

VIKING HALL 349-1613
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Summer
2016
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Birkebeinerne (The Birchlegs)

Yes, you are in for another Norwegian history lesson. I can’t stop myself. I am so excited; the Norwegian film industry has made a film about the Birkebeinerne (the Birchlegs). In fact, the movie is called “Birkebeinerne”. The director is Nils Gaup, one of Norway’s greatest directors, who won an Academy Award for his movie about a legendary Sami skier in the 1987 movie “Pathfinder”.



Skiing Birchlegs Crossing the Mountains with the Royal Child, by Knud Bergslien.

The movie “Birkebeinerne” has already premiered in Norway and is scheduled for release this year in theaters around the U.S. under the title “The Last King” because hardly anyone in the U.S. knows about the Norwegian Birkebeiners. But if you keep reading this piece you will soon be among the enlightened “hardly anyones”.

Fierce fighting did not end in Norway with the close of the Viking Age and the coming of Christianity; it just turned inward. From 1130 to 1240 Norway experienced a bitter civil war where various and numerous contending rivals for the throne fought nearly continuously for 110 years (the

treachery and blood-letting in HBO’s “Game of Thrones” pales in comparison). Quarter was rarely given by either side; if you lost, you died, or much worse. Few of the contending kings ever lived beyond their twenties and some never made it out of their teens. And yes, there were many mistresses, but because it was Norway we know their names and they had much influence in their respective worlds (and in those days you could be an heir to the throne whether you were illegitimate or not, it did not matter).

Over time two major political parties emerged, the Birkebeiners (Birchlegs) and the Baglers (Crozier). Geographically the Birkebeiners had their political base in Trøndelag, the province that now contains the ancient city of Trondheim (then called Nidaros); whereas the Baglers had their seat of power largely in the region centered on Oslo and Tonsberg in eastern Norway. Originally, many of the warriors on the Birkebeiner side came from Norway’s wild central border zone with Sweden. These were tough, hardy men who often were so poor that they had to wear leggings made of birch bark, hence the name “Birkebeiner” or “Birchleg” in English. Eventually, by the end of the thirteenth century, the Birkebeiners began to include many men and women of wealth and standing in their ranks; they were hardly just a party of poor farmers and borderers. The Bagler faction was nick-named the “Crozier” because of their close alliance with the leaders of the Norwegian Catholic Church.

In 1203 King Haakon Sverresson, the leader of the Birkebeiners, died unexpectedly in Sarpsborg at the relatively young age of 27 (most likely from poison). The new king, elected by the Birkebeiners, was Inge Baardsson. Soon it was discovered that the recently deceased king, Haakon Sverresson, had left an unknown living heir who had been born in 1204 to Inga of Varteig (one of the mistresses of influence) in Folkenborg, Norway, in the province of Østfold. However, Østfold was in the territory of the rival Bagler king, Erling Stonewall, who controlled most of southeastern Norway and who was supported by Denmark. When they learned of the existence of the little eighteen-month-old Haakon Haakonsson, the Birkebeiners knew that both the child and his mother were in great danger. If found, they would certainly be killed by the rival Bagler faction.

So in December of 1205 the Birkebeiners sent a band of warriors to bring Haakon and his mother to safety in Nidaros (now Trondheim) where they could find protection under the rule of King Inge Baardsson. The Baglers, in turn, had heard that King Haakon Sverresson had produced a living heir and they were already actively searching for the boy.

The band of Birkebeiner warriors successfully gathered up the child and his mother in Østfold and made their way north on skis to Hamar and then on to Lillehammer where they briefly rested. Hot on their trail were the Bagler soldiers of King Erling Stonewall. Faced with a severe blizzard, two men from the Birkebeinerne group were specially chosen to take little Haakon Haakonsson over the mountains to Østerdalen, a large valley located along Norway’s eastern border with Sweden.

President’s Message continues on Page 2

The Birchlegs

President's Message continues from Page 1

These two men, Thorstein Skevla and Skjervald Skrukka, were thought to be the best skiers among the group of Birkebeiners and therefore would have had the best chance for getting the child to safety. After making a successful initial ski run to Østerdalen, Skevla and Skrukka, carrying child-Haakon, skied hundreds of miles across the high snowy mountains of central Norway to the Birkebeiner stronghold at Nidaros (Trondheim). In the end, little Haakon had been saved by the stalwart and brave Birkebeiner warriors.

After his amazing winter journey across snowy Norway in the care of Thorstein Skevla and Skjervald Skrukka, Haakon Haakonson grew up to become one of Norway's greatest kings. He ended the civil wars and consolidated all political power in Norway under his authority. During his long reign (1217-1263) Norway entered what has been called its "Golden Age". At his court, learning flourished and he constructed the first monumental stone secular buildings in Norway (for instance, the great Haakon's Hall in Bergen). Also, he won direct control over Iceland, Greenland, the Orkneys, the Hebrides, as well as large parts of Scotland. With his fleet of up to 300 ships Norway became recognized as a world power and the friendship of King Haakon was actively sought by both the Pope and the King of Spain.

"Birkebeinerne", the movie, re-creates this epic Medieval journey on skis. The costuming and settings appear to be historically accurate and the one-pole skiing in the movie is heart-stopping in its intensity. Initial reviews of this movie are very good and it has been already suggested by some film critics for an Academy Award. Skevla's and Skrukka's famous ski rescue of the future king of Norway is commemorated each year in the Birkebeinerrennet, a 54-kilometer ski race from Rena to Lillehammer, Norway (the reverse of this leg of the original journey). There is also an American commemorative race held in Wisconsin known as the "Birkie".

Now you are among the "hardly anyones" who know about this famous journey by the Birkebeiners from Norway's distant past. And when the movie comes to town go see it and support Norway's movie industry!

*Fraternally yours,
Terje "Ted" Birkedal*

P.S. Thanks to Lillian Anderson for helping me with the Norwegian names and terms.



SUNSHINE REPORT



Greetings are sent to the following members celebrating a birthday who are at least 75 years young.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

A Big Happy Birthday to
Thordis Nelson,
who turns 97 on the 24th!
Martha Andrew
Dagrun Brotherston
Sylvia Dix
John Jensen
Wayne Johnson
Anne Marie Marson
H. Lee Pederson
Colleen Rudledge
Sandra Johnson
Nancy Gay Wagster

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Marilyn Freitag
Shirley Iverson
Paul Roseland
Donald Schulz
Alice Sears
Marvin Olson
Caroline Saur
Shannon Jones
Shirley Marie Luedke

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

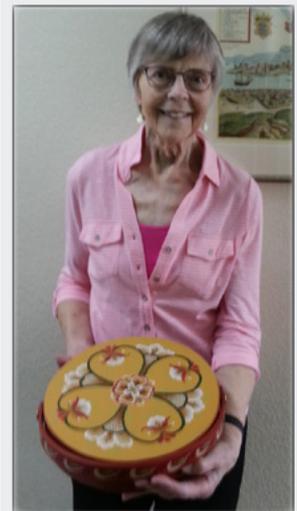
Richard Anderson
Margaret Benson
Steinar Hansen
Sigurd Langnes
Donald Saur
Ann Strother
Diane Thomas
E. Frances Vadia
Pia Meyer
Nicholas Derenoff
A Big Happy Birthday to
E. Frances Vadia,
who turns 92 on the 19th.



If you know someone who needs a little sunshine, *call or email* Cindy McDowell:
696-0725 (cell - 862-1143) Email: ccmcd38@hotmail.com

And the Winner of the Norwegian Wooden Pie Carrier is....

**Lodge Member,
Sharon Clausen**



Rosemaling by Anna Decker
(Pictured here with pie carrier)

Basket by Bill White



CALLING ALL NORWEGIANS! JOIN THE PARADE!

Bring the Family and March in the Downtown 4th of July Parade as we show our Norwegian-American pride.

All Day Family Fun at the Delaney Park Strip

Meet at 10:00 am at 8th St. and G St. on the corner behind the Conoco-Phillips Building

We will be walking with Bridge Builders of Anchorage

Call (907) 351-6095 if you cannot find us

For More Info Contact Linda Bustamante - bustamante@gci.net
or Ted Birkedal - tedbirkedal@gmail.com



8:00 am - Pancake Breakfast

11:00 am - Community & Veterans Parade

12:30 pm - Special performance by
University of Washington Marching Band

1:00 pm - Reading of the
Declaration of Independence

LISE FALSKOW TO READ DECLARATION ON JULY 4

The Harvard Club of Alaska, in collaboration with the Municipality of Anchorage, will hold the twenty-second annual commemoration of Independence Day at One o'clock in the afternoon on Monday, July 4, at the Veterans' Memorial Flagpole on the Park Strip in Anchorage.

Reader of the Declaration will be Lise Falskow, President and CEO of the Alaska World Affairs Council and Honorary Norwegian Consul for Alaska. Kaethe Henning of San Francisco will sing songs of the season, including the Star-Spangled Banner and the Alaska Flag Song, accompanied by pianist Debbie Pankow of Central Lutheran Church. Longtime Sons of Norway member Jim Muller, President of the Harvard Club of Alaska, will serve as M.C.

The program begins at one o'clock, rain or shine, and concludes with the ringing of the bells 230 times, once for each year of American independence. Parents, bring your children, and children, bring your parents. Come early, bring a picnic, relax on the grass, and remember what the Fourth is really all about!

Tusen Takk to Chuck Brodahl

Many thanks to Chuck Brodahl for his highly generous gift of \$10,000 to Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge in 2016. It is greatly appreciated and we will make sure to use it wisely.

President Terje "Ted" Birkedal

Chuck has had a life-time association with Sons of Norway and has been a long-term member of Bernt Balchen Lodge. His father served as Secretary for the SONs in Minneapolis in 1916!

The September Flyer will feature an article submitted by Chuck - It is very interesting and I can't wait to share it with our membership! Ruth Kvernplassen, Editor



Charles Brodahl

"Here in Anchorage I have met such good people at the Lodge, and have relished the good food, programs and fellowship. Through the many years I have always enjoyed being part of Bernt Balchen Lodge."

Chuck Brodahl

FISH BOIL



In case you are excited about watching water boil or at least seeing kerosene doused on a fire, the Fish Boil will be August 16th. Although the fish boil is distinctly Scandinavian it did not start until Scandinavians settled around the Great Lakes.

Courtesy of Arnie Thompson we will be serving rock fish and red snapper. *See our Lodge President's article.* For those of you who would like to forgo the fish; sausages and hot dogs will be available.

You can start showing up at 4:00 p.m. (*earlier if you wish*) to sit in the parking lot and watch the fish boil while you catch up on what everyone did during the summer.

At 6:00 p.m. dinner will start being served.

Music is being arranged.

Cost will be \$20.00 for adults, \$10.00 for 12 to 18 years, \$5.00 for 6 to 11 years and Free for 5 years and under.

Yes, we want you to bring your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, little cousins, the neighbor's kids, etc.

Volunteers are needed for throwing kerosene on the fire, serving, making desserts, making cole slaw, baking dinner rolls, setting up and clean up. All levels of experience are accepted.

Please call 349-1613 to volunteer and/or make reservations.



NORWEGIAN CONSTITUTION DAY

This year we began celebrating Syttende Mai on Sunday, the 15th of May with a yummy potluck. The Potluck began with the presentation of an Alaska State Legislative Citation for Paul Roseland by Representatives Gabrielle Ledoux and Representative Liz Vazquez. The citation was for Paul



Roseland's lifetime contribution to Alaskan music as the "Singing Sourdough". Lodge President Ted Birkedal accepted the citation on behalf of Paul Roseland whose health prevented his attendance in person.

Next, President Ted Birkedal announced the Scholarship winners for 2016. Two recipients, Kelsey Lien and Ingrid Kelly were present with their families to receive their \$1000 scholarship checks. Karlin Swearingen, the third recipient could not attend in person due to prior obligations in Fairbanks, Alaska.



Ted Birkedal also announced that he had picked up the awards for the October 23, 2015 Biz Bee Spelling Bee which had been won by the Bernt Balchen Lodge team, the Verbose Vikings. The members of this team include Nancy Clark, Tim Andrew, and Terry Gryting. Ted Birkedal also made

it known that the enthusiasm of the folks that had come to support the Verbose Vikings had resulted in a Spirit Award for the lodge. Both awards, along with a photo of the Verbose Vikings in their regalia, will be placed in the library.



Entertainment for the night began with Espen Falskow expertly playing a classical piece on his cello for Ambassador Kåre Aas and the assembled lodge members. He was followed by beautiful duets by Hedwig Faber and Anne Adasiak-Andrew accompanied on the piano by Debbie Pankow.

Ted Birkedal announced that a permanent brass plaque would be placed on the piano thanking Hedwig Faber's donating it to the lodge.



After the entertainment, Ambassador Aas got up to give some remarks about the connections between Norway and the United States. Ted Birkedal then presented Ambassador Aas with a framed Sons of Norway "Tusen Takk!" Award for strengthening the ties between our lodge and the Kingdom of Norway and His Majesty King Harald V.



*Photos courtesy of
Christie Ericson and Ruth Kvernplassen*

THIS IS HOW WE CELEBRATE!



On the 17th of May we had at least 80 people show up to march in the Syttende Mai Parade on the Park Strip in downtown Anchorage. Many young people showed up among the participants and they helped lead the parade with banners and Norwegian flags. We also had three excellent musicians follow the lead flags



led by Erik Falskow. Ambassador Aas took a position right after the musicians. It was a colorful event with lots of bunads and flag waving. After the parade was over Ambassador Aas again gave some remarks about the closeness of the United States and Norway. He was, in turn, followed by the three young musicians who played a number of fine jazz tunes for the crowd. Ted Birkedal also announced the generous gift of \$10,000 that Chuck Brodahl had given to Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge.

Cynthia Olnes and John Olnes then served up the sausage and hot dogs plus ice cream for all who had come to celebrate Syttende Mai. We want to thank Cynthia and John for also doing the set-up for the parade and all the other volunteers that made the Potluck and the Syttende Mai celebrations both fun and successful.



Higher Education Scholarships



Kelsey Lien

Kelsey Lien graduated from Eagle River High School this spring. She plans on continuing her education and going on to college. Kelsey has been very active with the Sons of Norway, participating in the Santa Lucia and Syttende Mai events. She and her parents are all members at the Lodge. She is a straight A student with many AP courses, member of the National Honor Society, as well as playing hockey and being in the choir. She expressed her Norwegian heritage as an important part of her life and would not feel nearly the same connection to Norway without Sons of Norway and all the opportunities the lodge has given her.

Karlin Swearingen graduated from Service High School in 2006. He currently is attending U of A in Fairbanks and has achieved numerous goals. He has an associate degree in sustainable energy. He is a year away from graduating with a BS in Mechanical Engineering and also a BS in sustainable energy and a NASA grant to continue on in graduate school. Karlin is also an EMT with the US Army Reserves.

In Karlin's scholarship application he wrote he felt like he was writing a thank you letter to the Sons of Norway lodge members for all the experiences he has had here at the lodge. Some of the events that were memorable was the Syttende Mai parade, the pig roast and fish fry. He was thankful seeing the Lodge members as an excellent example of friendship, strength and community.



Recipients and their families. Kelsey Lien, 4th from left and Ingrid Kelly, 2nd from right. Recipient Karlin Swearingen is not pictured.



Ingrid Kelly

Ingrid Kelly graduated from West Anchorage High School and then a bachelor's degree from Western State Colorado University last May. She is now pursuing a master's in business administration at U of A Fairbanks. She too has many accomplishments including graduating Summa Cum Laude and has also participated in college hockey and skiing. Ingrid has been active at the Lodge including Santa Lucia, Far-I-Kaal and the 17th of May parade. She wrote that the Sons of Norway has brought her great pride in her Norwegian Heritage. When she enters the Hall she feels strong hearts around her and a community that she will have for the rest of her life and is very thankful for that.

Congratulations John and Cynthia Olnes!

Nominees for the Bridge Builders Excellence in Community Service Award

John and Cynthia Olnes were chosen at the April Board/Membership Meeting to be Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge's 2016 nominees for the Bridge Builders of Anchorage's Excellence in Community Service Award. They are nominated as a couple for their combined contributions to both to Sons of Norway and the wider community. Over the years they have contributed thousands of hours to the success of the lodge and the maintenance of its physical home, Viking Hall. In addition, Cynthia and John have both spent countless hours helping the visually impaired and disabled enjoy the winter sport of cross-country skiing through their participation in Ski for Light and the Special Olympics. Also, John and Cynthia, as long-term members of the Anchorage Nordic Skiing Association, have donated a great deal of time and expertise over the years as volunteers at both local youth and adult ski events. In short, John and Cynthia Olnes, as a married couple, embody the generous and cooperative spirit that exemplifies the Scandinavian people of the world.

They are ambassadors of good will to all who have had the pleasure of coming in contact with them.

John and Cynthia will receive their award on August 20th at the Bridge Builders Unity Gala at the Hilton Hotel.

If you wish to show your support for John and Cynthia's contributions to both the lodge and the community you can purchase tickets for the event from Merlin Hamre (Phone: 907-575-6420; email: mhamre@acsalaska.net).

Tickets are \$65 each and include dinner and entertainment. The event begins at 6:00 p.m.



Mother's Day Brunch

Past presidents were well represented in the group helping with the Mother's Day Brunch. In addition, those attending were greeted by one of the six smiling faces of our young members – Ian and Emma Clark, Juliana Andrew, and Stella, Jack and Luna Olnes who assisted with serving.

The attendance was slightly down from recent years but

those attending enjoyed time with family, the cheery atmosphere, and a traditional breakfast that continues to include the pancake and syrup recipes of Walter and Nuna Kjera.

Tusen takk to everyone who helped with putting on this event!



Cultural Director Christie Ericson, with her son Matt Wallender, at the Mother's Day Brunch.

*John Olnes and
Anna Decker, Co-chairs*

Tusen Takk to Icicle Seafoods of Seward

Tusen takk to Icicle Seafoods of Seward! They donated 70 pounds of prime, flash-frozen rockfish (including snappers) to Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge for the upcoming Fish Boil on August 16, 2016. And thanks

to Arnie Thomson who took the donation and brought the fish to Viking Hall's freezer.



Icicle Seafoods donation to our lodge makes sense. The company was founded some 50 years ago in Petersburg, Alaska by Norwegian fishermen and other citizens of the town. It is now one of the largest

fish processing companies in North America. Their logo is a Viking ship in full sail. Thank you Icicle Seafoods of Seward, Alaska.

*Terje "Ted" Birkedal
President, Bernt Balchen Lodge*



Consul's Corner

Information and Opportunities for Norwegian Alaskans



Building on our Relationship with Norway



Falling Oil Prices: Recommendations for Alaska and other Arctic Countries. Photo courtesy of Lise Falskow

This past month was a busy month for the Norwegian Community in Alaska. Ambassador Kåre Aas impressed and charmed Alaskans with his knowledge, openness, and approachability. While in Anchorage, in addition to speaking at the Sons of Norway 17th of May Potluck and at the 17th of May Parade on the Park Strip, he gave a presentation for almost 200 people about, *"Falling Oil Prices: Recommendations for Alaska and other Arctic Countries"* at a luncheon hosted by the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce and the Alaska World Affairs Council, as well as an intimate talk and Q&A for about twenty five people at a 17th of May breakfast at the Captain Cook Hotel.

People here wanted to ask the Ambassador what we could learn from Norway, a country that currently has an 800+ billion dollar sovereign wealth fund compared with Alaska's 50+ billion dollar sovereign wealth fund which was created two decades prior to Norway's.

Instead of telling Alaskans what they should do, Ambassador Aas talked about some of the successes of Norway as well as some of the challenges.

Ambassador Aas stated that in addition to petroleum, there is, "considerable potential in the maritime sector, the seafood industry, mineral industry, IT and tourism." He added that, "Norway has a highly educated and flexible labor force that moves between industries."

As the Norwegian Honorary Consul for Alaska, I had the honor of accompanying Ambassador Aas in Anchorage and in Petersburg. During this time, I was reminded of the warmth of American Norwegians in Alaska and the commitment Alaskans have to maintaining and passing on to the next generation Norwegian culture and heritage.



Luncheon and presentation sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and the Alaska World Affairs Council.

Photo courtesy of Lise Falskow



Greetings from the Syttende Mai Parade!

Photo courtesy of Lise Falskow

Ambassador Aas was thrilled with his visit to Alaska and enjoyed meeting all of the wonderful people here. I believe he will be coming back to Alaska again soon.

The last thing Ambassador Aas said to me before heading back to Washington DC was, *"It is important to build on this visit to strengthen relationships between Alaska and Norway."* I couldn't agree more!

Lise Kristiansen Falskow

I am honored to have been asked to serve as the Norwegian Honorary Consul in Alaska. When information and opportunities come across my desk, I will let Norwegians in our community know about them in a regular Consul's Corner section of the Flyer.



Sons of Norway
8141 Briarwood St.
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Are You Going Fishing this Summer?

For those of you with a plentiful harvest of fish, we would appreciate if you would be willing to share with Bernt Balchen Lodge for the Christmas Brunch. We would appreciate salmon fillets to bake or for gravlax, and different kinds of fish to make fish sausage.

It can be made with different fish (pike, cod, whitefish, etc.). – Merlin

Watch for upcoming class offerings on how to make fish sausages in future Flyers and on our Website:

<http://www.sofnalaska.com>



EVENTS

JUNE

1 - 4

Wednesday

**District 2 Convention
 Coeur d'Alene, Idaho**

9

Thursday

7:00 pm

Board/Membership Meeting

JULY

4

Monday

10:00 am

July 4th Parade



AUGUST

16

Tuesday

4:00 pm Fish Boil

6:00 pm Dinner

25 - 27

Thursday

**International Convention
 Tacoma, WA**

FOOD BANK DONATIONS

Our lodge continues to donate canned goods, non-perishable foods and money to the local food bank.
 Please bring your food or monetary donation in to Viking Hall.



All events take place at Viking Hall, 8141 Briarwood St., unless otherwise noted.

Please send articles or event information for the next Newsletter by August 20th to: sonancak@gmail.com Attention - Ruth Subject Line - The Flyer