

John Barclay McNaught

15th March 1938 – 5th June 2020

John was born into a small farming community in Beith, North Ayrshire, Scotland. At an early age John determined that a farming life was not for him although he maintained a love of domestic gardening throughout his life. Leaving school at age fifteen, he entered an engineering apprenticeship and went on to complete a Degree in Mechanical Engineering.



John's desire to see the world led to him gaining a position as a junior marine engineer on an ocean-going vessel where his lifelong maritime journey commenced. John spent much of his early career working onboard British India vessels. His extensive world travels eventually resulted in him immigrating to Australia where he sailed on various ships including RW Miller "sixty milers". Holding a "Double Barrel" steam and motor certificate, John progressed to the Millers Tankers, including R Miller, Millers MacArthur, Millers Canopus, Robert Miller and Amanda Miller where he sailed as both Second and Chief Engineer. He eventually took up the position of Superintendent Engineer responsible for the tankers. When Howard Smith acquired Millers in the mid 1980's, John was in Korea overseeing the construction of two new tankers, the Era and Canopus. He transferred to Smith's management and continued to oversee the two tankers as well as sharing his experience amongst the other vessels in Smith's fleet.

John was an extremely practical engineer; his planning, administrative and communication skills being of a remarkably high order and the envy of many of his colleagues. His abilities led to him being posted overseas to supervise the construction of new vessels including Lindsay Clark, Portland, Era and Canopus during the mid-1980's. Additionally, John was involved in the planning and construction of the Conara, Camira and Wallarah for Smith's/Coal & Allied.

Shortly after his return to Australia in the late 80's, John suffered a near fatal fall in one of the ballast tanks onboard Lindsay Clark. John was alone at the time of the incident and had no recollection of what had occurred. The injuries he sustained required many years of rehabilitation and eventually led to his forced, premature retirement.

Several years later, one of John's Korean contacts from his time in New Construction contacted him looking for a Mechanical Inspector for a project in Korea. After gaining all necessary medical clearances,

John travelled to Korea for a three-month trial period that eventually lasted more than seven years. During his time in Korea, John's medical condition improved such that he assumed the responsibilities of Project Manager for several new construction projects. At the completion of these projects John was employed by Tidewater Inc where he worked throughout Asia for the next ten years in a new construction management position.

John eventually retired for good in late 2012 as Tidewater's new construction program wound down and new construction projects were minimised and ceased altogether in late 2015.

Almost immediately on his return to Australia he underwent a hip replacement operation which did not go as well as hoped. John had also been diagnosed as having "plaque" on his lungs caused by asbestos fibres. This led to an ongoing bronchial condition that continued to worsen as time went on and eventually became a significant factor in John's hospitalisation and eventual passing.

John, or "Mad Eyes McNaught" was a genuine "hard man". His old-style, no-nonsense approach to maritime problem solving won him many admirers along with the occasional detractor. His exploits were legendary amongst fellow seafarers. John was also quite the entertainer and those lucky enough to witness one of his impromptu concerts will never forget the experience. What is probably less known is that John was a very compassionate, generous man who went out of his way to provide support to those less fortunate than himself, particularly in Indonesia and China.

Although he is no longer with us, John will never be forgotten by those fortunate enough to have known him.