

Thesen & Co. (Pty) Ltd., KNYSNA

22 February, 1971

TO ALL SHAREHOLDERS

It's all becoming rather dated news but perhaps you would like to have my impressions of the last week of the Rio Race and since!

As I have indicated before, everyone in Knysna suffered from "Rio Fever" almost throughout the whole period Albatros II was at sea. There was an awful gloom over Knysna from the 7th to the 12th, as broadcasts went haywire during that period and many felt something awful must have happened. Albatros II went off the news! In fact on Wednesday evening I telephoned Frank Whatmough, after listening to one broadcast, and asked him if I was right in assuming what had been said was "all bunk"! He agreed with me that broadcasters obviously knew nothing about handicap races. The morale in Knysna, however, went for a loop and few would believe me when I said "Wait and see".

In the meantime Doaty, Ros, Judy and I, with Hildur aiding and abetting, planned for an "impromptu" party when Albatros II crossed the line, provided she was well up in the race. Stanley said before he left that it was no good waiting for him to get back from Rio and a party should be held at once after Albatros II had come in first. You can imagine the thrill when a telex arrived from South African Yachting saying that Albatros II was over the line and overall winner! That news came through just after noon on Friday the 12th. We checked as well as we could and then pandemonium broke loose when our office burglar alarm was set off, followed by the factory hooter! Everyone soon guessed what it was all about, though naturally some in town thought of fire etc!

Anyway the phones started and before very long not only the staff throughout the group, but also the public knew we were at home for a party at Thesen Industries at 5.30 p.m. that evening! We all got on the phone to advise our friends of it. It was all terribly exciting and even people like old Mrs. Bella Olsen and old Miss Brown phoned me to say how thrilled they were.

There must have been several hundred staff members (with wives of husbands) and local friends even from Lautenberg Bay, Wilderness and George at the party - held on the same lawns as that of the launching party. Michael Todd was there and you may have heard me on broadcast at nine that evening with him and John Goodwin, from Rio!

The speeches were short and simple. The first by me welcoming everyone and saying how proud we were of Albatros II, the men who built her, and John Goodwin and his crew who sailed her. The second was by Rory Condon, congratulating, on behalf of the whole staff, the family on their courage in undertaking this venture. The third was by the Deputy Mayor, Mr. Bob McClelland, (the Mayor was away), congratulating Thesens on their success and on putting Knysna on the world map. There is no

getting away from it, it was a delightful, simple impromptu party, thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Since then there have been hundreds of telegrams, telexes, letters, messages and phone calls, all of which will have to be acknowledged — Ros asked me how I could keep my head above water — in fact I feel I've been hit by a whale and. Sunk! How does one write to Prime Ministers, Admirals, Generals, Hon. Ministers and Members of Parliament and the Provincial Council, Mayors of towns, businesses, friends and relations, each letter really needing something slightly different! However, we'll manage somehow!

Since then crewman John Allen has arrived from Rio and. we had a delightful staff tea party on the 19th, again on the same lawn. It was just for Thesen Industries Staff and the boat builders. John looked extremely fit though tired, and cheerfully told us all bits about the race. He said it was touch and. go for Albatros II when she broached to at the beginning of the race, as water rushed in at full bore and another 15 seconds, with her cross-tree touching the water as it was, would have seen her sink! He was full of admiration for John Goodwin's quick thinking of how to fix the mast in the lee of Robben Island.

He thinks Albatros II is a wonderful yacht for racing and. that with minor alterations she would be a lovely ocean cruiser. As she is, she had to be handled every second of the way, with not one moment off the tiller.

Among other things, he told us that Hal had done splendidly throughout and. although "dog's body" (Allen's words) for the whole crew, he never once said "Go to blazes, this is Daddy's yacht". If anyone dropped anything however there were always shouts, not necessarily by Hal, of "Be careful, this is Daddy's yacht"! Hal also is said to have said "If the Captain instructs me, I cut my hair but if you try to, I'll fight you!"

Ros asked all of the family still in Knysna to have a drink with John Allen and his wife Donna that evening, and it was just too delightful getting first hand news – we learned then that John had done all the cooking, that they worked in two shifts of three - six hours on and six off - but that all had to be on deck at times for sail changes etc. They took two hours each per shift at steering, and did their other jobs, such as cooking, in between. John Green must have used the sewing machine to cover nearly half a mile of stitching when repairing the torn spinnaker! A wonderful job but he doesn't want to see a sewing machine again! I got the impression that it was a "happy" ship with Brian Lello keeping them amused all along, but tactfully **not** all the time.

I am sending you other circular letters with this one, plus the cuttings, particularly for those of you who are keeping scrap books. I feel you will like the extracts from Stanley's letter to Ros which shows that they too were in the dark as to news almost up to the time of Albatros II's arrival. The telegrams and letters received from so

many, and from unexpected people too, make one appreciate it was a wonderful achievement, in keeping with the family's Viking spirit and background.

Perhaps one day you'll have a chance to see my "Centenary" and "Race" albums and photographs. It will end- no doubt in our Boardroom Archives. It's been fun compiling it, and I think has caused much amusement to all who visit my office, stacked at times with newspapers and wastepaper baskets filled with their remains!

As all in Knysna now feel, there's nothing in the news but it has been a wonderful experience. I'll end up with -the concluding paragraph of the letter I am sending out in acknowledgement of messages received.

"The Thesen family, the Company and all its employees were naturally delighted to hear the news. It was a wonderful achievement by her skipper, John Goodwin, and his crew -to sail Albatros II so ably to victory. We are proud of our yacht and the men who built her in our own boat yard at Knysna to the design of Ricus van der Stadt of Holland, who designed many of the yachts which did so well in the race.

As you no doubt know, the yacht was built and entered in the Rip race to mark our Company's centenary and named after the Thesens' own schooner Albatros which brought the family to South Africa in 1869. We feel the success achieved in the race is a fitting tribute to the pioneering spirit of the founders of our Company, and also fitting that Hal Thesen, son of our Managing Director, Stanley Thesen, and a great-grandson of the founder, was a member of the crew."

Yours sincerely,

Ted Stent

CHAIRMAN