SONG OF NORWAY
25TH REUNION
July 27, 1991

COMMENTS AND REMINISCENCES

"I'm in San Francisco, California and still a Respiratory Therapist. I am also a Hula Sister and sing Jumpin Rhythm & Blues with 2 other women and a four-piece band. We have 1 album out and hope to have a 2nd out before Christmas '91 on a major/minor label—we are not picky. We are touring in Wisconsin June 26-July 7th ending up at Summerfest, Sunday the 7th. Madison Crystal Corner (on) June 27 and Madison Club De Wash, July 6. Thanks for thinking of me!"

Ellen Peters
San Francisco, California

"Enjoying life in the San Diego area! Would have liked to join this reunion. We both have fond memories of Tryol Basin and Mt. Horeb and Song of Norway."

Chuck & Betty Peters
San Diego, California

"Bud Grove and I served as part of the back stage crew for many years. Bud died seven years ago. I remarried 1½ years ago and now live in Madison. I still recall the fun and the happy memories from those days. Continued Good Luck!"

Casey Grove-Sunday
Madison, Wisconsin

"Happy 25th! May you have another 25 years!"

Gloria J. Jarvis

"Am performing in the Savoyards production of "Patience" that weekend (of the reunion)."

Megan O'Leary
Madison, Wisconsin

"I'd love to come and spend an afternoon getting reacquainted with my Song of Norway friends, but my husband and I are expecting our first child on August 8, and we don't want to travel too far from our home in Wausau, Wis. I work at Wausau West HS as a German and English as a second language teacher. My husband, Dan, also works as a general music teacher at Franklin Elementary School in Wausau. I hope to make it to Mt. Horeb next summer to see Song of Norway."

Shari (Sailing) Larson
Wausau, Wisconsin
"After working with youth for many years in Alaska, I went back to school in Dubuque, Iowa and am now a pastor in Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church in Anchorage, Alaska.

Wondering that 1st year if it would go over and then looking out on the hillside and seeing all the people that 1st performance, and then watching the crowds grow each week. I was in the Song in '67 the summer after high school."

Rev. Daniel Bollerud
Anchorage, Alaska

"I have fond memories of performing with the Song of Norway and the beautiful countryside. After graduating from the UW I obtained an M.S. from U. of Conn. in Microbiology and met my husband while in school there. We moved to Phoenix for his first job and then to Los Angeles where Jeff took a position with the Northrup Corp. I am working for Baxter Healthcare Corp. in viral research. We are expecting our first child in February. I miss you all.

I've always loved music and there were some great mentors in the group for me to look up to. I also developed a deep appreciation for the amount of work that takes place behind the scenes which helps me enjoy opera and theatre today so much more."

Candace (Cook) Bunch
Duarte, California

"I had a two year experience as Freddy the Fiddler. That made me more interested in the Song of Norway Festival, its colorful scenes of pageant and talented performers."

Kennell Helgeson
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin

"How nice that you have planned this reunion! I was on the board until we moved from Mt. Horeb when Ken died. It was fun promoting Song of Norway and even had a chance to serve coffee to Mayor of Madison (maybe it was Governor of Wisconsin!) and Byron Ostby who is the Norwegian Vice-Counselor in Wisconsin. Had my dishes from Norway to serve them coffee. Enjoyed planning and preparing food for the last performance while in Mt. Horeb. Still am taking tour groups every year to Norway.

Had a lot to do with the meal we served in Chicago to introduce Song of Norway. I enjoyed being on the board from the beginning and until I had to give up some activities because of Ken's health problems. Had a lot of friends for dinner the nights we had the Song of Norway so we could take them there for a very special evening of good music and all those being part of it. I did have charge of some parties the last night of performance and cooked a lot of food recommended especially by Forest and Doris!"

Thelma Evenson
Madison, Wisconsin
"Thanks for the invitation. Wish I could join you! Living in King, North Carolina at the foothills of the Blue Ridge. We have an architectural antique business and I’m an interior designer. I still miss Wisconsin but don’t get to visit very often.

Being a part of this production was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life in the Midwest. I think about it often and plan to get back there for a performance one of these days."

Carolyn (Schwalbe) Landreth
King, North Carolina

"Recording a variety of images on film is always a challenge. Photographing Song was also fun—faces, colorful costumes, emotion, the joy of youth—images that reflected the spirit of hometown theatre. It’s too bad that a still photograph can’t have a soundtrack—such beautiful music.

I "retired" in May of ’86 due to the onset of Multiple Sclerosis. My active lifestyle has changed; my culinary efforts have improved, a book is in the works, and I find retirement to be BUSY!"

Duane, Mary Ann & Heather Hopp
Madison, Wisconsin

"I’m still in music. Organist at Temple Beth El, the University Hospital and the V.A. Hospital. I’m still accompanying Philharmonic Chorus of Madison, and I was the first female to join Madison South Rotary. I play for them and also the Golden K Kiwanis Club of Madison as well as on monthly visits to 4 and sometimes 5 of the area nursing homes.

My youngest daughter, Debbie, turned pages and brushed bugs off the music for me. We were greeted (usually) by a large bull frog in the pond as we entered the grounds. My next to youngest daughter, Libby, worked back stage. And we all loved it! Also the chicken we used to get at the A&W Root Beer Stand!"

Julia Landmark Foster
Madison, Wisconsin

"Ron is Vice President of Banc One, Wis. Trust Company in Monroe, Wisconsin. Jennifer works for the Monroe Public School System."

Ron and Jennifer (Ayers) Spielman
Monroe, Wisconsin

"I am living in northern California with my husband and 2 sons; Eric, 20 months and Paul, 1 month. I still take dance classes when I have the time and work as a nurse 3 days a week.

Rebecca Bondhus-Colley
Groton, California
"Managing Director--Environmental Risk Management Services for Willis Corroon in Nashville, TN. Willis Corroon PLC is the third largest insurance brokerage firm in the world.

In retrospect the years on stage in Song and as a tour guide at Cave of the Mounds probably were as important as my years in college. I'm on stage alot in my job now. The experience I gained in Mt. Horeb was very valuable."

David Dybdahl, Jr.
Brentwood, Tennessee

"John and I have been retired for four years and live in Bellingham, WA, north of Seattle, where the golf is great and salt-water sailing even better. Our daughter Kathy is with United Airlines in Seattle and Carl is an engineer in Seattle. Barb is doing PhD research in Costa Rica. All married--no kids! We all enjoyed our years with Song of Norway.

We probably attended 90-100 performances and Grieg's music has stayed with us, along with the words put to it. We have classical music stations from Vancouver, B.C. and Seattle on frequently and we are surprisingly often reminded of Song; its performances and its settings. We also quote favorite lines frequently, e.g., "Now--not tomorrow--but now!"

John and Florence Bellows
Bellingham, Washington

"We have been in New Jersey for 6 years. Kris just graduated from HS and will be attending George Washington University. Mark is an 8th grader and very involved in soccer. Jan is now teaching Special Education.

I think I remember best the 'tornado' alert out at the Mounds where the entire cast ended up in the Cave for an hour or more. Kristen remembers a girl in the cast that could whistle and hum at the same time!"

Jan Hubbard
Medford Lakes, New Jersey

"We now live in Prairie du Sac, WI where Gary has a practice specializing in chiropractic orthopedics. Judy is office manager. Our family is grown.

Through Song we met co-founders Lee and Nancy Vogel and a host of other friends who have grown dearer with time. Our experience also provided a focus for family fun and a real sense of community for our children."

Gary and Judy Hooks
Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin

"Sorry, I can't make it! I'll be in the Grand Canyon on the 27th!"

David Hottman
Madison, Wisconsin

"Always enjoyed selling tickets and visiting with the people. Hope it can continue on for many more years."

Betty Zentner
"While Eleanor Arneson and I were waiting to go on for our first entrance at the Gym, on opening night in 1967, Monona (Nina) asked me how I felt--I told her that I felt like tinkling in my knickers--Monona said, 'Good, that's how you're supposed to feel!'

It is the responsibility of a community to give it's people some of the best--think of the hundreds of people who, because of Song, have heard some of the best music--can't think of anything that has impacted on the area more than this show. It's continued success has been a miracle--plus a lot of hard work!"

David Dybdahl
Black Earth, Wisconsin

"I live on a farm with my husband in Western Australia. We have about 3,000 acres, 2,000 sheep and grow wheat and barley. Though we would love to be there for the reunion, I am afraid it is a bit too far to go. Hope you have a wonderful reunion and a great season.

I was involved with Song of Norway for about 10 years. I helped out backstage, helped with make-up, sang on stage as one of the townspeople, sang with the Song of Norway Singers and for a few years on the Board as treasurer. I thoroughly enjoyed all of my involvement with Song! I loved the music, the singing, the dancing, and meeting some wonderful people!

I think being on an outdoor stage made it a unique experience. I remember standing on stage in an off-the-shoulder ballgown, turning blue from the cold and trying to keep my teeth from chattering and singing at the same time. I also remembered opening my mouth to sing and swallowing a bug (of which there were many attracted by the lights) and trying to pretend that nothing happened and not spit and splutter and carry on. After all, the show must go on! I remember watching the skies many times and praying that it wouldn't rain just minutes before the show was due to start. I remember singing in the rain and the audience watching us, holding umbrellas. I remember a dog walking on stage once during a performance and stealing the show! I remember it all as a really wonderful experience! My only regret is that I won't be able to be there with you to share in this reunion. But know that my heart is there with you and I hope you all have a really wonderful reunion and another great season!"

Dorothy (Kalina) Moore
Pingrup, Western Australia

"I loved the warmth, kindness and generosity of spirit shown me by all of the company. I wish you the very best."

Ed Amor
Madison, Wisconsin

"I really enjoyed being part of the Song family during my years in the chorus and as one of the Spring Dancers. The rehearsals, the performances and the cast parties were all a special part of the caring and warmth I felt and will always remember fondly.

I am living in the Appleton area with my husband, Dave, and 2½ year old son, Ross. I am currently pursuing a Masters Degree in the school counseling program at UW-Oshkosh and I plan to graduate next May."

Kathy (Schulz) Vanden Boogaard
Little Chute, Wisconsin
"I sang in Song in the chorus in 1970 and graduated from UW in '72. Came back to the UW in 1990 to perform in Alumni production of 'Ariadne Auf Naxos.' Have performed with: Florentine Opera (Milwaukee), Milwaukee Opera Co., Great Lakes Opera Co., (Milwaukee), Skylight Opera (Milwaukee), Music Under the Stars (Milwaukee), Madison Opera, Madison Theatre Guild, Madison Civic Rep., Phi Beta and more.

I only sang one summer (1970) but I'll never forget it. It was a wonderful experience, loads of real fun and I met some great people. Love and luck to all."

Ramon Gawlitta
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

"How I wish I could be there! My thoughts certainly will be. I already faxed a short statement to Jack about what Song meant to me. Have a wonderful reunion!"

Monona Rossol
New York, New York

"The reunion is a great idea. Have fun! I will be in Washington, D.C. attending a summer institute for teachers sponsored by the National Geographic Society. I'm a middle school teacher and have been to Norway 2 times since my Song experience. Grieg's home in Bergen is charming.

I was the 'coffee lady' for a year or 2(!). It was fun to watch the people arrive with their chairs and blankets. I loved seeing the variety of Norwegian sweaters people wore to ward off the chill of the night air at Tyrol Basin. It was an experience to witness Jiggs and Oljanna work the crowd as they seated them on the hillside and exchanged stories and jokes with the visitors. The magical moment for me was when the sun dipped below the rim of the Tyrol and the music began. You could almost see the nisse and trolls cavorting in the background."

Beth Elver
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin

"I am living in central California, married with 2 children; have my own business. My family and my husband's employer are in Wisconsin, so we do get back occasionally.

I truly enjoyed the fellowship, music, and dancing that Song had to offer. It was an exciting experience working with such great talent!"

Carol (Zarndt) Salvador
California

"Del & I both enjoyed the friendship and fellowship we had and still do maintain. The only reason we stopped was the distance we drove and with work starting early the next morning.

I certainly enjoyed singing in Song. It brought me many happy memories and such enjoyment of God's beauty and his gift to so many people with beautiful voices. Certainly God given talent. It's fun to tell my 4th grade students about the Norwegian Song of Norway."

Mary (Klir) and Del Horne
Dodgeville, Wisconsin
"Too bad we can't make it. Unfortunately living in Florida does have a few drawbacks. Been here since 1974. What a great experience this was for my husband and I to be so lucky to be part of the first production of Song of Norway. Since that summer Dick and I have married and have been able to go to Bergen, Norway and really commune with Grieg and all of this beautiful music. We are celebrating 20 years of marriage this summer, and have 2 adopted children. Thanks for asking us. Have a wonderful reunion!"

Dick and Sue (Iverson) Ripp
Fort Myers, Florida

"I hadn't done any acting since high school, about (X) years ago. I had a ball, even though the memory isn't what it used to be (or is it?) and the lines were harder to retain. The entire production staff were fun to work with."

Dick Ostern (Papa Grieg)
Madison, Wisconsin

"That first year we were in Song dancers and so also in the performance which meant we were gone many nights either performing with the dancers or rehearsing with the cast. After 6 straight nights of having the babysitter put the boys to bed, I had to call her to find out what time they were going down."

Jeanne Lunde
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin

"Congratulations! To ALL who have participated in the Song of Norway musical for 25 years. You have given of your time, energy and talent. We commend your dedication of the performance for our community and other places. Many people come from many states and cities for the performances and enjoy the evening. I have enjoyed the performance for many years. I also enjoy hearing the comments on our colorful bunads while we are handing out the programs and taking their tickets. The evening is pleasant and enjoyable."

Fleta Shackelford
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin

"I have helped take tickets and hand out programs for several years. I have a Norwegian bunad which I have worn and it has always been a special occasion to be able to help the Song of Norway production.

Mildred Thronson
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin

"The performances were always exciting: the backstage slightly hectic with makeup and dressing; peeking to see who and how many were out there tonight; worry about threatened weather, etc. Yet to me the highlight each year were the parties. Good people, good music and dance, of course, good food and drink ... but mostly, good people!"

Bob Sager
"Thanks for finding me up here in the Twin Cities, where I’m making myself useful in the human services, and enjoying the Guthrie Theatre and other great arts activities—and working on writing a play! Looking forward to seeing you all! (I’ll be attending with my daughter who was born when Song of Norway was born!)

Nancy Stearns
River Falls, Wisconsin

"We have lived in southern Florida since December, 1979 and love it. Our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren live here for the most part. Gunhild (Goodie) will be going to the Holy Land in November. Boz (Marion) does not care to go. He is very busy helping working at St. Peters Episcopal Church, where our son-in-law is Dean of the Cathedral.

Marion and I were members of the very first performance. There were so few of us that we each had three parts: members of the dance group, members of the crowd on stage in Norwegian costumes and members of the ballroom scene."

Marion and Goodie Boswell
Deerfield Beach, Florida

"Sorry I can’t be there; I have a wedding to sing for. I want to wish you all the very best of luck on your final performance. I wish I could be there. I miss you all very much. Some news: Brian Stoll and I are engaged. Some of you may know him.

Song was honestly one of the more memorable events of my life. Playing Nina gave me confidence and experience to try new things. I’ll never forget my ‘fall’ into stardom. Recall, my opening entrance during the 2nd performance when I ‘fell’ into Rick’s arms, literally!"

Renee Hollfelder
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

"I look back on three memorable summers of wonderful times with everyone in the productions. Every time I hear a Grieg song, I’m right back on the stage."

Art Becknell
Madison, Wisconsin

"Sometimes it was hard, aggravating work. But I enjoyed doing backstage. Good thing I was younger then. Now it’s all I can do going from day to day."

Gladys Board
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin

"A lot of changes in 25 years. Dale and I enjoyed selling tickets with Otto and Irene Gilbertson first at Tryol Basin. We always had such a good time; and then when we got rained out and had to be in the school gym—was it hot! At the Cave of the Mounds grounds, too, was so pleasant. Now Otto and Dale are gone, but the Song goes on. Good luck!"

Rubelle Opsal
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin
"Thank you for your letter concerning the 25th reunion. I regret that I will not be able to attend what sounds like a wonderful event, however, my thoughts will be with you all.

In July of 1987, I was married to Helen Krogman (of Bloomington, WI). We lived and worked in Madison until September 1990 when we relocated to Penfield, New York so that I could attend the Eastman School of Music. I will receive a Masters of Music degree in vocal performance/literature and a Performer’s Certificate in May of 1992. Thus far, I have had several wonderful musical experiences including leading roles in Opera, solo concert work and ensembles. I hope to see the realization of a dream and I’d like to say that the Song of Norway provided another step towards that end.

Helen is teaching music in Avon, a small town outside of Rochester. She enjoys her work and is happy to be here in Rochester, a city not unlike Madison, however, there is no place like Madison, Spring Green, Mt. Horeb and certainly not like Cave of the Mounds.

Please say hello to everyone for us. Should there be any sort of program or book with updated information on Song of Norway cast members, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to purchase one. We extend our warmest regards and wish you the best of luck! on the upcoming reunion and performances.

Dan and Helen Ihasz
Penfield, New York

"Being a part of the Song was without a doubt the greatest fun we had in those years. Since being transferred to Texas (by way of 7 years in Louisiana) we have been active in the Norwegian Society of Texas. You are all saying 'Norwegians in Texas'?? You bet, 70,000 strong–alive and well! Pete and I dance with the Metroplex dance group called Keikarringen. We have about 35 dancers plus groups in Amarillo and El Paso. We are not with you at this timely celebration because we are dancing at the Texas Folklife Festival in San Antonio. We perform approximately 30-40 times a year. Two years ago we journeyed to Iowa for a centennial and three years ago to Oslo, Norway. We have designed our own authentic Texas bunad–ok’d by King Olaf! We have learned to sing many more Norwegian songs and a few American songs translated into Norwegian. Un-Norwegians love to sing "Ro, ro, ro din bat."

Pete is working as a consultant in Louisiana—a 2 year project (started 5 years ago—things do go slower in the South!)—hopefully coming to a close. He is in 'count down' towards retirement. We’re ready to polish the 5th wheeler and head out! Lois keeps busy with house, yard, church, Norwegian whatever, Mother Stoltz and anything else that comes along. The 3 daughters are scattered hither & yon … Gail in Atlanta, Georgia, computer program analyst, husband, Bob, Special Ed teacher; Jean in Berlin, Germany, waiting for Uncle Sam to send them back to U.S., husband, Bill, is an Army helicopter pilot. Next assignment is as an instructor at West Point. Kay in Chaparral, New Mexico, homemaker and substitute teacher, husband, Mike, self-employed sales. 3 children, Katy 12½; Ben, 10; David, 7.

We danced at the National Youth Gathering in Dallas several weeks ago and were pleasantly greeted by some Wisconsin Norwegians. They were very appreciative and we appreciated the young peoples’ attendance, attitudes and attention. Keep that Norwegian heritage going!"

Pete and Lois Becker
Arlington, Texas
"We're continuing to perform in the area. We just had our second child (May 31), a son, Jacob. You may remember Song, 1983—I was pregnant (5 months) with Diana. She still uses the afghan June Edseth made for her. We miss our friends at Song of Norway. Love to you all.

After performing Edvard & Nina for so many years with so many good friends—it seemed we really were good friends reuniting every summer—working out our dreams and our trials in a beautiful corner of God's world. It was a very special time in our lives. Thank you for sharing yourselves with us."

Greg and Peggy Walters
Madison, Wisconsin

"How wonderful that you are having a reunion, and how we wish we could be there. If only we had known sooner, I have a performance engagement in West Texas that weekend, but certainly would not have accepted it if we had known about the reunion. As part of the original cast and original music director, Lou and I have a special interest in the on-going success of the Song of Norway.

The Song held a MOST special place in our lives at its inception—for many reasons. Lou and I had our noses to the grindstones, so to speak. With both of us working on our PhDs, there was little time for joy, except through our family, church and the Song. When we were contacted to play major parts in the first year, and the next successive two years, we were flooded with joy, a joy which spread not only to the personnel involved with the productions, but a joy which included practically the entire town of Mt. Horeb. We started eating there, shopping there, visiting in homes of dear friends, picnicking. To say that the Song helped us through some very heavy times is an understatement. Our children were young; the Song played an important part in their lives, also. Our daughter, Gayla, even played the harp one summer along with the organ. This was her first harp job. I think she was paid $20 for the entire summer (ha!), but it was momentous to her. We still have lifelong friends in Mt. Horeb, and will never forget the place the Countess and the Music Director of the Song played in the fulfillment of just who Lou and Mozelle are today.

By the way, we are still performing, singing, directing, etc. Lou has three bands in Louisville, and I am Director of Opera at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Lou sings with the Kentucky Opera Company, and I tour the U.S., as my teaching/directing schedule allows, to do WOMEN OF THE BIBLE one-woman shows. Let me now if any of the churches in Mt. Horeb ever have a celebration of any kind. Maybe we can work together once again.

Gayla lives in Louisville, has one son, and is Director of Annual Giving at Southern Seminary. She does many harp engagements, and is soloist in a Presbyterian church. Clark is an Associate Episcopal priest, has a son and a daughter, and lives in Ft. Collins, Colorado. We have been in Louisville for seven years, but still own our cabin at Lake Camelot in Wisconsin. We spend as much time as our busy schedules allow there in the North woods.

Let us hear from you have the reunion. And good luck!

Lou and Mozelle Sherman
Louisville, Kentucky

"Sorry I can't make it. Just finished playing Eliza Doolittle in "My Fair Lady" here in New York City."

Cindy Marty
Jackson Heights, New York
I'm not exactly sure to whom I should address this, especially in light of the twenty-five years (!) which have passed since I first set foot on the "Song of Norway" stage that very first season--anybody left from those early years?

So, dear Reunion Committee. I'd just started singing around the time "Song of Norway/Mt. Horeb" was in the planning stages, and I vividly remember an envoy of people, my Father's cousin Olean Cuneen included, coming backstage after a performance of "Die Fledermaus" (Madison Civic Opera), asking me to be the first Rikard Nordrak. Those were thrilling times, but my onstage experience was indeed limited--how well I remember Nancy Stern's patient help--but eventually I was able to walk across a stage without falling over my own feet! My two seasons as Rikard were a kind of springboard, propelling me toward an as yet unknown but hopeful career on the stage, and as I look back on these (oh my god!) twenty-five years, I have to say that I'm thrilled that I persevered. So here I am, sitting at my Smith-Corona, on the 18th floor of my very nice air-conditioned apartment, reflecting on the the hundreds and hundreds of performances with which I've been involved since my move to New York City, and at the same time re-living those heady but uncertain days in 1967(?).

But before this gets to be too long, or too boring, let me just say that I'm currently singing with the New York City Opera, as a chorister, and from time to time a role or two comes my way. I've also been singing with The Metropolitan Opera for a few seasons--was in their new "Ring" Cycle, and this past season's new production of "Parsifal," which I'll be repeating in the spring of '92. I've also recently started painting (water colors), and have done a few colored pencil drawings as well. The enclosed Canon copy is a drawing I did of Olean Cuneen (wonderful lady!) from a photograph which I took during our last visit--the copy isn't very accurate, but at least you'll get an impression of one of my first efforts. I wonder if either "Little Norway, or perhaps "Song of Norway" would enjoy displaying the original? Is there any sort of permanent spot for this sort of thing? I would be happy to have it matted and framed, as thanks for her wonderful contribution to "Song of Norway," and as loving memory of a kind and beautiful lady.

Much success to "Song of Norway"! I hope that the note indicating "final performances" doesn't mean the door are closing forever. Please, say it isn't so! I'd love to be there for the reunion, but opera calls.

Best wishes always,

Ron Forsmo
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