

General Information

OBITUARY



ADAM KERR

It was with great sadness that the Directing Committee of the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB), announced the death of Adam J. KERR (former Director), who passed away in his home in Lamorna (United Kingdom) on 8 August 2016.

Adam Kerr a “chart maker, fisherman and sailor”. This is how he defined himself at the end of his autobiography. To this I would add:... *and a true gentleman of the sea.*

I met Adam for the first time in Genova (Italy) in my office as Director of the Italian Navy Hydrographic Institute (IIM). It was 1988 and he had come to ask for the cooperation of the IIM to support the creation of a Hydrographic School in Trieste (Italy) as part of a project, agreed between IMO and Italy, to establish a Maritime Academy. The hydrographic school was established and has operated for many years thereafter. Adam was, at the time, a brand new Director of the International Hydrographic Bureau, the secretariat of the International hydrographic Organization (IHO), based in Monaco. Listening to him that day I had the immediate impression of having in front of me a dedicated and enthusiastic hydrographer and sound and experienced seaman who had the clear vision that organizations are made up of people who, when inspired and properly guided, achieve great things. Adam was definitely the man to both inspire and to guide.

I was fortunate that only a few years later, in 1992, I was elected as a fellow Director of the IHB alongside Adam and Rear Admiral Christian Andreasen as the President of the Directing Committee in Monaco.

This was the beginning of five years of intense cooperation. It was the period of developing the now well established IHO electronic chart standards, increasing the number of Member States of the IHO, increasing technical cooperation and assistance to developing hydrographic services and strengthening ties with the relevant United Nations Specialized Agencies. Adam worked intensely and helped me greatly.

I admired in particular his efficiency and capacity for work. His desk was always tidy, there were no files piling up waiting to be dispatched. His writing was extremely clear and direct: no doubt about the meaning and the intention. A quality that he had not only inherited from his father, a reputed writer, but also from his long seagoing experience: sailors do not need many words to develop a concept and to get to the point.

Surveying and charting inhospitable waters as he did in British (*claimed*) Antarctica and in the Canadian Arctic made him a very knowledgeable and experienced hydrographer and an expert seaman. Before joining the IHO, he served in the Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS) for thirty years during which time many novel surveying techniques were trialed and some implemented. On his desk at the IHB, was a model of the famous *Dolphin*: a torpedo shaped craft with a snorkel and fitted with an echo sounder. Its purpose was to increase a ship’s survey output by cruising in parallel to the track of its mother survey ship.

General Information



Adam had a clear vision of the advantages of fostering close cooperation between Government Hydrographic Offices, Industry and Academia. He narrates, in his book, how successful was the cooperation of the Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS) with the enterprise CARIS and the University of New Brunswick in the collection and subsequent processing of digital survey data.

Adam also tried to overcome the skepticism and sometimes hostility of Government HOs towards private industry that had been producing electronic charts since the early eighties. In his book, he says *"I was of the opinion that some of the most innovative work was being done by commercial companies such as C-Map and Navionics"*.

When I passed on the sad news of his death to the President of Navionics and to the former owner of C-Map, they wrote:

"We remember Adam as a most brilliant civil servant, one who could see very far - without being drawn into small matters, and a master at using his superior charisma and diplomatic skills to resolve conflicts that looked like unstoppable forest fires.

We also like to celebrate Adam as a great example of how to enjoy life: the party at his home and his curriculum as a boater have always been a great inspiration for us."

In fact, Adam contributed significantly to the social life of the IHB. At IHO Conferences and meetings, we, the three Directors, used to invite the delegates to our homes. I remember that the guests at Adam's receptions, coming from all over the world, deeply appreciated his kindness as well as that of his wife Judith and his sons Andrew and Timothy. A charming family indeed.

I do not want to close these few lines without mentioning that Adam was a fine watercolor painter who was capable of catching the most emotional moments of his life at sea. After he retired from the IHB he used to send watercolor Christmas cards to his many friends and colleagues.



In conclusion, those who had the pleasure to work with and alongside him had the chance to experience a remarkable person. We miss you deeply Adam, have a nice navigation in the eternity's ocean!

*The book: **CHARTING POLAR SEAS**. Author Adam Kerr printed by Amazon in 2016. A genuine and full of adventures autobiography of a sailor, surveyor, boating, and vigilant father of a charming family.*

Giuseppe Angrisano