

Memories of Water based Employment

Or What I tried to do in shipping

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From the London Nautical School, through International Packers,
Eagle Oil, James Patrick Shipping and Pacific Far East Line

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London Nautical School

Since a small boy I had wanted to go to sea, and as luck would have it at the age of 11 I was accepted to commence secondary school at the London Nautical School. The school came under the London County Council education system. Years one and two were concerned with a normal school curriculum, except every morning we were on parade, with inspection by staff of shiny shoes, clean caps etc. In the years three, four and five the subjects of Navigation and Seamanship were added. Seamanship included a two hour session every week in whale boats on the Thames between Waterloo Bridge and Tower Bridge. In the winter the boats were towed to calmer waters in Surrey Docks, where we broke the ice. Capt. Harvey regularly screaming out in his deep loud voice, "There's two ends to an our muggins!" Muggins being his choice of name to any pupil who did not comply with his instructions, be it on the river or in class.

Regarding staff there were a couple of standouts, Capt Willis (Master in Sail and Steam) who arrived every day resplendent with bowler hat, camel coat with astrakhan collar, pinstripe trousers, spats and cane.

Mr Fortune Fowler, who had the task of taking religious instruction. He arrived every day in his MG, which was parked at the rear of the parade ground. His instruction usually commenced with some connection of Christ and Roman soldiers, this led into his own WWII exploits skippering Motor Torpedo boats that dashed into the English Channel to pickup ditched airmen. In later years I found out that an inspector visited the school and listened to Fortune Fowler, on questioning him about his stories, he told the inspector it was difficult to give religious instruction without bibles. A supply of bibles arrived shortly after this episode.



Figure 1 Mercator under sail

At the end of my last term at the school I had my first seagoing experience. I was lucky to be picked to participate in the Tall Ships "Race" on the Belgium tall ship Mercator. The official race was from Brest, France to the Spanish Island of Teneriffe. A fellow student (Dave Howden) and I were lucky to the extent that we were part of the crew with the young Belgium cadets and were expected to run up the rigging, out on the yard arms to furl and unfurl sails (no safety harness in 1958), haul on ropes, and sleep in hammocks. It was in Brest that I experienced my first hangover, and in Teneriffe my second. After Teneriffe we sailed, with some engine assistance to Falmouth, Southern England.



At the end of my final year I was sent off for an interview at Eagle Oil & Shipping Company. My interview was with the Marine Superintendent Capt. Mason. He was the Master of the Ohio which was on charter to Eagle Oil during WWII and famously was in the convoy named [Operation Pedestal](#) that relieved Malta.

Figure 2 Ohio entering Valetta Harbour Malta

Eagle Oil & Shipping Company



My mother duly paid the £50 for me to be indentured to Eagle Oil. This document made the Master of the vessel my legal guardian. She then went shopping for my uniform, which would only be worn at mealtimes and to join or leave a vessel, plus set of oil skins, summer whites etc. For this expense she cashed in some of her pension monies, she would remind of this until she died.

Figure 3 Seamans Identity Card

The first vessel I sailed on was the San Wenceslao built in 1942 for the Ministry of War as the Empire Airman. I hated going down to the engine room as the vessel was powered by a triple expanding steam engine. It was terrifying machine to be near, although fascinating to see the Oiler squirting from his large can a stream of oil to



Figure 4 San Wenceslao

lubricate the huge pistons. As luck would have it my old school mate who was on the Mercator with me was the other apprentice. I think I was a last minute addition to the crew as I'm sure that under normal conditions there would not be two first trip apprentices allocated to a vessel. Ballast to the Gulf and loading at the "lovely" ports of Mina al Ahmadi and Basra and discharging at tropical paradises such as Bombay, Chittagong and Colombo.

My second vessel was the San Eliseo, another old tub, built in 1939. This vessel traded in the Caribbean, loading at Curacao, and discharging at Caribbean Islands and ports down the coast of South America.



Figure 5 San Eliseo

Many months spent discharging various grades of petroleum products, from petrol to aviation spirit. Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Brazil, venturing up an Amazon Tributary to Belem where the vessel was taken over by huge butterflies that fluttered around for a few days after sailing.

Usually in port for 24 to 36 hours there was a pleasant surprise in Rio De Janeiro, the line to the on shore tanks were very small so pumping was extremely slow, The vessel was in port for almost a week. Having time to spare the senior apprentice and myself

decided to sight see instead of the usual visit to the nearest bar. We managed to take the cable car to the top of the Sugar Loaf, but here we met our downfall, there was a bar there, so that was that.

My last voyage on this vessel was eventful. Having fully loaded at Curacao bound for South American ports the vessel broke down east of the island of Trinidad Tobago. The engineers discovered that crankshaft had a crack where the piston joins it. Although other vessels came alongside offering to take the vessel in tow, the master refused. The engineers with the assistance of the bosun, fed wire down through the engine room into the engine where the piston had been removed; steel bars were placed along the cracked area and whipped together with the wire. The vessel got under way and limped into Port of Spain, Trinidad for temporary repairs.

No cargo to discharge, so a lazy week or so in port. Usually in port the two apprentices worked six hours on, six hours off turning valves and assisting to connect hoses. So some time was spent listening to a very sexy voice on the radio introducing pop songs. We two apprentices decided to visit "The Voice" with some flowers, the radio station let us in and we met a very large Trinidadian lady with a silky voice. She played some Chris Richards song for us, and for the remaining days in port played a song for us.



Figure 6 Training to be a Deck Officer

With new orders to sail for Ellesmere Port, on the Manchester Ship canal, to discharge we limped off. A slow voyage home on an engine with one piston removed and an unbalanced welded crankshaft. Arriving a few days before Christmas, all crew paid off except Officers, apprentices, engineers and the bosun. After discharging the cargo orders were given sail to Rotterdam for repairs. Being close to Christmas it was very difficult to obtain a crew, when we sailed the new crew were all out of the local jail. Being the junior apprentice I was positioned aft with the second mate to let go with the motley bunch of seamen. Wet and drizzling, the seaman, on orders to let go just grabbed the fire axe and chopped through the hawsers. As we proceeded out of the canal into the Mersey, I was summoned from aft to the bridge and told to take the wheel, as the seaman on the wheel was drunk, a frightening experience for me. I had been at sea for two years I had never been at the wheel. With the Pilot screaming at me and the Master helping me, we finally cleared the Mersey.

Our troubles had only just begun. The tanks had to be cleaned and gas free before dry-docking. Although we had done this many times before there was only limited time on the short voyage. The old tub did not have a self cleaning system, so after steaming the tanks the normal operation of sending the apprentices down the tanks to shovel the residue into buckets began. The residue was thick sludge, the worst being in crude oil tanks. Down the ladders with a rope around your waist and start digging, putting the sludge into buckets which were hauled up by the Officers, the crew refusing to do the dirty work. The sludge was thrown over the side. The apprentices meanwhile would suffer from fumes that came out of bubbles in the sludge and have to be pulled up. The remedy every time was a strong slug of navy rum to clear the head and down again to resume digging. This continued 18 hours a day until we berthed in Rotterdam. We apprentices had hardly time to sleep, let alone clean up properly. After we had tied up we proceeded to our cabin, and looking forward to a good hot shower

and general clean up. Into our cabin came a minion from head office, wearing his uniform of Bowler hat, dark overcoat and pin striped trousers. He said he had checked our cabin and we were a disgusting pair of individuals and should be ashamed of ourselves. Duly admonished we were paid off the next day, still smarting from the dressing down. Having been given our pay and ferry tickets to Harwich and our rail tickets home we proceeded down the gang way to our awaiting taxi with our luggage. The agent was with our taxi driver and on seeing us in our uniforms said there had been an error. As we were "Officers" we were entitled to a better car and first class tickets. We did not argue. We had a pleasant trip home with our duty free gin and tonic water.

After two years at sea I quickly became aware that being an Apprentice Deck Officer meant that your main introduction to becoming a Deck Officer was cleaning tanks, stripping paint of the amidships accommodation, chipping away at rust, applying red lead paint with a rag to metal, stripping varnish from woodwork and revarnishing it, and when that was complete to commence all over again, plus every other job too dirty for the seamen. I decided I would give it away.

My mother lost her £50, although I had sent her £2 a month from my £8 a month salary.

International Packers Ltd - London

I landed a job with International Packers, located just north of Smithfield meat market in the shipping department. I think I got the job because I had actually been to sea! I was the runner, taking documents to shipping companies, the Customs House and the Port of London Authority. International Packers handled all the meat imports for Swift and Armour, By far the largest part was the importation of chilled beef quarters from South America. Every Friday or Saturday three vessels would arrive from Argentina and Uruguay. One vessel was a Blue Star vessel which carried all the Angliss Imports plus a few independent importers quotas, Houlder Bros had the Swift and Armour shipments and the third all the others.

These three vessels commenced discharge on Sunday, with the chilled beef quarters being sent to Smithfield Market and other provincial meat markets for the big Monday sales. My job had begun to be the coordinating of the markets daily requirements and the forwarding of these requirements to the stevedoring company. By far the biggest day of discharge was Sunday and all the cargo had to be discharged by the end of Thursday. Then it would all begin again on the Sunday. I spent a month on the floor of Smithfield market starting around 3:00 AM, breakfast at 6:00 AM in the pub, being winter usually included a hot rum toddy.

Once a month I accompanied the Shipping Manager to the meeting of the South American Conference meeting. The meeting was lorded over by Lord Vestey who arrived in his chauffeur driven car, I found him rather strange, although a millionaire, his glasses were standard plastic Nation Health glasses that had cello tape holding the frame together.

A major perk was on Friday afternoons I was given a Ford Zephyr Zodiac car for the weekend, The reason for this was that I had to go to the docks on Sunday mornings to

collect the temperature recorders from the vessels and to also take a few random temperatures of the chilled beef quarters on discharge, Another perk was that I could also get a great rib roast at cost price to take home. My parents, who were in catering, said Argentine chilled beef was the best beef as it had been hung in controlled temperature for a few weeks.

After five years with International Packers myself and three friends decided to drive a car around the world. This is another story, but to cut it short after arriving in Bombay the car was a wreck and we decided that we would change our booking from Bombay to Fremantle to Melbourne as we knew we would not get the car (a 1948 ex army Range Rover, short wheel base with canvas top) across the Nullarbor. Arriving in Melbourne in January 1965, We are still all in Melbourne!

We all had jobs within in week, wages double of that in the UK. beer much cheaper and petrol half the price. Who would want to leave.

James Patrick & Co. Pty. Ltd.

After a small stint on a factory assembly line making Astor fridges I applied and got a job at James Patrick Shipping Pty. Ltd. in the inward freight department. Once again a young man with sea going experience and experience with a major importer must have come into play. At that time John Helfrich had recently been made the Melbourne Manager and was in the process of changing the office from a dark wood cladded area to a more open office. The Assistant Manager was Cec Withers, Freight Manager Bert Hornsey, and I think the operations manager was a very English ex army gentleman called Reg Wills who wore white Bombay Bloomers and long white socks in the summer, he left Patricks shortly after my arrival to take up an operational position in Saigon handling cargo for the ill fated Vietnam war. He was replaced by Jim Greig, who later moved on to open Nauru Shipping.

Other staff of note where Don Turpy, whose son Ian would brighten us young fellows up by bringing his girlfriend to the office, the delightful Olivia Newton-John. The female attire at the time being very, very short miniskirts and long boots. Don't know what the long boots were supposed to hide.

Other young men who would become well known in the shipping industry, were, Maurie Rudrum, Alan Miles, Paul Ryan, Mike Prefol and Bob Pender. Frequently this group would end up at weekends in the house in Caulfield that myself and fellow travellers had rented. A very fluid mixture of residents at that abode.

A few years later Glen Van Landenberg joined the company. In later years at the Curry Lunch John Helfrich said he was extremely lucky to have such a talented young group under his wing.



The building of James Patrick was on the north west corner of William Street and Flinders Lane. At that time it was the oldest brick building and had been a public house in the CBD. In old prints the building can be seen with Tall ships berthed at Queens Wharf.

Figure 7 Queens Wharf 1864

Flinders Lane still had old convict built bluestone warehouses that were offices, one being for Victorian Stevedores, later acquired by Patrick Stevedores.

In the picture (1864) the building can be seen between the mast and the funnel of the vessel on the left. St James Cathedral can be seen directly behind it. The cathedral being moved to King Street, opposite the Flagstaff Gardens in 1914.

After a couple of months in the office and the routine of drinking at The London Hotel (corner of Flinders Lane and Market Street) every lunch time and after work, I had had a long lunch celebrating a birthday, returning to the office rather late I was summoned to the small office at the back of the main floor where Bert Hornsey resided. He told me to come with him, and proceeded to take me down stairs to the accounts and pay office department. This was the usual procedure when you were getting the sack. But we went out the side door on to Flinders lane turning right I followed him down Flinders Lane and into the pub the Kerry Family, on the corner of Flinders Lane and King Street. He ordered two pots (ten ounce glasses) of beer, (the usual at that time being 7 ounce glasses).

He then said " I am fed up with this Mr. Hornsey nonsense, my name is Bert and forget the pommy Mr. Hornsey nonsense". Old habits die hard, and it took me to the Curry Lunch days not to call John Helfrich, Mr Helfrich (such was the regard I had for him).

Patricks had a Travel Department in which two young female socialites from Toorak and South Yarra seemed worked. Plus Bev Hay, who also dabbled in being a jazz singer and two male travel consultants.

John Helfrich's secretary was an English lady named Barbara Charlton, who was an extremely thin and tall lady. Many years later she and John were to become an item. I had heard of this and at one curry lunch I innocently asked John whatever had happened to Barbara, to which he replied she now lived with him. I asked if she was still extremely thin. He said yes and wish he had remembered that I knew her as she had a problem returning to live in Australia as the Immigration Department thought she was not a well person due to her thin appearance, and that I could have assisted by saying she was always of that stature.

Inward freight

The senior member of Inward Freight was Frank Dundas, a Dutchman who I think had known John Helfrich for some time. Although I had been employed for my so called experience everything was completely new to me, So began my learning experience on the vast shipping documentation.

Just for prosperity I will give a brief rundown of the procedures of the Inward Freight Department for each individual vessel, feel free to by pass this.

1. Multiple copies of manifests for cargo destined for Melbourne were progressively received from each port of loading.
2. These were then collated into many copies and each Bill number was marked beginning at number one until the end of the collated manifests, thereby

creating a “Line number” which would become the unique identifier for that Bill of Lading in all the shipping processes.

3. These numbered manifests would be then be distributed to Customs, Quarantine, Stevedores. and the Port of Melbourne Authority (PMA). The PMA would calculate wharfage and individuals would lodge paperwork at the PMA and pay wharfage directly to them. Importers would also pay “Sorting and Stacking” directly to the Stevedore. At that time shipping companies paid the Stevedore for movement of the cargo from the hatch to the wharf, Sorting, Stacking and delivering the cargo from the ships hook was charged directly to the Importer by the Stevedore.

Most of the vessels handled by James Patricks were Stevedored by Patrick Stevedoring and therefore the Inward Freight Department had to calculate and collect the Sorting and Stacking.

4. Importers or Customs Agents would lodge their Bills of Lading with the Inward Freight Department and would be given a Delivery Order to pick up their cargo after any Freight and Sorting and Stacking had been paid.

Overtime was made available to those in Inward Freight by the sharing of checking Outward Freight manifests. This again was an eye opener to me. Not only did you get overtime but had to take a tea break, and given “Tea money”. Tea money being spent at the Old London Inn (Known as Rollie Palmers or Hepatitis House) between 5:00PM and 6:00PM. This was the time of six o’clock closing and the rush to purchase numerous glasses of beer at 5:50PM was a sight to behold. And how your shoes stuck to the beer soaked carpet! Then on the way back to the office a quick visit to Greasy Joes for a hamburger or Chico Roll (Tried one of those many years later and nearly threw up).

The Old Melbourne Inn was a favourite watering hole for many in the shipping industry. Shipping companies seemed to own various parts of the downstairs bar. Patricks, first area on the left hand side bar, second area various Customs agents, The bar on the opposite side was occupied by The Port Of Melbourne (Capt McFarlane, the Harbour Master, Mr McDonald the Chief Engineer and the Assistant Harbour Masters, Wilh Wilhlemsen staff and staff of what became ACTA.

After two years I decided that Australia was the place for me and purchased a return trip to return to the UK with P & O to tell my mother of my decision. Leaving on the Canberra and returning on the Oriana six months later.

The day after returning I visited James Patrick to see if there was a job available, but it seemed my luck was out. But two days later I had a phone call saying to come in. Chris Fountain had resigned, to open a small restaurant in Malvern and a position was open in Inward Freight. Chris went on to open the dining and function area at Mitchelton Winery.

After a short time I was moved to the Outward Freight Department.

Outward freight

Outward Freight was overseen by Harold Stubbings, whose brothers also worked in the shipping industry.

After a vessel had completed loading Exporters would lodge their Bills of Lading with Outward Freight together with their cargo receipts, these were matched with the documents from the wharf. Bills were allocated a number and released to the Exporter or Agent after payment of any monies due. As bills were numbered they were passed to the typists to type up manifests on special typewriters with extra large carriages as Manifests were very large documents. These documents were spirit duplication stencils. A filthy product to handle. The purple ink on the stencil was very hard to remove, the typists wore protection around their wrists to stop the ink from going onto their clothing.

After the typing was completed copies of the manifests were run off, they were then checked against the Bill of Lading, word for word, this is the process mentioned earlier that got us overtime. Copies were then sent to the ports of discharge and the Stevedores, customs and Harbour trust.

No email or computer files in those days.

It was during this period that I first met John Smith from Smorgon's. Tony Ellis was the canvasser for Atlantraffik and as I processed the Bills of Lading Tony believed I should meet the exporters. He got permission from Bert Hornsey for me to go to lunch with Tony and John (Smorgo) Smith. Little did I know what I was in for! We left the office before noon and met Smorgo at some salubrious pub near the Smorgon Meat works, John Smith started his day very early as he was dealing with buyers in the USA, and worked to their timetable, so our lunch time was his end of day. A long and lunch, not much to eat but lots of amber liquid was consumed. I understand this was quite a ritual among the many canvassers.

Operations

After about a year (1968) I was transferred to the Operations Department. By then headed by Jim Greig. I was given the smaller shipping lines and tramps.

Small Shipping Lines and Tramps

These companies included COSCO (How they did grow), Djakarta Lloyd and Golden Line.

COSCO chartered Scandinavian tramps, little or no cargo to discharge, (And how that changed), but loading wool, sheep skins and drums of tallow. COSCO also gave me an introduction to The Wool Clearing House. See below for information regarding the Wool Clearing House.

Sheep skins were received into the sheds and had to be placed on large tarpaulins covered with sawdust to absorb the terrible smelling liquid that oozed from the bales. Plenty of sawdust around the edge of the pile.

This was also my first introduction to the friendly aquavit drinking Scandinavians!

Djakarta LLOYD

These vessels traded between Indonesia and Australia. The main cargo being chests of tea. All tea chests were marked with Chop numbers, which in turn were matched to

Bills of Lading. Quite a job to sort out the Chop numbers for delivery., (Chop from the Hindi; means to stamp. A chop of tea means a certain number of chests all carrying the same brand.)

A side line for empty tea chests from the importers was selling them to removalists for household items.

Baltic Shipping and FESCO

After "Basic" operations training with the tramps I was given Baltic Shipping and FESCO. The major part being Baltic Shipping, FESCO at that time were not regular callers to Australia, but would call occasionally to pick up wool.

Baltic Shipping discharged various cargoes from Europe and loaded cargoes of wool, and sheepskins.

This was in the times of the Cold War, to go onboard the vessels it was necessary to firstly get by the Commissar, the Political Officer on board. Usually a very surly person. He ensured you were authorised to board the vessel and to ensure crew went ashore in threes. The crew on return had to individually report to the Commissar and relate where they had been and who they had met. If a crew members story differed from another they were in trouble.

The Captain and Officers were usually good company. One Master on my first meeting at 7:00 AM offered me a schnapps, which I refused, He then offered me coffee and chocolates which I accepted. Coffee was good, but on biting into the coffee, my mouth was infused with a great burst of schnapps! Great laughter from the Master and First Mate.

During the major wool export season these vessels would sail with wool stacked four or five high on deck, although Bills of Lading were stamped "Under deck stowage" only.

After the vessels had been calling for some time agreement was reached to hold a party for the Exporters on board, Patricks had to arrange the catering, so our old employee Chris Fountain was organised for this. The vessel supplied the duty free drink. A great night had by all, the Iron Curtain being drawn for the evening.

Chris Fountain and I were given half a dozen bottles of the best Russian Vodka to take home.

Patricks around this time received a Telex message from a small Russian Whaling Fleet Supply vessel stating arriving Port Phillip with an injured crew member, and asking to provide an ambulance, with a strange addendum to the message to advise Uncle Ben. We could not contact an Uncle Ben at the Russian Embassy. The Harbour Master (Capt McFarlane) gave us a berth at Station Pier and the Port Emergency Service provided the ambulance, All were there to meet the vessel. On boarding I advised the Master that the ambulance was standing bye. To which he replied that it was no longer required, but where was he to discharge the cargo. What cargo I asked to which he handed me a manifest and Bills of Lading all made out to Uncle Bens Pet Foods, A whole cargo of whale meat!.

As Capt McFarlane was there a berth with a crane was allocated and arrangements to shift the vessel up river was made. A single hatch with a small opening meant a long stay, especially as no overtime would be paid, no weekend work. I got to know the Captain, a tall strapping man who told me he had fought Cassius Clay at the Rome Olympics. I entertained him and the Chief Engineer for a few weekends. One of his requests was to go to the William Ricketts sanctuary in the Dandenong Hills. At that time I had not heard of William Ricketts. It seems that Ricketts had received an award from the Russian Government!

One Saturday around noon after the wharf had stopped work I picked up the Captain and Chief Engineer, both in full uniform to take them for a counter lunch at the Inkerman Hotel, just down the road from the flat I shared with Alan Miles and Mike Prefol. We all went, also with my girlfriend Laima (later my wife) to the pub. Lots of jugs of beer, by three o'clock in true Russian style the Captain and Chief decided they wanted to sing.

Onto the stage they went and we and the other patrons were entertained for the next forty minutes with loud Russian folk songs.

The next weekend the Captain said he would like to cook for us, so he and the Chief came to my flat, we provided the ingredients and they cooked, can't remember what but it went down well with the bottles of vodka they brought along. Many burnt cooking pans I do remember.

He did offer me his stewardess, a strapping hairy legged women which I refused, with much laughter from him.

When he sailed he gave me a whole salted salmon and more vodka, a very enjoyable stay.

About a year after I had left Patricks, I had a call from my old colleagues saying that he was returning to Melbourne and would like to see me. A happy reunion.

Atlantraffik

At the time I was looking after the Russians Alan Miles was looking after Atlantraffik. Alan had been offered the position of Operations Manager with Columbus Lines and I moved up to the Premier line of the agency.

I the mid sixties the refrigerated meat trade from Australia to the USA was booming and Eric Weiner set up a service between the two countries. Atlantraffik was managed by a Company in Switzerland, with vessels provided by two Swedish companies, Brostroms and Malmros.

Eric Weiner was the Australian Representative.

These vessels came south bound with various cargoes, including heavy machinery and bulk latex in the vessels tanks.

After discharge of a hatch was complete the process of turning it into a refrigerated compartment began. A general cargo was shipped out, including milk powder, but the bulk of the cargo was frozen meat for East Coast USA and Canadian ports.

A lot of the cartons were marked MAC, little did I know at the time that these cartons were for McDonalds, as they had not begun their invasion into Australia.

These vessels worked around the clock if labour was available. Conventional reefer vessels used a lot of labour. For example 4 day gangs, three twilight gangs and one midnight gang, a total of eight gangs manned with 20 men, a total of 160 men for one vessel.

Stevedores were given copies of the discharge stowage plan and together with the proposed stowage plan for the loading would work out the hours required to work each hatch. These hours were passed to a committee who would then allocate the number of gangs each vessel in port could have. Although the committee was supposed to be impartial, I am sure a certain amount of skulduggery went on.

Part of my job, other than being the quaintly named "Ships husband" was to order out the frozen meat from the various exports. Booking varied from 200/400 tons from the major players, Borthwicks, Angliss, Smorgons, down to 15 ton parcels from smaller players such as Klari Meats and Moe Meats. Meat would also come from Jacksons Corio by insulated rail trucks. If any problems with loading the vessel these rail trucks had to be loaded with dry ice to keep hold the temperature.

The day prior to the commencement of loading, meat was ordered out in multiples of 15 tons, this being the standard shipment and also the quantity that the waterside labour loaded in an hour. This ordering out was all carried out over the phone and had to be adjusted due to cargo not ready etc.

On the day of loading lists were distributed to clerks and stevedores giving details of the shipments and hatches the cargo was allocated to. Rain, walk offs, heat etc. could all disrupt the program and adjusts made, as well as getting the next day's loading arranged.

Meat was generally sent to the wharf in refrigerated vehicles, although our good friends at Smorgo's used tray trucks covered by heavy insulated tarpaulins.

One vessel was receiving frozen meat from Smorgons on the twilight shift when the chief officer stopped the loading, The cartons of meat from the truck were dripping blood and on taking a temperature it was found that the meat was not frozen. The Department of Primary Industry (DPI) Officer who was on duty double checked the load and confirmed it was not frozen. Although the vessels were refrigerated there machinery would not be able to freeze the cargo, but would have frozen the cartons together making discharge impossible.

Within half an hour Smorgo Smith was wharf side, shouting and screaming trying to get his shipment on board, but the DPI officer stood firm, supporting the Chief Officer. The meat was not loaded, but the DPI officer was never seen on the waterfront again, being banished to the country.

It was during this time that I became friendly with a Chief Engineer, the youngest Chief Engineer in the fleet, Kjell Anderson. He later came ashore and started Celsiunator Industries in Melbourne.

As mentioned earlier at this time the waterside ceased work at noon on Saturdays and it was commonplace for me to enjoy the company of the ships mates on Saturday afternoons. On one occasion I advised them I could not play up as I had to go to up country to Seymour to visit Laima who was in hospital. This was not a problem as two wanted to come with me, never have been out of Melbourne. Dressed in their best and loaded with flowers we arrived at the hospital, where the nurses began to swoon seeing tall, blonde Vikings in their country hospital. Laima's mother was also suitably impressed!

Ship board parties were regularly held on board the Atlantraffik vessels. Tony Ellis and Eric Weiner did not like each other one little bit. Tony was a great canvasser, when Sydney and Brisbane did not fill their quota Tony would quickly make up the shortfall. This was at some cost to his health as he drank with exporters every day and Eric did not like his drinking habits.

At one party Tony was handing out cigars to all and sundry, coming across Eric he said "Have a cigar", to which Eric replied "No thank you, it would kill me", Tony's immediate response was "Have one".

FG Strang Pty. Ltd. were the stevedores for Atlantraffik, all other lines were stevedored by Patrick Stevedores. During my Russian stint I never saw a stevedores invoice, but with Strangs I had to vet every line. This gave me a great insight into Stevedoring charges.

Capt. Martin Spencer-Hogbin was the man in charge at Strangs and I got to know him very well. When he heard of my arrangement with Borthwicks were I picked up a whole rump of beef at wholesale prices every week (flat mates would cut of a steak as required) he asked if I could get him one weekly. The great benefit to me was that I would deliver the lump of meat to him and stay for dinner. Paula being a great cook, Martin, a connoisseur of great wines and plus two daughters to flirt with.

Often Paula's mother would be there for dinner. She once asked Martin why he invited the butcher's delivery boy for dinner.

Towards the end of my employment at Patricks, Atlantraffik changed Stevedores to Patricks.

During the Patrick era one occasion stands out. During the loading of bags of Milk Powder from rail trucks the waterside workers walked off, leaving many bags on the wharf. It was a hot day with rain forecast, and the supervisor Gay Sherma and I had to load all the bags back into the rail trucks. Not all easy work for waterside workers I can assure you.

At this time I was friendly with a bunch of girls who rented a house in Elwood. I was there one evening when there was a knock on the door and the girls said it was the landlord to collect the rent, to my surprise and his it was Gay Sherma.

Owners Agents

Occasionally Patricks acted as owners agents. One time I was given the Cap Frio, she had been sold by Columbus Lines to Greek Owners and then chartered back to themselves. It was strange being owners agent to a vessel under charter to Atlantraffik competitors, with Alan Raph (a very old friend) being cargo agent. The Greeks liked to party so the Gay Sherma household and others from my black book were invited to a Saturday night party on board. Quite a wild party after which I had to drive the girls back to Elwood. No .05 alcohol limit at that time, so got the girls safely back after pulling my much used eye patch from the glove box so stop my double vision.

Claims

The Claims Department was run by Ernie Spencer who main job appeared to be mixing dry martini's for John Helfrich's weekly Friday drinks after 5:00PM.

Cashier

With a lot of social young men on the staff it should be mentioned that the cashier played a very important part in their lives. By Monday morning, Thursday being payday, we were out of money. IOU's were readily available from the cashier, I am sure John Helfrich knew of this arrangement, as long as they were repaid on Friday.

The banks at this time closed at 3:00PM. The cashier was always in a rush to get all the freight monies into the bank by that time as it was put on overnight banking rates.

Shipping Agencies at that time also held large amounts in their accounts earning interest. Inward and outward freight monies would be collected and held until all voyage accounts had been settled. Sometimes this would take months. Owners eventually caught up to this and the system changed.

In 1973 I was approached by John Wilson to join Pacific Far East Line to look after operations in Melbourne and Tasmania. PFEL had recently purchased the Matson Lines US West Coast to Australia/New Zealand. I accepted the offer but told John I thought I was letting down John Helfrich. He said he would tell him, and John wished me all the best.

Pacific Far East Line

Pacific Far East Lines (PFEL) purchased from Matson by the Alioto family of San Francisco from Matson Lines. Also involved was Sal Tarantino. Both families still own and run restaurants on Fishermans wharf and allegedly the families had mafia links.

Although George Stogdale was listed as the Melbourne Manager in fact it was completely run by John Wilson . George was what would be called "Old school". He

was really a passenger vessel man, and Matson had two passenger ships that would call in Australia, the Monterey and the Mariposa. George would announce he "Was off to the bank", about 10:00 AM every day with his paper under his arm. The "Bank" I believe was a club. He would return around 4:00 PM!

Brendan Lothian was the Freight Manager. Other staff included an Accountant Carl Clark, Max Clevely a Travel rep, John Wilson's secretary, two other female staff and once the LASH service started a Container Controller, Bill Halliwell.

At the time I joined PFEL they were still running conventional vessels between West Coast USA to Australia New Zealand. John had employed me to run the operations as



Figure 8 LASH Vessel

they were and to assist in the set up of the Lighter Aboard Ship (LASH) operations, including the stevedoring contract for the LASH ships.

These LASH ships were 33000 GT, the barges could hold 340 tonnes of cargo. The barge crane had a SWL of 480 tonnes. The forward container crane had a capacity of 31 Tonnes.

I called for stevedores quotes from the three Stevedores, Patricks, Strang and United. United showed no interest, Patrick just gave me the Port Schedule, which had not been used by Shipping Companies for years and Strang gave a full quotation. Bearing in mind the quotes were for an operation that had not been seen in Australia. All information was obtained from the West Coast USA. After we had appointed FG Strange as the stevedores, Jim Joyce rung me from Patricks and asked why I had appointed Patricks, and when I advised him they had just sent me Port Schedule he



Figure 9 Discharging a barge

thought I did not know what I was doing, He did not realise that the training at James Patrick and Atlantraffik had taught me a lot about stevedoring invoices.

Quotes had to be obtained for towing the barges to a working berth. The tugs were finally provided by Korevaar Marine Group, run by the Korevaar brothers in Williamstown. They built a special tug with square bow.

The barge lids were small McGregor type folding lids. They could be opened by hand, a long tedious operation, but with a chain saw with an adapter a quick process. That is if you could get the chain saw to work. Kjell Anderson spent many hours starting chain saws!



Strang's also had to install 110 volt 3 phase power at Strangtainer to handle the PFEL reefer containers. These were not completed until after the service had begun.

Figure 10 Barge being pushed

Before the first LASH vessels arrival Laima and I decided to marry. I knew that there would not be much time after. Having mentioned this in Rollie Palmers I was asked by Doug Hayward where I would be married. I told him I wanted a registry office but Laima had said that her mother would be most unhappy, and as both of us were long lapsed Catholics it would have to be in a catholic church. He asked where to which I replied hadn't any idea. He told me he would talk to his good friend Father Quinlan at the Stella Maris, which was attached to St Augustines in Bourke Street. A lovely old church. Next evening he told me he had spoken to Father Quinlan and he would await my call. We duly made an appointment and went to see him after work. We were met by a thick set man with a very pronounced squashed nose. I learnt later that he had been a jackeroo and a boxer in his younger days. After introductions were over I asked what we had to do as we had not been to church for years, expecting to have to go to many church services, confession, (which could have taken a week) etc. Much to our surprise he said he said at our age 32 and 28, he was happy we had chosen the church.

After setting the date the first question was about rings, having advised him I had taken out a small overdraft to get married Laima would be using her mother's ring, and I would not be having one. He replied not a problem in his Irish brogue, and explained that where he came from men wearing rings were a bit suspect.

He then asked what we are doing about flowers, once again we told him could not afford them, to which he replied he would ensure that flowers remained from the previous wedding. Next, music, once again told him no money for organist, he quickly replied that he would get the organist to remain from the previous wedding.

Alan Miles was my best man, and I gave him \$20 in an envelope to Father Quinlan. At the party in my flat after the wedding I asked Alan if he had given the envelope to Father Quinlan, at which stage he took the envelope out of his pocket and gave it to me saying. "Father Quinlan asked me to give it to you as a wedding present". I was nearly back in the fold.

A month or so later the first call of the LASH ship was due and I invited Father Quinlan down to Princess Pier to see the arrival. As she came over the horizon I exclaimed, "Jesus Christ she's huge", which at that time she was. I then apologised to which he replied I was right.

Export containers had been stored at the Tradex yard, the corner of Dudley Street and Footscray road.



The real test now began, I had written out all the order of work, for both discharging and loading containers and barges. All went well, the hardest part of the operation being the containers, as feeding the container gantry from West Melbourne to Port Melbourne through traffic was not that easy. From memory I think we achieved 10 containers an hour which at that time was almost up to the rate under the portainers.

Figure 11 Korovaar Tug Condor

Barges were towed/pushed to Victoria dock for discharge and later loading.

Bougainville

My Operational role covered Melbourne, Burnie, Hobart and Bougainville. The Bougainville experience was quite memorable for many reasons.

The call to Kieta in Bougainville was mainly to discharge supplies for the huge open cut copper mine. At that time the largest open cut copper mine in the world. The mine was up in the hills and the mined copper was changed to a slurry and pumped down to the port area. The cargo that was discharged included heavy machinery, mining equipment, bagged rice from California and other miscellaneous goods.

On my first trip to Kieta, after much telexing to and fro regards how to handle the barges I joined the vessel in Port Moresby and approaching the port of Kieta the pilot boat approached with Pilot, local authorities and some local Bougainvillian workers. The indigenous locals are really the same race as the Solomon Islanders, their skin colour being pitch black. When the first local began to climb the pilot ladder, one of the American crew members, an Afro American, exclaimed "Boy them niggers sure am black", not that they would say that today. Remember this was 1973.

Many of the senior workers, foremen, supervisors etc, were expat Australians. One 6' 6" laconic crane driver who I chatted with said he came from Yackandandah, not having heard of such a place I thought he was pulling my leg. Had to check that out when I returned to Melbourne. He also told me that just a week before a locals pig had run off into the jungle, which was extremely thick as soon as you left the road, and the owner ran in after it. He almost immediately came across a WWII fighter plane with the remains of the pilot still strapped into the wreckage.

On one trip I took Captain Gluck ashore for a meal at the Kieta Motel. The only motel! On being seated at our table we were approached by the Bougainvillian local dressed smartly in waiters attire, including a resplendent red waistcoat. Asking what we would drink to Captain asked for a Martini, I a scotch. The waiter went back to the bar and we noticed him bending down behind the bar deep in study. Back he came with the question "Sweet or dry Martini?", the Captain duly replied "Dry thank you". Again down behind the bar he went, returning to advise "We no got". So two scotch it was.

After the meal we decided to go into the lounge where entertainment was advertised. To our great surprise it was an Elvis Presley impersonator, once again a very black skinned local in full Elvis regalia.

On another trip I arrived in Kieta on December 20th, with a return flight via Port Moresby booked for the 21st. A normal thing to do in those far off days was to immediately confirm your return flight. Imagine my great surprise when I was told the flight was booked out and the next available seat was on January 3rd. After getting on to our local agent to see what they could do, which was nothing, I rang John Wilson in Melbourne. He told me to ring him back in the evening. After a worrying day at work I rang John. He told me to be at the Kieta Airport at 7:00 AM the next morning, where a Cessna owned by a construction company would take me to Lae. I would meet there my Mike Brown from the Sydney Office. He was looking after the operation there.

I was then booked on a Japanese Charter flight to Port Moresby where I would connect to my QANTAS flight to Brisbane.

All sounded good, although was not sure about the Cessna as I had never flown in a small plane before.

Next morning I was on the tarmac at 6:00 AM!

Meeting the pilot he helped me stow my baggage in the small place behind the pilots and passengers seat. Then a local man was slotted into this space, no seat! I climbed in to the passenger seat and off we went. I was pleasantly surprised, a smooth take off up in to clear blue sky with great views of New Guinea below.

This was not to last for long. Dark clouds loomed with flashes of lightning. For over half an hour we were buffeted around, my fingers turning white with the force of my grip on the seat. The pilot chatting away with Lae about the weather forecast. To my surprise he did not hold on to the joy stick. It was just doing its thing, springing left, right, forward and back, it seemed to have a life of its own. To make matters worse the third passenger was letting wind, very loudly and I think he must have eaten kilo's of a very pungent meal before boarding. The air was putrid and my stomach was almost in my throat. At last we dived down in to Lae. Not before time I think. I staggered off the plane, almost into the arms of Mike Brown, who exclaimed, "My God, Trader (His nickname for me referring to the time I spent in New Guinea) you are green, we had better get you a beer".

Next day Lae to Port Moresby, a much better trip although the Japanese plane was obviously built for the Japanese people, very narrow seats and not much headroom. But I got home on time.

On another trip I joined the vessel in Port Moresby and sailed to the old port of Rabaul. Sailing in to Rabaul was quite a sight with two volcanoes smoking away in the large bay.

WWII relics still abounded. The cranes used to discharge the barges were small cranes welded to old US Army jeeps. They just reversed to the wharf edge lowered the hook, up with the sling and the forward to place the cargo where it was stowed.

Fuel was stored in two WWII Japanese miniature submarines which were moored against a wharf.

The Japanese HQ bunker was still in the centre of town. The tunnels where the Japanese defended the town were still there. The Americans by passed Rabaul in the end as they could not penetrate the tunnels.

One day sticks in my mind at PFEL. John Wilson had nominated Brendan and I to "Entertain" Capt Terry Reeves from the paper mill in Burnie, I soon found out why. Lunch started early, even before noon. After dining extremely well we moved onto pubs. Leaving the last pub very late in the afternoon into what should have been a very bright afternoon we were plunged into complete darkness. It was the day in the

early seventies when Melbourne was engulfed in a huge dust storm that blocked out the sunlight.

On another day, during a Wharf strike I did the mail run out to the anchorage. I spent most of the day trying to explain cricket to the officers and engineers as they were watching a Test Match. The Americans just could not get over stopping for drinks, lunch and tea. On top if that to go five days with no result!

During my time at PFEL I learnt from John Wilson the power of getting to know the right people. Every Friday we would meet Capt McFarlane, the Harbour Master and one of the Assistant Harbour Masters for lunch at the Queens Bridge Hotel, Lunch consisted of a steak sandwich and many beers.

Another regular lunch was a monthly one with the then Secretary of the Painters and Dockers Union, Pat Shannon. This was a full afternoon event at Ma Murphy's in South Melbourne. There were usually a couple of body guards around Pat, one being Joey Martin.

Just before one lunch John said he would be picking his new Seiko watch up from Joey. This was the latest automatic watch with all the bells and whistles for under half the price being charged through normal channels. On seeing the watch I asked Joey could I have one, he replied, "I have to order these they come from Japan". One month later just before our lunch he rang me to advise he would have my watch. I excitedly told my brother, who was living with me at the time I was picking up the watch, he said he wouldn't mind one but just a normal Seiko. On arriving at Ma Murphy's I duly handed over my money and got my watch. I then asked Joey how long to wait for a standard model, to which he replied, "I have those in stock", and went outside to his car and came back with a plastic bag full of watches.

Other bargains on offer were full length leather coats, when John said he would like one he was informed that they didn't stock his size, John was a big man!

When I told them I was getting married they wanted to give me a fridge and a TV, which was declined.

After one long lunch John asked Pat Shannon what was the real truth about the Painters and Dockers, to which he replied, "I take my orders from Carlton". Carlton being the heart of Italian Melbourne. Pat died by shotgun blast outside a pub in South Melbourne. No elections at the Painters and Dockers!

The first time our lunches were turned to some good for PFEL was when the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) banned all American flagged vessels as a protest against the Vietnam war. After John spoke to Pat Shannon the WWF lifted the ban for 24 hours while our vessel was in port.

PFEL came to an end in 1976, having been sold to Farrell Lines. The end did not come smoothly. The Sydney based Australian Manager Noel Morrison rang the Accountant in Melbourne Carl Clark and told him to dismiss all the Melbourne staff. Advising him that he and the Accountant would be the only two employees left in the company. They would then split up the Company Superannuation between them. The

Accountant did not think this was right and spoke to John Wilson about it. The Shipping Officers Association said they could not do anything about it. So our monthly lunches with the Painters and Dockers paid off again. John rang Pat Shannon, who in turn rang the Secretary of the Waterside Workers Union, who then placed a ban on the vessels until all monies owed to employees were guaranteed.

A sad end to a great time. I was offered a job at Wilh Wilhelmsens in their operation department under Capt Tony Beck, which I accepted.

MORE TO COME 1976 -2002

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