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Hands Across the Rockies

BERNDT PETTERSON writes about a memorable visit to Chicago

One day during the early part of last November, I received a letter with invitation to attend an Executive Board Meeting of the American Union of Swedish Singers to be held in Chicago on November 20. This letter was written by Martin Ahlm, Secretary of the AUSS. I promptly mailed a letter back to him, stating that I would be glad to attend.

Therefore, shortly before midnight on the 18th of November, I was seated in the big plane that was to take me from Portland, Oregon, to Chicago, Illinois. The plane took off in a rain-storm and darkness and we were on our way. The following morning the sun came up, we were flying at an altitude of 20,000 feet, and below us was a great sea of something that looked like cotton, it was a great layer of clouds. We arrived in Chicago at scheduled time but could not land due to the clouds—way down it was thick fog. We were flying above Chicago for an hour and a half before we could go down, but all of a sudden the huge plane shot down through the clouds and there were the house tops of Chicago and the runway right in front of us. A perfect landing and we were again united with Mother Earth.

As I stepped out of the plane and looked towards the Main Building of the airport, I saw my very dear friends, Gustaf E. Rickan, President of the American Union of Swedish Singers, and his charming wife. They were there to meet me and take me in to the

city. It was wonderful to meet them again, we had learned to know each other during the convention in San Francisco last summer and we had become close friends.

After I had received their greetings and warm welcome, we stepped into Rickan's car and we drove to their home, where Mrs. Rickan right there and then fixed me a fine breakfast. I must say it was the best potatiskorv I had ever tasted and it was made by none other than Mrs. Rickan herself.

Now I felt so much better and we drove to my hotel which was located close to Mr. and Mrs. Rickan's home. I was at rest to 5:30 p. m. when my good friends took me to the Svithiod Singing Club.

I am unable to describe this magnificent club building, the interior is well planned and it is beautiful. I must congratulate the Svithiod Singing Club for having such a wonderful home.

Martin Ahlm, Secretary of the AUSS, and I were invited by the Rickans to have dinner together with them in the club's superb dining room. There was wonderful food, delightful atmosphere and we enjoyed ourselves. I was introduced to a score of people and there were many whom I knew since years ago.

After the dinner we went upstairs to the singer's rehearsal hall. The chorus was already at work. Knute Hansen, their fine director, really gave

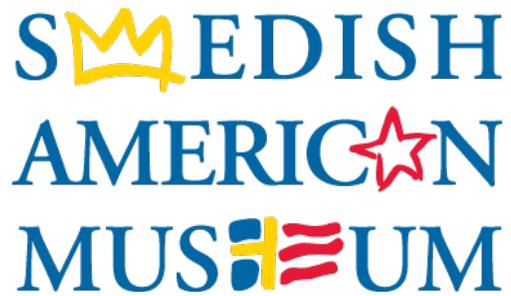
them the works, I was thrilled to hear this chorus (90 voices) and I knew within myself that here was one of the best choruses we have. The chorus was preparing for a TV appearance which was to take place the following day on WGN-TV at 10:00 a. m.

When Brother Hansen had finished with his singers, I was introduced to them by Gustaf Rickan. There and then I told them a little about their brother singers out on the Pacific coast. I mentioned about our love of Swedish Song, told them about our work, also told them how far away we are from the Midwest. I also told them that it was my belief that there should be more cooperation between us and that I hoped that we would have a closer relationship in the future. I told them that for the first time in its history the Pacific Division will be host to a National Singing Festival. I also extended greetings and best wishes from their brother singers who live on the other side of the Rockies out in the great West.

The President of Svithiod Singing Club in return asked me to greet all the singers of the Pacific Division from his chorus. As we had spoken to me, all the members stood up as to give their approval.

Later in the evening many of us gathered in the lower regions of the building where I met many of my old friends and where I also made new friends.

At 8:00 a. m. the following morning



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