

OBITUARY

CAPTAIN ISAAC VILHELM TEGNER

ROYAL DANISH NAVY

(1902-1981)

Captain Vilhelm TEGNER, a distinguished Danish hydrographer and a member of the Directing Committee of the IHB from 1967 to 1972, died in Denmark on 26th January 1981 aged 78 years.

Born in August 1902, the son of a former naval officer, he married Nelly von BARDENFLETH in the Holmens Kirke on 3rd November 1926.

TEGNER served as a midshipman in the Naval Academy from 1920 to 1924, being promoted to lieutenant in 1925.

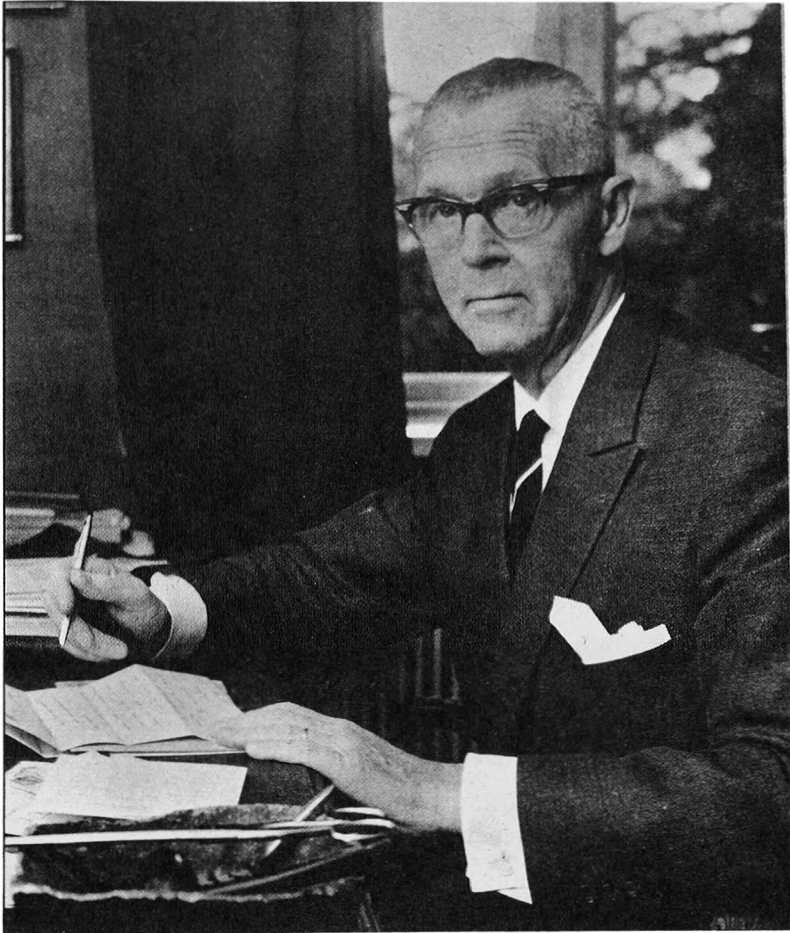
He then took seven months' leave, during which he went round the world, sailing to Australia in a ship of the East Asiatic Company. After visiting the outback he sailed on in a French ship through the Pacific Islands and the Panama Canal, arriving home via Marseilles.

After a year in the Submarine Division he served for a year in the Spanish Navy onboard the cruiser *Mendez Nuñez*, and then returned to Denmark in 1928 to complete the Higher Course at the Danish Naval Academy.

In 1930 he received his first posting to the Royal Danish Hydrographic Office, and a year later sailed onboard the Danish inspection ship *Hvidbjørnen* on her annual cruise to Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

This cruise formed a turning point in his career, for he recognised Greenland waters as an area of operations where the surveying challenge was sufficient to match his determination and seamanlike capabilities.

In 1932 he was selected to sail with the Danish Arctic Explorer, Knud RASMUSSEN, on the 7th Thule Expedition (East Greenland) during that summer period, being promoted Lieutenant Commander on return home. In 1933 he spent a further 6-month season with RASMUSSEN's 7th Thule Expedition (S.E. Greenland), this time in command of the cutter *Kivioq*.



After completing the Staff Officers' course at the Naval Academy, he sailed in 1935 in the survey vessel *Hejmdal*. The year of 1936 was spent studying geodesy at the Army Officers' Academy, after which he was employed for three years on surveys in Greenland waters, with lie-up periods drawing fair sheets in the Danish Hydrographic Office. He served as Head of the Mission and Commanding Officer of the survey ship during the last two years of this period, being promoted commander in 1939.

His shipmates found TEGNER an active inspired leader, if often somewhat impatient. They said of him that his principle was "Better to miss the mark than to do nothing".

In 1940 he commanded the survey ship *Freja* in Danish waters, and from October 1940 to April 1946 he was Head of the Cartographic Division in the Hydrographic Office.

At the end of World War II he returned to his beloved Greenland, in command of the Naval District, returning to Denmark to command the Naval Training School, and was promoted to Captain in 1948.

After commanding the Naval District of South Zealand, and serving as Chief of Staff at the Naval Base in Copenhagen, he got back once more to Greenland, commanding the surveying ship *Hejmdal* for the seasons 1951-52-53.

The years 1954-56 saw him in command successively of two Naval Districts, but in 1956 he was again posted as Head of the Cartographic Division, with the additional post of Assistant Hydrographer, posts he continued to hold until 1967 when he retired to take up his Directorship of the IHB.

During this long period as Head of the Cartographic Division he took the initiative in the scheming and production of the present series of modern nautical charts of Greenland. His forceful temperament, together with his extensive experience in Greenland waters, resulted in these charts taking precedence over all other work in the Office, using all his persuasive power to convince the Hydrographer on this matter. The result was that, on his departure from Denmark for Monaco, he was able to feel well-justified pride in the fact that he had made, both in the field and in the office, a major contribution to the safety of navigation in Greenland waters.

Vilhelm TEGNER did not look forward to retirement and having to leave his lifetime task whilst still in good health and spirits. It was therefore a very happy day for him at the I.H. Conference in 1967 when the results of the election for the Directing Committee granted him another five years in the hydrographic field where all his interests lay.

Staff at the IHB remember Captain TEGNER with affection, for he was always willing to help anyone, and directed his immediate attention to any technical problem laid before him and would work tirelessly on it until it was solved. He studied the charts arriving in the chartroom from the Member States with diligence, and it was, of course, a red-letter day when a new Danish chart of Greenland waters arrived.

Vilhelm and his dear wife Nelly lived in a small house in Cap d'Ail during TEGNER's service at the IHB and many of us remember with extreme pleasure the generous and homely hospitality which was there offered to their many guests.

When I first served ashore in the British Hydrographic Office I was sent with Mr. ATHERTON, the then Principal Civil Hydrographic Officer, to some hydrographic meeting in Paris. I was new to the conference game and knew none of the speakers and so it was that I asked Mr. ATHERTON afterwards who the Englishman was, so erect and precise, who had spoken so eloquently. I was informed to my surprise that the speaker had been a Danish naval captain – TEGNER, from the Hydrographic Office. TEGNER was equally proficient in Spanish and French, being a remarkable linguist.

He was a holder of the "Fortjenstmedaillen i sølv med spænde" for his participation in the 7th Thule Expedition, and was twice decorated in the Order of Dannebrog, becoming a Knight of the First Grade.

It was always a delight to meet this remarkable seaman-hydrographer and to see the twinkle in his eye and the smile that crossed his face when he spoke of sailing northern waters or charting the seas.

He is a great loss to our international hydrographic family.

G.S.R.

Note. - I have been greatly assisted in preparing this Obituary by Captain Knud KAERGÅRD, the Danish Hydrographer.
