

To all our friends around the world,

Lucia is over, Christmas is soon here and, as many of you know, one of my personal traditions this time is to think of the year gone by and to write "The Hallin family story 2014". I always begin by looking through all the photos I've taken this year – some of which you can see on the back of this letter – and in doing this I am reminded of all the fun things we've done together.

The beginning of the year was spent in our new "house" (a four bedroom apartment in a house) in **Tegefjäll/Åre**, a skiing resort in northern Sweden. Anna had left Sweden to join her Paul in Australia but Ida and Eva with families came (we borrowed the old apartment from my sister to accommodate everyone). We had a fantastic New Year's Eve dinner together but the first week in January we all took turns in having stomach flu (very contagious) so we didn't do so much skiing. However, we returned several times during the skiing season. For the first time in years we decided not to travel abroad in February but to spend time relaxing in **Smultronet 15B**, the address for our house in Åre/Tegefjäll. "Smultron" means "wild strawberry" in Swedish and a wellknown Swedish idiom/expression is "Smultronställe" (a place for wild strawberries) which relates to peaceful places that you'd like to return to. And we really think that our new place is exactly that! In February we took my mum for a long weekend. In March we returned for a week of skiing, joined by friends, and in April, Ida, Svante and Gustav joined us for even more skiing over Easter.

Our first trip abroad this year was to the US east coast, end of May and beginning of June. We spent a couple of really nice days with Anna and Paul in **NYC**, e.g. staying at a comfortable inn in the wine district of **Long Island**, enjoying "Book of Mormon" on Broadway and also many other things. We drove to **Tarrytown** to visit our friends Andrea and Ken Taber in their fantastic house, having a great time. Back to NYC for a day and then we picked up Anneliese at the airport in Newark and drove to **Vermont** to visit the Lilienthal family in their lovely farm and it was so nice to finally meet them! Our summer vacation was spent in Sweden, visiting friends and family, enjoying some beautiful summer weather this year. We had a fantastic celebration of our son-in-law Carl's 30th birthday, helping out with a big party in his parent's summerhouse in Skåne (southern Sweden). We then drove north with our caravan, visited and did some hiking in Åre, attended **Urkult**, the music festival, and ended our vacation by visiting our good friends at **Höga Kusten**. In the fall we've spent two weekends in Åre, just to relax from our busy jobs. But in November we needed a longer break and after a look at our "bucket list" we ended up going to **Jordan**. We traveled with G Adventures in a nice group with a fantastic, knowledgeable guide. He took us hiking for 11 hours up and down in Petra and we spent a magic night in tents in the desert of Wadi Rum. As always I've had a number of work-related trips: Amsterdam (twice), London, Copenhagen, Vienna, Thessaloniki – all interesting and good trips but since the grandchildren arrived I prefer to stay home as much as I can.

Our **job situations** have been unusually tough, especially the past six months. **Anders** is still working in a clinic owned by Aleris, a private corporation in healthcare in Sweden, Denmark and Norway with 8500 employees. He's been satisfied with his situation but recently learned that some major reorganizations are planned, which will make it more difficult for him to work the way he likes to do, so we'll see what happens. I'm still working at Danderyd Hospital (my 27th year) but I've had an extremely tough situation this year, mainly because we've been very understaffed, both with physicians and nurses. It has been very stressful and it almost made me quit or, at least, seriously think about quitting. Luckily the head of my department is really understanding and he decided that I, temporarily, didn't have to take on-calls (since end of June) which has given me free weekends i.e. time to relax and take some of the stress out of my life. I probably have to go back on a regular schedule this spring but things have improved regarding staff etc. so I hope it'll work. At age 60 it's OK not to be on-call but I still have more than a year to hit that number...

So, family updates: **Anna** (33), teaching at NYU, but also working on her proposal that she successfully defended in October! She'll be in Sweden Jan-April to collect data for the project. Anna also finds time to sing in a great NYC choir, The Cerddorion, and to run - she finished her first NY marathon this fall on amazing 4:17:18! Anna lives with Paul in Brooklyn, they both work really hard (he works for SumofUS) but they seem very happy. **Ida** (30) has also had a busy year: working on different rotations for her license to practice medicine while being pregnant and looking for a bigger apartment for a growing family. Finally Ida and her base-playing husband **Svante** decided to sell their centrally located apartment in Stockholm and instead buy Anders' mum's, rather worn-down, row house in Sollentuna, 5 km from where we live. The house really needed a major renovation so Ida, Svante and **Gustav** (2.5) moved in with us Sept. 23 and stayed in our basement floor, an arrangement that worked well. Gustav started at a Daycare center in Sollentuna and seems to like it a lot. But because of delays with the renovation the Söderqvist family couldn't move to their house until Nov.23 and only five days later, Nov.28, we welcomed **little Ivar** (pronounced Eevar), their second son, born after an uncomplicated and fast delivery! **Eva** (28) works 80% at her research position in meteorology, which also includes teaching and taking courses, and she is also pregnant (due date: end of February 2015). After the first months when she had pregnancy sickness and bad headaches, she feels a lot better now but is tired. **Carl** still works as physiotherapist among the elderly and little **Lena** (almost 2.5) spends her days at a cooperative, parent run Daycare center that she loves. She also loves playing with her cousin Gustav and it is so much fun to see the two of them together! They are both very verbal and talkative kids and I love babysitting and reading books to them. **Anneliese**, our "extra daughter", rents Anna's apartment in Stockholm, and works fulltime at the Karolinska Institute. We all are so busy that we don't have time to get together very often but she arranged a 4th of July party in our garden this summer and recently we were invited to a fantastic Thanksgiving dinner hosted by Anneliese and her friend George. Anneliese will spend Christmas with a friend in Italy so we'll see her in January when Anna has come home.

So, Anders and I have a wonderful family and three fantastic grandkids. We also have second home up north where we really can relax from our busy jobs (and a third house on wheels, our caravan!). We continue to sing in our choirs - Anders has started in a new choir this fall - and I do my genealogy when I have time but spending time with our grandchildren is probably our first priority nowadays! We are looking forward another baby this spring and we pray that our job situations will calm down. Now we hope to some have peaceful days around Christmas and as always...

We wish you a Joyful Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Lucia & Anders