

HAVE FREEDOM, WILL TRAVEL:

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT THE SWEDISH HERITAGE

[Editor's Note: In the Winter 1993 issue of *Sweden & America* an article entitled "Living and Learning in Sweden" presented one avenue for Swedish-Americans to learn more about their cultural heritage. Richard Londgren's article suggests other ways.]

For older Americans, learning opportunities have burgeoned in recent years in countless ways: To add skills. To start another career. To cope with aging. To enjoy the arts. To gain knowledge through travel. And to explore your ethnic heritage—while you travel.

Swedish-Americans have discovered many ways to learn about their roots while they get acquainted with others involved in a similar pursuit. And they've found ways to economize as they travel and learn.

For Lee Clifford of New York, New York, for instance, one venture into her Swedish ancestry led to another way of gathering information. In 1990 she and her mother, Nora Keel, went on the Scan Travel Center's "Heritage Tour of Sweden." They enjoyed the sights of

Sweden, she said. But even more importantly, they cherished the opportunity for a personal connection with their past. She said their tour leader, Nils William Olsson (long associated with Swedish Council of America), helped them locate relatives in Sweden. She added that he, "Seemed to take deep satisfaction when we met our cousins—an episode he has seen often on his heritage tours."

In an article Lee wrote for *The Mature Traveler*, she recalled the heartwarming experience: "Standing at the gravesite of a family member, touching the baptismal font or harvesting a souvenir from the sod of the family farm can unite you with the past. But shaking hands with a living cousin on native soil completes the bond. When 72-year-old cousin Gustav proudly extended his strong hand and in dignified English he had learned for the occasion said, 'Valkommen to Sveden,' we knew we had found our roots."

Motivated by that rewarding experience, mother and daughter decided to continue to learn about their roots—while staying in the United States. In

1992 they explored their American past by visiting northern Minnesota. Besides stopping in communities associated with their family, they learned more about their Swedish/Minnesota heritage at the Charles A. Lindbergh Museum in Little Falls.

Next they went to Gustavus Adolphus College in southern Minnesota to participate in an Elderhostel class focusing on Sweden. There members of the college faculty and staff packed information and entertainment into the week-long course about past and present Sweden.

If you're a senior citizen curious about your Swedish heritage, you have lots of learning choices. Elderhostel, for instance, began as a hybrid of the European hosteling concept combined with the residential emphasis of the Scandinavian folk high schools. Now Elderhostel includes an international network of 1,800 participating institutions with programs in every state of the United States and every province in Canada, and in more than 45 other countries.

For a starter, you might want to sign up for the course about Sweden being offered again at Gustavus Adolphus College that's scheduled for July 4-10. But don't delay, because classes fill up fast—often with veteran Elderhostelers enrolling for another chance to learn and play. One "graduate" of the 1992 Elderhostel class at Gustavus Adolphus, for example, reported "degrees" from 15 other Elderhostel programs.

Elderhostel's catalog of domestic course offerings is available in many public libraries. The courses offered vary from year to year but a recent review of the spring and summer catalogs revealed the following 1993 "Swedish" offerings (a partial listing in chronological order):

May 9-15: "Scandinavia During World War II," and "The Scandinavian Immigrant Experience," both at Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa;

May 16-21: "Carl Sandburg: His Life and Literature," at Blue Ridge Commu-



Artist Tim Granlund, son of resident sculptor Paul Granlund of Gustavus Adolphus College, chats about the sculpture of Charles Lindbergh with Nora Keel (left) and her daughter, Lee Clifford, during a 1992 Elderhostel class about Sweden at the St. Peter, Minnesota, college. (Photo: Richard Londgren)

nity College, Bonclarken Conference Center, North Carolina;

May 23-29: "The Wooden Shoe People: Minnesota's Swedes," at Lakewood Community College, Maplewood, Minnesota;

May 30-June 5: "Coming to America: Swedish Immigration and Genealogy Research," "Scandinavia Today," and "Scandinavian Lutheran Traditions of the Upper Mississippi Valley," all at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois;

June 6-12: "Scandinavian Culture: A Smorgasbord," at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, Wisconsin;

June 6-12: "The Scandinavian State: A Look at a Way of Life" and "Scandinavian Folk Art," both at Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington;

June 13-19 & June 20-26: "A Swedish Perspective in Rural America," at Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas;

August 1-7: "Music and Art Scandinavian-American Style," "Scandinavian Immigrant Authors: the American Scene," and "Movers and Shakers: Scandinavian-American Political Life," all offered at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota;

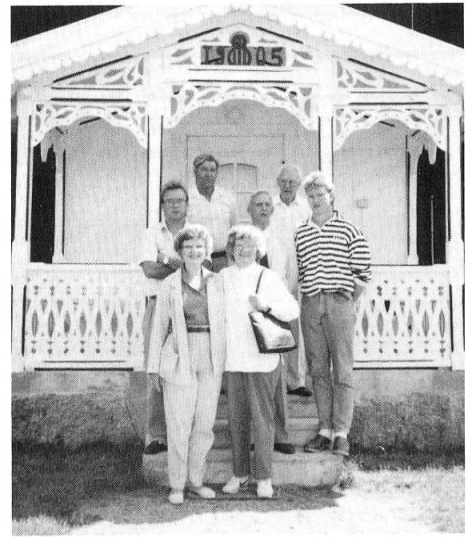
September 19-24: "Introduction to Spoken Swedish" and "The Scandinavian Presence in the Northwest," both offered at Linfield College, Astoria, Oregon.

Elderhostel also has an international division, with its own catalog, also available at most libraries. Courses in Scandinavia are coordinated with Scandinavian Seminar, the Amherst, Massachusetts-based organization that sends hundreds of young Americans to spend a school year at a Scandinavian folk high school. Elderhostel enrollees spend three weeks in Scandinavia, usually one week at each of three folk high schools, and most often (though not always) in three different Nordic countries.

To get current and more complete information about both domestic and international Elderhostel programs, write to: Elderhostel, 75 Federal St., Boston, MA 02110-1941. Or call (617)426-8056. (Note: You must be at least 60 years old to participate in Elderhostel.)

INTERHOSTEL offers similar opportunities for older Americans, both in the United States and in 25 countries, but for INTERHOSTEL programs you only have to be 50 years old. For information, write to INTERHOSTEL, University of New Hampshire, 6 Garrison Ave., Durham, NH 03824-3529. Or call 1 (800) 733-9753.

Though INTERHOSTEL's spring program included a study tour to Sweden, the summer offering doesn't quite make it that far. But it comes



Lee Clifford and Nora Keel (front row) visit with cousin Gustav and their Swedish relatives at the family farm in Hallaryd. Cousin Gustav is in the middle of the second row. (Photo: Lee Clifford)

close—to Helsingör, Denmark, and Bergen and Oslo, Norway.

- Richard Londgren

Richard Londgren is co-editor of *Scandinavian Scene*, published by the *Scandinavian Cultural Center* at Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington.

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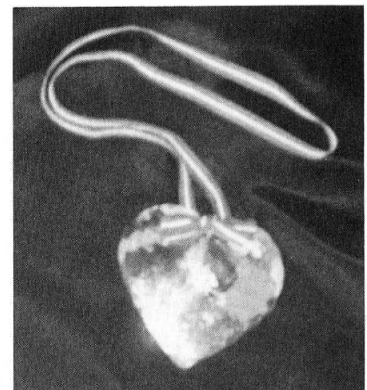
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