

Margaret and Erling Botnen

presented by Ella Naves 2005

Erling and Margaret grew up on farms north and northeast of Driscoll, ND. Both attended rural schools. After eighth grade graduation, Erling assisted his parents on the farm. Farm boys often were not given the privilege of going to high school because they were needed on the farm.

Margaret continued on to high school at Driscoll. She was most thankful to be able to attend high school, as everyone was in the midst of the "Thirties Depression". Following high school graduation, Margaret continued on to Dickinson State Teachers College (as it was called at that time). Here she received her second grade professional teacher's diploma. Her next 39 years were spent teaching in rural schools, and consolidated schools, namely Driscoll, Steele, and in 1955 in the Bismarck Public School System.



Back tracking slightly, Margaret married Joel Erickson in 1940. Joel and Margaret were parents of four children. Joel passed away in 1966.

Erling also was married in 1940 to Julia Fagering. They had eight children. Julia died in 1965.

In 1966, Margaret and her 8-year-old daughter moved to Bismarck, where Margaret had accepted a 1st grade teaching position at Riverside School. In the summer of 1967 she received her Bachelor of Science degree from Valley City State college.

It was during this time that Arnold Christianson, of sons of Norway, (or as many knew him as Turkey Trot Bill) approached Margaret to start a folk dance group. He offered to furnish the music. Our first dance selection was taken from Margaret's College Physical Education manual. The Sons of Norway was then meeting in the Grand Pacific Hotel. One meeting we were dancing to honor a dignitary from Norway. He was very gracious, but said he didn't recognize one number. Rightfully so, it was 100% American. The arts of music and dance are very important in Norway.

We practiced at numerous places. We were able to add members to our small Sons of Norway consisting of 40 to 60 people at this time.

Erling and Margaret married in 1968. Together they worked hard to become familiar with the new dances. They weren't as lucky as today's dancers. They had only three or four years of Folk Dance workshops.

Those first years in Sons of Norway were extremely busy. Besides having the weekly folk dance practices, Margaret was chairman of the social and cultural committee. At that time they were combined.

Also, Erling and Margaret helped with the first Sons of Norway Lutefisk Dinner. Dr. Brink was chairman. For the next 8 years Margaret was in charge of all workers in the dining room, the dinner was served at Trinity Lutheran Church. Both Erling and Margaret continued helping each year with the lutefisk supper.

During this time Erling worked at the State Museum and later as an elevator operator at the State Capitol.

After 20 years, Margaret gave up the chairmanship of the Sons of Norway folk dancing. Since the 1960s Erling and Margaret have been members of the Sons of Norway Chorus.

For the past four years Erling has been a resident at Missouri Slope Care Center. Margaret still keeps busy with watercolor painting, assisting at the Senior Center and being available to help at her church.

At the Burleigh County Senior Center Margaret has been a member of their chorus since 1984. She also served on their Advisory Committee and the Council. Erling also sang in their chorus and served on the Council.

For the past six years Margaret has been chairman of Faith Lutherans' Friendship Circle!