

A Tribute To Reidar Oftebro by John Oftebro -- January 8, 2008

In 1988 I received a letter from Yngvil Oftebro who was an exchange student in Washington State, USA. Her correspondence also included the first "Family Tree" sketch that I had seen, written, of course by her father, Reidar. I contacted and met Yngvil, and months later Camilla. This was very exciting to me because my first trip to Norway in 1987 resulted in meeting only the Oftebros of my immediate family who were all still living at Oftebro and in Lyngdal.

The correspondence began flowing between Reidar and me. When he greeted my family at the Oslo train station in 1992, the rainy drive to his and Grethe's home in Asker was an inquisition on his part into any American Oftebro knowledge that I possessed. Since my Aunt Gudrun had kept me informed about her Great Uncle Ommund and his missionary accomplishments, and our various relatives in the Pacific Northwest and Canada, I was able to offer some assistance for what became his passion.

We were introduced to the wonderful Tobias Oftebro family in Mandal, meeting Frederick and Tomally, and my interest in the larger Oftebro family was born. By our next trip in 1999, Reidar and Grethe hosted an even larger gathering at Asker, inviting many other Oftebros from his years of research. Then, with the assistance of now fiercely motivated brother Torstein, they had developed the South African history and began tracking down Oftebros around the world. With Inge Christian they produced the astonishing first printout of the 8-meter Family Tree, and it was amazing!

Reidar and Grethe, Torstein and families were wonderful hosts, showing off their beautiful country by taking us to parks, museums, castles, stave churches, on river adventures and cultural events. Reidar was always thinking about the larger family by asking questions, taking notes, planning perhaps a worldwide family reunion. He and Torstein were at our home in Washington when the 9-11-2001 terrorist attacks occurred, having met Oftebros in Washington, D.C., California and our area just days before. We journeyed Canada together, with Torstein telling the family history and Reidar asking questions, taking notes and squeezing out every piece of family connection that he could.

With his research oriented background and now the use of the Internet, his persistent dedication to finding all Oftebros and their family histories resulted in what we all know as the tremendously successful and fabulous 2004 Oftebro Family Reunion in Lyngdal. While 450 Oftebros enjoyed all that was provided and presented, Reidar was at his research station, interviewing everyone he could, and piecing together the thousands of details that resulted in the keepsake tools we now have to further connect and enjoy our world-wide family.

Subsequent reunions in South Africa and planning for the American Reunion will continue to allow connections for our descendents and us.

Reidar—you have earned the title of Sir, or the Nobel Prize for Family Research, and would definitely be my nomination for the first member of The Oftebro Hall of Fame. You will be missed and remembered by all as one of the Great Oftebros-- as a wonderful son, brother, husband, father, uncle, grandfather, great uncle, cousin and friend to many.