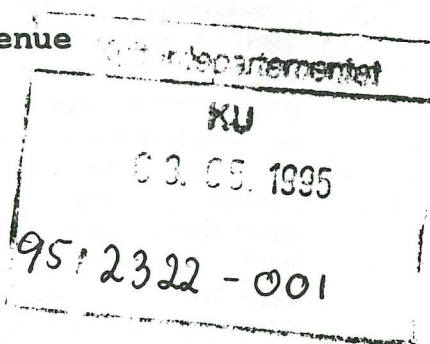


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19 April 1995



Det Kongelige Kirke og
Kulturdepartementet
Box 8030 Dep.
N-0030 Oslo
NORWAY

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you in the hope that you can help me locate some information on the late Storker T. Storkerson (ca.1883-193?) of Norway. I have no information on his birth place nor where he spent his last years. The purpose of this information is for a book I am writing on the Klengenbergs family of Arctic Canada. Christian Klinkenberg Jørgensen, or, "Klengenbergs" as he was known in the New World, was a Dane who came to Alaska in 1888 on board a whaling ship. Klengenbergs stayed and married Kemnik or "Gremnia" of Point Hope in 1893. After some years of living the native life in Alaska, Gremnia and Klengenbergs ventured into Arctic Canada where he was the first European to trade and settle among the Copper Inuit. They had nine children. Their first born, Wenek or "Weena" (1895-19??) married Storker T. Storkerson of Norway in 1910. Storker and Weena produced three daughters: Martina born June 10, 1911; Aida born June 13, 1915; Bessie, April 20, 1918.

Storkerson came from Norway into Arctic Canada as a member of the Anglo-American Arctic Expedition of 1906-07 which is also referred to as, the "Leffingwell-Mikkelsen Expedition". Another member of the Expedition was Vilhjalmur Stefansson with whom Storkerson would have a close association through his years in Canada. Storkerson later joined the Canadian Arctic Expedition, under the leadership of Stefansson, who in numerous instances, referred to him as his "right hand" man.

Storkerson had, among other things, devised a new method of taking ocean depth sounding as clues to the existence of new land. On the Canadian Arctic Expedition, Storkerson, Stefansson and Ole Andreasson with six dogs made the first leg of the "discovery" of new Arctic islands during 1914-15. These were the last new lands discovered in the Americas. They traced the entire west coast of Prince Patrick Island and landed on an unknown island which Stefansson named, Brock Island, then another larger unrecorded island which he named Borden Island, later re-named Mackenzie King Island for the Prime Minister of the day. During the following winter, they travelled over sea ice northeast of Ellef Ringnes Island and sighted another unmapped island west of Axel Heiberg which Stefansson named Meighen Island. They spent the winter of 1916 on the northern part of Melville Island. From there, Storkerson set out in early 1917, to explore the northern and eastern corners of Victoria Island. Both Storkerson and Stefansson proved they could live off the land by hunting as the native people had always done.

In 1920, Stefansson and Storkerson collaborated on a reindeer-herding enterprise undertaken in cooperation with the Hudson's Bay Company in Amadjuak Bay on the south coast of Baffin Island. Storkerson was responsible for studying the terrain and arranging the transportation of reindeer and Sami herders from Hammerfest in Northern Norway. Nearly seven hundred reindeer were purchased in Norway, 550 of which lived to reach Baffin island. Once landed, the herd was dispersed by a storm and only 210 were recovered the following spring. But the experiment was beset with problems. The Sami herders were unfamiliar with working in treeless regions and were homesick and worst of all, the terrain was deficient in the type of moss that is the dietary staple of reindeer. The Sami herders returned to Norway in 1923 and the Hudson's Bay Company closed the operation in 1924 after losing its large capital investment.

Storkerson returned to Norway after the failure of the reindeer experiment and it is not certain whether he ever returned to Canada to re-join his wife and their daughters although I know that he attempted to do so. To members of the Klengenbergs family, "Storkersen was a great man" with more knowledge of ocean currents than any other. Another explorer, Harold Noice¹, who was with Storkerson and Stefansson on the Canadian Arctic Expedition described Storkerson as "the most important man in our party. He is a Norwegian who has sailed the Seven Seas, to leave them all at last for the lure of the Arctic. He is stockily built, with fair hair and frank blue eyes."

The only known reference to his fate is to be found in Klengenbergs' comment that: "The hardships and anxieties which Storkersen endured in saving the lives of the Stefansson crew by his own wit and courage and endurance were such that he collapsed afterwards."² In 1930, according to Klengenbergs, Storkerson "was being treated at an institution in Norway". On Klengenbergs' death in 1931 there is no record of Storkerson's fate.

I would be most grateful to have any information at all about Storkersen after he returned to Norway. I may even be able to make a trip to do the research myself, if I can be put in contact with sources from which to start. I can read Norwegian with no problem as my mother tongue is Danish. (Speaking Norwegian is another matter!) Thank you for any help you can give me on this subject.

Sincerely yours,

Jette Elsebeth Ashlee, M.Litt.

Jette Ashlee.

¹Harold Noice. With Stefansson in the Arctic. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 192?.

²Tom MacInnes, Klengenbergs of the Arctic, London, Jonathan Cape, 1932.