

VASA ORDER OF AMERICA

A Swedish-American Fraternal Organization

Tucson Lodge 691

UPCOMING EVENTS – Mark Your Calendars

Saturday, November 10, 2018

Nordic Julafton – noon

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church
Activity Building
1200 N. Campbell Avenue, Tucson

Saturday, December 1, 2018

Nordic Guild Fair – 9 am to 3 pm

Streams in the Desert Lutheran Church
5360 E. Pima Street, Tucson

Saturday, December 8, 2018

Lucia Festival – Starts noon

Resurrection Lutheran Church
11575 N. 1st Avenue, Oro Valley

NORDIC JULAFTON



Bundled against the winter weather, Swedes buy food and Christmas gifts in an open air market in Stockholm.

VASA begins the holidays Saturday, November 10, with a program that presents the ways the Nordic countries celebrate the Christmas season. Our Nordic friends in Tucson have been invited to join us at noon at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church for a fun and interesting program. There are similarities and differences, of course, in the customs of the Nordic countries and in their food and drink.

VASA members and our Nordic friends are asked to bring their ethnic holiday dishes to the Christmas potluck. Also, VASA members—and our Nordic friends, if they wish—are asked to bring an unwrapped gift (up to \$10) for children. The gifts will be donated to Emerge, a center against domestic abuse in Tucson. The gifts can be clothing for all ages up to 14, and grooming tools for the older children.

Advent starts the Christmas season in Sweden. Advent in Latin means “the coming” and is marked at four Sunday church services—December 2, December 9, December 16 and December 23—leading to Christmas. Christmas traditions vary in the regions and provinces of Sweden, and these traditions have their roots in history, extending from antiquity through the Middle Ages to the present.



Advent Wreath - During Advent, a candle is lit each Sunday, and a fifth white candle, often placed in the center, is lit on Christmas Eve. Advent wreaths have their origins in the folk traditions of northern Europe, where candlelight gave comfort at this darkest time of the year, when there can be only four hours of daylight per day.

In Sweden, Christmas Eve, December 24, is the highlight of Christmas. Schoolchildren are on holiday break, as well as most parents. After enjoying the abundant Christmas smorgasbord, everyone waits for that special knock on the door, which means Jultomten has arrived with presents. Jultomten is the guardian of the household. He cares for everyone, especially the animals. Good little children receive toys, and bad little children receive bunches of sticks.



There's a knock at the door. And, children look outside to see the little elfish fellow, his arms loaded with presents. His goodwill has been assured by a bowl of rice pudding. After his work is finished and the bowl of pudding is empty, he sleeps in the barn with the animals.

Drawings by Jenny Nyström

NORDIC GUILD FAIR

Nordic Fair, our fundraising event of the year, will take place on Saturday, December 1, at Streams in the Desert Lutheran Church, 5360 E. Pima Street in Tucson. The fair runs from 9 am to 3 pm, but plan to come early for the folk dancing and music—and the delicious food and baked goods.

VASA will offer limpa, braided cardamom coffee bread and apple cakes, plus rice pudding, Swedish-style hotdogs—and a meatball Sundae! If a member wants to bake a cake, rolls or cookies, a label must be placed on each cake and each bag of rolls or cookies (4 or 5 cookies per bag). The label must state: 1) name of the item, 2) ingredients, and 3) that it is home baked.

LUCIA CELEBRATION

There will be an exciting change in the St. Lucia Fest this year. VASA 691 Lodge will join with the congregation of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Oro Valley to celebrate St. Lucia—and there will be two Lucias.

Sixteen-year-old Emma Faye Enos, daughter of Morgan Thomas Enos and Carrie Aldrich, will be the Lucia representing VASA 691 Lodge. She is a junior at Ironwood Ridge High School and may major in Engineering when she enters college. Emma has volunteered at the Tucson Meet Yourself Festival and at Nordic Fair. She also provided the opening anthems for the District 21 convention in April 2018.

Julia Spencer, daughter of Sean and Jenene Spencer, will be the Lucia representing Resurrection Lutheran Church. A senior at Ironwood Ridge High School, she will graduate with honors and plans to attend the University of Arizona on scholarships next fall. She plays flugelhorn, flute, piano and guitar, and acts and sings in church musicals.

Lucia of Syracuse (283-304 A.D.) was a young Christian martyr who died during the Great Persecution, the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. She is venerated in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Orthodox churches. St. Lucy or Saint Lucia Day is celebrated on December 13 in the Western world. Lucia is known as the festival of lights in Scandinavia. It is meant to bring hope and light at the time of year when there are only a few hours of daylight each day.

VASA members and guests are to bring the traditional food and desserts for a potluck. There will be no charge for VASA, but the members and guests must make reservations with Chairman Gayle Anderson.

The food and desserts must arrive no later than 11:30 a.m. at the church. Seating will start at 11:30 a.m., and guests will be greeted with warm cider.

The Lucia Procession will begin at noon. The two Lucias, their attendants and the star boys will sit at the head table. Lucia buns and coffee will be served; smorgasbord buffet at 12:20 p.m.

The program will also include the Swedish Folk Dancers and the Aurora Borealis Folk Band. Anita Vadis, a VASA member who attends Resurrection Lutheran Church, will direct the program. The church address is 11575 N. 1st Avenue, Oro Valley.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA TREE-RING LABORATORY

Members and friends of the VASA 691 Lodge enjoyed an exceptional tour of the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research (LTRR) at the University of Arizona in Tucson in September. The tour was so popular last year that we decided to repeat the tour this year.

The scientific study of tree rings in America was formalized in 1937 when the LTRR was created at the university. Andrew Ellicott Douglass had been working with wood for more than 30 years by the time he founded the lab. LTRR has helped to found many dendrochronology labs around the world. Dendrochronology is the dating and study of annual rings in trees.



A cross section of the trunk of a cork oak, *Quercus suber*.



Docent Randall explained events that can be determined by studying tree- rings.

NORDIC DANCE GROUPS AT TUCSON MEET YOURSELF FESTIVAL



Sven Iverson and Fendi Lofgren

The Tucson VASA 691 Swedish Dancers and the Leikarring Norwegian Dancers represented the Tucson Nordic community at the popular Tucson Meet Yourself (TMY) Festival in October. Fendi Lofgren and Sven Iverson led the parade of Nordic dancers with the Swedish and Norwegian flags.

The Aurora Borealis Folk Band was magnificent as they provided the lively music for the dancers.

The groups will also perform at the Nordic Fair on December 1 at the Streams in the Desert Lutheran Church, 5360 E. Pima Street in Tucson.

The Swedish Folk Dance Group has continued to perform at the TMY festival, although the participation of the VASA 691 booth ended in 2015. The booth with the Swedish flag proudly displayed in front, was a fixture at the festival for 42 years. The booth was designed and built by Al Berg, a lodge member.

CALLING ALL DANCERS

VASA 691 is extraordinarily fortunate to have very knowledgeable and skilled instructors: Gerry Spinks, Nancy Bannister, Phyllis Gracy and Sven Iverson. They will gradually work new performers into the lead-up programs for participation, such as Tucson Meet Yourself and the Nordic Fair. You do not need a partner. We will help you with a costume.

Rehearsal takes place 7:15 pm every Monday at Whitmore School, 5350 E. Glenn.

Please consider helping VASA 691 put its best dance foot forward.

For additional information, contact: Phyllis Gracy pagracy@comcast.net or Gayle Anderson (520) 818-6641 (between 2:30 pm-7:30 pm)

IN MEMORIAM



Al and Darlene Berg

Alvin Axel Berg, a first-generation American who was proud of his Swedish heritage and was active in the VASA 691 Lodge of Tucson for several decades, died Saturday, October 20. He was 90.

Al and his wife, Darlene, who were married 66 years, were also an active team in the lodge. Al was the 691 Chairman from 1993 to 1996 and Darlene was 691 Chairman from 1999 to 2000. Darlene also served as 691 Cultural Leader and Master of Ceremonies. They were both active in folk dancing and began the lodge's youth club. They were also active for years in the Arizona District 21 Lodge.

Al designed and built the VASA 691 booth, from which the lodge's members proudly served Swedish food and baked goods for 42 years at the annual Tucson Meet Yourself Festival.

A memorial service was held for Al on November 4 at Christ Community Church in Tucson.

Al was born January 10, 1928 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was the eldest of two sons born to Axel Berg and his wife, Gladys Ahlström Berg. Axel immigrated to the United States in 1924 at age 26 from Ekshärad in Sweden's Värmland Province. Gladys was born in Minneapolis, but her parents emigrated from Sweden. Al's younger brother, Kenneth, preceded him in death.

After graduating from high school, Al joined the US Army. He spent time at Vint Hill Farm Station, where Russian transmissions were decoded before being assigned to the Military

Police. He also served as a guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington, D.C. Al and his son, Carl, recently returned to visit the memorials in Washington, as part of the Southern Arizona Honor Flight.

Al attended Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis, where he met a lifelong friend. Later, they were both hired by IBM. When the friend married, Al was the Best Man, and a woman, named Darlene, who was the bride's cousin, was the Maid of Honor. Al proposed a month later, and he and Darlene were married in Chicago. Al spent 37 years with IBM in St. Paul, Minnesota, Chicago, Greencastle, Indiana, and Tucson. They moved to Tucson in the late 1980s.

Two children were born to Al and Darlene, a daughter, Debbie, and a son, Carl. Debbie married Mike Woodard, and they have two children, Christopher and Joshua. Carl married Sondra, and they have three children, Justin, Ashley and Haley. And there are seven great-grandchildren, Noelle, Micah, Audrey, Payson, Maren, Carmen and Kecera.

Darlene's brother, Roy Johnson, and Roy's wife, Dusty, were active members of VASA 691 lodge. Roy preceded Al in death. Dusty continues to be active in lodge events.