

Hei Hei! Thank you for taking the time to read some of my family's history. It brings me great joy knowing that these stories are finally being told. In a world littered with beauty pageants, I was honored to be a part of a contest that is so meaningful.

## 2024 Mission

I'm Baylyn Shankman from Bedminster, NJ. Last year's contest forced me to step back from myself and develop a better understanding of how I got here in the first place. There are many gaps in the stories about my relatives who immigrated to the US in the 1920's. Since my mom is my oldest living Norwegian-American relative (no older family members to provide information), researching my family history proved to be the most challenging project I've worked on. My mission in this year's contest is to share what I've learned, so that my family's legacy will never be lost again.

## I am... (Quick Facts)

- Enrolled at St. Olaf College (class of 2028)
- An ice-hockey goalie: Girls' Travel and Boys' HS Varsity
- A bookworm
- A detective
- A Lutheran
- A Norwegian!

## And I like... (Hobbies)

- Reading
- Baking
- Cats
- Thrift shopping
- Bike riding
- Singing Norwegian songs



## My Norwegian Traditions

Almonds are a widely-used ingredient for baking in Norway. Bestie's (short for Bestemor) specialty was rice pudding with a secret almond, and mine is Norwegian almond cake. I love baking the cakes, because not only do they smell and taste delectable, especially on a snowy day, but I get to enjoy the memories I have of baking with Bestie every time I'd visit her house. It was these cakes I talked about when I was tasked with presenting information about a different culture (I chose Norwegian, naturally) in my Sociology class this fall. I must've talked too much, though, because my teacher made me go home that night and bake one for him! I think he liked it because I somehow got sucked into baking him another one for Christmas!

My mom had the biggest impact on my passion for and understanding of my heritage. Since I was two years old, she has been taking me to Syttende Mai parades, St. Lucia pageants, and, of course, to walk as a Little Miss Norway and watch the Miss Norway contests over the years. Without her, I wouldn't be able to tell you all these stories about my great-grandmother Ingrid and my great-great-grandfather Ivar (more info on them to follow), and I wouldn't even be standing on the stage competing.



Left: 2008 Syttende Mai Parade with Brian Andersson & Miss Norway Sarah Lindland



Below: Me, my mom, & Grete Waitz in NYC

My mom and I like to watch Norwegian TV shows and movies, like *Hjem til Jul* and *Christmas as Usual*, as ways of living vicariously through the characters because we haven't been to Norway yet. However, I do hope to travel to Norway in a few years! This past summer, I was recruited to play women's hockey at St. Olaf College (Northfield, MN). This next chapter at St. Olaf means more to me than just playing a higher level of hockey, however. Being an Ole means a chance to be "un-orphaned," since my Norwegian family is small and broken. Because St. Olaf is a Norwegian and Lutheran school, I will be surrounded by people who are like me, and I am excited to enrich myself in the culture and community. I will also be studying abroad at the University of Oslo the summer after my sophomore year, where I will take courses in Norwegian language, history, or culture. Since I can't go during the winter months (hockey season), I'll be going for a spring/summer session, and there's a chance that I'll be there on May 17. In preparation, I've been learning the Norwegian National Anthem, so that when the time comes, I can belt it out joyfully. I wish Bestie was alive to learn that I am going to a Norwegian school, but I know that she, my great-grandma Ingrid, and all of my other ancestors do know this and are happy to see their descendent honoring them. I will immerse you in my Norwegian history in greater detail, but first let me provide a few details about who I am.

## High School & College

At St. Olaf, I plan to double-major in Mathematics and Computer Science, as well as take part in the Fellowship for Christian Athletes and Women in Computer Science Club. Right now, as a senior in high school, I am maintaining a 4.6 GPA (1510 SAT) and am taking Honors and AP courses, including AP Calculus and AP Computer Science. I've always loved math; even when I have trouble figuring something out, I cannot quit until I figure out the question because not knowing will bother me for the rest of the day. I'm particularly enjoying my high school computer science class and hope to incorporate it into my future career.

## Hockey

Since age 7, I've played hockey at the Tier 1 Girls' travel level, as well as the Boys' Varsity High School levels, where I've won league trophies, played in national championship tournaments, and was team captain my junior and senior years of high school. I bonded with Bestie through hockey when she was getting older and couldn't do as much. She would watch all of my games on the YouTube livestreams and then call me to talk about them afterward. My grandpa reports that, during the games, she would start screaming and shaking her fist at the TV, "like a true Viking warrior!"



## Holiday Book Drive

In last year's contest, I mentioned that my mother was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2021, and that during the chemotherapy and immune-therapy treatments, she and the other patients can't do much, besides read. Last winter, I knocked on my neighbors doors and collected 163 donated books and cash for the Summit Health Oncology Floor in Florham Park, NJ. Due to last year's success, I had another drive this year and collected another 174 books (111 books + \$63 used to purchase additional books from local nonprofits), for a total of 337 books to date that were shelved at the center. I am happy to report that upon returning for my mom's subsequent appointments, the books were off the shelves of the Summit Medical Group Oncology Floor in Florham Park, NJ and are in the hands of the patients!





“We honor those who came before us. We realize that their fates and destinies had to happen to give us life in this moment. It could be no other way. This realization brings about immense gratitude for our family lineage and for life.”  
-Anonymous

## My Family

While preparing for last year’s contest, I realized that the only Norwegian relatives I knew about, besides my mom, were my grandma Bestie and a little bit about my great-grandma Ingrid. It didn’t bother me until later that no one knew much about our family. All we were told was that three relatives immigrated here from the motherland, and two of them took their own lives a little while after arriving in Brooklyn. Bestie didn’t want to talk about our immigrant relatives, because the stories are sad, and perhaps she felt embarrassed. However, all Norwegian immigrant stories deserve to be told, even the tragic ones, because they demonstrate our forefathers’ hardships and challenges, while highlighting their strength and persistence.

We were a small family to begin with, and then our Norwegian last name Eide died off in America. Now there are only two living generations of our bloodline left here: one from my mom and one from her sister. I’m making it my responsibility to ensure that the stories of our ancestors do, in fact, get told, so that the people who created this life for us in America are properly honored.

## Bestie (my grandmother, short for Bestamor)

Bestie can be characterized by her Norwegian pride, no doubt instilled in her by Ingrid. She would always tell me how tough Ingrid was and what a blessing it is to be from



such a beautiful country. Bestie loved wearing Norwegian sweaters, reading her Bible, and telling folktales, including stories about trolls running out from under bridges when violins were played in the dark.

Christmas was a stupendous celebration at her house, which would always be covered floor-to-ceiling in red and white decorations. My favorite Christmas tradition with her was on Christmas Eve, when she would give each person a cup of rice pudding. Only one of them contained an almond, and whoever received the almond would hand out the presents that year. And always, there were accusations thrown around about Bestie rigging the contest! But that was half the fun of it. :)



Most importantly, Bestie would tell stories of the Norwegian Resistance during WWII, and how deeply Norwegians love their country. Many times she talked about a group of Norwegians who went on a suicide mission to sabotage a Nazi bus. They were courageous and selfless, and she always admired them.

She also would mention that a cousin named Arne was part of the Norwegian defense in WWII. No one knew anything about him, but through my research on MyHeritage.com, I learned that his full name was Arne-Martin Gørbitz Andal. He has our family names Martin and Gørbitz, and his mother has the family name Lucie. The website, [www.krigsseilerregisteret.no](http://www.krigsseilerregisteret.no), says that Arne was an electrician in the Norwegian Navy from 1940-1945, and he also earned two medals: The War Medal (for meritorious efforts in the Royal Norwegian Navy) and Haakon VII's 70th Anniversary Medal. Arne deserves a lot of admiration for all he did, and I am proud to have a family member who served his country so valiantly.

Besides what Bestie had told me, I didn't know much more about the Resistance because it was never covered in my history classes. To satisfy my intrigue on the topic, this past winter, I read *Out Stealing Horses* by Norwegian author Per Petterson, which is about a man reminiscing on his childhood and understanding how the Resistance affected his father. I learned that Norwegian people are not as outspoken as we Americans are. Norwegians are humble and reserved, which is a part of the reason why their heroic acts during the war are not very widely known in the USA. The narrator Trond says about his father: "The Germans had left, but I can't remember that we talked about them any longer. At least my father did not. He never said anything about the

war.” Trond’s father played a crucial role in the Resistance, because he smuggled documents and film that were vital to the movement, past Nazi officers, across the Swedish borders. He just never talked about it because it wasn’t in his nature. He was humble and did not seek extra recognition for his patriotism/loyalty.

And this humility characteristic is not just specific to the Resistance members. The only reason I know about all of my great-grandma Ingrid’s accomplishments is because of my grandmother Bestie; my mom says that Ingrid never once talked about her accomplishments, and her only sense of pride was in Norway itself. Almost every Norwegian is humble because they follow the Janteloven, a set of social standards for Scandinavian countries that establish a sense of community, rather than prideful individuality. Norwegian society is quite different from the US in this way, as we are more individual-focused. I admire the Norwegians for this system, and I am excited to experience Janteloven when I visit Oslo for my study abroad.

### Ingrid Eide (great-grandma)

I can draw many parallels between the lives of my relatives to my own life. I learned that Ingrid “toughed it out” through many careers, including working on the US Coast Guard. This was during a time when women could only work in the traditional sector, for example, as nurses, secretaries, or maids. But my great-grandma was tough-as-nails, and the hardest worker I know of. She wasn’t afraid to do what she needed to do to succeed. She is my inspiration.

Ingrid is the example I always refer back to when I think of a strong, independent woman. Even though she was alone in a foreign country and couldn’t even speak the same language as those around her, Ingrid found a way to not only survive, but to build a decent life for herself. She was also artistic, as she created wood sculptures and paintings, and was also a hand model in a cruise ship commercial. My grandmother, mother, and I talked about how Ingrid’s perseverance is her most memorable trait and admire her as a feminist role model for our own lives.

I thought that, given the time period I live in, I would be treated the same as the other boys on my ice-hockey team. But that’s not the case. I have been screamed at, called names, and degraded. However, in the same way that Ingrid needed to serve on the Coast Guard to make a living, I need to play on the team to improve my skills before I play in college. Any discrimination I face is probably only a fraction of what she had to endure, but (as you can see in her photo), she was a strong woman, who “didn’t take nothing from no one!” Ingrid’s photo reminds me that, even in the midst of challenges, giving up is not an option and that I shouldn’t let anyone stand in the way of my success.

Most of the information that I knew about my Norwegian family was limited only to Ingrid. It felt melancholy that this was all slipping away, and I realized that I was sad about losing people that I never even met. I then understood that I was fortunate enough to have been around my grandma Bestie long enough to absorb her passion for Norway, which then made me passionate about recovering all this lost information. Perhaps, without this passion, my mother and I never would have gone on our “Norwegian Research Odyssey.” And then my children would never even know or care about the place they came from and how it affects them. And the lives of the Eides would fade away into the background of modern American life.

## New Information

My mother and I wanted to learn more about the two other relatives besides Ingrid who immigrated to the US: Ivar (Ingrid’s father) and Marie (Ingrid’s sister). As hours turned into days turned into weeks turned into months, we spent many nights (that usually became mornings) searching heritage newspapers, censuses, and grave finder websites, trying to uncover as much as we could. To be honest, the process was extremely frustrating and draining. Although there are many databases available, our family’s information was often misspelled and missing from the pages that it should be on.

The biggest, most memorable part of my researching Odyssey was learning about Ivar Eide (my great-great-grandfather). Bestie told me that Ingrid, her father (were not given his name), and her sister Marie immigrated to Brooklyn, and Marie and Ivar passed away by suicide. Eventually, my mother and I found Ingrid’s father’s name, which is spelled as Ivar, Iver, and Ives (depending on which document you looked at). This name enabled us to tighten our search for him. It had been a mystery for many years as to what happened to him and why, because our relatives only passed down vague information verbally (no documents). I could tell that my mom was perturbed by the fact that we only had wishy-washy rumors. She desperately needed to know for sure what had happened to him to feel clarity and understanding.

I’m a competitive person (because I’m an athlete), so I turned over every stone I could find. Eventually, MyHeritage.com led me to a list of data about Ivar, which included his birthday, marriage date, death date, etc. In fine print at the bottom of the page was his death certificate number. I first Googled the number with “death certificate,” but the search was too broad to provide me with what I wanted. I knew he lived in Brooklyn, so I then traveled to an NYC death certificate database that separates the certificates by borough. From his address (627 Warren St., Brooklyn) I was able to enter his borough



and certificate number, and, finally, the database provided me with his certificate. I'd discovered information which ended 70 years of speculation.

While this discovery was exciting at first, the celebration was quickly squashed by mourning; the certificate read: "Cause of death: probably suicide." With the death certificate information, I was able to pull up an article with the headline: "Comfortable Pose Taken for Suicide" (see documents at the end pages). Even though we had been told that this had happened to Ivar, looking straight at the evidence was like being doused in ice water, a shock.

The reason why only Ivar, Ingrid, and Marie immigrated, leaving family in Norway behind, was because Ivar hoped to establish a steady business and then bring the rest of the family to Brooklyn. However, this was during the Great Depression, and Ivar tried and failed twice to keep his Baltic Furniture Exchange business afloat (114 Fifth Ave, Brooklyn, around the block from his apartment). Advertisements for his store ("sacrificed prices") indicated that he was struggling, but trying hard to make ends meet. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough to save the business. Not only was Ivar crushed by the personal failure, but also by the pressure of the family back home that was waiting for him. He had nothing left, and probably in despair, took his life by laying down and inhaling fumes from his stove. For someone to be wounded so badly, in both his home country and his new land, including being widowed, to the point where he kills himself, is the most heartbreaking story I have heard in my life. Ivar had hopes and dreams coming here, and the American Dream failed him.

## Gravestones

I felt sad for all of the suffering Ivar and his family had to endure throughout their lives, and even more sad because I was mourning relatives I'd never even met. It felt like there was nothing I could do about it. But, actually, there was one thing I could do, though it would never be enough to ease a life's worth of pain: visit his grave and pay respects. The death certificate said he was buried in Evergreens Cemetery in Brooklyn, so I felt encouraged knowing that he was documented and in a place that was easily drivable. After emailing the cemetery to confirm with an Administrative Assistant that he was, in fact, buried there, my household piled into the car and made the trip. Since there are 526,000 people buried there, we were relieved to at least have the fact that he was in the Seaman's Grounds lot, which we thought would make our search easier.

However, after inspecting each grave multiple times, we couldn't find him. We knew we were in the right area (because the cemetery had emailed us a highlighted map), and were incredulous as to what had happened. Are we looking in the wrong place? Were we told to look in the wrong section? Did his headstone break? Out of the corner of her

eye, my mom saw light reflecting off the ground, which we then discovered was a grave that had been nearly covered by grass, dirt, and foliage. Digging rapidly on all fours like a dog trying to bury a bone, I felt the excitement building as I swiped away the last piece of dirt... false alarm. It wasn't him. Again, feeling defeated, we were stumped. Maybe his stone was buried, like that one? After another hour of searching, there was nothing else we could do but go home and call the cemetery office when it reopened on Monday morning.

My mom spoke to a different representative, who informed us that we were looking in the right section, but that we couldn't find Ivar's gravestone because he doesn't have one. He was in an unmarked grave section of the Seaman's Grounds, along with all of the other immigrants and seamen whose families could not afford proper burials.

That made me even more sad about what happened to Ivar. Even in death, he still couldn't have the privileges that others had. It made me want to try even harder to honor his legacy and make sure that all of the pain he endured to try to make a better life for his family will never be forgotten. And, you know what, I think he did accomplish his goal. My mom told me in the kitchen this morning that we are fortunate enough to be the most successful generation of our family. I wish I could talk to Ivar and say "thank you" for all of his sacrifices that lead up to the life that I have today, but then again I know that he already knows how I feel. His spirit and the spirits of his daughter Ingrid and her daughter Bestie can hear and see everything, and they should be happy that their lives *did*, in fact, mean something.

Ivar's death triggered my mom and I to also research his other daughter, Marie (my great-great aunt). Bestie had told us that Marie took her own life at a younger age, but Ivar's death certificate led us to Marie's marriage certificate. From that, we learned that she had a husband and two children. Had we not done this research, we would never have known that we had an uncle and some cousins! Marie married Godtfried Monsen and had 2 children, including Peter Monsen, who now lives in Norway and is an accomplished and widely-known artist. Through FindAGrave.com, my mom and I were able to locate Godtfried's grave, which is located in a cemetery in Newtown, PA (only an hour from our house). Visiting and cleaning his gravestone makes me feel like, even though there is not much now that I can do for my relatives, I can finally honor the family who has been forgotten for so long.

## Next Steps

There are still many unsolved mysteries. Godtfried's name is misspelled on his gravestone; it's missing the first "d." My family is currently pondering how to address this situation. Additionally, we are unsure why he was buried in Newtown, Pennsylvania,

when he lived and died in Westbury (Nassau County, Long Island). And we also don't know why he is in a 4-person plot with an Irish woman and a Captain from the Russian Imperial Army, especially when each of these people died 30 years apart.

Graves left to right: Godtfried, Regina E. Jones (Irish), Alexis V. Vapley (Russian)



We are also learning more about Marie's life: how did she pass away at the young age of 44, and where is she buried? We hope to gain this knowledge soon, as we recently submitted paperwork to the Town of Brookhaven (Long Island) to obtain a copy of her death certificate.

### My "Why"

I've loved the idea of competing for Miss Norway since the first time I watched this contest at age 5. Losing last year was devastating, but it was also a teachable moment. It forced me to dig deeper into my heritage and complete all of this research in the first place, and that's the real meaning of this contest. Cliche as it sounds, like a true Norwegian, and especially like Ivar and Ingrid, I am not a quitter and will keep trying again at Miss Norway. Competing in this contest grants me a platform to share, and the world deserves to know about my family, who dedicated their lives to creating a space where I can experience the opportunities that they sacrificed their lives to create for my parents and my children.





## Research

I've attached a few of the documents I came across in my research. I thought they might interest you. The information is compiled from myheritage.com, NYC death certificate database, familysearch.com, newspapers.com, findagrave.com, etc.

[illegible]

Eide ✓	Marie	17	✓	F	S	School-girl	Yes	Norwegian
da ✓	Ingrid	15	✓	F	S	do	do	do

Manifest from Ingrid and Marie's Voyage to Ellis Island On January 28, 1930.

## COMFORTABLE POSE TAKEN FOR SUICIDE

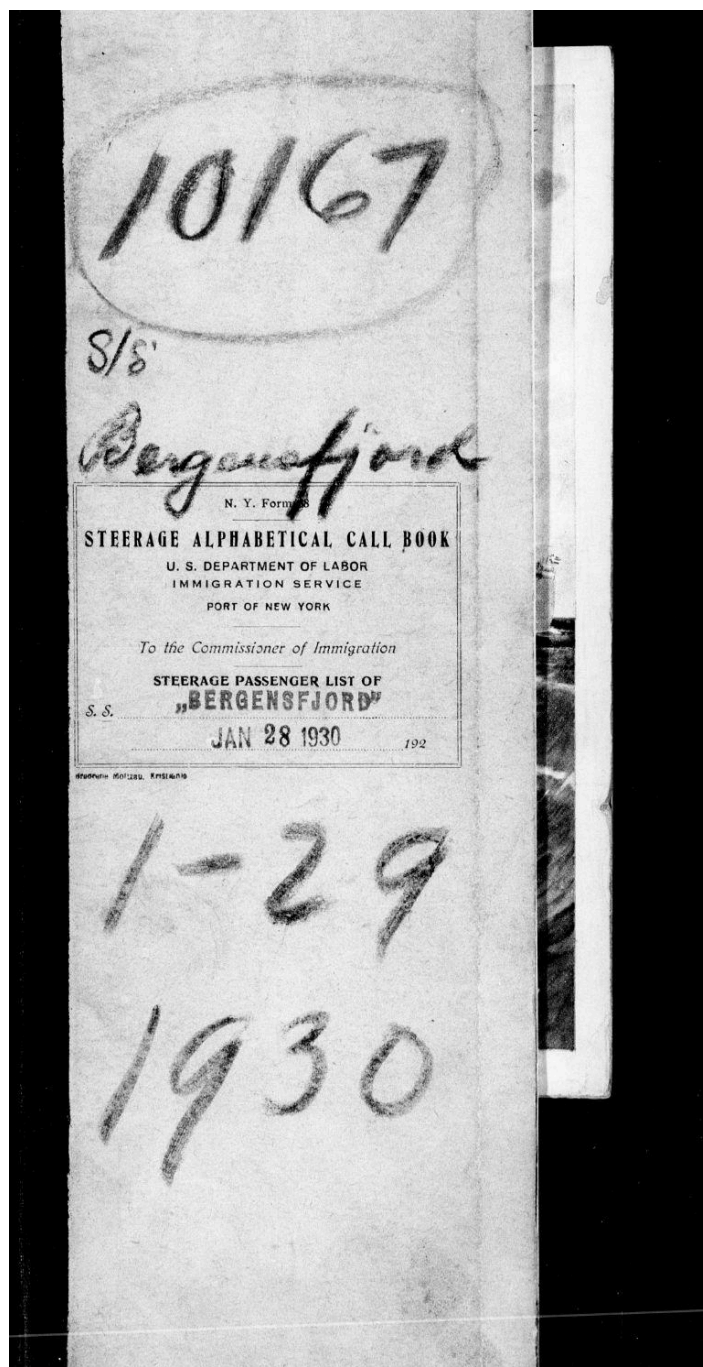
### Business Man Puts Pillow Under Head, Takes Gas.

Discouraged by poor business, Iver Elde, 55, planned to make his death as comfortable as possible yesterday and after turning on the gas in the stove and heater in the kitchen of his apartment at 627 Warren st., placed a pillow under his head and lay down on the kitchen floor to await death, according to the police of the Bergen St. Precinct.

Elde was dead when neighbors smelled gas and traced it to his apartment. Police summoned Dr. Collins from the Holy Family Hospital. He said Elde had been dead a couple of hours. Police say the four jets on the gas stove, and the one on the gas heater had been turned on.

On the table the police found a letter addressed to Mrs. Martha Monsen, of 1250 Lexington ave., Los Angeles, Calif., a daughter. The letter was written in either Swedish or Norwegian and the police have not yet been able to decipher it.

Elde conducted a second hand furniture store at 114 Fifth ave., just around the corner from his home.



Left: Ivar Elde's death announcement, Times Union Newspaper, Dec. 11, 1935.  
Right: Ingrid's and Marie's ship, the Bergensfjord.





Anna Gørbitz, Ingrid's mother



Ingrid is in Anna's lap



My mom, Bestie, Ingrid, Aunt Heather



Ingrid's grandfather





My family at the Syttende Mai parades over the years!

