

Timelines

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Deck boy to captain also sailed the Horn

JOHN QUINN

1928 - 2010

John Quinn (sometimes also known as Jack) came from a line of seafarers. His grandfather, also John Quinn, served on the Burns Philp shipping line and his father, George Quinn, went down with HMAS Sydney in November 1941.

John Fredrick Quinn was born on August 31, 1928, one of three children of George and Eva. He went to the public schools in Tempe, then in January 1945, when he was 16, he joined his first ship, starting as a deck boy.

It was the coal-burning SS Morinda, which his grandfather had served on, a Burns Philp passenger and cargo vessel that had flown the US, British and Australian flags during World War II.

Quinn spent a few years on the Morinda and similar ships around the Pacific then joined the RAAF, but decided he had too much salt water in his veins and, in 1949, responded to an ad to become a crew member on the four-masted, 6000-tonne sailing ship Passat.

The vessel, owned by G. Erikson of Finland, was the last of the large cargo-carrying sailing ships to leave Australia. There was no motor, no radio and 26 men on the crew - the Australians among them had been recruited to replace deserters. They were signed on at £10 a month and under Australian law had to be repatriated at the end of the voyage.

However, the captain explained to them that he could not pay the repatriation so they could sign on with the understanding that he would destroy the agreement of repatriation when they were out of Australian waters.

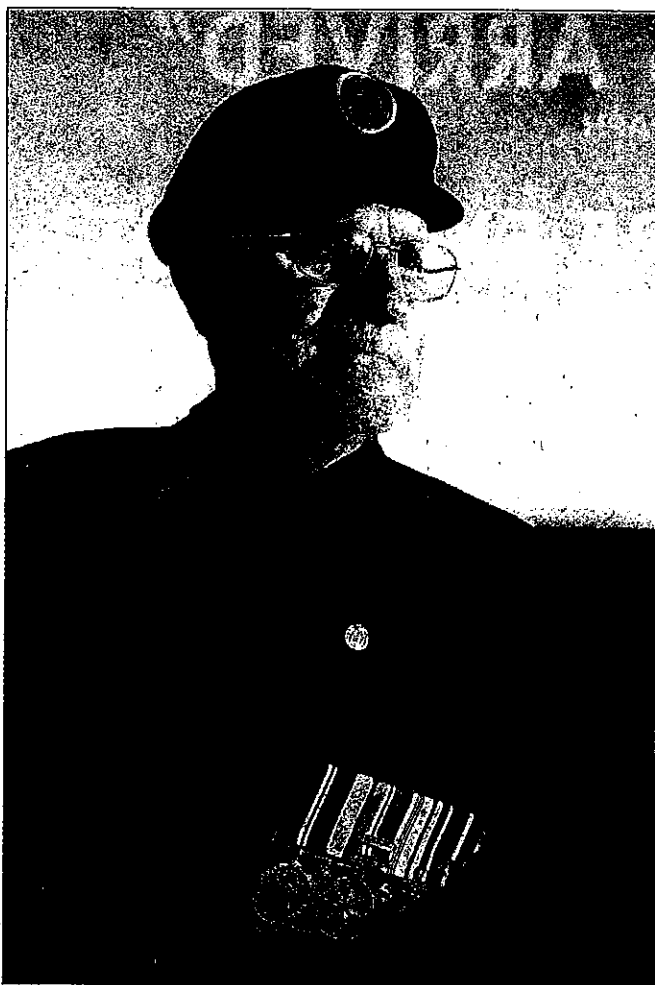
Quinn spent his 21st birthday shovelling snow and working the sails as the ship rounded Cape Horn. It took 110 days to get to Britain.

He worked out of British ports and went to the Liverpool School of Navigation to earn his mate's ticket. In 1951 he returned to Australia with his new wife, Anita, and they lived in Sydney with his mother, sister and brother in a two-bedroom house.

Quinn then served on the aircraft carrier Sydney as a lieutenant in the Korean War. Back home again, when his son was born, the family had housing difficulties. So Quinn went to visit Joe Cahill, MP, at his Marrickville home and the Quinns were soon housed in the Dundas Valley.

John joined the Union Steam Ship Company, then later the Australian Board of Shipping - which became the Australian Shipping Commission - the forerunner of Australian National Lines (ANL).

He was also a naval reservist, and was made the acting commander on HMAS Jeparit, requisitioned to supply the military in Vietnam. In port there, he would regularly throw hand-grenades overboard to protect the ship



John Quinn ... his father went down with the Sydney in World War II.

from underwater attack. He made 12 consecutive trips to the war zone.

Anita died in 1976 and while Quinn was captain of the Jeparit, he met Ira, who became his second wife and they had a daughter, Donna. The marriage later failed. Quinn's last ANL ship was the Enterprise, a large container vessel. On his final trip he circumnavigated the world.

After retiring, he served on the Marine Board of Inquiry when an Alltrans cement carrier ran aground on the Barrier Reef. Quinn was also interested in the effects of his work. His research into ballast water of large ships helped to draw attention to the ecological damage that could occur when the water and the life in it was dumped in new waters.

In 1988, the Cape Horners (those who have sailed round the Horn) met in Sydney. There Quinn met Aase Galligani, and they spent many months each year at her place in Norway or his at Boat Harbour. Then, in about 2005, he met his last partner, Krista.

Quinn enjoyed his BMW motorbike and rode it over most of Australia and would also take it to a port and pick it up in Europe. He rode it over much of Europe that way.

He also considered himself a devout Catholic, taught scripture at schools and supported many charities. During the Ceausescu era, he smuggled US dollars by motorbike to a Franciscan orphanage in Romania. He said he stopped to ask a man directions and, when there was no response, found that the man's throat had been cut. Later in a forest he had to escape from starving wild children but finally got the money to the orphanage.

Quinn and his sister Judy spent a lot of time on the mystery of HMAS Sydney. They were present when a trip to the wreck was made and when the services and the inquiry were held.

John Quinn is survived by Krista, children George and Donna, four grandchildren, brother Don and sister Judy.

Bob Martin