

This interview is the first in a series in which we will meet with the most important personalities in the gaming world, and speak with them not only of their professional lives but also of their human side.

EXPERIENCE AND PASSION KEEPING THE COMPANY ON THE TOP

Bertil Knutsson, Chairman of TCSJOHNHUXLEY and founder of the Knutsson Bolagen AB Group, is a man whose passions have kept him in a constant good mood throughout his seventy-three years. As a businessman, Mr Knutsson believes that the best way to live business life intensely is to work in the family business.

Where you were born?

I was born in Gothenburg in 1932. I have always lived there, even though I have had to establish businesses and companies outside of Sweden.



BERTIL KNUTTSON,
CHAIRMAN OF TCSJOHNHUXLEY



Where did you study?

I am self-taught. I am an entrepreneur. I left High School in Gothenburg when I was 17 and since then have learnt all I know from life itself. I started in this business in 1955 as a croupier in the Casino Valand Restaurant in Gothenburg. In 1958 I bought my own roulette fifty-fifty with a partner and in 1959 I founded my first company. Soon afterwards, we founded the limited company.

Do you have any hobbies?

I have many. Everybody knows that my biggest hobby is horses. I have 35 horses in Sweden, Paris and the UK. I have loved Marbella, in Spain, ever since it was a fishing village in the 60's. Boxing is another one of my hobbies. I was a junior boxer and won the silver medal in the national championships. I also became the youngest international boxing referee and was Chairman of the Swedish Boxing Federation. This was all before boxing was banned in Sweden

Does your family live in Gothenburg?

My wife Stella and my oldest son, Michael Knutsson, both live in Sweden. My other two sons, Tristan Sjöberg and Charles Maquignon live near London and in Paris. All my sons have freely chosen their own way in life. Charles is a professional actor in Paris, a long way from the family business. Tristan is a doctor in Marine Biology, although, somehow, he found the business more interesting and is currently Corporate Development Manager in the company. Michael is the Director of the company.



Bertil Knutsson and his son Michael



Bertil Knutsson and his son Tristan

What companies have you had?

I have had many and obviously most of them related with the industry. There are so numerous that I cannot even say how many. Our policy is that wherever we establish a branch, it must be incorporated in accordance with the regulations of the host country, employing local people and creating wealth in the area. In total we employ about 170 professionals in the group. Although we could be on the stock market we prefer to keep the company as a family company.

What was the worst moment of your career?

It was in the late 70's in Sweden. We invested everything we had in developing and producing the Chipper Champ Machine, to sort chips by colour. We had produced nearly one hundred ready to be commercialised within a month when the Swedish Government banned gambling. At the time, we were on the verge of the bankruptcy, which was nothing new to me. This, we decided, was the time to move to the UK, and the machine was first introduced at the Palm Beach Casino.

What was the most exciting moment of your career?

Right now. TCSJOHNHUXLEY has just reached an agreement to launch a new product, which will be a great success. Last month was also very important, because we all met to discuss the present and future of the company. Our change of headquarters was also a very big step.

What are your projects for the future?

Wherever there is an opportunity to introduce our products, that is where we will be. However, we will only work in regulated markets, to know what we can and cannot do. We already have offices in Moscow, Buenos Aires and Macao. We have an eye on Latin America where the industry is becoming very important.



Do you still travel much?

I still travel, but not as much as before. Now I am much more relaxed when I travel, because I know I have reliable professionals in charge.