

SPOTLIGHT ON YERKER JOHAN OLOF ANDERSSON

Yerker has lived in the USA since 1955. However, he was born in 1929 (not a typo) in Sweden, where he attended Manillaskolan Elementary School for the Deaf in Stockholm from 1937 to 1945. He agreed to be in the ICF Spotlight because he wants to encourage young individuals with disabilities to make a career in health sciences. We are all envious of Yerker because he is holding up so well for his tender age of 74. Longevity runs in his family...his maternal grandmother lived to 99, his father lived to 94, and his father's sister lived to 96. This is excellent news for the ICF, since Yerker still has another 25 years left to get the ICF message out! Yerker reports that neither he nor his younger brother has children. In Sweden, he estimates that one million people have the last name of Andersson. Yerker's brother is also deaf and still lives in Sweden. Yerker reports that his parents were surprised that he and his brother were deaf at birth and could not recall that there was any deaf relative in their family history. His father was a superintendent of four public schools his mother was also a teacher. He is the fourth generation teacher. His brother speaks in Swedish Sign Language and his wife speaks in American Sign Language, so Yerker has to interpret for both when they get together. Yerker's wife Ann Marie is a New Jersey native who graduated with BA in Art from Gallaudet College (now University) in 1958--this is where they met. Yerker's hobbies are stamp collecting (Swedish stamps and deafness-related stamps); woodworking; reading, and cooking. His professional background is as interesting as his personal history.

Yerker earned an M.A. degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Columbia University in 1962 and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Maryland in 1981. He had a distinguished career with Gallaudet University from 1964 to 1996, when he retired as Chairperson of the Deaf Studies Department. Since retiring seven years ago, he has: chaired the Nippon World Deaf Leadership Committee; served on the Institutional Review Board of Gallaudet University; been selected by President Clinton to serve on the National Council on Disability; served on the International Advisory Editorial Board for the Encyclopedia of Disability by Sage Publications; and participated actively in the DISTAB group of the National Center for Health Statistics. Dr. Andersson can read six languages (English, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, French, and German) and his is fluent in American Sign Language, Swedish Sign Language, and Gestuno (International Sign Language). Dr. Andersson also knows the "ICF language" quite well, which makes an even ten languages in which he is fluent.