

OCTOBER, 2014

VOLUME 34, ISSUE 3



# SIGDALSLAG SAGA

SINCE 1911

SERVING NORWEGIAN-AMERICANS OF SIGDAL, EGGEDAL AND KRØDSHERAD ANCESTRY

## Inside this issue:

President's letter	2
Sigdalslag 2014 Book	3
Palme Enger story	4-5
Landingslag request	5
Skogfjorden Camp	6
Norwegian Ridge Camp	7
Pletan Story	8-9
Paul Enger Obituary	10
Keith Enger Obituary	10
Lynn Skadeland Obituary	10
Arlene Skjevem Obituary	11
Roy Bjornerud Obituary	11

## Sigdalslag SAGA-October 2014

Gode ønsker til dere alle, Thank you Numedalslågen Lag for a terrific stevne. My sisters, Sheila Winstead & Tallie Habstritt, and I went on the Friday tour and were delighted with each stop. On Saturday, Marlys Honrud Larsen and Marilyn Moen put together a great local tour of the Rothsay area for the Sigdal group, followed by our annual meeting and lunch at Ole and Lena's Pizzaria. Who knew a hotdish pizza would be so tasty? Look for a few more Stevne pictures on page 3 and also on our website [www.sigdalslag.org](http://www.sigdalslag.org). Another highlight was having the *Sigdalslag 2014* book available for purchase. Thank you, Scott Brunner, for a very well done and welcome addition to the set of Sigdalslag books. You can find ordering info on page 3. Make sure you mark your calendars for some exciting upcoming events. The 2015 stevne will be hosted by Landingslag in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Note their request, on page 5, for church photos. Planning is well underway for a fantastic Bygdelagenes Fellesraad Centennial celebration to be held at the Twin Cities in 2016. There are still many opportunities to get involved with this historic event. Look for contact info on page 6. Most important: Plan to attend! Till next time, Med vennlig hilsen, Jean Borgerding



BICENTENARY  
NORWEGIAN CONSTITUTION  
1814-2014



1916-2016

Velkommen, nye lag  
medlemmer!

Tim Gronseth,  
Northfield, MN  
Mark Gronseth,  
Breckenridge, MN



Back Row, L to R: Dale Buisman, Don Glesne, Edwin Harp, Earl Knutson, Tim Gronseth, Don Skadeland, Calvin Jokstad, Mark Gronseth, Karen Olson & DeVon Jokstad  
Middle Row, L to R: Rod Pletan, Audrey Pletan, Carol Niewski, Lila Harp, Tallie Habstritt, Betty Knutson, Dianne Snell, Marilyn Somdahl, Jill Hanson, Jean Knaak & Jean Borgerding  
Front Row, L to R: Sheila Winstead, Lizzie Hanson Roe & Lexi Hanson Roe

Registered but not pictured: Janice Johnson, Rick Johnson, Cheryl Nousaine, Eunice Helgeson, CoCo Gronseth, Marlys Larsen, Gloria Schultz, Andrew Brevig and Nancy Nordick



## 2014 Sigdalslag Officers

**JEAN T. KNAAK**, President  
2456 Arkwright Street  
St. Paul, MN 55117  
651-483-9261  
[knaak002@bevcomm.net](mailto:knaak002@bevcomm.net)

**LILA HARP**, VP 1/Membership  
12667 W 85th Circle  
Arvada, CO 80005  
[lilaharp10@gmail.com](mailto:lilaharp10@gmail.com)

**KAREN OLSON**, VP 2  
P.O. Box 225  
Northome, MN 56661  
[olekaren@paulbunyan.net](mailto:olekaren@paulbunyan.net)

**MARLYS HONRUD LARSEN**, VP 3  
P.O. Box 217  
Spicer, MN 56288  
[larsenfamily@charter.net](mailto:larsenfamily@charter.net)

**JANICE JOHNSON**, Treasurer  
8451 Nicollet Avenue South  
Bloomington, MN 55420  
[jj3dc@juno.com](mailto:jj3dc@juno.com)

**LINDA MOHN**, Secretary  
514 3rd Ave SW  
Jamestown, ND 58401  
[l.mohn@csicable.net](mailto:l.mohn@csicable.net)

**GARTH ULRICH**, Genealogist  
3099 Dunn Drive  
Prince Albert, SK  
S6V 6Y6 CANADA  
[gulrich@sasktel.net](mailto:gulrich@sasktel.net)

**Open**, Historian

**JEAN BORGERDING**, SAGA Editor  
509 8th Avenue NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55413  
612-379-4280  
[jborgerd@msn.com](mailto:jborgerd@msn.com)

**DALE BUISMAN**, Webmaster  
38265 Great Oaks Court  
North Branch, MN 55056  
651-277-6885  
[dbuisman@sherbtl.net](mailto:dbuisman@sherbtl.net)  
[webmaster@sigdalslag.org](mailto:webmaster@sigdalslag.org)

Fra Presidenten,

What does it mean to be proud of your Norwegian heritage? It can mean many things including valuing hard work and integrity that echoes the values of our grandparents, pride in how well our families "did" in this country since our great grandparents "came over", and a sense of belonging. We appreciate the many customs including very special foods at holidays, getting together as families for special occasions, and the strong religious influence that we were raised with. I can also reflect on hearing that someone was "not much of a worker" which was viewed as extreme criticism by other people and motivated me to do better. In this era of buying cheap stuff, we value the Scandinavian emphasis on craftsmanship and taking care of what we have.

This leads to promoting Norwegian heritage through our lag. Like many of you, I became a lag member because of receiving genealogical help through our then genealogist, Lee Rokke. I had never heard of lags prior to that time. Each of the lags that I belong to have assisted me with genealogy, which helped to solve the puzzle of where my family came from. However, genealogy may be completed by other family members, so we need to move toward promoting our Norwegian culture for our children and grandchildren if lags are to survive long-term.

If we are agreed that we need to work for the long term, what can we do? We can aggressively pursue new members who can join now and become more active as it fits their work schedules. There are new Sigdalslag membership brochures that are available from board members or can be emailed to you as attachments. Consider sending a membership invitation to your relatives and acquaintances from our lag area with the caveat that they are supporting our cultural heritage through membership. We can work on strategies for younger people to become active in lags. At our Stevnes we need programming in every time slot that is attractive to people of all ages. We need to reach members through media sources; a three times a year black and white printed newsletter will gradually begin to be replaced and enhanced by electronic media.

In this day of organizations not surviving, the organization of lags under the umbrella of Fellesraad Bygdelagenes will joyfully celebrate their centennial in 2016. Mark your calendar and underline May 6-7, 2016 to commemorate this very special occasion. There will be lots more information forthcoming, but it will be very special time. Please volunteer to help – there are both large and small opportunities.

Our thanks to Marlys Larsen and Marilyn Moen for planning our lag meeting at the Wahpeton Stevne. It was held at Ole and Lena's Pizzeria in Rothsay, MN, preceded by an informative trip around the Rothsay area, home of our founder A B Pederson.

The 2015 Stevne is planned for July 9-11 in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. There will be lots of information later, but mark your calendars now.

Please feel free to email me at any time with questions or concerns at [knaak002@bevcomm.net](mailto:knaak002@bevcomm.net) or call 651-357-6139.

Hilsen,  
Jean

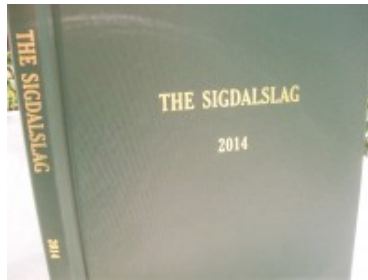




## Now accepting orders for the 2014 *Sigdalslag Book!*

by Scott Brunner

After five years of compilation, our newest book, *The Sigdalslag 2014*, is available for purchase. This hard cover book measures 8½ x 11 inches and is 275 pages long. The cover is dark green



with gold embossed lettering; it is an exact match to our previous four English volumes. We celebrate the completion of yet another book, one hundred years after Sigdalslag's first book came out in 1914. Our previous texts are mostly filled with family histories. But unlike those books, this volume has a special appeal to all members of Sigdalslag and their families. A large portion of the book is a history of the Lag itself. Here is a breakdown of the text pages:

History and people: Constitution, officers through the years, Lag presidents and notable people. Pages 1-33.

Chronology and stevner: stevner throughout the years, early stevne photos, lag minutes and articles (some in Norwegian). Pages 34-60.

Sigdalslag Centennial celebration, Centennial group photos, 2011 membership list, Sigdalslag artifacts owned by the Lag, Sigdalslag banner photos and information. Pages 61-80.

Sigdalslag trip to Norway 2012, churches of Sigdal, Eggedal, and Krødsherad. Pages 81-100.

History of Sigdal (1896 text written by Lag first president Anders Braateli Petersen). Pages 101-128.

Family histories. Pages 129-258.

Book Index. Pages 259-275.

As with all our books, you can view ordering details on our website: [www.sigdalslag.org](http://www.sigdalslag.org). Go to the right hand margin and click on the "Shop" tab. This latest book has a good comprehensive index of names listed within the volume, and the Book index can be viewed on the website. Look and find your family names and people of interest there. The *Sigdalslag 2014* book can be purchased via the Website with Paypal or you can send a personal check to member Rod Pletan who handles our books. His address is:  
Rod Pletan  
Sigdalslag Book Distribution Center  
7414 West Broadway  
Forest Lake, MN 55025-8474

The *Sigdalslag 2014* book sells for \$50 each. Shipping cost is \$10 for the first book mailed, and \$2 postage for each additional book afterwards. Our book sales are an important means for generating revenue for the Lag, helping to fund our scholarships, language studies, and genealogy. As many as twenty books will be donated to various libraries in the US and Norway to promote our Lag. Place your order now to learn more about Sigdalslag and offer your Lag support!

## Scenes from the Stevne

photos from Dianne Snell





## ***The Story of a Sigdal Pioneer***

*by Keith "Skip" Enger*



***Palme and Marie Enger on their 50th wedding anniversary in 1934***

My father, Oscar Enger, born 1902, was the youngest son of Palme and Marie Enger of rural Davenport, North Dakota who homesteaded 160 acres of land in 1883. This is the story of that homestead.

Palme, my grandfather, born in Sigdal, Norway in 1855, immigrated to America in 1861 with his parents, Peder and Aase Enger and six brothers and sisters. Peder, born in Sigdal, Norway in 1811 came to America in 1861 with his pregnant wife Aase. Waiting for the ship to America in Drammen, Aase gave birth to a baby daughter that was named Gunhild. A week later the family boarded the bark "Askur" which departed Drammen May 17 and arrived in Quebec July 14, 1861.

Peder and Aase Enger had owned a 40-acre farm near Eggedal which they sold to their oldest daughter Ingeborg who had recently married Ole Kristensen Jokstad. They chose to remain on the farm and care for Peder's mother Ingeborg until she passed away in 1864.

Peder and Aase's oldest son, Elling Enger, immigrated to America in 1854 with a cousin, Ole Rustan. After a trip to the gold fields in California, Elling made his way back to the Norwegian community of Spring Grove in southern Minnesota. It is thought that Elling made the arrangements with a pioneer farmer

by the name of Gubberud to advance a sum of money for Peder to help finance the family's trip to America. The Peder Enger family came to this country as "indentured servants" who would work for three years to repay the immigration loan.

Grandfather Palme went to school in Spring Grove. He worked as a "herdsman" to earn extra money for the family as there were no fences to keep the cattle from wandering off. In 1860 a stone church was built in Spring Grove to replace the first church structure built in 1855. Spring Grove was a small rural community until the railroad came in 1879. The town was known as a church center but it also had a post office, two general stores and a blacksmith shop. Palme was confirmed in the stone church by the second pastor, Rev. Styrk S. Reque, who served the congregation for 40 years. The village grew after 1879 and the population was 293 residents in 1880 and by 1890 it had a population of 394.

Palme left Spring Grove on May 10, 1870, as he was hired as a herdsman at 25 cents a day for a caravan of three families, Ramstads, Bjerkes and the Reitans, who were obtaining homestead claims in the Red River Valley of Eastern Dakota Territory. The caravan consisted of three covered wagons drawn by oxen, a few sheep, and seven head of cattle including two heifers that father Peder had given Palme to sell in case he did not find work. Palme did however find work as he was hired by the Bjerke family at \$8.00 per month.

Palme always remembered that he enjoyed the adventure of the trip. He walked most of the way shoeless and slept under the wagons at night. His job was to find food for the animals and generally care for them. At St. Cloud they ferried across the Mississippi River and went north to Alexandria, then on to Elizabeth just north of Fergus Falls. It took the caravan 22 days to move from Spring Grove to their final stop in the Kindred area of Dakota Territory.

After working for the Bjerkes for almost two years, in 1872 Palme returned to Spring Grove and went to work for the Ingval Muller family. In 1876 when Palme was 21 he returned to the Kindred area to the Bjerke's again for work and filed his claim for 160 acres of public domain where he had to "live" and make improvements. At the end of 5 years, if the land was not abandoned, improvements were made, and a small fee was paid the land would become Palme's. He filed a claim to the NW ¼ of Section 14-137-51 in Davenport Township, Dakota Territory. Palme's sister Aase married Nels Liudahl of Hallingdal, Norway in 1874 and they too filed a claim next to Palme and built their house on the western edge of their claim. Palme built a claim shack on the





eastern edge of his property so they lived just across the property line from each other. The Bjerke's farm was located a few miles east of Palme's claim where he worked for the five years while improving his property. He planted cottonwood trees on the north side of the claim as a wind break and also planted a few gooseberry bushes. One day he heard that "squatters" were coming into the area. He hitched up Bjerke's team of horses and galloped to his claim, yoked up his two oxen and with a "walking plow" began to plow the land which would prevent squatters from taking it.

In 1883 Palme received the deed for 160 acres of land in Davenport Township signed by President Chester Arthur. When Palme had worked at the Ingval Muller home in Spring Grove he met the seamstress Maria Jensen (also known as Stern) who had worked there periodically and which Maria called her second home. She came to America with her parents, Jens and Kari Jensen, from Hadeland at the age of seven, settling in rural Lansing, Iowa. After grade school Maria went to a dressmaking and tailoring school in Decorah, Iowa. These skills landed her a job at the Muller farm home. In January of 1884 Palme returned to Spring Grove to a Muller job where he continued his relationship with Maria. On March 16, 1884, Palme and Maria attended services at the Spring Grove Lutheran Church in the morning, were married by Pastor Reque in the afternoon at the Muller home, and participated in a "shivaree" in the evening with wedding events sponsored by the Ingval Muller family.

During the spring of 1884 Palme and Maria left Spring Grove and traveled to Davenport Township to take up permanent residence on Palme's 160 acres of land authorized by the Homestead Act of 1862 under the Republican administration of Abraham Lincoln. The Palme Enger household became life-long Republicans as they believed the Republican Party was responsible for their gift of 160 acres of land that gave them their start to their economic life here in America. They always remained faithful to the Republican cause and at elections they always voted the Republican ticket because as my Grandmother Marie said, "They gave us the land, didn't they?"

Palme and Marie lived on the land in Davenport Township the remaining years of their lives. They seldom traveled more than 30 miles from home. They were among the earliest "pioneers" who settled the land and helped devise the governing mechanisms that supervised their township. There were 10 children born in that rural location, nine of whom lived including my father Oscar. They were founding members of the Christiania Lutheran Church of rural Davenport and are buried in the

church cemetery, Palme passing in 1837 and Marie in 1944. The Homestead Act of 1862 and the Northern Pacific Railroad land sales helped populate the northern part of Dakota Territory with thousands of Norwegian, German and Russian immigrant farmers which resulted in the Territory reaching population numbers required for Statehood in 1889, when Davenport Township became part of Cass County in the new State called North Dakota.



### ***We Are In Need of Photographs***

The planning committee of the Landings Lag is already busy making plans for the 2015 Stevne and we need your help. We are looking for photographs of old churches that were built by our Norwegian ancestors when they came to this country. We are primarily interested in churches built before 1920. If you belong to such a church or if you live near one, could you take a photo or two and send them to us? This is what we need:

- 1) A high resolution color photograph of the church exterior (300 dpi or better/file size of 300KB or better)
  - 2) An additional photograph of the church sign
  - 3) You may also wish to include a photo of the interior or any distinctive architectural features.
- The photographs should be emailed to:

Carol Jorgenson at [CarLyJ1@comcast.net](mailto:CarLyJ1@comcast.net)

Please include the name of the church, its location and when it was built. Sorry, but we cannot use pictures from books, newspapers or magazines. They will lack the clarity that we need for this project. Therefore, these will have to be church buildings that are still standing.

Hopefully you can get out there and take some photos before the winter sets in. We'd like to have them by this fall so we will have time to put it all together. Thank you for your assistance and we'll see you all next July.



## ***A Tale of Two Camps (Norwegian Language)***

Last year, Lizzie and Lexi Hanson Roe received scholarships from the Sigdal Scholarship Fund to apply toward their tuition for Norwegian Language Camp in Bemidji, MN. From the following report, it sounds like the scholarships were put to very good use! Audrey and Rod Pletan sent two of their granddaughters to Norwegian Ridge Language Camp in Spring Grove, MN. Each pair of girls have written articles about their experiences at the camps. This makes for a fun comparison. Thank you girls! Look at the Sigdalslag website for information on applying for scholarships. [www.sigdalslag.org](http://www.sigdalslag.org)

### ***Skogfjorden***

*by Lizzie and Lexi Hanson Roe*

When you enter Skogfjorden, Concordia College Language Village, you enter through the passport control. We, Lizzie and Lexi Hanson Roe, attended camp for two weeks. We first selected our Norwegian names and received our cabin assignments, Unni from Molde and Anna from Kristiansund. Then we were inspected by the health care center. They made sure our medical files were up to date and checked to see if we were healthy, just like immigrants did when they came to the United States. We then went to our separate cabins and unpacked and met our cabin mates for the next two weeks. Next, we went to get our navneskilts burned so that our name and cabin would show. The string on our navneskilts showed what level/ how many years one has attended here. Then we went to the bank and exchanged our American Money for krone. We also ordered our International day t-shirts. Everyone from our camp would wear them on International day. Our very first meal took place in the Gimle. We ate family style, around a table, and we had to ask for our food in Norsk. Being our first year, the first few days it was hard to remember what to say, but we caught on quickly. We used "hvordan sier man" a lot when we didn't know a word. For food to be passed to us we had to say "Kan du sende meg \_\_\_\_". We used this a lot because the Norwegian food we had was just so good!

Our daily schedule stayed pretty consistent. We woke up at 7:30 every day and went to flag rising at 8:15. After that it was frokost. We had a lot of yogurt with granola and fresh fruit which is really good. At 9:00 we had byoprydding, cleaning. Everyone had a certain job they did so that it wasn't difficult. We also had a competition on whose hytta was the cleanest. At 9:30 we had allsang until 10:15. At this time we had kretser which is the history of Norway. At noon we had a snack. At 12:45 we had strenggruppe 1. Strenggruppe is where we learned most of our Norwegian. At 1:45 we had Kosetime 1 which is an activity time. At 2:15 it was finally lunch time! We had nap time or middagslur at 3:15 – 4:30. Then we had kosetime

2. At 5:15 we had fritid. During this time we could do whatever we wanted. Most the time we just relaxed. Then we had strenggruppe 2 at 6:00. At 7:00 it was dinner time! After dinner we had 30 minutes to get ready for flaggfiring and kveldsprogrammet at 8:15. Finally it was lights out at 10:30.

International day was a day where all the other camps came together and we ate different foods and enjoyed other cultures. Then, at the end of the day, we all gathered around the stage and each village did a dance. I (Lexi) was a part of the dance where we danced to a song celebrating Norway's independence. This is the link for the dance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOk546jie7Q> The immersion experience at Skogfjorden was an unforgettable experience that we will always treasure.



*Lexi Hanson Roe is pictured on the far right.*



*Lizzie Hanson Roe is pictured second from the right.*

### **Norwegian - American Bygdelagenes Fellesraad**

*A Centennial Celebration*

*May 6-7, 2016*



**1916-2016**

#### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:**

*If you would enjoy working on this exciting project, please contact President, Jean Knaak. We are looking for 2-4 volunteers in leadership and committee positions. For more info about the project go to:*

[www.fellesraad.com/centennial](http://www.fellesraad.com/centennial).





## Norwegian Ridge Language Camp Spring Grove, MN

by Maria Schield (12), Forest Lake, MN and  
Ellen Pagois (13), Eagan, MN

In June 2014, we had the privilege of attending the Norwegian Ridge Language Camp in Spring Grove, Minnesota. The camp experience was a gift from our grandparents to learn more about our Norwegian heritage. During our 3-hour drive to Spring Grove, neither of us knew what to expect about the upcoming week, but we were excited to find out!

The five-day camp was filled with fun activities to interest the campers, ranging from eight to seventeen years old. Most campers were from Spring Grove and stayed in their own homes each night. Four kids from out-of-town stayed in a guest house behind the Heritage Center that belonged to one of the Camp Directors. But we were lucky enough to stay with a host family that lived only a few blocks away from the Heritage Center, where the camp was held. Our hosts fed us breakfast and dinner, and they drove us to and from camp each day. They were very welcoming and made us feel right at home!

Some of our favorite activities at Norwegian Ridge Camp were all the fun crafts. We learned how to do Rosemaling. First we practiced, and then we each painted a Scandinavian horse. We did some weaving with looms, and we made felt bowls. They were all tricky crafts to make at first, but they got easier with practice.

At camp, we learned songs to help us remember Norwegian words. We sang them many times until we got the words down and the tune stuck in our heads. During the week we learned a popular song, "What Does the Fox Say" (Hva Sier Reven) in Norwegian. It was pretty easy to sing after practicing it a bunch of times. We also made a music video for it, which was pretty cool. Finally, all the campers participated in a play called, "The Ask Lad and the Good Helpers." This is a popular folktale in Norway. We performed the short play for parents on the last day of camp.

At camp, there were lots of fun games and activities. We played our own version of extreme sports, including stick ball (which is like baseball, but using a stick instead of a bat). We also did relays and a scavenger hunt in the woods, which was really fun. During the evenings, after we had dinner with our hosts, there were additional activities for all the campers, such as seeing a movie at the theater or visiting the small waterpark in Spring Grove. We got to eat a variety of Norwegian foods during camp, such as Kransekeke, lefse, rommegrot and meatballs. All the kids got to help make cookies and decorate them for the lunch with parents on the last day of camp. Kransekeke and the cookies were our favorites!

Overall, Norwegian Ridge Camp was really fun! It was a great bonding experience for us as cousins. We learned a lot about our heritage and the language and

customs of Norway. The week went by fast and we wish we were there longer! We are glad we went!



### Emigrant Obituary Project

- Thank you to Scott Brunner and Diana Catlin for their recent submissions. The link to the Emigrant Obituary Project can be found under the Genealogy section of our website. Our Genealogist, Garth Ulrich, looks forward to receiving a copy of the obituary of your emigrant ancestor from Sigdal, Eggedal or Krødsherad (see page 2 for contact information).

### Sigdalslag Family History Surveys have been received from:

1) Carol Moore MacIsaac on Narve Torstensen Lien and family

If you have not yet submitted a Family History Survey, the link can be found under the Genealogy section of our website. For members without internet access, a copy may be requested from our Genealogist, Garth Ulrich (see page 2 for contact information).

## **PLETANS CELEBRATE THEIR NORWEGIAN HERITAGE AND SHARE IT WITH OTHERS**

Published in Forest Lake Times, Sept 4, 2014

Mary Bailey, Community Editor

Rodney and Audrey Pletan of Forest Lake have been married for 53 years. But their connections go back a lot farther: They have the same great-great-great-grandparents.

Audrey and Rod are descended from Norwegian immigrants who came to America starting in the 1850s. When the couple wed on September 2, 1961, they did not know they are fourth cousins.

In the course of researching their ancestry, they discovered they share a common great-great-great-grandfather. The Pletans have studied the history of Norwegian emigration and learned much about tracking relatives.

Rod Pletan shared this knowledge as speaker at the Vennelag meeting in Lindstrom on Tuesday, Aug. 19. Vennelag 546, Sons of Norway, meets at the Lindstrom Community Center to celebrate Norwegian heritage and culture.

### **Traveling for work**

Pletan is a civil engineer who worked for the Minnesota Department of Transportation from 1964 to 2000. He was District Maintenance Engineer for the Minneapolis area for six years and State Maintenance Engineer for 10 years. He has traveled to Norway six times, starting in 1985, both for work and for pleasure. It all started as part of his MnDOT job.

In 1978, he was in charge of buying equipment, including snowplows. Norwegian officials, flush with wealth from oil discovered in the continental shelf in 1969, came to Minnesota to look at snow plow technology.

"It started with public road administration engineers. Then export-related business people came, then companies that made snow removal equipment and dump boxes," he said.

The Norwegians made several trips to Minnesota, often asking when he would come to visit them. At that time MnDOT had no travel budget. No problem: the Norwegian government sponsored his first trip where Rod made a presentation at a Scandinavian winter conference in Lillehammer, Norway.

"They had some technology that we didn't have," he reported. "Over there I found plows that threw snow farther, trip-blades to run across a manhole without breaking the cutting edge, hitches with rubber grommets like shock absorbers. They had boxes made of aluminum instead of steel, that tipped to left and right as well as to the rear."

Over the years the professional acquaintances in Norway have become friends. The Pletans have visited their homes in Norway and invited them to visit their home in Minnesota.

The couple traveled to Norway in 1985, 1992, 1997 (just Rod), 1998, 2003 and 2010. On the most recent trip they took their oldest daughter Lynnae, her husband and three children.

Next summer the other two daughters, Sheila and Gina, with their families, will make the trip. There will be 10 traveling together, using a rental car, private car, airplane, ferry, regional bus, city bus and trains. They will stay in hotels, motels, apartments, private homes and hostels.

After the 2015 trip, the Pletans will have traveled Norway with the families of all three of their daughters, including all eight grandchildren. Unlike Rod and Audrey, the grandchildren are of mixed heritage: none of the Pletan sons-in-law have any Norwegian ancestry.

But back when his three 100 percent Norwegian-ancestry daughters were single, while giving a presentation to a highway group in Norway, Rod jokingly asked, "Does anybody here have a 100 percent Norwegian son?"

The answer was no: The family-friendly social programs in Norway these days attract people from many countries. "They are very mixed now," he said. "Oslo is heavily concentrated in immigrant people."

So how did the Minnesota strain stay so pure for so long?

### **Emigrant history**

When the Norwegian emigrants came to America, they tended to settle near others who spoke the same language, with shared background and customs.

Instead of traveling singly, most came as entire families. "They were land-starved," Pletan said. A small amount of tillable land could not support a growing population.

By law, the farms could not be further divided. Instead, the eldest son inherited and younger siblings had to hire out, often as workers on other farms.

"Parents talked their kids into leaving," he said. Leaving others behind was "like going through a funeral, but everybody is still alive," he said.

"America fever" was fueled by the Homestead Act of 1862. A family could settle on 160 acres (one-quarter section) of un-appropriated federal land, farm it for five years, and then own it for just the cost of the filing fee.

In Norway, where only 3 percent of the land is tillable, coming to America meant leaving scarcity for abundance. It meant eating meat versus eating only grain. From 1836 to 1920, Pletan said, 900,000 people left Norway for America.

Early emigrants who left for religious freedom settled in Milwaukee, he said, but after the Homestead Act passed, "Go to America and eat meat" became the motto and acquiring farmland the motive. The location of available federal land determined where families settled.



In his presentation Pletan showed pictures of the emigrant ships, which used steam and wind to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Each family brought enough food for 13 days, plus their own kettles. Their possessions were packed in a trunk on the storage level. A flat trunk would be placed at the bottom of the stack; one with a curved top would go on top.

On the next level, bunks slept three to six people. Women stood in line to go up to the top deck to use the stove for cooking. He showed a map of the Great Lakes, by which the emigrants made their way westward. Norwegians from coastal Norway, trained as shipbuilders and fishermen, settled in Washington and Oregon. But the farmers from inland Norway settled here in northern parts of the Midwest, where the topography looked familiar.

When the land in Illinois and Iowa was taken, they settled in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Those who came later went farther west, into North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. In these communities they stuck together, which helps explain how fourth cousins could end up getting married.

The Pletans have researched all 16 of their (combined) great-grandparents. Their stories fit in the history of Norway and Norwegians in the U.S. Some second and third sons working on someone else's farm took as their last name the family name of the farm. Of the 16 sets of great-grandparents, only one has a descendant still living on the farm.

At the Vennelag meeting in Lindstrom, time ran out before Pletan could give genealogy tips for Norwegian ancestry searches. If he returns to continue the discussion, Vennelag members and visitors will learn where to start (in the U.S. or Norway), how the Norwegian naming system worked, how spellings changed over time, issues with the Norwegian alphabet and what information sources are available.



**Erica, Melissa, Kevin Rau traveled to Norway in 2010 with their grandparents, Rodney and Audrey Pletan. Rodney Pletan recently shared photos of his trips to Norway, and history of the Norwegian emigration to America, at the Vennelag meeting in Lindstrom. This photo was taken on the grounds of Hagen, home of Norwegian artist Christian Skredsvig.**

*My Father Called Them Ant Trails  
from Carol (Pederson) Jorgenson  
Member of Landingslag*

*Ant trails, odd as it may sound, is an apt description of the routes that many of our ancestors followed when they immigrated to America. If you ever owned an Uncle Milton's Ant Farm when you were a child, you probably remember spending hours watching the behavior of the ant colony as it created tunnels through the sand like material, forming paths that others could follow. One or two ants would act as scouts, bravely going out into the great unknown to find sources of food. Once found, they would return to the colony and lead the rest to their discovery.*

*Much like the ants, the first Norwegians who immigrated to America sought out land where they could grow crops and feed their families. They wrote back to their loved ones in Norway, telling them of the opportunities in the new world and encouraging them to follow. Once convinced, the "scouts" gave them advice about what to bring and the various transportation methods they would need to take in order to make it to their destination. A large number of our Norwegian ancestors immigrated in this fashion. They would first join those who they knew in the new land. But in many cases they moved on to new frontiers where land was more plentiful. Many first settled in Wisconsin during the mid 1800s. From there they moved on to Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas and beyond. After the first families ventured forth and located good land, they would write back, informing others of the opportunities that could be had. So, more followed and some settled in their new land and prospered. But soon word spread of other opportunities of available land and some of these hardy pioneers bravely ventured forth again. They wrote back and told of the good land and opportunities; and soon others followed. And so it went.*

*Do you know the paths or ant trails that your ancestors followed when they came to the New Land? Where did they first settle? Did they stay there or did they move on like so many others? Have you ever taken out a map and with your finger drawn the path that they followed?*

*At the 2015 Stevne, you are going to have to opportunity to record the path that your ancestors followed. In the coming months, take a little time and acquaint yourself with your family's trail(s) so that you'll be prepared to share yours with others in your Lag.*

## In Memory...

**ENGER--Paul**, 86, retired [newsman](#), playwright and co-founder of a soup kitchen for the homeless, died November 29, 2013. Born in Fargo, ND, Paul graduated from the [University of Minnesota](#), began a career as a newspaper reporter in his hometown, worked for UPI and CBS News in New York. There he wrote for evening anchors Walter Cronkite and Dan Rather. He also wrote for Good Morning America and All My Children on ABC-TV, as well as scripts for A&E Cable and The History Channel. He holds three awards from the Writers Guild of America and is the recipient of the International Radio NY Festival Gold Award. Paul authored nine full-length plays, including "Vestigial Parts" and "Harmon and Ruth." His works have been performed Off Broadway as well as in Massachusetts, Florida, Arizona, California and Indiana. His most recent play, "Benefit Performance," a play with songs written with Tom Ferriter and Michael Valenti is slated for production at Stageplays Theatre in the coming season. Paul was an active member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church on West 65th Street in Manhattan, where he co-founded HUG, a soup kitchen program for homeless men and women, and assisted in planning the Bach Vespers program. Paul, who lived in Jackson Heights, Queens, was the beloved brother of Mary K. Katz and beloved uncle of Gretchen Browne and Richard Katz. A funeral service will be held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church on Saturday, December 7 at 9:30am. Burial will be at Riverside Cemetery in Fargo, ND. Services are under the direction of Conway Funeral Home, Jackson Heights.

Published in The New York Times on Dec. 4, 2013

Paul is a descendant of Sigdal emigrants Peder Ellingsen Enger & Åse Ellefsdatter Øygården



**Keith "Skip" Enger** - age 83, passed away peacefully in his sleep on January 28, 2014 at Springdale Village Rehabilitation Center in Mesa, AZ. He was born July 5, 1930 in Linton, ND to the late Oscar and Esther (Boyer) Enger. "Skip" was raised in North Dakota, Minnesota and Oregon. He graduated from



Moorhead State University (MN) and earned his Master's Degree from L.A. State (CA) and later served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. On December 30, 1953, he married Bonnie Mae Ingersoll with whom he celebrated their 60th anniversary just four weeks ago. "Skip" was an enthusiastic teacher and coach throughout much of his young career. He retired from the education system in 1981 so he could pursue other passions and interests such as traveling, golf, "squawkbox", politics, the desert climate, socializing with his family, friends and much more. "Skip" is survived by his wife, Bonnie; two sons, Kit (Kim) and Kurt; two grandchildren, Kolby (Kriste) and Kory, four great-grandchildren; one brother, John (Phyllis) and many nephews and nieces. He will be greatly missed by all. Family and friends are invited to attend 1:00 PM Memorial Services at Valley of the Sun Mortuary, 10940 E. Chandler Heights Road, Chandler, AZ 85248 on Saturday, February 1, 2014 and then to attend a celebration of his life gathering at Oakwood Country Club immediately following the Memorial Service. Interment at Audubon Cemetery in Audubon, MN will take place at a later date where he will join his parents.

Source: [dignitymemorial.com](http://dignitymemorial.com) & Dianne Snell

Keith is a descendant of Sigdal emigrants Peder Ellingsen Enger & Åse Ellefsdatter Øygården

## Harolyn E. "Lynn" Skadeland

(Apr 3, 1937 - Jun 26, 2014)

Survived by husband, Don; son Dean and wife Linda of Kansas City MO; daughter, Sandra and husband Tim of Wichita, KS; grandchildren, Glori Skadeland Hausner and husband Toby Hausner, Jacob and Natalie Kloth of Wichita KS; brother, Howard and wife Margaret Kimball of Russellville AR. Preceded in death by parents, Harold and Myrtle Kimball. Lynn's strong interest in family genealogy produced several wonderful family history books, and three memorable visits with many relatives in Norway. She also was very involved in a "Prayer Shawl Ministry" that ministered to a wide variety of people and animals, as all of her yarn remnants would become 16-inch square "cat Pads" that we would deliver to the Humane Society. Through 58 married years, she enjoyed a wide variety of travel including Europe and the Middle East. Memorials to The Gideons International or King of Kings Church. Interment at Forest Lawn Cemetery.

Source: [www.johngentleman.com](http://www.johngentleman.com)

Lynn's husband, Don, is a descendant of Sigdal emigrant Helge Halvorsen Skadeland.







### **Arlene B. Skjervem**

(February 3, 1925- September 13, 2014)

Funeral services for Arlene Beverly Skjervem, 89, were held September 19 at United Lutheran Church, 324 Chestnut Street, Grand Forks, ND, where she was a longtime member. She died at Valley Eldercare in Grand Forks. Interment was to be at Zion Cemetery, Dahlen, ND.

Arlene, a former Sigdalslag member, was born in rural

Dahlen, ND, to Henry and Marie (Olsen) Skjervem. She was named for her two grandmothers and baptized by her grandfather, Rev. Hans Christian Olsen in the Middle Forest River Church. Her confirmation took place at Dahlen Lutheran Church in 1939, officiated by Rev. Rykken. She received her elementary and secondary education in the Dahlen Public Schools and her college training at Mayville State College where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. Later she attended graduate school at the University of North Dakota and was awarded a Master of Education degree.

She retired from a North Dakota teaching career in 1990 after teaching in Fillmore, Leeds, and finally, Grand Forks. She taught a first grade class at Wilder School many years and was inducted in the Grand Forks Public Teacher's Hall of Fame, August 3, 2001.

Arlene was involved in church and community activities as well as educational organizations. She was a member of Delta Kappa Gamma for over 50 years. Her special interests were music (she was an accomplished organist like her mother), traveling, photography, baking and volunteer work.

She was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers, Carmen and Howard Skjervem. Survivors include two nephews, James Skjervem, Sierra Vista, AZ, and Mark (Janie) Skjervem, Playa des Rey, CA, and two great-nephews, Ian Skjervem, Pittsburgh, PA, and Sam Skjervem, Playa del Rey, CA.

Source: Grand Forks Herald, 9/17/14

Submitted by Marilyn Somdahl. (Arlene was the organist at my 1958 wedding!)

Arlene is a descendant of Sigdal emigrant Berte Olsdatter Bjørreie.

Please share with us your families' news of marriages, graduations, long term anniversaries, significant milestones, and the passing of loved ones. Send info to the Saga Editor:

Jean Borgerding

509 8th Ave NE

Minneapolis, MN 55413 or

email: [jlborgerding@msn.com](mailto:jlborgerding@msn.com)

### **Roy Bjornerud**

(May 8, 1929 - October 3, 2014)

Roy Bjornerud, age 85, of Fosston, MN passed away on Friday, October 3rd at his home in Fosston. Funeral services will be held on Thursday, October 9th at 2:00 PM at Hope Lutheran Church in Fosston with Rev. Paul Magelssen officiating.

Visitation will be held for one hour before the funeral at the church on Thursday, and

interment will be at Hope Lutheran Cemetery, Fosston.

The Carlin-Hoialmen Funeral Home of Fosston is in charge of the arrangements. Messages of condolence may be sent to [www.carlinhoialmen.com](http://www.carlinhoialmen.com).

Roy Ervin Bjornerud was born on May 8, 1929 to parents Albert and Gena (Haltli) Bjornerud in Fosston, Minnesota. He graduated from Fosston High School in 1947 and attended one year of college. Roy served in the U.S. Navy from 1950 to 1954.

He married Pearl Lomen in 1953. Pearl passed away the next year in 1954.

In 1955, Roy married Lillian Lomen. He ran his own carpentry business with Derry DeFrang for many years. He obtained his Peace Officer Degree in 1978 and worked as a Polk County Deputy until retirement in 1992.

Roy was a long-standing member of the American Legion. He enjoyed woodworking, and his horses in his retirement years.

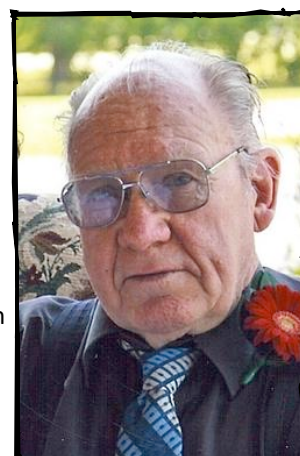
Roy passed away at his home in Fosston on Friday, October 3, 2014 at the age of 85 years.

Survivors include son Rocky (Deborah) Bjornerud of Vista, California, daughters Dawn (Joe) Hammer of Black Hawk, South Dakota, Cynthia (Steve) Green of Fosston, and Lori (Mike) Swecker of Anchorage, Alaska, and his brother Jim (Gloria) Bjornerud of Wisconsin. Roy is also survived by 17 grandchildren, 29 great grandchildren, and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his parents, wife Pearl, wife Lillian, his daughter Karlyn, brothers Al and Russel, sister Violet Rossell, and an infant sister.

Roy was a descendant of Sigdal emigrants Even Kristensen Bjornerud and Karoline Jensdatter Green and their emigrant parents Kristian Evensen Bjørnrud & Jøran Jonsd. Løvnes and Jens Olsen Green & Turi Stenersdatter Halvorset.

Source: [www.carlinhoialmen.com](http://www.carlinhoialmen.com)



# SIGDALSLAG SAGA

*Serving Norwegian-Americans of Sigdal,  
Eggedal & Krødsherad ancestry*

**SIGDALSLAG EDITOR**  
**509 8TH AVENUE NE**  
**MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55413**



FIRST CLASS MAIL

SIGDALSLAG SAGA IS PUBLISHED IN  
FEBRUARY, MAY AND OCTOBER

We're on the Web!  
[www.sigdalslag.org](http://www.sigdalslag.org)

**Comments? Suggestions?** SAGA solicits feature articles, news, pictures & obituaries from members. E-mail: [sigdalslagsaga@yahoo.com](mailto:sigdalslagsaga@yahoo.com), or contact the editor (see Pg. 2).

**Changed your mailing or e-mail address?**

Don't miss an issue! Please contact Lila Harp at

[lilaharp10@gmail.com722](mailto:lilaharp10@gmail.com722)

NOTE: the YEAR shown on the mailing label next to your name indicates that your membership is paid thru DECEMBER of that year.

## ***Consider receiving your newsletter by e-mail!***

*You will enjoy full color and save your lag leadership time and help the lag finances. Some lags are moving to e-mail newsletters for everyone who has an e-mail address. Sigdalslag wants to be certain that our newsletter is available to all members. E-mail Lila Harp at [lilaharp10@gmail.com722](mailto:lilaharp10@gmail.com722) if you are willing to change to e-mail delivery. Remember that members can always access all issues of the Saga through our "members only" section on the website.*

**JOIN SIGDALSLAG NOW!** Date \_\_\_\_\_ Check if Renewal: ☐ or Gift: ☐

Full name/s \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

BUSKERUD Family Origin in (circle one) - SIGDAL EGGEDAL KRØDSHERAD

Emigrant Ancestor's name \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Name \_\_\_\_\_ Year Emigrated \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues: **USA and CANADA** \$10/YR or \$25/3 YR, in US dollars

**ELSEWHERE** \$12/YR or \$30/3 YR, in US dollars

Make check payable to **Sigdalslag** and mail to :

**LILA HARP**  
12667 W 85TH Circle  
Arvada, CO 80005

Residents of **CANADA** should make check payable to  
**GARTH ULRICH** and mail application to:

**GARTH ULRICH**  
3099 Dunn Drive  
Prince Albert, SK  
S6V 6Y6 CANADA

Write "Sigdalslag dues (3 yr or 1 yr)" on the memo line of the check. Dues in Canadian dollars should be made in the amount equivalent to \$10 US (1 year) or \$25 US (3 years) on the date written.