

## **Capt 'Mac' Rodney Coates**

May 3, 1927 – January 28, 2018 (aged 90)

Born in Queensland, Mac Coates went to school at Kelvin Grove and then Brisbane Grammar and was a keen member of the Boy Scouts.

Mac loved reading. Even as a young child his love of books centred on those associated with the sea and ships. His knowledge of all things nautical was extensive. This passion for reading continued throughout his life and he possibly had one of the biggest book collections anyone can have.

Mac's passion for seafaring possibly came from his own father who was a Purser with AUSN and E&A. In December 1943, just one month after finishing secondary school, Mac started his own long association with the sea by signing on with AUSN, the same company as his father had worked for. In those days one started as an apprentice and carried out studies while at sea gaining the necessary practical skills.

In 1943 at just 16 years of age, Mac departed for 10 months on his first assignment on-board the *SS Mungana*. He also sailed on the *Eastern*, which his father had sailed on in his career.

After successfully finishing his apprenticeship in 1947 he left AUSN and was employed by Common Brothers Shipping and British India Shipping Company.

In 1951 he joined E&A and remained with that company until retirement. He was promoted to Master in 1964 and was given the *Eastern*, his father's old ship, as his first command. Command of many ships followed until his retirement in 1983.

He received two commendations during his career with E&A; the first in 1968 for his prompt actions in obtaining the release of the *Arawaka* when the vessel had been arrested at sea by an Indonesian warship, and the second in 1982, when in command of the *Arafura*, for the rescue of the entire crew of the stranded *Koyten Maru* in the Coral Sea.

### **Marriage & family**

Mac met his wife Gwenda in Brisbane and they lived there for a few years before work commitments saw them move to Sydney in 1962 where they raised their family of three children.

Over the years family holidays and outings always centred on the ocean, be it on the family's boat up on the Gold Coast waterways or the local Hawkesbury River, fishing, water-skiing and swimming.

Mac was a very keen fisherman and at one point this resulted in a collection of preserved shark heads sitting in jars in the laundry, much to Gwenda's horror. Mac's love of fishing continued throughout his entire life.

### **Timeline**

Indentured to Australian United Steam Navigation (AUSN) Co. Ltd from December 29, 1943 until March 24, 1947. Ships – *Mungana*, *Ormiston*, *Reynella* and *Eastern*.

Passing exams for his 2<sup>nd</sup>. Mates Certificate in 1947 he was employed by Common Brothers (Shipping) UK for approximately 12 months as 2<sup>nd</sup>. Officer on *MS Rajistan/Hindustan*.

From 1949 to early 1951 Mac was employed by the British Steam navigation Co. Ltd. In ships such as *Orna* and *Fultala*.

In 1951, having successfully passed his 1<sup>st</sup>. mates Certificate, he joined the Eastern and Australian Steamship Co. Ltd. and remained with that company until retirement.

Passing his Masters Certificate in July 1954 he was promoted to Master in 1964 and served as Master on the following vessels – *Nankin, Arawatta, Arakawa, Eastern, Arafura, Ariake, Cathay* and *Chitral*.

In 1983 Captain Mac Coates requested, and was granted, early retirement. The Company wished him well in any future employment he may undertake.

Mac died, aged 90 on January 28, 2018.

*From Mac's Eulogy with thanks to Hugh Coates.*