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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 Kuhlen, 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.