



# The Danish Soldiers Club



**November—December 2020**

[www.danishsoldiersclub.com](http://www.danishsoldiersclub.com)

NEWSLETTER FOR THE DANISH SOLDIERS CLUB OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, INC. POST OFFICE BOX 41, PETALUMA CA. 94953

## THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Nine of us enjoyed a slightly cool, but otherwise delightful sunny day at the club's October picnic Saturday, November 7. We moved two tables out into the sun in front of the social hall and were able to enjoy each other's company in a safe socially distanced way. The next picnic will be in March 2011 weather permitting.

The board of directors met by Zoom on Saturday, November 14. The decision was made to forgo our traditional Christmas party in December with the specter of Covid 19 hanging over us locally and across the world. I hope that you and yours are able to get together in a safe way to celebrate the upcoming holiday season.

The board also reviewed our financial position. Our income is down from last year and our expenses exceeded it by \$6,200 bringing our bank balance down to \$30,100. There is also some work to be done to collect \$10 payments from members who paid by PayPal last year and had not changed their payment to \$40.

If we are able to meet in March next year, we will have to elect three directors to replace those whose terms are coming to an end. Volunteers are still need volunteers to fill those positions.

Stay well,  
Keith Brians  
President



**Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the 2020 "JULEFEST" Christmas Party has been cancelled.**

The Danish Soldiers Club  
Post Office Box 41  
Petaluma, CA 94953



**Address Correction Requested**

## The Governing Board for 2020

Keith Brians President to 2020	Petaluma (707) 789-9953 kastaniakeith@gmail.com
Dennis Wimple Vice President to 2021	El Cerrito (510) 525-4120 denniswimple@yahoo.com
Margrethe Bækgaard Treasurer to 2020	Santa Rosa (707) 293-7972 margrethebaekgaard@danishsoldiersclub.com
Jill Brians Secretary to 2022	Petaluma (707) 227-8404 jcbrians@yahoo.com
Michael Stecher Web Master Director to 2022	Mill Valley (415) 624-6215 mstecher@me.com
Ken Fultz Director to 2020	American Canyon (415) 362-7509 KFCVA41@comcast.net
Adam Byer Director to 2021	Oakland (510) 332 6932 adam@cherrystreetgames.com
Vagn Nielsen Director to 2021	Sonoma (707) 996-9950 nielsen.vk@gmail.com
Henrik Olsgaard Director to 2022	Orinda (510) 847-5186 holsgaard@hotmail.com

### Volunteers:

Lilian Rasmussen Membership Coordinator	Roseville (916) 771-4961 mormor@surewest.net
Rick Santarini Newsletter Editor	Santa Rosa (707) 477-6669 santarinirick@gmail.com

### Club News

As mentioned in the Presidents Letter, the Governing Board met by Zoom on Saturday, November 14. It is with much sadness that with the County of Sonoma not allowing events at their facilities until 2021 (at the earliest) and to ensure the health and well-being of our membership, the Board has regretfully and unfortunately made the decision to cancel our Annual **JULEFEST** Party for 2020.

Also the board discussed Club finances. In this extraordinary year our income is down from 2019 and our expenses exceeded it by \$6,200 bringing our bank balance down to \$30,100.

On Thursday November 19th a group of volunteers will be winterizing our grounds at Kastania Fælled.

### Elections for 2021 Board

With 2020 ending it is time to think about Board nominations and elections. Due to the COVID 19 situation the Board has decided to delay the election of a new board until the next traditional meeting, hopefully in March of next year. We have three board members with expiring terms; Keith Brians, Margrethe Bækgaard and Ken Fultz. As always, this is a volunteer run organization and your participation in the board and other activities is appreciated and necessary for the club's success. So this is the time for Members to consider (especially new mem-

bers) joining the board to help continue to keep this club strong and vibrant.

### Email addresses

Please remember if you receive our newsletter by email and you change your email address, please send that update to [santarinirick@gmail.com](mailto:santarinirick@gmail.com) so I can update my contact list and ensure you continue to receive our newsletter.

### Be careful when responding to emails

The Club would like to remind you that we should all be careful about who we're replying to in our emails, and that you should check the email to make sure the email address is correct for the name of the sender (even though it sometimes masks it with your name). In the past I have had members ask me about emails from me that I did not send. While my name was listed in the email the email address was bogus. So if you do not recognize the email address do not respond.

### Dues for 2021

The Christmas season coincides with the time to renew your membership with the Danish Soldiers Club. The price is \$40 for 2021. The easiest way is Via **PayPal** on our website [www.danishsoldiersclub.com](http://www.danishsoldiersclub.com). Just click on the member re-

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newal button on top of the home page, and you are done.

If you do not have computer access you can also send a \$40 check to :

Margrethe Bækgaard our Treasurer. Her address is:

1740 Brandee Lane  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Email: [margrethebaekgaard@danishsoldiersclub.com](mailto:margrethebaekgaard@danishsoldiersclub.com)

### Fellow Members,

As you know the dues in 2020 were raised to \$40. The website was updated so that new accounts are \$40, but we cannot control people's **OLD recurring charges** from our end. The account holder has to do that by logging in to [PayPal.com](http://PayPal.com).

If your 2021 dues will be automatically paid this way and you have not already changed your account please to log into your PayPal account and cancel the \$30 recurring payment, and then go to our website and use the new link to approve a new \$40 recurring payment, which works just fine.

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But I'm afraid we're going to have to ask every "recurring payment" member to do the same, for security reasons; it's PayPal, not us.

Sorry for any inconvenience this causes you.

## Holiday Traditions of Denmark "Glædelig Jul og godt nytår"

The main festival of the year in Denmark is Christmas. Danes celebrate Christmas Eve on December 24 and prolong the Christmas through December 25 and 26. Though many longstanding traditions have disappeared over the years, many traditions such as the family gathering at Christmas, lighting Christmas tree candles, and the month-long calendar candy are still celebrated today.

On Christmas Eve, after a splendid of traditional Danish seasonal dinner, Danish families light candles on the beautifully decorated Christmas tree. After dancing round the tree, singing traditional songs, the members of the family exchange gifts. Some of the family will probably have attended church services in the afternoon.

Christmas in Danish is called Jul, an old Nordic word for "feast".

### A Danish Christmas of old times.

Christmas celebrations in Denmark has a long history. Even before the birth of Christ, the concept was known in the Nordic countries and some of the customs of Christmas has been carried into our time. A nice, sumptuous Christmas dinner for example.

In the Middle Ages, after the Danes had been Christianized, catholic traditions mingled with the old Nordic ones especially in the cities, and the custom of candles was adopted. Today, Danes still refer to Christmas as the feast of the candles.

After the reformation in 1536, the Church tried to get rid of the old customs - pagan as well as catholic - and to Christianize Christmas. Even though people did not let go of their old traditions, some change took place during the next two centuries. Christmas remained the major holiday and a lot of preparations were made during December. In the countryside they butchered, baked, brewed, and made candles. Christmas was a time when people as well as animals were cared for. Furthermore, all kind of work was banned during the holidays. Christmas gifts were not yet common even though it started to gain popularity in the cities, but servants and employees were given a bonus like big Christmas breads or small cakes of batter cooked over the fire in a special kind of pan. These cakes were called "apple slices" and are still eaten at Christmas in Denmark along with a hot punch called gløgg made of red wine, a squeeze of brandy or snaps and with rains and pieces of almond in it.

In those years, Christmas was recreated and made into a big event centered around the family. It was seen as a way to broaden the national awareness by strengthening our traditions and as an event the Danes could gather around. As a consequence, a lot of new customs was introduced.

First of all, the Christmas tree came along, decorated with paper decorations, fruit, sweets, candles, and small Danish flags. The whole concept of Christmas trees was imported from Germany. Also, Christmas gifts became common along with Christmas cards and the Christmas "nisse," a small Danish mythical creature that you definitely want to stay best friends with, since he is able to control your fortune. Hence the tradition of putting porridge out for the nisse on Christmas Eve. The nisse was

usually a small, old man with a white beard, dressed in a grey sweater, grey trousers, a red pixie cap, red stockings, and wooden shoes. He was believed to live hundreds of years. As Christmas today is a family time, also the nisse has a family now.

In the beginning of the 20th century, Santa Claus and the stories surrounding him came to Denmark from the USA. From Great Britain came the mistletoe and holly. After the Second World War the Christmas Calendar, the wreath of Advent and the Christmas as it is known today took shape.

### Danish Christmas of Today

In Denmark, Christmas starts with advent which means "coming". It is the coming of Christ that is referred to. Originally it was also a time for fasting and doing penance and thereby preparing yourself for the Christmas feast. On the fourth Sunday before Christmas Eve - the first Sunday of advent - a wreath of pine twigs mounted with four candles and red or purple ribbons is hung up and one candle is lit. The following Sunday the next candle is lit, lighting one more each Sunday. This tradition is the first sign of Christmas approaching should you not have noticed the huge amount of Christmas decorations and displays in shops and malls, not to mention the colorful Christmas catalogues you have found in your mailbox since the beginning of November.

The first of December is the first day of the Christmas month, and it is therefore the day to start opening your Christmas calendar. Every kid has one and there is a wide variety of them.

Some are made of paper and filled with chocolate hidden behind 24 small windows allowing one piece each day until December 24. Others have small pictures behind the windows and yet others are embroidered ones with little gifts tied to them.

The first of December is also the day to light your calendar candle, a candle marked off in 24 divisions, one for each day until Christmas. During December all the preparations for the holidays begin. One of the bigger jobs - and expenses - is buying your Christmas presents for friends and family. Gift wrapping used to be a family event, done by the whole family on a December evening, but nowadays the shops and stores have pretty much taken over.

A tradition that on the other hand seems to be intact, is writing relatives and friends a Christmas card wishing everybody a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. When you post it you usually put on a Christmas seal that looks like a stamp but does not have any value in itself. Instead the profit of the sale is used for charity work. Every year the Christmas seal is designed by a different artist.

As Christmas Eve approaches, a number of other things must be attended to and taken care of. One is the making of all sorts of Christmas decorations for the house and the Christmas tree. Though all families keep their decorations from year to year, new ones are nevertheless almost always made each year, often because the children wish to.

A special Danish tradition is the Christmas heart, an interwoven paper heart often made of red and white paper, the colors of the Danish flag. These paper hearts are put on the Christmas tree or used as mobiles. Once the decorations are ready it is time to get a Christmas tree.



Most people buy their tree at the nearest mall or grocery store, but some still spend an afternoon in the forest, selecting and eventually chopping their own tree.

In most homes the tree is kept outside until the day before Christmas where it is taken inside and decorated. Usually the whole family helps, but sometimes the adults do it on their own in order to surprise the children on Christmas Eve. The Christmas tree is not only found indoors, though. Christmas trees are also part of the decorations of towns and cities, and a really tall tree is usually placed at the city square or in front of the city hall. On the first of December, the electric lights are switched on and they are lighted every day in December.

Food has always been an important part of the Christmas celebrations, and even though you can buy all you need in shops and grocery-stores, at least some of it is made at home. Normally cookies and sweets are made together with the children and are part of the Christmas preparations. Traditional Christmas cookies are vanilla wreaths, brown cookies with cardamom, cinnamon, and candied peel, "klejner" which are cakes cooked in oil or fat, and small, hard biscuits called pepper-nuts. Some people also make honey-cakes in all kinds of shapes decorated with white icing. These may even be used as Christmas decorations.

Sweets are also made at home in many families, especially chocolates. Marzipan, nuts, nougat, dried fruit, almond, liquors like brandy, rum etc. are typical ingredients. You then make your own chocolate covered marzipan bars and all other kinds of small sweets.

Danish people also has a great tradition for Christmas lunches - though they are often held in the evening! This "lunch" is usually hosted by the employer and celebrated with your colleagues at the workplace but may also be a get together with friends and relatives. Most people go to at least a couple of Christmas lunches during December.

The traditional Christmas lunch foods are herrings with a kind of curry-salad with eggs followed by stewed curly kale with ham and sausages. The meal often ends with cheese and biscuits or just fruits and sweets. Beer, usually specially brewed Christmas beers that are only sold at Christmas time, and snaps is almost always served. Although this menu varies and is not identical all over the country, the purpose of having a Christmas lunch is the same. The whole idea is basically to have a good time, a nice meal and to wish your colleagues a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Since it is a party without your family and spouse, these lunches have gained the reputation of being kind of a wild and unrestrained event. Be that as it may, it is an event looked forward to by most people and an in-escapable tradition at most workplaces.

Another Christmas time event taking place throughout December is having people over for glögg and "apple-pieces". Glögg is hot red wine and a squeeze of brandy or snaps, and with cinnamon, cardamom, raisins, and pieces of almond. Glögg is served with a small hot cake of batter called "apple-pieces" even though they do not contain apple anymore. It is eaten with jam and sugar or icing sugar. In some families glögg and apple-pieces is a "Little Christmas Eve" tradition. The "Little Christmas Eve" is the evening before Christmas, in Denmark the evening before December 23.

Other traditional Christmas food eaten throughout December are oranges, clementines, nuts and apples. For lunch liver paste, meatballs, Christmas ham, herrings, sausages, and pate are common dishes. As for drinks and beverages, a special Danish tradition is the various Christmas beers brewed and sold only at Christmas time. Every single brewery has their own special Christmas beer with names like "snow beer", "X-mas", "Christmas brew" etc. Snaps is also a major Christmas liquor, and like the Christmas beers, a special Christmas snaps is produced every year.

The last days before Christmas are spent buying the few presents remaining, preparing food, hoping for the snow to fall if it is not yet there and thousands of other small things. On December 24, all shops close at noon so everything must be taken care of and bought before this deadline.

The day of Christmas Eve, December 24, is one long wait if you are a child and probably quite busy if you are an adult. Christmas dinner is prepared, and some families go to church in the afternoon to hear the Christmas Gospel about the birth of Jesus. Finally, in the evening, Christmas dinner is served, and it too has a lot of traditions attached to it.

Some families start with rice pudding. A whole almond is hidden in the pudding and whoever gets the almond receives the almond present, traditionally but not necessarily a marzipan pig. Afterwards most people have either duck, roast, turkey, or goose served with potatoes, gravy, and cooked red cabbage. If you did not start with rice pudding, you have a kind of cold rice pudding for dessert along with cherry sauce and, of course, the whole almond. Christmas beer, a sweet beer, or juice is served with the porridge and red wine is common with the main course.

After the Christmas dinner it is time to light the tree, walk around it and sing the Christmas carols, some of which are known all over the world like "Holy Night, Silent Night," "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and some are strictly Danish. Finally, the presents are opened, and when the unwrapping is done, it is time for coffee and sweets before bedtime.



On Christmas Day, December 25, most people have lunch or dinner with relatives in order to celebrate Christmas with the whole family. Christmas Eve is usually just an event for the children, their parents, and grandparents. The second day of Christmas, December 26, is often spent at home, relaxing after the last hectic days.

