

The Norwegian-American
Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota



From the Secretary's Office to the Association Members

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Editor, LLOYD HUSTVEDT

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First Haugen Scholarship Awarded

Clarence Burton Sheffield, Jr., the first recipient of the Einar and Eva Lund Haugen Memorial Scholarship, is a doctoral student in the field of Modern Art at Bryn Mawr College. The \$3,000 award will support the completion of his dissertation on "The Myth of the Peasant in Norwegian Painting (1880-1920) from Naturalism to Modernist Expression."

Professor Barbara Miller Lane, his advisor, writes: "Mr. Sheffield is a young scholar with ability to do important and innovative work in a variety of areas central to Scandinavian history and modern history." She also sees him as a successful teacher: He shows "an unusual ability in explaining works of art . . . and has great ability to engage students in art historical issues." Another professor notes that he has already published articles and delivered papers that earmark him as a promising scholar.

The Haugen scholarship funds are invested by the NAHA and the Awards Committee is currently made up of Odd S. Lovoll (chair), Janet Rasmussen (President, Hollins College, Roanoke, Virginia), Michael Metcalf (Professor, University of Minnesota), and Solveig Zempel (Professor, St. Olaf College). The Haugen fund closed out 1997 with a fund balance of \$100,000. Future scholarships, barring unhappy investment returns, will be \$6,000.

Award recipients will provide the NAHA Archives with a copy of their completed dissertation.

Book Celebration: Concerning Our Heritage

The book party, June 3, that celebrated the publication of *Concerning Our Heritage*, a translation of *Omkring Fædrearven* by O. E. Rølvaag, took place, appropriately enough in the Rølvaag home, 311 Manitou Street. Torild Homstad (a granddaughter of the author) and her husband Keith live in the home, which is on the National Register of Historic places.

President Lawrence O. Hauge, who hosted the party with the assistance of Torild Homstad, welcomed the fifty and more members who attended. Editor Odd S. Lovoll addressed the still relevant issues considered by Rølvaag which inspired making the work available in the English language at this time. He noted in particular that the essay entitled "Our Heritage" was Rølvaag's response to the hostile attitudes toward ethnic interests spawned by World War I that remained strong up to and after 1922, the year *Omkring Fædrearven* was published.

Solveig Zempel, Rølvaag's granddaughter, the translator of *Concerning Our Heritage* and the author of its 35-page Introduction, thanked Odd S. Lovoll and Mary Hove for their editorial work and for seeing the manuscript through its many stages of publication. She expressed gratitude to all who had come. Ella Valborg Tweet, daughter of Jenny and O. E. Rølvaag, was present as was Marion Rølvaag, widow of the late Karl F. Rølvaag.

These book parties are pleasant, congenial affairs, where authors and members

have an opportunity to meet and chat. The fact that the NAHA rarely sponsors social events for their own sake may tend to make our mission-related "parties" all the more meaningful. It is regrettable that they must be local affairs no matter where they take place.

Profile of a Loyal Member

Freda Hovden of Napa, California, died recently at age 97. She exemplified the meaning of sustained and steadfast membership support, the kind that builds over the years.

Freda Hovden became a member of the NAHA in 1958, forty years ago. Some years later she transferred to Life, a membership that required no further payment of dues. Her membership card, however, tells a different story. Unsolicited she has made a gift of \$100 annually for the past thirty years. In addition, upon her death she left a bequest of \$500, a daughter, Erlaine Hovden Seeger, made a \$300 memorial gift, and other relatives and friends have added another \$200.

During her tenure of membership Freda Hovden, with no fanfare, strengthened the O. E. Rølvaag Endowment Fund by \$4,000, a fund that supports the general operation of the NAHA. Her support lives on.

Letters from Home

For the past four years the NAHA Archives has provided Norsk Lokalhistorisk Institutt with copies of letters written by Norwegians to friends and relatives who had emigrated to America. The Archives has many such letters. A number of these letters now appear in *Brev hjemmefra: Brev fra Norge til utvandrerne 1840-1960*, Solum Forlag, 1997, 320 pages. Edited by Else Braut and Randi Holden Hoff.

The collection contains 150 letters, classified according to *fylke* (province) of origin. Telemark and Vest Agder lead the field with fourteen letters each. The remaining fifteen provinces present a reasonable balance (8-10) save for Finnmark which offers only one.

In contrast to letters that moved from America to Norway, that documented the emigrant experience, letters written by those who stayed home have not earlier attracted the historian's attention. The Introduction expresses the hope that *Brev hjemmefra* (Letters from Home) will shed some light on life and thought in Norway during the years in which they were written.

An Unusual Letter File

Charlotte Stav, Dennison, Minnesota, sent us several immigrant letters of value, and one of these had rested for more than 100 years between the walls of the Wallace Jacobson farm home located in Leon township, Goodhue county, Minnesota. The letter, dated 1884, written by Mrs. Nils Skogstad (nee Martha Mæland), a former neighbor who had moved to South Dakota, came to light during a recent home renovation. How did it get there?

Several sentences toward the end of the letter may provide an answer: "You write that you have just started to build a new home. It was a delight to hear . . . your mother, I know was fed up with the old one." (Translated from Norwegian).

Western Home Recognized

The 1998 American Studies Network prize for the best book in American Studies by a member of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS) was awarded to Orm Øverland for his *The Western Home: A Literary History of Norwegian America*, published by the NAHA in 1996.

The jury noted, "From these studies [six titles] of equal, or almost equal merit, the jury chose Orm Øverland's *The Western Home* because it succeeds in putting what had been unknown territory on the map of American literary history. Øverland narrates the history of the Norwegian immigrant literature from 1820 until about 1930 by people who although writing in a 'foreign' tongue nevertheless defined themselves as American."

One of Us

Bjørn Gunnar Østgaard might well be taken for a member of the NAHA staff. He is on the scene every day and when needed he answers the telephone, receives and helps visitors and turns out the lights and locks the doors when he is the last to leave. He left his home in Fagernes, Norway, more than a year ago, in order to examine letters that immigrants wrote to each other in this country, dubbed America-America letters.

Østgaard estimates that our archives contain approximately 2,000 letters that match his interest. He has now selected and entered into his computer files 300 of these letters, each a candidate for future translation and publication. He says the selected letters speak for the "common folk" and the professionals (clergy, engineers, etc.) have been excluded. Otherwise, said Østgaard, the writers range from a lonely mother in Chicago to a hard-working farmer in North Dakota. A few letters have been written in Norway, but by immigrants home on a visit. He noted that he had underestimated at the outset the enormous insight he would gain into immigrant life through his work on these letters.

Østgaard will return to his home in Fagernes on August 16, where he is one of four historians assigned to write the history of Nord Aurdal in Valdres, a project that will entail four, possibly five volumes. We shall miss Bjørn Gunnar Østgaard, not least for his gentle ways and his exquisite sense of humor.

Random News

- Received residue stock (5 copies) of *Rollin Olson: Civil War Letters*, translated and footnoted where clarification is needed by the late Morgan A. Olson. Paper cover, illustrated, 167 pages. These letters by a member of the 15th Wisconsin Regiment are as moving as they are informative. Members \$8, non-members \$10. Includes postage and handling.

- Received from Ardyce Jaeb and Marlene Doran their *Graftaas Family History*, maps, photos, newspaper clippings, legal documents, charts and tables, loose leaf, approx. 150 unnumbered pages. Ole and Anna Graftaas left

Nord-Trøndelag in 1868, settling first in Goodhue county, Minnesota, and settled later and permanently in Steele county, Minnesota.

- Received from Jay and Dorothy Steinberg their *Kasa - Slevegen Family Genealogy*, a manuscript of 285 pages, with an index listing some 5,000 names. No illustrations.

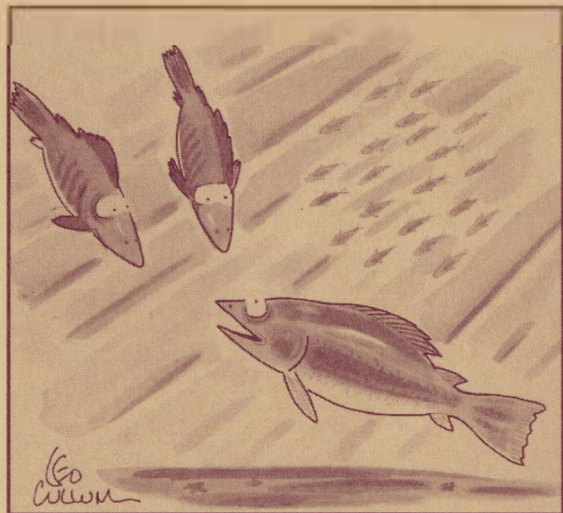
- Received from Peter Thaler his *Norwegian Minds - American Dreams: Ethnic Activism Among Norwegian-American Intellectuals*, University of Delaware Press, 440 Forsgate, Cranbury NJ 08512, 1998, 163 pages. O. E. Rølvaag, Waldemar Ager, Simon Johnson, and the lesser known Hans A. Rønnevik are prominent figures in this study. \$32.50.

- Received from Carl Jorgenson *Landings Across the Sea*, a book of 211 pages published by the Landings Lag of America. A professional piece of work and of significance to descendants of immigrants from Land in Oppland, Norway.

- Received from Fayette Dyrud Thureen *Tensions Among Titans: The Construction of Cultural Identity through Conflict* by Tamara Dyrud Schierkolk, a M.A. dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1995, 111 pages.

- Received from Elizabeth Rossing Forell, a collection of family letters, the bulk of which are by Viola Marie Rossing to her family while she attended Red Wing Lutheran Ladies Seminary in 1907-1908. They describe life and conditions at that school. Letters from Hjalmar Rossing to his family date from 1898 to 1909. These letters supplement the Papers of Lars A. Rossing (1845-1913), a Norwegian-born merchant at Argyle, Wisconsin.

- Received from Dr. M. Jackson parts 5 and 6 of *A History of the Jackson Family* compiled by David P. Jackson. The first traces the



**"I'm not sure what I am, but I believe
I'm a product of Norway."**

The New Yorker

Random News Continued –

ancestry and descendants of Mathias Bertinius Reinertson (1851-1936) born in Lista, Vest Agder, and settled in Valders, Wisconsin, in 1872. The second volume traces the ancestry and descendants of Marit Andersdatter Kval (1856-1932), a native of Valders, Wisconsin. Both volumes are spiralbound and contain photos, maps, charts, tables, and brief, separate narrative accounts, 1997, 43 and 29 pages respectively.

- Received from Eddie D. Goplen two America Letters (translated into English) written by Hans Gulbrandson Koller, dated November 26, 1850, and December 20, 1852. He left Oslo May 5, 1850, came to New York, July 13, and arrived at the Koshkonong settlement August 3. The first letter describes the voyage over and gives detailed instructions what members of his family should do in case they decided to emigrate. Strangely enough he adds "Mostly Latin is used here, and I advise those who wish to go to America to read much Latin."

- Received from Christine Anderson her *Christmas Time and Juletid*, a spiralbound compilation of 251 pages that addresses both Norwegian and American Christmas traditions: songs, recipes, decorations and stories. Illustrated by Rosemary Antel, music by Paul Allen and Darrel Eide, and published by Leikarringen, Leif Erikson Lodge, 2245 NW 57th Street, Seattle, WA 98107, 1997. \$29.95 (includes postage and handling).

- Received from Allan J. Lindrup four bound volumes of the Chicago *Viking* for the years 1953, 1954, 1956, 1957 (vols. 12, 13, 15, and 16), a weekly published and edited by John A. Lindrup.

- Received from Jerome Ramstad his *Ole Anderson and Ragne Hansdatter Ramstad and Family*, a looseleaf family history of 131 pages, photos, maps, newsletters, charts and tables, and reminiscences from members of the family. Ole and Ragna left Fet, Norway, in 1854, and settled permanently in Wanamingo township in Goodhue county, Minnesota, in 1858, where they became the progenitors of a large family. This well-done history makes for interesting reading.

- Correction: The preceding *Newsletter* listed the board members that govern NAHA-Norge. Missing from that list was the name of Terje Hasle Joranger, who is a member of that board.

- Received from David Plette his *The Guttersen Family History*. Egil Guttormsen Sebbe (Telemark) and his wife Magla came to America in 1854, settling in Fillmore county, Minnesota, after a year in Wisconsin. They moved once again in 1878 to Butternut Valley, Minnesota. They had seven children. The loose leaf bound history of 75 pages contains photos, charts, tables, newspaper clippings, and narrative accounts.

- *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, now being prepared for publication, will include biographical sketches of Theodore C. Blegen and Kenneth O. Bjork, former editors of the NAHA. Our current editor, Odd S. Lovoll, will write the entries.

Note!

Save for those living abroad (mainly Norway), all NAHA members should have by this date received a copy of *Concerning Our Heritage*. Any member who did not receive their copy should notify the secretary's office.

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