

## Trial to the Death: Coffee vs. Tea

*By Donna Bishop*

The most recent research assures those coffee drinkers among us that drinking coffee may even be beneficial to your health. A few years ago researchers said that was not true and the healthiest choice would be green tea. So we scratch our heads and recognize that research studies are sometimes a bit skewed by those that support the research. The majority of us go on enjoying the beverage of our choice.

The argument would however heat up if our government should decide that coffee and tea drinking is a serious hazard to our health and as a result they levied heavy taxes to discourage consumption.

An article from Wikipedia reports just such a royal edict by King Adolf Fredrik in 1746 in Sweden. If taxes were not paid fines were imposed and cups and dishes were confiscated. Even bans on the substances did not eliminate consumption. When the King died his son Gustav III was crowned king. He imposed a system of almost total autocratic dictatorship, however he was an enlightened ruler.

He did continue to believe that coffee consumption was a threat to public health. He ordered an experiment to prove the negative effects. His idea was to use twin convicts awaiting execution in the experiment. One convict would drink three pots of coffee every day until he died in prison and his twin brother would drink a like amount of tea until his death. The twins agreed to participate in the experiment rather than be executed.

Unfortunately, the results of the experiment were not validated as both the King and the supervising physicians died before the twins. The records do show the tea drinking convict died at 83. I would say 83 years of age in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century is a pretty good run so I will keep my money on tea.