

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 20, 2014

S.A.S. and Solveig: In the travel world of the mid-20th century, S.A.S. meant only one thing, Scandinavian Airlines System. Traveling on S.A.S. was a wonderful way to cross the Atlantic, with superb food, beverages, and service, second to none. Most stewardesses were young and attractive on all airlines, but the Scandinavians were outstanding. Unfortunately, as transatlantic routes were doled out following World War II, there was much lower demand for travel to Scandinavia than to London, Paris, and Rome, so travel agents such as Marshall & Burton (later Marshall & Greenplate) in Wilmington had fewer opportunities to put clients on S.A.S. than on British Airways, Air France, Pan American, and TWA. The European destinations in Scandinavia were only Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm, but in the days before the transatlantic jets (about 1960), most eastbound Scandinavian flights stopped at Prestwick, Scotland, for refueling. Once I flew on S.A.S. to Prestwick on a Douglas DC-7 and took a steam train from Glasgow to London.

Like all airlines promoting transatlantic travel, in which effort they made great strides over steamships during the 1950s, S.A.S. did all sorts of interesting things for travel agents, hoping for increased business in return. W. Murray Metten, travel editor for the *News Journal* papers, would put on a travel forum in Wilmington annually, featuring an interesting and enjoyable program open to the public. Usually one of the airlines, tour companies, or tourist organizations promoting places like the West Indies or Hawaii would be a certain year's attraction. And that's where Solveig enters the story.

I don't remember Solveig's last name, but she worked out of the New York office, promoting S.A.S. among the travel community. A very attractive Swedish girl in her mid-20s, she had been a top stewardess for the airline before her promotion. She spoke perfect English (or American English) and apparently loved living in New York. S.A.S. was invited to sponsor the Travel Forum in Wilmington (about 1951), and Solveig was sent to spend two or three days making arrangements, overseeing the program, and visiting Wilmington travel agents. I don't know how it happened, as I was afraid of girls, but I ended up entertaining Solveig one evening.

My car at that time was a used 1940 Packard One-Sixty 8-passenger sedan with 148" wheelbase, and in that I drove her around the area. One of my secret places in those days was the old Hagley Powder Yard, where the gate off Barley Mill Road was always open; nothing was happening in the area that is now the Hagley Museum. We drove along the Brandywine and exited up Blacksmith Hill to the area of Christ Church, then out via Buck Road. We also went to Longwood Gardens, where the grounds were open until dark with free admission. We ended the evening at the Greenhill Dairy at Lancaster Avenue and Greenhill Avenue, where we enjoyed milkshakes. It was a very quiet evening for a sophisticated New York girl, but she said she enjoyed it thoroughly. I think Solveig enjoyed everything.

Some 10 years went by, and I got a phone call from Solveig. She had married a New York socialite, and she wanted to bring him to see me and our attractions and especially expressed an interest in Longwood. She said her twin sister wanted to come with them, which sounded interesting. It was arranged on a Sunday in the summer, and they arrived in her husband's fancy convertible. We enjoyed Longwood together, visited my father's cars, and had dinner, possibly at the Hotel du Pont. Solveig's twin sister, however, was her opposite, very plain looking and shy; she hardly said anything during their visit. Solveig's husband was pleasant enough, but his wife carried the day. That Sunday visit was more than 50 years ago. I never heard from that quarter again.