

tons of bananas arrived in Norway. Christian would soon get the nickname Banan-Matthiessen.

Christian's banana business grew rapidly. In order to expand it further, Christian's son Carl, at the age of 23, was sent to Gothenburg, 300 km south of Oslo to explore if the Swedes would have a taste for bananas. In 1909, Carl established The Banana Company AB, which soon changed name to the better-known AB Banan-Kompaniet. At that point in time the banana was almost unknown in Sweden, as unknown as it had been in Norway just a few years earlier. The first banana cargo arrived at Gothenburg in 1909 all black and frozen, and only a small amount of the sorry shipment could be sold. The bananas which arrived in a good state were well appreciated, but most bananas that arrived at Swedish ports were too ripe, frozen, or damaged in other ways. Since the Swedish market was interested in bananas, Banan-Kompaniet built up a logistical operation with their own quays to ensure fast distribution, since there were no cooling houses at the time. But the core problem remained – the bananas that arrived at the quay were already damaged.

Carl was therefore looking to improve maritime banana transport. Sven Salén was a suitable candidate. Carl Matthiessen's knowledge of and connections to the banana industry complemented Sven Salén's knowledge of shipping. Together they decided to develop the import of bananas to Sweden and Scandinavia, taking on more control of the maritime transport than previously. Sven chartered in the ship *Caledonia* in 1922 to transport bananas from Rotterdam to Malmö and Stockholm<sup>2</sup>. Sven and Carl established a line Rotterdam-Ghent-Antwerp-Stockholm, serviced by three ships, as well as Rotterdam-Gothenburg-Oslo, serviced by two ships, what we today would call a feeder service. To Rotterdam, the bananas were delivered with United Fruit's banana carriers.

#### **Brokers: From Klaveness to Orion**

Torvald Klaveness established his company in 1946. His family had a background in shipping and his wife's father was the head of Banan-Matthiessen, who in turn was connected to Sven Salén. He started brokering reefer ships and also bought the reefer *Balao*, built at the Drammen shipyard<sup>a</sup>. In the early 1960s, he focused on brokerage rather than ship-owning, in order to not be exposed to the vagaries of the shipping markets.

<sup>2</sup> Salénnytt, 1968/1. Salénnytt is the corporate magazine of Saléninvest, aimed primarily at employees but also open to any person interested. It was published from 1968 to the bankruptcy in 1984.

Klaveness had employed our respondent Alv Thomassen as its sole reefer broker already in the 1960s, but the business grew to the point that by the mid-1990s, there were seven. Thomassen recalls that in the early days the focus lay on finding tonnage for a particular cargo and that this later changed to the reverse, that is to say, find cargo for a particular ship. Klaveness was an international operation that worked with both Lauritzen and Salén, despite their rivalry, and also the banana companies.

During the late 1990s the upper management of Klaveness decided to sell its reefer brokerage arm to RS Platou. The brokers were unhappy with this decision and instead decided to start their own operation to be known as Orion. They approached Jan Olaf Tonnevold, a former investor in the reefer segment to be a part-owner.

To kick off the venture, Orion received five or six vessels to exclusively manage from Tonnevold. In the early 2000s, business was good, but the profit went down in 2006 and 2007. Because of the decline and consolidation of the independent reefer operators, many brokers started to leave the reefer segment. Orion experienced that the spot market, which was particularly important to the brokers, had shrunk. Seatrade and Green Reefers also started to use in-house brokers. Furthermore, Trade Winds reported that “Reefer brokers have been forced to stand aside as exporters and ship owners tie up tonnage themselves”<sup>b</sup>. Therefore, the three brokers Espen Harr, Peter Oyen, and Morten Saetre wound up Orion but continued to do business separately. Orion’s demise meant that there were few reefer brokers left in the market, Ocean Reefer Services in the UK was one.

Notes: a Borgen, P.O. & Heieren, R. 2011, *Made in Drammen: industrihistorie fra en østlandsby med hovedvekt på perioden 1870-1970*, Drammen : Drammen Rotary, p. 123. Available at: <<https://www.drammen.kommune.no/Books/made%20in%20drammen/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#page1>>; b “Madness’ reigns in the reefer zone”. Trade Winds 29 January 2010.

Soon after the business was established, Sven Salén started to invest in tonnage for the new lines, since there was a lack of suitable tonnage that could be chartered in. The first ship was the steamer *Chr. Matthiessen* bought in 1923 which was rebuilt for transporting bananas, and she was followed by three more ships bought in 1926-1929: *Jamaica*, *Sigrid Matthiessen*, and *Sverre Nergaard*<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, they were upgraded to ventilated fruit carriers and heating equipment and insulation were installed to prevent the cargo from chilling injury in the

3 They all had an operating speed of 10-12 knots, were of about 1300-1500 dwt.