

## Act nine:

A short story about Nordic Happiness.

The happiest people live in Finland according to a World Happiness Report, followed by those who live in Denmark, Iceland, and Norway & Sweden. Where does this come from? Just because Finland offers the best education system, lowest level of corruption, great healthcare, sustainable economy, long parental leave, are the Finnish people happier than others?

In Sweden we have an expression called *LAGOM*, or "just the right amount", and that captures the Swedes contentment, neither too much nor too little, or should we simply say that the Swedes embrace modesty and reject excess? Gender equality & personal accomplishments are important, but not necessarily expressed. *Lagom* describes contentment with life's bare necessities. People in the Nordic countries also believe in the *LAW OF JANTE* or is better explained that we are all alike, no better no worse than others. One doesn't describe or brag about the personal successes. "Don't think you are anything special; do not imagine that you are better than others." Very different from what is considered successful in the American culture - where the success is the accumulation of wealth. The Nordic believes that what their governments provide is sufficient and they believe that life is as good as it gets. That they are content in living in smaller apartments, just earning enough, accepting high cost of living and high taxation, however, they expect the benefits.

We reflect on why people here do not smile and greet you when you pass one another, on the way to your car, or simply stay silent in the elevator. We miss that people pass you without noticing you, and remember fondly that in America everyone says hello just because. So what is the secret for happy living? Smile when you see people, talk with your neighbors, dare to be positive, dare to be different. Our definition of happiness includes, joy, laughter, love, meaningful friendships and engagements, time to read a book, listen to magical music and discovering the joy of being a pensioner with no demands. Living in Sweden offers

the opportunity to challenge yourself, to look at your involvement with fresh eyes, acknowledge differences, travel far in mind & body, finding new joys and limitless exploration of possibilities. That's is Sweden for us! When people see us now, most say "HEJ" and many expect to be engaged by those strange talking Americans!

Summer travel season is soon upon us. Where to go is the question? With the continuance of the pandemic, travel may be limited to Sweden this year. In past years we have visited mostly Southern Sweden and now look forward to drive further north. We would like to visit Finland and hope that travel restrictions will be removed. Time to tell!

Remember, the road to a friend's house is never far, even if getting there involves plane tickets and rental cars! So make your plans, come visit us in the beautiful land of the North and let us show you around. There is always more to see, learn, hear, feel and Sweden offers you a chance to experience them all.

**"Var välkommen kära du, till Carl Englund och hans fru."**

Carl Larsson painted this saying over his entrance to his beloved home Lilla Hyttnäs i Sundborn. (We welcome you to the home of Carl Larsson and his wife)