

James Butterfield

August 25, 1922 – May 23, 2009

James Butterfield, Master Mariner, slipped his cable and set sail from Victoria on Swiftsure Day, Saturday May 23, after a brief bout with cancer. He leaves his beloved wife Sybil in the 60th year of their marriage; sons Christopher (Merrie-Ellen), Philip (Tracy), Peter (Sarah), Benjamin (Anne); grandchildren Marco, Sarah, Oonagh, Rosanna, Claire, Harry, Julian, Felix, Robin and Marijn; brothers Philip (Jenifer), Aidan (Aileen), John Sebastian (Mary). He was predeceased by an infant daughter, Robin (1951), and daughter Joy (Stefano) in 2006.

James was born in Reno, Nevada on August 25, 1922, the first son of James Butterfield, of Vancouver, and Virginia (Tener), of Wheeling, West Virginia. He grew up in Vancouver and in Summerland, BC. He attended the Duncan Grammar School, and in 1936 went to Liverpool (UK) to train for three years as a cadet in the Merchant Navy training ship HMS Conway. On leaving the Conway he joined the Canadian Pacific Steamships – RMS Empress of Russia – and for two years sailed to the Far East from Vancouver. In 1942 he was Deck Officer in three Foreign Going merchant ships, the last of which SS Jasper Park was torpedoed and sunk in the Indian Ocean. He spent the next two years as Navigating Officer (RCN(R)) in HMCS North Bay on convoy escort duties in the North Atlantic. In 1945, he attended Trinity College, University of Toronto, where he met and fell in love with Sybil Agnew. They both graduated with Bachelor of Arts degrees in 1948, and James then returned to the Navy. After being commissioned as a Lieutenant in the RCN, he married Sybil in Kingston, Ontario in April, 1950. James served in Vancouver, Halifax, St. Jean, Halifax again, and Victoria; his last naval posting was as skipper of the training ketch HMCS Oriole. After retiring from the Navy in 1968, James served briefly in the Canadian Hydrographic

Service, and then joined BC Ferries as Chief Officer, Master and then Senior Master. His last command was M/V Queen of the North, from which he retired in 1986. For some years afterwards he acted as Master of M/V Charlotte Princess for the summer, taking her on positioning cruises to the Queen Charlotte Islands; in this way he passed on his profound knowledge of the coast he loved to a younger generation.

James loved the sea and ships, books, poetry, music, dancing and friendship. He will be warmly remembered by his shipmates in the Company of Master Mariners; The Conway Association; The Thermopylae Club; The Naval Officers Association of Vancouver Island and by many friends up and down the West Coast, and around the world. He was contented and true-blue. His enthusiasm, love of life, and of people will forever be an inspiration to those who were fortunate to have known him. The family would like to thank Dr Cox, the staff at Victoria Hospice and Beacon Services for their care. A memorial service will be held at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, on Saturday, June 13 at 11 am. In lieu of flowers, please send donations in his memory to the Mission to Seafarers, 401 East Waterfront Rd., Vancouver, BC, V6A 4G9