



Chairperson's Message

Greetings to all! The April 25th Installation of Officers was well attended with a total of 40 members and guests. The following dignitaries attended: District Deputy Dawn Briggs, PGLD, who conducted the Installation ceremonies along with her installing team from Nordic Lodge: Ken Briggs, Past District Executive Board Member; Marlene Patient, PDM and Grand Lodge Activities Director. Also attending from the District Lodge were: Linda Boylan, Vice District Master; Lynne Martin, District Treasurer; Michael Bagnulo, District Executive Board Member; and Judy Tanzer, District Inner Guard.

I would like to thank everyone who helped with the April Installation, especially with food donations, as well as setting up the hall and helping in the kitchen. Delicious refreshments were served and enjoyed by all. We certainly have some great cooks at Birka Lodge! We received rave comments from our guests on the wonderful sandwiches and desserts. Thank you, thank you to all! Special thank you to Ann-Marie Breuer for making the birthday cake. Thank you also to Gus and Roz Blomgren for donating the Raffle basket.

Thanks also go to the March Refreshment Committee for the delicious food we enjoyed at the March meeting, and to Ann-Marie Breuer for hosting the May Activities meeting

At the **May 23rd Meeting**, we will have our Memorial Service to remember our departed members who have died this past year. The Kitchen Committee, will be chaired by Marlys Mahajan and provide refreshments. We will also be initiating Frank Ryan, friend of Birka member, Janet Muller. Following the meeting, we will have a May Basket auction. Please bring a decorated Spring Basket/Gift bag, etc. with plants, flowers, seeds, etc. something that can be planted. Be as creative as you choose. There will also be a cultural program.

The final meeting before the summer break will be **June 27th**. It will have a Midsommar theme. The Kitchen Committee, co-chaired by Karin Caves and Matilda Halloran, will provide the traditional strawberry shortcake dessert. Cultural Leader, Ann-Marie Breuer will be presenting a cultural program. We will also be electing delegates to the Massachusetts District 2 Convention, September 18-20 at the Double Tree by Hilton in Leominster, MA. Nordic Lodge #611 will sponsor this year's convention. Please plan on attending the meeting.

The lodge has planned a summer outing for **Saturday, August 22, Salem, Mass.** A sign up sheet with cost and further details will be available at the May and June meetings. Please mark this date, and plan to bring along family and friends.

The next Activities Committee Meeting will be on **September 14th at 3:00 p.m.** at the home of Andrea and Mike Swanson in Rowley. All officers and members are invited to share their thoughts and help plan for the Christmas festivities.

If you have not been able to attend a lodge meeting this year, it is not too late. We miss you. Two lodge meetings are left before the summer break in June. I hope to see you soon. Come and support your lodge and its officers. New program booklets for 2015-2016 will be available at these meetings, thanks to the efforts of Linda Boylan.

In closing, I would like to thank the lodge for re-electing me as your Chairman for the coming year. Thank you to all the officers who have taken an office for the coming year. I appreciate the help and support of all lodge members. Your presence is requested to give encouragement to your officers and make more secure the future of our Order.

Best wishes for a healthy and safe summer. Glad Midsommar! Happy Summer!

In truth and unity,

Linda Christianson, PDM, Chairman

Hearty Birka Birthday Wishes to these members . . .



. in May

1 William Guidara	22 Linda Reidlinger
13 Richard Lilja	25 Al Reidlinger
17 Linda Christianson	

. . . in June

4 Ernest Sandberg	12 Judy Tanzer
4 Ann Delacey	17 Richard Johns
8 Janet Dawe	28 Ellen Greenberg

. . . in July

3 Nancy Hayward	15 Nancy Olson
8 Amy Hawkes	15 John Caves
11 Audrey DiPillo	16 Richard Sunman
14 June Guidara	24 William Ghen

. . . in August

11 Denise Esperson	20 Janet Muller
17 Matilda Halloran	24 Lara Collins
17 Gordon Hayward	26 Ambia O. Smith
	26 Milton Leitner

. . . 'round the Lodge

Congratulations to Birka Lodge's officers for the 2015-2016 season! All of next year's officers are returning to the same positions they held this year. Thank you to all officers for stepping up to keep the Lodge running smoothly!

A hearty Birka welcome to Frank Ryan, our newest member, who will be joining us at our May meeting. He is familiar to many of us, since he has come to many of our social gatherings with his friend, Janet Muller. Welcome Frank!

Bring one and buy one!

May Baskets

May 22 meeting

Don't forget to check Birka's website! The web address is found below. The website is maintained by Richard Lilja. Many kinks to the web site have been worked out in the past month, so there are many new links to explore. Thank you, Richard.

If you have not yet paid your 2015 dues of \$25, please mail a check, payable to Birka Lodge 732, to: Financial Secretary, Linda Boylan, 12 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921.

Please notify Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer, 3 Anthony Road, Hamilton, MA 01982 (Tel: 978-468-7407) of any address changes. We appreciate your helping us keep the membership roles up to date.

Summer Outing Being Planned

Hold that date! Plans are being made for our summer outing on **August 22**. We are proposing a cruise on the schooner Fame, out of Pickering Wharf in Salem. It is a one-and-three-quarters-hour cruise around the harbor in a 3-masted schooner. The cost is \$31.50 for adults, \$23 for seniors over 65, and \$14.50 for children under 13. Come to the May meeting to help finalize these plans.

Reminders

Sick Benefit Fund If you have been a Vasa member for five years or more and have paid your dues, you are entitled to medical assistance 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.

The snow is gone and garden plants are now springing up. Dig some of those lovely perennials from your garden to share with your friends at our May Basket meeting on May 22. Or come with some other garden inspired gift. You will have a chance to bid on and buy your favorites from this lot. We look forward to seeing you and your greenery!



Photo by Fran Jarvis

[Check it out in full color on the Web!]

Calendar Summary

May

22nd Memorial Service and May Basket Auction, 7:30 p.m.

June

27th Strawberry Festival, 7:30 p.m.

August

22nd or 29th Summer outing in Salem, MA.

September

13th Activities Committee meeting, Michael and Andrea Swanson's home, 3:00 p.m.

REFRESHMENT COMMITTEES

May Basket Auction

May 22

Marlys Mahajan, chair

Judy Tanzer

Sue and Mike Bagnulo

Linda Christianson

Mary Anne Hawkes

Midsommar Strawberry Fest

June 26

Karin Caves, co-chair

Matilda Halloran, co-chair

Eva Ghika

Remember to pick up your **new program booklet** at the May meeting.

In it you will find all the meeting and plans that have been made for the coming year. It also contains a list of the all the Lodge officers

for the year. This is just one way in which we try to keep you connected and informed.



The Birka Banner is a bi-monthly newsletter, published by Birka Lodge 732, Vasa Order of America, and on the web at www.birka732.com

Linda Christianson, Chairperson
Marlys Mahajan, Editor
Richard Lilja, Webmaster



Wednesday, April 30, 2014 - 11:00pm

As always we Swedes insist on getting our celebrations in early and why be different with Valborg? Traditionally a feast to ward of winter and evil spirits, as well as a celebration of spring is celebrated in Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Czech Republic and Germany. And Finland. But they call it Vappen! Valborg was a saint who lived in the late 8th century and at the time there was already a tradition to placate the spirits of the dead, which were thought to be especially close to earth. In the mid 1700's, fires were lit to scare away predators before cows, goats and sheep were led to their summer pastures. In the 1800's the "Maying" took over. Young people would go around with leafy twigs and sing in the villages, and would receive eggs – a fertility symbol – as thanks.

Valborg as the Swedes know it is closest to Walpurgis Night (Walpurgisnacht) and is a traditional religious holiday celebrated by pagans and Satanists, as well as Roman Catholics, on April 30 or May 1 in large parts of Central and Northern Europe. Saint Walpurga was born in Devon about 710. Due to her holy day falling on the same day, her name became associated with the celebrations. Walpurga was honored in the same way that Vikings had celebrated spring and as they spread throughout Europe, the two dates became mixed together and created the Walpurgis Night celebration. Early Christianity had a policy of 'Christianising' pagan festivals so it is perhaps no accident that St. Walpurga's day was set to May 1, and in Sweden of course it turned in to one of those Eves again... Celebrations are derived from various pagan spring customs, for example bonfires which were built to keep away the dead and chaotic spirits that were said to walk among the living then, as well as well and truly scare away the cold winter and prepare the ground for new growth. Usually, there is a Swedish Valborg celebration happening, either through the Swedish School or ditto Church.

April 30th is also a National flag day in Sweden, as it's the King Carl XVI Gustav's birthday!

May Day – Workers of the World – Unite! May Day, in it's capacity as the Worker's Day is celebrated globally, though not so much in the USA and Canada. In 1938 it became the first non-church holiday in the Swedish Calendar. The tradition started with the Haymarket massacre, in USA, in 1886, where the unions as they were at the time were protesting against appalling working conditions and many were killed by government forces. In France, the first May Day was celebrated as the bicentennial of the French Revolution, but in Amsterdam 1904 the Socialist Party called its members to a protest and it marked the start of the modern day celebrations. In Sweden, you have protest marches through the towns, and in Stockholm the union leader will address the masses gathered.

May is the month of the May flower appeal, sold since 1907 for the benefit of the sick and disabled. The patron of this appeal is the Queen Silvia and usually it's school children who sell them.

THE NATIONAL DAY OF SWEDEN

Swedes celebrate their National Day on 6 June in honour of two historical events. On 6 June 1523, Gustav Vasa was elected king, and on the same date in 1809, the country adopted a new constitution. Not known for displaying their national pride, this day offers a rare chance to see Swedes waving their flag about.

START READING ↓

Swedish Flag and 6th of June

The Swedish flag takes its colours from the coat of arms of King Manus Ladulås from 1275 and from the national coat of arms with three golden crowns on a blue background introduced by King Albrekt of Mecklenburg in 1364. In 1448, King Karl Knutsson combined these two to form a new national coat of arms consisting of four fields divided by a golden cross. This is usually seen as the origin of the Swedish national flag, which was first flown by warships in the mid-16th century.

For a long time Sweden was perhaps the only country in the world with no official national day. In old times the 6th of November was celebrated with patriotic speeches in schools and military barracks, in honour of King Gustav Adolf, a great general and statesman who died in the Battle of Lützen in 1632.

In the years round about 1900, there was an upsurge of romantic national sentiment and many enthusiasts wanted Sweden, like other countries, to have a national day. As a result of private initiatives, 'Swedish Flag Day' began to be celebrated on 6th of June. This day was chosen because Gustav Vasa, who delivered the country from the union with Denmark forced upon it in the late Middle ages, was elected King of Sweden on that day in 1523. Also, one of Sweden's constitutions was signed on the 6th of June 1809.

It was not until 1983 that the 6th of June officially became Sweden's National Day.

SVEN AND OLE went to the lake, rented a boat and went fishing. They eventually found a great spot and quickly caught their limit. On the way back to the dock Ole said, "That surely was good fishing. How will we ever find that place again?"

Sven said, "Don't worry. While we were there, I put an X on the side of the boat."

"But that won't work!" Ole said.

"Why not?"

"How do we know we'll get the same boat next time?"

A THIEF broke into the respectable home of Ole's friend Gustav and had just started going through a jewelry box when he heard a voice saying, "Jesus is watching you!"

The thief looked around but didn't see anybody, so he continued going through the jewel case. Then he heard the voice again, "Jesus is watching you!"

The thief decided to check out what it could be. He went into the living room and in the corner was a parrot who said, "Hello, I'm Moses."

The thief said, "Moses? What kind of people would name their parrot Moses?"

The parrot said, "The same people who name their Rottweiler Jesus."



Venus from Milo

Will Rogers (1879-1935) had a young niece. On a visit to Paris he sent a picture postcard of the Venus de Milo to her and wrote on the back:

"See what will happen to you if you don't stop biting your fingernails."

At the end of the line

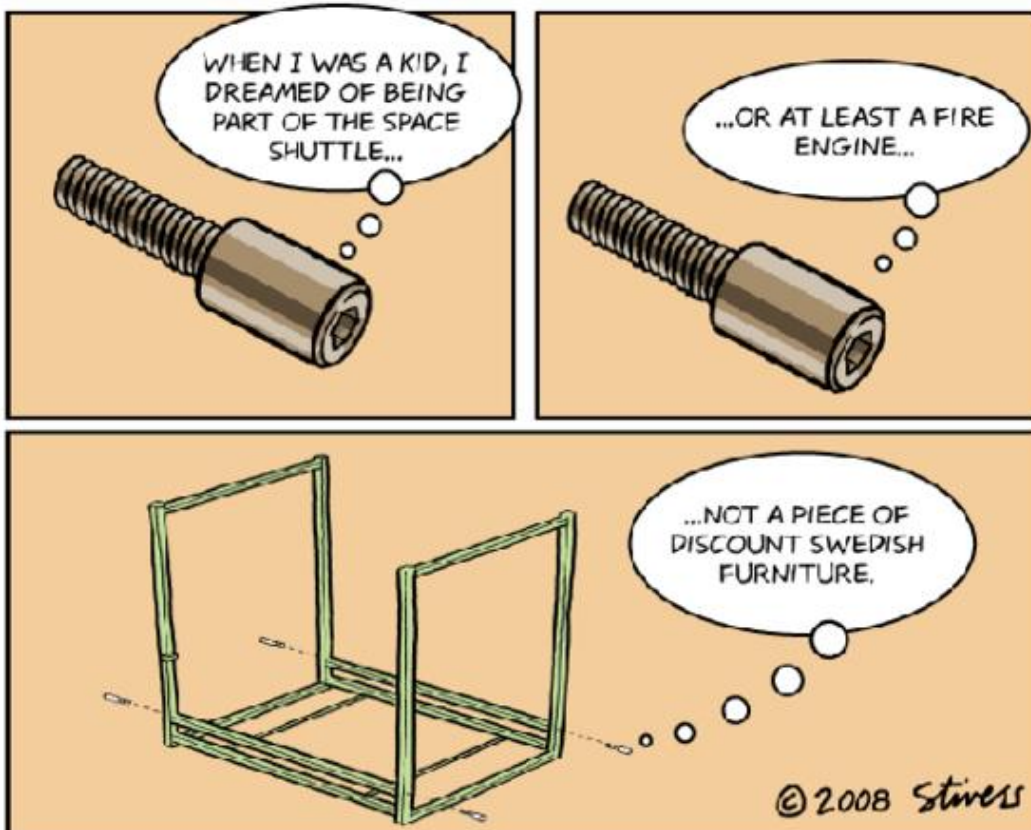
LENA PASSED away and Ole called 911. The 911 operator told Ole that she would send someone out right away.

"Where do you live?" asked the operator.

Ole answered, "At the end of Eucalyptus Drive."

"Can you spell that for me?" the operator asked.

There was a long pause and finally Ole said, "How about if I drag her over to Oak Street and you pick her up there?"





Kanelbulle and Bacon

Ronald McDonald dates Lucia ... meet the Egg McSvensk, a hot potato for Swedish taste buds as we try a new sweet and savory combination served at a Swedish bakery in Wisconsin.

Halfway between Milwaukee and Chicago is Kenosha, Wisconsin, at the shores of Lake Michigan, population of nearly 100,000 and home to the newest Swedish addition in the Badger State. We turn and drive down one of Kenosha's main arteries toward the marina, when a somewhat familiar sight stops us.

A green Dalahäst

In case you miss the sign, the 4-foot-tall green "Dalahäst" (Dala horse) in the window is a sure give-away for Linnea Bakery, a gem in this quaint part of the state. Painted green after the bakery's namesake, the linnea flower, the interior is a mix of the green and the warm pink colors of this, the provincial flower of Småland. We walk in to a clean, welcoming and functional interior, the heavenly smell of fresh flowers and cardamom, cinnamon and coffee ... we're in Valhalla.

Even if we hadn't heard great things about this bakery, and we had, we would have wanted to check it out. We were lucky to meet the owners, Mark and Kim, a friendly Swedish-American-Norwegian-Polish couple with excellent Swedish accents whose understanding of the 29 letters of the Swedish alphabet impressed us the moment we walked in and noticed labels with Swedish words spelled correctly.

Swedish with a twist

After a couple days of editorial meetings, planning for the future and meeting local leaders in the community we were eager to connect with some of the local suppliers of Swedishness — and, let's face it, there's no Swedishness without food! The owners weren't the only friendly folks there when we arrived at lunchtime. Customers, several of them obviously frequent diners at Linnea, happily recommended different foods, including the interesting, if not controversial, kanelbulle breakfast sandwich. The egg, cherry wood smoked bacon and havarti cheese combo sounded good ... it took a while for us to realize these savory ingredients were being served on a traditional Swedish cinnamon bun. This American sounding twist on taste made us join the ranks with — according to social media — hundreds, perhaps thousands of cautious lovers of Swedish food.

We hesitated. We hemmed and we hawed, then delayed the decision even further by tasting the flavorful cardamom coffee. But we finally gave in, crossed our fingers and ordered the specialty. Being good Swedish-Americans, we took a photo of the sandwich, posted it on Facebook and asked the social media universe what to think of it.

Kanelbulle combo morphs into a hot potato

We weren't surprised that a few Swedes — we assumed they were Swedes — refused to even think about straying from their allegiance to the already perfect kanelbulle. In fact, one seemed to suggest that the Swedish kanelbulle might be too good to even be considered food — ambrosia, perhaps? — that "mixing sweet bread with food is not a good idea." Some thought it sounded disgusting. And this comment may have some sympathizers: "Certain things should just be sacrosanct ... kanelbulle with coffee or tea."

Neither were we surprised by the comments that accused this idea of being too American. We agree, actually, and that's just what it is, isn't it? One fan of the creation gave it the name Egg McSvensk. The majority of the more than 1,200 comments was feedback madly in favor of this "brilliant" combination of Swedish and American flavors. In fact, it became clear that many people had already tried the must-have sandwich: "What discussion? They are delicious, it's a fact!" said one commenter on Facebook. And the rest flowed in fast:

"It's fantastic! Linnea does it right!"

"When you're not worried about your fat intake, this is what you eat."

"I was skeptical at first but it's delicious."

"They are DIVINE! The sweet and savory is perfection!"

"OMG this is sinfully good! It's breakfast that I don't have to wait for dessert for!"

"Mark and Kim are offering bliss for the taste buds and the eyes."

"Probably my favorite breakfast sandwich anywhere!"