



Birka Banner

Birka Lodge #732, Vasa Order of America

September/October 2017

Message from the Chair

Greetings to all and welcome back from your summer vacations. I hope everyone enjoyed their vacations, and that you were able to travel, visit, relax and return refreshed. It's hard to believe that summer is over, and it's time to plan fall activities at Birka Lodge. The summer was pleasant, which was great for vacations and sunbathing! The cool fall weather will soon be upon us.

Thank you to the members of the June Refreshment Committee: Karin and John Caves, Matilda Halloran and Eva Ghika. Delicious strawberry and peach shortcake was enjoyed by all.

The first meeting of the fall will be held on **September 22 at 7:30 p.m.** We will have our annual Harvest Auction. Please bring fall plants, garden vegetables, flowers, etc. to auction off. We will also have a delegates report from the District Convention and a cultural report from Cultural Leader, Ann-Marie Breuer. An evening you won't want to miss! A great time to fellowship with Birka members and catch up on summer vacations.

The **October 27 meeting** is our annual Halloween/Hexan's Potluck Supper **at 6:30 p.m.** everyone attending is asked to bring a main dish, salad or dessert. If your dish needs to be heated in the oven, please arrive between **6:00 and 6:15 p.m.** We would like to begin at **6:30 p.m.** The lodge will provide coffee and cold drinks. This has been a very successful event, and we have some great cooks at the lodge. Dessert will be served following the meeting. **Costumes are encouraged.** Use your imagination. Children are welcome. Come in costume for the Potluck! Who knows who or what you'll meet!

At the September and October meetings, the signup sheet for volunteers for the **Christmas Fair, November 25** at the Community House will be available. As always, we need help with setting up the night before, cleaning up, publicity, booth help, etc. We also need donations for grabs and home baked goods. This is Birka Lodge's major fund raising event of the year, and the support and help of all lodge members is needed to make this year's Christmas Fair as successful as in past years.

The next Activities Committee meeting will be held in October, with the date and time to be discussed at the September meeting. It will be the only Activities meeting before the Jul Fair. I encourage all officers and members to attend to help plan the Fair and other coming events.

On Saturday, September 23, the Scandinavian Living Center will sponsor its fourth annual Nordic Bites Food Fest from **11 a.m. to 3 p.m.** There will be food stations, Scandinavian vendors, a Viking encampment, Scandinavian music and much more. I encourage Birka members to attend and fellowship with other Scandinavians. For updates, check the Scandinavian Living Center website at www.scandicenter.org. See page 3 for details.

During the summer, Birka's former newsletter editor, Lois Johnson, formerly of Beverly, MA, passed away in New Jersey on June 29. We will remember Lois at our September 22 meeting. Please remember her family in your thoughts.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the **September 22 Harvest Auction** and the **October 27 Potluck Supper**. Please mark the dates! Come and support your lodge and its officers. New program booklets for 2017-2018 season are available at these meetings.

Happy autumn! Your presence is requested to give encouragement to your officers and make more secure the future of our Order. Welcome back!

In Truth and Unity,

Linda Christianson, PDM, Chairman

Sweden's new bank notes, which came into circulation on October 1st 2015.



Astrid Lindgren

Evert Taube

Greta Garbo

Swedish author
and screenwriter

Swedish author, artist,
composer and singer

Swedish film actress



Ingmar Bergman

Birgit Nilsson

Dag Hammarskjöld

Swedish director, writer and producer

Swedish dramatic soprano

Swedish diplomat,
economist, and author



The "Beloved actors" theme and The "Aurora Borealis" theme was among the finalists

Hearty Birka Birthday wishes to these members:

... in September

3 Claire Glover	14 Karen Caves
4 Mike Swanson	18 Naomi Graves
7 Warren E Johnson	22 Sharon Mikutel
	26 Sue Bagnulo

... in October

4 Eddie Thurnquist	14 Sven Hyberts
5 Rute Johnson	17 Anita Adams
7 Vincent Ghika	25 Karen Roman



REFRESHMENT COMMITTEES

Harvest Auction
September 22

Denise Esperson, chair
Audrey DiPillo
Ann Delacey
Bill Ghen
Naomi Gray
Andrea/Ron Holmgren
Richard Lilja
Tina Rawson



Halloween/Hexan Potluck
October 27



Janet Muller, chair
Frank Ryan
Gus/Eric/Greg Blomgren
Linda Boylan

... 'round the lodge

The September meeting will be extra special this year, since we haven't gathered together since June. We were unable to book a summer cruise, due to problems with the *Beauport Princess*. Be ready to tell everyone about your fun vacations and catch us up on changes in your family. And don't forget be bring something "garden-y" for our auction.

For all college age and soon-to-be college age members: The national lodge, [Vasa Order of America](http://www.vasaorder.com), gives out several scholarships each year. The deadline for applications has been in December in the past. Watch the Vasa website (www.vasaorder.com) for details about this year's application process.

Remember to check [Birka Lodge's website](http://www.birka.org). 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. 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 by writing her at 3 Anthony Road, Hamilton, MA 01982, or by phoning her at 978-468-7407. Thank you.



Calendar of Events



September

22 Harvest Auction and Lodge meeting, 7:30 p.m.

October

? Activities meeting date and time to be decided at September meeting

27 Halloween/Hexan Lodge meeting and Pot Luck Supper, 6:30 p.m.



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

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



Provinces of Sweden

Sweden, being roughly the size of California, is not divided into states or provinces, but rather into 21 counties for government purposes. However, historically the country was divided into 25 provinces. Today these provincial divisions are still in use, but only as cultural and geographical areas. Local dialects and folklore follow these boundaries, rather than those of the counties. From which province or county did your ancestors come?

Moose

The moose is king of the Swedish forest. The Bull can be over 2 m high and weigh as much as 700 kg. There is plenty of moose in the Swedish forests but now a days there are s.c Moose parks where visitors can come and see this majestic animal.

Nine odd things that happen when you (try to) learn Swedish

Learning Swedish will teach you a lot – but not necessarily the things you thought it would. Here are nine of the strange things that happen once you start studying the language.

1. You learn a lot about Sweden

Learning a language is one of the best ways to get under the skin of a country, and most Swedish language courses have a strong emphasis on culture and lifestyle, rather than just verb tables and vocab. My textbook includes facts and stats related to each topic, and a particularly long time was spent in class learning about fish and traditional Swedish drinking songs, of which our teacher gave a hearty rendition. In other cases, it's only by learning particular words that you can fully understand a certain concept. In what other culture would you have a specific term for passive-aggressive notes left in a laundry room (*'tvättstugelapp'*, by the way) or the first day of the year when it's socially acceptable to eat fermented herring (that's *'surströmmingspremiär'* in Swedish, or 'never', in my humble opinion)?

2. You will make embarrassing mistakes

Any language teacher will tell you that the only way to learn is to make mistakes and going by that logic, I have learnt a lot of Swedish. In a language where the same word is used for 'six' and 'sex'; the pronunciations of 'drunk' ('full') and 'ugly' ('ful') sound deceptively similar but neither means the English 'full'; and the word for cinnamon bun ('kanelbulle') can all too easily be mis-pronounced as 'knulle' or 'sex bun' (using an offensive word for sex at that), you're going to slip up sooner or later.

3. Your English (or native language) will become worse

Swedish linguistic quirks can start to infiltrate your mother tongue, so that you end up saying things in an idiosyncratic way ('exact!' instead of 'exactly!') or even forgetting the English word for something. It can also affect any other languages you've previously learned. I studied German and Italian at university, but these days my German has a Scandinavian twang, and I've confused at least one Italian friend in Stockholm by inviting them for 'fika' (a coffee break) – forgetting that 'fica' in Italian, pronounced the same way, refers to female genitalia.

4. You'll take any opportunity to practice...

The high level of English spoken by most Swedes makes settling into the country relatively easy, but is frustrating when you want to try out your newly-learned vocab. Just like a bear can detect the smallest signs of weakness, the linguistically gifted Swedes seem able to sniff out any hint of linguistic hesitation, instantly switching to flawless English. And just as with a bear, the best option is often to stand your ground, which in this case means continue obstinately with your Swedish, no matter what. Alternatively, you can play dead so that the bear/Swede loses interest... OK, this simile might be falling apart. Finding somewhere to practice Swedish is tough outside the classroom, so you might find yourself signing up to an obscure course, or going on a date with someone you have nothing in common with, just for a chance to inflict your dodgy pronunciation on a native. Alternatively, you might find yourself staring intently at an advert on the 'tunnelbana', trying to decipher the text, before eventually realizing it's about STD testing and that your fellow passengers are looking mildly concerned by your apparent interest.

5. ... and get excited by the smallest milestones

The difficulty in practicing Swedish means you're justified in celebrating each and every language milestone.

The first time you're able to order a meal without the waiter switching to English will be a cause for celebration – at least until they bring you a completely different meal to what you thought you'd ordered. And once you've made it through an entire evening conversing in Swedish, you truly know you've made it.

6. You develop an attachment to favorite words

Personally I like 'bonusbarn', which seems to put a more positive spin on 'stepchild', 'färgglad' – 'colorful' but literally translating as 'color-happy', 'klumpig' (clumsy), and the prefix 'jätte' which I add to everything. But my ultimate favourite is 'snabel-a', the Swedish term for the '@' symbol which comes from the word 'snabel', meaning an elephant's trunk.

7. You will learn intimate details about your classmates

Probably the most poignant experience of my Swedish course was the lesson on occupations and the past tense.

Going round the classroom, the teacher asked everyone in turn what they had wanted to be when they were younger. The responses were a window into the childhood dreams of all my classmates, ranging from king to Olympic diver to concert pianist. Then, she asked people what job they did now. Accountant, accountant, accountant, came the first three answers. Very respectable, of course, but slightly less inspiring. Having asked everyone, the teacher merrily concluded: "So! No one does what they wanted to do! *Vad synd!*"

8. You will be blunt

Various studies have claimed to show that people's personalities change depending on the language they speak, and in particular, that your native language is more closely connected to strong emotions, because the force of a word isn't diluted by translation.

Combined with the limitations that a beginners' level imposes, this means you just can't get the same range of tone or nuance across, and your Swedish speech might come out more abruptly than intended.

In what other situation would it be appropriate to round on someone you met only ten minutes ago, ask them in quick succession if they're married and have children, and respond to their negative answers with a loud "and why not?" Yet that's exactly what happened to me in a lesson on family relationships.

9. People will ask why you're bothering

Learning Swedish is hard. Heading into a classroom after a day at work in order to get intimately acquainted with Swedish verbs, or spending your Sunday morning slowly, painstakingly, probably incorrectly translating the local paper that arrived on your doormat is not many people's idea of fun. Yet I'm still surprised when Swedes ask me why I'm trying to learn their language, their confusion amplified by the revelation that I work in an anglophone office.

There are plenty of reasons to learn Swedish – and despite all of the above, I'm really glad to be doing so. Yes, you can 'get by' in Stockholm perfectly well without knowing the ins and outs of Swedish sentence structure. But if you want to do more than just 'get by' here; if you want to build a life where you can read menus, speak to a doctor, watch Swedish TV, and avoid being gripped with paranoia every time bilingual colleagues switch to Swedish, you have to learn the language.