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GENERAL BOTHA OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

http://www.generalbotha.co.za

FEBRUARY 2016

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.

Our quarterly letters always seem to be too early for Christmas and too late for New Year to send our wishes. Never the less we always have our friends & colleagues in mind, and perhaps this Irish blessing is appropriate throughout:

"Count your blessings instead of your crosses.
Count your joys instead of your woes.
Count your smiles instead of your tears.
Count your full times instead of your lean.
Count your health instead of your wealth.
Count your gains instead of your losses.
Count your friends instead of your foes.
Count your courage instead of your fears.
Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.
Love your neighbor as much as yourself."

DURBAN BRANCH

For this year's AGM and Commissioning Day Dinner we have decided to make it a more social event as opposed to the formalities of previous occasions and hopefully encourage our Obies to take part.

AGM Date – a brief meeting **18:30 for 19:00 Saturday 16 April 2016**
Dinner – the meeting will be followed by refreshments and supper with wine on the table
Venue – Roy Martin's home – 59 Westville Road, Westville
RSVP – Please reply before Sunday 10 April to: The Secretary, Howard Jackson-Moss jacksonmoss@telkomsa.net Tel. +27 (0)83 300 9891 or +27 (0)31 572 3901

Gauteng Branch will be having their usual Sunday lunch at Victoria Lake Club on 3rd April

Australian Branch AGM and Indonesian set lunch to commemorate the commissioning of the General Botha 94 years ago. It will be held at Delima Restaurant at 69/1 Dixon Street in China Town, Sydney on Saturday 2nd April, 2016.

Please refer to the relevant Branch news below for further details of these events.

FORTHCOMING CAPE TOWN EVENTS

- **Tuesday 8th March**, 1130 for 1200 – Pub lunch, Royal Cape Yacht Club, R55 p.p., partners welcome. Lunch preceded by a presentation from Old Boy Robin Gratjios, class 1956/57; "How charterers manage their risks in the oil, chemical and gas tanker industry". Booking required, please RSVP by 1700 Sunday 6th March, detail below.
- **Saturday 12th March 2016**, 1030 for 1100 – Annual General Meeting, Kelvin Grove Club, Camp Ground Road, Newlands, next door to Newlands Cricket Club.
- **Saturday 12th March 2016**, 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 R265 p.p, please note we have maintained same price for past three years. Cash bar. Should any member find difficulty with the price please contact a committee member. What is vitally important to us is that you and your wife attend the function. We look forward to seeing you all there on the day.
- **Sunday 13th March 2016** @ 1000 – War Memorial Service, at our cenotaph, corner of Heerengracht and Hertzog Boulevard, Cape Town. The service shall be 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. We request that members make a donation towards the Mission to Seafarers at this function.
- Booking for the Commissioning Day Lunch is important, please RSVP by Tuesday 8th March 2016 to:
- Kathy or Jacky or Louise Nicholas: phone 021-788 5957
  - Email: cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za
  - Facsimile: 086 233 6410

Pre-payment for the Commissioning Day Lunch would be appreciated by our over stressed Treasurer.

- Bank: Standard Bank
- Branch: Thibault Square, Cape Town
- Branch code: 02 09 09
- Account name: General Botha Old Boys' Association
- Account number: 070835128
- SWIFT: SBZA ZA JJ

FROM THE BRIDGE OF s.s. *CAPE TOWN*

Another year has passed under our keel and our next *Bothie Weekend* approaches as detailed in our forthcoming events above. Although we strive to host other interesting meetings and events during the year, March forms our principal event, also stated as such in our constitution. As such I look forward to strong support from the membership, which also encourages your committee members in their endeavours to preserve the association and its history and legacy.

Coinciding with this year's *Bothie Weekend* there has been a strong groundswell of class reunions, GB classes 1955/56, 1956/57, 1966, 1976 & 1986 shall be represented. Bravo Zulu to the organisers. In addition to the class reunions the association invites our Old Salts and their wives as guests to the Commissioning Day Dinner. Thus we can look forward to some very interesting and humorous stories on the day.

On the subject of reunions three 1959/60 classmates met recently in Kyneton, Australia. Errol Hunter took them all on a motor bike ride which was rather adventurous. Appears Errol has a huge collection of both old and new motorbikes stashed away in his barn somewhere.

Nigel Hobbs, Rudolf Auer, Errol Hunter

A very positive response was received from our UK based members following our appeal to assist with the refurbishment of our memorial plaque at the National Memorial Arboretum, more on the subject in the UK Branch News. Our heartfelt thanks to the members who contributed to this important cause and to Ted Fisher for coordinating the initiative.

Unfortunately the manufacturer of our magnificent plaques (pictured) has weighed his anchor. Derek McManus, Durban Branch chairman, has retrieved the mould from his widow. Now all we need is someone with the expertise to make them for us. Please let me know if you or whether you know of someone who can manufacture these using the mould we have.

THE SOCIETY OF MASTER MARINERS SOUTH AFRICA

The society was founded at a meeting in the Bencorrum Hotel in Durban on the 9th of December 1940. The first president of the society was none other than our ship's donor, T.B.F. Davis; such was his interest in all matters maritime and more importantly, the welfare of seafarers. Over the past 75 years the society has made many valuable contributions to the industry and seafarers. Today the society is headed as President by Old Boy Rob Whitehead GB class 1973. The 75th was celebrated during 2015 and most notably at our joint year end lunch where Rob gave a talk on the history of the society. Rob has also published an interesting document covering the history of the society. If you have not received a copy as a SOMMSA member contact Rob at: mastermariners@icon.co.za.
Bravo Zulu Rob.

(Left) **Rob Whitehead GB class 1973 with Rev Charles de Lange at the Merchant Navy Memorial cenotaph**. The service was held 18th November 2015 but sadly there was a very poor turnout. Not many recall that when the cenotaph was relocated from Duncan Dock to its present location in from of the port control tower [Table Bay Harbour], a time capsule was placed inside the memorial which includes a GBOBA newsletter.

SCRANBAG

R. WHITEHEAD 1973 #2463. Twenty years ago Rob took the nerve-racking decision to leave formal employment and float his own company (with a partner), African Maritime Services. Now celebrating 20 years of service to the fishing industry Rob comments; "We started with nothing. We had one car between us, two desks and an empty factory". With the determination to succeed Rob has built his company into a highly respected one with a Namibian branch and worldwide respected suppliers. Bravo Zulu Rob.

H. FOUCHE 1968 #2332. Henri retired from UNISA last year and relocated from Gauteng to Langebaan. "I have been appointed as from 1st February at Stellenbosch University as a senior researcher at the Security Institute for governance and leadership in Africa, Faculty of military science. The Faculty is housed at the military academy in Saldanha. My task is, amongst others, to establish a maritime security research hub, focusing on security in the maritime domain, developing short courses and coordinating and presenting academic conferences and workshops." We hope someone in government actually listens to you.

K.D. ELLAM 1985 #2863. Ken has been with Swire Salvage for a few years. A recent report in a maritime magazine interviewed Ken who handled the removal of fuel and ammunition from the wreck

of the RFA Darkdale, which was torpedoed in the anchorage of St Helena early in WWII. We await further news Ken.

N.T. CASELEY 1941/42 #1157. Norman has achieved Old Salt status at 91 years of age. Norman sailed on the four masted barque s.v. *Lawhill*, three voyages including rounding Cape Horn. Thereafter sailed on other vessels including troop transport in 1945. 1947 joined Safmarine and was Third Officer on the S.A. *Vergelegen* on her first voyage under the S.A. Flag. 1955 obtained Extra Master's and then taught for a year at Hull Trinity Navigation School before returning to South Africa to take over the Navigation School in Durban. Thereafter spent two years at the Kalk Bay Bible Institute preparing for missionary work. Worked for Scripture Union and in 1965 joined the S.A.M.N.A. *General Botha* as Senior Lecturer. 1969 moved to Port Elizabeth to run the Youth for Christ and at the same time opened own business as a marine surveyor and compass adjuster. Later joined the Department of Transport and retired in 1990 as Chief Surveyor and Examiner. Norman was an active radio amateur (excellent on WT with Morse) and good with DIY projects, one of his most notable was his construction – over many years – of an astronomical telescope. For this he ground his own lenses and assembled the motorised gearing out of Meccano components driven by a gramophone (turntable) motor. The telescope is still in use in a university. A remarkable achievement.

L.J. RIDGWAY 1958/59 #E19. After Bothie John joined an insurance company as a junior clerk and after many years in the industry, ended up as a main board Director for Lloyds Broker in London. Also continued with his musical career including two years at Kneller Hall, Royal Marines School of Music on a part time basis. Conducted the junior band of the Royal Green Jackets and continued to conduct choirs, orchestras and bands. Has a Commission in the Royal Green Jackets (Light Infantry). 2009 retired in France and recently moved to Israel. "There does not appear to be any known old boys in Israel but I would love to form an association in that country. There must be a number of old cadets that visit Israeli ports and they would be so welcome to visit me and enjoy the sights and sounds of Israel." Anyone there or visiting contact John on email ridgway.in.france@gmail.com

P.H.C. KROON 1969 #2370. As previously reported Peter and Liz have joined their family in Australia. December 1969, joined Safmarine and my first ship in the same month. Served as Cadet, Fourth, Third and Second Officer with Safmarine until 1975. During this time served on tankers, passenger vessels and cargo ships. Then left in order to do a voyage down to the Antarctic on the old R.S.A. Did one trip to the ice, then promoted to Chief Officer. Obtained Master's Certificate in 1978 and remained as Chief Officer on the new ship S.A Agulhas until 1980, when he was offered a post as surveyor in Saldanha Bay in 1980. Served in Saldanha and West Coast for three years until 1983. Then promoted to East London as Principal Officer. Retired 2015.

R.J.D. DUIGAN 1982 #2759. Bothie Boys, and Girls, certainly get around. "In France I work for Technip (in the operating centre in La Defense, Paris), an engineering company with offices in most regions. I am VP responsible for a business unit supplying conceptual and front end engineering designs of oil refineries, petrochemical plants, bio-fuel, and fertilizer facilities. There is a nautical side to our company. We own about thirty vessels for installing and maintaining subsea infrastructure in oil and gas fields. I haven't yet got to combine the nautical with the chemical engineering from my side. However, I have colleagues in the gas processing side, who, along with our offshore team, designed the Prelude floating LNG vessel for Shell. I think it's now the largest vessel afloat. Our stock response to describing the difference between our offshore and subsea activities is that the stuff on the sea floor that is supposed to be there is subsea. I work in the onshore segment.

We live in Versailles, which is quite lovely, very civilized, and where even the dogs are well behaved, polite, and friendly. My weekend 10km walks are a lap around the Grand Canal through the gardens behind the chateau. Can't complain."

P.J.K. FITT 1955/56 #1938. Peter has recently moved back to Durban from Canada. Although he does not say I imagine he is retired by now.

C.R. HELLYER 1958/59 #E9. Spotted Charles in a photograph taken during a Bothie lunch in England. Charles left S.A. and settled in Surrey. Don't blame him for complaining of the cost of living over there.

ANCHORS AWEIGH

N.W. CONNOLLY 1958/59 E4. After a long battle with cancer passed away 26th November 2015.
His long term friend, ex Fish Hoek, E29, Nigel Hobbs writes;
"Norm is one of five Fish Hoek boys who attended Bothie between 58 to 61.
Post Bothie he completed a heavy engineering apprenticeship at the naval dockyard, Simon's Town. At that time it was still under Royal Navy control. He joined Safmarine's ss *SA Merchant*, completed one trip and decided seafaring wasn't for him. After marrying, migrated to Australia.
At this time the Australian east coast was developing its electricity grid, building power stations. Norm joined the construction teams, after one was completed one moved to the next. So this meant caravan living, two sons were born and raised in a caravan.
Norm built a house at Caves Beach, Newcastle, NSW (very like Fish Hoek). Started work at the coal loading facility Newcastle harbour (government run). Then, when coal exports increased beyond the government facility, a huge private enterprise coal loading was built and Norm worked there until retirement.
A very good tradesman, completed complicated house alterations, enjoyed surfing, camping, did many trips up north with his 4WD+offroad caravan. In retirement enjoyed cruising around the Pacific islands.
Norm and Jen had a great relationship of 50 years and three wonderful children, two boys and a daughter. Norm was always ready to stop what he was doing to help someone else. He has been taken before his time."
J.R. LANGRIDGE 1940/41. Known to all as our Old Salt Gentleman with a wonderful sense of humour, Jim passed away 24th November 2015. Jim's war service was with the Royal Navy Reserve. Post War, Stewards & Lloyds of S.A. Ltd Engineering Division.
In 2014 awarded the Artic Star and in 2015 the Russian Consulate in Cape Town awarded Jim the Medal of Ushakov for personal courage and bravery shown during the Second World War as a participant of the Arctic Convoys. Jim made it clear that he accepted these awards on behalf of all who served in the vessel. An honourable gentleman.
Our condolences to family and shipmates.

DURBAN BRANCH NEWS - Derek McManus

For this year's AGM and Commissioning Day Dinner (*see Page1 for details*) we have decided to make it a more social event as opposed to the formalities of previous occasions, and hopefully encourage our Obies to take part.
We are grateful to Roy for offering his home on this occasion, and we look forward to seeing you and your Wife or Partner there as an opportunity to renew our friendships. During the AGM meeting Old Boy's partners will be able to gather separately for cocktails. You will be advised closer to the time of any further details. Meanwhile, please diarise the date and advise Howard as early as possible of your attendance in order to organise the catering.

GAUTENG BRANCH NEWS – Alan Ford

2015 is history, the new almanac is on the bridge book shelf about 45 top right corners cut off so far, and we seem to be running happily on autopilot at present up here on our virtual ship. Head count over the Southern Summer has happily stayed constant, having traded in Henri Fouche ('68) to Saldanha and gained in a barter agreement with Tony, a much more recent model by way Dave Johnson ('86). We will check him out for rust and treat if necessary, but Henri should be fine except for maybe needing some tallow on his hinge pins and a coat of red lead.
A reminder, as reported in the November newsletter, for us dry footed ones, **Gauteng Branch will be having their usual Sunday lunch at Victoria Lake Club on 3rd April**. The format will be similar to previous events and there will be adequate roast potatoes, so I am assured. Every year I pull a different coloured rabbit out of the hat with regard to having an interesting speaker or group activity. This year it is planned to have another… ah.. you'll have to wait and see, but I believe that it will be an eye opener and worth popping along to the luncheon for. For those on limited budgets, please start putting away a few Rands for petrol, pap, and pudding. We strive to keep costs as low as possible but there will be an

inevitable increase over last year's price. I am hoping that due to the exchange rate there will not be too many people visiting their grandchildren around SA and the far reaches of the globe.
For those who may require transport please let me know at your earliest convenience so that we can organize your Bill of Lading, work out FOB costs, and arrange hazardous cargo insurance to get you to the event.
Members from other branches, who may find themselves in our territorial waters on the day, are more than welcome to join us. They will be granted free pratique and will not be required to take a pilot.
As always we look to GB Old Buoys to be generous in assisting to sponsor a few bottles of table wine, it is always greatly appreciated and helps to keep the costs within reason for those on very limited budgets. The Notice to Mariners for the luncheon will go out shortly to the Gauteng members and I ask that they respond promptly for planning purposes.

Yours truly, the Scribe, apologises for inadvertently omitting half of Alan's article in the last Newsletter, and so for good order this is repeated in full below.
Reading one or two of the daily shipping papers, some interesting trends have become apparent over recent years. These trends are embodied in the designs of various classes of ships employed in industries specialising in subsea operations and surface support vessels, which are an integral part of facilitating that expanding industry.
Gone are the days of canted Stulken masts with heavy lift derricks on general cargo ships that could dump the odd railway loco on deck or transformer in the square of No.4 hatch. Today we are seeing massive heavy lift ships that have offset boom cranes of vast proportions, loading huge structural components, or fleets of tugs and service vessels loaded up as day-to-day cargo. Our old hatches have made way for something akin to flat bed lorries, where structures like refinery crackers, hundreds of metres long are loaded in one assembly. Ships sailing around the world carrying a couple of container berth cranes, would I think, have been totally incomprehensible to most masters of 50 years ago.
Where cargo items are too big or inconvenient to lift with a crane, today they just pop a submersible ship underneath it and lift the load just out of the water. Entire oil rigs and even big ships themselves can be considered as cargo these days.
Spare a thought for the chief officers on those monster floating flatbed trucks. Their lives must be interesting, and the thought of bad weather must contribute enormously to their level of grumpiness. They, along with the company stability wallahs, seem to do a good job, as reports of such operations going awry are very scarce.
These heavy lift ships have smaller sisters that look quite similar, except that to the old fashioned mariner, the designs bring a new meaning to the term foc'sle. No longer a windswept waste of space furnished with chief officers, bosuns, windlass, warping drums, bitts and fairleads, it has now been obliterated by the new X Bow, Axe Bow, and inverted bow configurations. What is left is now buried in the foundations of the new "forecastle" built almost on top of to utilize the deck space as best as possible. The bridge perched on top is strange looking as well, where the emphasis is now on it performing the function of a Deck Ops control centre with 360-degree view windows. To the casual observer it looks like a mini Air Traffic Control tower…. perhaps not a bad analogy, as quite often there is a huge heliport built right in front of it. The main deck is generally a vast flat expanse of floating real estate with relatively little freeboard. These vessels which can stow an entire wind turbine tower and set of blades also sport as rigging, huge hydraulic cranes which are sometimes gyro stabilized for delicate placement of offloaded items when the weather is unpleasant.
Functionality, efficiency, and modern technology are the driving forces behind these new workhorse ships. Bold graphic art and wild colour schemes in many cases camouflage what to us may look like ugly ships. The long expanses of black or white or lavender topsides live on only in ship calendar pictures.
I hope someone who is not a ruthless company bean counter will have the foresight to preserve examples of these ships, just like Cutty Sark has been preserved, so that in a hundred years time humankind can marvel at what life at sea must have been like in the bad old days of 2020.

At the other end of the scale it is reported that the MV Doulos, which was visitor to African shores as a library ship for a number of years, has made its final trip to a dry berth in Indonesia. It is reported on Wikipedia that she will form part of a hotel complex. The ship was built in 1914 in Newport News and was named SS Medina. 0ver 100 years is not a bad innings for a ship that started life as a cargo ship, and was extensively remodeled during her career.

AUSTRALIA BRANCH NEWS

Hi to everyone from Australia. We hope you enjoyed the festive season. Our next get together will be the short AGM and Indonesian set lunch to commemorate the commissioning of the General Botha 94 years ago. It will be held at Delima Restaurant at 69/1 Dixon Street in China Town, Sydney on **Saturday 2nd April, 2016**. This is close to Town Hall Station. We have arranged a wonderful 7-course menu for $30 per head, which is a bargain for Sydney. Drinks will be your own account. Please note that in the previous newsletter we mentioned Saturday March 19th but this had to be changed.
Regards to all and please get in touch if you are going to be in Sydney.

Grenville Stevens	(2189 60/61)	Chairman
Andy Fotheringham	(2525 '76)	Vice Chairman
Peter O'Hare	(2247 '64)	Hon Secretary, itspeterohare@outlook.com Tel: 0417 028809

GBOBA-UNITED KINGDOM BRANCH-Ted Fisher

Joint Training Ships Plaques – National Memorial Arboretum – Alrewas, Staffordshire

The refurbishment of the plaques is now well underway with the design having been approved. A reminder of the Training Ships: Conway, Worcester, General Botha, Mercury and Nautical College Pangbourne. The restoration cost per Association £250. In response to an email appeal by our Chairman Tony Nicholas to UK Old Boys for donations to the restoration fund I was asked to co-ordinate the fund raising contributions. This I have undertaken through opening a Bank Account into which donations have been paid. For your information, I was totally overwhelmed by the quick and positive response by a number of our UK members and am able to confirm that we have, through the very kind generosity of 19 Old Boys, in well exceeding the stated target figure above. Through our Chairman and the Committee, all members will be updated and a list of donors will be published for the AGM this March 2016. As we have a surplus, the balance of the fund will, I know, go to a well deserving Charity…….watch this space! I look forward to being able to represent as Hon Sec the UK Branch at the AGM this year.
The plan now is through liaison with other Associations and the Arboretum to finalise a date for the Rededication Ceremony, possibly making it an event that will, hopefully, see the original members who were present back in 2001 when the plaques were laid. The dates being considered are through May/June/July, but more news anon! Of interest visit on line www.memorialarboretum.com this will provide background.
Our long AWOL member Ian James Henry Blaney (39/40) has been well updated with the Bothy history having received copies of the DVD's on The Ship plus his ability to access previous Newsletters through our website. That is it for now. Best Wishes to all for the year ahead
Ted Fisher Tel: (44) 1903 744400, Mob: (44)7702 635017, email: tedefisher@aol.com

GBOBA Bursary Fund - February, 2016.

The flow of the Fund activities has turned once more from the quiet ebb of the festive holiday months to the running tide of Lawhill's first term. The Committee was, however, all aboard early in January with the Blue Peter flying aloft, so all is well and we have set sail into 2016 at full steam ahead.
We were delighted to learn that our two ex-bursars studying at the Cape Peninsular University of Technology (CPUT), Tsoso Hanong and Zusiphe Mzotho, did very well in their studies last year, passing their masters-level academic examinations (S4) with many distinctions. We are certain that Jeremy Hookins, their initial mentor, would have been as proud of them as they deserve to be of themselves.

All three of our 2015 grade 12 bursars, Talisha Chetty, Lethabo Morovhi and Mfundo Joseph, matriculated well and have been accepted to continue their tertiary level maritime studies this year; Talisha and Lethabo as deck officer candidates and Mfundo in marine engineering. We wish them a happy and successful voyage.

The first term individual mentoring discussions with our continuing bursars took place in mid-January, reviewing their experiences during last year and setting new goals for 2016. All of them passed their year-end exams, and they are well settled and fully committed to tackling their new grades of work. Unfortunately, the Committee could not justify the renewal of the bursary of one scholar – always a difficult and disappointing decision to make.

The Fund starts this year in a sound financial position thanks to the continued contributions of our committed and generous private and corporate donors and sponsors, and, particularly, due to the grand success of the annual golf-day held in November. Nothing would be possible without this support. Thank you!

The fund financial growth has been substantial and has increased from a Bursary Commitment in 2012 of R12, 000 to an expected commitment of R450,000 for 2016. Bearing in mind the commitment is a three year commitment, there is huge responsibility on the fund and its administration. Full details of the Fund's activities and finances will be available in the annual report for the past financial year, which should be ready for initial distribution at the Fund AGM in March.

We are planning to award four new bursaries this year, three for boarders and one day-scholar could be two if further commitments are confirmed. The interview and selection process will be completed by mid-February.

The growth of the Fund and its activities since its commencement, as laid out above, has made a structured administration essential. The administrative load has become substantial especially with respect to the Bursar administration. We are therefore very pleased to have been able to welcome Louise Nicholas aboard in January as a part-time Fund Administrator to manage some of the ever-increasing administration of the Fund.

The fund has also realised that it needs to address two issues in terms of its sustainability going forward, that of succession and increased assistance and counsel in achieving our goals and objectives in mentoring. We are therefore very proud to announce that Nomkhitha Mbele the Commercial Manager of Smit Amandla and an ex Lawhill Student has agreed to join the committee, where she will be providing wise counsel and assistance specifically on the Selection and Mentoring sub-committee. She will be attending the AGM where her appointment will be confirmed.

We are looking to further strengthen the committee with younger members during the coming year.

The Committee's programme of work for 2016 includes three new initiatives (Projects):

1. Improvement of Funds ability and understanding of Bursar transition requirements and opportunities, from Secondary to Tertiary education, and in particular the broadening of our corporate network of sponsors and support to be more inclusive of the marine engineering segment of the maritime industry.
2. To study how the Fund can be more effective in the extra-mural support of our bursars.
3. To establish a fund raising sub-committee to better manage and improve this aspect of our income generation

There is still much to be done to fulfil our aspirations for the Bursars both present and past who look to us for guidance and a helping hand, so it's "all hands on deck" once again – as Masefield said: "*...The call of the running tide is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied."*

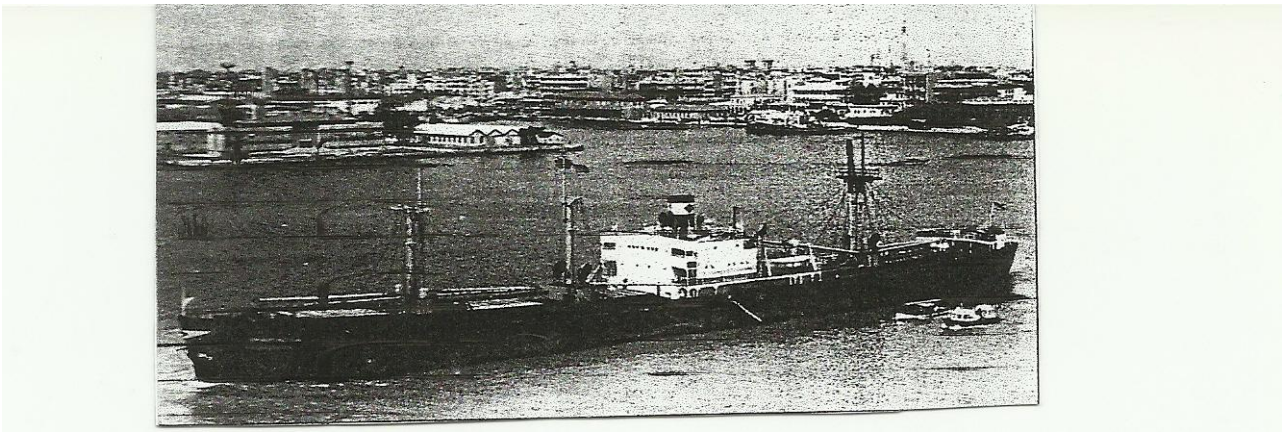
THE NORTHERN/SOUTHERN STEAMSHIP COMPANY

An unrecognised piece of South African maritime history – by Ivor Little

Over the years, and particularly around reunion time, there is always a lot of reminiscing about the days of our youth and particularly about our early days at sea.

It is a strange fact of maritime life that in the seagoing officers' profession it does not matter for which shipping lines you subsequently worked but with which company you served your apprenticeship, or time as a cadet.

Where you "served your time" gives those in the profession an immediate mental picture of your social standing in the maritime world, i.e. whether you were a tramp-ship man, a tanker man or a liner man.
With our particular class (1953/54), we covered a good spread of all three varieties above and many are the stories told about service in the "good old days" when the Red Duster reigned supreme and South Africa still had ships on its register.
The company which accepted the largest number of cadets, five in all, at the end of l954 was Northern/Southern Steamships and, largely because this group has been a regular contributor to our reunion correspondence and discussions, the name Southern Steamships figures prominently in our class consciousness.
The stories are legion, and in many cases, hilarious, but apart from that very few of the class know much about the company, a defect I shall now attempt to put right.
Between the two World Wars many Greek island families operated sailing *caiques*, or dilapidated cast-off tramps between the Greek islands and around the Mediterranean. One of these was the Nomikos family of Santorini (also known as Thera). During World War II a number of their ships were sunk, as a result of enemy action, leaving their fleets depleted. After the War the US government found itself with a vast over-supply of war-built shipping, while at the same time there was a world-wide shortage of shipping. To even things out, the US offered second-hand "Liberty" ships at knock-down prices to ship-owners who could prove war losses.
The Nomikos family took advantage of this offer and within a short space of time Nomikos Lines became a big player in the Mediterranean and Middle East trade.
When the Germans overran Greece, the Greek royal family was offered a haven in exile by General Smuts. They accepted his offer and moved to South Africa. A Lot of their countrymen followed, among them Evangelos P Nomikos. He appears to have been a wealthy man to start with - an astute financier - for at the war's end he was intimately connected with the gold mining industry. As part of the Nomikos family, he was also into shipping and when the US offer materialised he took advantage of it and acquired second-hand Liberty ships. These were basic cargo carriers, ideal for tramping, being cheap to maintain and to run.
Possibly because of a connection with the President Brand gold mine, and a need to maximise any returns there from, Nomikos put these five ships on the South African register and named them after former Transvaal and Free State Presidents. These were the "*President Kruger"* (ex "*John M Palmer"*), "*President Hoffman"* (ex "*Mary Walker"*), "*President Pretorius"* (ex "*James B Hickock"*), "*President Reitz"* (ex "*Segundo Ruiz-Belvis"*) and "*President Steyn"* (ex "*John G Nicolay"*). He also acquired the T2 tanker "*Egg Harbour",* a fast 15 000 tonner which he re-named "*President Brand*".



"President Pretorius" in Port Said

By 1947 he had his fleet and opened an office in Loveday Street, Johannesburg, from where he ran it under the name of Northern Steamships. In true Greek ship-owing fashion, he also opened an office in London Wall Buildings in London which he registered as Southern Steamships and from where the ships were actually managed as part of the then "London Greek" ship-owning fraternity. In one move he had become South Africa's largest shipping company.

He employed polyglot crews, with a preference given to Greek or South African crews, and British, Greek or South African officers. Among many well-known names who served with him were our old navigation master, Morgan Williams, and ex-cadet Bobby Deacon of NSRI fame. The crews signed on at British rates of pay on British B Agreement, which was from Cape Town back to Cape Town or for two years, whichever came sooner. However, this was never strictly enforced and people were signed on and off in the UK or Europe, as circumstances dictated.

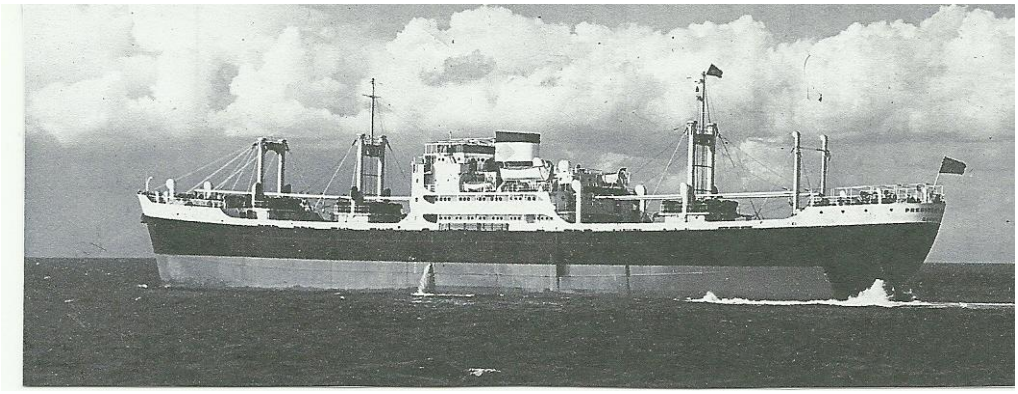
These ships were very well run, well maintained and good feeders, so the actual incidences of crew changes were low.

The original funnel colours were a conglomeration of blue, white, green and gold, but it seemed that Mrs Nomikos considered it garish and designed a green funnel with a white band, with a gold diamond superimposed on it. This represented the national colours of South Africa (green and gold) and the country's mineral wealth (a gold diamond) and once again a mining connection. Hulls were black with red boot-topping, white upperworks and buff masts and ventilators. The house flag was a diagonally quartered flag divided into blue and white and green and gold segments, with blue next to the fly.

The company got off to a disastrous start when the *President Reitz* was wrecked on Cape St Francis on her first voyage. Thereafter things went better and the company prospered in the world-wide tramp trade. Most surprisingly for South African ships at the time, many of these voyages took them behind the Iron Curtain.

In the middle 1950s Nomikos embarked on a modernisation program. The *President Kruger* was transferred to the Liberian register and renamed "*Effie*", the nickname of Nomikos' daughter Evgenia. The *President Steyn* was sold on and the tanker *President Brand* also transferred to the Liberian flag as the *Kyanos*, Greek for Ocean.

It was at this time that the African Nationalist Government decided to build three frigates and name them "*President Kruger*, *Steyn* and *Pretorius"*. The Johannesburg Northern Steamships office protested violently about this use of their nomenclature but the Government was unmoved. The Presidents were their heroes, not some fly-by-night Greek outfit. The book "Three Frigates" by Rear Admiral Chris Bennett gives a nice description of this paper exchange. Both sides ended up happy and in 1953 Northern Steamships completed and named the 24 000 ton "super-tanker", "*President Brand" for* the international oil charter market. This was followed in 1955 by the large, modern tramp "*President Kruger*" and then, surprisingly, later in 1955 by the purchase of the SAR&H coal ship "*Aloe*" as the "*President Steyn*". This gave them seven ships at a time when Safmarine had only the three "Victories".

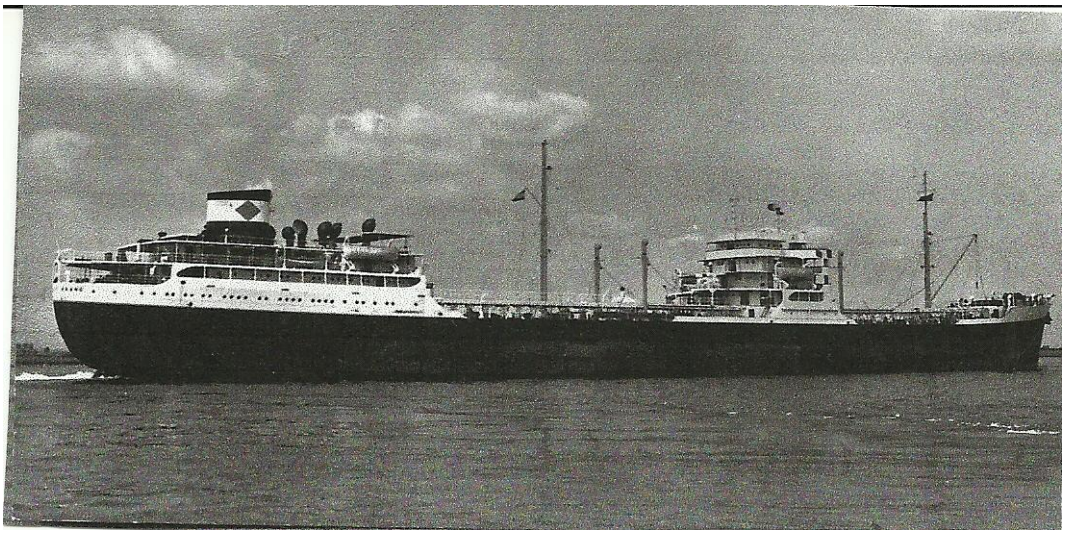


"President Kruger" running trials off Sunderland

When his daughter Evgenia got married, Nomikos followed the Greek custom of providing the bride with a dowry, in this case the *"President Kruger*" which was given to the young couple and re-named "*Navarino*" under the Liberian flag. The rest of the fleet soldiered on, being joined in the 1960s by a former Norwegian cargo liner re-christened "*Roula*".

As sanctions against South Africa intensified in the late 1960s and early 70s, the ships found it increasingly difficult to operate in the tramp trades and they were taken off the South African register and placed under that of Liberia and Bermuda. The Johannesburg office closed down and the Company quietly disappeared.

Throughout their three decades under the South African flag, the Company consistently employed *General Botha* cadets. Unlike the cheap labour in other tramp companies, these young men were treated as officers of the future and received an excellent training, which bore fruit in later years when one examines the later careers of those cadets.

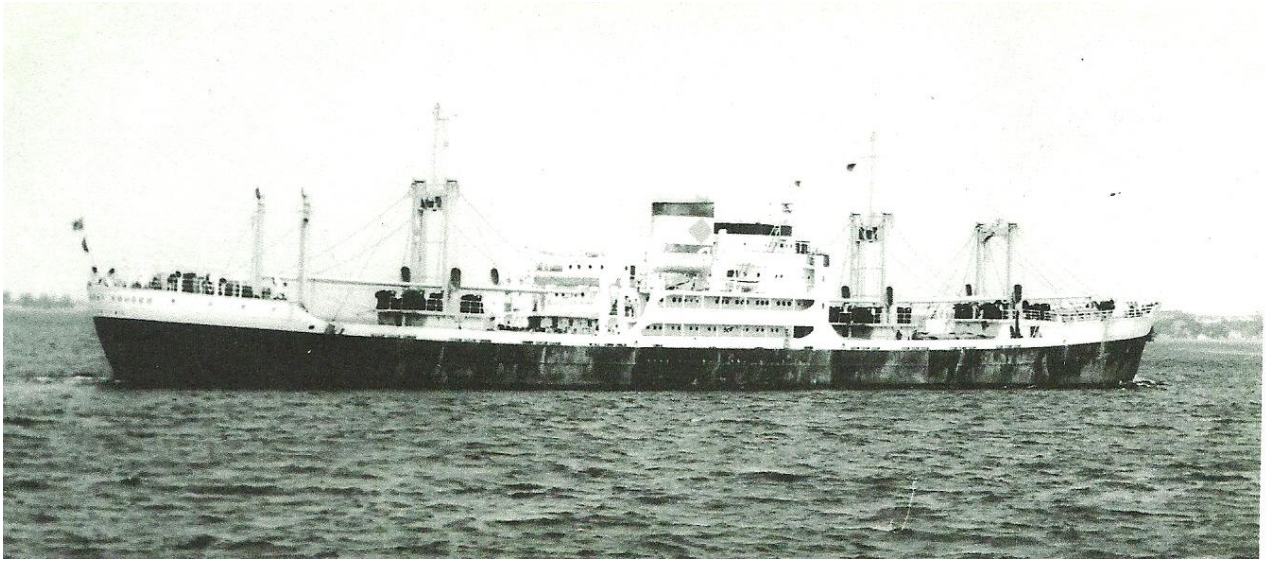


"President Brand" in the Solent

They also employed other youngsters as cadets who had not been to the *General Botha* and some ships also carried British and Greek cadets for a four-year apprenticeship. I say cadets, for that is the modern term, but in fact they were all apprentices on indentures and the B Agreement. None of the cadets got leave and most spent all their indentures on one ship. This paid off in that they all got their required sea-time in as quickly as possible and got a head start on their contemporaries of the same age.

As an aside, it is worth reporting that one Greek uncertificated 3rd officer who came to Southern Steamships from Hellenic Lines later became a multi-millionaire ship-owner himself. He was Aristomenis Karageoris, who founded K Lines and started it with two of the big City Line passenger ships.

The demise of Southern Steamships was inevitable. The advent of containerisation would have ended them if sanctions did not, but for those of us who served their time with them they gave us a good training and an adventurous start to our later careers. *Ivor Little*



"President Kruger"

A.G. "SAILOR" MALAN GB 1924/25

Much has been written over the years of our famous Old Boy. New research by Dr. Chris de Wit has produced and interesting new book; "*Politics, Personalities and Perspectives. The Battle of Britain. The Role of Sailor Malan and other South Africans*". Price is R150 plus postage of R67. For your copy contact Chris on Cell: 0794872447 Email: dewitchris6@gmail.com

CWPB REUNION 2017

Members may be aware of the successful Conway, Worcester, Pangboure and Botha reunion held in Sydney last year. As honourary member of their associations, as they are of ours, our GB Old Boys also participated reporting that the event was most enjoyable with over 200 participants. Planning has been initiated to host a similar reunion in North America, details:

"For anyone looking for a good excuse to visit British Columbia, to see friends or family, and have been putting it off. Now's the time to do it. Don't delay. May and June are the best months and our side trips will be at best prices available. It is the intention of the CWPB Association on Vancouver Island to hold a reunion in Victoria, Canada at the end of May 2017. The event will be held over a period of four days and in addition will include optional side trips. A local afternoon whale watching tour. Either a coach trip through the Canadian Rockies or a cruise up to Alaska. At present we are interested in early replies of anyone interested in attending so that we can get our numbers and make best arrangements. For those interested in attending it would be appreciated if you could send an e-mail to cwpb2017@gmail.com by 30th March 2016. Detailed information shall then be sent to you."

So, pack up your old kit bags and plan your trip. A strong and festive GB contingent is a must. I look forward to report back on events leading up to and during.

9 INCH RIFLED MUZZLE LOADING CANNON

This old cannon was restored by the Cannon Association a few years ago and is now fired every year at 1100 on Remembrance Day. This shot (pardon the pun) was captured by Old Boy Ian Fishley last November. Immediately after firing I spotted Old Boy "Brad" Wallace-Bradley on the double with the water bucket in hand putting out the grass fires in front of the cannon. A charge of five kilograms of gunpowder is used.

This cannon was manufactured at the Royal Gun Factory at Woolwich, England in 1865, and was designed as a broadside gun for heavy iron clad ships, and also for the defence of harbour and sea fronts. It weighs over 12 tons (over 12,000 kg) and is a very powerful gun for its weight. Only 190 of this particular type were made, of which the Simon's Town gun is No. 22. The gun was issued in 1866 to Halifax, Nova Scotia; in 1878 it was moved to Bermuda, and it then returned to England in 1881 where it was mounted at Sheerness Naval Dockyard until 1885. It was mounted in its present emplacement at Middle North Battery in 1896, and is a unique survivor of this type of gun still in its original mounting.

SEAFARING – THE GOOD OLD DAYS & THE GOOD NEW DAYS! By Alan Ford

The game of seafaring has changed dramatically in step with the adoption of new technology, which today affects just about all aspects of our lives even though we are not usually aware of it. As always when old and new seafarers discuss life at sea the topic of the good old days and the good new days is likely to come up for evaluation. There will always be two sides to the coin, with good and bad on both, hopefully the good, over time outweighs the bad; otherwise human kind would not advance. Whether that advance is in the best direction is a topic for another day. I came across the following reports in the maritime papers which I thought the older members would find interesting, and give some insight into the issues which confront the modern crew member, from galley boy to master.

I quote:

Reasons Why Ports Become Boring For Seafarers

Time was when ports were abuzz with exotic cargoes, vessels and of course seafarers. There were pubs which existed to serve them, there were other very "specialized" businesses which sprang up to cater for their "needs". Today though it is all so different – ports become boring! Ships dock far from most towns, and the days of people even recognizing seafarers seem over hence, being in port becomes less enjoyable for many seafarers. Today you would be hard pressed to know you were looking at a seafarer. The trained eye can spot them – for instance any Filipino carrying more than ten bars of Toblerone is likely to be a sea dog. Ports such as Southampton with large cruise contingents perhaps still have the feel of a seafarer city, but most others sadly don't. All too many places seem to have broken their connection with the sea over the past decades. In many other countries the pain of getting ashore, and the hassle, cost and loss of rest – as covered in the recent ***Crewtoo*** *Seafarers Happiness Index – suggest that shore leave is increasingly problematic. So we see that seafarers are an increasingly rare beast in town. The tales of history, of debauchery, enjoyment and rabble rousing have been consigned to the Disney films – today, seafarers are more likely to be eating sweets watching Jack Sparrow on Movielink than acting like him. The fun seems to have evaporated, and crews today just don't mix like they used too.*

Now, given the changes to shipping patterns, speed of turnarounds, and the raft of legislation to comply with, it is fairly obvious that change has led to isolation and seafarers being constrained to the ship.

Decades ago ports were a place where new cultures flourished. Nowadays ports become boring. Throughout history the arrival of ships meant not just the cargo they delivered, but also a visit from seafarers. Many brought with them new ideas, culture and even music to the places they visited. It is said that much of modern culture has emerged because of the influence of seafarers. Granted in the Americas Spanish sailors did kill millions of Aztecs and indigenous tribes, but apart from that hiccup in relations the rest has been fairly positive.

Most of the world's great cities were shaped by seafaring influences. London was in many ways moulded in this way too – and even had its own "Sailorstown" – as parts of the East End focused on their proud role being the haunts of visiting crews and home to maritime employers and seafarers'.

Unions have joined forces to publish new international 'Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying'. The new Guidelines, developed by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), can be downloaded from the ICS and ITF websites. These Guidelines have been launched in advance of an important International Labour Organization (ILO) Special Tripartite Committee on the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), to be held in February in Geneva, at which ICS and ITF will co-ordinate the representation of the social partners alongside governments.

Under the ILO MLC, governments are already required to satisfy themselves that their laws and regulations respect the fundamental right of seafarers not to be discriminated against during their employment on board ships. Recognizing that any form of harassment and bullying can have serious consequences for seafarers, the new industry Guidance takes the additional step of setting out what shipping companies, seafarers and seafarers' organizations can do to help prevent bullying and harassment from becoming a serious concern. As well as providing advice on company policies on reporting, complaints and grievance procedures, the Guidance addresses the responsibilities of seafarers and their employers to use these procedures appropriately and for being aware of any harassment or bullying that might occur within the maritime workplace. This includes any instances of cyber-bullying.

The important role of seafarers' organizations in these awareness raising activities is also underlined. ICS Secretary General, Peter Hinchliffe, remarked: "Ship owners fully accept the need to develop policies and plans to eliminate any harassment and bullying as a matter of good employment practice. Bullying has serious consequences for the physical and emotional health of seafarers and can also compromise teamwork with negative consequences for the safety of the ship and its crew. The fact that ICS and ITF have collaborated to produce this new Guidance is therefore a very positive development." ITF General Secretary, Steve Cotton, said: "Bullying and harassment in the workplace

are unacceptable wherever they happen – but they have a particular horror at sea, where those affected may be isolated and alone, hundreds of miles from home. Until now there has been a lack of practical common sense guidelines and we're delighted that we have been able to work side by side with the ICS to address this need." The Guidelines are now being distributed throughout the global shipping industry via ICS national ship owners' associations and ITF union affiliates. The authors are also encouraging their use by maritime training providers and other parties with an interest in promoting the elimination of harassment and bullying within the global shipping industry.

British sailors, for centuries the influx of people, culture and ideas was the lifeblood of so many places. Alas, as the vessels moved further down river the mixing of the populace with seafarers began to dry up. Today the change is most stark – shore leave is being seen as almost a luxury rather than a right or essential part of seafaring life. According to the ITF, it is essential for seafarers who spend many weeks cooped up at their workplace, with only work mates and managers for company to get ashore. Seafarers need to break free of the vessel and port to access phones and the Internet to contact family, to seek welfare, social, medical or psychological support if needed, and to have a break from the work environment. Sadly despite this, the seafarers' essential right to have respite on shore is facing erosion from growing pressures in the industry. The ITF feels that the shipping industry is putting increasing demands on crews and ships that affect time in ports. There is less time on shore for seafarers, who are increasingly working longer hours at sea as crew sizes are reduced. There have also been changes in the ports themselves. New-build ports tend to be isolated away from the traditional coastal towns, which also limits seafarers' options when they do have time off-ship. Sometimes the transportation costs are just too high for seafarers to access facilities. The sad fact is that nowadays local populations are increasingly disconnected from the sea, and so too the seafarers who bring so much of the goods, foods, fuel and luxuries we rely on. The irony is that society is more dependent than ever before on seafarers, but crews are marginalized, and cut off from the people they serve. It seems not so much that people are not welcoming of seafarers; just they do not really understand who they are or what they do. One book on the subject captures the problem well – "The astounding ignorance of maritime matters manifested by British people generally makes one gasp in amazement". While the criticism can likely be leveled at many other nationalities, what is more surprising is that the quote was written in the year 1900! Yes, so the problems of sea blindness, ignorance and disconnection have existed for centuries.

Are seafarers' centers a thing of the past?
The ITF has demanded a change – and prompted by the Crew too Seafarers Happiness Index, which pointed out that some crews now dread port calls there is a push for guarantees of the right to shore leave. An important part of this is seen to be the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention 185 – Seafarers' ID – which it is felt could improve the situation by ensuring that seafarers have a highly secure ID that is recognized worldwide. The ITF is campaigning for full ratification of C185, and is monitoring seafarers' access to shore leave through its international reporting system. So we can perhaps see a new mechanism which means seafarers can get ashore – what they find when they get there is another matter. There are all kinds of change in the air – some believe that the traditional seafarers' centers are an old fashioned concept from a different age. While some believe they are essential, and give crews a focal point and "home" from home. Whether seafarer welfare is based on missions, or free Wi-Fi in local coffee houses, we hope that local populations can find a way to bring seafarers back into the consciousness and into their hearts. Seafarers deliver so much; let's hope in return for a little respect, a warm welcome and a place in the hearts of a grateful society. Source: www.crewtoo.com Unquote
Bullying and harassment!!!! What do all the Old salts have to say about that? Plenty I expect, but remember that today cultural differences in the crew makeup are generally more clearly defined in the officer ranks, than what we were used to. To cope with that there are today a raft of rules and regulations and protections in place. Food for thought I hope. *Alan Ford*

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