

Swedish American Genealogist

Volume 19
Number 2 *Double Issue*

Article 2

9-1-1999

Introduction

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Recommended Citation

Erickson, James E. (1999) "Introduction," *Swedish American Genealogist*. Vol. 19 : No. 2 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol19/iss2/2>

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Introduction

James E. Erickson

*Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and the quarry from which you were dug.*

—The prophet Isaiah

This special issue represents the culmination of a process that began well over one year ago. My initial request for manuscripts to be published in *SAG* in honor of Nils William Olsson's ninetieth birthday was met with an immediate and overwhelmingly positive response. To all who supported this effort, I am deeply grateful. I only regret that time and circumstances did not allow for even wider participation but, as one of the contributors so succinctly put it, "As far as Nils William's other friends and colleagues here [in Sweden] are concerned, it is a natural but sad fact that most of them are lying in different churchyards and thus they will hardly be able to contribute. Alas!"¹

As I contemplate my dear friend and mentor, who becomes a nonagenarian on 11 June 1999 (and will be forty years my senior!), I keep asking myself the same questions. What is left to be said about an individual upon whom most accolades have already been bestowed? Whose *festschrift* has already been published? Whose achievements have already been recognized? Whose legacy has already been assured?

In this premillennial period of history—characterized by the immediacy of e-mail, the horror of internecine warfare, the explosion of information, the hysteria of Y2K, the proliferation of mallspeak (teenbonics), and the general dumbing down of everything—I can unequivocally state that I am encouraged by Nils William the man, who embodies dedication and skill, and I am inspired by his corpus of genealogical work, which reflects excellence and scholarship. His legacy will forever be tied to the fact that he, more than anyone else in the U.S. in the twentieth century, encouraged and enabled Americans of Swedish ancestry to remember their "rocks" and locate their "quarries."

In a spirit of profound respect and gratitude, I am pleased to present this collection of essays to Dr. Nils William Olsson, Editor Emeritus of *Swedish American Genealogist*, in honor of his ninetieth birthday.

¹ Folke Sandgren, letter to author, 10 September 1998.