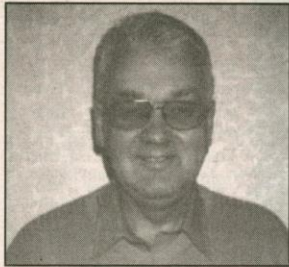


## Christer Brunström | Associate Editor

### Small Town Swedish Local Post



Ramün "Walter" de Paz Rivera grew up in El Salvador during the civil war which broke out in 1980. He joined the leftist forces and in a battle with government troops, he was wounded in his left arm. Ramün lost his mother and three brothers and sisters in the war. Thus he was only too happy to leave El Salvador in 1987 for a new life in Sweden. His first year in Sweden was filled with studies and medical treatments for his wounds. He learned a new language and also took part in various adult education courses.

In 1988 he moved to Lysekil, a small town on the West Coast of Sweden. He married a local girl and now has three children. However, despite all his efforts he was unable to get a regular job.

In 1997 two local posts were started in the neighbouring city of Uddevalla, and they received wide publicity in the local press. Ramün read about the posts and decided to find out more about the running of a local mail service. He went to Uddevalla and what he discovered made him want to start the same kind of local mail service in his new home town of Lysekil.

Also he took part in a course for future entrepreneurs run by the local job agency. In 1998 he felt he was ready to launch his company—Lysekils Lokalpost. Per-

mission to run a local postal service in Lysekil had been obtained from the Posts & Telecommunications Authority. A government agency helped with the necessary financing.

Five red letter boxes had been placed in different parts of the town. Two different postage stamps had been printed for first class and economy mail. They were on sale at a number of tobacconists' and other shops. I remember buying my first Lysekil local post stamps in the town's book shop.

In 2008, the local post celebrated its tenth anniversary. Ramün is known as Walter to the people of Lysekil, and he can be seen delivering mail on a daily basis using his bike. He is a very friendly person reportedly always greeting people with a big smile regardless of the weather (which in winter can often be cold, rainy and windy on Sweden's West Coast).

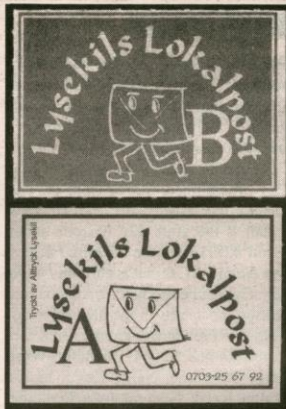
Ramün not only runs the company but he is also its only postman. At times when there are far more mail items than usual, his wife and other family members help out. The local post serves only the town itself (post codes 45300-45385) and not the rural areas or islands. During the month of July, the post closes for annual holidays. Mail is delivered from Monday to Friday. On an average some 250-500 mail items are delivered on a daily basis.

On a typical day Ramün begins his deliveries at 9am, and by 4pm he can usually return home for a siesta. In the evening he empties the mail boxes and sorts the mail for next day's deliveries. On weekends he is busy distributing commercial advertising matter. He also offers a number of other postal services.

The local post is mainly used by the major commercial enterprises in the town. The town council and its various departments also use the local post as does the church. The major client is LEVA, the municipal corporation which provides electricity, water and other utilities. They use the local post to mail out bills to some 4,000 clients. All in all the local post has some 60 local companies as regular clients and they seem quite satisfied with Ramün's mail service.

The major mailers hand in their mail to the local post where it is cancelled. The business mail is generally not franked with stamps. Only mail items from smaller businesses or private individuals are franked with local postage stamps. This kind of mail items are mainly deposited in the red letter boxes.

In the early 1990's, Post Sweden lost its postal monopoly. Especially in 1997-1998 numerous local posts were started. However, they soon discovered that it was difficult to run this kind of postal service profitably. Since 1994 more than 100 services have been started all over



Sweden, but today only some 20 local posts are still in operation.

It seems that local posts serving smaller communities have the biggest chances of being successful. It is of course of paramount importance that they can be relied on to deliver the mail in a dependable way. It appears to me that this is exactly what Ramün de Paz Rivera has been doing in Lysekil for the past ten years. Thanks to Ramün's excellent service record more and more enterprises use his local post.

For mailers the main advantage is of course the lower rates charged by the local post. Currently Post Sweden charges 5.50 kronor for a 20-gramme first-class letter. The local post will deliver the same letter for 4.50 kronor.

So far the Lysekil Lokalpost has released eight different postage stamps. There are basically two different designs which have been printed in different colours. The stamps do not carry any denominations but the letter A is used for first-class mail (SEK 4.50) and B for economy mail (SEK 4.00). A first-class A stamp secures next day delivery from Monday to Friday while a B economy class letter may take two days. (I once mailed a number of covers franked with both A and B stamps and they were all delivered the following day). There is a preferential rate for non-profit organizations. They can mail letters weighing as much as 100 grammes for SEK 4.00

### Catalogue of Lysekils Lokalpost stamps:

#### Issue 1—April 29, 1998

- (3.50) A-post white with text in red
- (3.00) B-post red with white text

#### Issue 2—August 1, 1999

- (3.50) A-post white with text in green
- (3.00) B-post green with white text

#### Issue 3—July 6, 2001

- (3.50) A-Post white with text in blue
- (3.00) B-post blue with white text

#### Issue 4—December 16, 2005

- (4.50) A-post white with text in red

Unlike #1 the design includes a telephone number

#### Issue 5—October 16, 2007

- (4.00) B-post red with white text (with phone number)

Issue 5 was printed in 2005 but not issued until late 2007 as ample supplies of #2 were still available.

The first three issues were released in sheets of ten rouletted stamps. Issues number four and five were printed in sheets of 20. They were all printed by Alltryck, a local printing company. Ramün came up with the idea of the design which was then developed by the late Björn Jönsson with a background in the printing business. Reportedly some 25,000 copies were printed of each value. As far as I know, no major errors or varieties have been reported.

Since 1998 at least some 20 different postmarks have been used to cancel stamps and unstamped mail items. Some have included a date but in recent years most cancels have not been dated.

Over the years I have seen hundreds of Swedish local post covers. They are generally fairly large in size. This is also the case in Lysekil. Shown here is a postcard mailed by a dentist's surgery giving the date and time for an appointment. Finding this kind of postal history is unfortunately not very easy.

Here is finally some basic information about Lysekil. It currently has a population of approximately 7,200 people. In 2003 it celebrated its centenary. It used to be an important fish processing centre but today its economy is more diversified. The town's port has regular connections with the British Isles. In summer, Lysekil is one of the more popular resorts on Sweden's West Coast attracting large numbers of tourists. ■

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