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## The Bridge Conference

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# The Bridge Conference in Karlstad

At the end of September, Wednesday the 27th, to be precise, there was held an unusual conference in Karlstad, the capital of Värmland in western Sweden. It was a joint arrangement by Swedish Council of America (SCA), the Kinship Center, and the Swedish Local Heritage Federation (*Sveriges Hembygdsförbund*). This was the first time SCA ventured over the ocean to establish closer contacts with Swedish organizations with an interest of preserving Swedish culture.

On Wednesday the conference gathered at its first meeting, and there were about 220 participants, of which almost 100 were Americans. We had a nice meal and were entertained by a performance of a part of

the musical play *Wermleuningarne*, to get a first taste of the local culture.

Thursday was Workshop day, and I held a workshop on useful Swedish and American databases on the internet, which seemed to be popular. Other workshops had subjects such as newsletters, Swedish-American churches, woodcrafts, old textiles, folk costumes, and much more. The Swenson Center director, Dag Blanck, also held a workshop.

Thursday evening was the SCA evening with lots of music, ballet, and Olle i Skratthult singing his old songs. The high point of the evening was the presentation of Awards of Merit to seven happy recipients, all long-time emigration researchers.

The next day we all went on buses

to various parts of Värmland. My bus went northeast, to Norra Råda, where we were given a delicious morning coffee at the local museum, and Hagfors, where we had a nice lunch. In the afternoon we ended up in Sunnemo, home of Pastor Olof Olsson and his group of immigrants to Lindsborg, Kansas. In his memory we sang hymns, even a Christmas one, in the old wooden church. The day ended with a tasty dinner at the Ransäter Museum.

The Saturday workshops all had the same theme – ideas to bring Sweden and America closer. A more interactive SCA web site was one idea – and more conferences!

*Elisabeth Thorsell*



*The Award recipients (from left): Lars-Göran Johansson, Bo Björklund, Per Clemensson, Lars Dahlgren, Tommy Hellström, Alf Brorson, and Elisabeth Thorsell. Photo by Elise Peters, Swedish Council of America.*