



Bethlehem resident Ann Oswald was featured in Sweden’s largest newspaper as they announced the 2017 cast of ‘Everything for Sweden,’ a highly popular reality TV show.

Everything for Sweden: Ann Oswald

Ann Oswald lives in a beautiful home overlooking Lake Hickory and all her neighbors there think she is just pretty darn wonderful. But in Sweden she is no less than a star! You see, Ann was a part of a TV show there that won a 2016 International Emmy Award for Best Non-Scripted Entertainment from the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and the 2017 Kristallen Award for ‘Docusoap’ of the Year.

A Swedish reality show, ‘Allt för Sverige’ translates as ‘Everything for Sweden.’ It is marketed in the United States as ‘The Great Swedish Adventure.’ The series is about Swedish-Americans who are searching for their Swedish roots. Each participant is given snippets of information about their family, but each week, they must compete in games, and one person must leave the show, thus not learning all the show’s genealogists have uncovered about their family.

Layne: How long have you lived in Bethlehem?

Ann: Since 2006. I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota with all the other Swedes up there! (Laughter). But when I was still a baby we moved to Jacksonville, Florida. So, I grew up there. Then I lived in different places in Florida, and then lived up in Delaware for six years. The company my husband created got sold and he said, ‘Let’s go back south, but let’s not go all the way to Florida.’ So, we chose North Carolina and settled here. The weather is perfect!

Layne: I think it is perfect too. But tell us about this TV show you were in. Ann: This show is done by the public television network in Sweden which is SVT. It’s got to be educational. It teaches the Swedish people about their history and

their country. They take 10 Swedish-Americans who have been separated from their families. Their family’s looking for them, they’ve been looking for their family. The grand prize at the end of six weeks is, whoever wins, gets to have their family history and a big family reunion.

Ten of us start. We do different experiences that not even people who live there get to do. We got to do the most amazing things and I can’t tell what they are because they would be spoilers. But an average person wouldn’t be able to do the things that they let us do. That’s all I can tell you. We stayed in people’s homes. We stayed in places you can’t rent. It was amazing! At the end of each episode, they have a game. It’s a good game. Everybody loves each other, it’s all family, it’s all wholesome. So, we go around the country, we experience a lot of fun stuff. Then we play a game, and somebody goes home. And then you cry because you miss that person so badly. We stayed in houses where there was only one bathroom and there were 10 of us! You get to know each other. But, it was an amazing adventure. You go all over the country. They take you to places where somebody in the group’s family is from. And sometimes you stay in their house. That was really interesting too.

Layne: I understand you are quite the celebrity in Sweden now!

Ann: (Laughter). Yes, people would see us and say ‘Oh! You’re the All for Sweden people!’ and give us tours of places other people weren’t allowed to normally go. I was in a hotel lobby and a guy came up to me and said, ‘Excuse me. Are you Ann?’ We were already featured in the largest newspaper in the country. So, the first few days that we were there, they announced who was in the show. So,

we were on the front of the newspaper, and a whole page inside. And I’m the interview at the top. People recognized us. We couldn’t go anywhere after this because everybody had us pegged. It was kind of fun because you were like a rock star, but then you go home, and nobody knows you! (Laughter). Layne: Tell us about this song ‘Mors Lilla Ole’ that I’ve been hearing about. Ann: This song was about

one of my relatives! ‘Mors Lilla Olle’ means ‘Mother’s Little Olle.’ It’s the ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb’ of Sweden. Everybody knows that song! It’s about a little boy who was a year-and-a-half, picking blueberries, when a mother bear came up with her two cubs. And he started feeding the blueberries to the cubs! And he patted on the mother bear! And the mother bear didn’t do anything! His older sister saw this and ran and got Mom. The bears ran off then when they saw his Mom coming. The story made the newspapers, then it made a poem, and then it made a song. And now, every child in Sweden sings that song! When people found out it was about a relative of mine, they would get so excited and do such nice things for us!

Layne: And how did you first find out about the show and become part of it? Ann: My husband was adopted, and he started looking for his parents. He was really into genealogy. We would interview my

grandparents, do our family trees and all that. We did the DNA tests. We also did DNA tests on my Mom and Dad, knowing that they were both Swedish. We found out that I was completely Scandinavian. So I joined a Swedish-American genealogy group, and they announced this show. I watched two episodes and it was like, ‘Oh my goodness! This is so exciting!’

And so, I talked to my husband about it and he said, ‘We’re going to Sweden next summer! I want you to start connecting with these cousins that the DNA test is giving you. Let’s find the family.’ And then my husband unexpectedly died. He died August 28th, 2014. It was a one-day thing. Blood clots. It just blew me out of the water. And I’m still trying to recover. My neighbors are taking care of me so well.

And December comes, and they post on the group that they’re taking applications for the show. I thought, ‘I can’t do that.’ I was still crying all the time. But it nagged at me so badly. I couldn’t sleep at night. I would wake up at night and think ‘Ann, you have to apply for this television show!’

I finally gave up and sent an application in on the computer on a Sunday night. Monday morning there were emails! ‘We want videos.’ Tuesday morning the phone was ringing. ‘Hello, this is Morica from Sweden and I want to talk to you!’

And then it was a roller-coaster! They flew me up to New York for an audition. They didn’t take me in 2015. They called me back in 2016, but didn’t take me then either. They called me back this year and they said, ‘Okay Ann, you were in the first time you came up, but you weren’t the right flower for the flower pot at the time. We get 10 different personalities, five guys, five women. But this year, you know what, we’re going to put Ann as the first flower and arrange all the other flowers around her.’ So, I was in!

Layne: What was the most rewarding part of your experience?

Ann: It’s going to be a spoiler, but I’m going to go ahead and say it anyway. My husband and I were bonded, high school sweethearts, but the other person in my life was my father. I go to Sweden and at the beginning of episode two, that morning,

they told me my dad had gone into hospice. From that time forward, I am a basket case. I’m crying all the time. My dad simply insisted that I stay there. He said, ‘Ann, you’ve got a mission.’ Because it was his mother that they chose to feature. They were unearthing stories that we never knew.

They had left my grandmother’s 8-year-old sister behind when they came to the United States.

me, I went, ‘Oh, that’s Grandma!’ But it was her lost sister Elna! I found out so much information! I connected with relatives there and we are still connected. The most rewarding part was that I got to tell all this to my Dad before he died. He died while I was over there. It was so hard. But I made it home for his funeral. But it was the most amazing thing to be able to unfold these mysteries about our family for my dad. Of all my many Swedish ancestors, they chose my Dad’s mother to research! I think that’s why he insisted that I stay and do the show, so that he could know these things before he died. It meant so much for me to be able to share that with him. It was kind of like having the best time of your life and the worst at the same time.

You can watch Ann’s TV appearances at www.sverigeinfo.eu/alltforsverige/index and connect with her on Facebook at ‘Ann Oswald - Allt för Sverige’

And so, my grandmother had never seen her sister. Never knew what happened to her. And when I had my ‘Special Day’ on the show and learned things. The first picture that they showed

Ann poses with cannons in the courtyard of medieval Griphsholm Castle in Sweden. One of the many places she visited as a participant in the reality TV show ‘Everything for Sweden.’



Ann with her fellow cast members and the show’s host.



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