

*To all our friends around the world,*

Winter came early to Sweden this year so we've already had lots of snow for weeks and it makes this dark period of the year a bit lighter. We put up our advent stars and lights in the windows the night before Advent 1<sup>st</sup>, which is tradition, and that makes things a little brighter too. I was planning to be early with my X-mas letter this year since I have taken some time off from work, but instead I am a bit late – there are just so many fun things to do when you're not working!

So, why am I not at the hospital? I think I told you last year that we're changing software for our computerized records and because I didn't want to be an active part of that process (again! "been there, done that") I made an early decision to take a break when it was implemented. So the past year I've worked many extra weekends and on-call nights to save up vacation and "compensation" time so that I now am off from work for three full months and it feels very good! I really need to be off and I haven't really made a lot of detailed plans on how to spend my time. But, as always, I am still busy with lots of things that I enjoy + Anders and I are going on an exciting trip to Tanzania and Kenya for two weeks in February 2011.

Anders is still working as a urologist at Danderyd hospital but he really would like to make a change, as he would prefer to be in a job situation with less teaching young, inexperienced surgeons and to do more surgery "on his own". He is a good and much appreciated teacher but it takes a lot of energy and nerve and he feels he's done it for so long. But it's not so easy to make that transition so we'll see what happens. I still enjoy my job as a diabetologist that I've been doing for so long. This fall two patients gave me flowers to acknowledge the fact that I've been their doctor for 20 years (i.e. the whole time that I've been employed in the Dept. of Medicine). However, just like Anders I've become less interested in other parts of my job, hectic work in our ward, e.g. old patients with general internal medicine problems. Also my department is quite turbulent, the head of the department is leaving, and nobody knows what will happen or who will take over.

Despite my need to save days for my "Take Off" (my colleagues call my leave that because the computer system is called "TakeCare") we've had some fantastic vacations this year. As usual we've taken two skiing trips, one - extremely cold - in January and one in March, both in **Tegefjäll**, our place up north. In February we spent four weeks in **Vietnam**, traveling with a small group by mini-bus and train, from the Mekong delta and Ho-Chi-Minh City (i.e. Saigon) in the south, all the way up north to Hanoi and fantastic Sapa in the mountains near the Chinese border. We were very pleased, both with our fantastic guide from Intrepid Travel and the great mixture of people in our group. There are so many things that I could tell you about that trip but I think that photos say more than words so check out our website ([www.lhhl.se](http://www.lhhl.se), on "Resor/trips" and you'll find almost 300 photos from Vietnam). A shorter but nice vacation was a very hot week in **Turkey** in June. It is an interesting country with many things to see and do - we were fascinated by the ruins of Ephesus, the hot springs and travertines of Pamukkale and, of course, we also enjoyed just relaxing in the sun.

Before that trip, in June, Anders was on a choir tour while I enjoyed the company of Anneliese Lilienthal, a new, young US friend with Swedish roots that I met in MHC alumnae choir. She and I had fun participating in a unique "happening" as we were among many thousands gathering in Stockholm for a royal wedding for the Swedish Crown Princess Victoria. Also Anna and Eva were singing in a choir for the newly weds as they came out to greet the people on a balcony.

In July Anders and I were both working but also preparing for Our big family event, **Ida & Svante's wedding** on Aug. 7. Since all guests had to travel a couple of hours to get to Hälsingland, the county where the wedding was set, it was a three day event: a barbecue on Friday, the wedding on Saturday and a big brunch on Sunday. And we were lucky, the whole weekend was perfect - great weather, a truly beautiful wedding ceremony with fantastic music (there are many musicians in Svante's family), fantastic food, lots of wine and a fun party that went on until early Sunday morning. Anders and I had rented a caravan for three weeks, and it was great, both for the week of preparations before the wedding and for having the shortest distance from the party to the bed that night! We also used it for a nice vacation after the wedding, visiting the Landstedt "roots" further north in Sweden, relaxing and meeting old and new friends as well as family.

Before I finish I have to tell you about this year's most dramatic event in our family. We were having a family dinner on Anna's birthday in August, two days before she was to move to NYC. Just as we started to eat Anders' mother, 79, choked on a piece of filet of lamb, several Heimlich maneuvers didn't help and she became unconscious. However, Anders was brave enough to perform what we had read about but never done i.e. an emergency coniotomy (airway puncture) using a kitchen knife! I then could ventilate my mother-in-law through a part of a pen that we used to keep the hole open until ambulance arrived. She stayed overnight for observation but has no problems and we are so grateful that it ended well!

So **Anna**, 29, could happily leave for her Fulbright adventure two days later, starting her PhD studies at NYU. She now shares a nice apartment with an old Lawrence friend (also named Anna) in Brooklyn, near Prospect Park. **Ida** (who now is **Mrs. Söderqvist**), 26, got her M.D. from Karolinska in June and has been working in as an Anesthesiologist at Danderyd hospital (which means she is in the same OR as Anders now and then). Ida made her "scientific debut" at a conference in December, presenting an insulin study but I doubt that she'll be a diabetologist (and she has at least two more years before choosing specialty). **Eva**, 24, is in her 4<sup>th</sup> year of studying meteorology and she passed her Bachelor's exam this June, presenting a study on noctilucent clouds (see Wikipedia). Now she is in the Masters program and seems to really enjoy her studies. Eva and her Carl have set a date for their wedding to **June 18, 2011** in Östra Ryd's church, close to Stockholm, where Anders and I were married. So we have another big event coming up next year! Our family hobbies are the same – all of us are still active choral singers and this time of the year we sing all the beautiful Advent, Lucia and Christmas music - my favorites! (Genealogy is, of course, still my other favorite hobby so I keep myself busy...)

But now I've come to the End of the 2010 chapter "The Hallin story". And as usual - we want to say...

*From All of Us to All of You - A Very Merry Christmas!*