

# Captain Nic Campbell

Captain Nic Campbell was a Master Mariner. His father Angus was a Master Mariner as is his brother, so it can rightly be said that Nic came from a seafaring family.

I am privileged to be here this morning on behalf of the N.Z. Company of Master Mariners to pay tribute to a friend, colleague and fellow Master Mariner.

Nic was born in Whanganui and spent his young days there before moving to live in Wellington.

He recalled, that later in life, and before the decline of coastal shipping, he sometimes returned as a seaman, to the then coastal port of Whanganui. He was one the last of a dying breed of mariners who were able to reminisce about going up river beyond Castlecliff to load and discharge cargo at the Whanganui Town Wharf.

Beginning his career at sea when he was sixteen years of age he sailed on coastal and deep sea vessels progressively gaining in both experience and qualifications. Eventually he went on to gain a Masters Certificate of Competency, became approved to command his own vessels and therefore entitled to be addressed as Captain.

He was proud of having been at sea and often reflected on his retained ability to be able to navigate a ship from Wellington to any port in the world with the aid of a sextant and without the need of the infinite number of electronic devices available on a ship's bridge today.

Nic's experience and fund of knowledge continued to expand when, in 1986, with a young family to raise, he came ashore.

Among the major organizations he worked for, were the NZ Railways, the Marine Division of the Ministry of Transport and the Wellington Harbour Board. His employment ashore never really took him far from the sea.

Importantly, included in his achievements Nic was also a writer, essayist, novelist, editor, publisher, historian and an engaging teller of stories of a nautical flavour. Excerpts of his life history, accounts and knowledge given by his many friends, all lie within the pages of the book *Ramblings with Old Nic*. This was the title one of the books he wrote, copies of which were often generously given to his friends and were duly autographed with a meaningful personal comment.

We came to know Nic when he joined the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand Company of Master Mariners. Qualification for membership of this private institution is to hold a Masters Certificate. Nic made an application to join and was duly welcomed as a member.

The diminishment of the New Zealand domiciled shipping industry is now a matter of history and with the dwindling number of members on its roll, the Company sought to encourage membership interest by reviving a house magazine which had previously fallen by the wayside. Its reintroduction was designed to gain attention, to stimulate and to inform its members on maritime matters.

In late 2007, after a faltering start, the magazine "On Deck" was reborn. However it was not until 2010 that it really sprang into life when the editorship was taken over by Nic. With two books already published under his name this challenge was an easy one for Nic. He was well acquainted with printers and publishers, their costs, pricing, the value of ISBN numbers and the advantages to be gained in widespread delivery.

Rather than just a Company journal Nic turned "On Deck" into a veritable medley of articles of history, geography, current affairs, sea shanties and poetry. It had a wide distribution which included fraternal organizations overseas. No matter who picked it up, it gained recognition and applause for its readability by

a world-wide audience. By adapting the publication for electronic mailing he regularly received many comments of encouragement. He was formally required to give a copy to the National Library which gave him a sense that it had endurance. A copy went to the Patron of the Company, the Governor-General, so no doubt, from time to time its colourful cover graced the coffee table at Government House.

By nature Nic was modest but a glint of satisfaction was detected when he was offered the idea that the Governor-General could well be currently reading what he had written. Without question the success of the publication was as a result of Nic's determination, wisdom and enthusiasm for making a success of the task at hand.

Sadly in 2018 with Nic's health deteriorating and well over 30 editions produced, publication of "On Deck" ceased. It was the end of an era. Nic, despite this change, was however able to continue to attend monthly meetings and enjoy the shared camaraderie of these gatherings.

Following due consideration by the Master and Executive Council of the Company, it was decided that as a mark of respect and appreciation of the extraordinary service given to the Company by him, Nic was to be awarded a Certificate of Life Membership.

This accolade was presented to Nic by the Branch Warden at a lunch meeting held a month later in August.

That Nic "crossed the bar" last week is an immeasurable loss to Colleen and the family and it leaves a wide gap in the membership of Master Mariners. In closing, here is the first verse of a poem written for mariners by Richard John Scarr.

Nic would have known and doubtlessly liked it.

No more a Watch to stand, Old Sailor  
You are outward bound on an ebbing tide.  
Eight Bells has rung, and last Watch done.  
Now a new berth waits you on the other side.

**Nic was a good friend to us all – May he Rest in Peace**



**Nic's coffin, covered with the Red Ensign, leaves to the skirl of pipes**

**12 April 2021**