



Grandma's and Grandpa's book

Ingemo och Charley Nilsson

To Axel, Nellie, Sofia and Filip

Grandma's and Grandpa's book

*"Let us now tell you a little about how we got along when we were kids,
went to school, started working – and some other things."*

At Christmas 2019 we gave our grandchildren a little book, where we told them about our childhood days and how our lives had been so far. For the benefit of our friends abroad we have made this revised version in English¹.

Enjoy,
Grandma Ingemo and Grandpa Charley



¹ British readers: please excuse us for using American English, but this is mainly intended for Charley's relatives in America.

Photos

Front page photo was taken by Rebecka Helgesson. All other photos were taken by Ingemo and Charley Nilsson, or belong to their collection. In most cases the photographers are unidentified, with the exception of

| | |
|------|-----------------------------|
| page | 1 Bengt Pålsson |
| | 7 Bengt Pålsson |
| | 14 Anna-Karin Philipsson |
| | 25 Thomas Laago |
| | 26 Bengt Pålsson (mug shot) |
| | 29 Natalia Papasteriadou |
| | 30 Bosse Johansson |

Photo on page 46 is taken from the cover of *Johnny Young – The complete Blue Horizon sessions*, Columbia 88697079152 (2007).

Thanks

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Sources

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Grandma's and Grandpa's book

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Ingemo & Charley Nilsson
Vindögatan 62
257 33 Rydebäck
Sweden
+46 (0)727-22 51 77

www.vindogatan62.se
home@vindogatan62.se

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Back in those days

When we were born in the winter of 1947–1948, Sweden had 6.8 million inhabitants compared to 10 million today, and there were about 170 000 private cars compared to 4.8 million today. The king, Gustav V, was 89 years old and the prime minister was the 46-year-old Tage Erlander.

Compared to today, the vast majority of families experienced a much worse health and medical care situation, and housing standards were significantly worse for most people.

A large part of the households did not have hot water from the pipeline, so water had to be heated on the stove. Many did not have access to a water toilet, instead such matters had to be taken care of in outhouses. Even in the mid-1960s, modern bathrooms were still missing in a third of Sweden's households.

But let us now tell you a little about how we got along when we were kids, went to school, started working – and some other things.

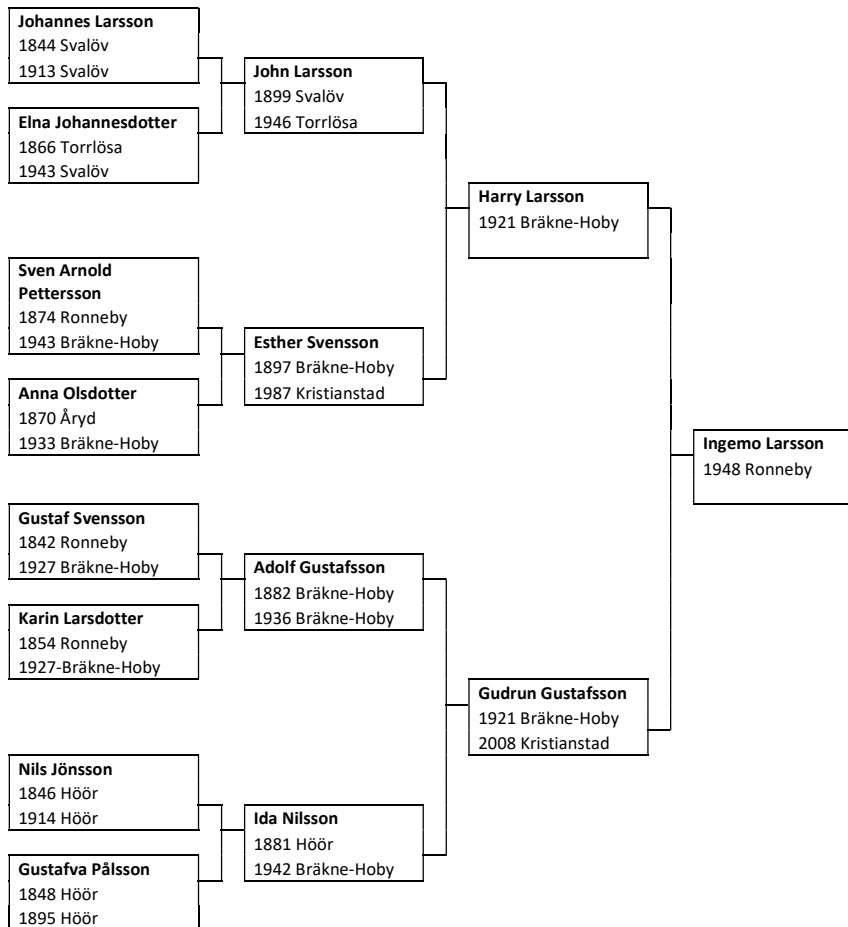
Rydebäck, Sweden, May 2020,
Ingemo and Charley Nilsson

Part I

Ingemo



Ancestors



Harry Larsson's family gathered at Hotel Örenäs to celebrate his 95th birthday in May, 2016.

My parents

My mother Gudrun was born in 1921 in Bräkne-Hoby, Blekinge^I, as the daughter of Ida and Adolf Gustafsson. My father Harry Larsson was the son of Ester and John Larsson, and he was also born in Bräkne-Hoby in 1921.

Furniture carpenter Harry Larsson and Gudrun Gustafsson, who worked as a maid, married in September 1945. They lived for a while with Gudrun's parents in Svenstorp, Bräkne-Hoby, but in 1947 they moved to an apartment in Ronneby. I was born there in March 1948, followed four years later by my brother Berth. In 1953, my parents bought a house at Kommungårdsvägen in another part of Ronneby, where my youngest brother Mats was born in 1954.



A stubborn girl

My parents have told me that I could be very stubborn, especially regarding something I really wanted to have. I spent a lot of time with my Dad, and sometimes I followed him to the hardware store when he was about to buy something there.

Once they had a tricycle that I wanted. But we didn't have much money, so Dad didn't think he could afford to buy it for me. But I didn't give up, and placed myself steadfast on the bike. I stayed on it until Dad gave in and bought the bike. Another time I got hold of a wheelbarrow, and it was the same story again. Dad had to give up, and the people in the hardware store were happy. And so was I.

When Mats was two years old, Gudrun started working at a dairy. At that time, milk was bought in bottles, and Gudrun, among other things, handled the



machine that washed the bottles. Harry worked at a carpentry factory, but for a while he led evening courses in carpentry as well. He also ran his own carpentry business for a few years.

My parents, especially Harry, were very much involved in Missionskyrkan^{II} and its work. Harry was, among other things, chairman of the congregation as well as youth leader. He often led worship services and other gatherings, and when I was a small kid I used to sneak up to him and stand and hold onto his trouser legs as he talked or read from the Bible.

With my parents at Karlskronagatan 14.

^I Blekinge County is just east of Skåne.

^{II} *Missionskyrkan*, a local church that belonged to the national organization Svenska Missionsförbundet, later Svenska Missionskyrkan, a national congregational church that was founded in 1878. In 2011, Missionskyrkan (Mission Covenant Church of Sweden), Baptistsamfundet (Baptist Union of Sweden) and Metodistkyrkan (Methodist Church in Sweden) established Ekuimeniakyrkan, a joint community.

My grandmother Esther often came to us to take care of us children. Grandma also lived with us periodically in Ronneby, but me and my brothers also spent much time with her and her sister Adele in Väby, Bräkne-Hoby¹. In the summers we often took the bus from Ronneby to Vieryd, and then walked to Adele's house.

Holding my grandmother's hand.



Dad's motorbike is exciting!



*Kommungårdsvägen 7,
Ronneby, today.*

*This house in
Ronneby used to be
Missionskyrkan.*



¹ About 8 miles west of Ronneby.

Adele's house in Vaby

Adele Svensson's house was built in 1937 on a plot that she bought in April the same year from her brother Albert. Their father Sven Arnold Pettersson cut the stones for the house, as well as the poles for the fence along the country road.

Adele's sister Esther became a widow in 1946, and after that she lived together with Adele.

Adele remained unmarried and childless, and in January 1970 she bequeathed the property of 1,884 square meters (almost ½ acre) to her nephew Harry, who through the years had helped her with carpentry, painting and other practical jobs. Adele died in February 1973, and after some dispute over the inheritance the ownership, in accordance to the will, went to Harry.

After Harry inherited the house, he and Gudrun spent a lot of time there, especially during summers and since they retired. In the summer of 1998, me and my brothers Berth and Mats formally took over as owners of the property in Bräkne-Hoby.

From Ronneby to Kristianstad

In the fall of 1958, Grandma Esther came to live with us in Ronneby. She cooked, cleaned and looked after us children. She was a valuable support to all of us, not the least since Gudrun got a job and Harry worked in Kristianstad.

In the beginning of 1959 Harry had become employed by a carpentry factory in Kristianstad¹. That's why he rented a room in Kristianstad, where he stayed during working days, and then he spent the weekends with us in Ronneby.

Dad worked a lot, but there was still time for some family trips by car on vacations, including a trip to Åre¹¹ where we camped.

As long as my brothers and I went to school, my parents didn't want the family to leave Ronneby. It wasn't until the summer of 1966 when we all, including my grandmother Esther, moved to an apartment in Kristianstad.

Harry continued to work at the carpentry factory, but in 1968 he resumed his own business. Most of all, he renovated apartments, but also did some work for a bank. Harry continued to work until he retired in 1986, 65 years old.

For a few years in the 1980s, Harry was also much involved in planning for a new church building, as well as doing a lot of carpentry work there in its final construction stages. Odalkyrkan in Kristianstad was inaugurated in March 1988.

After we moved to Kristianstad, Gudrun had a job packing cheese, a job that, however, hurt her shoulders. It became so painful that she could no longer work, and after two years of sick leave she retired with early retirement pension when she was 58 years old.



Berth, myself, Mats and Dad.



Youth leader Harry Larsson, with me in the middle.

¹ Kristianstad is about 50 miles west of Ronneby.

¹¹ Åre is situated in Jämtland county and about 620 miles north of Ronneby.

In the early 1980s, Harry, Gudrun and Esther moved from the apartment to a house on Pastorsvägen^I owned by Missionskyrkan in Kristianstad.

Towards the end of 1986, Harry's mother Esther became so senile that she no longer could live with Harry and Gudrun. Esther came to a nursing home, and eventually ended up in a hospital where she died in March 1987, 90 years old. Two years later, Harry and Gudrun moved to an apartment on Östra Kaserngatan.

During the latter part of 1995, Gudrun had problems with her stomach. She was later diagnosed as having a tumor in her gut, and went through surgery. Towards the end of 1999, new health problems led to further hospital stays and surgeries. In the fall of 2007, Gudrun and Harry moved to an apartment at the centrally located Sommarro^{II}. Gudrun died there in April 2008, while Harry – who'll be 99 years old in May 2020 – still lives there.



Esther Larsson (1897–1987)

My school years

In the fall of 1955, with 16 other girls and boys, I attended first grade in elementary school in Ronneby. I found math interesting and I also liked handicraft, which in those days only meant sewing for girls and woodworking for boys.

I enjoyed studying with the others in the class, and I only have nice memories from my time in school and my classmates. Today, however, I have no contact with anyone from my class, though I'm still in touch with my friend Kerstin who is one year older than me and who still lives in Ronneby.

The school system in the 1950s

From the year when Swedish children became seven years old, they were all required to attend school for seven years. This was according to a law on public school duty from 1936. For the vast majority of children in Sweden, their education only consisted of those seven years in the *folkskola*, elementary school.

After sixth grade you could continue studying, and start at *realskola* (secondary school) if you wanted to and had grades good enough to be admitted. The secondary school was similar to what since the late 1960's has been covered by grade 7–9 in *grundskolan* (today's elementary school), and in Ronneby it lasted for three or four years. The number of study years in the secondary school and the rules of transition varied between the municipalities.

After each year in secondary school, you had to have approved grades to be promoted to the next class. If you did not, you had to take another year at that level – or quit.

After completing your years in secondary school, you graduated (got the *realexamen*), provided that you had approved grades after a number of oral examinations and written tests. If you wanted to undertake further studies, you did not have to do the last year in secondary school, but could (if the grades were sufficient) instead move on to a four-year high school.

^I Pastorsvägen (Pastor Street), suitable address for a house owned by a church!

^{II} Sommarro is a home for old folks where they have their own apartment with kitchen, but can also eat at the home's restaurant or have food brought to their apartment, and where they also have access to nursing.



First grade in Ronneby 1955, with me in the middle of second row.



Photos from 3rd and 4th grade.



Folkskolan in Ronneby.



With my schoolmates in 6th grade. I'm the one in the middle in front of the boy in white.

When my brother Berth started going to school I was in the fourth grade. Berth did not think it was fun at all to go to school, so in the beginning he sometimes ran away from the school yard and home to grandmother. Then I was instructed to make sure that he did not run away anymore but stayed in school.

Secondary school exam

After six years in elementary school, in the fall of 1961 I started secondary school. During summer vacation I worked in a bakery shop in Ronneby. Most of all, I remember that there were many wasps drawn to the sweet cakes and pastries.

Already in the lower classes I had found it difficult and boring to study Swedish and other languages, especially regarding grammar. In secondary school I had a teacher who really did not make those subjects easier or more interesting to me. But otherwise I did quite well in secondary school, and after four years I took my exam in June 1965.

Further education and work



From an early age my aim was to get a job where I could work with children, though not as a teacher. So after school I had a few years of practising in families with children, and during a couple of summers I also worked at a children's vacation camp. You had to have this kind of experiences before you could apply for a nursing education, and an exam in that field was necessary to be able to get a job with children at schools or other institutions.

Marie was one of the children I took care of during practising.



At the rural domestic school, 1967.



Practising in Landskrona, 1968.

Although it was not a requirement in order to apply for the education I wanted, I attended a rural domestic school in Bräkne-Hoby for a semester. There we learned how to sew, knit and weave, and also how to slaughter chickens, cut up a pig and to cook.

In the spring of 1968, I went to Landskrona to get my long-awaited nursing education that lasted about five months. To a large part it included internship in a kindergarten.

After that I could start looking for work, and later that year I got a job in Växjö as a children's nurse. It was at Solvändan, a brand new boarding school for children aged seven

and upwards who had different forms of disability. In Växjö, I rented a room not far from my job.

During my time in Växjö I got to know Anna-Karin Sällryd, who also used to go to Missionskyrkan and lived close to Solvändan. A few years later Anna-Karin married Anders Philipsson from Vinslöv, and they are still close friends to us.

To Helsingborg

By then, Charley and I had started dating. Sometimes he took his 1958 Volkswagen to Växjö, but usually, when I had the weekend off, I took my Saab and drove the 190 kilometers south to Helsingborg.



With Charley in Växjö – 50 years ago!

So there were reasons for me to look for employment in Helsingborg, and in December 1970 I moved there and started working at a nursing home for both children and adults.

But I wanted to work only with children, so in the fall of 1971 I got a job at Borgmästargården¹ in the northwestern part of Helsingborg.

¹ *Borgmästargården* (The mayor's house), so called because a mayor used to live there.

Borgmästargården was a large villa that housed kindergarten and school for about 15 disabled children of various ages, including some with Down's syndrome.

Sometimes we spent a few days with the children at a camp school. When our son Pär was just a few years old, I once brought him with me to the camp school. In those days you were allowed to smoke anywhere and anytime, and most of my workmates were smokers. When Pär had been inside that smoke filled house for a little while, he asked me: "Mom, is this a smoke school?"

Student assistant

In 1978 it was decided that most of the children at Borgmästargården and similar special schools should instead form their own classes in ordinary elementary schools. So after seven years of being close to the lovely Pålshö woods, I began to work at Högestensskolan as an assistant to handicapped students aged 13 to 15, a position I held for 18 years. But the work was sometimes heavy, with lifting and wheelchair driving, as we had students who also had physical disabilities.

During the years at Högestensskolan we sometimes made trips, when we loaded students and wheelchairs in a minibus that I drove. Once we made a little longer trip to Söderköping, about 250 miles from Helsingborg.

In 1996, it was decided that there would be no more special classes at Högestensskolan. That is why I moved back to Borgmästargården, by then mainly intended for students with autism and similar disabilities. While there I participated in a week-long course in Växjö, where a new teaching method was taught. That week stays in my mind, mainly because I got a painful inflammation in a tooth and had to see a dentist.

After a few more years in the old villa in Pålshö, I got a job as an assistant at the Filbornaskolan, where the students aged 13–15 had different kinds of disabilities. I had a decent principal who, in addition to my ordinary work, gave me the responsibility of keeping track of all the keys to cabinets and class rooms, and I also took care of our communication with those in town who handled the transports for handicapped students.



At Filbornaskolan, 2006.

My best years

I worked at Filbornaskolan from 2000 until I retired on July 1, 2012. In the last few years there, I sometimes was in charge of a blind guy, and after retirement I occasionally came back as an assistant to him during his last school year. But after that – no more working!

When I look back today, the years at Filbornaskolan were probably the best I had during my years of working. I really enjoyed being there with the students, their teachers and the rest of the staff, and I still see and spend some time with some of my old workmates.



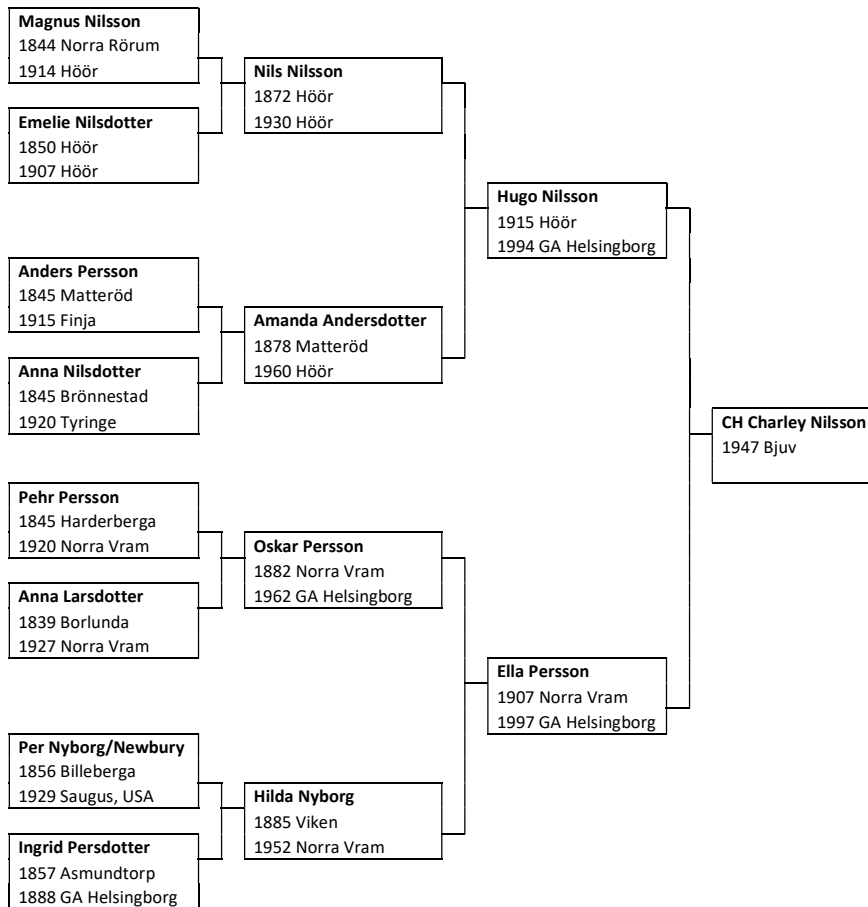
With colleague Torsten, who also retired in 2012.

Part II

Charley



Ancestors



Nils and Amanda Nilsson's grandchildren, with wives and husbands, gathered in Helsingborg in June, 2017.

My parents

My mother Ella was born in Billesholm¹ in 1907, and the daughter of Hilda and Oskar Persson. My father Hugo Nilsson was born in 1915, just north of Höör in the middle of Skåne, and he was the son of Amanda and Nils Nilsson.

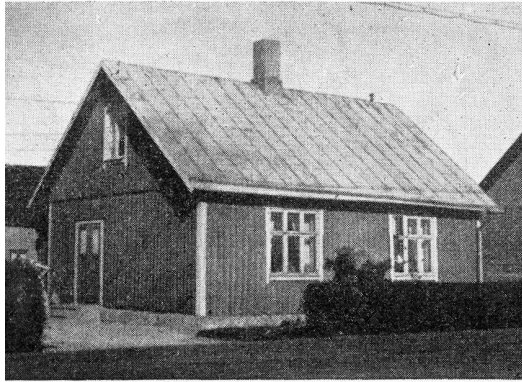
Hugo and Ella met when they both worked at Jönsson's bakery in Höör, and were married in 1938.



His own bakery

For a long time Hugo probably had dreamed about having his own bakery. In August 1942, he moved northwest to Bjuv with Ella and my brother Lennart (born 1939), to a house close to the well-known food company, Findus, and less than 2 miles from Ljungsgård where Ella's parents Oskar and Hilda lived.

Along the road there was a dwelling house, and at the other side of the plot, along the railway tracks to Findus, there was a rather large garage building. The bakery house was small and also contained a little shop that faced the road.



The two-storeyed dwelling house had two bedrooms upstairs. On the ground floor there was a kitchen and an office as well as pantry and closet, a hallway and stairs to the upper floor. The rest of the ground floor consisted of a large living room. For the heat, there was a wood stove in the kitchen and kerosene stoves in the living room and upstairs.



Hugo is standing outside the bakery shop, while Ella is taking care of a customer.

¹ Billesholm is 14 miles east of Helsingborg, and just like Bjuv an old coalmining village.

There was no toilet in the house, so those needs had to be taken care of in an outhouse with no heat or water. There was no shower or bathtub in the house, so we washed ourselves in the kitchen sink.

On December 1, 1947, Lennart's brother (that's me!) was born. In our house today I have a small hand-written card that probably was cut from a cake box. There are a few flowers drawn on it, and the words "Till Mor och lillebror. Hälsningar Lennart. Välkomna hem!" (To Mother and Little brother. Greetings Lennart. Welcome home!).

Thus, during my first years, I lived in Bjuv. There were, as far as I can remember, no children of my age in the neighborhood, and Lennart went to school, so I mostly played by myself in the garden or indoors, and also, of course, spent time with my parents in the bakery.

Being a baker means you have to get up early and this was especially true on Saturday mornings. Therefore, on Fridays, my father used to take me in his car to Grandma Hilda and Grandpa Oskar at Ljungs-gård, and then I stayed with them until Saturday afternoon when my parents were finally able to rest after a week of many working hours¹.



Our family in 1948.



Outside my grandparent's house.



Hilda and Oskar Persson.



Hugo at work.



Ella and her sons by the delivery car.

¹ They never worked on Sundays and in those days almost all shops and businesses were closed on Sundays, as well as on holidays like Christmas Day.

From Bjuv to Billesholm

In November 1953 we moved about three miles southeast to a two-storeyed house in Billesholm. The property covered 3,060 square meters¹, which is five times larger than the plot where today Ingemo and I live in Rydebäck today.

On the ground floor, the house contained the bakery and a shop, as well as our dwelling area. There was a kitchen and a tiled bathroom with sink and bath, as well as a toilet. It was a real water closet, a welcome luxury for anyone used to the unheated outhouse in Selleberga!

On the ground floor there were also a dining room, a living room and a small office space. Upstairs we had another toilet and four bedrooms. My brother Lennart lived in a room facing the street, while I occupied the room next to his.

My grandfather, Oskar Persson, was 71 when we moved to Billesholm. He had become a widower the year before, so the little two-room apartment that we also had upstairs suited him well. In the summer of 1954 he therefore sold the house in Ljungsgård and came to live with us.

"Selleberga-Billesholms bageri". The owner, my father Hugo Nilsson, at far right by the family's private car, a Borgward Isabella.



Elementary and secondary school

After we moved to Billesholm, it was easier to find playmates. The house next door was a grocery store, and upstairs the manager Stig Bengtsson lived with his family, and their son Alf and I got to spend a lot of time together.



It's 1954 and time for school. Front row shows Lennart Persson (2nd fr. left), then myself, Bogislav Filus and Alf Bengtsson.

In the fall of 1954 Alf Bengtsson and I started going to school, and I soon also made friends with Lennart Persson and others in my class. The school was called Skeneholmsskolan and was located just a block or two from our bakery.

¹ About $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre.

After three years with our teacher Elsie Nilsson in grade 1–3 I had a teacher named Henning Palm at the neighboring Centralskolan during grade 4–6.

In August 1960, I began studying at the four-year secondary school in Åstorp, which meant daily travels by train between Billesholm and Åstorp. My friend Lennart Persson also went there, and when it was time for second grade we were joined by Folke Mårtensson, whose parents had a café in Åstorp. I knew Folke already, because his parents and mine were old friends. Both Folke (who's been living in Texas since the 1980s) and Lennart are still among my close friends.

To Helsingborg

In July, 1958, my parents bought Dahlin's bakery in Helsingborg. It was a bigger and very well-known bakery with a great location on Kullagatan right in the middle of Helsingborg, with a staff of seven or eight bakers, three shop assistants, a couple of packers and three delivery drivers.

For a few years Hugo and Ella ran both bakeries, but in the long run it became too much of a burden for them to keep both bakeries running. So in February 1962, the bakery in Billesholm was closed down, and we moved to a villa on Konvaljegatan, at that time a street in the eastern outskirts of Helsingborg. A week before that, Lennart had married a farmer's daughter from Glumslöv named Vanja Andersson, and had moved to Helsingborg.

Grandpa Oskar followed us to Helsingborg and continued to live with us. But he had started to get slightly senile, and had his ailments. One day in July 1962, I was on summer vacation from school and, like my parents, had got up early and left to go to the bakery. When my mother tried to call Oskar around lunchtime he did not answer, so I went home a little earlier and found grandpa dead in his bed.

When we moved to Helsingborg I had left the secondary school in Åstorp, and now studied at Gossläroverket (Boys' high school) in Helsingborg. So it

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was called because only boys were admitted, while girls got their equivalent education at Flickläroverket (Girls' high school). However, implementation of integration had started at the high school level (both schools had education at secondary as well as high school level), so there were now some girls studying at Gossläroverket and some boys at Flickläroverket. Progress!

After spending ten years of my life in school, I graduated in May 1964, with 500 other secondary school students in Helsingborg.

Confectionary apprentice

Ever since I was a few years old, I had helped my parents in the bakery, first with simple chores like filling bags with rusks. After I started school, I worked in the bakery during vacations, and with a three-wheeled bike I delivered bread, cakes and cookies to the shops in Billesholm. I also cleaned baking sheets and made cake mixture, and at Christmas I decorated gingerbread pigs and hearts.

After I had finished school in 1964, I started working full-time in the bakery. I became a confectionary apprentice, and learned, among other things, how to make pastries and donuts.



Dahlin's bakery was run by Ella and Hugo 1958–1965. Besides long working days in the bakery a lot of time was spent at home with accounts and other paperwork.



Celebrating Hugo's 50th birthday on July 19, 1965: Vanja, Lennart, Ella, Hugo, Charley.

End of the baking business

But, for us, the bakery era was drawing near the end. The property owner announced that the lease would not be renewed. My father probably realized that he would not be able to cope with the bakery job for much longer anyway, because of his very troublesome asthma, and he made no effort to find a new location for the bakery.

One day in early summer of 1965, the last loaves of bread were sold in the bakery shop on Kullagatan 13. The next day the phone rang and I picked it up. It was the staff from Sofiero slott¹ who as usual wanted to place their first order of the season, because King Gustav VI Adolf and Queen Louise were soon

¹ *Sofiero slott* (castle) is situated just north of Helsingborg. Our royalties always spent their summers at Sofiero, where they also had other royal people, prime ministers and other heads of states as guests, including Dwight D. Eisenhower and Lyndon B. Johnson.

coming down from Stockholm. So all I could do was to regret that the king and queen now had to get their bread and cakes from elsewhere.

The bakery's premises were emptied. The owner of another bakery bought some of the machinery, and my father and I worked there for a couple of months to help his staff get acquainted with the equipment.

Last part of their lives

Hugo had no problem getting a new job, and ended up working for a margarine company. Unfortunately he lost a lot of money in the process of winding up his business, so my parents had a couple of financially tough years before things got straightened out. In 1982 Hugo retired, and he and Ella had at least a couple of fine and trouble-free years together. They were able to travel around quite a bit by car and were also very active in the Baptist church in Helsingborg.

But after a few years Hugo started getting senile. In 1988 Ella – who for many years was having a bad leg that troubled her moving around – fell and broke her leg once more. As Hugo's senility by then had become serious, we realized that Ella could no longer be able to take care of him. While Ella was recovering, Hugo was placed in a home for the old and senile. Lennart and I sold our parents' house and got a flat for Ella in central Helsingborg, close to my job. Hugo died in 1994, aged 78, and Ella in February 1997, 8 months before her 90th birthday.

My first overseas trips

Since my parents had to keep their business going all the time, except for Sundays and holidays, they never could go on vacation. We hardly ever did any travelling while I was growing up. The exceptions were, for example, occasional weekend visits to my cousins in Malmö and Västergötland. And of course we also took a few rare trips to Copenhagen.

Since we moved to Helsingborg, I had participated in Slottshagskyrkan's¹ youth activities. They once organized a quiz-competition, where the winners would go to a Baptist youth conference in Amsterdam. Me and my friend Olle Löfgren won, and thus we could spend a few days in the summer of 1964 in Amsterdam. We attended meetings, including a service where Martin Luther King, Jr. preached, and were also able to have a look at parts of The Netherlands capital.

In Amsterdam we stayed at a hostel with several British baptists, and Olle and I made friends with a guy named Ian Thomas, a meeting that has meant a lot to me.

The following year, Olle and I traveled to Britain, and in the company of Ian we visited London and hitchhiked to various parts of the country, including Liverpool. Then in 1967 I went there by myself, and stayed for a few days with



Ian's parents in the Welsh coastal town of Aberystwyth. After hitchhiking up to Scotland I went down to London, where I stayed with Ian's sister and her friends. Ian and I have stayed in touch ever since, and Ingemo and I have visited him on several occasions, most recently in 2018.

¹ *Slottshagskyrkan*, a Baptist church that was built in the 1890's.



1965: Olle Lövgren, Ian Thomas and Charley Nilsson outside the cellar club The Cavern in Liverpool, where The Beatles and other bands and artists played in the beginning of their careers in the 1960's.

The building was torn down in the 1970's, and a new Cavern Club was built very close to its original location.

Storeman

After the bakery closed down in 1965, I worked for eight years at the wholesale company Ludvig Wigarth & Co. It was located at Järnvägsgatan in central Helsingborg. The company bought large quantities of goods directly from factories, both in Sweden and abroad, and then resold it to stores here in Sweden. Wigarths was, for instance, agent for the popular Dinkey Toys cars, so all those sold in Sweden came through Wigarths.

In the beginning I worked in their toy department at the corner of Bruks-gatan–Trädgårdsgatan, but in 1966 I started at the unpacking department. There were lots of sewing accessories, underwear, socks and other goods delivered to us by truck, and then it was our job to unpack, check that everything was included according to delivery notes, and then stock the goods where other employees then dispatched the orders.

Medical orderly in the army

For eight months in 1968–1969, I did military service as a medical orderly at the T4 regiment in Hässleholm. It seemed to me that some days were a waste of time, but I had nice comrades and got to learn a lot about injuries and medical care, knowledge that later sometimes came handy.



Time for a break before we move on to pick up a few so called wounded. The truck had room enough for six stretchers. I was the driver, with corporal Laago as my boss.

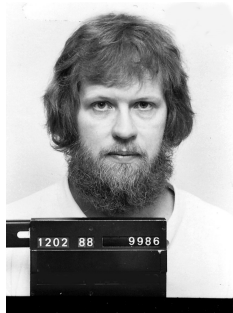
After my military service, I returned to work. I liked working in the old Wigarth's house, but then in the early 1970s the business was moved to an industrial area away from downtown. Then I felt it was time to do something different. So by the end of July 1973 I quit.

After being unemployed for a few months, I started working at a laundry industry. There I packed freshly washed work clothes, towels and other things that the drivers, and sometimes myself, delivered to shops, hotels and other customers. A few times I had to take the company's biggest truck, fill it with dirty carpets and drive to the company's premises in Malmö. I must admit I was a little nervous when I first drove that large truck straight through the heavy traffic in Malmö.

Photographer and caretaker

In the beginning of 1974 I saw an advertisement for a job as a deputy photographer for one year, at the forensic unit at the Police in Helsingborg. I had been interested in photography for a long time, and I had developing and copying equipment at home. Now this was long before the age of digital camera. I applied for the job – and got it!

Now I learned photography for real and took photos of, for example, fingerprints, blood stained clothes, smuggled drugs, and I took a lot of mug shots too. I also spent a lot of time in the laboratory, developing films and making prints (in black and white) that would be used in investigative records, in trials, or in other juridical contexts.



This fake mug shot was taken when we tried out new lighting equipment.



My colleague Bengt Pålsson is photographing a forged cheque.



After a year the one I was deputing for came back, but only to work half-time. So I continued to work as a photographer in the afternoons as a deputy of her, while I was a caretaker in the mornings and handled in- and outgoing mail, as well as making copies of notifications, investigation records and other documents.

In 1977 a Police investigation regarding environmental toxins was carried out at the premises of the Danish-owned chemical company BT Kemi in Teckomatorp¹. For a couple of weeks, me and a forensic officer took pictures of factory, equipment, and barrels with poisonous waste that they had buried

¹ BT Kemi manufactured pesticides for agricultural use and other environmentally hazardous chemicals.

on the grounds instead of securely destroying them. We also took a lot of samples for laboratory examination, inside the factory as well as on the grounds and in a creek. The BT Kemi-scandal gained tremendous attention, and was for many years regarded as a deterrent example of some companies' recklessness when it comes to dealing with toxic matters and other things that can harm us and the nature. As recently as in November 12, 2019, the regional TV-news program had a feature about the still ongoing work to clear the area from harmful chemicals.

Union representative

A few years into the 1980s I became engaged in trade union work¹, and was elected chairman for our local union club in 1985. This meant that a quarter of my working hours were devoted to union work. Later I was a chairman at the county level as well, and during 1991–1994 I was also a member of the national union board. There I was responsible for education in union matters and protection legislation for workers, and planned, administered and led ten one-week courses at various places from Luleå in the north to Helsingborg in the south. I was also in the editorial board for our union's national member-paper, where I participated as a writer and did the layout.

In the meantime, the one I shared the photo job with quit. From September 1, 1988, I therefore formally had a full-time job as a photographer, even though my union engagement took at least 25 per cent of my time.

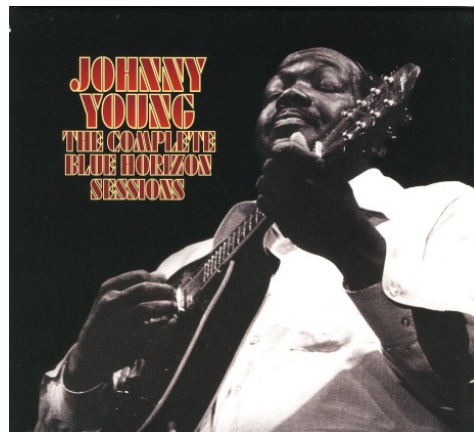


"How do you do it?" Slightly bewildered course leader, 1992.

Music

Because of my interest in music, since the late 1970s I have contributed to the Swedish music magazine Jefferson with articles, record reviews and photos.

I have also had some photos published in American music magazines, books and on record sleeves. My interest in music has also played a big role in our travels to the United States, where I've met and interviewed artists, record company owners and others in the blues-, soul- and gospel music field. So the combination of photographic and musical interests has been of great importance to me for many years.



Cd-cover "Photo: Charley Nilsson".

¹ I was engaged in the union that organized government employees in general. Police officers had their own union.

Extra jobs and engagements

For a number of years I did some photographic work for Sundsgårdens Folkhögskola, a school for adult education situated just south of Helsingborg. Once every year I photographed their students and staff, and also took pictures when they gave theater performances or arranged other events. From 1983 and about ten years on, I was also a lighting and sound technician in a theater group based at Sundsgården. It was a great time with nice people and exciting experiences, including performance trips to Stockholm and Oslo.

Information officer and press spokesman

In 1994, it was decided that the Police in northwestern Skåne was going to have an information unit. By then I had been a photographer for twenty years and thought that it maybe was time to do something different. As I had been involved a lot with education and information issues within the union, I applied for and got one of the four appointments. Initially, I mostly focused on internal and external written information, but the daily contacts (mainly by telephone) with journalists soon dominated my days, even though I still wrote a lot of press releases and other external and internal information.

In the mid-1990s, the Police organization was hit by tough cut down-requirements. As the employees' representative on the county level, I had to spend a lot of time negotiating changes of organization and layoffs. After three years of dismissals and re-organization within the county Police, the personnel situation stabilized and in 1997 I felt I could leave my union assignments, with the exception of auditor at the national level. Now I was a full-time information officer.

There was a lot of work to convey information about thefts, burglaries, fires and traffic accidents, but also about more widely recognized events such as soccer hooliganism, political meetings and demonstrations, as well as violent crimes like murder. Often, the normal eight hours working days were not enough, and it was not uncommon for the phone to ring at night. Then I had to go to the police station to take care of the journalists' questions by telephone and in radio and television interviews.



I've been interviewed by tv-channels from various countries, including Finland. As you can see it could sometimes be cold and windy.

EU project and language group

During a few years in the early 2000s, in addition to my usual job, I was involved in a European Union project in Latvia, in preparation for that country's entry into the EU in 2004. For my part, the job initially consisted of correcting and editing texts in English that would be included in documents for planning and implementation of the project. Once the project was in progress, I worked primarily with coordination of conferences and trainings, as well as documentation of these.

The assignment meant that I made nearly twenty trips to the capital of Latvia, Riga, where we used a small office in the Ministry of the Interior. The project involved migration issues, and was led by my Police Commissioner in Helsingborg, Knut Dreyer¹, assisted by Rolf-Åke Pettersson at the Skåne county Police. Rolf-Åke was permanently placed in Riga during the project, and after he found an apartment in the old part of the city I used to stay there.



Preparing a report with project leader Knut Dreyer at one of the conferences in Riga.

From the beginning of the 2000s, I also became part of a national language network, where we focused on finding ways to get those employed by the Swedish Police to write correctly and in a way that could be more easily understood by the public in general. The language group met a couple of times a year, usually in Stockholm but also in cities like Gothenburg, Umeå and Helsingborg.

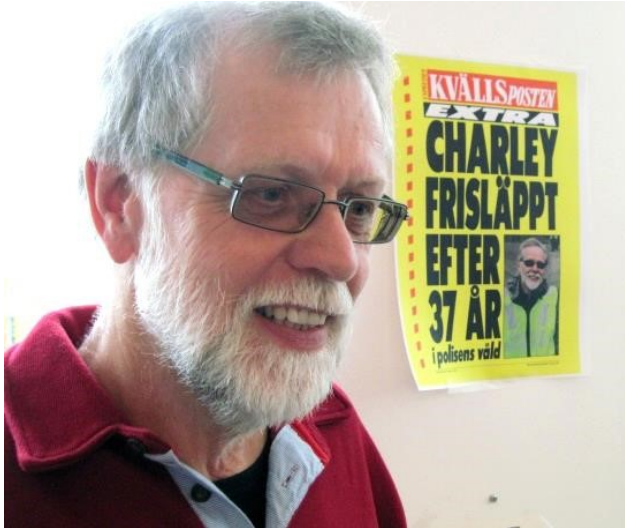
Retirement in 2011

I really enjoyed my job as an informant and press spokesman, but thanks to an old retirement agreement I was able to retire between age 63 and 65. So I chose to retire on June 1, 2011, at the age of 63 ½ years and after 37 years at the Police and a total of 47 years of working.

¹ Knut Dreyer was later appointed Senior Police Adviser to the Secretary General at OSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The secretariat is located in Vienna, and Knut Dreyer was able to find a few hours to spend with me and Ingemo when we visited Vienna in 2011.

It felt very good to be able to quit almost whenever I wanted to, and especially while I was still very much enjoying my job and in good health.

I am happy and grateful that, through my union assignments and work as information officer, I got to know a great many people at all levels within the Police organization. I also made many rewarding contacts with journalists, and I can't help but being a little proud of having left traces like numerous quotes in newspaper articles, as well as in some criminology books and crime novels.



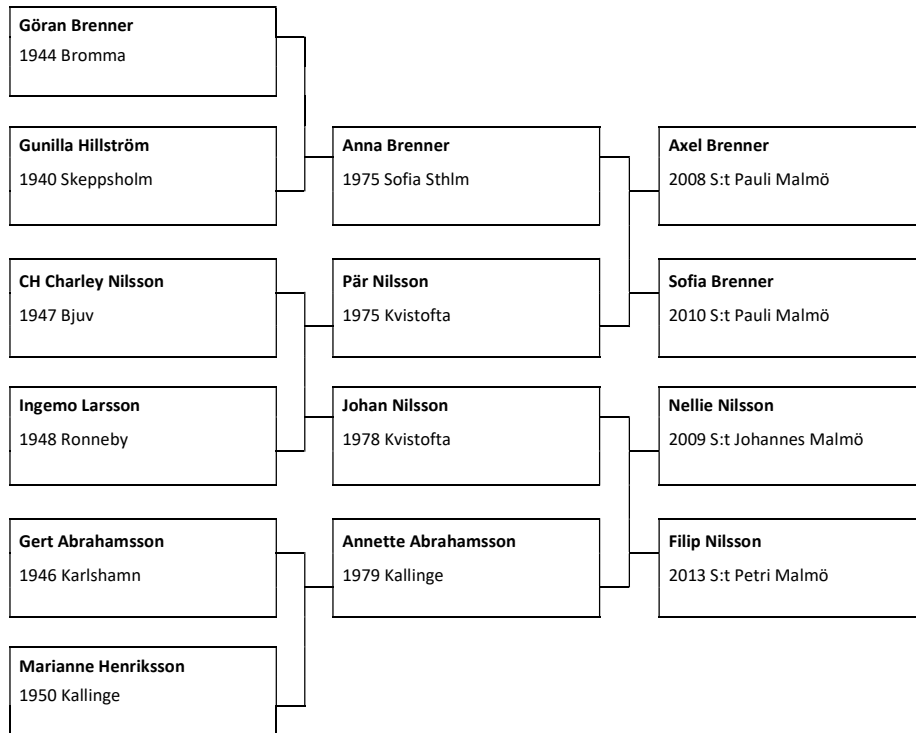
To my farewell reception on May 27, 2011, the newspaper Kvällsposten surprised me by having printed a lot of nice posters. It said "Charley released after 37 years in police custody".

Part III

Together



Descendants



On trolleys in July, 2017. From left: Nellie, Sofia, Pär, Filip, Anna, Annette, Axel, Johan, Charley and Ingemo.

Two makes four

We probably met for the first time at EFS-kyrkan¹ in Kristianstad in the fall of 1968, in conjunction with Charley's military service in Hässleholm. But we did not start dating until the following summer.

At that time Ingemo worked in Växjö, but in 1970 she moved to Helsingborg and continued to work with disabled children. A few months earlier, Charley had left home and rented a room in a house owned by an old teacher. A guy called Göran Svensson also stayed there, and just like Charley he liked blues and other music genres.

But we wanted to live together and get married, but during those years it was very difficult to find somewhere to live in Helsingborg. But Charley's brother Lennart hinted about a house that might fit us until we could find something more permanent. The house was located in Glumslöv, between Helsingborg and Landskrona, and was part of a bigger farm called Assargården, owned by Erik Andersson (a cousin of Lennart's wife Vanja) and his wife Inga. So in September 1971 we moved there, and immediately liked the old house and got along very well with everyone at Assargården.



The old farm in Glumslöv in 1957. It looked mostly the same in 1971.

On December 4 we got married, and lived in Glumslöv until we managed to buy a property in Rydebäck, about 1 ½ mile closer to Helsingborg. In March 1978 the construction of the house was finished, so we left Glumslöv and moved to the house at Vindögatan 62 in Rydebäck. We are still living there after 42 years.

When we moved to Rydebäck in 1978, our son Pär was three years old, and in October the same year Johan was born. By then Pär was in day care at Assargården with Inga, and the farm became kind of Johan's kindergarten as well, where both boys learned a lot about life on a farm and experienced a lot of exciting things there.



¹ EFS (*Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen*), a religious organization within the Church of Sweden.



Pär enjoyed his days at the farm, just as his brother would later.



In March 1978 we moved to a new house at Vindögatan 62 in Rydebäck, and soon you could tell we were going to be one more in the house.





Church engagement

We both grew up in families with strong ties to free churches and their activities. It was therefore only natural that we became involved in Slottshagskyrkan in Helsingborg, where Charley's brother and parents also were members. In the early 1970s, Charley succeeded his brother Lennart as chairman of the youth club, and Ingemo later handled the finances for both the youth club and the congregation.

After a recreation center was built in connection with the church, concerts and other public events were arranged on many Saturday evenings from 1974 and ten years onwards. On those occasions Ingemo was in charge of the café, while Charley was engaged in booking singers, bands and other participants. Our involvement in the church more or less ended in the latter part of the 1990s, but friends from that period in our lives are still our friends.

Travels and hikes

Since our first trip together in the early 1970s to Britain, we have been trying to make at least one trip a year, whether it's been camping in Denmark with Pär and Johan when they were kids, or taking trips to other countries. On most occasions, like vacations in Britain or the US, we have traveled on our own, but we have participated in arranged journeys to countries like China and Greece as well.

We have also hiked a lot during the summers along the regional trail system Skåneleden, but also taken part in hiking trips in, for instance, Ireland, Italy and Austria. The longest hike was for eight days in the fall of 2018, when we walked 100 miles across northern England along Hadrian's wall.



Memories from England 1990, USA 2012 and 2004, Italy 2017 and England 2018.



On top of Monte Vesuvio, October 1, 2019.

Today

The years have gone by fast, and we are now retired since 2011 and 2012 respectively. We are doing very well and enjoying our days, and are very happy that Pär and Johan and their families are doing fine too!