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Behind the scenes of *Allt för Sverige*

- *Fika* with Leif Mörkfors, the researcher

BY ELISABETH THORSELL



After having eagerly watched season 4 of the reality show *Allt för Sverige*, I was excited to have a chat with *Leif Mörkfors*, who is the chief researcher for the show. Leif and I have known about each other for a long time, but only met once before in spite of the fact that we live in the same area of our hometown Järfälla. Leif came to my home, and we had a nice *fika* together.

The former researcher for *Allt för Sverige*, Helena Stark (see SAG 2013/2), unfortunately died in 2013. The producers needed a new researcher. Leif was among those who were interviewed, as he has vast experience in Swedish research. He has, for instance, also done research for the Swedish version of *Who Do You Think You Are?* He got the job as chief researcher. He worked in company with *Fredrik Mejster*, a young and enthusiastic researcher.

The casting started at the end of 2013 in America, where more than 2,000 e-mails were sent out to various Swedish organizations and individuals, and also promoted on social media such as Facebook.

The conditions for interested people were that they should be below age 70, had never visited Scandinavia, and had Swedish roots. The casting people had to check all applications and find the ones most fitting these requirements. It was also important that the applicant had an outgoing personality, which would make a good impression on TV. After the first sorting, perhaps about 50 persons were still possible contestants, and they were scrutinized, even by using Skype. At this time

some that had almost made the program the previous year were considered again for the new season. Then people from the Swedish producer came to the U.S. to meet with the proposed participants, and when they had decided which people were to be in the new season, the work for Leif and Fredrik started.

A lot of things to do

They had to make sure that the information about the immigrant was correct, find the origins in Sweden, and follow the lines backwards, hopefully finding interesting stories about the individuals. As the grand prize for the winner of *Allt för Sverige* is to meet with the Swedish family, they also had to start a few generations back and go forward and trace the families. They had to find living relatives for all 10 contestants, as nobody knew who was going to win! This is fairly easy to do in most cases, as there are CD-databases of the Swedish population, and the Swedish Death Index and other databases, and the possibility of checking probates, but it can be very time-consuming, and there was not much time for Leif and Fredrik to do all this before the filming started in late May. They had to work almost around the clock to get it done in time, but they did it!

This research all over Sweden has given Leif and Fredrik many new experiences and some exciting finds. Leif mentioned that they were hunting for an unknown father, the mother had given birth on the island of Ljusterö, north of Stockholm. She

was not mentioned in the parish clerical survey, only in the birth records. The researchers tried to find her in the moving-in records, but these started too late to cover the time when she was in the parish. On a hunch they contacted the local heritage society (*hembygdsföreningen*) and asked if it was possible to visit their archives? The chairperson was new, and did not know too much about the contents of the archive, but she allowed Leif and Fredrik to visit.

There were many files and archival boxes and they browsed through a lot of them. Suddenly they found a box with older moving-in and -out records, and hundreds of those little testimonies (*flyttningsbetyg*) that people brought with them when they



Leif (to the left) with singer, songwriter Björn Skifs during the taping of the Swedish *Who Do You Think You Are?* (*Vem tror du att du är?*) in 2013.

moved from parish to parish. In these records they found the missing information about the unwed mother, and later could find her origins in the parish of Malung in Dalarna. It even turned out that she was related to Leif's ancestors! She also was related to the Linjo family, of which some members went to Bishop Hill with the prophet Erik Jansson. Leif and Fredrik also notified the Stockholm City Archives (*Stockholms Stadsarkiv*) about their find, and now the records are safe at the archive.

Another big find was when Leif was doing research in Dalsland on the ancestors of John Olson (the final winner of the show). John has part of his roots in Håbol in western Dalsland.

John's grandfather's grandmother (*farfars farmor*) Anna Kajsa Jansdotter was born on 7 Nov. 1839 in nearby Ör parish, daughter of clock-maker Jan Andersson (b. 15 Feb. 1813 in Ör), and his first wife Lisa Olsdotter (b. 1817 in Ör, died in Näset, Ör, on 13 Feb. 1861).

On 21 Sep. 1865 Jan remarried in Håbol to Kristina Sofia Bågenholm (b. 2 Aug. 1833 in Ed). They first lived at his old home Näset in Ör, but in 1868 moved to Gäserud in Håbol, where they seem to have taken over



Gäserudsstugan in Håbol, possibly one of the oldest houses still standing in Dalsland.

her parental home, Gäserudsstugan, which is now the local heritage museum (*hembygdsgård*). Jan Andersson died in this house on 21 Apr. 1889, and his wife Kristina 8 Feb. 1907, also in Håbol.

Leif had been scouring Dalsland for a photo of Jan Anderson, but nobody could tell him if there even was one. When the filming crew came to this house, almost the first thing they saw was a photo of an old man, who turned out to be Jan Andersson, and his wife! See picture to the right.



Photo by Fredrik Mejster.

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McPherson County Old Mill Museum 120 Mill Street, Lindsborg, Kansas 67456

The Old Mill Museum will be hosting two Swedish Genealogy Workshops in 2015 March 28/29 and September 26/27. People can attend 1 or 2 days. There will be sessions for beginners and experienced researchers. Computer stations for all. Hands-on learning every session. Assistance from experts.

Registration for the March workshop is probably closing before you see this.

The fall workshop will be a larger one – open to about 200 people.

Lenora Lynam and Lorna Nelson, both experienced Swedish researchers are the organizers.

The SwedGen team (*Anna-Lena*

Hultman, Anneli Andersson, Charlotte Börjesson, and Olof Cronberg) will return, along with *Kathy Meade*. We have also asked *Geoff Morris* from the FamilySearch team of Salt Lake City, to speak, and have invited *Michael Peterson* of TX, former contestant on *Allt för Sverige*, to speak about his experiences on the show and visiting Sweden for the first (and 2nd) times.

We are planning a new format of two days of lectures with the computer lab up and running both days as well. People will choose a 4 hour time frame for the computer lab.

Schedule for the September Workshop 26 – 27

Saturday & Sunday

Includes:

- Two days of workshops and research time.
- Admittance to the Welcome Reception on Friday, September 25.
- Option for hot lunch provided or bring your own lunch.

Early bird registration ends July 18.

For registration check out p. 30, or call 785-227-3595.



The workshops are sponsored by
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