

Arne Oddvar Mikkelsen
2005 Viking of Year Biography

I was born in Bergen, Norway on January 1, 1933. My Father was a manager for a farm equipment and supply company and my Mother was at home taking care of the kids. I had an older brother, who passed away at an early age due to an accident, and a younger sister, who still lives in Bergen. When World War II broke out in Europe I was 7 years old and the Nazi's took control of Norway from 1940-1945. It was very hard during those times for my parents to get food and clothing for the family, but somehow we seemed to manage and survive. Those were five years that I will never forget. After I finished High School, I went on to Business School and remained in Bergen where I started working in a Sporting Goods store called "Tonning" in downtown Bergen, which I very much enjoyed. At that time of my life I was extremely involved in Track & Field and Soccer. It was at that time being involved with Sports and working in a Sporting Goods store that I was lucky to meet so many Famous Athletes of that time including, Birger Ruud (Ski Jumper), Stein Ericksen (Skier), and all of the Brann players (Bergen's Pro Soccer Team) including Oddvar Hansen and Kniksen. I was seriously thinking of opening my own Sporting Goods store which would have been a dream, but then came Norway's military duties and I had to serve for two years with the "Tyskland Brigaden" (German Brigade), where I became the anchorman on the 4 x 100 meter relay team. When my tour of duty was over, I decided that "America" would be my next destination. At that same time though, I had met the prettiest girl in Norway and her name was Karen. I told her that my dream was to go to America and it took some convincing to take her with me to this strange new land. We were 22 years old and didn't have a lot of money, but we took a chance and left Bergen for New York in March of 1955 to start a new life in "America". There was one condition though, that we would go back to Norway after two years? I said, no problem, and that was 51 years ago and the rest is history.

Karen and I came to Brooklyn, New York via Ellis Island, like millions of other immigrants before us, to find a new start in life. I found a job working for a Norwegian Contractor who was building approximately 3,000 homes on Long Island. This was quite different from the construction projects in Norway. I received an opportunity to move from residential construction to commercial construction, working in Manhattan (Harlem) on a thirty-six floor apartment complex. In 1956 New York experienced a very cold and

windy winter which was worse than anything we had ever experienced in Norway. So in the spring of 1957 Karen and I had to decide to move to a warmer climate within the U.S. or move back to Norway. We packed our things, jumped in the car and started down Route 66 headed for Los Angeles, California where my aunt lived. While heading west we made a stop in Las Vegas, Nevada where Karen had some luck and hit a jack pot winning \$400.00 in silver dollar coins, which almost paid for our trip. We knew then we were heading in the right direction.

As we arrived in Los Angeles, in May, 1957 the sun was shining, the ocean was nice and warm and we loved it! I continued my career working in construction by building a house in Canoga Park with my uncle who was an excellent craftsman from Norway. While on this project we were paid \$1.50 above scale per hour. In June we experienced a heat wave, which we weren't prepared for. The temperature reached 100°f by 11:00 AM where we were working in Canoga Park. We briefly reconsidered our decision to come to California, but we learned to tolerate and actually enjoy the heat. The beach became our new weekend pass time.

Later I went back to working in commercial construction and began a project in Beverly Hills building the Century Plaza Towers. I became the general foreman on the project with 120 carpenters and 20 finish carpenters working for me. These men were the best craftsmen I have ever worked with. The General Superintendent, Harvey Jensen (Denmark) even hired them for special detail projects. After 7 ½ years we completed the Century Plaza Towers and I became a Superintendent for several large construction companies based in the L.A. area such as H.C. Beck & Co., C.L. Peck Co. and spent 15 years working as a Superintendent for Matt Construction. In 1983 I earned my General Contractor's License and began building several "speck" (speculation) homes in San Pedro and retired in 2003. Recently I took on a new project building a house for my oldest son in Santa Ynez, California just north of Santa Barbara near the Danish town of Solvang

In 1965 I was invited to play soccer with a Norwegian club named "Sportsklubben Fram" who played their games at a place called "Nansen Field" in Palos Verdes. They would play against ships teams when they would come into the LA Harbor. The club still exists today and still plays their games at Nansen Field. Both of my sons, Ole and Erik, started their soccer careers with Fram and Nansen Field. I also continued my "Idrett" qualifications with Norway because Sportsklubben Fram was and still is

affiliated with the “Norsk Idretts Forbund” (similar to the Presidential fitness award here in the U.S.). I have been fortunate enough to have qualified at every age level and continue to try and compete with myself even today. It was through soccer and Fram that my family became introduced to the Norwegian community in Palos Verdes, San Pedro and the Southern California area.

I have and am also involved with other clubs at Nansen Field including, Den Norske Fiskeklubben, SCAN as well as the Norwegian Seamen’s Church in San Pedro.

I will always have a place in my heart for “Nansen Field” and will always cherish the many good memories and friends that I have met over the years at Nansen Field and the Norwegian community here in beautiful Southern California.

Thank you all very much,

Arne O. Mikkelsen
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