

Rolf G Mayer and Ingwar Gemzell, Swedish American Line, 1960s & 70s

Having devoted more than a decade working aboard the prestigious Swedish cruise ships, Rolf and Ingwar - both of them around 75+ by now - would here like to share some memories from their good times with SAL, their colleagues and their careers.

Rolf & Ingwar is a couple and they met for the first time in 1961, onboard the “old” Kungsholm (1953). Rolf was working as Wine Steward and Ingwar was a Dining Room Waiter. After fifty years, they are still living together, and are the best of friends. They live in a registered partnership relation since 2005. They have subsequently been featured in that capacity - interviewed in Swedish radio and television programmes.

After retirement at 60 they still spend time on cruise ships - a couple of trips each year – but as passengers this time of course! Rolf becomes 75 in 2013, and Ingwar is on his 76th.

Rolf’s story

Before coming to SAL I started my career in hotel & restaurant schools in post war Germany and then worked my way through a number of first class hotels in Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.

In my early contacts with SAL’s Torkel Tistrand I realized that I needed some knowledge about the Swedish language to be able to get a career onboard the White Fleet. Therefore, I got myself a job in a top notch Stockholm restaurant (Berns), where I learned some Swedish. Eventually I came to the “old” and then to the “new” (1966) Kungsholm. Starting in the main dining room I was later promoted to Assistant Chief Steward on Veranda Deck and eventually I became Chief Steward, i.e. head of all the service and staff on Veranda Deck & Promenade Deck. For me, those years of my life were full of great experiences together with wonderful colleagues such as the deck waiters, stewards, bartenders and “barnisses” (bar hands).

In 1975, after the SAL years, I continued in the restaurant business ashore as a Restaurant Manager in various well known establishments in Stockholm. And, at the age of 49 I started to study to get a “teachers certificate” followed by twelve years as a teacher at a hotel & restaurant senior high school in Stockholm - in fact without having taken a single lesson to learn the Swedish language!

Ingwar’s story

My ship career begun early, before I was sixteen, working as a mess steward onboard a coal-barge (Rex bolaget), and later on with the Johnson Line, which took me to various places in South America, the USA and Canada. This was at that time a great way of exploring the world as a Swedish youngster. I started onboard the M/S Stockholm (1948), SAL, the trip after the

collision with Andrea Doria in 1956. In the following years I fulfilled my military service in the Royal Swedish Navy - of course - where later in life I returned as a navy priest.

Wanting a job ashore, for exchange, I joined a theater school in Paris, financing my studies through a modeling career at Dior and Cardin, among others. For a while I worked in the show biz in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Helsinki, sometimes in shows with famous Swedish artists like Git Gay, and also impersonating Katie Rolfsen in other shows.

Finally back to SAL again and a career on the “new” Kungsholm (1966), where in due course I reached the position as crew number 601 i.e. Chief Steward on Veranda and Promenade Deck. Possibly due to exceptionally blond hair and my past in show biz, I was awarded the nickname Snow White.

Several of my family ancestors have been priests, and this was kind of a dream also for me. After the ships were sold in 1975, I studied theology and was finally ordained by the Archbishop of Sweden in 1976. In spite of attractive job offers in the restaurant business by the Hilton Group, I had already made up my mind – to become and work as a priest. Still today, at the age of seventy-six I get assignments now and then to conduct weddings and funerals.

Greetings from Rolf and Ingvar

One of our greatest joys today, from the SAL perspective, is to meet and to have contacts with our former Kungsholm professional colleagues. For example, Tommy Stark and Hans Gustafsson were deck waiters on the Veranda Deck for some years 1971-73, and we have met again in Stockholm together with “guys on the Bridge” like Master Kjell Smittberg, a captain that was very much appreciated by both crew and passengers. We meet these and other persons from SAL-ships every now and then. The captains Smitterberg, Grönberg, Sjölin and Sölje were all real gentlemen and good SAL ambassadors.

We, Rolf & Ingvar, would like to thank SAL for all these wonderful years, including all the people we worked with, onboard the White Fleet. We hope that you will enjoy some of the pictures that we now share with you all.

Regards,

Ingvar & Rolf

Stockholm, March 2013.