

# Distinguished Alumni

## International entrepreneur named Distinguished Alumnus

By Marty C. Padilla  
Alumnews Editor

**E**rland Raastad, 1988 Distinguished Alumnus, arrived in Laramie in mid-September 1960, tired from an international trek that began in Norway two years before. He recalled driving over the Summit and seeing what would be his new home and feeling a little disappointed. After having visualized Laramie as a mountain community, Raastad said, the switch from Norway to Laramie, in the early '60s, was not an easy task.

He immigrated to the United States in 1958 with "a vague idea of going to college," he recalls. With the assistance of family friends in Chicago, Raastad was offered the opportunity to work before entering the University of Wyoming. He stayed in the Chicago area for approximately two years before moving out west.



Raastad and wife Ingrid found adjusting to life in Laramie a bit different, but he does recall that many opportunities were available to them. Ingrid was employed by the Iverson Memorial Hospital as a registered nurse. She had received her training in Norway. During the couple's stay in Laramie the arrival of son, Brian Erland, also made living in Wyoming something special.

Brian Erland received his bachelor's degree from the University of Wyoming during commencement last spring. Father and son have a special claim to fame at Wyoming; Brian is the first off-spring graduate of the very first Norwegian graduate from the College of Commerce and Industry. Mom, dad, and eighteen-year-old sister, Ingrid Camilla, were present for the special occasion. "I have had many things to thank the United States and Wyoming for," Raastad says.

Having already attended a secondary school in Oslo, seeking a business degree at the University was his first choice. During his days at UW Raastad said everyone in his program was a close group. "Around seven of us did everything together. There was a relaxed atmosphere which was characterized by ambition on the part of the professor and student alike," he said.



Instrumental to his growth and development while at UW was Jack C. Routsen, a business administration professor who served as Raastad's advisor and mentor. Routsen, now professor emeritus, still holds a special place in Raastad's life. "He means an awful lot to me, and I visit him every time I come to Wyoming."

The young Norwegian persevered with his goals at UW, and in 1962 completed his program. The career that followed not only distinguished Raastad as an internationally acclaimed businessman and entrepreneur, but gave UW and Wyoming an international ambassador. Raastad has been a transportation magnet in Northern Europe, Scandinavia and the United States for more than two decades. His phenomenal career record suggests he is, perhaps, one of the most outstanding foreign students ever to graduate from the University of Wyoming. In 1977 the College of Commerce and Industry named him "Outstanding Alumnus."

With the end of college came a major personal decision, whether to stay in the United States or return to Norway. Because of the positive experience the couple enjoyed while living in Laramie, Raastad took a job in neighboring Cheyenne, as the finance manager for the Read Companies.

During a 1965 visit with family back in Norway, Raastad ran into old friends who enticed him with the prospect of returning to Norway to head up the marketing division of an international business that distributed Firestone products. In January of 1966, the Raastad's returned to Norway.

In the late '60s Raastad was approached by Chrysler to head up its Norway office. In 1972 the family moved to Salsburg, Austria, where he took a similar position with Chrysler. Then, in 1974, another offer came to return back to Norway, only this time as managing director of Royal Viking Cruise Line, which at that time was

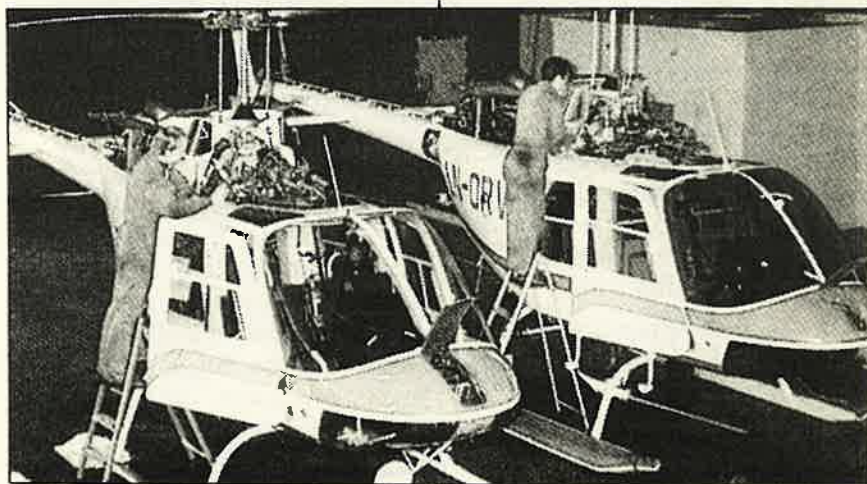
a new cruise line venture started by three ship owning companies.

"Normally, I would not have considered the offer, but Chrysler was preparing for a move to headquarter me out of Paris," he said. "Because my family had been moved around so much, when the opportunity to return to Norway presented itself, I said, 'let's go home.'"

For the next seven years Raastad built the Royal Viking Cruise Line to a top world class line. In 1980 the structure of the cruise line was changing, and before the line moved its base operation to San Francisco, Raastad took a new post as managing director of Helikopter Service A/S, based in Oslo.

Helikopter Service A/S is a public firm that acts as principle supplier of transport service for personnel and supplies from the North Sea shore to offshore drilling pads and also between pads. With a fleet of 40 helicopters, the company also had subsidiary companies, including a domestic market division and a fixed wing company. One of his former associates from the automobile industry was now heading up the company and invited Raastad to join his venture as the number two man. With the prospect of undertaking a new area of transportation, Raastad happily accepted the offer. But still kept his foot in the door of the cruise industry by serving on the board of directors for Norwegian Caribbean Cruise Line renamed Kloster Cruise A/S.

During his tenure on the board of Kloster, Raastad said the company acquired his old firm, Royal Viking Line in 1984. It was at that time he was offered the post of president and chief executive officer of the line. It was Raastad's job to bring the forces of the two luxury shipping giants together out



of San Francisco, Miami, and the new branch in Norway. With the merger of the shipping powers, the firm had become one of the largest luxury cruise ship lines in the world. Under the direction of Raastad the company experienced revenues in excess of \$500 million, with over 4,200 employees.

In 1986 a friend approached Raastad about starting a new venture. With plans and projects in place for a new line of luxury ships, Raastad is beginning yet another entrepreneurial endeavor. The ships will be aimed at the "upper, upper end of the American cruise market." Two ships are currently under construction, the first to be delivered in November, 1988. Each will have a 200 passenger limit, permitting the operation of a truly world class, top-of-the-line cruise ship. A third ship is in the works with marketing and booking offices in Oslo and San Francisco.

"Our goal is to deliver what we tell people, offer number one quality for the discriminating cruise passenger. If you render proper service, profit will take care of itself."

A colleague described him by saying "his most outstanding record of accomplishments places him in the minority of persons who have the unique and unusual ability to organize, direct and impose their formula for success."

For a number of years Raastad also served as counselor, encourager, and sponsor of many outstanding Norwegian students who have attended the University of Wyoming. One of those students is the managing director of the largest real estate group in Norway. He said he liked sharing his experiences and would always dig out his catalogs, "before you know it they were off to the races." He also assisted the University with the translation of transfer transcripts from European and Scandinavian schools concerning course equivalents before such an office was established in the Division of Admissions.

For the future Raastad says, "The challenge confronting

academics today is that you have genuinely concerned faculty that are interested in expanding fertile young minds in an overall effort to develop these individuals, not just scholastically, but to be prepared for a complex world. Let's give them a total education to base their future on," he said. ❧