

## **TABLE TALK / TO THE POINT :**

**SEPTEMBER 2011**

**OBITUARY : RICHARD J. JENKINS (HF 1975188):** It is quite impossible in a short article such as this to fully describe the distinguished and varied career of the late Dick Jenkins, who died in Durban on Thursday 18 August this year in his ninety first year. One can only hope to provide an overview of the life and career of this man with whom many of us have been associated professionally and socially during the past forty years or more.

Dick was born in Croydon, near London, in 1920. At that time Croydon was the site of London's International Airport and young Dick was there to welcome Amy Johnson and Jim Mollison when they arrived from Australia on solo flights in 1931.

Dick served his apprenticeship with the General Steam Navigation Company at their Deptford yard on the London River and in July 1940 he joined their 1316 grt coaster FALCON, built in 1927, as Third Engineer. The War shortened his apprenticeship but advanced his sea career somewhat. Fortunately his ship was a survivor of the Mediterranean convoys.

When it was realised by the War Department that they had an excellent engineer on board he was sent as passenger to Bombay together with another dozen officers to bring back England a captured Vichy French passenger ship the 9 896 grt TSS COMPIEGNE, built in 1923 as JAMAIQUE for Chargeurs Reunis. Eighteen months later with many adventures in her wake the ship arrived in Middlesborough where she remained as a static training ship. After the War she was returned to France and survived until 1954.

Next he joined a new Chapman & Willan ship, DEMERTON, which was blooded off Juno and Sword beaches and lost quite a number of army and ship's personnel after being shelled from the beach. After several trips to the beaches the ship was released and sent to the Tyne for rehabilitation. After the invasion of Normandy Dick undertook a couple of trips across the U-Boat free North Atlantic before the German Surrender on 8 May 1945 brought the war in Europe to an end.

Although the War was over his activities were still governed by the Ministry of War Transport so he travelled around until paying off in Cape Town with leg injuries from which he was hospitalised. After repatriation he went back to Poplar Tech. for his Chiefs' Ticket having passed his Seconds' in 1942. He realised that South Africa was the place for him and signed on as a Second Engineer on an old wreck purchased by Union Steamship of Cape Town to be delivered to South Africa. It was crewed by riff raff supplied by the South African Embassy and arrived in South Africa fifty days later, not without many problems. Promoted to Chief Engineer he circumnavigated Africa on the same ship in 165 days and then took his first shore appointment in Port Elizabeth, working for Caltex Africa.

A short spell with Globe Engineering in Cape Town was followed by an exciting three years in Tristan Da Cunha building and operating a crayfish canning factory. With empire building in his blood he then went to Beira as Terminal Manager for Mobil, spending seven years there before being transferred to Lourenco Marques. Besides holding various managerial positions, he was a consultant, surveyor and general shipping expert.

In January 1965 he returned to Durban as Marine Manager for Unicorn Lines which at that time had twenty nine ships; but after a productive 3 ½ years he found himself “on the beach” following a company altercation. It was at this time he commenced a lengthy relationship with the Dorman Long (Africa), building and repairing all forms of ships and everything else that floats.

His first new construction task was to build the Diving/Torpedo Recovery Vessel FLEUR for the South African Navy in a yard which did not have a slipway. Fortunately the slip was completed in time for the launch which took place on 30 June 1969. SAS FLEUR had a long, active career with the South African Navy and last year had a new lease of life as the anti-piracy patrol ship FLEUR DU CAP.

A couple of years after the delivery of Dorman Long’s first ship Dick supervised the construction of the Unicorn Lines “Trampco” cargo ships RIDGE and VERGE, the biggest ships built in South Africa.



DICK JENKINS DISCUSSES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. B. J. VORSTER, FOLLOWING THE LAUNCH OF THE TRAMP CO CLASS CARGO SHIP VERGE BY MRS. TIENIE VORSTER IN FEBRUARY 1973. PHOTO : DENNIS CLEAVER.

In 1983 Dick reached Dorbyl’s compulsory retirement age so he just went up the road to Sandock Austral where he took up the post of Ship Repair Manager.

Following that he opened Jenkins Marine cc with his former secretary Sally Bronner, whom he married following the death of his wife, and did extremely well as an independent marine surveyor until he hung up his overalls in 1992 at the age of seventy two.

In 1975, having been a long serving member of the UK Institute of Marine Engineers, Dick became a founder member of our Institute and for thirty five years he worked tirelessly for our members, being responsible for a change of our Constitution that allowed qualified Chief Engineers to become Corporate Members. He is the only member of SAIMENA to have served two terms as President and held the post of National Honorary Secretary at the age of ninety.

Dick was truly “larger than life” and made a major contribution to the development of the ship building and ship repair industries in Durban. He also devoted a large part of his life, his free time and his boundless energy to promoting and developing SAIMENA and will be sadly missed by his family and his many friends in the South African Maritime Community. – *Based on a biography published by Ian Lloyd in the Two Oceans Journal some years ago.*

*His time was come; he ran his race;  
We hope he's in a better place. – Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)*

**NAVY NEWS:** SAS AMATOLA remains on an anti-piracy patrol in the Mozambique Channel and the buzz is that she may be relieved by SAS DRAKENSBERG. If so, it makes good sense as she has longer legs and can also carry an Oryx helicopter.

The submarine SAS CHARLOTTE MAXEKE has also been deployed but as is appropriate, to a “destination unknown.” At the same time her sister, SAS QUEEN MODJAJI has been seen popping in and out of Simon’s Town harbour and up and down at sea. This severely questions the impression many seem to have about the submarines that “cannot go to sea or dive!” Happily it makes the static “Museum Submarine” ASSEGAI even more in demand for official visitors including another school group from Limpopo province and two from Namibia.

The Type 42 Destroyer HMS EDINBURGH from the United Kingdom will be in Simon’s Town from 7-16 September during which time it is hoped to have a wreath-laying at the British graves in Dido Valley Cemetery. In September three German vessels will be spending time in port here (5-12 Sept and 23 -27 Sept), and in mid-October we will host two US Navy ships.

Simon’s Town will be holding the Simon’s Town Festival over the weekend 23 – 25 Sep and celebrating Heritage Day. The Naval Museum and SAS ASSEGAI will be part of the main attraction, with the Naval Band performing on Jubilee Square on the Friday evening. - *S A Naval Officers’ Association – Spindrift/Spunyarn.*

*"24 hours in a day, 24 beers in a case. Coincidence? I think not." - H. L. Mencken*

**S A AGULHAS II :** The new South African Polar Research and supply vessel was officially christened and named S A AGULHAS II in Rauma, Finland, at the end of July by the Director-General of the Department of Environmental Affairs, Ms. Nosipho Ngcaba. – *Maritime Southern Africa – July/August 2011*

*"Without question, the greatest invention in the history of mankind is beer. Oh, I grant you that the wheel was also a fine invention, but the wheel does not go nearly as well with pizza." - Dave Barry*



OPS 204 – THE SECOND HIGH SPEED ALUMINIUM CREW BOAT BUILT IN SIMON'S TOWN DOCKYARD BY KND FOR NIGERIAN OWNERS. - PHOTO : R ADM(JG) A.G. SÖDERLUND SAN (RETD).

*Two Irishmen are hammering floorboards down in a house. Paddy picks up a nail, realises it's upside down & throws it away. He carries on doing this until Murphy says, "Why are you throwing them away?" "Because they're upside down," replies Paddy. "You daft so-and-so," says Murphy, "save 'em for the ceiling!"*

**A BLAST FROM THE PAST :** Mozambican ports as Dick Jenkins would have known them.



THE PORT OF BEIRA WITH THE FARRELL LINES MOTOR VESSEL *CITY OF NEW YORK*. (9872 GRT, BUILT IN 1930) ANCHORED IN THE ROADSTEAD.



THE HARBOUR AT LOURENCO MARQUES SEEN FROM THE AIR. THE WHITE VESSEL IS THE PORTUGUESE NAVAL SURVEY SHIP *ALMIRANTE LACERDA*, FORMERLY THE *BANGOR* CLASS MINESWEEPER *HMS CARAQUET* AND THE TWO FUNNELED TUG IN THE BASIN IS *MAGUL*, FORMERLY *T.E. FULLER* OF S A R & H.

*My mate's missus left him last Thursday. She said she was going out for a pint of milk and never come back!*

*I asked him how he was coping and he said, "Not bad, I've been using that powdered stuff."*