

SCRIBBLINGS



From Bill Miller

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Above: The Rotterdam arriving at New York in Sep 1980

Mon May 30th Rotterdam/Amsterdam: Overnight passage and early morning arrival at the Wilhelminakade, the onetime Holland-America

terminal and now the much rebuilt cruise terminal. The naming is scheduled for 11 and, like well trained sailors, we are seated, ready, attentive. After a few speeches, the Princess does the honors. Myself, I was seated in Row 3, just behind Carnival & Holland America management, the mayor of Rotterdam and a row across from the Princess herself. Yes, I felt very honored, quietly thrilled.

A little about Princess Margriet! The 79-yr-old Princess is the third daughter of the late Queen Juliana and her husband, Prince Bernhard. Her older sister is Beatrix, who was the Dutch queen until she abdicated (retired) in favor of her son, King Willem Alexander. Consequently, Margriet is the sister to the former queen and aunt to the current king.

But back in May 1940, as Nazi forces ruthlessly invaded Holland, the Dutch royals fled (and so quickly that the crown jewels were carried off in brown paper bags) first to England and then (aboard a Dutch warship) to the greater safety of Canada. They resided until the first summer of peace in 1945 in Ottawa. Margriet was actually born in Canada in 1943, but the Canadian Government kindly decreed that the hospital delivery room was “Dutch soil for the day” and so the little royal princess could claim Dutch birth. (Briefly, back in May 1940, the seat of the Dutch government-in-exile was actually temporarily installed aboard the Holland-America liner *Westernland*, while anchored off Falmouth in England.) When the Dutch royal family finally left Canada and returned home, in June 1945, they crossed from New York to Southampton onboard the troopship *Queen Elizabeth* (below and in wartime coloring). By then, the famed Cunarder was carrying up to 15,000 returning soldiers going westbound, but as few as 100 “passengers” going eastward. There were no tourists quite yet, for

example, the War had just ended. The Dutch royals were back in war-ravaged Holland by August.



Princess Margriet has had a long association with the Holland-America Line. She is, after all, national godmother to all Dutch ships. Myself, I

had gone over for the naming of the new *Nieuw Amsterdam* in June 1983 and the Princess was to do the honors. The ship was French-built and so the ceremonies were planned at a dockside in Le Havre. But alas, the electrical system on the otherwise brand new ship suddenly (and thoughtlessly) conked (and – curses -- the very night before) and we soon had candles in our cabins. With only hours, the Princess was told (politely, of course) not to come.

Princess Margriet has in fact the highest number of HAL namings to her royal credit. She has named the *Prinsendam* (1972), *Nieuw Amsterdam* (1983), *Rotterdam* (1997) and the *Oosterdam* (2003). The Company's connection to The House of Orange actually goes back nearly a century to Prince Hendrik (Margriet's grandfather) launching the *Statendam* in 1929. Since then, members of the Dutch Royal Family have launched 11 more Holland America Line vessels. (Another Dutch shipping line, the long-gone Oranje Line, named one of its small passenger-cargo ships in her honor of the Princess. It later sailed for Holland-America in the 1960s.)



Princess Margriet and her husband (a Dutch professor) took several world cruise segments aboard the *Rotterdam* (below) in the 1980s & '90s. They traveled as quite ordinary guests, but were kept under the watchful eye of the then Dutch owners and management. It was said that several “spies” (Indonesian stewards) reported on every royal move and activity -- and made sure nothing went wrong. “The Princess is now having her soup” was one noted comment reported back to the Seattle home office.





Queen Beatrix naming the Eurodam in 2008.



The Princess (center) and the christening rope ...

