

January 2017

Golden Valley Lodge #616 Newsletter

Happy New Year!

Chairman's Message

Dear Golden Valley Members,

Next meeting will be my last as your Chairman and I wanted to thank you for letting me serve for two years. It has been a very interesting and rewarding experience, even though I have served two, two year terms before.

I give my best to my successor Inga Francis. I know she will do well -- and with a membership like ours how can she fail? We happen to have the best lodge and members and I know you all will show your support for Inga and make her year a success.

Past Chairman
Isabella Muscarella

Next meeting: Thursday, January 12, 2017

Golden Valley Lodge #616 • Vasa Order of America • Meeting Address: 14312 Friar St. • Van Nuys • CA 91401
info@goldenvalleylodge.org • www.goldenvalleylodge.org

GVL Happenings

2017 Dinner Hosts

- January:** Steve & Katarina Holstein
February: Klintare's
March: Laila Jensen, Maria Jacobs, Gunvor Sabo
April Social: Chase & Kristina
May: Andrea, Britt, Mona, and Birgitta
June: We need a June volunteer!



Social Activities for Golden Valley Lodge to Consider

Look over the list to see if there is anything that might be fun. We would appreciate any and all suggestions to the list! We can vote on an activity at our March meeting.

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| Whale Watching Tours out of Newport Beach | Julian Apple Days Festival in September |
| Kingsburg Spring Festival in May | Hollywood Bowl |
| Riley's Farm in Glen Oaks | Glendale Center Theater |
| Solvang: Elverhoj Museum, wine tasting, Chumash Casino, Danish Days in September | Getty Villa |
| Near Solvang is the La Purisima Mission State Historic Park with events during the year. They have walking tours, Village Days in August and November, Mission Life Days in May, July and September. | Autry Museum of the American West. A friend of Delphine's is a docent. |
| | San Pedro Dinner Cruise |
| | Zion National Park |

Happy January Birthday!

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|---------------------|-----|---------------------|------|
| Isabella Muscarella | 3rd | Ingrid Thomsen | 10th |
| Birgitta Clark | 5th | Mary Locke | 11th |
| Margit Bennett | 6th | Jennifer Dewey | 13th |
| Dagmar Rydberg | 8th | Ruzenka diBenedetto | 28th |
| Andrea Benitese * | 9th | Lars Heinstedt * | 29th |
| Rigmor Jonsdotter | 9th | Mathew Locke | 31st |



Culture Corner: Mushrooms



The beautiful red-and-white spotted toadstool is a common image in many aspects of popular culture. Garden ornaments and children's picture books depicting gnomes and fairies, such as the Smurfs, often show the mushrooms being used as seats, or homes. They have been featured in paintings since the Renaissance, albeit in a subtle manner. In the Victorian era they became more visible, becoming the main topic of some fairy paintings. Two of the most famous uses of the mushroom are in the video game series Super Mario Bros. (specifically two of the power-up items and the platforms in several stages), and the dancing mushroom sequence in the 1940 Disney film *Fantasia*.

Amanita muscaria, commonly known as the fly agaric or fly amanita, is a poisonous and psychoactive basidiomycete fungus, one of many in the genus *Amanita*. (Basically that means that it has hallucinogenic properties.) Native throughout the temperate and boreal regions of the Northern Hemisphere, *Amanita muscaria* has been unintentionally introduced to many countries in the southern hemisphere, generally as a symbiont with pine plantations, and is now a true cosmopolitan species.

The name of the mushroom in many European languages is thought to be derived from its use as an insecticide when sprinkled in milk. This practice has been recorded from Germanic- and Slavic-speaking parts of Europe, as well as the Vosges region and pockets elsewhere in France, and Romania. Albertus Magnus was the first to record it in his work *De vegetabilibus* some time before 1256, commenting *vocatur fungus muscarum, eo quod in lacte pulverizatus interficit muscas*, "it is called the fly mushroom because it is

powdered in milk to kill flies."

The 16th-century Flemish botanist Carolus Clusius traced the practice of sprinkling it into milk to Frankfurt in Germany, while Carl Linnaeus, the "father of taxonomy", reported it from Småland in southern Sweden, where he had lived as a child. He described it in volume two of his *Species Plantarum* in 1753, giving it the name *Agaricus muscarius*, the specific epithet deriving from Latin *musca* meaning "fly". It gained its current name in 1783, when placed in the genus *Amanita* by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, a name sanctioned in 1821 by the "father of mycology", Swedish naturalist Elias Magnus Fries. Linnaeus and Lamarck are now taken as the namers of *Amanita muscaria* (L.) Lam.

(Warning: This section is gross!)The active ingredients of *amanita muscaria* are not metabolized by the body, and therefore remain active in urine. It is safer to drink the urine of one who has consumed the mushroom than to eat the mushroom directly, as many of the mushroom's toxic compounds are processed and eliminated on the first pass through the body. The mushroom's ingredients can remain potent even after six passes through the human body. Drinking it has only a slightly less intoxicating effect than eating the fungus itself. It was common practice among ancient people to recycle the potent effects of the mushroom by drinking each other's urine. Some scholars argue that this is the origin of the phrase "to get pissed," as this urine-drinking activity preceded alcohol by thousands of years. (For those not familiar with the expression, "getting pissed" is English slang for getting drunk/intoxicated.)

Filip Johann von Strahlenberg, a Swedish prisoner of war in the early eighteenth century, reported seeing Koryak tribespeople outside huts where mushroom sessions were taking place, waiting for people to come out and urinate. When they did, the fresh liquid was collected in wooden bowls and greedily gulped down. This method of ingestion was much less likely to cause the vomiting often associated with eating the mushroom itself.

How did ancient peoples gain this knowledge? Why, from the reindeer of course!

The Reindeer

There are many indigenous peoples who used the *amanita muscaria* as their sacrament. Best documented are the Sami (Lapps) of northern Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia and the Tungusic and Koryak peoples of Siberia. All of these groups live in the Arctic Circle and are traditionally reindeer herders.

Reindeer were the sacred animals of these semi-nomadic people, as they were the source of food, shelter, clothing and other necessities. As it happens, the reindeer have a particular fondness for *amanita muscaria*, even seeking them out from underneath the snow. When they eat the mushrooms they become stupefied, staggering and prancing around while under the influence.

In Victorian times, travelers returned with intriguing tales of the use of fly agaric by people in Siberia, Lapland, and other areas in the northern latitudes. One of the first was reported by the mycologist Mordecai Cooke, who mentioned the recycling of urine rich in muscimol in his *A Plain and Easy Account of British Fungi* (1862). Patrick Harding of Sheffield University



points out that Mordecai Cooke was a friend of Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), the author of the fantastic children's story *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). "Almost certainly,

this is the source of the episode in *Alice* where she eats the mushroom, where one side makes her grow very tall and the other very small," Harding says. "This inability to judge size—macropsia—is one of the effects of fly agaric."

Vikings

The notion that Vikings used *A. muscaria* to produce their berserker rages was first suggested by the Swedish professor Samuel Ödmann in 1784. Ödmann based his theories on reports about the use of fly agaric among Siberian shamans. The notion has become widespread since the 19th century, but no contemporary sources mention this use or anything similar in

their description of berserkers. Muscimol is generally a mild relaxant, but it can create a range of different reactions within a group of people. It is possible that it could make a person angry, or cause them to be "very jolly or sad, jump about, dance, sing or give way to great fright."

Fairy Rings

A fairy ring, also known as fairy circle, elf circle, elf ring or pixie ring, is a naturally occurring ring or arc of mushrooms. Typically, the rings may grow to over 10 meters (33 ft) in diameter, and they become stable over time as the fungus grows and seeks food underground. On occasion the rings will continue to grow over time, resulting in a pattern that can be thousands of feet wide, and hundreds of years old. One of the most im-



A fairy ring with the red and white mushrooms

pressive rings ever was found in France, and suspected to be about 2,000 feet (600 meters) wide and over 700 years old! Time, environmental factors, and animal droppings may replenish the nutrients in the center of the ring once it is wide enough. This can result in a second ring growing inside the first. They are found mainly in forested areas, but also appear in grasslands or rangelands. Fairy rings are detectable by sporocarps in rings or arcs, as well as by a necrotic zone (dead grass), or a ring of dark green grass. A fungus, *mycelium*, is present in the ring or arc underneath.

Mycelium is the underground organism that produces the reproductive fruit bodies that we know as mushrooms. This relationship is sometimes explained by comparison to an apple tree. If we think of mushrooms as apples, then the *mycelium* is the tree from which

they fruit. In this analogy the tree is underground, but you get the idea. In the case of a ring, the mycelium starts as a single point and grows in a circular shape. It continues to push outwards in an attempt to consume more nutrients. As it exhausts the nutrients on the inside of the circle, it will widen further and further as it looks for a new food source.



This process results in an ever-growing circle, that doesn't start to grow back inwards or cross over on itself because there's no new food on the inside of the circle. The mycelium may have started at one point, but soon it has nowhere to go but in an outwardly, circular direction.



Although not uncommon, fairy rings don't just happen anywhere. Multiple factors influence this circular growth pattern, including soil type and condition, amount of nutrients in the soil, obstructions underground, and dirt composition. The ground needs to be even and well composed, a reason why you'll often see them pop up on lawns.

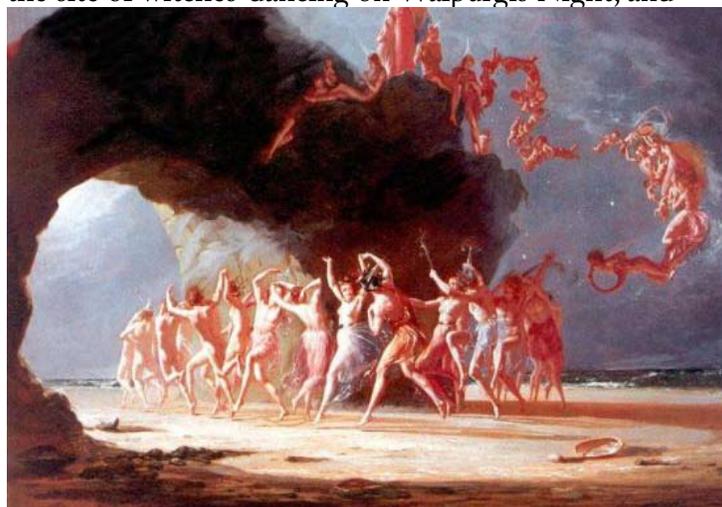
The chance exists that you've seen more fairy rings than you realize. Although we only notice them when they produce mushrooms, the circular mycelium underground is always there and growing.

Fairy Rings Oral Tradition and Folklore

A great deal of folklore surrounds fairy rings. Some people have a superstitious discomfort about fairy rings, as they see them as representing the presence of fairy folk who don't always deal fairly with humans. Others see the rings as an inconvenience, as the rings can make a lush green yard look rather unsightly. After the mushrooms die, they leave bare spots in the grass. (Maybe the fairy folk aren't being so nice after all.)

Still, many people welcome fairy rings as imaginative signs of magic or as manifestations of the beauty and wonder of nature. If you are in this group, you might also want to visit the site of Stonehenge. Some of the oldest fairy ring colonies exist in this location – many of which go back as far 700 years. Some of the colonies are so large, it is easier to view them by plane than up-close.

In the district of Norrland in Sweden there is a tradition of throwing toadstools into bonfires on midsummer's eve (June 23) to ward off evil spirits. Look into the folklore of any culture and you're almost sure to find other examples. Their names in European languages often allude to supernatural origins; they are known as *ronds de sorciers* ("sorcerers' rings") in France, and *Hexenringe* ("witches' rings") in German. In German tradition, fairy rings were thought to mark the site of witches' dancing on Walpurgis Night, and



Public Domain

Dutch superstition claimed that the circles show where the Devil churned his milk. In Tyrol, folklore attributed fairy rings to the fiery tails of flying dragons; once a dragon had created such a circle, nothing but toadstools could grow there for seven years. European superstitions routinely warned against entering a



'Triumphal March of the Elf King by Night' (1870) by Richard 'Dicky' Doyle (1824-83) Courtesy of The Leicester Gallery.

fairy ring. French tradition reported that fairy rings were guarded by giant bug-eyed toads that cursed those who violated the circles. In other parts of Europe, entering a fairy ring would result in the loss of an eye. Fairy rings are associated with diminutive spirits in the Philippines.

Western European, including English, Scandinavian and Celtic, traditions claimed that fairy rings are the result of elves or fairies dancing. Such ideas dated to at least the mediæval period; The Middle English term *elferingewort* ("elf-ring"), meaning "a ring of daisies caused by elves' dancing" dates to the 12th century. In his *History of the Goths* (1628), Olaus Magnus makes this connection, saying that fairy rings are burned into the ground by the dancing of elves. British folklorist, Thomas Keightley, noted that in Scandinavia in the early 20th century, beliefs persisted that fairy rings (*elfdans*)

arose from the dancing of elves. Keightley warned that while entering an *elfdans* might allow the interloper to see the elves—although this was not guaranteed—it would also put the intruder in thrall to their illusions.

Do NOT Step Into the Ring

It is generally felt that fairy circles are to be avoided as dangerous places as they're associated with malevolent beings. If you dare to enter a ring, many myths warn you will die young. You also become invisible to the mortal world, unable to escape the ring, or you are transported instantly to the fairy realm. You might also lose an eye for your foolishness. Either way, you will be forced to dance around the ring until you die of exhaustion or madness.

- See more at:

<http://www.mushroom-appreciation.com/fairy-rings.html#sthash.6ug6ETX9.dpuf>

http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/ciencia2/ciencia_psychoalteredstates16.htm

<http://www.thedailytransmission.com/2011/12/26/755/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Johan_von_Strahlenberg

<http://www.yurtopic.com/food/cooking/mushroom-facts.html>

Did 'Shrooms Send Santa and His Reindeer Flying?

By Richard Harris, NPR December 27, 2010

Long ago, shamans — and reindeer — in the Far East were known to eat red and white mushrooms. And then hallucinate. A Harvard biologist asks, is it possible this is the source of the “jolly” man in the red and white suit and his “flying” reindeer?

Children across the land on Christmas Eve will nestle all snug in their beds to hear the classic poem “The Night Before Christmas.” There’s a parallel tradition on the Harvard campus at this time of year. Students and faculty gather to hear the story of Santa Claus and the psychedelic mushrooms.

I stumbled upon this curious blend of biology and fable during a wintry campus visit to Harvard’s Farlow Reference Library and Herbarium a few years ago.

Curator and biology professor Donald Pfister greeted me in a majestic room, filled with glass display cases, folios and portraits. It’s a short tour — no time even to peek into the rooms that contain 1.5 million specimens of fungi, algae, lichens, mosses and liverworts.

As we prepared to leave, we turned a corner, and there, in a glass case, was an odd assortment of artifacts: Christmas decorations shaped like red mushrooms with white flecks on them, *Amanita muscaria*, by name. There was also a Santa Claus, dressed in his traditional red robe with white trim.

While I was puzzling at this display, Pfister turned to a colleague, Anne Pringle, and mentioned that he was planning to make his annual lecture about the link between *Amanita muscaria* — which happens to be a hallucinogenic mushroom — and Santa.

Flying Reindeer, Or 'Flying' Reindeer?

He explained that back in 1967 an amateur scholar named R. Gordon Wasson published a book arguing that *Amanita muscaria* was used in ancient ceremonies by shamans in the Far East. Other scholars then chimed in, noting that in Siberia, both the shamans — and the reindeer — were known to eat these mushrooms. Man and beast alike hallucinated. You can see the Christmas connections, Pfister said. “This idea [is] that reindeer go berserk because they’re eating *Amanita muscaria*,” Pfister said. “Reindeers flying —

are they flying, or are your senses telling you they’re flying because you’re hallucinating?”

Look at the Christmas decorations here, he said. “We use — all over the Western world at least — these Christmas ornaments [which] have *Amanita muscaria* or other mushrooms.” And finally, he said, consider the color schemes. “So here’s a red fungus with white spots. And Santa Claus was dressed in red with white trim.” Add it all up and what do you get? Pringle connected the dots: “People are flying. The mushroom turns into a happy personification named Santa.”

She said it with a laugh, but the connection between psychedelic mushrooms and the Santa story has gradually woven itself into popular culture, at least the popular culture of mycology, mushroom science.

So every year, when Christmas draws near, Pfister gathers the students in his introductory botany class, and, no doubt with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, tells the tale of Santa and the psychedelic mushrooms.

The Real Santa?

Now some say that certain stories are simply too wondrous to question in this magical season. Others have no such compunction, like Ronald Hutton, a history professor at the University of Bristol.

“If you look at the evidence of Siberian shamanism, which I’ve done,” Hutton said, “you find that shamans didn’t travel by sleigh, didn’t usually deal with reindeer spirits, very rarely took the mushrooms to get trances, didn’t have red and white clothes.”

And they didn’t even run around handing out gifts.

“The Santa Claus we know and love was invented by a New Yorker, it really is true,” Hutton said. “It was the work of Clement Clarke Moore, in New York City in 1822, who suddenly turned a medieval saint into a flying, reindeer-driving spirit of the Northern midwinter.”

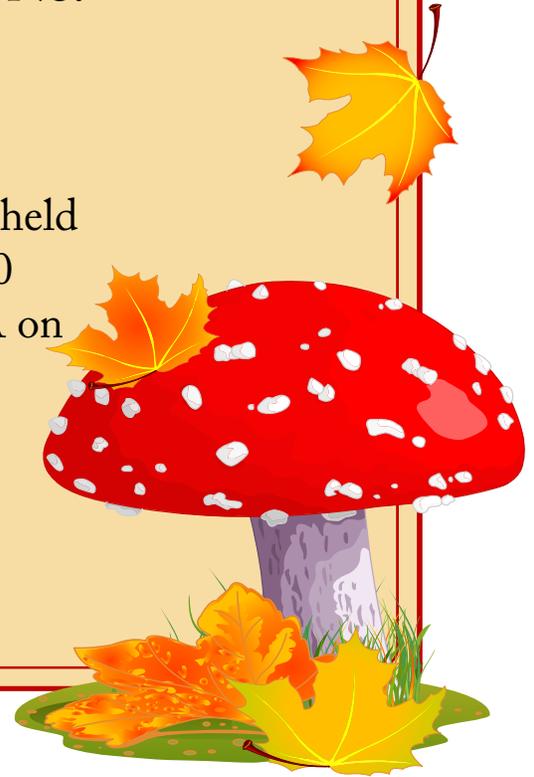
And Moore brought that beloved Santa Claus to life in his poem, “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” otherwise known as “The Night Before Christmas.”

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– Article from NPR.



**District Lodge Pacific Southwest No.
15
103rd District Convention**

The 103rd District Convention will be held
at the Hilton Hotel located at 6360
Canoga Avenue, Woodland Hills, CA on
February 24 - February 26, 2017.



**Golden Valley Lodge, #616
Vasa Order of America
c/o**