



Nordic News

240 Sparks Street, PO Box 55023, Ottawa, ON K1P 1A1

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Tim Mark

I am happy to report that the Canadian Nordic Society has enjoyed successful start to the 2015-16 season.

Behind-the-scenes work has resulted in our new PayPal system as a way to join or renew CNS membership online – which already 25 members have done. Great credit is due to Council members Astrid Ahlgen and Bruce Miller and to our hard-working webmaster Punam Bhargava for this achievement.

The second behind-the-scenes enhancement has come thanks to the work of Council member Hilde Huus (with help from brother Jan) who have set up CNS with a Facebook account as of Nov. 3. This indeed is a great leap forward: we are already liked by 51 people from all over the place and Facebook is proving a great asset in publicising events and information of interest to our members – and far beyond. Do check it out.

Membership stands at 110 at present, which is very creditable. We have enjoyed three excellent speakers' evenings as well as sponsorship of the Ottawa Chamber Orchestra's "Scandinavian Adventures" on Nov. 21 – a concert of the music of Grieg and Sibelius played to a near-capacity house at St. Brigid's Centre for the Arts.

The monthly lunches have been going from strength to strength, with over 40 people registered for the December 7 Christmas lunch. If you have not come to a monthly lunch yet – a warm welcome awaits you.

Next up: please mark your calendar for Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2016 when **Eric Bawden** will speak on his intriguing **Journey of Discovery** of his Finnish roots. Members free, non-members \$5. Further speakers in the series will be announced. If you have ideas or suggestions for future speakers or events do please speak to any member of Council

Finally, on behalf of the CNS Council – best wishes to everyone for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Finnish joulupikki

MONTHLY LUNCHES

Canadian Nordic Society members meet for lunch once a month from September until June at the historic and beautiful Officers' Mess at 149 Somerset Street West (just east of Elgin Street), Ottawa. Please do join us!

These are the dates of the lunches for the rest of this season:

- January 4
- February 1
- March 7
- April 4
- May 2
- June 6



Danish Julemanden

Don Westwood's Presentation on the Design of Toronto City Hall: the Finnish influence on Modern Toronto

by Peter Macnaughton

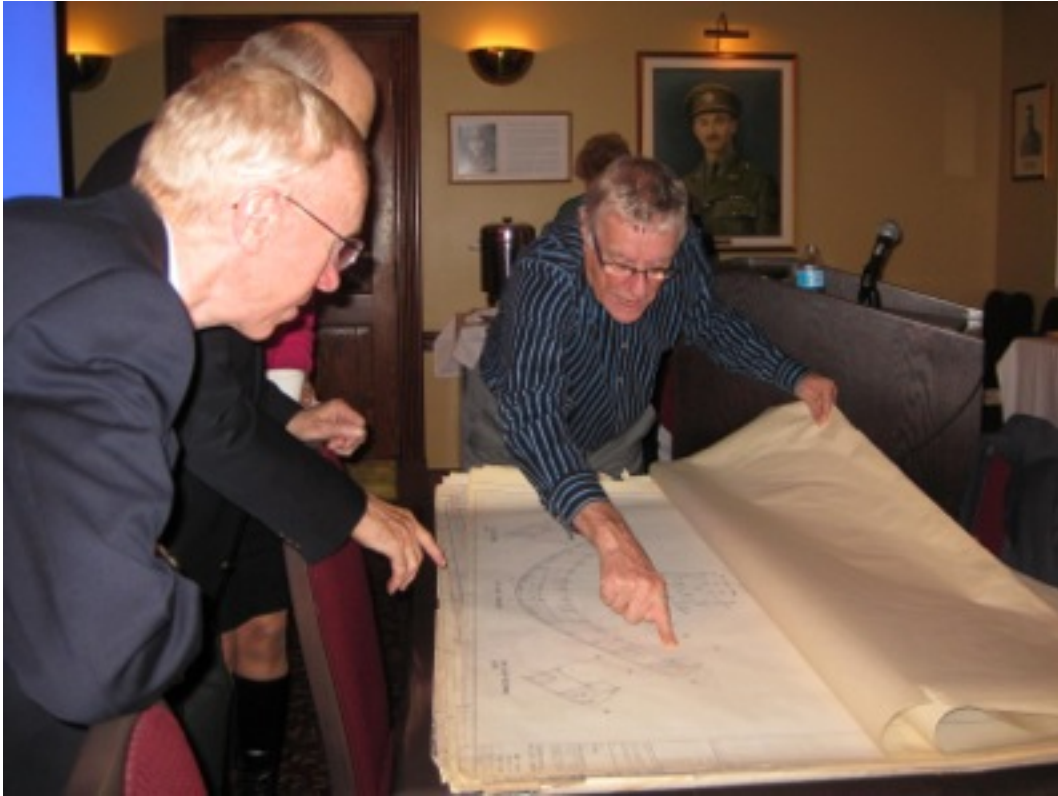
Thanks, Don, for your fascinating description on November 17 of the origin and development of the Toronto City Hall (which is celebrating its 50 years of service this year), its Finnish “foundation”, and your own personal contributions to its development.

Don Westwood is a long-time member of CNS, and in the early 1960's was employed as an architectural assistant (read “draughtsman”) by the Canadian architects hired to implement the design for the new city hall in Toronto conceived by the Finnish Architect Viljo Revell.

The need for a new city hall was identified back in 1943, but the project kept getting postponed until Mayor Nathan Philips created an international competition in the mid 1950's to select a design. Over 500 entries from 42 countries around the world were submitted. A 5-member panel of distinguished architects selected the winning design from 8 semi-finalists. Interestingly, each entry had to include a model built to a specified scale, so that it could be placed in a model of then downtown Toronto and viewed from many directions.

According to Don, the concept of the two curved towers with the pedestal council building in between was originated one evening by several associates of Revell and was presented to him the next morning for his acceptance. Revell tried to ensure the originators received strong recognition for their inspiration, but unfortunately passed away before completion of the building.

The towers sit on top of a parking garage, which presented challenges in the design of the supports for the towers to leave nice rectangular spots for cars beneath. One of Don's contributions was



calculating, by hand, slide rule and adding machine, the location of every support, down to a thousandth of a foot, or about 0.3 mm. Later his calculations were verified using the “big” computer at the University of Toronto, and the results were found to be off by 0.003 feet, or about 1 millimetre. *(Photo shows Don Westwood pointing out some features from drawings he worked on during the design and construction.)*

Other challenges that existed included the need to study the aerodynamics of the structure including wind tunnel testing, resulting in some design changes at the ends of the curved towers to ensure that the towers wouldn't shake to pieces in strong winds.

Don was also involved in the design of the precast concrete wall panels forming the outside of the towers. The standard construction material in vogue at that time was limestone blocks so the use of concrete panels was a radical innovation.



Don Westwood receiving his “Thank You” mug from Tim Mark, President of the CNS. The bag is in “Carleton University Colours” in respect to Don’s long service in the University’s Faculty of Architecture.



Norwegian Julenisser

Events of Interest to CNS Members

The Canadian Museum of History's **Vikings Exhibition** opens on Wednesday December 3 and runs until April 17, 2016. For more information and to buy tickets, visit <http://www.historymuseum.ca/event/vikings/#>

Swedish Club's annual traditional Lucia celebration on Saturday, December 5, 4:00PM to 7:00PM at Rideau Park United Church, Alta Vista. (The Lucia procession will start at 5:00PM.)

Danish Club's family Christmas party on Sunday, December 6 at 2:00PM, at St. John's Lutheran Church Hall, 272 Crichton Street, Ottawa

Friends of Iceland Jólaglögg featuring the film "Of Horses and Men" (Icelandic with English subtitles) on Thursday, December 10 at 7:30PM, at Arts Court Studio Theatre, 2 Daly Avenue, Ottawa (parking at the Rideau Centre). Traditional Glögg to be served at the reception which follows. Free admission but donations welcome.

Danish Club's Christmas church service on Sunday, December 13 at 2:00PM, at St. John's Lutheran Church, 272 Crichton Street, Ottawa

Finnish Christmas service on Sunday, December 13, 3:00PM, at St. Peter's Evangelical Church, 400 Sparks Street. Entrance through the side door from the parking lot. (Note: entrance is closed at 3:30 and re-opened after the service, before the coffee reception.)



Icelandic "Yule lads" in Dimmuborgir

My Little Christmas Story

by Hilde Huus

Christmas last year was bittersweet for my family. My father died nine days before Christmas, on December 16, 2014. On top of frailties caused by multiple sclerosis, he had suffered a series of “mini-strokes” before becoming significantly disabled by a major stroke in the summer of 2013. This led to his having to move to a retirement residence in Bells Corners that fall, and then to “The Grove” nursing home in Arnprior. My mother visited him there every day. He became gradually wearier and slipped back and forth between this and other worlds, but somehow he always recognized his family and was always very happy to see us. He coped remarkably well with his disabilities - checking the newspaper to find the date, coming up with innovative ways to describe something when he couldn’t find the word. The nursing home is right on the edge of the beautiful Arnprior grove with its historic giant white pines, and he liked to sit at the large window in his room and look for birds and squirrels. One day he reported to me that he had seen “one of those... one of those... RED PRIESTS!”. “Oh”, I exclaimed, “you saw a cardinal”!! “Right - a cardinal!” he replied happily.

On the morning of December 16, it was suddenly apparent that he was very ill and he was sent by ambulance to the Arnprior Hospital, and from there to the Civic Hospital in Ottawa. My mother, my brother and I gathered around his bed and waited anxiously for reports on his condition and what, if anything could be done. He seemed to be mostly unconscious but occasionally he responded to a touch or to something that was said. It became clear as the afternoon progressed that we would have to let him go, but it was impossible to say how long he might be able to hang on. It could be several days, we were told. We were encouraged to look after ourselves-to eat, to rest, to take turns with the bedside vigil.

So I went to the cafeteria and had supper while my mother and brother stayed with him. Then my brother took my mother home with him to have supper with his family. Alone with my father but unable to really communicate with him, I started to sing softly. I sang a couple of little Norwegian songs I knew from my childhood, and then hummed some tunes that drifted into my mind. I think there may have been some Norwegian fiddle tunes among them, but I’m not sure. I sang bits and pieces of some Christmas carols. I tried to sing “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” but I found I was crying and I couldn’t continue. And then my father died.

Late that night I drove my mother back to Arnprior through a sleety rain. Numb and exhausted, I went to bed and while trying to fall asleep, I suddenly remembered a conversation I had had with my father. I could not and cannot remember where we were or when it took place. It may have been while he was staying at the retirement residence in Bells Corners the previous Christmas. I remember we talked about Christmas carols. “I like that quiet one, you know,” he had said. “Silent Night?”, I asked. No, not that one. “O Little Town of Bethlehem?”. No, no, that other one. “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear?”. Yes, that’s the one! And I remember thinking to myself that this was important, and I needed to remember it.

My father's own father had died just before Christmas when my father was a young man. It would be like my father (who was such a planner) to muse that he himself might also die just before Christmas, and that in that case, we could sing "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" at his funeral.

And we did sing "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" at his funeral a few days before Christmas. It was the last song in the service we had prepared for him, and it was perfect! Several people in my family sing in choirs, and many of our choir friends came to the service. So we sang with feeling of "Angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold", of "Peace on earth, good will to men", and "The world in silent stillness lay to hear the angels sing".

A few days later we surprised ourselves by having a very pleasant family Christmas! It was quieter than usual, but we were all happy to be together and we all felt very much at peace. My father had made it clear to us that he was ready to go, and we all felt in our hearts that we had looked after him as well as we possibly could, and had done justice to him at his funeral.

On Christmas Day, my mother's neighbour dropped in to pay her respects. She and her husband, a pastor, had lived next door for a couple of years and were on friendly terms with my mother, but they did not know each other well. She hadn't come to the funeral because she hadn't seen the death notice in time. She is a lovely woman and we sat and talked and drank tea for a while. As she was leaving, she handed my mother an envelope. My mother saw her out and then opened it. Inside was a beautiful Christmas card with a traditional landscape in white, grey, blue and silver. "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" was the Christmas message written on the front.



Swedish Jultomte

Contributions to Nordic News

We appreciate receiving your articles and news to include in the *Nordic News*! Please email them to the editor, Hilde Huus, at hildehuu@gmail.com

www.canadiannordicsociety.com
email: info@canadiannordicsociety.com

<https://www.facebook.com/canadiannordicsociety>





Canadian Nordic Society

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Membership Application/Renewal

(membership year 1 September - 31 August)

Name(s) _____
Mailing address _____

Phone(s) _____
Email _____

Category of membership (check box)

- individual \$30.00
- family \$45.00
- student \$20.00

You will receive a receipt for your payment.

September 2015