

## CONCLUSION



It seems odd, almost wrong, to write “Conclusion” to this story. It has no conclusion. It goes on and on.

First, there are so many unexplored corners of our family history. When I started I knew nothing, to take but one example, about Inga, Anna and Louisa, the three oldest daughters of Magnus and Katrina. Now I know that these three women who married the Morris brothers have hundreds of descendants. I simply do not have time to find all of them. Surely there are some fascinating stories to be unearthed. Maybe after reading this account another descendant will be curious enough to seek them out and complete that part of our family history.

Second, there are a number of relatives in the closer circle of the family whom I have not been able to find. Again, to take but a single illustration, there are the grandchildren and other descendants of Minnie, the oldest daughter of John and Hattie Chilstrom, and Minnie’s daughter Lillie. There are probably hundreds of them, many of whom would like to connect with the Chilstrom family history.

Third, I know that Magnus Kjöllersström’s brother Johan and his family came to America on the same ship with Magnus and Katrina and their children. I was unable to find a trace of him or his family. That road seemed to be a dead end. Possibly someone else will succeed in finding them.

Fourth, I regret that I was not able to do more with the Nelson side of our heritage, especially the deeper roots in Sweden. I am also now quite certain that other members of the Nelson family came to America -- sisters and brothers of Johan and Kristina. Surely there are interesting tales to be told about their roots in Sweden and America. I hope someone will do that.

Fifth, we know we have many Chilstrom relatives in Sweden. Thanks to Bengt Kjöllersström’s diligent work in building a website for the family in Sweden and the U.S., they can be found with minimum effort. As I mentioned in the Introduction, it was my privilege, together with my wife Corinne and son Christopher, to attend the family reunion of my fifth cousins at Mossebo Church in August of 2007. What a privilege it was to meet twenty of them, many of their spouses, children and grandchildren. I wrote the following summary of our visit:

*This email is for those of you on the Chil(l)strom side of the family. It's an attempt to give you a glimpse into the experience Corinne, Chris and I had while visiting some of our newly-discovered relatives in Sweden these past two weeks.*

*Our trip included a stop in Iceland for a four day tour of "Glaciers, Geysers and Waterfalls." Magnificent! Chris joined us in Reykjavik, Iceland when the tour was over and accompanied us on the trip to Sweden.*

*A bit of background:*

*Until now, Sven (now deceased) and Bengt were the only Kjällerströms I had met.*

*When I heard from Bengt last January that there was going to be a Kjällerström reunion on August 11 I decided to explore the possibility of attending. It all worked out. We had a marvelous time and learned that we have some very remarkable relatives in Sweden. I think Corinne and Chris enjoyed it as much as I did.*

*So who are these "cousins" we met in Sweden? They are fifth cousins to my generation. In order to link with a common ancestor you have to go all the way back to a woman named Chatarina Kjällerström who lived from 1718 to 1805. Why a woman and not a man, as is usually the case in genealogical charts? Because she was the sole survivor among the children in her family. When she married and her husband moved on to the family farm, he took her name, as was also the custom. Thus, the farm and the family name were preserved.*

*The Kjällerström clan originated and gradually spread out over an area on the western edge of Småland and the eastern edge of Vastergotland provinces in south central Sweden.*

*These fifth cousins are the sons and daughters of six brothers and sisters. There were 23 of them, with 21 still living. Twenty of the 21 attended the reunion, along with many of their children and grandchildren. Counting spouses, there were 120 who came. While most live in Sweden, there were some who came from as far away as Alaska, Portugal, France and Norway. The gathering was at Mossebo Lutheran Church on the eastern border of Vastergotland. It is a quaint, picturesque little red country church, constructed from wood. The interior walls are almost completely covered with paintings of biblical stories. At the gathering a representative from each of the six families told a bit about that family's history. At the end I was invited to tell the story of my great grandfather Magnus and his family and their journey to the U.S. I had carried*

*Magnus' Bible with me and showed it to them, accenting that it was because of that Book that I had found them. Swedes are fascinated by accounts of those who came to the U.S. The historical novels of Moberg, describing what it was like to emigrate to America in the mid-1800's are very popular among them. They want to make my book available to the relatives in Sweden. I'll be working with one of them to put it on their newly-created family web site.*

*Most of the men were as tall as I am or taller. One from the younger generation towers at 6 foot 9 inches. Almost all of the fifth cousins spoke English well. Their children speak it fluently.*

*Here are a few comments about some of these cousins:*

*Birgitta Kjällerström Andersson has taught Religion & English in Stockholm all of her adult life. She's married to an Estonian man, a journalist who has written books about the persecution of the Estonians by the Russians. He was forbidden to return to Estonia.*

*Ragnild Kjällerström Andersson is a retired high school teacher. Her daughter Anna Haraldsson does what sounds exactly like what you do, Heidi – helping companies understand their impact on the environment. She wants to be in touch with you and I'll send her email address. Ragnild's son is studying in the field of bio engineering, helping people with injuries recover natural movement.*

*Bengt Kjällerström is a retired professor of theoretical physics at Lund University in southern Sweden. His daughter is a physician married to a physician. She is studying to become a neurologist and hopes to attend the convention here in the U.S. next year – where she will meet you, Mary. Another daughter Birgitta is a librarian, married to a disc jockey. She and her husband will visit Washington DC next month and she hopes to meet you, Krista & Bill. I'll send her email address.*

*Göran Kjällerström is an attorney with an international law firm in Nice, France.*

*Lennart Kjällerström owns a large tree farm in the area where we met. A few months ago Sweden had one of its worst wind storms in many years, felling millions of trees. Lennart is working hard to clear his woodland. Everywhere you travel in southern Sweden you see huge piles of logs along the country roads.*

*Karl-Gustav Kjällerström lives in Portugal where he owns a clothing factory. He's married to a Portugese woman. His daughter, Monica Kjällerström works for the United Nations in New York. Again, her work*

sounds a bit like yours, Heidi. I'll send her email address to you. Another daughter Paula is a pediatrician in Lisbon, Portugal, and a third daughter Josefina is a CEO in Lisbon. I wish I had had all this information before you did your bike tour, Steve & Rose. You'll have to go back.

Inga Kjällerström and her husband Håkan Larsson have a clothing factory. It's headquarters is in Tranemo, Sweden where her father Gustav started the company. Now their factory is in Bulgaria. If you are traveling in Europe and see the name "Tranemo Work Wear," that 's their brand. Their son Max Larsson is just now taking over as head of the company.

Sven Svenningsson, whose mother was a Kjällerström, is part of a computer company that has a contract with the Swedish Department of Defense to keep an inventory of military parts for all its equipment – ships, planes, tanks, etc. He also works for the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS). His company helps the IRS to make certain that one department does not take an action that would have a disastrous impact on another unit. He flies to Washington frequently for consultation. He works mostly out of his own office at home, where he can look out over the fields and the woods. He laughed when he told us that the IRS had to come to the woods in Sweden to solve one of its problems. So next time you pay your taxes remember that they could be even higher were it not for our cousin Sven in Sweden!

Inger Kjällerström-Svenningsson is in pharmaceutical research. Her daughter Sofia just finished medical school and her son David is working on his doctorate at Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Per Wangstrom, whose mother was a Kjällerström, lives in Anchorage, Alaska and works for British Petroleum. He has a daughter in London who trains horses. Ironically, Per and his wife go to the same church as Corinne's nephew Dick Mandsager and Per's daughter had Dick's wife Ruth for a Sunday school teacher!

Lena Bjurgert's mother was a Kjällerström. Lena and her husband and family have lived in the U.S. and London for years. He has been in finance. Lena attended Yale University. It is their son Bo who is 6' 9". He's with Merrill Lynch financial in London. A daughter Anna is with Morgan Stanley financial in London and a third daughter Ellen is in Copenhagen, also in finance.

Håkan Vesterlund, whose mother was a Kjällerström, lives in Portugal where he also is in clothing manufacturing. He has a Portuguese wife Fatima, a son Alex who is studying herbal/medicinal gardening in Sweden, and a daughter Anna who is a former model and now potter in Lisbon.

*Quite a collection of interesting people, isn't it? And there are no doubt many more. But we had only a few hours to collect this information and I think we did pretty well, thanks mostly to Corinne who took copious notes.*

*Here are a couple of other interesting items from our trip to and from the reunion:*

*On our way to the gathering we rode in two cars with Bengt and Annika and their son Anders and daughter Birgitta. We decided to stop at IKEA in Anhult, the birthplace of the founder of IKEA, and the site of one of his first stores. He now lives in Switzerland, no doubt to avoid the high Swedish income taxes. As we were walking into the store Annika stopped suddenly and whispered, "There he is!" And so he was – one of the world's richest men was standing there at the entrance. At age 84 he was living up to his reputation as a very common man. His shirt tail was hanging out and his hair flying in all directions. He was having an animated conversation with a man who was probably the manager. Suddenly he turned on his heels and hurried across the parking lot to his car. No body guards in sight. Chris managed to get a shot of him (not at him) and has copies available for a price!*

*On the way back from the reunion we stopped at the little village of Öreryd where great grandfather Magnus Kjällerström and grandfather John Chilstrom were born. There are only a few houses and a neat white clapboard church in the community. Across from the church is the house where Magnus was born in 1809. At that time it was an inn, run by his parents. Country inns served not only as places to stay and eat in those days, but also as the destination of riders who carried mail and other items around the countryside. These inns kept horses so that riders could get a fresh mount and go on to the next inn – a horseback ride away.*

*We spent a lot of time looking around the church and taking pictures. Then came a very unexpected surprise. Chris and Anders decided to explore the bell tower. As they were nosing around in the dim light Chris noticed some writing in red paint on the bare wooden walls of the tower. Something looked familiar. On closer examination and with light from their cameras he and Anders saw the name "M Kjällerström" and the date "1831." Wow! What a find! Magnus had painted it there when he was 22 years old, 176 years ago! The penmanship matched what is in Magnus' Bible that I have here on my shelf. We have pictures to prove it!*

*A visit to Gränna: As I looked at the map of Sweden before our trip I realized that the Kjällerström reunion would take place not far south from Gränna, the birth place of our other great grandfather, Johan Nelson and two of his children. Hattie (Hedda), married our grandfather John*

*Chilstrom and is the mother of Anton, Sig, Mollie, Victoria & Walfred. Gustav, another child, is the father of Lydia, Carl and August Nelson from Cannon Falls.*

*I wondered if there was any chance we could get up to Gränna. Well, it worked out that we were able to go there for part of a day. Thanks to the help of Birgitta Kjällerström who accompanied us, we were able again to discover some fascinating things about this branch of the family.*

*The drive up to Gränna along the shore of Lake Vatern, a huge body of water in the middle of Sweden, is called "Europe's most beautiful roadway." When you think of Switzerland, Bavaria, Norway, the south of France, that seems like a stretch. But it actually is that beautiful. Unfortunately, this was about the only day during our time in Sweden that it rained and was foggy. Yet, the beauty was still there. Gränna has only about 1,000 residents, but is a beehive of activity in the summer, much like some of our northern MN resort towns. It has been known for centuries for its special candy – Polkagrissar. It means literally "Peppermint Rocks." It was probably originally a breath mint that couples used when they danced. In those days before tooth brushing and when snooze chewing was common it was a necessity!*

*We visited the large stone church where John and his children were baptized. Then we found out the exact place where John was born – a farm called Hägna just north of the village. We knocked on the door of the large farm home. After a few minutes a small man probably in his early 50's came around the corner. Through Birgitta we were able to establish that he is undoubtedly a relative. He spoke no English and we were under time pressure by then. But we did get the name and address of a relative of his in Michigan and it may be that through her we can establish a closer connection. We also had the exact name of the farm where Hattie and Gustav were born but could not find it. It may be gone by now. We also learned from local records that Johan was a very small farmer, with probably only a cow and a pig and a small plot of land. No wonder he decided to go to America!*

*Herb*

My strong hope is that some of the descendants of Magnus and Katrina in the next

generations will make the effort to connect with these relatives, will visit them in Sweden, will invite them to come to the United States, and will build a bridge across that mighty Atlantic Ocean that has separated us for more than a century and half.

Finally, though incomplete, I have satisfied my long-time need to put what I know of our family history into writing. Now it's yours -- everyone born to or adopted into the Chilstrom and Nelson clans. I hope you will take what I've given you and build on it. You owe it to yourself and your children and generations to come to maintain a sense of family history, a sense of belonging, a sense of how each of us fits into the history of our family and of our world.

As most of you know, I've spent my career as a minister of the Gospel. So it should be no surpriseto you that I would end with a word about grace, faith, love, endurance and hope. And that takes me to the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament. After citing all the great deeds of faith of their ancestors, the author sets down a very interesting idea. Here are the words from Hebrews 11:39:

*...all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.*

What does that mean? Surely it says something about faith and trust in God. As far back as we can trace our Chilstrom and Nelson heritages, they are people of faith, people who trust in God. The verse suggests that not all the hopes and expectations of one generation are fulfilled. Each new generation passes along to the next a part of their dreams, including convictions about faith and trust in God. The Kjällerström (Chilstrom) and Nilsson (Nelson) Bibles that came across the troubled waters of the Atlantic are evidence enough that they wanted all of us to carry on the tradition of the faith.

But I think we can also apply this idea to all the good things we inherit from our ancestors. We are intimately, inextricably tied to them. As is suggested in Paul's Letter to the Romans, the tie is more than genetic. It is also by adoption -- and we have a number who have been adopted into our families. So, whether by natural birth or by adoption, we are all part of the same heritage. Whatever good they did, whatever love they expressed, whatever tradition they passed on - all these are gifts to us, reminders that their lives are not complete without us. And, I must add, reminders that our lives will not be complete apart from our children and grandchildren and generations yet to come.

So, trusting in God, do your best to be a good descendant as well as a good ancestor. Appreciate your heritage and pass on the best of it to your children and grandchildren.