



Nordic News

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

Choices in Extraordinary Circumstances

by Hilde Huus

The Occupation of Norway by Nazi Germany was not unexpected. My father told me that there had been talk around the dinner table in his home about the possibility for some time before it actually happened. And while the Occupation was a brutal, violent, and terrifying time for many, Norway got off fairly lightly compared to some countries like Poland and the Ukraine, because Hitler believed that the Scandinavian “race” was closely related to the German “master race.” Sadly, many Norwegians sided with him and joined the Nazi Party or became collaborators. When my grandparents were arrested separately for their underground activities, it was Norwegian civilian police officers who arrested them on both occasions.

But there were many, many Norwegians who actively resisted the Nazis in large ways and in small. Many young men like Trygve Ringereide (whose son Trygve John Ringereide spoke about his life at our February Distinguished Speakers event) put their lives on the line by escaping Norway to join the Norwegian Armed Forces that were fighting with the Allied Forces. Others performed daring acts of sabotage, sheltered fugitives, passed along secret messages, published illegal newspapers, shared food, or did whatever they could in ways large and small to help in the struggle against the fascism that had taken over their country.

My father was a boy of 12 living in the Majorstuen neighbourhood of Oslo when the Nazis took over. His parents were imprisoned, his school was taken over, and the family apartment was used by the Norwegian resistance movement for secret meetings and for storing food. There were Nazi soldiers everywhere. His older sister has reminded me more than once how lucky I am never to have experienced wartime, and I know she is right.

A few years ago my parents and I watched a Norwegian film called “Max Manus” about one of the most famous Norwegian resistance fighters. A lot of the action in the film took place right in the Majorstuen neighbourhood. I asked my father afterwards if the film was true to life. He replied that it was, but it didn’t fully convey the sense of overwhelming danger that they lived with the whole time. I also asked him if they ever felt hopeless about it all. Did they really think that they would

prevail in the end? “We never doubted that we would win” was his reply. “We always knew it would be over some day.”



Max Manus guarding Crown Prince Olav in the liberation parade

My mother was a little girl living in the country during the Occupation so was less directly affected, but she remembers being put to bed fully dressed in case they had to escape into the woods, and her father making visits to a neighbour to secretly listen to news on a forbidden radio. She also remembers a wounded young Norwegian coming to the door one night looking for help, and the camp for Russian prisoners of war in the small town not far from their farm. The local residents would throw food to the prisoners, and some prisoners would throw back small carvings they had made out of matchboxes in gratitude. Those captured Russian soldiers were almost certainly all shot when they returned home at the end of the war.

Patriotism has two faces. It can inspire heroism in those who put their lives on the line to defend their country, like Trygve Ringereide and the many other Norwegians of that era who performed extraordinary acts of courage and daring. Some of those heroes did not survive the war, and others were deeply scarred by their experiences. “Post-traumatic stress disorder” we would call it today. They were forever changed by their experiences and those changes profoundly affected their families as well. But patriotism also led others to be stigmatized if it was somehow implied that they had not done enough to join the fight against the occupiers, for whatever reason. The aftereffects must have been far worse for the families of the Nazi sympathizers, even for children who had no say in their parents’ political decisions. And then there were the children of Norwegian women and German soldiers. They suffered greatly and felt unwelcome in both Norway and Germany.

In a ceremony at Oslo City Hall in January this year, Alf Tollef, Gerd Julie Bergljot Pettersen, Reidar Larsen and Rolf Alexander Syversen were honoured with a medal and Israeli state

designation 'Righteous Among the Nations'. In six weeks of an operation led by the four Norwegians, 358 Jews crossed the border to Sweden. Most Norwegian Jews were not so fortunate, however. Records show 758 were murdered, mostly at Auschwitz, and another 775 were arrested, detained or deported. My own father's little playmate was among those taken away and murdered and this was something that haunted my father for the rest of his life.

People are people and although Norwegians can be proud of our heritage in many ways, we are not better than other people. But we can be grateful for those who, like Trygve Ringereide and others like him, found themselves in extraordinary circumstances and rose to the occasion. Their ideals and the choices they made continue to inspire us all these many years later.



Trygve Ringereide, like many other Norwegian Air Force pilots and crew, trained in Canada at "Little Norway", in Toronto and Muskoka, before returning to the battlefields of Europe to fight alongside other Allied troops. Here he is in 2007 in front one of the Fairchild fighter planes used to train pilots at "Little Norway."

March Luncheon

It seems like so long since we all got together! Our February luncheon was first postponed and then finally cancelled due to circumstances at the Army Officers' Mess that were beyond our control. We very sincerely apologize to anyone who may not have received the cancellation notice.

Our next luncheon takes place on Monday, March 6, at the Army Officers' Mess, 249 Somerset Street West, at noon as usual. Swedish MP Aron Modig will be joining us. He is visiting Canada to study the Canadian system of immigration and integration of immigrants but also to learn more about Nordics in Canada. Looking forward to seeing lots of our members and guests at the lunch!

Distinguished Speaker Series

Our Speaker Series takes place at the Officers' Mess, 149 Somerset Street West at 7:30 PM, but we recommend arriving a little early so you can get your name tag and socialize a little if you wish. Speaker events are free for members, with a \$5 charge for non-members. There is some parking available at the mess itself in the evenings.

March 15 Speaker Event: My Remarkable Grandmother: running a taxi business in pre-war Stockholm

Anita Maclean's grandmother was an entrepreneur in Stockholm in the 1930's. Starting with a horse-drawn carriage, she built up her own taxi business in a time when female entrepreneurs were uncommon. Come hear her remarkable story as told by Anita on March 15 at 7:30 PM.



A horse and wagon in Stockholm (undated photo)

April 19 Speaker Event: Contemporary Scandinavian Cinema

Gunnar Iversen, Ph.D. (Stockholm University), is a visiting professor at Carleton University for 2016-17. He works on film history, with an emphasis on Scandinavian and Norwegian cinema, documentary, and early and silent cinema. He also studies sound in film and television. We are very pleased that he will be our Distinguished Speaker on Wednesday, April 19.

Other Upcoming Events of Interest

- Watch for news of the Canadian Friends of Finland annual St. Urho's Celebration on March 16. (The legendary "St. Urho" is the North American Finnish community's answer to St. Patrick's Day. It is celebrated in a similar manner, but with a Finnish twist, shall we say.)
- Finland is celebrating 100 years of independence and the CNS is working with other Finnish-related organizations to mark the occasion. If you would like to help please contact CNS President Tim Mark (president@canadiannordicsociety.com or (613) 733-1744)

Fifth CNS President Olav Løken (1970-71)



Olav Løken

Olav Løken was born in Aalesund, Norway in 1931 and studied at the University of Oslo. In 1957 he went to Antarctica to work as a glaciologist at the US Wilkes Station as part of the International Geophysical Year project. This was an international scientific project that marked the end of a long period during the Cold War when scientific interchange between nations had been seriously interrupted. From July 1, 1957 to December 31, 1958, sixty-seven countries participated in International Geophysical Year projects. The work performed on the Antarctic projects led directly to the Antarctic Treaty, which called for the use of Antarctica for peaceful purposes and cooperative scientific research. Today, 41 nations have signed the Treaty and international collaborative research continues.

A range of moraines near the US Wilkes Station was named after Olav Løken by Carl R. Eklund, the Scientific Station Leader.

After spending a year in Antarctica, Olav made his way to Montreal, to continue his studies in the Department of Geography at McGill University. In Montreal he met Inger Marie, and they married in 1960. They spent the summer together in the Torngat Mountains in Labrador where Olav did field work for his thesis. He received his PhD in 1962 and two years later he was elected a Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America.

After teaching at Queen's University, Olav joined the Geographical Branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in Ottawa in 1964. Over his 26-year government career he did much to advance Canadian Arctic science, through extensive fieldwork (particularly on Baffin Island) and a variety of management and policy roles in Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

After retiring from government he worked with the Canadian Polar Commission, a government agency of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada responsible, among other things, for recommending polar science policy direction to government. Olav's role was promoting Canadian involvement in Antarctic-related research.

In addition to serving as President of the Canadian Nordic Society, he also served as President of the Arctic Circle.

Like many Norwegians, Olav was a passionate cross-country skier who loved the outdoors. He enjoyed spending free time at the family tree farm near Shawville, tending the forest, doing the interior woodwork for a new house, and building fences and furniture. Olav Løken remained a member of the Canadian Nordic Society until his death on September 18, 2015, at age 84. His wife, Inger Marie, is still a CNS member today.

Fourth CNS President G.O.H. Poulsson (1969-70)

I am looking for information about the fourth CNS President, G.O.H. Poulsson. So far I know only that he was Swedish and had the rank of Major. My internet searches have been completely fruitless. If anybody has any information, photos, or memories of him, I would be very grateful if you would get in touch with me at communications@canadiannordicsociety.com.

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 communications@nordicsociety.com

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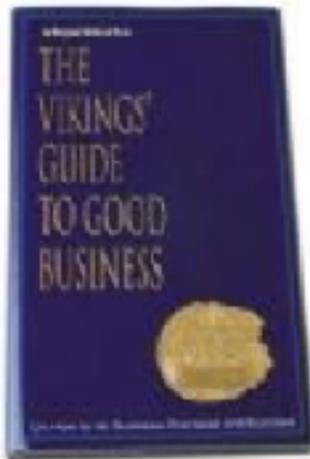
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You can join in person when you attend one of our luncheons or speaker events. Please speak to any one of our Council members

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Gudrun Publishing was established in Reykjavik in 1992. Gudrun books are now represented in museums and bookshops right across Scandinavia and all over the world.

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