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Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce - Arizona

Promoting Trade, Commerce, and Investments between Sweden and Arizona since 1996

SACC Arizona - Featured Member

Mona Mellegard

Mona Mellegards life is a whirlwind tour of the world. And when you've been travelling the world since being a kid - where do you decide to settle down? She choose Phoenix, Arizona of course.

Although being born in Sweden, her early years was spent growing up in Persia, where her father worked as a Civil engineer at construction projects. Later it was Egypt and the Aswan dam-building.

- Then we lived in Alingsas, in Sweden, for one-and-a-half years, before my father decided to take a job in Caracas, Venezuela, to build a hospital.



One would think that all the time spent outside Sweden would foster a longing for settling down in the mother land. Especially when Mona describes how the family sometimes went looking for other swedes, to be able to talk swedish and reconnect with swedish traditions.

- Remember, this was long before Internet and easy to use communications. It was still letters and very occasional long distance phone calls.

But when the family returned to Sweden, the then teenager Mona couldn't get to grips with the everyday life.

- I lasted about eight years. I just did not fit in with Sweden. It was just not my calling. I wanted out and explore the world a little more. So I became a travel guide and worked all over the south of Europe. But it was when I started to take groups to America for three-week-tours, that I realized that it was here I wanted to live. I led groups through the US for about six years and explored the country from coast to coast. It was during that time I found that Arizona was the place for me. The climate and culture was the best fit for me.

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Leaving the nomadic life style of the travel guide, she instead opted to delve into hotel management.

- I remember coming to Phoenix in 1981, with two bags. That's all I brought with me.

And almost as Mary Poppins, she took to the hotel business like a whirlwind. After a few years she became head concierge, started up a concierge organization and worked her way up to become resort manager.

But her love of Sweden found new ways to manifest itself.

- Together with Eva Froelich - who was involved with SWEA and [The Vasa Order](#) - we started [SWEA in Arizona](#). I still remember us having the first meeting in my house.

And - of course - she was also involved in the rejuvenation of SACC Arizona. During the late 1990s she, together with Anna Seedhill, was instrumental in getting the organization vital again and brought in new and old members.

What is SACC good for?

- I think it is a commercially important forum. Not a lot people understand that. Any collection of people who share a common background or interest, is a breeding ground for business ideas or joint ventures. It can be used more wisely, than it is, I think.

In five years' time – what will you say about SACC then?

- I don't know. My personal view is that we have so many amazing possibilities through computers and Internet. It's not as necessary to meet in organizations maybe. You can keep in contact with families and friends through Skype etc. When I was young you had to grab every swede you saw, when you were abroad, to be able to talk Swedish.

- But we also see that there is a backlash to online-only living. Conferences and fairs are still going strong. People seems to need face-to-face-meetings.

Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce Arizona Inc.
PO Box 5102 | Scottsdale, AZ 85261-5102 USA | contact@saccarizona.org

c/o Bryan Cave, LLP
2 North Central Avenue #2200, Phoenix, AZ 85004, USA