



SONS OF NORWAY SOLVANG LODGE 457 WESTBY, WISCONSIN

Sons of Norway Newsletter (Sandhetter)



Editor: Jeanne Fredrick



SEPTEMBER 2017

HAPPY FALL

94 Degrees and holding

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Greetings Solvang members!

While looking at the changing leaves here and listening to the terrible weather in so many places I am reminded of the wonderful area we live in. As so many of our members say when they return from their travels in Norway, our area is so much like our ancestral home. More members have traveled there this summer and we are anxious to hear of their adventures.

The Oktoberfest Parade is coming up and we will be pulling our Viking Ship in it. We need 2 people to carry the banner ahead of the ship and people in Norwegian dress to ride in the ship. We and Dregne's rode in Decorah and despite pulling it through Lansing where 10,000 bikers were ending their week-long ride across Iowa we had a great time.

We congratulate our member Brian Rude who was given the honor of being named this year's Fest master for Oktoberfest. We wish Brian and Karen a fun filled year wearing lederhosen instead of a bunad.

Thanks to all who are willing to serve as officers currently and those who will accept positions for the coming year. Please volunteer or be willing to serve when contacted. There are many areas of need, if only to volunteer to handle one event. Enjoy a beautiful Fall.

Sandy



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

This is your new editor speaking again for the second time. As you know, Famous Dave (Torgerson), the bank examiner, was editor. I get impressed saying "bank examiner." Did anybody wonder what happened to me? Probly not. I wasted my summer and most of fall. On July 17, I went to Lutheran Hospital to 'buy' a new hip being the old one had painful spurs on it. They took me to Norseland in a Transit (a van like Strang Plumbing uses). I did get to see the 5 feet of water standing in Coon Valley Park, and a small building stuck under the bridge. I spent 3 weeks at Norseland. They have an excellent therapist named Eric, but I could easily have starved to death there. Marilyn Sharping arranged for me to sit at her dining table in the hall along with Elaine Lund. All was fine until I blew out the new hip 30 days later, in Boscobel. Cousin Jimmy Knudson had the restaurant staff immediately dial 911. The ambulance took me 3 blocks away to their hospital where I received a Morphine derivative - screaming all the way so my chest was sore for 4 days - then a ride to Lutheran Hospital on those washed out bumpy flooded roads. I remember the doctors popping the hip back into socket, I could hear it pop. I could choose a nursing home - I chose Vernon Manor next, stayed 2 weeks, and signed myself out. That was a great place, good cooks, but I didn't get anywhere with therapy due to a full leg brace. All is well once more. The pain was out of this world - like 7 childbirths all at once when it popped out. I am without my cane today, whoo whooo!

I spent most of January in Granada, Spain with family. It was my second trip, and it is not for me - it was their wintertime, (went with grandson & had to go when he was free from UW/L). Grenada is in the

mountains, and I nearly froze to death. We wore long underwear IN the house. It is called the City of White. An ordinance requires all buildings to be white. It is built on hills and you need to be a mountain goat to live there. I did enjoy the thousands of acres of olive trees and the processing plants. Nice, new John Deere equipment. Olive trees are surely not sustainable over the long haul and that ground will have to be used for something else eventually. My son said "I think Gramma is more interested in dirt, farms & tractors than monasteries and cathedrals. AMEN.

Came home - took a look at inches of ice everywhere, and said to my Border Collie - "get in" the car. We drove for six days, I was talking to myself out loud with delight to finally see green grass, trees, crops, at Waco, TX. The sky was heavy overcast dark all the way to south of Kansas City. Wasted one whole day with a flat tire in Oklahoma City - ended up buying a new tire. Patches was scared of the black man in the Chevy tire shop, so that was interesting. They made friends. We stayed 2 1/2 months on So. Padre Island in a duplex that I found on-line. That's more like it. Cousins Kelly & Chris Knutson picked me up one day - showed me their trailer house at Bentsen Palm Resort, at Palm View, TX next to McAllen. I ended up buying a furnished trailer house in that resort, sold by a couple from Tennessee who are now too old to travel. All I had to do was put in a dishwasher. It is the most pleasant place! with a 20 X 12' screened, carpeted porch. The Resort is built on an old orange/grape fruit grove, so lots of shade trees. I kept watching TV from the nursing homes to see if my trailer house floated on by, but I guess it is not damaged. There's an outdoor and indoor pool, and community building. Of course, anyone is welcome to use my place as a home base. There is a 2nd bedroom. (I do have to be on-site, they say).



Jeanne Fredrick at Granada, Spain grocery store – this is how they sell their hams; hams come from different provinces of Spain, such as pigs fed only acorns.

THIS AND THAT.....

Bygdoy Island, Oslo

The Oseberg ship and the Oseberg carved cart - The Oseberg is 100 feet long. Just think of a 100 foot barn to put size into perspective. There is a new building going up and around the huge ships at Bygdoy. When I was there in 1981, you could touch the Kontiki (Thor Heyerdahl's) reed craft, and other one, the RA. When I got there in 1991 there was no more touching; fenced off with dumb artwork that was supposed to look like blue ocean on cardboard around the base.

The Saga Oseberg, a copied version of original Oseberg, and most other copies of old craft have been mostly disabled by Norway's Maritime government. A new January 2017 law went into affect saying if these boats can carry 12 passengers or more (like school kids, government groups, etc.) the boat must have a motor and provide life vests. The folks who maintain all these vessels are volunteers. They can't afford what needs to happen for motors and life vests. So, this is officially ending the 'time' of old Norsk maritime.

The Klofta Skolekorps Band from near Oslo

What an enjoyment for everybody to hear these kids in the glorious decor of the Country Coon Prairie Church (thank you Elaine Lund and crew). My favorite piece was Requiem from Phantom of the Opera. I talked with some of the young folks - they get a star for every year they belong to the Band to place on their shoulder lapelet. After 5 years they receive one black rope to put around the shoulder, then another rope -

they then get a medal for their shirt for 5 more years, and another for 10 years. The stars on lapelet are taken off when they get their first black rope. Remember - these are all volunteer players and just plain love music; ages 11 through 19 - I noticed the older kids kindly took the young ones under their wing. I talked with that beautiful blond girl who played first chair flute and fife. It appeared she's going to snap her neck - her buddies are afraid she'll throw herself out of joint one day. What a clean-cut bunch. I'd like to take away those nose rings though. Obviously, I'm from a different era.

Happiest Country

Perhaps you've been reading about the happiest countries in the world. Norway ranks number 1 at this point, outranking Denmark. I'm afraid things will change, especially in Oslo, due to immigrants. I saw plenty of Turks coming in. The United States ranked 20th in happiness I believe. Recently 6 people were shot in an Oslo bar so they have their problems. It is easy to be happy if all the people are basically the same breed of cat. (My theory). I stayed with a family in Raufoss whose menfolk said there are no jobs except to follow their father into the luggage factory, and so they make their life outside of work. One of the guys races trotter horses all over Norway.

Oslo tried to ban traffic in down town. Now I see why. By next year they want to try driverless buses in Oslo and the greater suburban area. Uffda. They did not have success with banning the traffic, so have figured out they can ban parking in downtown; that should take care of it. By 2025, Norway's aim is to have only electric cars, anywhere.

Bjorn Unseth, Mount Sterling cheesemaker.

Bjorn, age 36 years old, is of local Unseth derivative. He has won several U.S. and World awards for his goat cheese making. This is a producer-owned producer plant, established in 1976. They do make ALL kinds of cheeses like cheddar, etc. Plans are to expand that plant. Trucks come in from New York, Texas, Georgia, etc. to pick up processed goat cheese orders. His wife Shardae (George) is working there as bookkeeper. There were several women slicing, packaging and labeling cheeses for the store display case and for shipment. There were at least 3 or 4 men working the vats. Bjorn brought home the 2017 World prize for Whey Butter. He has many world and U.S. awards hanging on the wall from American Cheese Society. When you are in the orchards this fall, stop at the creamery - they are open 7 days per week. Bjorn's great grandpa was Torvald Carl who operated a clothing store in the Unseth Bekkedal building.

Using the interview list provided by Howard Sherpe in his classes:

SAM BAKKESTUEN: I wrote about Sam Bakkestuen in last issue. I was reminded by a Vang Church member that Sam is an expert on all things Vang. I didn't realize that.

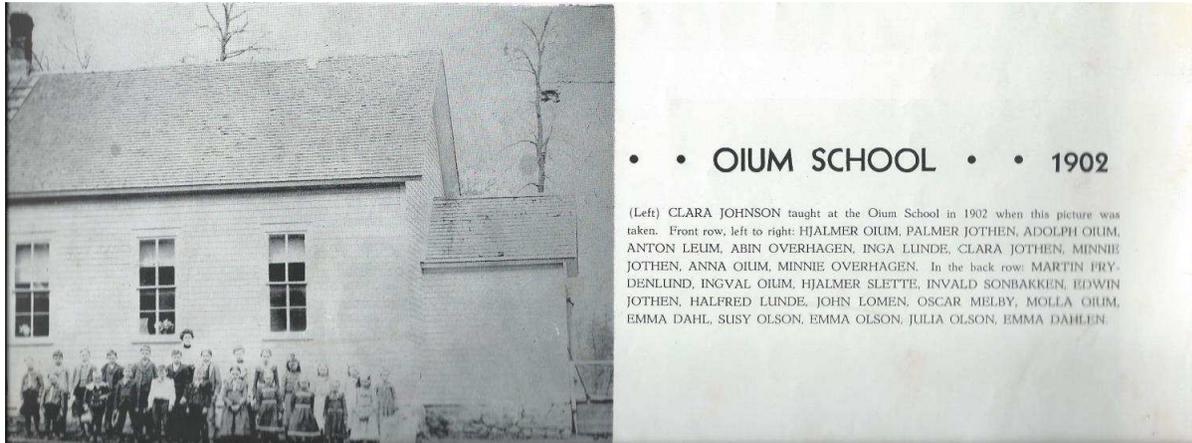
MARILYN OIUM SHARPING

I was blessed that Marilyn arranged for me to sit at her table 3 times per day for 3 weeks at Norseland Nursing Home. She's an interesting woman - demure, kind, caring, classy and smart. She came to breakfast every morning with coordinated outfits and jewelry. Her students over the years gave her many earrings for gifts, so she had a 3 foot by 2-foot-wide Styrofoam panel with all the earrings on it. She is not mobile on her feet anymore but can really scoot with her wheelchair. She is in a room of her own thankfully, as her mom Julia left her with a barrel full of old pictures of the Oium history and Timber Coulee. **WONDERFUL!** She is busy sorting and making albums.

My friend asked Marilyn how she liked living at Norseland. She said something profound: "Everybody has to BE somewhere."

Marilyn attended Oium School next door to her home. Her first-grade teacher was Esther Benrud, who was also her favorite teacher. Esther stayed with Verna Bekkedal while teaching. Her favorite teacher at Westby High was Mrs. Gladys Betherum., the Commercial teacher. Marilyn then went on to Vernon County Teacher's College and car pooled with 2 other gals and a guy. One of the gals was Patsy Stafslie. Marilyn felt confident by doing the driving if she could. One day they encountered icy blizzard and she was hanging

her head out the window to see. They switched off driving every week. She then attended UW/La Crosse. When it came time to graduate and get that diploma, Marilyn was very very sick and went to the occasion anyhow. She figured if she toiled so hard on that degree, she was going to go receive it in person no matter what.



The school house is long gone, but you can see where it sat - there is a cupula on the spot now.

Marilyn Oium married Verdel Sharping. They enjoyed going to dances until their children started coming and again when the kids were grown. They are parents of Vicki, Diana, Karla and Steve. Steve will remain on the farm in Timber Coulee. He works off the farm also. Kala oversees Marilyn's bookwork.

She remembers she and Verdel pulled open a door at Cashton VFW one evening to see what was going on - there was a square dance. The folks therein pulled Marilyn and Verdel inside and that was beginning of a long time of square dancing, sometimes getting home at 3:00 a.m. depending on location of the event. They also enjoyed camping at Jelly Stone at Warrens. About three times per year they would pack up the kids, park their camper under big trees; the kids would wade in the lake. At about 3:00 p.m. they would arrive and have a meal. Later in the evening they would have supper. Grandchildren started coming and there were times when there were 10 kids in tow. The camper had all the amenities, such as microwave and refrigerator. On one occasion, there was a tornado that went through Timber Coulee. A daughter alerted the office at Jelly Stone who sent two brave teenage girls to tell Sharpings that that a big pine was on top of their house. There was no exit available from the campground that night, or from Tomah either. They left for home as soon as roads were open.

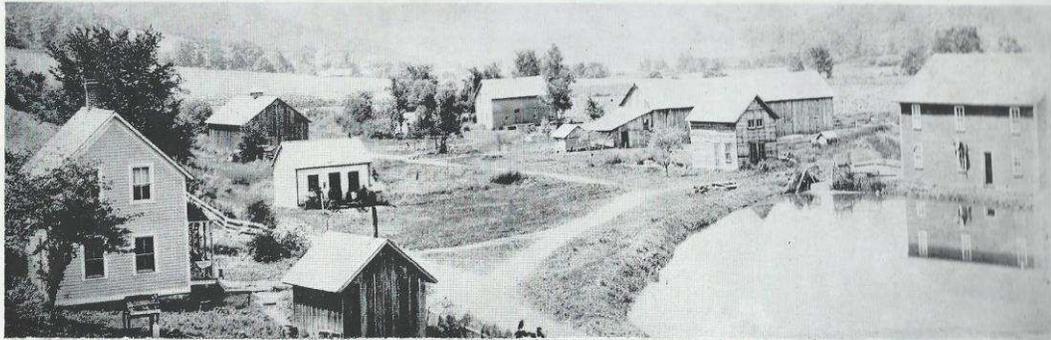
I have got to include the story of the huge spider. Verdel hauled butter down south for Sloane's. He would bring back crates of peaches. He stacked the crates in front of their couch. Marilyn had placed clothes from dryer on her couch and went to fold them - she heard a big "plop" and a huge yellow furry spider, very huge, hit the floor. She took broom and dust pan and threw it out the front door. She never told anyone as she was afraid the kids would go looking for it. Cold weather probably took care of spider.

When her kids were bored they would go out into the fields and look for arrowheads and found several. What fun! I have never found ONE.

THAT FAMOUS OIUM MILL POND OF TIMBER COULEE

We are all probably acquainted with the story of Iver and Tjostel Amundson Oium by now. I believe it was Iver who came to America first. Tjostel followed and was walking across hill and dale toward the valleys (where the Dickman farm is now) and late one day he noticed smoke coming out of a hillside. The next day he went to explore. There was a room built into a cave or indentation in the earth, where he saw a man with a long shig and hair, laying on a cot. He went over to the guy and discovered it was his brother! He said "Ney ada do????"

IN OIUMSDALEN



All I remember is that it was Iver who started the Mill. Everything was hand built of wood except the blade of course.



• • OIUM SCHOOL • • 1902

(Left) CLARA JOHNSON taught at the Oium School in 1902 when this picture was taken. Front row, left to right: HJALMER OIUM, PALMER JOTHEN, ADOLPH OIUM, ANTON LEUM, ABIN OVERHAGEN, INGA LUNDE, CLARA JOTHEN, MINNIE JOTHEN, ANNA OIUM, MINNIE OVERHAGEN. In the back row: MARTIN PRYDENLUND, INGVAL OIUM, HJALMER SLETTE, INVALD SONBAKKEN, EDWIN JOTHEN, HALFRED LUNDE, JOHN LOMEN, OSCAR MELBY, MOLLA OIUM, EMMA DAHL, SUSY OLSON, EMMA OLSON, JULIA OLSON, EMMA DAHLEN.

When Marilyn was small, she remembers running toward the saw rig - ran into the saw and still has a scar from that incident. Her Mom could not tolerate the sight of blood, so anytime an accident occurred Julia would have to lay down in the soft grass for awhile. When she was old enough to count, it became Marilyn's job at the Mill to count out tobacco lath being sawed in 5-lath bundles. Farmers would bring boards or logs to be sawed into lath. Fresh sawn laths were miserable to spear tobacco onto, in my opinion. They eventually got smooth from use. At a recent auction, I went to at Stoughton, laths were being sold for fire wood. How things change. She says she had a very happy childhood. In her yard was a huge rock. Marilyn would ride her bike as fast as she could and jump off her bike onto that rock, always hitting the same place on her thigh. That wound eventually turned cancerous. She had to have the affliction removed.

I remember standing UNDER a log with Pa when it was going thru the reciprocating saw. There was one light bulb shining under there. It was a very very slow process to see one board sawed at a time. They eventually purchased a circulating saw. My father was born and raised on Struxness which Grandpa Ole Eggen homesteaded. There was a log cabin there at the time, and Grandpa had the house built. He was ready to put in a Delco Power Plant when they decided to buy Melby up on Highway 27, out of the flood zone. That Struxness house is in poor shape now. Pa often went to the Mill Pond on his bike as there was a small store and gas station there. He would get a 5-cent bottle of pop.

There were various dogs that lived at the Mill and farm - one of Marilyn's dogs was a black and white Border Collie named Ring - being he had a complete white ring around his neck. She has a pix of Ring.

The Mill Pond was a special place for our whole area, a place for children to get their first experience fishing. First day of trout fishing season was a BIG DEAL. Along came the friendly DNR who declared the water for the fish therein was too warm. If the weather did turn hot, Marilyn points out - then the trout dived to the 15-foot depth of the pond. The Oiums were made to drain the big pond nevertheless. Some time later, the Vernon Co. Fish Manager and his supervisor came to announce the DNR WAS WRONG (can you imagine that?), the Oiums could refill the pond, but they could not use creek water to do so. This would necessitate a well being drilled. I was working at the DNR at that time. I was irate.

Remember Eugene Volden's trout pond on Kolbo Road? That had to be 'gone' also. The DNR boys had an old man from Jackson County come who was experienced in blasting. K.W, the supervisor was standing back a ways when the charge was lit. The windows were blown out of the DNR carry-all van. Good, I thought. K.W. was standing there with his camera - a boulder went up and was headed straight for K.W. The boulder landed right behind him.

Due to my incarceration in two nursing homes, I did not do my second member interview as intended. I will include a 1914 story and very good picture of a nice SOD HOUSE in No. Dakota.

Since living persons would not be represented on U.S stamps, the kids were blocked out by a haystack at first. Ironically, John Bakken was still alive at age 92 when the stamp was issued. This photo was used by Norway on its postage stamp in 1975, to commemorate the sesquicentennial of Norwegian immigration to American. The children were left in the picture for this stamp, rendering a more accurate image of the original photograph.

Some kept in contact, some did not. The advantage of staying in contact with your American relatives (as least for kids) was that it got you presents, especially at Christmas. My mother had three brothers who left the island of Fedje and settled in Oregon. Uncle Carl, the middle brother came back to Norway for a visit in 1948, accompanied by his wife Bergllet and his five-year-old daughter Audrey. I remember that they brought great presents, especially hard candy in many colors.

On the day they arrived, our family made the trip to the island of Fedje (on the coast, northwest of Bergen) to join the group assembled there to greet them. Having relatives visit from America was a big deal. I remember that there was a long table full of food prepared in my grandparents' living room, and seated directly across from me was my new American aunt. Bergllet was raised by Norwegian parents in Portland, and spoke Norwegian well. Sometime during the meal, to the great consternation of this six-year-old boy, she said something to me in English. I was totally embarrassed because I didn't know what to do. How could I answer her when I didn't know what she asked? Red-faced and silent I stared at my plate, like I was inspecting the lese for defects, until she took pity on me and said something in Norwegian I could respond to. In due course, she became my favorite aunt.



RARE OLD LETTERS

Rare old letters and family stories open a valuable window into the past and make real the lives of people living long ago. We can tell the story of a family and give a rich history to an area.

Jacob Post Michelet was a merchant in Lillehammer, Norway, in the mid-1800's and it was quite likely that his story was a gathering place and the place where news and information was exchanged.

Many people came to Coon Prairie from Norway and family responded. So, it was that Jacob Post Michelet wrote to his teenaged son Johan who preceded him to Coon Prairie from Lillehammer, 1850.

Jacob Post wrote on April 6, 1851. "I received your precious letter on New Year's Day at 3:00 in the afternoon and it transformed our day from a dismal one to a happy one. I decided at once to take your advice and follow you to America. We expect to leave around the middle of May. I will write to you from New York and you can expect to meet us in Milwaukee..."

Johan at this time was a young man of 18, charged with great responsibility for the family. (I see later on, that Johan married into Unseth or my Bratlie family). They lived on East Ridge and were part of District 2 of Clockmaker School. Where is cousin Eric Leum when I need him.

Johan Post continued "your efforts ought to concentrate in every way on gathering information about the most fertile and best place for us to settle...what is most advantages to us, dear Johan, because your own as well as the entire family's welfare depend on your thoughtful consideration as well as that kind of fortune we can expect in America."

As turned out Johan Michelet was well up to the responsibility given him by his father. Johan's name became so prominent in the history of Westby; the town could easily be Michelet today, though Ole T. Westby was given the honor."

In Westby, John Michelet built a grain warehouse and was Westby's first grain buyer. He was active in early Westby serving as township chairman, assessor, and treasurer, as well as a member of the county board. He helped start several schools and served on school boards. He also served as postmaster from 1884 to 1888 and operated a general store for about 15 ears starting in 1891.

Jacob Post Michelet brought his wife and three young children and a new infant to Coon Prairie in 1851 when he was 55 years old. He built the cabin home for his family which is now preserved at Skumrud, the late first cabin on the left as you enter the park. However, in leaving Norway he left family members behind that had been part of his young life, family he knew he would never see again. A word of mouth family history tells a tragic life changing event in the life of young Jacob Post Michael It was written down 100 years ago by Marion Grimsrud, granddaughter of John Michelet and great-granddaughter of Jacob Post.

This is a..... stay tuned until next episode type of thing (true in every way)..... I think he drowned trying to get across a lake **I will go to Historical Society and find the 'rest of the story'.**



One of the biggest floods in the history of Coon Valley - 9/4/1921. (Global warming?)

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