

Capt Brian Druce

1923 – 2019

'A sad day; a dear friend; a super star; true inspiration; always sprightly. He gave his best and always enjoyed your company with a smile and a glass; a true mariner'. Comments from those learning that the late Captain suffering from cancer, had Crossed the Bar.

Born in Chatswood in 1923, Brian Druce was educated at Mowbray House School and Sydney Grammar.

A Christmas Holidays job mailing out calendars convinced Brian that an office job was not for him. A careers advisory test suggested he should become an electrician or a Ship's Captain. Thus, in making his choice, in 1941, Brian left school and joined Burns Philp's SS Marella as a Cadet Officer.

The lottery of life treated Brian well during the Second World War assigning him to ships that generally avoided trouble. Brian told of a journey where his ship was bound for Singapore but was sent to another destination so avoiding being caught up in the fall of Singapore.

He did have a couple of episodes during the war, the first being when they spotted a submarine surfaced ahead of them. They opened fire hitting it several times without sinking it. Only when they got closer did they realise it would be difficult to sink a large teak log.

Another time Brian's ship was buzzed by a Japanese plane. Brian delighted to retaliate using a Vickers Machine Gun and said he was delighted when he heard his bullets hitting something metallic. However, he had the distinction of shooting holes in his own ship's funnel.

After the war Brian joined Union Steamship Company and relocated to New Zealand. A shipboard colleague organised a blind date for Brian with Julie and romance blossomed into marriage in Auckland in March 1949. Brian and Julie settled in Auckland and with four children Brian worked his way up through the ranks to Captain.

His voyages included many of the Pacific Islands, many ports around New Zealand and South Eastern Australia.

In 1960 the family moved to Sydney when Brian got a job with the Maritime Services Board. He started working as a crew member on the Pilot Boat and soon became a Harbour Pilot after relief jobs at Newcastle and Eden.

Brian and Julie soon acquired a fifth child and a house at Wahroonga.

Brian stayed with the MSB until his retirement in 1983 by which time he had become Harbour Master of Sydney & Botany Bay and State Nautical Coordinator.

In 1971 the family moved from Wahroonga to Wollstonecraft enjoying its easy access to the city and a holiday house on the South Coast.

Retirement allowed Brian and Julie to travel widely visiting New Zealand, Europe, England, Scandinavia, China and North America, Julie having been born in Canada. They also travelled extensively in Australia, much of it with caravan in tow.

In the 80's they decided to leave Sydney and built a house on Lake Macquarie. Brian very much involved in the building of the house. They spent about ten years on the Lake before moving to Newcastle near the beach.

After Julie's death in 2011 Brian made a couple of moves before finishing up at Toronto where in his own words, 'I'm comfortable sitting here in my Hero's Chair overlooking the Lake having the occasional glass of Verdelho'.

Brian died April 12, 2019.