

## Syttende Mai -- The 17th of May

A historical date and a day of national celebrations

By Knut Mykland

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*This article has been condensed.*



The **17th of May** is Norway's National Day. In the history of Norway, **17 May 1814** marks both the country's declaration of independence and the triumph of constitutional government. In order to understand the dominant place occupied by the celebration of the **17th of May** in the national consciousness it is necessary to view it against its historical background.

In 1319 Norway was linked with Sweden in a union after over 400 years as a self-governing and independent realm. In 1380 Norway and Denmark were united under the same king, a union which eventually led to Norway's being integrated in a Danish-Norwegian single unified state with Denmark as the realm's dominant partner and Copenhagen as the unchallenged capital of the kingdom. It was not until 14 January 1814, the date of the Treaty of Kiel, that the Danish-Norwegian dual monarchy was dissolved and King Fredrik IV of Denmark was forced to cede Norway to the King of Sweden.

When Denmark-Norway was drawn into the whirlpool of the Napoleonic wars in 1807, Fredrik VI opted for alliance with France and war with England. As far as Norway was concerned the war with England meant blockade, crisis and hunger. In this situation there were clear signs of a growing separatist movement in Norway and increasing disenchantment with the existing regime and the union with Denmark. The separation of Norway from Denmark by the Treaty of Kiel on 14 January 1814, came not as a result of dissatisfaction in Norway, but rather as a consequence of the policies Napoleon's former marshal, Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, had pursued after he was elected Crown Prince of Sweden in 1810 and as heir-presumptive to the Swedish throne adopted the name Carl Johan. Norway was the reward of the victorious commander in the field, in return for his and Sweden's support to the allies in the final reckoning with Napoleon.

From the spring of 1813 the young heir-presumptive to the Danish-Norwegian crown, Prince Christian Fredrik, resided in Norway. At the

**Children's Birthday Party**  
Where: City Hall Square in Oslo  
When: after the **17th of May** Parade.  
See the world's greatest birthday cake and longest hot dog  
More info: <http://www.oslo1000.com/o1k.asp?id=169>

end of January, he received news of the Peace signed at Kiel and the cession of Norway to Sweden. He decided to prevent the realization of the cession of the Kingdom by placing himself at the head of a Norwegian independence movement, with reunion with Denmark as his unexpressed secret hope. King Fredrik VI of Denmark was well aware of the Prince's plan, was in sympathy with it, and himself supported the independence movement in Norway by supplying large quantities of grain.

The fact that Christian Fredrik was able to unite the Norwegians in the struggle for independence and, in cooperation with the National Assembly, to organize the government of the new state in the course of a few hectic weeks prior to the **17th of May** was due to Carl Johan's continued involvement on the Continent with the main Swedish army. But after Napoleon was forced to abdicate at the beginning of April, the Crown Prince of Sweden had fulfilled his obligations to his allies and, towards the end of May 1814, he was able to return to Sweden with the Swedish army. Despite bombastic statements from Norway, and despite the declaration "Death before slavery", after a short war Norway was forced into a union with Sweden, the union became effective when the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament) elected Carl XIII of Sweden as King of Norway on 4 November 1814. But the constitutional form of the Kingdom was in all main respects such as was laid down in the **Constitution of 17 May**, and the union with Sweden was so loose that it could be dissolved in 1905 without either kingdom being seriously affected as a result.

There are therefore good grounds for regarding **17 May 1814**

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**Watermark - Cleng Peerson - Father of Norwegian Emigration to the USA (Viking May 1996)**

## Fra Presidenten Jane Bolgen

Hooray, Hooray the First of May! May is the wonderful month for celebrating spring. As a child growing up in the Northeast, it was traditional for small children to pick lilies of the valley on the first of May, put them on their mother's door step, ring the bell and runaway. The first of May on the Norwegian calendar is Labor Day. This is a national holiday and a day off from work and celebrated with meetings and processions. Mother's Day is the next special day in May. Mother's Day is extra special for me because my oldest son's (Nick) birthday often falls on Mother's Day. Fred's cousin, Torill, tells me Mother's Day is celebrated in Norway on the second Sunday in February. Their celebration is very similar to ours. They give Mother small gifts and prepare a special breakfast for her.

The 17th of May is Norway's National Day. May 17, 1814 marks the country's declaration of independence and the triumph of constitutional government. After a long, cold winter, this is a great spring festival. Children and adults carry flags up Oslo's main street to greet the king and royal family. Towns throughout Norway celebrate in this manner. My first 17th of May parade was in Brooklyn, NY, where we viewed an all afternoon parade of Norwegians in bunads marching with flags and bands. It was very impressive. This year Cleng Peerson Lodge will join with Norwegian Society of Texas for a celebration on Saturday, May 20 at Walnut Creek Park from 1 PM - 4 PM. There will be games for all, hot dogs, sodas and a parade. Hope to see you there!

We finish up the month with Memorial Day in memory of those who served the United States in the Armed Forces. It is also the date of my parent's wedding anniversary. We, too, display our flag and have parades. Let us not forget our great Norwegian heritage or our American heritage. Fly both flags proudly!

Hilsen,

*Jane*

Carol serving  
Nordic  
meatballs at  
Vikingfest



*Thanks to Irma Pearson for the following photo links to VikingFest pics:*

Gus Stangeland's photos from Viking Fest (NST - Viking Chapter; SoN - NORDTEX LODGE)

<http://www.photosbygus.com/festivals/vfest2k/>

Joe Grossinger's photos from VikingFest (NST - Sol Hjem Chapter)

<http://victorian.fortunecity.com/finsbury/273/vfest2000/VFest2000.htm>

## LUTEFISKTOSS at VikingFest 2000



Note young  
lady escaping  
trademark  
lutfisk aroma.

Russ teaching competitor the fine points of lutfisk tossing (such as pinching ones nose, wearing gloves, eating with copious amounts of butter, etc.)

## Mange Takk å Alle

### From Jane

Tusen Takk! Mange, Mange Takk to all of you who worked so hard at the Viking Fest and the Nordic Meatball Kitchen. Viking Fest requires many dedicated people. It was a lot of fun! We saw many old friends, and greeted many new friends. The weekend was a tremendous success!

### From Fred

I need to thank so many of the Cleng Peerson Lodge's folks with a special thanks for all they did for Viking Fest.

There was no other club that had so much top-level participation. Thanks go to Don, Pam, Leila, Russ, Phil, Lewis, Mary, Duane and Phyllis, Jane, Todd, Rita, Carol, Sandy and Bob, and Glen Larson and the kids.. I know that

I have forgotten probably ten others and I will lie awake thinking of their names until they come to me. We needed all of you and you really came through!!

### From Cleng Peerson Lodge Members

To Fred and Jane and everyone else who helped with Viking Fest in any way. Thanks for Viking Fest 2000!!

Kids lined up to  
toss lutfisk at  
VikingFest 2000!



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as the pre- eminent date in Norway's history. After centuries as a dependency Norway once again joined the ranks of free states as an independent realm, and the new union with Sweden proved only to be an intermezzo, with no influence on the inner development of the country. From being subjected -- at least in theory -- to a most extreme form of despotism, the country emerged with a more liberal Constitution than any other contemporary state. While other free constitutions in Europe, drawn up during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, were rescinded and substituted by more authoritarian regimes, the Norwegian Constitution remained standing.

The **17th of May** has remained the great spring festival in Norway, in a country with a winter that is both long and cold. For this reason the **17th of May** has more and more taken on the character of a children`s festival. The children's procession has become the colorful focal point in the celebrations, from the most remote coastal settlements to the capital city where literally thousands of schoolchildren, marching along behind their school bands and banners, file past the Royal Palace in salute to the King.

The German occupation during World War II provided evidence of the fate which could befall a small country in a world ruled by the great powers. Experiences from that time have been kept alive in people's minds in the post-1945 cold war, in which the small states were often treated as no more than pawns in the great powers' ruthless game. There are still many countries which have not yet attained national independence. There are still many peoples who continue to live under dictatorship and despotic forms of government. Viewed against such a background, the ideals from Eidsvoll still retain their relevance and significance, representing values which are able to give the **17th of May** celebrations a deeper meaning.



### Cultural Resources

Don't miss the [www.norway.com](http://www.norway.com) slide shows & videos  
See color slides of the Constitution Center at Eidsvoll!!!!

See IN SEARCH OF VIKINGS in the May 2000 National Geographic.

### Hilda Complains!

Lena and Hilda were having dinner together one night. When it came time for dessert, Lena took the biggest piece of cake.

Hilda looked very surprised and said, "Vell, Lena, dat sure vasn't very polite of yew! Yew took da biggest piece of cake!"

"Vell vhat would yew have done?" asked Lena.

"Vell, I would have been polite and taken the smaller vun!" replied Hilda.

"Vell, vat are yew gryping about?" Lena asked with a smile. "Yew have it!!"

### Kalender fer de glade mai (mah-i) måned.

Calendar for the merry month of May  
Sola skinner (sooh-la shin-ner) i mai! (It's sunny in May!)  
Tusen takk, Gud, fer vakkert været i Vikingfest i år!!  
(Thank you , God, for the beautiful weather at Viking Fest this year!)

Der kjottkaker og lefsa deilig (die-e lay)! (The meatballs and lefsa were delicious!)

20.05.00(lør) Joint 17th of May Celebration (Syttende  
**May 20!** mai) with NST; from 1 to 4 pm!  
Walnut Creek Park Pavilion (located on  
North Lamar just north of Braker)

1-4.06.00 Texas Folklife Festival, Texas Institute of  
**June 1-4!** Texan Cultures, Institute grounds in  
Hemisfair Park! (801 S. Bowie), San Antonio

19.06.00(man) Brown Bag Business Meeting at Ascension  
**June 19!** Lutheran, 6 pm. All are invited.

7 pm Social Meeting. Video Tour of Norway  
by Rita & Merrill Carlson (postponed from  
January)

Note : **There will be no Cleng Peerson Lodge Social Meetings in July or August. Happy Vacations to everyone and see you in September!!**

18.09.00(man) Brown Bag Business Meeting at Ascension  
**Sep 18!** Lutheran, 6 pm. All are invited.

7 pm Social Meeting. TBA.

### Vaffeler

Poem by Lars Chr. Sande

My waffle iron makes waffles with five hearts.

A delicious golden brown joined in a circle  
and glowing warmly like a little sun.

Waffle hearts should symbolize humanity  
on the globe`s five continents  
on the day they have reached  
the goal of solidarity.

Together we have developed just ways  
to share our resources.

The aroma of fresh waffles tickles the nostrils.

Freshly baked, golden with blackberry jam.

Heart by heart.

Can there be a better Sunday tea-time treat  
in Paradise?



Leila mixing favorite  
waffle recipe.



Linda preparing her  
strawberry-whip cream  
waffle.

**Sons of Norway  
Cleng Peerson Lodge #1-645  
Austin, Texas  
Instituted February 14, 1997**

**Mission statement.** The mission of Sons of Norway is to promote, preserve, and cherish a lasting appreciation of the heritage and culture of Norway and other Nordic countries while growing soundly as a fraternal benefit society and offering maximum benefits to its members.

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**Gratulerer med Fødselsdagen  
(Grah-tew-LEHR-er meh FERDS-els-dah-en!)  
MAI**

2 Ken Gjemre	11 Wallace Vog
7 Pam Erickson-Knott	22 Carolyn Ekland-Olson
9 Kathryn Rogenes	31 Bob Helle
11 Robert Sebring	

**Texas Folklife Festival-June 1-4 in San Antonio**

This year the Texas Folklife Festival, presented annually since 1972 by The University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio, takes place June 1-4. For 2000 it brings together more than 40 ethnic and cultural groups, who showcase their food, crafts, music, dance and stories on the Institute grounds in Hemisfair Park (801 S. Bowie). Phone: 210-458-2300; Web site: www.texancultures.utsa.edu. For more information please call Rita Carlson 604 Harris Ave., #1 Austin, Texas 78705 512-658-4285 (new)

**Happy Belated Mother's Day!  
Hope your day was filled with joy!!**

**Celebrate Syttende Mai 2000!!!**

**Syttende Mai 2000 will be held at Walnut Creek Park in Austin on N Lamar  
on Saturday, May 20, 2000!!**

**A map of Walnut Creek Park appears on Map Page 13 (orange) in the  
Greater Austin SWBell Yellow Pages**

**Bring Flags for the BIG parade!!**

**Games for the kids and for the BIG kids!**

**BIG hot dogs and COLD ice cream - \$4.00 per person**

**Sons Of Norway**

**Cleng Peerson Lodge #1-645**

c/o Editor

12006 Snowgoose Road

Austin, Texas 78758



Sons of Norway fyller 105!