

# VIKING VISTA

March 2015

San Diego, California

## Balboa Park Centennial

As Balboa Park celebrates 100 years of existence, the House of Sweden and other international cottages are joining the festivities with more activities and increased hours of operation. In recent years, the city of San Diego -- along with Balboa Park and the House of Pacific Relations -- has asked the cottages to be more available to the public.

Now that 2015 has arrived and the park's year-long birthday party is underway, most cottages are open on Saturdays, the fourth Tuesday each month and will be open on Thursday evenings during the summer. For the first time, the park's annual Ethnic Food Fair is a two-day event set this year for Saturday May 23 and Sunday May 24. In addition, each cottage must be open for the entire week leading up to its lawn program.

That means the House of Sweden will be open Monday June 15 through Saturday June 20 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. A presentation highlighting Swedish culture, language and customs will occur each of those days. For example, the House of Sweden's "Pysselgruppen" will show their handcrafts skills and creations and answer questions on Tuesday June 16. The grand finale will be the House of Sweden's Midsummer festival and Maypole, or Majstang, dancing on Sunday June 21.



The city of San Diego's new rules for expanded hours during 2015 puts volunteerism to the test. For many years, the international cottages were required to be open only on Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. While the push to make the cottages more accessible to the public stretches the resources of nonprofit organizations, it is a chance to connect with people, recruit new members and talk about Sweden and all things Swedish.

Please get involved and go to [www.houseofsweden.us](http://www.houseofsweden.us) to help the House of Sweden with its educational and cultural outreach to the community.

An extra event marking Balboa Park's centennial is "Hospitality Day," set for Saturday June 20 at the San Diego Fair Ground in Del Mar. Operating from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., "Hospitality Day" will recreate the Pan American Exposition of 1915. The city of San Diego has asked volunteers of the international cottages to wear costumes and work in booths representing their countries. Volunteers will serve food and beverages and give away maps and information about their respective countries. Volunteers will be given free entrance and free parking.

## Letter from VIKING VISTA's New Editor

If you attend the monthly membership meetings, some of you might recognize or even know me. During my first House of Sweden meeting nearly five years ago, I volunteered to serve as recording secretary.

To repeat a cliché: The rest, they say, is history. Several weeks ago, the house voted to hire me as editor responsible for creating monthly calendars and quarterly newsletters. I don't speak Swedish; but as one might guess from my last name, Hagstrom, I am Swedish on my father's side. Before joining the house in 2010, I had traveled to Sweden twice to visit friends in Uppsala and do family-tree research in Stockholm's archives. My great-great grandfather, Gustaf Hagstrom, was a shoemaker who lived and worked on the Adam and Eve block of Drottningatan, now a pedestrian-only shopping street in



Stockholm. Although the original buildings no longer exist, there are several shoe stores nearby.

Gustaf Hagstrom got married and baptized all of his children in Klara Kyrka, which is near Drottningatan and Stockholm's train station. (One of his sons immigrated to Boston in the late 1800s, which is why I am here several generations later.)

During my 2010 visit, I decided to attend mass at Klara Kyrka on my birthday, which happened to be Sunday February 7. As luck would have it, the King and Queen of Sweden attended the same service! The queen likes Klara Kyrka's outreach to Stockholm's immigrant and underprivileged community, so she persuaded the king to accompany her to

mass. The royal couple rarely attends church outside their palace.

Because I don't speak Swedish, I sat in the section where volunteers provided translation in English and Farsi. Consequently, I had a great view of Sweden's king and queen! (They are seated in the photo above.)

I felt as though the stars had aligned themselves in my favor and that the universe was smiling at me.

My research in Stockholm's archives revealed that my chances of finding a living relative in Sweden were remote. Nearly all of the shoemaker's children either never married, got married but didn't have children, or had children who never married.

When I was a child growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1960s, many people found it odd that I was an only child. Little did they know that my both of my parents are also only children.

Learning about the shoemaker's family made me smile. I wasn't unusual at all. I was similar to his children. Like many of my great-great uncles and my great-great aunts, I never married or had children. To repeat yet another cliché: They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

The shoemaker's father-in-law also was a shoemaker, who had moved to Stockholm from Visby in the late 1700s. The archives in Visby sent me a copy of my great-great-great grandfather's birth record in the mail. It showed that his parents had worked as caretakers of the church in Sanda during the mid-1700s. (Sanda and Visby are in Gotland, a large Swedish island in the Baltic Sea.)

For the past five years, I have dreamed of seeing this church and resuming my family-tree research in Visby's archives. I realized both dreams recently, after flying to Stockholm on Christmas Day! I attended the Epiphany mass at Sanda parish on January 6. (This is when the three kings arrived to Bethlehem with their gifts for baby Jesus.)



The following day I went to Visby's archives, where to my astonishment two dedicated researchers had managed to find a living relative! My distant cousin is: Britt Svea Margareta Sigren Sandsjo, age 41, a happily married mother with two children. Britt works for Forsakringskassan, a Swedish government agency in Visby. Our common ancestors are the couple who looked after Sanda parish. (In the photo above Britt is on the left, and I am on the right.)

My meeting Britt in person resulted from a lot of hard work, a little luck and a big coincidence. I was speechless. Details about this remarkable genealogical find are on the archive's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/riksarkivet.landsarkivet.visby/posts/426265227537036>

Based on my prior research in Stockholm, I arrived to Gotland with no expectations of identifying -- much less talking to -- a 21st century Swedish relative. I left Gotland and Sweden on cloud nine, and I'm still floating in midair. I feel as though the stars have aligned themselves in my favor and that the universe is smiling at me.

## Scandinavian Festival 2015

Touted as one of the largest events of its kind in the western United States, Scandinavian Festival is set for Saturday April 18 and Sunday April 19 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The two-day celebration of Nordic music, history, food, dancing, games, languages and crafts takes place at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks.

Exhibits include authentic representations of ancient Viking and present-day Sami villages. The Sami are a nomadic people who tend reindeer in the Arctic regions of Scandinavia. Diplomats from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden usually attend Scanfest.

Activities for children range from puppet shows to “hands-on” arts-and-crafts workshops. Entertainers include the tribute band ABBA Girlz, comic and concert pianist Magnus Martensson, folksinger Ann-Marita and indie band The Evening Guests.



California Lutheran University and the nearby Scandinavian American Cultural and Historical Foundation sponsor the festival, which includes academic lectures as well as family fun. The cost is \$10 per adult and \$5 per child. However, there is a way to buy tickets at a discount via the [www.scalscanfest.org](http://www.scalscanfest.org) Web site.

The very first “Scanfest” in 1974 attracted about 600 people to the university’s then modest gymnasium. Forty-one years later the festival encompasses the entire campus -- drawing more than 8,000 visitors a year.

More information about the event is available on [www.scandinaviancenter.org](http://www.scandinaviancenter.org)

## **Bob Swanson's Contribution: Sweden vs. Russia**

While most of world attention is focused on the Middle East and Ukraine, there is also a bit of an increase of saber rattling in the Baltic. At intervals of a month or so for the last few years, Russian planes have carried out simulated attacks on targets in Poland, the Baltic states, and Swedish targets such as Öland, Gotland and Stockholm. A typical foray consists of a pair of Tu-22M3 Backfire heavy bombers, capable of carrying cruise missiles and nuclear weapons, and their four Su-27 Flanker fighter escorts. Each incursion is met by Swedish Gripen fighters launched to track and monitor the mission. This sort of activity was formerly carried on during the Cold War, but had ceased in 1992.

In a recent interview, acting Flight Tactical Commander Anders Persson said: “We are now seeing an increased activity of Russian strategic bombers in the area. Of course we have to follow developments and see where they’re going and what they’re doing ... I think the purpose was to practice various types of attacks as well as highlight the Russian presence in the southern Baltic ... The difference is that when we practice, we do it together with a nation, we do not practice on any target in any nation without the country being involved in the exercise. The Russian behavior is far more aggressive in their exercises.”

Russian incursions have not been limited to aircraft. No one can forget October 1981, when the Russian submarine U-137 ran aground in the Karlskrona archipelago 30 km east of the Swedish naval base at Karlskrona. The submarine was discovered by a fisherman, who reported his finding to an astonished Swedish Navy. The Swedish news media went wild. After much investigation and interrogation by the Swedish government, the crew and submarine were returned to Russia. Since then there have been sightings, real or imaginary, about once per year culminating in October 2014 when radio intercepts and two Russian ships in the Stockholm archipelago brought the Swedish Navy out in force to scour the area. No submarine was found, although it is believed that a submarine had encountered some sort of problem and then left the area. This continuing activity inspired author Henning Markell to write a Kurt Wallander novel titled “The Troubled Man” based on the 1982-83 events.

A Swedish government official recently stated “The Russians are deliberately trying to undermine the confidence of our armed forces”. That might be a possibility. Since the end of the Cold War, the Swedish Air Force has scaled back by 70%, the Navy by 80%. The army has been reduced by 90%, from approximately a half million soldiers to 50,000 troops. According to a 2013 poll, only 6% of Swedes believe their country can defend itself. While Sweden’s center-left government opposes NATO membership, for the first time more Swedes favor, rather than oppose, joining the organization.

Sweden is currently in the European Union and, while not a member of NATO, has participated in naval exercises with NATO countries. Concurrent with the downsizing of the Swedish military, major parts of Swedish arms manufacturers such as Hägglund, Saab, and Bofors have been acquired by the British arms conglomerate BAE Systems.

## More News and Upcoming Events

### Who is Bob Swanson?

Bob Swanson has been a member of Scandinavian Lodge 667 in San Diego for the past 20 years. His "Bob's Page" columns, which are written for the lodge, are often reprinted by other Scandinavian organizations. Bob works for the University of California San Diego as a professor and researcher specializing in high energy nuclear physics.

### Traditional Swedish Dinner

Scandinavian Lodge No. 667 is hosting a pea soup dinner Saturday March 28 at 5 p.m. The annual event will be held at La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center, 8450 La Mesa Blvd. The cost is \$10 a person. Contact Carol Thompson at [scandinavianlodge667@cox.net](mailto:scandinavianlodge667@cox.net) or 760-940-0731 by March 23 to make reservations.

### Eggsexa

The House of Sweden's Eggsexa Easter Luncheon occurs Saturday April 4 at 11:30 a.m. Seating will be limited to about 40 people because bagpipers will perform on stage to celebrate San Diego's Tartan Day. The cost is \$10 a person or a covered dish that serves six to 10 people. Board member Louisa Harbage is organizing the food, and vice president John Pettit is collecting the money. Eggsexa features a hat contest.

### Easter Service in San Pedro

The Church of Sweden in Los Angeles and the Norwegian Seamen's Church will have a joint Easter service on Sunday April 5, 11 a.m. at the Norwegian Seamen's Church, 1035 S. Beacon St., San Pedro. The service will be conducted in Swedish and Norwegian.

**Walpurgisnacht/Valborgsmassoafton**  
Scandinavian Lodge No. 667 will begin celebrating Walpurgis at 3 p.m. Saturday April 25 at the northwest end of De Anza Cove at Mission Bay Park. Bring drinks, dinner, a covered dish to share and a chair and some firewood for the bonfire!

Predating Christianity, Walpurgis welcomes the arrival of spring in Scandinavia, Germany and the Baltic countries. Ceremonial fires were intended to ward off evil spirits. At some point, Saint Walpurga, an English missionary, was linked to the pagan celebration. Many modern-day gatherings include choral music and church hymns.

Although the event is universally known as Walpurgis or Walpurgisnacht, the equivalent Swedish words are Valborg and Valborgsmassoafton.



### Passport Renewal

The Swedish Consulate will provide a mobile passport station at its San Diego office on Monday October 19 and Tuesday October 20. This service, available by appointment only, will enable Swedish citizens to renew their passports. To make an appointment, contact Vice Consul Katarina Keane at [sandiego@consulateofsweden.org](mailto:sandiego@consulateofsweden.org) or 619-209-6170.