



Newsletter October 2012



## *American Scandinavian Foundation Awards Annual Scholarships 2012*



Scholarship recipients Kristin Van Der Kar of Carpinteria, Gabriel Burdick, graduate of Dos Pueblos High School, and Alexander Shirokow-Louden, enrolled at Laguna Blanca.

# ASFBS

American Scandinavian Foundation of Santa Barbara

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# Reflections on our Future.....



## REFLECTIONS ON OUR FUTURE

Volunteer groups like ours seem to have predictable "highs" and "not-so-highs."

Sometimes we are up; sometimes we are not. This is fairly easy to determine once we get there! We will either have grown or we will have contracted. That part is easy. The more difficult question has to do with whether we can predict if we are growing or contracting, and even more difficult -- what we can do to make sure we are moving forward.

Recently, I spoke with the Board of Directors and urged them to think about having a Board Retreat that would include committee members as well as prospective Board members. I characterized a Retreat as a time "to get together to think out loud about our future."

Six years ago, we were not growing. In fact, we were contemplating folding our tent and going out of business. The good news is that we have made substantial progress over the past 6 years.

- We examined and revised our statement of purpose – an answer to why we exist.
- We have added new members to ASF-SB and to our Board of Directors.
- We have developed a much more engaging committee system where more people are involved in the decision making process.
- We have made substantial progress in terms of adding funds to our Scholarship program.
- We have added younger members to our "chronologically gifted" group.
- We have experienced six years of successful programming.

### So we have made real progress!

But resting on laurels, though tempting, fails us in the long haul, so the Board agree to have another retreat on October 20. It is time to review not only what we have achieved but where we want to go. Our mission includes the sharing of Scandinavian culture with our larger community and we will want to explore just how we do that.

The challenge for volunteer organizations like ours is that we either grow or we decline. We can stay put for only a short time, so I have urged the Board to consider steps that we can take to insure continued growth. The potential is certainly there! We have far more Scandinavian-Americans living in the Santa Barbara area than our membership rolls would indicate. What might bring them into our circle? What would make them stay? How are we managing to engage our existing membership? Are there activities that would be better suited to our group?

These are important questions, and the answers will determine our potential! Should you be interested in attending our retreat and perhaps getting involved as a member of a committee or Board member, please call President Ellen Zissler at 805-565-3995. We would love to have your input!

Peter Haslund



## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of ASFSB is to promote international understanding by preserving and sharing Scandinavian heritage and culture with our community.

# Announcements



## ASFSB Awards Annual Scholarships

By Evelyne Houdek

Three Santa Barbara area students were honored with \$2500 scholarships each, awarded by the American Scandinavian Foundation at their annual Scholarship luncheon on May 5 held at the Santa Barbara City College Hospitality Department dining room. Members and guests were introduced to recipients Gabriel Burdick, graduate of Dos Pueblos High School, Alexander Shirokow-Louden, enrolled at Laguna Blanca, and Kristin Van Der Kar of Carpinteria, whose scholarship was a renewal from last year. Representing the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara, Colette Hadley followed the buffet lunch with a brief history of the association between the Foundation and ASFSB through the years of administering its Scholarship funds. The Mission Statement of ASFSB is to promote international understanding by Preserving and sharing Scandinavian heritage and culture with the community, and maintains a web site at [www.asfsb.net](http://www.asfsb.net) Kristin is the daughter of Chris and Sally Van Der Kar of Carpinteria.

## News from The Danish Pioneer

*Did you know?*

### HISTORY

The word 'Denmark' dates back to the Viking age and is carved on the famous Jelling Stone from around 900 AD. Denmark today though is very different from its historical past. Between the 13th and 17th centuries, Denmark was a superpower whose influence was as powerful as that of the largest European countries. Today, the current size and influence of Denmark is the result of 400 years of forced relinquishments of land, surrenders and lost battles. For a small country though, Denmark still punches above its weight in many different areas including design, architecture, farming, green technology and pharmaceuticals.

The Jelling mounds, runic stones and church were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994. The runic text describes how Harald brought Denmark and Norway together and Christianized the Danes.

### St. John's Eve- June 23rd

The evening before Midsummer Day, which is the birthday of John the Baptist, has become one of the popular red letter days in the calendar.

The Danes often meet with family and friends to have dinner together. If the weather is good, they then proceed to a local bonfire venue. Here the bonfire with the witch on top is lit around 10 pm. Beforehand, a bonfire speech is often made, at large events normally by a well-known person. After the speech, the attendees sing Holger Drachmann's 'Midsommervise' (Midsummer Song) (1885), which is the epitome of the light northern summer night and a National-Romantic idyllic view of the peasant culture.

Even though the summer solstice is on June 21, St John's Eve is regarded as the actual Midsummer Eve and therefore the shortest night of the entire year. According to popular belief, it was therefore charged with a special power where evil forces were also at work. People believed that the witches flew past on their broomsticks on their way to the Brocken. To keep the evil forces away, the bonfires were usually lit on high ground. Placing a witch- made of old clothes stuffed with hay- on the bonfire is a tradition which did not become common until the 20th century.



## Santa Lucia Day Marked with Ceremony

By: Brooke Van Der Kar

The American Scandinavian Foundation of Santa Barbara holds its annual Christmas party and dinner every year early in December. Although the festival of Santa Lucia's Day, held on December 13, is of fairly recent origin, the legend is rooted in ancient times. Early Norsemen considered the night of December 13 to be the longest night of the year. They feasted and drank brandy, called "lussesup" (literally, "cup of light"), and filled their houses with candlelight to ward off evil spirits.

The old celebration of light eventually merged with the legend of Santa Lucia of Sicily, a young Christian convert who was tortured, burned at the stake and finally beheaded for refusing to marry. No one knows who brought the legend of Lucia to Scandinavia, but the custom today is for the eldest daughter of each home to serve coffee and saffron buns early in the dark morning of December 13. She dresses in a white gown and wears a crown of greenery supporting blazing candles on her head.

Our family has been involved with this tradition for many years. Our Mother Evangeline organized the processional with the help of myself and my sister-in-laws Sally and Susan.

Our Van Der Kar girls have enjoyed leading the processional wearing the crown of candles and encouraging the younger children. We are all involved this year as every year. Our Santa Lucia's have been Brookie, Vanessa, Marian, Alison and Kristin. Our young men who are now adults are Barnaby, Ben and Logan. Our young children who are still involved are Mateo, Cate, Ruby, Josiah, Kai, Lucy, Iris and Baby Evangeline and Jackson Min Ho.

We look forward to seeing you all at this year's Santa Lucia Celebration on the first Saturday in December, December 1st. All the Van Der Kars will be there and we look forward to sharing this Scandinavian tradition with you and your family.



Santa Lucia Matilda Dahlin followed by her sister Sara Dahlin



## Letter from Courtlin

By Courtlin Stoker

Last June, I was given the opportunity to pursue one of my dreams. I embarked on one of the most life changing and incredible adventures of my life. As many of you might recall, I self designed a world trip that took me to various places around the globe. I not only got to explore and see new places, but also participate in various service projects. I left thinking I was going to change world and came back realizing how much the people, countries, and experiences changed me.

I began my journey in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where I volunteered with the non-profit organization, Empower Congo Women. During my time in the DRC, I mainly taught English communication to children and adults. I heard many stories of the impacts of war ranging from child war soldiers to massive rape. Everyone was somehow affected

by the war. However, it was not in the people's suffering, but their resilience and hope for a prosperous DRC that reminded me to be grateful for all I have, especially my education. I was also very fortunate because I got to see the gorillas. For me, it was truly remarkable because only a very small percentage of people will ever see gorillas in the wild. It is projected that they will be extinct by 2020.

Next, I headed to Switzerland where previously I had been a Rotary Youth Exchange Student in 2005. Besides being able to spend time with old friends and family, I spent two weeks in the mountains partaking in forestry projects with Bergwald International. It was hard work, but highly rewarding as I saw the positive effects the group had on the surrounding environment. My volunteer work in Switzerland also served as a reminder that it is possible to lend a helping hand almost any-

where in the world. We often think of volunteer and service work needed only in the "developing" countries, but often it is in our own backyard where we can have a lasting impact.

After Switzerland, I flew to Kolkata, India. I lived with two families in the Kolkata region. Everyday, I took a thirty-minute train ride to the village, Pi-yali Junction, a place once prominent with child brides. For a month, I organized the school library and taught classes at the all girls' school. I was also given the opportunity to attend the jewelry making class for women of the community. While the handcrafted jewelry was difficult to make and time consuming, I witnessed first hand the positive benefits from their microfinance program. Not only did the microfinance program give the women more say in their household, but they were also supportive of their daughters or granddaughters attending the





## News

school. It is through this connection, that I began to realize, that women's empowerment not only comes with educating the girls, but by giving their mothers and grandmothers a chance to change the status quo as well. We often forget about the power to dream, but just to be able to say I want to be a doctor or teacher is a miracle itself. Those dreams did not exist before and through their education and the microfinance program, these girls and women have the power to shape a stronger and healthier community.

Kolkata has never been known for the most beautiful part of India, but it certainly is famous for its Durga Puja. The Durga Puja is Kolkata's largest festival, celebrating the Hindu Durga Goddess. Throughout the city, there are over 500 giant structures called pandals that are only built for the five-day festival. One of the days, I went with teachers from the school to look at the pandals. It was great to spend time with the teachers as well as have them explain much of their culture to me. Each teacher seemed to have their "special" pandal we had to go see and with that came many stories of their childhood in Kolkata.

I originally was planning to go to Pakistan, but had difficulties obtaining a

visa. Luckily, one of my good friends is South African and had a connection for me to volunteer with an NGO called Network in Cape Town, South Africa. At Network, I designed the computer literacy manual and computer course for the students who were mainly refugees from DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi. This project gave me the lens to see how knowledge of the Internet and basic computer skills completely transforms someone's life. For the first time in their lives, they had everything from access to jobs to understanding one's legal rights.

Besides volunteering at Network, I also did some of the touristy things like visiting museums, wine tasting in Stellenbosch, and even going on a safari. I participated in a South African cooking competition and attended my first Braai or what we would call a bbq. I saw magnificent views from Table Mountain and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. I was also given the opportunity to visit some of the townships to deliver food and Christmas gifts. I especially loved playing with the little kids and making silly faces. Each experience served as a reminder of the importance of travel. Through my travels, South Africa has been given a face and voice to me rather than just a "place in Africa".

The last place I visited was Argentina, where I had spent some time previously in 2009. I lived with an Argentine host family in rural northern Argentina and participated in many of the local Rotary projects. Spending time with my family and participating with Rotary helped me understand the value of community. I was asked by the Chief of one of the local "comparsas" (group) to dance in their community Carnival Parade. Glitter and all, it is certainly an experience I will never forget. In Buenos Aires, I joined a group called Un Techo Para Mi País where I surveyed people to see if they were eligible to receive a home through the program. Un Techo Para Mi País, reminded me in many ways of Habitat for Humanity. It was incredible talking to the people and learning about the various obstacles, they overcome. It was also inspiring talking to the people who have already received a home and seeing how it transformed their lives.

My experiences abroad not only gave me a deeper understanding of myself, but illustrated how intertwined we truly are. Our actions take root here and sprout out throughout the globe. As Americans, we have been given the resources to take chances to make a difference and strive for success. As global citizens, we have been given the responsibility to not just think for ourselves, but in light of humanity.

I am so grateful for the countless support from the American Scandinavian Foundation members. It is through your support and positive words that encourages me to follow my dreams. I do not plan to stop anytime soon and I look forward to my presenting in January. See everyone soon!

Sincerely,

Courtlin Stoker



# Community



## Scandinavian Approaches to Life!

Peter Haslund

**I**sometimes find myself pondering why I am so fascinated with Scandinavia. Yes, I was born there, but so what? Here I am, an American, and proud of it. Still, I have a sense of pride about my Scandinavian origins... so I return to the question: **Why?**

The answer, it seems to me, lies in the fact that the Scandinavian experience brings different forces to bear on real-life problem solving. For me, the big three relate to medical health care (currently a hotly debated topic here!), working conditions leading to a highly competitive business environment, and education – or how do we prepare the student of today for the world of tomorrow.

Here are three snippets from the writings of other that address these components. At the very least, you will have to admit that Scandinavian approaches....are different.



### Scandinavian Values

from Bill Roy of the Topeka Capital-Journal, 8-16-11

“Yes we pay high taxes, but we get a lot for it.” Not one of our dozen or more sample complained specifically about taxes being too high.

They get free education through college, and national health-care. Most get 6-weeks vacation after one year on the job. Both men and women get extended maternity leave after the birth of their child. Their pensions are high. They spend little on the military.

**Scandinavians seem dismayed that health care and education are denied millions of Americans.**

If they have frustrations, they apparently don't try to overcome them by stuffing themselves with food. Anywhere and everywhere in our country we see many huge people. In Scandinavia, you can go hours without seeing one morbidly obese person (one and one-half times normal weight or 100 pounds or more overweight.).

**Bottom line: Scandinavian health statistics are much better than ours.**

Why? Diet and exercise, and maybe genes. Lots of fish and bicycle riding, and medical care when they need it, not just when they can afford it..



# Community

## The Scandinavian Way (from a 2006 study)

By Troels Theill Eriksen, Martin Kruse and Gitte Larsen

When Europe needs vision, it looks increasingly often to the Nordic area. The countries to the north have managed to create a welfare system with free education, public support plans, and a well-developed public health service. The Nordic countries top the international rankings of the most competitive regions in the world despite their having some of the highest taxes in the world, and despite their workers working fewer hours than those of almost any other country. Measured in GNP per capita, the Nordic region, if defined as one country, is among the richest in the world, surpassed only by Luxembourg, Switzerland and Ireland. Moreover, the five Nordic nationalities are some of the world's happiest. How is it possible?

The special and so-called Scandinavian model is a big part of the answer to the question. Pragmatism, consensus, and "down-to-earthness" have allowed the Nordics to find their own third way, where equality and socialism from the east are combined with freedom and market forces from the west. You can read more answers by reading the latest member report from the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies, **The Scandinavian Way**.

## On Education

Since its beginning, Scandinavian teaching has been well known to focus primarily on the student, this leads to a genuine and fundamental development of the general character and by adding skills and knowledge, we prepare the student well for academic studies as well as business life.

For a long time it has been traditional also to integrate theories and learning into the range of subjects taught, so subjects are applicable to future Professions. Other characteristics of the system are that all students are encouraged to show independence and to participate in discussions – and to be able to work in teams - these are very important competences.

Another strength is the dual system of initial Vocational Education and Training providing two learning venues in terms of the enterprise and the school, this will provide the students with the skills demanded by labour market. Today we live in a globalised world and the outlines of the 21st-century management model are already clear: Decision-making will be more peer based, the tools of creativity will be idely distributed in organizations. Ideas will compete on an equal footing. Strategies will be built from the bottom up. Power will be a function of competence rather than of position.

**The Niels Brock concept of commercial education is based on significant values such as respect, subject knowledge, excellence and development.** These overall principles constitute the basis for Niels Brock's vision of teaching based on modern and motivating pedagogical strategies, including the following dimensions:

- Project-based
- Interdisciplinary
- IT-based
- Participant-based
- Business oriented
- Motivating & differentiated



Essential to this concept of teaching is the pedagogical perspective of a pro-active teaching strategy encouraging the students to participate in an active and independent way when it comes to solving problems in a project-based learning context. Flexible employees, who, highly motivated, are able to deal with ever changing work tasks, are in high demand.

The successful educational institution of the future must:

- Think networks
- Think global
- Think technology – semi-virtual courses
- Think new pedagogical methods
- Think development
- Think cooperation

We must encourage the students to be innovative and think in creative ways, and in collaboration with their peers put their collective minds to better use.



## Rachel Bergseteren Strange as Clara in The Nutcracker Performance at Granada Theatre

Heidi Bergseteren

Rachel Bergseteren Strange, the 17 year old daughter of Norwegian immigrant Heidi Bergseteren (who moved here in 1993 to study at Brooks Institute of Photography) and Santa Barbara native, Paul Strange, performed the lead role of Clara in the State Street Ballet's recent Christmas production of Tchaikovsky's classic, The Nutcracker. The State Street Ballet presented a lush staging with a beautifully choreographed interpretation before a packed house at the Granada.

For Rachel, it was the fulfillment of a dream to play the role of Clara. She has been dancing ballet since the age of three. At thirteen, Rachel was selected to study with the Kirov Ballet Company's summer intensive in Washington DC. As a member of the State Street Young Dancers (an apprentice group to the professional company) Rachel has been selected to join the State Street Ballet on previous productions, such as A Midsummer Night's Dream. But for every young dancer, being selected to lead The Nutcracker is a crowning moment.

Asked about her favorite moment in the production, Rachel replied, "For me, it was so exciting to perform combinations, pirouettes and lifts with professional dancers. The battle scene in particular involved a large number of people on stage and that's also when I meet the soldier with whom I am in love. So my dancing had to convey a lot of emotion".

Rachel took a particularly circuitous path to the lead role in The Nutcracker. She

stepped back from the State Street Ballet Young Dancers two years ago, opting to focus on competitive gymnastics (another lifelong pursuit). Rachel qualified for the United States Western Regional Gymnastics Championships and twice placed in the top ten in the floor exercise. Rachel reflects, "I miss the competitive athleticism of gymnastics, but dance will always have a place in my life".





# Announcements

## Around the Corner



**September 15: Dr. Jeffrey Krause lecture.** Dr. Jeffrey Krause and his grand mother's cousin, Anita Londgren will give a talk. If you have not received this flyer, please check it out on our website at: [www.asfsb.net](http://www.asfsb.net).

**October 20: Showing of Helle Sharling-Todd's Studio.** She will show us her artist studio in Ventura. She has created some incredible pieces. You can view some of her work on the internet. This event is still in the planning stages but the date is set for October 20th.

**December 1: The Annual Christmas Party at the Holiday Inn** .Join us for homemade glog, the Lucia Pageant, good food, no host bar, and silent auction. If you have children please have them join our pageant. ASF member, Sally Van Der Kar, will be coordinating the pageant and her phone number will be on the Christmas invite.

Please join us in gathering fun items for the silent auction...Do you have a favorite restaurant that could donate a gift certificate or a favorite store to donate a gift? Do you have an item that you no longer need or want around your home that you would like to donate? Items do not need to be of a Scandinavian nature. All proceeds from the auction will fund future student scholarships.

**Call Heidi Poley at 681-0083 for further information/ideas!**

## NOT YET A MEMBER? FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

Lilli Tragos, our Membership Chair, reminds us that it is, once again, time to renew our membership in ASFSB by paying a small fee to help defray the costs of the newsletter and other administrative items. Only \$35 for a family membership; \$25 for an individual. What a bargain!! Application forms are always available at events! Or cal Lilli (969-7882) to make sure you remain on our membership list, and call a friend who should be a member! Each of us knows at least one such person!!



So why wait? Mail your check to:

ASFSB  
PO Box 41502  
Santa Barbara, CA 93140

**Single Membership \$25.00**  
**Family Membership \$35.00**



## Erik Herner 1931-2012

Peter Haslund

Our good friend and long time ASF member, Erik Herner, passed after a short illness on July 22 from complications of pneumonia. He was 81.

Erik and Jane came to the United States from Denmark in 1983, in part because Jane's mother was an American citizen, which allowed them both to receive work permits (green cards). Erik's first job in the US was to deliver newspapers! He also generated an income from the importation of dental equipment from Denmark. Mostly, he was a handyman, capable of building most anything. He was a master at building decks, staircases, and coping with plumbing & electrical problems.

In his retirement years, he volunteered as a driver-training instructor with the AARP, and eventually became the Regional Manager. He helped countless seniors learn to drive more defensively, and this helped reduce the cost of their insurance. His final volunteer work was to help with the Center for Successful Aging.

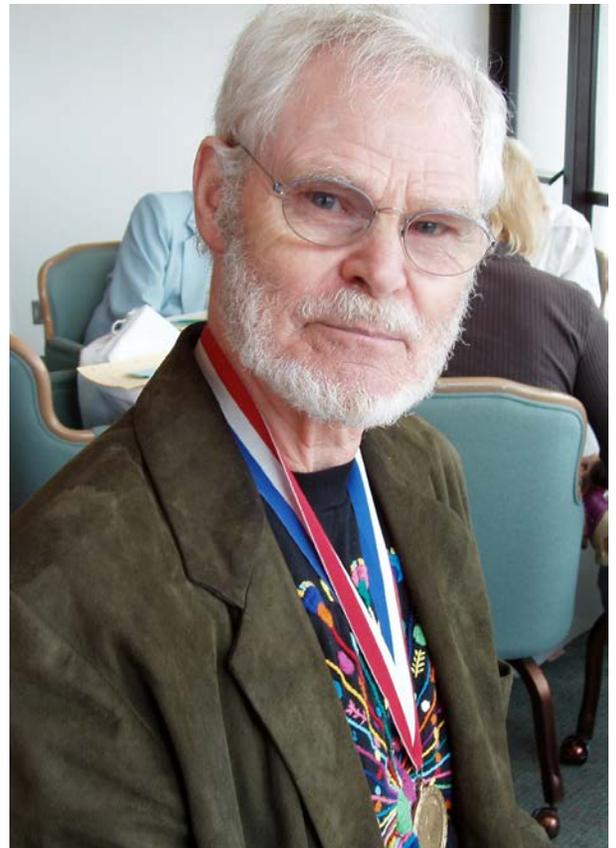
In this way, Erik was a teacher. He was patient and he loved people. He loved to be with people and he loved to help them whether it was to help repair a deck, learn something about driving more safely, or simply – and by example – how to be a more authentic person. He was a happy guy! I can't remember a single ASF meeting where he didn't have something to say that would make me laugh. He served as the ASF Treasurer for many years, and would always bring a Danish "Kringle" from Andersen's Bakery to our meetings! He truly enjoyed life to the fullest.

I asked Jane about a single characteristic that would identify Erik. She said he was "extremely kind – he never had a mean word to say about anyone or anything!" She said he was a very uncomplicated person; not at all self-referent but basically happy, joyful, and ultimately positive. Nothing seemed to upset him. If there was a problem, he fixed it without fanfare.

He enjoyed every aspect of being alive in the moment. He was especially fond of crazy, colorful T-shirts. The wilder, the better! And he enjoyed classical music! If they were to go to the theater, Erik might use the occasion to take a nap, but if they went to a concert....that was something entirely different! A concert was something to be savored!

Jane and Erik had 6 children between them, 3 each from previous marriages. Erik was fond of telling the story about how his ex-wife married Jane's ex-husband, and from Jane's point of view, they were much better suited to each other! They had 15 grandchildren, most of whom still live in Denmark. Jane and Erik celebrated their 35 Wedding Anniversary in June of this year.

I will remember Erik as a wonderfully authentic human being. He was "very Danish," proud of his Danish heritage. It was his view that the American Scandinavian Foundation of Santa Barbara brought him the best of both worlds. It will be impossible not to miss him!





# ASFSB

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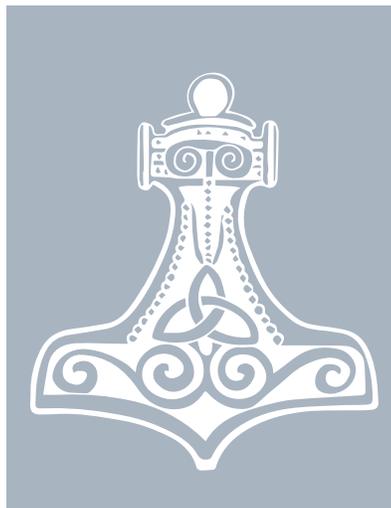
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