



OBITUARY: ROLAND FELIX KOHL (March 3, 1921 - July 11, 2016) by Ken Sanford



Roland Felix Kohl was born in Dresden, Germany on March 3, 1921 of a Swiss mother and German father. He completed his basic education in 1939. Always interested in aviation, airplanes and dirigibles, he wanted to become an aeronautical engineer. When he started to collect stamps as a youth he reflected his penchant for aviation by seeking stamps related to that field. His ambitions took a change in 1941 when he was drafted into the German Army. Trained as a telegrapher, he was serving in that capacity when his unit was transferred to the Russian front and was wounded during fighting around Latvia, evacuated back to Germany, treated and recovered. While convalescing in Dresden he survived the February 13, 1945 horrific bombing that virtually destroyed that city. When he sought to continue his education, there were no classes for Aeronautical Engineering and he enrolled in the Civil Engineering program. Upon graduation in 1952, he got a job as an engineer working for the U.S.

Airforce rebuilding damaged/destroyed airports. An old friend who had emigrated to New York before the war returned to Germany on business and tracked Roland down. He convinced Roland to come to America. Aided by his aunt and family who lived in New York, he found a place to live and got a job working for Amman and Whitney the famous bridge builders. Roland met a lovely Swedish girl, Kerstin, in New York, fell in love, and married her in January 1958. They lived happily in the city, both became U.S. citizens. In 1962 they decided to return to Europe and Roland quickly found jobs working for American engineering firms rebuilding industrial plants and refineries in Germany. In 1970 he was offered a job as Chief Engineer for the Zurich International Airport. He and Kerstin were delighted to move to Switzerland. 1995. All through the years after the end of World War II, Roland enlarged and maintained his aerophilatelic collection and became active in several aerophilatelic organizations.

Roland served as President of the International Federation of Aerophilatelic Societies (FISA) from 1977 until 1998. For many years, he was also President of the Swiss Airmail Society. Roland also organized a number of aerophilatelic exhibitions in Switzerland, most of which were held in the Swiss transport Museum in Lucerne.

One of his main specialities was Austrian Airmails, and in 1998 he published a Handbook & Catalogue of the Airmails and First Flights of Austria, includes SCADTA and Zeppelin flights, special cancellations etc.

As I lived in Switzerland from 1975 to 1998, I met Roland many times, and served with him for many years on the FISA Board. He was a great aerophilatelist and was known to philatelists Worldwide. He was a good friend and I will miss him.

While at an international philatelic exhibition in Thailand, Roland fell in love with the country and after Kerstin's death purchased a 12th floor condominium on the beach in Patong, Phuket. He was there on December 26, 2004 when the historic tsunami hit. Fortunately he was located in a sturdy 30 story building and was an observer of all the chaos that ensued. Eventually, he developed glaucoma and macular degeneration and hearing loss. Unable to get good health care he decided in 2011 to return to the United States and live with his first cousin, André and his wife Sally in Delaware. Succumbing to various ailments, he passed away peacefully on July 11, 2016. He was 95 years old.
