

By Roger Holden

Dogs, cats and a lamb that knows how to use a VHF Radio ... no yacht should go to sea without them.



Charles Rigg from *The Advertiser* 21 July 2021

THERE was more than just a hint of Errol Flynn about the younger Charles Rigg. Good-looking, adventurer, motorcycle racer on the Isle of Man circuits, rascal, a man’s man with adoring girls at his side. Just like Flynn. Except Charles was the real deal. He didn’t need confected Hollywood hype to carry him through.

Flynn abandoned Tasmania for America. Charles aimed higher. He abandoned the UK for South Australia. He and a mate came out on a whim, Charles went kangaroo shooting to earn a living, took up sailing, settled in Port Lincoln, won the Adelaide Port Lincoln race within three years of arrival, and became an enormously welcome Member of the Squadron. His skill as a diesel mechanic was legendary. He opened a service station and mechanic’s shop in Port Lincoln, and set up a yacht charter business there.

The best was yet to come. He met the delightfully zany Julie Fisher who could match his whims and love for sailing, and turn his mind and imagination at will. Well almost.

On land, they set up a farm at Koppio where the animals were too precious to process. There was Primrose the pig who grew from an adorable little creature into such a huge and pampered hulk that she wasn’t allowed into the house anymore to have her skin massaged daily with baby oil. There were Billy and Nanny the goats who dropped into the kitchen to meet the dinner guests and enjoy the leftover curries and nibbles.

In the fields there were sheep in nappies – exotic creatures who needed their coloured and valuable fleeces protected from the staining that dags can bring.

At sea, as well as at home, there were Ashka the German Shepherd and Pouschka the cat, perfectly adapted to life afloat, and ever respectful when orphan lambs joined them for bottle-fed life support as *Quasar* cruised the Gulfs and Kangaroo Island.

And who could forget Norton from Moreton, that young wild cormorant from Reevesby Island who for several years would fly out to greet *Quasar* when she arrived in Moreton Bay, settle upon the rail, or even the heads of crew, and never disgrace herself in the disgusting manner of her ilk?

Charles had a younger brother, Michael, an RAF jet-fighter pilot who was once rescued by a helicopter after his Lightning flamed out in the South China Sea. After retiring from a later career as a Cathay Pacific pilot, Michael took up racing old sports cars at the famous Brands Hatch circuit in the UK and bought a Tiger Moth. Not to be outdone, Charles bought an Ultralight ... and pranged her into a barbed wire fence while landing near Port Lincoln on his maiden flight. To be fair, he insisted the former owner was at the controls. The brothers Rigg were heroes to each other, separated by enormous distance but bonded by an uncanny spirit of adventure, sense of humour and sheer joy of life.

Charles died at Tumby Bay in July this year. He was 86. Our mate Charles. Everybody’s mate. Marion and I loved him because we shared a precious bond. We knew that boats were not just there for racing, cruising or status. They were there to sustain a happy life itself.

The following is an edited version of my eulogy given at his funeral:

Oh Charles, over all the years of our hilarious and generous friendship, we could always rely upon you to tell us how to vote, what to drink and how we must never discuss literature unless we were prepared to acknowledge Steinbeck as the world’s greatest writer.

Now you tell us you’ve decided to leave us.

You win. Please stay. We accept all your terms ... anything, as long as the fun times with you and Julie can carry on. Let loose the lines on Quasar, drop the hook in Spalding Cove, lash up a yukky saucepan of honey curry sausages and drink some of that disgusting watered- down port you insisted upon as a guaranteed elixir of youth.

Mind you, we may have to draw the line if you expect us to listen to all your lefty ABC radio friends who stimulated your early morning hours while the rest of us tried to sleep off your hospitality from the night before.

Marion and I met Charles sometime in the late 1970s. Port Lincoln and its amazing characters were our second home when we sailed in once or twice a year on various Marionettes with our two young children aboard. There was Wilson Hissey, of course, Jack Randall, Sheila and Phil Roe, Esterlita and Anton Lukin, Nan and Dion Manthorpe, the Hoppings and Stan Morgan. And there was exuberant Charles, his successful yacht racing days behind him ... larger than a welcoming life could be, soon to be trying out a living as a yacht charter skipper aboard Quasar.

Gosh the things we did together, the places, the shared anchorages, the madcap shared experiences.

Once while sheltering from a northerly under Cape Catastrophe Rudy, an orphan lamb aboard Quasar, chewed through the wiring of a VHF handset and somehow managed to link up with Adelaide Radio’s radio telephone system before we knew what was happening. A seagoing lamb that knew how to use a VHF radio? Surely every yacht should have one?

Oh, and I must tell you of the day Marion and I became new owners of Quasar ...

We were both anchored at Stickney Island in the Banks Group one morning when our son Rick called down from our cockpit, “Hey dad, Charlie has gone ashore and Quasar is dragging.” “Nonsense,” I said. Everyone knows Charles has the world’s greatest anchor and anyway, he never drags, because he told us so.

Ten minutes later, Rick called down again, “Dad, Quasar has dragged. You’d better come quickly.” Sure enough, Quasar was halfway to Spilsby Island and moving at quite a pace ... so we up anchored, chased her down and brought her back to safety. Meanwhile, an extremely anxious



Billy drops in for curry leftovers

Charles watched the drama helplessly from the beach, dressed just in shorts and seaboots which he wore to protect himself from snakes as he took his morning run around the island.

Now here is the curious part. We told Charles that under British maritime salvage law we were now the legal owners of Quasar by virtue of saving the vessel from certain disaster, but that we were generously prepared to allow him to sail her at our pleasure and discretion. Now, remember: we were anchored at an isolated island with no-one within miles. We told no-one of the incident and you can bet with certainty that Charles would not have done so either. Yet a week later when we walked into the Port Lincoln Yacht Club with Charles, the cry went up, “Well done, Marion and Roger! How are you enjoying your new boat?”

Charles turned red and was certainly not at all amused ...

Charles? We loved you for your friendship, for your gentility, for your companionship. You brought amazing Julie into our lives, you gave us



Julie welcomes aboard Norton from Moreton

the pleasure of meeting your late mother and father in Adelaide and in the UK. Through you we spent a brief time with your sister Helen and family on the Wirral in Britain, and shared some wonderful moments with your brother Michael and his family when they came to Adelaide.

To remember the fun times today is not meant to diminish memories or affection for the warm and intelligent friend that you were but to help us carry the burden of our loss.

Great friend, great sailor, great companion....we salute you and say goodbye.

Footnote: Sadly, younger brother Michael, who was known to quite a few Squadron Members, died from prostate cancer in the UK on 24 October, just four months after Charles was buried. Michael had insisted that Charles not be told of his own terminal condition to spare his elder brother grief in his final days.



IN TRANQUIL WATERS



Frederick Gwynne Townsend
6 October 1935 – 20 June 2021

FRED was born in Port Adelaide and lived there all his life. As a young boy he had a neighbour named Jean who left the area as a teenager, only to meet up with Fred later at a local dance. They eventually married in 1957 and had three children, John, Mark and Cindy, and continued to live in the area. As a family they visited Coffin Bay for Christmas each year, towing their boat and enjoying fishing around the Bay. Fred helped build his grandfather’s 20 foot fishing boat in a shed at home, which later became Fred’s.

Fred attended Pennington Primary School and later Le Fevre Boys Technical High School. At sixteen- years-old he left school to work at R T Searles Boatyard where he worked with Brian Mellows and did his National Service while working there. Boatbuilding became Fred’s livelihood. He worked on Chappie Charlesworth’s boat, *Teriki*, and it was Chappie who encouraged Fred to apply to work at RSAYS. There he worked as a boatbuilder and repairer until his retirement and enjoyed doing surveys on boats, including Ion Ullett’s *Fine Romance* and L Moore’s *Cooralea*, just two of many boats. Fred was well respected at the Squadron and retired in 2000, when he was presented with a gift in the company of his family at a retirement lunch. His boys particularly remember playing around the yards as children.

Fred was also a member of the Port Adelaide City Band, playing the cornet. He often played the Last Post at local Anzac Day services. As an avid Rotarian he became a Life Member of Port Adelaide Rotary Club. Golf was another love, and he had two holes-in-one in his golf career as a member of North Haven and then Grange Golf Clubs.

Fred is survived by Jean, his wife of more than 60 years, his three children, six grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

