

# A life girdling the world

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By TESS CAMPBELL

**F**ROM his childhood in a small Hunter coalmining town to a career as head of the world's largest international news agency, Glen Renfrew lived a varied life.

He was the seventh chief executive of the Reuters news and information empire for a decade from 1981 and oversaw the news agency's transition from private ownership to a publicly traded, high-earning company.

The stockmarket float in 1984 laid the foundations for the modern-day Reuters, unlocking big profits for the company.

Glen Renfrew was the first non-British head of the company since its 19th-century founder, Paul Julius Reuter.

The 10th child of a mining father, Renfrew was born in Aberdare on September 15, 1928.

He was schooled at Newcastle Boys Grammar, where he won a scholarship to Sydney University to study modern languages, becoming fluent in five.

He had learnt dialect Italian from immigrant labourers in his childhood and decades later he is said to have stood on the Spanish Steps in Rome and recited Italian poetry.

For Renfrew, there were always strong links to the Hunter and although he moved to London on his graduation, he often returned to visit family in the area.

As a child he loved sailing and built his own boat, displaying a resourcefulness early on that was to be integral to his rise through Reuters.

Renfrew joined the news agency in 1952 as a trainee freshly arrived in London from Australia.

He worked his way up from reporter to able executive through postings in London, Singapore and South Africa, before going to Belgium to help launch the company's first directly delivered on-line financial services.



## OBITUARY

**GLEN RENFREW**  
1928-2006

By the time he retired in 1991, Reuters was making an annual profit of £320 million on revenues of £1.3 billion, employed more than 10,000 people and had been floated with huge success on the London and New York stock exchanges.

A hard-driving executive, he could grumble and sometimes used his fists, but he was never short of a grin.

It was reported that on foreign trips, Renfrew would cancel dinner at a

three-star restaurant to take colleagues off to a small bistro he remembered, or sit up over many bottles of wine discussing plans late into the night.

His larrikin Australian ways and nonsense manner earned him an endearing reputation among Reuters employees for his common touch.

He was said to have turned down a knighthood in 1990 on the grounds that the head of an international news organisation should not accept

government favours.

After retiring, he devoted himself to sailing, moving to Bermuda before returning to England in bad health.

Glen Renfrew died on June 29 at St Albans, England, at age 77.

He is survived by his wife Daphne, son Barry, a senior executive of the rival American news agency Associated Press, and two daughters, Susan and Judith. A third daughter, Ann, died in a hiking accident in 1981.

*He built a VS in a boatshed at South Belmont and was a competitive member of the Belmont Sailing club in late 1950s.*

*The family later moved to Belmont Bay on LAMIP when we knew him.*

*He was employed in the steel box in digging the footings for the Belmont High School. He was also a baggage handler on Central Station and drove the trolleys.*