

DISCOVERING FAMILY.....and FRIENDS

My trip to Sweden - by Ruth Patrick

Travel today has become much more commonplace than in years gone-by and many of us have trips to exotic places already in our memories. Ruth Patrick had the opportunity for a very special trip to Sweden; one which not only permitted her to visit the land of her parents but also to make the acquaintance of many of her relatives. Ruth shares her experiences with us and describes the lifestyle and scenery of this rugged country in this 2 part article. The conclusion of the article will be in the next issue of the Lantern. (P. Little, ed)

My trip to Sweden July 5 to August 4 was very special to me because I was able to see my fathers and my mothers childhood homes, renovated with all modern conveniences. My cousin Barbro was my hostess, interpreter, guide, chauffeur and general caretaker. Before I arrived, she had gathered together information about places and things of interest, and had mapped out routes of special beauty for our trips.

My first day at Taby, a northern suburb of Stockholm, was a bit blurred by Jet lag, but by Tuesday, July 8, we were ready to leave for our trip north to Lapland, the northernmost state of Sweden. The first day we travelled on a main highway near the East coast, through rocky countryside (much like the rocky areas near Lyndhurst) through forests of pine and birch. The first night, after 500 km of driving, we stayed overnight in a cabin at a campsite near Ramvik, beside a beautiful lake near the coast. All day we had seen hundreds of caravans - the European term for what we call house trailers or campers. Many Swedish workers were on vacation, and they were joined by vacationers from Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium and West Germany and Finland. Each caravan was distinguished by the initial of its country of origin. All drivers must keep the headlights of their cars on all day, even in sunlight. The highways are excellent, in good repair.

The houses we passed were mostly of wood, the siding up and down, with strips covering the joints, painted dark red with white trim, and with orangy tile roofs. They were very well kept, with lovely flowerbeds surrounding them.

The next morning we travelled northwest, and had a most interesting stop at Torvsjo Brookmills. These mills were restored beginning in 1969, and declared a national monument in 1972. These restorations show how a small stream running down a hillside could give power to several small mills to grind grain, to flour, to thresh the grain, saw lumber and provide power to make clay bricks.

We arrived at Barbro's cosy, primitive cottage at Boxon, near Stensele, at 4 pm. It is beautifully situated by a big lake made by damming the Ume River.

Barbro had gone there by train the weekend before I arrived to have it in order. After our dinner, we went to the town of Stensele to visit our Aunt Irene in the Old Folks Home. She is 89, and has a remarkably good memory, and was delighted to see us. Since my parents spoke Swedish to us when we were children, I can understand some Swedish if it is spoken slowly. I can say a few words, but unfortunately my accent is all wrong, so no one can understand me -- except for one phrase "Jag elskar dig" which means I love you. Aunt Irene spoke too quickly for me to follow,

so Barbro was our interpreter. Aunt Irene took us on a tour of the home. It is unfortunate that the powers that be had changed it to self-contained units -- living room, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom - in spite of the fact that everyone had their meals in the common diningroom, and that their rooms are cared for by the staff. The Kitchens are entirely unnecessary. Aunt Irene was the most able inmate there. We were also sorry to find that the hobby room was closed for the summer.

During the next several days, we picked up Aunt Irene every time we went to visit our cousins. Their welcome was most hearwarming. I was able to get the idea of most conversations, and make some comments for Barbro to interpret. When I tried to say things in Swedish, she finally said "In English please!"

One day we went to Aunt Irene's old home, where her son and his family now live. During the afternoon he and his brother-in-law took Barbro and me to see his acres of land. The pine forests had been cut down, and he and his family and friends had been planting pine seedlings -- thousands of them. They would take 125 years to mature enough to be harvested.

Most of the houses we visited were either fairly new, or renovated with all modern conveniences. Many had old family treasures. One of our cousins was noted for her weaving, and she had many lovely rugs and other cloths. Most homes

had beautifully finished wood floors. I don't recall seeing any broadloom rugs. I was very impressed with the windows in Barbro's condominium. There are three panes in each and

between two are sandwiched venetian blinds. A great way to save dusting!

My father and two uncles had skiied from Stensele to Mo i Rana, at the end of a fiord in Norway, to board ships to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Barbro had never been there, so we went on a two day trip there and back, west along the Gulf of Bothnia to Finland, across Finland, and into Russia. Vindelalven is an unharnessed part of the Ume River basin, the rest of which has 17 hydroelectric power stations along its 500 km course. The scenery is beautiful, with stretches of lakes and rushing rivers, through pine and birch forests, with snow capped mountains in the distance. At Tarnaby we drove through the village, which is the home of several well known Swedish skiiers. One is Ingemar Stenmark, who is descended from the same family tree as Barbro and I. At Tarnaby the pine forests stop, and there are only birch trees, much smaller than those to the south east, and with more burls. These burls are some sort of tumor, and are made into unusual shaped bowls, which are lovely. We saw many birch trees whose leaves were chewed, but couldn't find out the cause.

We stopped at a Same museum near Tarnaby. The Same who herd reindeer are a special race, with more Mongolian features, who have their own culture, and do not like to be called "Lapps". During our overnight stop at a cousins cottage at Vilasund, we went for a walk, and found corrals and a slaughtering pen for reindeer. The incident at Chernobyl has really hurt the Same Lapplanders who herd reindeer, as they are not allowed to slaughter and sell them for five years. We saw no herds, but did see a couple strays. On our way back to Sweden from Mo i Rana, at the top of a treeless, windy hill, we stopped at a roadside stand, where a Norwegian Lapplander and his children, in costume, were selling souvenirs. They had reindeer hides, dolls in costume, pouches made of reindeer hide, etc. The doll I bought is different from all others I saw in souvenir shops.

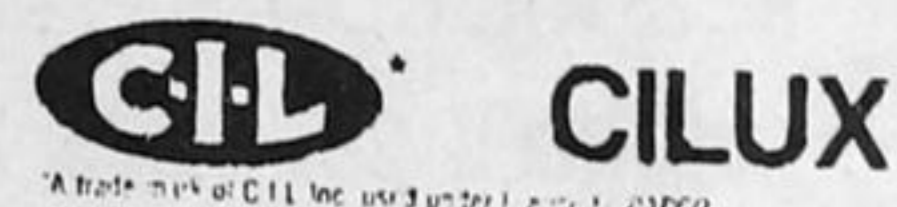
Back at Stensele we said goodbye to Aunt Irene and other family there and got ready to leave for Taby. Early Saturday, July 19th we closed up the cottage for the rest of the summer and the winter months, as Barbro can't get up there often.

We took a different route home, going farther west through central Sweden. We stayed overnight at a campsite near Vemdalen. There they had man made ponds for swimming and fishing, and an excellent restaurant.

cont'd next month

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