



Vale
John Reginald Lorking
“Sea Dog”

16th October 1932 - 7th January 2017

I was wondering how the description “Sea Dog” came to be applied to the late John Lorking until I read the back page of the Service Sheet distributed at John’s graveside service on Saturday, 7th January 2017. It is a term applied to a seasoned mariner and I am sure that as you read the following Eulogy you will all agree that it is a fitting description for a man who loved the sea.

The service was conducted by Tim Sheridan who, in his words of welcome said that “he was honoured to conduct this service for the family as I went to school with John’s kids, with Chilli being in the same class plus John being a regular face at the League’s Club, (particularly during happy hours), where I managed for some ten years.

“We gather to comfort each other in our grief and to honour the life John led. A life that was full of hope, happiness, sadness, laughter and love - through good times as well as bad. This is the way we will always remember John. A life that was taken away before he was ready, even though John was 84 years of age, he was very active and enjoyed his daily routine and was enjoying holidays with his children when his unexpected tragedy struck him.

Our thoughts are with his family today - especially Brett and Debbie, Kelly and Pete, Chilli, Lambchop and John and his long term companion Pat, who will miss John very much, as we all will.

(continued overleaf)

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John Reginald Lorking - continued

As John spent his lifetime on or around the seas, it is appropriate that we all gather here today to assist John in crossing the Bar for the very last time”.

Music for the service was, as can be expected, nautically based - ‘Sailing’ sung by Rod Stewart; ‘Pull for the Shore’ and ‘A Pirate looks at forty’ sung by Jimmy Buffett.

John’s daughter, Dr. Kellie Pendoley PhD, then read the following Eulogy:- “John Reginald Lorking was born on Vancouver Island, Canada, to his Australian father John (Jum) Reginald Lorking and South African mother, Elaine W. Utting. Dad came to Australia with his parents aboard the ship, the ‘Rabaul’”.

The family moved to Norfolk Island in 1948 where, 26 years earlier, his father Jum had served a 3 year contract with the Pacific Cable Board. Dad joined the Merchant Marine in 1950 signing on to his first ship, the “Kanimbla”. Over the years, he came back to Norfolk as a Merchant Seaman aboard ships of the Burns Philp line which serviced the Pacific Islands. Dad loved the ocean and he continued to work on it after he returned permanently to Norfolk in 1965.

His contributions to the maritime industry of Norfolk Island spans over 5 decades; working as a fisherman, Fish Factory Manager, in the lighterage and on the Tanker. Like his father before him, his passion was fishing and he was an active member of the Norfolk Island Fishing Club, a foundation member of the Norfolk Island Consultative Committee and his intimate knowledge of the waters around Norfolk provided the basis for the boundaries of the Domestic Fishing box as we know it today.

His 41 years in the lighterage service ended on his terms, with a quiet phone call to the Lighterage Manager after unloading his last ship in 2009. His knowledge and skills in both shipping and seamanship were recognised with his appointment as the island’s Tidewaiter and for 20 years he was responsible for assessing the sea conditions and making the final call on if, when and where the ship could be unloaded. His sense of responsibility never left him and he continued to monitor and critically appraise the performance of the lighterage boys, from a distance, for years after he retired. His seamanship was also recognised by his appointment as the Harbour Master, responsible for navigation and off loading of the oil tankers in Ball Bay, a role he delighted in, particularly with new Tanker Captains nervous about entering the bay.

As is common on Norfolk he was a busy man, working several jobs at a time. In the 1970s he imported the first commercial carpet cleaning machine

to Norfolk and in doing so found a new niche. His honesty and extreme discretion meant home owners and businesses alike trusted him completely and there are a few dwellings on Norfolk that have not felt the “John Lorking Carpet Cleaning” touch over the years.

He collected wives like he collected paintings of ships, marrying Wendy in 1956, Betty in 1972 and Judith in 1997. He was also engaged to Helen (Georgie) when she died in 1968. In recent years his close friend, Pat, provided mutual companionship and support.

While he would never let on to us, he was very proud of his children; the twins, Brett and Kellie, Coral, Chilli and Lambchop.

You could set your watch by Dad’s daily schedule, comprising morning chores around the house and running errands. The afternoon was spent at Emily Bay, in his “spot” at the boat ramp with a book and catching up with the beach crew. The Mooloolabah Speedos he was so well known for marked him as a true icon of the local beach culture. His afternoon routine saw him feeding his beloved chooks, a shower and spiff up in his dress denim shorts and the dash to the Leagues that conveniently coincided with Happy Hour and the arrival of his drinking buddies. He rarely stayed longer than the hour, enough time to catch up on the daily gossip, solve a few world problems and, argue the finer details of splicing a cargo net.

His wardrobe was a constant source of wonder. How could one human own so many pairs of denim shorts. They came in in 2 styles, short and long. Short for everyday wear with a regular pair of flip flops, long for evening wear at the Leagues Club with his “good” flip flops. He did own a pair of long pants, dress shirt and shoes but these only came out for weddings and funerals.

He loved his home ‘Sarita’, the house his father built. He could oversee and manage the entire property from his Captain’s Chair that was strategically placed in the lounge room. Anybody daring to plant their backside on the Sacred Seat were immediately and unceremoniously ejected. He spent hours quietly sitting in the chair gazing at the mountain until well after dusk or reading one of the pile of novels from the local library.

Dad was incredibly observant and nothing in this world escaped close scrutiny. He had a razor-sharp mind that questioned everything, driving us mad with the questions: how, why, when, where, what..... His brain would grab an idea and mentally dissect it, analyse it and generally thrash it until it lay bleeding

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**When driving... be considerate
SLOW DOWN FOR HORSES!**

John Reginald Lorking - continued

and beaten on the ground. Hearing the words, over breakfast, "hey I have been thinking...." was enough to strike fear into one's heart. There were few activities on the island that escaped his critical scrutiny. At 80 years, old he took on the challenge of the Internet and soon became the 'King of Skype'. He gleefully took to mobile phones in his 70s and in his 84th year he finally conquered a smart phone.

Dad was known by many names; John, Johnno, Lork, Lorks, Sea Dog, Sea Doggy. Doggy. His seamanship skills were widely recognised and highly valued; as a teacher, role model and a mentor to generations of young men on Norfolk. He was an inspiration to all those who knew and worked with him in his many roles in the Norfolk Island community. He was a larger than life figure and a true Son of Norfolk Island. His legacy will live on in our hearts and minds and in the maritime history of Norfolk Island.

~ : ~

Tim Sheridan then read the following message that had been received from Miriam Harrison (Christian Bailey):- "My association with John spans at least four decades, from the 70's when he used to pick Lambchops up after school in the "John Lorking Carpet Cleaning mobile". Being Lambchops friend, I would often tag along.

John thought the world of Lambchops. They had a great relationship with the same pragmatic, no nonsense views on life.

He was a central figure in the Lorking household, perched up there in his house in JE Road which was decked out in marine and various other paraphernalia. He lived there for as long as I can remember. He usually had a drink or smoke in hand, an opinion on current events, and always a sly bit of gossip up his sleeve. He loved his family and remained cool, calm and collected in the mayhem when they were all home!

I am guessing John would have been very loyal to those he associated with through his many years of unloading the ship, his carpet cleaning business and Leagues Club mates.

I think John liked to consider himself a lady's man and always seemed to have success in that area. After sadly losing previous wives, there always seemed to be another woman waiting in the pipeline. Perhaps it was his iconic budgie smugglers that he regularly donned on Emily Bay that did it.

Lambchops told me in recent years that he assured "everything was working perfectly fine down there".

A cringe worthy thought for my friends 80+ year old father - but probably true.

I saw John only a fortnight ago. He had his short denim shorts on, protruding heavily sun-tanned elderly skinny legs, a sleeveless shirt, and an ear ring in his left ear and he had been relishing in the company of Lambchops, John and Chilli over the Christmas period. To be honest he looked a picture of health and looked no different to 40 years ago.

He will be sadly missed. He's like a figure that has been around forever and it will be weird turning up at the house and not hearing "Aaah it's Merry Legs.... Lambchops, Miriam is here".

RIP John Lorking."

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Heartfelt Thank You

The Lorking family would like to sincerely thank the wonderful community of Norfolk;

the ambulance crew, the amazing doctor, nurses and blood donors; those special sullen who gave and offered their never ending support, love, food, meals, flowers, accommodation; the sexton; coffin maker; staff at NI radio; the grave diggers; the lovely ladies at dar usual place and decorators of dar mound (unforgettable); the pall bearers, hearse driver and police; the minister and all those who contributed to dad's beautiful funeral service; the organisers and contributors to dad's final farewell at the leagues and anybody we may have forgotten.

You have helped us more than you will ever know to get through this very sad time, and we will be forever grateful to yorlie.

~ : ~

Thank You

I would like to thank everyone for your kind thoughts, love, support and prayers for me, on the loss of my dearest John. Your kindness is greatly appreciated.

With gratitude, I love you all."

Pat Conaghan.



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