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(Lloyd's List)

Last Word

20 in style

TOOK the boat to Ellis Island Immigration Museum for a special occasion ? the celebration of Heidmar?s 20th anniversary.

Six hundred ?by invitation only? guests crammed the historic New York ? sorry, New Jersey ? site last Saturday night to help Norwegian ? sorry, Connecticut ? shipowner Per Heidenreich usher in the third decade of his enterprise.

Since the entire museum was booked for the whole evening, the only access was by a ferry from Battery Park provided by the host. The arriving party was taken past the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour on a reasonably pleasant albeit cloudy New York evening, before being let loose into the party headquarters.

For the Lloyd?s List photographer, who flew in from Norway the previous day, the event was doubly gratifying.

After spending six hours in the Heathrow lounge on a forced layover, he became among the first arrivals from ?old Europe? to be photographed and fingerprinted at Newark Liberty International Airport as a new US policy kicked in.

He grumbled a little. But frankly, how can one expect Brit and Yankee hospitality to hold a candle to the incomparable Norwegian knack of making cold seem warm?

Sound was unsound

THE only unsound note during the entire evening was the quality of the acoustics ? as one can expect in a historic building not designed for speeches.

But while attendees could barely decipher the songs that the party band was manfully articulating, they needed no help in registering the message being delivered by their gracious host.

Heidenreich took the time to walk around the dinner tables, welcoming guests and ? in our case ? answering questions. His speech, too, was one that adhered to the principle ?brevity is the soul of wit?. The idea for using the site as the party venue apparently came from a Heidmar committee known as the ?20-20 visionaries?, he said. But the symbolism behind the venue choice was entirely intentional, and entirely in keeping with the man. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants were processed through Ellis Island between the late 19th century and 1938, but the station closed its doors in 1954.

The last immigrant to leave its doors in 1954 was a Norwegian, Heidenreich dryly pointed out.

Better sorry than Stolt

PER Heidenreich's own journey in the "promised land" started about two decades later.

He arrived in the US in 1970, and went on to spend 12 years with Stolt-Nielsen in locations around the world including Connecticut.

He left Stolt-Nielsen and started Heidenreich Marine in 1984. Hindsight is 20-20, of course, but one cannot help thinking that he is happier for it to have worked out this way.

Zero to hundred in 20

THE company was formally established on October 1, 1984. Starting with just one employee "himself" Heidmar has today grown into a 90-employee operation spread across offices in Darien, Houston, Caracas, London and Singapore. Twenty nationalities are represented in Darien alone, Heidenreich said.

Its Star Tankers pool, established in 1998, is now the largest panamax operator in the Atlantic basin, and the company has since started the Dorado product tanker and Sigma Tankers aframax pools.

The parent company is divided into three divisions "conventional shipmanagement for all pools, a lightering unit based in Houston, and information technology specialist Heidmar Innovations.

The son also shines

WHILE both Heidenreich's son and daughter work for the company, the "original" shipping mantle was passed on two years ago to Tim Brennan, a graduate of the US Merchant Marine Academy at King's Point, who heads Heidenreich Marine. An aerospace engineer by training, Heidenreich's son Fritz is more suited for the space age "into which, unfortunately, ships seem an anachronism.

Not to worry. Fritz heads up Heidmar Innovations, a division launched in the mid-1990s to develop software applications for the company's pools.

The division became a stand-alone entity within the Heidmar organization chart in 2002.

Heidmar Innovations has launched the websites www.q88.com, www.qbulk.com and www.qfleet.com, and has been slowly adding staff even though it accounts for only a minuscule proportion of the parent entity's revenues.

The original intention was to use the higher profile of Heidmar Innovations to attract independent shipowners to its range of online products.

But Fritz told Lloyd's List at the party that this plan has now been put in abeyance,