

SWEDES IN USA

“I get my inspiration from the stormy sea.”

Skier, Windsurfer and Designer.

*Love brought Stina Sayre to posh Martha's Vineyard's
where she has her own label and two stores.....*

Martha's Vineyard is America's summer paradise. It is here that the American presidents Clinton and Obama spend their vacations amidst Hollywood stars, the rich and other top celebrities.

Swedish Clothing Designer Stina Sayre has chosen to live on Martha's Vineyard and has set up two boutiques where she sells and creates her collections surrounded by the sea that inspires her work.

Stina Sayre came to Martha's Vineyard 30 years ago; it was the wind that brought her to the Island but it was possibly the handsome American windsurfer, Nevin Sayre, who had the pull. Their paths were crossed the first time on Barbados 1983.

“Then there was also a summer in France. We were at a competition without a whole lot of wind...so it went like it did,” laughs Stina as we speak in her store on Main Street in Vineyard Haven.

Nevin's parents had a beach front home in Vineyard Haven and it was there the couple lived in between competitions. This is the same house they live in today and where their two children, Solvig and Rasmus, have grown up. The children, like their parents, are windsurfers, sailors and kite surfers competing on an elite level. Solvig has her goal set on OS in the NACRA class.

Stina was an accomplished windsurfer in the 80's. Her parents had a summer home on Tjorn and it was there, as a 19 year old, that she was introduced to the sport.

How did she go from windsurfer to clothing designer? “I had a friend in Sweden that had a knitting machine and knitted sweaters so I bought a machine too,” she explained.

She dragged around the knitting machine to windsurfing locations around the world - Maui, Hood River, Oregon, San Francisco, Mexico - and started to make sweaters that she sold to friends. “Not the least to my male competitors who shopped for their girl friends and wives they had left at home. I called them “guilt sweaters””.

Nevin put everything into Windsurfing and was Top 3 in the world. Though Stina was a Swedish Champion, a title she held for 6 years, windsurfing wasn't the be-all and end-all for her.

Stina's family is filled with artists and her grandfather had clothing stores in her home town Östersund. "I grew up in the stores selling clothing since I was 13 years old," said the designer of how her clothing interest started.

When the children were born, Stina stayed home with the kids. She started building her business and brand from the kitchen table. "I have it in my blood," she explained. "Technically I'm totally self-trained besides a few continuing education classes. I believe the human body is asymmetric. Symmetry in clothing design looks boring and it doesn't make sense to me. When people stand in front of the mirror and complain that they look fat, I often tell them that no one looks at you straight and still from your front."

The Swedish designer continued, "We see each other in constant motion, the beauty is your whole being. Clothing should make you feel strong and confident."

Stina's costumers are repeat clients and summer visitors and residents from all over the United States including Washington DC, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Though Stina protects her star costumers, such celebrities as Diane Keaton, Emma Thompson Maud Adams and Meg Ryan have been seen leafing through her racks.

For Stina, it isn't important that famous people wear her clothes. It's about women feeling proud of wearing her creations and that they come back for more.

"I make hand bags out of recycled seat belts!" she laughs.

Stina buys most of her fabrics in NYC and loves going to the old textile quarters. She also likes to recycle and has a handbag collection made from re-claimed safety belts. "No, I don't drive around late at night cutting out belts from cars," she adds. "I buy the left over from the factories. Actually, you could say that is true about the fabrics I use as well. They are mostly left over from the big famous designers."

Her inspiration comes from the sea. Preferably she would love to move her design studio to the little boat house where she lives. There she could sit and look at the sailboats and ferries come and go.

She opened her first shop 15 years ago in an old doctor's office that she made in to a design studio. She also sold to about 50 stores in New England at that time.

Swedish Stina Sayre loves Martha's Vineyard and unlike many of the summer tourists, she loves when the winter storms come rolling in. It is then that she has the peace and quiet to create her next collection. For her, it is the creativity that is the most important.

"In simple and clean lines, no sloppiness can be hidden."