

# Sundquist, John Paul (1917–2013)

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## INGRID GUSTAVSSON

Ingrid Gustavsson, M.A. in music education (Andrews University), is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London. She has worked in West Africa, the United States and Sweden. She is currently employed as a music teacher at the Adventist Academy in Sweden, Ekebyholmsskolan, where she has worked since 1998. She and her husband Bo are actively involved in their local church.

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John Paul Sundquist was a pastor, missionary, educator, administrator and photographer. Sundquist served as a missionary in many African countries, in his native Sweden, and at the Northern Europe-West Africa Division Office in St. Albans, U.K.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Sundquist was born on May 22, 1917, in Kyrktjärn, Bjurholm, the county of Västerbotten, in the north of Sweden. He was the son of Betty and Oskar Sundquist, who had three children, of whom Paul was the middle child. His father was a building contractor, and his mother was a schoolteacher. The family lived in Umeå, the “City of Birches,” and Sundquist attended school there until his teens. The children of devout Lutherans, they were expected to read from the little black book, the catechism, every night before going to sleep. Later his parents became Seventh-day Adventists and decided to send their son to Ekebyholm Mission School, 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of Stockholm. The school, beautifully situated out in the country by the lake Syningen, was the place where Sundquist had a strong conversion experience and felt a calling to become a minister. He was baptized April 25, 1935, at the age of 17.

While pursuing pastoral studies at Newbold College in England (1937–1939), he met his wife to be, Eunice May Powell (1918–2013). Because of the imminence of World War II, Sundquist had to return to Sweden, where he did military service, and the couple were separated for seven years. Letters and telegrams kept their friendship alive. In 1941 Sundquist started working as an evangelist and young people’s leader within the Adventist Church in Sweden. After the war, when the North Sea had been swept for mines, Eunice took the first boat to Gothenburg, Sweden, available to civilians. Paul met her with seven red roses. The couple was married September 29, 1946, in Stanborough Park Church, Watford, England, and immediately left for France. First to Collonges, the Adventist language school and seminary, and then to Paris, where they studied the French language in preparation for their first appointment in Africa. Arriving in the Belgian Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo), they excitedly opened their trunk of wedding gifts, only to find that the gifts had been stolen. Because they had very little money, their first pieces of furniture were built from orange crates. They had left their homes and families to serve the Lord in a faraway country, and they were convinced that He would be with them.

Sundquist worked as a missionary in several African countries from 1947 to 1959<sup>2</sup> with a study break at Emmanuel Missionary College (Andrews University), U.S.A. (1953–1954), where he took a degree in modern languages. He had an aptitude for learning new languages, which greatly helped him in his work. The family lived in the Belgian Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, South Africa, and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). His primary responsibilities were education, youth work, and temperance work. During that time two daughters were born.

Working in different parts of Africa and seeing the great beauty of the people but also their tremendous needs inspired him to buy a camera and conscientiously start documenting. He was a pioneer in the Adventist Church when it came to photographing “the work.” The camera equipment was heavy and burdensome to carry in the heat, but Sundquist was convinced that well-taken pictures would speak their own language and move people to action. His photographs have made a significant impact on the work of missions at home and abroad. In 1991 the book *Upptäck mitt Afrika* (Discover My Africa) was illustrated by his expressive and striking pictures.

In 1959 Sundquist was called to work as union president for the Swedish Union. Later a call to the Northern Europe-West Africa Division resulted in the family moving to St. Albans, England. From 1966 to 1980 Sundquist worked as Youth, Public Relations, and Sabbath School director, heading up the work in the countries of Northern Europe-West Africa Division. The last few years before retirement (1980–1982) he pastored the church in Helsingborg, southern Sweden. After officially finishing his work for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, after 41 years of service, he and his wife moved to the Stockholm area, where they lived until their deaths in 2013.

“He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!” was a favorite song that Sundquist often used in his meetings. With a strong, clear baritone voice, he sang the song with passion as he prepared to preach the gospel. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10) was his favorite Bible text. He was always very focused on his mission; his greatest desire was to lead people to Christ. He was an avid reader, interested in learning new things, and a captivating storyteller. He was very creative and was excellent at finding suitable illustrations for his sermons. Whether traveling on skis in the north of Sweden, riding through the African deserts on the back of a camel, or simply driving his little red car, he was ever looking forward to the final destination: heaven and the return of Jesus.

After retirement Sundquist continued preaching, teaching, collecting money door-to-door for missions, and visiting sick and lonely people in the community where they lived. This continued until his death on March 1, 2013.

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## SOURCES

Öster, Yvonne Johansson. “Paul Sundquist.” In *Svenskt Frikyrkolexikon*. Ed. Jan-Åke Alvarsson. Stockholm: Atlantis, 2014.

Paul Sundquist’s Service Records. Swedish Union of Churches Conference, Stockholm, Sweden.

## NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, this article reflects the personal knowledge of the author as the daughter of Paul Sundquist and from her writing in Yvonne Johansson Öster, "Paul Sundquist," in *Svenskt Frikyrkolexikon*, ed. Jan-Åke Alvarsson (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2014).
2. This and other dates of service in various locations are from Paul Sundquist's Service Records, Swedish Union of Churches Conference, Stockholm, Sweden.

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