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## SONS OF NORWAY BERNT BALCHEN LODGE – PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

### Saint Lucia’s Day: A Victory for Light in Winter’s Dark Gloom



On Sunday, December 10th, 2017, starting at 3:00 p.m. Bernt Balchen Lodge will host its very own Saint Lucia’s Day Celebration. What is that you may ask? Why are a bunch of Norwegians and other Scandinavians celebrating an Italian Saint who died in the 4th century AD? Mostly-Lutheran Scandinavians usually pay little attention to the other saints of the Christian pantheon.

Even odder, this Christmas-season event involves the solemn singing of an Italian

Neapolitan tune entitled “Santa Lucia”. There is a mystery here and I tried to solve it, but it is a deep one and I think I was only partially successful in untangling the strands of the Lucia story, especially its connections to ancient pagan Scandinavian beliefs and practices.

Although it has deep roots in the Scandinavian past, the celebration of Saint Lucia is a relatively recent tradition in Scandinavia, one that only can be traced back to the middle of the 18th century. The first recorded celebration of Saint Lucia’s Day is from a manor house located in Västergötland, a province of west-central Sweden. On December 13th of 1764 the oldest daughter of the house rose up early and donned a crown of lingonberry branches complete with nine burning candles and a white shift with a red sash. She then went from room to room bringing morning greetings and breakfast to the members of the household and then going out to the barn to feed the animals as well. For many years it remained a local Christmas custom and was unknown to most Swedes until 1893 when the celebration of Saint Lucia was featured in a public performance at the famous Skansen open-air folk museum. Soon thereafter many Swedish families began their own observance of Saint Lucia’s Day, but at first it remained a family affair where the oldest daughter brought coffee and sweet buns called lussekatter (“light cats” [S-shaped saffron buns]) to the members of her family. In 1924 a Swedish musician wrote Swedish lyrics to an early nineteenth century Neapolitan tune about Saint Lucia and singing the Swedish version this song became another tradition associated with Saint Lucia’s Day.

In 1927 a Stockholm newspaper held a public contest to choose a city-wide Lucia plus her attendants and the celebration of Saint Lucia’s Day moved from the family home to every school, village, town, and city in the country including those in Swedish-speaking areas of Finland. Denmark did not embrace Saint Lucia’s Day until 1944 when it was promoted as a way “to bring light in a time of darkness” during the German occupation. Norway only began to observe Saint Lucia’s Day after World War II, and like Sweden and Denmark, it wrote its own unique lyrics to accompany the original Neapolitan Santa Lucia tune.

Today Saint Lucia’s Day, with some minor variations, is celebrated by holding a procession led by the “Lucia”, the lussebrud (Lucy Bride) in Swedish, who wears a crown of lingonberry branches fitted out with four to nine upright lit candles and a white gown with a red, often satin, sash around her waist. The white gown is supposed to symbolize the virginity of Saint Lucia and the red sash the blood of her martyrdom.



*President’s Message continues on Page 2, 3*

## Santa Lucia

*President's Message continues from Page 1*

Carrying a single candle she leads a procession of similarly white-clad and sashed girls, also carrying single candles, who represent her attendants. Joining with the girls in the procession are boys with tall conical hats and wands with stars at their end; these are the star boys or magi. Many processions also include tomten (Swedish for elves) or jule nisser (Norwegian Christmas elves). During the procession "Lucia" and her retinue sing the song "Santa Lucia". After the end of the procession "Lucia" leads the attendants, star boys, tomten or nisser in other songs, usually Christmas carols and songs about Saint Stephen which are sometimes initiated by the star boys. Following the opening procession, "Lucia" and her followers often visit retirement homes, senior care centers, and hospitals to cheer the inhabitants and give out lussekatter buns and pepper cookies.



So what are the deep roots of this relatively new celebration in the Scandinavian past? First, it is important to note the date of Saint Lucia Day. It is December 13th, which in the Medieval Julian Calendar was considered the shortest day of the year and thus viewed as the day of the solstice, a dark and dangerous time when the Scandinavians of old thought the sun actually stopped its annual circuit of the heavens. In this in-between time awful things could happen and demons, gnomes, trolls, and spirits of the dead roamed the earth often snatching people who dared to go outside or chose to work on the first day of the holy Christmas Season. This hoard of evil beings was led by the enchantress Lussi who had the ability to fly down chimneys and whisk away bad children. Until well into the nineteenth century Norwegians would hide away in their houses on the night of December 13th and paint crosses on their doors. If they could afford them, they also lit candles

throughout the night to ward off the lussiferda (Lussi's hoard of followers). In Sweden, villagers often held torchlight parades and then set massive bonfires to discourage Lussi and her band from descending on their houses. According to Professor Kathleen Stokker, author of *Keeping Christmas: Yuletide Traditions in Norway and the New Land*, one of the original symbolic functions of Lucia's halo of lights was to scare away any evil demons that may have entered the house prior to the morning of December 13th.

Well before the celebration of Saint Lucia became the vogue in Sweden it was common for groups of children and young people to go from house to house as lussegubbe on the night of December 13th, in a more benign embodiment of the more fearsome lussiferda. They would sing songs in return for treats, and if old enough, a draft of aquavit.

Some scholars believe that the celebration of Saint Lucia Day may have its origins in Norse pagan conceptions of the struggle between light and darkness. One nineteenth century Lutheran pastor suggested that Saint Lucia was really Freya, the Norse goddess "dressed up" as a Christian saint. Freya used to cross the heavens in a chariot pulled by two blue cats which might explain why the Saint Lucia Day buns are called lussekatter (light cats) and why the two raisins placed on these S-shaped buns look like eyes on a cat's face. As a goddess she was associated with cats and also light. She was thought to ignite the Northern Lights when she took her cat-drawn chariot out at night. Freya was also the owner of the famed magical necklace called Brisingamen which represented fire and shone like the sun. Freya was known as the "shining bride of the gods". Others link the Saint Lucia celebration to the ancient worship of Frigg, the wife of Odin, who some believe was perhaps just another personification of Freya. Frigg could both foresee the future as well as change the fates of mankind with her spindle and spinning wheel and she gave birth to Balder, who was the Norse god of light. There is some speculation that the legend of lussi and her band of demons represents a Medieval Christian inversion of the story of Freya/ Frigg and their companion gods.

No matter the exact sources of the celebration's ancestral roots, Saint Lucia's Day in present-day Scandinavia is less about worship of Saint Lucia of old Italy; but more about the ancient and continued Scandinavian obsession with light and dark in the depths of winter.

*President's Message continues on Page 3*

## Lighting the Darkness

*President's Message continues from Page 2*

Both the Swedish and Norwegian opening verses of Santa Lucia the song confirm this emphasis on matters of light and dark.

Here is a translation of the first verses of the Swedish version of the song.

*Night walks with a heavy step*

*Round yard and hearth*

*As sun departs from earth*

*Shadows are brooding*

*There in our dark house*

*Walking with lit candles*

*Santa Lucia! Santa Lucia!*

The same theme of a foreboding darkness lit up by Lucia's halo of candles is also found in the first lines of the Norwegian version of the Santa Lucia song.

*Black night is falling in stalls and homes*

*The sun has gone away, the shadows are threatening*

*Into our dark house enters with lit candles*

*Santa Lucia! Santa Lucia!*



*All Photos courtesy of Ruth Kvernplassen*

What is clear from the lyrics of these songs is that Saint Lucia has been adopted by Scandinavians as the personification of the light that wards off the enveloping darkness of winter in Northern Europe and she gives hope for the sun's rebirth after the passing of the longest night of the calendar year. Lucia's name means "the luminous" or "of the light" and given her official saintly virtues and abilities she is the perfect saint for the job in a Christian Scandinavian world; a job that may have been once been filled in more ancient times by her pagan predecessors Freya and/or Frigg. Santa Lucia's Day on December 13th is a celebration of life and light that illuminates the dark gloom of the Scandinavian winter and gives delight to both children and adults as a joyful gateway to the Christmas Season.

Though we celebrate Saint Lucia's Day on the 10th of December rather than on the official day of December 13th this year, come to Bernt Balchen Lodge at 3:00 p.m. and sweep away the gloom of Alaska's dark winter for a family-oriented event complete with Scandinavian-style sandwiches and gløgg, the Vikings' pleasure.

*Fraternally yours, Terje "Ted" Birkedal*

*President, Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge*



## SUNSHINE REPORT



*Greetings are sent to the following members celebrating a birthday who are at least 75 years young.*

### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

*"Happy Birthday!"*



John Barstad  
Eva Bilet  
Louis Gjosund

Carolyn Korman  
Wallace Smith  
Barbara Stinson

Anstice Tibor  
James Tibor  
Carl Pearson



If you know someone who needs a little sunshine - Please call 696-0725 (cell - 862-1143)  
or email Cindy McDowell: [ccmcd38@hotmail.com](mailto:ccmcd38@hotmail.com)

*"Gratulerer med dagen!"*

# Sons of Norway Lucia Christmas Celebration

*The Lucia Committee welcomes all Bernt Balchen Lodge members to our upcoming Lucia Christmas program on December 10th.*

Santa Lucia, or Saint Lucy's Day, is the subject of this month's President's Message and is a fascinating read.

The Lucia tradition at the Bernt Balchen Lodge celebrates our Scandinavian heritage through music, food, and language. It is one of the most popular events at the lodge. Children learn and sing Norwegian and Swedish songs, often accompanied by harp and piano. Families are treated to a talent show, singing around the Christmas tree, and enjoying authentic Scandinavian rice pudding, open-faced sandwiches, and desserts. Santa Claus makes a special appearance at this event and hands out goodies to all attending children.

This year's Lucia is Emma Katherine Clark (pictured center in photo) is the daughter of Nancy and Bret Clark and granddaughter of Mickey Andrew. She will lead the Lucia procession and represent Bernt Balchen Lodge.



Final Lucia Rehearsal is  
Sunday, December 3rd  
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

## VOLUNTEERING:

*The Lucia Committee is seeking volunteers to help in any way during the Christmas program. From making sandwiches to pouring glogg to cutting spruce boughs,*

*there are many opportunities for supporting this fun family-focused event. For more information, contact Crystal Enkvist at 907-245-0495 or [crystal\\_enkvist@hotmail.com](mailto:crystal_enkvist@hotmail.com). Takk for hjelpen!*

*This event has become a tradition in many local Scandinavian families, and we hope that you will make time for this event on your calendar this year, too.*



*Karin Childers and Crystal Enkvist  
Lucia Committee Acting Co-Chairs*

*All photos courtesy of Urban Enkvist*

## SCANDINAVIAN BAND WEAVING GROUP

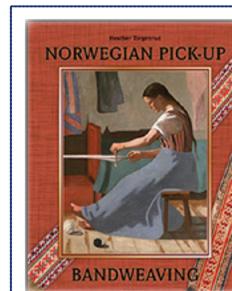
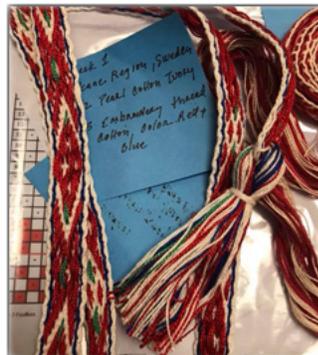


This workshop was led by members of the *Anchorage Weavers & Spinners Guild* and followed the online workshop run by Susan Foulkes through the *Braid Society*. They have an online Yahoo discussion group, Braids and Bands, that is free to join.

The workshop at Bernt Balchen Lodge was only scheduled to meet for four times, but there seems to be interest in scheduling more get-togethers. For beginners, mercerized cotton thread was mainly used. Both organizations mentioned would

be able to recommend the best places to get wool for band weaving.

If you are interested call the lodge at 349-1613 and they will contact the Cultural Director, Christie Ericson.



*Norwegian Pick-Up Bandweaving* by Heather Torgrenrud, is recommended for those interested in the history of Norwegian Band Weaving.

All photos courtesy of Christie Ericson, excluding the *Norwegian Pick-up Bandweaving* book cover.

## Tusen Takk to the Lutefisk and Lefse Team

A huge thanks to everyone that helped make this year's lutefisk and lefse dinner a great success again. We could not do this event without the help of so many. We had over 250 guests for dinner this year and we invested well over 300 hours of volunteer time in putting the event together. A big thanks to the lefse king and queen, Ted and Anna, for getting all of those rollers in the kitchen for two weekends of fun. We now have enough lefse for the remaining two holiday events as well. And thanks to everyone that helped with meatball rolling too.



If you have not yet tried a meatball inside of a lefse, perhaps you need to join the meatball rolling team next year as we always have to sample the goods before we can serve them. And special thanks to everyone that helped on the big night itself – we could not have a better crew of folks to help out and I was especially pleased to see some of our brand new members assist this year, including some that just joined the lodge this past month (Jan, John, Land, Brandon, Lina and Mimsy – way to go!). Patrick and I have a great time putting this event on for the lodge thanks to the great help from everyone that pitches in to help out. Consider helping out at an upcoming event, you might enjoy it!



*Tom Falskow and  
Patrick McCormick  
Lutefisk dinner co-chairs*



*All Photos Courtesy of Christie Ericson.  
Thanks Christie!*



## Sons of Norway District 2 Youth Camps

### *Greetings from District 2!*

*As the temperatures continue to drop, it may be hard to think of summer but it will come!*

*And it is not too early to get ready for summer by getting out the word about District 2 summer youth camps and scholarship opportunities!*

The Sofie/Olson Scholarship is available for children who attend our District Two Youth camps. One scholarship is awarded to an attendee at each of our camps: Nidaros, Normanna, and Trollhaugen. Eligibility is restricted to the children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces, and nephews of current District Two members of Sons of Norway and been accepted to the camp of their choice. A scholarship application with guidelines will be mailed to each camper. The complicated application must be postmarked no later than April 15th, 2018.

The Draxten Memorial Scholarship is awarded to many of our children attending the District Two youth camps. To be eligible, campers must have applied and been accepted to the camp of their choice AND they must have been awarded a camp scholarship from their local lodge. The Draxten Memorial Fund will grant an amount up to, but not exceeding, the amount given by the local lodge. This is a partially matching scholarship with awards generally ranging from \$50 to \$100. If your lodge does not have a large scholarship fund, please do not let that stop you from awarding what you can. Lodge camp scholarships have ranged from \$50 - \$300 in recent years. The lodge awarding the initial scholarship must notify the Youth Director of the recipient's name and the amount given by April 30th, 2018, which means that lodges must select scholarships no later than early April, Please let the District 2 Youth Director know if you have not awarded them yet and when you will do so.

### **Important Dates to Remember (all in 2018):**

- January 30th Deadline for giving name/contact info lodge scholarship coordinator to District 2 Youth Director.
- February 14 Youth camp registration forms must not be postmarked prior to this date.
- Upon receipt Youth Camp Registrars mail campers confirmations and scholarship applications.
- April 15 Deadline for campers to mail applications for the Sofie/Olson Scholarship.
- April 30 Deadline for lodges to notify Youth Director of the names of recipients of lodge camp scholarships, the camps they will attend and amounts awarded to be eligible for funds from the Draxten.
- May 15 Deadline for local lodge scholarship checks to be received by Youth Camp Registrars – Please do not mail checks to campers!
- May 31 Youth Camp Registrars mail final camper packets with statements reflecting balance due after all scholarships are received.
- June 10 Deadline for Youth Camp Registrars to receive full balance of fees

Watch for more information in future *Flyers* or contact the Youth Director at 971-284-4175 or [norseherodotus@hotmail.com](mailto:norseherodotus@hotmail.com) if you have any questions.

*Fraternally yours, David Champion – Youth Director & Scholarship Committee Chair, District 2 Sons of Norway*

**SUPERBOWL  
Raffle  
TICKET**

### *Super Bowl Raffle - 2018 Scholarship Fund-raiser*

***It's that time of year again!*** Ticket sales for the Sons of Norway 2018 Super Bowl Raffle are now underway. The raffle is the primary source of funds for the Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge No. 2-046 Language/ Heritage/Higher Education Scholarships.

The Raffle will again have 20 winners with a top prize of \$1,000. Only 300 tickets are sold so the chance to win is very generous, one in fifteen. Tickets are selling for \$25 each or a special deal of 5-for-\$100. Your ticket also entitles you to a free Lapskaus (Norwegian stew) dinner during the showing of the Super Bowl 51 game on a big-screen TV at Viking Hall on Sunday, February 4, 2018.

*To purchase raffle tickets please contact the Lodge at: 349-1613*

*Tickets will also be available during Lodge events and at Viking Hall office.*

## DITT og DATT!

### Welcome, New Members!

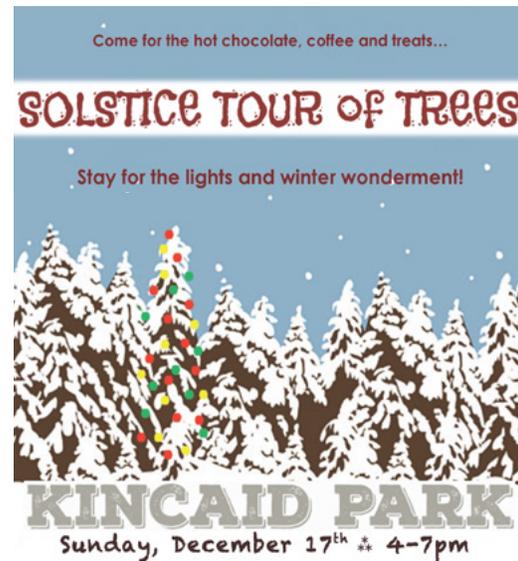
Karen A Atherton  
 Janice Lynn Hallin  
 John Eric Hallin  
 Janice M Halvorson  
 Land Hayward  
 Erik Jones  
 Brian Lervold  
 Brandon J Porter  
 Liv Lunde Ramos  
 Lina Tesikameron  
 Erica Viens  
 Mimzy Wellberg

### Kongens Nei/The King's Choice

Our cultural director Christie Ericson contacted the Bear Tooth theater to see if they had any plans to show the Kongens Nei/The King's Choice film or if they knew about it. There is a lot of interest in this film from the Scandinavian community here in Anchorage. They didn't have any plans to show it, but after hearing about it and looking into it, they agreed that it looked good, and it sounds like they are going to try to get it. They said they probably wouldn't be able to show it until the end of December or January. The DVD is slated to be released to the U.S. in late December as well. Stay tuned for more information.



### Solstice Tour and Opportunity to Help!



The Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage brings you the Second Annual Solstice Tree Tour: A unique Alaskan celebration of Winter Solstice! As a northern community, we love that this event encourages all ages and abilities to get outside and celebrate the winter solstice. The event is a tour of the trees along the first 2.5 k of the Mize Loop. Local businesses sponsor trees along the route and can decorate them to create a winter wonderland along one of the most well-loved trails at Kincaid.

*For one time only, NSAA will permit people to walk as well as ski on the groomed trails which will increase participant traffic.* Kaladi Brothers will provide hot chocolate and coffee and volunteers will provide snacks along the way. This is a very popular, family friendly event for all ages and levels of fitness.

If you would like to be involved or have any questions, contact the NSAA at <https://www.anchoragenordicski.com/solstice-tree-tour/> or email Sara Miller at [aksaramiller@gmail.com](mailto:aksaramiller@gmail.com).

### Birthday Open House for Charles Brodahl!

Please join Charles Brodahl for his 95th Birthday!

Sunday, January 7, 2018.

Open house from 12:30 - 3:30 pm at 1321 Bannister Drive





**Sons of Norway**  
 8141 Briarwood St.  
 Anchorage, AK 99518  
 907-349-1613

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Our lodge continues to donate canned goods, non-perishable foods and money to the local food bank.

Please bring your food or monetary donation in to Viking Hall.

*Please consider helping those who are less fortunate.*

## EVENTS FOR DECEMBER

<b>3rd</b>	<b>5th</b>	<b>10th</b>	<b>14th</b>	<b>19th</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>
11:00 am - 2 pm	10:00 am	3:00 - 6:00 pm	7:00 pm	10:00 am
<b><u>Nordic Christmas Brunch</u></b>	<b><u>Needle Crafts and Rosemaling</u></b>	<b><u>Lucia Family Christmas Party</u></b>	<b><u>Board and Membership Meeting</u></b>	<b><u>Needle Crafts and Rosemaling</u></b>
4 pm				
<b><u>Final Lucia Practice</u></b>				

# NORDIC BRUNCH!

*The Nordic Brunch will be held  
 December 3rd from 11:00 am to 2:00 p.m.*

If you are willing to contribute an entrée and/or willing to help with the event please email Merlin Hamre at:

[mhamre@acsalaska.net](mailto:mhamre@acsalaska.net)

### COST:

\$25.00 for adults • \$15.00 for age 12 to 18  
 \$5.00 for ages 6 to 11 • Free for ages 5 or less.

349-1613 For Reservations

All events take place at Viking Hall, 8141 Briarwood St., unless otherwise noted.

Please send articles or event information for the next Newsletter by December 20th to: [sonancak@gmail.com](mailto:sonancak@gmail.com) Attention - Ruth Subject Line - The Flyer