Vale

Kirsti Jenkins-Smith

12th August 1936 – 30th August 2025

Shakespeare said, *"All the world's a stage and all the men and women are but players. Though a man may play several parts."*

Kirsti was born on 12th August 1936 in Narvik, Northern Norway. She was the second daughter of Kirstin and Arild Johnsen. Kirsti grew up in occupied Norway during World War II. She said that when the Germans turned up and said they were here to protect them from the British. However the British then bombed them to save them from the Germans.

She was sent to the country in the summer months to spend time with the Sami (Laplanders), where she helped to herd reindeer on the Sami's treks. The food was also a lot better than what was available to the people stuck in town.

During her later school years, after the war, she and her friends would spend time down at the harbour exploring ships that had been refloated after the end of World War II. This ignited her interest in seafaring.

When she left school, she enrolled in radio school in Trondheim and trained as a ship's radio operator. Female radio operators were quite unusual at the time and almost unheard of in England. So, she was making her own path from quite early on. She went to sea working as a radio operator on iron ore carriers and oil tankers, which is where she met her first husband, Joe Jenkins who was from Norfolk Island.

When Kirsti and Joe got engaged, she realised that it was no good telling her mother that she was marrying a Norfolk islander as her mother would have no idea where that was, so Kirsti said she was marrying an Australian. Her mother was unsure what an Australian was, so she looked up Australia in the encyclopedia and saw a picture of an aboriginal with a bone through his nose…. She cried.

Kirsti and Joe were married on 19th September 1959 on Norfolk. Kirsti and her mother spent the

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morning of the wedding trying to get ants out of the wedding cake. This was a new experience for them as they didn't have ants like those in Northern Norway.

After their wedding they returned to sea, working on several ships until November 1960 when her eldest son John was born in Norway. The nurse at the hospital commented that he was a funny colour. Kirsti replied, "you should see his father."

In 1963 they returned to Norfolk to live permanently. Upon her move to Norfolk, she suffered a culture shock, in that moving from a Europe where everything was electric and modern, to a life with a wood fire stove and kerosene lamps. She also had a wonderful opportunity to become more conversant with much more insect life, than which she was previously familiar with from Northern Norway. Like big hairy spiders, cockroaches, flies etc. In October 1964, her second son Arne was born. Life went on and in November 1967, her daughter Ruth arrived on the scene.

In 1973, she started working in the library, where she was instrumental in the design of the new library in New Cascade Road, following the fire in the old Kingston Library.

Kirsti was fearless and not afraid to meet things head on. Arne remembers she went up to the school and took on John Snelling about spelling. He had given him a list of words to learn and some of them were spelt wrong. Arne was moved out of that class soon after.

She was always looking to improve herself and she did a correspondence course in bookkeeping.

In February 1979, Joe passed away. After this, Kirsti got a full-time job in Immigration at Kingston. This was a time Kirsti truly loved - working with the girls in Admin. Eventually, it was time to move on, so she took up a job working for Rex Barrett in the office and then later Cathy O'Sullivan before ending up working back at the library part time.

In December 1980, she married Jim Smith, a communications engineer from the UK. This began a very adventurous part of her life.

Jim was a Ham Radio operator and Kirsti had already started to rekindle her interest in radio when they met. Jim and Kirsti subsequently travelled the world to many out of the way places on Ham Radio expeditions. After trips to Western Samoa and Sarawak in the early 1980's, they decided to undertake a major expedition to Heard Island, an uninhabited dot in the Antarctic Ocean. This turned out to be a much bigger adventure than they were expecting, as the ship they had chartered, the 'Cheynes II' had first run aground at Kerguelen Islands and had to be refloated. It then was running very low on fuel on their way home from Heard Island and wound up having to be sailed across The Roaring 40's by improvising sails out of tarps and tents. This stands as a World Record as the longest voyage sailed by a motor vessel.

This experience put them both in good stead for their following expeditions which included Howland Island, Murmansk, Bhutan, Willis Island, Svalbard and several other much more civilised locations.

Kirsti wrote two books about their adventures. The first, 'Heard Island Odyssey' is about their Antarctic saga. A few years later, 'QRV – A Dxer's Life For Me' was written about their later trips.

After Jim passed away, Kirsti withdrew from the Ham Radio world. She continued a quiet life on Norfolk Island being a grandmother and great grandmother.

Seafarer, adventurer, author, mother. Kirsti, you've played more than your fair share of parts, but you ignored the last chapter as set out by the Bard and you chose your own path.

You certainly proved the expression, "living a life well lived".

A life well lived is a legacy of joy, of pride and pleasure.

A living, lasting memory our grateful hearts will treasure.

Thank You

The family would sincerely like to thank the following people.

The Ambulance team, Dr Lin, Dr Russell, and the hospital staff, the Sexton Shane and the grave diggers, Tardy for driving Kirsti on her last run down town, the police for the escort, the wreath makers, all the people who donated flowers and greenery, the ushers, Toni at Photopress for the printing, the coffin makers, Daivid Buffett for taking the service and for his guidance and support, Trent Christian for his voice, all those who dropped groceries and food off and offered support during this time. A special mention to Marj Christian, for all her help, and support over the years.

If we have missed anyone, please accept our sincerest thanks.
