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# SACC Arizona

*Promoting Trade, Commerce and Investment  
between Sweden and Arizona since 1996*

## SACC ARIZONA - FEATURED MEMBER

### LARS LAGERMAN

**Sweden's latest Honorary consul in Arizona is Lars Lagerman. If his name and title sounds familiar, it's because he held the office in between 1995 to 2007. But he's been in Arizona since 1974.**

The young Lars Lagerman was studying in Uppsala, when he got the opportunity to study abroad. He ended up at the Gustavus Adolphus College, Minnesota. The plan was to study, learn some more English and go back to Sweden.



"On my very first day at school I met Susan. She later became my wife and we lived for a few years in Sweden and Spain.

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But Susan wanted to become a lawyer. That was her dream and I followed her to Tucson, AZ, to realize that dream.”

SunAir Awnings 2011

CMS Winemarketing 2011

They both got a degree and Lars Lagerman got involved in commercial and residential real estate as an attorney during the late 70's. He is still with the law firm Bryan Cave where he represents major developers in acquisition and development of land and lenders financing real estate developments.

Through the years he worked on developing land and energy resources both in the US and Mexico.

Phoenix in the 80's was more of a Wild West town with a lot of agricultural businesses in farming, cattle and crops. When the housing market and the bank sector collapsed in the late 80's and early 90's the state of Arizona went into a slump, like most American states.

“During those years the state worked to reinvent its business sector. So when the market came back Phoenix looked more like California.” Lagerman remembers.

It was in these years that Lars Lagerman was involved in starting the Swedish American Chamber of Commerce in Arizona together with Kent Berg, who ran SACC in California. It was also during the 1990s that Lagerman was asked to become honorary consul for Sweden. A position he held for three mandates, 12 years.

“In 1997 our lives were hectic. We had two daughters and my workload was booming when the market came back. So I asked to be relieved. My successor, Mattias Stolpe, held the position for two mandates before his business took too much time.”

What did you say when you got the question to again become honorary consul?

"I said: Never. Not gonna' happen. But I got a call from the Swedish Embassy in Washington... And here we are."

### **Is there a need for SACC Arizona?**

"I think that a lot of nonprofit networks in the US have taken a hit since the heydays of the 1970-80's. Business networking have always been big in the US, but they have moved to other arenas. That is the negative side of it."

"The positive side is that SACC is part of a bigger network with SWEA, Vasa Orden and other organizations. They are all part of the network around Aktiebolaget Sweden (Sweden Inc), as it's sometimes called. SACC is an important part of a bigger whole. "

"I will give a couple of reasons for the need of SACC and other Swedish networks. We have the social aspects with the connection to Swedish traditions and culture. On the business side it's a connection to all good vibes that Sweden gives of: design, longevity, quality. The brand of Sweden. If you're not a member of SACC, you do not have that direct connection to the brand of Sweden. "

### **In five years' time - what will you say about SACC then?**

"I guess it depends on the effort that we put into it during those five years. Swedes are known for their teamwork and it's down to the collective work we put into SACC that will steer the future. The issue that I see is the participation from

Swedish companies on a local level. “

He makes a parallel to SACC in New York that has a bedrock of locally present Swedish companies to build upon.

“That’s a real success story. They have a true market. A market that we in SACC AZ have not yet really tapped into. One reason is that there are not many Swedish companies present in Arizona yet. I think that SACC might need to garner the support from big name Swedish companies to make sure that the Chamber can focus on the networking and helping small and medium sized companies to find business ventures between Arizona and Sweden.

“It’s also important to remember that it is a Swedish-American chamber. So it should be 50/50 participation from Swedish and American companies and individuals. Right now I have a feeling that it’s close to 90 percent Swedish participation. The American companies that wants to get in on the Swedish vibe, they would probably be better off by becoming members in SACC Arizona first.”

### **How did you celebrate your very first Nationaldag in the US?**

“My first Swedish Nationaldagsfirandet was actually the Midsommarfirandet in Minneapolis in 1972 when I first in college at Gustavus Adolphus College. You know, 6th of June did not become a holiday until much later. We didn’t celebrate them,” says Lars Lagerman, Honorary consul of Sweden in Phoenix, Arizona.

## **Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce Arizona Inc.**

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