

## "Marpessa" PJMO sinking

Picture by ?

"Marpessa" PJMO

diensttijd van 1969 t/m 1969. IMO 6921678

Bouwer : Ishikawajima Harima Heavy Industry Yokohama, Japan.

Bouwnummer : 2020

L X B X D X H : 325,22 X 47,21 X 18,96 X 24,50 mt.

Tonnage : 104.373 brt., 78.411 nrt. en 206.805 dwt.

Motoren : 2 x Mitsubishi turbines van 28.000 pk. snelheid 16 knopen per uur.

Van 1969 t/m 1969 "Marpessa" C.S.M. Willemstad N.A.

Op 14 december 1969 gezonken bij Dakar.

Op 12 december 1969, op haar tweede reis van Rotterdam naar Mena Al Ahmadi, vond er in tank V tijdens het tankwassen een zware explosie plaats. Over een grote lengte werd het dek opengereten en brak er brand uit. Ze bevond zich toen circa 100 mijl NW van Dakar op de positie 16graden 05 minuten NB en 17 graden 48 minuten WL.

Er vielen twee slachtoffers t.w. twee Chinese onderofficieren.

Op 13 december had de bemanning kans gezien de brand te blussen maar de "Marpessa" leek verloren. De bemanning werd van boord gehaald door de Britse Shell tanker "Serenia" en later in Dakar aan wal gebracht. De volgende dag, op 14 december verdween de "Marpessa" in de golven op 50 mijl NNW van Dakar, nog geen twee maanden nadat ze was opgeleverd.

De "Marpessa" had toen de twijfelachtige eer het grootste koopvaardijchip te zijn wat verloren ging. De eerder gezonken "Torrey Canyon" was de helft kleiner.

De Raad van Scheepvaart concludeerde dat de bemanning geen schuld betroof aan het verlies van de tanker. Sterker nog de bemanning werd lof toegezwaaaid voor de inspanningen die ze hadden verricht om het schip te behouden. Later werd vastgesteld dat op deze tankers ontlading van elektrostatische energie de oorzaak van de explosie moet zijn geweest. Passende maatregelen worden hiertegen genomen op alle andere zusterschepen. Uiteindelijk keerde de verzekering een bedrag uit van 6.590.000 English pounds.

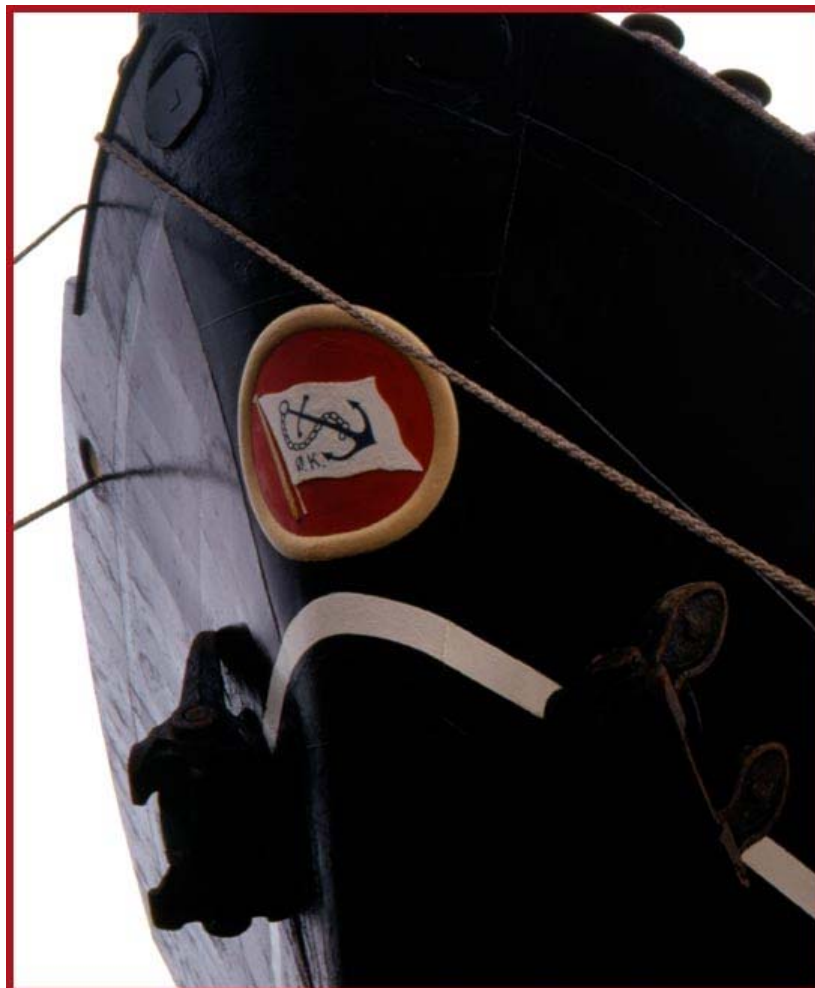


# "The Ships"

featuring

## - M/S "BORIBANA" -

- a typical dry cargo ship from the sixties -



M/S "Boribana"

- the bow,- with the logo of the East Asiatic Company -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)

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Builders: B&W Ship Yard, Copenhagen

Delivered: 1961

Length,- overall: 151,4 m

Breadth: 19,4 m

Deadweight: 10300 tons  
Propulsion: A B&W diesel engine, 10.000 bhp  
Speed: 17,5 knots

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M/S "Boribana"  
- bow -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)



M/S "Boribana"  
- in Aarhus, -Denmark, 1969 -, preparing for the Far East -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)

"BORIBANA" is the next development in cargo ships.

The main difference from M/S "SAMOA" from the fifties is, - that the ship owners now had started to think in more economical ways.

Why use the mid section of the ship for a huge engine room???? The mid section is the best cargo space you have, - and if you could move the engine room aft, - where the hull is narrow and sharp-, then you could carry a lot more cargo.

And an extra bonus is, that you do not need the long "tunnel" for the propeller shaft any longer, - and thereby you also saved cargo space in the aft cargo holds.

However, - it was believed, that the duty officers could not keep a proper lookout, if also the bridge was moved aft, - like you see it on present days ships.

Therefore the bridge, - as well as the accommodation for the deck officers-, was kept in its traditional place, - mid ships -, on this class of ships.

However, - it was soon discovered, that it was perfectly OK also to have the bridge aft, and after a very short period with split superstructures, - this arrangement was abandoned on later new buildings, where everything was moved aft.

That split arrangement of the superstructure spoiled the harmony and beauty of the ship, - although the hull lines were still beautiful, - with rounded stern, raised bow, and a beautiful deck sheer, - just like on the older ships.





M/S "Boribana"  
- on this picture, the unusual split superstructure is clearly seen -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)



M/S "Boribana"  
- here loading for the Far East in Aarhus, Denmark, - with sister ship "Busuanga" behind -  
(Photography by karsten Petersen)



M/S "Boribana"  
- with sister ship "Busuanga" in Aarhus, Denmark -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)





M/S "Boribana"  
- finally at sea, - in the South Atlantic -, bound for the Far East -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)



M/S "Boribana"  
- the house flag of the East asiatic Company -  
(In port Klang, - which I believe -, was known as Port Swettenham in those days -)



(Photography by Karsten Petersen)



M/S "Boribana"  
- in Japan -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)

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## The "Marpessa" disaster

### - the explosion and sinking of the biggest ship ever -

You cannot possibly be a seagoing man for 37 years without experiencing disasters of some sort, - mainly storms -, but also fire, explosions, collisions, grounding or whatever dangers you might encounter when you navigate the great oceans.

On "Boribana" we witnessed such a disaster, - the explosion and eventual sinking of the brand new Shell super tanker "Marpessa" of 209.996 tons.

"Marpessa" was on her second voyage to the Middle East to pick up a new cargo, when during tank cleaning operation an explosion suddenly ripped up one of the center tanks, killing two crew members and injuring many more - - -

This was on December 12th. 1969 off Dakar while "Boribana" was homeward bound in the opposite direction from her round trip to the Far East.

When the distress message from the "Marpessa" was received, we immediately altered course towards the crippled super tanker, but since several other ships were already there, our assistance was not required - - -

The "Marpessa" crew did of course try to put out the fire, but since the fire lines on deck was damaged, they did not succeed.

The "Marpessa" started to take in water, and as she slowly flooded, bulkhead after bulkhead gave way under the pressure, and on December 15th. 1969 she finally sank, and became the biggest ship that had

ever gone to the bottom of the sea.

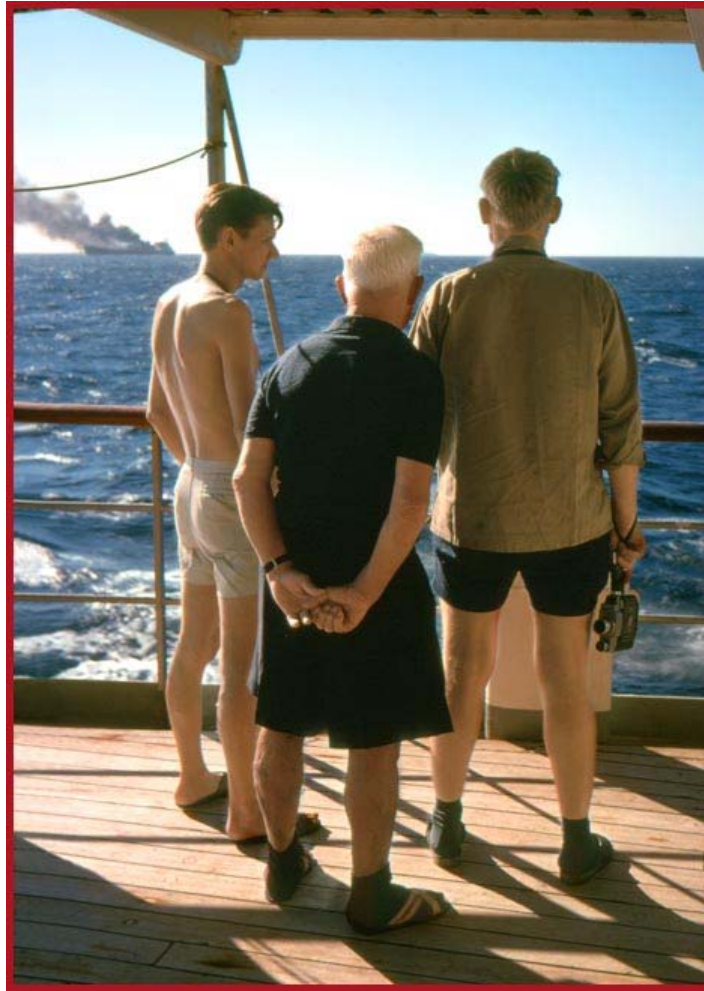
I took a few pics of this event - - - - -



M/S "Boribana"  
- racing to the rescue - , while smoke from the burning "Marpessa" clearly shows in the horizon -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)



Shell tanker "Marpessa"  
- "Marpessa" on fire before she sank -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)



M/S "Boribana"  
- watching the "Marpessa" die -  
Left to right: 1st. Engineer Henning Lisby, the Chief Engineer Just Petersen and Electrician Jørgen Friis -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)

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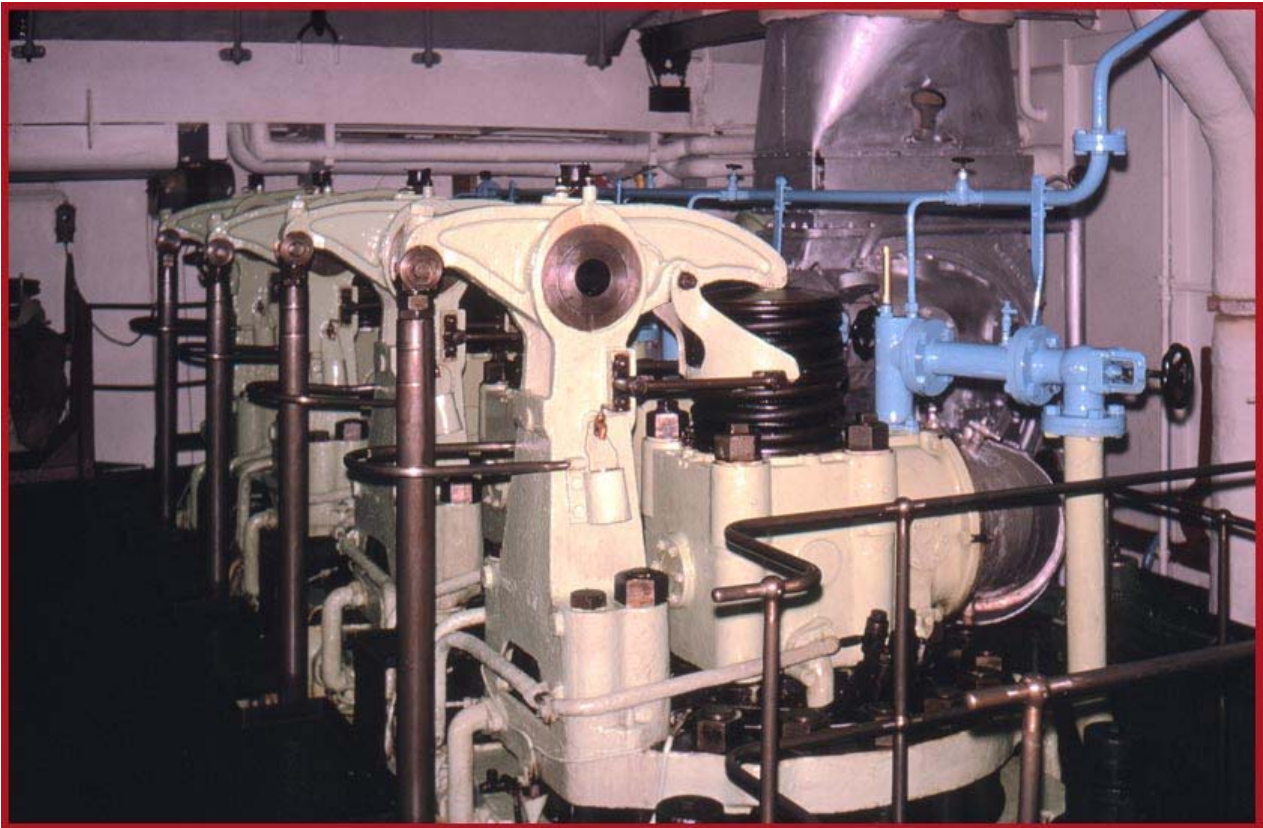


M/S "Boribana"

- coming home to winter after a great trip Far East round trip, - take note of fog and ice in the water -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)

**The Engine room -**



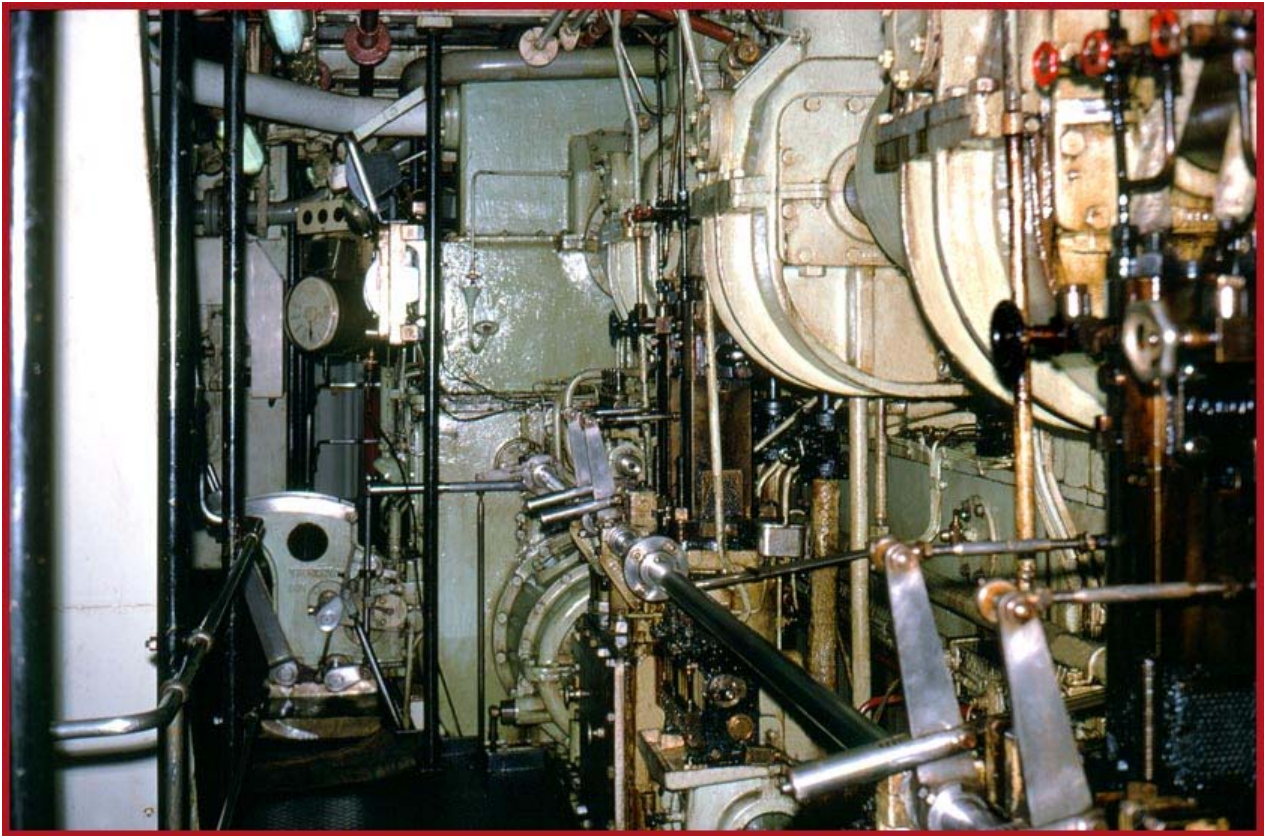


M/S "Boribana"  
- the engine top -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)



M/S "Boribana"

- the engine top with rocker arms and exhaust valves -  
(Photography by Karsten Petersen)



M/S "Boribana"

- the intermediate platform with fuel rack and fuel pumps -and maneuver stand in the background -  
(Photography by karsten Petersen)

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Click [HERE](#) for part two - A "Boribana" trip from 1971 - 1972

**NOTE:** You can see much more about "The Finest Shipping Company in the World", - the "East Asiatic Company" of Copenhagen -, at following address: [www.snesejler.dk](http://www.snesejler.dk) where many old EAC sailors like myself have contributed with pictures, stories and memories. A truly GREAT site - - -

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