

## The Centennial of Tordenskjold Lodge No. 5

The Sons of Norway was founded in 1895 by eighteen Norwegian immigrants in Minneapolis, Minnesota and the international headquarters is still based there today. It consists of eight districts which preside over more than four hundred lodges in the United States, Canada and Norway with a membership in excess of 70,000. The objectives are the same now as they were a hundred and twelve years ago; namely to promote Norwegian heritage and protect benefits to its members such as insurance and retirement housing.

The early requirements for membership in the Sons of Norway were very strict. To qualify, the man had to be Norwegian or of Norwegian descent, morally upright, in good health, capable of supporting a family and be at least 20 years old and not older than 50 years to join.

The organizational meetings of the Spokane lodge were held in the meeting room on the second floor of the 'Skandinav', a Scandinavian Newspaper office operated by Mads Marken, located at 14 W Sprague Avenue in Spokane, WA. At the meeting in Apollo Hall, near the present Spokane City Hall, on Sunday, September 8, 1907, the Spokane Lodge of Sons of Norway was officially chartered with thirty-four charter members. Jacob Rivedahl was the first president and the local lodge was named *Lodge Tordenskjold*. Following the chartering, the next meeting was held on the next night, Monday evening, September 9, 1907 and the Constitution and By-Laws were adopted. They are still today basically the same with minor

changes and additions made as needed. At the third meeting of the lodge, three new members were initiated and the members saw the need to raise money. They agreed to have a 'basket party' at the fourth meeting. The net result of that party was a deficit of \$1.75.

Our lodge was named after Peder Jansen Wessel Tordenskjold who was born in Trondheim, Norway on October 28, 1690, one of fourteen children. He was the Admiral of the Danish-Norwegian navy and was famous for his brilliant seamanship, dashing courage, and his resourcefulness. He was the most illustrious and beloved among Norway's many naval heroes. As an aside my wife, Esther, was always told by her mother that they were descendants of Admiral Tordenskjold.

In 1910, the lodge was located at 810 ½ W Riverside Avenue and meetings were held every Tuesday at 8:00 PM. In March of 1908, Freya Lodge No. 3, Daughters of Norway, was chartered. In 1916, the Supreme Lodge of the Sons of Norway changed the membership rules to permit women to join local lodges. On November 17, 1923, the forty members of the Freya Lodge gave up their charter and all the women were initiated into Tordenskjold Lodge No. 5, Sons of Norway.

In 1914, the lodge purchased a beautiful 39" by 63" tapestry for \$461.64 which is on display here tonight. The tapestry is blue drape on the top portion, covers a red field featuring an oil painting of a Viking long-ship. The reverse side features the midnight sun painted in gilt. All lettering is done in gilt with the tassels and fringe in gold thread. That tapestry is still the pride and joy of our lodge along with the large metal Viking figure in

the foyer that was created by George Roberts, a professor at the University of Idaho. The story goes that the little "Wooden Viking" on display out in the foyer, was left by a lady who was going on a trip in the 1940's and the lodge could display it until her return. Apparently she hasn't returned.

By 1925, the lodge was located in the Foresters Hall at 25 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. The lodge was then at 39 W. Pacific from 1930 until 1941. At that time, the lodge bought the building at 311 W. Riverside Avenue with the lodge rooms and office on the second floor for \$20,000, of which \$15,000 was a mortgage. At a meeting on April 14, 1976, President Marvin Stover cast the deciding vote to break a tie to build a new lodge building at 6710 Country Homes Boulevard, our current home, and the grand opening took place on November 10, 1979. I, John Ellingson as president, had the dubious honor of conducting the last meeting in the lodge downtown and the first meeting held in this building.

Tordenskjold Lodge No. 5 has hosted two Sons of Norway International Conventions, one in August of 1948 and the other in August of 1990. We have also hosted many District 2 biannual conventions since 1908 and will host the 2008 District 2 convention this coming summer. Several of our members have held positions on the district level. One in particular is Melroy Medhus, here tonight, who has served as District Two President and as International Director on the International Board.

At the lutefisk dinner in 1945, which extended over two days, more than 4,000 people were served at a dollar a serving. Over two tons of lutefisk was needed.

Our lodge has hosted many District 2 golf and bowling tournaments. For years, a weekly pool league has been a drawing card of our lodge. The lodge is famous for its lutefisk, dinners, julebords, pancake breakfasts, and old-fashioned ice cream socials. Norwegian language classes are always well-attended.

In 1949, our first queen, Violet Mossbruker, was installed. Since that time, each year we select a new queen and her princess. Reba Haugen Jewell, here tonight, was queen in 1959-1960 and subsequently has served as president of our lodge. This year, she is our Vice President.

Over the years, Tordenskjold Lodge No. 5 has donated thousands of dollars to local charities.

Our membership reached a high of over 2,000 members just after World War II and, sorry to report, membership has since declined to the point that our membership is now less than four hundred members. Today the Sons of Norway accepts membership applications from people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds. I challenge you to help our lodge grow in membership and activities.

John C. Ellingson, Historian, Tordenskjold Lodge No. 5