

OBITUARY

PETER ALLAN

20 November 1943 - 3 November 2015

“Never let the truth get in the way of a good story”. Anyone who knew Peter Allan, Pinmar’s founder who died at his home in Mexico on 3 November at the age of 71, will recognise one of his favourite sayings. Fortunately, in Peter’s case, his story needs no exaggeration to make it interesting.

Born in the East End of London in November 1943, he left school at 15 and joined Esso Petroleum as a trainee deep-sea navigational officer. He soon decided that this early involvement with the marine world did not appeal and thereafter had a series of short-lived jobs culminating in work on a building site painting houses.

He realised there was a shortage of skilled painters and recruited his own team and soon graduated from houses to petrol stations and car parks (both for people whose yachts he would paint many years later).

The business did well and he took his first trip abroad – a holiday in Italy. He enjoyed it so much that, soon after his return, a longer Mediterranean expedition was called for. Leaving his business partner in charge he bought a cheap Aussie motor caravan, headed for the south of France and was soon selling ice cream on the nude beaches of St Tropez.

After a few months, with the UK business in the process of closing down and the Gendarmes showing an interest in his lack of paperwork, he decided it was time to move on again and in early summer 1972 he eventually arrived in Mallorca which would remain his home for more than 40 years.

Needing to support himself, he returned to painting houses and, inevitably it seems now, someone asked him if he wanted to do some work on a yacht. That someone, Terry Cameron, introduced Peter to the Captain of Southern Breeze and soon Peter had a team of dayworkers varnishing the capping rails. Another friend Barry McNamara suggested to Peter that he should go to the Club de Mar in Palma and talk to people about painting work on yachts. Peter duly met David Wynne and Guillermo Cervera of Camper & Nicholsons who would both become very influential in his life and through whom he landed his first small boat to paint. Having very quickly learned to use marine rather than industrial paints, he found regular work on the boats in the Club de Mar and soon met Captain Mike Insull whose 40M C&N yacht he would paint and who would become another lifelong friend.

By 1975 it was clear that yacht painting was his forte and it was therefore time to formalise his fledgling operation and, by compressing the Spanish words for marine paints (Pinturas Marinas), Pinmar was born. By this time Peter was already using Awlgrip and became the importer/distributor for Spain and so that side of the business, which would later become Pinmar Supply, was effectively started at the same time.

Pinmar’s rapid growth over the ensuing 40 years is another story and one the Editor has kindly offered to include in a future issue of the Islander but suffice it to say that it

included nearly losing the business over a disastrous investment in a floating paint shed in Palma (1991) followed rapidly by the very successful expansion into Barcelona and the building with MB92 of the 75M (later 125M) paint shed, fairing and painting the new Spanish royal yacht, and ultimately creating one of the most successful service businesses in the superyacht sector. Peter was responsible for many innovations within his chosen field, and although it seems like an exaggeration to say that he invented the superyacht refinishing industry, I wonder if it really is?

But back to the people in Peter's life. After a short-lived early marriage while still in England, Peter married, secondly, Elaine the mother of his only child, Luke, who recently flew to Mexico to bring Peter's ashes home to Mallorca. Luke is currently serving in the British Army and Peter was immensely proud of his son and his grandchildren.

His friendships with Pepe Garcia of MB92, Dirk Schonenberg of Royal Van Lent, Jürgen Engelskirchen of Blohm + Voss, Claus Kusch of Kusch Yachts, Diego Colon of Astilleros de Mallorca and Flip Thomsen of Awlgrip were very important and all were in Peter's words "very dedicated professional people who deserve our respect, and I count as friends" and they also included Gary Wright, Donal Hughes, John Clark, Richard Cross, Sir John Onslow, Wynand Van Westering, Patrick Griffith, Roger Madigan, David Broome, Nick Meyers, Russell Lunt, Colin Squire and countless others.

Within Pinmar, Peter's relationships were also hugely significant; José Mora joined Pinmar in 1983 to run the retail and distribution side and is now the longest serving member of the management team and Antonia Feliu ran the administration side of the company for many years. Manolo Rosales and several of Peter's early team of painters are still with the company and yet, although it would be impossible to tell Peter's story properly without mentioning his long-suffering serving secretary Marie-Claude, perhaps his most important "acquisition" was Remy Millott.

Remy was hired by Steve Taylor in 1995 to supervise Pinmar's repainting of Lady Georgina in the Barcelona shed. Although Peter knew Remy socially and from the Pinmar Golf Tournament, they did not really know each other well but, as they worked together, they did then become very good friends and Remy duly joined the company in 1997 and was soon running the entire Contracts Division.

By 2002 Peter was starting to think about retirement and Remy led the rest of the team in a management buyout the following year. Peter stayed on as Non-executive Chairman until his full retirement in 2008.

Having divorced his third wife Jeanie, he spent most of his later years in Mexico where his good friends Roger Madigan and his family lived.

Peter will be greatly missed by his many friends and, as the person who had the task of advising them of his death, I also had the privilege of receiving countless replies full of warm words and happy memories of the man. I was also repeatedly struck by how many people recalled how Peter had been one of the first people they had met, either in yachting in general or specifically here in Mallorca, and they all said how very generous and helpful he had been to them at the beginning of their careers – which was precisely my own experience. It seems we all had special times to remember with the wonderful man known to so many as "Peter the Painter"!

I am deeply indebted to Colin Squire of Yachting Matters for his kind permission to plagiarise his "Man at the Top" interview with Peter which he published in 2004. I can strongly recommend reading the full length original which Colin has also kindly allowed us to post on the Pinmar Golf website. www.pimargolf.es

This obituary was published by The Islander and is reproduced here by kind permission of the editor, Simon Relph.

Nick Entwisle