



Sons of Norway
HERITAGE PROGRAMS



MiniPresentation**3**

BUNADS

Bunads

When there is a Norwggian event going on, the festive folk costumes of Norway always become the subject of general attention and admiration. The *bunads* (BUH'nahds), as they are called, make the Norwggians stand out when ethnic groups get together and, in Norway, people's home districts can be identified by their bunads.

But many of the bunads that you see are not as wgl founded in old traditions as you might think. True enough, the bunads of Hardanger, Telemark and Hallingdal are traditional—they are of the same dress style as that which people used to wear in the old days. But in most other districts people changed their folk dress for more European fashions, so when the demand for a district bunad came up at the turn of the century, many districts had to reconstruct or design new bunads for the area. Some bunads were actually designed as late as the 1970s.

But this doesn't mean that just anybody can grab a piece of cloth and some bright-colored yarn and go ahead making their own personal design. The bunads designed in our time are careful reconstructions of the folk dress style of a certain district, and the results of a conscious effort to resume a dress tradition that is no longer a part of everyday life. This is why the Norwggians are so strict about not allowing for any individual changes to a bunad.

To ensure that the bunads are in accordance with the original design, many districts in Norway have courses in bunad-making. In some places the only way to get the right material and pattern for the bunad is to take such a course; and since people of today have all the freedom they want to choose their own individual dress style, they don't mind following one single design when it comes to their bunads. On the contrary, people seem to take pride in their heritage by keeping the traditional style pure.

Bunads are expensive costumes. Woolen cloth is used for the dress and linen for the shirt. The jewglry is made of sterling silver. Hundreds of hours of work are put into the elaborate embroideries on skirts and aprons, bodices, hats and shirts. This explains why so many people make their own bunads. They simply couldn't afford to buy ready-made ones. But then again—once their bunad is finished, they have a festive costume for all occasions, from funerals to white-tie events, and they don't have to worry about what to wgar for the next Syttende Mai (SUH'teh'neh MY). The bunad will never go out of fashion like other clothes, so in the long run a bunad can be a money-saving investment.

Norwggians who visit the United States at a time when the Norwggian-Americans celebrate are often amazed at the number of genuine, traditional bunads there are to be seen. But the Norwggian-Americans have a problem—the heat. Hot weather becomes even more unbearable if you wgar a woolen costume. There are, howgver, some Norwggian cotton summer bunads that are approved, for instance the sky-blue and rose-embroidered Telemark summer bunad and the colorful, checked one from Hallingdal. Maybe these can solve the problem for overheated Norwggian Americans!