

Capt Ted Liley



Ted was born in Brisbane on the 15th September 1927 to Captain Oswy Harold Liley, a Brisbane Pilot, and his wife Sophie Jane. He was raised, along with his three brothers, in Hazelwood Road Newfarm on the Brisbane river.

It was no surprise when Ted, aged 15, went to sea as a deck boy on the lighthouse ship the Cape Leeuwin in 1942 as his family were steeped in the seafaring tradition.

The family proudly boasts 400 years of direct ancestors who went to sea, with an extraordinary 300 odd years as pilots on the Thames and Mersey Rivers in England and later in Australia. Even Ted's grandfather on his mother's side, Captain James Morris, was an ex Sydney Harbour Pilot and Marine Superintendent for Sydney Ports. It was said that Oswy could never become a Sydney pilot as it would have been considered nepotism!

During a voyage on the Cape Leeuwin, Ted was on lookout duties when they observed huge red fire clouds on the dark night's horizon and heard the horrific explosions when the Australian hospital ship the Centaur was attacked and sunk by Japanese subs off Brisbane. The crew of the Lewin were not to know it was the deadly attack on The Centaur until they arrived in Mackay three days later. The estimated position he gave was extremely close to where the ship was recently found.

In 1949 Ted met his wonderful wife Brenda, He was 18 and she 17. They courted for a number of years and were married in 1952, before settling in to their current home in Vaucluse. Ted went on to gain his Masters Foreign Going Certificate in 1952, the same year as he was appointed Master of the Patricks' vessel Cardross, then the Colcane. At that time Ted, who was then 25 years old, was the youngest appointed Master on the coast.

With a young family growing up Ted applied for and was appointed the Mate on the Newcastle Harbour Pilot vessel Birubi in 1955, and then the Sydney Harbour Pilot Vessel, Captain Cook, enabling him to get home more frequently to his family and more importantly gave him his first step into the NSW Maritime Pilot Service. Around this time he purchased the home in Vaucluse in which they had been living, where he had a commanding view over the harbour and the Captain Cook mooring in Watsons Bay.

In December 1960 Ted was appointed a junior pilot in The Port of Newcastle and went on to gain his pilot's licence in Eden, Port Kembla, and Sydney ports, which also included the Port of Botany as this was then part of the Sydney licence. At that time he was the only pilot to hold all 4 licences. Ted gained his permanent position as a Sydney pilot in 1964 which made him the second youngest permanent pilot appointed in Sydney to the service. He went on to become the Senior Pilot in 1972, a position he held for a staggering 15 years until his retirement in September 1987. In those days it was compulsory to retire from the pilots at age 60.

During Ted's time as a pilot he conducted in excess of 6,000 pilotages, a feat in those days of

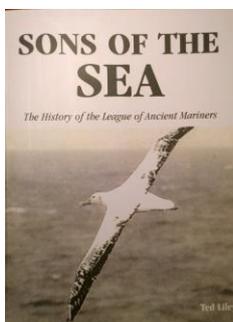
great standing. One of his great thrills was to pilot the USS Enterprise, a huge aircraft carrier, while other highlights were the pilotage of the QEII and other great > seagoing passenger ships on their maiden voyages to Sydney. As with all highs there were some disappointments; one being when he was trained up in all the social graces and Royal etiquette needed to pilot the RMS Britannica with Her Majesty aboard. Ted's brother had the privilege to Pilot the Queen's vessel in and out of Brisbane, however sadly just days before the event, some Naval Pilot with more pull gazumped him!

As previously mentioned, the Liley family, had many seafarers and pilots within their ranks and today there are still Liley pilots right around Australia. There was a joke going around that during Ted's time as a pilot in Sydney, a ship visited Brisbane where his brother piloted the vessel in and out then in Melbourne where a cousin did the same and when Ted arrived on the ship's Bridge the master asked him his name and he said "Liley". To which the Master replied "is that some sort of rank as a pilot as we've had one in the last three ports"!

Ted is always remembered within the pilot ranks as one of the best Senior Pilots to hold the "worry beads" thanks to his great ability to train and impart the specialist knowledge of pilotage in Port Jackson and the all important transits that cleared all the lurking obstacles that lay below the water level. Ted's knowledge of the Harbour was unsurpassed, remembering that in his day there were no electronic charts or GPS positions, just "Mark one eyeball" and a good memory of the seabed, currents and wind. No matter what the weather, Ted's outer sea uniform was always a black Fedora hat turned up at the front to allow him to see the pilot ladder rungs above him and an old rain coat. He could always be picked out at a distance by the tug skippers who were on their way to assist in the berthing of the vessel.

On his retirement Ted went on to lead the Bar Bounders club, a select club of old senior seafarers who had "swallowed the anchor" as the saying goes, that met monthly.

'Sons of the Sea'



Ted was a past president of the NSW League of Ancient Mariners and the author of the book "*Sons of the Sea.*"

Ted never forgot his old ship mates and watch keeping pilots after their retirement and was always the first to know who had 'passed over the bar' or was of poor health and saw to it that the rest were aware of it.

He was a tireless supporter of the Rose Bay RSL where he was an executive of the Sub branch.

Ted, a stalwart in the Pilots and Tug masters bi-annual dinners for current and retired Pilots and Tug masters, was an active member for over 50 years and was always the font of knowledge of events and history of his beloved port.

Ted passed over the bar on Thursday 31st May 2018 after a number of years of poor health.

Ted's memory will be fondly kept by many a mariner. Ted is survived by his wife Brenda and their two sons Ken and Ian, their wives, and his five grandchildren.