



EUROMEET TR writes history with SSR – WHERE PAST & PRESENT MEET

Exactly 60 years ago one of the last pencil lines were drawn on the drawing board in 1954. A plan and finally how to construct the SS Rotterdam is completed. A memorable and accidental moment! You wonder whether there might not be any more of these remarkable flukes..?

A ship like the Titanic

Nearly four years later, on a Saturday afternoon, the 13th of September 1958, the steamship Rotterdam runs from stack. Nine minutes later than predicted, at 16.39 hours sharp, to reach the water in the river Maas. At high tide, 110 centimeters above normal sea level. On the RDM shipyard sounds a loud ringing. Queen Juliana put with her silver hatchet the champagne into motion. The launch was announced by the newspapers at a large scale. Thousands of spectators marvel at the other side of the river. It's a warm day, the ship is slowly moving and runs smoothly out of the building dock and dives deep into the water. It causes a tidal wave that rolls out far over the river. An overall "Ohhh" is heard, followed by an equally general sigh of relief. It's not more than a few inches or the ship touches the shore, it seems almost too big with 228 meters long and 29 meters wide, dimensions which are similar to a ship like the Titanic!

Euromeet Rotterdam, 13th of September 2014, exactly 56 years later! Not less remarkable is that both, the launch of the ship and the Euromeet Rotterdam, will be even on the same day... **Saturday!** How on earth is this possible..!

Symbol of reconstruction

11th of July 1959, the SS Rotterdam begins her maiden voyage. Something you could not let that moment go by. Beautiful summer weather, no wind, but a bit hazy. At a time like this, you're not alone, thousands and thousands of Rotterdam citizens are on the move. By foot, on bicycle or motorcycle. Congestion on the roads, in those days an unprecedented phenomenon, VW Beetles, little Opel's and a lot of "made in England" cars are following the flow of the river Maas. The SS Rotterdam was and is much more than a ship, more than 13.000 tons of floating steel, almost everyone had something to do with shipping, probably the reason for such a huge rush. The SS Rotterdam was the symbol of reconstruction, future and prosperity that everyone was waiting for during the sixties. Nine tugboats pulling the majestic ship, that towers up 55 yards above the waterline of the New Waterway, to the open sea. On the pier of Hook of Holland you see her, propelled all by herself, disappear into the mist. After her first trip, on Friday 11th of September 1959, the SS Rotterdam moors at quay 40 in New York. A special moment at least, so special that after many, many journeys around the world she is now returned in her city of birth, Rotterdam. A city where the Rotterdam inhabitants talk about boats instead of ships..

So however, the story is almost complete. In exactly the same weekend as that of 11th of September 1959, although 55 years later, our Euromeet will take place on the SS Rotterdam! In the very same weekend, it just cannot be more beautiful, even the dates are flowing on nicely to 12, 13 & 14th of September 2014! What a coincidences all together..!

Everything on board needs to be perfect

'Our ship' is number 5 in a series of six vessels carrying the same ship's name, Rotterdam, over a period from 1872 to the current sailing MS Rotterdam, in service since 1997. If you wish to learn more about the history please visit the following website: <http://www.vdleek.nl/Rtd/6Rtd/Ships.html>

It was our ship, and it would stay that way. Forty years later I lived in a small house on Curaçao, at the border of the Caribbean Sea. The house was located somewhat outside the centre of Willemstad, not far from the entrance to the harbour. One evening, just before sunset, I was sitting outside on the terrace and I saw a ship appear alongside the quay and I felt the shock of recognition. This was my Rotterdam. No, I could not say 'our' any more; my father has passed away ten years ago. But simultaneously with the ship I saw him appear, above the horizon. He was sitting on the small dock in the First Petroleum Harbour, smoking a cigarette, and said: 'That's a fine ship, Jan, don't you think?' The ship was coming closer. It was still white in the upper part, but now the hull was dark blue. The slim line funnels removed any trace of doubt: it was the Rotterdam, no question. 'Did you know', I said to my wife, 'that I even can draw the interior of a second-class cabin for you?' She asked me whether I had been on board the ship. 'Never, I am afraid. In our village there lived a ships carpenter who worked for the Rotterdamse Droogdok Maatschappij. He was in poor health, my father used to visit him and I occasionally went along with him. He lived in a house that used to belong to a fruit farm on the Slotsedijk, in the bay window there stood a mahogany desk. It should have been installed in a second class cabin of the steamship Rotterdam but, during installation, a corner of the top had broken off. Everything on board had to be perfect; the desk was rejected and the carpenter was allowed to take it home. Every single time I came to visit him with my dad he gave me permission to sit at the desk. 'How does it feel?', he would ask. And I said: 'As if I am sailing.' His name was Roobol. He had been working for the R.D.M. for thirty eight years; he died with a cigarette in his mouth. Just before he drew his final breath he sat down at the desk. 'You know what, working people of that period perfectly matched the things they made. That is no longer the case'.

My wife smiled at me, got up, handed me my binoculars, and said: 'His ship is still sailing'. I focused on the prow and read the name "Rembrandt". Also, a very symbolical name, and still I felt a pang in my heart, as if right in front of my eyes a vandal had thrust a knife into the Nachtwacht. In the end, the ship was not even allowed to be called Rotterdam.

A quote from the book Steamship Rotterdam 1955-2005 by Jan Brokken

Dates and figures are extracted from the standard work Zes maal Rotterdam of Bram Oosterwijk

MS Rotterdam passes the SS Rotterdam

Times are changing, now the Rembrandt is fortunately again Rotterdam. Both ships, the SS Rotterdam and MS Rotterdam, are just a stone throw away from each other! Whether it should be.., so the story is even more complete. A final and special coincidence is the fact that the MS Rotterdam, during our Euromeet on Saturday the **13th of September 2014**, in the afternoon around **16.00 hours** will leave from the former Holland America Line Terminal at the Wilhelminakade, which is now hotel New York. Say, with a bit of luck, goodbye to the MS Rotterdam from the port- or rear side of the SS Rotterdam. See how times of bygone revived, unwhile she is sailing away for a cruise with a Southern European destination! What a striking coincidence again!

Coincidences and equal intervals : Euromeet Rotterdam 2014 writes history with SSR – where past & present meet!

Euromeet Team Rotterdam is ready for you!

Why not writing history yourself and have a lasting memory by being there too! Just do it! What is going to happen at Euromeet Rotterdam - see your club website or www.trclub.nl ! For every Euromeet participant there will be a unique Polo shirt, finished with the embroidered logo Euromeet 2014 Rotterdam, as on top of this newsletter. There is also a, specially for this event compiled, programme book available per equipe. This is a once-in-a-lifetime occasion. So many coincidences will not happen again! You're coming, right? Book quickly while you still can! The registration form is digitally available on your club's website so why not should you ...



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