

MERCHANT NAVY NEWS

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TO FOSTER THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA

A WORKING LIFE IN THE AUSTRALIAN MARITIME INDUSTRY Part 2

By Neil Bevis



MV Wangara

Built in 1955 at the New South Wales State Dockyard for the Australian Shipping Board (ASB) and transferred to the Australian National Line in 1957. Bareboat charter to the West Australian State Shipping Service in 1965 and sold to them in 1966 and renamed MV Dongara. In 1967. Sold to overseas interests in 1977 and made into a dumb barge in the Philippines in 1979.

In January 1965 I joined the ship MV 'Wangara' as bosun in Melbourne. By good fortune it just happened to be on charter to the West Australian State Shipping Service and was sailing for Fremantle where my wife was. After one voyage up the coast of Western Australia to Dampier, Port Hedland, Broome, Wyndham, Derby, Darwin and back to Fremantle I felt it was time to look at a shore job for a while and to spend time with my wife and children. A chance visit to the union official of the Ship Painters and Dockers Union Paddy Troy, a legendary figure in Fremantle, and after a brief discussion a job materialised in the State Shipping Service

rigging loft in Fremantle, splicing rope, and wire, making cargo nets and cargo slings, sewing canvas. Start the next morning. The salary was £18 per week, which really wasn't such a good wage back then. But while I was determined to make it work and never missed a day for the next three months, deep down I knew that I needed a better job with better prospects if my ambition of staying ashore was to work.

Ship Berthing Crew

Sometime around June 1965, while still working in the rigging loft, word filtered down through the grapevine that the Fremantle Port Authority were looking for a new member of the 'ship mooring gang'. This was a plum job, and I knew there would be a lot of competition, but I concluded that if I remained in my comfort zone and simply accepted the status quo I would be giving in to the forces that had been holding me back and nothing was going to change. They had to be faced down, so I dropped off a letter expressing my interest and within a day I was contacted and told to be at the Port Authority building at 4 pm for an interview with the berthing master and the Harbour Master. The next day I was again contacted to say that I had the job. Start 6 am the following day. The hours were long, regularly going from 6 am to midnight with lots of stopping and starting. It was not unusual to have a few hours off waiting for the next ship to arrive or depart while at other times running from one ship to the next.

Splash Boards

For many of my early years at sea there were no environmental concerns about shipboard sewage. Toilet contents were simply flushed over the side through outlets in the ship side. While this wasn't so much a health hazard while the ship was at sea it was problematic when a ship was in port because as the end of the flushing pipe exited the ship side on the wharf side, the contents were simply dumped onto the wharf. Not only did this foul the surface at the edge of the wharf it could also happen that if someone were to be standing on the wharf beneath a flushing pipe the contents of a flushed toilet would land on or around them. This was most likely to happen to waterside workers queuing to board the ship. One solution that has introduced back then was to construct 'splash boards' that when in port were lowered over the wharf side of the ship to cover the pipe exit point and then secured in position, the idea being that the toilet contents would hit this board and instead of spewing onto the wharf would simply drop vertically, hopefully into the water but more often than not it would land and accumulate on the 'waleing piece' [a length of heavy

timber just below the wharf face that extended out about a half metre]. While the initial purpose of the 'splash board' solved the problem for those on the wharf it created a problem for those of us in the mooring gang as we would often have to get onto the 'waleing piece' to assist in getting a heavy mooring line onto the wharf for securing onto a bollard. There was little we could do about it and fortunately with time ships had holding tanks for sewage.

Master of Harbours and Rivers

Through my job in the mooring crew, I got to mix with harbour pilots, launch and tug masters and other maritime industry professionals. As they got to know me and my background, they encouraged me to study for a Certificate of Competency in case I ever wanted to go back to sea. I was unsure if I was capable of this until I was put in touch with an elderly ex Harbour Master, Captain Trivett who ran a small school out of a back room of his 'grace and favour' house in Fremantle. I approached him and after some discussion he suggested I start with the Master of Harbours and Rivers Certificate of Competency for the Swan River and Cockburn Sound, an abbreviated version of a Pilots Exemption. It was an oral exam so only required memory. He gave me a book of notes for this qualification and instructed me to study and memorise them. I studied and whenever possible between working commitments this old ex Harbour Master would verbally test me repeatedly until he felt I had the knowledge 'verbatim'. He seemed to find in me an avuncular understanding and invested in me the wisdom and confidence I lacked. This was the first test that I had taken since leaving school ten years earlier. I passed and was issued with the Certificate of Competency. This was the one that demonstrated to me that I was better than I had led myself to believe. It caused me to reflect and take stock of myself and it was at that moment I learnt to believe in myself and the decisions I made. Over the following years I studied for the higher and much more complex qualifications.

I become a deck officer

In late 1969 while still working in the mooring gang, a position was advertised for a 3rd officer on a small coastal ship the MV Clevedon and Registered in Panama and later with a name change to Clieveden it was Registered in Fremantle. The ship was trading on the West Australian coast carrying dry bulk cement from Fremantle to Dampier, Point Murat

in Exmouth Gulf, Point Samson, and Port Hedland. As I now held seagoing Certificates of Competency I applied for the position. An interview was arranged, and I was given the job. The voyages were short and leave provisions were generous.

One of the unusual things about this ship for that time was that it didn't carry the traditional Radio Officer [long before GMDSS]. This meant that the deck officers had to hold a Commercial Radio Operator's Certificate of Proficiency Third Class to be able to operate the radio equipment (a double sideband and single sideband voice radio) legally and technically. With a bit of practice and some study I took the test and passed.



MV Clevedon/Clieveden

As the ship was on a regular voyage to and from Fremantle it was decided that one of the officers should be our union representative. I became the ships representative on the Merchant Service Guild (later the Australian Maritime Officers Union) committee of management. Some years later I decided to contest the position as Union Secretary. I had been on the COM for quite some years and on occasion I had relieved the union secretary so when the election came around, I nominated. There was only the two of us as candidates, the incumbent and me. Unfortunately, I will never know how I would have gone because the Returning Officer 'found' that the person who seconded my nomination was a member of the NSW Branch of the Union and legally he had to be a member of the West Australia Branch. Hence, I was disqualified.

An encounter with a cyclone

One incident that made life at sea on this ship somewhat dangerous (because it was only a relatively small ship) was an encounter with a particularly violent tropical cyclone in 1969. With the cyclone tracking down the coast while we were tracking north it was clear that if we both continued as we were we would clash at around NW Cape. After some discussion between the Master and us officers it was agreed that the best action to take was to change course to due west and attempt to position the ship in the 'navigable semi-circle'. We approached NW Cape with the cyclone still about 120 miles north of us and showing signs of the expected re-curvature to the SE, made the course alteration to due west, knowing that while this would take us away from the general direction to our destination in Port Dampier it would also take us away from the expected 'path' of the cyclone to the southeast and behind us. Instead of passing behind us as we expected, the cyclone curved in a westerly direction and ran roughly parallel to our course and close enough to be giving us a terrible battering. The weather was seriously bad, the sky was completely covered with dense cloud, the rain from the cyclone was torrential and with the ship moving heavily and violently in huge seas it was not possible to obtain a sextant sight to enable us to plot at least an approximate position (no GPS in those days) so we had to keep running in a westerly direction on 'dead reckoning' and also using traverse tables for the 'days' work' calculation technique. During the following 48 hours the cyclone progressively curved to the SE and fell away behind us, the weather moderated then cleared and we were able to get sextant sights. From these 'sights' we established that we had run quite a distance into the Indian Ocean. After two days steaming due east, we sighted the coast and resumed the coastal voyage. While little structural damage had been done it had been an extremely dangerous situation.

Promotion to second officer

In 1971, I was landed ashore in Port Headland with acute appendicitis and after ten days in hospital (no laparoscopic surgery in those days) flown home to Perth. After another two weeks post-operative recovery I was cleared by the company shipping doctor and re-joined the ship for my next 'swing' but this time as 2nd mate. My promotion was sudden and the result of an incident involving a heated verbal exchange between the then 2nd mate and the duty able seaman that quickly escalated into a violent king hit sending the 2nd mate to hospital with a broken jaw and the AB being instantly dismissed.

An anecdote: A steward has a psychiatric episode

Another incident around this time involved one of the ships stewards. I was the navigation bridge watch-keeping officer (3rd mate) when at about 9 pm the captain appeared beside me in a state of mild agitation and directed me to 'call the bosun'. He revealed that one of the stewards, while armed with a length of small chain and a large knife, had stormed into the officer's saloon where several officers were enjoying a general discussion. The officers quickly exited out one door and alerted the captain. Not sure as to where this armed and possibly dangerous steward was lurking, the captain, the bosun, the chief officer and two of the biggest AB's went in search of him but not before the captain instructed me to:

Shut both wheelhouse doors and if he were to storm the bridge, ring the engine room telegraph bells and they would rush to my aid'.

Taking into consideration the time it would take for my 'would be rescuers' to get back to the bridge I was not particularly confident for my safety. Shortly after they set out the chief engineer arrived on the bridge. He was apparently unaware of the unfolding situation but was aware that something was amiss as he told me he had a steward locked in the wardrobe in his cabin. It turned out that after the encounter with the officers and their rapid exiting out one door, the wayward steward ran out the other door which just happened to lead past the cabin of the chief engineer.

The steward, in his apparent paranoia thinking that he was being chased, entered the chief engineer's cabin, and said 'can you help me, everyone is after me' The chief engineer quickly noticing that the steward was armed politely said: 'Sure, I will help you (as you would) just climb into my wardrobe, I'll lock it behind you, no one will know where you are, and I won't tell them so you will be perfectly safe'. The steward thanked him and did exactly what he was told to do. With the steward now secured in the wardrobe the Chief Engineer left his cabin and came up to the navigation bridge, making sure to lock his cabin door after him in case the steward smelt a rat and broke out of the wardrobe. The search was called off; the steward was removed from the wardrobe and placed in an empty locked cabin under an external watch by the on-duty seaman. A message was sent to our agent in Fremantle explaining the situation and requesting that the steward be apprehended by the police and landed ashore. We anchored off Carnarvon the following morning to wait what we expected to be a large launch manned with police. To our surprise a small 5 metre 'tinny' powered by an outboard motor was observed approaching with two people in it. On arrival at the ship the larger of the

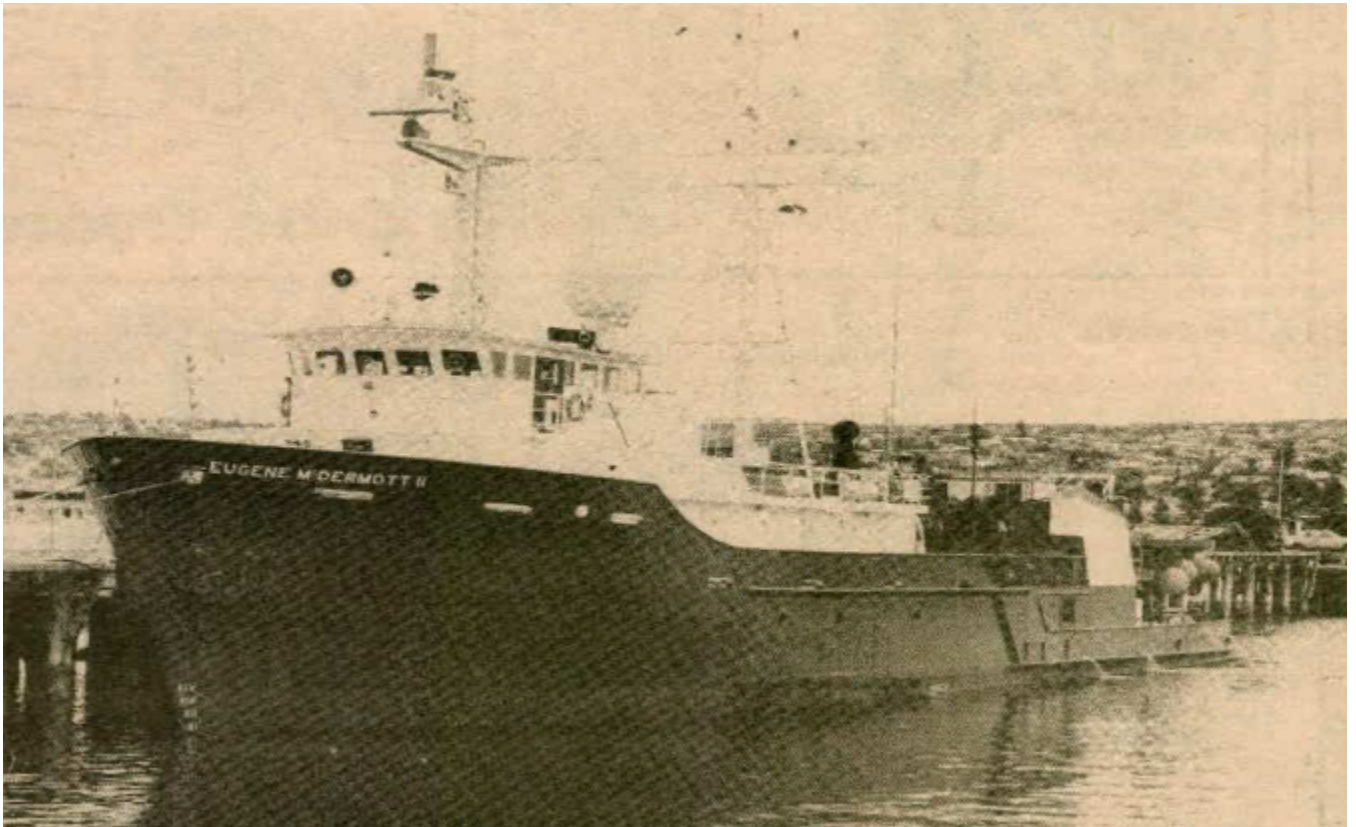
two occupants was a ships agent in Carnarvon who had been contacted by our agent in Fremantle to arrange the transfer of the steward into custody for medical assessment. He boarded the ship and without any more to do told us to leave everything to him (he was a tough Northwester). We cautiously opened the cabin door only to find a very remorseful and sheepish steward, perfectly calm and quite happy to be taken ashore. The last view we had of him was sitting happily in this little tinny speeding towards Carnarvon and never to be seen again. I remained serving on this ship until 1972 when the contract for delivery of cement was completed and we were all discharged. I undertook my exams for my First Mate Certificate of Competency.

Not long after I was contacted by the marine superintendent of a company in Fremantle who offered me a relieving position as chief officer on a large ocean-going tug and rig supply vessel the 'Smit Lloyd 32'. The relief was for three months, and the vessel was working out of Fremantle to the semi-submersible oil rig Ocean Digger off Rottnest Island and the Jack Up rig Jubilee at the bottom of Cockburn Sound. It was dangerous work manoeuvring close alongside these large, fixed platforms in weather to snatch heavy containers and other equipment swinging from under a crane. But it was good experience especially ship handling. As there were only the two officers onboard, my-self as chief officer and the ships master with both of us doing 6-hour navigation watches (6 on and 6 off) it sometimes fell to whichever of us was on watch at the time to conduct the ship handling manoeuvres. I was sorry when the relief ended.

My last ship at sea

My last ship at sea was in 1972 as chief officer on a seismic survey vessel MV Eugene McDermott working in the Indian Ocean and the Timor Gap towing a 2-mile-long seismic cable. One afternoon while I was the bridge navigation watch-keeping officer, steaming along happily with the 'echo sounder' showing a depth of 66 fathoms of water below us and the navigation chart showing the same depth all round us I was at peace but bored. That was until I suddenly noticed the depth trace on the echo sounder was rapidly rising and the warning alarm sounding. Helpless to do anything as it was rising so rapidly, I could only stare at it as the depth of water under the ship rapidly reduced. At 6 fathoms the trace suddenly stopped rising and ran horizontal for about 500 metres then suddenly fell back to 66 fathoms. We had crossed an un-charted sea mount. Once back in port the discovery was reported

to the navy Hydrographic Department for investigation. They later confirmed the sea mount, and it has since been marked on all navigation charts for the area.



MV Eugene McDermott

Ships Agent

In 1972 again, out of work I responded to a job advertisement for a Shipping Officer/ships Agent with Wigmores Limited an international shipping agency in Fremantle. I was interviewed and offered the position. It was to be a big learning curve for me as it involved being in total charge of the port operations of a ship. My sea going experience had always been that the ship arrived off a port, was manoeuvred into its allocated berth, commenced cargo operations, finished cargo operations, and then sailed away to the next port. I had no idea what else was involved as it didn't concern me. Now it did concern me. This job was totally different. A shipping officer/ships agent works for an agency that acts on behalf of the ship-owner and has the role of overall responsibility for the commercial operation of a ship during its time in port. I needed to have a wide range of expertise in Customs matters, Quarantine Regulations, and Immigration statutes.

I also needed to have a good working relationship with harbour masters, towage companies, stevedores, waterside labour allocators, cargo shippers, surveyors, providores, the regular processes of crew signing-on and signing-off, of clearing inwards and outwards through Customs along with the competing demands of inward cargo consignees, outward cargo shippers and the ships owners and others. Communications were a vital part, especially with Forms that had to be completed accurately and on time. While I didn't have to be an instant expert, I certainly needed to be alert to what needed to be done and more importantly when it had to be done. One overlooked Form or survey would throw the whole loading schedule out and delay sailing as I was soon to find out.

On one occasion I forgot to tell the Government Surveyor BEFORE we commenced loading a consignment of loose pig iron ingots which was classified as a 'dangerous cargo'. I had lodged the Dangerous Cargo Form well in advance but had completely forgotten to have the space inspected by the Government marine surveyor before loading, only realising this AFTER we had already tipped in about 60 tonnes!! I immediately instructed the stevedore supervisor to stop the loading, telephoned the surveyor and explained the situation to him. The surveyor shouted at me to unload the cargo and call him when the space was empty. The stevedore shouted at me because it threw out the loading plan for that cargo hold. The waterside workers shouted at me because they now had to manhandle the 60 tonnes of pig iron ingots one at a time back into skips for discharge. My manager shouted at me for making the mistake. The cargo was unloaded, the surveyor approved the very same stowage space and we started over again.

In this job it was also important that I maintained a friendly but firm disposition when dealing with waterfront unions and in some cases I had to be careful how far I went because, as is common with human nature, they press for an advantage but then just as easily think less of you when they gain it. One of the most usual situations I would encounter was with the Ship Painters & Dockers and revolved around what was called a 'job and finish'. It worked something like this. One of the ships under our e encounter was with the Ship Painters & Dockers and revolved around what was called a 'job and finish'. It worked something like this. One of the ships under our agency would arrive in Fremantle to discharge general cargo and then sail overnight

to the Port of Bunbury to back load several cargo holds of bulk cargo before returning to Fremantle to load the other cargo holds with general cargo. This would mean having to have the particular cargo holds cleaned and surveyed before sailing from Fremantle so that the loading of the bulk cargo could commence immediately on arrival in Bunbury. Any delay would mean having wharf labour standing by on pay. But the hold cleaning could not be done until the particular cargo holds were empty of incoming cargo in Fremantle, and this meant they were usually not available until sailing day. The cleaning had to be done by shore side members of the Ship Painters and Dockers Union who worked for a ship repair and maintenance company. I would arrange for the company to supply sufficient labour on the day to have the job done and completed before the time of sailing which was usually at 10 pm. The labour would start the cleaning at 1 pm with plenty of time to have the holds cleaned by 9 pm. At around 4 pm I would be approached by the foreman of the cleaning company who would say with mock alarm: 'I don't think you will be able to sail tonight skipper. Best put the sailing back to tomorrow. The boys have been working flat out but there is more to be done than I anticipated, and we just haven't got enough time to complete the job by 9 pm'. Then he would suggest that maybe, just maybe, if they had a 'job and finish' they could possibly make it on time, all the time knowing full well that I had no alternative but to agree because if I didn't it would delay the sailing. Of course, I also knew full well that once I agreed to the job and finish, they would have it done in a couple of hours. And sure enough by 7pm the cleaning would be completed, and the labour would be rushing down the gangway knowing they would be paid till 9 pm.

Another of my roles in this job was handling crew matters. I recall an occasion when on the day before the arrival of one of the Japanese ships contracted to our Agency, we received a message from the ship advising that one of the engineers was behaving strangely and had isolated himself in a corner of the engine room and would not be budged. The message went on to request the presence of the company doctor on arrival in Fremantle the next day. I advised the doctor of the situation and he joined me at the ship on its arrival. The doctor went to the engine room where he (the doctor) managed to sedate the engineer who was then removed and transported by ambulance to Fremantle Hospital where he was monitored overnight in a special ward. The next day we were told by the head of the hospital emergency department that he could not be kept indefinitely and strongly suggested we arrange for him to be repatriated to Japan. Telex messages flew back and forth between

Telex messages flew back and forth between us in Fremantle and the ships owners in Tokyo with instructions to organise his repatriation with the company doctor and a medical assistant as escort. I became the 'medical assistant'. As there were no direct flights from Perth to Tokyo the three of us embarked on a flight to Sydney, a long wait at the airport and then a flight to Tokyo. A long and tiring journey as the engineer was seated in the middle of the three seats with me on one side and the doctor on the other. The engineer was quite calm throughout the flight having been sedated before and during the flight by the doctor and on arrival in Tokyo he was duly handed over to some hospital staff and taken away.

I join the Royal Australian Navy Reserve Forces

In 1977 I made an application to join the RANR. After passing the medicals and psychological tests I waited for a call, fully expecting to be offered a billet in the Seamen Officers Branch. The call came but it was to ask if I would be interested in joining a Special Branch, Naval Control (and Protection) of Merchant Shipping (NCS), a unique branch of the service consisting of a cadre of naval reserve officers and ratings with specialist knowledge of merchant ship operations and concerns. An interview with the Commanding Officer and his Executive Officer at the HMAS Leeuwin barracks in Fremantle and I became Lieutenant Bevis RANR C102864. *(All naval shore establishments are treated as ships, in order that their occupants abide by naval rules and regulations.*

I was immediately posted to HMAS Creswell in Jervis Bay to complete the mandatory orientation course, known in Navy speak as the '*knife and fork*' course. For two weeks I was taught how to march, salute, and give orders and how to behave during a mess dinner. On my first training night back in Fremantle I was placed in charge of a company of 40 sailors for 'parade divisions'. If there is one thing you need to know about sailors, it is that they are very proud of their marching ability and this company was no exception. I managed to get the first part right, bringing them to attention, dressing to the right, doing a right turn into three's, and then marching off behind the navy band. The first command was a 'left wheel' and I got that right. Then it all fell apart. The next command should have been 'into line left turn' but I inadvertently gave another 'left wheel'. Despite the 'leading seaman' who was at the back of the parade shoutin' 'obey the order' some of them carried out a left wheel as ordered and others, knowing the order was wrong, disregarded my order and did a left turn. If all of them had

obeyed the order it would still have been a problem because I would have been 'alongside' the parade instead of 'leading' the parade for the march past salute, but it would not have been as bad as it was. Anyway, the parade was called to a halt, and we went back and started again.

Annual Continuous Training

The RANR required presenting for one training night per week, one weekend every month and one two-week annual continuous training exercise. I attended every year including Kangaroo '89 which was a major exercise. Once a loaded ship left her berth to head for her convoy assembly anchorage, it came under the Naval Control of Shipping unit. It was the purpose of these annual exercises to put these procedures into practice.

During this 2-week exercise I was the Plotting Officer responsible for a 12 hour 'on' watch with 24 hours off. On commencement of the Exercise, I was handed a list of all the actual merchant and military ships that were presently known to be within the Australian area of operations, in this case a total of 400. The data showed their position (latitude and longitude) course, speed, and destination.



Exercise Anchorman Annual Continuous Training HMAS KUTTABUL

With the assistance of two reserve WRANS we had to place every ship on the plotting table in its correct position and then every 6 hours move each ship along its projected course at its estimated speed while at the same time removing any ships that had arrived at their destination and adding any ships that had sailed from any Australian port or entered the Australian area of operation's and adjusting the 'dead reckoning' position of any ships that had sent in signals, basically showing a panoramic map in real-time representation of what was actually occurring at sea. This meant reading incoming signals and generating the required signal traffic to MHQ advising them of the arrivals and departures. At some point in the exercise a 'hypothetical' communications failure was introduced which meant we had to maintain a paper list of all the ships with their updated details every 6 hours. Then when the communications failure was lifted, signals had to be manually generated for all the current positions of the ships. It was hard and tiring but was a worthwhile exercise.

Registered Publications Officer and Harbour Defence Officer

In 1989 I was given the responsibility for the control, maintenance and issue of Registered Publications held by the Fremantle Port Division RANR. This meant having to attend a training course at HMAS Harman in Canberra and a Staff Management course at HMAS Stirling. In 1990 I relinquished my position as the RPO and was given the position of Deputy Harbour Defence Officer and later as a course development officer and instructor

The award of the 'dove'

There is a strong institutional identity at the heart of the Navy's character. When you join up you enter a unique community with its own venerated history and culture, irrevocably by the nature of naval society. Unfortunately, probably because of this, I quickly found that some permanent navy officers were unenthusiastic about reservists especially those who came with a merchant marine background resulting in a rarity of respect between both being sometimes difficult to achieve. I took the attitude that I was trained and competent and that this would get me through. As far as I was concerned, I joined the reserves to 'do a job' not to 'get a job'. But it is also fair to say that during my 16 years of service while I found some regular officers retained their prejudices, many were greatly appreciative of our service especially those who rose through the

the ranks as sailors. There is little better preparation for understanding the mentality of the ordinary sailor than to have been one

Any difficult relationship between permanent navy officers and reservists is often bought into sharp focus during combined exercises when close cooperation is required. On one particular occasion I was asked to represent my unit Naval Control of Shipping at a weekend 'task group exercise' at HMAS Stirling navy base. The exercise was primarily for permanent navy officers but as it involved 'convoying' which was the task of NCS I was to contribute. There were about 25 PNF navy officers in the exercise room and me. The exercise was being moderated by a US Navy Officer. On greeting the attendees, he mentioned that a Reserve officer would be in attendance and said, 'is Lieutenant Bevis here'. I said, 'yes' and stood up only to hear a PNF officer immediately in front of me say 'well that's the only question he'll get right this weekend'. This of course elicited several sniggers. It was then that I decided I wasn't going to let them crush me into a patterned mould and I would use this exercise to prove it. The exercise was meant to be conducted in a hypothetical period of 'tension' and to simulate the protection of a convoy of merchant ships across the top of Australia to the Cocos Islands. As the exercise progressed, a series of hypothetical incidents were thrown in (low flying aircraft, acoustic reports, approaching warships from different nations) and to present our reactions. The PNF officers were quick to take some form of aggressive action while I was more cautious. The one that clinched it was a simulated explosion onboard one of the merchant ships, a vessel by name of HMAS Jervis Bay that I was familiar with as I had served in a smaller version of this ship type the TSMV Princess of Tasmania. With the PNF immediately assuming it was some form of attack and prepared to retaliate, when I was asked, I said I would do nothing until I had more information as it could have simply been an internal explosion on the ship as it was carrying military vehicles and it was easy for fuel to leak or the vehicles to shift and roll against each other. The moderator then said that that was the exact situation (an internal explosion). This type of thing played out all weekend and at the end of the exercise I was given the 'Award of the Dove', meaning I was too soft. I gracefully accepted the award despite its intended meaning as I believe that the manner in which an individual accepts success or praise even though given with ill intent provides an index to character. To me an exaggerated sense of importance or overbearing manner are signs of weakness, and the real test of a person is how they meet the approval of those around them.

A WORKING LIFE IN THE AUSTRALIAN MARITIME INDUSTRY

Promotion to Lieutenant Commander RANR

The normal progression of promotion from Lieutenant-to-Lieutenant Commander was 8 to 10 years, depending of the number of billets allocated to that particular unit. As my unit (NCS) was quite small there were only three positions available at the rank of Lcdr. In 1994 one of these billets became vacant and I was given the promotion. The List of Promotions is closely scrutinised by very senior officers of the particular force. Most naval reserve officers don't rise above the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

Lecturer

I'm not quite sure what prompted me to become a lecturer. I seemed to have been 'lured' into it by accident, but it became my most important life's decision. While working for the shipping agency in Fremantle I would often walk past the Fremantle Maritime College. It occurred to me in September 1977 that I might get some casual lecturing, so I wrote a letter to the senior lecturer setting out my qualifications and interest. I heard nothing, no acknowledgement or response. I forgot about it until at around 3 pm one day in February 1978 (5 months after I had lodged my letter of interest) I received a telephone call that went something like this: "good afternoon, sir, this is Captain Tilley. I would like you to teach marine meteorology starting at 7 pm tonight, can you be here by 6.45 pm" and he hung up. At first, I didn't know who he was or what he was talking about. It took me about 30 minutes to make the connection between his call and my application of September the previous year for some casual teaching. But I hadn't been to sea since 1972. My knowledge of marine meteorology was rusty. I didn't even have a syllabus. I walked the short distance to the college and presented myself to 'Captain Tilley'. After a quick discussion I realised there was no getting out of it and with the syllabus in my hand I quickly 'refreshed' my knowledge of the first objective.

Presenting at 6.45 pm as suggested I was pointed to a classroom by Captain Tilley. At 7 pm I was facing a class of about 20 adult students made up of doctors, lawyers, and company directors as well as yachties who had just commenced this subject as part of the course for a Yacht Master Certificate'. I started by explaining what the course would involve, what textbooks to buy, where to buy them, and other general information as you do on the first lecture. After a long coffee break, I told them as it was the first night we would finish early, and they seemed

happy with that. The result was very little teaching and a lot of talking, a long coffee break and an early finish. It gave me the breathing space to prepare for the next weeks lesson.

I came to respect Captain Tilley as a brilliant man and good friend. I owe him a great debt of thanks because he set me on a 25-year career as a Maritime Lecturer. I often think of what could have been the outcome if, in that first telephone call he had simply said to me 'would you like to teach a class of meteorology at 7 pm tonight'? I would probably have said 'no' as I was totally unprepared and that could well have been the end of it. By being straight forward and making it appear that he was asking rather than telling he saved me. What started out as one night class per week very quickly became two, then three and by the end of that year (1978) I was teaching four nights per week across different subjects including coastal and offshore navigation, radar plotting, ship construction and ship stability. It was keeping me very busy as I was still holding down my day job as a ships agent. As these were night classes there was always the potential danger of a 'clash' between a ship arriving or sailing (at which I had to be in attendance), and a class that I had also to be in attendance, both occurring at the same time. Fortunately, this situation was able to be managed even if it meant having to finish a class early by about 15 minutes so as to get to the arriving or departing ship.

At the start of the next year (1979) I was offered a one-year position as a lecturer at the Maritime College on a full time-casual basis. I approached his offer with caution and thought it best to remain with my permanent day job rather than chance a one year 'casual' job with only the 'promise' of it being extended the following year depending on the number of student enrolments. I refused the offer and continued throughout 1979 with casual teaching of night classes. But I was starting to neglect my day job as I was more interested in teaching than visiting ships, something that was noticed by the Manager as possibly creating a conflict of work issues that could reflect on the reputation of the Agency. Although he did not interfere, for which I am grateful, I decided if at the end of 1979 I was again made the offer of a full time-casual position at the college I would accept it and take the chance. A big decision as I could very well have lost both jobs which would have meant going back to sea, something I desperately wanted to avoid. The position was offered, and I accepted, starting my career in February 1980 teaching both day and night classes as a full-time casual lecturer which had to be re-negotiated on an annual basis. The big question came at the end of that year (1980). Would I be offered an

an extension of another year? As it happened not only was I offered an extension, but I was offered a full-time permanent casual position. Part of the reason for this offer was due to my good friend Captain Tilley who sort of took it upon himself to 'second' me to assist him in 1980 during the periods I was not programmed to teach. Although this meant doing a lot of his administrative work it served me well in later years as it enhanced my reputation as a multi skilled person. Once again, what seemed at the time to be 'being used' was doing me a favour, with all of the administrative and logistical issues having a benefit as I became seen by the management as a can-do, fix it, reliable sort of person: a safe pair of hands and it gave me more experience in policy work.

In 1981 I was given the position of teaching a course in Boat Handling as part of the Yacht Master Certificate. The course was to be conducted on the college training vessel FV Lancelin which was primarily used to train teenagers to enter the fishing industry. As such it was registered as a Fishing Vessel with the skipper having to hold Fishing Certificates of Competency. My certificates were for 'trading' vessels which meant I had to somehow get the relevant certificate (Skipper Grade 1). In addition to this, as the skipper of the vessel during the boat handling course I also had to be the engineer. A quick return to study, a couple of written and oral exams and I passed both the necessary Harbour and Light Certificates of Competency.

In 1982 I was given a full-time permanent position just in time for the introduction of new legislation in the shape of the Uniform Shipping Laws code (USL Code) that was developed nationally in response to the need for a common national safety standard for commercial vessels across all states and territories in Australia. This was a big project and meant that the whole scheduling of subjects, classes, lecturers, and classrooms had to be re-programmed as well as new course material and exams being prepared and written. Once again, I was given this task by my good friend Captain Tilley, to be completed during my non-teaching time thus taking up any spare time I otherwise may have had.

**THE NEIL BEVIS STORY TO CONTINUE NEXT EDITION -
SPRING 2025**

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|---|---|--|
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|---|---|--|

60th ANNUAL COMMEMORATION AT THE MERCHANT NAVY MEMORIAL AND COLUMBARIUM,
 1 HAWTHORN AVENUE, ROOKWOOD NECROPOLIS

SUNDAY 13TH APRIL 2025, COMMENCING AT 1100 HOURS

FOLLOWED BY LIGHT REFRESHMENTS ONSITE



Commodore Christopher 'Kit' Rynd, FNI

Kit Rynd was born in New Zealand and grew up in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji & Samoa. He began his sea career as an apprentice in Union Steamship Company of New Zealand.

He completed training as an Instructor in Sea Survival in 1980 and in 1987 trained in Fast Rescue Craft and instructed on board. He has also completed extensive and ongoing company sponsored training from Advanced Fire Fighting, Dynamic Positioning to Emergency Ship Handling on an annual basis as well as the STCW required training and updates.

In 2000 Kit was promoted to Captain and has commanded nine different classes/types of passenger ships including the liner Queen Mary 2.

He has served as an Expert Witness in maritime affairs for the High Court of New South Wales.

Christopher Rynd was appointed Commodore of Cunard Line in April 2011 and is a Fellow of the Nautical Institute. Kit has been married to his wife Julie since 1980.

He retired from full time seagoing career in September 2018 and is now a part time consultant in maritime affairs with special interest in Human Factors training and Bridge Team management implementation.

RSVP BY FRIDAY 4th APRIL 2025

PLEASE RESPOND BY EMAIL TO

STAN MORIARTY, SECRETARY, MNWMF secretary@mnwmf.com.au 0418 488163

PLEASE NOTE: RESPONSE PREFERABLY BY EMAIL OR PHONE ESSENTIAL FOR CO-ORDINATION

GUIDANCE FOR THOSE LAYING WREATHS

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 FOR PRIOR CO-ORDINATION OF THE WREATH LAYING CEREMONY**

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 CLEARLY MARKED WITH CARD INDICATING THE NAME OF THE ORGANISATION, PERSON (S) LAYING & TITLE,
 AS MAY BE APPROPRIATE.**

TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE

NO MERCHANT NAVY VETERAN SHOULD BE PREVENTED FROM ATTENDING DUE TO LACK OF TRANSPORT.
 IF YOU WOULD LIKE OR ARE AWARE OF ANY VETERAN WHO WOULD ATTEND IF TRANSPORT WAS PROVIDED.

PLEASE CONTACT YOUR ASSOCIATION OR
 STAN MORIARTY secretary@mnwmf.com.au OR
 SEAN BARRETT, CHAIRMAN MNWMF Sean.Barrett@dpworld.com



The Members of
***U.S. Army Small Ships Association and
The Merchant Navy Association of NSW***

Cordially invite
Members of the Merchant Navy Association of NSW

As Honoured Guests to the
***80th Anniversary of Victory Reunion
Honouring Merchant Mariners of WWII***

Memorial Service commencing 11:00 hours,
on Sunday the 4th of May, 2025

At L'Aqua, Gold Room, Rooftop Level 2 –
Cockle Bay Wharf, Darling Park, Sydney

Followed by Commemorative Luncheon
Commencing 12.00 pm

Dress: Smart Casual / Medals & Decorations

Cost: \$140 per guest

RSVP: By Monday the 21st of April, 2025

Secretary Daniel O'Brien OAM - Phone: 0411 027 319
Email: secretary@usarmysmallships.asn.au

THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE BAR

GERARD BURKE (Gerry) 4/03/2025 RAN Korea Veteran

THEY SAIL FOREVERMORE UNDER THE RED ENSIGN



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