

Birka Banner

Birka Lodge 732, Vasa Order of America

November /December, 2014

Chairperson's Message

Greetings to all Birka members. It is soon time for Birka's biggest fund raising event of the year. The lodge needs your help and support to make the fair as successful as ever. If you have not already signed up to help at the fair, the sign-up sheet will be available at the November 21st meeting or call me. We will also need help setting up and decorating the Community House on Friday evening, November 28th beginning at 5:00 p.m. The tables are always very busy when the fair first opens, and additional help is appreciated. We are also requesting contributions for the **Grabs Table**, a value of \$5.00. Items should be new. Please wrap in holiday paper without price. We also need gifts for children - boys/girls and please mark each package. Home baked goods are also requested for the **Bake Table** and should be priced beforehand.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a flyer. Please copy, post and distribute to family, friends, and colleagues. Many of our lodge members and table chairs have been hard at work preparing for the fair. We have imported gift items, linens, jewelry, books, Dala horses, candles and candleholders from Sweden as well as a variety of imported foods for your Christmas and Holiday table. The Lucia procession will take place at 12:00 noon. Please mark the date and come and support your lodge. I look forward to seeing you there. It would be great if you have a folk costume or Scandinavian sweater to wear to the fair!

At the **September 26th** meeting, the Refreshment Committee chaired by Audrey DiPillo, and her committee, provided delicious refreshments. Following the meeting, we had a wonderful presentation by Glen Boucher, a friend of Ann-Marie Breuer, on his adventures in Sochi, Russia, during the 2014 Winter Olympics.

The **October 24th** Halloween Potluck Supper was well attended, and everyone enjoyed the delicious casseroles, salads, and desserts brought by the great cooks in the lodge. Thank you to Janet Muller and her committee for coordinating and setting up the hall. No one went home hungry! Thank you to everyone. Two guests from Goteborg, Sweden, were present: Charlotte Borjoesson, District Cultural Leader for District Northern Sweden No. 19 and Cultural Leader at her local Lodge Goteborg and her husband, Lars Goran Borjoesson, Webmaster for District Northern Sweden No. 19. Also accompanying them were Birka Lodge member Eddie Thurnquist and his daughter, Lee Thurnquist of Kingston, NH. Charlotte Borjoesson is also Eddie's daughter. It was a nice to have visitors from Sweden. Also, thank you to our musician, Bob Landoni for providing music.

The Activities Committee did not meet on **November 2**. The next Activities Committee meeting will be held in February, with the Auditors. The date and place will be decided at the November lodge meeting. At the Activities meeting, we will be planning the schedule of events for 2015. The books of both the Financial Secretary and Treasurer will also be audited.

The **November 21st** meeting will be the final meeting for the year. We will have a "Surprise Grab Package" auction. Members are asked to bring a surprise package, wrapped nicely as a present, funny or serious, to be auctioned off after the meeting. The initiation of Claire Glover, daughter of Birka member, Ellen Greenberg, will also take place.

Thank you to Andrea and Mike Swanson and their committee, who will be providing the refreshments for the meeting. Nomination and election of officers for the 2015 term will be held. Please contact Mike Bagnulo if you do not plan on remaining in your current office. Thank you. The lodge needs your participation.

The **Lucia Rehearsal** will be held on **Sunday, November 23, at 3:00 p.m.** at the Community House. Lucia this year is Libby Collins, daughter of Lodge member Lara Collins. New children are welcome. Please contact me if you are interested. Also on **Sunday, November 23, at 11:00 a.m.**, there will be a Cookie Bake at Marlys Mahajan's. Please see Marlys for details.

The first event for 2015 is our annual **Children's Tree Plundering Party**, which will be held **Sunday, January 11, at 3:00 p.m. at the Community House**. Music, storytelling, dancing around the Christmas tree, gifts, refreshments, and a visit from Tomten are planned. Additional information and cost will be mailed out in early December.

I look forward to seeing you at the **November 21st meeting** as well as at the **Christmas Fair on Saturday, November 29, and at the January 11, 2015, Tree Plundering Party**. Your presence is requested to support and encourage your lodge and its officers.

I would also like to mention that Treasurer, Mike Swanson's mother, Barbara (Swanson) Aznavoorian, passed away recently. Please remember Mike and Andrea and their family during this time.

Best wishes for a peaceful and joyful holiday season. God Jul och Gott Nytt Ar!

In truth and unity,

Linda Christianson, PDM, Chairman

The Story of the Julbock, or Yule Goat



In pre-Christian Sweden, the last sheaf of grain that was harvested in the fall was thought to have magical properties. It was saved for the winter solstice, when it was made into a goat, one of Thor's companions. This straw goat was placed on the feast table, and the food was first offered the goat for a good harvest the next year before being eaten.

With the arrival of Christianity, the Julbock was seen as an evil spirit, but gradually evolved into being a prankster associated with Christmas. A goat, with an insult attached, would be placed just inside the door of an unaware neighbor. The Julbock also watched over Christmas preparations and demanded gifts to appease any shortcomings in the preparations.

During the nineteenth century, however, the Julbock evolved into a giver of gifts, as neighbors attached gifts instead of insults to the Julbock that was tossed through the door. In the twentieth century the Jultomtem, often riding on the Julbock, gradually assumed the role of gift giver, but the Julbock remains as an onlooker to the Christmas dinner and as ornaments on the Christmas tree.

Hearty Birka Birthday Wishes to these members . . .

. . . in November

3 Jean Clough	19 Sonya Prior
4 Linda Boylan	24 Ron Holmgren
5 Joanne Emerson	25 Jane Atherton
8 Andrea Holmgren	25 Marilyn Sandberg
16 Karen MacMillan	26 Maggie Starrak

. . . in December

1 Bob Landoni	10 Richard Johnson
3 Warren Johnson	11 Alison L-Wickey
3 Marilyn Seaburg	16 Gunnar Berggren
5 Gus Blomgren	17 Cynthia Olsen
9 Sharon Guidara	19 Andrea Swanson
9 Mary Anne Hawkes	19 Kari Delacey

REFRESHMENT COMMITTEES

November 21

Andrea and Mike Swanson,
co-chair
Karin Caves
Marilyn and Ernie Sandberg
Sheila and Richard Sunman

Skane Night

January 23

Judy Tanzer, chair
Gus, Eric, Greg Blomgren
Denise Esperson,
Mary Anne Hawkes
Michael, Andrea Swanson



. . . 'round the Lodge

Our second annual Cookie Bake will be held at Marlys Mahajan's on **November 23**, since our cookies were such a great success at last year's Jul Fair. We need people to mix, mold, bag, and label for as long as they have time. Marlys will provide the basic – flour, butter, sugar, the oven and mixer, etc. You can bring a favorite recipe and any special ingredients it requires. Just let her know: (978) 468-4423. Join us at 26 Appaloosa Lane, Hamilton, any time between **11 a.m. and 4 p.m.** and we will put you to work!



Lodge Dues Annual dues for 2015 of **\$25** per person is due beginning in January. Please consider this your first dues notice. Lodge dues should be paid by the end of April. Please make checks payable to: **Birka Lodge No. 732** and mail to the Financial Secretary, Linda Boylan at 12 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921. (Ph: (978) 887-3917).

Early Bird Dues Drawing If you pay your 2015 dues before the end of 2014, your name will be entered in a drawing. The winner will receive an extra year of membership **FREE**. **PLEASE PAY DUES EARLY!** Thank you.

Check out Birka Lodge's website (www.birka732.com) for more photos and copies of the Birka Banner. It is maintained by Richard Lilja, our Web Master. Thank you, Richard.

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



Jul Marknad!

Saturday, November 29
9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

You can help by:

- Lending a hand. Sign up to help at any of the tables.
- Bring a young friend or relative to participate in the Lucia procession.
- Contributing a \$5 gift for the Grab Gift.
- Help bake cookies on **November 23**.
- Donating baked goods from your own kitchen for the bake table.

Calendar Summary

November

- 21 Lodge meeting, 7:30 p.m.
- 23 Lucia practice, 3 p.m.
Cookie bake at Marlys Mahajan's,
11 a.m. to 4:00pm
- 28 Set up for Yul Fair, 5 p.m.
- 29 Yul Fair, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.



December

God Jul!

January

- 11 Children's Tree plundering, 3 p.m.
- 23 Lodge meeting, 7:30 p.m.

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 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.

A Christmas Cake Recipe

1. Sample the Johnnie Walker to check quality.
2. Take a large bowl, check the whisky again. To be sure it is the highest quality, pour one level cup and drink.
3. Repeat.
4. Turn on the electric mixer. Beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl.
5. Add one teaspoon of sugar. Beat again.
6. Make sure the whisky is still OK. Try another cup.
7. Turn off the mixer.
8. Break 2 eggs and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried fruit.
9. Mix on the turner.
10. If the fried fruit gets stuck in the beaters pry it loose with a drowscriver.
11. Sample the whisky to check for consistency.
12. Next, sift two cups of salt. Or something.
13. Check the whisky. Now sift the lemon juice and strain your nuts.
14. Add one table.
15. Add a spoon of sugar, or something. Whatever you can find.
16. Grease the oven.
17. Turn the cake tin 350 degrees.
18. Don't forget to beat off the turner.
19. Throw the bowl out of the bleeping window.
20. Check the whisky again and go to bed.

Traditional Christmas in Sweden

Traditional Christmas Greeting: "Glad Jul"

Location: Scandinavia

Tree Type: Traditional

Decorations:

- The heart shaped baskets are woven and maybe made from straw. These baskets are filled with candy for January 13th St Knut's Day.
- The straw ornaments (Juldocka) are handmade figures. They represent children and animals, and date back to a time when the only material available for ornaments was straw.
- The wooden heart symbolizes the belief that everyone is lovable at Christmas time.
- The tissue and cardboard ornaments (Julgrans Karamellar) contain small gifts inside. They are made especially for the children.

Traditions:

Advent begins the holiday season in Sweden four Sundays before Christmas. Swedish Christians light one candle each week as they await Christmas Eve. On the 13th of December, towns and families celebrate Santa Lucia Day in honor of the fourth century girl who was martyred for her Christian beliefs. To commemorate her sacrifice, one girl in each family dresses in a long white gown and places a wreath of evergreen branches with four lit candles (sometimes electric today) in her hair. Her siblings dress in white and accompany her while she brings her parents coffee, buns, and cookies in bed. This tradition is sometimes repeated in schools or town squares.

Christmas trees in Sweden are usually not decorated until a day or two before Christmas. Families get together the evening of the 22nd or 23rd to cover them with straw snowflakes, stars and sunbursts, candy, flags, and small gnomes wearing red hats. When candles are lit or lights illuminated on Christmas Eve, the tree is truly a beautiful sight during the dark winter.

The 24th brings to Sweden the lavish Christmas Eve meal often called the smorgasborg. Herring, lutfisk, or salmon usually provide seafood to go with the julskika, or Christmas ham, that has been boiled, marinated, and baked over the previous several days. In addition, people in Sweden feast on Kottbullar (meatballs), leverpastej (liver and anchovy paste), potatoes, beet salad, and revbenspall (oven-roasted pork ribs). For dessert, they have mandelmusslor (almond cream tarts), pepparkakor (heart or goat shaped gingerbread), and a creamy rice pudding called risgrynsgröt. There is always just one almond in the pudding, and it is said that whoever finds the almond will be married during the next year.

The Birka Banner is a bi-monthly newsletter, published by Birka Lodge 732, Vasa Order of America (via Newsletter Editor: Marlys Mahajan), and on the web at <http://www.birka732.com> (by Web Master: Richard Lilja)

And by Lodge Chairperson: Linda Christianson

Birka Lodge 732, Birka Banner
c/o Marlys Mahajan, Newsletter Editor
26 Appaloosa Lane
S Hamilton, MA 01982

SWEDISH YULE FAIR

(Traditional Jul Marknad)

Saturday, November 29th

9:00am-2:30pm



Hamilton/Wenham Community House
(Bay Road Route 1-A)

FREE ADMISSION

Lucia (Bride of Light) 12:00 noon

Scandinavian & American HOLIDAY MUSIC (all day)

LUNCH AT NOON: Assorted, Open-Face Sandwiches

Coffee & Coffee Bread, Glögg & Pepparkakor (all day)

Gifts, Handcrafts, Imported Linens, Ornaments, Jewelry

Cards, Wrapping Paper, Candles, Candle Holders & Rings

Dala Horses, Straw Goats, Jul Tomtes (gnomes) etc.

VALKOMMEN!

BIRKA LODGE NO. 732 OF HAMILTON, MASSACHUSETTS

VASA ORDER OF AMERICA

Non-Profit Fraternal Benefit Association

WWW.Birka732.com

