



Rotary International

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A color photograph of an elderly couple, Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar and his wife Monica, smiling and looking at each other. Carl-Wilhelm is on the left, wearing glasses and a white button-down shirt. Monica is on the right, wearing a patterned scarf and a light-colored top. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with trees.

MEET ROTARY'S NEW PRESIDENT

At home in Sweden with
Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar
and his wife, Monica

AFTER THE STORM

Tsunami relief in Thailand

RING IN ROTARY'S NEW CENTURY

A roundup of
centennial celebrations

M E E T

Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar

BY JULIE A. JACOB

Rotary's new president from Sweden is ready to take on a second century of service.

Rotary International President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar believes that anything worth doing is worth doing with complete commitment.

In fact, when it comes to Rotary, Stenhammar will give the shirt off his back to help. Literally.

Carolyn E. Jones, appointed by Stenhammar as the first female trustee of The Rotary Foundation of RI, recalls his contribution during a visit as the president's representative to the District 5010 (Canada, Russia, United States) conference in 1998. The district was just short of its Rotary Foundation donation goal, so the district representatives decided to hold an impromptu auction at its banquet to raise the remaining funds. Stenhammar promptly offered his shirt for the event. The elegant, handmade Italian dress shirt fetched US\$1,500.

That dedication and willingness to help his fellow Rotarians isn't surprising

to those who know him. Stenhammar's friends describe him as a man deeply dedicated to Rotary, a true friend, a cultured man and an avid outdoorsman, a man of kindness and humor, a decisive leader, a man committed to doing what he believes is right, a person who does what it takes to get the job done.

"He is generous, he is playful . . . on a more serious side, he has an ability to communicate and listen and relate to people from other countries, places and cultures," says Jones.

During an interview at Rotary World Headquarters, Stenhammar talked about what drew him to Rotary and his plans for his presidential year.

Stenhammar was dressed in a blue shirt and yellow tie, the colors he has chosen for the 2005-06 Rotary year. He has the lightly tanned face and trim build of a sports enthusiast. He is courteous, gracious and soft-spoken, and articulates his ideas with clarity and precision. Even in a wide-ranging discussion he rarely needs to pause to collect his thoughts. He occasionally emphasizes a point by tapping his fingers on the table or steeping his fingers together. He exudes energy and confidence.

Stenhammar says his reason for joining Rotary was simple: It offered a way to give to others some of the same opportunities in life that he has enjoyed.

"I've always had food on the table, my whole education was paid for, I have never suffered anything, and I thought this maybe was an opportunity to give back," says Stenhammar.



Carl-Wilhelm at 18 months old

Carl-Wilhelm and Monica, married for 43 years, stand on a bridge near the Royal Palace in Stockholm.

THE STENHAMMARS SHARE A LOVE OF THE OUTDOORS, INCLUDING NAVIGATING THEIR 34-FOOT SAILBOAT, BIKING, CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING, AND WALKING. THEY SPLIT THEIR TIME BETWEEN A CONDO IN GÖTEBORG AND A SUMMER COTTAGE ALONG SWEDEN'S WEST COAST.

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Even as a child, Stenhammar wanted to help others. His mother was Norwegian, and during World War II he remembers helping his family to collect clothes and goods to send to his mother's family in Norway.

Stenhammar was born in Göteborg, Sweden, in 1935, and raised in the port city, Sweden's second largest, on the country's west coast. His father, who owned a prosperous food brokerage business, was also a Rotarian for many years. “He came home and talked about Rotary, but I didn't pay much attention to it. I was young,” says Stenhammar.

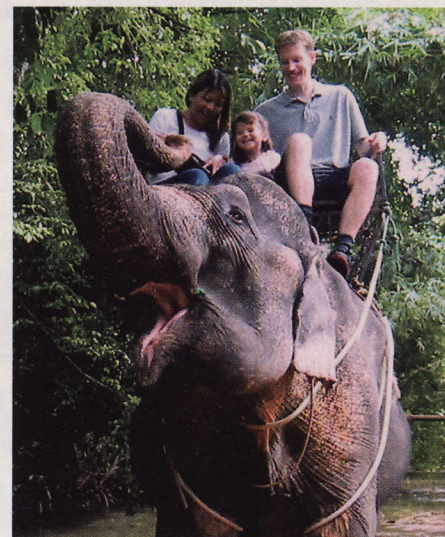
It would be another 30 years before Stenhammar reconnected with Rotary. During those years he completed college and built a successful career with his family's business.

He had originally planned to become an architect, he says, but quickly realized that a career focused on bricks and blueprints did not interest him. He was more drawn to the dynamic, inter-personal field of business. His father invited him to join the family food brokerage business, Gust F. Bratt AB.

On his first assignment, he was sent to Fresno, Calif., USA, during 1957 to work for various food companies so he could gain firsthand experience in U.S. business operations. The year abroad gave him a valuable education in learning about the corporate world and living in a new land and culture. Stenhammar became friends with another young Swede, and he fondly recalls their adventures in exploring California. “We were tourists almost every weekend,” Stenhammar says.

After his year in California, Stenhammar returned to Sweden, where he worked in sales at Bratt for 12 years before buying the company in 1972. His sales experience gave him the chance to network with people all over Sweden – including Rotarians. “It's fun to go out and talk to Rotarians about what we do because we have a tremendous product,” says Stenhammar. “To be able to sell to them management ideas, it is just wonderful to do that. To sell quality is not that difficult.”

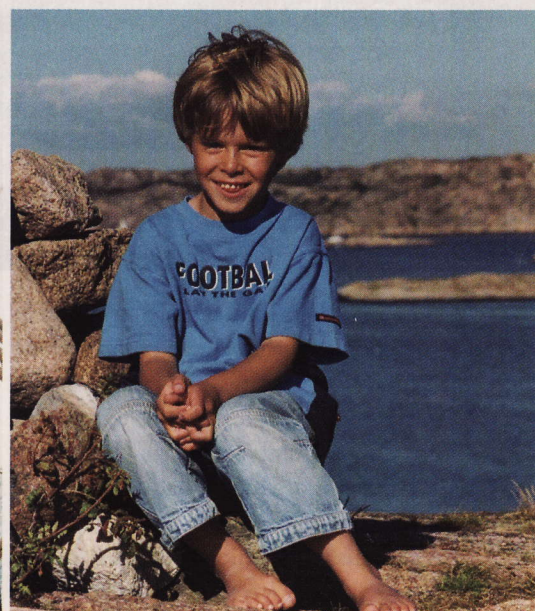
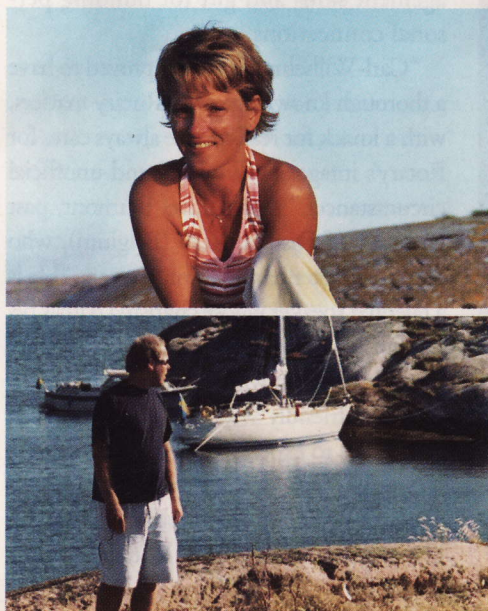
A few years after Stenhammar returned to Sweden, he met and married his wife of 43 years, Monica. His wife, who gained a keen interest in nature from her



Granddaughter Sophia in Thailand with her parents, Ning and Christian Stenhammar.

veterinarian father, is retired from her career as a physical therapist, specializing in orthopedics and sports medicine. She was very active in the World Wide Fund for Nature (which is also known as WWF and uses a distinctive panda-bear logo). Together they enjoy sailing the west coast of Sweden in their 34-foot sailboat, biking, cross-country skiing and walking. The couple have two grown sons and three grandchildren.

Top to bottom, then left to right: daughter-in-law Åsa, son Per-Ulrik, grandsons Theodor and Valdemar.



HITTING THE HIGH NOTES

In the world of Rotary, Stenhammar means President Carl-Wilhelm, but in the world of music, Stenhammar means composer Wilhelm Stenhammar.

President Stenhammar's grandfather is one of Sweden's most noted composers. Born 7 February 1871, Wilhelm Stenhammar was a pianist, conductor and composer who wrote piano concertos, piano sonatas, symphonies, operas and songs. Among his works are the opera *Tirfing*, the cantata *Ett Folk*, and *Symphony 2 in G minor*. Wilhelm Stenhammar also served as conductor of both the Göteborg Orchestra and the Stockholm Philharmonic Society.

Wilhelm Stenhammar died of a stroke on 20 November 1927 at age 56. According to classical music Web sites, Wilhelm Stenhammar is considered Sweden's foremost composer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and among the three most famous Nordic composers of that era.

Although President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar was born after his grandfather's death, music and art were still an important part of his

childhood. Göteborg, a city of 460,000, has a vibrant arts tradition, an opera house, and a concert hall.



Wilhelm Stenhammar, famous composer.

"I grew up in a cultured family," recalls Stenhammar. He remembers his parents often inviting musicians and artists for dinner at their house.

President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar inherited his grandfather's love of music. He sang as a second bass in a Swedish men's choir for 20 years. During that time, the choir traveled throughout Europe giving performances. He

had to bow out of the choir when his Rotary and business obligations made it too difficult to continue to attend rehearsals and travel.

President Carl-Wilhelm and his wife enjoy attending the opera and concerts in Göteborg. The city built a stunning modern opera hall in 1994. Stenhammar and Monica have season tickets there.

"It looks like an old warehouse, and it's located where we have old warehouses," says Stenhammar. "It's very nice."

Stenhammar is an opera buff who particularly enjoys Italian opera. When he is traveling, he tries to squeeze in as many operas as possible. During a recent six-week trip to the United States and Australia, he attended operas at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Lyric Opera in Chicago, and the Sydney Opera House in Australia – a few rare moments of relaxation during Stenhammar's busy year. – J.A.J.

"I have a tendency not to just sit back," says Stenhammar. "I like to be active."

He took on the task of sorting through 15 years of club records and archives, in which he discovered a two-minute silent film. The montage was directed by Victor Hasselblad – famous for his cameras – documenting Paul Harris' visit to the club back in the 1930s. Stenhammar arranged to have the film transferred to videotape and donated to Rotary headquarters.

Stenhammar applied that same sense of energy and purpose to all of the positions he has held in his 31-year career at Rotary. These include club president, district governor, chair of the Sweden Rotary Youth Exchange Foundation, PolioPlus national advocacy adviser, chair of the Rotary International Youth Service Committee, and Rotary International director.

In his role as PolioPlus national advocacy adviser, Stenhammar tirelessly worked on behalf of The Rotary Foundation to secure a donation for the program from the Swedish government. After five years of patient effort, the Swedish government donated US\$30 million in December 2004 to PolioPlus. "That teaches us never to give up," he says simply.

Rotarians who have served with Stenhammar speak highly of his management skills and gift for building personal connections.

"Carl-Wilhelm has always proved to have a thorough knowledge of all Rotary matters, with a knack for realism. He always cares for Rotary's image in all official and unofficial circumstances," says Michel Dumont, past governor of District 1620 (Belgium), who has known Stenhammar for 20 years. "He is a talented speaker whose charisma equals his human and leadership qualities. He is an easygoing person with a talent for listening. He has a friendly word for everyone, from youngsters to experienced Rotarians."

Stenhammar has an impressive list of goals that he hopes to achieve during his presidency: expand Rotary's Youth

They split their time between a condo in Göteborg and a summer cottage along Sweden's west coast.

It was the couple's love of tennis that introduced Stenhammar to Rotary in 1974. He and Monica had purchased a house outside of Göteborg located next to a tennis club, which they soon joined.

The club's chairman, a member of the same Rotary club that Stenhammar's father had been president of 30 years earlier, invited Stenhammar to become a Rotarian.

Stenhammar immediately became involved in the club's projects. Within a year, he was elected secretary.

"I'm sending the message that there is a place for women in Rotary," says Stenhammar. "I see this as a short-term investment for a long-term profit."

Exchange program, boost membership by at least one net member per club, raise public awareness of Rotary, increase the involvement of women and younger Rotarians, and invite Cuba back into the Rotary family.

He has already put his stamp on Rotary's future leadership by appointing women to chair the Literary Resource Group, the new Public Image Resource Group, and the Membership Development and Retention Committee. He has also broken ground by appointing Jones as the first female trustee of The Rotary Foundation. He hopes these actions, combined with a call to clubs and districts to elect women as presidents and district governors, will pave the way for a future female RI president and boost the percentage of female Rotarians.

As a retired business owner, Stenhammar views these appointments as simply good business for Rotary.

"I'm sending the message that there is a place for women in Rotary," says Stenhammar. "I see this as a short-term investment for a long-term profit."

He mentions with pride the Rotaract Club of Göteborg, whose male-female membership is split exactly in half. "We

hope to get all of them involved in the club, that's our big plan," says Stenhammar, who is an advocate of inviting younger people to join, noting that Paul Harris was only 36 when he founded Rotary.

"What Carl-Wilhelm realizes is that before a zone nominating committee nominates someone, they have to have a track record," says Jones. "He's giving some qualified women a chance to have something to put on their applications, should they apply to be Rotary directors."

Stenhammar is also passionate about another goal – to increase the number of Youth Exchange students so that more young people can enjoy the same opportunity he had of exploring a new culture and country. If every club sponsored a Youth Exchange student, he said, Rotary could quadruple the number of exchanges from the current 8,000 to 32,000. He acknowledges that smaller clubs may not be able to afford to sponsor a Youth Exchange, but he says that larger clubs could compensate by sponsoring more than one student.

Stenhammar also hopes to achieve his dream of bringing Cuba back into the Rotary fold. A committee met in April to

discuss the possibility, and RI has received a statement of support from the U.S. State Department. He also hopes that one day soon China will join the Rotary world.

"I would like to see the whole world [be a part of Rotary]," says Stenhammar. As for now, he says, "We have 168 countries and I would like to see them all."

He will also encourage clubs to participate in water projects, which he has merged into the health and hunger resource group. He combined water with the other two because he believes clean water is inextricably linked with hunger and health. Clean water is essential for survival, sanitation, and cooking, he notes, and polluted water threatens millions of people.

Stenhammar's goals for Rotary are ambitious, and he stresses that the organization can't achieve its goals on its own. That's why cooperation, along with continuity, are core elements of his presidency. He envisions Rotary teaming up with other organizations on water and youth exchange programs.

"There are over 100 countries and organizations that work toward the same thing, clean water for everyone," says Stenhammar. "By joining forces we

Stenhammar moderates at the 2002 European Institute in Salzburg (left) and talks with Trustee Carolyn E. Jones.

