

Capt Richard Sandeman-Gay

It is with profound regret we have to advise that after a fall resulting in catastrophic head injuries, our Committee Member Captain Richard Sandeman-Gay, Crossed the Bar on Thursday 11 May 2017 surrounded by his family.

We send his family our condolences. He will be sadly missed by many.

From the Eulogy at his farewell ...

Richard started his cadetship with British India Shipping Company in 1953 as a 16-year-old. After obtaining his Certificate he sailed briefly as Fourth Mate in New Zealand Shipping Company and soon after as Third mate before gaining his Mates Certificate in Cardiff, Wales.

He then sailed as Second Officer when he met Elisabeth in 1961 and they decided to get married. He left the sea and lived in Fremantle from 1962 to 1963. He then moved to Victoria where his daughter Marina was born and soon after he was back at sea with Union steam ship company.

Richard studied for his Masters Certificate in Melbourne RMIT in 1954 and decided to join the Merchant Service Guild which was quite out of character for his family background where unions were frowned upon. Nevertheless, Richard could see the value for improvements in conditions, seafarers' welfare and general wellbeing.

The family then bought a house in Sandringham shortly before a serious car accident in South Australia. Later Richard had an offer as partner in a Marine Surveying business with Frank Griffin.

He worked with Union steam until 1969 in Melbourne, Sydney, Strahan, Hobart and many other ports.

He finally resigned Union Steamship to study for his Extra Masters Part B which would give him a Compass Adjusters Certificate.

The family moved to Wollongong, with two small children and started the business on August 1, 1969.

Richard was one of the early compass adjusters in Australia with Certificate Number 11.

With the flourishing business, Elisabeth had to attend Business College to learn to type and help in the business. Also, an office was purchased in Wentworth Street, Port Kembla for the Marine Surveying business of Christy & Griffin. This was a partnership of several ex British India officers that worked as cargo and ship surveyors.

Richard went to Sydney for an interview with Eastern Seaboard Shipping on the Matthew Flinders, James Cook and the tanker Arthur Phillip.

Redundancy from Flinders Shipping Company was inevitable as the fleet were being replaced by much larger vessels.

The delivery of the ship Seaway King to Singapore saw Elisabeth fly on her first overseas trip.

An overland trip in 1977-78 through Singapore, Malaysia, Penang all the way to Wales enabled him to see the countries inland from the ports he had sailed into years earlier.

The visits included many of his early experiences like the pub Ye Old King of Prussia, Barnet High School, Moss Hall Primary, the Villages of Begelly and Saundersfoot where Richard was born in 1935. Also, the Old Mill Farm, Pinetree Cottage and Highfield.

At the time, Richard was an extra in the 1980 film "The Mouse and the Woman" written by Dylan Thomas and directed by Karl Francis.

Interviews in London then led to a flight to Port Moresby, to join PNG Shipping Corporation as Chief Officer. He was promoted to Master after only half a voyage based on his quality work.

In PNG Richard sailed on just about every ship they had - all the Chiefs - Moresby, Lae, Nuigini, Obo, Eassett etc. He sailed around the coast and to most of the Islands of PNG.

Voyages took him also to America, Singapore, Australia and up and down the Fly River, often coming to Port Kembla with bulk loads of copper concentrate.

Richard joined the Company of Master Mariners of Australia in October 1998. He has been a staunch supporter over the years and a member of the Branch Court since 2006. He has been the Editor of the newsletter for nearly ten years'

His father was an officer in the Royal Navy during the war and was killed in action. This prompted Richard to support veterans and the Merchant Navy Association. His interest also extended to many other areas of the Maritime Industry.

Following on from his time in PNG, when he stood by in Zhenjiang, on the Yangtse River for three months in 1999 while the Chinese yard fitted out the newest ship of the fleet.

Richard always regaled funny stories of his stay there and loved the people he had to deal with, especially the Madam Chairwoman, the boss of the whole operation who did not speak a word of English, until the final day when Richard suddenly discovered that all along she'd understood every word he'd said! And he loved

seeing the replay of a TV interview he gave, in which they dubbed his words into Mandarin.

Not only was Richard Master on all these vessels, he trained the PNG Nationals to become seafarers and ultimately Masters themselves. He loved the people; he loved the place; and he was always having a go at Management to ensure the best for his ships and his crews.

He retired unwillingly in 2002 after a leg infection kept him on sick leave for a long time. He fell short of his 25th anniversary of working in the country by a few weeks and his 'retirement' was one of the bitter regrets of his life.