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## GENERAL BOTHA OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

<http://www.generalbotha.co.za>

**August 2008**

### **JOINT NEWSLETTER**

**Has your address changed?** Please send your updated details to Tony Nicholas Chairman Cape Town (details above).

**Do you have an interesting article for this newsletter?** Please send your contributions to Dennis Henwood, [dhenwood@iafrica.com](mailto:dhenwood@iafrica.com) Phone: +27 (0)21 6716373. Fax: +27 (0)86 6706710.

**Can you read this Newsletter?** If not please let us know. We can send you larger print if it is necessary.

"The Legend Lives On" is a regular feature of this newsletter thanks to our Chairman Tony delving into interesting pieces of history and bringing out the great characters amongst the GBOBA. The 'Stone Anchor' which proudly stands above Gordon's Bay is one such Legend. We all know what the 'GB' represents dotted out in white stone on the mountainside, and for many of us our hair stands on end when we hear folk talk of it highlighting the town of Gordon's Bay. A few years ago it was discovered that the street map of Cape Town (Gordon's Bay is now included in the metropolis of Cape Town) actually indexed the anchor as "Gordon's Bay." This was very quickly corrected when our Chairman wrote a firm but polite letter.

In our quest to secure the history of the Ship and the General Botha in its many homes and different types of establishments, we have successfully laid plaques at the relevant places. The most recent being in Gordon's Bay on the beach front. This plaque explains quite clearly to the public the history and relevance of the stone anchor visible on the mountainside above. So all those Obies on a nostalgic trip back to GB, please take a turn along the beach walk and admire this very smart piece of work.

It was thanks to the great energy of **Peter Coetzee (#2171; 1960/61)** that this plaque was erected with the permission of the City Council and the bureaucratic tape that had to be unraveled. He tirelessly soldiered on seeking the agreement and cooperation of the officials. Now that that has all been done, the process continues as he seeks the recognition and authority of 'Heritage Western Cape'. The correspondence and supporting letter from the Environment & Heritage Management offices are of interest and published further on in this newsletter. The final paragraph sums it all up when Peter writes "We will strive to keep the legend and the history of the SATS General Botha alive."

You may also read in this edition what the Bothie meant to some of the Obies of 1957/58 years. There is also news from the various branches, but nothing heard from 'Down Under'. They must be hibernating in the cold winter! We look forward to a bumper contribution in November.

We hope that the print in this edition is an improvement for those who receive the snail mail version. Please take note of the loose 'flyer' with booking details for the September lunch and the Slop Chest.

*"The Pessimist complains about the wind, the Optimist expects it to change and the Realist adjusts his sails."* (Anonymous)

## FORTHCOMING CAPE TOWN EVENTS

- **Venue:** Royal Cape Yacht Club, Duncan Road, Table Bay Harbour.
- **Date & time:** Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1130 for 1200, lunch served at 1300.
- **Partners welcome.**
- **Subject:** Captain Charles Kingon – modern vessel new build, Korea.
- **Lunch cost:** R40 p.p
- **RSVP:** Peter Coetzee, phone 021-712 7982  
or email [pdcoetzee@telkomsa.net](mailto:pdcoetzee@telkomsa.net)  
by Monday 1200, 8<sup>th</sup> September.

### FROM THE BRIDGE OF ss CAPE TOWN (Tony Nicholas, Chairman)

By the time you read this both my grandsons shall have celebrated their first birthdays leaving me much poorer. But how can I be expected to resist the charms of our budding Springbok hooker and scrumhalf's?

It has been a relatively quiet quarter and I suppose the winter weather accounts for this. Even my 4x4 truck is enjoying a well earned R&R. Our monthly lunches continued like clockwork at the Royal Cape Yacht Club, second Tuesday of EVERY month without fail. We have noted a steady decrease in attendance numbers and attribute this to the winter blues as well. Hopefully this shall pick up from September, we look forward to hosting you all again. The September lunch shall be preceded by a presentation from Captain Charles Kingon, a former vice chairman of the association. Charles stood by a Safmarine new build in Korea where he no doubt came into contact with Errol Hunter. This shall be a most interesting presentation from Charles and I expect a full house. Therefore lunch booking is essential for the day.

I was interested in a recent news article which announced that South African seafarers are being invited by Iranian maritime officials to take training courses in their country's training centers and universities. With all our local eminent training establishments why on earth should we want to train elsewhere? Something to do with politics I suppose.

For those of you that still receive this publication by post you have no doubt noticed the revised large format, A4 instead of the A5 size that we have been printing for many years. We took necessary decision in cognizance of members' wishes. However this has doubled our newsletter costs which if not supported shall place a serious drain on our resources. The interest earned does not sufficiently cover this cost and we believe that we have many more years to budget for. Thus firstly, those of you that have email facilities but still receive this publication by post, PLEASE advise your email address without further delay. As we are volunteer scribes contributing to the newsletter sending it out to you via email costs the association exactly nothing. I regularly receive emails from members and when checking on my data base I note that we are still sending newsletters by post to them. Secondly, as we do not have a subscription system we rely on members' donations to make up the shortfall in expenses. Members' are known to be very generous but as we are all only human, need to be reminded from time to time. Thus please do not take umbrage when we nudge members for a donation from time to time. The association's finances are available to all members for scrutiny should you so wish. Those that attend our AGM see the financial status of the association. Other members are welcome to request a copy if desired. Our sincere thanks to those that do contribute to the well being of the association. Some send regularly; for example Richard Hogg 1956/57 who has a monthly stop order in favour of the association. Bravo Zulu Richard. Another regular contributor is Jimmy Cooke 1966 who takes a group of us for lunch at the Jewel Tavern each year after the War Memorial Service. We usually take a collection around the table to pay for our lunch [after far too many bottles of wine]. But only to find that Jimmy had already settled with the management and promptly hands our cash over as a donation to the association. Bravo Zulu to you as well Jimmy. There is some truth in the old adage that there is never a free lunch. Well, that is all for now and please dig a little to support the newsletter and other goals of the association. Cheers.

SOS

“I am trying to trace distant relatives of mine with the surname Tipper who immigrated to South Africa in the late 1800s early 1900s. The head of one family was Loton Tipper (b1828) and the head of the other was William Tipper (b1862). On your website a gentleman called William Loton Tipper was listed in the 1944 intake, no1383. He was almost certainly a descendant of this Tipper family as the name Loton is synonymous with our Tipper pedigree dating back to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century in the UK. I should like to try and contact his family to make some inquiries, although I know this might be difficult as I see that he was reported deceased in 1996. To this end I wonder if you could pass on this email or let me have a contact address. Yours faithfully, Vivienne Pugh (nee Tipper).”

Email viv.pugh@wilkin94.fsnet.co.uk

Ian Manning and Denys Pitcher kindly did some research for which the family is very grateful. However we have still failed to trace our OBIE. It has been established that he failed his eyesight test when sitting for his Second Mate’s and applied for a position in the Port Elizabeth Post Office in 1948. Any further information will be appreciated.

NAME	CLASS	LAST KNOWN LOCATION
Konrad Eriksen	1978	P&O Ports Stevedoring Cape Town
Brian Sutherland	1975	Henley On Klip
Peter Carelse	1982	Christchurch, New Zealand
Jimmy Kruger	1978	Richard’s Bay

All members get searching and find them for us, please.

### SCRANBAG

**Chris Sutton 1983** comments; “Interesting to see how many 'Bothy Boys' are currently making their livings with the Grindrod family. My count is twelve; nine are with Island View Shipping and the last five on the list are from the class of '83. Tim McClure 1973, Peter Stacey 1964, Dave Rennie 1979, Mark Koen 1979, Gavin Durell 1973, James Stewart 1979, Kyle Stemmet 1977, Roy Scallan 1983, Rob Gardner 1983, Wayne Jones 1983, Chris Sutton 1983.” Indeed interesting and we would appreciate hearing from them.

**G.A. DAVIES 1980 #2712.** Guy’s contract with Dublin Port Company International has come to an end and has recently returned from his Indonesian posting to Ireland.

**K.A. TATE 1976 #2542.** After 6 illuminating months at UCT’s Michaelis School of Art, joined Safmarine as a Cadet in late 1974. Served on various ship types until transferring to SAFTUG (Safmarine’s Special Ships Division) in 1980. Served aboard JOHN ROSS and WOLRAAD WOLTEMADE until subsidiary company Pentow Marine formed in 1986. Then served aboard various Pentow vessels involved in the offshore oil industry. Obtained Master’s Certificate in 1988 and promoted to Master in 1989. Master aboard various offshore support vessels and salvage tugs JOHN ROSS and WOLRAAD WOLTEMADE. Skipped a 65’ schooner GOOD NEWS in 1986 Cape to Rio Race and co-skipped a 54’ ketch NEW CRUSADER in 2000 Cape to Rio Race. Stayed with company as Pentow Marine became SMIT Pentow Marine, then SMIT Marine South Africa. Seconded to S.A. AGULHAS as Master from 2001 to 2003 after two understudy trips in 2000. Freelanced as Ice Pilot aboard New Zealand’s NIWA research vessel TANGAROA in Ross Sea in 2004. Master aboard SMIT AMAMDLA (ex JOHN ROSS) from 2003 to 2008 in role of ETV for S.A. Government on S.A. coast. “Swallowed the anchor” in 2008 after 34 years at sea and joined SMIT Salvage as a Salvage Master. Kevin makes no mention of his prestigious awards/medals resulting from his professional adventures at sea. Kevin, we request that you pen some episodes which our editor can serialize in future publications.

**R.K. HOOLE 1979 #2644.** Rob has temporarily faded off our radar screen sailing his yacht somewhere on the vast oceans. Here is the only email received at his Smit office so far. “We are currently in Morandava on the central west coast of Madagascar. It is a small broken down town but it does have a decent market so we are stoking up on fuel and victuals for 2 weeks in the Barren Islands (an archipelago of about a dozen islands about 25 miles off the coast north west of Morandava). The islands are uninhabited except for a few migrant fishermen who set up camp for a week or two before

moving on. Really beautiful place. All is going well, boat behaving and we have been very lucky with the weather. Had an uneventful sail up the SA coast, but then had to hole up in Richards Bay for a few days to allow a cold front to pass through, before jumping onto the back of the front and making the passage to Tulear (in Southern Madagascar) in 6 days. Muzzi and the family joined me in Tulear and after a few days surfing south of Tulear we set off north calling in at Ifaty (tricky passage through the coral reef with no nav aids of any sort and no detail on the chart – but with excellent diving), Nosy Hoa (islands), Morembe (town), Some more islands and finally to Morandava. Setting off this afternoon inland to a famous avenue of baobab trees to watch the sun set. So as you can see things are great.”

**P. BROWNE 1952/53 #1756.** Pat and Ann recently left our sunny shores for England. Residing near their daughter in Great Ayton, wherever that may be. He writes that he will be happy to see any OBIE visiting their area.

### **ANCHORS AWEIGH**

It is with much sadness that we report the untimely passing of Caroline Fisher, wife of our UK branch Chairman Ted Fisher. Caroline was involved in much charitable work and was honoured for contribution to these. We shall miss Caroline’s sunny smile and extend our blessings to Ted.

**GEORGE COLEMAN 1943/44.** Recent newsletter returned from his Cape Town address marked “deceased”. Any further information appreciated.

**JOHN FINLAYSON 1943/44.** Passed away 16<sup>th</sup> July. Any further information appreciated.

**HANS TISSINK 1973.** We recently reported the untimely passing of Hans earlier this year. His brother relates; Hans matriculated from Goudveld High School in Welkom, Orange Free State - no oranges there, nothing is free and in a hell've state. All his courses and tickets were done thru SAMNA General Botha. Safmarine: Joined his first ship - the SA Drakenstein as cadet on 4th March 1972 His first ship as 3rd mate was the SA Zebediela which he joined on 8th February 1976 He joined the Sishen as a fresh 2nd mate on 9th February 1979 where I joined as well, as a cadet with Peter Blackett as 3rd mate ! Best dry docking I have ever had was the guarantee docking in Japan!!! He then left and joined Unicorn and where he joined the Buffalo on 13th October 1979 as 2nd Officer. He sailed as Chief Officer on the Umfolozi from 2nd April 1980 and his last ship at sea was again the Buffalo which he joined on 8th August 1981, still as CNO. The rest is history as it all belonged to the "railways". Eddie Bremner continues the history; Hans joined the Harbour service as it was then known in Port Elizabeth in 1981. Hans was a Master Mariner when he joined and as they all did at the time started as a Mate on the tugs before going on to become the Master or Captain of the tug. During this time Hans and I worked closely as a team. I was a pilot at the time and Hans was on the tug. He was not only an excellent tug master he was one of those people who just never complained even though worked very long hours and the family came under pressure.. His crew from that era still remember him as a straight talker and an excellent leader. In 1990 Hans was promoted to pilot and moved to Walvis Bay where he learnt many of his excellent piloting skills. In 1994 Hans transferred to Cape Town and continued his piloting career. During his time there he attained his Open Pilots licence and was recognized by all as an excellent pilot. Hans was an unflappable character. I remember on one occasion taking a series of photos of Hans bringing in a FPSO under tow. This type of operation is difficult under any condition but what made this operation different was that the South Easter came up at just the wrong time with the tug and tow nearly ending up on the spur at Duncan Dock entrance. I captured all of this on film and afterwards when discussing his “near miss’ all the unflappable Hans said was “that was exciting” Like all good pilots Hans could discard the near misses. Hans always had a great sense of humour. I would often listen to him on the radio chirping the other pilots with comments such as why are you dawdling get on with the job! Apart from piloting Hans also had another job thrust on to him. He was in charge of the pilot’s work roster. Now anyone who knows pilots would know that this is a particularly challenging job. I cannot remember a time when Hans did not come with a plan on how to provide a pilot in a hurry. Hans was also a great trainer and motivator. He certainly made a difference when it came to assisting our understudy pilots. To sum up Hans had a great sense of humour, was an excellent person, a great shipmate and loved and respected by all.

## **THE LEGEND LIVES ON – ss LAWHILL**

**David Bell 1953/54** writes; “I have just received this letter from Colin Dwyer 44/45 (1350) who now lives in New South Wales (Where Sydney is) and has been involved with GBOB’s in the past. Colin was also a cadet on the Lawhill but I will let his letter tell the story. His letter was hand written and I will ask the lovely Julia to type it for me as time constraints would come into play as I typed away far into the night only to find a phrase or a word missing and spelling mistakes aplenty, which would take me into the early hours of tomorrow morning to fix, and leave me a gibbering wreck and unable to face my glorious early morning run and swim to catch the obligatory wave. So here ‘tis.

My name is Colin Dwyer. I am a retired ships master who retired from the BHP Shipping Fleet in early 1962. Like yourself I am also an ex General Botha boy having been on the Botha during 1944/45. I recently read in the November 2007 GBOBA news letter that your brother was a member of the crew of Lawhill during 1946, which was the last voyage she did for the SAR and H fleet. I joined the Lawhill as a first trip cadet during early march 1946 at Cape Town, so I was on the Lawhill at the same time your brother was. You mentioned in your letter to Tony Nicholas that your brother had told you that there were two ex General Botha cadets on Lawhill at the same time, and that if they were still alive, they would probably be about 80. You would be surprised to know that there were actually ten ex Gen Botha Boys on Lawhill during that voyage, but they were not all cadets on Lawhill. Phil Nankin [1941/42] was 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate, and Pat Birch [1940/41] was an AB. The other eight were all Cadets. I attended the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cadets who were on the Bothy during 1944 in Cape Town during March 1994. I made enquiries about the seven cadets, who had been on the Lawhill with me, and at the time only two of us were still alive, and one of them lived in Coffs Harbour on the NSW North coast, and I know that he passed away during 1995. I met Phillip Nankin again when I was in Cape Town during 1994 and I know that he passed on since then too. Pat Birch is long gone, so it appears that I am the last survivor of the ten ex Gen. Botha cadets who were on Lawhill during 1946, and I’ll be 79 next month, so your estimate was almost spot on. I am enclosing a couple of newspaper photos from a Cape Town paper at the time during which your brother and I were on Lawhill which might interest you. We sailed from Cape Town to Durban in ballast. It took eight days to get to Durban which was considered good. We loaded coal at the Bluff from buckets, which took ages, then sailed for a place called Puerto Belgrano, which was a naval base in Argentina. It took 67 days to get there, and after discharging the coal we moved to Bahia Blanca where we spent a few weeks and loaded a cargo of bagged wheat for Cape Town. It took 37 days to get back to Cape Town, after which the ship was laid up awaiting sale, so we were all paid off. Hope you find these snippets interesting, and wishing you the best of luck. Best wishes, Colin Dwyer.

There, I did it myself as Julia was having a little Nanna nap and it only took 50 minutes. I obviously seriously underestimated my typing ability. The articles and pictures were from the SA Railways and Harbour Magazine of March 1953 and the others from the Cape Times or Argus in 1946. Julia and I went to a very pleasant lunch at Peter and Norma Heydenrych [1952/53] place about a month ago when we made one of our infrequent visits to the big city and was surprised to find he was one of my Old Salts and neither of us remembered the other. It was great to get together and I am now planning to get the other six together if possible although they are very wide spread. Hoping you are all well Cheers. David Bell.” We look forward to further report back of the next Lawhill reunion “down there”.

### **ANOTHER LEGEND LIVES ON – #718 Matthew Sinclair 1933/34**

After leaving the Botha in 1934 entered an apprenticeship in refrigeration in Durban. On completion joined the army and saw service in East Africa, Egypt, and Libya etc. Discharged medically unfit and joined the public works dept. in Durban. Retired in 1981 after 40 years service. Although well into his 90’s and largely confined to a wheelchair Matt is still very switched on and he entertains the whole family with stories from his days on the Botha (and during the war). Unfortunately I can’t do any of them real justice but needless to say most of the stories involved things like smuggling cigarettes back from rugby matches in Tokai (the butt forgotten in the lining of his coat was found but not the whole box he had hidden down his trousers!) and a personal mention he got from Captain Yardley during the graduation who included words to the effect of – “I can’t help being suspicious of any cadet who graduated without being brought before me for some indiscretion at least once, unlike my good friend

Sinclair who managed it repeatedly!" When Matt boarded the Dalia to leave Durban for East Africa in 1940 (I think) he bumped into an Old Boy, Michael Goold, then the third (or second) officer of the Dalia. Goold immediately invited Matt below to share some "liquid refreshment" and remember the "old days". Since his (late) wife, Peggy, had told him she could not stand goodbyes and would not go and wave him goodbye from the shore he immediately accepted and went below. It was only when Matt returned at the end of his service that he heard she had changed her mind and was tearfully waving him off to war while he was happily "knocking back a few" with an old friend from the Botha. He also remembers, after the war, meeting up separately with both Biermann 1932/33 (ex cadet captain) and Flam Johnson 1933/34 (star cadet who took all the honours during Matt's time at Botha) when they were busy with submarine hunting manoeuvres off Durban (both Captains by that time I think) and Matt went aboard to work on the refrigeration systems. Arnold Merryweather 1933/34, another Old Boy and friend, was serving under one of them and recounted the story of being in the heads when a message came down from the bridge to "crack the side of the hull with a spanner". When Merryweather returned and the message was relayed to him it had somehow become "the hulls been cracked with a spanner". The bilge pumps had almost been started before the confusion was cleared up and the (Royal Navy) submarine had been signalled with a crack from a spanner on the side of the hull! Matt has a number of photographs, documents and items including, we think, a belaying pin (just don't ask how he got it!) from his time on the Botha. Finally are you aware if there are any other Botha old boys still around who might remember Matt (or have shared similar experiences on the Botha during the 30's or 40's)? Kind regards, Steve Wood (on behalf of Matthew Sinclair). Steve, I checked our database between the years of 1922 to 1945 and find that there are 140 Old Boys on the mailing list covering that period. Really a hardy bunch.

#### **UNITED KINGDOM BRANCH – Ted Fisher e-mail [tedefisher@aol.com](mailto:tedefisher@aol.com)**

I am very grateful to the many friends and family who have supported Caroline throughout her illness and indeed myself over the past couple of months – much appreciated, however, in our many quiet conversations Caroline decided life must in her absence, go on, and that is what is happening to me!

Really delighted to receive a telephone call from Pat Browne (52/53) to say Anne and himself are settling down in their new flat up on Teeside. Now near their daughter who is able to offer much help as both Pat and Anne are not in the best of health – we wish them both well and look forward to receiving some positive news in the future.

A visit to The Rising Sun Warsash today, the first Sunday of the month for the Conway Solent Club/GBOBA lunch. Stewart and Pam Edwards (54/55) attended for the first time – both actively house hunting! Donald & Kathleen Neaves have it is rumoured a family wedding next weekend thus could not attend and Douglas Wrathmall, well shall we say the 3<sup>rd</sup> Test Match.....?

Four Conway stalwarts together with wives and my guest completed the table. Where are all the other Obies from the locality?

**The Xmas gathering is fixed for Sunday 7 December 2008 again at The Crown Hotel Lyndhurst a Gala Menu £20.50 per person, 1300 hours meeting in the bar from Noon!**

Formal invites for names and numbers etc, etc will be e-mailed, however, Obies please make a note in your diaries or ask the ladies to issue a reminder for their day out!

In the meantime Best wishes to all  
Ted Fisher (54/55)

#### **KZN BRANCH NEWSLETTER Durban July 2008**

The last quarter has been relatively quite in Durban.

We continue to enjoy good lunches at RNYC and committee meetings have been well attended with most of our committee here.

However we are now in the season of travel and Ray Walker is on extended motor trip to Mozambique, Malawi and perhaps further into North Africa.

Alan Pembroke has gone off to the world life saving championships on the Baltic and Dave DeWet has gone off to the Cape for a while.

The committee is having a social dinner on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> August.  
Our **Christmas lunch** is booked for **10<sup>th</sup> December**.

### **SATS GENERAL BOTHA Southern Lunch**

The next SATS GENERAL BOTHA Southern Lunch will be held on Tuesday 21 October 2008 at the Seven Seas Club, Simon's Town at 1200 for 1300. Those wishing to attend are requested to telephone Brad Wallace-Bradley on 021-786-1957 or Ian Manning on 021-782-1559 before 1700 on Friday 17 October 2008.

Please note that the Seven Seas Club dress code requires shirts worn by members and their guests to have collars [i.e. no T-shirts or sweaters] and shoes with socks or stockings [i.e. no sandals without socks.]

### **1969 Cadets 40 Year Reunion**

The Cadets of 1969 are having a 40 year reunion on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2009. If you are a 1969 Cadet and have not received an e-mail in this regard yet, please contact Kieron Cox (maretek@iafrica.com or 021 794 3447).

### **1979 Cadets 30 Year Reunion**

Rumour has it that a reunion is planned for next year. Please contact Guy Barker, Tel: 044 695 0390; Fax: 044 6950391; Cell: 0832548609; [guybarker@mweb.co.za](mailto:guybarker@mweb.co.za).

### **What the Bothie Did & Meant for Me?**

*The following quotes from the recent 57's & 58's reunion sent in by Laurentius van Rouendal (#2082; 1957/58):*

Graham Reinders (#E18; 1958/59) wrote: WHAT THE BOTHIE DID FOR ME?

Very definitely Bothie saved me from dropping out of school and probably stopped me from becoming a delinquent. My parents had just parted and I was running with the local Motor Cycle Boys. Somehow I had lost sight of any future horizon. Bothie suddenly gave me a very immediate goal and a view of a future career.

I of course thought that I was very bright and very talented and as it turned out, Bothie gave me an opportunity to compare my talents with others. Unfortunately, it also showed up my shortcomings. The Bothie Engineering Course definitely enhanced my mechanical knowledge and skills. I think Marais and I were usually first and second in most exams. He was very good at studying and giving the correct answers. I was always winging it. (My apologies to you other guys, if this was not reality, but only my arrogant opinion, I think that many of you were just as smart as I thought I was). I think it is fair to say that Bothie gave us all a two-year start over our peers. We were able to combine the two last years of school with the start of our careers. In addition it gave us an extra year advantage because we had also done our Military Service, whereas the others had to dedicate an extra year to it. Following Mike Lundy's theory, we were projected into a world of Dog eat Dog which prepared us well for the real world to follow. The bashing is never excusable but it is a world reality. Some survive and some don't. Stalin killed 40 million Russians and Mao killed 70 million Chinese, all in the name of "Good for the Nation".

Van has played the Religious Card and I think even back then, we had a few of the "Christians" in our midst, but somehow I suspect that a Christian Junior Cadets did not often martyr themselves to a Heathen Senior Cadet, but kept their mouths shut. The Heathens definitely predominated. Bothie gave us a very broad approach to the value (and the lack thereof) of Institutionalised religion. Two years of the Reverend Vernon Vivian was enough to make one question the presence of God in a Church. That was one thing Martin Luther did get correct.

My choice to Atheism probably began from the statistical and scientific findings that the followers of the Jesus God do not have any fewer calamities, sicknesses, disasters or more cures than the followers of the other 3000 registered religions. As they say "Faith is the ability to believe the unbelievable". Just maybe; they are ALL wrong.

Bothie was a microcosm of political and social skills. We were being tested every day and we did have to learn diplomacy and coping skills. Two or three of our year ran away because they did not

develop these skills soon enough. I believe in revenge. We should not be allowed to escape the fruits of our actions. At worst, "Karma's gonna get ya", but I prefer to see it with my own eyes. Those of us who graduated had completed a real life experiment of survival under brutal circumstances. After that the rest of life was easy.

Personally, the "Not good guys" behaviours taught me how to recognize the good and the bad in people. It also prepared me for the possible different outcomes, which were not always predictable, when dealing with such people.

Bothie certainly taught us how to develop and maintain networking and support groups. Without our support groups none could have made it. After we were trained in Hell, what was to come would be much easier to cope with.

Bothie was the most powerful influence in my entire life, for good and for bad, (I still have Bothie dreams 50 years later – I think it is now called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) but it gave me an advantage, which in later life allowed me to run rings around the other mere mortals who had not been tested in the "Fire". I truly was able to "Achieve whatever I wanted"

Looking at the number of "Captains" on our list, I must believe that we (I never made it) were truly a special bunch of guys. These conditions are not ever likely to occur again. 1958 was the end of an Era and 1959 was the end of a System, and 1997 was the end of a Nation.

Laurentius van Rouendal ('Van') (2082) wrote: WHAT THE BOTHIE MEANT TO ME

Graeme challenged us to react to this very interesting topic - surely one that we all have probably thought about or talked about many times in our lives.

Bothie taught me to help myself when having to speak in English which is very important - since there are few things so pathetic if a person should fumble and fail miserably whenever he has to say something in front of learned other people in the other official language. This is especially true of politicians when appearing on TV.

And Bothie taught me to have a great respect for my seniors in all walks of life - whether it be a parent, a tutor, an older person, definitely an officer, everyone of our Old Salts (except the one that earned Graeme's brick), our clients ... but also to have a great respect for all subordinates.

It is a gift that I would like to earn in treating everyone more important or less important with the same respect and reverence.

Hans Oostenbrink (#2067; 1957/58) told this story at the Bothie Dinner, and was asked to repeat it at the Commissioning Dinner. WHAT THE BOTHIE DID FOR ME?

1957 Was probably one of the worst years of my life. There were many reason for this, most of which came down to the fact that I was both hard assed (especially as far as the seniors were concerned) and "slapgat" as far as the officers, instructors and teachers were concerned. From the outset I was determined that I was not going to take chum bashing lying down. I rebelled against this abuse of power. I was also not going to let the Bothie get me down.

Before I joined the Bothie I was warned to stay away. The saying went that at the Bothie "they'll first break you and then they'll make you". But seniors really tried their best to accomplish the first goal. But chum bashing was far from my biggest problem. The fact that I could barely speak English at first was far worse. I simply did not understand what the teachers and instructors were trying to get across to me. The result was that I became totally disinterested and my exam results showed this. At the end of the first term I had an average of 29% and by the end of that year 28%. I stood third from the rear.

I obviously had no excuse in the second term. By then I could understand, read and write English as well as the rest of us.

In April of the third semester I was summoned to the Captain's office. I didn't have a clue why he wanted to see me, but was nevertheless petrified. I knocked on his door and as I entered on his command, I found him sitting behind his huge desk. How intimidating! Without even greeting me, he climbed into me. He told me how useless I was and that, unless my mark improved considerably by the end of that term, I would not be allowed back. I would also not be assigned to a ship. He sat

quiet for about two minutes just staring at me. Suddenly he almost screamed: "So, what do you intend doing about it?" In a very timid voice I replied: "I suppose I'll start studying, sir". "I would jolly well think so." he grumbled, "Now get out!" I was too glad to oblige. I went straight to my books and began trying to make sense of what they contained. I had quite a lot of help from Cor (I believe it is now Cees) van der Mark and passed some weeks later with an average of about 45%. When our marks were read out in the main hall, I received the one, and only, compliment I ever heard the Captain utter.

During the fourth term I learned that I could leave the Bothie at night without being detected. I soon became the Bothie's main smuggler of Texans. Later on I often went out just for the feeling of freedom it provided.

About two weeks after having completed our final exams I went out once again. The procedure was to get into the drying room, get into my No. 9's, then through the window and over the fence to freedom. This particular night I returned at about 22h30, just to find the drying room's window closed. I knew straight away that I had been caught. Pop must have checked my bed just to find a handful of clothing neatly formed to look like a body. And Pop reported to Chiefie, the officer on duty. (You guys will remember how we asked Pop, the night watchman, how things were in the past and how he always replied with: "Son, we were as tough as nails"). I tried to get around the building so as to get in by the door on the ground floor which led to the chums heads, but when I peered carefully around the corner, I saw Chiefie standing on the main deck passage just above where I had to enter the building.

So I climbed on top of the dining room, then down the other side, in through the door which led to the main deck and up to the upper deck. There I climbed through one of the windows and slid down a down pipe to land me safely on the main deck. I got into bed without a sound, scared as hell, of course. Knowing that the longer I made Chiefie wait, the more upset he was going to be, I eventually got out of bed and walked up to behind where Chiefie was standing. I just said: "I'm back, Sir". He turned round sharply, blazing with rage.

Everyone who was with me at the Bothie those days will agree that Chiefie was a legend. We were told that he could do at least twenty pull-ups on the horizontal bar with one hand and climb upside down up and down a rope hanging from the ceiling in the main hall. He had red hair and a red face which became even redder when he was cross. Well, that night he was cross. I almost wet myself. I was sure he was going to clobber me, but at the end he just stared at me for some time and ordered me to bed with the words: "Captain's report tomorrow morning". I was to be charged with mutiny. I didn't sleep much that night.

What I did not know until the next morning was that one of the other seniors, Dave Groenefelt, had also been out the same night and that he had been caught at least an hour before me, so both of us had Captain's report. The Captain was furious, to say the least. He did not even ask us whether we had anything to say (we didn't anyway). He found us guilty of mutiny and ordered that we be given six cuts and be treated as No.6 defaulters for the remainder of the year - about two weeks. Also he ordered that we were not to be given a ship.

I received the six cuts that same afternoon. I had no problem with that. What really hurt was the fact that I would not be assigned to a ship. I really wanted to go to sea. To take that away from me was like smashing all my dreams to pieces. I was devastated and felt that to stay a day longer at the Bothie was just a waste of time. So I decided to "escape" the next morning. I told Dave about my plans and he immediately asked whether he could come along. To have a partner in crime was quite a relief, so we left together.

The next morning we waited until the first break, got into our No.1's, jumped the fence and walked to the main road. We had very little money to buy food or to rent a room, so we hiked for two days and two nights before I finally got home at about 10h00, exhausted and completely drained. I can assure you that my homecoming was all but a feast. As I entered the gate, my mother was standing right there in the garden and asked bluntly "What do you want here". I'm not sure what I was expecting, but certainly not such naked rejection, I didn't say a word, just went upstairs, got into my old bed and cried myself to sleep. I had no fight left in me. I was a child again. So the song we used

to sing at the Bothie about: "When my Bothie days are over, oh how happy I will be" never came true for me.

What did the Bothie do for me? It gave me self-respect, determination, discipline, and above all, the ability to stand "when all around you are falling and blaming it on you". And it made me a man of honour and duty.

About three years later I went for a job interview in Johannesburg. To my surprise I found myself once again in front of Captain Legassick, now a personnel officer with a large mining company. He was extremely polite, asked what I had been doing with myself since leaving the Bothie and what my future plans were. I read later that he was given the sack at the Bothie on 17 December 1958, only weeks after my final act of mutiny. He died six years later on 27 April 1964. Incidentally, I didn't get the job, but that had nothing to do with any ill feelings.

### **The Stone Anchor Commemorative Plaque**

*The following correspondence is of interest:*

The City of Cape Town

21<sup>st</sup> July 2008

Dear Mr. Van Wyk,

#### **Commemorative Plaque installed on the Gordon's Bay Waterfront**

We refer to our recent discussion regarding the registration of a Commemorative Plaque that we have very recently installed on the Gordon's Bay waterfront adjacent to the cannon. In terms of the conditions detailed in the Letter of Authority that we received from the Council (Somerset West Town Hall) we were required to register such plaque with the relevant authority once installed.

We welcome your invitation to provide a short History of our Association, which would include our motivation in our establishing these plaques prior to an approach being made to Heritage Western Cape. We would separate the various developments as follows:

**The Ship and Commissioning.** In 1920 Captain T.B.H. Davis purchased the 4050 ton third rate cruiser HMS Thames from the British Admiralty to be utilized in South Africa as a permanent home for the Cape Town Naval Sea Cadet Corps and the ship renamed as TV General Botha. A change of plan resulted in the ship being donated to the South African Government to be used for the full-time training of boys for careers at sea. The distant connection with the sea cadet corps is still reflected in the navy blue and dark green of the cadet corps flag still being used in the ties, badges, flags and other items being used by the G.B. Old Boys Association today. The first intake of 75 boys joined the ship on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1922. The S.A.T.S. General Botha Old Boys' Association's "Commissioning Day Dinner" commemorates this date annually. The official christening of the ship as S.A.T.S. General Botha (GB) was performed on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1922 by the wife of General J. C. Smuts, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa. For the next 20 years the ship remained a familiar sight in Simon's Bay and steadily built up an enviable reputation for the caliber of seafarers who were produced. Altogether 1276 cadets received their training aboard during this time.

**Termination of training afloat and World War II** With the presence of German submarines in the South Atlantic and Southern Indian Oceans in 1942 and the entry of Japan into the war, the naval authorities became concerned for the safety of the cadets living aboard in the open anchorage. For this reason the cadets were moved to the GB sports complex on Red Hill at the end of July 1942, but continued to use the ship for daily training until the end of that year. Thereafter the ship was commandeered by the Royal Navy, moved to an alongside berth in the Naval Dockyard and used variously as a detention barracks and accommodation ship for naval personnel in transit.

The names of no less than 83 former cadets appear on the GB Roll of Honor and are all inscribed on the General Botha Cenotaph which is situated at the corner of Hertzog Boulevard and the Heerengracht in our City's CBD. Many former cadets were decorated, the best known being Group-Captain A.G.(Sailor) Malan and Squadron-Leader J.D Nettleton, who both earned the Victoria Cross, the latter unfortunately being killed in action at a later stage.

**The end of the Ship.** At the end of the war when it was time to return the ship to the care of the Trustees and the Board of Control, a survey found the ship beyond economical repair. It was agreed by

all concerned that she be disposed of and on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1947 she was towed into False Bay and sunk by gunfire from SCALA battery in a position 9 miles East-South-East of Roman Rock lighthouse.

**The training continues.** Training continued ashore at the Red Hill camp until early 1948. Fortunately the GB was able to move to the former SAAF crash boat station at Gordon's Bay at the end of April 1948. At this time the name of the establishment was changed to The South African Nautical College General Botha. Thus a new phase in the life of the establishment commenced, under the command of Captain G.V. Legassick, the new Captain-Superintendent.

For the next ten years SANC General Botha prospered. Standards of training were further improved, an engineering course was introduced and many enhancements realized. In 1958 the S.A. Government decided to place the establishment under the control of the Department of Defense and the SA Navy was directed to assume responsibility for GB. Commander S.C. Biermann SAN assumed command. During this period the two year course that had been in use since the inception of GB, was replaced with a one-year course. Maritime training continued in Gordon's Bay until 1966 when the new South African Merchant academy was established at Granger Bay. Altogether 18 years were spent in Gordon's Bay.

**The Final Phase.** This endured for no less than 21 years under the command of Captain –Superintendent A.P. Nankin. For the first time GB operated out of brand new, purpose designed facilities. 1987 GB became a Department of the Cape Technikon and ceased to exist as an independent entity. Altogether some 3000 cadets received their training in the ship and shore establishments, which so proudly bore the name “GENERAL BOTHA”.

The General Botha's motto “*Honour and Duty*” has been well served.

For your reference and information we include information of Plaques and Cenotaph already installed in Greater Cape Town and beyond:

- Cenotaph situated at the corner of Heerengracht and Hertzog Boulevard which bear the names of former cadets sadly lost during WWII. An annual ceremony is held in March in remembrance.
- A plaque is in place at Jubilee Square in Simonstown honouring the ship.
- A plaque is in place in the South African Naval College (NAVCOL) ex SANC General Botha site honouring Captain G.V. Legassick.
- A plaque is in place at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Granger Bay Campus (CAPUT) honouring Captain A.P.Nankin and the founder of the South African Merchant Navy Academy General Botha, Granger Bay.
- A plaque has been attached to the wreck of the ship (lying in 29 fathoms) on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her sinking in False Bay. She now enjoys National Heritage status.
- A plaque has recently been installed in Navcol to remind students there of what took place on the site in previous years.
- A plaque has recently been installed, with the permission of Council, on the waterfront at Gordon's Bay adjacent to the cannon. This plaque informs visitors, tourists and all interested people of the origins and meaning of the anchor on the hillside and of the College itself.

**The Role of the South African Navy (SAN).** The General Botha Old Boys' Association (GBOBA) is very proud to be associated with the SAN and has enjoyed their support for many years. The General Botha exhibit in the SAN Museum in Simonstown continues to be improved upon.

We trust that we have provided enough information for you to favorably recommend to Heritage Western Cape that registration of the Gordon's Bay waterfront should take place timeously. Please note that our Association is very active in promoting and preserving the heritage of the ship and the intuitions that replaced the ship.

The motivation that we harbour to maintain existing plaques and the establishment of new ones is simply explained.... We will strive to keep the legend and the history of the SATS General Botha alive.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Coetzee

For: General Botha Old Boys' Association.

*The office of the Environmental & Heritage Management replied with:*

“... .. The General Botha Old Boys’ Association, in cooperation with the Sport and Recreation Department of the City of Cape Town, completed the installation of the said commemorative plaque in the waterfront of Gordon’s Bay recently. The letter from the General Botha Old Boys’ Association dated 21 July 2008 provides a thorough motivation for the said commemorative plaque in the Gordon’s Bay Waterfront, together with a historical background of the General Botha ship, the South African Nautical College General Botha in Gordon’s Bay, as well as the other associated commemorative plaques and the cenotaph that already exist in the Western Cape.

“The purpose of the commemorative plaque in the Gordon’s Bay Waterfront is to inform visitors, tourists and all interested people of the origins and meaning of the GB anchor on the hillside of Gordon’s Bay and of the College itself. The photograph that accompanied the letter of motivation from the General Botha Old Boys’ Association shows the inscription on the said commemorative plaque.

“The Heritage Section of the Environmental & Heritage Management Branch: Eastern Region (Environmental Resource Management Department) of the City of Cape Town thus supports the registering of the General Botha Old Boys Association’s public memorial (commemorative plaque), which was recently installed in the Gordon’s Bay Waterfront, in the appropriate Heritage Register in accordance with Section 37 of the National Heritage Resources Act, (Act 25 of 1999). ... ..” Johan van Wyk, Environmental & Heritage Management: Eastern Region – Heritage Section, Environmental Resource Management, Directorate Strategy & Planning, City of Cape Town.

#### **Alan Ford (#2391; 1971) Poses some questions**

Hi, you know by know I am a bit odd, so please forgive the following questions.

What lights does an ice yacht show? Is a Ski-Doo on a frozen lake considered a power driven vessel?

Please ask these questions in the next newsletter and see if we can generate some controversy.

*Alan, we hope that you have the answers and are prepared for a barrage of questions shortly.*

#### **Departing In Style by Mike Bryant (53/54) aka *The Junkman***

*Thanks to Ivor Little for sending this in.*

In the old British India troopship *Dilwara* we brought the relieving regiment to take over the garrison in Tripoli. In those days, back in the '50s Britain still had military bases in some surprising places. The regiment going home was always a big occasion. The poor devils had been there on the edge of the desert for the last three years, after all - the Queen's Bays, a cavalry regiment and a particularly pukka bunch of pongos.

Well, there was the usual pomp and ceremony - the Welsh Regiment relieving (also rather "far back") on full parade to see them off, band playing, all sorts of military hardware on the quay, including a row of 10-tonners parked with military precision close to the edge of the quay.

Already singled up, the *Dilwara* sounded her whistle, the band struck up "Men of Harlech" and a couple of thousand FNs went to the "present", with the pilot somewhat foolhardily choosing to leave the quayside at "half ahead" from a standing start. Down aft we got the order to "let go" a trifle late, but - no matter - stern line and backspring were let go. The ship already moving forward, the stern line came in. Our lascars leapt to deal with the backspring. From my station at the telephone I watched fascinated as the eye of the backspring, bouncing merrily through the dust, landed unerringly over the front bumper of the nearest army lorry.

Those desert trucks had large round hatches cut in the roof of the drivers cab. A soldier was seated on top of the cab, with legs dangling through the hatch, waving cheerily to the lads going back to Blighty. His lorry took off sideways at about seven knots, leaving him in mid air, to collide with the one parked next to it. There followed a most spectacular domino effect, with soldiers scattering in all directions. Fortunately the main ranks were drawn up some distance back; otherwise the Welsh regiment would probably have lost a platoon or two that day rather than retreat.

The band had just got to that bit:

*"Loose the folds asunder,*

*Flags we conquer under,*

*The placid sky, once bright on high,  
Lets loose its bolts of thunder....."*

They were right in the path of the juggernaut, as were the top brass of the regiment. They took one look and, as one man, ran for it. We struggled meanwhile to slip the turns from the bits, leaping for cover as the wire sprang all over the place and finally ran out. We left our backspring behind. Fortunately nobody was hurt. The only casualties were the trucks, one bass drum and a lot of regimental pride!

*"A cloudy day is no match for a sunny disposition."* (Anonymous)

### SLOP CHEST

These slop chest items all proudly display our association insignia and is available from Cape Town branch. Place your orders without delay with Kathy or Louise Nicholas:

Phone: 021-7885957 fax: 086 604 0811

Email: [cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za](mailto:cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za)

<b>BADGE</b>	<b>R100</b>
<b>FLAG</b>	<b>R100</b>
<b>TIE [STRIPED]</b>	<b>R60</b>
<b>PLAQUE</b>	<b>R125</b>
<b>PEAK CAP [BASEBALL TYPE]</b>	<b>R70</b>
<b>‘n NAAM WAT SEEVAARDERS EER</b> Geschiedenis van die opleiding skip.	<b>DONASIE</b>
<b>A NAME AMONG SEAFARING MEN</b> History of the training ship.	<b>DONATION</b>
<b>FIRST DAY COVER</b> 60 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Old Boys' Association	<b>DONATION</b>
<b>BELT BUCKLE</b>	<b>R100</b>
<b>DVD "THE SHIP"</b> Filmed on board during the thirties.	<b>R40</b>
<b>DVD "RED HILL 1946/47"</b> Collection of Rex Chamber's photographs with titles and accompanying music.	<b>R40</b>
<b>DVD "SOUTH AFRICAN NAUTICAL COLLEGE GENERAL BOTHA 1954"</b> Filmed by Barry Cullen and Chris Copeland.	<b>R40</b>

### PLUS PACKAGING AND POSTAGE!

**Note: some items in the slop chest are available from Durban branch as well.**

Cheque or postal order should be made out to "General Botha Old Boys' Association". Post to: P.O. Box 4515, Cape Town, 8000

Alternatively, the payment can be made by electronic fund transfer directly into our bank account. Details as follows:

- Bank: Standard Bank
- Branch: Thibault Square, Cape Town
- Branch code: 02 09 09
- Account name: General Botha Old Boys' Association
- Account number: 070835128