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The Midnight Sun

SAGA Celebrates One Year Anniversary

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Greetings from the President

It is hard to believe that it is already one month since I wrote my greetings to all of you who read SAGA's newsletter. At that time, I invited you to come and participate in our upcoming Annual General Meeting.

The meeting is history, now. I had mixed feelings the entire week before it because the seven days forecast told about possibility of cold, rainy with mix of s l e e t weather for our Sunday meeting. Along the week, the prognosis did not improve. I thought that u n f o r t u -

nately only a few brave ones

would show up to the meeting. Then came the Sunday, bright and sunny. I did not know what to think then. Nobody probably will come now when we had this great, gorgeous day.

Then I realized that my worries do not have a point at all. The weather is not

t h e issue. T h e point will be the excitement about SAGA issues within our people and they will come, rain or shine. And they showed up! We had a good crowd to

socialize, enjoy the servings of coffee cake and video



Eva Stokkebye and Stephanie Staton enjoy the ScanFest DVD with SAGA Board members Ulrika Pettersson, Else & Rodger Grady, and Pirkko & Seppo Laaksonen



Emma Tucker and Emily Owens are excited about the refreshments!

about ScanFest 2005 and even follow our brief official, mandatory meeting. We will be ready for ScanFest 2006. I hope that many of you will come and help us out even before we start calling for volunteers to participate actively in this effort.

I hope to see you there,
Seppo Laaksonen

Calendar of Events

- **Bowling Social Event** at George Pappas Park Lanes 1700 Montford Drive Charlotte, NC 28209 **Saturday, April 22 4 pm - 6 pm**
- **ScanFest 2006!** Location and Times TBD

Conan Conquers Finland!

Conan O'Brien, host of "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," visited Finland in mid-February. A couple of thousand Finnish fans were waiting for him at Helsinki-Vantaa Airport upon his arrival. Conan O'Brien had prepared a speech in Finnish and all the fans went nuts hearing him speak Finnish.

He had a busy schedule while in Finland. TV stations invited him for interviews, he accepted a Finnish Telvis Award

for being "the most surprising and entertaining TV personality in Finland," and CNN and NBC reported on his visit to this extremely cold country.

The highlight of O'Brien's visit was his meeting with Finland's president Tarja Halonen. You see, he had jokingly supported her reelection campaign as her "long-lost twin." O'Brien



O'Brien presents Halonen with a Valentine's gift.

looks an awful lot like the president of Finland, a red-haired, pale-skinned woman.

"Once I conquer Finland, I'll head south through the Baltics and on

to Belarus," O'Brien said in a statement. "Soon all the world will find me mildly amusing."

In the US, air footage from his trip starts Feb. 28.

Local Junior Girl Scout Troop #2866 highlights Finland during World Thinking Day on February 25, 2006

I sometimes have the honor of helping out local children with Scandinavian projects. This year I was invited to Weddington to talk to a group of Girl Scouts about Finland. They had done their research in advance and had plenty of questions for me. Their excitement for Finnish Santa Claus, reindeer, snow and midnight sun really showed. Some of the girls had never visited any of the Scandinavian countries nor had they tasted the food. Luckily their leader, Cheryl Klink, had shopped at local stores and found Finnish licorice, gingerbread cookies and Finnish rye crackers. I must say that gingerbread cookies won in taste competition...

The girls made snowflake pins for their event as a symbol of Finland. The pins were sold for .25 cents and proceeds went directly to Girl Scouts of America.

Here is some history of the World Thinking Day:

It was first created in 1926 at the fourth Girl Guide/Girl Scout International Conference, held at Girl Scouts of the USA's Camp Edith Macy (now called Edith Macy Conference Center). Conference attendees decided that there should be a special day when Girl Scouts and Girl Guides all around the world think of each other and give thanks and appreciation to



The girls of Troop 2866 proudly represent Finland

their "sister" Girl Scouts. The delegates chose February 22 as the date for Thinking Day because it was the mutual birthday of Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement, and his wife Olave, who served as World Chief Guide.

Submitted by Sanna Tucker

Picture Perfect Northern Sweden - A Journey of Renewal

Many thanks to Inga-Lisa Pettersson of Cornelius, NC (originally from Enköping, Sweden), for sharing these fabulous photos with us! Inga-Lisa loves the great outdoors and takes annual backpacking trips all by herself to the remote areas of northern Sweden, where

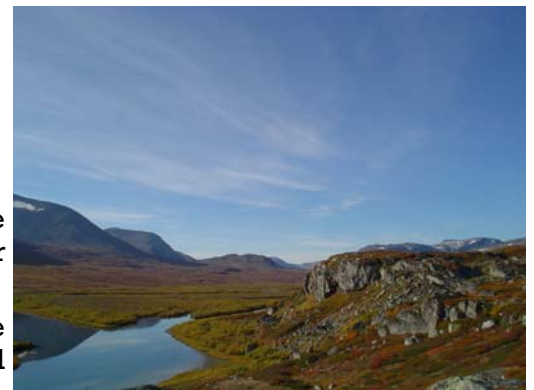


Enroute Kungsleden approaching Kebnekajse mountain station, with a pile of rocks (Swedish: sten rös) marking the trail.

she rejuvenates her soul. These photos are taken from two of her most memorable journeys:

- (1) From "Kungsleden" (the King's trail), a famous and popular hiking trail (440 kilometers long) from Abisko to Hemavan through Vindelfjällens National Park past Sweden's highest mountain, Kebnekajse

Would you like to see your friends and family in *The Midnight Sun*? We would, too! Send your photo or recipe submissions to Jenn@ScandinavianConnection.org by Friday, March 17.



A beautiful view while hiking Kungsleden, from Abisko in the north to Kebnekajse in the south.

- (2) From Sylarna, part of a nature reserve in Jämtland.



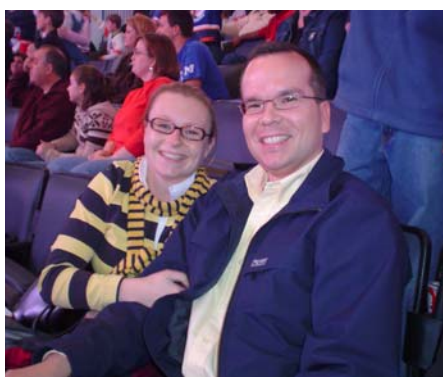
Scenic view while returning from Sylarna in Jämtlandsfjällen



Gunilla Maraia and Emil Billbäck feeling frustrated for the home team.

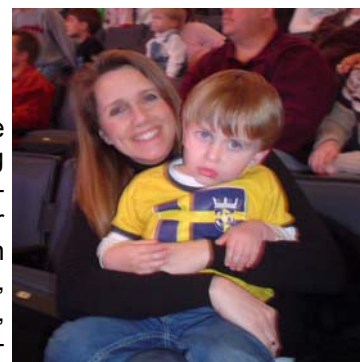
Hockey Fever!!

the beautiful new Charlotte Bobcats Arena. The Checkers didn't do very well, losing 6-2 to the Columbia Inferno (perhaps due to the performance of Jani Hurme of Finland in net for the Inferno!), but a good time was had by all.



Ulrika and Jonas Wallen relax and enjoy the game.

Just a few weeks before Sweden and Finland took the gold and silver for men's hockey in Torino, SAGA held its first social event and fundraiser of the year. A group of over 100 Scandinavian-Americans and their friends attended the Charlotte Checkers game on February 4 at



Alexander Persson (with his mom, Angie) can't believe the Checkers aren't winning!

We are planning to get together again on Saturday, April 22, for another opportunity to meet and mingle with fellow Scandinavian-Americans and their family and friends. This time we're off to George Pappa's Park Lanes for a fun-filled afternoon of bowling. Please see page 4 of this edition of *The Midnight Sun* for more details. Hope to see you there!

Scandinavian Pancakes - A Taste of Home

I hope you will enjoy these pancakes as much as I always do. They are my "home sickness" cure. Whenever I miss Finland, I make "letut" as Finnish people call them. My husband has learned early on that Finland is on my mind when he comes home from work to the smell of "letut." I have tried to teach my children to eat them with strawberry jelly but the American way (syrup) still wins. I have the strangest tradition for eating "lettu". First lettu is eaten with strawberry jelly, the rest with granulated sugar. I can eat 10 of the big ones easily for dinner if my heart is aching. Every Thursday is Lettu Day in Finland. If you visit a restaurant (especially one which serves home-cooking) in Finland for lunch, you have a chance to order lettu. Lettu is accompanied with split pea soup.

Scandinavian Style Pancakes

serves 4

- 2 eggs
- 2 1/2 cups milk (preferably whole or 2%)
- 1 1/4 cups flour

- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3 tbsps granulated sugar
- 3 tbsps. butter, melted (optional)

Toppings

- Lingonberry jam
- Granulated sugar
- Any berry/fruit jam

Make it festive with

- Vanilla Ice cream
- Whipped whipping cream

In a large bowl, beat the eggs with half the milk. Beat in flour and salt until smooth. Stir in melted butter (optional) and remaining milk. Let the batter sit for 30 – 45 minutes in room temperature. Heat a griddle or large skillet with a small amount of vegetable oil or butter. For each pancake, pour about 1/4 cup batter onto the griddle and cook over medium heat 1 to 2 minutes. With a spatula, turn the pancakes and cook until golden brown, about 1/2 minute. Serve immediately or keep warm while making



Sanna Tucker, new American citizen, and her family after her Naturalization Ceremony

the remaining pancakes.

Serve warm. Sprinkle with sugar and top with lingonberries or your choice of jam. Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream makes a beautiful and tasteful addition.

Pancakes can be frozen.

Recipe submitted by Sanna Tucker

SAGA Throws for a Strike!

Did you know that bowling is one of the most popular participatory sports in the United States, where there are thousands of recreational leagues?

The month of April brings you SAGA's second social event of the year, as we dust off those bowling balls and head to George Pappas Park Lanes (across from the Park Road Shopping Center) for a fun-filled afternoon of bowling on Saturday, April 22, 4:00pm-6:00pm. So whether you are a seasoned bowler or a first timer, why not take this opportunity to come out and mingle with fellow Scandinavian-

Americans, family and friends!

The cost for one (1) game of bowling and one (1) shoe rental is \$7.75 per person.

For us to arrange a group outing at George Pappas Park Lanes, advance payment and reservation is required. **Payment must be received no later than Saturday, April 15 to guarantee your reservation.** Please send all



reservations, with payment, to:

Ulrika Pettersson
SAGA Social Committee
P.O. Box 1416
Huntersville NC 28070-1416

Please make checks payable to **SAGA of the Carolinas**.

If you have any questions, please contact us via email at Ulrika@ScandinavianConnection.org or call 704.763.9152.

World Record Holder For Longest Solo Ski Trek Completes Journey on South Pole

Norwegian adventurer Rune Gjeldnes, who set a world record for the longest unsupported ski trek in history on January 9 after a 3880 kilometer (2425 mile) trek, arrived at his goal by the Terra Nova Bay Friday February 3rd.

"Meeting people is going to be great," the 32-year-old explorer told Aftenposten. "I've increasingly been craving some real human contact recently."

Which shouldn't really come as a surprise: Rune Gjeldnes has skied for 90 days straight, covering a distance of 4800 kilometers (3000 miles). In comparison, the distance between New York and Seattle is approximately 2840 miles.

Rune Gjeldnes has made extreme expeditions and innovative use of equipment a lifestyle, and neither frost bite nor blizzards have deterred him from crossing the South Pole. Using a kite to gain speed, Gjeldnes was able to cover up to 180 kilometers (112 miles) every day, roughly equal to the distance between Los Angeles and San Diego.

He started his expedition - "The Longest March" - on November 3rd

in Novolasarevskaja, venturing into Queen Maud's Land. After having skied for 48 days, covering 2207 kilometers, he reached the South Pole on December 20th. This makes Gjeldnes one of the very few explorers who have reached both geographical poles unsupported.

The kite Gjeldnes uses is similar to the ones used by kite surfers. By taking advantage of the icy cold winds of the antarctic, the kite propels Gjeldnes across the ice. With the kite he has been able to cover up to 180 kilometers a day across the Antarctic ice.

"Kiting is extremely fast," says Gjeldnes. "I reached speeds up to 20 miles per hour."

On day 68 of his Antarctic adventure, he beat the record held by fellow countrymen Eirik Sønneland and Rolf Bae, after they trekked 3,800 kilometers across the South Pole.

The disadvantage of the kite, however, is that he does not use his feet as much as he would by traditional skiing, increasing the risk of freezing. Even though it is techni-



cally high summer in the Antarctic, Gjeldnes has endured extreme cold, giving him severe frost bite on four toes.

Still, for Gjeldnes, the extreme sub-zero conditions is not the main problem. "As a social person it is going to be a challenge to be all alone," Gjeldnes told TV2 Nettavisen. "I really like to go in trips with other people to share the experiences. You have nobody to talk to, and you have to make all decisions yourself."

Born in 1970 and growing up by Trollheimen, one of Norway's most scenic mountains, Gjeldnes has been an adventurer, writer and lecturer for the last five years. He has a background as a SEAL in the Norwegian Navy.

Author: Royal Norwegian Embassy / Thor Englund

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"Connecting Scandinavia and the Carolinas"

We're on the Web!

www.ScandinavianConnection.org



Mission Statement

SAGA of the Carolinas, a non-profit organization, is organized to promote cultural exchange between the United States and the Nordic Countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden; to preserve and enjoy the Scandinavian traditions, customs, history and cultural heritage; to increase understanding of the Nordic people and societies among Americans; and to provide a forum where people interested in Scandinavia can meet and enjoy Nordic culture and activities.

Calling all Scan-Am Groups!

If your group or organization would like to have your events or news included in the next issue of *The Midnight Sun*, please send your submission of 100-200 words to Jenn@ScandinavianConnection.org by Friday, March 17.

More Swedish Birds Carrying Bird Flu Virus

Of the 31 dead birds from the Oskarshamn area which were tested for bird flu, eight have been found to be carrying the virus, according to results from the National Veterinary Institute released on Friday, March 3.

"But we won't know whether it's the mild or the aggressive variant of the H5 until later on Friday," said the institute's Lennart Melin.

The Institute said that it is working to confirm that the birds had the highly pathogenic form of the H5 virus. If the tests are positive, the samples will be sent for further analysis at the EU reference laboratory in Britain for final confirmation that the birds were carrying H5N1.

The birds being tested were herons, tufted ducks and other ducks. Search efforts for additionally infected birds in the Oskarshamn area were reduced on Friday and police check points will be taken away. Supervised areas around the nuclear power plant outside of Oskarshamn will continue all restrictions regarding transport of fowl and poultry products.

On February 28, the aggressive bird virus was found in two dead tufted ducks in waters outside the nuclear power plant in Oskarshamn.

Swedish health officials decided to classify the virus as constituting a public danger as of March 2. As such, doctors who discover the virus in patients must now report

findings to the Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control.

Doctors who treat possibly infected patients are still responsible for containing the virus, and informing all who could have come into contact with the disease. Doctors are also responsible for information on how to prevent further spreading of the virus.

In addition to the H5N1 virus, around 25 other diseases are classified in Sweden as constituting a public danger, including the diphtheria, hepatitis A-E, cholera, anthrax, rabies and tuberculosis.