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# news of Norway

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# A window to Norway

## Wanted: $3.5 million for a new Norwegian film at Disney World.

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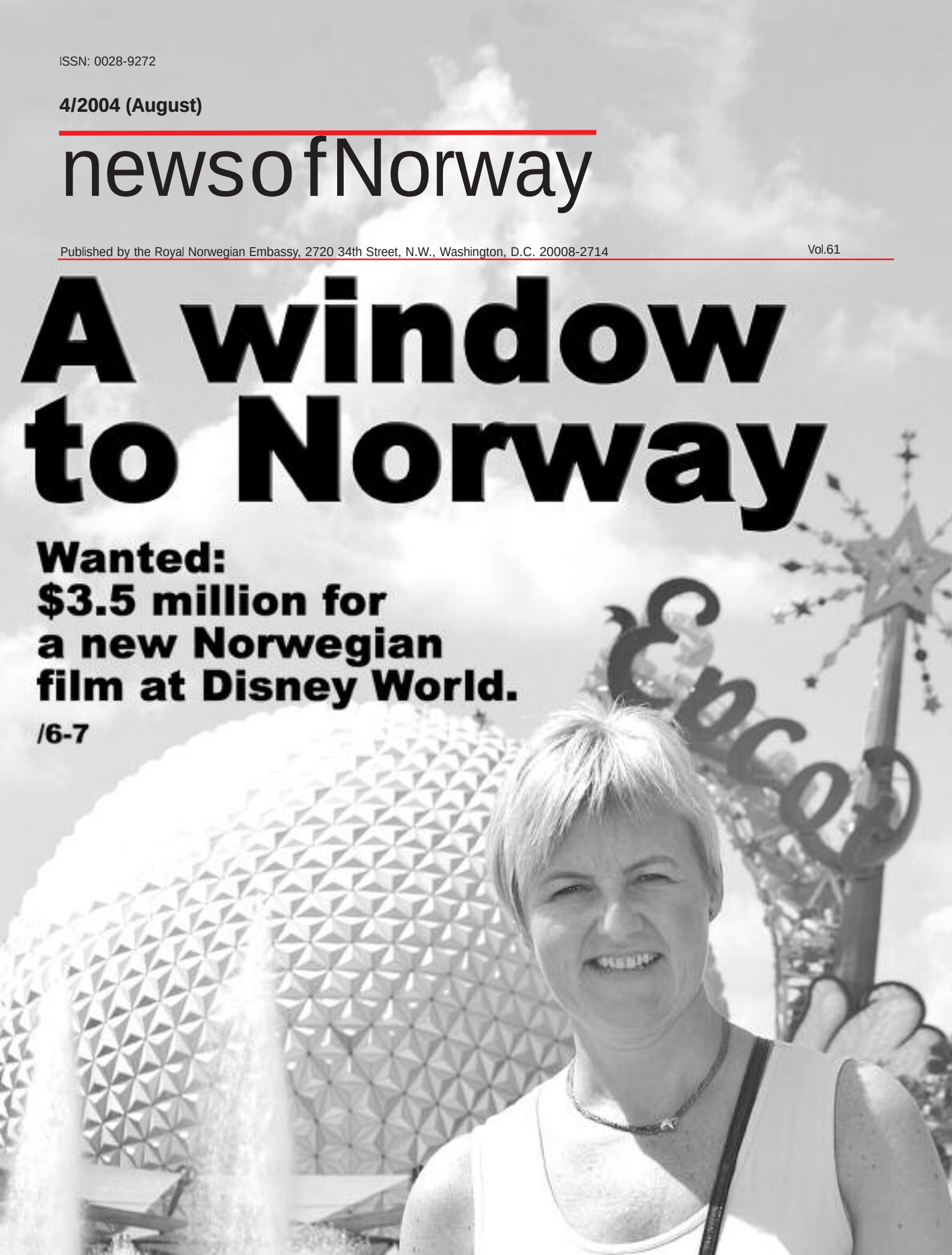

# In Brief...

*By Tonje Ruud*

**Tryvann Tower faces closure**
One of Oslo's landmarks, the tower at Tryvann in the hills above Oslo, may be closing its doors to the public due to lack of sightseeing interest. While the tower once ranked as a top local tourist attraction, drawing as many as 100,000 visitors a year, less than 30,000 visitors came in 2003.

**New order**
H.M. King Harald has decided to award Sverre Larsen with the St. Olav medal of honor for his many years of exceptional service to the Norwegian Seamen's Mission in Philadelphia as well as for the Norwegian social environment in the area.

**Off to North Dakota**
In a survey sponsored by the Norwegian newspaper Dagbladet, North Dakota was identified as the 5th most popular destination in the U.S. for Norwegian travellers in 2003. The numbers are based on information from Norwegian travel agencies and tour operators, who are placing North Dakota right after Florida, California, Washington, D.C. and Minneapolis on the list of favorite U.S. destinations.

**Volunteer fever**
Norwegians are volunteering their time and services more than ever. Charitable organizations in Oslo are reporting an increase in the number of humanitarian activists, especially young people. Local chapters of the Red Cross, Save the Children, Amnesty International and Norwegian People's Aid received so many applications that they were forced to impose a hiring freeze.

**Jazz it up**
The central Norwegian city of Molde is keeping its tradition with the annual jazz festival. 70,000 music fans - around three times the town's population - attended the concerts this year. Among the big names this year were Steve Wonder, Bradford Marsalis, the Jean Michel Pilc trio, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Terje Rypdal and Nils Petter Molvaer.

**Front page**: Valgerd Svarstad Haugland, Norway's Minister of Culture, visited the Norwegian Pavilion at the Epcot Center at Walt Disney World in June. The pavilion receives 4.5 million visitors each year, and serves as one of the most important outlets for Norway in the United States. Forces have now been put in motion to renew parts of the pavilion, starting with the movie tourists are shown after taking tthe popular *Maelstrom* ride. Read the full story about Norway, Disney and the Epcot Center on pages 6-7.

Maria Mena, 18, backstage at the Warner Theatre on July 8 as she prepared herself for opening for Hanson. The young Norwegian singer toured the United States to support her new album, *White turns blue*. PHOTO: KRISTOFFER RØNNEBERG

# Mena's turn

**Screaming fans. Raving reviews. Touring with Hanson. Performing on the Late Show with David Letterman. The only person who hasn't really understood that the United States is taking to Maria Mena is the Norwegian singer-songwriter herself.**

2004 is becoming quite a year for young and talented Norwegian artists who have tried their luck in the United States. Sondre Lerche charmed the socks off all of his audiences during his spring tour, and Kurt Nilsen beat Kelly Clarkson and nine other Idol winners to become the World Idol on New Year's Day.

But none of these young men from Bergen have managed to hit the charts. Only Maria Mena from Oslo has done that, with a top 15 spot on the singles' sales list.

In the dressing-room at the Warner Theatre in Washington, D.C., the 18-year-old girl with a father from New York is warming up for the night's performance. She is the opening act for Hanson, the three brothers who became famous for their hit Mmmbop in 1997. It is July 8, and Mena is slowly grasping the momentum of her rising stardom. She doesn't seem too affected by it, though.

"You know," she says, "this thing can blow off tomorrow. I have absolutely no expectations about hitting it big in the world. As long as I can make a living writing and performing music in Norway, I'll be more than satisfied."

Fortunately for her, her manager Robin Goodier and Sony Music, her record label, have set their goals higher.

As a result, Maria Mena became the first Norwegian artist ever to perform on the Latee Show with David Letterman.

Although Mena is only 18, she is already becoming an experienced artist in Norway. She broke through at the tender age of 15 with *My Lullaby*, a heartfelt and honest reaction to her parents' divorce.

"I write songs for myself," she explains when asked why so many young girls associate with her lyrics.

"I've been through the normal teenage problems, and I think others can relate to that. My songs are therapy for me, and it makes me so glad to see that they can be of comfort to others as well."

Modestly, she adds that her strengh lies in her lyrics, not her voice.

American reviewers seem to disagree, praising the young Norwegian for both her lyrics, her melodies and her voice.

"Equal parts Michelle Branch and Alanis Morissette," wrote *Billboard* magazine in its review of Mena's new album *White Turns Blue*, adding that she was sure to "take on the world."

*USA Today's* reviewer applauded the Norwegian's "unpretentious thoughtfulness and [her] delicate, breathy voice that captures youthful wonder and yearning."

For Maria Mena, the whole thing is a bit bizarre.

"It is impossible for me to explain how it feels to be on the road like this to my friends back home," she admits.

"Fortunately for me, my best friend Morten just came over to visit. It really helps to have someone here to share this with."

The U.S. tour ends on August 16. Asia awaits in the fall, no doubt another unique experience for Mena. But for the 18-year-old, the most important thing is not how successful she becomes.

"I get to tell my grandkids that I traveled the world when I was 18. That's a fantastic thing to have done."

# Norway tops UN ranking

**For the fourth year in a row, a United Nations study has ranked Norway as the best place in the world to live. The index , which ranks nations according to income, life expectancy and education levels, also revealed a disturbing lack of development in many African nations.**

Every summer, the United Nations Development Program issues a thorough, state-of-the-world-like report in which the world's countries are ranked according to the Human Development Index, a system for determining standard of living. This year, as in the previous three, Norway tops the list, while neighboring Sweden has climbed one spot to number two.

The UNDP has created the index to measure the extent of human development in countries around the world. In the report's foreword, its authors write that in order to reach the UN's Millennium Goals, countries must strive to become inclusive, culturally diverse societies.

"Human development is first and foremost about allowing people to lead the kind of life they choose—and providing them with the tools and opportunities to make those choices," the report reads.

The report states that Norway has a life expectancy of 79 years and a school enrollment ratio of 98 percent.

As usual, industrialized nations figure heavily in the top 20, with the United States coming in at eighth place, and the United Kingdom at 12th. At the bottom of the list, for the seventh year in a row, lies Sierra Leone, still suffering from the consequences of civil war.

Norway tops the list, the report argues, because of its high wealth combined with a small population. The average income in Norway is, according to the report, a staggering USD 36,600. Only Luxembourg, with an average income of USD 61,190 can top that. The GDP per capita in the United States is almost as high as that of Norway at USD 35,750. In comparison, that of Ethiopia is USD 780.

But the report is not primarily created as a way of seeing how well the already rich countries fare when compared to each other. More imporantly, the report shows how far the United Nations has come in implementing the Millennium Goals that were agreed upon in 2000. The 2004 report shows disturbing signs that development is actually in reversal in 20 of the world's nations. 13 of these lie in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the report, the main reason for this reversal is the ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis. Life expectancy in eight of the sub-Saharan nations has now fallen below 40 years because of the disease.

"The Aids crisis cripples states at all levels because the disease attacks people in their most productive years," Mark Malloch Brown, head of the UNDP, told the BBC.

# Up for Opera

The tiny Norwegian software company Opera is becoming a serious contender to Microsoft's Internet Explorer. One month after PCWorld awarded the company its "Best Browser" prize, the respected tech-site Cnet.com declares Opera a "robust alternative" to the Microsoft browser.

Very few of the dotcoms that emerged in Norway in the mid-nineties are still around today. As in the rest of the world, the new millennium presented challenges that were too big for the majority of the new technology companies to handle.

One of the notable exceptions in the post-bubble Internet world of Norway is Opera. The company started off in 1994 as a part of the research department at Telenor, Norway's largest telecom compnay. Ten years later the company's stock is traded at the Oslo Stock Exchange, and the future is looking brighter than ever.

When the prestigious magazine PCWorld announced in June that their award for best browser went to Opera, CEO Jon Stephenson von Tetzchner was understandably thrilled.

"We are honored to earn the best browser title," he said.

"The recognition confirms the trend we are seeing on desktop: more and more users are tired of the ageing Internet Explorer, and are looking to get more out of the Internet. For these users Opera offers a fast, feature-rich alternative that is both fun and more productive."

In a world where the dominant web browser is plagued by security holes and faulty programming, more and more heads are turning in the direction of a sound alternative.

For the renowned technology site Cnet.com, Opera is just what the doctor ordered.

"Opera is a fast, user-friendly, and highly versatile Internet browser that includes a newsreader, integrated search, and an M2 e-mail client," the site explains in its download section.

"Offering an unprecedented speed boost and low memory usage, Opera is still embarrassing the big browsers by loading most Web pages in a fraction of the time they use."

Opera is a free web browser you can download from its website by clicking the link to the right. The free version comes with a discreet banner that shows ads customized according to the website you are visiting. It is also possible to download a version of Opera without the ads, although this option comes at a cost of $39.

# In Brief...

**Just married**
Two of Norway's wealthiest people, retailing tycoon Stein Erik Hagen and forest products heiress Mille-Marie Treschow tied the knot in June in a lavish, three-day affair. Among the 300 invited guests were top politicians including Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik as well as a long list of Norwegian celebrities from business and entertainment circles.

**www.norway.no**
Norwegian Governmental officials have launched a new English web site aimed at helping foreigners become familliar with life in Norway. The site is meant as a guide to public services and offers practical information about studying, working and living in Norway, as well as travel information for tourists.

**TV on the go**
Norwegian cell phone users can now watch TV on their phones, thanks to a service offered by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK). The service allows people to watch live streaming television on their cell phones 24 hours a day as well as more specialized content such as news bulletins every hour.

**Viking chewing gum discovered**
Women's jewelry, a spinning wheel and a contender for early Norse chewing gum has been found during the excavation of a Viking burial site at Revheim in Stavanger. Among the more unusual finds was the small lump of resin with traces of bite marks. The archeologists argue that the resin was probably the Viking version of chewing gum.

**Trendy Mette-Marit**
The French fashion magazine Elle has named Norwegian Crown Princess Mette-Marit one of the trediest royals in Europe, even ahead of Princess Madeleine of Sweden.

**Out for a smoke**
The total ban on public indoor smoking is literally forcing bar and restaurant owners to think outside the box. More and more public restaurants have started offering outside seating and serving. The Norwegian tobacco company Tiedemanns has donated heading lamps to restaurants and bars to help patrons cope with cold weather. The move outdoors has also created a new source of income for the authorities. This year Oslo will take in NOK 4.5 million (USD 650,000) in sidewalk rental fees.

Chester & Joy Reiten standing in the Clog Shop of the Norsk Høstfest. PHOTO: MARK NELSON,

# The fest must go on

**One might think that Chester Reiten, who turned 80 last year, would be ready to rest on his laurels after seeing his autumn festival grow from being a local, one-night event to becoming the largest Scandinavian festival in North America. But the president of the board of directors of Norsk Høstfest in Minot, ND, since its inception 27 years ago is nowhere close to slowing down.**

*By Candice Helseth*

During his lifetime, Reiten built a multi-million dollar broadcasting empire, was Minot mayor for 14 years, a North Dakota senator for 16 years, and a volunteer in several capacities, including a 35-year stint on the local hospital's board of directors with 12 years as chairman and 25 years as a Sunday school teacher in his church.

While he has retired from his other endeavors, his passion for Høstfest only burns brighter. This is the man who was shot in the eye in a hunting accident only two weeks prior to the festival three years ago. Heavily sedated for pain and unable to see out of the injured eye, Reiten continued his commitments. "I couldn't stand to stay home and miss it," he says. "After all, the show must go on."

In his unpaid position as Høstfest president, Reiten marshals the efforts of more than 7,000 volunteers who greet up to 60,000 visitors that arrive in Minot – a city of only 35,000 – for five nights and four days of culture, heritage, entertainment, and fun. Norsk Høstfest will be held Oct. 5-9 this year.

"Norsk Høstfest is a celebration of our great heritage," Reiten states. "Heritage here means those essential family values that are not taught from books but are as a lighted torch that is passed down from one generation to the next and on through the ages. Understanding the past is essential to mastering our future."

The King of Norway has recognized Reiten with the prestigious St. Olav Medal for his work in developing Norwegian-American relations. He is also one of only 33 North Dakotans to receive the North Dakota Theodore Roosevelt Roughrider Award given to North Dakotans who have achieved national recognition in their fields of endeavor.

A visionary, Reiten is always looking to the future. He founded the Høstfest Guardian Program, formed to protect the festival's solvency, and he heads the Høstfest-Heritage Foundation to preserve Scandinavian heritage and culture. He is as generous with his money as his time, having given a gift of $500,000 to the Foundation.

He was instrumental in the development of the Scandinavian American Hall of Fame in 1984, believing that it is one more means of "preserving the heritage," a term he uses frequently and fondly to apply to almost any undertaking of Nordic influence. The Hall of Fame honors persons of Scandinavian descent who have made great achievements in the business world or who have contributed significantly to the betterment of mankind. Nominees are inducted at a Hall of Fame banquet during Høstfest.

Reiten is also a contributor to the Scandinavian Heritage Association (SHA) in Minot. SHA has developed the Scandinavian Heritage Park, a year-round, permanent legacy to the area's Scandinavian settlers. The SHA Park is home to a full size replica of a Gol Stave Church, a Norwegian stabbur, a 500-year-old home moved to Minot from Norway, and other buildings and statues that reflect the culture of all five Scandinavian countries.

Skien, a small town in southern Norway and Minot have established ties as Sister Cities, another arrangement where Reiten played an active role. Skien sends a delegation to every Høstfest and Norsk Høstfest Association sponsors an annual Norway tour that includes a stop in Skien.

North Dakota has been Reiten's lifelong home. All four of his grandparents were immigrants from Norway, settling south of Valley City in southeast North Dakota. He and his wife, Joy, have been married 57 years and raised five children together.

He enjoys traveling with Joy to "every place we can find that has some historical interest, something you can learn." Norway, though, is the only place where he returns. "Once we've seen it, we don't go back. We go somewhere else. But Norway is family, you know."

He sums up his success simply, "I took opportunity when it came. I like challenges. Failure wasn't in my mind. I assumed I could do it and didn't worry about it."

# Bondevik shuffles government

Norway's Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik announced on June 18 that he has made the first big changes to his cabinet since he took office in 2001. Two new cabinet members join the government, while several of the existing ministers change departments.

The center-right coalition government of Kjell Magne Bondevik took on a brand new face after the reshuffle. The Christian Democratic Party deputy leader Knut Arild Hareide assumes the position of Minister of the Environment while former deputy foreign affairs minister Thorhild Widvey takes the post of Minister of Petroleum and Energy.

The changes mean that Einar Steensnæs, the current Minister of Petroleum and Energy, and Ingjerd Schou, the current Minister of Social Affairs, have to leave the cabinet.

"It is never easy being Prime Minsister and telling someone they have to go," Bondevik said at a press conference following the announcement. "The two have made a marvelous effort."

Only one cabinet member had stepped down before the June 18 announcement. In March, Minister of Labor Victor Norman gave away his position to Morten Meyer. All the other cabinet members have remained in their chairs since Bondevik assumed his second Prime Ministership after the elections on September 10, 2001.

"We've had, and continue to have, a strong cabinet," Prime Minister Bondevik said.

The new government will look substantially different from the one that Bondevik has led up until now.

Health Minister and Christian Democratic Party leader Dagfinn Høybråten becomes the Social and Labor Minister, a new ministry that will allow him to coordinate the social doctrine upon which the party has placed great emphasis.

Høybråten's period as Minister of Health was the focus of much controversy and debate when he imposed a new smoking law on June 1, banning smokers from lighting up in public places such as bars and restaurants.

Ansgar Gabrielsen, the current Minister of Trade and Industry, takes over the Ministry of Health. The void at the top of his department is filled by Børge Brende, who was Minister of the Environment until June 18.

Morten Meyer, who just entered the cabinet in March, will head the newly established Ministry of Modernization.

The next elections in Norway will be held in September 2005, during Norway's centennial as an independent nation. Bondevik announced on June 17 that he would not be seeking a new four-year period in the Storting (Parliament) following that election.

Paul Watkins first heard about Norway when he lay badly injured on a fishing boat off the coast of North Carolina. Once he went to see the place, he was spellbound. "I remain deeply changed by my time in Norway," he writes in his new book *Fellowship of Ghosts*.
PHOTO: KRISTOFFER RØNNEBERG

# Ghost story

**Paul Watkins' love for the mountains of Norway, described in his new book *The Fellowship of Ghosts*, began when the young author got his face smashed in on a scallop dragger off the coast of North Carolina.**

The British author had yet to write his best-selling autobiography *Stand Before Your God*. In fact he was still in college, earning money between terms at Yale as a fisherman in the Atlantic.

A freak accident involving a piece of machinery on the boat he worked on crushed his jaw and left a big hole in his cheek. For a week, he lay in a nightmare while he waited for the boat to get back to shore.

What kept him sane during that week was an old sailor called Arneson. Hailing from Åndalsnes on the west coast of Norway, Arneson told Watkins about the land he emigrated from in the 50s. Mesmerized by tales he was convinced were untrue or at least greatly exaggerated, Watkins decided to see for himself.

The love affair with Norway that began on that trip has now, two decades later, turned into a second autobiography from Watkins. *The Fellowship of Ghosts* is the author's captivating and touching story of one man's quest to conquer himself more than any mountain.

"I started going to Norway because I had to reconcile with the accident," he tells *News of Norway*. "It was a form of excorcism."

He has returned to Norway almost every summer since his fishing accident.

The book was released this July as part of a traveler's series published by the National Geographic Society.

The title alludes to the only company Watkins allows on his journey — a collection of travel journals by highly eccentric Brits written between 1876 and 1912. *The Fellowship of Ghosts* is a gripping, often very witty, collection of stories from Norway, experienced either by Watkins alone or by the author and his old and quirky travel companions.

"I realized," says Watkins, "that so little had changed since they wrote their memoirs that I sometimes had difficulties believing that they were dead."

The book is also in many ways a story of Watkins' quest to find the tiny speckles of Norwegian heritage he as a Welshman may have.

"For the British mind," he says, "Norway serves as a psychological counterpoint to ourselves. Norway is definitely a part of British cultural history."

He is referring, of course, to the Vikings, a people by which he reveals in this book to be deeply fascinated.

By mixing Vikings, eccentric British travelers and himself, Watkins tells a story with a certain degree of timelessness – just like the mountains in which he travels.

"The past, present and future all become the same thing," he writes at the end of his journey.

"The inability to live in the present is the great malady of modern times, a thing we once knew but have forgotten. The discovery of this missing treasure is what binds my journey to the experiences of those travelers who went before me, as well as ancient Norway to

Pluto gets the Viking treatment at the Norwegian pavilion, one of 11 national showcases at Epcot. The gift shop also offers visitors a wide array of Norwegian treats from Freia milk chocolate to Laila perfume. 4.5 million people visit the pavilion every year. PHOTOS: KRISTOFFER N. RØNNEBERG

# A new view of Norway

Norway has changed over the last sixteen years. So has filmmaking. Tens of millions of people have caught a glimpse of Norway in a 70mm film at the Norwegian pavilion at the Epcot Center in Orlando's Walt Disney World since the film was first shown in 1998. Now, hopefully just in time for the centennial in 2005, a new film is underway.

*By Kristoffer N. Rønneberg*

Disney executive Ben May is noticeably relieved when he hears the words. Across the table, in a conference room above one of the most popular attractions at the Epcot Center in Orlando, the Norwegian Minister of Culture is smiling at him. "I think," she has just told him, "that it's a good idea to make a new movie." That little piece of goodwill may put a show on the road for Disney that has previously been kept on ice.

The Norwegian pavilion at the Epcot Center in Walt Disney World is in many ways the world's largest Norwegian tourist attraction. With more than 4.5 million visitors, the pavilion is the second most popular at the Epcot Center. That number is about the same as the population of Norway.

For most visitors, the pavilion is as close to Norway as they will ever get. For anyone interested in promoting Norway, the picture created at the Epcot Center is therefore enormously important.

While most of the pavilion has a sense of timelessness to it – the Akershus restaurant serves traditional Norwegian food, the Maelstrom boat ride brings visitors through Norwegian history and the Kringla bakery offers tasty snacks – there is one aspect of this little piece of Norway that stands out in its outdatedness: The film shown at the end of the Maelstrom ride, a 70mm movie that in five minutes attempts to create an image of Norway to the pavilion's visitors.

"Everything at the pavilion apart from the film holds a very high standard," says Dave Spilde, head of Unique Promotions in Bergen, the second largest city in Norway.

He and his colleagues have managed the remarkable feat of having Disney allow them to make a new film about Norway.

"They've never let anyone produce a film for them before," Spilde tells News of Norway with an understandably proud tone in his voice.

The company, established in 1997 by Spilde and Chris Olsson-Hagan, has 21 employees and an annual revenue of $4 million. Producing a film for Disney at an estimated cost of $3.5 million is therefore a big deal.

The green light from Disney was given Spilde after he visited Orlando and gave Epcot execs a presentation in April 2003. But the film is still on the drawing board.

"We started contacting sponsors, but found it difficult to attract the necessary funds," says Spilde.

"The companies we spoke to were positive at first," he explains, "but then they discovered that some institutions in Norway claimed that the Norwegian pavilion had been a failed project."

Indeed the history of the relationship between Disney and Norway when it comes to the Norwegian pavilion at the Epcot Center is no fairy tale. Ever since it opened in 1988 there have been discussions over ownership and content control.

It started, really, a good while before the Norwegian pavilion even opened. The Epcot Center–short for Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, although one travel guide quipps it might as

Norway's Minister of Culture, Valgerd Svarstad Haugland, listens as Tove Naalsund, one of 85 Norwegian trainees at the Norwegian pavilion, describes the sights at Epcot's second most popular showcase. A replica of a viking ship and a stave church are among the attractions.

well stand for Every Person Comes Out Tired because of its large area–was established in 1982 with nine national pavilions. Mexico, China, Germany, Italy, The American Adventure, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, and Canada were the pioneering countries, with Morocco added in 1984.

Originally, the idea was to establish a Nordic Pavilion. But after much deliberations from the three countries a group of Norwegian investors came up with the $30 million necessary to create a Norwegian pavilion.

All looked well. The then Crown Prince Harald formally opened the pavilion in June 1988 while Norwegians followed the ceremony in one of the longest live satellite transmissions the country had experienced till then.

Two years later, the head of Norwegian Showcase, the company that built the pavilion, was still positive.

"Although it is diffficult to measure the direct impact of Norway's investment here," Gunnar Jerman told the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten in March 1990, "the large number of visitors speaks for itself. We have also seen an increased interest in Norway as a vacation target. Norwegian design and crafts have also benefitted from the pavilion's popularity, although there is still some way to go."

In 1992, the sentiment had changed. The Norwegian investors that had contributed two-thirds of the entire production cost of the Norwegian pavilion backed out due to disappointing sales and sold their stakes to Disney.

As a symbolic gesture to indicate Norway's continued interest in the pavilion, the government decided to give $200.000 each year to Epcot in a five-year period. This contract was renewed for five new years in 1997. In 2002, however, Norway decided to cut the chord despite recommendations from the embassy in D.C. to keep the contract going.

"But this is not to say that the Norwegian government disapproved of the pavilion," says Knut Vollebaek, Norway's ambassador to the United States. "There were just some forces in Oslo that felt that it wasn't necessary to continue with the support."

He adds that he is himself a great supporter of the Norwegian pavilion, which he describes as "fantastic".

For Disney, the little piece of Norway was so popular that they kept it running even without official support.

"We love the Norwegian pavilion," says Ben May, the Manager at Epcot Business Development, "but we want to do more."

He is full of praise for the 85 young Norwegian men and women who work at the pavilion. Clad in costumes resembling the bunad, the Norwegian national costume, these trainees spend nine months at Epcot as part of their college degree. Since this is Disney World, they are referred to as "cast members."

"They make us what we are," says May. "I mean–anyone can build this thing, but no-one can create a Norwegian atmosphere like the cast members."

May is a good salesman. To the Minister of Culture he talks warmly of Norway, claiming it has had "more influence on the world than any other single country."

He has no intentions of asking for money from neither her nor any other member of the Norwegian government. All he wants at this point is a letter of goodwill from the Norwegian government, stating that Norway supports Epcot.

"We take our brand, which is very strong, and we attach it to Norway. We are selling Norway," says Ben May in his sales pitch to the Norwegian Minister of Culture.

The positive reply he receives makes him smile.

For Dave Spilde at Unique Promotions, a letter of goodwill from the Norwegian government would open many doors.

"With that kind of moral support we would be much closer to production. We would, of course, be very happy to receive some financial support as well, but the most important thing is the moral support."

With luck, Spilde will be able to hire a top-notch director and produce a film in time for next year, when Norway celebrates its centennial.

"If we get a nod of approval sometime soon, I think we can make that deadline," he says.

# Saving Singer

For the American painter William Henry Singer, the West Coast of Norway proved to be a powerful muse that would inspire him for a lifetime. Today, 61 years after his death, his home in Olden is still standing. Jean Woods has spent much of her life in the company of Singer's art. Now she wants to go to Norway to make a record of his Norwegian collection.

*By Kristoffer N. Rønneberg*

The children of Olden in Nordfjoreid always looked forward to springtime. As the snow retracted to the mountaintops and gave way for green fields and yellow flowers, the children knew that clothes and candy were on the way. The Singers were returning from their winter home in Holland.

Although Anna and William Henry Singer found the Norwegian winter too harsh and chose to spend it in the somewhat more temperate climate of the Netherlands, they always returned to Olden to enjoy summer in the immediate vicinity of the Jostedal glacier.

"They always brought presents to the children," says Anna Spencer Vangberg, who lives in Olden. Her mother worked for the Singers for 12 years and chose to name her daughter after the generous American.

"Everybody here still knows about the Singers," Ms. Vangberg says. "They gave a lot to the community."

In addition to bringing gifts for the children every spring and Christmas, the Singers funded a hopital in Nordfjoreid as well as a road to the neighboring town of Innvik.

Perhaps it was a way to repay the land that had provided William Henry Singer with inspiration since he fist set foot in Norway in 1903. The painter from Allgheny (now Pittsburgh), Pennsylvania was one of a generation of American artists who traveled to Europe at the beginning of the 20th century to seek inspiration. He was one of the few that became so inspired that he never returned.

Today, Singer is among the most famous American painters of the first half of the last century. His artwork is featured in three main galleries, all founded by his wife Anna after his death: The Singer Room in the Washignton Country Museum of Fine Arts in Hagerstown, Maryland, the Singer Museum in Laren, Holland and the Singer Collection in the Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, aka Permanenten, in Bergen, Norway.

Jean Woods was the Executive Director of the Washington County Museum for 21 years until she retired last year. Now she wants to travel to Norway to preserve the fourth place where Singer is prominently displayed: The Singer home in Olden, commonly known as Singerheimen.

"There is renewed interest in a lot of the artists that died in the 1930s and 1940s," she says. "I guess it has something to do with the fact that many of their paintings are being placed on the market by grandchildren who have inherited them and now want to sell them."

She senses that Singer will be among the painters that will experience a kind of renaissance in the coming years. Before that happens, Ms. Woods wants to make sure that the paintings, documents and memorabilia that can be found in the Singerheimen are properly registered, indexed and stored.

"I estimate that there are over 100 paintings. About 65 are by William Henry Singer, Jr."

Singerheimen was testamented away by Mrs. Singer when she died in 1962. The place was originally intended as a place to rest for nurses from the hospital in Nordfjoreid.

"The artwork needs to be documented," she says.

Forces have now been put in motion by the Norwegian Embassy in Washington and cultural institutions in Norway to make sure that Jean Woods will be able to travel to Olden in order to document the art collection at Singerheimen.

"This is too important to ignore," says Bendik Rugaas, a former cabinet member in Norway who now works as the counselor for cultural affairs at the Embassy.

"We'll get Ms. Woods to Olden," he states.

The Singers bought an estimated 20,000 pieces of art during the 40 years they spent in Europe after Mr. Singer's father had sent them to Paris for inspiration in 1901. The artwork ranged from Oriental jade pieces to baroque Italian furniture to bronze busts by Rodin to impressionist paintings by fellow American expats.

William Henry Singer came from a prosperous family in

**Facing page:** Jean Woods, the former Executive Director of the Washington County Museum in Hagerstown, MD, outside the Singer room at the museum. **This page, clockwise from top:** One of two Singer paintings are part of the permanent art collection at the Norwegian Ambassador's residence in DC; the Singers; a portrait of W.H. Singer by Isadore Opsomer.

Pennsylvania. This enabled the couple to help struggling artist friends by offering to let them stay for moths at a time in their homes. They also purchased their friends' artwork. One such friend was Willard Metcalf, who did a large portrait of the couple which is now on display in Permanenten in Bergen.

Singer was introduced to Norway by a Norwegian painter who had emigrated to the United States. Martin Borgord came from Gausdal and became Singer's mentor in the early years of the 20th century. The two artists both lived in Laren in Holland, but Singer never took to the landscape in Holland. When he saw Olden in 1908, he became so spellbound by the rugged beauty of the area that he returned again and again. A hunting cabin he built in 1909 in Tydal, north of Olden, gave way in 1921 to Dalheim, now Singerheimen.

Until they built their dream home among the mountains and fjords, the Singers spent their summers at the hotel in Olden, which Singer had expanded so that he could paint there. During the first World War, the Singers lived all year at the hotel since their home in Holland was confiscated by German soldiers.

It wasn't until after Dalheim was built that Singer started producing what is now considered his best work.

"To Singer," Jean Woods writes in a biography of the artist, "the fascinating Norwegian wilderness was an unending muse — rich in form color and light, which provided an endless variety of beauty for his paintings."

"The special light reflected in high latitudes of Norway and the winter stillness," she continues, "inspired Singer, just as the sense of place is evident in the music of Edvard Grieg and the writing of Henrik Ibsen."

Singer painted in a post-impressionistic style that had long since gone out of fashion in the 1920s. His style captured sunlight and shadow of the glaciers, the sparkling water and the snow-laden fields. By developing a special technique that involved painting directly onto an unprepared canvas, he achieved an almost pastel-like effect that became his trademark. He could work very quickly, and was able to produce a painting in a day or two.

Soon, his paintings will appear in a new exhibit in Holland.

"It's a good time to buy Singer now," says Woods. "The prices will rise significantly because of the show."

# (N)ice and cold...

Norwegians are a peculiar people. When it finally becomes warm enough, for a very short period of time, to spend time outdoors without excessive clothing, they find a way to remind themselves of winter. Few people eat more ice cream than Norwegians, even though almost the entire annual consumption of 13 liters per person takes place in the summer months.

Although the knowledge of ice cream production is said to come from China, Norway can take some credit for making it possible to produce in some regions of Europe. When the Swiss salesman Carlo Gatti brought ice cream to London in the 1850s, he became the first person to offer the novelty to the general public. To ensure a steady supply of ice cream, he imported large quantities of glacier ice from Norway.

Today, the ice cream industry in Norway employs around 1,000 people. They produce around 54 million litres of the delicious dessert every year.

Although ice cream is a relatively new invention in the West, the use of ice as a physical remedy has a long history. The father of modern medicine, Hippocrates, encouraged his ancient Greek patients to eat ice "as it livens the lifejuices and increases the well-being."

Embassy chef Frode Selvaag loves to make ice cream. The Ambassador's favorite is vanilla.

"And it's not hard to make at all," Selvaag insists.

"You get the best result with an ice cream maker, but it's possible to do it without one, as well."

In order to make a sorbet, no machine is necessary, only good raw materials. Quality ingredients are a must also for the ice cream.

"It's really important to use a good vanilla bean," Selvaag says.

"The best ones are from Tahiti. They cost around ten dollars each, but it's worth it."

# ...and easier than you think

## Rasberry sorbét and real vanilla ice cream

**RASBERRY SORBÉT:**
2 lbs frozen rasberries
1/2 cup corn syrup or sweet glucose
4 oz. sugar
4 egg whites

Keep the rasberries in the refrigerator overnight so that they are chilled but not frozen. Run the berries, sugar and corn syrup in a food processor for five minutes. Strain the mixture well enough to get rid of the seeds. Place in freezer for ten minutes.
Meanwhile, whip the egg whites until you have a cloudy, but not too firm result. Carefully bring the beaten egg whites and the rasberry mixture together and place back in the freezer. Remove and stir every 30 minutes for two hours.
If you have an ice cream maker, you can skip the egg whites and freeze the rasberry mixture the modern way.

*An insider tip from chef Frode:* "In order to make nice sorbét scoops, place the ice cream spoon in hot water between each scoop. After some practice, you can try scooping with regular spoons and create a professional look by shaping the sorbét as eggs. Practice is the thing."

**REAL VANILLA ICE CREAM**
2.5 cups heavy whipping cream
2.5 cups whole milk
1/2 lbs. sugar
1 whole vanilla bean, split in two and carved
1/2 cup corn syrup or sweet glucose
12 egg yolks

Prepare all the ingredients in individual bowls. Bring the milk, cream, sugar and vanilla to a boil. Include the whole bean, not just the insides you've just carved out. Combine the egg yolks in a large bowl. Pour the hot milk mixture over the egg yolks while stirring. Move the egg and milk mixture over to a large pot and heat. Remove from heat when the mixture feels like a thin vanilla sauce. It is very important that the mixture doesn't get too hot, and under no circumstances should you allow it to boil. Once the mixture is heated, pour back into a bowl and let it cool down.
For the ultimate taste sensation, let the mixture rest in the refrigerator for two days. When the two days are up, or when your patience grows thin, stir the mixture well and strain it. Make sure to keep the vanilla bean. Once you've cleaned it you can use it again later. Pour into an ice cream machine (remember to put it in the freezer 24 hours before use) and let it run for 20 minutes.

# calendarofevents

**Norwegian films at BAM (NY)**
The fifth annual World According to Shorts film festval will feature two Norwegian short films. Both will première at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM):
Save the Children by Terje Rangnes, and All in All by Torbjørn Skarild.
**When:** All in All will show at 6:45 p.m. on Wednesday, September 8 and 9 p.m. on Thursday, September 9. Save the Children will show at 9 p.m. on Wednesday, September 8 and 6:45 p.m. on Thursday, September 9.
**Where:** BAM, 30 Lafayette Street, Brooklyn, NY
**Info:** (718) 636-4100

**BBQ at the Norwegian Seamen's Church (NY)**
Every Sunday night June through August is barbeque night on the rooftop of the Norwegian Seamen's Church in Manhattan. Dinner, coffee and entertainment. Donation: $12.
**When:** Sundays through August 29, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
**Where:** The Norwegian Seamen's Church, 317 East 52nd Street, NYC
**Info:** (212) 319 0370 or NewYork@sjomannskirken.no

**Sunday Scandinavian Dance (MN)**
Instruction 5 p.m. - 6 p.m.. Dancing 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.. $6 dance only/ $7 with instruction.
**When:** Most Sundays.
**Where:** Good Templar Hall, 2922 Cedar Ave. S. Minneapolis
**Info:** Good Templar: (612) 722 8535

**Nordic Cool (DC)**
Several Norwegian artists are among the lineup at this summer's big exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. Nordic Cool: Hot Women Designers will showcase more than 200 of the best designs the five Nordic countries have to offer.
**When:** Through September 12, 2004.
**Where:** National Museum of Women in the arts. 1250 New York Ave., NW, two blocks north of Metro Center in downtown Washington, DC.
**Info:** More information is available by calling 202.783.5000, or looking online at www.nmwa.org.

**Norwegian Dance, (MA)**
Norwegian dance with live music by the Boston Spelmannslag.
Fourth Saturday of each month at the Church of our Saviour.
**When:** 21 Marathon Street, MA
**Where:** 8-11 p.m., 4/24 - 11/27
**Info:** Call David Golber at (617) 661-3670

**Scandinavian Folk Instrument workshop (OR)**
Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet will hold its 8th annual meeting this coming August. All Psalmondikon players and those who would like to learn more about this one-stinged Scandinavian folk instrument of the 1800's are welcome.
**When:** August 20-22, 2004
**Where:** Portland, OR
**Info:** Jean Akre 503-244 9854, e-mail pakre@comcast.net, or Linda Dalrymple: 503-255-3876. Information regarding the Crayfish dinner contact Ross foelquist at 503-244-3697.

**Kleiberg's Requiem at the National Cathedral on September 11 (DC)**
The Norwegian composer Ståle Kleiberg will perform a special extended version of his "Requiem for victims of Nazi persecution" at the National Cathedral on September 11. The piece, a large scale work for three soloists, mixed choir and orchestra, will be the Cathedral's main event for the historic day.
**When:** September 11, 2004, at 6:30 p.m.
**Where:** National Cathedral, 3101 Wisconsin Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C.
**Info:** Call (202) 537-6200

**Irene Christensen in "The Water Show" at BWAC (NY)**
Norwegian painter Irene Christensen will show her work at the Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalitions event. Special events include Artists Reception on July 17, also an Affordable Art Auction on August 22.
**When:** Through August 22, every weekend 12-6 p.m.
**Where:** 499 Van Brunt Street, Red Hook, Brooklyn
**Info:** (718) 596-2507 www.bwac.org

**Scandinavian Heritage Festival (WA)**
The 3rd annual Heritage Festival includes two full days of festivities, packed with celebration of Scandinavian culture - dance music, food, exhibits, arts and crafts and gifts. The festival raffle has a Grand Prize of two round trip tickets to Scandinavia, donated by SAS and SHF. Drawing will be held on Sunday, October 10th 4:30 p.m.. Admission is $3 (this includes beverage); children under 12 enter for free. Free parking in Gold lot across from main entrance.
**When:** October 9th and 10th from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
**Where:** Pavilion Hall, Western Washington Fairgrounds, Puyallup, WA
**Info:** 425-881-1544 or e-mail: desireeomdal@hotmail.com, www.thefair.com.

**A Tribute to Elfi (NY)**
"Tribute to Elfi" is an exhibition that will pay homage to a highly respected and much cherished pillar of New York's Scandinavian cultural community, Elfi von Kantzow Alvin. A life's work retrospective of this multifaceted and creative artist, designer and curator. As founder and chairperson of the Art Committee of the American Scandianvian Society, she has been curator of more than 60 Scandinavian art exhibits in New York, presenting the work of over 250 artists. Presented by The American Scandinavian Society and The Trygve Lie Gallery.
**When:** Opening Thursday, June 3rd, 2004, 5.30 - 8 p.m. Throughout summer 2004.
**Where:** Trygve Lie Gallery, 317 East 52nd Street, NYC
**Info:** (212) 319 0370 or info@trygveliegallery.com

**The Sami Reindeer People of Alaska (AK)**
This traveling exhibit honors the Sami herders who came from Norway in 1894 and 1898 to teach reindeer herding subsistence skills to the Yup'ik and Inupiaq Peoples of Alaska.
The reception is open to the public with free admission. Dessert and beverages will be furnished through a grant from the Shuyak Native Corporation.
The exhibit contains such items as a Sami lavvu (traditional tent), vintage photographs of
Sami herders, a collection of traditional Sami tools and household items, men and women's hats from Kautokeino and Karasjok, descriptive panels containing authoritative overviews on the arrival of the reindeer from Chukotka, the arrival of the Sami in 1894 and 1898, the Alaska reindeer industry in the 20s and the 30s, the Reindeer Act, the move to Poulsbo and the lives of herders who stayed in Alaska.
**When:** Through September 19.
**Where:** Alaska Native Heritage Center, 8800 Heritage Center Drive, AK
**Info:** www.alaskanative.net.

**Leif Erikson Festival (NJ)**
The 7th annual Leif Erikson Festival focuses on the Viking Age with an emphasis on having fun. There will be two authentic Viking replica Knarr ships, the Norseman and the Gyrfalcon. Society for Creative Anachronismwill be staging Viking battles throughout the day. Along with the 50+ vendors selling Scandinavian craft or food items, there will be a moonwalk, hayride, and other activities for children. Under the outdoor pavilion, there will be music and displays of folk dancing. In the evening, the Festival will move into Viking Hall for the Viking Feast of fresh venison (additional fee), followed by dance music.
**Where:** Vasa Park, Budd Lake, NJ
**When:** Saturday, September 25, from 10:00 a.m.
**Info:**
www.vasorder.com/eventsnj.htm

**Knitting along the Viking trail (WI)**
Elsebeth Lavold, artist and designer of Swedish, Danish and Norwegian descent, spans a millennium with her unique knitwear exhibit.
**Where:** W. Ager Association, 514 W. Madison Street, Eau Claire, WI 54703
**When:** August 27 to September 30.
**Info:** (715) 834 3985

Please check www.norway.org for complete and continous updates.

# A farewell from Minister Counselor Øyslebø

What's it like to have such dark winters as you have in Norway?

Do most Norwegians live on a farm by a fjord?

How can a country ruled by an un-elected king claim to be a democracy?

Why are Norwegians so reluctant to joining the European Union?

How come a small country like Norway is capable of contributing to the resolution of armed conflicts in remote parts of the world?

Being in charge of public affairs at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Washington, D.C. for the past four years, I have repeatedly tried to respond to these and many other questions. This month my term is coming to an end. As I leave Washington, I hope that I have been able to give a small contribution to making contemporary Norway more comprehensible to people in the United States. I am impressed and overwhelmed by the intererest from people who want to learn more about this rather large country with a small population in the northern fringes of Europe. Whether I have been speaking to high school and college students, alumni associations, members of the Sons of Norway, or simply responding to emails and letters, it has always been a true pleasure to present my country to Americans.

At the same time I have had the privilege of familiarizing myself with the United States; with its vastness, its variety, and its diverse population. I feel privileged to have had this opportunity.

Many individuals and institutions are working to present and promote Norway in the United States. I would like to recognize the dedicated efforts of the following: Sons of Norway, the Norwegian American Foundation, the American Scandinavian Foundation, the Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum, the Nordic Heritage Museum, the Norwegian American Historical Association, NORTANA (the association for teachers of Norwegian and Norwegian studies in North America), the individual universities that offer Norwegian programs, the Norwegian seamen's churches and the memorial churches, the newspapers Norway Times and Western Viking, the North American "Bygdelagenes Fellesraad," Innovation Norway (which incorporates the former Norwegian Tourist Board and the Norwegian Trade Council), as well as the Norwegian American Chamber of Commerce. There are also 38 Honorary Consuls throughout the United States who are tirelessly serving and preserving Norwegian interests. And last but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues at the Embassy and at the Consulates General in New York, Minneapolis, Houston and San Francisco for a great partnership.

I am leaving Washington as the Embassy, the Consulates General and several partner institutions are preparing to mark next year's Centennial for Norway's independence. The union between Norway and Sweden, in existence since 1814, was peacefully dissolved on June 5, 1905. Since then, the two countries have enjoyed a peaceful relationship as partners and good neighbors. Through several events, including royal visits, Norway's visibility in the United States will most likely increase in 2005.

I will be replaced by Erling Rimestad, former adviser to one of the State Secretaries in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I wish him success in his endeavors, and invite a strengthened dialogue between the Embassy and the readers of News of Norway.

*Jon-Åge Øyslebø*
*Minister Counsellor*
*Press and Cultural Affairs*

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