



Hultafors personal.

Photo courtesy of Swedish HASDA.

Hultafors Sanitarium Health Center (1926-2004)

YVONNE JOHANSSON ÖSTER

Yvonne Johansson Öster, M.Phil. (University of Lund, Sweden), M.A. in religion (Andrews University), is a retired college teacher and pastor. Her numerous articles on Adventist history include a biography of pioneer missionary Hanna Bergström (Skandinaviska Bokförlaget, 2013) and an anthology of Swedish missionaries (Skandinaviska Bokförlaget, 2019). Johansson Öster also contributed an article about the Adventist church in the *Encyclopedia of Swedish Free Churches* (Sveriges

In 1926 the Swedish Conference of the Scandinavian Union had just 1,776 members.¹ Two health institutions were operated by the Church in Sweden at this time: Nyhyttan, a summer "bath;" and the Stockholm Fysikaliska, where day patients were treated. The desire was to launch a full-time Swedish equivalent to the Skodsborg Badesanatorium in Denmark. It was there that a School of Physiotherapy also operated and provided all Scandinavia with well-trained health staff. It was the vigorous leader of the Scandinavian Union, G. E. Nord, a Swedish-American, who initiated the establishment of Hultafors as a year-round Adventist health institution.²

Hultafors was originally built as a tourist hotel in 1907, but had not been overly successful, even when it was operated as a health resort by previous owners. Yet its geographical location provided good communication, thanks to the railway opened in 1909 which provided access to the country's second city, Gothenburg, 56 kilometers away, and to the nearby middle-sized city of Borås. The location was accessible to a large proportion of the population of southern Sweden. Situated in a hilly woodland landscape, with several lakes, it provided an ideal place for Adventist holistic treatment. The first ten years had in total 10,000 guests. The average number of guests per day increased from 44 in 1926 to 80 in 1936. This was considered a success, given it was during the depression.³ For many years this institution provided considerable financial subsidies to other church projects and institutions in Sweden.

The motto for its very first prospectus in 1926 was *Where nature and science cooperate*. The prospectus provided a meticulous list of the kinds of treatments Hultafors offered for those who: were overworked or overweight; had chronic intestinal diseases; had heart or kidney problems; had diabetes; or suffered digestive and nervous disorders. However, no patient with tuberculosis or a mental illness could be treated.⁴

In 1926 tuberculosis was still a widespread disease among all ages and classes. The idea behind Hultafors was not hospitalization, but preventive medicine and a changed lifestyle. It was an ambitious project.

At the time there were no Adventist-trained medical doctors in Sweden, but a medical student, Isak Unhäll, promised to serve at Hultafors when he finished his medical training. This he did for his entire working life until 1964. His specialty in neurology was highly appreciated in the public health system of the region, which meant many patients were referred to Hultafors.

The year 1929 saw the start of a nursing school with the aim to provide Adventist health institutions with staff trained to not only provide physical care, but also spiritual assistance to the patients. The first graduation from the nursing school took place on October 1, 1931, with six graduates.⁵ It was the physician, Dr. E. Garby, and the matron, Asta Svensson, who were responsible for this two-year course. The prerequisite for entrance to the course was one year of practice at a hospital as a nursing-aide. The course was terminated in 1968 because the state medical board would not give the Hultafors nursing course a national license. However, it was recognized fully in Finland, where over the years quite a few nursing students had their roots. At the 25th year anniversary

there was an impressive number of staff serving the institution, with Drs. Garby and Unhäll (medical director) still leading the medical work.

In 1964 Norman Blomstedt arrived after completing medical studies in Sweden, as well as further training in California at the White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles and at the Glendale Sanitarium and Hospital in Glendale. Blomstedt had served in different capacities in a Swedish hospital.⁶ He and his wife Lillian, who served as head nurse, created an atmosphere of high standards, including all the cultural aspects of sanitarium life. It was a high time for the institution, with good finances and changes to upgrade the institution to modern standards, both in treatment and in remodeling the building complexes and adding extensions. Norman Blomstedt had a great interest in architecture and art, as well as classical music. These interests benefitted the institution where a high cultural standard developed.

Blomstedt's tenure as medical director and CEO of the institution lasted till 1984 when he was succeeded by Dr. Christer Joreteg who had grown up at Hultafors. Drs. Gunnar Roslin and Hans Löfgren followed after Dr. Joreteg left for the mission field. They tried to maintain an Adventist ethos in an increasingly harsh climate as far as private Christian institutions were concerned.

At the beginning of the 1990s the cracks in the Swedish welfare state began to impact Hultafors. Tougher restrictions regarding patient referrals meant the country withdrew all their referrals overnight. These referrals had constituted the majority of patients at Hultafors. Different attempts were made to replace and reorganize the operation with great energy and faith, yet times were definitely changing. In a country where taxes paid for public healthcare, private guests were rare. The cost to run a private health center proved too heavy, and increasing legal demands connected with healthcare institutions mounted, as well as salaries. All together these were the background for the closure of the institution and the sale which took place in 2004.⁷ This sadly marked the end of Church-owned and operated healthcare institutions in Sweden.

SOURCES

Grundberg, Oscar. "Report for the Swedish Conference for 1926." *Missionären*, March 1927.

Hultafors Anniversary publications: a) 1926-1952; b) 1926-1996.

Hultafors Prospectus 1926 and 1948.

Jan-Åke, Alvarsson (ed.). *Svenskt Frikyrkolexikon (Swedish Encyclopedia of Free Churches)* Stockholm: Atlantis, 2014.

Svensson, Asta. "Från Hultafors." *Ungdomens Budbärare* 1931.

Wiklander, Gösta. *I vår Herres tjänst*, Stockholm: Adventistsamfundet, 2001.

NOTES

1. Oscar Grundberg, "Report for the Swedish Conference for 1926," *Missionären*, March 1927, 34.
2. Hultafors Sanatorium 1926-1952, 6 (Anniversary pamphlet 1952).
3. *Hultafors Hälsocenter* 1926-1996, 5 (Anniversary pamphlet 1996).
4. *Hultafors Prospectus* 1926.
5. Asta Svensson, "Från Hultafors," *Ungdomens Budbärare*, November 1931, 5, 12.
6. Gösta Wiklander, *I vår Herres tjänst* (Stockholm: Adventistsamfundet, 2001) 19.
7. Jan-Åke Alvarsson (ed.), *Svenskt Frikyrkolexikon* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2014), 199.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000