

**Wireless radio operator Harald J. Rasmussen's letters home to family describing life onboard Anna and Peter Mærsk from 1929 to 1940**



Translated by Knud Rasmussen, Toronto, Canada 2019

## Foreword.

This was originally published by Birte Brodersen, Ebba and Alfred's daughter in Danish and the following is her introduction.

The package in brown paper with a string around I have seen in my home, but never wondered about its content. Many years after I was married, had grown children and my parents grown old, they gave me the package in the brown paper. It contained a bunch of old letters my dad's younger brother Harald had written to them in the years he sailed the oceans as a radio operator.

I never knew my uncle or remember him since I was only four years old, when he died. However I remember the dressing gown, the silk west, the jewellery box, pictures with Japanese motives and many other items, he had mailed home to us. We always listened to the radio, when they played the Christmas greetings from sailors far away from Denmark. There was a kind of solemnity listening to them, which I first understood as a grown up. My dad told me about Harald and their childhood, their close relationship and interest in radios as well how they built their own receivers.

Harald was born with a deformed spine and he often spend time at a hospital for handicapped in Copenhagen, where they fitted a leather corset for him. It was a "torture apparel" very unpleasant for a little boy to walk around in.

Their mother died, when Harald was 12 years old and after that, it was difficult for his father to get him to wear his "torture apparel" and he had to live with a bad back the rest of his life.

Harald got an education in his great interest and went to the radio operators' school in Svenborg, where he graduated and after spend most of his time sailing mainly from the east coast of USA to the Far East.

All those letters he wrote and send home to my parents is now a history, that will give us an idea of an merchant marine officer's daily live on board his ship in the thirties.

Harald was born in Odense December 23 1907 and died December 8 1942.



*We have received the sad news, that my dear son, dear brother, brother in law and uncle*

*Radio operator Harald Rasmussen perished at sea December 3 1942*



*Harald*



*Alfred*



*Ebba*

**From 1929 only a few postcards and telegrams where in the package.**

**P 107 Radio 27/8 1929 9.30 am**

Telegram from Leopold 2 Antwerp

Address Ringbiler Kastanievej 68, Odense

Onboard Leopold on the way to Alexandria. Regards Harald

**Postcard**

Miss Ebba Rasmussen Nørregade 39-41 Odense, Denmark, Europe

Bayreuth 19/9 1929

Dear Ebba

Congratulations with your birthday and best wishes for the future

Sincerely Harald

**Postcard**

Miss Ebba Rasmussen Nørregade 39-41 Odense, Denmark, Europe

Montevideo 6/12 1929

Herby wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Harald

**Postcard**

Mr. Taxi owner P. A. Rasmussen. Kastanievej 68, Odense, Europe

Montevideo 6/12 1929

A merry Christmas and good luck for the New Year wishes you from Harald

**Postcard**

Buenos Aires 14/12 1929

Hobokon Bar

Beer-Wine-Spanish girls- Greetings

H.R. W.D F P JB ATTG and M2

Odense April 17, 1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Many thanks for your letters and pictures and congratulation for you new job Ebba.

Life here at home is the same old thing and since not much is happening I am sorry to say, I have little to write about, but no news is good news some people will say.

I have still not been hired, but the ship is not finished yet and it will take another 3 to 4 weeks, so I will have to put up with hoping and uncertainty for a while more. I must admit, I am beginning to doubt somewhat, but I will let you know if I get hired.

Erik\*, Johanne\* and the children (Paul, Ellis and Kaj Erik) are in Sdr. Nærup and Dad\* and Miss Jakobsen\* are attending a painting exhibition here in Odense. Theodor\* will return home in June. At present he is in Geelong, Australia from where they will return to Europe and he will disembark there.

Petersen's\* are moving across the street to a bigger apartment, if they can find someone to take over the old place. Ellen told me yesterday that Arne got a job working on the new Lillebæltsbroen\*.

That's all for this time with loving greetings to both of you.

Harald

P.S. Greetings from Dad and Miss Jakobsen

*\*Erik is Harald's brother-in-law*

*\*Johanne is Harald's sister*

*\*Dad is Rasmus Johannes Rasmussen the father to Harald, Alfred and Johanne*

*\*Miss Jakobsen is Rasmus Rasmussen's housekeeper*

*\*Theodor Pedersen is a friend of Harald and Alfred*

*\*Pedersen's-Young Russian woman married to a Danish engineer, with 3 children. Ellen, Theodor and Arne. On trip from Russia to England the couple stopped in Denmark, where the father passed away. The mother decided to stay in Odense and without being able to speak Danish; she managed to bring up her kids by going out as a washerwoman.*

*\*Lillebæltsbroen is a new bridge between Jutland and Fyn*

Odense April 29. 1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Finally I have good news to tell both of you. I have been hired on M/S. Anna Mærsk.

I received a letter from Danish Radio on Wednesday telling me to contact Captain Bærentzen at the shipyard, since there is a possibility I can be hired for the new ship. It is Theodor's old captain from Chastine Mærsk\* He was very friendly and easy to talk to, but most of the conversation was in regard to accepting to keep the books for him and the steward, which I of course agreed to, and he wrote to the shipping company that he would like to add me to his crew.

This morning I received a letter and a package from the company. The package was filled with buttons, gold cords and shoulder epaulettes. I am having blue and tropical uniforms tailored for me. The blue jacket (very dark blue) has two rows of gold buttons and a single twisted gold cord on the arm. The vest has a single row of gold buttons. The uniform is completed with a white cuff shirt and black tie. The tropical uniform is made up with white pants and a jacket with a military collar, a single row of gold buttons, black shoulder epaulettes with a twisted gold cord and a single gold button, but no cord on the arms. I also have to mail the company my hat size and they will forward a uniform cap.

I visited and talked to the captain today and the official sign-on will be Wednesday with the ship departure on Friday. I will be very happy if I can take a quick trip home on Kristi Himmelfartsdag (fourth day of Easter) to say goodbye. Let me know if it is possible.

I have a message to you from Erik in regard to some oil drums. He has called several times without getting in touch. Two days ago he sends his truck up to pick them up, but I do not know if they got them to take back to the warehouse. I also forward regards from Erik and Johanne as well as dad. Poul and Ellis have chickenpox, but they are doing well.

I trust both of you are healthy and feeling good.

I will finish for this time, but will write soon.

Many loving greetings.

Harald

P.S. You could telephone me tomorrow Saturday, but I am looking after the kids in the evening. Would have called this evening, but did not know what number to call.

*\* M/S Chastine Mærsk from Svendborg. A. P. Møller Shipping Company, Copenhagen. The ship was sunk after canon fire from a German U-Boat off the Norwegian coast February 13. 1940. No one perished.*

M/S. Anna Mærsk docked in Copenhagen May 8, 1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Just a few words before we leave. The test run is now finished and everything went well. We arrived in Copenhagen Saturday morning 9 am and went directly to Burmeister and Wain's dock. We will probably depart Monday afternoon for New York. I will send you a wireless telegraph letter on the way over.

Did you return safely to Randers?

I made 4 wireless telegrams on the test run and received 2, so you can see, I tested our equipment.

Vig\* visited me this morning. He is a sailor in the navy, stationed at the navy yard across from our dock, where he saw us arrive yesterday. Regards from Madsen\* who I visited yesterday. I am sitting in the radio room writing this letter, with the radio going for full blast here and in the lounge. There are a lot of people boarding today, so I am interrupted often. A.P.\* is expected today too.

There is not too much to write about now, but you will hear from me later. I am hoping to receive your letter in New York.

My address is H. Rasmussen Radio operator, MS. Anna Mærsk, c/o Shipping Company A. P. Møller, Kongens Nytorv 8. Copenhagen K. (Postage 25 øre (*a Danish quarter*)).

Kind regards to both of you

Harald

*\* Peter Vig from Vinderup. Radio operator and later colleague to Harald.*

*\* Madsen is unknown to us, but he is often mentioned in Harald's letters.*

*\* A.P. is ship owner Møller*

M/S. Anna Mærsk docked in New York May 27, 1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Many thanks for your letter and pictures, I got them a couple of days ago. I hope you got my wireless letter and now I will tell you a bit about how it is going so far. We did not depart Copenhagen until Thursday morning and after test-sailing a couple of times from the harbour to Sweden, we set course north, passing Skagen\* at midnight and heading north of Scotland into the Atlantic. We had pretty fine weather and arrived in New York Monday morning 23<sup>rd</sup> of May.

You can believe I have been extremely busy so far, and it is all new and unfamiliar to me, but everything went well and I managed to get all my telegrams and wireless letters through. Altogether, I sent 26 telegrams and 30 wireless letters. Most of them were shortwave and I was able to maintain contact with Denmark through the entire voyage. About eight hours before arrival in New York I was presented with 2 telegrams to be forwarded to Denmark and I sent them via Lyngby\* and they went through without any problems. The distance is approx. 3800 miles or approx. 6800 km. and it's quite a distance to "throw" a telegram, I may say. It is very interesting to work with shortwave, but often we must call for a half to one hour, before we get contact. The connection to Lyngby is 36m and we can hear a lot of Danish ships with shortwave trying to make contact. I have been looking for M/S Colombia, so I can send a greeting to Theodor, but so far no luck. I did have a problem with the automatic alarm for SOS. Already on the second day at sea, it certainly started to ring, because a lamp had blown. I could not replace it, because the voltage had increased and a new lamp would just blow too. It turned out to be a very difficult failure to find, but luckily I found the problem after five days of constant search. It was a small relay switch getting overloaded, when we reached a certain voltage. I removed it and will have it send to a factory for rewiring. It was a good thing I found the problem myself, otherwise we would have had to call assistance from ashore and they would be looking for eight days at \$10 per day and I would have received a nasty lecture from Radio Denmark. I visited M/S Frederik 8 and talked to the radio operators there, but he could not help, since they had never seen such a problem before. That being said, I have now learned in the last five days more about wireless radio equipment, than I have known in all my prior life.

Believe me; I had a serious problem finding Frederik 8. She was docked on the Manhattan side in Hoboken. NJ, and we were at the Brooklyn side in Erie Basin. It is almost as far away as Odense is from Nyborg, so you can understand New York is a big city. I received detailed instructions about taking a Cross-Town tramp (streetcar) to Borough Hall and then take the subway to Fulton St. Change subway to South Ferry, where I returned to the earth surface. Then take a ferry crossing the river to Manhattan and walk down Washington St to the foot of 5<sup>th</sup> St, where Frederik 8 is docked. Well, after missing the subway stations a couple of times, I finally reached the damn South Ferry. However there was no ferry to Manhattan, so I asked a man in a paper stand for direction and he told me "you are wrong, you are still in New York. Go down to the subway and take a train to Chamber St. Get off at the second station and take a train to the end station. I disappeared down in the dark again and was soon on the



Manhattan side. The “tube” is underground below the river, so I did not need a ferry at all. I arrived on Frederik 8 around coffee time and the crew offered me coffee.

The second radio operator on the ship is a very likable fellow, who had been at sea since 1920 and he was happy to see me, because we had spoken to each other on the way over. One day I received a telegram to a person onboard Frederik 8 and he was the person I forwarded the telegram to.

The return back went well, but I stopped at Borough Hall and exchanged 35 kroner (Danish money) for an exchange rate of 5.95 to 1 dollar. I then went to a barber for a haircut. It cost exactly \$1. A rip-off price I think, even if I had a hair wash too.

Yesterday evening, together with 2 junior officers, we visited Broadway and Times Square. You won't believe it and God have mercy on the amount of traffic and neon signs there, but it is of course the heart of New York. Broadway is the world's longest street, so we did not manage to walk the full length. Broadway intersects with 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the street of millionaires and Wall Street, with the New York stock exchange, where right now the world's money market is controlled. There are cinemas and Variety shows almost in every building.

We are living very well onboard our ship, but we also have a first-class cook. He has served oxtail soup and rhubarb desert several times. He is also a baker and bakes delicious “Wienerbrød” (*Danish pastry*) and warm “Rundstykker” (*Danish bread rolls*) every morning. All the mates and engineers are great guys, even if they made me pay for a round of beer for everyone last night. We “klunsede” (a very old game played with wooden matches) and “Gnisten” (Danish for the Spark) were the lucky one. Everybody calls me “Gnisten” all the time and the captain calls me “Gnist” (Spark), but he is the most pleasant person, who walks on two legs.

I have to finish this letter, because I have to write a letter to Danish Radio regarding the fire alarm.

But first our schedule: tomorrow morning, Saturday, we will leave for Baltimore, Philadelphia and Chester to take on cargo and then back to New York to complete our cargo and take on passengers.

The final schedule is as follows.

Departure New York Hampton Road June 10, Departure Savannah on the east coast of United States June 14, Departure Los Angeles June 29, Departure Yokohama July 18, Departure Kobe July 20, Departure Shanghai July 24, Departure Hong Kong July 28, Departure Manila August 1. Departure Cebu, Philippines August 3 arrival in Iloilo August 4, Departure Iloilo August 14, Departure Manila August 16, Departure Hong Kong August 19, Departure Shanghai August 23, Departure Yokohama September 2, Departure Los Angeles September 13. Arrival in New York September 29, for a 4 month round trip.

I have just been on the deck to see the gigantic cruise ship M/S Monarch of Bermuda depart the harbour. It is the world's most luxurious cruise ship built in England last year.

Last evening I watched the German liner "Europa's" arrival. It is very impressive to see the oceans' huge ships arriving here, and our little ship looks like a barge beside them.

My address is: H. Rasmussen Radio operator M/S Anna Mærsk c/o Isbrandtsen-Møller Co. Inc., 17 Battery Place, New York, USA. They will forward any mail to me.

I hope you both are well and will finish with loving greetings.

Harald

*\*Skagen the most northern part of Jutland*

*\*Lyngby Radio (call sign OXZ) is a Danish coast radio station*

M/S. Anna Mærsk

Philadelphia June 6/1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

It's Sunday and I will again pick up my pen to write to you, since I have some time to spare, something we do not have very often aboard a ship. It's not that too much has happened since my last letter, but we have been in Baltimore and Deepwater Point. We are now in Philadelphia and will continue to Ford's city, Chester (is that not where your sister and brother-in-law lives Ebba?), if so forward their address to me and I will visit them next time, when we stop for a cargo of trucks. It's mostly paper, dyes and maybe some scrap iron we are loading for Shanghai and Japan.

Believe me; we are in a very tough area and the worst of all the states in regard to gangsters. Here there are bandits and I am going to tell you a little about it.

A few months ago our chief engineer was here and someone stole all his clothes. Everything was gone and he was lucky. A few weeks ago the Danish ship M/S "Nordpol" docked here and the following happened: one night some gangsters boarded and went to the captain's cabin, where the door was locked. Through the key hole they injected sulfur smoke until the captain was unconscious and then broke down the door. They stole \$700 and all his clothes and disappeared. The next day the captain bought a Winchester rifle and gave it to the night watchman with 12 cartridges. He instructed the watchman to shoot anyone trying to board the ship. This is not a joke, but reality. Our generators run all night, so all lights in corridors and the deck are lit up all night. He also instructed the crew to lock their doors and portholes from inside. Even if there was a night watch throughout the night, it was not possible to guarantee that no one would sneak on board. On top of this the captain, first mate and chief engineer sleep with loaded revolvers every night, as well as one of the watchmen having a loaded revolver too. Must say it is "hyggelig" (*Danish word for cozy*) conditions in a civilized country. The Police are powerless. When we leave the ship at night, it is best to be in a group, or we risk being mugged here on the docks.

Otherwise I am OK and well.

Loving greetings

Harald

**Telegram from M/S. Anna Mærsk June 13/1932**

Mr. Representative Rasmussen. Railway hotel Randers.

Thanks for the pictures and we departed Thursday at noon.

Greetings

Harald

**Postcard**

Mr. Representative Rasmussen. Railway hotel Randers.

Shanghai July 22/1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Hereby greetings from China and we had a good crossing over the Pacific Ocean. From here we depart to Hong Kong. Will write letter soon, but have been very busy. Docked together with Peter Mærsk here in Yokohama and visited my old school friends on board. Hope soon to hear from you, but I still have had no letters from Odense. All is well and loving greetings.

Harald

**Telegram from M/S. Anna Mærsk August 17/1932**

On our way to Hong Kong. Loving greetings Harald.

Telegram from M/S. Anna Mærsk June 13/1932

All the best and happy birthday. Departed for Hong Kong Saturday. Loving greetings Harald.

M/S. Anna Mærsk

Manila August 15/1932

Dear Alfred

First I want to wish you a real happy birthday even if it is a bit late, but I mean it. Then I want to thank you many times for the post card I received in Manila, where we docked. We have now been to several places in the Philippines and have returned to Manila on the way back to New York. We docked in Iloilo and Cebu to unload our freight and then continued to Bais and San Carlos, where we took on a cargo of brown sugar. I got off the ship in Manila, Cebu, Bais and San Carlos. The last two were only villages, where the sugar factories are located.

It is quite interesting over here. Manila is a very beautiful and modern American city with a couple of marvelous parks, but everything is very expensive. We pay 60 centavos (1 ½ kroner) for half a bottle of beer. In Bais I experienced something very interesting, when I visited one of the natives in his palm hut. The second mate and I purchased supplies from a local company and became friends with the boss, who gave us bananas, and mangos, as well as inviting us to his home. However he had to work that evening and his daughter came to get us. We enjoyed the evening with his sons and particular his oldest daughter a very beautiful 19 year old young woman. Many of the Filipinos are very beautiful and kind of Malays. She spoke perfect English and we discussed a lot of things that evening. She served palm wine, a kind of red juice that does not taste very good and it is quite intoxicating. The house is built on stilts and constructed from bamboo. It is located in the middle of tall and slender palm trees (coconut and bananas). The moon is shining in through the window, a large hole in the wall, and quite idyllic plus warm. The furniture consisted of a couple of reed chairs, benches and a table in the living room, but the bedrooms and kitchen are all very small. On the walls they had newspaper clippings of film stars and from the ceiling colored paper strips. All together it was a great evening.

In Kope, Japan I embarked with the 4<sup>th</sup> engineer, who you know. Japan is a lovely country and the small "Japsere" (*Danish slang for Japanese*) are nice people, pleasant and friendly. We both got a little girlfriend (sounds like geisha girls) and mine was Mar-Yu-Mi a very sweet little women. We will visit them again, when we get back to Kobe.

I got off the ship quite a few times in Shanghai, but it is not as friendly as Japan and the Chinese are a bunch of robbers.

One afternoon I went for a ride in a real rickshaw. I had to buy a part for a speaker and had a coolie running for me more than two hours from one radio store to the next, without being able to find the part. I did see Shanghai from one end to the other, both the European and the "gules" quarters (*Danish slang for Japanese*) quarters. Right now there is cholera, typhus and small pox in Asia, so the entire crew was vaccinated, when we arrived in Shanghai. The captain on one of "Store Nordisk" (Danish cable manufacture) ships still moored in Shanghai died from cholera, just before we arrived. It is a creepy mess the Chinese live in.

One day a body, bound hand and foot, drifted down the Yangtze River right next to our ship, but nobody cares, it just drifted down stream.

On top of this, the Chinese hate the Japanese. They see red every time Japanese pass by; they say "by and by" and show a very explicit hand movement around the neck, telling them they will be decapitated. Two of the Chinese from a supply company we had on board, told us proudly, how in the winter during the war, they captured some Japanese and buried them, so only the head was above the surface. Then they cut off the ears and nose before they kicked them to death. There is probably a good reason that Japan has soldiers in Shanghai and they also have a number of navy ships docked here.

That's it for now, but promise to write from Japan. Regards to "Nørregade" (where Ebba's parents live in Odense), when you write to them Ebba.

Loving greetings to both of you

Harald

M/S. Anna Mærsk

Yokohama August 30/1932

Dear Alfred

Many thanks for your letters, which I received this morning, when we arrived. You must believe I am excited every time we arrive in a new harbour, and the local agent arrives with a stack of letters. It is my job to sort them out, and today they were all for me, plus a card from Erik and Johanne written from Grenå. It is a delight to receive news from back home, and we keep reading them several times, when we are on the high sea.

Everything is going well here as usual, and tomorrow we leave for the big trip across the Pacific for Los Angeles. It will take 15 days on the high sea and we will arrive in New York September 27. We have a full cargo and 13 passengers, so that is good, but A.P.'s ships also belong to the few with a full cargo every time. He has excellent agents around the world, who know how to find the cargo, and it pays off. Many 10 000 ton ships from other companies sail with 1500 to 2000 tons of cargo.

We were in Kobe Saturday and the 4<sup>th</sup> engineer and I visited our small girlfriends and Mar-Yu-Mi was feeling very good. The engineer's friend is named Taruko and we have a delightful evening together.

You wrote in your letter Alfred, that Denmark is in a slump, but believe me the same goes for us here in the Far East because of the falling exchange of the Danish Kroner. Every night I contact ships between Copenhagen and Aalborg to get the exchange rate. Next morning when I go to the mess and tell the guys that the American dollar value is up, and you can hear a lot of swearing. If you want a haircut and wash in the States right now it is 5.44 kroner. Viola as the French would say, its robbery.

Well there is little happening here, so I do not have much to write about. There are a lot of typhoons here at this time of year, so I collect reports several times daily, since it can be useful for our crossing. When we left Shanghai for Hong Kong, I received a report, when we were docked there, that a very strong typhoon from the Philippines (they all come from there) was heading northwest towards the southern end of Taiwan. Normally we head for the Formosa Strait, right pass the infamous Bias Bay, the pirate cave, where Chinese pirates still haunt our days. I was ordered to be on constant duty for more than 24 hours, only relieved by the 3<sup>rd</sup> mate. We had to reach the first part of the strait, and the captained hoped we could sneak by before the typhoon crossed, but that did not happen, since we got a report that it had changed direction, and now was heading straight up the strait against our course. A typhoon is not something you play with in such a narrow strait, and you can believe the orders to the engine room was full speed ahead, the rudder was turned around and Anna was heading back north and around Taiwan, cheating the typhoon this time. We were 24 hours behind schedule. The speed of a Typhoon is normally 10 to 12 miles an hour and our ship does 15, so we can easily

bypass it, if we know the location and there is room. Our captain is normally a daredevil, but extremely experienced and the company's boldest captain. We were docked loading sugar in Bais, Philippines and finished late in the evening and in pitch dark. The harbour entrance is very difficult to pass through, very narrow, lots of rocks, no pilots and no lighthouses at all. Land and sea were all dark. A small Philippine steamship on regular route was also docked here, but the captain did not dare to depart and was waiting for the next day. Well when the hatches were secured, our captain commanded to cast off and let the current move us out a bit, turn around and slowly and surely sail toward the open sea. 8 hours was saved and a tidy sum of money for the shipping company. Several of the local agent's men insisted the captain was the first ever to leave in the dark. Another time we were in a narrow straight in pitch darkness sailing towards Cebu, no lighthouses with only the lights from palm shacks on shore to guide us, and we passed one of Wilhelm Wilhelmsen's large motor ships slowly cruising through the strait towards Cebu. Anna for full speed (that night we did 16 miles an hour) sped by the Norwegian and when he finally arrived, we were already docked, and taking on cargo.

I have to finish for this time and also have a letter to write to them in Odense.

Hope all is well and both of you are healthy.

Have a nice vacation and regards to Lykke (Ebba's sister) and congratulation to her for passing her exam with such fine grades. Also regards to everyone in Nørregade.

Loving greetings

"Gnist"

PS: You asked about my address out here. OK you will get it from Japan or the Philippines. I will cut it out from your envelopes and enclose them. Trust you received my two radio letters.

Enclosed newspaper clipping: Pirates attack Danish steamship.

Hong Kong Feb 28. (AP) – Chinese pirates active again after a quiet period attacked the Danish steamship Gustav Diederichsen last night while on route to Swatow, China. Held up the officers, smashed the wireless and decamped with three first class passengers.



M/S. Anna Mærsk

Baltimore November 20/1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Many thanks for letters and newspapers. I received two letters and a big bundle of Sunday B.T. (Danish newspaper). Please accept my apology for being so tardy in writing to you, I think the last time was in Yokohama, but I promise to write more often. I received a bundle of B.T. in Los Angeles and another big bundle when we arrived in New York, so they arrived quickly over the Atlantic. You asked me if the radio telegram goes directly to "Aalborghus" (a ship in Danish waters) Alfred. Yes, that is correct, since I have connections directly with Denmark and local Danish ships there on short-wave. We reached Yokohama and over to Manila, so those telegrams have crossed 10 000 kilometers through the atmosphere. It is kind of strange to be here in Japan or China and be able to talk to "Aalborghus" in Kattegat or Lyngby in Denmark. Crossing the Pacific, it is not possible to have direct connection until we reach Panama, where we again can reach Denmark, and the same all the way up the east coast of USA.

We arrived in New York Saturday evening November 2 and on Tuesday we will head for Boston, where we will be for five days, unloading sugar. From there we continue to Philadelphia, but leave the same day for Baltimore, where we will stay for 14 days. We have unloaded all cargo and this afternoon, we will enter a dry dock to get the ship's bottom scraped and painted, so you can say, we are on dry land at the moment. We will be in dry dock until tomorrow afternoon or a total of 24 hours at a cost of \$9000 x 5.60 or a total of 50 000 kroner. Tomorrow we will start to take on new cargo for the Far East. Around the 4<sup>th</sup> we depart for New York leaving November 10, and stopping in Norfolk and Savannah on the east coast.

Our first round trip went very well, since we had all the cargo we could contain, exactly 8800 ton from Asia to here. We also had a fair number of passengers, from Shanghai to Los Angeles 11 adult and two children, and from LA to Panama 6, as well as 6 from Panama to New York.

We had a magnificent trip through the Panama Canal. We were raised up, since the canal's water level is higher than the oceans, I think about 80 feet. This is done using locks, three at each end of the canal. We sail directly into a lock and the gates are closed, then they pump water in at high pressure; when the water level is the same as the next lock the gate open and we continue, pulled by 4 electric locomotives. After the third lock we enter the canal on the Pacific side, and it is very narrow with tall steep slopes on both sides. On the Atlantic side there is more room, since we sail through a couple of lakes. When we arrive in Cristobal, we enter three locks and are lowered to sea level. The entire trip takes about 8 to 10 hours.

Time on board goes smooth and quiet and we live very well. On Sunday we were served dinner with pear soup, roasted duck with red cabbage, apples and prunes and orange pudding. We are also presented with such delicacies as salmon, lobster, crab and oysters from time to time. When we dock, I have a great time with no more work than I want to do, but at sea, I am fully engaged with lots of work.

As an example I write the menu card and radio news every day, and before we arrive I am extremely busy.

There are a lot of lists to make up. List of passengers, crew, provisions, custom etc. On top of this, I ask the passengers for name, age, nationality and a lot of other things. I did not like it in the beginning, but now everything is OK. The worst place is Japan. As I wrote before, there is a cholera epidemic in China and because of that; there is very strict quarantine when we arrive from Shanghai.

As soon as we left Shanghai I received from the first mate some small tin cans about the size of a 2 kroner coin each with a chop stick, as I call them. On the cans I had to glue a small label with the name for each person aboard, both crew and passengers and I had to give them out to each one requesting a sample of "fertilizer" before we arrived in Kobe. For the crew it was easy, since we have a rather common way to speak on board ships. "Aber zuerts komf der Graf" (*German for "But first comes the Count"*) namely the passengers of which most were female. It turned out to our horror, that none of us knew the polite English words for this. We all knew the more common words like Danish s....d. I was not exactly excited about this job, since it was not really my duty, but the first mate told me to give the cans to the steward, since passengers were his department, but he point-blank refused to do this. I then approached the captain and asked him to do it, but he also refused, even if he could swear like a trooper, since his vocabulary did not cover that eventuality. We finally found a solution, and asked Mr. Plette a young American who was with us for the entire journey and quite familiar with us too, to write a polite note, which the waiters then delivered with the cans.

We arrived in Kobe at 6 o'clock in the morning and everyone got woken up and each individual delivered their can and thought it quite hilarious. A Mr. Pearman from Los Angeles strutted proudly back and forward on the promenade deck holding his can between two fingers. He was a happy- go-lucky kind of fellow, and he received during the trip telegrams from his mistress in Shanghai and his wife in America, where he also had an ex-wife. He drank whisky like milk and was drunk almost every day. A Miss Goldman from Shanghai was constipated and could not deliver. The same happened to one of our ship assistants. He sat on the toilet almost the whole morning, before he was able to deliver, and he came storming up on the deck to loud cheers, red faced, dripping, and out of air, to deliver his still warm can.

You are asking me what I would like for Christmas Alfred. If you want to give me something, I will be happy for a book, but I really think it is not necessary for you to inconvenience yourself with this. Beside this I will have to apologise, since I want to buy something for you, when we arrive in Japan in the middle of December and you will not receive it for Christmas and I am sorry for that. Do you want me to mail it to the Railway Hotel, or do you have another address? If you write to (Los Angeles – San Pedro) I will be able to receive a letter there. I am including the agent's address there. With regards to the duty, I will ask dad to send you the money.

Yes, we will celebrate Christmas in the Far East. According to the plans, we will arrive in Shanghai Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> with at least a three or four days stay, so we will celebrate Christmas

here. New Year's will be in Manila or at sea between Hong Kong and Manila.

I have to finish so I can get on land to mail this letter before it's too late.

Believe me Ebba I am very happy for the pullover you gave me, since at this time its freezing cold here, especially when we are arriving from the tropics. I am not feeling very well right now, influenza or something, so I wear it in bed too.

I planned to write last night, but had to hit the sack and it is the worst part of this route changing from cold to hot. Right now we are cold, but approximately 5 days from now, after we depart for New York, we will be back in the tropics, plus in Panama we will have up to 35 Celsius in the shade. 8 days later we will be in San Pedro where it again is cold. It is freezing cold crossing the Pacific as well as in Japan and Shanghai. 3 days after Shanghai we will be in Hong Kong, then the Philippines where it also is 35 degrees in the shade. Middle of January we are back in Shanghai with frost and snow. 1 month later in Panama with fierce heat and then 8 days later in New York with frost and snow.

Now I am finishing with loving greetings to both of you.

Harald

PS: Greetings to Nørregade when you write to them.

M/S. Anna Mærsk

Chester November 13/1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

I am just going to send you a few words again. We are again in route to the Far East, as we left New York Thursday. We are going to Newport News and Norfolk and from there we are continuing on to Savannah, but in the meantime they added a lot of Ford cars to our cargo and we returned to Chester again.

We are docked at Ford's own quay, leaving tomorrow morning for Savannah again. We have 5 passengers on board and three of them will be with us for the whole trip. They are a millionaire and his wife and niece. They just had a visit from his grandson and his Negro butler. He is a very friendly and down to earth man, and his wife shook hands with our cook and gave him \$10. I am going to be busy on this trip, since I have to get daily stock exchange results for him. We also have a couple of ladies for Shanghai, and when we depart San Pedro, we will be fully occupied for the rest of the trip, so as you can see, we are doing very well when it comes to passengers. Cargo is also doing well. We have general cargo, which can be anything and in Norfolk we will load 1500 barrels of tobacco filling almost our whole cargo hold. We also have a lot of cars (Ford) both unassembled in crates and fully assembled. The most costly cargo this time is medicine in small crates ranging from \$1000 to \$2000 each. At our last trip we had a large cargo of silver and Peter Mærsk had a cargo of gold.

The schedule I gave you earlier has been changed a bit, since we have added 8 days extra for the trip back and forth on the Pacific. However, dates for arrival in harbours in the Far East are the same. But we will arrive in New York on March 8<sup>th</sup> instead of February 28<sup>th</sup>. If we do not get delayed, we will arrive in Shanghai December 24<sup>th</sup> and stay there for Christmas and Boxing Day. We are already delayed a couple of days, because of the Ford cars, but weather permitting, we will be able to pick them up during the crossing of the Pacific, since we are running great after the dry dock in Baltimore. Our last trip between Philadelphia and New York was kind of a record, with speeds of up to 16 knots an hour.

I went to the Roxy in New York again this time, even if I had not planned to go ashore, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> mate insisted on buying me a ticket to a movie, since he did not know how to find the place. I am almost familiar with New York now, since I often go ashore doing the day to run errands for the crew and visit the post office etc. The last day I was running all over from early morning to 3 in the afternoon. First I had to pick up a parcel for the 3<sup>rd</sup> mate at the post office located on the other side of New York City at the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 31<sup>st</sup> Street. I was also running around for a battery package for the wireless radio and visited a number of stores before I found the right one.

It is Paul's birthday today and I ordered over the radio a box of chocolate from "Illum" in Copenhagen (a department store), unfortunately I only contacted them last night on the trip from Norfolk to here, so he will not get it before Tuesday and this is a new idea, "Dansk Radio" has

introduced. We can order flowers, cigars, chocolate and a lot of other things over the radio. We received a catalog from "Illum" with passwords and prices. We pay the cost on board and radio a letter to "Dansk Radio" including the receiving address, name, password and price and they will look after ordering it and forward it anywhere in Denmark. We have to pay the cost of the telegram and the present.

Believe me, I am going to be extremely busy during the days before Christmas. There will be Christmas radio letters and telegrams, and, hopefully I will make contact with domestic ships in Denmark and Lyngby, sending a hundred or so telegrams at one time. I will probably also contact Danish Public Radio so they can broadcast our greeting.

This is all for this time, and trust I will hear from you in Yokohama. Trust all is well and you are in good health. Are you traveling home for Christmas?

Loving greetings

Harald

PS: Will write soon again.

M/S. Anna Mærsk

The Pacific November 24/1932

2254 miles south west of Los Angeles, midday position 11.29' n. Brd 88.20' w. Lgd. Distance sailed the last 24 hours 375 nautical miles ca. 700 kilometer.

Dear Alfred and Ebba

I am going to write a few words now, so the letter is ready when we reach Los Angeles. That is the last chance for us to mail Christmas letters. I am on duty right now and since it is not very busy, I have time to write a few words. It is approximately 9:30 pm here (Nov 24) and at home it is exactly 3:35 am, so I expect you are asleep snoring and I am sitting here sweating in more than 30 degree Celsius. Approximately 15 minutes ago, I was in the air on the 54 meter band sending a radio letter to dad and he will get it tomorrow after 7 am. It was send at 3:00 am Danish time and dad will have in his hand approximately 16 hours after I send it. I send it directly to Århusbåden S/S Århus (Danish ferry) in Kattegat and I am here in the Pacific Ocean 30 to 40 nautical miles west of the coast of Mexico. The distance is approximately 6000 nautical miles (about 11000 km). It cost 10 øre per word plus 15 øre for postage, so it is quite cheap. By the way, it is kind of strange, but when we sailed around Cuba, I could not make contact with them. Certainly this evening they are getting through loud and clear. I have to stop for a moment, since I have to get stock market and news reports. I am producing a full newspaper of 4 or 5 copies every day, and I will mail you a copy.

It's a holiday here in the States (Thanksgiving Day) today, so we have all the flags hoisted with Stars and Stripes at the top of the mast and tonight there is a big party in the salon. There was a big dinner at 7 with lots of booze. They are running around with colored paper hats and they are dancing on the deck. On the journey across the Pacific there is always a big dinner on the last or second last day before we reach harbour. It's the Captain's dinner, which means A P Møller pays, since it is a custom on the big passenger ships. On the last trip it lasted to 4 or 5 in the morning and everyone was drunk. Now I have to stop and do not expect a letter from me before we reach Japan. Hope you both are doing well and hope to get letter from you in Yokohama. I will finish by wishing you a very merry Christmas and good New Year. I promise to propose a toast to you two Christmas and New Year's evening. We will be in Shanghai Christmas Eve and since we are seven hours ahead of you, we will eat the Christmas goose around 11 am Danish time. You will probably hear greetings from us on Denmark's Radio.

All the best and loving greetings to both of you.

Harald.

PS: Sorry for the spots on the letter, but it was down in the mess first (Today we had bad weather Pedro Panama) and all the passengers were seasick. Ship rolled as if it were in hell.

30/11/32. Arrived in Pedro right now (9 pm). Received your letter and many thanks for it and the pictures. San Pedro and Los Angeles are the same. I am completely healthy again. A lot of cargo here and we will not be able to load all of it onboard. Depart tomorrow evening and will arrive in Yokohama 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> of December. Letter will follow from Yokohama. Would be glad for "BTer" (a Danish Magazine), if it is not too expensive to mail. If so, do not send them. Merry Christmas and good New Year.



M/S. Anna Mærsk- Wireless press, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1932

**New York stocks:** The market fluctuated fractionally to 3 points higher doing the first session, then dropped and closed steady. The list was dominated by professionals and a brief rally was insufficient to generate with participation. In Great Britain, where the impression is growing that Americans will not favour debt revision, the idea brought selling into Sterling and it broke to a new low for the year in London. In New York it recovered as a cent and held the gain. After selling at fractional gains, wheat turned downward and stocks sold off with it. Wheat closed lower as did other grains. At the highs US Steel was at 36-3/4 up 1-1/2 net, Allied Chemicals 79-3/4 up 2-1/2, American 55-1/8 up 1-3/4, American Telephone 109-3/4 up 2-1/4, Case 44-1/8 up 2-3/8, Union Pacific 79-3/4, most gains were eliminated before closing. Railway shares sold off, but sales were light. Sales totalled seven hundred thousand shares. Paris the bourse closed inactive. London the exchange closed easy.

**Closing prices Nov 18.** Allied Chem 77-1/4, Am Can 55-1/2, Am T and T 107-1/2, Anaconda 9-3/8, Atchison 41-3/4, Auburn 44, Case 42-1/2, Ches and Ohio 23-3/4, Chrysler 15-7/8, Col G and E 13, Cons Gas 57-3/4, Dupont 36-1/4, El P and E 7-3/4, Gen El 16-1/8, Int Harvester 8-3/8, Int Nic 8-3/8, Int T and T 9-3/4, Kennecott 11, Lowes 26-5/8, Mont Ward 13-1/4, NY Cent 23-3/8, North Am 28, Penn RR 14, Pub Ser 48-3/4, Radio 7, Stan Oil NJ 31, South Pacific 18-3/4, Texas Corp 15-1/4, Un Carbide 25, United Air 23- 7/8, United Gas Imp 18-1/8, US Steel 35-1/4, Vanadium 13-5/8, Westing EL 28-1/8, Woolworth 37-1/8 --- Foreign Exchange: England 3.28 1/8, France Ro391 1/2, Germany R2376, Italy R 0511 3/4, Sweden R1750, Holland R 4018, Argentina R 2594,

**Berlin:** Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazis, who is expecting to play an important part in the formation of the new German cabinet, arrived today to meet the President Paul von Hindenburg here on Saturday. Herr Hitler came by air from Munich. In previous negotiations the German Fascist leader has demanded "the chancellorship or nothing". The President is expected to confer with other party leaders today. The fact that the President was personally conducting negotiations for the first time since he took office indicated that he would not allow the Reichstag to take the Reich Government from his hands.

**Indianapolis:** Plans were being completed today for the immediate organization on a nation- wide basis of the Sons of the Legion, which is a junior order of the American Legion.

**Berlin:** Poland is negotiating for rapprochement with Germany for the first time since the war, it was learned today.

**Baltimore:** An attempt of three unidentified white men to dynamite one of the buildings on the campus of Morgan, Negar College failed today. They were frightened away while trying to touch off the explosion.

**New York:** Thomas Patrick Morriss claim to the Wendel's millions appeared on the verge of dismissal late today. His lawyers, Raymond L. Wise, said that they are convinced the three leading bills of documentary evidence produced by his client are not genuine. He referred in a letter to a "will" and a



marriage certificate, all bearing the purported signature of John Gottlieb Wendel, who Morriss claim as his father.

If Morriss could have established his claim, he would have been eligible, as a nephew, to inherit the seventy-five million dollar estate left by Ella Wendel, the last of the Wendel's.

**Gillam, LA:** Two masked bandits this afternoon robbed the Federal Trust and Savings bank here of \$1500 and escaped.

### **Congressional leaders favor war dept payments.**

**Washington:** Most of the congressional leaders who will confer with President Hoover after the Hoover-Roosevelt conference on war debts, oppose any further moratorium and favour collection of all payments due, it was learned Friday. Six congressmen have gone on record to that effect; others had made their views known previously, thus assuring any move towards an extension of the moratorium would be opposed by leaders of both parties. Mr. Hoover discussed in detail with his cabinet the conference Tuesday with President elect Roosevelt; simultaneously Roosevelt made arrangements for an overnight stay in Washington, indicating his conversations with Hoover probably will be lengthier than at first indicated. After discussing the debt situation with his cabinet, Hoover had private conferences with secretaries Stimson and Mills. The President will confer with congressional leaders Wednesday.

**Paris:** France will pay belated tribute to former Premier Georges Clemenceau, when the statue in his honor is dedicated on the third anniversary of his death next Tuesday.

**Athens, Greece:** Samuel Insull, formerly of Chicago utilities conferred Friday with attorneys, as Chicago authorities came here to force his extradition. Two Illinois State's attorneys will reach here Saturday and will begin efforts to obtain Insull's extradition for embezzlement charges.

### **Amy Johnson completes record flight to Capetown.**

**Capetown, South Africa:** Amy Johnson Mollison, England's star aviatrix, beat her husband James A. Mollison's record by ten hours Friday in her flight from London to Capetown. She completed her spectacular air adventure across sea, desert, mountain and jungle in four days, six hours and 58 minutes. Mollison's elapsed time was four days, 17 hours and 19 minutes. Over 4000 persons gathered at the air-o-drome here to welcome Miss Johnson. She made a graceful landing, unlike her husband, who became confused and crashed his plane. She had only five hours sleep en route. Though extremely tired, the young aviatrix was jubilant over her success. The worst stress of her flight was between Boula, Cameroon and Benguela, which was flown during the night, she said.

**Reno:** Mrs. Beatrice Barnett de Stanchfield Friday filed suit for divorce against John de Stanchfield son of the late John de Stanchfield, prominent New York attorney. She charged cruelty.

**Washington:** Pelman D. Glassford former police chief, who handled the law enforcement division during the bonus army invasion, warned Friday that any march on Washington by veterans or other groups would lead to a winter of "misery and hunger".

M/S. Anna Mærsk

Shanghai 29/12/1932

Dear Alfred and Ebba

I am just going to drop you a few lines again, but first I want to say many thanks for the book I got in Yokohama a couple of days before Christmas. Also many thanks for the two letters, one of them had been in Manila. I also got a book from dad and Miss Jacobsen and one from Erik and Johanne, so I have lots of reading stuff now. In contrast I did not get any letters from home, either Dad or from Erik and Johanne and I have not had a word from them since we were in New York. Yet from Erik and Johanne I only received one letter in the last 8 months, but it is of course possible that some letters got lost. It's just strange that all your letters get to me, and I will say at least 85% of my letters are from you, so if you wrote like they did, there would be a half year between letters.

Well I better tell you a little about our Christmas. We did not arrive for Christmas in Shanghai. The 24<sup>th</sup> we were in Kobe and did not finish loading cargo until 5pm. Luckily for us, the Captain decided we should have our Christmas goose in peace and quiet, so we waited to depart until 8pm. We had a small Christmas tree on the top of our three masts and the aft flagpole. The mess was decorated with garlands, colored paper, spruce and flags. Of course we also had a small Christmas tree nicely decorated by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer, and it was placed on an empty beer case (Carlsberg Danish beer), but I have to state the case was wrapped in a Danish flag. At six o'clock we first ate rice porridge with sweet beer, after came the goose with red cabbage and other delicacies. Then a large cream pie. Drinks were served with everything, Red wine, Madeira, Port wine, Cognac, Whisky and beer, but we could of course not get drunk, since we had to haul anchor at 8 o'clock. After the dinner we were served a large plate of apples, oranges, confectioneries, raisins, figs, dates, marzipan, nuts and more. We could have cigars and cigarettes, as many as we wanted. After dinner we sang two Christmas carols printed and published by the undersigned with great difficult, until I found them with Peter Captain, one of the best altar boys in the merchant marine. His mother had been prudent enough to give him a hymnbook to take with him, otherwise we would not have been able to sing "Julen har bragt" and "Glædelig Jul" (*Danish Christmas hymns*). After the dinner we went around and wished the crew merry Christmas. Later in the evening, after we departed, the skipper and some of the passengers came down to the mess and wished us Merry Christmas and offered champagne. The orgy continued Christmas and Boxing Day. I also got some Christmas gifts from some of the passengers: 6 very nice handkerchiefs and I think it was because I presented them with many good radio reports during the crossing. Nobody else in the mess got gifts, but they did give to the servants in the salon.

30/12. I became sick in the evening and had to stop here, but I am fully OK again. It was stomach cramps and nausea. We will depart in half an hour, so I am sorry to stop here, but will write more when we arrive in the Philippines. I have also been very busy, since one of my generators broke down. A motor coil burned out, so I had to disassemble it and send it on shore. It is the first time I have tried to take a motor apart, but everything went well. I have

assembled it again and it is working better than before. I was at the Yangtze-Poo dry-dock when it was repaired, and they did an excellent job. Well, the pilot has arrived, so many loving greetings, Harald

Manila 6/1/33 – Unfortunately I did not find time to mail this letter in Shanghai because of some unfortunate problems. I had it in the envelope and the stamp ready to give the agent, when the captain came storming and ordered me to right away make contact with Shanghai pilot boat or M/S. Niel Mærsk\*, which we docked with there. The following had happened. Some very important documents “Bills of Health” had by mistake been forgotten onboard “Niel” at 6 am in the morning, when it pulled anchor and departed. It travels the same route as us, and was on return trip to the States. At 10 o’clock in the morning, when we prepared to depart for Hong Kong, the Captain discovered he was missing the documents and they were onboard “Niel”. We are taking a pilot on in Shanghai and the Captain is boarding the pilot boat at the entrance to Yangtse-Kiangi entrance approximately 5 hours from Shanghai. I got on the radio right away, disregarding us being in the middle of Shanghai Bay, where it is forbidden to use radio communication. I made contact with the pilot boat right away, and to the Captain’s great relief, we were informed “Niel” had not passed them yet. When I finished and stormed down on the deck with the letter, the gangway was removed and the agent had left. We departed and moved out in the river, turned around sailing downstream Wang Poo’s muddy water. Half an hour later “Niel” contacted me and informed us that they had the documents onboard and would deliver them to the pilot boat. 5 hours later we received the documents from the pilot, so everything was under control again. I can now tell you, that in Hong Kong I received a lovely long letter from Erik and Johanne with lots of news from home and in Manila there was letter from Dad. Both letters had been in Yokohama and had arrived same day we departed for Kobe. Had they just arrived one day earlier, I would have received them for Christmas. Well, I have to finish, but promise from now on, to make sure letters get off in good time.

Again loving greetings

Harald

I have mailed a tea set from Yokohama to your address at the Railway Hotel. Please check to see if it has a number 76 label on the cups, but I am pretty sure they are not cheating me. There are 6 cups with desert plates, 1 tea pot, 1 cream jug and 1 sugar dish. It was the best he had and hand painted, but he also had cheap fabricated sets. If you want 6 more cups please let me know.

*\*M/S. Niel Mærsk registered in Svendborg, Denmark sailing under Panama flag was attacked June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1942 in the Mozambique Channel and 2 foreign crew members perished, but all Danes survived.*

M/S. Anna Mærsk

23/01/1933 Hong Kong

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Yes, we are again in Hong Kong on the way homeward, and since I am not busy right now, I will take the opportunity to write a letter. We arrived at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and started to take on cargo right away, and are leaving tomorrow morning at 10 for Shanghai. There is not a lot to write about this time. We have been in the Philippines for the last 14 days taking sugar on at two different places, but had to anchor offshore far out, without a chance to get off the ship. One of our junior officers got sick there and we had to leave him at a hospital in Manila. He had jaundice. I am going ashore tonight with 4<sup>th</sup> Engineer Preisler. I have never been offshore here before, so it should be quite interesting.

We only had one passenger in Manila, but we will probably get more in Shanghai. We are having a 3 day stay in Shanghai this time. I do not remember, if in my last letter mailed from Manila, I told you about New Year's Eve. We celebrated at sea between Shanghai and Hong Kong and for dinner had mushroom soup, salmon, pheasant with all the trimmings and prune cake. Also include all the proper wines to such a feast and all the liquors, such as Whisky, Cognac and Port Wine one wanted all evening. At 10 o'clock we were served warm "æbleskiver" (*apple fritters*) including a punch.

Unfortunately I had to send telegrams all night, so I had to take it easy. On the stroke of 12 o'clock a terrible noise broke out. The mate on the bridge tooted with the siren and in the mess the Captain was using a spare foghorn and the fire alarm bells were all ringing. They all got drunk like old sailors, except the ones on duty. Junior officer Olsen ended up sitting on the mess floor embracing the Christmas tree. He was also the one most "exhausted".

The watch is now almost half past six, so I have to go down for dinner and then going offshore. I will write more on the way to Japan.

Yokohama 05/02/1033. We arrived early this morning and will depart 2 o'clock in the afternoon. We did not have much time here, but did get one night in Kobe, where I visited my soul friend Mar-Yu-Mi. I received a big parcel of newspapers and magazines, thank you very much and I am very happy to have something to read. There were no letters from home this time, but I got two. One from Axle (Harald's cousin) and my colleague Madsen.

It is bitterly cold here in Japan with frost and sometimes a bit of snow. The trip across the Pacific will probably also be cold and wet, since we are taking the northern route. I am not too crazy anymore about visiting the States, since the exchange rate for the dollar is 6.63 kroner. We are not going offshore, just buying stamps. I finish for this time, but will write from Pedro, when we arrive on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Hope you're both well and looking forward to a letter from you in Pedro. Loving greetings Harald

San Pedro,

California 27/02/1933

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Yes I am again taking up the pen to write you a long tale, because of a great event and upheaval in my so far quiet and peaceful existence onboard "Anna". Lady luck has stopped smiling on me. Accidents have tumbled down on my wicked head during the last three weeks. I am no longer aboard M/S. Anna Mærsk and right now I am walking around California without work, but fortunately on full wages.

But let us start with the beginning. We departed Yokohama Sunday the 5<sup>th</sup> of February at 3 in the afternoon and in beautiful sunshine. The mood was great. "Anna" was this time filled with a very fancy and expensive cargo and we departed one day ahead of our schedule, planning to set a record crossing the Pacific. We did it and crossed in 14 days and some hours. As soon as we departed, I made contact with two competitors, an Englishman and a Norwegian, who were 1 to 2 days ahead of us. "Anna" fired up her 6000 horsepower's engine, and ignoring high swells and strong winds, she pushed forward. The skipper had plotted the course on a fine northern curve that being the shortest route. In the middle of the Pacific, we were side by side with the Englishman and the Norwegian and we arrived in Los Angeles before both of them. That was great and good advertising for us. But to the point: after 4 or 5 days en route, the events started. The "Koksmaten" (cook's apprentice) got sick. It is his throat, there is something wrong with it. A couple of days later, the cabin boy came down with the same sickness. After a few days, one after the other on board came down with the same symptoms. This sickness comes suddenly and in a few hours starts with a severe headache, pain in the lower back and then even worse pain in the throat. Also, a high fever, some up to 41 Celsius. We all got it after the two first named and in the following order. 3<sup>rd</sup> engineer, the writer, 3<sup>rd</sup> mate, another apprentice, 2<sup>nd</sup> engineer, another cabin boy and the 1<sup>st</sup> mate. It is now clear, we have contagious sickness on board and it is dangerous. We are taking all kinds of cautions, like pails with bleach to spit in and sterilizing all food utilities. The skipper, together with the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate had to take a 12 hour watch on the bridge every day. In the engine room they also had 12 hour watches and the wireless radio room was closed. In the meantime the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate and I got better after 2 or 3 days and could take up our posts again. Why we two got over it much quicker will be told later. We had no idea what kind sickness we were experiencing. The 2<sup>nd</sup> engineer also got over his sickness after a few days. Slowly but surely, other personnel started to recover, and we arrived in the USA on Sunday February 19<sup>th</sup>. We started to glimpse the outline of the California coast in the morning. The journey is completed and we cast anchor outside San Pedro, waiting for quarantine authorities to arrive. They arrive quickly and the captain of course informs them about the sickness we have on board. We still have four sick, two of them seriously. As usual, we are lined up on the deck and counted. The quarantine doctors check on the sick, plus all who had been sick. The doctors cannot tell us, what disease it is, but they take samples from the throats of the sick people and send them ashore. After two hours they have inspected everything on board and leave. The ship receives permission to dock, but no one may depart and no one may board the ship.

“Anna” pulled anchor and entered the harbour. It’s Sunday afternoon and the quay is filled with people strolling and watching the “Ocean airplane”. Docked after crossing the Pacific from the Far East and we received mail on board with letters to me from Walter, Madsen and Peder Vig, a radio operator friend. I am sitting in peace and quiet here in my cabin reading them. Suddenly like lightning from a clear sky a new disaster hits poor little me, when the skipper comes running in and say: “Gnist, there is telegram from the shipping company, saying you must go ashore and await the arrival of M/S. Peter Mærsk.” I turned cold and pale, but I had little time for indulging in sad and pitiful considerations, because the skipper told me to get ready to disembark right away, since “Anna” would be leaving at 12 o’clock midnight. However “Anna” did not leave that evening and later in the evening the doctors returned and cancelled the departure, informing us we had and still have diphtheria on board. There was a great commotion, and the shipping company’s own doctor shows up. Around 10 o’clock in the evening, the entire crew was vaccinated in the officer’s mess. We got the torpedo, as we call it and it is not funny, since we get a needle in the lower back. Believe me, it is not always fun out here in the big world. We are constantly changing climates, from tropic to near arctic. The worst part is we are constantly pumped full of vaccines, which probably are not always harmless. We get them in the arm, the butt and then in the back. We are being vaccinated for diphtheria, plague, typhoid etc. and to finish it off, maybe we get a quick fever or malaria as well. In the Philippines I have seen many white men who were total wrecks. Then around 11 o’clock, the ambulances arrive on the quay to pick up the 4 sick crew members and then a new disaster hit me. I had been expecting to play “Duke of Monte Christo” staying at one of the city’s best hotels, but the doctor tells me no, because I just had diphtheria and if I am going ashore, it is to the hospital. If I had not been a pessimist before, I am now. “Anna” prepared to depart on Monday at 3pm and a couple of hours before, I said my goodbyes to the guys and the skipper and left with Dr. Campbell in his private car for the hospital. Prior, I had been given instructions from the skipper and I signed off February 20<sup>th</sup> after 9 months and 17 days of duty. I demanded my leftover pay and received 270 kroner, approximately \$41. Oh, what a money exchange. The skipper informed me that my wages would continue unchanged from February 21<sup>st</sup> onboard “Peter”, including the time I am waiting here. On top of that the shipping company would pay all expenses for hotel, food and transfer of luggage. So everything is OK. The skipper was very kind and when I told him I was concerned about losing my wage 10% supplement changing ship, he said: No, the devil take me “Gnist, if the captain on “Peter” refuses to pay you exactly what you are being paid on my ship, you complain right away.” He then wrote a few words in my payment book. Captain Bærentzen is a wonderful human being and I probably will never get a skipper like him again. Now it will be all about how I will get along with the company’s horror, the tyrant Captain Petersen on “Peter”. The reason I am being transferred to “Peter”, is the radio operator there is returning home, because of heart problems and they could not get a new man over in time, resulting in me being ordered on board here, and a new man taking my job when “Anna” arrives in New York. The “heart problems” are just the official reason, so the man can return home for free. The real reason is probably a quarrel with the skipper, who by the way, commanded him to paint and remove rust on the deck. If he asks me, I will definitely say no to that too.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> engineer comforted me as well as he could when I visited him in the hospital the other day. He told me that even if the skipper was crazy, there were always a few onboard he liked, resulting in those few being able to do almost anything they wanted. Besides that, I know you have very good recommendations from skipper Bærentzen and the first mate back home at the company office, so they will be skeptical if you cannot get along with the Captain, since they know him. I hope everything will turn out well for you.

I was only in the hospital for four days, where they took 3 tests, all negative, and I was discharged. I am doing very well out here, but bored. I have a single room with bath and telephone and don't do anything other than lying around smoking cigarettes. The sick ones in the hospital also lay all day and smoke, as well as listening to the radio in their room. When I visit them, I am allowed to stand at the door and talk to them. They are the first mate, 3<sup>rd</sup> engineer, the cook's apprentice, and the cabin boy. In the meantime, we have been very lucky in regard to this sickness. The doctors asked: who looked after the sick, because they have gotten amazingly easily through it. In reality, it was lucky nobody died and we were able to contain it to half a dozen people. It has happened before that the entire crew got sick and if we had not made land in time, it could have happened to us. In the hospital they had to operate on the first mate and the apprentice to open up their throats for breathing, and they had 41 degree fevers when we arrived. The skipper was also very happy that we arrived in time. The doctors tell us the reason the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate, 3<sup>rd</sup> engineer and I got over it fairly easy is because we had had diphtheria before. I never believed before that diphtheria could be so contentious and believe me, it was very creepy to be in the middle of the Pacific day after day, having no idea what the sickness was. One of the local agent's men, who boarded us, has been admitted to the hospital on Sunday with diphtheria. There is no doubt where he got it. Not a word has been written in the newspapers here, looks like the agent was able to keep it secret and you must promise not to tell about it to too many back home too. If news appears in the papers back home about diphtheria on board "Anna", then A.P. will get mad, because he hates this kind of news and the newspapers usually make a much bigger story out of it, making it worse than it really is. Well, I am wandering around sunny California enjoying my extra vacation. "Peter" is a week late and will not arrive until March 7<sup>th</sup> so I will have 16 or 17 days here. The sun shines here every day from a clear and cloudless sky and the weather is delightful mild. I am living with a Dane, Mr. Hermansen, here in San Pedro. It is very nice here and I come and go as I please around the clock. He lives in a house on 733 W. Meyler Syr between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Street (it's still there today). I have a beautiful view of the harbour and Long Beach. I go to the movies every evening and I am taking a trip to Los Angeles, taking about an hour on a streetcar. I wanted to visit Hollywood, but Hermansen tells me it is stupid to waste time on such a trip, since it is just another city. One can only visit the movie studios with special permission and you have to be almost a king to get such permission.

I visited the Norwegian consul to get my maritime discharge book. He looks after Danish ships here, since the Danish consul is in Los Angeles. He is a very nice man and he told me to come to him, if I need any help.

The entire area here is a forest of drilling derricks, since we are in the middle of an oil field. It is also a great chance for me to learn English or rather American. I have picked up a lot of nasal Yankee slang and every day it gets better and better for me to understand the language spoken through the nose. I am doing great with what I know now, and local newspapers give me the same info as the Danish ones. I am enclosing a clipping about the Danish steamer \*"Gustav Diderichsen", who was attacked by pirates close to Hong Kong. One is never safe from the damn gangs of Chinese robbers. We docked together with "Gertrude" in Shanghai and their chief engineer was robbed ashore by rickshaw coolies. He had gone ashore together with another officer and they each took a rickshaw. Within a few minutes they lost contact with each other, and the chief engineer was driven in to a sinister side street, where 6 or 7 bandits robbed him for \$80 (100 kroner) and his watch and everything he had. To resist would be almost certain death. To go to Chinese law officers and ask for help is like asking the moon to help. I hate Chinese even if there are of course many good Chinese people, but law and order does not exist in China. I have had a couple of discussions with Hermansen in regard to the war over there. He believes the Japanese should lose big, since they are the bandits and I believe the opposite. The reality is that the Japanese people are the only ones in the world who can bring law and order to China. The white people cannot do it and neither can the Chinese themselves. I also do not understand why all the nations in the world are against the Japanese. Japanese are some of the most sympathetic people I have ever met, and they have law and order, even more than in USA. Hermansen does not like it when I tell him that the Japanese, compared to the Americans have better education and culture, but it is a fact. The Americans are keen on war, and I tell Hermansen they can send their naval fleet to Japan, and I believe, they will never see the fleet again. Yesterday USA's Pacific and Atlantic navy were combined. All together 150 warships with 38 large battle ships and others here in San Pedro. Torpedo boats and submarines are in San Diego. In addition there are hangar ships with 340 aircraft here in San Pedro.

I have to finish, but will write soon again. My address is still the same, but it is M/S "Peter Mærsk" and we depart for the Far East around 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> of March. I am enclosing a picture of the officers from "Anna", it was taken at sea between Manila and Hong Kong. Front row: Captain Bærentzen and Chief Engineer Madsen. The little one is the skipper. Behind from the left, the undersigned, 1<sup>st</sup> mate Hansen, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate Larsen, 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Holst, 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Mørch and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate Olsen. 4<sup>th</sup> Engineer was on duty in the engine room.

Hope you both are healthy and loving greetings

Harald



P.S: Have not received any letters since Christmas. The last letter I received was written at the end of November. In contrast I received B.T. (Danish newspaper) in Japan. Thanks very much. If you write right away to Yokohama, I believe I will get it on our return voyage. Have you received my Christmas letters and telegrams? Longing to hear from you.

*\*S/S "Gustav Diderichsen" from M. Jebsen Shipping Company, Aabenraa. The ship was torpedoed, after it joined the Japanese merchant navy, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1942 at Eriom-Zaki and the Danish captain perished.*

Wireless radio letter.

Delivered on board S/S "Peter Mærsk" 08/03/1933

Mr. Representative Rasmussen

Dansk Engelsk Benzin og Petrolreum Co. (Danish English Gasoline and Petroleum Co.)

Sønderbro, Randers.

Received letter in Manila as well as one New York forwarded. Have mailed 2 letters airmail to Jernbanehotellet. Further to last letter nothing new. Stop. I am now aboard Peter Mærsk departing for the Far East.

Loving greetings Harald.

San Pedro 05/03/1933

Dear Alfred

I received a letter from you today, which I was supposed to receive in Manila. This letter has been around the world, first to Manila, then New York and finally here in Pedro, where it landed in the hospital and I received it this afternoon when I visited my buddies. You write that it was sent as airmail, but that was not the case, since it only had 25 øre postage. Moreover, it has to me an unknown handwriting on the envelope written in Amsterdam, Dutch East India and the Philippines. You also mention a letter to Japan which I have not received yet, so it's probably also rowing around the world and now that I have changed ship, it will take a long time for me to get it.

In regard to what you mention in the letter, it's fine with me and I will do all I can to help. Fate's whimsical games have now, this week, again seen me depart for the Far East, but that was somewhat lucky this time. We carry a lot of tea from the East to the USA, and it is a very fine cargo and freight charges are high. It is in Hong Kong that we load this cargo and it will be here that I will try to find a company. I understand you want the tea shipped directly home, in order to avoid the big companies in New York, London and Hamburg. I do not know many people in Hong Kong, but the skipper introduced me to our local agent there last time. He is a young Englishman and he visited my wireless radio station onboard. It is possible that I could ask him for some names of local tea companies here in Hong Kong. If I get an opportunity, I will contact them to see if they are interested in direct export to Denmark. I have also been thinking of contacting the Danish consul or vice consul there, asking if they can help, but we will find out, when we get there. However, my new skipper will have to give me permission to go ashore during the day and if he does, I think I can do something. Aboard "Anna" I could come and go as I pleased. However there is another side; if the large companies are stakeholders in the tea plantations here, they would not be able to sell to other companies, but it would be unusual if there were no "outsider" plantations willing to sell to others. In regard to the other items from the Far East, I am not sure. In the Philippines there is probably not much of interest except for sugar (unrefined) and palm oil. In contrast our Japanese friends have many articles which could be of interest to you. I know quite a few Japanese in Yokohama and Kobe and one thing that I think could be of interest there is silk. Our underwriter bought a large lot for his sister, who has a business back home. I am of thinking rolls of silk for sewing shirts, pajamas, ladies dresses etc. For men's fashion stores, it could be used for hosiery. Silk can be purchased here very cheaply, and if you get it directly from suppliers, I think prices will be competitive. I myself am getting some shirts sewn here right now and will check with Sakamoto, my tailor in Yokohama, to see if he knows any local wholesalers or suppliers who are interested in direct export to Denmark, and I will then get in touch with them. By the way, I know your size pretty well and I am having a silk shirt made for you here and mailed, so you have an idea what I am talking about. Duty is pretty high for finished products, but in rolls it is much lower, since it is calculated from weight. If the duty is too high on the shirt, just refuse to take it, since it is only worth 4.5 yen, approximately 6 kroner.

The silk is first class and almost impossible to wear out. Our first mate has shirts he uses for work for several years. Besides that, there is Japanese porcelain too, and I have sent a tea set to you and Ebba, so you can have a close look and explore if there is interest in such items back home. The same set with 12 cups cost 18 yen + 4 yen. This is the price I have to pay for a single set here in Kobe. Buying in quantity will of course be much cheaper and so will the freight per set. 1 yen was at that time 1.25 kroner and last time 1.4 kroner, so it is very low. When you get this letter and the tea set and decide it is of interest, you can just hit "tråden" (wire), which is the "trådløse" (wireless) and you will get in contact with me right away. The cost is only 35 øre per word and you can go to any telegraph station with your message and tell them you want it sent via shortwave over Lyngby. Then I and "gnisten" in Lyngby will take care of it. If you want to get in contact with a company regarding the porcelain, telegraph the following: Operator Rasmussen Peter Mærsk (Lyngby) = Porcelain+. The word Lyngby will be added by the telegraph station, but it counts for a word or a total of 5 words and about 1.75 kroner. No signature is required. If porcelain is added, I will know you want to make contact. You write Peter Mærsk as one word and do not write M/S in front, since it will count as a word and is not necessary. If there are any other things you want me to do, use our call sign, it's "OZRE", but it is not necessary to tell them, since Lyngby has it when you send a telegram. There are countless smart things here in Japan and if I find something I think of interest to you, I will let you know. I have seen some very smart cigar and cigarette boxes made from bamboo, designed for smoking tables. There are drawers for matches and ashes made with such precision that when you push one in, air pressure will open the other. Toilet sets made from tortoiseshell, suitcases, table lamps with incense, and many more interesting things. You can write me more about those products and I will help, as much as I can. It is not so good to know business is slow back home, but that's what is happening all over the world now, and one has to find other ways to make a living. I really hope this will be successful, if we can get it going. I am told there are great possibilities here in the Far East right now, especially in Shanghai, where the Chinese are beginning to wake up, and can use help from white people. It is also because of the war, and the possibilities for engineers, mechanics etc. is great in China. Well, I am finished for this time, and will go ashore to mail this letter and have a "drink" (he is using the English word). I am quite happy that we are returning to the East again. Especially, I am longing for Kobe, where my little girlfriend Mar-Yu-Me is waiting for me. Believe me, she is a very sweet "japserpige" (Jap girl). She will probably be surprised that I am back so soon again, since she thought it would be end of May before I would return. Well, I hope you are healthy and having a good time, with loving greetings to you and Ebba.

Harald

Write to the usual address in Yokohama, but remember "Peter Mærsk"

PS: Pardon my writing it is ghastly, but I am busy. Notes above are only between you and me. "Peter" arrives on Tuesday March 3 and properly departs on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

M/S. Peter Mærsk at present in the Pacific May 13/33 (Yokohama San Pedro)

Dear Alfred and Ebba

First I will say thank you very much for the two letters. I got one in Manila and one in Yokohama. Also you must excuse me for not sending letters from the Far East this time. I am still very busy when we are docked in harbors, and I have been ashore, but never as much as with this ship. Now I am going to write about everything that happened since we left San Pedro, and it is going to be a long story. First I want to send greetings from Peter Vig from Vinderup, who you probably remember, Alfred. He is on "Anna" replacing me, and we talk everyday right now, and he asked me to send his regards in my next letter.

We will pass by "Anna" tomorrow afternoon and we will most likely have them in sight. "Anna" is again on her way to the Far East.

On March 7<sup>th</sup> I signed on aboard "Peter" in San Pedro and we departed March 8<sup>th</sup> for Yokohama. In the beginning everything felt a bit strange, but I am quickly getting used to it and everything is fine now. I better note right away that the skipper and I get along nicely with each other, so that is OK. In contrast, there is a lot of uproar between the skipper and the officers, as well as between individual officers. The relations in the mess are not as good as they should be. Compared to "Anna" it is bad, but then she was a model for a good ship. However, I have made friends with one of the assistants, Jacobsen, and we keep to ourselves and go ashore together. He is a real Copenhagener with a real sense of humor and as you can imagine, we have some really good times together here in the Far East. At sea, he visits me every evening for an hour and we chat about our latest exploits. We now have the same interests, since he went with me to visit my girl friend Mar-Yu-Me and she has a very nice girlfriend, whom he fell for right away, and we are now a foursome here in Kobe, but more of that later on.

May 24: Now it's really crazy, since we will arrive in San Pedro in half an hour and I had counted on writing a letter with half a dozen pages, but I have literally not had a minute of free time on this crossing. I can tell you, on average I get at most 4 hours sleep every 24 hours, and you will understand that I am very busy. We have 17 passengers, and for a change, they are sending telegrams all the time. Every afternoon I write the news on a typewriter and then 10 menu cards. In the afternoon I must make contact with a lot of stations to find out, if there are any telegrams. I have 6 stations in the USA, 1 in Japan and Manila, with which I keep in daily contact, plus Denmark via other ships. On top of that, there are weather reports and news stations. Lots to do, and in the last month I made 250 kroner for A P Møller in telegram fees, so he had a free radio operator this month plus a little extra, but the fees are of course also high. A few hours ago I received a telegram from Hollywood to one of the passengers, a Japanese professor, and he replied with a 54 word message with fees of 29.16 kroner to A.P.M, so my daily salary is paid for. I just noticed, we have arrived at the peninsula, and the engine is now at half speed and we are at the entrance to Pedro. With that, I have finished my sixth crossing of the Pacific, a journey of 5200 miles or 10 000 kilometers, plus we set a record for A.P's Far East service line. The trip took 14 days and 12

hours, which means that we have beaten "Anna's" record by 3 hours, but we did have great weather. On top of that we had a race with two "japsere" (Japanese ships). One of them left Yokohama a day before us and right now she is about 2 miles behind us. We passed close by her this morning at 8.30 and the time is now 1 o'clock. We spotted his aft lanterns last evening and now she is the one looking at ours. The other "japser" is about 100 miles behind us, but she has caught up with us, since she took a shorter route. All three of us arrive in San Pedro today from Yokohama. We are just passing the breakwater and entering the harbor and I have to stop, since we will have quarantine inspection right away. It is usually rigorous when we (we just dropped anchor) arrive from the Far East.

I trust you are both well now you are newlywed and will again congratulate you. Thanks for your telegram, which was sent two hours after mine.

Many loving greetings to both of you.

Harald

PS: I promise to be more diligent in writing to you.

It's true, we are going to get a new skipper in New York, but it is a secret. The skipper and I are the only ones who know about it. We received a telegram shortly after we departed from Yokohama. It is exciting, wondering which skipper we are going to get.



M/S. Peter Mærsk

Baltimore 1/7/33

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Many thanks for the letter I received in New York. You probably do not understand why you have not heard from me, but the situation is that I have been very busy lately. I have had unloading duty every day, checking to make sure that the goods being unloaded tallied with the paperwork, until 3 days ago. In the evenings I am busy sending shortwave telegrams. On the evenings with no telegrams to send, I have been washing and ironing clothes. I have only been ashore one evening here in Baltimore and the same in Boston and New York. For the last 3 days I have been busy checking our radio equipment, making sure it is ready for the next journey. As I probably wrote earlier, the radio room was a terrible mess when I arrived, but I have now almost fixed it up properly. In the last few days, I have been painting. I painted the walls "crème de la crème" and the ceiling snow white. I just need to paint the baseboards maroon now. In addition to that, I have also polished and buffed all the shiny parts, so it almost looks like a brand new station. When I have finished the radio station, I have also 4 motors and 3 large accumulator batteries to check and clean. Everything must be in tip top order before departing New York the 8<sup>th</sup> of July. I have also installed emergency lightning in the skipper's, my cabin and the radio station, because the engines are turned off at 10 o'clock every evening when we are docked and have no passengers. So the skipper and I have electric light and the rest of the crew must use kerosene lamps. Speaking of skippers, we got a new one as soon as we arrived in New York. His name is Schmidt and he is one of the young ones, around 40 years old. He looks to be "motherly" all right. He is friendly and speaks straightforwardly to everyone. He calls me "Spark" the English word for "Gnist". He is also a radio operator and the best mate/operator that ever existed. I had cargo unloading duty in New York, and I was standing in the warehouse when he arrived to meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate, who also had unloading duty. The 2<sup>nd</sup> mate introduced me to him and he came over and shook my hand saying: I am the one who will be playing with you people now. The 2<sup>nd</sup> mate told him I had been aboard "Anna", upon which the skipper said, "What the hell, then we know each other, since we often chatted", when he was onboard \* "Nicoline Mærsk", where he also looked after the radio station and I spoke with him a number of times. The other day I went ashore with him to purchase lamps for the emergency lightning. He was very kind and bought me chicken and ice-cream for lunch.

July 7. Now I am continuing the letter again. I visited "Frederik 8<sup>th</sup>" today to say hello to colleagues and pick up some telegram forms, since I was running low on them and did not receive any from back home. I arrived at coffee time and was invited to coffee and "wienerbrød" (Danish pastry) and had to tell them about my last journey.

Unfortunately I can't remember how much I wrote about in my last letter from San Pedro. I have been ashore a lot in the Far East on this journey, especially in Kobe and Yokohama. As you know I have a little mistress in Kobe and I received a very nice letter from her in New York.

Unfortunately I could not read a word of it except for the signature, since it was written in Japanese. The signature looks like "J'/J". I am not sure you can read it? It says Yudiko and I have two girlfriends in Kobe. In Yokohama on the way back, I went ashore with assistant officer Jacobsen for a party, a real cannibal fest. We got ashore around 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening, but just before that, I received a letter. It was written in English by a little "japser" girl Yuriko and not Yudiko. She was a girl I had met before on an afternoon in Kobe and only knew casually, but I must have told her I was onboard "Peter Mærsk". It was an invitation to meet her in a "bar X", and Jacobsen and I decided to check her out. We took a taxi, since we always do that here in Japan and it is very cheap. 50 cents, approximately 70 øre, will take you pretty well anywhere in the city. There were a couple of other girls there who were quite sweet too, and they wanted us to stay and later invited us to their homes. We thanked them and explained that unfortunately we could not accept, since we had gone ashore to look around and drink some beer. After enjoying a couple of beers, we "hailed anchor" and went up to the "mountain" visiting almost all the bars, restaurants and hotels there, resulting in us being in a great mood. It did not matter where we went, we would find a crew member from "Peter Mærsk" and all with a glass of beer in one hand and the other arm around a girl. You could see the "Mærsk" fleet's flagship was in harbour.

You will barely find a bar in Yokohama, where they do not know the guys from the four ships "Peter", "Anna", "Niel"\* and Gertrude" and they like the Danish sailors, since they spend a lot of money out having a good time, without becoming crude and violent, and "japserne" like that. Around midnight we decided it was time to return to the ship, but when we passed "Bar X", Jacobsen thought we should check it out again to say good night. The result was a few more beers and a lot of fun. "Jacob" gets into a lot of mischief when he gets a bit drunk, jumping around, dancing and kissing the girls. Finally, they got him down on a bench and held him there, painting his eyebrows black and the face red with lipstick. He looked like an Indian warrior.

Around 2 o'clock it was closing time, and the girls wanted us to come home with them to continue the party, but we wanted to go back to the ship, and got into a taxi. We had almost gotten there when "Jacob" regretted it, so we turned around and drove back to "Bar X", but the girls were gone.

Then we wanted to return to the ship, but good intentions are one thing, and a weak character is another, and it must have been the latter that evening. On the way back there was another pitfall, "Peter Mærsk's" favorite watering hole "Baronen", where we always can find someone we know and we fell for the temptation. Some of the guys were already there and we were received with cheers. A short time later the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer and one of the assistant also arrived to loud cheers. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer had his arms full of parcels and probably a number of beers under his vest. When the Steward and the Cook shortly afterward literally rolled into the bar, a real commotion started. It now turned in to a real party with drinking, singing, record playing, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer danced solo. Two of our passengers, a married couple were also there and they could not believe their own eyes, watching the normally quiet sailors from "Peter Mærsk".

“Jacob” spilled his beer, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate overturned a table, and all bottles and glasses broke, and the cook broke the record player. Overall we had a great night, but we were a bit tired and had hangovers when we went on duty the next morning after an hours sleep. All together we have 17 passengers, amongst them a Japanese professor, and 1 gentleman from the Swiss legations in Tokyo, together with his wife and two daughters who are 5 and 3 years of age. Altogether, we had five children on board age 3 to 9 years. From Shanghai we had a cargo of silver bullion worth 8 million kroner for a bank in New York. On this trip we were delayed some days, because we had to go to Chester to pick up Ford vehicles for the Far East, and, as they were not ready, we had to wait a couple of days there.

Just remembered your card I received the other day, thank you. I am looking forward to getting back to the Far East again. It's too boring and expensive here in the USA. We drink a fair amount of beer here, costing 10 cents per bottle and not nearly as tasty as a Carlsberg or Tuborg (Danish beer). I am thinking I may buy a camera, when we get to Far East. One day, when I visited “Frederik 8<sup>th</sup>”, I took a walk down Cortland St. here in New York City and found a store with nice cameras. They were 6x9, the same brand as yours, for \$13, and if the dollar has gone down the next time we are here, I may buy one. There is a lot to photograph on our tour, and I hope to send you a lot of great pictures.

It is going to be interesting to see how our next journey proceeds, since we have quite a few new crew members. Besides the new skipper, we have the following new officers in the mess: 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer, two new assistants and a 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer and Mate. Everything now has to be like onboard a big liner ship. We can only show up on the bridge in uniform and right now, when it is so warm, it's the white tropical uniforms with “wienerbrød” (salad) on the shoulders. Besides that, we will now signal our departure 15 minutes before leaving. Everything onboard now is copied from the big liner ships. I have to stop writing now, but promise to be more diligent with my letters in the future. I am enclosing several pictures I was given onboard, but I am asking you to keep them for me until I return home, since they are the only copies I have. I have written a note on the back to indicate what they are. I also sent some to Odense, but can get them when I return. Are you going home for summer holidays? I have also enclosed a journey schedule. Many loving greetings and trust you all are well.

Harald

\*M/S “Niel Mærsk” out of Svendborg DK sailed under the Panama flag and was ship wrecked June 1942 in the Mozambique Canal. Two foreign sailors perished, but no Danes.

\* “Nicoline Mærsk” Odense. The ship was commandeered by the Germans and the crew was replaced with Germans, It ran aground on the Spanish east coast in December 1943. No one perished.



M/S. Peter Mærsk

Pacific Ocean, Sunday 30/7 1933

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Just a few words from San Pedro, but not many, because nothing special happened since I wrote last time. We arrived in Pedro early this morning around 3 o'clock. We had fine weather all the way from New York and it was quite hot, 34 to 35 Celsius in the shade, but we have finally reached so far north (25 degree North) that the hot weather has stopped. In the afternoon we still have 30 degrees heat, but as the afternoon passes, the temperature falls to the low 20's and we start to freeze like small dogs, quickly changing into our blue uniforms. It's strange that one feels cold in 22 degrees, but that happens, when one has been used to 30 degrees for long periods. At the same time the water temperature falls from 30 to 20 so our pool is now deserted. There is no one who has the guts to swim in "ice water". Well otherwise, everything is OK, as the Yankees say, except that I am at odds with "høkeren" (the Petty Officer). The reason is, he came up to the radio station one evening and started making a fuss about no radio music in the salon. He made so much of a fuss that I got angry, and told him point blank that I was going to ask the skipper if we are playing music or sending telegrams, because both can not be done at the same time. He told me to go right ahead, and probably had forgotten that we had a new skipper. The result was that "høkeren" got himself a dressing down and the skipper told me not to take order from anyone aboard, since no one but him can give me orders. Beside this the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer has the habit (and by the way so have all 1<sup>st</sup> Engineers, since they think they know everything) of telling me to fetch the telegrams, when he needed them sent. The skipper has now told me not to be a delivery boy for the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer or anyone else on board. If the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer wants to send a telegram, he can deliver it up to the station. I am a telegraph operator on a telegraph station open to the public. Should anyone want to send a telegram, they can visit the station, as they would do anywhere else. Onboard most of the Danish ships the rules are that "Gnisten" are just a kind of service boy for higher ranking officers such as the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer. It is not going to be like that here as long as Schmidt is skipper. That is all right with me. He is a very nice man, but if something goes wrong, he can have a real temper.

Well, I have to finish, and hope both of you are OK and healthy. Hope to hear from you and will write from Yokohama.

Loving greetings

Harald

PS: Enclosing a picture of two sweet “japserpiger” (Jap girls) in Kobe. The one with socks on is “Jacob’s” girl. The picture I took of Ma-Yu-Mi was not very good, so I will take another one and mail it to you.

PS: On this journey we will visit 2 locations in Formosa (Taiwan) between Hong Kong and Shanghai. It is possible that we will visit Frisco on the return journey. “Anna” had been at both places during their last voyage.



M/S. Peter Mærsk

At sea 24/8 1933

Dear Alfred and Ebba

I am just going to send you a few words. Right now we are on our way to Shanghai from Kobe. We will be loading cargo around midnight or in a couple of hours, and we will arrive in Shanghai tomorrow morning early, around 6 o'clock. Actually, I should be sound asleep, since I was up all night and only slept for a couple of hours this morning, but I wanted to write a few words to you. On top of that, I have to be up at 12 o'clock, because there is a birthday at the "midnatsklubben" (mid night club) tonight. I do not think I have told you about the club earlier, but it is a threesome consisting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer, assistant Jacobsen, and the undersigned, who enjoy our cup of coffee in the mess every night at 12 to 1 o'clock. At 12 o'clock the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer and "Jacob" are off duty from the engine room and since I am up around the same time, we meet at the mess and have small chat over a cup of coffee. Tonight at 12 o'clock it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer's birthday, which means snaps and beer.

There is not a lot to write about on this trip, but no news is good news, as they say. We have had a rather unique voyage over the Pacific this time, with beautiful weather and hardly any wind.

We had a great time in Yokohama and Kobe. Jacobsen and I were ashore in both places as usual until early morning. I am also so lucky that I am off duty in harbours, unless there is unloading duty, which did not happen at all this time. Normally, we have to be onboard before 7 o'clock in the morning. The last night in Kobe, we were supposed to depart at 12 o'clock midnight, but the skipper called me up to his cabin and I thought he had some work for me. Instead he said, "Good evening Spark, I just want to tell you that we won't be departing until noon tomorrow, and you can go onshore tonight. There is a boat going ashore at 10 o'clock and if you need money, you can get it from me. It is also not necessary to report for duty at 7 o'clock tomorrow, you can come midmorning or any time you want, as long as you are onboard when we depart, and that applies anytime we are in harbour. You have so much night duty at sea, that it is reasonable you are off duty, when we are in harbour". That was great, and I departed for Ma-Ry-Uni's place. Unfortunately "Jacob" had duty, so I went by myself. So from now on, I will make sure to take advantage of this when we are in harbor. When we return back to Kobe from the Philippines (and we are lucky to arrive during the day) "Ma-Ry-Uni" will come and pick me up and we will go for a picnic in the forest up in the mountains. They won't see me before we are ready to depart. When we get to Yokohama, I am planning a trip to Tokyo together with a little Geisha girl named Futhiko, but Jacobsen and his girl are coming too, and it will be an evening trip. Tokyo is 30 km away, so we hire a taxi to drive us there and back plus around the city for only 10 yen. We will be eating Japanese dinner there with chop sticks etc.

In Shanghai, Hong Kong and Manila I don't think I will go ashore this time. On the return journey we will stop in Formosa and probably Frisco in the States.

The pilot is almost here and I have to stop for now. I have to drop by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer's to wish him happy birthday and then on to my berth for a couple hours of sleep, but up at 3 o'clock to see if Lyngby has any telegrams for us and to send a couple of radio letters to domestic ships in Denmark. I am enclosing two pictures of "a meeting in the Pacific". It's "Anna", when we passed by her between Panama and Pedro. One picture shows her approaching us and the second, when we are passing. I want to wish you happy birthday for upcoming birthdays and finish with loving greetings.

Harald

PS: Will send one more letter from the Far East.



M/S. Peter Mærsk  
26/11/33

Baltimore

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Well you probably think I have gone to heaven long time ago, because it is several months since I wrote to you the last time. It is not that bad, I am still "frisk som in fisk" (fresh like a fish), but I do not know why it is almost impossible for me to get going writing a letter to you. If you knew about my pangs of conscience, because I have not written to you, I think you will forgive me a little. First I want to say thank you for your letters and Sunday "BT", because, even if I am not diligent in writing to you, I am still egoistic enough to yearn for letters from home. I think I am beginning to feel at home out here, and may spend some years out here before I find my way back home again, if A. P. Møller tells me that he no longer has any need of my services. I am so used to the life out here now that I feel at home, so I have no plans to make changes right now. Life here has its up's and down's like everywhere else, some happiness, some sorrows and some worries. On this journey, a very unpleasant thing happened to me and unfortunately it is not over yet. Just shows that even out here, we can have troubles. It is in regards to 500 bars of tin we took on as cargo in Hong Kong for New York. The first mate ordered me to count the bars, as they were loaded onboard from a barge alongside our ship. I attached the hoist to a sling with 20 bars. The barge and the agent also had their people on hoist duty. When we finished, I counted 25 slings or 500 bars and the other hoist crews had the same number, so everything was OK. I signed the receiving book and did not think about it anymore. I have to note that trainee Lammert was sent down to the cargo hold to supervise the loading, as well as keeping watch, so the coolies did not steal any of our cargo. All over the Far East, when the cargos hatches are open, he has been on duty. He and I are now directly involved in this case, which I will tell you about now. During the loading in Hong Kong Lammert arranged the tin in rows each with a specific numbers of bars and after loading, he himself took an inventory and decided there were 500 bars in total. This I did not know before we arrived in New York and it would have consequences for me personally. In New York we unloaded the tin at the quay, but nobody from our ship counted the number of bars, since Isbrandtsen's (a local Danish import company) own people were in charge of unloading, and at completion, it turned out, that we only had 485 bars on the ship. So 15 missing bars with a value of 3000 kroner were very little compared to the receiver and unloading crew insinuating that our ship had stolen the missing bars and sold them. Well, my inventory book was retrieved and I was interrogated by a representative from some kind of company regarding how, where etc. I had kept inventory during the loading. Lammert was also interrogated.

In the beginning it looked like a minor problem, until one day, when the captain and I were summoned to a meeting in Isbrandtsen's office on Battery Place in New York and, Isbrandtsen, the CEO himself, interrogated us. Nothing much happened, but I had the pleasure of meeting Isbrandtsen and shaking hands with him. By the way, it was a very interesting trip, since we were docked far away in Brooklyn at a sugar factory and drove by car through New York for about a quarter hour to the office.

It was the first time in I had driven over the Brooklyn Bridge, crossing the East River from Brooklyn to Manhattan. Now, I have sailed on the East River, traveled under it by subway, and finally, over it on a bridge. Until now, I have only sailed on the Hudson River and traveled under it by subway. The Hudson River divides Manhattan (New York City) and

New Jersey. Besides that, Isbrandtsen lives above the office and I do not know if it was 40 or 50 floors up, so I had a "real" elevator trip. So far it has not been possible to find the 15 bars of tin. I apologize for my writing today, but we are now on the way from Baltimore to Philadelphia and when we were loading, the whole ship was shaking. We departed at 6:30 in the evening on Saturday 2/12 and will be in Pluto tomorrow afternoon. I am enclosing our schedule, but only for the outbound journey; for the return trip, I will write later. We will be in New York on Wednesday and depart Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> for the Far East. There will be 5 stops on the way and we are fully booked with passengers. Outside that, everything is the same old, except that my good friend assistant Jacobsen is departing. He has been transferred to "Bente Mærsk", which will return him to Denmark. We have had a great time in the Far East and 5 full days in Yokohama, because of a broken chain in the engine. It was great, but expensive since I spend 150 kroner. I did go ashore every day. We had delightful weather during the entire journey and crossed the Pacific in 14 days and 3 hours. Well, I have to stop for now. I have to get the weather report and then I will go below for a bath and then to my bunk.

3/12 Sunday – We are now most of the way to Philadelphia and will arrive there at 8:40 pm. I am inclosing a number of pictures I have bought from several people onboard. Most of them are from the Far East and I will write a note on the back to indicate what they show and from where. By the way, I bought a camera in New York this time. It's a used "Voegtlaender" (German camera) 6:9 and I paid 8 dollars for it, including 8 rolls of film. I have now used all 8 rolls and the pictures are quite amazing, but I have not made copies yet. When I do, I will mail a copy of each.

We have a lot of cargo for this journey, especially a lot of Ford vehicles for Japan, which we will take on board in Chester. In Baltimore we loaded a passenger plane onboard. Unfortunately, I did not get a picture of it when it was hanging from the crane. It has room for 10 passengers and is going to Yokohama. We are also being told that on this journey we will stop in Miami, Florida, to load a second airplane. I am going to send a radio telegram for Christmas, so you can see where we are Christmas Eve, since the radio letter is printed on a world map with a small ship stamped on it, indicating our position. To do that, we will contact Radio Denmark a couple of days before, indicating our position, and they will locate it on the letter.

I am going to finish this letter now, but I promise to write soon again. Trust you both are healthy and everything is good. Are you traveling to Odense for Christmas?

Herewith the best regards.

Harald

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Chester 13/5 1934

Dear Alfred and Ebba

First many thanks for your letters, and now I really have to apologize for not writing to you for almost a half year. Normally, I would write to you, when we are here on the east coast but it did not work out for me until now. The problem is that I am fixing the radio station and it is still not quite done. I started on with spring cleaning and painting my cabin also. Everything is removed from my bunk and sofa. Curtains and everything unscrewed and removed. I have painted everything, walls and ceiling, with a white lacquered finish, "rustico", I think it's called and believe me, I now live in a nice and clean cabin, but I still have to paint the baseboards, and varnish and polish the deck. Apologies; I mean the floor. In the last 8 days I have been working Saturdays and Sundays to 11 -12 at night. Last night was the first time I took half an hour off, and went ashore to buy a summer cap for \$1.50 plus 85 cent for an extra cover. So I have not been ashore lately and that saved me a lot of money, which was quite necessary, since I have never been so poor as I have been since we departed from Japan last time. Not one "øre" (Danish cent) is left in my pay book and I still owe the tailors in Shanghai and Yokohama 100 "kroner", which I have to pay them, when we return next time. Damn it, but it is not possible to save money onboard "Peter" and since I boarded, money has been gone for me. Onboard "Anna" I would have 65 "kroner" left over from my salary every month with, which I paid off a debt to my union, and bought a lot of linen, but after 9 months, when I debarked in Pedro, I had 250 "kroner" owed to me on my pay book. Here on "Peter" I have 114.50 "kroner" for myself and now on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, after 14 months, I am owed 110 "kroner" and I owe 100 in the Far East, leaving only 11 kroner on my pay book. It's quite a crew on this ship. We can go ashore here in the Far East without spending at least half a hundred for a night, and we have to go ashore for sure in Yokohama, Kobe and Shanghai. On top of that, here in the tropics we have to have a least 3 or 4 Carlsberg beer every day and they cost 50 "øre" each, so the monthly bill from the petty officer is average 30 to 40 "kroner" each month. Onboard "Anna" it was seldom more than 10 monthly for me. Well, I think I will survive, since my salary next fall will increase 33 "kroner" to 247.50 monthly, and I will then draw 150 monthly on my pay book and get 97.50 for myself. I am going to try to save enough so I can pay for a trip home for Christmas a year after this fall.

We completed our last journey without any major events. We were of course, ashore to party at several places in the Far East. We arrived in New York April 11<sup>th</sup>, and the day after "Svend Pii"\* one of the shipping company "Vendilas" steamships arrived and docked at the pier across from us and we had a real party that night, with lots of beer and whisky. There is always a party on board our ship when we dock with other Danish ships, because most of them do not have a restaurant like ours onboard, so we have guests almost all the time when we dock on the east coast. Last time we were in New York, we docked with "M/S Chr Lars" and "SS Sonja Mærsk"\*\* and we had a big party on our ship and the guests got drunk, as always. 3<sup>rd</sup> engineer Uglebjerg, Theodor's\*\*\* old friend and I are checking to see if we could meet "M/S Astoria" somewhere. If so, we will make sure Theodor gets his fill. It could happen, since they also sail in the Far East.

Well, we departed on the 10<sup>th</sup> as planned, from New York and we are here in Chester loading Ford vehicles. Tomorrow we leave for Norfolk and then directly to San Pedro in Panama. We are not stopping in Savannah this time, even if it was stated on the schedule I mailed you. I trust you are healthy and home again Ebba, when you get this letter. Hope you got my radio telegram in the hospital. I hope you both will be healthy and have a good time.

Best regards to both of you and I hope you will feel better Ebba.

Harald

P.S. Will write a longer letter from Pedro

*\*SS Svend Pii, Copenhagen, Denmark. Shipping Company Vendila, Copenhagen. This ship was docked in Bremen, Germany, when an air attack sunk it on 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1943. No one perished.*

*\*\* SS Sonja Mærsk, Aalborg, Denmark. Shipping company A. P. Møller, Copenhagen. This ship on route between Swansea and Halifax ran aground and was wrecked June 5<sup>th</sup> 1942. No one perished.*

*\*\*\*Theodor, a school friend of Alfred and Harald home in Odense.*



M/S. Peter Mærsk

Norfolk, Virginia 12/10/1934

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Thank you very much for the letters, book and pictures. It is terrible, it is so long ago since I wrote to you the last time, and I am as ashamed of myself as a naughty dog, but I am going to do something about it. Nothing special happened during our last round trip. As usual, we partied at some of the places in the Far East and we were fully booked with passengers throughout the journey. On the journey across the Pacific, something almost happened, when I had duty one night and received a fire signal from the very large American cruise ship "President Lincoln" after a fire had started onboard. A fire signal consists of 3 +++ and is sent in place of SOS, if there is no immediate and imminent danger. This is the fire signal I received: +++ de KDXM=all ships=ss President Lincoln Saturday 22.28 north long 155.30 west at 8 pm. Fire nr. 7 hold please stand by = master +. Right away half dozen ships acknowledged receiving the message. I immediately ran down to the salon with the message for the captain, who right away went on the bridge and calculated our position. I then telegraphed our position and speed to "President Lincoln" and asked if we should enter course toward her. They replied that it was not necessary, since they were fighting the fire themselves and just wanted to be sure other ships were ready to help if the fire spread. If it had happened, he would have given us plenty of time to come to their assistance. They had 180 passengers and a similar crew onboard. They managed to control the fire and reach Honolulu. Another American steam ship "Morro Castle" caught fire recently off the coast of New Jersey, just south of New York, but we were too far away to assist. Our ship was approximately 700 miles or 2 days south on our way to New York and we did not hear anything about it until the evening radio news. "Morro Castle" had been in one of those tropical disturbances typical around Cuba and the West Indies Islands. I already had the weather reports when we left Panama, and we went 300 miles south-east of the storm center, which was traveling north with a speed similar to ours until it reached Cape Hatteras, when it's speed increased dramatically along the coast and caught up with "Morro Castle", which was four or five hours away from New York. We saw the wreck when we got there, since we were sailing close to the coast.

Outside of that, nothing else happened, and we had a good time during the month we have been on the East Coast, but left New York the on the 10<sup>th</sup> again, on the way to the Far East. I am enclosing our schedule, and as you can see, we depart Manila on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, having New Year's Eve in Shanghai. It is going to be some party for sure. We have 3 new Junior Officers onboard, and they look to be a bit boring, but of course it is their first time at sea. They are traveling home for the holidays, and I am wondering when it will be my turn to go on holidays. I have been thinking about coming home next Christmas, but we will see. We almost ran into Theodor in Yokohama, but they departed the day before we arrived and Theodor left a long letter for me. Unfortunately it did not work out that we were there together, because we would have had a lot of fun with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer, who is his friend from the navy.

The book I received from you has been read. It was very good, thanks again, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer is reading it now. Many thanks for the pictures in the last letter. They made me happy and they were the first pictures I have seen of the children since I left home. I must say they have grown since then, especially Ellis\*, who has changed so much that I barely recognized her. I think she looks like musician Jensen's Else. It's unbelievable how time flies, especially out here. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November it will be 2 ½ years since I left Odense. For that I am getting a 33 "Kroner" raise, and my pay is now 247.50 monthly. We do not measure time out here in years, but in round trips. One journey is 5 months, meaning 4 from New York and back, plus 1 month on the east coast of the USA. We docked together in New York with a new boat "Nora Mærsk", when we returned from the Far East. It is a bit bigger and faster than our ship. Speed for Nora is 16 nautical miles fully loaded. They also have a radio operator onboard, a young man right out of school. He was not very happy and had a hard time, but I went over to see him and gave him some tips before they departed.

We depart for Savannah tomorrow at noon and sail directly to San Pedro, and then off to our favorite place, Yokohama. I miss my "girl friend" there a lot. We always have a couple of lovely days in Japan. When we left Yokohama last year, I was so drunk. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer was off duty and we went on shore at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and did not return until 2 pm the next day, drunk as skunks. I was so bad, I just dropped down on my sofa and fell asleep after being sick and throwing up in the waste basket. We were scheduled to depart at 6 pm and I was supposed to have the weather report ready. Our skipper visited my cabin and realized what the situation was right away. I didn't see or hear him, but he ordered the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate to get the weather report, because the "Spark" was resting on his sofa and looked like a dead pig." I will be surprised if he wakes up before a day or two." Well the "Spark" did wake up at 6 pm, and right away got the weather report and any telegrams there.

It was the loveliest drunk I have ever had in my life. A regular German beer hangover. When we went ashore at 5 pm our battle plan had already been made. First we picked up our sweet little "Japser girl friends" and went for dinner at the bar "Hamburg", which had a German owner, German beer etc. We had "Wiener schnitzels" and drank beer. After that, we toured Yokohama's fashionable bars like "Night Palace", "Monte Carlo Khyo Hotel" etc. at and nine o'clock the next morning, we returned to bar "Hamburg" for lunch and to continue our beer drinking until 1 pm, when we began to navigate down to the harbour and "Peter Mærsk", complete with a small stop for more beer. We have a great time here in Japan. Shanghai can also be very good, but they are missing the small cuddly "Japser girls". There is not much life in the Chinese girls.

Our Skipper is OK. He accepts that we go partying ashore. A guy who can't drink himself drunk and have fun with the girls, is just a nobody, so that maybe why he likes me? My mates insist I am number one on his list. He can be very open with me, when we are alone, and he often offers me fruit and so on. He is also very generous with money when we are ashore. One evening when the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer and I arrived at the Khyo Hotel, the Skipper was sitting in the restaurant (his girlfriend lives there).

When he saw us, he winked and asked how our wallets were doing. We admitted to being very low on funds. He said that was no problem, and when we followed him to the Gentleman's, he took care of our wallets, giving us 30 yen each. By the way, we had a great evening. The Petty Officer and cook were also there, and some of the girls invited us all for Japanese dinner at a private room, where we sat on the floor and ate using chopsticks. We had great fun and I got into a fight with the

Skipper's girlfriend and we were rolling around on the floor. All for fun of course, and everyone found it very amusing. Every trip to Japan is rich in new experiences and we are all looking forward to it. In the mess there is a lot of talk about "Japsen girls" and beer.

I have to stop writing now. Hope you are feeling better Ebba, and both of you are doing well. Everything here is OK and I am going to pull myself together and write at least once a month. Loving greetings to both of you.

Harald

P.S. Regards to Nørregade when you write.\*

\* *Ebba's parent's home in Odense.*

## M/S Peter Mærsk schedule May 1934.

### Journey No. 6

Departure	Arrival	Departure
New York.....	.....	May 10
Norfolk .....	May 11 .....	May 12
Savannah.....	May 14.....	May 15
Panama .....	May 21 .....	May 21
Los Angeles.....	May 30.....	May 30
Yokohama.....	June 18.....	June 20
Kobe.....	June 21.....	June 22
Shanghai.....	Jun 25.....	June 27
Hong Kong.....	Jun 30.....	Jul 02
Manila.....	Jul 04.....	Jul 05
Cebu.....	Jul 07.....	Jul 07
Hoilo.....	Jul 08	
Return	Arrival	Departure
Manila.....	Jul 22.....	July 24
Hong Kong.....	Jul 26.....	Jul 27
Shanghai.....	Jul 31.....	Aug 03
Kobe.....	Aug 06.....	Aug 07
Nagoya.....	Aug 08.....	Aug 08
Yokohama.....	Aug 09.....	Aug 10
Los Angeles.....	Aug 24.....	Aug 25
Panama.....	Sep 03.....	Sep 03
New York.....	Sep 10	

**M/S. Peter Mærsk 1934****Journey No. 7**

<b>Departure</b>	<b>Arrival</b>	<b>Departure</b>
New York.....	.....	Oct 10
Norfolk .....	Oct 11.....	Oct 12
Savannah.....	Oct 14.....	Oct 15
Panama .....	Oct 21.....	Oct 21
Los Angeles.....	Oct 30.....	Oct 31
Yokohama.....	Nov 18.....	Nov 20
Kobe.....	Nov 21.....	Nov 22
Shanghai.....	Nov 25.....	Nov 27
Hong Kong.....	Nov 30.....	Dec 02
Manila.....	Dec 04.....	Dec 05
Cebu.....	Dec 07.....	Dec 07
Hoilo.....	Dec 08	
<b>Return</b>	<b>Arrival</b>	<b>Departure</b>
Manila.....	Dec 22.....	Dec 24
Hong Kong.....	Dec 26.....	Dec 27
Shanghai.....	Dec 31.....	Dec 03
Kobe.....	Jan 06.....	Jan07
Nagoya.....	Jan 08.....	Jan 08
Shimidzu.....	Jan 09.....	Jan 9
Yokohama.....	Jan 10.....	Jan 11
Los Angeles.....	Jan 25.....	Jan 26
Panama.....	Feb 04.....	Feb 04
New York.....	Feb 11	

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Baltimore December 03/1935

Dear Alfred and Ebba

I am almost ashamed writing to you, because it's such a long time since I wrote last time. First, many thanks for the Christmas letter and the book, I was really happy to get it. Unfortunately, it is a bit late to write and thank you, but for some reason I am having trouble getting started to write a letter. However I am going to correct this neglect and write a really long letter. A lot has been going on that I can write about, and I will start with the latest, since it is the most interesting.

Right now we are docked in Baltimore and have been here since February 22<sup>nd</sup> and will be here until March 16<sup>th</sup>. We are docked by the Bethlehem dry docks for repairs to the engine, but more about that later on in this letter. We have only been to New York and Baltimore so far and I have only been ashore one time. One night, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer, who will be our 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer on our next journey, and I decided to go ashore at 11 o'clock at night to have a look at the "dark side" of Baltimore. We got the shipyard's security guard to call a taxi to take us up to the "Horn & Horn", one of Baltimore's finest restaurants, where we had half a dozen fresh oysters each. They were really big ones and we had coffee and toast, all for the price of only 70 cents. Then we went to Ensor Street, which is something like Copenhagen's "Nyhavn" (red district), visiting one dive after the other all night. Beer was 5 cent for a glass, so we had our fill. It is here the city's lowlifes hang around. There were lots of easy girls and their "boyfriends". We experienced arguments and fights, plus examples of swearing in English. Almost all dives have a "Nigger" jazz band and dance. It was interesting to study daily life, here until we decided to visit the better part of the city, where both of us ate "en stor beskidt bøf" (a very large steak), before we went onboard again.

In San Pedro we also went ashore to check out the night life and it was somewhat different to Baltimore. In San Pedro is characterized by sailors, and often violent. From time to time, someone will lose their life to a revolver bullet. That happened in one of our favorite bars that was closed when we got there, because a man had been shot there the night before. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer's brother lives and work in Hollywood (a couple of hours ride on a streetcar from Pedro) and he always visits us when we dock at Pedro, and takes us ashore. In Pedro you will find a lot of promiscuous "ladies", who by the way are often very smart. Most of them are from Hollywood, where because of the bad times, it is hard to make a living, but here in the seaport it is easier. I have never seen so many drunken women as in Pedro. On the street and in restaurants they stagger around. The end of prohibition has really changed the USA, even if people also drank a lot during prohibition, but it was more hidden then. Well enough about all that, and I am going to tell you about the more exciting events that we have had here.

In regard to the following, I have to ask you not to mention anything about it to strangers, since some of it is concerning confidential telegrams, and other issues not to be made public. I will start in San Pedro on the return journey, since the previous one went well.

The ship's engine had functioned above all expectations, with a speed of 15 nautical miles when the weather was calm. We have a full cargo and the maximum number of passengers heading to Pedro. By the way, we had the largest cargo of silk from Japan that any Mærsk freighter has had to date. Approximately 4400 bales of raw silk. To give you an idea of the value, a bale is approx. 1 meter by  $\frac{1}{2}$  meter by  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter and the freight cost is \$8 each or a total of \$35000 for the total cargo. You can imagine the actual value of the silk and it only fills a fraction of our cargo space. It was this year's first harvest of silk and expected by the receivers to be in New York according to our schedule. Just a few words about the engine. It's a new design and has had a lot of problems so far. It is a two stroke B & W engine with 9 cylinders, or actually 18, since it has 9 top and 9 bottom cylinders and 9 pistons.

Well, we departed in the most beautiful California summer weather and a glassy sea all the way to New York. Everything looked good, but only a day south of Pedro did the engine start to give us problems. It started with water in one of the bottom cylinders and we had stopped half a day for repairs. It turned out to be a crack in the engine block and could not be repaired at sea. We had to disconnect the one cylinder and continue on eight with a speed of 12  $\frac{1}{2}$  nautical miles. The engine ran very unevenly, and the entire ship was shaking violently. My antenna connections broke and fell down, and I had to repair them several times daily. Of course, we immediately sent telegrams to Copenhagen and New York and right away telegrams started to flow in from the two places. It was the silk that was the big problem. The receivers were furious that we would not be able to reach New York on the promised date. We received orders to force the speed as much as possible and the chief engineer had to send long telegrams regarding the damage and repair. He was not happy, because he knew we could not force the engine to higher speed. For 3 days we managed, but then just before midnight, we heard a very loud bang. I almost fell off my chair in terror. The engine gave a couple of small noises and stopped. A chain in the transmission had broken, and such a chain is worth 30 000 Kroner. Besides that, a blade broke in the transmission block and the engine base cracked. We now drifted around on the glassy Pacific, with two red lanterns raised to warn other ships passing by that we were adrift and could not enter course. It was a beautiful tropical night, warm, with no wind at all and a full moon smiled or rather, gazed mournfully down on poor "Peter Brock" (Peter broken, our new name for P.M.). Blessed silence, broken from time to time by vigorous hammering and noise from block and tackle in the engine room. All engineers, apprentices, and grease monkeys were of course working. We were lucky to have a spare chain to install, and we removed the damaged cylinder and piston and got the engine to run more smoothly. It worked, and we started to move at 7 in the morning and finally reached Balboa. We went through the canal, where I received a not too pleasant telegram from Copenhagen, telling the chief engineer to reinstall the piston in the broken cylinder, so that the top cylinder could be used again. In their lack of technical knowledge back home, they had worked out that it would give the ship a speed of 14 nautical miles per hour. It was crazy and the chief was furious, because his practical knowledge tells him that it will do more damage than good. But it was an order, and we stayed in Cristobal overnight, while the engine crew performed this futile work.

In the morning, we continued our journey with the great result that we could only do 12 nautical miles compared to 12 ½ before. We got lucky with the balmy seas, and finally arrived in New York 6 days late. In New York we unloaded the cargo, including the cargo for Boston and Philadelphia, and then went directly to the ship yard. We were supposed to leave New York for the Far East March 9, but that was not going to happen. Inspector Nielsen from the shipping company and Mr. Krovenberg from B & W arrived from Copenhagen on SS "Europa". The entire engine is now disassembled and it is not minor things that are wrong. Rumors were traveling fast. First we would return home for repairs, then staying here, then home again and so on. The result was that we would do the repair here, starting on March 16<sup>th</sup>, and depart from New York March on 23<sup>rd</sup>. If this plan doesn't succeed, then the ship will return home. There is a lot of pressure to reach this date, so we can complete one more journey, after which the engine will get a thorough repair, probably in Copenhagen. The inspector thinks the ship should return home, but the final say is of course up to A.P.; however, we will almost for surely return home at the end of August. If I can return home with the ship, which I hope very much, it will be wonderful to spend a month at home, and I will come to Randers to visit you. I am really looking forward to that, because in May, it will be 3 years since I left. How quickly the time is passing, and I think dad will be happy if I come home for a month, and it will be around his birthday too. Should the ship not return home, I do not think I will return home until Christmas 1936. We had a great time in the Far East especially in Japan, with our little "sweethearts" in Yokohama and Kobe. We have new 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Engineers on board and the old 3<sup>rd</sup> engineer has been promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup>, plus we have a new 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate. I am the oldest in the officers mess now and only the 1<sup>st</sup> Mate and the Cook have been onboard the ship longer than me.

Our contract has been extended to 1937 without any changes, except we are now accepted in the pension plan and can retire with a pension. The shipping company pays half the cost.

Well I do not think there is anything more of interest and I am enclosing our schedule, but please note, we are probably 14 days late. Hope you are both healthy and doing well. Regards to your parents and siblings Ebba, next time you write them. Say hello to Olaf\* if you see him. I will write one more time before we leave New York and hope you will forgive me for taking so long to write.

Hope to get letter from you soon.

My best wished to both of you.

Harald

PS: New New York address:

Isbrandtsen – Møller Co. Inc. 26 Broadway, New York City N.Y.

U.S.A.



## M/S Peter Mærsk schedule May 1935.

### Journey No. 8

Departure	Arrival	Departure
New York.....	.....	Mar 09
Norfolk .....	Mar 10.....	Mar 11
Savannah.....	Mar 13.....	Mar 14
Panama .....	Mar 20.....	Mar 20
Los Angeles.....	Mar 29.....	Mar 30
Yokohama.....	April 17.....	April 19
Kobe.....	April 20.....	April 21
Shanghai.....	April 24.....	April 26
Hong Kong.....	April 29.....	May 01
Manila.....	May 03.....	May 04
Cebu.....	May 06.....	May 06
Hoilo.....	May 07	
Return	Arrival	Departure
Manila.....	May 23.....	May 25
Hong Kong.....	May 25.....	May 28
Shanghai.....	May 31.....	June 03
Kobe.....	June 06.....	June 07
Nagoya.....	June 08.....	June 08
Shinizu.....	June 09.....	June 09
Yokohama.....	June 10.....	June 11
Los Angeles.....	June 25.....	June 26
Panama.....	July 05.....	July 05

New York..... July 12

**Should you want to take a trip to the Orient, here are the ticket prices for the luxury liner M/S. Peter Mærsk**

**First class service. Swimming pool and tennis court.**

**New York – Panama .....\$80.00**

**New York – Yokohama .....\$240.00**

**New York – Shanghai .....\$250.00**

**New York – Manila .....\$265.00**

**Los Angeles – Panama .....\$90.00**

**Los Angeles – Yokohama.....\$150.00**

**Los Angeles – Manila .....\$180.00**

**Special fares for families, parties, round journey, single room etc.**

**Telegram from M/S. Peter Mærsk**

**Radio letter Lyngby Radio August 14, 1935**

**Rasmussen Villa Svea, Dronningborg, Randers**

**Wednesday half over. Expect arrival in Copenhagen the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup>. Calm weather.**

**Radio operator sends greetings**

**Harald**

**Telegram from M/S. Peter Mærsk**

**Lyngby Radio August 18, 1935**

**Rasmussen Villa Svea, Dronningborg, Randers**

**Tuesday 8 am**

Odense September 18, 1935

Dear Ebba

Many thanks for the slippers. They fit perfectly and they are nice and warm. I just got back from a trip to Copenhagen last Friday and Saturday. I am going out with "Peter Mærsk" again, and it does not depart before the 27<sup>th</sup>, but I have to be on board a couple days before, and will have to leave at the beginning of next week. Ugleberg had a great time here, but had only 10 days of vacation and will be onboard again, when we leave. My friend the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate has left already with another ship as 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate and did not have any vacation at all. Here at home, everything stays the same, so I have little to write about this time, but I will write before I leave.

Regards to both of you

Harald

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Copenhagen September 30, 1935

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Many thanks for the flowers and letter. I was very surprised when I received the parcel. The flowers are doing well and standing here on my table.

We were supposed to depart on Saturday, but because of a small problem with the engine, we are now departing on Tuesday afternoon. We have quite a few new people on board such as the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mates, Chief, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Engineers, plus 5 new assistants who never have been at sea before, and Uglebjerg is not too happy about that. We have had excellent food onboard the first days, so our new cook knows how to prepare food and let's hope the new steward will continue giving him good food to cook with.

Otherwise not much to write about, but I promise to write from Manila or Japan. We will probably arrive in New York before Christmas. Trust everything is well with you two.

Regards

Harald

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Manila October 04, 1935

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Just arrived and I am going to send you a few words even though, to tell the truth, there is little to write about.

We arrived here on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October after an unusually fine trip, which took exactly a month. As you know, it was October 1<sup>st</sup> at 3 pm, when we departed from B & W's repair dock and at 5.15 PM (Manila time is 7 hours ahead of Danish time) October 31<sup>st</sup>, we dropped anchor in Manila's harbour, after sailing approximately 10, 200 miles (18 000 km), with only three stops at sea to install some ventilation. The engine has run magnificently. All the creepy sounds and bangs in the engine base have completely disappeared and it runs like a dream. Over the stack during the entire journey, as it should be on a proper motor ship, we have only seen a light heat shimmer and not a hint of smoke. Here in Manila we dismantled two cylinders to check for wear and tear and everything was satisfactory. We now have hope that the engine will perform properly from now on. Our average speed during the entire journey has been 15 nautical miles an hour, but we have had days with an average of 16 nautical miles an hour (approx. 30 km). Upon our arrival here, including the return trip to Copenhagen, we have circumnavigated the earth at exactly 5 months and 4 hours, since we departed Manila on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May at 12.30 pm via China, Japan, Panama, New York and Copenhagen. The total distance travelled was approximately 26 000 nautical miles. We have passed through both the Panama and the Suez canals. The furthest north we have been is 59 degrees, just north of Scotland, and the furthest south is 1 degree north south of Singapore or approximately 60 nautical miles north of equator. We have not been in the southern hemisphere so far. Shortly after we left Copenhagen, I had the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate cut my hair, so I am now completely bald and you probably would not recognize me if you saw me. It is both comfortable and practical and it actually suits me. The Skipper and 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate have also been cut bald, so I am not alone. On Saturday evening, 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Uglebjerg and I, together with the Chief Engineer, went ashore. We visited St Ana, allegedly the world's largest cabaret. We drank our fair share of beer, which resulted in us getting drunk, especially Uglebjerg. Arriving back on the ship 4 o'clock in the morning, he found out he had lost his cabin key and ended up sleeping on the 4<sup>th</sup> Engineer's sofa. All day Sunday he was depressed and practically sobbed over his wasted life, blaming himself and solemnly promising never to drink beer again. I offered him a cold beer several times, but he just ran away and I was beginning to worry about his mental state. By early evening, he had recuperated somewhat and we had 4 beers for dinner. Today he is fine, happy and his old self, and by no means is he refusing a cold beer. We depart from here to Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Japan on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November and probably arrive in New York on December 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup>, and will depart for our next journey on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1936. I am enclosing the schedule.

I trust both of you are fine and happy in your new apartment. Mail me the new address as soon as possible.

M/S. Peter Mærsk

San Pedro December 05 1935

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Hereby a Christmas greeting from California. Unfortunately I do not have much time to write a letter right now, since we are about to depart. I had a tough journey across the Pacific this time. Average 4 to 5 hours sleep and no free time to write Christmas letters. Upon arrival here, I had to finish a report, then count bales of silk to 4 pm and we are departing at 9 tonight, so there is little time left, and on top of this, I have to prepare a weather report. I am getting sick and tired of all this and wish I could get away soon, when my 18 month contract is up. Either home or to Japan and therefore I have stopped completely going ashore except for Yokohama and Kobe, so I can save my money. I want to ask you a big favor. As far as I know, there is something at home called 100 hours German and 100 hours French and if you could get it for me, I would be very happy. Also if you could find out if a Danish-Japanese dictionary, including grammar exists, and if so, it is probably only available in one of the big bookstores in Copenhagen. I have an English-Japanese dictionary, but would like a Danish-Japanese, if it is available. If you can find it, please mail to this address. Radio operator H. Rasmussen M/S. Peter Mærsk, c/o C. B. Fenton & Company, Inc. P. O. Box 5025, Cristobal, C. Z. Panama.

I have to stop now, since I have to write a few words to hotel owner Petersen in Yokohama, whom I spent a lot of time with last time, where he introduced me to "de hvides" (the whites) club in Yokohama. It is not just anyone who can visit there, since you have to be introduced by a member. I also promised to get him some caged birds from Panama.

Best wishes for Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

Regards

Harald

P.S. You will get a longer letter from New York,

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Norfolk January 13, 1936

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Many thanks for the two books and letters. It was way too much to send two books, but I have read both of them and they were very good. We have again departed for Japan and we had a quick turnaround here on the East coast this time. Our Christmas was spoiled, since we left New York on the 24<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm and had both Christmas Eve and Day at sea. Christmas day, both engine and deck crew worked full blast, since we had to be prepared to take on cargo in Boston. So we did not have much of a Christmas. From Boston we departed for Baltimore, where we arrived on the 31<sup>st</sup> in the morning, ending up having New Year's Eve ashore. It went over very well, if you like drinking parties. Otherwise I have had no adventures on the East Coast this time, since I did not go ashore at all. I am experiencing grief, since my best friend, 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Uglebjerg, has been transferred to M/S. Nora Mærsk, travelling the same route as us, but we did meet up in Shanghai. He left us in Panama, so we had beer-drinking farewell parties for him on both side of the canal, first in Panama City and then in Cristobal. Since Uglebjerg, left my life has been very quiet and I do not go ashore except in Japan, because I am thinking about retiring from the merchant marine, if I can save enough money. I have not been able to afford to buy the camphor tree chest yet, but I will make sure to get you one. Do you want one just as large as the one you saw in Copenhagen? I will also buy some paintings for the Erland's, (a friend of Ebba and Alfred) and send them home. If you want some more let me know.

I would like you to get me a scarf Ebba, if it is not too inconvenient for you. It has been very cold the last 3 weeks here. 10 degrees frost and snow, and I really appreciated the pullover and slippers you gave me. In regard to the books I wrote about in my last letter; let me know what you can do, and if you will mail them to Panama, I can check with the agent. Sounds like the hunting season is going well and I wouldn't mind joining you one Sunday, but the season is probably almost finished. Are you sad Ebba, that you lost "Blitz" (Alfred's hunting dog), or are you happy with the new dog?

I am going to stop now, but I will write again from San Pedro and if possible from Yokohama, but it depends on how busy I will be on the journey over the Pacific, and in Japan, I will have no time.

Best regards and all the best to both of you for a successful and healthy New Year.

Harald

PS: Thanks for the birthday telegram and say hello in Nørregade and say thank you. Regards to Olaf too.

M/S. Peter Mærsk

The Pacific January 29 1936

Dear Alfred and Ebba

I am just going to write a few lines, because as usual, I have little exciting news. We arrived in San Pedro early this morning, a day early and with full cargo, so we shall only take on passengers and refuel, staying only for 4 or 5 hours, so we are 2 days ahead of schedule and have plenty of time to cross the Pacific for Yokohama. We have had great weather since we left New York, and the engine performs above all expectations. We will probably arrive in Yokohama on the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> of February, but it is not easy to say for sure, since the risk of damn bad weather this time of year and the "stille" sea (Stillehavet (calm sea) is the Danish name for the Pacific Ocean) is often difficult to fight with during the winter season, since one storm after the other from the east towards USA will hit us right on the nose.

We are fully booked with passengers: 13 women and 3 men. I have spoken with "Vig" (a radio operator) on M/S. Anna Mærsk every evening for the last 5 or 6 days and he will be traveling home on holidays from New York, the lucky guy. He wants to go home to look for a job on land, which probably will not be easy to find right now (This is the time of the great depression still). A consolation for me is that we are arriving in Japan again in approximately 14 days. Now I have to stop writing for this time, because of lack of anything new. Trust you are both well and having a good time. Is the new dog just as affectionate as Blitz? Hope to hear from you soon.

Regards

Harald



M/S. Peter Mærsk

Baltimore May 30, 1936

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Thanks very much for letters and books I have received. Yes, it is now a long time since I wrote last, but time runs fast and one day goes after the other without writing. Everything is OK here as usual, with nothing different, just the same old grind. We passed by "Astoria" here in the Pacific. It has been chartered for a round tour on our route. I wanted to send a telegram to Theodor, but the "Styrmandstelegrafisten" (mate acting as a radio operator) onboard probably had cotton wool in his ears, since I could hear him clearly and tried several times, but he never replied.

Dad wrote me and indicated that you did not want any money for the books, but I will try to get the camphorwood chest in Shanghai (the chest is still in the family and resides in Canada). The most difficult part is to get it sent to you, but something will be done about that.

In Philadelphia we docked with "Nora Mærsk" one afternoon and I managed to meet Uglebjerg. I kind of promised him that I will take vacation next year in August. I really would like to come home, but I also want to save more money, so I can look for something else to do, since this job is becoming more and more tedious.

New York June 10<sup>th</sup> 1936

Another few days went by without me being able to finish this letter, but now I am going to do something about it. We are again ready to depart for the Far East. The passengers are on board and we are almost finished loading our cargo. Tomorrow we depart for Norfolk and from there on to Yokohama via the Panama Canal and San Pedro. In regard to the scarf you are writing about Ebba, it will be best to send it to Panama, since it does not have to go through customs there. I have often needed it and will appreciate it very much when I get it. The address in Panama is C. B. Fenton and Co. Inc. PO Box 5025, Cristobal, Canal Zone, Panama.

It is going to be a warm journey this time, since we get to the Far East during the warmest time of the summer, but on the other side, we will probably have great weather crossing the Pacific. It will be my 20<sup>th</sup> crossing, and I have splashed around there enough now.

Finish for this time. But will try to be more diligent writing after this. Trust you both are doing well and will have a nice summer vacation at home.

Regards Harald

Present Radio Telegram. Salesman P.A. Rasmussen, Ankerhusvej, Dronningborg, Randers. Sent from M/S. Peter Mærsk July 21, 1936 received at Lyngby Radio. Included a bouquet flowers. Dear Alfred and Ebba. Congratulation on the new son. Regards Harald.

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Philadelphia October 5, 1936

Dear Alfred and Ebba

Thank you very much for the two letters and congratulation on the new son. It came as a surprise to me, and it will be exiting to get home to see the little new man in the family. I am looking forward to it. I apologize for taking so long to write, but I sent a radio letter and I hope you got it. We returned suddenly from the Far East and arrived in New York a whole month in advance. The letters sent to Japan and Manila did not reach me in time, and have been forwarded to America and that has taken time.

We have been docked and loading Ford vehicles on board here in Chester today, and will arrive in Philadelphia tonight. In Chester, I had a visit from a young Danish man, Allan Falbe Hansen, who works for Ford. He was previously in Detroit, but was relocated to Chester. I could not remember what your brother-in-law's name was Ebba. Otherwise I would have asked Allan if he knows him.

M/S. Nora Mærsk, A.P.'s largest, newest and fastest ship here on this route, caught fire when we were here in the Far East and was the reason we returned to Hong Kong to pick up their cargo. It was a sad accident, and the ship is a total loss and will be sold as scrap iron. It was not even two years, old and had a value of 3 million "Kroner". It burned for eleven days and it started with the explosion of a boiler in the engine room and there were a series of explosions in the bottom tanks, where the fuel is stored. The command bridge, crew quarters and the front were a total loss. Luckily no one was killed, but my good friend, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Uglebjerg, whom you probably remember from Copenhagen, was seriously burned, which is not surprising considering his temperament. However he was lucky and got over it. We read in the Japanese newspapers about the fire, and they indicated that one officer was killed and we were sure it had to be Uglebjerg. I did get a telegram from one of "Ø.K's" (Danish shipping company) ships, as he had visited when they were docked in Cebu. We returned to Hong Kong and were ordered to force the time for our return as much as possible. We managed several records, like crossing the Pacific in 13 days and 11 hours. We have never been under 14 days before, but the engine runs like a dream.

I had the opportunity to win an exciting bet I had with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate, when we were in the Panama Canal. It was the most exciting and nerve wracking bet I have ever made. Based on our average speed from Yokohama to Panama I calculated that we could make the trip from Panama to New York in 5 ½ days. We have never managed to do it in less than 6 days before except for one trip of 5 days and 20 hours. I told the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate about my calculations and he swore it was impossible. The result; a bet for 14 "Hof" (Danish beer) for the mess. Not a really large bet, but it was all about the honor. It was Sunday September 6 in Panama and the bet was based upon our departure before midnight, and I would win if the anchor was dropped in New York's guaranty zone before 12 o'clock midday September 11. There was not one in the whole crew, who dared to make a bet on me and I was judged to fail. We had to be lucky to arrive on September 11 at night, and I did realize that we must have fine weather for me to win.

We departed 10.14 pm Sunday and the bet was set. We have to make 354 nautical miles average every 24 hours. Until Monday midday we were doing well and I gained 3 miles the first 24 hours. In the Caribbean Sea we met the north east trade wind (The 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate's good friend, who he had bragged about to help him to beat me) and it was blowing hard. I lost 27 nautical miles in that 24 hours, but the trade wind calmed down and I lost only 3 miles in the next 24 hours. Great weather, high speed and strong current against us and I lost 15 nautical miles. Everyone in the mess gave up on me and suggested I paid for the beer right away, but I stuck with my bet. I counted on my helper, who we were getting close to, meaning the Gulfstream, plus a very fine weather report. During the 4<sup>th</sup> 24 hour period, I gained 18 nautical miles and now we are on the last 24 hours, where we had to do 367 nautical miles and stop to take the pilot onboard, but "Peter" showed that it was ready for a final sprint. The sea was blank like a mirror and there was no current, so "Peter" went full blast, doing 16 miles an hour. Friday morning we found out that New York was on summer time and our clock was an hour ahead. This was a bad handicap for me, since I had not taken it into my calculations, and it made the last minutes very exciting. 5 minutes before 11:00, the pilot boarded, and within an hour we spotted the quarantine station, but the clock was getting very close to 12:00. Finally, the command to stop the engine was given, and the anchor was ready to drop. There were only 3 minutes to go, then 2 and finally the last minute. Then the Skipper shouted "let starboard anchor go" and it dropped. I won with a half minute to spare. Can anyone make a finer calculation? The total distance was 1974 nautical miles (3700 km). All the Mates were teased big time by the Skipper, who told them, that from now on, they would know who to ask for arrival times.

Norfolk October 12/36. Sorry, another few days have gone by, but I have been busy fixing the station up. In New York I helped on the cranes, and at night I worked in the radio station until 12:00 or 1:00 o'clock. This letter is going to be late. On the other side, I have new and exciting news. There are rumors (especially credible from Isbrandtsen's office in New York), that our route length is going to be increased. When the 2 new ships arrive in the fall, New York will no longer be the end stop and we will continue towards Europe, ending in Copenhagen. Isbrandtsen's presently have a route from New York to Le Havre-London-Antwerp and then Rotterdam, using chartered ships. The idea is that we shall join this route and our round trip will then be 6 months long. The 14 days we now spend in Baltimore waiting, will be spent in Copenhagen, and twice yearly, we will have 14 days in Denmark. That's going to be great, if it happens, and we will be home for the first time in August next year. The reason for this is probably that the American's are trying to declare our present route illegal, since we do not enter a Danish harbour, sailing only between US and foreign harbours. Well, we will see what happens.

Outside of that, there is nothing new and I will finish for this time. Hope everybody is healthy and having a good time. You are probably completely OK again Ebba? Hope you send me a little picture of Knud.

Regards to all three of you Harald

P.S. Regards to your friend Oluf

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Shanghai October 25, 1936

Dear all three of you.

Hereby I am sending a little Christmas greeting, since I hope this letter will get to you before Christmas. We are docked here in Shanghai, quietly and peacefully. We arrived yesterday from Japan and depart tomorrow for Hong Kong. We had a fantastically fine trip over the Pacific with beautiful weather every day, and arrived fully 3 days early in Japan. Because of that we had a great time in Japan, even if it started off as an annoyance. At the start of the journey we did not think we would reach Yokohama before Monday, but because the weather was so great we realized we could have Sunday evening there. We arrived Sunday after 6 o'clock in the evening and unfortunately, an hour too late; the quarantine station had closed and we had to stay onboard doing absolutely nothing. Our Swedish cook's mate was furious and yelling that he damn well would spend nothing in Yokohama. Well, we were released Monday morning and stayed until Wednesday morning. As far as I am concerned, it does not matter, since I am ashore all the time we are in Japan. In Kobe, we docked from Thursday morning to Friday evening, but for me I was ashore for the whole time, and did not get back to the ship before Friday at noon. As the Chief Engineer stated, "Yes "Gnist", it was a great disappointment and we will remember it for many years". The Chief understood "the great disappointment" and he is a great fellow to get together with, but unfortunately he is quite deaf.

According to our schedule we will leave Manila Christmas Eve, but I think we will leave the 22<sup>nd</sup>, so we probably will have Christmas Eve in Hong Kong and New Years Eve in Shanghai.

I wish all three of you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Best regards Harald

P.S. Will write again from Manila





Shanghai.

On board M/s "Peter Mærsk"

25-11-1936.

Kære Alle Tre!

Hermed sender jer en lille  
Julehilsen, idet jeg haaber dette Brev  
maa naa jeren kort før Jul. Vi ligger  
i Aften fredelig og stille her i Shanghai,  
vi ankom igaar fra Japan og sejler  
imorgen til Hong Kong. Vi havde en  
vidunderlig fin Rejse over Stillehavet med  
det herligste Vær hele Tiden, saa vi  
kom hele 3 Dage for tidlig til Japan. Vi  
havde derfor indmarktet god Tid i Japan,  
selv om det begyndte med en Orgrulse.  
I Begyndelsen af Rejsen regnede vi ikke  
med at naa Yokohama før Mandag, men  
da Været holdt sig fint, blev vi klar over  
at Lørdag Aften kunde reddes. Vi naaede  
ogsaa ind Lørdag Aften Kl 6, men des-  
værre een Time for sent; Karantænen  
havde lukket, saa vi maatte pænt sidde  
om Bord og tænke videre. Vor svenske Koks-  
mat var rasende; han vilde, ta mig færd



inta Kijna en Stump i Yokohama."

Naa, Mandag Morgen kom vi ind og blev  
til Onsdag Morgen. Mig var det lige meget  
hvi jeg er i Land hele Tiden, vi ligger i  
Japan. I Kobe laa vi fra Torsdag Morgen  
til Fredag Aften. Her flød det hele ind i  
et for mig. Jeg naaede først om Bord Fredag  
Middag. Det var som I' Mester sagde: Ja,  
Gnist, det var rigtigt nok een af de store  
Landgange, een af dem vi mindes i mange  
Aar. I' Mester sætter Pris paa, store Landgange  
og han er en gemytlig Svend at være sam-  
men med; desværre er han meget døv.

Efter Fastplanen skal vi gaa fra Manila  
Juleaften, men jeg tænker vi gaar den 22.  
saa vi nok faar Juleaften i Hong Kong  
og Nytaar i Shanghai.

Jeg vil nu ønske jer alle 3 en rig-  
tig glædelig Jul og et godt Nytaar.

Hermed de kærligste Hilsener  
Harald.

P.S. Skriver fra Manila igen.

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Los Angeles March 31, 1937

Dear all three of you.

I am really embarrassed again that it has been so long since I wrote to you, and even now, I even have to hurry up, since we will be departing soon. Many thanks for the Christmas letter and the book, which I really liked. The scarf you wrote about was not there, so it must have been lost. The book I got here in Los Angeles, but the letter I did not get until we reached New York in February.

I am still OK and have decided to ask for holidays, so I can come home for Christmas this year. I should have written this letter yesterday, when we arrived, but unfortunately or should I say fortunately, we have a young female passenger of 20 years of age, who really wanted to see San Pedro at night, so the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate and I were the gallant officers who volunteered for the task. It went very well, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate is still not sober and the girl disappeared this morning, but hopefully she will show up again soon, since we depart in a couple of hours. Personally I am not feeling well and have problems collecting my thoughts. Hopefully I will get over it.

In regard to the hunting shotgun you wrote about Alfred, I will be happy to get one for you, but I think you have to find out if you can get it into the country, since you cannot import anything into the country with a value of more than 25 Kroner, without having foreign exchange. Write me when you find out.

How is Knud doing, he must be a big man now and I am really looking forward to seeing him when I get home. Hope all three of you are healthy and doing well.

Unfortunately, I do not have time to write more about the things I would like to at this time, but I am going to write a really long letter on the way to Japan. There is a possibility that we are going on strike, and if that happens, I will go ashore when we arrive in Shanghai.

Have to finish for now, and hope all three of you are OK and that I will soon receive a few words from you again.

Regards

Harald.

P.S. Say hello to Olaf

**M/S. Peter Mærsk****Schedule for journey no. 13 1937****Outbound**

<b>Departing</b>	<b>Arrival</b>	<b>Departing</b>
New York		March 10
Norfolk	March 11	March 12
Savannah	March 14	March 15
Panama	March 21	March 21
Los Angeles	March 30	March 31
Yokohama	April 18	April 20
Kobe	April 21	April 22
Shanghai	April 25	April 27
Hong Kong	April 30	May 02
Manila	May 04	May 06
Cebu	May 07	May 07
Iloilo	May 08	March 12

**Homebound**

<b>Departing</b>	<b>Arrival</b>	<b>Departing</b>
Manila		May 24
Hong Kong	May 26	May 27
Shanghai	May 30	June 02
Kobe	June 05	June 06
Nagoya	June 07	June 08
Yokohama	June 09	June 10
Los Angeles	June 24	June 25



Panama	July 04	July 04
New York	July 11	

Radio letter

Lyngby Radio

August 22, 1937

Telegram from M/S. Peter Mærsk

Representative Rasmussen

Lorenz Gade 2-1

Randers

Congratulation with your birthday

Arriving Pedro July 29 on the way to the Far East

Greetings from Harald

M/S. Peter Mærsk

Los Angeles November 27, 1937

Dear all three of you

Thank you very much for the picture of Knud, he really looks like a sweet little boy. I think that some of his features look like Alfred. Sorry for taking so long to write again, but time just passes without one knowing it. This letter will be the last, since you now know I will be coming home. I hope I am going to make it home for Christmas, but it could be a problem, since we have been delayed a couple of days because of bad weather. We expect to arrive in New York on Monday December 13<sup>th</sup>, but the last Scandinavian "Christmas ship", the Swedish steamship "Kungsholm" departs December 14<sup>th</sup> and should arrive in Copenhagen December 23<sup>rd</sup>, so it is uncertain if I can make it, since I have to introduce the new man to my job before I leave. If I cannot make it, I will try to get home for Christmas on the "Queen Mary" via England. If not I will try "Bremen" or "Europa" via Germany. I am really looking forward to this trip, but it is going to be expensive, about 1000 Kroner. A Tourist class ticket is \$130, since I do not want to travel 3<sup>rd</sup> class. Add to this tips, transport of luggage etc. Your old suitcase is getting too small and I gave it to an old sailor we had onboard, when he was going home. I then bought a large trunk in Hong Kong for \$40. It is so big it can even hold me. I hope you will come home for Christmas, so we can all have Christmas together. I am not sure how long my vacation will be, and actually I have no idea what the future will be, but most likely, I can get out here again, since the shipping company is getting 3 new ships in the New Year. I would like to have a longer vacation than last time, but to tell the truth, I am not keen on sailing any more, but if the rumors are right and the ships will return to Copenhagen at the end of every trip, then it would not be so bad. As an example "Gertrude" and "Niel"\* are now sailing from Manila to India, then through the Suez Canal to England and back to Copenhagen. I am not sure if this change is because of the war out here. I will send a telegram to Dad from the ship I get on to indicating the date I will arrive, and he will probably then send you a letter. Well, I have to stop now, since I am going ashore to do some shopping. I am also busy getting everything ready to turn the station over in New York. In some ways, it is sad, since I have operated the station for almost 5 whole years now, and I am the person who has been on "Peter Mærsk" the longest. When I leave, it will be the Skipper, who has been the longest on board.

Hope you all are healthy and regards to all three of you.

Harald

See you later and congratulation on the new car.

*\* M/S Niel Mærsk from Svendborg, Denmark sailed under the Panama flag after the Second World War broke out. It was sunk June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1942 in the Mozambique Canal. All Danish crew members survived, but two foreigners perished.*

Odense January 16, 1938

Dear all three

As promised, I am sending a short greeting. First, thanks for the letter, which I received this morning. I am going to Copenhagen tomorrow to pick up my vacation pay. I have now received my luggage from Antwerp, but unfortunately not without damage. I have two camphor wood chests for you, but one of them is almost completely damaged and the second one also damaged, but not as much. I don't know how I am going to get it up to you without further damage. Are you coming home driving your car soon? The chests are fairly large and I cannot bring them with me in a train compartment. Write to me and let me know what you suggest.

When I return from Copenhagen, I probably will take a trip to Haderslev (city in South Jutland). Erik and Johanne\* were home here last Sunday evening and Monday afternoon. Friday evening dad, Miss Jacobsen and I visited Theodor and Else\*\* and Ellen and Mrs. Petersen\*\*\* were there too. Theodor has been very lucky to find work at home in Denmark, and he sounded happy with his new job. I would not mind staying home too, even if I would soon be bored, I think, and start longing to be out again. I am actually enjoying life here, even if the climate does not suit me. It is pretty cold and one never sees the sun. Most of the time I sit by the stove and read, going to bed around 9 -10 and sleeping until noon. I have not met any friends except for Theodor and my old friend Peder Vig\*\*\*\*, who lives close by.

Well I have finish now, but in regard to the names you wrote about Ebba, I like Hanne and Birte best. Will there soon be a christening?

Regards to all of you

Harald

P.S. Many regards from Dad and Miss Jacobsen.

*\* Brother in law and sister to Harald.*

*\*\* Friends of the family and Theodor is Alfred's youth friend.*

*\*\*\* Ellen sister to Theodor and his mother.*

*\*\*\*\* Radio operator and colleague to Harald.*

Odense March 11, 1938

Dear all four

Thanks for the letter and the cheque and of course for the time I spent visiting you all. I apologize for not writing sooner, but I do not know what is wrong with me, probably laziness, because one day goes by after the other, without pulling myself together to write. This evening I am home alone, since dad and Miss Jacobsen are out visiting someone. I am getting together with Aksel (Harald's cousin) a fair bit now. He is still a bachelor, so we can still go out to party. Otherwise nothing new here, but I am beginning to ride the bicycle, when the weather is good. I am thinking about a ride out to Tolvshave one of those days to see if our family is still alive.

I am going to Svendborg (town in south Fyn), since it is possible that I have to go back to school for some time again. Right now I am having a grey suit and a summer coat made by the tailor Andersen. I think the suit will be ready tomorrow and the coat next week.

I probably have to write to A. P. Møller applying for a job, since it is getting expensive to live here in the long run. Regrettably, I cannot find the key to the camphor wood chest, but I will turn everything upside down tomorrow and I will mail it as soon as I find it.

Trust you all four are healthy and we are all healthy and enjoying it here.

Regards

Harald

P.S. Regards from dad and Miss Jacobsen

Odense May 20, 1938

Dear Ebba

Thank you very much for your letter which I got this morning. Unfortunately, things are not going well here at home. On Wednesday, Miss Jacobsen got sick and is in the hospital. It is possible they have to operate and it is something about a stomach ulcer. Dad and I are trying to keep the house going. I have also gotten permission to take a re-examination in June and will start on Wednesday in Svendborg. I did not go down there today, since I got sick last night. I had a terrible beating of my heart, stomach pain and nausea. Probably from something I had eaten last night. Today I am OK and will travel to Svendborg tomorrow. I bought a travel card to travel down and back every day. I have to get up at 5am to catch 6 am train from "Fruens Bøge" (a station in Odense) and I will be back after 6 in the evening. On top of that, I have homework and then to bed, so you can see I have no time to visit Nørregade (Ebba's parents) and "Gregers" (family friends), who was with me at the tailor. There is a lot to prepare for the examination in Svendborg, including radiotelephony, and if I graduate, I will soon be on the microphone again. The examination begins on June 20<sup>th</sup>, so I have to really work if I am going to make it, and I hope I will. I am still registered with A. P. Møller, so I run the risk of having to travel, but hope nothing shows up before I am finished. I just talked to a skipper, and he told me that it's possible I will be sent to New York to board "Marchen Mærsk" on July 10<sup>th</sup>, so I am sorry to, say, I probably will not have a chance to visit you again.

Dad just returned from the hospital, where Miss Jacobsen was operated on today, but it looks like all went well. Dad has not been well the last few days, especially Sunday and it is something with his stomach, but it is getting better.

Dad says hello to all of you.

Regards

Harald.

Odense June 8, 1938

Dear Ebba

Thank you very much for your letter. Everything is going better for Miss Jacobsen. She is receiving radium therapy, but it will properly be another couple of weeks before she returns home. Otherwise everything is the same old here, and I hope Knud is healthy again.

The family from Haderslev was home Whit Monday and Johanne told us Knud has measles. I am really busy studying right now, but it probably does me no good, since most likely I will fail. By the way I got an offer to go to sea again from the shipping company "Norden" onboard their newest ship "Nordvest"\*, which will sail from Nakskov shipyard in a week's time, but I did not accept the offer. There are also positions as telegraph operators in Greenland right now, but it is a cold place and one has to sign on for 5 years and then get a year off as vacation.

*Note: Unfortunately the rest of the letter is missing.*

\* M/S Nordvest out of Copenhagen received a new name. Alan A Dale out of Panama still owned by "Norden". It was sunk December 26. 1944 in the Shelde River. No casualties.

Copenhagen July 3, 1938

Dear Alfred and Ebba

I am just going to mail you a few lines again. First of all, thanks for the letter I received a couple of days ago. On Thursday I had my second last exam day in Svendborg in telephony and geography. I received UG (Excellent Good 7- The highest mark in Danish schools) in both. In telegraphy I also received UG. In technique and regulations I received MG+ (Very good-6 ) so I am averaging 7.3 or UG-. I can now work on any Danish ship both as a radio operator as well as radio phone operator.

I traveled to Nakskov last Friday and boarded my ship. We depart Nakskov Saturday afternoon and arrived here in Copenhagen this morning. It is a large ship I am on, almost twice as large as "Peter Mærsk". It's between 15 and 16 000 tons and we will see how I am going to like it.

However A.P. Møller (the shipping company) has promised that I can get on a new Mærsk ship in February. Unfortunately, we will not stop in Ålborg since we are departing from here to the following ports: Goteborg, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Dunkirk (France), Genoa, Portland, Suez, Singapore, Manila, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Yokohama, Kobe, Osaka and Dairen and then return. The trip will last almost 5 months, and we will arrive back in Copenhagen December 1. My address is H.J. Rasmussen, Radio operator, M/S "India" c/o A/S Det Østasiatiske Kompani. Holdbergsgade 2, København K.

Must end for this time, but will write soon again.

Trust you have a good time and are all healthy.

My loving greetings

Harald

PS: Write if there is something I should bring back from the Far East.

M/S "India"

Pennang October 13, 1938

Dear all four

Hereby is a short airmail from Malacca. Well, I haven't been too industrious in writing and I also have received few letters, but it's not too important, since we now are on our return trip home. We have made the whole trip around here in the Far East and in and out of each harbour the same day. I managed to get on land for 3 or 4 hours in Yokohama, that's all. In Kobe and Shanghai there was no chance at all to get on land. The only place we stayed for any length was Daling, where we stayed for 12 days, but only 2 days docked, where we had a chance to get on land. In Manila on the outbound journey, we were docked with my dear old ship "Peter Mærsk" and I managed to get an afternoon free before we were going to depart, so I could visit my old buddies. On the return journey, we docked in Manila with "Marchen Mærsk", where both the chief and second engineers are good old friends. We got really lucky with heavy rain that postponed our departure one night, so we had a serious party that evening, ending at the St. Ana, where I ended up dancing for the first time in many years. It went very well. Besides that, there is absolutely nothing going on here onboard, except a 15 hour workday, lousy food and to tell the truth a miserable and poor company to work for. Let me have A. P. Møller anytime, since they have only one problem: that their ships never go home.

By the way, I have an offer from Danish Radio to sail with "Marchen Mærsk", when I return home. I must join them between December 12th and January 12th in New York, but I am not sure if I want the position. I would be 100% better there than here, but also I like to get home from time to time. We are in Suez October 28<sup>th</sup>, and probably in Copenhagen November 20<sup>th</sup>.

Well, have to stop and hope everything is good and you are healthy, all four of you.

Loving greetings

Harald

Telegram "India" Oyze Copenhagen Radio

Wireless station. Randers, November 21, 1938

Rasmussen

Villa Ro, Hornbæk, Randers

Copenhagen FC2 14.49

Will not arrive in Århus this evening. Delayed indefinitely.

Harald



M/S "India"

Genoa December 21, 1938

Dear all four

Herby a little Christmas greeting from Italy. Well I did not make it home on Sunday, everything happened so fast and I had to leave home on Wednesday. Thursday afternoon we departed for Goteborg and from there to Oslo, Antwerp and Hamburg, where we departed the 23<sup>rd</sup> for Porto Empedocles in Sicily, where we will dock for six days and celebrate New Year as well as Christmas Day and the day after.

So far, we have had a good trip and managed to leave before the cold weather started at home. It is not quite warm here, but there is no frost, even if the mountains along the Italian Riviera are completely covered in snow. We will return home in May, and will probably have a full month at home. I have family on board, since the son of Kromann and cousin Petra is here as an assistance to the engineers. We are having somewhat better food on this trip, and my cabin has been upgraded with new curtains etc. Besides that, nothing special is happening here.

I trust all four of you are doing well and are healthy and I wish you a really merry Christmas and good New Year.

Lowling greetings

Harald

Thank you for my last visit.

M/S "India"

Suez. January 8, 1939

Dear all four

First of all, many thanks for the Christmas letter and the picture of the kids and I received them on my birthday in Genoa.

It's a brilliant picture of them and also thanks for the birthday telegram.

We arrived in Genoa December 21<sup>st</sup>, and departed on the 23rd for Sicily. We arrived there on Christmas Day, so we had Christmas Eve at sea, which meant I had half an hour to eat my goose dinner, otherwise I would have had to work far into the night. We departed from Sicily January 4<sup>th</sup>, so we had New Year's Eve in harbour. New Year's Eve I was however, unsure of the reason, in such a bad mood that I went to my bunk at 9 pm, to the amazement of everyone in the mess, since I am usually the last one to leave when a party is going on. So I had neither Christmas nor New Year.

It has been rather cold down here. They even had snow in Genoa.

The last day in Sicily I had an unpleasant experience. Half a dozen custom officials boarded the ship and searched all the cabins for cigarettes, tobacco and matches. Everything they found was confiscated and 11 crew members were fined between 400 and 600 lire (100 to 130 kroner) each, even if it was only a package with 4 or 5 cigarettes. I was lucky, since they only found a tin with Klejner (crullers) in my cabin and when the custom officer ate one of them, he left right away. I think he got sick. He forgot to search the rest of the cabin, where I had both cigarettes and matches. The Klejner I was bringing to a young lady in Singapore from a friend in Copenhagen. It saved me 100 kroner and I thank the young lady for that.

My good buddy "Trikkeren" was fined 450 lire, but he refused point blank to pay, which the other crew members also did, and for the time being the ship paid the 4600 lire.

We are now well on our way to the Far East and in about 17 to 18 days, we will arrive in Singapore. We will have about a month in Dairen and will arrive home in May and then have a full month at home. I will remember to bring tea home.

Best wishes for a really good new year and loving greetings

Harald

M/S "India"

Dairen February 26, 1939

Dear Alfred

Thanks for your letter, which I received at noon today. Since it is Saturday, I want to take the opportunity to write right away. We have had a good trip to Darien without any excitement. We have been anchored for 8 days, and will be here approximately 8 more before we start on the journey home. We visited both Yokohama and Kobe on the outbound journey, but there is a possibility we will not get to Japan on the journey home, since we proceed directly to Hong Kong from here, and then to Saigon in French Indochina (Vietnam) to load a shipment of rice to France, either to Marseille, Bordeaux, Le Havre or Dunkirk or maybe even Antwerp. We plan to be home at the beginning of May, or mid-May, where the ship will get a major repair, so we probably will not leave until July. It could be an extended holiday, unless we are transferred over to another ship when we arrive home. It is freezing cold here Darien, so it is not too pleasant to be here and I am looking forward to get to warmer places.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to buy anything to take back home this time, since I have very little money because I asked the company to hold money back, so I can have some savings. For quite some time, I have been tired of sailing and would like to find something else to do, but I have to save some capital up first. I would not mind getting some more information about the chicken farm you wrote about. However it will probably cost quite a bit of money. Right now, I know little about chicken farming, so I would like to know how much space is required and how much money is needed to start up. I probably have to be located out in the country? One of my former colleagues and school buddies from Svendborg went ashore and started a chicken farm in England and is doing quite well, as far as I know.

I guess no more letters will reach me here in the Far East this time, but I will be delighted to get one in Suez, where we arrive around April 14 and a letter will take about 8 days to reach there. Otherwise we can talk about it, when I get home.

If you no longer are collecting stamps, I would like to get the ones on the letters I have sent home.

Trust you all four are healthy and feel good. Is Knud healthy again?

Loving greetings from

Harald

Regards from the 4<sup>th</sup> Mate.

Odense. May 19, 1939

Dear all four of you.

Now that I have arrived home safely, I want to send you a few words. We arrived in Copenhagen Monday at noon and disembarked the same day. I have 14 days holiday and arrived home last Tuesday evening. The ship will depart again June 3<sup>rd</sup> for the same trip to the Far East. I would very much like to come up to visit you, so we can have a chat about the chicken farm. I have a number of things to take care of here, but if it is OK, I would like to come up on Friday. Dad believes you are traveling to Haderslev (Alfred and Herald's sister and family live there) for Whitsun (Danish holiday), and we could travel together to get there. Dad and Miss Jacobsen are also planning to visit Haderslev at Whitsun, so we could all meet up there.

Nothing much is happening to write about, since we will soon get together. Dad and I spent all Kristi "Himmelfartsdag" (Christ's Ascension Day, a Danish holiday) talking about the chicken farm and dad also thinks it is not a crazy idea, but quite possible.

Well, we are doing well, and all three of us are healthy, but it is disgustingly cold here and I am freezing like a little dog. I trust all four of you are healthy and doing well. Hope to hear from you in the next days.

Loving greetings

Harald

Odense. May 24, 1939

Dear all four of you.

Thanks for the letter I received Monday, and I am only sending a couple of words to tell you I will be there tomorrow, Thursday. I have managed to arrange to get my new clothing tomorrow at noon, and I will depart via the train at 1 o'clock arriving, in Randers 5:00 pm. It is not necessary to pick me up at the railway station, since I will have no problem finding your place. Here at home, there is nothing new, and we are enjoying the nice weather. Dad and Miss Jacobsen will travel to Haderslev Whitsun Saturday, so we will meet them there.

Regards from Dad and Miss Jacobsen.

Loving greetings and see you soon.

Harald

### **Postcard**

Mr. Sales representative P.A.Rasmussen

Villa "Ro"

Hornbæk

Randers

Danemark

Hamburg June 16, 1939

Dear all four

Hereby a little greeting and thanks for the days I spent with you. Trust everything is OK, and everything is well here. Depart today for Genoa and the Far East. Will write from Genoa.

Loving greetings

Harald

M/S "India"

Hong Kong July 9, 1939

Dear all four

Now I am serious about sending you a letter. I have continued to make excuses, but it has been an extremely hot journey so far and one is not inclined to write letters. We have been to Ras Mallap which is located right after Suez. It's not a city, but only a factory located in the desert of the Sinai Peninsula. Beside there, we have been to Mumbai in India, Bangkok in Thailand, and the usual stops, so this has been a very long and tough journey. We depart from here tonight for Shanghai, Tsingtao and Dairen, so we will only stop in Japan on the return journey. We still do not know what cargo we will take onboard for the rest of the trip, as well as for the return journey, and we will probably not be home until the beginning of November. Otherwise everything is going the same old way onboard and I have not experienced anything exciting. We almost finished all our beer, but must say a cold one tastes very good in this hot climate. In Manila we docked together with "Hulda Mærsk" one of A. P. Møller newest ships. I have three old buddies on board, so I visited them and they told me that I was supposed to have been with them. We had a nice day together remembering old times. How is it going at home? Are your chickens grown, and I would like to know how it's going with the ones we picked out of the eggs? Have you talked to the man who was with us, when we looked for land plots? If you happen to hear about some land for a reasonable price, make sure to contact me. I am very interested in starting such a project and I can't see myself for more than two more trips with this ship. The trips are just too grueling for me. If I cannot find something at home to do, I will try to get back on a Mærsk ship again and if not find a small coaster ship back home.

I am sure I could get a chicken farm up and running when I get started, even if the first year could be a bit difficult. I am going to mail a letter from Dairen, when we have some idea about the trip home. It is possible we will stop in Ålborg or Århus on the journey home. Hope to hear from you soon.

I will finish with loving greetings to all four of you and congratulation on your birthday Alfred.

Harald

*"Hulda Mærsk" from Kalundborg, Denmark. New name "Chant of Panama" Shipping Company A. P. Møller. On a journey from Glasgow to Malta it was attacked by airplanes June 15, 1942 at Pantellana. 87 crew perished, but no Danes.*

Antwerp December 2, 1939

Dear all four.

First of all thank you for your letter, which I got yesterday. It was dated August 19, so it took a few days to get here, but it did arrive. I am doing well and I am still healthy. Hope the same goes for all of you. We are doing OK out here and the mood is good onboard considering the difficult times, even if it has been somewhat depressing from time to time, especially lately. I trust everything is going well back home, but you probably also have your difficulties there. Actually, I have been thinking about travelling home, so I can celebrate Christmas there. I will probably have a couple of days in Ålborg, so maybe we can meet there?

Ebba, please accept my apologies for not sending you a greeting for your birthday, but all telegrams have been banned.

Loving greetings to all four of you

Harald

Odense December 22, 1939

Dear Ebba.

Hereby a little note to tell you I have sent a money order to you. I just found out you are going to Haderslev, but I hope you get it before you leave. It's from Dad and me, and I would like you to buy Christmas gifts for all of you, and a birthday gift from me. I just got home on Thursday evening and did not think I would have time to buy the gifts and mail them over to you before Christmas. I visited Nørregade (Ebba's parent's home in Odense) yesterday and have regards from your mother and Eva. Your dad had just left when I arrived. Your mother would very much like it if you were to come home over Christmas. The same thing goes for Dad and Miss Jacobsen. I phoned Erik (Harald's sister's husband) yesterday and he told me that you are arriving in Haderslev today, but he said nothing about you visiting us one of the Christmas days. If you phone Christoffersen's grocery store tomorrow, (if you have not already written), and let her know, I will tell your mother. Have to finish since I am going over to visit Ellen Pedersen (a good friend to the Rasmussen family) before she closes the store.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas and loving greetings

Harald

Regards from Dad and Miss Jacobsen



Odense January 2, 1940

Dear all four

Happy birthday Birte. I am enclosing a little birthday gift in the letter, so she can decide for herself, what she would like. Trust you had a happy New Year up there in Randers. We are doing well here and had a visit from all of them in Haderslev. They arrived Saturday evening and left Monday evening.

Otherwise, there is nothing new here at home. It is terribly cold here, and we do not get out of doors unless it is absolutely necessary. Tomorrow I am going to the tailor for my new coat fitting. Otherwise, I work on my stamp collection and it is a great way to spend some free time. The books I got for Christmas have now all been read. It was a delightful book that I got from you. I will write in a couple of days, when I get my coat. I am a little afraid. I will be sent out on an icebreaker, if the waters freeze over.

I am ending for this time with loving greetings to all of you and the best wishes for the New Year to Birte.

Harald.

Odense January 10, 1940

Dear all four

I am sorry to tell you that I will not be able to visit you in Randers. In the middle of last week, I got a message from Danish Radio to be prepared, since there is a shortage of radio operators and they won't let me wait for M/S "India". Today I got a notice to board M/S "Panama" ØK Friday morning. It will depart Saturday from Copenhagen, but they would not tell me where it would be heading. I will probably find out when I get on board, but I think it will be South America, the same as "India", and I will write from Copenhagen. I leave home tomorrow morning and Dad is not too happy, but there is not much to do about it. I got my new winter coat Friday, so I have something warm to put on now. Using my summer coat was not fun in the terrible cold we have had, and I never went out the door unless it was absolutely necessary. We will probably soon be down in the warmer latitudes.

How are you doing up in Randers? Hope you are all healthy. Here at home, everything is good and we are all healthy. Dad and Miss Jacobsen send regards. I hope I will be able to visit you next time we get home and hopefully there will have more normal conditions, when I get home again (It is the start of the Second World War). I think the war will end sometime in the spring. I did not manage to get to Haderslev this time, but they visited us here in Odense and we had a little chat. I will end for this time with loving greetings

Harald

*\* M/S "Panama" Copenhagen Denmark. Shipping Company ØK Copenhagen. The ship on the way in ballast from Cardiff to Philadelphia located north of the Azores in convoy April 11 1945, capsized during a strong storm, but not from an attack. 40 foreigners and 26 Danes perished at sea.*

Antwerp February 1, 1940

Dear all four

First, many thanks for the letter I received a couple of days ago, along with one from Haderslev. They were somewhat delayed, as I could see from the stamps, and they had been lying around in ØK's office for half a dozen days. Yes, I am also sorry that I did not manage a trip up to your place this time, but hope it will happen when I get home in the summer. I am now on a journey; I am used to and will probably be home in July, if everything goes well. We departed January 15 at 4 in the afternoon. It was the worst trip I have ever had at sea so far. We sailed into an extremely heavy snowstorm in Kattegat, and had no idea where we were all night. Tuesday morning, when it cleared, we were almost at the entrance to Randers fjord, where we anchored to secure our cargo. We had lost two iron cylinders weighing 10 to 15 ton each from our foredeck, where they got loose during the ships violent movements. I was lying on my sofa snoozing, but jumped, when I heard the crash of the cylinders coming loose and crashing through the railings into the sea. The ship heeled over, and I thought for sure we had hit a mine. A very creepy moment, but the ship straightened up quickly.

We did not get to Rotterdam until Saturday. I have not been in my bunk all week, as well as being in the same clothes, so it was really great to get into harbour, believe me. We have been here Antwerp for some time enjoying it, but tonight it will all change. This ship is older and smaller than the previous ones, but my cabin is much bigger and better furnished than the last one I had, so I am somewhat happy here.

There is nothing else to write about, but will write in 10-14 days again.

I have to finish, since the agent wants to leave and I must give the letters to him.

Hope all four of you are healthy and having a good time.

Loving greetings

Harald.

## **Postscript by Birte Brodersen who created this as part of the Rasmussen family's history in Danish.**

After almost a year of reading and printing Harald's letters, I am left with many feelings, some are happy, funny and sad, but also a look into my family in the time those letters were written and sent home.

There are several reasons in play for no letters in the last two and a half years of Harald's life.

My Parents had to move away from Randers when the war started, and the Germans occupied Denmark. It was difficult to find work and a place to live and my mother and her two children had to move home to her parents in Odense and my dad got a job in Copenhagen. If Harald had been able to send letters home, they probably would have gone to my grandfather, Harald's dad. It is also possible the seamen were not able to send letters home at that time. Harald wrote in one of his last letters that telegrams were no longer permitted.

The last letter, from February 1, 1940, was sent from Antwerp onboard ØK's "Panama". I read in the book "Søfolk og skibe 1939-1945: Den danske handelsflådes historie under anden verdenskrig" (A Danish book about the merchant navy during the second world war), that "Panama" was part of a convoy from Halifax, Canada, to Liverpool, England and the ship would have been there on July 30, 1940 and I assume Harald would have been onboard "Panama".

"Peter Mærsk" was docked in Glasgow in August 1940, so it is possible Harald managed to transfer onboard there. I know for sure he was onboard "Peter Mærsk" December 8, 1942, when it was torpedoed by Germans submarines on its way from England to North Africa. All onboard perished.

Mixed with Harald's letters was a letter from my mother's sister Jenny in USA. The letter was dated December 1941 and in it I read that my dad, Alfred, had sent a letter to Harald through her in the States. She probably sent it to ØK's office or an agent in USA, but the letter was returned after nine months. In the letter that my aunt sent home to my parents, I could see from the stamps that it had been opened by the German occupation army. I have had help from A.P. Møller's archives as well as "Handels og Søfarts Museum" in Kronborg. My inquiry to the National Maritime Museum in London, England gave no result and they proposed I hire a local person to search the archives. It's not possible for me, since I do not know how much time is required for such a search, or the cost.

I am thankful for the help I received from Kenneth Henriksen, Handels og Søfarts Museum and Henning Morgen, A.P. Møller.

From those letters, I feel I have gotten to know my uncle and we in my family often talk about all the things he wrote home about. He had an ability to write about normal day-to-day things, and making them interesting. Harald writes in many of his letters "Unskyld jeg har været doven. Jeg har ikke taget mig sammen til at skrive i lang tid o.s.v." (Sorry I have been lazy. I have not found time to write for a long time, etc.). I am sure, he would apologise for not writing the last two years of his life.

I am also sure the three main characters in these letters would have approved the decision, we in our family made, that all the original letters be given to the museum in Kronborg, and copies to A.P. Møller's archives.