

# The Ager Newsletter

Waldemar Ager Museum June 2018-Aug. 2019

## Coming Events

**Board Meetings**, Ager Museum,  
Monday June 17, July 15 and  
August 19, 9:30 a.m.

**Book Club Discussion:** Jane  
Pederson leads the discussion of  
*Christ Before Pilate*, Monday  
June 17, 6:30 p.m.

**Kubb for Kids**, Tuesday June 18,  
10-11:30 a.m. Front lawn, Ager  
Museum

**Midsommar Celebration**, Ager  
Museum, Sat. June 22, 1-4 p.m.

**FIRST Music Special and Open  
House**, Wednesday July 17, 6;30

**Nordic Camp for Kids**, Ages 7- 12.  
Ager Museum, Monday -Thursday  
Aug. 5-8, 9 a.m.-12:15.

**Second Music Special and Open  
House**, Wednesday Aug. 19, 6:30

**The complete 2019 calendar is  
included as an insert in this issue.**

**The Waldemar Ager  
Association**

**514 W. Madison Street  
P.O. Box 1742**

**Eau Claire, Wisconsin  
54702-1742**

**715.834.3985**

**[www.agerhouse.org](http://www.agerhouse.org)**

You are cordially invited to  
our Midsommar Celebration

For many years, the Ager  
Association has celebrated  
Midsommar. We enjoy ice cream  
and strawberries, Kubb and  
other games, music, daisy-chain  
crown-making, and conversation  
indoors and out. There will  
also be a cake in honor of  
Ager's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Come again this year—on  
Saturday, June 22, from 1 - 4.  
Bring your family and friends.

If it rains, we'll move  
indoors. Everything is free!

**Book Club:** As part of the celebration of Ager's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday,  
the planners included the formation of a book club and scheduled  
the first three meetings for discussions of three of Ager's novels. We  
have already had two.

Next up is a conversation about *Christ Before Pilate*. Discussion, led  
by Jane Pederson, will be on Monday, June 17, at 6:30 p.m. at the  
Ager Museum. Copies of the book are for sale at the Museum. The  
book is also available at the public library.

Books for discussion in July, August, September, October have not  
yet been decided. If you have suggestions, pass them along to Doug  
Pearson or any other member of the Program Committee: Vicky  
Finstad, Tim Hirsch, Marilyn and Roger Skatrud, Mary Elworthy, Mari  
Carlson.—*Doug Pearson*

**President's Column:  
Your Membership Matters!  
By Greg Kocken**

Recently, a group of graduate students in the Public History program at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire developed and led a unique tour of the Ager House. This free public tour explored Waldemar Ager's contributions to the temperance movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. **Each room in the house, from the parlor to the library upstairs, told part of this story.** The students did a tremendous job, and during a portion of their tour I was reminded of how important the work of the Ager Association is. These opportunities, both for the students and the public visitors, are made possible through the support we receive each year from our members.

**Membership in the Waldemar Ager Association matters.** Our members provide one of the critical resources necessary in helping the association develop, host, and deliver programs and other unique opportunities that engage the communities we serve. These programs and opportunities help us to achieve our mission of sharing Waldemar Ager's story and preserving Nordic Culture in the Midwest. This year, we have already connected with well over a thousand individuals through our programs and media presence.

All of this is made possible through the on-going support for our friends and members. If you have not renewed your membership for 2019, even if it has been a few years since your last active membership, I want you to consider renewing and joining our active members in supporting the tremendous work accomplished by the Waldemar Ager Association. **For those members who renewed in 2019, thank you!**

**The easiest way to join or renew your membership is online.** From our website, visit [www.agerhouse.org/membership](http://www.agerhouse.org/membership) and select "Renew your membership online here." The secure and easy to use online payment option is one of the simplest ways to join or renew your membership and show your support for the great work done by the Waldemar Ager Association.

If you have any questions or would like to leave other feedback regarding the Waldemar Ager Association, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I would love to hear from all our members and can be reached easily by e-mail, [kockeng@uwec.edu](mailto:kockeng@uwec.edu). **Thank you for being part of something special.**

**How to Unlock Digitally Preserved Copies of the *Reform*:**

On Monday, July 22, at noon, Laura Moquin, master's student in Scandinavian Studies at UW-Madison, and Greg Kocken, President of the Ager Association and Head of Special Collections and Archives and Associate Professor in History, will unlock some ways to think about *Reform*, the newspaper that was so much a part of Waldemar Ager's daily life.

Moquin's master's thesis focuses on "language ideologies, or attitudes toward language" as "expressed in Norwegian-American newspapers." In effect, in her presentation, she will be addressing Ager's favorite topic in his essays, lectures, and fiction.

Kocken will reveal the techniques for accessing the digitally preserved copies of *Reform*. If you are a researcher or just someone who enjoys a challenging and intriguing topic, you will leave this session with some new tools and, possibly, some new ambitions for study. —*Doug Pearson*



### Syttende Mai 2019

This year's banquet was held at the Holiday Inn South. Mary Elworthy presented her painting to the Ager Museum.



The entertainer for Syttende Mai was Michael Perry. He is a *New York Times* bestselling author, humorist, playwright and radio host from New Auburn, Wisconsin. Michael is currently recording a third album and he hosts the nationally-syndicated "Tent Show Radio". He performs widely as a humorist and tours with his band. Everyone enjoyed his humor.—  
*Photos and text by Dennis Weise.*

## Celebrating Waldemar Ager's 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday... March 22 & 23, 2019—Eau Claire, Wisconsin



At 4:00 p.m. on the 22<sup>rd</sup> Tim Hirsch began the *Conversations about Immigrant Identity* with his talk on Ager and American Literature. Two guest speakers followed, supporting the idea that even if an American write in a language other than English, the work is still considered American literature. On Saturday the 23<sup>rd</sup> the *Conversations* continued with Betty Bergland, from UW River Falls discussing *Norwegian Immigration: Women, Gender and Historical Patterns*. She was followed by local speakers on *Ager as a Citizen of Eau Claire*.



The banquet room at the W.R. Davies Student Center at UWEC was the setting for the evening program for the birthday celebration. The buffet dinner consisted of salad, roasted salmon, Norwegian meatballs, potatoes, vegetables and assorted desserts. The guest of honor for the evening was **Odd Lovoll, scholar, author, teacher and preeminent historian.**



**The readers theater group** ecWIT (Eau Claire Women in Theater) dramatized the daily misadventures of Norwegian immigrant women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Eau Claire. This was followed by a story taken from Ager's book *Fairy Tales for Eyvind: When You Are Tired of Playing*. Both selections were charming, humorous and warmly received.

The conclusion to the *Conversations* was the concert on Saturday night at the Pablo Center at the Confluence. It began with a presentation by Gretchen Peters on how music is a symbol of identity in multicultural environments. Later the Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra (ECCO) dedicated the second half of the concert to Norwegian composers Edvard Grieg and Johan Halvorsen as a salute to Waldemar Ager. Photos by Dennis Weise.

## ***Conversations About Immigrant Identity***

The Ager Association produced eight programs in February and March to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ager's birth in Fredrikstad, Norway.

We covered a variety of topics such as immigrant assimilation, the history of immigration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Eau Claire, Ager's place in American literary history, the roles of women immigrants, and the various ways that Ager served his community.

More than 700 people attended our events. The banquet and program hosted 125, and ecWIT (Eau Claire Women in Theater) produced the first dramatization of Ager's work in recent history.

Grants from the Wisconsin Humanities Council and the Mayo Clinic Health System helped fund much of the expense of the programming. But the value

of their investment is being carried forward even as this report is being drafted.

Tim Lane and Ivar Lunde collaborated on a recent faculty recital of Norwegian music, inspired, according to Lane, by the celebratory programming that the Ager Association created.

A book discussion series also is ongoing. On June 1, ecWIT, the production company that presented Ager's take on women immigrants, is giving a second performance of that show at the Reunion Weekend at St. Olaf College.

In July, we will learn from scholar Laura Moquin what she has found out about "language ideologies" as she did her research on *Reform* and other Norwegian-American newspapers. —*Doug Pearson*

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## What a Great Surprise! Birthday Celebration Extended

At the first-Friday faculty recital (UW-Eau Claire, Music and Theater Arts), held at the Pablo Center for the Arts on May 3, about 60 people enjoyed music played by Professor Tim Lane (flute), and guest artist Szu Ling Wu (piano).

Inspired in part by the celebrations of Ager's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, Lane selected for this concert works by six Norwegian composers, including Ole Bull and Edvard Grieg, and our local hero, Ivar Lunde. Lunde is Professor Emeritus (Music, UW-Eau Claire) and retired conductor of the Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra.

In the first half of the program, Lunde's recently composed "Norwegian Folksongs (Opus 139)" included seven short tales or profiles. Lunde provided the Norwegian texts and English translations for the lilting melodies. The variety of repetitions and simplicity of style are characteristic of young story tellers, and the music lifts one's spirits.

In the second half, Lane and Wu offered a series of short pieces by Ole Bull, Niels Gade, and Edvard Grieg. They then concluded the program with "Sonatina (Opus 61)" by Sverre Jordan. Expressive in their interpretations, and engaged by all of the music, Lane and Wu earned the appreciation of an enthusiastic audience.



--Courtesy of Ivar Lunde

## Summer Book Suggestion from Mari Carlson

*An Everyday Story: Norwegian Women's Fiction*  
Edited by Katherine Hanson  
1995 (originally 1984)  
Women in Translation (Seal Press)  
Seattle, Washington  
ISBN 1879679078  
\$14.95  
(available in the Ager library)

*An Everyday Story* collects feminist Norwegian authors in an updated edition of short fiction. The 1984 edition was published before two significant changes in Norwegian society: immigration from the Middle and Far East and Sami cultural resurgence. The 1995 edition includes a Chinese-Norwegian author and Sami authors, as well as Norwegian writers still at work.

Ordinary experiences of overlooked women are a central theme in all the stories. Working class women, young girls, unwed mothers, and women who exert masculine characteristics or simply resist norms populate the pages. Some stories contain superstition and possible witchcraft, fantastical characters, and mysterious pregnancies. Of the 40 stories, each is only a few pages long, and a handful of authors contribute two stories each.

Each story is preceded by the editor's notes on the author. These introductions put the stories in context, with author dates and historical facts, and show how the writers themselves fit into Norway's literary landscape.

Three stories stand out. Both Cora Sandel's stories from the early 1900s deal with girls who won't be contained. One loves roads where "freedom had no boundaries" and another takes long walks into the woods at a summer home until she eventually resolves various personal issues and leaves on a boat. Solveig Christov's "The Paradise Fish" from the 1960s celebrates Erna, a baker, who finds a clever way to ensure her future living as a single mom in a small town.

Each story shows a woman asserting herself in her own way. *An Everyday Story* gives us a glimpse into a woman's place in Norwegian culture through the 20th century.

**The Ager Association  
2019 Board of Directors**

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**Items for next newsletter must be  
received by Aug. 17, 2019**

**Visit our website *Agerhouse.org* to  
view the newsletter in color and learn  
more about the Ager House.**

**If you have a story or an idea you  
would like to share, please contact us.  
We would like to hear from you.**

—*Ella Fossum*

**Members and Friends:**

**New Members**

**Patricia Lindholm**

**Martin R. Zens**

**Mark Helland**

**Taylor Struwe**

**Transitions**

**Orv Bierman**, 1934-2019, longtime representative from Nordenfolk to the Ager Board of Directors. Orv taught mathematics at UWEC for many years. He leaves his wife Elaine, three daughters and their families.

**Richard Kozbial**, 1934-2019, former recording secretary of the Ager Board of Directors. Richard taught sixth grade for 31 years in Ohio and Michigan before moving to Eau Claire with his family. Here he participated in many cultural, linguistic and musical organizations. He died in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

**Contributions**

**Mary and Ed Elworthy**

**Maren Harrison**

**Leon G. Salander**

**Charles V. Enwald**

**A.K. Hellum**

**Peter and Carol Anderson**—in memory of Yvonne Hillestad and Betty Larson.

**Estate of Waldemar Ager**—Karren Bloom, administrator of the Canadian Mineral Rights held by the Waldemar Ager family, sent the remainder of funds to the Ager Association for its use. The amount of the check was \$4,231.22. Karren is the granddaughter of Waldemar Ager.—*E.F.*

**Docents Needed:** A small group of docents initiated the regular open house schedule at the Ager Museum in January 2016. The number of docents increased over the course of the year and remained steady for nearly two years, but lately, the number has dwindled.

**We now need more docents.** The docent coordinator will be calling members soon to set up training sessions. If you are called, we hope you will become a docent volunteer. Here is the regular schedule for open house at the Ager Museum: **2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of the month from 10-2 & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of the month from 4 -7.** Contact Doug Pearson (715 834 5204) or write [pearsoda@uwec.edu](mailto:pearsoda@uwec.edu).

The Waldemar Ager Association  
P.O. Box 1742  
Eau Claire, WI 54702-1742



## **Nordic Camp for Kids**

Ages 7 – 12

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Camp is scheduled from 9 – 12:15, Monday through Thursday, August 5 - 8.

Kids learn some Norwegian, play games, have an outing at the Chippewa Valley Museum (the theme this year is fishing), and try rosemaling.

**Registrations** accepted through July 22. More information and the registration form available at [www.agerhouse.org](http://www.agerhouse.org).

At the moment, however, no child has registered. The camp is in danger of being canceled. If you know of youngsters who might enjoy this day camp experience, please encourage them to check out the information at the website.



### Calendar for the Remainder of 2019

Day	Date	Time	Event
Monday	June 17	6:30	Book Discussion: <i>Christ Before Pilate</i> , Jane Pederson
Tuesday	June 18	10 – 11:30	Kubb for Kids: Front lawn, Ager Museum
Saturday	June 22	1 – 4	Midsommar Celebration
Monday	July 15	6:30	Book Discussion: Title to be decided
Wednesday	July 17	6:30	Music Special and Open House
Monday	July 22	Noon	Using <i>Reform</i> : Archives Department, McIntyre Library, UW-Eau Claire, Laura Moquin and Greg Kocken
Monday	August 5	9 – 12:15	Nordic Camp for Kids
Monday	August 19	6:30	Book Discussion: Title to be decided
Wednesday	Aug 21		Music Special and Open House
	Late Aug	TBD	Annual Yard Sale
Monday	Sept 16	6:30	Book Discussion: Title to be decided
Wednesday	Sept 18	6:30	Music Special and Open House
Monday	Tentative Sept 30	6:30	Panel Discussion: Creating the Ager Association Sustaining It for the Future
Monday	Oct 21	6:30	Book Discussion: Title to be decided
Wednesday	Oct 16	6:30	Music Special and Open House
Sunday	Dec 8	1 – 4	Advent at the Ager

Unless otherwise stated, all events are at the Ager Museum, 514 W. Madison Street, Eau Claire

**Music Featured on Four Wednesdays:** Mari Carlson is organizing a series of music programs for third Wednesdays: **on July 17, August 21, September 18, and October 16.** In good weather, the events will be held outdoors, starting at 6:30. Guests can arrive early and have a tour of the house. If weather doesn't cooperate, the programs will convene in the house.  
**Cost: \$5/person. Students 21 and under are free.**