

NEWSLETTER

Department of Scandinavian Studies

University of Wisconsin–Madison

A Message from the Chair, Professor Kirsten Wolf

I think faculty, staff, and students in the Department will all agree that the spring semester has been a trying one. Faculty and staff have spent a considerable amount of time on budget reduction exercises in preparation for and in anticipation of the severe cuts that the University is facing. The looming cuts and the uncertainty of what sort of budget the department will have to work with next year are a source of anxiety. However, these issues have not discouraged students from declaring a major and applying to our graduate program. Indeed, the Faculty of Letters and Science, has shown the department considerable mercy in its allocation of TA-funding for next year, for which we are deeply grateful. Moreover, two incoming students have been awarded prestigious university fellowships.

The budget cut has been bad news. But the department has also received pieces of good news, which have been causes for celebration. Scott Mellor has recently been promoted from Senior Lecturer to Distinguished Lecturer, and Nete Schmidt has been awarded the Chancellor's Hilldale Award for Excellence in Teaching. The following pages feature the success of Scott and Nete, the achievements of some of our students, who spent the year doing research abroad, and offer a bit of insight into the many other activities of the department during the spring semester.

Department Celebrates Recognition of Outstanding Teaching

The Department congratulates Senior Lecturer Nete Schmidt on being awarded the Chancellor's Hilldale Award for Excellence in Teaching. The Hilldale Awards are given to outstanding academic staff by the chancellor of UW-Madison in areas of "teaching, research, leadership, public service, service to the university, and career achievement," and each year only one instructor

is chosen to receive the Excellence in Teaching award. Hilldale Award recipients were honored at an Academic Staff Assembly meeting and at a reception for award recipients, family and colleagues. Thank you, Nete, for all you do for the students in our department as well as the many students from around campus who discover Scandinavian Studies through your

SPRING 2011

Contents



Students Abroad 2-5



In Memoriam: Vera Croner 5



Graduation and Award Announcements 6



Why We Study Norwegian and Danish 7



Departmental Happenings 8





Cutting Birch Branches in Utsjoki – Tim Frandy

I was in my tent with the icy August rain pounding down for 12 straight hours near Utsjoki, Finland, one of Finland's northernmost villages, some 450 km north of the Arctic Circle, and I somehow had to brave the cold and rain, cook my morning coffee over a fire, and walk five kilometers to my nearest neighbor's house to conduct an interview in a few short hours.

Conducting fieldwork about herding and salmon fishing is challenging enough in Finnish and North Sámi, nonetheless dealing with the exhaustion of conducting such fieldwork from a tent. I drank from the clean waters of a nearby stream, I made fires at least twice a day, at first using the smoke to mask my smell from mosquitoes, and later to keep warm. I burned so many fires, that the smoke still smells in my clothes, and when I rode the tram in Helsinki before leaving the country, I overheard people making quips about somebody just coming from the smoke-sauna. If I wanted to buy food in Utsjoki, or if I had scheduled an interview downtown, I could catch the one daily bus towards town, which carried school children between Ivalo and Inari, and delivered mail on the one road between Rovaniemi and Nuorgam. But the bus only went one way, and I always had to walk 15 km back to my tent. In my few spare moments, I would work an hour on my dissertation and check my email in my tent, using my laptop's short battery life.

Eventually the rain abated, and I was able to visit Niilo Kalevi Länsman, a local herder and math teacher at Sámi Allaskuvla in Guovdageaidnu, Norway. Niilo Kalevi decided that we should cut birch leaves that day, which we would tie up and hang as reindeer food for next April. We drove to Gidajohka, where we hacked away at sapling birches with machetes for several hours.

Indeed, it sounds much more romantic an experience than it actually was. I'm no slouch of an outdoorsman... in my own woods and waters of the Lake Superior Region, that is. But I found myself puzzled, bewildered, and frustrated that I could not select the branches to cut that Niilo Kalevi wanted me to cut. "Don't cut down that one!" he'd yell out at me from afar. "No, no... take the whole sapling!"

It's customary among Sámi people not to give direct verbal instruction, which instead forces people to observe carefully and try to emulate. But I was still baffled as Niilo Kalevi would cut down entire large birches, and refuse to touch others, as if it was a completely arbitrary process. But as he was staring at birches, reading the grove, it was clear that he knew perfectly, after years of experience herding, what he wanted to cut.

It was only after a few hours of cutting that I began to piece it together. We were cutting birch on family land, less than a hundred meters from the house in which his father was born, and in this supposedly vast wilderness he relied on this place every year to cut birch to keep his reindeer healthy during winter. And my mistake was that I was looking at the birch in the present, and he was looking at them in the future. He cut the birch in a way to maximize the leaf yield for next year, cutting in ways that didn't kill good-looking trees, and removed undesirable trees, which were becoming too dominant. He was managing the land to keep the birch immature, low, and leafy.

After I figured this much out, the task at hand became much easier. We cut more, tied them in a special way to hang them conveniently in his shed on Skallovaara, the place where reindeer roundup occurs in the Kaldoaivi reindeer-herding district. We went back to his house, where I would have to record an interview about salmon. I was exhausted, and my right palm was throbbing gently after swinging at trees for half a day. Niilo Kalevi made tea and put out the makings for sandwiches, as is the traditional way to treat visitors to one's home in Lapland. We ate, and I did my best to muster through an interview, a mere intimation of my larger experience living in a tent and conducting fieldwork in Utsjoki.



Reading and Writing of *Njáls saga* – Sanna Fahn

Thanks to the Barbara Morgridge Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship, I was able to go to Reykjavík, Iceland, from September 2010 to March 2011, to conduct research for my dissertation “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls Saga*: The Codicology of Iceland’s Most Famous Saga.”

Codicology studies manuscripts as physical artifacts. A codicological analysis of all manuscripts and manuscript fragments containing *Njáls saga* makes it possible not only to reconstruct trends and changes in manuscript production and the history of the manuscripts and their provenances, but also to recreate the history of the readership and reception of Iceland’s most renowned saga through readers’ notes and scribal remarks. *Njáls saga* is preserved in 61 manuscripts and fragments on vellum and paper, dating from the early 14th to the 19th century. Furthermore a small number of manuscripts contain excerpts or translations of *Njáls saga*. While scholars have used famous sagas, such as *Njáls saga*, in order to research transmission, authorship, and other textual and literary features, the use of the manuscripts themselves as historical and archaeological artifacts is a new approach in Old Norse-Icelandic studies.

During my stay in Iceland, I had the chance to look at the 43 manuscripts and fragments housed in Iceland and gather information about codicological features, such as size, layout, and preservation, as well as scribal remarks and marginal notes. Despite feeling like I have barely scratched the surface in my analysis of the manuscripts, I already made some fascinating findings, such as layout changes, interestingly decorated initials, marginalia and additions to the text by scribes and readers. In a paper manuscript from 1668, for example, the scribe added verses to the main text of *Njáls saga*, which seemingly have not been published yet and which may have been written by the famous scribe Björn Jónsson á Skarðsá (1574-1655). I also had the privilege to view some unique manuscripts as part of my project, such as *Gráskinna* (‘grey-skin’) from the early 14th century, which received its name due to its binding of grey sealskin, or two beautiful large volumes bound in red velvet with gilt-edged pages, which were written in the late 17th century for the amusement of a certain Jón Eyjólfsson and other pious men and which, in 1692, were given to King Christian V as a gift from Björn Þorleifsson, who later became bishop of Hólar in Northern Iceland.

The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies kindly invited me to give a lecture about my dissertation and research progress on October 8, 2010. I also presented a short paper at a colloquium on manuscript studies on February 25, 2011 held at the institute. The attending scholars at both events were very interested in my topic and I very much appreciated the excellent feedback I received.

Teaching Excellence, cont.

excellent classes!

Congratulations to Dr. Scott Mellor, who has received the Distinguished prefix and is now a Distinguished Lecturer in our department. The Distinguished prefix is a promotion from Senior Lecturer and is a particular honor because it “is reserved for the truly exceptional performer who is recognized by peers within and outside the institution as a ‘superstar’ in the specialty,” according to UW-Madison Human Resources guidelines. In order to receive the Distinguished prefix, an instructor must be a leader not only in the department and on the University campus, but must also do community, national, or even international outreach with his or her scholarship and research. Congratulations, Scott, and thank you for being such a great ambassador for our department and field.

Studying Nations in Uppsala – Christopher Bishop



Fortunate enough to receive a generous grant from The American-Scandinavian Foundation, I am now eight months into my yearlong project collecting information about student identities and traditions in Uppsala, Sweden. I am conducting fieldwork among three well-formed groups: *Västgöta* and *Gotlands nation* and the natural scientists and engineers comprising various sub-groups of Uppsala Teknolog- och Naturvetarkår (Uppsala Union of Science and Engineering Students - UTN).

What are the student nations? In brief, they are organizations that mostly date back to the late 17th century and are connected with regional provinces, clearly recognizable in their names. Historically, their roles have varied, but now they serve primarily as focal points for socialization and semi-formal support. This academic year is the first following the passing of a law that dissolved mandatory membership in a nation.

UTN sub-groups are centered on academic disciplines. For example, I have been following IUPAK, *Möbius* and BÄR—consisting of Chemistry, Mathematics and Biology students respectively—these are far younger than the venerable nations, but organizations that share many similar characteristics. Some are organized to the extent that they have printed song books, various committees, and even hold their own dinners that highly resemble those of the nations.

Regarding major activities, Uppsala is most well known for its *Valborg* celebrations, but an equally striking autumn experience comes from the various *reccemottagningar*—freshmen receptions—that are growing larger each year, especially among the academic discipline groups. The biggest and most visible group consists of combined engineering programs, all of which spend two weeks integrating new arrivals through special songs, dances, and missions. An entire mythology has been created around this reception—varying somewhat year to year.

Conducting interviews with members of the various organizations has proven illuminating and progresses at odd intervals, but my presence and project have increasingly become more understood and accepted. Certainly, I have only begun to discover what exists: food, clothing, and singing in Uppsala student life. I look forward to my remaining fieldwork and will be glad when I can finally share more detailed results from my project.

Många hälsningar från Sverige! Many greetings from Sweden!



Beth Godec's Adventures in Umeå

The most common question I am asked about my experience studying abroad is 'Why Sweden?' Honestly, I have yet to come up with a good answer. For years I have been determined to study abroad, but the 'where' was never that important to me. Personally, my goal in studying abroad was not to increase my proficiency in the language, but to challenge myself by putting myself in a foreign environment. Sweden seemed to be the perfect opportunity.

When researching the study abroad programs available, the program in Umeå struck me as interesting. Smaller than Madison, the university has about 17,000 full-time students enrolled who live on campus. Of those students, many are international. Umeå was recently ranked #2 in Sweden and #4 in Europe on satisfaction of international student experience with a satisfaction rate of 91%.

Much of that is due to the Buddy Programme offered through the international office. The

Umeå, cont.

program's aim is to integrate international students into Swedish culture and life. Students are placed with Swedish 'Buddies' who create activities and get-togethers. These activities have been integral to meeting people and making friends. The Buddy Programme is extremely supportive in promoting easy adjustment.

The Programme also provides great opportunities for local travel, such as trips in the region. I recently returned from a 5-day trip around Lapland with a group of international students. We went dog sledding, saw the Ice Hotel, fed reindeer on a Sami farm, took a day trip to Narvik, Norway, took a dip in a frozen lake and spent time in a sauna. Overall, it has been a great way to familiarize myself with northern Scandinavia.

After making my decision to attend Umeå University and my subsequent acceptance, I was surprised to discover that I would be doing it completely alone. I didn't believe that I was the only student out of nearly 40,000 in Madison to apply to the program. At first, I was terrified to venture alone, now I wouldn't change it for the world. Granted, it was difficult in the beginning, but it truly made me grow as a person and realize that it is not so difficult to adjust.

Umeå was definitely the best choice for me. However, I find it disappointing how underrepresented the program in Umeå is, especially considering the vast number of students going elsewhere in Scandinavia. Hopefully upon my return I will be able to assist those who are already working to create more interest in this great program. The friends I have made here come from all corners of the world and I am extremely grateful for the great opportunity to make lifelong friends and come to appreciate all that Umeå has to offer.

In Memoriam: Vera Croner

Vera Fannie Croner died on January 18, 2010, at the age of 89. A retired credit union executive, recipient of an accounting degree from the University of Wisconsin, and a talented pianist, she included UW's Business School and School of Music in her will, but she also left a generous bequest in the names of her parents, Max and Hedwig Croner, to the Department of Scandinavian Studies—and thereby hangs a tale.

Vera Croner, a self-described "pampered only child," was born in 1920 in Stettin (then Germany, now Poland), the daughter of a Jewish factory owner and a Gentile mother. Her life changed when the Nazis seized power. Expelled from high school and, under anti-Semitic laws, prohibited from attending university, she pursued her education privately with the help of family friends. Her father was arrested in 1939 and, forced to leave the country, sought exile in Shanghai. Vera and her mother endured the dangerous, hungry war years in Stettin where, as a Jew, she relied on forged papers and hiding places. As World War II ended, Vera and Hedwig sought refuge in Berlin from the advancing Russians. Soon after, her parents were able to reunite in Madison, but Vera ventured to Norway and thence to Denmark where she worked in Copenhagen before joining her parents in 1951. Inspired by the cooperatives common in Scandinavia and established by Scandinavians in Wisconsin, she worked for the Farm Bureau Cooperative Business Service before and during her undergraduate tenure, then was employed successively for the CUNA Credit Union and the Credit Union National Association before retiring in the 1980s.

Vera Croner's time in Scandinavia made a strong impression, and her new friends in Madison included faculty, staff, and students in the Department of Scandinavian Studies. Her gift will support students for years to come and testifies to a generous and indomitable spirit.

The Department Congratulates The Classes of 2010-2011

Congrats Graduates:

PhD

Spring 2011

Carrie Roy

John Eason

MA

Spring 2011:

Jason Schroeder

Mathew Holland

BA

Fall 2010:

Warren Gall

Keri Newton

Jennifer Beie

Spring 2011:

Timothy Cochrane

Rebecca Hill

Emily Irwin

Noah Mergendahl

John Kruse

Anjuli Brekke

Congratulations to Grant Winners for Academic Year 2011-2012:

National and International Grants:

American-Scandinavian Foundation:

Todd Michaelson-Ambelang, Denmark

Jackson Crawford, Iceland

Birgit Baldwin:

Susanne Fahn, Denmark

Fulbright:

Jackson Crawford, Iceland

FLAS, Summer:

Marcus Cederström, Denmark

Jackson Crawford, Faroe Islands

Svenska Institutets korttidsvistelse bidrag, Summer:

Paul Natiw, Sweden

Aaron Kahn, Sweden

Departmental Grants: (Many thanks to our donors)

Cullander-Raoul Wallenberg Fund:

Samantha Brown, Denmark

Elizabeth Godec, Sweden

Travis Ingish, Norway

Paul Natiw, Sweden

Grace and William Larsen Memorial Fund:

Nicholas Chenoweth, Norway

Lauren Dunn, Norway

Jacob Minix, Norway

Caitlin Roby, Sweden

Idun Lodge Sons of Norway:

Rebecca Andresen, Norway

Torske Klubben:

Lucas Annear, Norway

Ygdrasil Literary Society:

Matthew Ziegler, Norway

Students Explain Why They Chose Danish and Norwegian

The Department of Scandinavian Studies is privileged to offer several less commonly taught languages, most every year. These courses offer students a more-individualized learning experience, where students begin on a level playing field. They also fulfill language requirements. This semester, students of Danish and Norwegian were asked to explain why they decided to learn a Scandinavian language. Their answers run the gamut from wanting to live and work there to the language classes having the cheapest textbooks of all foreign languages. Students tend to be of Scandinavian extraction, even if only a small part. Students also tend to follow their own family's history and chose the language of their ancestors, instead of choosing one of the other Scandinavian languages. This, however, is not always the case.

A large number of students stated that they enjoy taking the classes because of the instructors, and with these instructors' guidance, many have considered studying abroad at one of the many university exchanges we offer. Other reasons students have given are:

"Scandinavian Languages are fun and beneficial."
"They help in understanding Europe through Scandinavian language and culture."
"I have friends and family in Scandinavia."
"I am learning for academic reasons: interest in literature and history."
"I have an appreciation for Scandinavian nature and sports culture."
"Friends have recommended taking Scandinavian languages."
"I want to visit Scandinavia."

Although we can happily say that there are too many students to quote directly, we would like to introduce you to them individually:

Danish 122 (Nete Schmidt)

Samantha Brown - Math and Scandinavian Studies
 Betsy Murray - Undeclared
 Monica Wasik - Italian



Norwegian 102-1 (Todd Michelson-Ambelang)

Anthony "AJ" Becker - BFA (Graphic Design)
 Kelsey Berkseth - Psychology
 Celia Conway - English (Creative Writing), European Studies
 Travis Ingish - Marketing Management
 Lance Johnson - Scandinavian Studies
 Justin Marks - Mechanical Engineering
 Kiefer Stenseng - Scandinavian Studies
 Carli Wilke - Psychology



Norwegian 102-2 (Peggy Hager)

Alyssa Kampa - Undeclared
 Allyson Katch - Zoology
 Elizabeth Klettke - Psychology
 Alyx Knudson - Atmospheric and Oceanic Science
 Carrie Jo Leum - Dairy Science
 Cody Luck - Theater
 Owen Lueders - English
 Mike Olson - History
 Sarah Reed - PhD German Literature
 Marshall Tofte - Geology



Danish 222 (Nete Schmidt)

Amy Sheffer - Music, Voice, Opera
 Charlie Cahill - History PhD
 Hailey Hackbarth - Pre-Pharmacy
 John Moller - Scandinavian Studies



DEPARTMENT OF
SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES
UW-MADISON

Van Hise Hall 1306, 1220 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706 USA

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 658
Madison, WI

Edited by Kirsten Wolf, Lucas Annear, Marcus Cederström, Susanna Fahn, Rachel Willson-Broyles, and Todd Michelson-Ambelang

Departmental Happenings

It's been a busy semester for the Scandinavian Studies department. On March 4th, Professors Tom Dubois and Jim Leary spoke at *From Word to Print – and Beyond*, a conference held in Madison that hosted scholars from the United States, Germany, and Turkey. Tom Dubois gave a presentation entitled "Editing Johan Turi: Making Turi's *Muitalus* Make Sense." In his presentation he spoke of Johan Turi's significance as the first Sami writer, and of the challenges of preserving oral history in written form. Jim Leary presented "Foreign Words and Folksongs in America: The Case of the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection." Professor Leary presented folk songs recorded by Helen Stratman-Thomas in the 1940s as head of the Wisconsin Folk Music Project. Professor Leary and several graduate students have also worked to transcribe and preserve the field recordings.

Along with scholars from our own department, we've been lucky to invite a variety of speakers here to Madison. Over the course of just one week we hosted two speakers on Scandinavian culture. John-Henri Holmberg from Stockholm presented "Stieg Larsson, Apostle of Free Love." Holmberg spoke about his relationship as friend to Larsson, the phenomenon of Larsson abroad, as well as Larsson's political and ideological views, which manifest themselves in the pages of the different books. Later in the week, Associate Professor Jørn Guldberg from the University of Southern Denmark presented "Scandinavian design in the USA." In his presentation, Guldberg spoke of the emergence of Scandinavian design in the US and the continued impact it has today.

We look forward to the coming semester and presentations by our faculty and staff and the visiting scholars who will be here in Madison to discuss their research. As always, we invite you all to stop by to listen to the presentations from a variety of scholars here at the University.