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A memory of Nils William Olsson

This story about Nils William goes back many years. The Olsson family and my wife's parents met in the early '20's in Pennsylvania. The family friendship continued for many years.

My contact with the family came in 1941 when Nils's brother Karl was a Sunday School teacher at the Englewood Mission Covenant Church in Chicago.

Fast forward to 1946. After my marriage to Iris Swensson in '46, we were looking for a place to live near the campus of the Univ. of Chicago. In '47 – our first was born in June – Nils and Dagmar offered to rent us a one-room basement apartment at their home on Woodlawn Avenue, two blocks from the campus. We jumped at it. Greg and Chris were infants.

Our awakening to our Swedish heritage came near Christmas of that year. Karna came down the steps to our place, costumed as St. Lucia, wearing a crown with candles (real live ones) and carrying a plate of *julebullar*. We moved out about a year later when veterans' housing became available on campus.

But, Nils had kindled my interest in genealogy. All my efforts through family contacts had failed. No one knew anything. In the early '70's a cousin found Grandpa Anderson's immigration paper. I sent it to Nils, and he translated the document. I had a start.

Our first visit to Sweden was in 1978 to visit Iris's family. We started our quest. First to the Swedish Emigrant Institute, Växjö. We found the

early church documents of the Englewood church, Chicago, and my grandma's entry as a new member and immigrant. It was a thrill to see Nils's name commemorating him as Swedish American of the Year.

Subsequent visits have been to the Uppsala and Vadstena archives. Since that time, Nils William was my consultant and mentor. He was unselfish in his guidance. We are saddened by his death but feel an everlasting debt to how he helped us to reconnect to our families in Sweden.

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Mariann Tiblin, Eric Lund, and Kerstin Lane are studying Nils William Olsson's meticulous scrapbooks from the 1948 Swedish Pioneer Centennial, now archived in the Swenson Center. October 2007.