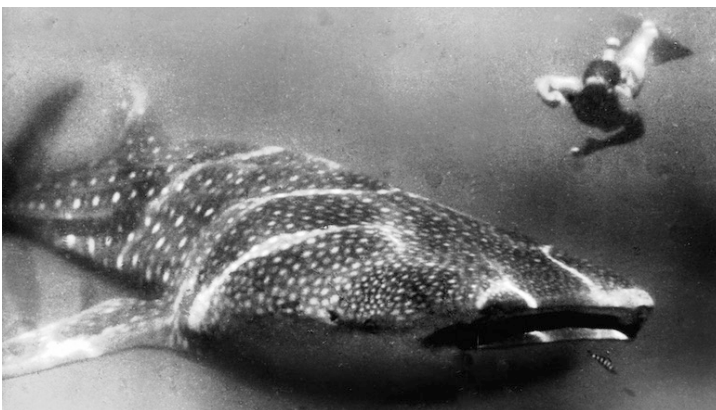


Nearly all of us know about the wonderful undersea explorations of the French scientist and film maker, Jacques Cousteau. Watching his documentaries and reading his books, one was transported into a magnificent undersea world of sharks, whales, corals and numerous other marine organisms. My childhood dream of becoming a marine biologist, which became partially true, was not sparked by Jacques Cousteau, but by a book written by Dr. Hans Hass, a German undersea explorer which is entitled: "We come from the sea" (*Wir kommen aus dem Meer*) translated into English in 1958. Hans Hass, born on the 23rd of January 1919, described with magnificent detail the first contact by him with a whale shark in the Red Sea, followed by numerous encounters all over the world which included the Galapagos Islands and the Great Barrier Reef to name a few. Over the years I have collected many of his books and films and watched them transfixed and fascinated as I lived myself into diving along with him under the Red Sea. Hans Hass received numerous awards for his creative work, and was the owner of a number of patents which included a re-breathing apparatus for underwater work. Hans Hass passed away on the 16th of June 2013 at the age of 94, leaving a magnificent legacy of marine biology and exploration.



Dr. Hans Hass and wife Lotte busy diving and filming the oceans



Left: Hans Hass taking the first film of the giant whale shark, *Rhincodon typus* on the 7th of May 1950 in the Red Sea
Right: Holding on to the tail of a harpooned sperm whale off the coast of the Azores

Ref: Hass, H. 1958. We come from the sea (*Wir kommen aus dem Meer*). Jarrolds Publishers. London.

As I happened to page through the book a couple of weeks ago, many years after I have read it so many times over and over, I came across a photograph of a person sitting in front of a tent with a radio inside, and a little board fixed to the front of the tent, bearing the letters "TI9AA". Immediately of course, I recognized it as a call-sign of a radio ham! So, by now, you may have been wondering: what on earth is all this writing about marine biology in a newsletter for radio amateurs? Three years after their expedition in the Red Sea, Hass left the Hamburg harbor on the 23rd of August 1953 for a 4 year expedition on his newly acquired Xarifa (*Die Schone*) which would visit the Azores, Galapagos and the famous Cocos Islands. The Xarifa had three masts, of which the main mast was thirty-three meters high. Fully equipped, Xarifa had a variety of scientist on board having their laboratories to work on various aspects of marine biology and oceanography.

Hass, to my great delight quotes in "*We come from the Sea*" the following: "*Dr. Heino Sommer was our physician and radio specialist. In his former capacity all he had to do at first was to prescribe for his own seasickness; as a wireless operator, however, he was, for a time, the busiest of us all since we had an amateur radio station and kept in touch with a number of amateurs all over the world*"^[1: p139]. Around the Coco's Islands, while filing in very stormy and dark waters, an appalling grinding noise came through Xarifa and the motor stopped. Soon the main engineer reported that a bearing had broken in the turn-over gear and that the main engine could not be used anymore. In the meantime, however, Dr. Sommer had managed, through amateur radio-stations to get through an order to Germany for the replacement of the bearing. This is but one of many instances where one would the least expect ham radio to play a role, or be associated with an activity such as marine biology, play an integral part in the survival of human beings.



The magnificent Xarifa at sea



QSL card of Dr. Heino Sommer TI9AA from Cocos Island on 2 April 1954



Dr Heino Sommer operating TI9AA from Cocos Island ordering a ship's motor bearing