

GAIA Newsletter – Summer 2008

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Our home in Myrskären in a global life

Both my Brazilian wife Noemia and I (Carl) live a “global life”. We have worked and lived in different countries and we both today are still working internationally within the electric energy business and have to frequently travel in our jobs. My son James is Canadian and Swedish citizen who lives with his family in Austin, Texas. Today on the 90th birthday of Nelson Mandela their son and my grandson Christopher Charles Ohlen was born in the USA so naturally we want to be with them. My youngest daughter Anna Karin graduated in Melbourne Australia and lives with her Australian boyfriend in Sweden. My oldest daughter Kristina went to high school in Houston, Texas and now lives with her family in Västerås, Sweden. Noemia’s family and closest friends all live in Brazil –another home country.

So although some half of the family is in Sweden we have to travel to be with all of our friends and loved ones – and this means we will fly and pollute CO₂. To limit our yearly footprint of pollution we need to reduce on everything else. During the week we stay in a small apartment near where we work so we can walk or take the bicycle. We have one small Ethanol Volvo S40 to get to our house in Myrskären for the (extended) weekends.

We are trying our best to create a sustainable living in our house. Efficient insulation and heating with green electricity and bio fuel. We grow own vegetables and pick berries in the forest. And reduce our consumption to a minimum. We are so fortunate to live by the forest, a small mountain and the lake. We have basically everything we need and want (Except our global families). Imagine all poor and starving children in the world with no options. They do not pollute nor cause global warming – we do – including myself - despite all our ambitions.



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Our home in Myrskären in a global life

So we are trying our best to create a sustainable living but we are far from there. The change we all have to do is affecting our life style, economical model and world view. We need a global mind change. We already have the technology and the ideas to do this. This is not the problem. And really. Do we find it a high quality life to sit for hours in a traffic jam every day going to work. Instead we should spend more time with our families and friends and more time in Nature. And there are alternatives to get to the city and still be in the nature. Stockholm is built on several islands of both lake Mälaren and the Baltic sea. You can use the subway to get some where fast but the nicest way is still to take one of the many boats and ferries. And you can walk in the city center or take the bike to Djurgården.

From Myrskären we can take the bus every 30 minutes so we in 10 minutes reach the train station (Or go by bicycle on a separate bicycle road) . Every 30 minutes we have a commuter train to Stockholm, every hour a train to Västerås and every two hours a train to Gothenburg. (All electrical train). And since we live by lake Mälaren we can also sail by boat to Stockholm, Uppsala, Västerås, Mariefred, Sigtuna, Södertälje and even continue out in the Baltic Sea – to anywhere...We can fish and swim because we are so fortunate that the water is clean. And in the winter we could go skating all the way from our home to Stockholm, Uppsala or Västerås – we could...Because the last winter was the first one ever recorded without any ice on lake Mälaren - due to global warming?



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A walk by the lake July 11, 2007

Nature is fascinating and beautiful. And it is dynamic. The biosphere is full of different species of plants and animals in an enormous variation. One other problem with globalization is the spread of alien species to habitat with no natural defense. This means the new species will eliminate the existing. Imagine how boring it would be if everything would look the same. A whole world with golf courses and corn fields separated by dry deserts and dead seas. It is the variation and the change of seasons that is so fascinating. The creation of God and Gaia. The mystery and beauty of life.

Every spring you see re-birth of plants and the arrival of different species of birds. And every year a complete renewal. Because this beautiful process is influenced by Nature – the air, temperature, moisture...and the influence of our human activities. All of this you can experience during our daily walk down to the lake. You can even experience something rare in the process of evolution. A mutation. A special Birch tree with maple leaves called "Ornäs björk". And all of this is the result of 5 billion years of evolution. The continuous play of life. The play that we – our single generation in a few years think we can master and control.



Ornäs björk



Mälaren from Myrskären



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A walk by the lake July 11, 2007

Last Friday I brought my camera with me for this morning walk. It is just a 5 minutes walk uphill along our common road enjoying all the gardens of our neighbors through the forest down to a small beach with fascinating and beautiful Nature. The scent and sound of plants and singing birds surrounds you with a precious atmosphere. On the cliff overlooking the lake and beneath an old pine tree I have my special spot of peace and meditation. Here in the center of Universe I can experience the truth, goodness and beauty of life.

Walking the narrow trail along the lake is like walking through a rainforest. The humidity from the lake and the protection from the mountain behind is like a green house and you can find all colors beside the forest with 1000 shades of green. All the islands in this part of Mälaren are protected as a bird sanctuary and the forest along Mälaren is a National reserve with original vegetation and animals. In Sweden we have what is called “All mans right”. This means that everyone has access to forests, lakes and rivers – but not to destroy or disturb. This wonderful reality is free for us to experience like one of the seagulls nesting on the island. Richard Bach (author of Jonathan Livingstone Seagull) said in “There’s is no such place as far away” – “Not being known doesn’t stop the truth from being true.”



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A walk by the lake July 11, 2007

I (Carl) have lived here for 30 years. Originally together with five other youngsters who needed a place for wild parties. Since 15 years together with Noemia as our center of the world where we return as much as possible. During these years I have learned to know most of the other families and persons living here. Like in Nature I have also experienced a change in generation. Now our children and grandchildren are moving in. Alf and Charlie are two of the other old timers like me. Alf is like a calendar every spring when he plant in his greenhouse. Now it is full of cucumbers and the tomatoes are on their way.

When I met Charlie this morning he was working on a small box for his fishing gear beside his new boat. He is an old sailor who has been around and we talked about the advantage of Internet to keep in touch with our children. He had just bought a new laptop and upgraded to a wireless Internet. So what is unusual with this? Nothing really except that Charlie is 86 years and Alf is 92. When he was ninety he went on a safari in Africa.



Charlie 86

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A walk by the lake July 11, 2007

Zooming in on nature you may discover lots of small animals. We have also a lot of larger animals passing by. Deer, rabbits, squirrels, mice, pheasants and even moose. This give competition in my garden. The deer loves red roses (but not yellow). The wild boar and a badger or a fox pays a visit once in a while looking for food. Pheasants and other birds go after seeds and berries. But the worst competition comes from the snails, now becoming many since the climate gets warmer with more rain. They love lettuce. So I have moved most of my plants to the veranda. Since this is the type the French love to eat I could try to catch and export them....And then we have the ants. They finished of the wooden structure of the small building behind or house. But they are now helping to pollinate my flowers. We have one dangerous animal here that unfortunately also is rapidly increasing due to the warmer climate – ticks. Noemia and I have both had Borelia. But the real threat with global warming is the changing of the seasons. Flowers, insects and birds are since long synchronized and if this is sudden disrupted it will influence the complete cycle of life.



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My old friends and me who bought Myrskären as a meeting spot and party place for us who graduated the special year of 1968 are growing older, but we try to keep up the old spirit. You can live a sustainable life and have fun. In fact – you have more fun. But now we have more relatives and distant friends visiting – still enjoying some of the good old music. Beatles, Doors, Frank Zappa. Janis, Santana, Deep Purple or a lot of Brazilian samba on CD or playing on our own instruments. Your own live music is absolutely free. So is dancing. And how great it is to be Santa for your grand children. The only problem was that this year we had a “green winter” or rather grey. No ice and no snow. But my grandchildren Valter (3) and Alice (1) both loves music. So we still have had some fun parties also this year with a lot of funny friends and relatives. With two houses and six bedrooms we often have people staying for the night- after one or more beer. And the berries we picked on our walk down to the lake we could share with visiting Andre from Brazil. The father of our goddaughter. So it is almost as when I grew up. When the whole village got together to work and to celebrate.



The "winter" of 2008



The "summer berries" of 2008

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Our work in Ludvika in a global life

During the weeks we mainly work in Ludvika, Sweden (Except when we are traveling) My office is in front of another lake. And this spring we actually experienced some snow during the kick-off in Sälen – a mountain village near the boarder with Norway. In both places the Nature is equally beautiful and fascinating – including wolves, bobcats and bears. The photos are taken with my cell phone – it can also record and play movies, listen to the radio, play MP3, GPS navigate, access Internet and e-mails,calendar and alarm clock – make text messages and yes make phone calls.....but in fact the best way to make phone calls is also for free via Skype and Internet to anywhere. “What a wonderful world”



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Christopher Charles Ohlen– welcome to the Öhlén family and a long history of generation after generation who was born, baptized, married and died in the same village until 1968 when your grandfather Carl left the village to see the world – and so did many other from his generation. We changed the world to something better (for us) – but we forgot you and all future generations of grand children, plants and animals. So you have to save the world!

Medelpad was populated after the last ice age. Many rock carvings show a hunting culture. During the Viking age Medelpad and Högom was an important trade centre linking Finland, Sweden and Norway.

The Swedish king Gustav Adolfs had in successful wars with Russia, Poland and Germany made Sweden a European "superpower" by 1652, although he himself was killed in battle. Sweden controlled Finland, the Baltic states and northern Germany

His daughter Kristina became Queen but because of religious reasons she resigned voluntary 1654.

Her cousin Carl X Gustav became king 1654. He went to war with Denmark/Norway and secured 1658 the provinces on the Scandinavian peninsula which made Sweden of today.

Medelpad and Sundsvall coast was occasionally attacked by the Russian navy in the 1700s. But with this exception Medelpad have had a long history of peaceful development.

The Vikings 0 –1000 A.D.

The Warriors 1000-1650 A.D.

Mikael Jakobsson, 1652

Jakob Mikaelsson, 1676

Pehr Jakobsson, 1728

Jakob Persson, 1759

Petrus Jakobsson, 1793

Nils Persson Öhlén, 1826

Jakob Alfred Öhlén, 1867

Jakob Anton Öhlén, 1921

The Swedish King Carl XII became King when he was 15 years old 1697. He won a big victory at Narva 1700 against the Russian tsar Peter. The Swedish army with 8000 won over the Russian with 80000. Fuelled by this success he set out to conquer Russia and Moscow.

The Swedish army was however trapped by the Russian winter 1708-09 and half of the Swedish army of 40 000 soldiers froze to death outside Moscow. (Carl XII, Napoleon and Hitler has all experienced this trap)

This weak army lost the battle of Poltava in Russia in spring 1709 which was the beginning of the end for the Swedish empire. In the peace treaty 1721 Sweden lost the Baltic states and Karelea to Russia. Sweden also lost most of its German provinces. The wars with Russia continued until 1809 when Finland definitely was lost. After this Sweden has not been involved in any war. Norway was part of Sweden until 1905 when the union was peacefully ended.

Annmari Högstedt , 1921

Jane Catherine Howes,
1950, Feb 2

Carl Gustaf Öhlén,
1949, Sept 4

Hilda Ann Beate Rudström,
1949, Jan 15

James Stefan Christoffer Öhlen
(1974) + Jody

Anna Kristina Öhlen
(1977) + Per

Anna Karin Öhlen,
(1979) + Darren

Christopher Charles Ohlen
2008, July 18

Valter Gustav Nyström
2005, Feb 11

Alice Beata Nyström
2007, Aug 2

Six generations



Henrik
1855



Brita Christina
1833



Jakob Alfred
1867

of a global family

Kristina Josefina
1882



Jakob Anton
1921



Carl Gustaf 1949

Ann Mari
1921



Jane
Catherine
1950



James, Kristina & Anna Karin
1974, 1977, 1979



Ann Beate &
Carl

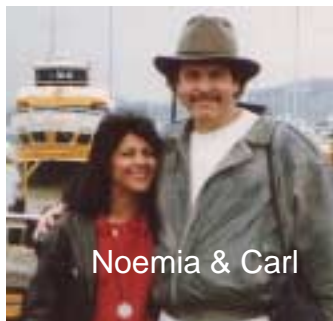
Ann Beate
1949



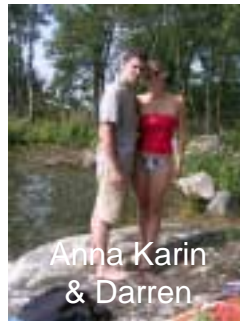
Jane & Carl



James Stefan
Christopher
& Jody



Noemia & Carl



Anna Karin
& Darren



Anna Kristina & Per



Christopher Charles
18/7 2008



Rachael 1993
(Supported daughter)



Giovanna 2007
(God daughter)



Valter Gustav
11/2 2005



Alice Beata
2/8 2007

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My zero CO₂ emission trip July 27-29

Noemia had to go on a business trip to South America (Peru, Chile and Brasil) and according to the airline this trip had 3.6 ton CO₂ emission. So although this is not her personal emission but for her company I decided to try to do the opposite while she was gone – to live a zero emission life. So since we have a small apartment in Ludvika close to my job I used my bicycle all week and reduced food consumption to what I could get locally. On Friday I drove to our house in Myrskären in our E85 Ethanol car but since 15% is gasoline I actually resulted a small emission. (0.2 kilo per km for gasoline and 0.04 kilo per km for E85). This gives around 8 kilo compared to Noemia 3583 kilo for her trip. But on Sunday I wanted to go to Sundsvall to celebrate my father's birthday and meet my old friend. So how to do this?



I took the bus just outside where I live in Myrskären and switched to another bus to Arlanda airport. And this bus was running on rap seed oil from a field not far from where we live. Then I continued to Sundsvall on the X2000 rapid electrical train. And around Sundsvall my friends took care of me as "shared ride" in their cars. I took the same train back to Stockholm and another commuter train back to Bålsta and then bus. It was fast, convenient and it was very low emission. So yes it can be done but.....it was very expensive. I would have done it for half the price in a fossil fueled car! My neighbours went on holiday with a low price airline to Germany for 50 USD/person. To fly to Germany has the same price I pay to take public transportation for 45 minutes to go to Stockholm and 1/6 of what I paid on my zero emission trip by bus and train to Sundsvall! . So what is the conclusion? Although the gasoline now is more expensive it is still much too cheap compared to what we pay for public transportation. So despite we have efficient public transportation – we want our own car and a bigger car and a second, third..car + mobile home + jet ski, + 4 wheeler + fly on vacation and it is cheaper! What a crazy world!



Bålsta Train station



Sundsvall Train station

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Is bio fuel the solution?

Bio fuel made from the same crops as is used for food is not exactly an ideal solution. The bus I went with from where I live in Myrskären to Arlanda together with a second similar bus will however reduce emission with 300 tons CO₂ per year. We have very good public transportation from Myrskären. Every 30 minutes we can take the bus and in 10 minutes reach our train station with commuter trains every 30 minutes to Stockholm, bus every hour to Arlanda airport or train to Västerås and Gothenburg. But still we are using our cars. On the bus driving on bio fuel to Arlanda we were four passengers. So we are running almost empty public transportation and in parallel thousands of cars despite the fact that Stockholm now has introduced a fee for every car entering the city. So if Stockholm is more advanced in sustainable transport compared to most other cities around the world and still not succeeding how about Los Angeles, Sao Paulo, Melbourne,...

And now we have also in Sweden got a right wing “liberal” government who believes 100% in the mighty market, free trade and deregulation. So prices on public transportation doubled, the free entrance on all museums was abandoned, the state owned companies are privatized and taxes for us already rich are reduced so we can consume more. No the problem is NOT so simple that we change from fossil oil to bio fuel or something else. We have to see this in a much larger context on how we live, travel, work and consume. We need to completely reverse our model of living – create instead of consume!



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My zero CO₂ emission weekend July 27- 29

On Friday evening me and my neighbors went down to have wine and cheese at the lake and watch the sunset. The water in this giant natural swimming pool was 24 degrees C. It was silent and with nature's own wonderful sent of life . All was perfect! The next morning I exchange my normal shower for an early walk down to the same lake and took a swim instead. And on my way home I took some pictures in our own small Butterfly valley. Wouldn't it be very sad if these beautiful creatures that also do a big job to pollinate our plants, berries and fruits would disappear. But also the butterflies are endangered.



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My zero CO₂ emission weekend July 27- 29

My neighbor Alf was born 1916. He and I are both growing vegetables such as cucumber and tomatoes. But he is doing it better than me. He has “green hands” and seem to be able to talk to his plants so they grow strong and dark green. Alf has been working as carpenter all his life and has now been retired for almost 30 years. Since I know he likes traveling I asked him if he had been somewhere lately. Oyes he said. “I went on a two week Caribbean cruise in March and in November I will go to the Cap Verde islands. That will be fun. “ So naturally this will give CO₂ emission. But considering his long life and that he never had a car I still do not think his environmental footprint is more than a fraction of our generation. So we can still travel but not every day to our jobs, to the shopping malls and in addition fly or cruise on vacation every year – because this is why we are destroying Gaia.



Alf 92, outside his green house

Although not as green as for Alf I had plenty of cucumber, salad etc. from my green house so so I could live on a low CO₂ diet. And since I got invited for lunch to our neighbors I also managed to live without spending any money at all. The same day the large shopping mall about 30 km along the freeway towards Stockholm had a BIG sale of BIG screen TV and other gadgets. The cars were lining up for hours before even being able to enter the parking lot. So we all have a choice!

When we are away our plants still need water. We have bought special lids with holes to put on normal Coke plastic bottles and turn them upside down. So do I have to buy a lot of Coke? No I just took the bicycle and went around to pick up the bottles the kids are throwing away everywhere.



My green house

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The sound of silence July 26

I love rock music. So when I am alone at home I play my favorites and play it loud. But when I am not doing this I love the sound of silence. I have never been able to totally close down my hearing to a walkman or an i-pod. Sometimes when I visit Stockholm I am astonished of how everybody seem to go through this city without being aware of where they are. They are listening to their music or talking in their cell phone. I love to walk early in the morning or late in evening when the only sound is from the birds and the crickets. I have a small boat by our lake with a 5 horse power engine running on environmental friendly fuel. But it still noisy. So on Saturday afternoon I took my canoe and went out to our Myrskären island. (imagine we have our own two islands) I put up my Brazilian hammock between two trees and brought a book by “the Swedish Al Gore”, Stefan Edman. He is one of the few writers that during many years have tried to alert mankind for what is happening. But when I was resting there on the island there were no sound of silence. The airplanes from Arlanda came every second minute and the power boats were screaming over the water. Sweden has tried to ban the use of jet skies. But the European Union forbids Sweden to do this because it is a crime against “free trade”. What a strange world we have when “free trade” is governing everything – including Nature. To protect pollution. When will we ever learn. So I went home over the “troubled water” without any “sound of silence” to listen to Frank Zappa. And on Sunday morning I took the bus and train to Sundsvall.



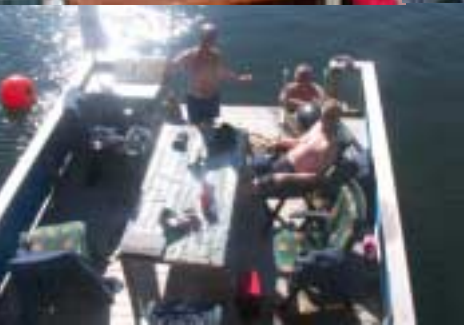
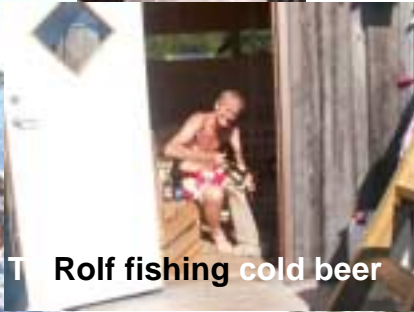
Photos taken with my cell phone from Myrskären

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So we all met again – the GG 68- Graduation Gang from 1968 – 40 years later. Krister, Leif T, Leif L, Rolf and me (Carl) on a two deck sauna float in the fishing village in Njurunda south of Sundsvall. The same young men who once lived together in the Djursholm commune.

On the maybe warmest day this summer – with 30 degree C in the air and 25 in the Baltic sea. And on speaker phone we even got hold of Leif B who lives in Detroit, Michigan to talk about the Red Wing success in Stanley Cup ice hockey where Z (from Njurunda) is playing. Krister just bought a new Ethanol car. Rolf has his own old farm and use wood for fuel. Leif L lives in a big house by the same lake he use for heating. And Leif T stays all summer on his small island outside Alnö fishing salmon and herring while watching the seals. Low emission!



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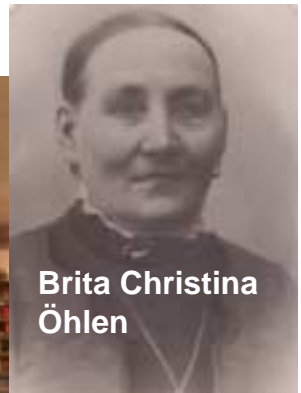
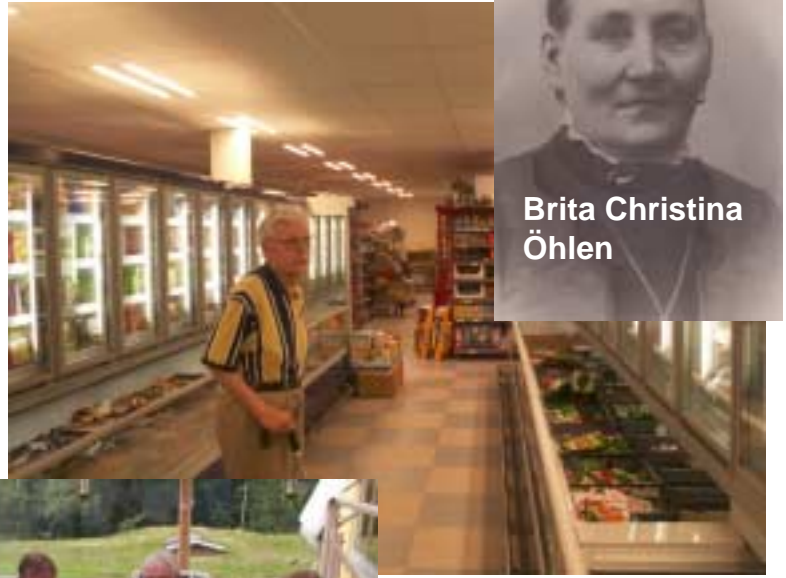
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July 28

Today we celebrated Anton Öhlens 87th birthday. He visited his old grocery store now being expanded by the new owner. Anton's father Jakob Alfred Öhlen started his first store 1899 and Anton took over that store together with his wife Annemari 1949 – the same year as I (Carl) was born. So we got together at the old Öhlen family farm in Östanå to eat "surströmming". Anton's and many other's favorite dish ...if you are from Sundsvall. Surströmming is made of herring from the nearby Baltic sea outside Sundsvall. It is fermented for one year (like wine) . It smells horrible but taste delicious. You eat surströmming with potatoes, hard bread and cheese – all made locally. Nothing needs to be imported from a far distance. It is healthy and sustainable food – but now the herring is also disappearing because of the pollution of the Baltic sea.



Anton with the new ICA store owner



Brita Christina Öhlen



Anton with the Öhlen relatives Gulli, Mari and Bertil. All including Carl are great grand children to Brita Christina born 1833.



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In Brazil

While I was enjoying myself in Sundsvall, Noemia was enjoying herself in Brazil visiting Santos. There she met the same friends she is communicating with via Skype when she is in Sweden. And she was enjoying the Brazilian food with all it's tropical fruits, sea food, meet, rice and beans. My car run on ethanol from Brazil. And now Brazil has discovered it's largest oil field ever in Santos. Brazil has everything. It's people is a mix of black, white, red and yellow. The Brazilian samba and music is the same mix between continents. And Brazil is home of the Amazon rain forest. But Brazil has very rich and very poor people. Every day hundreds of families from the poor country side, most of them black are entering the big metropolitan areas in Sao Paulo, Santos, Rio, Recife. The Brazilian president Lula is considered to be "left" and he comes from a poor background. But also he has to play the same game as all other in our uniformed global economy. Together with India and China he is trying to become a strong force in the WTO (World Trade Organization) negotiating with US, EU and Japan. He has also taken the initiative to limit the deforestation of the rain forest. So yes – Brazil is progressing – but still in the same direction as our developed world with increased consumption, urbanization and pollution.



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Happy birthday Alice on August 2nd

My grand daughter Alice celebrated her first birthday last Saturday and also taking her first steps on two legs. The day after Noemia and I went to The Swedish Museum of National History in Stockholm. They have the exhibition “The Human Journey” describing how Alice ancestors took their first steps in Africa more than 2 million years ago and then evolved as Homo Ergaster and Homo Erectus to spread through Asia and later as the Neanderthal populate Europe. Our present species Homo Sapiens emerged in Africa around 200 000 years ago and it took 100 000 years before we left Africa to populate the world. Today we are 6.4 billion people living everywhere it is possible. The museum also had two other exhibitions- “4.5 Billion Years – The history of Earth and Life” and “Mission Climate Earth”. So if we live this history in 24 hours homo sapiens appeared 4 seconds to midnight, our civilization was born 86 milliseconds to midnight and we have managed to endanger our only earth and common future in 60 years or ONE MILLISECOND. This is the world we are handing over to Alice and her children.



Alice 1 year with dad Per, mum Kristina grandmother Ambi and brother Valter grandfather



Kristina 1 year with grandfather John Rudström (born 1912) who is Alice great grand father and Hilda Beata Rudström (1884-1978) who is Alice great – great grand mother



4 generations with Alice, mum Kristina grand mother Ambi, great grand mother Birgit (Born 1925) + fifth generation Hilda Beata to the right

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Everything has a season

Noemia just came back from her business trip around South America. Her native country Brazil is another fantastic country with a wonderful Nature. Everything grows everywhere. Brazil has so many exotic fruits and although you can buy some of them here they are not the same after a long transportation. "Everything has a season" and "Everything has a home". I read in the book of Stefan Edman the example of a continental breakfast with orange juice from Florida, apples from New Zealand, bread from Germany and cheese from Denmark has traveled 36000 km and needed 5.8 kWh energy per kilo. This is a big change from just a few years ago when we ate what came from where we lived. We can now buy and eat anything from anywhere and anytime. How utterly boring - and polluting. But since Noemia came from Brazil she filled her suitcase with papaya, mango, manioca, lime, silver bananas etc so we really could have a Brazilian fruit party. Mmmmmmm. But we would never buy the same fruit here and why should we when we have wild berries, straw berries, various fruit and my home grown vegetables. And now the mushroom season is here. Noemia and I went out for half an hour and picked a meal with chantarelles.

Both Brazil and Sweden are very low CO₂ emitting compared with USA and other high emitting countries. Still we could both reduce further. But like USA we are now increasing emission by copying the American life style. Sao Paulo is a new Los Angeles traffic jam. Brazil is one of the largest producer of meat. Now there is a dispute on meat trade. EU does not allow import from Brazil. Korea does not allow import from USA. But we do not discuss meat consumption as such. The latest news is that the WTO free trade talks have failed. And that the stock market has decreased 0.1% or was it up 0.1%. Who cares? But who cares about Gaia and our common future?

