

(Reprinted from a yellowed copy of the souvenir "Grand Mound/Rochester Swede Day, June 23, 1984" edition of the "The Advertiser" published by Dan & Melody Gleichman

## **Past Celebrations Full of Variety**

By Melody Gleichman

Advertiser Staff Editor

How did Swede Day begin? In April, 1979, Harry Bay, a reporter from The Daily Chronicle in Centralia was in the Grand Mound/Rochester area gathering news. While he was in the Fabric Shop and Chantilly, talking to owner Polly Collins, the conversation turned to how Rochester needed an identity.

When Mrs. Collins said Swede Hall was the only landmark in Rochester, the reporter suggested "Swede Day." So Mrs. Collins presented the idea to the Grand Mound/Rochester Citizens Group at the next meeting, and they appointed her and the Rev. Lauren Lundblad to co-chair the first Swede Day.

After doing much research, Polly found out that each year, Sweden has a national holiday on the weekend closest to June 24, which they call, "Mid Summer Day Festival." So this idea was adopted with the thought that on this day, everyone would be a Swede ...Swedish-Irish, Swedish-English, Swedish-Indian, etc.

On June 23, just two months later, the first Swede Day was celebrated. The activities included a parade, followed by a Swedish-style potluck picnic, and featuring displays of Swedish arts and crafts items during the afternoon. Baseball games were held that afternoon, and other events, such as horseshoe contests, Frisbee tossings, music, and folk dancing were enjoyed by celebrants. The Tony Onley family, Indians, presented a half-hour audience participation show. "The Swingers" musical group from Centralia provided music for a dance that night at Swede Hall. The royal court, made up of three princesses, did not go through a pageant that year. They were Audry Hilt, Peggy Hilt, Peggy Antonsen, and Lena Garcia. Jan Forsman acted as Miss Swede Day and three-year-old Aimee Booth served as Little Miss Swede: "Lycka till." meaning "Good Luck," was the Swedish greeting on the first year's buttons. The buttons are sold each year to help defray expenses.

In 1980, the Swede Day celebration was postponed until July 19, because of the ashfall from Mt. St. Helens. However, that didn't seem to dampen the spirit of the committees. And, that year, the very first coronation banquet was held to select a princess. Shari Baldwin won the crown, and her attendants were Penny Brandt, Diane Gossard Bradley and the late Nancy Halgren. A noon potluck followed the parade, and entertainment began with "The Schaffer Brothers Logging Film." The Tony Onley family of plains dancers from the Yakima Tribe followed. Later, the Order of Runeburg Choir from Tacoma sang. "Olympia" musician Arnold Koutenen performed selections on the accordion. Children between the ages of five and ten years were invited to join in on fun and games at Rochester Primary School. An arts and crafts tent was set up next to Swede

hall. A dance was held that evening, featuring Seattle's "Moonlighters" for music. The buttons that year carried the words, "Var'soh goo," or you are welcome.

The 1981 celebration was adorned with Princess Tami Parkhurst, and attendants, Lisa Richardson Hoglund, Kelly Miller and Laurie Keller, on June 28. The first Swede Day Fun Run was held that year. Then following the parade, a Swedish dinner prepared by the Grand Mound/Rochester Citizens Group, was served at Swede Hall. Yvonne Ruege was mistress of Ceremonies for the entertainment program. Dick Fall, Rochester, performed a number of Swedish polkas, and other selections on the piano, and the Tacoma Order of Runeburg's Choir sang several numbers. That year's official saying was "Jagar en van," meaning, "I am a friend."

In 1982, Princess Renee Charboneau and her court, Christy Johnson and Connie Lael reigned over the festivities on June 26. A Swedish Meatball dinner was again served after the parade. An afternoon of musical entertainment including Tanhaujat, a Finnish dancing group from Seattle; Mr. And Mrs. Vic Holm, an accordion duo from Oregon, Yvonne Ruege on the guitar, and Dick Fall, a popular keyboard artist, at the piano. The Early Day engine and Tractor Association, displayed and demonstrated their antique gas one-lung engines and tractors.

Later, in 1982, a float was purchased from Capitol Lakefair. The 1982 court was the first to ride on the float in the Lewis County Christmas Parade. Since then, the colors of the float have been changed to the official Swede Day colors of blue and gold. The slogan on 1982's button was "Hasa alla," or Hello to all."

Last year, the titles of the Swede Day Court was changed from "Princess and attendants" to "Queen and her court." The first ever Swede Day Queen was Jenny Boden, and her court consisted of Heather Mortensen, Linda Hohman and Terry Davis. After the parade, at the Swede Hall dinner, entertainment featured Tanhuajat again. Throughout the day, an arts and crafts show and sale were held at the Rochester High School gymnasium. Celebrants greeted each other with "Jag alskar dig," meaning "I love you.

THIS YEAR'S Swede Day is being celebrated for the sixth time in Rochester. Have a grand time!