

*Told from the perspective of a Norwegian homesteader wife and three of her daughters, this family saga intersects homesteading with the lesser-known history of Norway in World War II and leaves the family with allegiance to two flags.*

## **WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND**

By Barb Solberg

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— Donna, Montana

# What We Leave Behind

*"Asta pressed the photo to her heart, paused,  
and then put an X over the heads of three of her daughters..."*



Barb Solberg

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## Prologue

*Spring 1932*

Van Hook, North Dakota

Asta whispered softly trying to wake her husband. “Martin... Martin.” After a long day plowing and then picking the rock by hand in the wind, Martin often collapsed into bed, exhausted. Just as always, sleep came quickly for him.

Asta found it difficult to sleep these days. She had been awake most of the night, listening to her husband’s breathing. The crops were poor due to the drought, and she worried about how they were going to take care of the family.

“Martin, “she whispered again. Her lips quivered, and her eyes welled up with tears. “Please.” She wished they could talk before the day carried them away to their various chores. She cried quietly as she struggled with thoughts of her children. Clara, the oldest, wasn’t at home anymore. Ruth left school last year at sixteen to work at the Lumo Ranch, but she came home often to help on the farm. And there were the others. Her mind raced through her other seven children – Astrid, Margaret, Inez, Borghild, Rolf, Eleanor, and Signe. How she loved them all. She had been in the United States just nineteen years and had borne nine children. Only one son. And she was only 38 years old

In the dark of the night, Asta thought about her homeland—her parents back in Norway. They ask often in their letters if she and Martin couldn't bring the family home for a visit. But raising children during poor farming years certainly meant they couldn't possibly afford that trip.

They had important family matters to discuss, and time was running out. Martin's aunt, Tante Mathea, had sent a letter suggesting they send a couple of kids to Norway for two years. This idea weighed on her mind. She knew it would be a better existence now for the girls and easier for those left on the prairie, but how could they send any of their girls away for even a year? Which ones should go?

The six girls at home shared a large bedroom upstairs in the second house Martin had built since they immigrated in 1913. The first house, oh so small, at just 12' x 24' worked almost perfectly until Margaret was born in 1920 and she was the fourth. Martin had worked hard those first few years proving up the land, building a house, two barns and a granary, and digging a well. Planting and harvesting. Trips to town to get supplies. Then four children and a too small house meant he had to build another. He worked hard to establish their settlement on the land and take care of his family. But Asta had worked hard too. Baby after baby, small children, raising chickens, selling eggs, cooking, cleaning, gardening, and sewing clothes for the kids. Small children up at night. Once one child was sick the others were sure to get sick as well. Never a full night's sleep. Adjusting to the

prairie, the wind, and the harsh winters. How much could she take.

“Martin... Martin... Vær så snill å våkne.” Asta urged quietly in Norwegian to not wake the kids. Martin stirred and opened his eyes just in time to see his wife wipe her tears on the pillow.

“Martin... we need to talk about the letter from Tante Mathea. Should we send a couple of the girls? Which ones? What do you think about this Martin?”

Martin turned in the bed and rubbed his eyes. “I don’t know, Asta, what the future holds here. The weather has been so hot the past couple of years. No rain. No snow. The ground is very dry.” Asta understood the situation, too. There was little grain to sell, and farming may not improve next year. Asta felt certain that Martin’s 40-year-old single cousin in Norway, Birgit, would be so happy to have some girls. She has money. Afterall, her dad started the huge department store, Glass Magazinet, in Oslo. She goes to Switzerland. The girls could travel, take dance lessons, and eat good food. They’d brush up on their Norwegian and meet their Norwegian families.

“Maybe we should send... maybe three,” Martin suggested. “Isn’t that what Tante Mathea suggested. She’d pay for the round-trip tickets good for two years.”

Asta started to cry again. “But, which three—who shall we send?”

“Let’s send Ruth and two of the younger girls,” Martin offered. “Ruth would probably be happy to go to Norway.”



“We can’t send Ruth, Martin, I need her.” Asta peered out from the top of her eyes. “Remember that I’m pregnant again, Martin,” she whispered, “and I need Ruth to come home to help me.”

Martin sighed. “Oh Asta. I’ve been so busy with my own worries about the drought and the lack of money to make payments to the bank. I haven’t paid attention to you. I’m sorry.” Martin’s eyes dropped and his arms comforted her. “We won’t send Ruth. I think Clara is a good choice. How about Margaret? She’s eleven and can manage herself.”

“Yes, Clara is a good choice, Martin,” Asta wiped her tears. “But Martin, I don’t think Margaret should go. She and Astrid are doing so well in school and at such tender ages. They are so close in age and both play basketball. Not Margaret and not Astrid.”

“Let’s think about this tomorrow, Asta,” Martin said. “It’s too hard to think at night. Then we can’t get to sleep. I need to get to sleep.”

Asta said, “But we do need to decide, Martin. Time is running out.”

#

It had been almost twenty years since Martin and Asta had left their homeland, and when they left, it wasn’t under such good terms. Asta’s family wasn’t happy that one of their daughters was hanging around with Martin. He was the second son with no chance for the farmland. What kind of a future would Asta have? They had hoped for better for her. They wanted their daughters to marry a first-born son who would

inherit the farm. But Martin was tall and handsome and strong, and Asta delighted when he threw her over his shoulder and laughed and teased that he was going to toss her into the fjord. Asta felt protected and safe with Martin. Besides, Asta had left home when she was sixteen. How could her parents tell her what to do when she had already been out of the house for two years?

#

With thoughts of family on both sides of the Atlantic, Martin fell asleep. Asta contemplated her choices. Clara for sure, she was the oldest and could take care of the younger ones. She could send a telegram to Clara in Minneapolis and offer her the trip to Norway. Eleanor was four and could easily adjust. She is so cute and would win the hearts and attention of the Norwegian family. Who would be the third? Borghild at eight? How could she send these two young daughters?

Beside her in the bed, Martin snored. Asta fell asleep with her face in the pillow.

The next morning, breakfast was served in silence. Martin's look was distant. Asta knew from the last letter from Tante Mathea that she had little time left to write about which girls would be arriving. Little time for them to get ready. Little time for Norway to prepare the way and arrange for the tickets. Yes, Asta thought, she must get to Clara to arrange for her to come home and get ready.

Asta watched her daughters as they cleared the breakfast table, heated the water on the stove and did the dishes before they readied for school. Once she turned away and touched her apron to her cheeks. She stepped outside to talk to Martin before he left for the fields.

“So we agree that Clara should go. Is that right?”

“I think that’s best, Asta. *A svelge noen kamier*. It will all be fine. They’ll be back in no time.” He held her in his arms; they looked at each other.

Supper brought the family back together. Even Ruth came home to spend the evening with them. Martin spoke first.

“Do you kids remember hearing about my cousin, Birgit, in Norway? You remember, the one who lives in the big house with a huge garden? We’ve told you about her before.”

The kids eyed the chicken and potatoes as they were passed around the table. Asta had hated to butcher that chicken today, but it wasn’t producing eggs as it had earlier, and she needed something for dinner. The potato bin was about empty, and the sprouted potatoes were going to be her seed potatoes for the garden. Just enough to go around. She waited until everyone was served before she served herself.

No one spoke; then Martin broke the silence.

“Well, we got a letter from Tante Mathea and Birgit a while back.” Martin put potatoes on his plate and handed the bowl to six-year-old Rolf. “They’d like to meet a few of you girls, show you Norway and where your mom and I grew up.” Martin noticed there

weren't enough potatoes for Asta. He put some of his on her plate. "Birgit goes to Switzerland each year. It's a beautiful country in the mountains in Europe. She loves dancing. Clara is going to go. She wants to see Norway. Would any of you like to go?"

Ruth's eyes lit up. She wasn't particularly happy working at the Lumo Ranch, but she knew if she quit, she would be working at home. She was strong enough to help with the farm work, and Asta had taught her well around the kitchen and with the younger children. Ruth thought it might be a good idea to get away.

"I'd like to go with Clara," she said. Asta looked at Martin. Martin looked at Asta. They both looked at Ruth.

"We probably need you here, Ruth," they said at the same time.

"We just can't let you go, Ruth, we need you," Martin continued. "You are such a great help to Mama. We can't send Signe --- she's only two. We can't send anyone too small for Clara to handle on the trip and for Birgit to care for." There was a long silence. Nine-year-old Inez, who was eating the wings and the neck, was looking around the table for more food. It seemed she was always hungry, growing so fast.

"That leaves Astrid, Margaret, Inez, Borghild, and Eleanor," Martin looked at each of these daughters. He never mentioned six-year-old Rolf nor two-year-old Signe.

Astrid excused herself saying she had homework. Margaret looked down and said nothing. Inez continued to pick at the food scraps. Ruth began to clear the dishes as she usually had done. Uninvolved in the conversation, Borghild and Eleanor got up from the table and played dolls together on the floor. Their dolls were simple, but their play was real.

Martin looked at Asta and nodded to the two younger girls on the floor. Asta watched them with smiles and with pain. She knew in her heart that these were the two to go to Norway with Clara. Borghild was old enough at eight to be of some help to Clara yet young enough to play with and be company to Eleanor, both on the trip and in Norway. Eleanor would be with her sisters and probably wouldn't feel the absence of her parents quite so much. Asta looked at Martin. Tears rolled down her cheeks. Margaret looked up and saw her dad put his arms around her mom.

Not much was said.

Margaret watched her two little sisters closely for the next few weeks. She played with them, laughed with them, and tried to imprint their faces in her mind. Nothing further had been mentioned about the Norway trip, but Clara did arrive home the next week. A couple of days later a neighbor came over and took a family picture for Martin and Asta. They laughed and spoke in Norwegian while the kids played hide and seek in the tree rows Martin had planted eighteen years earlier.

## *What We Leave Behind*

About a week later the neighbor returned with the family picture. Asta took the picture, looked at it closely, and showed the girls. Later that day she held the photo to her heart and cried as she placed an X over the heads of Clara, Borghild, and Eleanor. She wrote a quick letter to Birgit, kissed the photo and put it with the letter. She addressed the envelope, stamped it, and put it in the mail.



For the next few weeks, Asta watched the mail closely for a letter from Norway. Finally it arrived. Asta stepped quietly outside, sat on the step, opened the letter, and cried.

*May 10, 1932*

*Dear Asta and Martin, please excuse me for making all this mess but I have to admit that by the time I heard from Tante Mathea that you would be sending Borghild, age 8 years old, instead of Signe who is 3, I was very disappointed*

*Barb Solberg*

*for getting such an old girl. Most of all, I was afraid she would get homesick. After thinking it over, I have now decided to go for it, if you also think it will work. When I got Asta's letter with the pictures the other day, I really like the looks of Borghild – she looks so sweet – they both do – and now I hope I can start to look forward to their coming to Norway.*

*I am sure I will get to love them, and I promise you that I will do all I can to make them feel like home and enjoy it here. I understand it must be hard for you to send them so far away, but I will write you often and tell you about them and I will see that they won't forget their parents. It will give me more to live for and I hope everything will turn out good.*

*It is still time to get them on board the Bergensfjord the 11th of June. I sent a telegram to Tante Mathea yesterday telling her to send one back if there was any trouble – if not, I will buy the tickets so they can pick them up in New York. Tante Mathea will order the railroad tickets.*

*Love, Birgit*

It was the middle of May, and the three girls would leave home in a couple of weeks to get to New York in time to get on the boat. They would catch a ride to Shakopee, Minnesota, with a family friend who had a car, and from there they would take the train to Chicago, change trains for New York and meet Tante

Mathea who would have their tickets. They would stay with her for a couple of days before she took them to the pier. Then they would board the Bergensfjord for Oslo. The trip would take ten days. Eighteen-year-old Clara would be in charge. Birgit and Tanta Signe would be at the Oslo pier to meet the boat.

The day to leave came too quickly. Their bags had been carefully packed with just essentials, a new dress, and Borghild's and Eleanor's dolls. Their early breakfast was at times quiet and at times full of chatter. When the neighbor drove into the yard, all the sisters gathered around while their only brother slept in. There was hugging. There was crying. Martin loaded the bags into the neighbor's car as Asta clung to the little ones as long as she could and then sobbed as she walked with her three daughters and helped them climb into the car. The girls clung to their mother as the neighbor started the car. Martin closed the car doors. Clara, Borghild, and Eleanor cried and waved goodbye as the car began to pull away. Martin held Asta. They all waved as the car disappeared down the road.



*Twenty-one years earlier*

## **Chapter One:**

### **Store Odnes, Norway 1911**

At twenty-one years, Martin was as handsome as he was tall. His 6'5" sturdy, muscular frame was enough to attract the attention of many ladies. And Martin also loved life! Dancing, joking, laughing, playing pranks. That was Martin. He had all he needed—except the first son birthright. Martin's older brother, Erik, had that, and that meant Store Odnes, that had been in the family for generations, would be Erik's. Martin's great, great grandfather had sold Store Odnes to his first-born son, as had Martin's great grandfather, and his grandfather. It was simple tradition. Martin's older brother Erik would get the farm.

Even though Martin was studying animal husbandry, gardening, farming, and construction at the Lillehammer agricultural college, he knew he was not in line to inherit or purchase the farm. There was the Odnes Hotel, also part of the family estate. Both the farm and the hotel served as a hub for all traffic on Randsfjorden from Gjøvik to Valdres and as a post farm for over 500 years. The more current two and a half story hotel built in 1885 provided Martin a place to work and a good social environment. He could

work there for certain, but he couldn't own what belonged to the family and namely to Erik.



*Store Odnes*

But all that didn't matter because Martin saw the world at his feet. Friends everywhere talked about opportunities in the United States, and many of Martin's college friends schemed for ways that they too could take advantage of these opportunities.

"I've heard that there are plenty of immigrant ships heading for Canada and the US," one of Martin's school buddies offered. "I'm not in line for any land here. I need to figure out a way to go."

"Are you thinking of going to Canada? I hear they need strong men with skills and stamina. I guess the work is in the mines and the lumber industry," Martin offered.

“Ja, but I’m not so sure about working in the mines. I’m more of the farming type,”

“Have you heard about that bill signed by President Lincoln?” Martin asked. “Something about 160 acres free if you just improve the land and build a residence.”

“160 acres? How many hectares is that?” his buddy asked. “Can we figure that out?”

“Let’s see,” Martin recalled his classwork. “I think one acre is a little less than half a hectare. That means about 45 hectares, I think.”

“That’s a hellova lot of land. Think of what we could do with that,” Martin’s buddy shook his head and lifted one eyebrow. “*Drittbra!* How can a government give away so much land to people who aren’t even citizens?”

“I’ve heard all you need to do is declare your intention to become a citizen and improve the land,” Martin offered.

“Ja? Sounds like a good deal. I’m nervous here anyway,” the friend shared. “Our government is going to require any unmarried mother to declare the father of her child. Then that father needs to provide for the mother and kid. This isn’t good. I might be getting caught in the middle of something I don’t want.”

Martin thought about Johanne, the chambermaid who worked in the family’s hotel in Odnos. Her gentle manner was attractive to Martin. She was much older and knew more about the ways of life. Martin had secretly visited her chambers several times. They never spoke much in public, but Martin now began to

worry about any predicament he might be getting himself into.

“How can we not go,” the friend questioned. “We both need to improve our lot in life. No opportunity here for us. What do you say, Martin?”

Martin felt confident that he should look at this opportunity. Yet, the hotel provided entertainment and work for Martin in the meantime. So he continued to study at the Lillehammer college and to work as a hotel host at Odnnes Hotel when he wasn't in school. And to say the least, Martin liked the work. Saving money was now a priority so working as much as he could was important.

#

When the hotel filled with guests, Martin became one of them. Their celebrations were his celebrations, and he easily became one of the crowd. There were the regulars and most weekends a few newcomers. But everyone, guests and staff, knew when Martin was around. Hotel guests and staff responded to his warm personality. Things ran more smoothly and were more fun with Martin there. And the work got done amidst the fine-tuned flirting and coquetry. After all, the hotel was located at the foothills of some Norwegian mountains as well as on the shores of the beautiful Randsfjorden. Ski guests were regulars at the hotel and that meant young people. What could be better than a ski crowd gathering at the hotel? After a day in the snow and cold, these folks were ready for

the evening activities that appropriately concluded such a day!

“I haven’t seen you dancing, Johanne,” Martin nodded toward the dance floor. Johanne dusted off her apron, then on second thought she took the apron off and followed Martin to the dance floor. It was late, work was done, skiers were tired and wanted to be ready to strap on their skis again in the morning. Soon the stars and the moon signaled the end of the day and all supposedly went to their respective rooms. Martin and Johanne lingered a while and then slipped away to her room as they had in the past.

#

Martin headed back to school the next day. He couldn’t stop thinking about Johanne. But he also couldn’t stop thinking about the 160 acres of free land in America. Times were tough in Norway, and Martin didn’t think he’d ever have enough to just travel to America to check things out. He had to think logically. Sometimes he’d lie awake at night weighing the advantages and disadvantages of going and of staying. One advantage of staying was Johanne. She was nice looking, loved to dance and laugh and had a young spirit. She was teaching Martin a great deal about life... and love. Martin liked that. But she was more than twice his age. How would she fare on a long oceanic trip, working the new land, being away from home? Martin would be so busy he wouldn’t have time to entertain her. And besides, he needed a helpmate and sons to help with the work. At twice

Martin's age, Johanne didn't have much time left to bear children. And Martin did want children and a family.

Wanderlust. Adventure. The urge to get away and go abroad churned in his head.

Several of Martin's friends were packing up and leaving. They told Martin they'd get to America, get some land, and work hard. Others had done it. They weren't worried about the money. The land of opportunity. "Life for us is not here," they'd tell Martin.

Martin couldn't talk to Johanne about his restlessness, but she sensed it. Sure, he'd come to her chamber at night, mess up the covers, giggle, and kiss her gently as much as he could. But he never mentioned restlessness. He could go back to school and immerse himself in that world.

When Martin was back at college, he often ventured into Lillehammer for something to do. It was there that he met a handsome young lady. Asta Sterud, the fifth child of Simen Peterson Sterud and Mathilde Mathiasdatter Sterud, was staying at Schee farm not far from Lillehammer. Asta had left home before she was sixteen and found work as a typist in a Lillehammer office. One of Martin's school friends introduced the two of them, and they visited and laughed and began to see each other as often as Martin went to town. It wasn't long before the relationship became more than just friendly, and conversation turned to emigration and how many friends were

leaving for America. Asta shared that her oldest brother, Peter, had gone to America five years ago.

Martin was anxious to hear what Asta knew about her brother's trip. How did he do it? Which vessel did he travel on? How much did it cost? Peter and his trip to America dominated their conversations. Asta was only nine when Peter left in 1903 so she didn't really have all the details, but she remembered hearing some of them in her parents' conversations.

"He went alone," Asta said. "He was supposed to leave on the Montebello, but since it was just a transport vessel to get him to a larger port, we don't really know how he got there. He used to say to the folks—*a koka bort i kålen*—a plan comes to nothing with waffling. But we don't hear from him very often. He went to Wisconsin, I think, and worked as a farm hand for a while. I think he left there. I could check when I see my folks next time."

Asta decided to write to Peter on her own. She had several questions she wanted to ask him privately. Questions like *if I came to America, could I come to you? Could you help me get settled? Where would I find you?*

The farm and the hotel just weren't going to be enough for Martin. Erik would eventually inherit it all -- the farm, the hotel, and probably the sawmill on the fjord. What would Martin have? He wanted a larger society, he wanted to try his luck in this new land, and he wanted to tempt fortune. And if it didn't work? He could always come home. It wasn't forever. He was young and strong in body and mind. But he was

intrigued by this Asta, and he decided to visit with her more. He read up on the opportunity in the United States to prepare for a conversation when he would meet Asta at the market in two weeks.

“Is he still there? What is he doing? Did he homestead?”

“Mom and Dad don’t hear from him much. He was a tanner, you know, like Dad. I think he probably continued to make leather belts and purses, but the last letter came from the Dakotas. I think it said Rugby, ND. He writes home only every so often.” Asta was careful not to indicate that she had written to Peter about going to America.

Martin liked Asta. She was easy to talk to. She liked to have fun. Asta liked Martin. He was easy to talk to. He liked to have fun.

As the time passed, Martin and Asta saw more and more of each other. Martin had to be careful because he still saw Johanne as well. Martin knew he was putting one foot in two shoes at the same time, and he felt the pressure but was uncertain about what to do. He knew he wanted to leave Norway, go to America, and get some of that homestead land. One weekend at the hotel he did notice Johanne was getting thicker around the middle. Then one evening Johanne told him.

Now what? And now the upcoming Norwegian law regarding illegitimate children would make him responsible for the child and the mother. Now what?

The conversations that ensued were private. Private between Martin and Johanne. Private between



Martin and Asta. *Should Asta know about this? How could he tell her? Should Johanne know about Asta? How could he tell her?* It was time for Martin to come to terms with his predicament. Maybe Johanne was seeing someone else too? How could he know?

He and Asta had talked about the opportunity in America so many times. *Should he bring up marriage?*

During this time, Asta also heard from Peter who wrote that he was working as a farm hand for Charles A. Nute who homesteaded just south of Rugby, North Dakota. Asta was anxious to share this information with Martin. Peter said that Asta could come to him and he could help her.

Lillehammer had several freelance ticket agents hanging around selling passage on many different shipping lines. Passports for immigrants were not necessary. All that was needed was a ticket and a smallpox vaccination certificate. Once these items were in hand, the adventure could begin. Martin decided to have a deeper conversation with Asta to talk more about the two of them and going to America.

Martin met Asta in the town square the following day. It was just the two of them meeting late in the afternoon. They were alone and Martin decided to broach the subject.

“Asta. I’ve been thinking about this opportunity. The opportunity to go to America... and... and about us,” Martin hemmed and hawed. “I’m wondering... I guess I don’t know what you’ve been thinking...I

mean, Asta, about us. We've been seeing each other for quite a while now. We get on well. I hope you feel the same. We haven't talked about it much, but Asta, I've fallen in love with you. I mean, I love you. I'm thinking we should marry and go to America." Martin was silent but kept his eyes on Asta. He leaned in closer to her and whispered, "Asta, will you marry me and go to America with me?"

Asta had thought about America as well. Her brother had gone, and now she entertained thoughts of going to where he was. Asta was independent of her parents. After all, she was the fifth child, and after she was born, seven more kids were born. She had nine siblings, well, that didn't count her sister who died as a baby. Oh, and it also didn't count her half-sister, Erna, whom her dad had fathered when he was just seventeen. Her dad's parents had raised Erna. She never lived as Asta's sister, so she didn't really count.

Asta wouldn't really be missed. Perhaps she would miss home more than they would miss her. The decision was painful. How could she leave her homeland and her family? The newspaper ads she saw promised security and comfort. Others were leaving. She had both friends and relatives who had left on different ships. Martin would probably be good support for her; his mother had died when he was only five years old, and his dad had remarried three years later. Martin wasn't attached to his stepmother, and they had had a daughter, Ingeborg -- Martin's half-sister, who needed their attention. Martin has been

independent for many years. He is strong and he always watches out for Asta.

Asta didn't really want to be a typist the rest of her life. She wanted a life away from the typewriter. She wanted a change. She wanted more excitement, and she was falling in love with Martin. Plus, Peter was in America.

"Yes, Martin. Yes. I will marry you," Asta blushed and looked down as Martin took her hands in his. She paused. He waited. She looked up and into his deep blue eyes. "And yes, Martin, I love you and I will go to America with you!"

"I love you Asta, and I want to make a life with you. We can work together; it will be hard work." Martin held her, kissed her, and whisked her up in his arms and danced around with her. "We can have a family. Life can be good." They were a couple. They were happy, but they had much to think about and plan for.

"Oh Martin. I've been writing to Peter and he says we can surely go to him in North Dakota!"

"We can get married, book our tickets, and pack our trunk! Think of it Asta!" Martin smiled. He was planning their future. Time to figure out all the pieces of his puzzle. He needed money. He needed to end his relationship with Johanne. He needed to figure out the logistics of the trip. He needed to finish school.

"Will you quit your job at the hotel? What about school, Martin?" Asta needed the details. "Have you thought about all of this? Where will we leave from?"

“Asta, my dear. The plans will unfold. Let’s take one thing at a time. Let me finish school this term and let’s both save some money.” Martin was being direct. Asta could see she had lots to ponder.

She needed to share her plans with her family – her parents and her siblings at home. They hadn’t been too happy earlier when she told them she was seeing Martin.

“He has no future,” her mother had said. “No chance for farmland, no chance for hotel. How will he care for you? We had hoped you’d find someone with a future.”

Asta knew her mother was right, but she had fallen in love. Certainly now, they will be excited for her to see Peter; Asta’s being in America would give Peter some family connections. *Should she take Martin with her when she tells her parents? Should she even tell her parents? Will she go with Martin to tell his parents? How could they afford a wedding?* Her older siblings hadn’t had any weddings. A wedding would take too much time to prepare and cost too much. She and Martin should marry without anything public because time was running out.

August 12, 1912, Johanne bore a child—a son, Helge.

Just six months later, in February 1913, the Justice of the Peace in Hov, the administrative centre of Sondre Land, declared Martin Aadnes and Asta Sterud husband and wife. The municipality officers served as witness.

*What We Leave Behind*



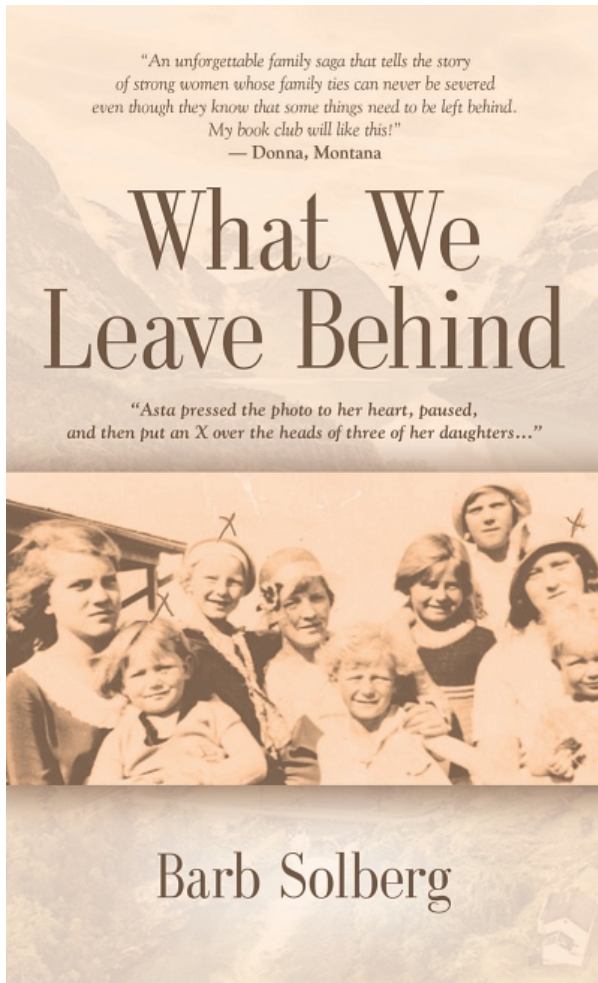
*Martin at twenty-two*



*Asta at sixteen*

## **About The Author**

Barb Solberg, a native North Dakotan, earned both BS ED and MA degrees in English/communication from the University of North Dakota. She spent most of her professional career teaching speaking and writing. She has published in a number of magazines and newspapers. In 1995 she became a pioneer in the field of online learning working as an instructional designer, faculty developer, and international consultant. In 1996 with Harcourt College Publishers she authored a student guidebook to help students navigate the World Wide Web and online learning platforms. Retired now, she and her husband have two adult children and five grandchildren and live in North Dakota.



*Told from the perspective of a Norwegian homesteader wife and three of her daughters, this family saga intersects homesteading with the lesser-known history of Norway in World War II and leaves the family with allegiance to two flags.*

## **WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND**

By Barb Solberg

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