



## u.s. masters international track team

November, 1977

### NOTES ON A TRIP TO SWEDEN

By Rose Higdon

(Among our hosts on the trip to the world championships were Hal and Rose Higdon, who served as our contact for those tour members staying at the Hotel Rubinen in Gothenburg. A lengthy description of the meet by Hal will appear in the November Runner's World, but we asked his lovely wife Rose to give us her version.)

Perhaps one of my most vivid memories of the Swedish trip were the American cars - - Chevies, Plymouths, and even one old Ford hearse - - cruising slowly up the main street in front of our hotel nearly every evening. They would pause in the plaza before the art museum, talk, cruise, stop at the other end of the street near the river bridge, drink beer, cruise some more, gun engines, spin wheels, back and forth each night. It was like a scene out of "American Graffiti." We really thought we had uncovered something, but on returning home discovered an article on them in Time.

And the American names on shirts and sweaters, particularly UCLA. The first time we saw a Swedish girl wearing a UCLA sweater, we actually thought she went there. UCLA on shirts we could understand, but California State Sacramento? And University of Illinois Circle Campus? But the ultimate were the children's shirts that said: "Green Bay Baseball."

Everyone wore denim and a popular color scheme was white and black. Many more women went braless than do in the States (where bralessness apparently has seen its peak). My husband took a survey and insisted that a higher percentage of Swedish women went braless on weekends instead of during the week.

The trams were fun, particularly since we took one each day to the stadium and back. We had passes entitling us to free street car rides (among other advantages), but never were asked to show them, never saw any of the local population pay or show passes, and never asked to find out why. Riding the trams made us feel part of the community since we rode accompanied by the people of Gothenburg - - and Canadians, and English, and Germans, and everybody else in Sweden for the meet.

Our passes also got us into Liseburg, a Swedish Disneyland, reportedly the largest amusement park in Scandinavia. We had a special entertainment for all world masters competitors one night and on another a party for American tour members, featuring a smorgasbord. Unfortunately, nobody explained to our group how Swedes go through a smorgasbord line, taking small platefuls and returning many times. One of our Swedish hosts was horrified to see us overloading our plates and (horror of horrors) even eating at the table. "They don't understand the system," one Swede told my husband. "Tell them they're doing it wrong".

Hal replied to him: "You tell them."

That was one of our few encounters with Swedish food, since downtown Gothenburg seemed to be overflowing with Italian and Chinese restaurants. This seemed to be fine with

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### SHOWDOWN AT GOTEBOG - - EPILOGUE

BY AL SHEAHEN

The euphoria felt as 3000 athletes from 45 nations participated in the 2nd World Masters Track and Field Championships in Goteborg, Sweden was somewhat tempered by political intrigue and secrecy that would make even the CIA blush.

After the political dust had settled, you had the feeling you had just slid down a licorice stick onto a bed of marshmallows. It was an interesting experience, but you felt a little strange bouncing around there on your behind.

On a scale of ten, the movement to open Masters competition to anyone-over-age-40 got a six. As an analogy, it was Raymond Massey, not Abraham Lincoln. Gene Bartow, not John Wooden. Forty-ninth street, not Park Avenue.

If it was a race, you felt you got second. An exam? You got B-minus. A kiss? You got it on the cheek.

On the plus side:

1) The International Masters Committee approved a Constitution including that: "Masters competition shall be open to all individuals 40 and over. No competitor shall be barred from competition due to race, religion, ethnic background, professional or national origin."

2) The near-unanimous sentiment among participants from all nations was that anyone over 40 should be allowed to compete, regardless.

3) The President of the IAAF was favorably disposed to let the Masters program do what it wants, while still remaining within the scope of the IAAF.

On the minus side:

1) If an international Masters meet were to be held tomorrow, South Africans, professionals, and others would officially be barred from competition, because the IAAF rules have not been changed, and the leaders of the Masters movement want to stay under the aegis of the IAAF.

2) There is virtually no chance that the IAAF will permit South Africans to compete in international meets in the near future.

3) There is only a slight chance that the IAAF will allow ex-professionals, age 40-49, to compete in the near future.

So what we have is a political maze that would puzzle Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman. The International Masters Committee FAVORS open competition, but ONLY within the framework of the IAAF, which OPPOSES open competition.

You figure it out. It's a neat trick if you can do it. Houdini would have trouble pulling it off.

Nevertheless, Don Farquharson and Bob Fine convinced nearly everyone that the IAAF would either:

A) change its rules for Masters so that everyone over 40 could compete, or

B) look the other way and not interfere.

The trouble with A is that it probably won't happen, and the trouble with B is that it's hypocritical and childish. For a

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