



THE SWEDISH CLUB NEWS

The Swedish Club of Houston
Preserving Swedish Heritage on the Texas Gulf Coast Since 1986

May/June

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President's Column *by Cathy Wahren*

Our 2009 *Kräftskiva* at the Monument Inn was well-attended this year, and I thought the crayfish were particularly tasty and nice-sized. Alternate fare was offered as usual that seemed to also be appreciated. We had a good turn-out of over 70 members and guests, including the President and Chairman of the Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Bertil Fredstrom from Austin, with some of his Chamber members. Honorary Consul General of Sweden, Jan Dryselius joined us, as he often does, and I even met a couple that came all the way from New York to help us all celebrate this yummy Swedish tradition (and visit their daughter Ulla-Britt Larka!)

The *Valborgsmässoafton* celebration was also on the Spring calendar as mentioned in our last newsletter. This event is a favorite of families with children and others who simply enjoy a day out in the countryside. I wish I could have attended, but I had out-of-town plans and missed out on the fun. Mona Raspler and I did manage to catch the Dance Salad performance at Wortham Theatre that included two pieces by Mats Ek of the Royal Swedish Ballet—we both thought it was wonderful. Cultural events that are coming up include Swedish clarinetist Håkan Rosengren on May 13th at the Hobby Center and a short dance film created in collaboration with the Norrbotten Big Band as part of the Dance USA 2009 Conference, at Dean's Credit Clothing on Main Street, June 4th.

The Swedish Club Board will meet once more before our summer hiatus, this time at Mark Swanson's home in League City (near Kemah). We have our schedule set for the rest of the year and will look forward to the fall *Smörgåsbord* in early November.

From the Consulate General . . .

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Third Annual Fayetteville Music Festival *"Chamber Music in the Countryside"*

Håkan Rosengren, Artistic Director

The Third Annual Festival will be May 8 - 16, 2009, in historic, downtown Fayetteville, Texas.

Repertoire will include music by Brahms, Mozart, Haydn, Berwald (a Swedish Romantic composer who was generally ignored during his lifetime, but according to Naxos.com, was the most important figure in Swedish music of the 19th century) and others.

More great classic masterworks will be performed by sensational international musical stars Cellist Andrzej Bauer, Pianists Phillip Bush and Rick Rowley, and Biava String Quartet, with Artistic Director Håkan Rosengren, clarinet.

Concerts:

Friday, May 8, at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 9, at 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 10, at 3:00 p.m.

Friday, May 15, at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 16, at 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

For more information and to purchase tickets, email info@fayettevillemusic.org.

Houston Concert: Internationally acclaimed Swedish clarinetist Håkan Rosengren, Artistic Director for the Fayetteville Music Festival is bringing a very special concert to Houston. The concert is planned for Wednesday, May 13, 8:00 p.m., in the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts' Zilkha Hall. To purchase tickets to this special event go to www.thehobbycenter.org.

BITS & PIECES

Do you have tried and true authentic Swedish recipes you would like to share? Members of the board are looking into compiling a **cookbook**. We're trying to keep it very affordable and are considering various options, so watch for more news to come. In the meantime, please send recipes via email to kswolz@sbcglobal.net.

On Sundays, May 10, 17 and 31, PBS Masterpiece Mystery! will air three episodes of the series "**Wallander**" that earned rave reviews on the BBC in England late last year. Kenneth Branagh stars as complex detective Kurt Wallander, fighting crime and his own demons.

Based on three books (*Sidetracked*, *Firewall* and *One Step Behind*) by best-selling Swedish author Henning Mankell, "Wallander" was filmed in rarely seen locations in southern Sweden, including Ystad. Locally, "Wallander" will air on KUHT, Channel 8, at 8:00 p.m.

Enjoy a new slide show about the **Swedes in Texas** as presented by the Swedish Council of America on their web site: <http://www.swedishcouncil.org/about.aspx>.

The psychological thriller *Missing*, by Swedish author Karin Alvtgen, has been nominated for a prestigious Edgar Award for Best Novel of the Year. *Missing* won Scandinavia's Glass Key crime fiction award in 2001 and is the story of Sybilla, a homeless woman wrongfully accused of murder who has to fight to clear her name and find the real killer.

Swedes Will Meet to Honor Ancestors in Round Rock, TX

by Jean Sellstrom

The Texas Swedish Pioneers Association (TSPA), formerly known as Swedish Old Settlers Assn., will hold its 92nd annual meeting at Palm Valley Lutheran Church, Round Rock, Texas, at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 28, 2009. The first meeting celebrated was in 1917 to honor the first large group of 100 Swedish immigrants who came to Texas in 1867. The association also honors S. M. Swenson, the first Swede

who arrived in Texas in 1838 and who was responsible for helping bring so many Swedes, at a time when Texas needed settlers. Also remembered are the other Swedish immigrants who arrived here at various times and from whom many in Texas are descended.

Included in the meeting will be special music and the awarding of scholarships. Although the meeting is conducted in English, it will also include a little Swedish, with the reading of *Fader Vår* (the Lord's Prayer) and a Swedish table prayer, as well as singing "*Du Gamla, Du Fria*," (the Swedish national anthem).

The program will be on the Old Gethsemane Lutheran Church which was located at 16th and North Congress Avenue in Austin, Texas, and was the second building of the oldest Swedish congregation in Central Texas. This old church building is now owned by the State of Texas and houses the Texas Historical Commission.

The historical marker on the church reads, "The First Lutheran Church in Travis County, Organized Dec. 12, 1868, by Swedish pioneers under leadership of Swante Palm. Site of first church building was 11 blocks SW; this structure was erected in 1883. It contains stone hauled in wheelbarrows from Texas Capitol that burned 1881. The present ornate, paneled doors came (1934) from Old Main Building at University of Texas. Architecture is typical of many rural Swedish Churches."

After the state bought the old building, the congregation relocated to North Austin at 200 E. Anderson Lane.

Following the TSPA meeting and program, refreshments will be served in the Palm Valley Church Hall.

Any person of Swedish heritage is considered a "member" of this association. There are no membership requirements or dues!

The meeting is open to the public, and everyone is "*Välkommen*" (Welcome)!

Palm Valley Lutheran Church is located at 2500 E. Palm Valley Blvd./US Hwy. 79N., Round Rock, Texas.



Old photo of the historic Gethsemane Lutheran Church.

Valborgsmässoafton 2009

by Margaret St.Clair

On April 25, our Club celebrated the coming of spring, or *Valborgsmässoafton*, as it is called in Sweden, at the Brenham ranch of club members Dr. Margit Winstrom and her husband Bill Riley. The ranch is a beautiful place, ideally suited for such a celebration. The bluebonnets and other wildflowers were in bloom, and the fields were lush and green. Despite the threat of rain, it really never materialized, and the 35 folks who attended enjoyed a mostly sunny but windy day.

Once again, Pelle Fisk organized the event. To get the socializing started, we began with some kite-flying and games of croquet, Kubb and Ladder Ball. Playing in the background was lots of Swedish music, courtesy of Mark Swanson and his CD player. We then moved on to more organized events such as a scavenger hunt followed by a sack-race relay, a 3-legged race relay and a raw egg-in-spoon-in-mouth relay. Winners of the relays and the scavenger hunt received IKEA gift certificates.



Mark Swanson and Nina Fisk competed in the sack race.



Pelle Fisk poses with the winners of the scavenger hunt—Annett Philipson, Nina Fisk and Ben Swanson.

All those activities soon made everyone hungry, and before long it was time for folks to grill their steaks, burgers, dogs, brats and veggies. Everyone set out their side dishes to share. This year it was requested that, if possible, the sides should be Swedish, and so they were! The food

was so delicious that many guests asked for recipes.

After dinner, it was time for Bill to start up the old John Deere and go on a hay-filled flat-bed wagon ride around the Winstrom property. As usual, we got to see the herd of Longhorns, always a treat for us city folks.

With dusk quickly upon us, we got in a quick water-balloon toss before heading over to the bonfire. By this time, the wind had subsided, thus making conditions perfect for a fire. We sang the traditional songs,



The hay ride is always a popular activity.



Margit Winstrom stands near the traditional *Valborgsmässoafton* bonfire.

some in Swedish, some in English, so that all could join in. When it got too dark to read the lyrics and the kids (and the adults!) were tired, it was time to call it a very fine day and head home, although some guests stayed for overnight camping!

Thanks to everyone who came. It was a most enjoyable day. Once again, thanks to Margit and Bill for hosting the event and to Pelle and Mark for organizing. We hope to be back next year!



Save the Date!

What: Smörgåsbord
When: Saturday, November 7, 2009
Where: BraeBurn Country Club

Watch for more details in an upcoming issue of the newsletter!

Kräftskiva 2009

Tusen tack (many thanks) to Ken Nilsson, who so faithfully takes photographs at SCH events!



There were plenty of crayfish for everyone.



Even the kids had a great time!

***Midsommar* (Midsummer) is big celebration in Sweden**



Photo: www.imagebank.sweden.se
© Fredrik Sweger, Lou B/Fredrik Sweger and the Swedish Institute

The weekend coming closet to the "real" Midsummer Day, June 24th (St. John's Day), is when Swedes hold their big summer festival.

St. John's Day is a holiday in other parts of Europe, too, mostly with a great bonfire outdoors as its most spectacular feature. This was also the case in Sweden at one time, but in these latitudes the lightest night of the year was not

really the right time for dancing around a fire.

The continental countries in medieval times already had another early summer custom, namely the maypole. Its ancestry goes back to ancient Rome and medieval France and Germany, where it was part of the May Day celebrations. The Germans, numerous

among Sweden's townspeople, often brought their native customs with them, but in the case of the maypole, this was not so easy. Because of the cold northern climate, there were not enough leaves and flowers to be had on May 1, and so a maypole could only be dressed later in the year—hence the conversion of the continental maypole into a Swedish "Midsummer pole" or *midsommarstång*.



Photo: www.imagebank.sweden.se
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(This article was excerpted from *Maypoles, Crayfish and Lucia, Swedish Holidays and Traditions* by Jan-Öjvind Swahn, published by The Swedish Institute.)

News from Sweden (from Swedish Council of America's March and April 2009 "eUPDATES")

- A royal wedding will take place in Sweden next summer. Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria has announced her engagement to Daniel Westling. Westling is to receive the title Prince Daniel, Duke of Västergötland.
- Sweden has opened the door to skilled workers from all over the world. New legislation is allowing employers who are not able to meet their needs through recruitment in Sweden, or in other EU/European Economic Area countries and Switzerland, to recruit from elsewhere.
- In an effort to boost Sweden's birthrate, the Christian Democrats are considering a proposal that would pay families 10,000 kronor (\$1,085) for every newborn child. According to figures from Statistics Sweden (SCB), 109,301 children were born in Sweden last year. But the Christian Democrats want to see that number increase.
- An increasing share of Sweden's vacation homes are owned by foreigners, according to new statistics. Counties with a large percentage of foreign-owned holiday homes include Värmland County, in western Sweden (20 percent), and Jönköping County, in southern Sweden (14 percent).
- Swedes in favor of joining the euro zone now outnumber those against, for the first time, a new survey indicates. The survey shows that opposition to the euro is largest in the north and lowest in the south with women more negative than men.
- The Swedish government has announced the launch of a performance-related bonus for immigrants pursuing state-funded language courses. The bonus is designed to encourage students of Swedish for Immigrants (*Svenska för Invandrare* - SFI) courses to complete their studies faster.

Trevlig Sommar!
(Happy Summer!)

Swedish Excellence Endowment scholarship recipients write about their experiences

Carrin Patman does a great job keeping us informed about the Swedish Excellence Endowment at The University of Texas, which offers aid to UT students who study in Sweden. Applicants from all academic disciplines may apply for the scholarship, which can be used for study or research in any academic field. Knowledge of Swedish is not required. For more information contact Study Abroad Advisor Laura Bayne at 512-471-8855, laura@austin.utexas.edu or Jesse Damon at 512-471-0209, jdamon@austin.utexas.edu.

Carrin shares letters written by some recent scholarship recipients:

Kit Yuen, Microbiology major at UT, wrote, "I studied microbiology in Uppsala, Sweden, in spring 2007. Being there on my own and overcoming the challenges helped to build my confidence, and of course gave me much more to talk about during job interviews.

"The school takes good care of exchange students. A group called Cambius organizes activities, and they assign you a buddy to help you with your needs. Some classes are especially designed to help you understand the region. You may know more about local culture than some of the Swedes after those classes and activities!"

Daniel Cornforth, (Mathematics) said, "I am very glad I decided to study in Uppsala, Sweden. My stay has given me some very different perspectives on many things. It's fascinating how Sweden differs in social policy from the US and to see how the country, which functions so differently from our own, manages. I have a better appreciation for all sorts of perspectives outside that of the US and have learned much about Swedish traditions, history, and culture."

Stephanie Eilers, (Public Relations) wrote, "I would not change a thing about my time here—I would live out of a box as long as it was from IKEA and stationed in Uppsala! I have seen things that I never quite pictured myself actually doing and seeing. I remember sitting at the Swedish Endowment dinner when you read us an e-mail from an exchange student who had visited the Ice Hotel and seen the Northern Lights. At that time, I really became jealous of that student. I wanted his life, to be able to say I have done those things. And now I have!"

Spotlight on The Swedish American Center in Karlstad

from Swedish Council of America's
April 2009 eUPDATE

Emigrantregistret/Kinship Center was founded in Karlstad, Sweden, in 1960 and thus will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year. The celebration will happen under a new name: The Swedish American Center. The name change undoubtedly prompts the question: Why? Governor Eva Eriksson, chair of the board, answers, "It is simply the case of institutional development. When *Emigrantregistret* was established, its first operational tasks were to gather information on the emigrants, compile registers and put all of this at the disposal of researchers. Now we are entering a new phase for more outwardly-directed operations with exhibits, lectures and other programs. In that light, the name *Emigrantregistret* is inadequate for describing what we do."

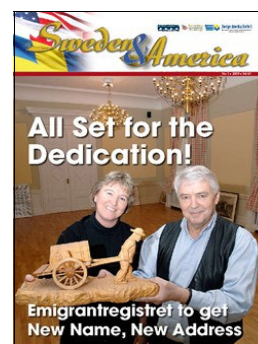
Erik Gustavson, director of The Swedish American Center, emphasizes that it does not solely focus on past history: "This is a meeting place for history, the present and the future." Gustavson continues, "The Swedish American Center is to be an enriching meeting place for researchers, genealogists, travelers to or from North America, business people and many others."

H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia attended the dedication of The Swedish American Center and the opening of the first exhibit, The Värmland Gift, on April 1, 2009. Gustavson says, "It is great fun that we can display The Värmland Gift in Karlstad. We are grateful to the American Swedish Institute for sending the exhibit home for a visit!" The Värmland Gift is comprised of folk art items, iron goods, wooden handicrafts, textile art, portraits and paintings, books, and numerous other items donated in 1952 by communities throughout Värmland to the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

For more information about The Swedish American Center visit www.swedenamerica.se. To view a slide show highlighting the history of connection between Värmland and North America, including selected images of The Värmland Gift, visit www.swedishcouncil.org.

Swedish Council of America publishes new magazine

The Swedish Council of America (SCA) is pleased to announce the rebirth of "Sweden & America," a joint quarterly publication of SCA and The Swedish American Center in Karlstad, Sweden. The intention is to reflect persons, places and events in the common history, and to preserve and strengthen the ties between Sweden and America.



The first issue (March 2009) featured articles on

- * the House of Sweden - Sweden's Embassy in Washington DC
- * The Swedish American Center
- * genealogy research tips
- * a friendship across the ocean

To receive a copy of the March 2009 issue, send your name and address along with a check for \$4 to Swedish Council of America, 2600 Park Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55407.

The annual subscription rate for four issues is only \$16. For more information on subscribing to the magazine, visit www.swedishcouncil.org/magazine/subscription.aspx.

Places to go and things to see . . .

New York, NY - The site-specific installation *Projects 89* by Swedish artist Klara Lidén is on display at Museum of Modern Art through June 8. Lidén creates architectural interventions and installations by cannibalizing existing structures and materials, such as cardboard, metal, drywall, wood, and carpet remnants. With a spirit of activism and rebellion, she rethinks the places we inhabit and builds spaces that deviate from their normal functions. In addition, she makes videos that challenge accepted codes of behavior. Brimming with physical intensity and ferocity, Lidén performs illicit acts for the camera, from the methodical destruction of a bicycle to an eccentric dance on a crowded Stockholm commuter train. Read more at www.moma.org.

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SWEDISH CLUB NEWS

The Swedish Club News is published 6 times a year by the Swedish Club of Houston. Articles, photos, etc., are welcome. We would especially like personal news of our members, explanation of family traditions and Swedish

culture, news of Swedes and of Sweden, and your favorite Swedish shops, products or resources.

Please send news to newsletter@swedishclub.org or by post to the return address below.

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