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## A Letter to the Editor

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# A Letter to the Editor

In *SAG* 2004:3 the new book *Your Swedish Roots* by Per Clemensson and Kjell Andersson was reviewed. We have received the following comments and clarifications from *Per Clemensson*, one of the authors

## *Your Swedish Roots* – Some Comments

As a writer it is always valuable to get a review, even when it includes many corrections. It is, however, a bit frustrating when a review is almost entirely filled with corrections and comments on details.

Personally, I feel that it is remarkable that there are not more errors in *Your Swedish Roots*, as the book contains hundreds of facts and has been produced directly in a foreign language in cooperation with a publisher in another country. Given these circumstances, I am very proud of a book of such high quality, and I would like to give credit to my colleague, Kjell Andersson, who did the writing, and to our graphic designer, Nina Sonesson, who is responsible for the layout.

I would like to comment on the purpose of the book, which I think may have been misunderstood by the reviewer, Elisabeth Thorsell. We do not intend to present a complete manual for Swedish genealogical research. It would not be possible to give a full introduction to the mysteries of Swedish genealogy 1686-2000 in 222 pages to a Swedish-American audience, which, by and large, lacks knowledge of the Swedish language. This more ambitious undertaking is a subject for a later book. This time we limited ourselves to providing an introduction to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because of the language problem, we excluded sources where an acquaintance with the Swedish language is necessary, such as estate inventories and legal records. Instead, we have focused on sources that are easier to read and

interpret, most notably the church records.

The purpose of the book is thus to provide assistance in finding ancestors a couple of generations back in time, and in finding relatives in the old country. The book is not a manual for genealogical research in the United States, Canada, or Australia, more than giving certain clues for further research. Many excellent genealogical books exist for those countries, and we cannot compete with them. We started with a gravestone in Connecticut and the first logical step was to see what records we could find in the local Swedish-American church archives, now indexed and easily accessible through the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö.

Let me now comment on some of the more specific remarks in the review:

1. First, the criticism that Gensline gets too much attention in the book. It is true that Gensline took the initiative in producing the book. But we, and others, have evaluated Gensline and other ways of gaining access to the source materials, and we would give the same attention to Gensline, even if the book had been brought out by another publisher. It is surprising that Swedish-American publications have not paid more attention to Gensline, as it opens up a fantastic new opportunity for genealogical research. In order to do genealogical research on the Internet, however, the kind of information that we try to give in our book is necessary. The fact that Gensline has not yet published all parishes is true, but beside the point. The company hopes to have all Swedish church records available within a fairly short period

of time, and we hope that our book will have a longer life than a year.

2. Elisabeth Thorsell suggests that I am not fully aware of the tremendous work done by Nils William Olsson. Nothing is more wrong. It is impossible to present all the work he has done in a fair way, and his archival materials and books are available at the Swenson Center to the public. Our comment in *Your Swedish Roots* that he built his research on the List of Fees from the Swedish Navy Fund is based on my own recollection. I had the opportunity to follow his work at the Regional Archives in Göteborg, where I helped him with many difficult cases.

3. We regret the erroneous information about the availability of microfilms of Swedish church records at the Swenson Center, which had to be corrected by the Center on page 32, and we hope that this has not been the cause of too much trouble. As they note, microfiche of Swedish church records can be ordered from SVAR through the Swenson Center. This, and other errors, will of course be corrected in the second printing of the book, which is already underway.

4. I agree with Elisabeth Thorsell that *Cradled in Sweden* was a very valuable book for its time. However, I do not think it is a sufficient book today, and that in some ways it can be misleading.

Finally, I would like to compliment the editor on the new design of *Swedish American Genealogist*. It is now a very attractive product.

*Per Clemensson*