

OUR 1989 VACATION ADVENTURE

A TORSLI ODYSSEY

An account of a trip to
Norway and England by Lloyd and
Dot Thorsley in June, 1989.

by Lloyd Thorsley

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Preface

Our 1989 trip to Norway and England was the most ambitious and expensive project that Dot and I had ever undertaken. The excitement and satisfaction we derived from it fully justified the cost and effort. It seemed appropriate that some record should be made for future reference and so that others might share in our adventure.

There were many facets to the trip, not the least of which was the opportunity to visit the lands of my ancestors. The scenery was most impressive but the people gave us more enduring and gratifying experiences.

It is hard to separate the various aspects of our experience so this record is essentially a chronological account with digressions where considered necessary to make the story meaningful. I have tried to keep it short. I trust that the main objectives are clear and complete.

There is a set of maps to help visualize the route we took through Norway and to: identify the places of most vital interest.

Also there is a photograph album (not included here) with over 100 pictures of scenery and people that may be of interest.

L.L.T. 1989/89/16

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NORWAY-OSLO

On the island of Senja in Northern Norway, some 300 km north of the Arctic Circle, lies the community of Vesterfjell. It is on the northern slope of a broad valley that is surrounded by low hills and has a small stream and lake. To the west low mountains show their snow covered peaks. In June the valley is lush and green, with woods of sturdy birch in full leaf and fields and grassland taking full advantage of the 24 hour sunlight. It is a very peaceful place. The only sounds are the calls of birds that can be heard at any time in the endless sunlight.

Vesterfjell is not a complete community in the North American sense. There is no commercial centre or post office or community hall. It is simply a group of homes spread out along a secondary road that branches off the main road in the centre of the valley. The historic and formal identification of the location is the gard or farm of Torsli. Torsli, at one time, comprised thousands of acres but has now been largely broken up into smaller lots, some not more than an acre or two.

Torsli (the local spelling) is significant to me as the birthplace of one Johan Henrik Pedersen, my grandfather, who emigrated with his parents and two sisters to the United States in 1867 and later, with his wife and children, to Alberta in 1982. Torsli is also the source of my family name. It was chosen by the family in the U.S.A. to provide a distinctive identification while retaining historical significance.

It was the desire to make the sentimental journey to the land of my ancestors and feel the sense of place that would be part of my unconscious heritage that was the original motivation for our trip. That it would also result in a visit to the land of my grandmother and uncover relatives still living there was unexpected when the trip was first conceived.

A mistrust of sentiment as the single motivation and the fact that Dot, my wife, would be accompanying me caused me to consider a tour of Norway in our plans. Since we would have to travel all the way to Northern Norway anyway it made sense to plan to see the country on the way. That would broaden the scope of the plan and give us both an experience of scenery and people that we could not get any other way. The eventual trip was more than we could have visualized at the time.

With the help of Jack Judd and his staff at Executive Travel we developed a plan that would take us by train up the interior of Norway and return us by boat along the coast. It would include stops of one day each in Oslo, Trondheim and Bodø and a five day stop in Tromsø to allow for a visit to Vesterfjell-Torsli. Not until we boarded the boat for the coastal voyage were we to travel two days in succession. The whole journey was to take 26 days.

We left on June 1. Erik Brown, or grandson, came out at about noon and had soup and a sandwich with us and then drove us to the Radisson Hotel where the Aboutown Transit was to pick us up at 2:00 p.m. and take us to Toronto Airport. Erik didn't wait to see us off. He and his father had tickets to the opening of the Toronto Skydome on June 5 and the building inspectors had not yet approved the fire safety systems. Erik was quite concerned and had to monitor the news for word of that final approval.

We were the only passengers on the trip to Toronto. Our driver was Barb. Barb is very friendly, almost excessively so, and kept up a continual conversation, either with us or with the other drivers on the road. She was a bit of a jerky driver but she knew her job and got us to the right place in lots of time.

Inside the airport we had our first experience with difficulty. There was a long plywood wall with gates or rather gaps in it and signs that seemed to tell us everything except where to go. A girl in the Swissair office was able to give us the right gate and when we got through it we just put ourselves in the hands of Lufthansa and things were under control.

There was, of course, a long wait in the boarding lounge, almost two hours. We were in the smoking area and met a lady from Ottawa who had a problem. She was taking her 18 year old daughter to Germany to meet her (the daughter's) grandparents and they had seats in a no smoking area in the plane. Mother was concerned about how she was going to have a cigarette on that long flight to Frankfurt. We compared seat assignments and found that their seats were on the same aisle as ours and we arranged that Mother could exchange seats with Dot so that she and I could have a cigarette together. A very nice arrangement. It didn't work. There were two flights to Frankfurt within 18 minutes of each other. Mother and daughter were on the Air Canada flight and we were on Lufthansa.

We boarded our plane on schedule at 6:10 p.m. and the plane moved out from the gate and stopped. We were told that two bags had been loaded for a passenger who did not board the plane. It took almost half an hour to find and remove those bags. We were pleased that a potential bomb may have been removed from the plane but we didn't need any extra time on the long seven hour flight. The long hours on airplanes were the most unpleasant parts of the trip.

We arrived in Frankfurt about 8:00 a.m. on June 2. It is a busy airport, with crowds of people, even at that hour of the morning. We met a couple from Toronto who were on their way to East Germany and Poland and were rather apprehensive. At least we were quite confident of our plans and weren't afraid of unpleasant officialdom. We bought some candy, Swiss chocolate, with Canadian money and found our gate for the flight to Oslo without problems.

Our plane boarded far out on the tarmac and we had to take a bus to get to it. It was a smaller plane than the one from Toronto but quite comfortable. Lufthansa fed us again; our third meal in about six hours. We really didn't need it but we tried to be polite.

We arrived in Oslo just after noon. Entering Norway was easy. The immigration officer just looked at our passports and stamped them with no questions or comments. Getting to the hotel was the next problem. There were busses and we tried to get aboard one of them and were told to take the one in front. The driver was very helpful and actually came with us to make sure we got on. Then we had to pay the fare and we had no Norwegian money. Our conductor gave us 5 minutes to get some at the bank and we cashed a \$190 traveller's cheque. We didn't realize at the time that \$199 is not much in Norway and that the banks are closed on Saturday and Sunday. We found that the hotel will always oblige by cashing travellers cheques but the fee is higher and the exchange rate may be lower than at a bank.

Our first experience with the people of Norway was quite refreshing. Entering the country without being asked the purpose of our visit or how long we were going to stay was new for us.

We would have expected at least a comment about our being Canadian, but that didn't happen. Our first words to each other about it were that we didn't feel like we had left Canada and that feeling persisted. It surprised us a little because, even when we cross the border to the United States we are conscious of being in a foreign country.

The Norwegian people were always patient and considerate without being patronizing or intrusive. Everyone spoke English and seemed to be pleased that they were able to, rather than resentful that they had to.

There may be some reasons for this. Norway is a small country, with a population of less than 4.5 million and a very beautiful but challenging landscape. They have a long and eventful history that is theirs alone. There are no ethnic minorities to challenge their identity as Norwegians. Also they have a right to be proud of their accomplishments but they are a small country and have no aspirations to great power. There is a quiet confidence and patience that helped us to enjoy their company.

The Hotel Residence is right in downtown Oslo, just across the street from the National Theater. The hotel actually started as a Theater Restaurant (Theatercafeen) and the restaurant is still a major part of the hotel. We got a room on the seventh floor at the back. The view wasn't very good but what we really needed was a place to rest. We had been awake for more than 39 hours and we really were tired, almost too tired to sleep. We did have a short nap and later in the afternoon went out for a walk. We saw the park around the National Theater, a real 'people place', but soon realized that neither of us was in condition for much walking. We soon went back to our room and went to bed without bothering with supper. Lufthansa had fed us well.

Our room presented some new things for us. The television wouldn't turn on unless the floor light was on. The toilet flushed by pushing a button on the top of the tank. The double bed was actually two single beds, side by side. The mattresses were comfortable and the covering was a quilt for each single bed. It was really warm and cozy. The trick was that the two single beds were on casters. If you didn't stay strictly on your side of the bed the two parts tended to slide apart and could leave you on the floor between. That called for a little discipline in bed habits but we soon learned and we had a sound night's sleep.

Our room was roomy and tastefully decorated. There were Dufy prints on the walls and a glass topped coffee table. The view was not very pleasant but at least we could see over the roofs toward the hills and sky beyond. We enjoyed our stay there.

On Saturday morning, June 3, we had our first buffet breakfast. It was in the Caroline restaurant on the second floor right at the elevator. Not every breakfast restaurant was going to be so easy to find. The Caroline is named after one of the founders of the hotel. It is still family owned and represents a remarkable success story that the hotel is quite proud of. Breakfast was a typical Scandinavian buffet. We were very conservative and had cold ham and a boiled egg and toast. Coffee was served by a waitress and refills were the order.

After breakfast we went back to the park outside and got our first impression of the Norwegian pedestrian. It was a bit of a surprise to find that, if you stepped to the curb as if to cross the street, all the traffic stopped until you were safely across. We had never seen that before and may never see it again. Pedestrians had rights in other Norwegian cities but not as completely as in Oslo. When we were on the tour bus in the afternoon the bus had to use an alternate route because there were people using the street.

The park was full on that Saturday morning. It stretches for three or four blocks and includes a pool and fountain, several statues of Norwegian writers, including Halberg and Ibsen, a restaurant, a band shell where a concert was going on, a Narvesen kiosk, and lots of beds of flowers. In one corner there was a group protesting against pollution with drums of polluted water to emphasize their point. Another area had an auction sale to raise money for some humanitarian cause that had attracted a large crowd. It was a happy scene and we enjoyed it and took some pictures.

In the afternoon we took a bus tour of the Bygdøy composite museum. After the bus managed to get around the crowd in downtown Oslo we went around the bay to Bygdøya, across the harbour from Oslo. The museum is quite well conceived and includes a reconstructed stave church, old dwellings and stabbur, or storage houses: The dwellings were sturdy but quite spartan. All the roofs were sod, underlaid with birch bark. It probably acted as a good insulation both in summer and winter. The stave church had a shingle roof. The church was supported by internal columns and beams, a forerunner of modern day skyscrapers.

A short bus ride took us past some other old buildings and then to a museum building with some old ships. These ships had been used as burial ships and had been originally built about 839 or 858 A.D. They were exceptionally well preserved and the boats on display were said to be 98% original material. They displayed a lot of skill in both wood and iron working and there were a lot of artifacts found with them that told a lot about the way of life at that time. They were the type of ship used by the Vikings, with high, sharp prow and stern, and wide bodies for 14 to 18 rowers. Two of the ships were found at Gjøkstad and Oseberg.

The tour also included the Gjøa and the Fram, two Arctic exploration ships, and Thor Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki and Ra II. By the time we got to the Fram we were too tired to go in to see it. We began to see the weakness of conducted tours. It has to be timed and one can only see so much. If you become interested in something you run the risk of being left behind or incurring the displeasure of the tour conductor. However, the tour was worth the trouble for the insights into the old way of life if nothing else.

That evening we ate at a restaurant called Tivoligrillen, part of our hotel but on the opposite side from the National Theater, that was billed as a 'coffee shop'. It wasn't quite that but we had a salmon dish that the waitress warned us was small and then a big dessert. While we were eating we could watch the people on the street. The whole wall on the street side was glass and the street was full of people. Only one or two cars showed up and dropped their passengers and left. One guy on a motorcycle zoomed down the street and back again and then left and didn't return. Across the street was a Kino, a movie theatre, advertising, 'Lady og Landstrykjerne i Fisk med Navn Wanda'. American movies penetrate there too.

I may be stretching things but Oslo reminded me of Tokyo. The Ginza in Tokyo on Saturday afternoon is a 'people place' where everyone looks happy and relaxed. Oslo seemed

to be like that on every street and every day. Pedestrians were kings. There was a T-shirt on display in one shop with a legend, "Beware of the Norsk Pedestrian".

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TRONDHEIM—MERAKE

The next morning, Sunday, June 4, we had our breakfast in the Caroline and then caught the train to Trondheim. We had our first view of the Norwegian mountain valleys with their tiny farms on the hillsides. We were too busy looking to take many pictures but we did get a couple just south of Dombås. North of Dombås we saw the effect of altitude at high latitude for the first time. At an elevation of only 1025 m we were at the snow line in June. The train was electric, very smooth and fast. There is no worry about sinking roadbeds. They are solid rock. Building railway lines in Norway requires a lot of blasting and tunnelling.

We arrived in Trondheim at about 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon of June 4 after an 8 hour train ride from Oslo.

Trondheim is located on Trondheim Fjord about 50 km from the open sea where the Nid River empties into the fjord. It is the ancient capital of Norway, founded by Olav Tryggvassen before 1000 A.D. It is the site of Trondheim Cathedral (Nidaros Domkirke) where the body of St Olav, Olav Haraldsen, lies beneath the main altar. It is a major shipping and commercial centre and has important fishing and fish processing activities.

Trondheim is a combination of old and new. A disastrous fire resulted in new plans for the city that provided wide thoroughfares and a city centre, The Torvet, with a tall column supporting a statue of the founder, Olav Tryggvassen. The Torvet is an open square with provision for open air markets and surrounded by a lively business district. Some of the old narrow streets still survive and form an interesting contrast to the broad avenues and the large central square.

Our hotel was situated right on Torvet. It was fairly large and quite modern with a good dining room. One of its features was a glassed in cafeteria, right on the street, surrounding part of the front and most of one side of the hotel. We found that we could get a sandwich and a coffee or a pretty full meal, quickly and at lower prices than in the dining room. It was a good place for people watching. The customers wandered in from the street and had a beer or a coffee and passed the time. We had one group at the next table discussing events in Lebanon, rather casually, in a language that I felt sure was Arabic. All the time the people on the street and in the square provided a moving panorama of citizens and visitors going about their business.

Three blocks down the street, past the Royal Residence, was Trondheim Harbour and the Fish Market. The Royal Residence is kept for the King's use when he is in Trondheim. It was once a private home but is a very large building. It is right on the street without the gardens that are usual for royal residences.

The fish market wasn't open for us but we did see the old warehouses, right on the water front, that were put there centuries ago.

We were impressed by the character and historical significance of Trondheim, but it had another significance, as the stated birthplace of my grandmother.

My father's mother had said that she came from Trondheim and that her maiden name was Gertrude Mary Johnson. Both Dot and I had known her and liked her and she was widely respected in the community where she lived but I had been completely frustrated in my efforts to find out anything more about her. There was a suspicion that a Mary Johnson who lived next door near Sioux Rapids, Iowa may have been her mother but there was no corroborating evidence and no way to determine where she might have come from.

In January, 1989, after our plans for our trip were well under weigh, I received a long letter from Joyce Raines, a cousin in Calgary, with a lot of details about family relationships and enclosing some letters, obituary notices and an ancient certificate made out to one Marit Larsdatter. That certificate was issued at Merager, Norway in April, 1824 and identified the farm where Marit lived as Hauggjerdet. One of the obituary notices was for Mary Johnson who was buried at Wetaskiwin, Alberta. The notice listed Gertrude Thorsley as one of her survivors. It took a little imagination to decide that Marit Larsdatter and Mary Johnson could be the same person but I didn't know any other person whose papers would have come into the possession of Joyce Raines.

Gerhard Naeseth at the Vesterheim Genealogy Center in Madison, Wisconsin was able to confirm that Merager was indeed the same place as I had identified on the map as Meråker, about 50 km east of Trondheim. He also sent me copies of two pages from Stjødørdalsboka, Volume 6, part 1, a genealogical record, showing the family at Hauggjerdet for several generations and including Marit Larsdatter. The last occupants shown were one Sverre Fordal who had a son Otto, born in 1945. Sverre Fordal operated the farm and lived there but did not own it, nor was he part of the family of Marit Larsdatter.

When we arrived in Trondheim I had, what must be admitted were only faint, hopes of being able to visit Hauggjerdet. It was still at least 50 kilometres away and even if I could find it I didn't want to go without asking the people who lived there first. But, having come so far, I decided to try. My first contact was, of course, the desk clerk at the hotel, who directed me to the Tourist Office just across the square. Two young ladies there were very helpful and between us we found the phone numbers in Meråker for an Otto Fordal and two Sverre Fordals. I also got some instruction on how to use the phone system and how to pronounce Hauggjerdet so that a Norwegian would understand.

We were still not very close to a visit to Hauggjerdet but at least I now had the elements of a plan and after dinner I decided to try the Norwegian telephone system. Otto Fordal didn't answer his phone. Neither did the first Sverre Fordal, but the second one did. He had about as much English as I had Norwegian but I managed to express my interest in Hauggjerdet and he was able to tell me that I should be calling another number. He got a little testy with me for not being able to recognize the old word for 7 in Norwegian but he finally got me straight. The next phone call got me in touch with a lady who understood me a little better and was able to get me to give her my phone number and tell me that someone would call me back. That sounded like progress and there was nothing more I could do so I took off my shoes and stretched out on the bed.

I guess I dozed off and about 298 minutes later I was awakened by the loudest telephone in Trondheim. Dot said I went straight up in the air at least a foot. I recovered with no broken bones and answered the phone. A voice asked me, in fluent English, if I was Mr. Thorsley and then informed me that he was Leif Lassesen and that he understood that I had

been talking to his mother and that I was interested in visiting Hauggjerdet. He told me that his aunt and uncle now lived at Hauggjerdet and that they would be glad to have us visit. He also told me that since tomorrow was his day off he would pick us up at 10:00 o'clock and take us there. I think he was a little surprised at my reaction to that. I couldn't have been more pleased.

He appeared next morning with apologies. He is a teacher and another teacher had called in sick and had to be replaced. However, he told us that if we took the bus at 1:15 and got off at the ski lift at Meråker someone would meet us there and that there would be someone there who spoke English. There was a bus coming back at 6:00 so we would have about three hours to see Hauggjerdet. We told him that we would go so that he could confirm the arrangements. I still marvel at the number of phone calls that must have been made to set that visit up.

When we got off the bus at the ski lift we were met by a lady and two men, hustled into a car, and taken a mile or so back up the road we had just come down. I was in the house for about 19 minutes before I realized that I was sitting in Hauggjerdet being served lefse and waffles and gjetost and lots of coffee. The people who live there are Ivar and Gudrun Brattås. The other man was Fritjof Réc who was born in Minnesota and was an excellent interpreter. Ivar and Gudrun are older people and have little or no English.

Hauggjerdet is a neat little homestead on the river bank just east of Meråker and right beside the main road. It is a very pretty location, in a green valley, with other homesteads and farms on the slopes of the hills and snow-capped mountains in the background to the south. The house is so close to the river that Ivar can catch his trout for supper without leaving his back porch. On the north side of the valley the hills are steeper and not as easily accessible. It was on one of these hills that John Hanshaugen, the man Marit Larsdatter married, lived and may be the place where Gjertrud Maria (my grandmother) was born.

Gudrun is a descendant of the same family line as Marit Larsdatter. I had two pages from Stjørdalsboka , Volume 6, part 1. Gudrun has the whole book. She was able to confirm that indeed Marit Larsdatter was the mother of Gjertrud Maria (or Gertrude Mary) and was the same person as Mary Johnson. She also determined that she and I are fifth cousins and that was good for a couple of hugs.



Haggjerdet

Gudrun is very interested in the family history and is currently working on an up-date of Stjédaldsboka. She would like to know more about what happened to the people who moved to America and I can help her with that. I look forward to more exchanges of information.

Our visit was a social affair. At first I thought I had a gold mine of genealogical data but it wasn't to be. There was just too much animated conversation for serious business. But it was a delightful visit and we met some very nice people.

It was a very emotional experience for me. To find some roots for the grandmother that I had known so well and in the process find so much warmth and cooperation left me rather overwhelmed. One can expect people to be friendly and nice but it still is a heart-warming experience to have it happen. I don't discount my own imagination and persistence in making the contact and maybe the satisfaction of having my efforts rewarded is part of the thrill.

Our bus back to Trondheim came from Storlien in Sweden, not far east of Meråker and was late. No one seemed to worry about that but it meant that our hosts had to stand beside the road with us at the ski lift for almost half an hour. The ride back to Trondheim was uneventful and we arrived back safe if a little late.

The first five days of our trip had been eventful and we had the major parts of it still to look forward to.

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BODØ-TROMSØ

We left Trondheim by train shortly after 8:98 a.m. on Tuesday, June 6. Our destination was Bodø, the end of the Norwegian rail line. We were to see some spectacular scenery and get a lesson in geography before the day was over.

The train took us along the edge of Trondheim Fjord, the same route we followed by bus as we left for Meråker the day before, passing the town of Hell. We had passed it twice the day before so we can say that we passed Hell three times without result. The main feature of the town seemed to be a large hotel, probably built for tourists who like to send postcards to their friends from there. However, instead of going up the valley (Stjørdalen) we followed the northward bend of the fjord through the important market towns of Levanger and Steinkjer and up the eastern side of Lake Snåsa. As we moved up the inland valley of Namdalen we saw many small farms and thickly forested slopes. Always the backdrop was mountain peaks on both sides of the line, many of them snow covered. The variety of the scenery was remarkable and it continued, literally for hours, frequently punctuated by trees right up to the side of the tracks and by rock cuts and tunnels.

These features made picture taking a frustrating experience but the cuts and tunnels reminded us of the scope of the achievement in building this line. As we approached Bodø we estimated that we had passed through at least 200 tunnels since we left Trondheim. !

Going northward we passed through the towns of Grong, the rail connection point for the ocean port of Namsos, and Mayavatn. From Mayavatn we followed the Vefsna river valley down to Mosjøen, at sea level, important as a centre of aluminum production. Shortly after we left Mosjøen we began to follow the bank of Ranfjorden to Mo i Rana. Mo is a large steel production centre and with Mosjøen illustrates the changes in the Norwegian economy since World War II.

As we left Mo we began to get a dramatic lesson in geography. Mo is on Ranafjorden at sea level. The grass was green and the trees were tall and straight and in full leaf. As we went north the grass gradually disappeared to be replaced by moss and the trees became smaller and deformed and only partially in leaf. They finally became only little crooked sticks just beginning to bud. At the same time the snow line was getting closer and as we reached the Saltfjell Plateau the trees had disappeared altogether and the snow was a metre deep right beside the tracks and we saw the cairn that marks the location of the Arctic Circle.

In 50 km the line rises 658 m to the Saltfjell Plateau. While that is not a very high elevation at lower latitudes at the Arctic Circle the effect is much more dramatic. In about an hour after leaving Mo we seemed to have gone backwards in time from the full bloom of June to the dead of winter.

After we passed the summit the changes were just as remarkable and even more dramatic. We were going down and the train was moving faster. In about half an hour we were in the Lénsdal valley among trees and grass and pretty little farms again. What may be even more surprising is that we later were hundreds of km farther north and never saw the same Arctic conditions again.

We met some fellow travellers. One of them was a young student from Belgium who had a video camera. It was a rather cumbersome arrangement with a power pack attached and toward the end his batteries went dead. That, combined with trying to get pictures between the trees and the tunnels, must have been very frustrating. He was friendly and we had several chats.

There was also a retired couple from New Zealand that had been in Europe since February. They had a son in Germany and had been visiting relatives in Norway. They were Jack and Joan Curtis from Wellington. Jack's mother was of Norwegian descent and they had found Norway very hospitable. I asked him if he would like to live in Norway but he felt that New Zealand was 'God's Country' and besides he would lose his New Zealand pension. They had planned to go to Fauske and catch a bus to go north from there but changed their minds and went all the way to Bodø. I think they hoped to find 'bed and breakfast' in Boddé and go on the next day. I marvelled at their loose arrangements. We had all our accommodations and transport secure before we left home.

Joan Curtis was a very friendly and chatty woman who seemed to really appreciate some one to talk to. Jack seemed a little nervous and unsure and that made his lack of planning somewhat surprising. His methods seemed to work. They were in the fourth month of their tour and they were still going.

We reached Bodd at 7:98 p.m. after an 11 hour train ride. It didn't seem like evening and for the first time night didn't come. We were now in the land of the midnight sun.

The train from Trondheim had been a pleasant experience. We had our first class compartment with smoking privileges and | windows that could be opened at the top for fresh air and clear pictures. The train was diesel-electric rather than the electric train we rode from Oslo to Trondheim but the road was smooth and the train was quiet.

Bodg is a seaport and business centre. It also attracts tourists with a spectacular tide race and there are ferry tours to see it. We didn't know about it and didn't go but the local people say that Edgar Allen Poe's Maelstrom is nothing compared to it. Our hotel was right near the harbour and we spent some time just watching the boats come and go.

When we checked in at the hotel I was asked whether I needed a no smoking room. I said that I smoked and they gave me a key. On the door of our room was a big sign forbidding smoking. I went back to the desk and was told to ignore the sign and that they would send up some ashtrays. We were in that hotel for two nights, one of which had been prepaid. When I went to check out I expected a bill for some 1290 or 1400 kroner. I was told that I owed 14 kroner. I said that there must be some mistake. I didn't want to find a bill for an expensive hotel waiting for me when I got home. So a check was made and the charge was 34 kroner. I had mailed a card and made a phone call. One protest was enough and I paid the 34 kroner. I didn't dare ask why the charge was so low and the only explanation I can think of is that they were not able to give us the room that I asked for when we registered.

That experience at the most expensive hotel on our trip was not untypical. Everything in Norway is expensive but there were repeated little gestures of free coffee or something extra at no charge. Nowhere did we get a break of the size of that reduction in our hotel bill at Bodø.

Bodø was the reported birthplace of one of my great grandmothers, Eva Christina. We had found her grave in Sioux Rapids, Iowa but I had some confusing information about her father's name. I found the tourist office and asked if there might be someone who had records in Bodø. They sent me to the museum but the man who could help was away so I left my request and after I got home got a clear record from Statsarkivet in Trondheim. Sometimes I'm amazed at the conscientiousness of officials. My request would have been so easy to ignore.

While I was at the tourist office I met a couple of girls from Quebec who were looking for some activity to fill their time until they had to go home two days later. We were interested in the fact that they thought Norway was very like the Laurentians. We had been saying how parts of the country resembled Northern Ontario. '

Our flight to Tromsø was short and uneventful except for a delay in getting started. The plane had had mechanical problems shortly after leaving Oslo and was about 2 hours late arriving in Bodg. We had checked our bags at the SAS counter in the hotel lobby and we got regular reports on the progress of the flight while we waited.

When we arrived in Tromsø we learned something new about how to run a taxi service. We had done what we thought was right by going out to the roadway outside the airport and found that no taxi was interested in us. Again a helpful passenger took me back inside and showed me the little computer terminal where you had to order a taxi. All you had to do was press a button and wait for the computer to produce a printed slip with a number on it. When the taxi assigned that number arrived you could get a ride. There were terminals at hotel desks and other places where taxis might be needed. The system seemed to work very well. Every car had a terminal and we always had service in a few minutes.

Tromsø is on a narrow island in a narrow sound between the mainland and the island of Kvaldy. It is connected by bridges with both the mainland and the island and has spilled over to both. The harbour is on the eastern, mainland, side and the airport is on the Kvaløy side. Our hotel, the Scandic, is quite near to the airport. It is a new hotel, only three years old, and there is some landscaping still going on. We speculated that developing a strong stand of grass at that latitude might be a rather long process.

The modern hotel has very nice rooms and a second floor restaurant, the Maken (the Gull), where we had our breakfasts and a dinner of reindeer steak. We were only there for one night before we went to Vesterfjell on Friday. We returned on Sunday for two more nights. When we checked out we found that someone had assumed that we had left for good and had sent a bill for some charges that hadn't been paid. I hadn't paid on purpose to make sure that we had a room when we got back. They were very good about it.

On Friday, June 9, we left the hotel early and took a taxi to the dock where we would catch the ferry to Finnsnes. We had some hours to spare so we had lunch at a cafeteria near the wharves and went down into the park to enjoy a warm bright afternoon. Our eyes caught sight of a big Canadian flag and when we checked it out we found that the destroyer Saguenay was in port after some exercises with the Nato Naval Forces. It didn't take much negotiating to get a tour of the ship including the helicopter. Dot didn't take that tour. The steep ladders were more than she would tackle. However, she sat in the park and met people and had a pleasant time. One young lad who seemed to make friends easily particularly impressed her. Also there was a

male nurse from Sweden who said that the way to eat cheaply in Norway was to catch a fish and take it home and cook it.

OUR 1989 VACATION ADVENTURE

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VESTERFJELL-TORSLI

We caught our ferry, the Fjordkongen, at 4:38. It is a high speed catamaran type of vessel with the passenger cabin between the two hulls. Riding in it is much like a wide bodied jet airplane. There isn't much to see but it is fast and we arrived in Finnsnes at 5:45 for our visit to Torsli.

We were met by Rigmor Pedersen and for the first time I found out how to get from Finnsnes on the mainland to the island of Senja. There is a beautiful pillar bridge, the longest of its type in Europe, making the connection. It is a fairly short drive to her home and when we approached it she said, "This is Vesterfjell and that white house stands on the spot where your great grandfather's house once stood". We had arrived at Torsli, the focus of all our plans.

My interest in Torsli was aroused when Gerhard Naeseth of Vesterheim Genealogical Center found the passenger list with my grandfather and his parents and sisters leaving Trondheim for Milwaukee in 1867. That passenger list showed the home parish of the family as Trang and the name of the gard or farm as Thorslie. I had suspected that the family had come from the island of Senja from an essay apparently written by an aunt of mine and this was a firm confirmation.

By a letter to Statsarkiv (State Archives) in Tromsø I was able to confirm the ownership of the farm in 1867 and to find out that the farm was now owned by one Rigmor Pedersen. I wrote to her with the suggestion that I might one day like to visit the farm. It was some months before she replied because of her unfamiliarity with the English language but her reply finally came and she said she would be quite happy to have a visit.

When our plans were well firmed up for our trip I wrote to tell her that we planned to visit on June 10 from Tromsø. Two days before we left I received another letter from her pointing out that since there was no ferry service on Saturday, June 10, we should come on Friday evening and be her guests till we could go back to Tromsø on Sunday. Her first letter had been delightful: this one was wonderful.

After arriving in Tromsø I confirmed our schedule by phone with Rigmor and she met us at the dock in Finnsnes on Friday evening, accompanied by two of her sons, Vegard and Øystein. I had told Dot that I hoped she didn't mind being hugged because that was what was going to happen when I met her. She didn't seem to mind but I wonder if she was just accepting my way of greeting and would normally be less effusive.

She is a very nice person, a widow whose husband died of a heart attack in 1984, with three sons, Vegard, 15, Øystein, 12, and Jørn, 18. She teaches primary school, part time, and apparently owns some property that ensures her financial independence. In spite of our being so far from home she was able to make us feel very comfortable.



The Torsli Homestead

When we arrived at the Pedersen home we had traditional Norwegian open sandwiches and coffee and we presented our gifts, a set of wall plaques for Rigmor and some candy for the boys. They seemed quite pleased. After supper, Vegard said that he was going fishing and asked if I would like to go along. His mother seemed a little apprehensive and got me a sweater and woolen socks and rubber boots and drove me to the top of the hill above the lake. I was just delighted at being accepted into the family activities so readily. .

There was a long walk down the hill to the lake, through fairly dense birch woods, over stumps and rocks and deadfalls to reach the shore of the lake. When we got there we had to pull the boat out of the water and dump the water out of it. Vegard installed the floor board and

seats and with Øystein in one end and me in the other we set out. I used Vegard's long bamboo pole and Øystein had a smaller outfit. Vegard did the rowing. In the meantime, Jørn did his fishing along the bank. Nobody caught any fish but I suspect I had a nibble and we had to renew the bait.

It was a pleasant little tour past some rocky islands and would have been nice even without the fishing poles. It was a very peaceful place, a small lake with birch woods all around and no sound but our own voices and our oars and a few bird calls. I still don't know what time it was. I never thought to look at my watch and in the everlasting daylight there is no sign of night coming on. There were two other boats on the lake and we all pulled in to the shore at the same time. Securing the boats and packing up took a few minutes and then we had the long climb back up the hill.

Vegard had commented that going down was easier than coming back and he was surely right. That climb was about all I could take and I had to stop the whole party while I got my breath. I was quite proud that we only had to stop once but was quite relieved when we reached the top. Tommy Kristiansen, one of the other fishermen, had his car there so I got a ride back to the Pedersen home. It was a rather exciting experience but when I went to bed I fell asleep immediately.

The next morning Rigmor had arranged for a local genealogist, Liv-Marit Løvdal, to call and give me some information that she had on the families that lived at Torsli. Liv-Marit does not speak English but I was able to decipher most of her notes and with Rigmor's help I got some interesting information. 'One item was that two of Johan H. Pedersen's brothers and two of his sisters died in one year, 1862. We don't know if there was an epidemic, but that tragedy would help to explain why they wanted to leave. I have copies of some of Liv-Marit's notes. There are some clues for further research.

Lunch at Rigmor's featured Halibut steaks. We ate a lot of fish on our trip (all of it good) but we still think that we liked those Halibut steaks best of all. Dessert was an elaborately decorated cake that I had to make the first cut in. I didn't want to spoil it but the boys were pleased because that meant that they would get some. It tasted as good as it looked.

After lunch Ole and Kristine Olsen (Kristine is Rigmor's late husband's sister and they live just across the road) took us with Rigmor for an automobile tour of Senja. We went right across the island to Gryllefjord on the west coast and stopped for coffee at Bente and Helge Leivik's. Bente is Ole and Kristine's daughter and works in a community centre in Gryllefjord and Helge works in a bank. They had both been to Cyprus and Egypt on a holiday and showed the tan. They are both fluent in English and Helge and I had quite a chat.

Gryllefjord is a village near the mouth of the fjord of the same name. While it is a small place it has two fish processing plants and some salmon hatcheries. To reach it the road goes all the way around the inside end of the fjord and you can see the village long before you get there.

On the way to Gryllefjord we followed the course of Svanelva, the river where swans nest in the summer, and Straumbotn, where the tide turns the water salt or fresh as it runs in and out. We crossed some high ridges getting from one valley to another.

One feature of our trip was a visit to a metal working shop that was combined with a restaurant. It seemed very isolated and when we stopped there we were the only visitors. The restaurant was well set up and the metal work was very impressive. Dot bought a little statue of Thor as a souvenir. As we passed on the way home I noticed that their parking lot had several cars in it so the isolated place is rather well known.

Another location along the way was an abandoned mine where many men had drowned in the last century when the sea floor caved in and let the water into the mine workings. There is little to see that there ever was anything on the site but there area couple of houses nearby.

When we got back to Vesterfjell we were told that we were to have 'sandwiches' at the Olsens. When we got there the large coffee table was being set with a fresh cloth and Ole was almost burning his fingers lighting the candles. His comment was, " It won't get dark for another six weeks but we must have candles"

The sandwiches were open faced, oval slices of bread, buttered, and topped with cold cuts, smoked salmon, cheese, and slices of cucumber, orange or whatever suits your fancy. The Norwegian word is 'smdérbrdéd, literally 'butter bread' and they are not really sandwiches at all. They are very tasty and quite nourishing and there were lots to go around. Again the dessert was a cake, beautifully decorated, and again I had to destroy it.

Ole and Kristine Olsen are small, spare people in their early sixties. They are very hospitable and seemed to vie with Rigmor for the honor of entertaining us. Ole is quite fluent in English and has an interest in learning. He is a teacher at Overbotn 'School with Rigmor. He was very curious about the high school essay that I had about "The Thorsley Farm in Norway" and I left a copy with him. While we were on the tour of Senja he asked a lot of questions about Canada and the U.S.A.

After supper I took photographs at midnight just to show that we were in the land of the 'Midnight Sun'. Rigmor had offered to drive me to higher ground so that I could see it but the sky was overcast and I contented my self with the pictures.

On Sunday morning I was up fairly early and had a cigarette on the back deck. It was a quiet morning and the valley was beautiful. One car went by on the road below. Other than that there was only the sounds of a few birds. I was again struck with the peaceful beauty my ancestors had left behind.

I was making some notes when Rigmor appeared and proposed that we stay till evening and go back to Tromsø on the late ferry. It would have meant that we would arrive at our hotel in the late evening and I was a little apprehensive about our getting our room back so I declined.

After breakfast Rigmor and I went to the school to get copies of some of Liv-Marit's notes. We were on our way back when she remembered that there was a view from the school that she thought I should see. So we went back to the school and from the upstairs window looked down a long, misty valley toward the island of Tranøy. That was a rather special moment for me and a fitting climax to our visit. The view seemed to epitomize the character of the country. It also showed Rigmor's concern that our visit be as complete as possible and her own pride in the place.

As we left with Rigmor to return to Finnsnes, Ole and Kristine both came out to the road to say, "Goodbye". It was a nice gesture and left us feeling that they really were glad that we had come.

On our way to Finnsnes we saw sheep grazing beside the road. They can be a driving hazard. At the dock we took a picture of the pillar bridge that connects Senja to the mainland. We bought a ticket on the Hurtigruten for 'Thorsley & Fru' and had our first experience on the kind of boat that we would later live on for over a week.

There was a choral group from Tromsø that had been on a concert weekend to Harstad and we had the pleasure of hearing them warm up in the lounge for a short concert that they were going to give outside on the deck. It was a cold day; Ole and Kristine had apologized for it when we left Vesterfjell; and we stayed in the warmth of the lounge. The group's warm-up was interesting, maybe just as interesting as their performance and they fully understood our staying inside when they came back with cold fingers and noses.

The Scandic had a room for us and for the next two days we were pretty relaxed. I did visit Statsarkiv twice because I wanted to meet Arne Edvardsen, who had first put me in touch with Rigmor Pedersen. He was ill all the time we were in Tromsø and I never did meet him but I left a small gift in appreciation and got a nice 'thank you' letter from him after I got home.

Statsarkiv is not far from our hotel, or at least it seemed that way, and I got brave and decided that I could take a taxi over and walk back. Somewhere I took a wrong turn and found myself going downhill toward the harbour, obviously the wrong direction. I spoke to a young man who was loading some fencing tools into a van and explained that I was lost and wanted to get to the Scandic Hotel. We decided that I needed a taxi so he called to an older woman who had come out onto the back porch. She disappeared for a minute or two and then called something back to him. He told me there would be a taxi shortly and then went on about his business. It was all so matter-of-fact, as if someone got lost there every day. He didn't care who I was or why I got lost. I was just someone who needed a little help.

OUR 1989 VACATION ADVENTURE

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THE COASTAL VOYAGE

On Tuesday, June 13, we checked out of the Scandic and boarded the M/S Nordnorge for our shipboard trip up and down the coast of Norway. It didn't get an auspicious start. To begin with our cabin wasn't ready and we had to wait with our luggage at the ship's office till someone got it cleaned up. Then there was the shock of finding that it was about 6 feet wide and 10 feet long with two bunks and a tiny bathroom. The 'window' was a small porthole that was below the wharf line when we docked. The bathroom floor didn't look very clean and on the second day the sewer backed up and flooded it so that we couldn't use it at all.

In addition we were given one wrong plastic card key, one for our cabin 17 and one for cabin 71. When we got that straightened out one of our keys broke right across after a day. I found out that the correction included changing the lock when I couldn't get into our cabin. It was like a comedy of errors and the Reiseleder, or Courier, who looked after all the passengers' problems, must have wished that he had never heard of Thorsley and Cabin 17.

All the problems got solved. As soon as we docked the sewer was fixed and the bathroom gleamed from then on. The keys worked when we got the right ones and we had full possession of our cabin. We couldn't do anything about the size of the cabin or the small window but after a couple of days we realized that on board ship you just don't spend much time in your cabin. There were lounges and decks and a cafeteria with big windows and lots of chairs and tables and other people to talk to. As a bonus we found that the gentle rolling of the ship was great for sleeping. The bunks were comfortable and the bedding warm and even the upper bunk was quite pleasant after I got into it.

Our boat sailed a course that was mostly protected from the open sea by islands and so we didn't often experience the pitching and rolling from ocean swells. It didn't take long to find 'sea legs' and when we did it was kind of pleasant, especially in bed. We were to find out later on the trip across the North Sea that ocean swells can be a bit of a problem, even on a large vessel. Neither of us got seasick but Dot did use seasick pills.

One discovery that Dot made was that she could wash our underwear and shirts in the evening and they would be dry by morning. That showed that we could have got along without all the clothes that we took and she got a lot of satisfaction out of it. That had been one of her concerns before we left.

Our boat was part of a Norwegian coastal steamer service that carries passengers and freight between Bergen in Southern Norway and Kirkenes, almost at the Russian border. There are 39 ports of call on the schedule and the ships normally stop at at least 35 of them. Most stops are just long enough to load and unload passengers and freight but at a few places the stop is 2 or 3 hours for ship supplying and for inland tours by the passengers.

The complete trip from Bergen to Kirkenes and back to Bergen takes 11 days. There are 11 ships in the fleet and every day, 365 days of the year, one of them arrives at Bergen at 2:98 p.m. and leaves again at 19:90 p.m. Each port of call sees two ships each day, one northbound and one southbound. Since the ships operate 24 hours a day the stop may be at any time of the day or night.

That seems to be a minor concern in Northern Norway. In the winter time there is no day and in the summer there is no night. It is not uncommon to have a group of people come down to the dock at 2:88 a.m. on their afternoon walk just to see the ship come in.

The coastal steamer service is a joint effort of three shipping companies. It is popularly known as 'Hurtigruten', and is an important part of life, especially in the northern part of the country. It is also an important tourist attraction for the magnificent and varied scenery along the route. The ships vary in size but each has accommodation for from 158 to 380 passengers and lots of room for short trip passengers on the decks and in lounges.

Freight carrying is an important service to the northern communities especially. We saw a great variety from automobiles to soft drinks. There were reinforcing steel mats, plywood, rope, fish nets, compressed gas, welding machines, motorcycles, chemicals in plastic bottles, groceries of all kinds including fruit from Argentina and New Zealand. We also saw a crate of 5 Mountain Ash trees with their roots in plastic bags. That was interesting because we were a long way north of where we could expect trees to grow in Canada.

We developed a lot of respect for the officers and crew of the ship. They had to keep it operating continuously and on schedule while navigating narrow passages and the inevitable shoals. While it seemed relatively simple in the everlasting daylight we had to remember that they did it in the everlasting darkness too.

We didn't see much of the operating crew except the crane operators who impressed me with their skill in extracting cargo from the hold and depositing it on the dock, quickly and with not one accident. Our contact was Haakon Dahl, the Reiseleder. To begin with he seemed to always be in difficulty and Dot began to refer to him as Captain of the 'Walloping Window Blind'. But he finally solved all our problems and was most cooperative. He was the one who arranged all the tours and cashed travellers cheques and answered everyone's questions. It was Haakon Dahl who rescued my wallet when I inadvertently left it on the corner of his desk.

Another person who got our attention was Solfryd Eldorsen. It was she who made sure our cabin was ready when we first boarded the ship. She also worked in the kitchen and dining room and often served at the counter in the cafeteria. Her interest in the welfare of the passengers was noticeable. On one occasion a young man with crutches came aboard. He had difficulty walking even with the crutches and Solfryd made sure that he got all the help he needed. When he left the ship she helped him down the gangway and when no one was there to meet him ran up the street to order a taxi and waited with him till it came. The boat had to wait. She told us that he had been in a car accident and had been in a coma for 87 days. He was just beginning to walk after two years but he said, and she believed him, that he was going to recover completely.

When I lost my wallet Dot and I had gone to the cafeteria for a coffee. Before I ordered I realized that my wallet was gone and thought that I had left it in the cabin. Dot waited while I raced down to look. When I returned Solfryd was at the counter and we decided to have coffee anyway. Solfryd announced that this was my lucky day. The coffee would be free. I told her I had lost my wallet and she came with me to search the cabin again. I was looking for my credit card number when Dot appeared at the cabin door with the wallet. Solfryd had found Haakon Dahl and solved the problem.

We went back for our delayed cup of coffee and I presented Solfryd with one of my Canada pins. I was a little taken aback when she grabbed my hand and kissed it but I returned the favor by kissing hers and pointing out how much I appreciated her concern. We noticed that she wore my pin for the rest of that day and all of the next.

The whole episode started when I went to buy an extra copy of the *Hurtigruten* book from Haakon Dahl. I intended to pay with paper money and then decided that I had enough change. In the process I left my wallet on the corner of his desk. When I went down to check the cabin I looked for Haakon but he was out of his office looking for me. It was a short experience but one that we won't soon forget. While I tried to remain calm, I have to admit that while my wallet was gone I felt very insecure.

The passengers were a diverse lot. They came from Italy, France, Sweden, Great Britain, United States, Germany, Holland, and, of course, Norway. The Norwegian passengers were mainly for short trips of a day or less but it was notable how many there were. Shortly after we boarded at Tromsø there were dozens of students returning home from school. They didn't take cabins or use the dining room. They got what they needed in the cafeteria and slept in the lounges or on the deck. They were a cheerful lot and quite ready with a smile and a greeting. One of them, Hans Inge Jørgensen, of Havøysund, came to Dot's rescue in an emergency and we had quite a good talk. He was delighted with the opportunity to practice his English.

A particular favorite was the man from Genoa, Italy. He was a large man, quite old, a retired engineer who had got his technical education in Austria. He shuffled about with 8 inch steps but always seemed to get where he was going soon enough. He never missed out on anything at the buffet table. He had a facility for dozing off in his chair in the lounge at any time and every afternoon he would retire to his cabin (his 'Match Box', he called it) for a 'horizontal'. His comment about the Midnight Sun was, "The days are awfully long". He was multi-lingual and could conduct a conversation fluently in German, French or English as well as Italian. He was interested in everybody and everything around him and was quite fun to talk to. I regret that I did not get his name and address for my records.

There was a lady from France (near Geneva, Switzerland, she said). Dot and I had an interesting conversation with her and our Italian friend. They commented that they were 'true Europeans' in that they could converse in either German or French when they were together or English when with us. She ventured to say that French speaking people do not readily acquire a second language, a characteristic of English speaking people too. I took it as a comment on Canada's language problems. Both our language groups are the most stubborn and inward looking in the world.

Then there was Mrs. Mikkelsen. We never did find out much about Mrs. Mikkelsen but we (Dot especially) saw quite a lot of her. At first I thought she lived in Narvik, Norway; then later Dot suspected that she was Swedish. She loved to sit and carry on intimate conversations and Dot was a favorite partner. We thought that she was trying to speak English but she mumbled and often held her hand in front of her mouth so we couldn't be sure. Later I suspected that she was speaking Norwegian and tried to follow her but I finally concluded that she spoke very bad Norwegian. After several days we had deciphered enough to determine that she seemed to be giving us a summary of the book describing the boat trip we were all taking. If so, she was wasting her time. She might have had a Norwegian version but we had the same

thing in English. She engaged other people in conversation but never for very long. I wonder if they had the same trouble that we had.

We had some pleasant meetings with Ted and Nell Kennaugh from Farnham, England. Ted is an electrical engineer and that helped to find common interests. Of course, I always had the stories of how I found the birth places of my ancestors to regale people with. Ted and Nell had one of the fancy cabins with two beds instead of double bunks. They said that neither could climb into an upper bunk. They were the only ones who dutifully 'dressed for dinner' every evening, and took a bottle of wine with their meal. We matched them one evening and from then on we had coffee together in the cafeteria after dinner.

There was a couple from Chicago that were pleased to meet other North Americans. There were four Germans at the next table at meals that we seldom saw at any other time. They were hearty eaters but didn't seem very friendly. There was a Dutchman from Groningen who ate his meals with our Italian friend and spent most of his time imbibing the Norwegian beer. We were surprised by a French tour group who came aboard, took over most of our lounge for half a day, talked fast and loud all the time and then disappeared.

Another surprise was to find a group of newspaper executives planning a conference on 'Globalization of the News'. They were in the smoking lounge for want of any place private that was big enough for their meeting but they were in the midst of the passing throng and had some great scenery just outside the windows. They represented papers in England, France, Sweden and a couple of other countries and their conference was to be in Brussels. All their discussions were in English and I couldn't help commenting on what a great place it was to hold a meeting. I don't think that they all agreed but they obviously knew their business and, since their meeting went on for most of three days, I would guess that they accomplished quite a lot.

Mealtimes were the routine events of the day. They were announced by a big gong that was sounded just outside the dining room and then carried down to all the cabin decks and sounded there. I don't think that was really necessary. Everyone seemed to be waiting at the door before the gong sounded and the gong only provided the signal to go inside. The doors were always open but no one entered until that gong went.

Breakfast and lunch were buffet style. Three seconds after the gong sounded you couldn't see the buffet table for the people around it. There was no need to rush. There was always plenty of food and if a bowl was emptied it was immediately replaced with a full one. Everyone sat at their assigned table. We sat alone at a table for four throughout our entire trip. It wasn't a bad idea. We got lots of opportunity to meet other passengers at other times.

The food was good. Breakfast was particularly interesting. There would be bread and the typical Norwegian hard breads and crackers and cheese and smoked salmon and two or three other kinds of fish. There would be gjetost (a Norwegian brown whey cheese) and at least two other kinds of cheese. There would be dry cereals and fruit and milk and buttermilk and orange juice. Often there would be hard-boiled and soft-boiled eggs and sometimes even bacon. It was a challenge to decide what to have and almost always we found something interesting after the plate was full, the hazard of all buffets.

Lunch was similar without the cereals and eggs and with a greater variety of fish and fruit and vegetables and the menu changed every day so there was always something new to try. One interesting feature was Frutesuppe, a dessert that is based on tapioca with a mixture of fruit. It is like a thick soup with fruit instead of meat and vegetables. It is a good idea.

Dinner was the formal meal but almost no one appeared in anything other than their regular clothes. The meal was served and featured an entree that was usually something other than fish, a big bowl of boiled potatoes, vegetables, and a light dessert. One could order a bottle of wine but there was no coffee or tea. The usual order of business was to retire to the cafeteria after dinner for coffee with friends.

Our trip was billed as one of the loveliest sea voyages in the world but one cannot look at scenery for a week or more no matter how beautiful it is. Norway is almost all mountains and that is what you see. Some one has said that mountains are all the same. If you have seen one you have seen them all. Norway's mountains are not the sky piercing peaks of the Rockies. They resemble more the Laurentians in Quebec or even the hills of Northern Ontario. However, there is much more variety, from the thickly wooded slopes from Tromsø south to the jagged and cold, barren, snow covered peaks of the Lyngen range. There were some very interesting formations. Torghatten, the mountain with a hole through it, is the best known. The bird colonies along the far northern coast were also interesting. I tried to take pictures and got some good ones but one could take a million pictures and not get the whole story.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the trip was the people. Not the ones we met but the tiny communities clinging to small bits of land along the shore; one to four houses with a boat dock and a few tiny fields around them and a mountain behind. And, if you looked closely, you would almost always see the line of a road along the shore to the next community several kilometres away or going up the valley to the community on the other side of the island. I marvelled at the independent will that made it possible for people to live there but also that they were not as isolated as they at first appeared.

Then there were the towns we called at. All of them seemed to be thriving places of a few hundred or a few thousand people that subsisted on fishing and fish processing and in some cases mining. All of them were well cared for and clean. Every building was painted and often in bright colors.

We took the tour to North Cape. It began at Honningsvåg and there was a 35 km bus ride to the cape. North Cape is the most northerly point in Europe (almost). It is on a treeless island and the road is bleak except that we saw the Arctic lichens and herds of reindeer grazing. There were a few patches of snow and, since the temperature was about 28 C, the reindeer were making use of the snow to cool off. The Cape itself has been developed as a tourist centre with a theatre and restaurant and gift shop cut right into the solid rock. We saw a very good film of North Cape throughout the year on five screens. Winter can be a very stormy season and the scenes in the film were quite graphic. The gift shop was good with good souvenirs and we bought a few. From the brow of the Cape we could see fishing boats from Skarsvåg, a small village near the Cape. Skarsvåg is the most northerly inhabited place in Europe. There is a military post at North Cape. No one actually lives there.

The only other tour we took was at Trondheim, mainly to see the Nidaros Domkirke, or the Cathedral. It was begun as a memorial to Olav Haraldsen, St. Olav, and his body is said to

rest under the main altar. It is a very impressive structure and the circular window over the main entrance is especially beautiful. The front wall exterior is filled with statues of saints with two niches reserved for Adam and Eve.

OUR VACATION ADVENTURE

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BERGEN & ENGLAND

As we approached Bergen at the end of our trip it was noticeable that there was a greater variety of trees and there were no longer the snow capped mountains we had seen everywhere farther north. As we wound through the islands and inlets there was evidence of a different geology. The islands were predominantly white as though they may have been Limestone.

Bergen seems to hang on the face of the mountains. There is a narrow band around the harbour with all the docks and warehouses. The residential part of the city seemed to be just spilling down the hillside.

We took a bus from our boat to the dock where we were to find the M/S Jupiter, the ship that was to take us to Newcastle. We found ourselves in an enormous waiting room with hardly anyone else but two English ladies, Valerie Belton and Isabel Cant. Isabel is a retired doctor and had a bad ankle so she needed help with luggage and getting up gangways. Valerie was her organizer, sometimes to Isabel's amusement. Dot thought Valerie resembled Barbara Woodhouse and expected her to say 'Walkies' whenever it was time to move. She tried to plan every detail and was continually busy worrying about what would happen next. Isabel simply figured that everything would work out in the end so why worry. We had lots more time to talk to Isabel.

As time went by (we had about three hours to wait) the waiting room filled, mainly with a band that was going to England. Then the boat came in and we had a packed house with incoming and outgoing passengers. One little girl particularly impressed Dot. She was young and flirty and cuddly and very much a part of the group that was going to board the ship to Newcastle. All the people in that group were young but this girl got attention as something more than most.

When I got our boarding cards I noticed that everyone else got a cabin number. All we got was an "A". The officer on board looked at our card and sent us three decks up. We had climbed two flights of stairs when a maid directed us to an elevator and then escorted us to the top deck. Just outside the elevator was a door marked "Fuertaventura" and she pushed it open and showed us in.

That was cabin "A" and was bigger than the hotel room we had in Trondheim with two beds and large closets and a complete bathroom and a big window. The telephone gave us access to the whole world had we wanted to use it. There was also a table and a chesterfield and two chairs. After our little 'match box' on the Nordnorge we couldn't believe it. Also the elevator went down as far as we wanted to go so we didn't use the stairs until we disembarked. There was a catch. The window opened out onto a deck and I was reminded when I noticed people outside only a few feet away and I was dressed in a bath towel over my shoulders.

We probably should not have been surprised. We had asked for first class accommodation throughout the trip and while a 'match box' might have been the best accommodation available on the Nordnorge we were now on a large luxury liner with quite different objectives. Of course, we wanted to show off our good fortune and the most available

candidates were our new friends, Valerie and Isabel. We met them in the cafeteria and shortly after they came up to see us. They were suitably impressed and we had an interesting discussion of our differing travel plans once we reached Newcastle.

Shortly after they left an announcement came over the speaker system that there was a 24 hour rail strike in Britain. That meant that neither they nor we were going to be able to meet our schedule as planned. As we expected they showed up in our room again in a very few minutes and the discussion was very animated. Valerie, the organizer, proposed that they would get a room at the Royal Station Hotel. It was supposedly a large hotel and right next to the Central Station. Our plans were to try to get either a plane or a bus to Norwich that evening. After they left I took the precaution of taking a record of the phone number of the Royal Station Hotel from the promotion booklet on Newcastle that we found in our room.

We arrived at Newcastle on time at 4:90 p.m. and took our time disembarking. We didn't use the elevator. We came down the stairs and moved down one deck at a time as the crowd below Cleared away. It took a while but we were able to sit, instead of standing for the same length of time in a pushing crowd. As we approached the Port of Entry we noticed that there were two lines, entering at different doors. One was for members of the European Common Market and the other was for "All Others". The "All Others" was a much longer Line. We cheerfully informed the Security Guard in charge the we were Canadian, implying that we didn't think we fitted into either of those categories. He, just as cheerfully, pointed out that, at least, we were members of the Commonwealth and directed us to the shorter line.

We were soon through Customs and Immigration and found ourselves in another big waiting room full of incoming and outgoing passengers. There was a tourist information counter and after waiting for someone to get free I found that there was no chance of finding a bus or plane to Norwich that evening. So I managed to get some change from the manager of the tourist service to use in a pay telephone. I phoned the Royal Station Hotel and reserved a room for the night.

In the meantime Dot had got acquainted with a British couple who were waiting to board the Jupiter for Norway. They found a common topic of conversation in genealogy and the man had found a highwayman among his ancestors. He seemed to be surprised when we told him we would be delighted to find someone like that. All we could find was ordinary people, mostly farmers.

We took a taxi to the hotel and we soon were installed for the night. There were a couple of phone calls, one to the railway to find the earliest train to Peterborough and Norwich, and oneto the Maid's Head Hotel in Norwich to tell them we would not be arriving till the next day. Our train left before 7:00 a.m. the next morning so I went down to the desk to check out and avoid dealing with a bleary night porter at 6:98 a.m. When I got to the lobby I was a bit surprised to find our friends, Valerie and Isabel. They had two single rooms because there were no double rooms available and Valerie was somewhat upset. When they found out how we got ours Valerie sniffed and turned and walked away. Isabel looked up from her chair and said quietly, "You're wonderful". I think I confirmed one friend and lost another in that few moments.

The next morning was not one of great satisfaction. We were right next door to the Central Station but the Underground Central Station is also right there too. We got into the

wrong one and spent precious time trying to find a train in an enormous cavern with hardly anyone else there and long stairways to get from one place to another. We finally found someone who could direct us and that meant climbing all the way out to the street and into another less noticeable entrance. We found our train with just minutes to spare. We were both exhausted and there was no time wasted trying to find the first class compartment that we were entitled to. We just got on the train and found a seat.

The English trains did not quite measure up to the Norwegian ones. The road bed was rougher and the trains were not as clean. As we left Newcastle the train had to stop several times because there was some trouble beside the track. We never did find out what the matter was. All the English trains are electric and that made them smooth and silent.

Our first look at English countryside came on the ride from Newcastle to Norwich. It was much as we expected but without the hedgerows. There were rolling hills and fields and farms with sheep and cattle and horses. There were small clumps of woods and often flowers, roses and poppies, along the roads or in the fields.

A feature of the landscape that we did not appreciate was the power stations with their enormous cooling towers. While they are not numerous they are so large that they dominate the area where they sit and they are dark and forbidding. Their accompanying transmission stations and power lines are hardly more attractive and they are everywhere.

When we reached Peterborough we found that we had choices for the next leg of the trip to Norwich. One thing about English trains is that there are lots of them. We had a coffee and a bun at the station and took the first train eastward to Norwich. The landscape changed to a marshier character and we saw evidence of storm damage in the woods along the side of the railway. Then was reached historically interesting town of Ely with lots of water and boats in what appeared to be canals. Our train went forwards into Ely and went backwards out of it and continued backwards all the way to Norwich. I speculated that Ely is not the kind of place that you can go through and that may explain its history as a fortified refuge.

OUR VACATION ADVENTURE

7

NORWICH & HOME

We arrived at Norwich and found the Maid's Head Hotel. This is an ancient hotel with some modern renovations involving glass doors at the entrance, a bar, and a parking garage. We didn't see much of the new construction. Our room was in the older part and was reached by a long trip through three lounges, a stairway, past the dining room, through a conservatory, and then two more doorways and two corridors and another set of stairs. It was a pleasant room, looking out on a narrow street with shops and the back of what we thought was a church. One drawback showed itself on Saturday night. We were just above the pub and carvery and at closing time there was a pretty noisy street out there. But it only happened on Saturday.

While the room was old it had been refurbished and all the facilities and furniture were in good condition and worked well. One feature that we appreciated was the refreshments provided. There was coffee and tea and milk and sugar and packages of shortbread and a Kettle to boil the water. We made good use of that.

The dining room was called the Minstel Room. That is where we ate most of our meals. It reminded us of Upstairs Downstairs. There was always someone in charge and their job was to see that everything was RIGHT. We felt that it would have been a great place to serve an apprenticeship in the food business. Three months in that dining room would have been a complete education. There was no pressure on the clientele. We dressed informally. One thing we had to be careful of was that the waitress would drown your coffee in hot milk if you didn't stop her. The food was good but English and different from what we had in Norway or what we would expect in Canada.

We were surprised at the rates at the Maid's Head. They were a bit higher than we had expected but when we went to check out we found that all our meals were included in the daily rate. That was something we hadn't expected. It seems that if you stay for several days you are considered a "resident" and thus get on a different list.

Norwich is a very old city and the Maid's Head is in an old part of it. The streets are narrow and winding and there were' cars on them all day long. People drive fast and pedestrians don't get any consideration. At certain places there are cross walks and a buzzer that signals that traffic is stopped. The buzzer lasts 5 seconds. Even with the narrow streets that isn't very long. There are some good streets for walking. They are too narrow for automobiles or there is an old building projecting into the street that effectively cuts it off. Bridewell Alley is like that.

I had planned on renting a car in Norwich and had had one reserved for me. When I saw the kind of conditions that I would have to drive in I chickened out. I found my cousin, Jim Lister, on the phone and proposed to him that I would appreciate his driving us to Hingham and other places if he could. I also invited him and his wife Nellie to have dinner with us at our hotel that evening.

When Jim told me that someone would be bringing them in but would not be stopping for dinner I began to wonder. I later met Barry who is a very special guy to Jim and Nellie. Barry took over Jim's electronics business when Jim retired and now acts as a doting son. Jim

and Nellie have no children of their own so they appreciate Barry very much. Barry drove them the 15 miles into Norwich and then went home to await their call to come and pick them up. Barry also came to pick us up the next morning and take us to Pulham Market and returned us to our hotel in the evening. Jim has a nice car that he drives around Pulham Market but he won't drive in the city. It must be a great comfort to him to have Barry willing to do those errands that require city driving.

Jim and Nellie are very nice people and we had a most enjoyable dinner with them and a pleasant tour of the places where our ancestors had lived in Norfolk. I had visited Hingham in 1924 with my mother and brother and it was quite a thrill to be able to recognize the place where my grandparents lived and where Jim's father had his bakery and the church and the school. The village common seemed small but I was assured that it hadn't changed. We had lunch at the White Hart Inn in Hingham and then went to visit churches and graveyards.

There was no point in trying to find any significant information in one afternoon. It was a tour that just gave me and Jim a chance to visit together some of the places where our ancestors lived. I think he enjoyed it almost as much as I did and we did find some Lister graves at Scoulton. None of them are direct ancestors. Visiting the ancient churches at Hingham and Scoulton and Caston gave me a sense of the history of my mother's family, who had lived in those places for over 398 years. I think Jim got some of the same feeling from visiting with me.

When we got back to Pulham Market Jim placed a phone call to his sister Madeline. She is 84 and lives near Portsmouth. Dot and I both spoke to her and were impressed with her vitality in conversation. We had taken two Canadian coffee spoons as gifts, one for Nellie and one to be sent to Madeline. Since we got home we have a long letter from Madeline that is just as lively as she sounded on the phone- We would have loved to have met her.

In the evening I had a visit from Patrick T.R. Palgrave-Moore, who had done the research that discovered my mother's ancestors back to about 1798. He is President of The Norwich and Norfolk Genealogical Society and turned out to be a very interesting visitor. He was very interested in the success that I had had in Norway and in the type of records available. He seemed to feel that my focus should be on my Norwegian ancestors because the chances of success are better and spreading too widely limits one's ability to keep track and maintain interest.

We had an interesting discussion about why anyone should get interested in Genealogy. He suggested that it was an attempt to find an identity in a climate of social chaos. When I suggested that we were all responsible to those who went before for our existence his reply was, "Yes, all of them". I was intrigued by his statement that every one has two parents and four grandparents and eight great grandparents and if you could go back far enough and find all of them you would find everybody. He had traced his ancestry back to John of Gaunt on one side. He seemed disappointed that it was his mother's side. He had some appreciation for the work of the Mormon Church but was not enthusiastic about their motives.

We had our meeting in one of the Maid's Head lounges and the porter brought us a pot of coffee and it was a very pleasant meeting. When I spoke to him on the phone in the morning I had asked him how we would recognize each other. He replied that he would know me

because Canadians always wear checkered shirts. This time he was right and when he came into the lounge he addressed me by my first name.

On Saturday morning Dot and I visited Norwich Cathedral. It is less than a block from the hotel but behind a wall and you see the Cathedral from its western gate. It is a very old building, started in 1096, only 39 years after the Conquest, by a Norman bishop. It has been the scene of some violent incidents and parts of it have been destroyed and other parts have been added. It is still a magnificent structure and serves to symbolize the social history of the region.

We visited a bookstore and bought a couple of books and then had Lunch in a pub. Dot had a shandy and I had a beer and we both had a sandwich. In the afternoon I went out alone to find The Mustard Shop and to cash some travellers cheques. I had a map and I asked directions but I still got a good look at the whole area of downtown Norwich before I found them both. It can be very confusing and asking directions is a waste of time. The answers seem to just increase the confusion.

I did find The Mustard Shop and it is a very small place in Bridewell Alley. Bridewell Alley is very narrow. One car might be able to get through it except that the vestry of St. Andrews Church projects out into the alley at one end and effectively blocks it off. There are some expensive looking shops and boutiques and a museum. The Mustard Shop is about 3 m wide and 6 m deep and sells only varieties of mustard. It took a little persistence to get to the counter and buy a small package of three kinds of mustard in the crowd of tourists who were mainly just gawking. The mustard is good but the shop is not an exciting place to visit. It bases its popularity on the history of Colman's Mustard, originally sold in that shop.

Sunday was our day for going home. As always the most exciting part of going away is coming home. The noise from the pub below had kept us awake at closing time on Saturday night but I was awake at 5:98 a.m. to get ready to catch the 7:20 train. We made use of the coffee and shortbread for a quick breakfast and found a first class smoking compartment (marked 'for use of second class passengers') and had it all to ourselves except for a rather interesting lady who got on at the last minute.

She didn't have a ticket and argued with the conductor about the fare to the extent of taking his name and number. She told us about her neighbors and some of her difficulties and the sounds that penetrated through the walls of her apartment. She was very helpful to us and helped Dot with her bag when we got to Liverpool Station but we couldn't help but feel that in time she would have found something to argue with us about.

Getting from Liverpool Station to Heathrow Airport means travelling clear across London. We could have taken the Underground but that meant a change of trains and then finding our terminal after we got there. With our luggage that wasn't a nice prospect. We took a taxi. It was expensive but it got us right to the place where we were to check in and we saw some of the city as we passed through.

There was a long wait for our flight to Toronto and we used it to have some lunch and watch the crowds of people coming and going. One of them was an Iranian lady who lived in California and had just been visiting a daughter in Switzerland. She and Dot had a discussion of Iranian cuisine and customs and Dot got some pointers on a different way to knit. It was

interesting to find out that this good looking, well dressed woman who was a Doctor's wife in California had a grand daughter in Switzerland who was learning to speak Farsi.

The flight to Toronto was even longer than the flight to Frankfurt. It seemed to me that the seats are crowded closer together than I remember them. There is just no room to stretch out at all. It might be good business for the airline but it makes travelling by plane a punishing experience. There was a movie, "A Fish Named Wanda", that didn't do anything to make the trip pleasant and we had a couple of meals that used up some time. .

We had a young girl who had just spent some time in Spain. I seems that her parents are separated and she divides her time between them. When we arrived in Toronto we had the usual Canadian welcome by way of the formal declaration of how much you purchased while away and the examination of those figures before you can formally get home. It is quite noticeable how much more trouble it is to get into Canada than into either Norway or Britain.

We had to search for our Aboutown Transit to London and, sure enough, it was Barb again. This time she had a full load but her conversation didn't change except that she had someone else to talk to. Penny picked us up at the Radisson Hotel and, at about midnight, 24 hours after our start in Norwich, we arrived home to find everything okay. Our big adventure was over.

We had accomplished all that we had set out to do and had some experiences that we did not expect. While the actual travelling was over we still had to try to digest what the implications were and get records in form so that the values would not be lost. It was a major undertaking but it more than justified the time and expense involved.