



Roy (Joe) Johansen

I was born in Yorkshire in 1948, a son of an illegal immigrant, my father jumped ship after the war as he was wanted in the Lofoten Islands, Norway, for distilling illegal whiskey and getting a young girl pregnant whose father was after him, but that's another story!

I started working at a local butcher's shop aged 13 whilst at Osmondthorpe school in Leeds, then left school at 15 and went straight into butchering, went to Leeds College of Commerce to do City & Guilds in Butchering, and was managing a butchers shop for the Co-op at 17, but always wanted to go to sea and the older staff didn't like a young boy as manager as I was unwittingly exposing all their fiddles!

On 2 April 1966 when I wanted to join the Royal Navy my father went crazy when asked for his birth certificate, as his secret was out and he had to send back to Norway to get a forged birth certificate from a 90 year old retired priest.

Did my basic training at **HMS Raleigh** where I met Gordon Chapman and Phil Briggs. After basic training went to **HMS Dryad** to do a course on radar and to my surprise Gordon Chapman was also there. After completing the course was drafted to **HMS Pembroke** whilst waiting to go to sea, and guess what so was Gordon Chapman! Then came my draft to **HMS Caprice**, all very exciting, and to my surprise teamed up with Gordon Chapman & Phil Briggs, can't I ever get them out of my hair! In 1968 at Cape Town whilst on shore one night I was very drunk (surely not!) got rolled, lost my ID, wallet and bottle of Brandy, and was so mad at losing the Brandy I was picking fights with the locals and Gordon carried me back to the ship, he saved my life that night, and he never lets me forget it!



Roy in 1968

After my spell on Caprice I was drafted to **HMS Eagle** in 1970, stationed in the Mediterranean and guess what? So was Gordon Chapman, can't I ever escape him! On the Eagle my duty was Homer's Assistant (The "Homer" was the officer responsible for aircraft landings), really enjoyed it as we never worked in rough weather as aircraft could not land and take off. After Eagle I went to **HMS Dryad** to complete an RP2 course, then to **HMS Londonderry**, doing fishery protection in the Caribbean, guess what, a draft without Chappy! we also visited east coast of USA and Londonderry in Northern Ireland. On the Londonderry I passed for leading seaman, really enjoyed this commission as I was now experienced as with Caprice everything was new as it was my first ship. After the Londonderry to **HMS Warrior** in Northwood, London, where I was sent over to Admiralty



House to work with the civilian gardener. Best draft ever, living in the Admiral's mansion, sharing same chefs, met lots of British and Foreign dignitaries - the Queen, and Defence Secretary Dennis Healey, to name just a couple.

The Admiral, Sir Peter Ashmore, was so pleased with my work he wanted to keep me there, and managed to for a further 6 months but the coxswain said he'd be doing me no favours as I had to get sea time in to pick my 'hook' up. If I could have stayed there I would still be in the Navy today!

After Admiralty House I joined **HMS Fife**, and by this time my brother, Raymond, had joined the Navy. Fife was going out to the Far East so I put in to swap drafts to **HMS Ghurka** to be with Raymond, so was dropped off in Gan in the Indian ocean, where the Navy forgot about me, and I spent 10 great days with the locals partying on the beach. This is where I invented Malibu!

Eventually got to the Ghurka and went to Scandinavia, and teamed up with my brother, we also were sent to the Med when the Turks invaded Cyprus. I put a request form in to see the skipper and told him that I should be taken off the ship in case it got sunk so that my parents wouldn't lose two sons. I volunteered my brother to go as I had joined the Navy to see the world, not get my head blown off! The captain was not amused! (no sense of humour!) so finished my time on the Ghurka and was demobbed in 1975.

After leaving the Navy I decided I liked a drink so thought I might as well get paid for it and got a job as a drayman at

Musgrave & Sagar, working behind the bar at a local Working Men's Club on a night.

After 3 years I was offered a job in Insurance where I worked my way up to Manager, and was one of the top sales people in the company, winning awards for my achievements.

In 1993 I was diagnosed as having Oesophageal cancer. The prognosis wasn't very good, only 3% survived 2 years and of that 3% who survive 95% don't survive 5 years. I was asked if I would like to take part in a new Government experiment where they fastened the stomach to the throat. During the operation my vocal chord was cut by accident, which is why my voice is occasionally high pitched, I haven't turned queer!

After the operation it was touch and go whether I survived, and I was 5 days in intensive care, and six months in and out of hospital treating an infection on my spleen. The doctors said I wouldn't have survived if I didn't have such a strong heart. During this time I got very depressed, and my weight went from 15 stone to 8 stone, and I was skin and bone, and so weak that I had to be pushed around in a wheelchair..

My daughter, Natalie, was eleven at the time and she told my sister that her dad didn't smile anymore, and when I was told I was so hurt that I made a concerted effort to get well. I was determined that one day I would be able to give her away should she get married, as I couldn't bear to think of someone else taking my place.

One day Natalie asked me to draw a picture for her school project, and I told her that I liked to paint with pastels when I was at



school, so at Christmas 1994 she bought me a set of pastels and I started to paint. That first night I painted I slept all night for the first time in 2 years, and I have never stopped painting since.

The doctors were amazed that I started to put weight on, and then after 2 years they realised I wasn't going to die so they admitted me again to have the operation completed by stitching my stomach to my ribs to reduce the discomfort

After surgery and treatment I took up painting as therapy to help me come to terms with my illness. I joined the local art club in 1997 and a year later Lorraine also joined, and we struck up a friendship. In 2001 our friendship turned into something more, and we have been together ever since. Lorraine is now my organiser, secretary, manager, agent (and chauffeur when I've had a drink - see likes and dislikes!), partner and fiancé, and I love her to bits! I have had a one-man show in Solihull, produced a limited edition print, and I have paintings in private collections worldwide. I also do demonstrations to raise money for various cancer charities, and have qualified as an Art Instructor and run day workshops and painting holidays.

My daughter Natalie got married in 2009 and giving her away was the proudest moment of my life, as I had not expected to live to see it.

Likes

Guinness, Painting, & more Guinness ** Screaming Kids, Margaret Thatcher & Tomatoes

Dislikes

