

In Memoriam

Gunnar Liden 1918–2003



Upon first meeting Gunnar Liden, one would see a serious, reserved Swede but soon learn he was a jovial guy with a great sense of humor who loved a good party. Although one of the last to leave a convention party, you would always find him on the front row of the first paper to be delivered the next morning, because of a genuine commitment to audiology. He was an avid alpine and cross-country skier, a dedicated fisherman, and a pretty decent piano player. He loved a good laugh.

Gunnar passed away December 29, 2003, following a short illness. He had retired to his childhood community of Sparsor, Sweden, in 1982 but remained active professionally in private practice and consulting until just a few years ago.

Gunnar started his career as a pediatrician in the late 1940s but soon abandoned it for otology because, as he claimed, "I did not like the smell of dirty diapers." In 1950, he attended the first International Course in Audiology in Stockholm. It was then that he developed an interest in audiology that led to a lifetime commitment to our field. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in audiology at the Karolinska Institute and was soon appointed director of the Department of Oto-Audiology (later changed to the Department of Audiology) at Sahlgrenska Hospital in 1954. Gunnar was the only staff member at the time, but within a few years it grew to become the largest audiology clinic in Scandinavia. Ultimately, he also became Professor of Audiology at the University of Gothenburg Medical School.

Gunnar had a profound influence on the development of audiology in Scandinavia and was an important link between American and

Scandinavian audiology. He served on many committees and boards in Europe and the United States. Gunnar was a popular figure in the United States, publishing in our journals, lecturing and presenting papers at our conventions and meetings. He was the first to introduce speech audiometry to Sweden in the mid-1950s. Gunnar was one of the early pioneers of impedance measurements, having published on the significance of the stapedial reflex for the understanding of speech in 1963. He also published the first article on the clinical application of tympanometry to appear in the American literature in 1970. Within the next four years, he published 10 more articles on the subject.

Gunnar held two visiting professorships in the United States: one, as a colleague of Raymond Carhart and Earl Harford, at Northwestern University from 1963 to 1965 where he researched acoustic reflex measurements and tympanometry; the other was at the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1982–84, again as a colleague of Earl Harford, where he researched real ear measurements and the bone anchored hearing aid (BAHA). He was chosen to present the Carhart Memorial Lecture at the annual meeting of the American Auditory Society in 1984.

He is survived by his wife, Nina, a daughter, three grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. All those who had the good fortune to know Gunnar Liden will remember him as an energetic, good-natured man with a marvelous sense of humor. We will miss him.

Earl Harford