sailing - that same serious demeanour is still present today hiding a perceptive wit brandished often as appropriate. Okke served his time in Greek, British and German vessels; obtaining his Extra Masters in London, September 1964.

From salvage tugmaster to superintendent in the Marine Diamond Corp, to managing a whaling company in Angola, to marine management with South African Lines (SAL) - Okke was active! In 1968/69 he represented the Master Mariners of South Africa on the Board of the SANC "General Botha", the first ex-cadet to do so. Along the way, he became proficient in several languages.

Arriving in Safmarine through their amalgamation with SAL, Okke developed the Special Ships Division, designing and supervising the building of the Kuswag patrol vessels and the two biggest salvage tugs the world had then seen. Successful operations were to make the "John Ross" and "Wolraad Woltemade" internationally famous and household names in South Africa - numerous worldwide towage and salvage "firsts" being achieved with these magnificent vessels.

Simultaneously Okke and the Special Ships Division became involved in the marine side of developing the new harbour at Saldanha Bay. This intensive project developed as a direct consequence of the government having withdrawn any kind of assistance to Iscor their para-statal, for the simple reason that the South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H), who then controlled all major ports in South

Africa, had initially scotched the idea of a port at Saldanha, maintaining that the new iron ore port should have been built at Port Elizabeth - irrespective of any long term adverse consequences to the Sishen scheme.

Head time; Okke was *busy*. He recalls how tremendous it had been working on the challenging marine side and to being part of the larger team with his Iscor project colleagues. Contracting, specifications, finance, writing of the port regulations and conditions and last but not least (coupled with intensive training for their crews at Europort) supervising in France the construction of the two original Voith harbour tugs and pilot boat along with arrangements for their delivery and introduction at Saldanha. Critical deadlines; all needed to come together for the projected opening date. The first ships were mobilising, the mine needed to have stock, the crusher had to guarantee quality, the dump truck needed to be ready. The final "small jobs" list was endless as it was fascinating: Channel markers, buoys, line haulers on the jetty, fenders, line boats & crews.

Safmarine's tug division had had a fifteen year contract from Iscor to run the port but suddenly and precariously, after a relatively short period but with the new port up and running smoothly, the SAR&H, (through the government), in a dramatic about-face, nationalised the port. Okke and his team, along with other subcontractors were summarily turfed out - and others were quick to claim the credit for the new port. Intensive development plans and projects came to an abrupt halt; a far reaching economic debacle which Okke recalls today with the utmost anguish. Nevertheless, the solid relationship Okke had built up with Iscor paid benefits when he was appointed director of the Safmarine/Ischor subsidiary Safore and for many years afterwards joined the annual iron ore price negotiating team to Japan and Korea.

Back in Cape Town with the Special Ships Division found Okke continuing apace with numerous world-wide towage and salvage operations. He made the tug's towage and salvage systems *work* - then formed Pentow Marine in 1986 becoming chairman, remaining a director there until his retirement. A well remembered interlude even involved the recovery of treasure from HMS "Birkenhead". As executive director at Safmarine's Marine Division from 1986, Okke supervised the construction and commissioning of their new passenger ship "Astor I", along with numerous other shipbuilding and conversion contracts, including a new-building during the 1992 war in Yugoslavia. As recreational diversion he was involved with the operation of a hush-hush VLCC; and twice managed to salvage his "own" ships, while modernising the marine organisation within Safmarine.

Later, as director of Safmarine's Bulk Division, he was involved in developing and completing a substantial and unique "counter-trade" deal between South Africa and Romania, two capesize ships against iron ore. From there he initiated the groundbreaking business of shipping iron-ore via the Black Sea and up the River Danube as far as Linz in Austria - a first. Then, the development of Iscor's successful iron ore stockpile in the new port of Qianwan in China, an imaginative operation. As light diversion he had a hand in drafting the RSA Salvage Act and the SAMSA Act, becoming a founding director in SAMSA.

It was a huge accomplishment, an honour, for Okke to become president of the International Salvage Union in 1994, the first person from outside Europe ever to fill this post. Here, he actively participated in modernising the International Salvage Convention.

Presently he is in regular demand as a consultant to the international maritime industry and is a listed Special Casualty Representative (SCR) at Lloyds in London. Take any marine disaster on the South African coast and there is a good chance you'll find Okke there brandishing common sense (and wit!) to some of the wildly excessive quotes from keen but inexperienced young salvors!

But what of the man? With all this energy devoted to shipping was there ever time for recreation or hobbies? Well, he learnt to fly in 1966 – one adventure being in 1994 when he “took the stick” of a huge Russian Mil8 chopper and flew 300 k's from Constanta to Bucharest, much to the astonishment of the locals. In Namibia, Okke continues to experience the keen pleasure of hunting in those beautiful wide open spaces. Closer to home, he part owned and skippered a traditional wooden boat, the beautiful "Elegance" for ten years out of the surrounds of Cape Town. And he owns a number of impressive sailing ship models in his home in the City Bowl.

Okke married Gudrun in 1961. They have a son, a daughter and three grandchildren. His son, Toralf, is a third generation Master Mariner and ship's captain. A family distinction of which Okke is justly proud.

“Superstorm” - by Roger Layzell (GB#1773).

Early in November 1955, being a second year apprentice with the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, I was sent to join the “Fort Dunvegan”, a naval stores ship on a regular run between Sheerness (Chatham) and Malta. This seemed to promise a pleasant change from tanker life up the Shatt El Arab without air conditioning that I'd become used to, but had I known what was coming I'd rather have stayed in the Shatt.

The “Dunvegan” was well built in Canada about 1941 and had the unusual feature of a pointed stern, which possibly, was a lifesaver. Her hull plating was mainly chain-riveted and she had a reciprocating steam engine. Her full speed was 11 knots, she was 7122 tons gross, 440 feet in length, had 5 cargo holds and was “flush-decked”.

Leaving Malta in light and “stiff” condition about the last week of November, we entered the Bay of Biscay one evening about 1st December in a SW gale. Not anticipating a unique near death experience with prolonged terror, I didn't keep a diary. I guessed our light condition, mediocre engine power, bluff bow and pointed stern were reasons for Captain Cunningham's decision to continue heading for the English Channel rather than “heaving-to”. It occurred to me later that he might have received misleading info from the Met. Office. I was only cheap labour, and not privy to discussion with him. 20 Hours later in the Bay of Biscay, conditions were mind-boggling. The Chief Officer had ordered me, the only cadet, to vacate the cadet's deckhouse at the after end of the boat-deck, and stay in the wheelhouse with my lifejacket handy. Similarly the crew were ordered to seal their quarters right aft and occupy the officer's dining room amidships.

In the fading light that afternoon, waves reckoned by the officers to be 100 feet high, with huge “combers” and curtains of spray, were overtaking the ship about every minute. As our logged speed was 10 knots, that seems to indicate wave crest speed of about 20 knots. About this time the 2nd mate remarked that on radar the crests were parallel white lines extending at least 40 miles across the screen, exactly one mile apart. A few hours later the wind increased to about 150 knots (as I heard well after the event), and the radar broke down under the strain.

About 1800 the Master ordered the Bosun to take the wheel, which was probably a lifesaver. Although about 60, the bosun was an exceptionally strong, fine seaman, and stayed at the wheel for about 9 hours. With feet planted wide and clutching the wheel for support, he watched the gyro repeater impassively, making continuous small adjustments of helm to save us from “broaching-to”. Clearly, the Master trusted him completely.

By now conversation was virtually impossible in the thunder of the weather outside the closed doors and windows of the wheelhouse. The view out of the windows was a complete “white out” in continuous dense driving spray, as the shrieking wind sliced the tops off waves. The ship's motion was a sudden upward swoop of the stern, followed by a vicious roll and steep dive that seemed would never end, followed by the bow rising slowly. This marked the passage of one wave, which I guess, occurred about once per minute, possibly faster after 2200. I was frozen with fear, hanging on grimly, certain of death.

After 2000, off-watch men began appearing on the Bridge with lifejackets, and our kind Captain didn't turn them away. There was no conversation. Men found places to allow walking space in the

wheelhouse, and hung on grimly, faces drawn with fear. Then, about midnight, as we reached the continental shelf, that which we'd feared for so long came to pass. Suddenly, the ship "broached-to". It didn't occur to me to pray, and my life didn't flash before my eyes. I guess I was too scared for that. I'm not sure exactly what happened as we broached-to. I know the stern suddenly swooped much higher than before and we dived steeply into a trough, rolling heavily to starb'd and remaining heeled over at about 45° while the bow swung to port through about 90° until heading NW. I know two waves crashed over the ship in quick succession. Miraculously, the Master managed to phone the engine room and find someone there "minding the store". Miraculously, the engineers managed to get the engine going full ahead and the bow turned slowly to starb'd until we were heading NE. Miraculously, conditions then eased considerably.

However, the hull was leaking due to cracks caused by excessive propeller vibration. The pumps were slowly losing the battle and we had to hurry to Plymouth for repairs. Both port side wooden lifeboats had disappeared. Nearly all the steel railings on the main deck were flattened. Some of the five-ton SWL, steel-banded pine derricks were in tatters, to mention only some items. Miraculously, the wooden hatch boards weren't damaged. I guess our salvation was having a "cargo" of mainly empty packing cases that couldn't cause problems by shifting, and the ship having a large GM and relatively high freeboard.

I can't recall this storm's official name and what I gathered about it later was hearsay. As I recall, it was then the worst storm recorded in the North Atlantic. That was supported by the Master's admission to me that it was the worst weather he, having rounded the Horn in sail westward, had ever experienced. I never tried to get the official Met. Office figures about it. My life was hectic and tiring in those days, and I was in a state of shock for some time after this experience.

The day after berthing in Plymouth I was sent to the fuelling-at-sea tanker "Wave Victor", and after a couple of commercial runs up the Shatt, we joined a Navy exercise in the Med. In this we refuelled warships at sea for a week, literally 24/7, in complete blackout at night, living on soup and sandwiches. This ended with another near death experience when I transferred by "chopper" to the aircraft carrier "Bulwark" to have a tooth removed, and returned to the Tanker by Jackstay and Breeches Buoy in rough sea. Something went wrong and I nearly ended up in the maelstrom between the ships. But that's another story!

"Above Board and Under Cover" by Ivor C. Little (1953/54)

Review by the 'Scribe'

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When young Ivor's prep school Afrikaans teacher, 'Japie' Horn, asked him "What do you want to do when you grow up?" He replied confidently "I want to be a Navigating Officer in the Merchant Navy, Sir." Ivor was devastated when Japie retorted "You! If you ever become a navigating officer I will buy you a farm in Adderley Street!" Well, who could have imagined the career path of a naïve youngster sitting in boredom in a classroom staring out the window during an Afrikaans lesson? Ivor writes of this incident: "That one statement by a tactless teacher stuck in my subconscious, waiting for the right moment and impetus to set a train of events in motion that would prove him wrong. If Japie ever read this, which I doubt, I would like him to know that he owes me a farm in Aderley Street!"

That moment and impetus was not far off as Ivor brushed up the wrong side of the Headmaster of the high school and had to move on. He was a poor academic and had little interest in sport which was contrary to the aspirations of the School, the Headmaster and the Prefects. Fortunately his Father recognised Ivor's predicament and salvaged the situation honourably by booking him into the General Botha and to complete his schooling 1953/54.

The rest is history, and has been passionately recorded in this fascinating book. Ivor takes us through that career with many facets including some extraordinary navigation feats, just to prove a point to Old Japie! His story leads him on from the Bothie to his first ship, The *President Brand*, a tanker of the

Southern Steamships fleet. He and Ernie Hinterleitner spent a full year on board as apprentices. Thereafter there are many intrepid and sometimes hazardous tales, as he describes his passage to achieving his Master's ticket at the age of 24. The chapters go on covering time on the *Dalia*, *Safmarine* and the Harbour Service. He tells of the many people he meets along the way including his girlfriends and how he met his wife Anne. Bothie Boys will recognise many of those mentioned, and you are quite likely to come across your own name mentioned in dispatches. He even ventured into the business world ashore when he was employed Hank Wilson, the MD of *United American Enterprises* (UNINAM) in the illustrious position of "Executive Assistant to the MD", which translated simply into running an icecream parlour in Port Elizabeth.

Ivor served on the staff of the Bothie in the early days at Granger Bay when the first cadets moved across from Gordon's Bay. From there he was head hunted by the Navy who employed him as Navigation Lecturer at the Military Academy, Saldanha Bay, where he wangled an inter-departmental transfer with promotion from 'Cadet Training Officer' (GB) to Commander. In the interview when asked why he wanted to join the Navy, his reply was "I didn't, the Navy wanted me to join it."

Well that transfer and promotion in 1970 took Ivor on to a different path which included lecturing specialized navigation courses to Officers studying Bachelor's Degrees (BMil) – Oh! Where was Japie and his farm? He went on to work at the S A Naval Staff College, and then to Pretoria where he was involved in counter-insurgency operations and naval communications operations. Between all of these he had made good friends with naval personnel in Chile and was invited to represent the SAN in that country and a trip to the Antarctic. Ivor was well thought of, and as his book explains, he made many friends – he is a natural diplomat. As Military Attaché he was sent on missions to Argentina and Italy, he was involved in Public Relations and Defence Secretariat. Ivor eventually went back to sea, and we have read recently in this newsletter about his experiences on the *Africana*.

Ivor's experiences and dealings with people range from Anneline Kriel, Adraan Vlok, Naas Botha, Chris Barnard, FW de Klerk to Defence Secretaries of Africa and Russian delegations, and all these anecdotes make fascinating reading. The transition from the SADF to the SANDF is also reflected in his experiences. Ivor is a Bothie Boy who has taken full advantage of a sound training on the 'Ship' and made a difference to all who crossed his path. We can be proud of him and all the Obies mentioned in this book. *Scribe*.

Points to Ponder

- You can't lead the way unless you hold the torch in your hand. You can follow the lead of others who hold the torch; you will not stumble or fall, but you will never lead. (Siichiro Honda)
- There are two freedoms: the false, where a man is free to do as he likes, and the true where a man is free to do as he ought. (Charles Kingsley)
- If you think you are too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room. (Anita Roddick)
- We believe everything in the media reports, but question the Bible.
- When you sing tell your mouth and face about the words; engage the heart and mind.

Finally:

The Pessimist complains about the wind, the Optimist expects it to change and the Realist adjusts his sails. (Author unknown)

"A cloudy day is no match for a sunny disposition." (anonymous)

"In nature there are neither rewards nor punishments; there are consequences." (Robert Green Ingersoll).

With greetings from the Scribe dhenwood@iafrica.com

SLOP CHEST

These slop chest items all proudly display our association insignia and is available from Cape Town branch. Place your orders without delay with Kathy or Louise Nicholas:

Phone: 021-7885957 fax: 086 604 0811 Email: cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za

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