

The Lifesaver Times

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The birthday boy with his pals Ross Currie, Douglas Wakeford and Ken Smith

80 YEARS YOUNG

Hylton Ross celebrates the occasion at Claremont Cricket Club, Constantia



The Big 8 has never scared the veteran musician, lifesaver and businessman

A tribute to our friend who remains an inspiration

By **ROSS CURRIE**
PHOTOS:
KEN SMITH

Hylton Ross was born in Woodstock, Cape Town, on 15 June 1938. The family moved to Fish Hoek in the middle '40s, where Hylton attended Fish Hoek Primary School. He started piano lessons at the age of six, and believe it or not, he was also a choir boy at St Margaret's Church, a member of the first Fish Hoek Sea Scouts, a founding member of the Fish Hoek Lifesaving Club, as well as a volunteer at the Fish Hoek Fire Brigade.

He then moved to Muizenberg School, where he enjoyed it so much that he spent two years in Standard 9! He finally did pass matric in 1957. The following year he joined the naval gymnasium in Saldanha Bay.

THE GLOBETROTTER

In '59 he joined the Swedish Transatlantic Shipping Line as a clerk, and after three years he was bored to death with the paperwork and on impulse he worked his way to Sweden on a cargo boat. He ended up in Gothenburg, and from there hitch hiked through Sweden and ultimately ending up in London. He landed a job as a pianist in a pub in Earls Court, and stayed at the Overseas Visitors' Club.

He then applied for and landed a job as a swimming instructor at a luxury hotel. This was no small feat, for although he was a member of the Fish Hoek Lifesaving Club, he couldn't swim a stroke!

THE MUSICIAN

He was also given the job of playing the piano for the guests of the hotel in the evening, and in his inimitable way, endeared himself to both audience and staff.

In '62 he went to Pamplona in Spain to participate for the first time in the notorious Running of the Bulls. (He has since returned for this event every year for 20 years).

In '63 he returned to South Africa and re-entered the shipping industry. At the same time he formed his own band - the Hylton Ross trio. After a few years he joined the well-known Springbok/ Atlas Safaris as marketing manager. He remained with the company for 10 years. During this time he met and married Janis.

THE BUSINESSMAN

Again on impulse he decided to leave Springbok/Atlas and start his own travel and touring company he named Hylton Ross Travel and Tours. He started out with two kombis, financed by the money he made from his band -which became regarded as the top band in the Western Cape. The Hylton

Ross Trio and the Constantia Neck restaurant's Saturday night dinner dances were legendary.

The band also did trips to Rio de Janeiro and the Greek isles aboard the Reina Del Mar and the Juventus.

THE INVESTOR

In the interim the original Overseas Visitors' Club had gone bust and Hylton re-registered the name and bought properties in Earls Court, London and Long Street Cape Town. Thus the overseas visitors club was re-born.

One has only to count the number of Hylton Ross tourist buses on the roads still today to appreciate the success of the business.

THE HUMOURIST

Sadly, Hylton has had two strokes - one in 2008 after which he sold his businesses and again in 2013. They have affected his mobility, but thankfully not his mind and positive attitude to life, not forgetting his acute sense of humour. He remains the Hylton who we have known.

He now resides in an apartment in Sea Point place, where he is still the 'life and soul of the party'. He has certainly lived life to its fullest, and is an inspiration to the rest of us. May he have many more fruitful years among us.



MUSIC, MAESTRO, PLEASE. Given Hylton's musical talent, the birthday cake was created in the form of a piano - his favourite instrument that formed part of the Hylton Ross Trio band.

Family and lifetime friends celebrate the occasion with the unstoppable Hylton Ross. The photos tell part of the story. . .



