



# Birka Banner

*Birka Lodge, Vasa Order of America*

*January/February, 2017*

## Message from the Chair

Greetings and Happy New Year 2017 to all Birka Members. I hope everyone enjoyed their Christmas holidays and New Year celebrations with family and friends. Now that the holidays are over, it is time to begin our lodge activities for 2017.

Our first lodge meeting will be **Friday, January 27 at 7:30 p.m.** Birka member; Ron Holmgren will present a cultural program, entitled "An Open Letter." Please plan on attending this program. Linda Boylan and her Refreshment Committee will provide the refreshments. Food items left from the Jul Fair Deli Table will be available for purchase from Mike Swanson. The annual report to the District Lodge will also be presented.

The **February 24** meeting will feature a cultural program. More details will follow at the January meeting. Judy Tanzer and her Refreshment Committee will be serving refreshments following the meeting. Please come to enjoy Vasa fellowship and refreshments.

At the **November 18** meeting, the nomination and election of officers was held. A motion was made to accept the slate of officers presented. All nominated officers agreed to serve and the nominations were closed. I would like to thank the officers for being willing to serve and support the lodge. We enjoyed a cultural presentation about Castle Hill in Ipswich by Bob Purzyki. Our thanks go out to Bob.

Our **Christmas Fair on November 26** was a great success! My thanks and appreciation is extended to all who participated and helped both on Saturday and Friday night during the set up. These events cannot happen without the **help** and **cooperation** of everyone. The Christmas Fair is our largest fund raising event of the year, and I'm so very grateful to all of you for coming and being part of the success of this event. Many, many thanks to all. The event is a service to the community, and many non-Scandinavians look forward to the fair every year. Our Treasurer, Mike Swanson, will have a detailed report of the results at the January meeting.

The Lucia procession again this year was wonderful with a great group of children. The children did a superb job and looked adorable as they sang and processed to the stage. Our Lucia was Caralyn Conrad, daughter of Angelina and Bruce Conrad of Ipswich. Her brother Eddy, a star boy, played the piano as the Lucia procession left the stage. Thank you to our soloist, Pamela Morris, for her leadership and singing during the Lucia procession and also to pianist, Helen Greene of Ipswich. I would also like to thank Anders Carlson of Natick, who sang a solo during the program. And thank you to accordionist, Birka member, Warren Johnson, and Bob Landoni, Mark French and Dan Murray, for providing festive holiday music during the fair.

On Sunday afternoon, **January 8**, our annual **Tree Plundering Party** was held. Thank you to everyone who brought food, children and themselves! It was a great time and the children and adults enjoyed the festivities. Thank you to all!

**Please note:** The next Activities meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, February 12, at 2:30 p.m.** at the home of **Marlys Mahajan in Hamilton**. The **Auditors** will also meet at this time with the Treasurer and Financial Secretary to audit the financial books of the lodge. The activities for the spring will be planned. Please contact me if you plan on attending.

**Annual dues of \$25 for 2017 are now due.** Please mail your dues to Financial Secretary, Linda Boylan, 12 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921, payable to: Birka Lodge No. 732. **Please consider this your dues notice for 2017. Dues are due in January.**

Before closing I would like to thank the members of the November Refreshment Committee, chaired by Andrea and Mike Swanson, for the delicious refreshments that we all enjoyed that evening. I look forward to seeing many of you at the next meetings, **January 27 and February 24**. Please mark the dates on your new 2017 calendars! Your presence gives encouragement to your officers and makes more secure the future of our Order.

Happy New Year!

In truth and unity,

Linda Christianson, PDM, Chairman

## Hearty Birka Birthday wishes to these members:

### . . . in January

5 Melissa Starrak  
10 Abigail Butt  
14 Janet Bloom  
18 Eric Blomgren  
18 Greg Blomgren  
22 Gerald Tobiason  
25 Ann-Marie Breuer  
29 Tina Rawsen

### . . . in February

11 Inga-Lill Olsson  
12 Elizabeth Sandberg  
15 Eva Ghika  
15 Marlys Mahajan



## REFRESHMENT COMMITTEES

### January 27

Linda Boylan, chair  
Gus, Eric, Greg Blomgren  
Denise Esperson  
Mary Anne Hawkes  
Mike and Andrea Swanson

### February 24

Judy Tanzer, chair  
Ann DeLacey  
Audrey DiPillo  
Milton Leitner  
Marlys Mahajan

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## . . . 'round the lodge

**For college age and soon-to-be college age members;** The Grand Lodge, Vasa Order of America, gives out eight \$1,000 scholarships each year to Vasa members. The deadline for applications this year is February 15, 2017. Check the Vasa website, at [vasaorder.com](http://vasaorder.com), for details about this year's application process.

**Website** Remember to check [Birka Lodge's website](#). The web address is found below. The website is maintained by Richard Lilja. Thank you, Richard.

**Sick Benefit Fund** If you have been a Vasa member for five years or more and have paid your dues, you are entitled to receive assistance with medical expenses from the Grand Lodge. Each member is entitled to receive up to \$3,000. If you would like an application, please contact Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer.

## Change of Address

Please notify Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer, of any address changes, either in writing at 3 Anthony Road, Hamilton, MA 01982, or by phoning her at 978-468-7407. Thank you.

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## Calendar of Events

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### January

27 Lodge meeting, "An Open Letter", 7:30 p.m.

### February

12 Activities meeting at Marlys Mahajan's home, 2:30 p.m.  
24 Lodge meeting, 7:30 p.m.

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## Reminder: Dues are now due!

If you haven't paid your dues yet, why not write out your \$25 check now and bring it to the January meeting?

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## Julmarknad (Christmas Market)

### Fun for All!

This year's Christmas Fair was a huge success! Due to a front page listing in the *Salem News* and an article in the *Hamilton Wenham Chronicle*, and a lovely fall day, attendance was exceptional. Visitors were delighted at the variety of Swedish baked goods, including *limpa* and coffee cake braids. They enjoyed the Lucia procession and shopped for Swedish imports. Members worked diligently to insure that everyone was well fed with sandwiches, homemade lingonberry ice cream, cookies, and *glögg*.



The fair offers something for everyone: a chance to enjoy the morning with a cup of coffee or hot *glögg* and some good food, while being entertained by the musicians and the dancers. All of this is thanks to the organizational skills and generous gifts of time that members contribute. Thanks to all!

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## Currencies of Scandinavia

Euros in Scandinavia? NO WAY! Each country still has its own currency, and they are not accepted in any other country, except on a store-by-store basis. So what are these currencies?

**Sweden** Based on the Krona (pl. Kronor) , it is abbreviated as SEK in currency tables. It is divided into 100 öre, and one U.S. dollar buys about 9 SEK.

**Norway** Based on the Krone (pl. Kroner), it is abbreviated as NOK in currency tables. It is divided into 100 øre, and one U.S. dollar buys about 8.5 NOK.

**Denmark** Based on the Krone (pl. Kroner), it is abbreviated as DKK in currency tables. It is divided into 100 øre, and one U.S. dollar buys about 7 DKK.



So plan ahead to get the appropriate currencies if you plan to visit Scandinavia any time soon. However, charge cards are accepted everywhere and will save you the hassle of carrying multiple foreign currencies.





Birka Banner is a bi-monthly newsletter, published by Birka Lodge 32, Vasa Order of America, and on the web as [www.birka732.com](http://www.birka732.com)

Linda Christianson, Chairperson

Marlys Mahajan, Editor

Richard Lilja, Webmaster

### **A Danish Christmas.**

Glaedelig Jul – Happy Christmas.

God Jul – Good Christmas.

Glaedelig Jul og Godt Nytar – Happy Christmas and Good New Year.

Christmas is the main festival celebrated in Denmark, with the whole of December taken up with the celebrations. It is also the main time for the mischievous **Nisse** to have his fun. He is said to live in the lofts of old farmhouses and he enjoys playing jokes. He wears grey woollen clothes, a red bonnet, red stockings and white clogs. Families leave him a bowl of rice pudding on Christmas Eve to keep his playful mood at bay. Usually though he is kind and helpful helping out on the farms and being especially good to the children.

On the fourth Sunday before Christmas Eve (the first Sunday of Advent) an Advent Wreath is lit. This comprises of a wreath of pine twigs, decorated with red berries and pine cones mounted with four white candles and red or purple ribbon to hang from the ceiling. One candle would be lit on the first Sunday, the following

Sunday it would be lit again with the next candle and so on. This is the first sign that Christmas is approaching. This means that all four candles – each one shorter than the others – are burning all together on the fourth Advent Sunday. Guests are invited to join in with the lighting of the candles and adults drink a warming mixture of red wine, spices and raisins called Glogg, and children drink a sweet fruit juice. Everybody eats small cakes of batter called abelskiver which have been cooked over the fire in a special pan, and dusted with icing sugar.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas children are able to help make the decorations for Christmas, they take pride in using natural resources using bright paper, wood and straw.

### **The Vikings**

Viking sailors heard of the story of a young girl living in Italy, who had died for her Christian beliefs. The Vikings, who later became Christians, were so moved by Lucia's story that they brought it home with them to Scandinavia. The Vikings imagined Lucia to be a shining figure, surrounded by light. This tale was favoured by northern people, since the days were short during the winter, making daylight a precious commodity. It was also helpful that Saint Lucia's day, December 13, marked the beginning of the Winter Solstice, in Swedish folklore. Also according to folklore, unmarried girls believed that Saint Lucia would tell them who their future husband would be, on her saint day.

### **Celebrating Saint Lucia Today**

On this day (Saint Lucia's Day) the Lucia procession takes place in most schools, businesses and homes. Children from various school choirs are dressed in white each carrying a candle, one child is chosen to be the "Lucia" bride and she is dressed in white robes and red ribbons and wears a crown of candles on her head leading the procession. The lights are turned off and the procession walks the corridors singing the Lucia song. In Families the eldest daughter plays Lucia, and greets her family with a breakfast of hot coffee and pastries, known as Lucia Buns. This ritual honors the legend of Saint Lucia bringing food during a famine.

### **A Few Jokes**

A Swede enters the Wildwood Bar in Woodville where he stopped for the night. He grabs a barstool and orders a drink. After sitting there for a while, he yells to the bartender, "Hey, you wanna hear a Norwegian joke?"

The Bar immediately falls absolutely quiet. In a very deep, husky voice, the woman him says, "before you tell that joke, sir, I think it is only fair — given that you are new here — you should know five things:

1. The bartender is a Norwegian.
2. The bouncer is a Norwegian.
3. I'm Norwegian and a professional weightlifter.
4. The woman sitting next to me is Norwegian with a black belt in karate.
5. The man to your right is a Norwegian and a professional wrestler.

Now think about it seriously, Mister. Do you still wanna tell that joke? The Swede thinks about it for a second, shakes his head, and declares: "Nah, not if I'm gonna have to explain it five times."