



*In loving memory.*

**Arne G. Brekke**  
**1927 - 2018**

We wish to pay tribute to our founder, Arne Brekke, who passed away on June 25, 2018 at the age of 90 years. Not only is Arne's passing an enormous loss for all of us at Brekke Tours, but Norway, as well as Norwegian America, has lost a great ambassador. His knowledge of Norway, language, linguistics and history cannot be replaced.

In case you did not have the privilege of knowing Arne personally, we would like to share highlights from his life story.

As a young man, Arne emigrated to America from Norway, having been given a scholarship to study at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. He continued his education, eventually earning a PhD from the University of Chicago. With a background in Germanic languages, he taught at the University of North Dakota combining an academic career with that of travel.

Arne was always eager to assist people in finding out the meaning of their family name and locating their family farm in Norway. His creativity, generosity, and determination to introduce his students and Norwegian-Americans to their heritage, as well as Norwegians to America provided thousands with the heart-touching experience of 'finding their roots' and seeing the 'new land'.

Brekke Tours traces its roots back to 1956 when Arne organized a group tour to his native Norway. Determined to provide an opportunity for Norwegian-Americans to visit their homeland, the business evolved into providing charter flights to Scandinavia. From the 1970's to 1991, Arne chartered entire aircraft (DC-10's, L10-11's), offering a back-to-back charter flight pattern during the summer months. This endeavor not only required filling planeloads of people to Norway, but also planeloads of people out of Norway which enabled Norwegians to visit America. As an entrepreneur and a risk-taker, nothing was impossible for Arne.

In 1977, Arne was honored by the King of Norway as a recipient of the prestigious St. Olaf Medal in recognition of his work promoting good will and cultural ties between Norway and America. In 2011, he was named Major Benefactor of the Year by the North Dakota Library Association for his work in establishing the bygdebok collection.

Arne shared his unending enthusiasm and his zest for living with the staff of Brekke Tours and everyone he met. He took great joy in talking to people, inquiring about their family name and seeking clues about their immigrant families. Drawing on his study of Comparative Germanic Indo-European languages, he would eventually help to reconstruct their family name and find their family farm in Norway. His treasure trove of books in his office, about Norway and farm origins, provided countless hours of research opportunities.

If you were interested in knowing the origin of a word or how it developed, you would ask Arne. If he did not know, he would check his vast collection of dictionaries in various languages. His knowledge of Norwegian, Latin, Greek, German, and Icelandic proved to be a useful tool in that research.

In recent years, Arne started a collection of books at the University of North Dakota related to Norwegian genealogy and cultural history. He was actively working in support of the book collection up to the time of his death. View a documentary about his work with the library at <https://vimeo.com/29745327>

Along with Brekke Tours, The Arne G. Brekke Bygdebok Collection at the University of North Dakota, is one of Arne's legacies. His determination and persistence in developing this collection has created one of the world's largest and most extensive collections of Norwegian farm histories outside of Norway. <https://library.und.edu/special-collections/bygdebok/>

Arne was very fond of Norwegian poetry and song. One of his favorite authors was Per Sivle, who was born in Flåm, at the same farm where Arne's mother was born.

The following verse, from one of Per Sivle's poems, is engraved on a monument in Flåm:

*Og det er det stora, og det er det glupa,  
at Merket det stend, um Mannen han stupa.*

In other words, even though we pass on, what we have done during our time on earth remains. We leave a mark. Arne has left an indelible mark. He has left us a legacy. A legacy, it is said by many, is a gift that keeps on giving across time and even generations.

The Arne G. Brekke Bygdebok Collection will keep on giving, as will Brekke Tours. By bringing people together through travel, we will continue to strive to create a better understanding of other cultures, with the hope of ultimately creating a more peaceful world.

May we all go forth sharing Arne's quest for knowledge, his passion and zest for living, along with Arne's desire for everyone to show love and compassion to their fellow human beings.