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SONS OF NORWAY BERNT BALCHEN LODGE – PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Norway' Sons of Liberty

Norwegian Yeoman Farmers and Norway's Constitution of 1814

On the eve of the signing of Norway's Constitution on the 17th of May, 1814, Norway had a population just short of one million people. Of this near million over 90 percent lived in rural settings far from Norway's few cities.

At this time most of Norway's population was engaged in farming. However, unlike most of Europe, Norway had a substantial number of farmers that owned their own land; they were what were known as freeholders or yeoman farmers. There were also cottars, or tenant farmers, and their numbers had grown throughout the eighteenth century, but still about 45 percent of Norway's farmers were tilling their own land in 1814 and these numerous free-farmers controlled approximately 60 percent of the available farmland. The great Norwegian historian, Halvdan Koht, has written that at that time "Norway was basically the only country in which people could be proud of being a farmer."

Of the 112 elected delegates to the Constituent Assembly that met at Eidsvoll in the spring of 1814, thirty-seven were yeoman farmers. These farmers made up a full one third of the delegates that shaped Norway's constitution. This level of representation in a governmental constitutional assembly by farmers was unprecedented in the history of Europe and not even closely replicated in the Constitutional Convention of the United States. Who were these farmers and why were they at Norway's Constitutional Convention? The short answer is that yeoman farmers were the economic backbone of Norway; the very sinews of its society in 1814.

Unlike on the Continent or in England the nobility played a minimal role in Norway's economy and society at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The economic engines of Norway were driven by its freehold farmers. These men and women were fiercely self-reliant, independent, and adaptable. In a country with few resources they had learned how to use everything available to them, but largely in a sustainable way so they did not exhaust the limited resources within their reach.

Along Norway's long coast most farmers were also fishermen in season. The greater majority also had sheep, goats, and milk cows which their wives would care for and take to the upland pastures in the summer. Where timber grew they chopped it down to make their houses, barns, and storage sheds and all important fishing boats. Almost all farmers made their own utensils, mostly of wood and many were expert carpenters by necessity. In the interior valleys of Norway the farmers also took advantage of everything the land would offer. Here, they also used the timber on their farms to their advantage.



Hans Dahl's "Upon Sunny Waves" - Public Domain

President's Message continues on Page 2

Mother's Day Brunch at Viking Hall

Sunday, May 14th 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

THE MENU INCLUDES:

Walter's sourdough pancakes,
Nuna's apple cinnamon syrup, ham,
reindeer sausage, eggs & mixed fruit.
Juice, Coffee, Tea & Champagne

BRUNCH PRICES:

Adults - \$12
Ages 12 to 16 - \$8
Ages 5 to 11 - \$5
Children under 5 years FREE
Please call 349-1613 for Event Information

Sons of Liberty

President's Message continues from Page 1

They also fished for trout and salmon and, of course, foraged the mountains and hills for berries and other edible plants. Similar to their coastal brethren they kept animals and took them to the high pastures to fatten up.

Though independent they recognized the benefits of mutual aid and helped each other out when needed and often cooperated in common projects that were to their benefit. Frequently, they combined their resources and labor to build their own timber mills, grain mills, even mills for processing woolens. In the Lofoten Islands of Northern Norway where 88 percent of the people were fisher-farmers, many joined together to build shared fishing boats and even larger boats to freight their dried cod to market.

Although trade was supposed to be the sole province of crown-licensed merchants in the cities, the free farmers were in-bedded in active regional and interregional trade networks; essentially an extensive Norwegian "black market". For instance the farmers of Laerdal of the eastern Sognefjord Region specialized in transporting both herring and grain over the mountains between western and eastern Norway, the herring going east and the grain west. Near Bergen seafaring farmers often ignored the monopoly in trade held by the burgher merchants and traded directly with the Scots as well as the Dutch who plied the coast seeking anyone willing to sell dried cod and barrels of herring. The farmers of Vest-Adger in southern Norway also engaged in trade with the Dutch who provided much-needed grain in return for Norwegian hides, leather, fish oil, butter, tar, and lumber. A number of Norwegian coastal farmers gained such a reputation for their beautiful and seaworthy sail boats like the "Nordlander", "ottring", and "gavl boat" that they began to build boats on order for Scottish fishermen.

Christian Jensen Loftus is a good example of the resourceful sort of men that eventually came to represent the Norwegian free-hold farmers at the Constituent Assembly in 1814. Born in 1750 in Aust-Agder in southern Norway, he not only managed a successful farm but soon acquired interests in a sawmill and in shipping and trade. He also served as a skipper on overseas voyages to Great Britain, Denmark, and France. In 1786 he was elected by the other farmers of his community to take their complaints to Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark. They objected to the high taxes imposed by Danish officials as well as the Danish grain monopoly and called for a freer timber trade. After what he thought was a successful meeting with the Crown Prince he returned to Norway with what he thought was a royal mandate to further document the complaints and collect petitions of support to present to the Crown Prince at a later date. To his surprise Danish officials tried to arrest him and his fellow farmers gathered round him and threatened armed conflict with the state. In the end, he was arrested for his resistance and imprisoned in Akershus Fortress until his death some ten years later.

To the farmers attending the Constituent Assembly at Eidsvoll, Loftus' struggle and tragic death served as an inspiration to their work in helping to create a constitution for Norway that recognized the rights and needs of farmers. Interestingly, Enevold Falsen, a noted Norwegian attorney, had defended Loftus in his trial. As it turned out, his son, Christian Magnus Falsen, became one of the leaders of the Constituent Assembly of 1814 and also a primary author of the Norwegian Constitution.

The Norwegian yeoman farmers at Eidsvoll, like many of their compatriots, were not conservative, insular peasants. They were often well read and some had been exposed to the writers of the Enlightenment like Rousseau. A number even composed poetry and music.

These free holders were interested in getting rid of an oppressive Danish bureaucracy, opening up free trade, guaranteeing freedom of speech and universal suffrage, and gaining a popular democracy for Norway. Overall, they were more revolutionary and republican in their views than the majority of the public officials and merchants that dominated the Constituent Assembly at Eidsvoll. Jørgen Aall, a wealthy ship owner and burgher, and also a delegate to the Constituent Assembly, openly complained about their "free-spirited independence". On the other hand, other powerful delegates like Wilhem Christie, a judge and the Secretary of the Constituent Assembly, and Peter Motzfelt, a prominent military officer, found the democratic and economic views of the free-hold farmers admirable and welcome. Ironically, even Karl Johan, the Prince Regent of Sweden and effective ruler of Sweden at the time of the Constituent Assembly, found the positions of the farmers to his liking and he made sure that some of their demands were included in the amendments to the Norwegian Constitution in the fall of 1814 during the negotiations for the union of Sweden and Norway. Odd as that may seem, it makes sense, for under his original French name of Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, Karl Johan had been a leading general and later Marshall of France in support of the republican cause during the French Revolution.

Though the Norwegian yeoman farmers did not get everything they wanted included in the original Norwegian Constitution, the result was still radical for its day and it in large part reflected their call for freedom from the rural valleys and coasts of Norway. This Constitution placed great emphasis on the principals of equality and freedom of speech, abolished the privileges of the aristocracy, and gave the right to vote to a very large proportion of the population (about 45 percent of the men then residing in Norway). Today, the Norwegian Constitution survives as the second oldest operational constitution in the world; only the Constitution of the United States is older. Hurra for Syttende Mai!

If you wish to learn more of this topic please see Victor Condorcét Vinje's book, *The Versatile Farmers of the North: The Struggle of Norwegian Yeomen for Economic Reforms and Political Power, 1750-1814*, Booktango, Bloomington, IN, 2014.

*Fraternally yours,
Terje "Ted" Birkedal*



Meet us for the SYTTENDE MAI PARADE

Wednesday, May 17 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Join us in celebration of Norway's Constitution Day
for a traditional parade on May 17.

A short presentation by Lise Kristiansen Falskow, Royal Norwegian Honorary Consul, Alaska, will precede the parade, and hotdogs and ice cream will follow.

We encourage you to wear your bunads or Norwegian sweaters and red and blue ribbons as we carry Norwegian flags and the Bernt Balchen Lodge banner around the block.

We will have flags on hand – or bring your own.

We encourage all ages to share favorite 17 Mai memories.

We will meet downtown near the Delaney Park Rose Garden in the open space west of "N" Street on the north side of the Rose Garden between 9th and 10th Avenues.

This event takes place rain or shine! If you would like to help or have questions contact John Olnes at 562-2794.

NORWEGIAN CONSTITUTION DAY CELEBRATIONS

Join us for the Syttende Mai Potluck Celebration at Viking Hall

Sunday, May 21st Viking Hall 5:00 pm Cost: \$5.00 per person



Bring a side dish, dessert, or salad. Sons of Norway will supply a meat dish.

Also, this year's Scholarship Award recipients will be announced at the potluck.

If you would like to help or have any questions please contact Ted Birkedal at 351-6095.

Celebrating the "Spirits" of Syttende Mai

Thanks to a donation from past board president Eva Bilet, we will have a special feature at this year's Syttende Mai Celebration on Sunday the 21st. We will have a blind tasting of aquavits, one from Norway, one from Denmark and one from Sweden. For those members 21 and older wishing to participate, the bartender will pour a small taste of each (call it an aquavit flight) for you to sample. We will then ask you to rank the three based on your preference and by the end of the evening we hope to establish which of the three aquavits is most preferred by our membership. We do suggest having a glass of water on hand as well so that you can cleanse your pallet between tastes making sure that you get the full flavor and essence of each of the three. Should make for some fun competition and may the happiest country win!



Mickey Andrew (Secretary District Two) presenting Christie Ericson with the 2017 Carl Saltveit Scholarship Award at the April Lodge Meeting.



Fra Biblioteket

Arnaldur Indridason remains Iceland's preeminent crime fiction writer of our time. His inspector Erlendur novels are full of suspense and a real sense of the cold arctic climate that his characters face in the streets of Reykjavik and other locations across Iceland. I've just completed two more of his novels that are now available in our library. Rekjavik Nights is a prequel to the other Erlendur novels and takes us back in time when the young Erlendur was not yet a detective, but a street cop stopping bad guys on the run. His persistence on a couple of cold cases leads to a full-blown investigation through which he discovers his talents as a detective in solving both of these crimes. Black Skies is set in more modern times and highlights some of the drama that surrounded the failure of the Icelandic banking system starting in 2008. Inspector Erlendur is out on leave and the story features more fully his colleague Sigurdur Oli who discovers some secrets his past school mates are trying to hide after attending a school reunion. The novel is a superb story of greed, pride, and murder from one of Scandinavia's most successful crime writers. Drop by the library and check out one of these or many other selections from our lodge library.

Tom Falskow, Lodge Librarian

How Cool is That?! Innovation in the Arctic

Friday, May 12th | 12:00pm to 1:30pm
Anchorage Downtown Hilton

- INTERNATIONAL INNOVATION -



NORWAY
Ambassador Kåre R. Aas,
Norwegian Ambassador to the U.S.



NORWAY
Morten Brugård,
Senior Advisor, Innovation Norway

- ALASKAN ARCTIC INNOVATORS -
To be announced as confirmed.

To learn more and purchase tickets, visit www.alaskaworldaffairs.org.
Contact us at (907) 276-8038 or info@alaskaworldaffairs.org.



North by North Events at a Glance

Detailed information: Consul Corner - Page 7

INNOVATE ARCTIC ----- May 12
ARCTIC FILM FESTIVAL----- May 12
ARCTIC DANCE PARTY----- May 13
NORTHERN LOCAL FOOD & BEER TASTING ----- May 13
ARTS, CRAFTS AND CULTURE EXPO ----- May 13 and 14
ONGOING | EXHIBITS AND PANELS

- Art installations by Armando Marino (Exile) and KUO I-Chen (STUMaPIN)
- Polar Bear Garden and I AM INUIT exhibitions
- Panel Discussions – Periphery & Resilience; Arctic Solutions
- Tour of Arctic Studies Center/Living Our People

Anchorage Museum, 625 C Street

Visit: www.nxnfestival.com for more information



*"Gratulerer
med dagen!"*



SUNSHINE REPORT



*"Happy
Birthday!"*

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

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Judith Bagley
Margaret Edwards

Reidun Hansen
David Haugen

Gordon Homme
Darrell Korman

Marianne Storms
Gerald Swanson

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

Fish Dinner!

Thanks to all the volunteers that made the Norwegian Fish Dinner a Success! Tusen Takk!

Mickey Andrew
Laura Brion and
her brother
Linda Bustamante
Katie Evans
Ron Flugum
Britta Hamre
Steinar Hansen
Sandra Hanson
Charlene Howe
Wayne Johnson
Marilyn Lee
Gayle Mathiesen
Jacob Mathiesen

Jaysen Mathiesen
Cindy McDowell
David Michaelson
Peter Mjos
Lisa Nelson
Cynthia Olnes
John Olnes
Amanda Saxton
Karen Ruud
Arni Thomsen
Andy Wilcox

Glenn Soby for the wonderful Photos!

From Merlin Hamre and Ted Birkedal, Co-Chairs



The hors d'oeuvres at the Fish Dinner received many compliments especially the kjottkaker (Norwegian Meatballs) made by Lodge President Ted Birkedal. He added a special ingredient to the sauce - gjetost - this is a delicious cheese primarily produced and consumed in Norway and is regarded as one of the country's most iconic foodstuffs.

Gjetost can be purchased in Anchorage at the Natural Pantry - Ted recommends the Tine brand. And he also served lingonberrys as a delicious companion to the Kjottkaker. The lingonberrys can be purchased at Alaska Sausage Company.



DITT og DATT!



Hurra for syttende mai!!!

The highlight of May in Norway is all the celebrating surrounding May 17th. Syttende mai, May 17th, is "Grunnlovsdagen"—the day commemorating the signing of the Norwegian Constitution at Eidsvoll Verk on May 17th, 1814. The main events are the parades of school children, dressed in bunads or their finest attire, marching along, singing patriotic songs, and merrily waving Norwegian flags. The traditional foods this day vary a bit from location to location. However, the most common foods are hotdogs, ice cream, and cakes such as bløtkake and pavlova. The newspaper, Aftenposten, estimates that over 16 million hotdogs are consumed each May 17th!



Mothers Day Sale!

Pia's Scandinavian Woolens
20% off all sweaters
Treat your mother or yourself!
www.piasweaters.com
907-277-7964



OLE

Learning of many diverse topics continues locally through OLE. This is focused on those of us above 50 with an interest in expanding our knowledge by attending classes, most often at an available classroom on the UAA campus and other local sites. These classes are wonderful, as they require no homework and are geared for us with flexible schedules - there is nothing mandatory, only your own interest! Look up OLE Anchorage at www.OleAnchorage.org. Or call Marci at 231-0095!

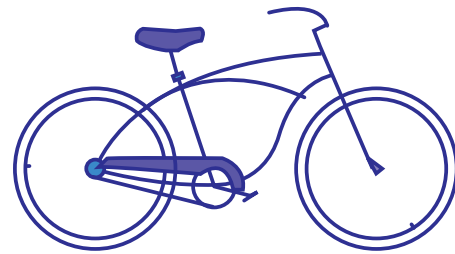
Bike tune up and repair clinic for SONS

May 10, 16, 24 from 7-9:30 pm

At the Hansen's- 1353 Inlet Place

People need to RSVP to Martin at 907-980-5333- text or phone.

Martin has tools, lube and a small amount of repair supplies.



Welcome New Members!

May is the month we recognize lodge members who have assisted in recruiting new members to the lodge over the past year. Without growth our lodge would not remain as vital and active as it is today. Just since the start of 2017 we have already welcomed the following new members to our lodge:

Kristin Raeesi
Amy Ciccone
Denise Bowen
Joy Vinje
Scott T Habberstad

Please welcome them at the next event – introduce yourself and let them know how glad we are that they have joined the best lodge in all of Sons of Norway! And while you are at it, ask someone else to join too!

Tom Falskow, Membership Secretary

Quilt Raffle

Quilt Raffle tickets on sale for Trollhaugen...contact Mickey or Amanda at lodge to purchase them.





Consul's Corner

Information and Opportunities for Norwegian Alaskans



The North by North festival will take place from May 11-14 in Anchorage and will include several people from Norway. Registration and more information about the festival is at: <http://lakarctichost.org/program/north-by-north>

The festival will include artists, musicians, chefs and filmmakers from Iceland, Norway, Finland, Greenland, Canada, Russia, and Sweden.

Look out for the folks from Norway including:

- Ambassador Kåre Aas, Norway's Ambassador to the United States. Ambassador Aas will be featured at a noon lunch program open to the public at the Alaska World World Affairs Council on Friday, May 12th, at the Hilton Hotel (www.alaskaworldaffairs.org).
- Morten Brugård, senior advisor with Innovation Norway based in Vadsø, Norway. Innovation Norway is the Norwegian Government's most important instrument for innovation and development of Norwegian enterprises and industry. Morten will be featured with Ambassador Aas on Friday, May 12th, at the Hilton Hotel. He will also be featured on Friday, May 12th at the Museum for the Innovation Arctic daylong event.
- Ole Øvretveit, from Akvaplan-niva, will be featured on Friday, May 12th at the Museum for Innovation Arctic.
- Martha Otte, from the Tromsø International Film Festival, will be one of the Directors of the Circumpolar Arctic Film Festival
- Jørn-Eirik Johnson, from Tromsø, will be one of the visiting Chef's at the Arts Crafts and Cultural Expo
- DJ Tösch, from Tromsø, will be one of the DJ's at the Arctic Dance Party.

Additional North by North Program Information:

Arctic Dance Party - Alaska's North by North Festival Arctic Dance Party will feature the most exciting DJs from the eight Arctic nations, including Norway, at performances in unexpected places around Anchorage. Performers are nominated from north of 60 degrees and then voted on by visitors to our website. The top DJ from several of the eight Arctic nations will attend the North by North Festival activities May 11-14 and perform the evening of May 13.

Arctic Film Festival - The North by North Arctic Film Festival will showcase short films (under 10 minutes) that highlight activities that governments, organizations, communities and individuals are engaging in to make their northern communities more livable, and even more fun, in the dark winter months or the endless summer days. Films can tell the story of anything from one particular place to multiple projects happening around a city in public or private spaces. Share the innovative ways people are intervening in the places they live, work and play. *Films will be screened in Anchorage's Town Square Park during the evening of May 12.*

Arts, Crafts and Culture Expo - As part of the Expo there will be artisans, craftspeople and northern vendors able to sell or exchange their merchandise to participants from around the state and Alaska's largest city. Vendors have been invited from all eight nations, and will include traditional handiwork and goods. Additionally, performances of song, dance and poetry will occur throughout the two days.

Innovate Arctic - a one day event focused on small and medium enterprises featuring technology or process innovation.

Want to meet some of the visiting Norwegians before the festival starts? Come and join us for coffee at 7:00 pm on May 10th I will invite the Norwegians to come to Black Cup Coffee shop located at 341 E. Benson Blvd to meet and talk with Sons of Norway folks. Hope you can make it!

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.
Anchorage, AK 99518
907-349-1613

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at Viking Hall

Please join us on **Saturday, May 6th between 10 am and noon** with outdoor clean-up around Viking Hall. Bring shovels, rakes and gloves to help spruce up our lodge in preparation for May lodge activities. Two lodge events coming up in May at Viking Hall are the Mother's Day Brunch on Sunday, May 14 and the Syttende Mai Celebration on Sunday, May 21. Contact John Olnes at 562-2794 if you have questions.

EVENTS FOR MAY!

2

Tuesday

10:00 am

Needle Crafts & Rosemaling Class

14

Sunday

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Mother's Day Brunch

17

Wednesday

6:00 pm

Syttende Mai Parade

11

Thursday

7:00 pm

Board/Membership Meeting

16

Tuesday

10:00 am

Needle Crafts & Rosemaling Class

21

Sunday

5:00 pm

Syttende Mai Celebration



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.

Please consider helping those who are less fortunate.

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

Please send articles or event information

for the next Newsletter by May 20th to: sonancak@gmail.com Attention - **Ruth** Subject Line - **The Flyer**