

December 2025

Golden Valley Lodge #616 Newsletter



Jason Trowbridge, Chairman

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

YES we are having a December 11th meeting even though Christmas Dinner is on the 13th. It is necessary because we need to cut checks for the dinner. We also need to elect our 2026 board. It will be a shorter meeting with Pizza. Maidie Karling is our hostess.

Our Christmas dinner will be the same menu as last year. Ann-Kristin has put together a wonderful Lucia program. Kerstin and Andrea have the raffle table,

Chuck will be Santa and Birgitta will have our Glogg table. We will have our Snaps toast with songs led by Ann-Sofi, our bar with Dylan and Valerie and appetizer table with Cecilia. We will also be awarding scholarships. We have 151 guests.

Jason

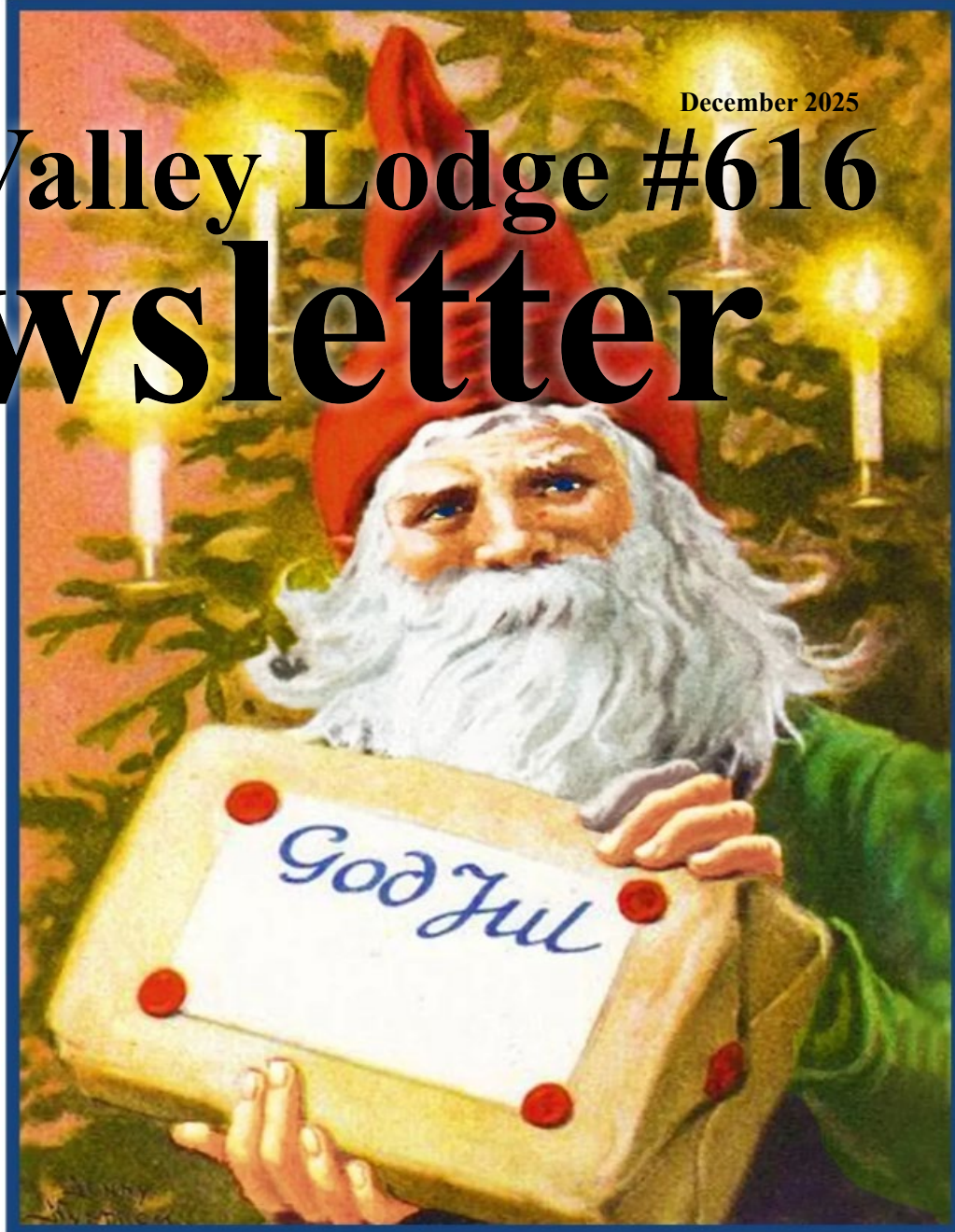
If you have not paid your membership dues, they are due.

Questions? Ask:
akarling20@yahoo.com

Please send your checks to:
Ann-Kristin Karling
as listed in the directory,
or bring to a meeting

Reimbursement for an expense:

Cecilia Danhi
Email: Cecilidadanhi@hotmail.com



GVL Happenings

Happy December 2025 and January
2026 Birthday!!

DECEMBER (12)

Robert Shoemaker	10
Susan Carlson	11
Mikael Frithiof	15
Robert Holstein	25
Merry Shepler	25
Hubert Pitters	27
Aili Luna	28
Gunilla Polutanovich	29
Zoey Shoemaker	30
Nicolas Storch	31

JANUARY (1)

Isabella Muscarella	3
Birgitta Clark	5
Jonathan Östergren	4
Susanne Moreland	6
Tyra Dios	7
Rigmor Johnsdotter	9
Jennifer Dewey	13
Chuck Bunnell	26
Aaron Gomes	27
Ian Wolf	28
Theo Wolf	28
Lars Heinstedt	29
Susanne Moreland	30

2025 Golden Valley Lodge Board & Service Positions

Chair: Jason Trowbridge
Vice Chair: Cecilia Brady
Past Chair: Delphine Trowbridge
Recording Secretary: Cecilia Danhi
Assistant Secretary: Dorothy Burns
Membership Secretary: Danielle Sommer
Financial Secretary: Ann-Kristin Karling
Treasurer: Bingitta Clark
Chaplain: Beth Bunnell
Master of Ceremonies: Stig Eneberg
Assistant MoC: Anneli Brady
Cultural: Laurie Taylor
Trustee Chairman 1 yr: Kerstin Wendt
Trustee 2 yr: Bertil Winther
Trustee 3 yr: Delphine Trowbridge
Auditor chairman 1 yr: Linda Trowbridge
Auditor 2 yr: Britt Potter
Auditor 3 yr: Wenche Eklund
Events Co-Chair: Maggie Connelly
& Delphine Trowbridge
Scholarships: Hubert Pitters, Beth Bunnell, Gunilla Thelin, Wenche Eklund, Britt-Marie Potter
Financial: Hubert Pitters
Historian & Vasa Star: Laurie Taylor
Vasa Park: Richard Heinstedt, Linnea Heinstedt, Dorothy Burns
Alternate Ann-Sofi Holst
Bar: Valerie & Dylan Olson
Newsletter: Laurie Taylor
Youth Group: Cecilia Trowbridge

ERNIE JURGENS

Our member, and wonderful piano player, Ernie Jurgens, passed away on November 25th. He was at Northridge Hospital for a few days after a heart attack.

We are sending warm thoughts and condolences to Inger Saffie and her family.



Cultural Corner Stuff

Gnomes vs. Gonks: Do you know what the difference is?

Every Christmas, it feels like gnome-shaped decorations are everywhere—tiny figures with long white beards, oversized noses, and tall red hats. They must be gnomes... right?

Not exactly. Although they look almost identical, these festive figures are actually gonks. Think of a gonk as a cross between a gnome and a hobgoblin. It is believed that they were first found in tales in the 1600s with many thinking that they originate from the 13th century. Many people associate them with Christmas gnomes even though they are different with their faces being entirely covered by their hat and beard. Their nose is the most distinctive part of their face and they are believed to be responsible for protecting their owner's home during winter and Christmas. They originate from Nordic and Scandinavian folklore, rather than the Germanic traditions that gave rise to the classic garden gnome. In their original myths, they're known as Nisse or Tomtes.

Garden gnomes—red hats, black boots, white beards—are timeless icons of front yards and fairy-tale décor.

Gonks, however, have deeper seasonal roots. In old Nordic stories, Nisse/Tomtes were linked to Christmas and the winter solstice. They were believed to frequent barns and cozy homes during the cold months, offering good fortune to households that treated them kindly—and mischief to those that didn't. That blend of charm and trickery lives on today. Gonks have become a holiday staple, filling shelves in December with their soft bodies, oversized hats, shaggy beards, and their signature lack of visible eyes. The version you see in modern stores is essentially an Americanized, commercial interpretation of the traditional Nisse/Tomte.

In folklore, these little creatures enjoy performing household chores, snacking on porridge, and—in some stories—delivering gifts much like Santa Claus. Many traditions even include leaving out porridge for them on the winter solstice.



So are gonks just gnomes? In a way, yes. You can think of gonks as a regional cousin of the gnome—one with a special love for Christmas and porridge. As for why their eyes are usually hidden, tales vary: some say their gaze is unsettling, while others claim their unseen eyes simply emphasize how rarely they reveal themselves. Some versions even describe them as nocturnal, coming out only at night to eat and leave gifts.

In modern décor, the differences are mostly about materials and style. Gonks are typically made from soft fabrics like felt, lack visible eyes, and are used indoors as whimsical holiday accents. Gnomes, by contrast, are often crafted from clay or porcelain, have fully visible faces, and usually live outdoors in gardens. Beyond those distinctions, the two share plenty in common—red hats, white beards, magical reputations, and a fondness for playful mischief.

And yes, you can even find gonk cookies—icing, sugar, and all.

Today, most people casually refer to gonks as gnomes, which isn't surprising given how similar they look and how widespread they've become. Their origins may differ, but whether you call them gnomes or gonks, these bearded little figures have become beloved decorations, brightening shelves, countertops, and holiday displays everywhere. While their origin is very much linked to holiday season and people call them the 'Christmas Gnome', many people use them to decorate their homes and gardens all year round.

Finland's Sustainability

In Finland, public libraries are expanding far beyond bookshelves — now offering tools that help stitch lives together, quite literally. Across several cities, sewing machines have become part of the standard lending catalog, allowing low-income visitors to repair clothes instead of throwing them away. These aren't tucked into obscure corners but placed in bright, welcoming craft zones where visitors can sit, sew, and save.

The machines are free to use and require no special registration. Alongside them are boxes of donated fabric, thread spools, scissors, and pins — everything needed for basic mending or light tailoring. Librarians sometimes offer tutorials or printed guides, helping first-time users fix zippers, shorten sleeves, or reinforce worn-out seams.

For many, these stations offer more than clothing repair. They become quiet spaces of focus, creativity, and pride. Visitors leave not just with stitched garments but a renewed sense of resourcefulness. Some even return with friends, teaching one another how to sew or create small upcycled items from scraps.

This initiative fits within Finland's broader culture of sustainability, where reuse is valued and waste is carefully avoided. By making such tools accessible to everyone, libraries are redefining their purpose — turning from knowledge hubs into hands-on sanctuaries for practical living.

With each stitch made in these shared spaces, Finland proves that mending doesn't just restore fabric — it strengthens the threads of community.

