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December 5, 1985

Dear Robert D. Ballard,

I very much enjoyed your article on the Titanic in the December National Geographic. I am writing you because my grandfather, Walter Kaulitz, always claimed that he had seen the flares from the sinking Titanic. At the time he was a sailor on a German Windjammer. Perhaps, his ship was the mystery ship described in your article. My mother and her sister, Walter's two children, have the travel logs of their father's sailing travels. Would the name of the ship he was on the day the Titanic sank be of interest to you? If you would like to know my family would be happy to attempt to find this and other related information for you.

Sincerely,

Gail Kara
4222 Davenport St
Omaha, NE 68131
USA

P.S. Enclosed is an article which describes his story about the Titanic!

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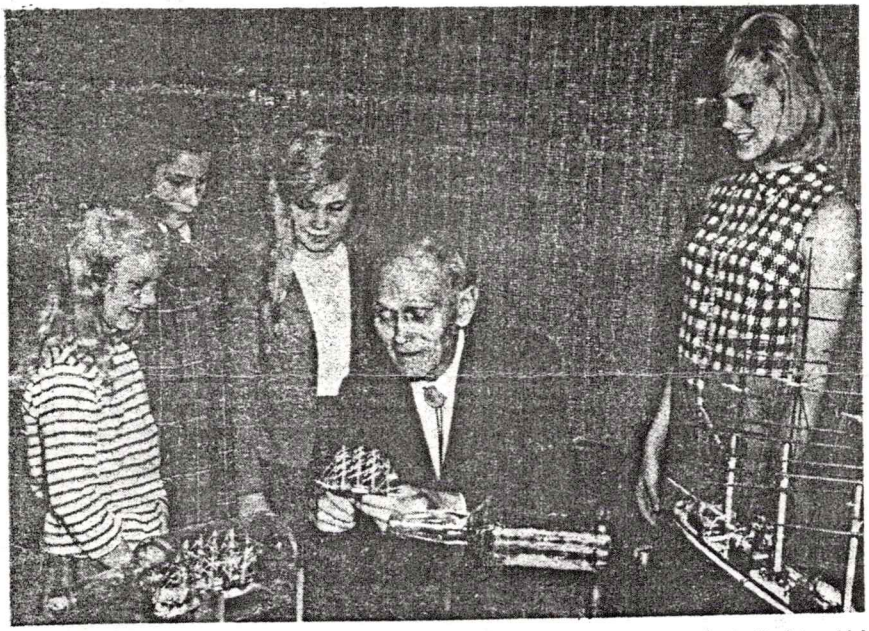
Walter Kaulitz Plays With Boats



AS ADMIRERS WATCH, Walter Kaulitz inspects a miniature ship he made and the bottle into which it eventually was placed. He also made the other ships. The children (from left) are Carol Reichstadt, 7, Robin Monsky, 9, Janis Reichstadt, 10, and Kathryn Reichstadt, 15. The Reichstadt youngsters are Kaulitz' grandchildren. The story of this interesting man and his interesting pastime are on Page 4.

The Swells Still Rise in Walter Kaulitz

By ELDON MILLER

Walter Kaulitz, age 77, still is as salty as the sea itself.

Though more than a half-century removed from life as a German sailor, the Midwest has not dried his memory.

The yet bright Nordic eyes seem to jump out at the listener as the old man recalls and describes with heavy accent.

Walter Kaulitz can remember how on the Atlantic Ocean the Northern Lights would make the metal yardarms of those sailing ships reflect like neon lights.

Walter Kaulitz can remember the torture of a windless ocean on the crew. "The ocean was just like a mirror; you couldn't move at all," he said.

"Once I was on a ship 195 consecutive days waiting for a breeze," he continued. "We were sailing from Nicaragua to England. Then there was that time in the Galapagos Island, we were held up four weeks without a wind. The captain finally was on deck motioning and saying, 'Come, you wind! Come, you wind!' And he whistled for the wind. I thought he'd gone crazy."

Walter Kaulitz can remember when a tidal wave jarred the ship so that the fresh water tank sprung a leak. "The water was rationed to a cup every once in a while. At night it was so long, and it was so dry," he said. "It was three weeks before it rained."

Walter Kaulitz can remember how nature was not the only antagonist. "When there is no wind and the ship is still, there is nothing to do. You'd have a fight once in a while," he recalled. "A sail rigger made my eye so closed I couldn't see out of it for two days. But I paid him back."

And, Walter Kaulitz can remember that day in 1912 when rockets shot from another vessel pierced the horizon. The captain urged the crew to be more attentive to spotting dangerous icebergs lurking in the waters of their own ship rather than "some passenger ship celebrating." Later, Kaulitz learned those rockets came from the ill-fated Titanic.

Kaulitz was 19 when he first stepped off German soil into the kind of life that was to mold his spirit. He became a ship's carpenter. He worked on six vessels before it all came to an end here in Omaha.

Kaulitz and German shipmates found themselves tied up on a Pacific Island in 1914 because of a world war that the United States still was hoping to avoid. Finally, after three months, a U.S. ship picked him up as its carpenter and he sailed to New Orleans.

He intended to travel overland to San Francisco and another ship. Kaulitz came to Omaha first, however, because he had a sister living here. Then he read in a German language newspaper that the British were stopping American ships and removing all German sailors they had aboard.

Kaulitz decided he preferred Omaha. "I stayed where I was, and I liked it," he said. He became a carpenter here and married a Nebraska girl.

Kaulitz was never on another ship. "I just look at books and read about it," he said.

There also is something else that helps stir his memory of the sea. Kaulitz makes those miniature ships that somehow end up in bottles. It's a pastime started when he was a sailor himself; it was what some sailors of the day picked up during those long windless days on water.

It's an intriguing, almost forgotten art that takes skill and patience. Kaulitz can spend 40 hours on a small detailed ship that would crush in the grip of a landlubber's hand.

As an example of the work involved: Kaulitz makes masts and yardarms out of pieces of maple. Into these are drilled small holes with a drill bit made out of a needle. Thread, simulating rope, is strung through the holes.

Each ship is built so that the masts are collapsible, thus when finished it can be slipped through the neck of the bottle and brought to full height again.

Among those interested in the work and background of Walter Kaulitz are the families of Dr. Paul Reichstadt, 674 N. 63rd, and Christy Kara, 4222 Davenport. It's a part of their heritage—Mrs. Reichstadt and Mrs. Kara are daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Kaulitz, who live at 4415 Douglas.