

Diary from Scandia Camp Mendocino 2007, seen from a Swedish point of view

We arrived in L.A. (through Chicago) June 2, a group full of expectations, consisting of Leif and Margaretha, Kalle and MajLis, Bosse and Siv, Tina and Pär and Börje and Peter Fiddler. Chris and Diane Gruber met us and we spent a few wonderful days in LA, continued with one rented and one borrowed car up the coast, Highway 1, arrived Thursday noon in San Francisco and left on Friday evening to go to Mendocino, staying the night with Emma and Dave in Sebastopol, 16 persons eating and sleeping in their wonderful house! Saturday June 9 we went along the coast again towards Mendocino, in good shape, jet lag gone at last, and full of impressions of, among other things, nice people and magnificent views.



We made a short stop in pretty town of Mendocino and arrived at camp late afternoon. We “checked in” and found our cabins. Pär and I, Tina, had talked quite a lot about the camp with Britt-Mari, Erik and Bengt, who were there last summer. Even though we knew what to expect, we were a bit surprised at first over the primitive standard of the cabins. Wonderful Carol brought bedding for us together with carpets and other things, and all set we realized we could probably endure a week.... Soon we discovered that the surroundings were really beautiful, the food was excellent, the dining and dance halls quite another thing than the cabins. First night dinner, information and welcome dancing.



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Sunday: The program for the week was full and tight. In the beginning I more or less dragged my reluctant Pär to the Norwegian dance classes. I said “let’s try once more” until he understood it was real fun! We were not at all familiar with the music and dance style but it is so nice to try new things and during the week the Valdres Springar became almost a good friend! Sunday afternoon we took a long walk up one of the trails. We saw signs that said “Beware of the Mountain lion, it attacks children first...”. We also learned to recognize the poison oak and to avoid it (which we managed to). The redwood trees are huge and the ground under them with the sprinkling sun, ferns, redwood sorrel, chip monks and other things growing feels very exotic and makes you feel calm, relaxed and humble! Evening dance was nice and full of speed, isn’t it strange to go from Sweden to the US and find such good, intense Scandinavian dancing that we experienced during the whole week!



Monday: The morning was very cold (which made it easier for me to persuade Pär to do the Norwegian), we ran from one activity to the other the whole day and kept warm. As if it was not enough with Swedish dances we were served Swedish smorgasbord for Dinner!! In the evening dance one of our favourite Föllinge dances came up, the Schlaka polska. As I found out later on Pär had put it on the request list. When we happily started to dance I discovered we were the only ones on the floor. How embarrassing I thought, but everybody else was laughing, probably at the look on my face, so what the.... If we come back another time we should teach it before we request it. The evening as usual contained a lot of dancing, for example Tango singing and dancing with Jane and her accordion. The sleep came very fast that night.



Tuesday: Swedish culture hour. We acted a Swedish "uppdansning". I was the talking woman. I was quite good at English in school, but this was my first visit to an English speaking country (it is never too late they say) and my English felt a bit rusty, so I was worried. During the stay it kind of woke up and finally I started to think and talk to Pär in English, I feel really happy about this. I got many chances to talk to all the wonderful people and practice, wow! Thank you everybody, it was a real "kick"!!!



After lunch we went on a nature walk to the Big Tree. Our guide, Aaron, showed us purple milkmaid, redwood sorrel, Douglas fir, thimbleberries and the refrigerator tree. It was nice to get names on the plants. The Big Tree was just big enough for the twelve of us to reach around when we held each others hands, fantastic, and we understood that there are even bigger ones. Back to camp we changed clothes and before dinner joined the swing dance party. Pär and I did our best in the swing dancing. After dinner an auction run by John Parish took place, where the most peculiar things were sold: golden shoes, weekends at someone's house, 1500 fingerminutesmassage, big blocks of chocolate and much more. The dance was a little shorter this evening.

Wednesday: At last less cold. We had cold evenings and mornings but nice weather daytime the whole week. When Pär played the fiddle in the afternoon I strolled around the camp and studied flowers and grass enjoying the cathedral-like forest in the sun. Wonderful! Very nice evening dance. At night I woke up from a rustling, nibbling sound. I got up and used the flashlight into the garbage bag that stood on the floor (forgotten). A very tiny and adorable little mouse with black peppercorn eyes looked up at me. Pär had also awakened and we carefully took the bag outside and shook it gently, the mouse hurried away, and we could hang the bag in the ceiling and go back to sleep.



Thursday: In the afternoon Pär and I took a walk to search for the famous and very hard-to-find swimming hole. After studying the map and then wandering about a while we found it a quarter mile beyond the "cathedral forest". It was a beautiful place in the Little Big River and it was really a "swimming hole". Other people (from the outside world...) had also found it and enjoyed the water and the nice little beach. We didn't bring bathing suits but decided to go back the next day. We continued walking and also found swimming hole no 2, which was not as easy to reach. We went back for afternoon dancing, changing our clothes before the evening banquet.

Gathering of beautifully dressed people. The Swedes (except for Börje) didn't bring the folk drakts due to lack of suitcase space, so here we had Swedes in normal clothes and Americans in Swedish Costumes, sometimes the world is upside down. Many photos were taken and many compliments were spoken. When dinner was ready to start we arranged a row with fiddlers first. We walked in procession into the dining hall where the tables were laid. Dinner was served, salmon with vegetables and rice, cake for dessert. After the banquet dinner we had entertainment in the dance hall and then awards. Finally the usual evening dance starting a little later this evening.



Friday: Already the last day, how time flies! We rehearsed the dances of the week, Swedish and Norwegian. After lunch the market, we took a look at it and then went together with Siv, Bosse, Kalle, MajLis and Börje to the swimming hole, now bringing swimming suits. The weather was beautiful and the water the right temperature, we bathed and had a wonderful time, especially Bosse, the bathing-lover, was happy. Strengthened we went for dinner and dancing. The dancing was intense and really wonderful, we tried for a long time to go home but it took an hour to succeed because everybody wanted to dance with everybody this last chance. We made a fire in the fireplace, more for the cosiness than for the cold, the temperature had turned much warmer during the week.



Saturday: The all-fixing Diane had arranged for Pär and me to go with Gene and Helen to San Francisco, they live in Santa Barbara and pass through anyway. Strangely enough all our luggage went into the car, who would have believed that? We went inland and stopped for lunch in Cloverdale, Owl Café. In San Rafael we paused for a visit to Trader Joe's. I wanted to buy dried fruits, nuts and chocolates. Among other things I found dried cherries, not available in Sweden. I use a lot of fruits and nuts in my baking. Luckily we had bought new suitcases in L.A. and we had a small one empty, that is, before the visit to Trader Joe's. We continued to Muir Woods to take a last long look at the Redwoods. It was evening before we entered San Francisco and could join the others. The Swedish group and the Americans who drove us from Mendocino to San Francisco were about 15 people. At last we found a restaurant that could supply 15 hungry people with food.... We separated from the Americans there and stayed the night at Clarion Hotel near the airport.



Sunday: Bye bye America, flying home. It is a long way and the travelling is the worst part but the trip was worth all the flying, lining, safety controls, dry air on airplanes, bad food and sitting, sitting, sitting (we prefer dancing, dancing, dancing..). Monday morning we took the train from Stockholm/Arlanda home to Dalarna.



Some general observations from a first-timer:

I always have wanted to go to the U.S. We have heard a lot about your country and had different expectations.

True: Everything is big: roads, highways, houses, stores, malls. The traffic is fluent and things seem to work OK and no littering.

More than true: Americans are very generous, hospitable and kind. In Sweden I am a bit of a loner, but the American form of social interaction that we met on this trip seemed to suit us perfectly. I cannot explain why, but I felt much more at ease and comfortable in chats, barbecue parties, mingling, dinner talk and other situations than I do in Sweden. I don't think I have talked so much in years, and in English too! Thank you all of you for taking so good care of us and being so nice. We feel we have made a lot of friends and NEED to come back...

False: "You will see lots of very fat people." We saw only a few but we do that at home too. Is this different in California than in other states?

I missed: Walking areas. In Sweden we walk and bike a lot. It is very easy to get close to nature. I also missed my dark sourdough rye bread.

I missed when I came home: your divine fruits and vegetables, melon, mango, cherries...

Now I have to finish before it becomes a book,



Lots of love and greetings from Tina and Pär.