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The Hans and Karin Story

A not unusual love story

BY NILS DAHLSTRAND

This is a story about how my father and mother fell in love. They came to America early in the twentieth century. My father arrived in New York in 1903; my mother in 1913. While Hans was in America he fell in love with her across the Atlantic Ocean without ever talking with her or meeting her face-to-face. As is usual in this kind of situation, a third party was involved. The party was Adolf and Ella Rybeck. Ella (nee Elin) was Karin's sister (my wonderful *moster* Ella) and Adolf was a cousin of Hans in various ways depending on where one looks in my genealogical records.

My Father

Hans Peter Dahlstrand was born on a farm, Leabo, in Bosebo parish in Jönköpings län on 24 September 1874. He was the second son of nine children.

In 1890, Hans's father bought the old ancestral farm, Dalshult, in Bosebo parish and brought his wife and eight children there. As Hans matured, he decided that he wanted to work with his mind as well as his hands. He enjoyed working with his father and grandfather on the farm, and as a teenager and young man, worked with them side by side. In the winter, he helped them make scythes in their blacksmith shop. But, he decided he wanted to do more with his life.

Hans wrote in his autobiography, dated 15 April 1944:

"My father, as well as grandfather, in addition to farming, manufactured scythes during the winter months. Later, when competition from scythe manufacturers became too strong, he had to discontinue this work. Later on he took up road building and was

active in that work for many years. He, like grandfather, was elected to various positions in the township as well as in the county....

"I worked on my father's farm until 1896. Besides the usual farm work, I also did blacksmithing and carpentry work. I realized that I should do something else; furthermore, some of us at home had to leave and take up activities in other places. I had always been interested in things mechanical and, after obtaining the necessary knowledge through private studies, I took (the) entrance examination to Borås Technical College, Borås, Sweden, and began my college studies in the fall of 1896. I graduated as a mechanical engineer in the spring of 1899.

"I entered the employ of Arboga Mechanical Works [*Arboga Mekaniska Verkstad*], Arboga, Sweden, as draftsman in June 1899. This company manufactured hydraulic turbines, (and) mining, saw, and flour mill machinery. Advancing to the position of assistant to the chief engineer, I left this company in June 1903 for the purpose of spending a few years in the United States in order to obtain a wider experience in the mechanical engineering field."

Hans went there to gain more experience, but, as it turned out, he made the United States his home because he didn't have the opportunities he was looking for in Sweden.

A Letter to His Brother Yngve

Many years later, Hans wrote a letter to his youngest brother, Yngve, the ninth child in the family. He wrote this on 27 December 1962. In this letter he recalls memories of his life

both in Sweden and the United States. Yngve arrived at New York's Ellis Island on 28 August 1910. He was 19 years old. He, like my father, was a mechanical engineer. This, in part, is what Hans wrote (Hans was 88 years of age at the time and Yngve was 75):

"I don't know if I would have gone to college if it had not been for our uncle Otto. Actually, I enjoyed working on the farm, but I knew the opportunity to have a farm of my own was nil. Uncle Otto, who was manager of a hardware store (in Gislaved), offered me a job and I spent a year selling hardware, but I was not satisfied and went back home and Emil (his older brother) took my place.

"Uncle Otto told father that I should go to college and study engineering. After a few months preparation, I passed the entrance exam to Borås *Tek[niska]* and completed the course in three years. I had a job when I graduated. I stayed with this firm (Arboga Mechanical Works) four years and, while I became their chief engineer, I did not advance as fast as I felt I deserved. The best positions were always reserved for graduates from '*Tekniska Högskolan*' and '*Chalmers*'.

"I decided, therefore, to spend a few years in (the) United States to obtain more experience."

My Mother

Karin Linnea Andersson was born at Kyrkebolet, Brevik parish, on the western shores of Lake Vättern in Skaraborgs län on 17 July 1888. Her father, Aron, an auditor and bookkeeper, led her and the rest of his family to a number of places in Sweden until they finally settled down at Skärkehylte, Långaryd parish,

Jönköpings län, on 18 August 1896. There Aron owned and operated his own lumber yard and hardware store. At that time Karin was 8 years old.

My mother never wrote things down about her life in Sweden like Hans has done. She told me bits and pieces about it as I was growing up. Looking back, I should have asked more questions about her life. But then, I was too young and ignorant about family ties. Besides, as I was growing up, I thought I had more important matters with which to deal. I should say though, that I have gathered a treasure trove of information about my mother's life in Sweden and her forbears by attending SAG Workshops in Salt Lake City and working with the SVAR microfiche from the Swenson Center at Augustana College.

She told me she studied for and became a registered nurse in Sweden. She never practiced her profession in America in the workaday world. Instead, she stayed home and made a wonderful life and home for Hans, my older brother, Olof, and me.

Hans Comes to America

Hans came to America in 1903. As I look at his decision to do this, I would say he took a big step into the unknown. He had no relatives in the United States to give him guidance and support, to help him find employment or a place to live. He would be on his own. But he wanted to give it a try. He, like so many Europeans and others around the world, had heard that the United States was "The Land of Opportunity."

He signed *Utvandrare=Kontrakt N:r. 39240* (Emigrant Contract No. 39240) with J. Oscar Reis to transport him and his belongings from Göteborg to New York. Mr. Reis was an agent for the Cunard Steamship Company at Göteborg (*Cunard-linien*). The contract was printed in both Swedish and English. Three people signed it on 17/6 (17 June) 1903; my father, J. Oscar Reis, and G. Hamberg *Göteborg i Poliskammaren* (Göteborg Police Chamber).

A few of the paragraphs on the English part of the contract say:

"I, J. Oscar Reis, hereby undertake, upon the following terms, to forward from Gothenburg to New York N. Y. in North America, the emigrant named below for the sum of *Kronor* 200, which amount has been duly paid and includes all ordinary charges upon landing in America.

"The journey takes place from Gothenburg the 17/6 by steamer second class passage to Hull or Grimsby in England and thence, within 48 hours after having passed the customs, to Liverpool by rail 3rd class and from Liverpool within 12 days after arrival there, by Ocean steamer second class passage, to New York or Boston in North America....

"At the above mentioned fare the emigrant will be supplied with good and sufficient provisions and attendance from leaving Gothenburg until arrival at place of landing in America, lodging during the stay in England and conveyance and care of effects not exceeding 10 Eng. cubic feet space by steamer and 150 Eng. lbs. weight by railway....

"Should the emigrant on arrival in the foreign country be refused by the authorities to immigrate and, if it cannot be proved that this prohibition has been caused by circumstances come to pass after this contract was made out, I, J. Oscar Reis, do hereby agree to repay the emigrant for the passage and at my expense have him returned to Gothenburg, Sweden, likewise his maintenance until his return and forwarding and care of his baggage."

Arrival in America

Hans arrived in New York Harbor on 2 July 1903. It took him 16 days to come to this country, assuming he left Sweden on 17 June. His trip from Liverpool started on 23 June. He came on the *R.M.S. Carpathia*. *Carpathia's* greatest claim to fame is unrelated to her service to Cunard Steamship Company. On the dark, moonless night of 14-15 April 1912, *Carpathia* raced 58 miles through a North Atlantic ice field in response

to the distress calls of White Star's *R.M.S. Titanic*. Although she arrived on scene after *Titanic* foundered, she rescued all 705 survivors in *Titanic's* lifeboats and took them to New York.

Hans's First Job

He started work in America at the Hartford Rubber Works Company, Hartford, Connecticut. He writes, "This position I considered temporary." In his 1962 letter to his brother Yngve, he goes into more detail. This is what he writes: "I started as a draftsman (at Hartford). The company was in the process of rebuilding the power plant and building a new addition to the factory. When they found out about my experience, I was put in charge of all design work. While this work was interesting, I wanted to get into hydraulic turbine engineering in which I had the most experience in Sweden."

Hans' Second Job

He continues in his letter to Yngve, "(On) 2 May 1904, I started work with Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company in West Allis, Wisconsin, (a suburb of Milwaukee) in the newly organized steam turbine department as designer. Allis-Chalmers was then building both hydraulic and steam turbines. (They had never built steam turbines before.) Upon reporting, I found (out) they wanted me in the steam turbine department, assuming that, because I came from Sweden, I must know about the steam turbines that de Laval had designed. de Laval¹ was known (to them) and they thought I had worked on the designs of his turbines. My knowledge consisted of having seen a few of his turbines.

"While I had no experience in (designing) steam turbines, it proved to be no handicap. I soon found out that nobody else had experience either."

The Third Party: Adolf and Ella Rybeck

In the first paragraph of this story, I spoke about a third party, Adolf and Ella Rybeck. As I said, Ella was my mother's sister. She and her husband played a big role in getting my father and mother together.

Both came to this country on the *S.S. Celtic*. They arrived at Ellis Island in New York Harbor on 2 May 1909. They were not married at the time. They settled in Milwaukee and were married about 1910. Adolf was related to my father in two ways. He was his first cousin, once removed, through one ancestor, and a third cousin, once removed, through another ancestor. Their first shared ancestor was born in 1793, the second in 1710. So Hans and Adolf, two Swedes, two mechanical engineers in a new country, had good reasons to get together as often as they could, lift their glasses high, clink them together, and say, "Skål!"

When I was a lad, my parents told me a little about how they became acquainted. Hans said he visited the Rybecks in their home frequently. *Moster* Ella had a picture of Karin prominently displayed on the fireplace mantel. Hans saw it, thought she was an interesting young lady (conjecture on my part), talked with Ella about her, and started writing to Karin. I guess they must have corresponded for two years or so. Finally, Hans decided that he wanted to meet this interesting and lovely young lady face-to-face. From what both of them told me, she was not adverse to the idea. So he booked passage to Sweden in the fall of 1913 and went there for the express purpose of meeting Karin. It didn't take them long to really grow to like each other.

A Happy Event

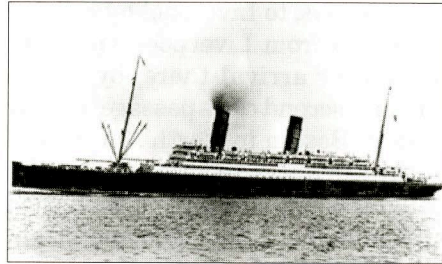
In his letter to Yngve in 1962, Hans writes about how he finally met Karin. He says, "The most important and happy event in my life took place in 1913. That was the year I found Karin and got married. It was through Adolf and Ella Rybeck that

I learned about Karin as she was Ella's sister. We began to correspond and in the fall I went to Sweden and met her for the first time.

"There is not much I can say except that, before I was ready to return (to America), Karin promised to marry me. We were married in Rybeck's house 20 December, 1913."

This, one would have to call a "whirlwind" courtship.

Hans and Karin came together to America on the *R.M.S. Caronia* sailing from Liverpool, England, on 1 November 1913 and arriving in



New York on 10 November. The passenger list (manifest) of the ship documents some interesting details about my parents. Hans was 39 years old, Karin 25. His occupation was "mechanical engineer," my mother's, "nurse." In the column, "Whether going to join a relative or friend; and if so, what relative or friend, and his name and complete address?" Hans answered, "Allis Chalmers, Milwaukee, Wisc." (He was near the end of the 4-5 year process of becoming a U.S. citizen). Karin answered, "Sister Ella Rybeck, 745 (?)th Ave., Milwaukee, Wisc." (It is hard to decipher the writing on the copy of the original passenger list I received from the Ellis Island Foundation in New York.)

Hans writes further in his 1962 letter to Yngve: "Thinking back, I cannot help to think but that Karin took a great risk. Here she married a man she had known only a short time and went with him to a strange country. I am sure the first years were not easy for her. I had a responsible position requiring me to be away a great deal on company business. We built our home in a couple of years after our marriage and were blessed with two boys. Karin had to stay home and keep things going and

also the main job of raising our two boys. For sure most of my absences were of short duration. The wonderful part was that Karin readily adapted herself to the new country, picking up the language in a short time, making new friends, and meeting my engineering associates and their wives as well as other Swedish acquaintances."

Writings of Karin

My mother was an avid letter writer. She was of the opinion, "If you want letters, write letters!" In 1949 she recorded a detailed account of their trip to Sweden. She wrote this in her little travel journal, a 4 x 6 inch bound book. Her writing was terse; she wrote each day's activities on one page; dates, places, even weather observations. Here are excerpts of the first part of their trip:

"May 22, 1949 Sunday. Milwaukee Wisconsin USA. Rain and fog. Hans and I started on our trip to Sweden. Were to take United Airline from Milw. Due to fog and rain, had to take train to Chicago. Helen and Herman took us from Milwaukee airport to depot. In Palmer House Chicago we were advised to take train to New York. Had a drawing room on Twentieth Century Limited. A good nights sleep. Found letter from Lois at Commodore Hotel where we had made, but had to cancel, reservation.

"May 23, 1949 Monday. New York. Weather fine. Left on SAS for Sweden 1:30 pm. Arrived in Gander, Newfoundland. Were delayed there 3 hours due to a faulty gasoline pump. Leaving Gander in rain and nasty weather. From New York to Gander was bad weather. Flew at altitude 19,000 ft. 280 mph. Left Gander and had altitude 17,000, speed 380 mph.

"May 24 1949 Tuesday. Prestwick, Scotland; Copenhagen; Stockholm. Weather good except in Stockholm. After 7 hours arrived in Prestwick minus any sleep, stopped one hour, had breakfast. Continued to Denmark; weather good. Sandwiches and coffee in Copenhagen. On to Stockholm. We were met in style at Bromma...."

Near the end of her travel journal, she wrote, "We have 60 relatives in Sweden. They all had big parties for Yngve and us. In Dalshult it was a dinner for 50. All sitting down, no buffet-style dinner in that big homestead."

Some Observations

It is interesting to have family records that document the time it took to travel between Sweden and the United States during the last 101 years. It took my father 16 days to come to this country in 1903. He used the most modern ways to get here: steamship from Sweden to England, railways in England, and steamship to New York.

In 1949 Hans and Karin spent 3 days traveling from their home in Wisconsin to get to Sweden. They, too, used the most modern ways to get there: railways and aircraft.

Nowadays, the fastest way to travel between Sweden and America is by air. The time is usually counted in hours, not days. But, in the olden days, trains and ocean liners provided a more relaxed way to travel.

Postscript

Hans and Karin were married happily for 51 years. Karin died on 17 July 1964, exactly 76 years after the day of her birth, and Hans died on 24 April 1968, 93 years and 7 months after his birth date.

Sources:

Dahlstrand, Nils, *History of the Dahlstrands: Nils' Story*, published for the family in 2003. Includes writings of Hans and Karin Dahlstrand.

Ellis Island Passenger Lists at <http://www.ellisland.org>

Great Ships at <http://www.greatships.net/>
Titanic Inquiry Project at <http://www.titanicinquiry.org>

Note:

1. Gustaf de Laval (1845-1913) was a famous Swedish inventor. His most important invention was the cream separator which was patented in 1878. One of his other great inventions was a steam turbine with a resilient axle which he completed in 1892.

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Hans Dahlstrand after his return to the U.S. in 1913.