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PLYMOUTH, N.Z.

A TREE TO MARK AN ACT OF HEROISM.

Under normal circumstances the docking of the heavy lift ship M.V. JUMBO STELLATWO on 10 June 1983 would have aroused no more interest than the cargo of two massive 400 tonne components for the Taranaki petro - chemical developments would generate but on this occasion the vessel was the focus of special interest as a mercy ship

During storms which raged over Queen's Birthday Weekend, June 4 - 6th many yachts returning from the Auckland - Suva Yacht Race found themselves in difficulties and had to seek assistance. Among these was the 'SOUTHERN RAIDER', which reported distress in the Norfolk Island area and was located by a searching aircraft. Contact was maintained while the JUMBO STELLATWO en route from Japan to New Plymouth was diverted to the scene.

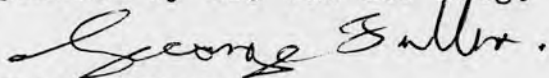
With the violent seas gradually subsiding to 6m it was decided to transfer the crew from the yacht and then scuttle it. In the course of this operation, one of the yacht crew, Mr R Whitehouse of Rotorua was caught between the two vessels and crushed, resulting in him falling injured into the sea.

The action which followed was one of commendable bravery. The Second Officer of the Jumbo Stellatwo, Mr C. van der Burg who had been taking part in the rescue, jumped into the sea without a lifejacket in a desperate effort to assist Mr Whitehouse. Unfortunately he was unsuccessful and the rescue took on an element of human tragedy at this late stage as Mr Whitehouse disappeared from sight. The arrival in New Plymouth of the ship aroused intense interest from the media and Mr van der Burg was hailed as a hero.

Saturday 11th June, the day following the arrival of the Jumbo Stellatwo marked Arbor Day in New Plymouth and the ceremony organised by the Parks and Recreation Department was held in Pukekura Park on a site where approximately 600 plants were set out for the public to plant in an area made vacant by the removal of old pines.

It was felt appropriate that Mr van der Burg would be invited to plant a tree in recognition of his brave act. This opportunity he accepted. On a previous voyage he had visited the park with his wife and held it in very high regard so in one respect it was a pleasureable prospect but at the same time he realised that this act would also commemorate the loss of a mans life. Consistent with his modest nature he declined any publicity over the planting.

On the afternoon of Saturday 11th June in a private ceremony, he planted a Pinus radiata. It is beside one planted in the morning by the previous Director, Mr J. W. Goodwin assisted by Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Committee, Mr B. Bellringer. In both ceremonial plantings, which are just to the east of the new lookout extending out from the old tennis courts on the Victoria Road frontage, the same spade used by Jane Carrington to plant the commemorative pine marking the establishment of the park in May, 1876 was used. The most easterly of these two upper pines is that planted by Mr. van der Burg.


GEORGE FULLER,
Curator Pukekura Park.

DUE TO INSTABILITY AND
STORM DAMAGE, REPLACED
WITH A SPECIES OF FAGUS.