

SPECIAL VISITOR TO LINDSBORG

APRIL 17, 1976

KING CARL XVI GUSTAF

OF SWEDEN

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PREFACE

FORTY YEARS AGO APRIL 17, 1976, A VERY EXCITING AND PLEASANT VISIT OCCURRED, WHEN KING CARL XVI GUSTAF CAME TO LINDSBORG.

Forty years ago in the spring of the year on April 17, 1976 a happening occurred in local history in the community of Lindsborg. It was on this date when King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden paid a well guarded visit to Lindsborg with a large entourage of Swedish Security

His arrival in the city was nearly four hours later than expected. When the King and his group arrived at the Salina airport, a caravan of vehicles from Lindsborg escorted the King at high speed to the Old Mill Park in southern Lindsborg where he was officially welcomed to the city. Following a short speech by the King, who was fighting a major voice, the groups next stop was at Bethany Home which played an active roll in the King's visit.

This article is written from stories and notes taken only of Bethany Home's involvement. Different parts of the city, such as the initial welcome at the Old Mill, the rendition of the Messiah Chorus in Presser Hall, the banquet served in the Bethany College dining room, along with the Committee involved in scheduling the visit of King Carl XVI Gustaf. all have their own special memories of this day in April, 1976.

Visitor traffic around the Home had increased during the weeks prior to the King's visit, as word was passed that the King would be visiting Bethany Home. Several weeks before the visit, local representative Hugo Lindahl had escorted the Swedish Ambassador from Chicago on a tour of the Home. The Ambassador took time to visit with a number of the Home's residents, including the Home's oldest native born Swede resident Mr. O.E. Danielson, who at that time was 102 years old.

The Preface to this article is an attempt to cover only the activities and happenings of the Bethany Home's visit, which were many, while the author of this article Bill Carlson was serving as its Administrator .

FORTY YEARS AGO-----A SPECIAL VISITOR

It was on April 17, 1976 when King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden made his visit to Lindsborg. In early 1995 it was announced locally that King Carl would be making a visit, following a scheduled skiing vacation in Colorado. A score of hot and cold rumors kept the town gossip at a high pitch regarding this possibility. Almost two years of planning for this expected visit by His Honor had taken place in the community prior to his coming to Lindsborg.

Even though local authorities assured all that the King's visit would be a reality, there was skepticism that this event would take place in such a small community as Lindsborg. A good deal of coffee table conversation in early 1976 centered around the Swedish King's coming to Lindsborg.

We were told early on that one of the "must" stops on the King's agenda, would be Bethany Home. The Home, at the time, housed one hundred and three exceptional aging people with the majority having some kind of Scandinavian back ground. Nine residents and two staff members at the recent time claimed Sweden as their birth place. These Swedes spoke the Swedish language fluently, while others could speak Swedish with varying degrees of fluency.

During the two week period prior to the King's visit, a number of Swedish press journalists and television personalities came to the city, and in particular Bethany Home, to visit with the expectant Swedes in the Home. The good number of Swedes living in the Home of course, was the drawing card for the contingent of Swedes who were following King Carl XVI Gustaf on his expectant visit. Two in particular, Acquired a close affinity for the folks in the Home in the persons of Miss Christine Liljcrantz and Mr. Hans Persson

One was a journalist and the other a photographer. The two had spent a number of sessions interviewing and photographing the native born residents of Sweden.

Albert Berquist, one of the quaint and lovable residents of the Home, living on the second floor of the Pioneer Memorial Wing, was born in Sweden and immigrated to America and the Smoky Valley when he was eighteen years old. "Berky", as staff affectionately referred to him, had retained his quaint and delightful Swedish accent throughout the many years of farming north of Lindsborg where he and his wife reared a family of three boys; Warren, Carroll and Arden. "Berky" was convinced the impending visit of the King of Sweden as only kind of a hoax. It was an interesting experience to introduce Miss Lijcrantz and Mr. Hans Persson to these residents, who were born in Sweden. When we made a visit to "Berkys" room to convince him the King was coming, he would sing softly, "it will never happen" .

A few days prior to the arrival of the King, the two Swedish press persons were back at Bethany Home seeking more interviews with those residents who were born in Sweden who could share of how they arrived in Lindsborg to make their home in this new land.

"Berky" was the first to be interviewed and was asked how excited he was to have the King of Sweden here in Bethany Home.. "Berky" was quick to reply, "No, I am not excited, vy do you tink I came to dis country, it vas to get away from de Damn King."

(Yes, we had prepared the members of the Swedish press for somewhat different replies than they expected).

Later in the interview "Berky" was asked how old he was. After saying, "no von knows dat", but with more prompting, he took his time, scratched his head, and replied with grave concern. "Vell I tell you, I tink I vas born in 188tree, but I don't know if dat vas before Christ, or after Christ".

Another quaint old fellow by the name of Emil wasn't too excited either when told that King Carl XVI Gustaf was coming to the Home in a few days, his reply was, "Bah, I suppose that means another blankety, blank, blank bath". We think possibly Emil was born with an aversion to water except for drinking purposes. Needless to say, Christine Lijcrantz and Hans Persson were well entertained.

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Top Security was in place on the 17th day of April as can be expected with a King, and especially the King of Sweden, here in Lindsborg. We were informed Security guards were represented by the FBI, KBI, the Swedish Security Guard, the Secret Police, the Highway Patrol, National Guard, a contingent from Wichita on motor cycles, and of course the county and local police. Further, helicopters were spotted that day flying over Lindsborg. One Dad, who was privy to all this Security, asked his five year old son as they were eating an early breakfast, if he would like to see the King of Sweden that day. The boys reply was, "Naw Dad, I don't want to see the old King, but sure would like to see all those policemen in their uniforms."

A few days before the King's arrival, members of the Security Police were in Bethany Home checking the place thoroughly. It was found there were seven exit doors. A member of the Security pointed to the doors, saying, "We want locks on all doors" Our reply was that since the place was opened in 1911, no doors had been locked to which the guard commented with, "Oh I'll be damned". There were at least two police in uniform at each door on April 17. "Times have changed to doors that have locks today".

April 17 was an overcast, raw and dreary day in Lindsborg with intermittent showers throughout the day. The King and his entourage were late by several hours due to inclement flight weather from Denver, Colorado where the King and his group had enjoyed a vacation of skiing. A caravan had been formed at the Salina airport who continued to report the King's air travel.

The Bethany Home dining room was packed with residents, staff, family, and visitors who were escaping the rain and hoping to see the King of Sweden. A number of staff and visitors entertained with music from the piano, by voice, and two elderly gentlemen who played their harmonicas. One five year old boy was coerced to stand on a chair and sing "Jesus Loves Me This I Know" many times. Only the boy remembers, while the Father says he does not remember this entertainment.

While the Bethany Home residents wait patiently, and some not so patiently, to see the King of Sweden upon his arrival, those residents who were born in Sweden were seated around a long table in the center of the Home's dining room which was decorated with Swedish and American flags. The residents were as follows; Mrs. Anna Warner, Mrs. Christine Axelson, Mr. C. A. Berggren, Mrs. Ellen Rhodes, Mr. Enoch Storm, Mrs. Anna Natsen, Mrs. Emily Heglund, Mr. O. E. Danielson, and Mr. Albert "Berky" Berquist scrubbed and dressed in his very best with a twinkle in his eye. Staff members who were born in Sweden were standing at each end of the table; Mrs. Amy Englund and Mrs. Ragnhild Bengtson.

Finally, the caravan following the King and his entourage arrived. The King and his group were met by the head of the welcoming committee Hugo Lindahl, who can be credited as the key member of the committee. Governor Mike Hayden joined the group and were escorted through the west door of Bethany Home.

The native Swedes were given the honor of shaking hands with the King who had developed a sore throat and a weak voice. In spite of this fact he warmly greeted all of the eleven native born. Almost immediately Mr. C. A. Berggren, who had been selected gave a proper greeting to the King in his language which brought laughter and another hand shake from King Carl Gustaf. Later, Mr. Berggren, who was 92 years old. was kind enough to provide a translation of his greeting as he enjoyed telling the King "I have seen you before, when years ago, along with my wife, on a tour of Sweden, our guide took us to the King's summer home where a number of very small boys were playing in the court yard, without a stitch of clothing. Our guide pointed to one little boy and said, "some day that little boy will be our King".

The King's exit, with his large entourage to Swedish Security, was highlighted by his sensitive humor as he abruptly stopped to see where the harmonica music was originating. Resident Art Palmquist and visitor Carl Holmgren of Salina had commenced playing the SWEDISH NATIONAL ANTHEM, DU GAMLA DU FRIA= = on their harmonicas as the King and his group left the Home. These two gentlemen were rewarded with a wide smile and a hand shake as the King made his exit on his way to Bethany College for a quick meal, and to hear the performance of the Messiah in Presser Hall AUDITORIUM.

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Following the April 17, 1976 visit to Lindsborg by the King Carl XVI Gustaf, the two became a more popular place for other Swedish visitors to be welcomed to the community.

Shortly after the King's visit to Lindsborg, a Swedish group spent a number of days in preparing a video to be shown in Sweden. This video, along with the King of Sweden's visit to this small community, influenced an increasing number of Swedish travelers to spend time here and to enjoy the Smoky Valley.

Some of those with Swedish back grounds in our community have often entertained relatives from Sweden since that day forty years ago. Many others keep visiting to find out what is seemingly so attractive here in Lindsborg. The Biennial Svensk Hyllnings Fest celebration, and other celebrations, along with the well known rendition of the Messiah each year during Holy Week, have attracted many.

Alf and Maud Brorson of Torsby, Sweden have visited so many times they have been awarded as Honorary Citizens of Lindsborg. They have completed two Artists in Residence weeks at the Red Barn Studio, and plan on being here again for the next Hyllningsfest in October of 2017, which will be their twenty second visit to Lindsborg. Alf, as a writer of books and magazine articles of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley, can't help but enrich the economy of the community.

Soon after the King of Sweden's visit a group of forty four singers known as the Motala Chamber Choir from near Stockholm Sweden arrived by charter bus parking in front of the Bethany Home. With short notice we had little time at the Home to prepare for their visit. However, we all were pleased they would stop and perform as a forty four member choir. We quickly learned that this group of Swedes were unlike most Scandinavians, in that only a few were able to speak English. This of course, presented a few problems initially, until we managed to seat all forty four in our dining room to serve coffee, tea and treats. A number of our Swedes living in Bethany Home joined the group to enjoy conversation all in Swedish.

We noticed one table lacked any of our Home Swedes and wanted so much to make our guests feel welcome and at home. Our kitchen staff was busy serving coffee and treats. I approached the table that included only the Swedish guests and selected the kindest appearing gentleman, and addressed this young man with my limited best Swedish. "Jag Kans Forsta Lie Svenska, Men Jag Kan Inte Tala Mycket Svenska"

("I can understand a little Swedish, but cannot talk much Swedish").

The gentle appearing young man looked up at me with the strangest look, and said, "HEY BUDDY, DON'T TALK THAT SWEDISH TO ME, I'M THE BUS DRIVER".