

Valborg Fisher
Presented by Janet Esser
May 21, 1995

It is truly a privilege to be invited to deliver a dedication speech in honor of my Aunt Valborg Peterson Fisher, at a time when she is being recognized by all of you as a member of distinction.

My efforts to bring forth a summary of her achievements in Sverdrup has become muddled by a myriad of memories from my long years of close family relationships and stories, stories, stories from my relatives and particularly from my Mom. To separate out the real life Valborg and the professional high achiever Valborg was too much for me. So, what you are getting today is a smattering of both, all stirred up in one great big pot.



Marge and Sig Peterson with Valborg Fisher

Born in 1907 in Sims, North Dakota, of immigrant parents from southern Norway, the next to the youngest in a family of six children, she attended grade school in Sims and graduated from high school in Almont. She and her younger brother Sig were the only ones to do so.

The family was very musically oriented with Grandpa Peterson being a skilled musician. The family had its own dance band with Valborg being the piano player. The door was always open, the coffee pot on, and all get to gathers ended in music.

Of course, in those days children created their own fun and most of their toys. Her brothers put spools on the girls heels so they could be like grown ups. Sig was only too willing to sit in a box and sing "Hiawatha" after being wound up by Valborg with an old Victrola crank.

When she graduated from high school she had in her possession a teaching certificate, so taught her first year before going to Dickinson to college the following summer. Valborg and my mother, with fear and apprehension, walked hand in hand up the steps at the college to be met by a large man in a frock coat, Dr. Mays, who kindly took them in tow to register - an everlasting impression on two little country girls.

Now, some memories of my mother's from their summer school years and as young ladies together.

Every morning at 6:30 a.m., pushing and pulling and round and round for six weeks to get the necessary Palmer penmanship certificate in order to get a teaching certificate.

"Cruising" in my Dad's car when he let them take it to Dickinson - until one door fell off.

What did you do for fun, I asked Mom. Oh, Valborg and I had lots of dates, she replied.

Valborg remembers how she teased Mom who was always quite prim and proper, by being a clown or lumbering down the sidewalk like a bumbler because my mother would walk ahead and over her shoulder tell Valborg to "behave herself" and Valborg loved it.

You can't begin to guess where this is leading--Valborg had a very promising career in theater as a star in "Girl of My Dreams". While at Dickinson, she and mom were tapped by a couple of "good looking guys" Ben Knause who was the Superintendent of Schools in Medora and Carmen Apland to be in their traveling revue, along with Ruby Apland, Marvel Jubert and Alice Rosen. Opening night was in Fryberg to a packed house. Valborg, the piano player and line speaker while Mom and Ruby danced and sang. Each night before moving on to the next town, Flasher, Carson, Almont, 8 or 9 shows, they divided the "take" and each wound up with about \$5, but lots and lots of fun.

And who sat in the front row - between the aisle of the first performance, but Valborg's romantic interest and later her husband, Bert. She says it made her a nervous wreck.

Bert, like his father, was a plaster from Dickinson. She and mom and a friend, Ole Hegland, who was also Bert's friend and you know how that goes. Bert was also a wonderful pianist having gone to McFails School of Music in Minneapolis. They were married November 13, 1929 and Bert then began to work toward his teaching credentials so they could teach together. Valborg has completed her Master's Degree in education and is short only 2 quarters from obtaining her doctorate in education.

From Le High as a critic teacher where among others she supervised Jean Thorson, one of our members in Sverdrup, to Dover, and then to Cour d'alene, while Bert was stationed as a Navy yeoman, to Bend, Oregon where Valborg taught and served as principal for 28 years as Bend's only woman administrator, her career as an educator abounds with accolades and honors.

Fortunately for hundreds and hundreds of children and grateful parents, Valborg let her career in the theater fall by the way side!

Valborg and Bert spent their summers in North Dakota with her parents and brothers and me - I grew up with a nine month of the year mother and a three month of the year Mom. After the deaths of Grandma and Grandpa, Valborg's brothers were ready to retire from ranching and Valborg suffered the loss of her life's partner, Bert. When asked by her brothers what her plans were, she said I'm coming home. As soon as they moved to Mandan, Valborg south out Sons of Norway and her extremely productive liaison with Sverdrup began.

She eagerly shared her abilities to spin, weave, do Hardanger.
She narrated bunad shows
Commented at the piano dedication at the Heritage Center

Served as cookie chair for years at the Lutefisk Supper
Was Mistress of Ceremonies at the Stabbur dedication

to mention some involvement.

But, most significantly Valborg did things that will always be remembered by Sverdrup 107. She translated the minutes written in Norwegian from 1910 through 1940. From this 2 volume translation she prepared a synopsis which she delivered to our lodge five years ago the 80th anniversary of the lodge. This task was overwhelming; a portion of the minutes written so finely it had to be read with a magnifying glass.

Valborg put together a volume of Troll stories and published it, this occurred after a contest at the District Convention in Bismarck in 1980. Each lodge has a photo and a story about their troll in the book.

She accumulated, edited and organized the material for the book "The Fabulous 4th" which gives the history and story of every lodge in the 4th District.

To Valborg we are very indebted for her effort to preserve our heritage and our history for generations to come!

At 85 years of age, Valborg, because of her intense interest in her Norwegian heritage eagerly pursued the organization of a book study group for our lodge. Without realizing it until it happened, she became the first person in Sons of Norway International to earn a cultural medal in Book Review. This drew international attention to our lodge.

Handicaps that stemmed from an early childhood bout with polio which, short of her mother's determination and divine intervention should have been fatal, has slowed her body, but most certainly not her mind. Poor eyesight has ended her seeing and weaving, but not her sense of humor and ability to enjoy life. When we think of Valborg as an educator, we acknowledge her life's dedication. We honor her use of her skills for our lodge.

Valborg Peterson Fisher has made her mark in the annals of Sverdrup 107 with her outstanding achievements and her leadership, and as a proverbial "doer and shaker". To plant a tree in her honor is to mark for all of us to see the absolute importance of each and every member such as Valborg who gives generously of their God given talents to a cause dear to their hearts.

Congratulations Valborg!