

It's the birthday of the painter **EDWARD HOPPER**, born in Nyack, New York (1882). By the time he was 12, he was already six feet tall. He was skinny, gangly, made fun of by his classmates, and painfully shy, and spent much of his time alone drawing.

After Hopper finished art school, he took a trip to Paris and spent almost all of his time there alone, reading or painting. In Paris, he realized that he had fallen in love with light. He said the light in Paris was unlike anything he'd ever seen before, and tried to recreate it in his paintings.

He came back to New York and found work as an illustrator at an ad agency which he hated. In his spare time, he drove around and painted train stations and gas stations and corner saloons. He'd sold only one painting by the time he was 40, but his first major exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 1933 made him famous for paintings such as "Houses by the Railroad," "Room in Brooklyn," "Roofs of Washington Square," "Cold Storage Plant," "Lonely House," and "Girl on Bridge."

Hopper had been an illustrator for business magazines, and became one of the first American painters to paint office scenes. Several of his paintings show office managers surrounded by gorgeous, buxom secretaries or people working late at desks high above the city.

He lived and worked in the same walkup apartment in Washington Square from 1913 until 1967. He ate almost every meal of his adult life in a diner, and never rode in a taxi. He loved the theater, but he always sat in the cheap seats. Hopper and his wife never had children, and he never included a single child in any of his paintings. The closest he came was a painting called "New York Pavements," showing a nun pushing a baby carriage. His painting "Four Lane Road" is his only painting that shows people actually communicating: a woman is yelling at a man.

Edward Hopper said, "Maybe I am slightly inhuman . . . All I ever wanted to do was to paint sunlight on the side of a house."

Acceptance Speech

by Lynn Powell

The radio's replaying last night's winners and the gratitude of the glamorous, everyone thanking everybody for making everything so possible, until I want to shush the faucet, dry my hands, join in right here at the cluttered podium of the sink, and thank

my mother for teaching me the true meaning of okra, my children for putting back the growl in hunger, my husband, primo uomo of dinner, for not begrudging me this starring role—

without all of them, I know this soup would not be here tonight.

And let me just add that I could not have made it without the marrow bone, that blood—brother to the broth, and the tomatoes who opened up their hearts, and the self-effacing limas, the blonde sorority of corn, the cayenne and oregano who dashed in in the nick of time.

Special thanks, as always, to the salt—you know who you are—and to the knife, who revealed the ripe beneath the rind, the clean truth underneath the dirty peel.

—I hope I've not forgotten anyone—oh, yes, to the celery and the parsnip, those bit players only there to swell the scene, let me just say: sometimes I know exactly how you feel.

But not tonight, not when it's all coming to something and the heat is on and I'm basking in another round of blue applause.

"Acceptance Speech" by Lynn Powell, from *The Zones of Paradise*. © University of Akron Press, Akron, Ohio. Reprinted with permission.

INSIDE PASSAGES by Holly Harden

As the time draws near for us to say goodbye and go our separate ways, back to our city apartments and houses on Main Street and porch swings and laundry and kids, we'd like to pause a moment to thank you for your stories, your laughter and your applause, and for tuning in each week and for showing up to spend some time with us.

You've shared your lives with us, too, in conversation and song, and in the notes you wrote on doilies, napkins, receipts, and on the backs of other writings and dropped into the box by the desk, and into our hands as we passed by. We, the editors, humbly thank you, and regret we could not publish more. Your words brought us laughter and tears, silence and wonder, and, on occasion, bewilderment. And questions, lots of questions.

No such thing as a bad question, and we thank you for them, too. There were quite a few questions that we couldn't answer for one reason or another. Questions which, if you put 'em all together, would read, "How did all of this happen?" Well, that's hard to say, but we'll give it a whirl. At the heart of things you'll find the APHC Staff who devote themselves, year-round, to *A Prairie Home Companion*; the EMI staff, a scrappy crew from New Jersey whom we call in for the more adventurous jobs like cruises; and the Norway Cruise Support Staff (a nice way of saying friends and family we've drafted to help out with things, and boy, do they ever). And there are always those people who get things going and keep them going over the long haul, coming in early and staying a bit late in order to get things done: Debra Beck, Caroline Hontz,

Sam Hudson, Andrea McAvey, and Albert Webster.

Then throw in a ship like the ms *Veendam* and her tireless, meticulous and competent crew, who fed us and kept us warm and comfortable and safe, who gave us directions and helped us out by attending to every detail. And then the passenger list filled with doctors and stay-at-home-parents and psychiatrists and pastors and farmers and mechanics and schoolteachers and aspiring artists of

all kinds and people simply looking for something — adventures, soulmates, themselves. Add to the mix a group of talented actors, learned naturalists, skilled singers and musicians, and a few writers. Throw in a bagpiper and you've got one heck of a good stretch of days. Something to remember.

If you hated it, we're sorry. Can't win 'em all. Did Prairie Home have a good time?

Oh, yeah. You bet we did.

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Kristina Stierholz
Scott Westphal

A short list of folks who helped put this sbindig together.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRONAGE AND FOR CRUISING WITH US.

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT WWW.PRETTYGOODGOODS.COM

You Really Ought to Know

If you missed the Debarb talk on Saturday, tune into channel 38 in your cabin for all you'll need to know about securing a smooth transfer home —wherever that lovely place may be.



THINGS OVERHEARD

“Make a grand entrance.”

“You got it! I’m a Leo.”

— at the door to the Rubens

“There sure are lots of people over 40 on this cruise.” — in the Atrium

“Can you get flan in Flåm?”

— over drinks

“They’re completely sold out of my beer...and the cheap wine.”

— in the Crow’s Nest

“We have to hit five museums before six p.m. tomorrow.”

— on traveling to Oslo

“I live on an island in Northwest Wisconsin, which is exactly like Norway only without the mountains.”

— small talk on a tour bus

FIELD NOTES The Competitive Bird-Watchers Guide to a Prairie Home Companion Cruise by Rich MacDonald

For millennia, Homo sapiens have been driven by competition. Historically, this was a competition for mates, food, and shelter. Going back at least to ancient Greece, we even competed for competition’s sake. The Bible is chock full of stories of competition (assuming competition equates with struggle), so clearly it is alright for Lutherans...

Just look to this cruise. I am continuously surprised by the enthusiasm with which my fellow cruisers approach, “Rich, I saw a bird...” and then proceed to describe the bird in infinite detail, hoping to aid my quest to be dubbed birder supreme of this voyage of discovery (sorry folks, but I have to see the bird myself, not on a digital camera, to count it in my tally).

By the end of day 1, we were off to a rip-roaring start. Eiders and pigeons and gulls, OH MY! Nancy, naturalist of the

finest sort totaled 7 species; yours truly, so-called “Bird Boy”: 9. There was trash-talk on both sides as to the opponent’s destiny for penultimate fame.

Over the next several days, the species totals remained little changed, but Dyk the Geologist threw his hat into the mix with a whopping 1!

Day 4 saw us two nautical miles offshore Runde, Norway’s largest seabird colony. Fulmars soared low over the water. Gannets were plunge diving from great heights. A complete run on the Alcids racked up Guillemots, Razorbills, and hundreds of Puffins. A Great Skua made an appearance, menacing the other seabirds. By days end: Bird Boy with 26 species, Nancy at 23, and Dyk 19.

Day 5. Nancy boasted of a Trondheim home-court advantage pushing her

ahead. A White-tailed Sea Eagle I notched while Nancy was below decks forecast differently. Bird Boy 38, Nancy 33, Dyk 21. (No Dyk, *granitoid Trondjemite* does not count in your daily bird tally.)

Is the pattern set? Nancy has worked diligently to find birds, but I have been able to maintain my lead. Meanwhile, Dyk, the Cinderella story, has quietly closed the gap so that by day 7, he was within 1 species of Nancy. Who will win the 2nd Annual Great Naturalist Birding Competition? Join us for the Coastal Commentary as we leave Oslo to see who has earned bragging rights as the most obsessed...er, I mean, the best, birder of the cruise.

The naturalists stun us every time with their good-natured humor and willingness to get wet. Prairie Home thanks the Naturalist crew for yet another wonderful cruise experience.

THE BOOK NOOK by Marcia Pankake

Everyday Philosophers

Everyday Life Philosophers: Modernity, Morality, and Autobiography in Norway

written by Marianne Gullestad
Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996

A social anthropologist ran an autobiography contest (“Write Your Life”) to identify the moral values of ordinary Norwegians. She later interviewed four of the six hundred thirty contestants asking about their beliefs. Because urbanization came relatively late to Norway, rural values remain strong. People feel, for instance, a conflict between the duty towards home and the freedom to advance themselves socially through education. American readers, whether Scandinavian or not, will find familiar many of the beliefs and conflicts.

Marcia Pankake is a retired librarian and long time editor of Prairie Home publications. She can tell you anything you might wish to know about “Kristin Lavransdatter.”

So, when GK lauded us for giving up our communication luxuries for a while—cell phone, computer, internet — or chided us for lapsing, we listened and heard!

And then he acknowledged the challenge of being an older father with an extraordinarily active nine-year-old daughter on board. I involuntarily reflected.

I too am an older father — three winters younger than GK — and my nine-year-old is a boy whom I fondly call “Urchin-boy” — which he is really not. He and his eleven-year-old sister are best friends.

I am away from them for two weeks. I love this vacation to myself — and it is not as selfish as it might seem. But if I value the Internet it is because I miss them dearly. I will love getting home to see them. And I will share my memories as we reconnect. All will be good, but sometimes music will reawaken the challenges of separation.

—Glenn Swanson from Easthampton, MA

Can we thank you enough for your contributions? You helped make this publication yours as much as ours. And thank you for that. —The editors, Holly Harden and Andrea McAvey

VIKING NEWS by Christina von Nolcken

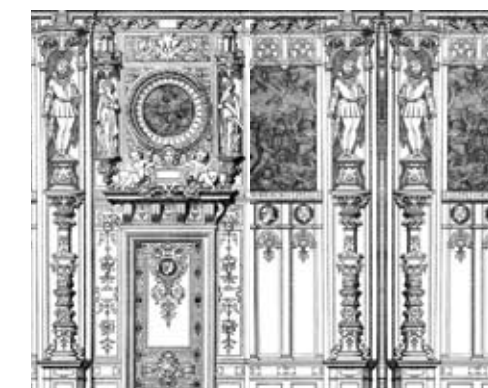
THE RUNIC ALPHABET

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Although Scandinavian societies did not start keeping extensive records until after Christianity had brought them the Roman alphabet, they did know how to write. Since at least the second century C.E. they had had the runic script, perhaps developed by Germanic peoples living near or within the Roman Empire. According to Old Norse mythology, Odin hung from the world tree, Yggdrasil, impaled on his own spear, for nine days and nights in order to gain the knowledge of runes (the word “rune” means secret). The script took slightly different shape in different parts of Scandinavia and England: I reproduce an early form here. It must have been

fairly widely known, and appears in inscriptions throughout the Viking world from the second century until early modern times. A version was still known among nineteenth-century Norwegian immigrants to America. These immigrants included the stonemason Olof Ohman, who was most probably responsible for the runic inscription on the Kensington Stone. This records an exploratory journey from Vinland to the west by 8 Goths and 22 Norwegians and was long taken as proof that Scandinavians had reached Minnesota as early as 1362. Good on runes is R 1. Page, *Runes* (Los Angeles and London, 1987)

Christina von Nolcken is the PHC Norway Cruise Viking expert. She gets a wild look in her eye when she talks about all things Viking.



PASSENGER NOTES

PRAIRIE HOME WISHES TO CONGRATULATE THE WINNERS OF OUR TALENT SHOW:

Belinda Bremner Dickens
(Green/Early Show)

Sarema Shorr
(Pink/Late Show)

LOVE

There’s the love of a beautiful maid;
Her love for a staunch, true man.
The love of a baby who’s unafraid
Has existed since time began.
But real love; true love,
Love even greater than that of a mother,
Is the infinite, passionate, tender love
Of one dead drunk for another!
—Tom

Last summer, Sue and I attended the Seattle show after the APHC Alaska cruise. It was clear from the camaraderie of the passengers and talent mixing with us landlubbers that “cruise” was just a placeholder name. Ebullient community. Authentic generous ebullient community might be more like it. We decided then and there to watch for the

next “cruise.” Neither of us would have chosen Norway and at the same time, we feel profoundly at home enveloped in the fjords. Our beloved Columbia River Gorge carved by different glaciers is a two-sided version of this multi-dimensional mix of mountains, tree-covered hills, grey-shaded clouds and breathtaking sunsets.

Entertainment all day is superb —amateurs to seasoned professionals. The talent tryouts could be the mirror opposite of American Idol — gentle appreciation for all, even those whose voices crack with nervousness. Genuine applause from our authentic generous ebullient community allows even the shy to contribute in their own way. Photos, choir, bird watching, singing, writing, storytelling...all gifts are called forth.

We are profoundly grateful for this experience with likeminded people with intellects honed, who allow heartstrings and legs to be pulled. Every public place is slathered with music, comedy, stories and lectures. —Mary Mack

It’s hard to believe that the end of our Norwegian adventure is near and even

harder to accept that this is the last cruise with the fabulous APHC cast, crew and enthusiasts. No more watching Fred’s face as Garrison presents him with an impossible sound challenge (come on, Fred, do that sperm whale!); no more First Impressions or quizzes with Sue and Tim; no more Shoe Band in the Crow’s Nest; no more Butch in the Piano Bar, or Prudence or Maria in the Explorer’s; no more Hopeful Gospel in the Atrium; no more meeting fabulous talent like Frigg and the Kreutzer Quartet; no more chats with fellow passengers who share your passion for APHC not to mention your values and political views...oh, say it ain’t so! Don’t you hear the Galapagos calling to you? There are even penguins there who may get your jokes. —Jane Connolly

If, as Fred Newman taught us, hearing is the most fundamental of our senses, giving us the ability to listen to and then with our developed brain interpret and analyze sound, determining whether to flee or fight or simply relax, then listening to a speaker can evolve more quickly a feeling than can reading a work or watching a scene.