

Norvel O. Brink, M.D.
presented by M.F. Peterson
May 16, 1993

Dr. Norvel O. Brink is the man credited for starting our Annual Lutefisk Dinners. The first dinner took place in 1971. An active lodge member and a leading Bismarck surgeon, he had been suggesting for several years that Sverdrup should put on a lutefisk dinner. His arguments for doing so were listened to politely and then objections were voiced that such an undertaking would be a great deal of work with many uncertainties as to success. However, Dr. Brink was a man of great determination. He liked good food and had the figure to prove it. Finally, with great reluctance, the lodge decided to try it. This time Dr. Brink and the few others expressing interest in a lutefisk dinner were not put off, as they had been in prior years.

Dr. Brink appointed himself as general chairman, committees were set up and planning began. Dr. Brink had no trouble securing centrally located Trinity Lutheran Church in Bismarck as the place to hold the dinner. As the date approached there was a frenzy of activity, with Dr. Brink encouraging, advising and helping everywhere. On Sundays before the dinner, the Johansens' Dakota Maid Bakery swarmed with meatball preparers, under the direction of Magnhild Hegland. Women made lefse and cookies. Supplies were ordered, hopefully somewhere near the right amounts. The date was the last Saturday in January. Somehow, it is hard to understand quite how, that first dinner fell into place and over a thousand people were served. In the following years changes have been made, with fine quality lefse now being obtained from Minnesota. The ham served with the first two dinners has been discontinued, much equipment has been purchased, and various changes have been made.

Basically though, the dinner remains much the same as it was in the beginning, and it is a unique event in Bismarck looked forward to by many people. A large number of the members who helped with the first dinner still participate enthusiastically in the planning and committee work, as they have since the beginning. Unfortunately, Dr. Brink lived only long enough to get us off to a good start in the early years.

There was a need for additional medical personnel at the hospital. Consequently in 1934, Dr. Norvel O. Brink began a surgical residency at age 24. Born December 21, 1909 in St. Paul, Minnesota, he received his M.D. Degree in 1933 from the University of Minnesota and interned at Ancker Hospital prior to coming to Bismarck.

Dr. Brink was an energetic young man and anxious to have additional training, particularly in the field of surgery. He rapidly acquired skills in the surgical field, but he was always willing to be of service in any department where medical attention was needed. It became obvious to the staff that there was a great need for a specialist in the field of urology. Dr. Brink was willing to acquire additional training and, consequently he had residency training at the University of Minnesota and Minneapolis General Hospitals in urology and returned to the Quain and Ramstad Clinic staff in 1940.

He was hesitant to abandon general surgery entirely and continued to manifest an interest in it. Most of his time, however, was taken in practicing his specialty. Dr. Brink became extremely busy, but in spite of this he had many interests, particularly in the religious (Lutheran) and musical fields. He was a member of a quartet that traveled throughout the area, attending church services and providing music. At times he also occupied the pulpit when a minister was not available.

Dr Brink visited a medical colleague of his in the missionary field in Africa and while there, performed many operations, much to gratification of the missionary.

Dr. Brink became a partner of the Quain and Ramstad Clinic in April of 1950 and served as chairman during the years of 1965 and 1966.

Dr. Brink married Lavina Brosz in September, 1937. She died June 17, 1966. They had six children. He had since married Mrs. Beverly Johnson.

He developed health problems and died of a pulmonary embolism April 4, 1972.