

## *Obituary*

# **Captain John Campbell MBE MNI**

The North of Scotland Branch is saddened to advise the passing of Captain John Campbell MBE on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024, He was a founding member of the local branch and would never hesitate to offer advice and support to fellow seafarers, particularly younger up and coming ones

Born in 1935 in Caithness in the north of Scotland, his thoughts turned to the sea in his teenage years stoked by his love of his favourite book Treasure Island. At 17, John commenced his apprenticeship at Leith Nautical College, embarking on a maritime voyage that would define his life.

John's seafaring career took him to distant lands, from Stromness to Western Samoa, navigating the world's oceans with skill and expertise. His career reached new heights as he became the master onboard Texaco super tankers, at the time some of the biggest ships in the world.

Each journey was an adventure, and he had many near-death experiences including having to doggy-paddle for his life in Singapore harbour and gaining the distinction of being the only Captain ever to lose his ship in dry-dock. John's exploits also included sailing his tanker up the Mekong Delta during the Vietnam War, where a mine exploded after hitting his ship's anchor chain, thus earning him the unlikely title of being a "Nam Vet!"

John was selected to feature in a Texaco television commercial alongside the well-known American comedian Bob Hope. The advert captured some witty repartee between the master of the sea and the mater of showbusiness. John relished his fleeting moment of fame, and Bob Hope humorously remarked, "Who's this wise guy? Texaco had better get him back to the sea; he's a contender for my show!"

During his time at sea John was both liked and respected as a skipper, he took care of his crew, often having to act as navigator, doctor and social worker.

In 1979 at the start of the North Sea oil boom, he came ashore to work as Texaco's Safety superintendent. This complex role was made even more challenging due to emergencies such as Piper Alpha and the Braer oil tanker disaster. His hard work and expertise led to the development of legislation and improved safety standards for oil production in the North Sea. His service to safety in the North Sea saw him recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 1993, with an MBE.



Upon retiring from Texaco in 1995, he continued working as an offshore safety consultant with his own company until the early 2000s.

In retirement John kept up with his maritime interests by being a member of the Nautical Institute and Honourable Company of Master Mariners, always marking Remembrance Day by laying a wreath on behalf of the Merchant Navy to honour those who lost their lives during conflict.

Captain John made friends wherever he went and was always on the lookout for people from Caithness and the Northern Isles and when onshore he was an active member of the Caithness Orkney and Shetland Association where he had many friends. One role he took on here was to visit anyone in hospital who had come down to Aberdeen from the north and who may need a friendly face or a helping hand.

John's commitment to service extended beyond his family and career. His involvement in charitable endeavours, including the Lions Club and the British Heart Foundation, showed his generous spirit.

Over the years John helped raise hundreds of thousands of pounds for charity, he also managed to combine his voluntary efforts and his interest in football by working for his home football team Aberdeen at their ground, Pittodrie on match days handing out team sheets and showing guests to their seats.

His good humour, cheery smile and people skills made him stand out as a character everyone remembered and he will be sorely missed by all.

**Duncan Cursiter MNI & James Buchan AFNI**