

THE COUNTY CHRONICLER

Polk County Historical Society

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Swedes, Norwegians, Danes... Americans

In Swedish author Wilhelm Moberg's great immigrant saga, as Karl Oskar faces forward toward his new land, his wife, Kristina, looks back over her shoulder at her old home in the old country. A hundred and fifty years later, as we look at our land and the land of our ancestors, what do we see? Can we go home again? Is that "old country" still there, or is it changed beyond all our parents' and grandparents' recognition? Are there immigrant strengths and risk-taking genes we have inherited? Carolyn Wedin will speak at our August 26th meeting. Through poems, stories, and photos, she will look at connections with the past and the present, the American Upper Midwest and Scandinavia.

Wedin taught at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for more than thirty years before teaching at the University of Lind in Sweden. She recently relocated to Frederic, Wisconsin, where she hopes to expand humanities consciousness in the rural areas of the state.



**August 26
7 p.m.
Center Building
6 p.m. Board**



**Willis Dwayne Erickson
1928 - 2003**

Polk County 150th Anniversary ~Expo Center~

- 9:30 Interstate Band**
- 10:00 Opening Ceremony**
- Tribute to Willis Erickson**
- Speakers – David Obey, Mark Pettis,
Harvey Stower, Sheila Harsdorf, Darrell
Kittleson**
- Art Barn Choir**
- 10:45 Wisconsin Veterans Museum**
- 11:00 Festival Theater skits**
- 11:30 Indianhead Chorus**
- 12:30 Cloggers**
- 1:30 Music – Larry Lee Philips**
- 2:00 Entertainer – Leona Cummings**
- 3:00 Community Choir**
- 4:00 Rover Valley Brass**

Willis Dwayne Erickson

Willis Dwayne Erickson, Balsam Lake, died Tuesday, July 29, 2003. He was 74 years old.

Willis was born August 17, 1928, in Maiden Rock. He was the first-born child of Paul and Ruth (Nelson) Erickson. Willis grew up in the Lund area and was baptized and confirmed from the Lund Mission Covenant Church in Stockholm. He attended the number 16 Grade School in Lund, and graduated from Maiden Rick High School in 1946. Upon graduating, Willis enrolled and attended college in River Falls. It was there where he met Elaine Lanore Severson, who would later become his wife. After graduating from college, Willis took a job teaching high school for four years in Barron and on June 22, 1951, he was united in marriage to Elaine Severson in Barron County. Willis worked for a year as assistant agriculture agent in Barron County before taking the position as Polk County Agriculture Agent, a job that he would keep for 31 years. It was also upon taking the job as Polk County Extension Agent that he and Elaine moved to Balsam Lake, the place that they have called home since 1955.

Willis is known by many people through the numerous organizations and groups with whom he was involved. He was a devoted Christian who was very active with the United Covenant Church of Clear Lake, lay minister for many local churches, minister partner of Prairieview Covenant Church of New Richmond, President of the Polk County Service Unit of the Salvation Army, a member of the Polk County Jail Ministry Team, and the Amery Camp of the Gideon's International where he was currently serving as chaplain. Willis was the curator of the Polk County Historical Museum and a member of the Polk County and many historical societies, Unity Community Education Council, Polk County Housing Collaborative, Polk County Library Association, Past President of the Polk County Fair Society and a Wisconsin County Fair Judge. He was Professor of Emeritus of the University of Wisconsin, Polk County Forest Administrator, a consultant for the Rice Lakes Park system, member of the Sportsman Club and the Luck Chapter of the Danish Brotherhood. Willis worked on the Balsam Lake Beautification Project, as well as donating his talent as a professional landscaper to many churches, government centers, organizations and individuals. All the groups that Willis has worked with or the people that he has touched in some way are just too numerous to list. He loved his traveling, photography, and spending time with his family. When time allowed, Willis enjoyed gardening, deer hunting, and collecting antiques.

Willis was preceded in death by his father, Paul. He is survived by his wife, Elaine, sons, Bruce and Charles Erickson, daughters, Susan (Bob) Olson, Jane (Dan) Howe, and Jill (Jeff) Priest, 11 grandchildren, mother, Ruth, sister, Pauline (Clinton) Stein, and many other loving relatives and friends.

Funeral services were held 11 a.m. on Saturday August 2, 2003, at the United Covenant Church of Clear Lake, with visitation from 4 to 8 p.m. on Friday at the Williamson Funeral Home in Amery. The Rev. Gary Tonn officiated the service. Margaret Peterson, Jan Stein and Paul Stein provided music. Internment was at the Clear Lake Swedish Congregational Cemetery.