

The Nordic Club - Columbia, SC March 2008 Newsletter (Vol.6 no. 3)

Happy Easter Scandinavians & Scanfans!

Hope this finds you all well. This is an exciting time as we prepare for the International Festival.

In the past, as you can see from the photo, we have had a stand rich in colors. This year we will have on display a wonderful example of Scandinavian Design as the Bohemian Furniture store has agreed to lend us a chair to display on our stand. The chair is a "Stressless" model by the Norwegian Furniture manufacturing company, Ekornes. That is the same type chair that we will be selling tickets for next month and will have the drawing in May.



Please RSVP if you are able to volunteer to be on the stand April 4 or 5. Thanks go out to Lester & Elbita, Einar, Mattias, Runa, Don, Kathy, Elin, who have already let us know that they will be volunteering.

On March 27, the Nordic Club will host a table at the International Gala for the volunteers that would like to attend.

It is also a sad time as we have lost one of our members, Jack Sproat.



We extend the sympathy of all Nordic Club members to Ruth Sproat Christensen and her family on the passing of Jack, who was a real Scanfan!

Photo of Jack Sproat (seated) entertaining Nordic Club ladies....

Now for some news items from Scandinavia...

Norwegian real estate problems?

'Hytte' sales slow down

Lots of Norwegians are spending this Easter holiday week at their own holiday cabin (known as a *hytte*), for spring skiing in the mountains. A hytte-building boom of the past few years, though, now seems to be tapering off.

Sales of new cabins and holiday homes in the mountains have slowed considerably. The papers are full of ads for "hytter" for sale, but buyers aren't materializing.

Thousands of holiday homes are for sale all over the country, not least brand-new cabins and condominiums, some built on speculation. Others haven't broken ground yet, and may not if the market doesn't pick up.

Norway's state statistics bureau SSB has reported that 1.3 million square meters of holiday homes broke ground from January to November of last year, up 6.2 percent from the same period in 2006.

Never before have so many "hytter" been built. Demand was also high last year, with around 23,000 holiday properties sold.

But now the demand seems lower, and prices are falling as well. Some real estate brokers have reported reductions in asking prices, which averaged NOK 1.4 million (USD 280,000) for resale properties and up to NOK 3 million for new properties last year.

Aftenposten English Web Desk/NTB

Reprinted Cartoons from Denmark controversial abroad and also to some in Denmark...

DANES AGAINST CARTOON REPRINT

While Danes overwhelmingly supported the initial publication of the infamous Mohammed cartoons as a symbol of free expression, most see the drawing's re-publication in September as an affront to Muslims, according to a Rambøll/Jyllands-Posten survey.

After the initial publication, 63.6 percent of Danes said they believed it was okay that the media ran the cartoons. But after the second issuance, that support has dropped to only 37.9 percent, with a full 58.5 percent saying they were directly against the publication.

Tøger Seidenfaden, editor-in-chief at Politiken newspaper, said the public is simply tired of the whole Mohammed cartoon affair.

'The first time could be excused, but the second seems like a conscious provocation.'

Edited March 17, 2008

Financial Markets in Iceland get the cool effects of the US \$.

Bad day for the Icelandic króna

03/18/2008 | 14:14

The Icelandic currency Króna, ISK fell sharply yesterday. The ISK fell 7 percent and has not dropped that much since the floating currency rate of the ISK was introduced in 2001.

When markets closed yesterday one Euro was worth ISK 118; it had been worth ISK 109 at the beginning of the day. Icelandic currency experts traced the drop to general risk avoidance on international financial markets. Other high interest rate currencies, similar to the ISK, also dropped dramatically yesterday, *Fréttabladid* reported. At midday Tuesday the EUR was at ISK 123, the GBP at ISK 156 and the USD at ISK 77.

“The Icelandic Króna is hit the hardest because of the sub prime loans crisis in the US and the effect on that on credit markets,” said financial analyst Ulrich Leuchtmann, with Commerzbank. He predicted that the ISK would drop further.

Analysts at Kaupthing bank said that the sellability of the ISK had decreased considerably because of the turmoil in international financial markets and called for the National Bank of Iceland to provide the Icelandic banks short term loans in foreign currencies. However the currency reserve of the National Bank could prevent it from taking such measures.

The Icelandic banks have been reluctant to lend in foreign currency in the last few weeks because of the credit crunch.

Recent pay rises on the Icelandic labor market are in turmoil because of the situation. The weakening of the currency basically wipes out pay rises as the prices of necessities and oil go up. Many families have taken out mortgages in foreign currencies. If the situation prevails in the long term they could be faced with considerably higher payments.

Nature has its own impact in Finland, some burdens that we do not experience in South Carolina as we prepare for Easter Egg hunts.....

Snow burdens are approaching risk limits in northeast, while Helsinki is already turning green

Untypically, the coastal areas of Southern Finland have been snow-deprived throughout the current winter, while the amount of snow in Finnish Lapland and Northeastern Finland are approaching the maximum weight capacity of roofs.

This winter, the gap between the south and the north has been exceptionally large. In coastal areas such snow-deprived winters normally occur only once in ten years.

However, not everybody is sorry about that. Helsinki resident **Tuovi Nöjd** certainly is not.

"Good, the ground is not frozen and I can do what I like most, namely to turn the soil over and prepare for the planting of potatoes. When the temperature of the soil is +4 degrees Celsius, I can start planting", reported Nöjd on her plot in the Kumpula allotment garden in Helsinki.

Snow burdens...(continued)

In the Kainuu region in Northeastern Finland, the weight of the snow on roofs is approaching the risk limits, and the Finnish Environment Institute has issued a warning, saying that in some areas the maximum safe weight could soon be exceeded.

The snow that is packed and frozen on roofs is now at its heaviest. Its weight is from 130 to 200 kilos per square metre, and in some areas even more than that. In other words, on a 100 sq metre roof the weight of snow can be more than 20,000 kilos, equalling a full truckload.

Reijo Pentikäinen from the Kainuu Regional Environment Centre is urging property owners to shovel off snow from their roofs if the thickness of snow cover has already reached the risk limit.

At present, the snowiest locations in Northeastern Finland are Hyrynsalmi, Suomussalmi, Puolanka, and Ristijärvi.

In Kainuu's Ukkohalla ski resort the snow is strong enough to bear a person's weight and the skiing conditions are at their best. Farmer **Tero Kinnunen** is shovelling snow off the roofs of rental cottages at the ski resort.

Kinnunen hopes that snow will soon stop piling up on rooftops, even though snowdrifts of more than one metre high are not that unusual in Kainuu. Such snow loads are seen a few times in a decade.

For the coastal areas the current winter season has been exceptional. Snow that has fallen on one day has often melted on the next. In Helsinki crocuses and tulips are poking out of the ground, while coltsfoots are appearing in Turku. Moreover, larks and starlings have already arrived on the coast, while people have been expecting good skiing conditions but in vain.

Reportedly, the water equivalent of the snow cover has not once exceeded 25 millimetres in the entire coastal area over this winter. Winter seasons with such a low snow load occur only once in a decade.

That is all for March. Please participate with the International Festival. Have a pleasant Easter or Passover!

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