

News from the Swedish front:

We have now lived in Sweden for approximately 1.5 years except for 3 months in Florida escaping this last dark, cold winter. We stayed in the Tampa area and traveled to many sites and towns including Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings home. She wrote the 'Yearling'. Here is Ingrid with her new best friend Vern:



Yes he is alive. We also visited with relatives and friends.

We had only been back in Sweden a week or so and both of us became sick with Covid despite having had all the shots. The Government had given the "All clear" after new cases dropped dramatically and Covid rules were rescinded. 2020 was spent sequestering against the Covid-19 pandemic opening in the fall of 2021. In that time we've learned a few things: The country is a giant bureaucracy that moves slowly. The State excels in sending invoices, collecting taxes and is the largest employer. The government prides itself on funding charitable causes like 3rd-world countries even though it can't afford it. For example, the further away from the three major cities the less convenient or available are medical services. We have been fortunate and have had no issue regarding social services.

The war, only 900 miles away in Ukraine, dominates the headlines but not necessarily conversations. Personal conversations are reserved for petrol and food price increases. The Social Democrats and their latest hollow promises that most citizens expect to be disregarded with the usual frivolous excuses, e.g., lack of money, are less frequently discussed. It's an election year (September) here in the 'old country'. The Moderates are expected to win this time with a surprising coalition of Sweden Democrats and Christian Democrats. If the win they will press for NATO membership, following the Finns. The Finns have been preparing for war with Russia since WW II. The Swedes however don't discuss war, party affiliation or politics with friends. Sweden has about 8 dominate political parties and 50 parties overall. Everyone can have their own political party.

Regarding the war, most Swedes don't like unpleasanties. They also do not expect the war to affect them because they have been good, occasionally go to church,

practice neutrality and have managed to stay out of fracas for the last 200 years. Given that, the country has been sending war supplies and other aid to Ukraine just in case prayer isn't enough. This is breaking a long standing neutrality. The U.S. is providing intelligence and 'other' support to aid Ukraine. Poland is the major conduit for refugees some of which have now reached Sweden. Sweden expects to take up to 120,000 Ukrainian refugees, almost all women and children. Mostly all Swedes give them a open welcome, but unlike middle Easterners who are here to stay, the Ukrainian refugees plan to go home when safe to do so. Although news is sketchy, Sweden is quietly building up its military forces and discussing NATO membership. That subject has the attention of Swedish citizens as is the scarcity of places suitable for bomb shelters.

Sequestering time can be used productively. Carl wrote his autobiography and Ingrid wrote articles about Swedish culture and history. We joined two separate retirement groups, PRO and SPF. We have traveled with other retirees and plan for many more excursions during 2022. Ingrid also became an English teacher for the local PRO teaching conversational English. Carl became a legal resident of Sweden. Covid messed with our travel plans around Sweden. We are hoping this spring and summer will be different. We have booked a trip on the Hurtigruten for August.

Hälsningar,  
Ingrid and Calle

