



Sons of Norway
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MiniPresentation21

VALENTINE

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Every February Americans set aside one day, Valentine's Day, to excel in hearts, roses, and sentiment. But few have given our Valentine a more unusual token of our love than the city of Omaha gave to its own special sweetheart: Norwegian figure-skater, Sonja Henie.

When she opened her ice show in Omaha on Valentine's Day in 1941, she was presented with an 80-pound heart sculpted of blue-green ice. The local press agent who took the initiative to the city's unusual Valentine gift, promised that Omaha would keep Sonja Henie's heart until she returned.

She never came back—but her Valentine heart remains, somewhat shrunken, in the Omaha Cold Storage Terminal, where visitors may view the city's tribute to a fine athlete and artist. Come to think of it, Omaha probably is the American city with the biggest Norwegian heart!

Otherwise, you will not find many Valentine traditions related to Norway. The Norwegian temperament is not very well suited for a typical romantic Valentine's Day celebration. The embarrassment of displaying endearing feelings on an otherwise ordinary day in February would be too much for most stoic, stone-faced Norwegians.

This is especially true when it comes to displaying one's romantic feelings towards that very special person of the opposite sex. Ola Norwayson can go on for hours praising his country, his dog, and his grandma. With tears in his eyes and a voice shaking with emotion, he can tell you about his first pair of skis or the first dime he earned. But showing his feelings for his sweetheart—in public? NO WAY!

Less informed individuals say that Norwegians are completely heartless, but this is far from true. The fact is that behind their well-composed facade beats a big, warm heart. However, this heart is not for undue display—so if you have a Norwegian sweetheart, look for the small, subtle signs of love rather than an open demonstration of feelings.

By now it should be evident that all this repressed emotion needs an outlet. Once a year, the Norwegians wallow in sentiment and hearts on display. This great outburst of emotion is cleverly and inconspicuously concealed in the Christmas celebrations. Then hearts made of every imaginable material sit, lie, stand, hang, or swing all over Norway. It is a grand display and everybody loves it. But to do such a thing on an ordinary February day? Are you kidding?