

Crossing Norway - Alone!

By Sonja Olmanson

At the end of May, 1979, Keith and I left for a month of vacationing in Scandinavia. It was a first for us. We spent our first two days in Denmark, then took a ferry to Sweden where we spent another day, and at last to Oslo by train. There we were met by my husband's cousin, Kjell. After arriving at his home, I learned that my father had passed away. The next morning, I flew home for his funeral, not knowing whether I would be returning.

However, since we had planned to stay in Norway a month, my family thought I should return. So, exactly one week after my first flight, I was back on the same flight route, even the same movie playing, except that I flew on from Copenhagen to Oslo where I was once again met by Kjell.

This is where my adventure really began.

Kjell was so anxious for me to catch up with Keith, (who by this time was across Norway on the coast) that he took me back to Oslo early in the morning, making certain I was on the first train out of town going west. All was well. The train ride was uneventful. Then I learned that trains don't go all the way across Norway. We stopped at Andalsnes, where we were to continue by bus. However, the bus would not leave until the next train arrived.

After quite some time had gone by, an announcement was made that the expected train had stalled, and that we would be waiting until it arrived. We waited - and waited - with an updated announcement that a new engine had to be brought to replace the stalled one. I remember taking a walk around the block a few times, and having coffee with an older Norwegian man who had spent enough time in Texas to have a pension from his job there, but was once again living in Norway. Anything to pass time faster.

From the bus depot, I also called the elderly cousin that Keith was with in Eidsdal. He told me that Keith was out for a walk. Since he spoke English, I told him the problem, and that I didn't know how late we would be. He apparently spoke English better than he understood it! He only told Keith that I would be late in arriving.

Finally the second train arrived, and after loading a few more passengers, we were able to depart. I went towards the back and sat down, wondering why I was the only passenger on my side of the aisle. The others were all behind the driver. As we traveled up the mountain road, through Trollstigen, we experienced the one hairpin turn where the bus has to go forward and back again slowly, turning only a little at a time to get around the corner. There I found the answer to my question. I was the only one looking down over the side of the mountain!

It was late at night when we finally arrived at Valdalen. The driver stopped at a small hotel, announcing that because we were so late, we had missed the last ferry across the fiord

to Eidsdal, and would have to stay in Valdalen overnight. I was given an upstairs room, but went downstairs again to call Keith, telling him I would have to stay overnight at Valdalen. I think I was ready to cry, and probably would have sooner or later, except the lady in charge came back to say I had a phone call.

Keith was calling to say that Torvall's wife had remembered that there was a ferry at 11:00 on Monday nights only. I told the lady in charge, and she called a taxi to take me to the ferry which was down the road a few miles at Linge. I haven't any recollection of how long the ferry ride was, but it seemed a long time. Torvall and Keith were waiting. Because Torvall hadn't understood me as well as I thought when I had talked to him, they had been meeting every ferry all evening.

What a day! I had started early in the morning by car, then traveled by train, next by bus, eventually by taxi, and ended with a ferry ride, eventually arriving at my destination approximately seventeen hours later. It was midnight.

I had been alone, all day, all the way across Norway, unable to read or speak more than a dozen words of Norwegian! But I found that, "Ja," "Nei," "Tukk," "Mange Tukk," and "Tusen Tukk" were all that were necessary!