



**SONS OF NORWAY** SOLVANG LODGE 457  
WESTBY, WISCONSIN

Sons of Norway Newsletter (Sandhetter)



Editor: Jeanne Fredrick



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June 2017

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HAPPY SPRING!

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**FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN**

Happy Summer to all.

First of all a big thank you to all the hard working members who helped with another successful Frokost. We didn't know what to expect with the rainy cold weather but the Norwegians came through. We served 175 which is down a little from last year but very good for the rainy day. Thanks to Faye for the organized planning of the big event. Solvang lodge has a great group of members.

Welcome Jeannie Fredrick on her first newsletter and thank David and Hazel for their work over the last 3 years.

We are sorry to lose our good board member, Ron Olson, who passed away last month after a long struggle with cancer and extend our sympathy to Kris and their family.

Solvang Lodge has bought the Viking Ship from the Westby Chamber of Commerce. This was voted on at the meeting with good approval so I hope you will be willing to ride or walk along at some of the parades. I have done it and it is a good time. Thanks to Dregnes for being willing to share their truck. We are planning to be in the Cashton, Decorah and Octoberfest parades.

Remember the Norwegian concert on July 2 at Country Coon Prairie church.

Please bake some cookies and help serve after the concert. We usually get a very good turnout for these events.

Have an enjoyable, safe Summer.

**Sandy**

I should mention: if there are any complaints, please hold out both your hands as this job will then be YOURS. JF

This is your new editor speaking. Famous Dave (Torgerson) was editor for three years and 'wanted to be done'. He says it's a lot of work. I told Sandy Iverson I would give it a whirl. Dave was a bank examiner. I worked with Criminals. My style of vocabulary may be somewhat different than Dave's. Let me tell about me so you won't think I was found under a cabbage leaf like Peter Rabbit.

I have a son, Jon who is InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Director at UW/Madison; daughter-in-law Julie (half Norsk/half Swiss) who teaches and runs a Dept. at UW/Madison, and two very important grandsons - Erik age 19 and a student at UW/L, and Hans age 10 who was named after his grandpa Hans Beutler, a Swiss cheese maker.

I have two younger brothers: Richard (Eileen) an electrician, and David (Mary) Eggen an organic farmer, both on Hwy. 27N.

My passion after retirement in 1998, was to drive Norwegian fjord horses. Ezra Glick, my Amish neighbor, instructed me on Saturdays for a long time til his wife got sick of it. My fjords, a donkey, a mule, my one reindeer all were bought by a petting zoo by Blue Mound in the very bitter winter after Eddie died. There were many tears that day when I saw my friends leaving in a big cattle trailer. The place is called Havens Farm. So, now I have no passion at all - except Sons of Norway newsletter. Eddie and I had a runaway with the team of fjords at 2008 Syttende Mai parade. It was an unwise to give helicopter rides next to the horse padock and the State Police were furious.

My hobby is reading. I needed glasses and never had any til I bought my own at age 19 in San Francisco. I have been reading ever since. My eyes always showed 20/20 at Clockmaker School, but they did not pull together. The letters wandered.

BIRI, Norway Biri is the home of my UNSETH people. We were Berg before they settled on one of the 'Unset' farms. Gr. Gr. Gr. Grandpa was Ole Berg, a land handler. Gr. Grandpa Torsten Berg-UNSET and all of his kids arrived in the U.S. on the Petrus in 1850. They left Biri on Saint Hansdagen (1st day of summer), and arrived in Koshkonong, WI in October. They needed to get out of Koshkonong quickly as there was cholera there. Torsten bought a ruberull (wagon) and a team of oxen, and up through Wisconsin they came to Coon Prairie. The oxen swan across the Wisconsin River. The whole family stayed with a neighbor from Norway - Ramsrud out by where Country Coon Prairie Church was built.

Next farm to (Unset) at BIRI lived Per Byrnstad whose sister Martha Byrnstad married Torsten Berg-Unset. She died before Torsten and all the kids immigrated. Per was a wealthy farmer who paid the fare for several Biri relatives. At Biri, I noticed intersecting road signs saying Klomstein, and Ramsrud. On Byrnstad at BIRI, I found a married couple (cousins to me) named Jorn Byrnstad and Janke Resch. Both physical



therapists - he in Biri, and his wife, across Lake Mjosa in Snertingdal - what a fabulous place with a 5-car garage and it appeared as if the top floor of the huge house could've been used for a dance hall. Most likely more than one family occupied that house at one time. Members may remember Finn Brobakken who spoke to our Club last summer. He told me those two physical therapists had LOST the farm, after all those many years as Byrnstad. How do two well paid people "run out of money" - but that's how it went and I should know - it has always been my job to keep the economy rolling, all by myself. I also visited at Unset, the neighboring farm. I do not speak Norwegian and they did not speak English but

managed to say they always wondered the outcome of all family who sailed for America.

[Biri in Gjovick municipality on Lake Mjosa.](#)

SVATSUM, ON LAKE ESPEDAL, NORWAY, IN VESTRE GAUSDAL. Svatsum is location of EGGEN AT ESPEDAL. We were STUBBERUD at the time Gr. Grandpa Christian Stubberud and his owley wife, Oline' Troen, bought Eggen from the nickel mine foreman, Per Eggen. Christian's father was Anders Stubberud from the neighboring farm in [WEST Gausdal](#). There was an Anders Stubberud over in East Gausdal too, but he isn't "ours". Christian and Oline' had an equally strong headed owley daughter named Tante' Syverine who lived to be 100. "That" was a long haul for them up on the mountain there. But, she liked me because I was brother Ole's granddaughter.

My GRANDPA Ole Eggen along with his in-laws, the Torger Espe family, departed in 1914 - they arrived in Canada on the Empress of Britain and traveled by train down through Prairie Farm to La Crosse to Chaseburg to Stoddard to Coon Valley . Svatsum is in Espedalen. There was no road in Espedalen until 1953 so all travel was by boat, or horse/cart, over to Vinstra to catch the train to Oslo, then to Liverpool, England and on to America.

COUSIN Ola Eggen was at Westby on different occasions, along with his Skabu-Espedal all-string orchestra. Ola played the Hardanger violin. They played at the Rod & Gun Building in Timber Coulee where there was standing room only. They all stayed at Eggen at Westby. THAT was entertaining - the Aquavit and music was freely flowing. Ola and his son Lars, both violinists, managed to spill a John Deere tractor each, off of the banks of Eggen, into Lake Espedal. Not to worry - both are pilots, and tractors are toys.

The only Svatsum person around here I've met is Shirley Schoenfeld of [Wergeland Lodge of La Crosse](#).

#### Norway's Lake Trout - how did they get up into the mountain lakes?

The mountain lake trout of southern Norway are called Bleka or Blege. The Bleka is a landlocked Atlantic salmon. As the Ice Age was coming to an end the sea rose and penetrated the low laying land which was then pressed low by the heavy ice. As the ice receded, salmon quickly found their way home into the rivers and lakes. But, as the land based ice melted, the land rose and the salmon in the rivers and lakes became trapped. They were then forced to turn from migratory fish to freshwater fish.

#### Nuclear Fallout....

Cousins say they soaked lake trout in brine to remove residue of nuclear fallout attributed to the Chernobyl 'accident.' My son Jon says Ola Eggen was into smoking his lake trout. The first time I saw cousin Katie was in 1991. She was 16 years old, had lost her luxurious long brown hair, developed cancer, and started losing fingers. Cancer was attributed to Chernobyl. Fallout was said to have destroyed all of the reindeer moss on some mountains for years to come. I know a little about that because we had a metal box on top of the State Office Building in La Crosse with a little motor sucking in air through a milk-pad-like filter. The filter was sent to a Lab in Michigan every Monday. The Lab could always tell when China was doing nuclear testing by the atmospheric fallout. Nuclear fallout was detected on pastures near the plant at Genoa as well.

SAINT HANS DAGEN is officially the first day of summer. The sun shines all night. I have walked the streets of Anchorage, Alaska during that time also, it's an eerie feeling. In about 2005, husband Eddie and I were on a farmer's trip to Norway hosted by Orion Samuelson. That was a blast. Orion served Aquavit every morning around 10:30. The first shot burned, but ..... the rest didn't. We stayed out in the Atlantic in cabins at HaHolmen Island perched on boulders. There were two boats on shore - one a replica of the old sailing vessel stored at Bygdoy isle near Oslo, and another was more modern. It was NOT warm out on water. Companions asked me how I knew to bring a good jacket, hat, and gloves. I said "been here before." We sailed up and down the shoreline honking the horn to people on the mainland who had set bon fires, a Saint Hansdagen tradition in all of Norway.

DNA Kit. Want to have some fun? Send for a DNA kit to Ancestry.Com as seen on TV. It costs about \$90. My report came back with about 50 sheets of 3rd cousins' email addresses, and one second cousin. It was accurate - 2nd cousin is Gail Olson of Montana - granddaughter of my Grandpa Ole's brother Harold who settled in Montana where he raised wheat in Montana and Canada (by the Section). I expected it would show close to 99.9% Norwegian for me, because I had a gr gr.. grandfather from Scotland - but not. It shows 41% English. I was so bummed out by that, I had to go sit down. Before Norway was settled, those Vikings sailed all over the place. It all started with Vikings in Spain in 844 a.d. Anyway, it blew me away. Howard

Sherpe told our writing class that he had a professor, whom I believe to be from Spring Grove, read his printout of another DNA test. It showed his lineage back to Neanderthal man.

**THE MAGAZINE:** You really need to get a hold of a **March 2017 of the National Geographic**. It is all about the Vikings, with pictures and a 10-page fold-out of a rich man and woman, called Rus with their garb; lots of pix of various stages of boat building. Buried artifacts are still being found. Interestingly, an archeologist was recently examining the pelvic bones and mandibles of a Viking that was found with many fancy swords on his lap, however, HE turned out to be a SHE! Obviously she was the one calling the shots as a leader.

The maps start out in 836 a.d. They were even monkeying around down in Portugal at that point. Well, I don't know if that's quite the correct term. Vikings were considered to be Swedes, Norwegian and Danes. One of the reasons for these junkets was there were no available women to marry.

They portaged their boats over land to get from the Volva River to Caspian Sea. There was definitely a cast system with slaves.

#### Recap of April 25th Sons of Norway, Westby meeting

Sandra Iverson, President, declared the meeting in session with 55 people attending. She explained the Traveling Trunk, moving between various Lodges in our district. When we receive the trunk, it will be opened to examine what others have contributed, and we will add an item to it, and send it on..

Names of members in nursing homes or assisted care were shared with members. We learned that a very very active member, Madelyn Anderson, passed away April 23 at age 71.

Faye McClurg, chairman of the Frokost, sent around work signup sheets. Workers should appear at Westby Methodist Church at 1 pm on Friday, May 19 of Syttende Mai weekend for set up. The crew helping on Saturday should be on hand at 6 a.m. as serving begins at 7 a.m. and some people show up early. Thank you Faye for assuming this huge responsibility again this year.

On Syttende Mai, Wed., May 17th, a program will be given by Sons of Norway members at Coon Valley School at 8:30 a.m. and at Westby Elementary at 12:30. Sarah Nestingen will teach Norwegian dance steps. Small flags have been ordered so each child will receive one.

Russ Hanson presented the Lodge with a scrapbook covering the nine years Russ served as President of the Lodge. The book was assembled by his wife Suzanne.

Recap of May 30 meetnig - Tuesday May 30 the Solvang Lodge 457 gathered at the Bekkum Library when Sandy Iverson conducted our May Memorial Service. We took time to remember our Members who are no longer with us: Howard Sherpe, Ruth Ann Wilson, and Ronald P. Olson. We had a brief business meeting to review our Syttende Mai activities where the Frokost was well attended. Roger Hanson made the observation "The good food trumps cold weather!" We have one new member, Dale Pieper. Cedric Veum presented Membership Recruitment Awards to Thor Thorson and Sandy Iverson, and the Sports Award to Corrine Olson. Our Pot of Gold was won by Corrine Olson. Dave Torgerson gave a presentation on Bunads, interesting old photos from Norway and some slides from the 2017 Syttende Mai Parade. Our next meeting will be June 27 with a program by an expert on Norwegian sweaters. Ron and Sandy Iverson prepared and served our lunch.



Sandy and Ron Iverson



Roger Hanson

**TRIP TO LIV REISE MUSEM AT STOUGHTON:** - David Amundson told about a July 8 bus trip to the new Liv Reise Museum at Stoughton leaving Coon Prairie Church at 7 a.m. and returning at 7 p.m. Stops will include other historical sites if time allows. At Liv Reise is a bank of computers linked to Madison Norwegian Genealogy Museum Records. Ruth Amundson told about the troll hidden for 39 years for the Troll Hunt. His name is Tann (meaning 'short on teeth') and is being joined by a female troll this year named Huldah. From 1973 through 2007, Russell Hanson hid the troll. Amundson are writing the clues and will hide the trolls this year.

### **Speakers for the evening:**

We were delighted to hear Norwegian exchange students both age 17 who gave excellent and very fun presentations. In Norway, students attend school for 13 years before college. Nicholai Krogstad Bjorndahl is from Kristiansund, a city of about 90,000, and told of different options of study they have. His favorite activity at WHS has been wrestling, becoming friends with coaches and students. He said a lot more emphasis and training is put into sports in the U.S. Sports in Norway is mostly private pay at sports clubs. His emphasis for his years ahead is the academic path as he has not yet decided on an occupation. Nickolai's hosts are the Luther & Connie Hendrickson family on Hwy. 14 south of Viroqua with grandpa Art Hendrickson being able to accompany Nickolai to many evening functions as well as Frokost until Connie could arrive.

Freida Askaurud is from Drobak, a small town about an hour south of Oslo. Freida has trained for several years in downhill skiing and handball. Her parents are downhill ski coaches. She said children study English between the ages of 7 and 16. In college, they may elect to study International English. She is interested in pursuing Sociology and Psychology. Freida explained "Rus" pronounced Ruse, a period of time of last quarter of senior year of high school, a sanctioned national "silly time" to get their heads on straight, or try to ..... ruin them as the case may be. Freida and her friends worked for two years to save money to buy a bus which they decorated. They decorate colorful outfits for Rus, with mostly decorated red bukse'. Then they hire a driver who is to be responsible for their welfare when they drive around, which may be in circles Freida said, if they don't have a designated route. Nickolai's group bought and decorated a van and plan to attend a concert in Oslo. The audience had many questions and many laughs with these very engaging students. The Rus vehicles are sold for recycle when they're finished with them. Freida said it was her intention NOT to tell us about Rus at all, but somehow she found herself into the talk about the subject up to her neck. You can read more about Rus - on-line. Freida's hosts are Craig and Vicki Dunnum family.

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### **MEET YOUR FOLLOW MEMBERS**

(Using questions and ideas provided by Howard Sherpe at his writing class at Norskedalen):

For each newsletter I will interview and introduce two members, in case you don't know them well in the first place.

The venerable SAM BAKKESTUEN is 80 years old. He lives at #8 Crestview Apartments in Westby. He recently learned his Norwegian family came from West Gausdal, Norway, when two gentlemen came to

Vang Church to look at cemetery stones. Sam was feeding animals on his nearby farm when Gene Danielson called to ask him to come to Vang to right away to meet two men. They presented Sam with two 8 x 10 photos of his beautiful home place. He was so pleased he forgot to ask their names. Sam's dad had said they came from Gudbrandal, but that's all Sam knew.

Sam's mom was Maria, born in 1899, his father John, born in 1889. He was raised in a log house which had a wood shed sitting south of the kitchen, and there was a log summer kitchen.

His dog's name was Trixie. When asked about memories, he thought of his brother Joe, who as a little fellow, disappeared. Also missing was the dog. Joe and the dog were spotted walking along up on the edge of a nearby stone quarry. Another memory was of his brother Willard's birth. The doctor came from Coon Valley parked his car by the windmill and the car took off rolling. I did not ask what they did about that.

One of the memories that made the most impact was in 1955. It was the 4th of July and all three brothers were home. Sam recalls that he had mumps at the time and was swollen on his back. The boys acquired some dynamite for a celebration. He remembers John C. Schwarz set off 4 sticks of dynamite, blew out some windows, and a nearby pig was covered with glass.

Sam attended Erickson School which is now gone, as well as a house that stood on the property. His first and favorite teacher was Lillian Halverson. His last teacher there was Lila Peterson Syverson. His brother Joe's last teacher was Elaine Nessett. Sam's favorite subject in school was Penmanship. He went to WHS for four years. His brother Joe was drafted into the Army in September 1956, a year after their father died. Joe went to Milwaukee for his physical and induction. Sam was classified 1-A with the Draft at the time, so he and his mom went to see Attorney Lester Skundberg. Being his brother Willard was out of the home and working elsewhere, and Joe was drafted, Sam was reclassified as 2-C so he could run the farm and take care of their mother.

Sam remembers driving at age 16. Their first tractor was a Farmal A secured at an auction of Clair Morrison on Brinkman Ridge on a government permit. Sam's family had delivered tobacco, and so they bought the tractor, plow and cultivators for \$805. His brother Willard managed to break his arm on the Farmal crank. They used that Farmal until 1969.

Sam was married October 12, 1991 and the marriage dissolved November 5, 2002.

He began working at Nerison barns. He then worked for Equity-Sparta for 32 years. He was loaned to the Altoona Equity Barn and remembers a fire. The cattle were trucked to Coon Valley Equity, all blistered.

Sam is now 80 years old, drives his car, is retired, has no cattle to take care of, and says he can go play cards at Viroqua Eagles, or at Coon Valley Legion on Wed. evenings. The meal site is at Westby and he is enjoying himself. In the future, he plans to keep living on his own - "if I don't die first," he said. Editor's note: Sam's memory is like a steel trap. He knows birth dates of all his nieces and nephews, and lots of statistics.

#### BERTHA JOHNSON

Bertha has been one of my very favorite neighbors forever on the Highway 27N neighborhood. She will never regret that she was always kind. Robert was one of the two best dancers I ever encountered - the other being Cousin Ola Eggen of Espedal, Norway. Bertha and Robert farmed the Jalmer and Cora (Brettingen) Johnson farm on Reo Avenue, off Hwy. 27 north of Westby. Bertha and Robert were married 60 years ago (I saw it in the old time news of the Westby Times.)

I knew Jalmer Johnson forever - he brought me a fat Border Collie, black and white puppy when I was 5 years old - Jalmer arrived during milking one cold winter night. I played and ran with that puppy in the feeding alley (which didn't have much light) til the dog finally sat down on top of me and I had to cry for help. The dog, "Micky" was with us for 13 years. He was crossing the road to follow Pa & a tractor up to Jimmy Knudson's place, when a Army convoy jeep hit him. The convoy men came to the house carrying Micky and were mightily upset. Those Army guys stopped to check on Micky on occasion. Micky lived about 2 years after that with a dragging, broken hip. Like Howard Sherpe would say: "You just sailed up the wrong fjord here" so, back to Bertha Johnson.

Bertha attended an 8-grade school at Omro, WI. The McSchooler place was located 1/2 mile from the Oshkosh air show fields. She went to Oshkosh College her first year, then to Whitewater as it is well known for business courses. She intended to become a business teacher from the beginning. The Superintendent at Cashton H.S. visited Whitewater to interview senior business students. He chose Bertha. Ruth Calhoun of Cashton introduced Robert and Bertha. Robert said it was all because they could see that "I was having too much fun."

They had four children: a boy, then a girl, then a boy, and Susan is youngest. Roger, then Jean (Fred) Wedwick, then Grant, all of Westby, and Susan, of Indiana. There are four grandchildren, and Jean's son Collin will have another addition to family soon.

Bertha has a dog, Jake, that snores like you wouldn't believe. I don't think she hears him. He was Grant's dog but Jake enjoys being with Bertha the most. The Johnsons raised Arabian horses. They had at least 10 mares plus young stock, according to Grant. They all rode those Arabian horses. The kids started out with a pony they could ride all over the yard. Robert acquired a group of half-breeds at one point too, but that was 'short lived.

Bertha became interested in learning Reflexology through Jean's mother in law, and was trained by Ann McLees who has since passed away. Bertha practices in her home, and is not licensed. Ann had a business between Westby and Viroqua at the Wayside. In fact, I have one of those Amish built cabins at my grandson's valley land on Ellefson Road. Bertha also deals in Shaklee products, is a member of the Red Hat Club, makes Romegrot for Syttende Mai, and doesn't miss much of anything as far as I can tell. She is a good egg!



Craig and Vicki Dunnum



Back Row L to R: Karen Hankee, Freida Askaurud, Alexis Dunnum. Front Row: Nickolai Krogstad Bjorndal, Hazel Cornell

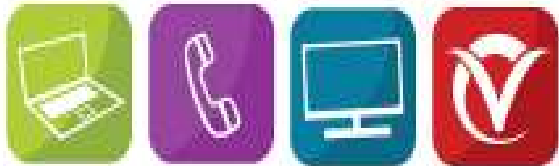


Karen Hankee and the trunk she rosemaled for Courtney Moser.

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