

- 41) M.V. Fort Kamloops 17281 GRT
Esbjerg, Denmark 26/7/83 - 20/10/83 Shanghai China.
42) M.V. Fort Kamloops Re-signed on articles
Shanghai China 20/10/83 - 20/12/83 Kunak Indonesia.

The ship had just returned from Indonesia with a cargo of timber which was being discharged at Esbjerg into warehouses when I joined. Shortly after, my wife Christine joined me there too. We had quite a long time alongside, so had ample time to explore the area. Then via Rotterdam, Antwerp, then across to Santos, Brazil. On route Christine became adept at chart correcting, much to the relief of the 2nd Officer whose job it normally was. Corrections to various publications are the bane of



all navigation and radio officers. Every week, a new set of corrections for charts and radio books are published. We get them in 6 or 8 week bunches when we hit port, so it takes a while and lots of work to catch up. Anyone able and willing to do the work is heartily welcome!

My wife also took her steersman's certificate. She is now qualified to steer ships of over 1000 tons. There is no upper limit, so theoretically she could steer the biggest super tanker afloat (over 500,000 tons!) She also got well and truly "done" for the crossing the line ceremony. Neptune really took his toll. Various



dubious mixtures being used as medicine by the "doctor" and as shampoo for washing hair and body. The ceremony being rounded off by everyone being dunked in the swimming pool (even the Captain in full uniform!) It was great fun, and ended up with a huge barbeque for all.

Santos, where we berthed in Brazil, had the dubious honour of being (at that time) one of the most polluted places on earth. Rivers and creeks were coloured and stinking. The green of the jungle was thin and dotted with dead and dying trees. The air was hazy with gases and smoke given off by industries and cars and trucks. We were berthed right next to an iron smelting works and rolling mill. The stink of sulphur and the brown fumes from the roasting ovens were ever present. Shortly after we left, a nearby village, Cubatao, (which we passed through on the way into Santos City) was destroyed by fire when a creek along which it was built burst into flame. One of the chemical works or oil refineries had been leaking into the creek for ages, and no one would do anything about it. There was tremendous loss of life. Afterwards, massive efforts to clean up the area were made.

Christine and I just had a few days in Santos together. She had to return to Germany to re-start school after the summer holidays. We travelled to Sao Paulo in a chartered taxi, via what was then the only road connection between Santos and Sao Paulo. It was a steep, dusty and at times very spectacular drive over the mountains. Traffic was heavy, with many



trucks (sometimes in a horrible state of repair) using the road. We drove through Sao Paulo, as the main international airport was on the other side. There is also an airport in the centre, but mostly for internal flights. Aircraft flew, sometimes only a few hundred feet above us, as we drove past. The state of the housing and the population density was appalling. Christine flew home from Sao Paulo and I travelled back to the ship at Santos again. The round trip took a full day, and I was very tired and dusty at the end, even though I did not have to drive.

Shortly before we sailed from Santos, the Fort Norman arrived. Her last port before going to Taiwan for scrap. It had become just too expensive to keep her running. I scrounged a couple of her spare transmitter PA valves as souvenirs. After all they would only be scrapped too. After having loaded a part cargo of steel at Santos, we travelled north to Vitoria where we loaded the rest of the cargo consisting of huge steel rolls for China.

There were two ways to get to China, one was North and then West, via the Panama Canal, but that was the long way round. The other, which we took, was the Great Circle Route southeast, across the South Atlantic, then into the Roaring Forties south of Cape Town if the weather was not too bad. Across the Indian Ocean, north past Sumatra and Java, and through the Sunda Straits. Finally after over a month at sea, we reached the Chinese mainland and Shanghai. On route we had passed a number of quite interesting places. We travelled close by Gough Island, a foreboding, deserted place of dark cliffs shrouded in mist and fog. Its nearest neighbour being Antarctica. We sighted the remains of the volcanic island of Krakatoa which exploded in 1883, the greatest volcanic explosion of modern times. It blew itself and the island virtually off the map. There are a number of active volcanoes in the Sunda Straits, and some of them could be seen smoking gently. As we passed through at night, it was very dramatic, lightning silhouetting the rugged shapes of the mountains against the sky.

We had a very interesting stay in Shanghai shortly after the liberalisation. I was even allowed to take photos! We had some Red Guards on board, and I asked them. At first they were very cautious and said no. The agent, however, asked someone of a higher rank, who said it was ok, he went on to mention that if it was not ok, it would be made very clear to me! (The meaning behind that statement will forever remain hidden as I was never stopped - very inscrutable!) At that time, Shanghai had very little motor traffic. Only a few trucks buses and official cars were to be seen. Most people walked, used public transport or had a bike. The bike parks were something else! They even had bike wardens to look after them. I remember one rainy day walking through some side streets and seeing a tri-shaw pulling a small trailer with a sewing machine on it. The sewing machine was protected by an umbrella, but the cyclist and passenger had no shelter at all! Impressions of the shops include one, completely devoted to

sewing machines. A tailor's shop with a dozen or so girls and women busily sitting at sewing machines, beside the open door and window. They waved gaily as I took a photo. A carpenter building furniture outside on the street, piles of wood chippings around him, and a little boy taking one look at me as I walked near his home, and then running inside screaming, scared by the "foreign devil" outside.



Another window contained what looked to be a Chinese typewriter, a massive construction, with various trays and levers for the thousands of characters required by the Chinese pictograms. Buildings being built or renovated with scaffolding entirely made from bamboo, lashed together with rope. A market where it was so full, that one could only go with the crowd. A stall selling various types and sizes of Abacus, made by craftsmen on the premises. I bought a small one much to the amusement of the onlookers. Walking along "The Bund", the promenade alongside the Shanghai River, I was approached by some young people who wanted to practice their English. Very shortly I was the centre of a large crowd of curious Chinese, listening and sometimes taking part in the conversations. The Chinese people I have met, I liked. Their curiosity for things outside China was boundless.

We left Shanghai after about a week and sailed on to Darien in Northern China. This was about a four day run up the coast.

China is a wonderful place for Steam Engines. They were still in daily use in the port areas at that time. Darien had a large rail goods shunting yard where many steam engines were still being used. It would have made the heart of any steam enthusiast leap. The smell of steam and coal, the sound of the big



engines puffing and clanking and the drivers leaning out of the cabs, looking down at me photographing them with interest and often a smile. Some of the engines had been modified to burn oil, but most seemed to be in original conditions, with coal heaped in the tenders behind them.

One could buy many wonderful handmade items at a government sponsored tourist shop. The prices even there, however, were sometimes high, though transport could be arranged back to Europe. Camphor wood chests, carvings, paintings, carpets and wonderful silks could be had. Payment only being allowed in foreign currency ... usually U.S. Dollars. (All major credit cards accepted!) The Capitalist face of Communism.

After China, we travelled down to Manila, with a cargo of nickel ore, then Borneo and Indonesia where the ship was to load timber and wood products at 10 different ports. The holds had to be made clean for this rather expensive cargo. At one of the ports, we met some Europeans who worked at the local Nickel mining plant. A small group of us were allowed to do a tour, where we saw how the ore was crushed, cleaned, roasted, refined and finally poured into moulds for making Nickel ingots.



All highly interesting and a good day out.

At Kunak we moored in the river, and loaded using barges. The chief of police used to visit us on regular occasions with his hangers-on, using a powerful speed boat. He was, of course, wined and dined on board, and hence we had absolutely no problems whilst we were there. Also our crew were always given a good reception when they went ashore. It helps to grease the wheels a bit! It was the rainy season, which again meant a very slow loading. Some of the wood was high grade, kiln dried, and had to be kept dry at all costs. If it even looked like rain, we stopped working cargo and closed the hatches! (And this was in the RAINY season so it happened several times a day!) We even started keeping radar watches for rain clouds! (Rain shows up very clearly on a 3cm marine radar, and it can give us a half hour warning!)

It took me and the two other officers leaving with me, 3 days to get home after paying off at Kunak, a real marathon. A taxi was provided by the agents from Kunak to Sandakan. (That was an exciting 3 hour drive over rutted semi washed-out roads). We were booked to fly in a rickety small Dakota from Sandakan to Kota Kinabalu. We found out at the airport, that there was not enough room for our baggage to fly with us. (Even we were weighed before boarding the aircraft to ensure it could even take off!). Our bags arrived later on the first flight the next morning. We stayed overnight in a small hotel which was a bit run down. Each room seemed to have its own pet gecko clinging to the wall! Later that day we flew in a small jet from Kota Kinabalu to Singapore, this at least took us AND our luggage. Finally a big modern freedom bird (Jumbo Jet) took us home. It took me a while to recover from that trip. I was not even quite sure what day it was for a while after.