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SONS OF NORWAY BERNT BALCHEN LODGE – PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Bernt Balchen



For years I did not know much about the man after which our lodge is named. All I knew is that he was a noted Norwegian-American aviator, nothing more. Then one day I noticed a book about Bernt Balchen on the book display table in the library. It was Carroll Glines' book *Bernt Balchen: Polar Aviator* dated 1999 and published by the Smithsonian Institution Press. I almost did not pick it up for I'm not an aviation buff, but I am glad I did for now I know why our lodge should be so proud to be named after Bernt Balchen. He was truly a great Norwegian-American.

Bernt Balchen was born at Tveit near Kristiansand in southern Norway in 1899. In his youth he thrived in the outdoors and became a skilled cross-country skier and ski jumper, avid hunter, and expert boxer. After graduating from

the forestry school at Moseby he joined the French Foreign Legion and was assigned to Verdun. However, he was called up for service in the Norwegian Army just before the great battle. He soon qualified for officer training and was given special permission by the Norwegian Army in 1918 to volunteer with the Finnish White Guards in their fight with the Finnish Red Guards and Soviet Russia. First a ski trooper and then a cavalryman, he was severely wounded in combat near Sortavala. After a lengthy recuperation he resigned his Army reserve position and joined the Norwegian Navy where he qualified for flight training. He excelled as an aviator and became a highly accomplished military test pilot. During this time he honed his considerable skills as both an airplane mechanic and as instrument flyer in the cloud-laden skies of Norway.

Because of his aviation skill-set he was selected to go to Svalbard in 1926 where he was to assist Roald Amundsen prepare the dirigible "Norge" for its landmark flight over the North Pole and on to Teller, Alaska. His skill with aircraft caught the eye of Commander Richard Byrd of the United States who had made an attempt to reach the North Pole from Svalbard in a tri-motor Fokker three days before Amundsen's flight. Byrd convinced Bernt Balchen to join his flying team in the United States. Once in the United States Bernt Balchen accompanied Byrd in 1927 as the chief pilot on the Ford tri-motor "America" that was the first aircraft to successfully deliver mail across the Atlantic to France. In an amazing feat of flying Bernt Balchen managed to safely crash-land the plane in shallow water just off-shore of a French beach. This forced ditching was necessary because all of France's northern airports were covered by impenetrable rain and low clouds when the "America" arrived.

After his trans-Atlantic flight Bernt Balchen was hired to ferry mining supplies and equipment into the Canadian Arctic. In this dangerous job he successfully pioneered many techniques and approaches to air transport in the Far North. This experience in northern Canada would prepare him for his next great adventure as a member of the Byrd Antarctic Expedition. In 1929, as chief pilot for the expedition, he was the first person to pilot a plane over the South Pole.

In 1932 he taught Amelia Earhart instrument flying and modified her plane for her historic trans-Atlantic flight to Ireland. From 1933 to 1935 he served as chief pilot for the Lincoln Ellsworth Trans-Antarctic Expedition. This multi-year expedition led to the scientific exploration and mapping of vast portions of the then largely unknown Antarctic Continent.

President's Message continues on Page 2



Bernt Balchen Lodge

President's Message continues from Page 1

In the late thirties Bernt Balchen returned to Norway where he helped lay the groundwork for both domestic as well as international passenger and cargo flights to and from Scandinavia. When World War II erupted Bernt Balchen joined the Norwegian Air Force and served as a special liaison to the United States. Part of his assignment was to set up a training center for Norwegian aviators in Canada that became known as "Little Norway". This center trained over 2500 Norwegian pilots, navigators, and aircraft mechanics during the war.

In 1941 General "Hap" Arnold convinced Bernt Balchen to join the United States Air Force and establish secret bases in Greenland. These bases were used to ferry planes for the Allies to Europe and serve as bases for the submarine-hunting B-24 Liberators. While stationed in Greenland Bernt Balchen performed many spectacular rescues of downed aviators and also led a devastating bombing attack on the last German outpost on Sabine Island. His next wartime assignment was northern Sweden where he was in charge of ferrying some 2000 Norwegians and 1200 U.S. interned airmen out of Sweden along with many important diplomats and refugees from the Nazis. He also organized and flew many clandestine flights from Sweden into Norway to supply the resistance. He even airlifted a mini-hospital complete with a doctor and nurse into northern Norway. His re-supply flights from Britain to Norway (3,980 miles) were the longest recorded in the European Theater of War.



After the end of the war Bernt Balchen returned to Norway as a civilian and helped to organize the Scandinavian Airline System (SAS). But he was convinced to return to active military duty in 1948 as a Colonel in the United States Airforce. He was immediately assigned to Elmendorf Airforce

Base in Anchorage, Alaska to head up the 10th Rescue Mission. Here he taught Arctic survival skills and developed new and innovative approaches for aviation rescue. Bernt Balchen also successfully championed the purchase of the de Havilland Beaver aircraft by the U.S. Air Force, still a popular Alaska bush plane today. While in Alaska he piloted a Douglas C-54 non-stop from Fairbanks across the North Pole to Norway and became the first person in history to pilot a plane over both poles.

Colonel Balchen left Alaska for the Pentagon in 1951 to serve as technical advisor for the construction of the U.S. base at Thule, Greenland. A strategic thinker he had argued for the importance of a U.S. base at Thule since 1942. Bernt Balchen had campaigned even harder for the base after the start of the Cold War with Russia. He realized that control of the Arctic skies was key to the defense of the United States.

In 1956 Bernt Balchen retired from the Air Force and entered into a busy retirement where he continued to be sought as a consultant to both the military and industry on aviation and flying in arctic environments. In a speech given in 1968 he was one of the first to warn of global warming based on his observations of changing ice conditions in the Arctic and he gained great attention in the press for his prescient views. In retirement he also pursued his lifelong love of painting and his renderings of the polar regions were featured by leading galleries in New York and elsewhere. After a bout with cancer, Bernt Balchen died in Mt. Kisco, New York in 1973.

Bernt Balchen's life was lived in the tradition of Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen, like them he is one of the "Giants of the North". To have our lodge named after such a great man is truly an honor.

*Fraternally yours,
Terje "Ted" Birkedal*

P.S. Throughout his life when faced with a challenge Bernt Balchen's standard answer was "Ve do it". In fact, his World War II squadron based in Kallax, Sweden was nicknamed the "Ve do it" Squadron. This saying is uncannily close to the Eva Bilet's motto, which is "Just do it". Eva Bilet, after 10 very active terms as president of Bernt Balchen Lodge was the force behind the eventual success of our lodge. She is appropriately made of the same stubborn stuff as Bernt Balchen, himself. Both are exemplary Norwegians. She turned 90 on December 9, 2015. Happy Birthday Eva!

SUPER BOWL 2016



Ticket sales for the Sons of Norway 2016 Super Bowl Raffle are now underway. The raffle is the primary source of funds for the Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge No. 2-046 Language/ Heritage/Higher Education Scholarships.

The Raffle will again have 20 winners with a top prize of \$1,000. Only 300 tickets are sold so the chance to win is very generous, one in fifteen.

Tickets are selling for \$25 each or a special deal of 5-for-\$100. Your ticket also entitles you to a free Lapskaus (Norwegian stew) dinner during the showing of the Super Bowl 50 game on a big-screen TV at Viking Hall on February 7, 2016.

To purchase raffle tickets please contact a member of the committee – John Olnes (562-2794), Sandra Hanson (243-2132), Wayne Johnson 248-3030) or Jane Moe (274-1357).

Tickets will also be available during upcoming lodge events and at the Viking Hall office.

Introducing....

Your 2016 Bernt Balchen Officers and Committee Chairs

President Ted Birkedal
Vice President Linda Bustamante
Counselor Anna Decker
Secretary Beverly Griffin
Recording Secretary Ashley Brusven
Membership Secretary Tom Falskow
Treasurer Merlin Hamre
Cultural Director Christie Ericson
Foundation Director Marit Kristiansen
Sports Director Martin Hansen
Marshal Sandra Hanson
Assistant Marshal Cindy McDowell
Trustee John Olnes (3-year)
Trustee Amanda Saxton (2-year)
Trustee Jacob Mathiesen (1-year)
Auditor Patrick McCormick
Auditor David Hewko

Committee Chairs

Librarian Tom Falskow
Newsletter Editor Ruth Kvernplassen
Co-Publicity Director Jane Moe Newby
Co-Publicity Director Charlotte MacCay



SUNSHINE REPORT

JANUARY



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

THREE CHEERS ...

Charles A. Brodahl is 93!!!

Louis H Carufel is 91!!

Alfred Augestad is 92!!

Melvin R. Aarseth

John L. Hall

Shirley A. Moe

David Pederson

Betty Rockne

Evelyn Rush

Susan Soby

*“Happy
Birthday!”*

If you know someone who needs a little sunshine, *call* or *email* Cindy McDowell:

696-0725 (cell - 862-1143) Email: ccmcd38@hotmail.com

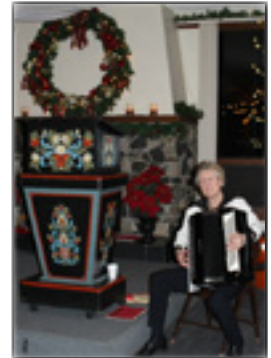
*“Gratulerer
med dagen!”*

Lucia Family

The Lucia Family Christmas Celebration was a Joyous Occasion!

Good food, Good Music, Good Cheer!

Please Enjoy these Photos, and We'll See *YOU* Next Year!



Christmas Party



Photos Courtesy of Christie Ericson and Ruth Kvernplassen

Grants and Scholarships for YOU!

Sons of Norway Foundation Grant Funds are available for lodges and members.

What is your lodge or community planning where extra funding could enhance the experience?

All grant applications are done online at www.sonsofnorway.com/foundation

Local Lodge Partnership Grants - Due January 15, 2016

For lodge events and Norwegian themed programming at the lodge level.

Matching funds grants up to \$1,000.

General Heritage & Culture Grants - Due February 1, 2016

For community-wide Norwegian themed events, musical & theatrical performances, Cross-cultural exchange groups, Nordic cultural fairs, etc.

Funds up to \$1,500 for events happening within the 2016 calendar year.

Helping Hands to Children Grants - Due February 15, 2016

For lodges helping in local schools with student mentoring, school supplies or Norwegian themed presentations, lodge events for children.

Matching funds up to \$500.

Sons of Norway Foundation Post High School Scholarships - Deadlines begin March 1, 2016

Did you know that the Sons of Norway Foundation offers college scholarships starting at \$1,000 for current members, children or grandchildren of current members?

This is a great member benefit.

Have the college students in your family check out:

www.sonsofnorway.com/foundation

We currently offer seven categories of scholarships for different areas of study.

All scholarship applications are done online.

The Sons of Norway Foundation awards approximately \$100,000 in grants and scholarship annually.

Please advise your Social Directors, Cultural Directors, Youth Directors and members of these opportunities.

WOOD SKI CLASSIC

Breaking News!!



The ever popular **Wood Ski Classic** has been *tentatively* re-scheduled to February 28th.

More information and confirmation of this date will be in the February Flyer, and on the Bernt Balchen Lodge Website.

<http://www.sofnalaska.com/>

Free cross country ski lessons for Sons of Norway members.

Martin and Mark Hansen will be offering beginning and intermediate ski lessons on Sunday, January 10th.

On the 10th, *classic lessons* will be offered from 12:00 to 1:00 pm and *skate lessons* from 1:30 to 2:30 pm.

Meet at the Kincaid Chalet ten minutes prior, with gear ready to go. Lessons will be in a group format and will take place in the stadium provided good conditions.

RSVP two days prior (January 8th) by emailing Martin at bikeskifish@gmail.com. For any questions please call Martin Hansen at 907-980-5333.

Passages

Erling T. Johansen

Passed on December 24th, 2015

Erling was a former President of Bernt Balchen Lodge and former Honorary Consul for Norway and Sweden in Alaska. He will be missed.

Our deepest sympathy to his family for their loss.



Consul's Corner

Information and Opportunities for Norwegian Alaskans



Heia! Heia!



While we were all gearing up for Christmas, several mushers in Norway were gearing up for an unprecedented Alaskan visit.

The press is calling it the “**Scandinavian Invasion**” with a record eight Norwegian mushers coming to Alaska for the Iditarod Dog Sled Race on March 5th, including 2 time champion Robert Sørli. In addition to the 8 Norwegians, Mats Pettersson from Kiruna, Sweden is coming as are four Canadians. Here is some information on the 8 Norwegians to look out for:

Dag Torluf Olsen, 51, was born and raised in Hammerfest/Finnmark, Norway. He has been running dogs since 1993 and has been dreaming about the Iditarod since 2000. His family is well known in the Norwegian mushing community and he has imported some dogs from Alaska, from both Mitch Seavey and Lance Mackey.

Joar Leifseth Ulsom, 29, was the 2013 Iditarod Rookie of the Year is from Mo I Rana in Norway by the Arctic Circle. Clocking the 5th fastest time ever run in the 2014 Iditarod race, Joar Leifseth Ulsom, holds the record as the fastest rookie to have ever run the Iditarod, while placing seventh in 2013. Joar is one of only two mushers to place top-7 three times in just three Iditarod starts. Joar works full time with his dogs and races in several countries.

Robert Sørli, 59, lives in Hurdal. He began mushing in 1970 and became interested in the Iditarod after winning all of the long distance races in Europe. He came to Alaska for the challenge and has since won the Iditarod twice. He said he is coming back because he wants to finish in a better place than last time he ran.

Sigrid Ekran, 36, was born and raised in Sparbu, Norway. She lived in Alaska from 2003 to 2008 and received her Master's Degree from UAF in Northern Studies. She began running dogs in 2006 while she lived in Fairbanks and became interested in the Iditarod when she “got two teams from Team Norway after the 2004 Race.” She ran the Iditarod twice before moving back to Norway to race in Europe. She says her current occupation is “Expedition guide and wildlife management.”

Tore Albrigtsen, 49, was born and raised in Tromsø, Norway. Tore is a wilderness guide and together with his girlfriend runs their own company, Active Tromsø, offering dog sled tours, kayaking and mountaineering. He began mushing in 1978 and ran his first Finnmark race in 1987. He has completed that race 13 times. He ran the Iditarod in 2006 to celebrate the 10 year anniversary of his first long distance race. He said he had wanted to run the Iditarod ever since the first Norwegian, Stein Håvard Fjesta, ran it in 1977. He has also participated in classic ski expeditions and did the Finnmark and Iditarod on skis with one dog in 1996 and 1997.

Lars Monsen, 52, was born in Oslo, Norway and currently lives in Skiptvet. Lars began mushing in 1990 and became interested in running the Iditarod when his friends, Robert Sørli, Harald Tunheim and Stein Håvard Fjesta first came to Alaska to run the Iditarod. Lars has written 18 books and has been on many expeditions. His books are about his travels in the wilderness in Alaska, Canada and Norway. His expeditions include crossing Alaska in 10 months, crossing the length of Norway in a year, and crossing Canada in three years.

Ralph Johannessen, 56, was born and raised in Bergen and currently lives in Dagali. Ralph started mushing in 1973 and has won all of the long distance races in Norway, as well as being the reigning Norwegian long distance champion. Having raced at the top level in Norway for numerous years, and being inspired by his good friend, Robert Sørli, he is ready for a new challenge and will be bringing his own dog team from Norway to the Iditarod.

Geir Idar Hjelvik, 54, was born in Molde, and currently lives in Norjordet. He began mushing in 1987 and started his mushing career skjoring with a German Shepherd. His first litter of Alaska husky pups were born in 1989, bloodlines from Susan Butcher and Jerry Austin. He currently maintains a kennel of 30 dogs in Norway but is running a team from Dallas Seavey's kennel in the Iditarod this year.

Go Team Norway!

Lise 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.

If you have any questions, you can reach me at 907norway@gmail.com.




Sons of Norway
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EVENTS

JANUARY

- | | | |
|----|----------|---|
| 5 | Tuesday | 10:00 am - Noon Needle Crafts and Rosemaling Class |
| 14 | Thursday | 7:00 pm Board/Membership Meeting |
| 19 | Tuesday | 10:00 am - Noon Needle Crafts and Rosemaling Class |



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.

**FOOD BANK
DONATIONS**

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

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