



VIKING HALL 349-1613  
www.sofnalaska.com

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desember



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**“Keeping Christmas”**

Christmas is coming up fast and we will have two big events associated the Yuletide at Viking Hall in the near future. The first will be the Nordic Christmas Brunch which will be held on Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The second event is the Lucia Christmas Party which will be held on Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Our members, like most Scandinavians, both here and in the old countries, love the Christmas Season and all the many traditions associated with this special time of year.



In my search for the practical origins of making and preparing lutefisk I was delighted to run across a wonderful book that delves deep into Norwegian Christmas traditions, both as practiced here in the United States as well as in Norway itself. The name of the book is *Keeping Christmas: Yuletide Traditions in Norway and the New Land*. The book is published by the Minnesota Historical Society and it is chuck-full of interesting facts, stories, and recipes that illustrate the long and deep relationship Norwegians have had with Christmas over the ages. The author is Kathleen Stokker who is Professor Emeritus of Scandinavian Studies at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. She is one of the two kind scholars who helped me find answers to the mysteries of lutefisk.

In the book she takes you back to the very beginnings of Christmas or *jul* in Norway. She then takes you on a fascinating journey through Christmases past to the present. And she gives attention not only to Norway’s traditions, but to those of the immigrant Norwegians to the United States whose notions of Christmas differed both by their region of origin and by the era of their immigration. Much of the book is about food and its importance to Norwegians. If you are interested in lutefisk then this is the book for you. She explains not only its value and nutritional benefits, but also the special place it holds in the lives of Norwegian-Americans. In addition, she covers most of the other foods that Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans hold dear from *ribbe* to *fattigmann*.

Professor Stokker also addresses any questions you may have about the origins of Norwegian Christmas customs like putting out the bowl of *risengrøt* for the *Julenissen*. This practice, she explains, is probably a very old one that goes back to the Viking Age when *Jul* was the time of year that the dead ancestors came back to share the bounty of the living. The *nisse* is a historic remnant of what was once called the *haugbonde* (farmer in the grave mound), *gardvord* (farm protector), or *tuftekall* (the one who first established the farm site). He was the farm’s ancestral founder and the belief was he remained its supernatural protector. To insure his continued protection, traditional Norwegian farm families honored him at Christmas with beer or porridge, and to be on the safe side often with both.

In the old days Norwegians believed that ghosts and other types of strange beings wandered about on Christmas Eve looking to do mischief and eat everything on the *julebord* (Christmas table). To counter their fear many would spread straw on the floor of the largest room in the farmhouse and all the residents of the farm, masters and servants, men and women, would sleep together for their mutual protection. Related to this fear of the supernatural on Christmas Eve is the practice of *julebukking* where adults and children dress in masks and odd clothing and go around asking for good drink and goodies, usually after Christmas Day. In the past the *julebukkers* were adults, but now the custom is most commonly reserved for children.

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

## Keeping Christmas

### President's Message continues from Page 1

The name *julebukkers*, meaning “Christmas goats”, derives from the fact that in the old days at least one of the party of *julebukkers* would wear a male goat’s head as well as a goat skin. Professor Stokker points out that this custom made it to America and it is still very popular in some Norwegian-dominated communities.

One thing I found interesting, given my interest in (but not liking for) lutefisk, was Professor Stokker’s discussion of humor and lutefisk. Jokes about lutefisk surround the eating of lutefisk in the United States. She points out this is a way for Norwegians to bond with each other as they eat their most “sacred” Norwegian dinner of the year. Participating in the joking reinforces their identity as Norwegian-Americans. Apparently, Norwegians back in the old country never developed this bantering humor over lutefisk for they never needed to make a point of their special identity in a large melting-pot nation such as the United States. You can find a great deal of this humor in Gary Legwold’s book, *The Last Word on Lutefisk: True Tales of Cod and Tradition* (Conrad Henry Press, Minneapolis, 1996). One of my favorites is a bumper sticker that says, “Lazarus loved lutefisk – both came back from the dead”.

So, if you want to know anything at all about Norwegian Christmas get Kathleen Stokker’s book, *Keeping Christmas: Yuletide Traditions in Norway and the New Land* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul, 2000). *God Jul og Godt Nytt År!*

Fraternally yours,  
Terje “Ted” Birkedal

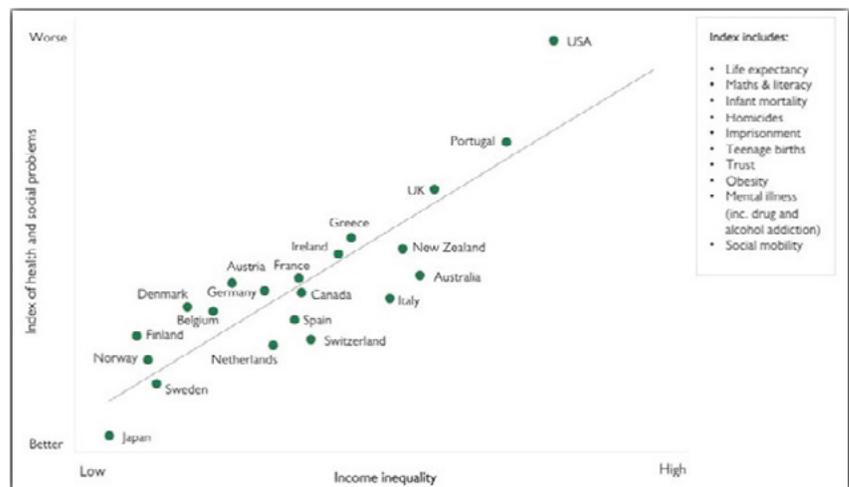
### Fra Biblioteket:



Continuing the topic of Nordic success stories, another book recently published looks at why Scandinavians have some

of the happiest people in the world and what we can all learn from the grand social experiment that they have been practicing now for several decades. George Lakey’s, “Viking Economics – How the Scandinavians Got it Right and How We Can Too”, explores the social background that not only creates a happy people, but has produced the dynamic Nordic economies that far exceed the small physical size and meager populations of these nations.

Lakey, a sociologist and visiting professor in peace and conflict studies at Swarthmore College, points out that the Nordic countries outstrip the US, UK and Canada in virtually every major social metric. Crime rates are lower, education is free, affordable childcare has empowered women, people live longer and healthier lives, and workers are paid better, are more productive, and work fewer hours. And yet the book is also quick to point out some of the real problems and contradictions that the Nordic nations continue to face. One such example being Norway’s major investments in oil and gas activities, including the Canadian tar sands projects which are considered by some to be the most environmentally damaging fossil fuel projects in the world.



His main argument is built on the real reason behind the Nordic success - a willingness to be inclusive and diverse and to develop clear and broad visions for the future that are both practical and within our reach. A world in which not each individual necessarily gets exactly what they want for themselves, but is willing to make some compromises for the good of the whole.

I recently came across a graph that perhaps explains one key part of how economics fits into the puzzle. As you can see in this graph, countries with lower income inequality tend to have better health and social metrics within their societies. You will notice that Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark all have a low level of income inequality and score as some of the best countries in terms of certain health and social indices.

## Sons of Norway Lucia 2016



*Mark your calendar for the Sons of Norway Lucia celebration scheduled for Sunday, December 11 from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the Bernt Balchen Lodge.*

*This fun holiday event for all ages features the traditional Lucia procession, a talent show, Scandinavian and American Christmas carols, dancing around the Christmas tree, and delicious holiday food prepared by lodge volunteers.*

*The Lucia Committee is pleased to announce that this year's Lucia is Miss Beth Margeson, a freshman at Steller Secondary School. Beth will lead the Lucia procession and represent the Bernt Balchen Lodge.*

Beth, almost a New Year's baby born on December 30, 2001, is thrilled and honored to follow her sister Annie, who was Lucia in 2007 and initially encouraged Beth's love of dance. She has participated in Lucia since age four. As a competitive Irish dancer, Beth just returned from Western Regional Oireachtas competitions in San Francisco. She also studies jazz, acro and tap at Barbara's School of Dance. A gifted singer, Beth performs at various public events and fundraisers.

Beth is active in the community and is generous in helping the homeless and in donating her hair for wigs for cancer patients. She is also politically active and worked to support favorite political candidates in our recent elections. She loves sports and has played soccer for a local Boys and Girls Club.

Beth is trilingual and travels internationally every year. One of her favorite trips was a Scandinavian-Russian excursion where she practiced speaking Russian and explored Russian heritage in St. Petersburg. During this trip, she enjoyed learning from Viking heritage museums in Norway. Her visit to the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo particularly impressed her with the exhibit honoring President Obama's diplomacy and peacekeeping efforts. This summer, Beth and her mom Marty Margeson, a Sister City Commissioner, will visit Whitby, England to represent Anchorage.

During the summer, Beth works with her mom in their family's downtown bed and breakfast. In her free time, she enjoys writing stories, attending Alaska City Folk camp, camping trips, and sightseeing in Alaska. However, Beth will always tell you that her favorite fun-filled trip is a trip to Disney -- in Florida, Paris, or especially Disneyland in California. She plans to go to college after high school.

The final rehearsal for this year's Lucia program is Sunday, December 4 at 4 p.m. All children (4-18) whose parents or grandparents are members of the lodge are invited to participate.

*What a wonderful way to celebrate the holidays!*

### SECOND LUCIA REHEARSAL

**Sunday, December 4, 4:00 pm at VIKING HALL**

**All interested in participating in this event please come at the appointed time.**

#### **Volunteers Needed:**

**We are looking for volunteers to serve on the Lucia Committee, or help in any way.**

**If interested call Ted Birkedal, President, Bernt Balchen Lodge,  
at (907) 351-6095 or via email at [tedbirkedal@gmail.com](mailto:tedbirkedal@gmail.com)**



## NORDIC KNITTING CONFERENCE

This fall I had the opportunity to attend the Nordic Knitting Conference at the Nordic Heritage Museum in Ballard (Seattle), WA from October 8-10. The conference brings



Samples from the Sami Knitted Mitten Techniques class with Laura Ricketts

together an amazing array of textile artists, teachers, and designers for three days of engaging workshops and lectures. The featured speakers at this year's event were Arne & Carlos (Arne Nerjordet and Carlos Zachrison), Scandinavian designers who live in Norway. Arne & Carlos are well-known for their passion for knitting and for integrating the rich heritage of Nordic knitting into their contemporary work.

As a knitter myself, I've long been drawn to traditional Scandinavian knitting design. It was fantastic to spend this time with others who shared my interests and to learn so

many new techniques--although I'm still trying to learn to knit the "Norwegian" way (or the "correct" way, as Arne calls it). In addition to the workshops and lectures, many local yarn shops had an extensive assortment of Nordic yarns for sale at the conference, many of which I had never seen before. I was like a kid in a candy shop and spent way too much money! (But it was worth it!)

More information about the 2016 conference can be found here: <https://nordicmuseum.org/knitting>

You can learn more about Arne & Carlos on their website, which also includes links to their blog and their YouTube Channel with weekly knitting tutorials: <http://arnecarlos.com/>

The 2017 Nordic Knitting Conference will be held from October 6-8, 2017. Classes fill up almost immediately, so if you're interested, make sure you sign up early when registration opens in May.

*Christie Ericson  
Cultural Director*



Rauma Finullgarn



Students in the Icelandic Lace Shawl class got to visit the Iceland room at the Museum



Nancy Bush demonstrates how to make nupps in Estonian lace



Me with Arne & Carlos



Students show off their work in Arne & Carlos's class on knitted wrist warmers.



Evelyn Clark teaching the Icelandic Lace Shawl class

*All photos courtesy  
of Christie Ericson*

## LUTEFISK AND LEFSE!!!



*All photos courtesy of Glenn Soby*

## BERNT BALCHEN LODGE ELECTION RESULTS

*Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge Elections for 2017 were held at the November 10th Board/ Membership Meeting.*

*The results are as follows:*

**Sons of Norway Officers for 2017**

President: Ted Birkedal

Vice President: Linda Bustamante

Counselor: Anna Decker

Secretary: Beverly Griffin

Recording Secretary: Anita Einarsen-Vindberg

Membership Secretary: Tom Falskow

Treasurer: Merlin Hamre

Cultural Director: Christie Ericson

Foundation Director: Marit Kristiansen

Sports Director: Martin Hansen

Marshal: Sandra Hanson

Assistant Marshal: Cindy McDowell

Trustee: Jacob Mathiesen (3-year)

Auditor: Patrick McCormick

Auditor: Tom Falskow

**Committee Chairs (Appointed by the President)**

Librarian: Tom Falskow

Newsletter Editor: Ruth Kvernplassen

Co-Publicity Director: Melinda Hansen

Co-Publicity Director: Charlotte McCay

**Newly Elected Viking Hall Board Members**

Jim Bysheim

Chuck Dunnagan

## NOVEMBER COOKING CLASS: LAPSKAUS

On November 13th, the cooking class learned how to make lapskaus, a traditional Norwegian Stew. For this month's class, Bernt Balchen Lodge President Ted Birkedal taught the class to make his mother's lapskaus recipe with pølse. Lillian Anderson also brought beef and pork versions so the class could do some "taste testing."

Ted's recipe can be found in the December 2015 newsletter (Gunhild's Lapskaus Recipe) which is also available on the Lodge website: <http://www.sofnalaska.com/newsletter/>

*For our next class we will be making a variety of holiday treats, including risgrøt, riskrem, krumkaker, and lussekatter.*

*December 4, 5:00-6:30 pm, Viking Hall, 8141 Briarwood St*

*\$20/members, \$30/non-members*

*To sign up for this class, contact Christie Ericson at (907) 602-0673.*



Chopping vegetables



Mashing the vegetables



Pølse



Pork lapskaus (Lys lapskaus)



It's not done until you do the decorative finish, just like Ted's mom used to do!



Lapskaus should be eaten with flatbrød



Beef lapskaus (Mørk lapskaus)



Teamwork

*All photos courtesy of Christie Ericson*

**SUPERBOWL**  
**Raffle**  
**TICKET**

### Super Bowl Raffle 2017 Scholarship Fundraiser

It's that time of year again! Ticket sales for the Sons of Norway 2017 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 5, 2017.

*To purchase raffle tickets please contact a member of the committee:*

John Olnes (562-2794), Sandra Hanson (243-2132), Wayne Johnson 248-3030) or Jane Moe (274-1357). Tickets will also be available during upcoming lodge events and at the Viking Hall office.



# Consul's Corner

*Information and Opportunities for Norwegian Alaskans*



## Special Opportunity for Norwegian Citizens!

Norwegian Passports will be able to be renewed in Anchorage for one day only in January, 2017.

The date will be sometime during the middle of January and has yet to be confirmed.

Due to biometric data requirements, all Norwegian Passports for citizens over the age of 12 normally need to be renewed where a biometric machine is located: in San Francisco, Houston, New York, Washington DC, or Norway.

For one day only in January, the biometric machine will be in Anchorage.

Please call Lise at (907) 440-5473 if you are interested in renewing your passport during this special opportunity.

All citizens under the age of 12 do not require biometric screening and can therefore have their passports issued or renewed with me at anytime.

*Lise Kristiansen Falskow*

*Royal Norwegian Honorary Consul, Alaska*

*Telephone: +1 (907) 440-5473*

*I am honored to have been asked to serve as the Norwegian Honorary Consul in Alaska. When information and opportunities come across my desk, I will let Norwegians in our community know about them in a regular Consul's Corner section of the Flyer.*

### VELKOMMEN NEW MEMBERS!

*We are so glad you joined us in 2016!*

- |                         |                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Karen Decker-Brown      | Mari P Moore      |
| Melinda M Hansen        | Jacob M Mathiesen |
| Lee J Sandbak           | Amy Ciccone       |
| Sarah J Sandbak         | Cynthia Moore     |
| Ryan William Garner     | Tim Tiedje        |
| Janice C Blanchard      | Deborah Smith     |
| Ingrid B Nelson Kelly   | Dave Hamre        |
| Theodore A Nelson Kelly | Brad Sworts       |
| Theresa Rosso           | Mark R Olson      |
| James H Greeley Jr      | Shelia K Olson    |



### SUNSHINE REPORT



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

#### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- |                                                       |                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| John Barstad                                          | Barbara Stinson |
| Carolyne Korman                                       | Anstice Tibor   |
| Wallace Smith                                         | James Tibor     |
| <i>Congratulations to Eva Bilet – 91 years old!!!</i> | Carl Pearson    |



If you know someone who needs a little sunshine, call **696-0725 (cell - 862-1143)** or

*“Happy Birthday!”* email Cindy McDowell: [ccmcd38@hotmail.com](mailto:ccmcd38@hotmail.com) *“Gratulerer med dagen!”*



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

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**FOOD BANK DONATIONS**

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.**



**EVENTS FOR DECEMBER!**

**4**

Sunday

11:00 am - 2:00 pm

Nordic Christmas Brunch

**&**

4:00 pm

Second

Lucia Practice

**6**

Tuesday

10:00 am

Needle Crafts & Rosemaling Class

**8**

Thursday

7:00 pm

Board Membership Meeting

**11**

Sunday

3:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Lucia Family Christmas Party

**20**

Tuesday

10:00 am

Needle Crafts & Rosemaling Class

**NORDIC BRUNCH!**

**The Nordic Brunch will be held December 4th from 10:30 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**

For adults who will be attending Handel's Messiah at West High School that day, call in reservations and arrive at the brunch prior to noon will receive a \$5.00 discount.

**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