

By Barry Allison

This is the story of one of the Squadron's most colourful Members—Bruce Fulton McFarlane AM who joined the Squadron on the 8 May 1968. I had the pleasure of interviewing Bruce recently in one of the most incredible offices and Board Rooms in the State which overlooks the inner basin of Port Adelaide and I envied Bruce's place of work.



BRUCE was born in 1945 in Adelaide, spent his early years at Clare, and later returned to Adelaide to complete his secondary studies at Prince Alfred College. He studied accountancy and economics for a short period, and then commenced his first job with Farmers Union before becoming a jackaroo in the South East. Then, at 19 years of age, he joined the Maughan Thiem Motor Company as a junior truck salesman and learnt about all of the tricks of the trade while selling heavy trucks to the many buyers of the time.

In 1971 when Bruce was 25 years of age, he was given the opportunity to be the licensee and publican of the Somerset Hotel in Pulteney Street in Adelaide, which is sadly now extinct. After four exciting years of learning the ropes of running a hotel, Bruce decided to return to the cut and thrust of the motor industry, and in 1974 took on the role of Sales Manager back at Maughan Thiem Motor Company. After much hard work and many successful business transactions, he became Managing Director of the company in 1984, and finally purchased the company as sole owner in 1990.

Meanwhile, Bruce's sailing life began way back in the mid-1960s when asked to crew on Ion Ullett's *Spindrift* which was a 28 ft Van de Stadt designed Black Soo and had been owned by Ion and Margaret Ullett for several years. He also sailed on *Cooroyba*, one of the wettest boats he has sailed on, and the two-masted schooner *Achernar* with the Ulletts until he relinquished his sailing activities to further his career at the Maughan Thiem Motor Company.

He crewed for the Ulletts in several Adelaide to Port Lincoln races in *Spindrift*, as well as many inshore races. Ion and Margaret and their three young daughters would always set off on Christmas morning bound for a month's cruising in the Kangaroo Island northern waters. In company would be the Taylors on *Gip*, the Judells on *Sarina*, the Lasts on *Kareelah* and Austin Gibson would also motor south with *Wylo*. Bruce remembers well the unique method of maintaining adequate clean nappies for the eight-week-old Ullett daughter – attaching a lanyard to the soiled nappy and tossing it overboard to trail astern for several miles.

Another memorable time was, when sheltering in Snug Cove, the local fisherman Doug Hart would supply yachts with crayfish. In those days, crayfish were plentiful along the north coast of the island, and Doug supplied 26 crays over the one-week period – they still had six crays at the end of their cruise. A feature of these cruises was the tremendous effort put in by the lady crew members in preparing and presenting afternoon teas. Of course, the male members would have no difficulty in selecting the most suitable wines to consume.

His sailing involvement was often interrupted with business negotiations, and in 2002 he purchased City Mazda. He sold Maughan Thiem Motors and City Mazda in 2004 to two loyal employees. His other business interests have included property development, owning a supermarket, co-ordinating a houseboat business at Morgan and owning a laundromat.

Bruce is currently the licensee of the British Hotel in Port Adelaide, and has been very passionate about the development of the Port Adelaide area. At the request of the Port Adelaide Enfield Council, he and a colleague established Lipson Wharf Pty Ltd and purchased the main wharf on McLaren Parade. In 1996 the large sheds Numbers 2 and 3 on this wharf were demolished, and the land has since been developed for housing on the wharf. Over the last 20 years or so Bruce has put in many hours, and much effort and money, on revitalising the Port area. He was a previous member of the Port Adelaide Renewal Steering Committee and several other committees working with the Port Adelaide Enfield Council.

Bruce's many interests over the years have included support for the Port Adelaide Football Club, and he has been a board member and chairman of the Magpies Football Club. He is also an inaugural member of the Power Chairman's Club, and was granted Life Membership in 2014. He has been a sponsor and benefactor since 1974, and was instrumental in ensuring that Port Adelaide survived in the SANFL during the 2000s, providing a foundation for the eventual One Club merger in 2011.



Spindrift Easter 1972

His busy life includes membership of the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society. He joined the Society in 1989 as a councillor and a member of the Motor Committee, and later became Chairman of the Commerce Committee and board member for 17 years followed by a term as Chairman and Trustee. He currently serves on the Foundation's Committee and is Patron of the Education Foundation. He is also a Life Member of the Motor Trade Association, a past President and Life Member of the Automotive Exhibitors Association, and served two 3-year terms as an assessor for the District and Magistrates Courts. He was a very active supporter of many Squadron functions, and was on the Board of RSAYS Limited for four years. He was also on the Board of Management at the Cruising Yacht Club for four to five years. His long association with the business world and his roles with the Port Adelaide community were recognised in the 2021 Australia Day Honours when he was awarded a well-deserved Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

Bruce has been a very keen power-boat owner and initially owned a 16 ft Shark Cat, followed by a 28 ft Bertram *Promises*, *Promises* which was moored at the CYC. He later bought a Randall 40 named *Avanti* from Dean Smoker at the CYC and many cruises were enjoyed by the family. More recently his main boating interest is in maintaining and running his beautiful 53 ft Dyna hull *Yarramarra* which is moored at the Squadron. *Yarramarra* at 24 tonnes was purchased in Queensland and trucked to Adelaide on a large low-loader. The trucking company took three attempts to load and transport such a large vessel down south. The third attempt from Gladstone took five days, and a very relieved truck driver was more than happy to see her off-loaded at Theodore's boatyard on the Port River where she was completely renovated and a new canopy fitted. Her twin Detroit diesels were serviced and she then became a great vessel



Yarramarra

to cruise the waters of Kangaroo Island and Port Lincoln. He well remembers cruising around the Sir Joseph Banks Group in company with *Tasman Isle* and her crew of Kevin Philips, Bruce Frame and John Rischbieth.

Sadly, Bruce's beloved wife, Valerie, died in June 2019, and Bruce donated to the Foundation for a gazebo and garden to be installed on the northern bank in her memory. He now enjoys his two daughters and three grandchildren – two boys and a girl. We wish Bruce many more years of happy cruising, and a slowdown of his many business activities.

