

26 CLARENDON GARDENS, LONDON W9 1AZ
Tel: 01-286 2600

27th November 1989

Dear Kormoran Comrades

Please accept my sincere thanks for receiving me as your guest at your 1989 reunion.

Although my initial contact with Otto Jurgensen produced a very friendly and generous response, I travelled to Germany with very mixed feelings. After all, if I were to believe Michael Montgomery - whose book I re-read during the journey to Hamburg - any enquiries I might make as to the fate of my father's ship would be met with evasive and uniform answers by men constrained by a vow of secrecy maintained these last 48 years. Of course I had read Barbara Winter's book and knew that here was a writer who had properly researched her subject, but still some lingering doubts remained.

A few hours among you however dispelled any such doubts or prejudices. Those of you I could converse with spoke frankly and openly about their experiences of 19th November 1941 and I was left in no doubt as to your honesty and integrity. You also must have had reservations about having me in your midst, as I was potentially an "awkward customer" being the son of a lost Sydney crewman and you were not to know whether I had other than personal reasons in speaking to you. If you had these feelings they certainly did not show and I especially appreciated the sympathy many of you expressed in my bereavement of so long ago.

Thank you to all those who left their tables to seek me out and speak in English, a language unfamiliar since school or prisoner of war days to many of you; it really was appreciated. Thank you to Hubert Daniel, Hans Daudzenberg, Heinz Eisenmenger, Joachim Greter, Helmut Jensch, Paul Koenig, Emil Kühlen, Johannes Schneider, Willi Thomas, Willi Tummers, Siegmur Weining and Erich Westphal for your patience in describing the action between Sydney and Kormoran, and my apologies if I have left any of you out. I know at times it must have seemed like an interrogation. I hope I did not give that impression.

To your Speaker, a very special thank you for making my visit possible, for presenting the Sydney Coat of Arms and for devoting so much of his time and energy - at very short notice - in making sure my visit would be a happy one, a task I am sure he could have done without with so much to do and organise.

Last, but not least, my thanks to the wives and widows who were so kind to me and to all those who expressed their sentiments and farewells in their own language and my apologies for my lack of German.



2

That Montgomery has slandered the officers and crew of the Kormoran is not in doubt, but he did raise an important issue which has yet to be satisfactorily resolved. Why do the British and Australian authorities still withhold state information about this naval battle? They are as much to blame as others for the rumour and speculation that has been published since 1941. My personal view is that it may have to do with protecting the reputations of war time decision makers who may have issued orders that severely compromised the captains of its fighting ships.

For me two good things have come from "Who sank the Sydney?". One is Barbara Winter's book which I understand will be published in German in 1990, and which I commend to you as a panacea for all your Montgomery grievances. The other is that it awakened in me a desire to know more about this unique (in modern times) naval battle which eventually led to my meeting you all last week and to have confirmed in my own mind that it was an honourable fight between two warships.

My father and his crewmates lost their lives because of an uncharacteristic blunder by the Sydney's captain. One day perhaps we will know why this happened.

Thank you all again for your kindness and hospitality.

Edmund Jones