

A Swede Jumps Off A Burning Boat, A Burger, And A Comedian

Posted by stephvelander / 22 Dec 2013

Svante Magnus Swenson migrated from Sweden to America in 1836. The vessel Svante traveled on rose into flames in the New York harbor; he had to jump off into the water and swim to the American shore. Svante lost everything he owned. Perhaps this was a precursor of the adventurous life he would lead.



Svante was the first Swedish immigrant to move to Texas and became one of the biggest ranch owners in the state. He established a mercantile business with his uncle and served two terms as a county commissioner here in Austin. Svante also worked with Sam Houston during the Civil War to keep Texas part of the union; he opposed both sides and refused to take up arms against the United States. This attracted numerous death threats, forcing him to flee to Mexico.

He eventually made his way back to New York and would spend the rest of life there. Svante was laid to rest in the Bronx. What does this brief moment in Texas history have to do with burgers or jokes? Two things. Well one thing; a food truck that lovingly handcrafts one of the tastiest stuffed burgers in Austin and stand-up comedian, Mike "Mikey" Swenson.

Twenty-three year old Mikey Swenson from Montclair, New Jersey is the great-great-great-great grandson of Svante M. Swenson. And he has serendipitously found himself carving his own path as an entrepreneur and stand-up comedian on the same grounds his ancestor left marks on. The "Swenson Family Legacy" should make an interesting novel one day. Mikey works alongside his friends and partners Danny Campeas and Chef Robert Lopez, who are all a part of what they call "Svante's Stuffed Burgers" – yes, affectionately named after that trailblazing Sweden.

They use grass-fed beef, direct from the Swenson Family ranch in West Texas, to make their signature "Space Jam" stuffed burger. I will not give away all the delicious details of this sacred piece of meaty heaven however, I will tell you there is an intense amount of cheese inside each patty and it's topped with bacon that's been bathed in a sauce that should be bottled and sold to the masses.

When Mikey isn't selling these treasures, he's on stage working his magic with the audience. Mikey has been an "open micer" for three years. He's performed in his home state, New York, Boston, and L.A. - which only lasted a week but that is a story best told by Mikey himself.

Out of all the places where Mikey has graced the stage, he enjoys Austin the most. "This town is very special," he said, "For some reason everyone looks to this town[...]for what's new, what's hot, what's upcoming and it's a small town. I essentially know or have seen, shaken hands with probably ninety-percent of the people who do comedy around here.

"It's big enough that you can get a spot every night but it still has that small town feel...it's different. It also attracts a lot of big names in the process".

Mikey had the chance to meet Bert Kreischer at Mister Tramps (a local pub that holds open mics) and discovered that they both shared the same comedic influence; Patrice O'Neal.

"I walked up to Bert Kreischer and said 'Hey man, I'm a huge fan I'm hosting here on Saturday, I love the [stuff] you do, blah blah blah and he said 'Do you want a guest set?' and it was the biggest thing I've done to date. Later on that night, my roommate asked Kreischer who his favorite comedian was; he said Patrice O'Neal. [Kreischer] met O'Neal, went up to him, gave him his set list and asked him what he thought. O'Neal picked it up, tore it in half, and told him 'Just talk'."

I continued to pry Mikey about his creative process, aspirations, and how he views himself as a comedian. His response was very earnest. "First of all...there's this comet passing by earth..."



Mikey continued to talk about the state of mind the country is in; that we are all "pretending that everything is fine" and that he's "trying to figure out a way to say these things so people will listen." As for his writing; "I have a strong appreciation for well-crafted jokes but lately I've been trying to just be myself as opposed to reciting jokes every night. The thing is I'm still young and 'I don't know who I am', I haven't had a real long relationship, etc."

I asked him if he sees himself following his ancestor's footsteps in his own unorthodox manner to which he humbly replied, "I just want to be a cool dude. I have all these opportunities and I'm taking them. I hope I don't look back on my life and say 'I was doing the wrong stuff' hopefully something will happen.

Lighting does strike twice. Welcome back to Austin, Swenson!

You can follow Mikey Swenson on <u>Twitter</u> as well as his <u>Svante's Stuffed Burgers accoun</u>t @SvantesBurgers or check out the website at <u>svantesstuffedburger.com</u>.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBrvAWYDfFQ

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