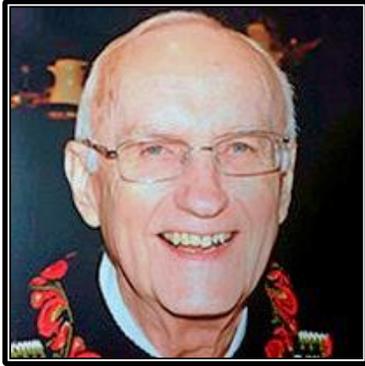


Nordfjordlag E-News

Nordfjordlag President - Dennis Robert Sorheim Dies



Born August 6, 1938 near Argonne, SD and died on February 12, 2021 (age 82) in Edina, Minnesota. Dennis was raised in Howard, SD and moved to Minneapolis and graduated from Minneapolis North. He graduated from St. Olaf College with a degree in English and minors in Norwegian and Music.

He met Phyllis while living and teaching in Carthage, SD, and they were married on May 11, 1963. They raised Tona, Trent, and Scott in Minneapolis and then Mendota Heights.

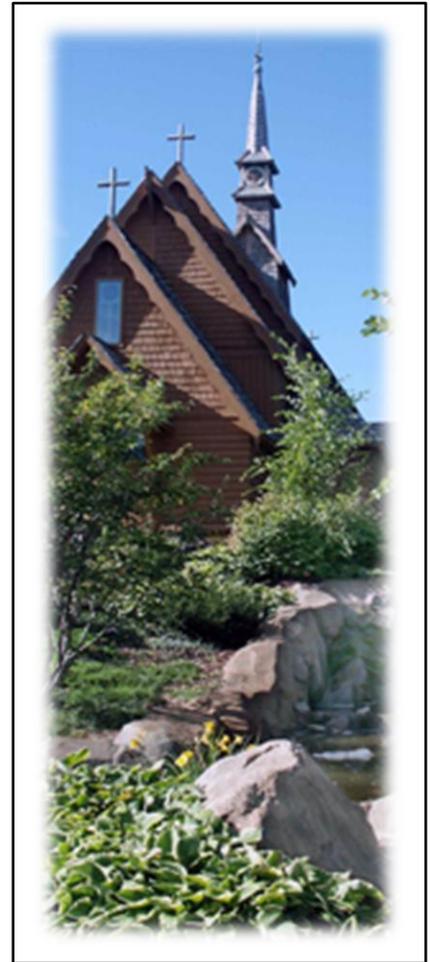
Over forty years of his professional career was with Peoples Electric in St. Paul, MN. Dennis loved hymns, playing the piano, appreciated classical music, and singing-especially in Norwegian. He was in Glee Club, attended Guthrie and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra with friends. Bowling, investment club, skiing, card games, and serving on many other boards and committees also kept him busy.

Dennis was passionate about his Norwegian heritage, evident by involvement with Vonheim Lodge, Norske Torske Klubben, Kontakt, Vesterheim, Nordfjordlaget i Amerika, and Sons of Norway where he served as Int'l President from 1994-1998. Dennis held a deep faith in Christ and was a dedicated Augustana Lutheran Church member since 1978, and more recently was involved at Mindekirken.

Those left to cherish his memory are: his children, Tona (Colin) Kerslake, Trent (Beatriz) Sorheim, and Scott (Jenny) Sorheim; his 8 grandchildren, Brittany, Parker, Nick, Alexis (Blaine), Riley, Kelby, Brooklyn, and Whitley; his siblings-in-law, Eldon Sneesby of Howard, SD and Jean Sneesby of SD, and many nieces, nephews and cousins; and his many friends that are a result of active involvement in his community all of his life. He was preceded in death by his wife, Phyllis, in 2004, his parents Harry and Anna; his siblings, Lola (Robert) Fedde, Richard (Dorothy) Sorheim, Dwight Sorheim, Janice (Robert) Awes, many aunts, uncles, cousins and dear friends.

Service was Thursday, February 18 at Augustana Lutheran Church, 1400 So. Robert St., West St Paul. Burial Noon Friday at Belleville Lutheran Cemetery, Howard, SD. Memorials to donor's choice.

He will be sorely missed!



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Stevne for 2021?

Are you wondering if there will be a Nordfjordlag Stevne held in 2021? I am. I have gotten both my COVID-19 shots and soon most of us should have them. But looking at the statistics published by the state health board one wonders if we will all be able to be together by September in time for our stevne. And will we know in time to find someone to do a program for the day.

Other lags who's stevner normally come earlier in the year have started to send in notices delaying their next meetings until 2022.

The board officers will need to meet soon to discuss this and other lag matters.

Are you concerned about getting together in person at our stevne? Would you still like to visit with your Nordfjording friends? Then **please** let the Nordfjordlag officers know now so we can start looking into holding a virtual meeting also! Use the E-mail link below.

We are also looking for suggestions for the position of President. If you are interested or would like to suggest someone for the position, then also let the officers know.

The Fellesraad is planning to have their May annual meeting virtually this year using UTube and the meeting program called Zoom. That will allow them to have their guest speaker give his presentations without having to leave Norway and allow members to execute their annual business without having to meet physically.

Speaking of the Fellesraad annual meeting, we need two representatives from our lag to be our voting members for that meeting. Obviously, you would not need to travel to the meeting, but you would be expected to be our voice for any questions that may come up for a vote. The only drawback to this year's virtual meeting is that we will miss out of the great lunches served there!

First come first served!

Please let us know by sending an E-mail message to officers@nordfjordlag.com.

COVID-19

Norway vs Minnesota

When looking at the total population, Norway (with 5.4 million) is remarkably close to Minnesota (with 5.7 million). Although as of March 4, 2021, the number of COVID-19 cases does not compare so well. Norway had a total of 72,923 cases (or 1.35% of the population) vs Minnesota with over 487,000 cases (8.5% of the population).

The density of population distributions is very similar, but Minnesota packs the total number into a smaller area. (Norway is 1.7 times larger than Minnesota.)

Comparisons of the death rates puts Norway at 632 deaths (0.86% of cases) vs Minnesota at 6575 deaths or (1.35% of cases). Likewise, in Norway deaths are 0.011% of the population while in Minnesota deaths are 0.111% of the population, ten times greater than that of Norway.

It looks like having Norwegian blood is good, although I am sure that social factors play a larger part in those differences.



Stryn Norway

From the Archives

Gene Rodi, Lag Librarian

“**From the Archives**” is a feature from times past gleaned from the Nordfjordlag archives. I hope to bring you texts, articles, and copies of news items of interest from these collections.

This is the text of a talk given at the 25th anniversary of Nordfjordlaget in 1935 given by B. A. Gimmestad.

“Our Norwegian Heritage”

By B. A. Gimmestad

I appreciate the honor bestowed upon me by being asked to speak at the 25th anniversary meeting of this Nordfjordlag. I wish I could speak in the Norwegian, but my Norse is rather faulty, and I dare not make the attempt. This opportunity to speak has given me an experience that prompts me to urge upon the younger generation the necessity of becoming more intimately acquainted with the history of the land from where their forefathers came. In preparing for this talk I felt it necessary to review what little Norse history I had had, but to my amazement. I found I knew very, very little. I began skimming through Professor Boyeson’s “Story of Norway”, but before I knew it I had stopped skimming and was reading in detail. I read the book from cover to cover, and found it as fascinating as any good piece of fiction I had ever read.

My topic this evening is “Our Norwegian Heritage”. In the few minutes allowed to me I want to try to bring to the younger generations something I feel they are lacking—namely a sincere pride in their forbears, and in the country from which their inheritance has sprung. Descendants of every country have something to be proud of, but I believe that we of Norwegian descent have a special right to be proud of our heritage. In order to understand a country and its people, one must necessarily be well acquainted with its history. Let us for a few moments review briefly some of the highlights of Gamle

Norge’s history. I know this is familiar to most of my audience, but there are those who know little or nothing about it. First of all, where did the Norse people come from? We know they belong to the Aryan or white race of peoples, and history tells us that the Aryan tribes probably had their original home in that part of Asia which the ancients called Bactria, near the sources of the rivers Oxus and Jaxartes. The first of these Aryan tribes, to migrate to Europe were those

of the Heilenes. or Greeks, and the Italic group from which came the mighty Roman Empire. Then followed the Celts, Slays and Teuton to which belong the Scandinavians. It is believed that the only portion of this Aryan race that remained in Asia were the Iranians in Persia, and the Hindus in India. The dates of the migrations of the various tribes is unknown, but it is believed that the Scandinavian tribes invaded the countries that they now inhabit during the second century preceding the Christian era. These tribes subdued the Finns and Lapps, whom they found in possession of the land, partly exterminating them, and driving the rest into the barren mountains of the extreme north.

Bear in mind that the chief occupation of these early tribes was fighting—war to conquer new lands, and war to hold what they had conquered. Do not be too hasty in judging them for some of the things they perpetrated, at least until you know something of the times in which they lived. Their religion centered about fighting. They had waged war from time immemorial because to them it was an honorable occupation. They fought to exist, and they fought for honor and glory for themselves and their country. Life was pretty much in the raw, and one cannot judge them from the standards of modern civilization.

In settling Norway, the tribes divided into groups so that almost every separate valley in Norway became a little kingdom by itself. These were called “fylkis”. The leader, who was also the tribal priest, was king over his own little group to start with, but here is an interesting thing regarding these “fylkis”. Al though the “fylkis” had its chief, or “jarl” as he was called, he could not tax the people for his own support nor could he impose on them any burden they would not accept of their own free choice. The people expressed their will in the “fylkis thing”, or popular assembly, and this idea has been carried

throughout the entire history of the country—the various “Things” during the days of the Vikings, growing into the Storting in 1814, the present representative assembly in Norway today. Later on, as the country became more nationally minded, these “fylkis” were banded into larger units and were more like counties—Trondelag, Viken, Vermaland, Gudbrandsdal, etc.

The topography of Norway decided the occupations of the people. Between raids on the neighboring countries or themselves, the inhabitants devoted themselves to fishing and agriculture, the chief and only main industries for centuries outside of fighting—if you can call that an industry, and it probably was so considered in those days.

The Vikings were a bold, fearless and ferocious band of men, marauding, pillaging, and murdering. Rightly did the other nations of Europe fear this fierce race of men. They have been condemned by historians of other nations and praised and lauded in the sagas of their own land, but remember the background of the race and the period of history they were living in and you can see that they were doing what they thought was right and proper. It is a peculiar thing about right and wrong. Men of other nations did the same things as the Vikings, but instead of condemning them they received a prominent place in the history of their nation, and in many cases were given titles and lands for their deeds. It is unfortunate that the history of these early Vikings is so fragmentary and indefinite, but we do not find anything definite outside of the Sagas until the time of Harold, the Fair Haired.

By their invasions and by their conquests, the Vikings brought to the nations of Europe a quality that has been the backbone of modern civilization—that independence that states as Abraham Lincoln did a thousand years later—“all men are created free and equal”—that spirit that gave to the world the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence.

These Vikings did more than invade and pillage a country. They conquered and settled in the lands they conquered and spread the quality that gives a Norseman the right to hold his head high among his fellowmen. Scotland was under their dominion for over three hundred years; Dublin, Ireland was under the rule of the Norsemen for 350 years; Northumbria in England, and other parts of England; the Orkney, Hebrides, Shetland and Faroe Islands, and Iceland. Rolf, the Walker, received the province of Normandy as fee from King Charles, the simple. The results of the influence of the Vikings and their ideas of democracy can be traced right down the line of Rolf's descendants through William Longsword, Richard the Fearless, and William the Conqueror, and so down the line of

English kings to the time of the Magna Carta—the eventful period in English and World history when the people of England declared in no uncertain terms that they were a free people and must be governed as such.

Mention was made of the early religion of the Norse. We cannot judge them rightly unless we know somewhat of this powerful influence on their lives and thoughts. Heathens they were and heathens they remained even long after Christianity had been introduced into Norway. Today we find Norway among those at the head of the list of Christian nations. There can be no object in this talk to go into detail regarding the religion of the ancient Norse, but a very brief summary may bring things to mind that may have been forgotten and give us a better understanding of our ancestors.

You are all acquainted with the Snorre Sagas and the ancient myths of Norse religion—Odin, Thor, and Frey—(after whom three days of the week are named), the Valkyries, Balder, Loke—all are familiar names to those of Norse descent. The world in the beginning was conceived by the early Norse as an enormous ash tree, named Ygdrasil, the three roots of which extend one to gods in Asgard, another to Yotunheim, the home of Night, the third to Niflheim, the home of frost and darkness. Odin dwelt with the other gods, Honer and Lodur, in Asgard, where he receives in his shining hall, Valhalla, all of those who died by the sword. These men in Valhalla, chosen by the Valkyrie maidens, issue forth each day and fight great battles, killing and maiming each other. But every evening they wake up whole and unscathed and return to Odin's hall where they spend the night in merry carousing and feasting. The emphasis in this religion, you will note, is that of fighting, and accounts for some of the zeal displayed by the Vikings. Each warrior dying by the sword, goes to his reward in Valhalla. The story of Thor and his great hammer Mjolner, riding in a cart drawn by two rams over the Gjallar bridge, Balder, the good and beautiful, Njord, ruler of the sea, Frey, ruler of the seasons, peace and good crops; Tyr, god of courage; and the evil Loke—these are all familiar, but we cannot take the time to relate these in detail.

Time does not permit going into details regarding the history of the Viking kings. Suffice it to say, that had it not been for the independent spirit of the people, their love of liberty that never died, and the courage of the peasant in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties, Norway would not today be the nation she is, nor in all probability would you and I be here today. Periods of darkness and periods of light—that was the story of the early kings. Darkness in periods ruled by Eric Blood Axe and his wicked wife, Gunhild; Harold Gille and that

long dark period beginning with the reign of Magnus the law maker in 1263. The period of light with Harold the Fair Haired, Olaf Tryggvason, Olaf Haroldson, Sverre Sigurdson and others of like rule. All through the entire history of Norway runs the vein of courageous independent spirit of the peasant. The Tronders, all of the west coast of early Norway, seem to have been representative of this spirit, and their active participation in the fight for independence and personal liberty is typical of the temper of the entire race.

It is of interest to see the influence that custom has on our present-day civilization. It has been the custom that all kings of Norway are crowned in the Cathedral at Nidaros, or Drontheim, as it was known in the days of the early kings. The Trondelag was one of the most populated districts and its citizens were active in their insistence on preserving their inherent rights. It was here that Olaf Tryggvason built the city of Nidaros, and it was here that that great Cathedral was built in memory of Olaf the Saint, who put down the last barrier to Christianity in this section of Norway. The Tronders in their "thing" often controlled the naming of a king and it was because of their power and their location that this custom was begun and has continued down the ages. History shows us that these men of central and western Norway were the foundation and the backbone of modern Norwegian democracy.

The dark centuries for Norway from about 1263 to 1814 only glorify all the more the indefatigable spirit of our forefathers. Though they were little better than serfs during the years under Denmark, they did not bow to the yoke as did the peasants of other nations under the Feudal system. Though disaster in the form of the Gula-Elva disaster and the horrors of the Black Death in 1349 which swept away the population of entire districts and paralyzed the entire country—these were enough to make ordinary mortals give up in despair, but these ancient Norse did not know the meaning of "giving up". Dark was the day when Norway lost her last vestige of independence in 1537 by being declared a province of Denmark. Through it all, these Norsemen never lost their inherent ideas of democracy and personal liberty. They resented every encroachment and never forgot the inheritance that had been passed down to them, and lost. Slowly Norway emerged—bit by bit—gamely fighting their way back, contesting every inch they gained until one by one the yokes were thrown off. Then on that day glorious to all of Norse descent, May 17, 1814, when at Eidsvold, Norway declared her independence of Denmark—where men like Sverdrup, Falsen, and Motzfelt overruled the timidity of those who were afraid to face the world as an independent nation. Again in 1905

when the final separation was made from the Union with Sweden, and Norway at last stood among the free nations of the world—free to work out her own problems in her own way.

What have you and I gained from these ancestors of ours? To know the history of Norway is to know that we of Norwegian descent have much to be proud of. No nation of weaklings could have come through such a bitter struggle as did Norway—stronger than ever because of the struggles. No nation without the intense love of liberty could have achieved what Norway has done in the short period after regaining her independence.

Listen to what historians and travelers, not of our nationality have to say:

"The most marked mental characteristics are clear insight, unconquerable pertinacity, dogged obstinacy, absolute honesty, and a sturdy sense of independence."

"No other country possesses so many men in official positions—doctors, clergymen, engineers, teachers and merchants—who are peasant born, and no other country has so many eminent men of science and statesmen risen directly from the peasantry."

"Poverty and piety alone have been left to influence the Norwegian. A deep sense of religion and a faith grounded in Almighty God is found in every home."

"Few peoples are as honorable and amiable and as free from destructive passions and pernicious prejudices. They are fond of a quiet and simple life with kinsfolk and friends."

Not the least of our heritage is that of health. A hardy race that has passed down to us a health that resists disease. In posture the Norse stand above all races of men. In the Civil War they were with the native Americans the tallest in the army, and in chest expansion were superior to them all.

To summarize, you and I have inherited these things from our forefathers:

Deep seated feeling of democracy and independence,

Strength of character,

Healthy bodies,

Reverence for God.

What more can one ask for? We have a right to be proud of our ancestry.

One could go on for hours reciting and recounting deeds of the past and present in Norwegian history. We point with pride that one of our race discovered America in the year 1000. We are proud of the fact that Norwegians took a prominent part in the early

history of our own country. We rejoice in the fact that Norway today stands respected of nations, contributing to the wealth of the world, in music through Grieg, Ole Bull, and Nordraak; in literature through Bjornson, Ibsen, Jonas Lie and Kielland; in art through Johan Dahl, Baade, Gude and Tideman, in sculpture by Sinding and Skeibrok. Today we find Norway leading in many social reforms, quietly tending to her own business, and growing in her influence on modern civilization.

Those of us in America who are descendants of the Norse are first and foremost Americans. We hold no allegiance to any other flag, no loyalty to any other nation other than our own beloved United States. We do, however, take pride in the fact that we are descended from a race of people with a history as proud as of any nation. With thousands of others of the younger generation here in the Northwest I can honestly say, "I am proud of my Norwegian ancestry!"

Join the Fellesraad Annual Meeting

As always, all bygdslag members are encouraged to join the Fellesraad annual meeting. Yes, each lag is expected to provide two voting members to these meetings but many people do not realize that all lag members are invited to attend the meeting and the special presentations provided there!



This year the meeting will be held virtually over Zoom and the special presenter will be Dr. Terje Joranger, Executive Director of the Norwegian Emigrant Museum located near Hamar, Norway.

[Link to Museum in Hamar-Norway](#)

Dr. Joranger is an expert in Norwegian

emigration and will share historical information on the four main emigration waves from Norway which correspond with the Norwegian immigration waves into the U.S. So, bring your ancestors' emigration information to help you tie into these emigration waves!

Other presentations will include the partnership established in 1955 between the Fellesraad (and Bygdslag) and the Norwegian Emigrant Museum and how that ties into our history. Dr. Joranger will talk about the major role he is playing in both the commemoration of the bicentennial of Norwegian Emigration in 2025 in Norway and coordinating with Norwegian-Americans in the U.S.

Current Nordfjordlag Officers

<u>Position</u>	<u>Person</u>	<u>1st Elected in</u>
President	Dennis Sorheim	2014
Vice President / Webmaster / Librarian	Gene Rodi	1995
Secretary	Sonia Rache	1997
Treasurer	Bob Swanson	2015
Genealogist	Kevin Hoff	2019
Director	Beverly Anderson	
Director	Martha McCartney	
Director	Gail Holm	

E-Mail: officers@nordfjordlag.com

Fellesraad Update on the Archive and Bibliotek at Norway House

By Elaine Hasleton

Dear Bygdelag Members,

What a year this has been!! Innovation has been the key to survival, both individually and professionally and organizationally! It is a challenge to maintain a closeness with Lag members when the annual Stevner are not held. Zoom has become our newest mode of communication, both for Board and other meetings and classes.

When all seems to have come to a standstill, we continually move forward with the Haugo Archive and Bibliotek at Norway House. Most of the “stations” or learning areas in the discovery experience, the Bibliotek, are firmed up. The floor plan is drawn, and we now need additional content for each station.

The station areas include: Famous Norwegians and Famous Norwegian-Americans, Emigration & Immigration, Norwegian-American & Canadian

Settlements, Record My Story, a DNA kiosk, and activities for children.

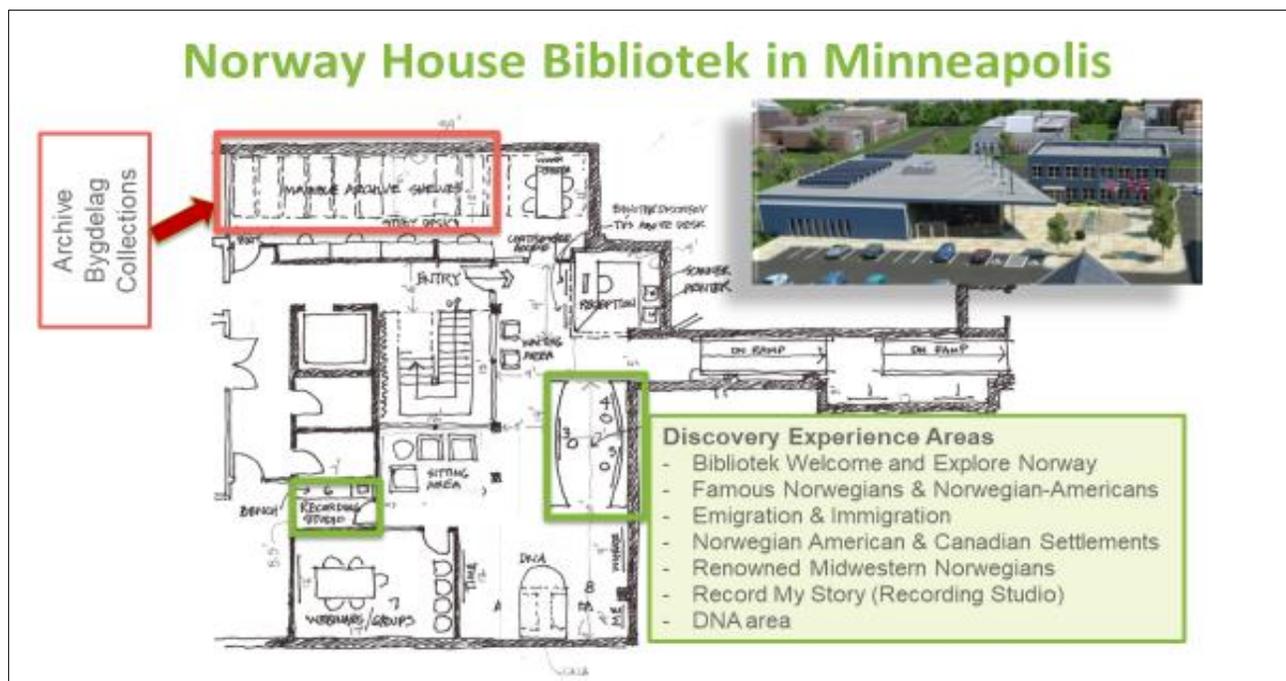
Would you each look at these topics to see where you might find information you can share? We wish to preserve your Lag and family history knowledge that are invaluable. Are there databases for your Lag area in Norway? There are numerous areas to pursue.

You will see the lay-out of the Archive (in red) and the Bibliotek (in green) on the floor plan below.

Tusen takk, Lag organizations and individuals, for your donations to help bring this project along. It is a big step in preserving our Bygdelag and Norwegian heritage!

Med vennlig hilsen,

Elaine



Membership:

Interested in becoming a member of Nordfjordlag?

Print this page, fill out the form and send it to the address on the form

Nordfjordlag in America

Memberships / Memorials

Memberships:

Mr.

Mrs.

Ms. _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone: _____

Cell: _____

Yearly Memberships: _____ @ \$10.00 per person

\$ _____

Life Memberships: _____ @ \$100.00 per person

\$ _____

Memorials:

If you would like to honor or remember someone with a donation to the Nordfjordlag, please complete the following:

Given in Honor of _____

\$ _____

Given in Memory of _____

\$ _____

Special donation to Bunad Fund _____

\$ _____

Total Memberships / Memorials:

\$ _____

Please make check payable to "Nordfjordlag" for the total amount.

Mail this form and check to:

Bob Swanson

16226 Grinnell Avenue

Lakeville, MN 55044

Ending Notes:

If there are members that have died since our last meeting, please forward that information to me so that it can be included in the next issue.

Have there been any address, phone number, or e-mail changes? Send them in!

We do not have a set schedule for publishing this newsletter. Much of that depends on what we hear from you, our readers.

Do you know someone who may be interested in joining Nordfjordlag? Send them a link to or a copy of the **Nordfjordlag E-News** and encourage them to join us. For it is through your personal contacts that 99% of our membership growth comes!

This issue is being sent as a link to the newsletter stored on our web page. (The first issue was included as an attachment to the E-mail that was sent.) I know that some of you may not have access to fast internet connections or have a limited service or phone mail addresses on which you wish to limit data flow, so I want to hear your feedback on which method is best for you!

In any case, I'd love to hear from you!

Gene Rodi, V.P./webmaster/librarian

webmaster@nordfjordlag.com.

Want current information on other lags? Go to www.fellesraad.com

Link to the Nordfjordlag web page. Go to www.nordfjordlag.com

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