



# THE SWEDISH CLUB NEWS

The Swedish Club of Houston  
*Preserving Swedish Heritage on the Texas Gulf Coast Since 1986*

March/April

2008

Volume XXI • No. 2

## Theresa Andersson to perform at *Kräftskiva*, Saturday, April 5

**Limited seating; make  
your reservations early**



Award-winning Swedish singer Theresa Andersson will perform at this year's *Kräftskiva* (Swedish Crawfish Party) on Saturday, April 5, 6:00 p.m., at Monument Inn, 4406 Battleground Road, La Porte. (See page 8 for directions.)

Andersson's self-titled "Theresa Andersson" EP was selected by the New

Orleans Times Picayune as one of the "Top 10 Albums of 2006." It was also the third highest selling CD for New Orleans Jazzfest 2006.

Among other awards, Andersson was named "Best Female Artist, 2002" by Gambit Weekly Magazine's Big Easy Awards.

Andersson is based in New Orleans, but was born and raised on the Swedish island of Gotland. With Swedish producer Tobias Froberg, she has just recorded a new album, due for release in summer 2008, and will be previewing some of her new material at the *Kräftskiva*.

Seating for the *Kräftskiva* is **limited to 75**, so it is very important to reserve your place early. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$15 for children under 12, and reservations must be received by Wednesday, April 2. **PLEASE NOTE: No tickets will be sold at the door.**

Make your advance reservations today **online** at [www.swedishclub.org](http://www.swedishclub.org), or **by mail** using the form on page 8. For more information, call Diana Rodionov, 281-636-8153.

## Celebrate the coming of Spring with *Valborgsmässoafton* in Texas!

### Swedish Bonfire and Texas Barbecue Saturday, May 3, 3:00 p.m.

The *Valborgsmässoafton* festival dates back to Viking days, when warriors of old celebrated an annual feast in honor of the return of spring. Bonfires lighted on mountain tops were thought to frighten away evil spirits, demons and witches. Today in Sweden, spring songs and choral singing are very typical of the Swedish Valborg celebrations, with many of the traditional songs dating from as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

We in Texas also have the opportunity to celebrate the end of winter with a bonfire and barbecue at "The Clearing," Dr. Margit Winstrom's ranch, 3383 Peters Lane, Brenham. (See page 8 for directions.)

Activities will start around 3:00 p.m., with Frisbee, volleyball, badminton, croquet and other customary Swedish games. A hayride across the large ranch will precede the long-awaited bonfire and singing of traditional spring songs.

**NOTE: Bring hot dogs, hamburgers or something else to grill for yourself, and one side dish for everyone to share.**

This event has become one of the more popular club celebrations and is a great event for families. Mark your calendar now and get ready to say "Good-bye, winter" and "Hello, spring!"

This event is free, but Event Chair Pelle Fisk asks that you let him know by Thursday, May 1, that you are coming, either on the SCH website, [www.swedishclub.org](http://www.swedishclub.org), or by calling him at 281-348-2584.



**President's Column**  
*by Margaret St. Clair*

Last month marked the beginning of my third year as president of The Swedish Club. My last two years have been interesting ones where I have had the opportunity

to meet and work with great folks. I look forward to serving as your president again in 2008.

The Club began the New Year with its Annual Meeting/Pea Soup & Pancake Supper on Sunday, January 27, at The Buffalo Grille near Rice Village. Thirty-seven guests enjoyed a very nice evening. Once again, John Stavinoha coordinated the food prep with the folks at the Grille. He cooked a delicious pea soup served with the traditional sides of marjoram, mustard and thyme. A variety of cheeses and *knäckebröd*, plus Swedish pancakes with berry sauces, *punsch* and other beverages, completed the meal. As a side note, I think we have finally perfected the art of making Swedish pancakes. They were outstanding!

Everyone enjoyed the slide show of Swedish Club 2007 events prepared by Ken Nilsson and Dave St. Clair. Historian Ken Nilsson also displayed three large binders of photos, newsletters and other memorabilia pertaining to 21 years of Swedish Club history.

After the meal, I opened the meeting. Ken Nilsson gave the treasurer's report which showed a balance, as of December 31, 2007, of \$14,189.77 in cash. Revenues from all sources totaled \$13,691.50. Expenses from all sources totaled \$11,600.03, resulting in a net gain of \$2,091.47.

John Stavinoha reported on Membership and stated that the Club had 136 members in 2007. John also reported on the Language School. He explained that our beginner and intermediate classes are now combined, due to one of the teachers leaving the program. The advanced class continues. Total participation is 21 students. We acknowledged IKEA for so generously allowing us to use their meeting rooms for our language classes and board meetings.

Laura Millikan, Erich Wolz and Ken Nilsson were recognized for their outstanding contributions to the club by their work on the newsletter, the website and being historian, respectively.

In 2007 the Club continued to host five excellent main events: Pea Soup and Pancakes/Annual meeting, Crawfish Party, Bonfire/Picnic, *Smörgåsbord* and the Christmas Traditions and Lucia Celebration. In addition, in January we hosted a reception for Swedish organist, Magnus Kjellson, following his concert at Christ the King Lutheran Church. And in April, Club members were invited to attend the unveiling of a Texas State Historical Marker for Swedish immigrant, August Forsgard, at his grave site in Glenwood Cemetery.

I am pleased to say that three goals for 2007 have been achieved: *First*, we have increased our visibility by advertising Swedish Club events in the Houston Chronicle. *Second*, we have a Club Historian, Ken Nilsson. *Third*, we have promoted communication between our Club and various other Scandinavian organizations in Houston by inviting them to attend our events and, in turn, announcing their events to our membership.

The meeting continued with the nomination and election of the following persons to serve on the Swedish Club Board in 2008:

- President: Margaret St. Clair
- Vice President: Nancy Webb
- Secretary: Diana Rodionov
- Treasurer/Historian: Ken Nilsson
- Membership/Language School: John Stavinoha
- Newsletter Editor: Laura Millikan
- Publicity: Ingrid Philipson
- Webmaster: Erich Wolz
- Director: Dina Jo Colburn
- Director: Mark Swanson
- Director: Karen Wolz
- Director: David Bash
- Director: Armando Garcia
- Director: Cathy Wahren
- Director: Knut Gezelius
- Director: Magnus Åkerlind

All 2007 board members returned to serve this year. We added four new directors, Armando Garcia, Cathy Wahren, Knut Gezelius and Magnus Åkerlind. Check out their biographies in this newsletter! I look forward to working with all directors this year—old and new alike. They are a talented and dedicated group who are determined to serve you well!

So went Annual Meeting 2008. As the year progresses, feel free to contact me or any board member with your concerns, questions, ideas or to

volunteer! The Swedish Club needs you and your input in order to flourish!

Now I look forward to our spring events, *Kräftskiva* (Crawfish Party) on April 5<sup>th</sup> and *Valborgsmässoafton* (Swedish Bonfire) on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Both of these events are not to be missed!

See you at *Kräftskiva*! Not only will we have fine food, but we will also have fine entertainment---- Swedish singer Theresa Andersson will be performing! Seating is limited! Reserve now!

*Margaret*



2008 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS - *Back row, l. to r.:* Knut Gezelius, David Bash, John Stavinoha, Erich Wolz, Magnus Åkerlind, Diana Rodionov; *Middle row:* Karen Wolz, Nancy Webb, Ingrid Philipson, Ken Nilsson; *Front row:* Laura Millikan, Margaret St.Clair, Dina Colburn. (*Not pictured:* Armando Garcia, Mark Swanson, Cathy Wahren)

## BITS & PIECES

🇸🇪 Ingrid Philipson, already serving as a Director on the Swedish Club Board, has agreed to serve as Publicity Chair, with the responsibility of promoting the club and all events in local newspapers. Thank you, Ingrid, for saying "Yes!"

🇸🇪 The Swedish Club Events Line, which gave a recorded message about club events, has been disconnected. Because it got only limited use, the Board of Directors voted at their last meeting to discontinue the line. Information regarding events is always available on the club's web site, [www.swedishclub.org](http://www.swedishclub.org).

🇸🇪 Nordic Fiddles & Feet, a week of Swedish and Norwegian music and dance, will be held June 28 - July 5, 2008, at Buffalo Gap Camp, Capon Bridge, West Virginia. The 2008 information, along with the brochure with registration form, is available online at <http://www.nordicfiddlesandfeet.org/2008i.html>. For more information, contact: NFF, 4401 Alta Vista Way, Knoxville, TN 37919; (865) 522-0515; [fiddlesandfeet@bellsouth.net](mailto:fiddlesandfeet@bellsouth.net).

🇸🇪 42 Scandinavian bands, several of which are from Sweden, are scheduled to perform at Austin's South by Southwest (SXSW) Music Conference and Festival, March 12-16. Specific times and venues are available online at <http://2008.sxsw.com/music/showcases/date/2008-03-12.html>.



*Mark your calendar*

**Saturday, October 25 - Smörgåsbord** at BraeBurn Country Club, Houston

**Saturday, December 13 - Christmas Traditions and Lucia Celebration**

**REMINDER:** A new dues year began January 1<sup>st</sup>. If you have not already renewed your membership for 2008 (\$35 for families, \$25 for individuals), you may do so either *online* at [www.swedishclub.org](http://www.swedishclub.org) or *by mail* by sending your check payable to "Swedish Club of Houston" to John Stavinoha, 807 Mulberry Lane, Bellaire, TX 77401.

## Introducing New SCH Board Members . . .

### Armando Garcia, Director

My name is Armando Garcia. Being born and raised in a tropical country like Venezuela, little did I think that I would ever be living in Sweden.

My first connections to Sweden were an article about Stockholm that appeared in 1974 in the National Geographic Magazine and two Ingmar Bergman films that I saw, still as teenager in Caracas. I



In Stockholm last year

became instantly intrigued with this northern country and its way of life. The “strange” written signs of the Swedish language (the letters *å*, *ö* and *ä*) fascinated me.

Many years later, I came across an interesting book written by an Italian journalist, Enrico Altavilla, based on his experiences as a news correspondent in Stockholm, whose title was “Sweden, Hell or Paradise?” Strangely enough, no one in Sweden seemed to have heard about this book. I then realized that I had to get to know this country and its people at close quarters.

It wasn't until the year I was finishing up my civil engineering studies that I became acquainted with Swedish people. This was a young couple about my age that happened to be living near my house in Caracas. I'm still a close friend of one of them, Roger, and his family, even now 25 years later!

My first visit to Sweden was in the winter of 1983. I went to visit Roger in Linköping where he was studying “*systemvetenskap*” or systems engineering. I also spent some days in Stockholm. After this first exposure to Sweden, I decided that I wanted to live for some time in this country that so much fascinated me. During a subsequent visit, I contacted some construction

companies in order to “*erbjuda mina tjänster*” (offer my services). One of these companies, Skanska AB, offered me a position at their headquarters in Stockholm as a “*teknisk praktikant*” (trainee). However, I had to wait out the work permit in Venezuela before I could start working in Sweden, which finally took place in May 1985. This trainee job eventually became a permanent job, and I stayed in Stockholm for almost four years.

It wasn't really difficult to pick up the Swedish language, and after some months, I was working and “living” in Swedish and getting fully immersed in the culture and traditions. The fact that many of the people that I was working with at Skanska were about my age enabled me to instantly “become acclimatized.” It was a very enriching experience, and I always look back with pleasure and a bit of nostalgia to those days. I'm still in touch with some of my former coworkers/friends, especially Ulla-Britt and Hans, who always pamper me every time I go back to Sweden!

After my residence in Sweden, I went back to Venezuela for some time and eventually moved to Montreal where I lived and worked for the past 12 years. Last summer an opportunity came along in terms of a job offer here in Houston. Of all the unlikely things that I have come across in this city, the Swedish Club of Houston is one of them! I became a member in November last year and have now joined the board. I have also been attending the conversation courses in Swedish in order to keep up the language and meet other Swedish-speaking people.

Other interests that keep me busy include my longtime passion with electric model trains, language learning and traveling.



## Knut Gezelius, Director



While originally from Stockholm, I grew up in a town situated two hours further north—Sandviken. It is a mere twenty-minute drive from Gävle, the city erecting the famous hay goat every Christmas. In Sweden, Sandviken is known primarily for its steel mill and its bandy

team. To put the size of the town in perspective, a quick search on Wikipedia® reveals that the population of the metropolitan Houston area is almost exactly 150 times larger than that of the metropolitan area of Sandviken.

After doing my compulsory military service at the Swedish Defense Language Institute (*Tolkskolan*), I spent an exciting year in Moscow working at the Embassy of Sweden. Having gained some experience from a country east of Sweden, I decided to head west and attend university in the US. Upon completing my undergraduate and graduate studies in nuclear engineering at MIT, I traveled frequently across the US while working as a management consultant for a Swedish-American firm headquartered in Boston. In the spring of 2007, I relocated to Houston to take advantage of an opportunity at the power company Entergy. My current focus at Entergy is strategic area planning.

I learned about the Swedish Club of Houston (SCH) shortly after moving to Texas. Meeting the other members of the club for the first time at last year's *Kräftskiva* was a blast. It was immediately obvious to me that this well-run organization had a tremendous potential. I thoroughly enjoyed participating in several other events later in the year. It is a privilege to serve on the Board, and I look forward to another successful year with SCH.



## Cathy Wahren, Director

Catalina (Cathy) is a half-Swede, daughter of Uno Wahren, a long-time Swedish Club member. Attending Club events with her family, she was eventually called upon by SCH charter member Inga Lisa Calissendorff herself to



serve on the board several years ago. During that time, she enrolled in a few of the fun, conversational Swedish language courses and chaired or served on event committees.

After a hiatus during which she spent some time in Germany (and was able to visit family in Sweden), she is joining the board once more. She is an environmental consultant by trade and lives in near-northwest Houston with her cat, Cookie, in close community with her neighbors, family and friends. She enjoys outdoor activities, cultural events and entertaining at home—in short, just about anything that is active, interesting and/or social!



(Editor's note: New SCH Director Magnus Åkerlind will be featured in a later edition of the newsletter.)

### Did you know . . .

that, according to multiple sources, this has been the warmest winter on record for Sweden?

## Swedish Club contributed to "Sweden Day" at St. Paul's School

Wednesday, March 5, 2008, was "Sweden Day" at St. Paul's School, a ministry of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston. Each year, the school celebrates a week of "Children of the World," giving the children the opportunity to experience a different country each day. Margaret St.Clair and Laura Millikan represented SCH in bringing a little bit of Sweden to the preschool and kindergarten children.

One class participated in a Lucia procession to the other classes, then each class spent some time in the music room, which had been decorated with maps, pictures and display items from Sweden. The children heard a little about Sweden, played a Swedish game, played dress-up with Viking helmets and swords, colored a Dala horse, learned a few Swedish words and tasted *pepparkakor* (ginger cookies) and lingon drink. As they left the room, each child got his/her "passport" stamped with Viking ship, indicating that he/she had been to Sweden.



Viking helmets were very popular!

SCH member Liz Cadwallader highly recommends this web site and has already begun entering her family names and history. Currently more than 14,000 individual names are registered in the database.

TASP encourages everyone with a Texas Swedish heritage to become a registered user and to contribute their family genealogy, history and photographs. Borg reports that there are even a number of Swedes who are using the site to trace their American relatives!

## *Första maj* (May Day) is official Swedish holiday

May Day is the annual manifestation day of the Swedish labor movement and has long been celebrated with processions and speeches all around the country. In many parts of Europe, since old times, May 1<sup>st</sup> had been a secular festival. Among the craft and merchant guilds of the towns and country villages, this was the day when accounts for the year were presented and new officers selected. Peasants, master craftsmen and merchants took the opportunity of arranging festivities in their various communities. Work would stand still, giving journeymen and apprentices a day off without any need for churchgoing.

In the 19th century, this holiday was turned into an annual rally of industrial workers demonstrating for labor's rights. Demonstration marches with banners, flags and brass band have been an annual occurrence in most of Sweden's industrial communities ever since 1890.

In Sweden as in many other countries, during the week before May Day, schoolchildren sell a small plastic flower, the Mayflower. The money raised helps finance the struggle against disease and disability among children.

Source: *Maypoles, Crayfish and Lucia: Swedish Holidays and Traditions*, by Jan-Öjvind Swahn, 1997.

## New web site helps trace Swedes in Texas

David Borg, a member of the Texas Swedish Pioneers Association (TSPA) board, has created the web site [www.swedesintexas.com](http://www.swedesintexas.com), to assist in the documentation and sharing of genealogical data on Swedish-Texans. Included in the site is a web edition of the English translation of the book *Swedes in Texas in Words and Pictures, 1838-1918*, as well as an extensive database for Texas Swedes from the United States Census.

## News from Sweden (from Swedish Council of America's January and February 2008 eUPDATES)

→ Swedish CO2 emissions are below levels required by the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol allows Sweden to increase its emissions by 4 percent in the years 1990 to 2012. However, latest statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency show emissions in 2006 were 9 percent lower than 1990 levels.

→ Sweden marks an ethanol milestone. According to the November newsletter of the Swedish Association of Green Motorists, the 1,000th E85 station opened in Sweden in November, and a new record was set in October when 21 percent of new cars sold were classified as environmental cars, meaning they are very fuel efficient or capable of running on high blends of renewable fuel.

→ For the fifth year in a row, the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) has ranked Sweden first for overall "innovation performance" among countries surveyed. Sweden ranked first in measures of entrepreneurship and also received high marks for measures of innovation drivers and intellectual property.

→ Sweden's central bank, the *Riksbank*, surprised financial markets by raising interest rates by 25 basis points to 4.25 percent. Most market observers had expected it to hold steady. The rate rise sets Sweden apart from the US and the Eurozone (EU members who have adopted the euro currency), where rates have either been cut drastically or put on hold. Sweden is a member of the European Union but not the Eurozone.

→ The body heat from the 250,000 people who pass through the Stockholm Central Station each day will be used to heat a new office building nearby, the Swedish state-held property administration company Jernhusen has announced.

→ Meanwhile, in southwestern Sweden, fresh milk from 1,100 cows will help heat the historic Wapnö castle. The heat that the milk releases as it is chilled will warm a gym, a workshop, and a 50-room accommodation complex.

## Summer 2008 Emigration Conference in Dalsland

Are you interested in learning more about Swedish emigration to North America? Plan to attend the international Emigration Conference, to be held at Kulturbruket på Dal, located in Mellerud, Dalsland, Sweden, August 15-16, 2008. Conference participants will attend seminars (primarily in English) about Swedish emigration and culture, listen to music, look at the exhibition of Swedish handicraft and products, talk to people, listen to music, dine and have fun together. Throughout the conference, there will be opportunities for individual consultations with capable genealogists.

Cost for both days of the seminars is \$300, and the latest day for registering is Saturday, May 31. Visit [www.homecoming.se](http://www.homecoming.se) for more information.



Making Dala horses (Photo: Andreas Österberg;  
[www.imagebank.sweden.se](http://www.imagebank.sweden.se))

***Kräftskiva***

**Swedish Crawfish Party**  
**Saturday, April 5 • 6:00 p.m.**  
**Monument Inn,**  
**4406 Battleground Road, La Porte**

**Adults: \$25; Children: \$15**  
**Seating limited to 75**  
***No tickets sold at door***

Make reservations **online** at  
[www.swedishclub.org](http://www.swedishclub.org),  
or **by mail** using the form below.  
For more information, call  
Diana Rodionov, 281-636-8153.

To get to Monument Inn:

- ▶ Take West Beltway 8 to TX 225
- ▶ Turn east on TX 225 toward Deer Park and La Porte
- ▶ Turn north on Battleground Road/TX 134 and go past the San Jacinto Monument
- ▶ The Inn will be on your right just before you get to the Lynchburg Ferry

***Valborgsmässoafton***

**Saturday, May 3 • 3:00 p.m.**  
**3383 Peters Lane, Brenham**

Bring something to grill for yourself,  
***and*** one side dish for everyone to share.

RSVP by Thursday, May 1, either  
on the web site, [www.swedishclub.org](http://www.swedishclub.org),  
or by calling Pelle Fisk at 281-348-2584.

Directions:

- ▶ US 290W towards Austin
- ▶ Turn left onto O'Malley Rd. (The turn off 290 comes up fast and is easy to miss. When 290W and 36N make the split with a sharp 270 degree right turn, drive 2.0 miles further on 290W, then make the left onto O'Malley Rd. Watch for the balloons on the sign.)
- ▶ Turn left onto CR-29/Lange Lake Rd.
- ▶ Turn right onto CR-25/Old Mill Creek Rd.
- ▶ Turn left onto CR-2/Beckerman Rd.
- ▶ Turn right onto Peters Ln. and stop at 3383
- ▶ Drive through the gate and up to parking by the ranch.

***KRÄFTSKIVA - SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2008***

**(Must be received by Wednesday, April 2)**

**Please make check payable to "Swedish Club of Houston" and  
mail to: Diana Rodionov, 11307 Willow Field Dr., Cypress, TX 77429**

Name:		Phone Number:
Name(s) of other(s) Attending:		
_____ <b>Adults</b> attending Crawfish Party	@ \$25 each	_____
_____ <b>Children</b> (12 and under) attending	@ \$15 each	_____
<b>CHECK TOTAL</b>		_____



# THE SWEDISH CLUB NEWS

The Swedish Club of Houston  
*Preserving Swedish Heritage on the Texas Gulf Coast Since 1986*

## SWEDISH CLUB NEWS

The Swedish Club News is published 6 times a year by the Swedish Club of Houston. Articles, photos, etc., are welcome. We would especially like personal news of our members, explanation of family traditions and Swedish

culture, news of Swedes and of Sweden, and your favorite Swedish shops, products or resources.

Please send news to [ljmillikan@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ljmillikan@sbcglobal.net) or by post to the return address below.

## OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Margaret St.Clair	President	margestclair@hotmail.com
Nancy Webb	Vice President	nancy.webb@kelsey-seybold.com
Ken Nilsson	Treasurer & Historian	kennilsson88@msn.com
Diana Rodionov	Secretary	drodionov@comcast.net
Laura Millikan	Newsletter Editor	ljmillikan@sbcglobal.net
Ingrid Philipson	Publicity	yourdreamhomewithingrid@yahoo.com
John Stavinoha	Membership & Language School	John.Stavinoha@memorialhermann.org
Erich Wolz	Webmaster	erich.wolz@sbcglobal.net
David Bash	Director	dbash@alumni.utexas.net
Dina Colburn	Director	djcolburn@yahoo.com
Armando Garcia	Director	armandogarcia00@yahoo.com
Knut Gezelius	Director	gezelius@alum.mit.edu
Mark Swanson	Director	Mark.Swanson@lr.org
Cathy Wahren	Director	catalinaw2@yahoo.com
Karen Wolz	Director	kswolz@sbcglobal.net
Magnus Åkerlind	Director	magnusakerlind@hotmail.com



## THE SWEDISH CLUB NEWS

c/o Laura Millikan  
6102 S. Sumac Drive  
Pearland, TX 77584-8064