

REMARKS ABOUT THE GREENHILLS IN AMERICA

It is an incredible pleasure to be here in Hedalen with all of you to say a few words about the American descendants of Halvor Grønhaug and Gunhild Eriksdatter Ølmhusplassen. I am so pleased that my wife, Hannah; my two sisters – Thelma and Mary Ellen and their husbands – Jake and Ingman; my nephew Paul Bursik and wife Deb are here to participate on this once in a lifetime experience.

The family history Anne Ingunn has prepared of the Descendants of Halvor Grønhaug and Gunhild Eriksdatter Ølmhusplassen is very complete, accurate and up-to-date. Anne Ingunn, Amund, Hildegunn, Toril and Ronny have done a superb job planning this reunion.

Erik was the first of the Grønhaug siblings to immigrate to America in 1907. He followed a common practice of adding son to his father's name and hence became Erik Halverson in America. Despite claims of America being the land of milk and honey, life was not easy for the new immigrants. Erik settled in south central Wisconsin in the Browntown area. He worked in a foundry in Browntown and later owned a farm before he retired to Browntown where he helped a plumber for several years. Erik married Ragna Peterson who was born in Hadeland. They had no children. Erik and Ragna worked hard but had a pleasant retirement including a trip to Norway. Erik was very proud of his Norwegian heritage and would point out persons of Norwegian heritage who were well known. Persons like Myron Floren of the Lawrence Welk music show that they watched religiously. Erik was extremely happy when Sigrid Høghaug announced she would visit America and later when she and Maria Hagen came to visit.

Ole was the second of the Grønhaug siblings to immigrate in 1909 and took the English version of Grønhaug and became Ole Greenhill. While I don't know the details of Ole's trip to America, he seems to have followed the lead of Erik and settled in south central Wisconsin in the neighboring town Argyle where he farmed his entire life. He married Amanda Nybråten and had four children: Gunelda, Gilbert, Casper and Evelyn. Amanda died in 1928 when the youngest child, Evelyn was 8 years old. He married Selma Severson in 1930. I think it is fair to say that the children were not close to their stepmother.

Helene Gunelda is the eldest of Ole's children. She married Clarion Torkelson in 1933 and died in 1978. They farmed in the Juda area and had four children: Donny, Harlene, Beverly and Dorothy. Gilbert Greenhill was Ole's second child. He was born in 1916 and died in 1993. He and Bernadine had two daughters: Barbara Tollakson and Jo Ann Johnson. Howard Caper Greenhill was Ole's third child. He was my cousin by blood and my uncle by marriage when he married my mother's sister, Goldie Melgaard. They had a set of twin girls: Jane and Janet. Evelyn was the youngest of Ole's children. Evelyn passed away in April of 2010. She and her husband, Bob Reed, farmed the Vinger farm for a number of years and Bob retired from General Motors in Janesville. Evelyn was an exceptionally gracious lady up to her death at

age 90. Some of you may remember when Evelyn, Bob and Kim visited Norway. Despite great interest, none of the Reeds were able to attend the reunion.

Guri (Gertie) was the third of the Grønhaug siblings to immigrate in 1910. I am not aware how Gertie was employed between 1910 when she arrived in America and 1918 when she married Clarence Vinger of Argyle. The Vingers were prominent farmers in the Argyle area whose roots were from the Bagn area. Clarence and Gertie retired from the farm at an early age. In Argyle, Clarence worked in the Saalsa Hardware Store for many years. Gertie and Clarence traveled considerably including a trip to Norway.

Anna was the fourth sibling to immigrate in 1911. I am sure that Gertie encouraged Anna to do so. She was employed as a house keeper in Rockford for many years. She married Kristoffer Nybråten in 1935. He was a widower. Krist and Anna had no children. Until Krist died in 1955, they had a small farm in the Town of Adams near the Vinger farm. After his death, Anna took employment in Rockford. In 1962, she married Jesse Rude. I will always remember visits to Anna because she never sat down to eat with the guests but stood by the table to be sure everyone was served. Undoubtedly, it was something she learned to do when she was employed as a domestic in Rockford.

My father, Harald, was the fifth sibling to immigrate to America in 1921. He naturally came to the Argyle and Browntown area. He was employed for sometime in Browntown at the foundry but most of the time on the Vinger farm. He met my mother, Evelyn Melgaard, when she was employed as house help on a neighboring farm. When they married in 1935, they first planned to rent the Vinger farm but when that did not work out, they came to northwest Wisconsin and purchased a small farm in Big Elk Creek near Colfax and the Melgaard farm. After struggling on this small farm in the depression times, they bought a larger farm near Sand Creek, WI where they lived and worked until retiring to Colfax, WI. Thelma and I were born on the Big Elk Creek farm and Mary Ellen and Arnold near Sand Creek. My parents had four children: H. Gaylon, Thelma Ann, Mary Ellen and Arnold Romain. As the three of us are present, I will start with the youngest, Arnold.

Arnie was born in 1947. He is a very successful lawyer in Shawano, WI. He married Elsie Albright in 1977 and they have two sons: Anthony "Tony" Greenhill and Ryan Greenhill and three grandchildren. Sadly Arnie is suffering from Multiple Myeloma. He has had two transplants and we hope and pray that cancer can be controlled. We wish he could be here today. He asked me to be sure to take pictures of the Skålvatnet at the Grønhaug setra because Dad used to talk about the good fishing there.

Mary Ellen is the next youngest: Many of you met Mary Ellen when she spent nearly 3 years as a nurse at Ullevål Hageby Hospital in Oslo. Mary Ellen is married to Ingman Ralph who is here too and is of Norwegian descent. In fact, Mary Ellen and Ingman were in Stavanger to trace Ingman's roots. Mary Ellen and Ingman have two sons: Jon and Mark and four

grandchildren. Grandma Mary Ellen will be happy to tell you about them and show pictures. Thelma is the next oldest sibling.

Thelma pursued a career in banking and credit unions. Jake and Thelma developed a very successful greenhouse operation in addition to their full-time employment. She married my college roommate, Jake Bursik. They were married in 1985. They have four children: Daniel, Paul, Robert and Maria. Daniel and Sue have three children: Jeffrey, Nicholas and Rachel. Paul is here with his wife, Debbie. Paul is a Professor of Finance at St. Norbert's College and Debbie is a legal litigator. They have two talented sons: Michael and Jared. Robert "Robbie" is not here for the reunion but he visited Norway several years ago and is very enthusiastic about Norway. He is not able to attend because they had a new baby a few weeks ago. Robert has three children: Jacinda, Colin and Ian. Maria follows her mother with a career in credit unions and has one son: Brandon.

I am the eldest child of Harold and Evelyn Greenhill. Hannah had a career of 38 years as a teacher of kindergarten and first grade. My career was 37 years as a Professor of Political Science and administrator at UW-Whitewater. In 1960-61, I was privileged to be a Fulbright Scholar to Norway. It was a wonderful opportunity to get to meet my relatives here. I remember fondly taking the train to Gran to be met by Gunnar Hagen at the station. He took me to Hagen where Maria and Bjørg Gunvor welcomed me. At Høghaug, I enjoyed many games of Whist. I remember Christmas Eve when we all walked down the hill to Hagen skipping along. On visits to Hedalen, Aunt Thea would spørre I kaffebrød. I remember Uncle Amund's interesting comments such as his reference that Aunt Thea liked to travel around the neighborhood. He said: "ho har en ubeskrivelig laupelyst". While I never had the privilege of knowing my grandparents, Halvor and Gunhild, it is clear that they were wonderful people. It makes me proud of my Norwegian ancestry. We proudly named our farm, Grønhaug USA, where we enjoy visitors from Norway.

Thank you for the opportunity to tell about the Greenhills in America. If you have any questions, feel free to ask me later.