

FAHP News, October 24, 2016
(Somewhat Repetitive from March 10, 2014)

Norway in my Lifetime: I had always wanted to visit Norway. Maybe it was because I marveled at people who could survive in such far-northern latitudes. Maybe it was the breathtaking scenery in the fjords or the Land of the Midnight Sun. In any event, Ruth and I went to Norway in 1990 and booked passage on a tiny coastal steamer that made a six-day trip from Bergen to Kirkenes on the Arctic Sea. We were in Norway from July 20 to 30, a month later than their longest days.

I remembered when Norway was in the News in the spring of 1940, when Hitler's Blitzkrieg forces sailed up the Oslofjord and quickly occupied Norway's capital, after pushing to capture Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark and isolate British forces against the North Sea at Dunkerque as the Maginot Line collapsed and France was about to fall. A Norwegian traitor named Vidkun Quisling passed secrets to the Nazis and became the hated ruler of his occupied country. From then on, the name "Quisling" became synonymous with "traitor," as had Benedict Arnold's. Another Nazi penetration of Norway was at Narvik, north of the Arctic Circle, where a rail line ran from there to the Swedish coal fields.

I liked the Norwegian people, partly because they loved Americans. Several told me they thought they would be enslaved forever until they heard about Pearl Harbor and the United States entering the war. Although it took three more long years, starting in 1942, they knew that eventually they would have a free country again. I also liked Norway because its largest cities reminded me of American cities of the 1930s, with no air conditioning, open windows, trolley cars, and lots of neon lights.

Norway is a very poor country with less than five million people, but they don't know they are poor. They work hard, and they appear to be very happy. They still have a king and a royal family but with much less pomp and circumstance than in Britain. The Royal Palace in Oslo looks like a miniature Buckingham Palace but with no fences or guards. We passed the Royal family's summer home outside the city. It appeared to be a country farmhouse with no gate or guards. When King Olav V was asked why he didn't have body guards, he replied, "I do have, five million of them" (the population of Norway). Olav died the winter after our visit.

When I was a travel agent, the Cunard Line and sometimes others operated an annual "North Cape Cruise" from New York toward the end of June. The advertising featured the Land of the Midnight Sun. Unfortunately, the weather was frequently damp, cold, and cloudy around the North Cape of Norway. Seldom did passengers get off the ship or even have a good view of the Cape. There were, however, several other ports visited before the cruise returned to New York.

In 1990, our little coastal steamer, along with 13 others (a daily departure from Bergen), made a 12-day round-trip from Bergen up the Norwegian coast, over to the Lofoten Islands and then through the channel to the Arctic Sea. The ship called at 30 ports in six days in each direction, many of them between 11 P.M. and 5 A.M. In July, it didn't matter as it was not dark anyway. We didn't see the midnight sun as it was cloudy, but it never got dark on two of our nights. The North Cape itself is on an island, and a navigable passage to the south connects the Norwegian Sea (part of the Atlantic) with the Arctic Sea. We got off our ship at a port on this passage and were taken by bus across the island to the Cape. Reindeer were everywhere, as they swim annually from the mainland to graze for two months or so each summer. An enterprising Laplander came on our ship that night and prepared reindeer stew for the passengers. It was very good, tasting like beef stroganoff. The Cape Museum, carved out of solid rock, has about 100,000 visitors each year (or it did in 1990). At a latitude of 71 degrees north, it faces the North Pole, 1,350 miles away, from about 600 feet above the sea below.

Like ourselves, most passengers from foreign places took the tiny boat only one way and then flew back to civilization. We disembarked at Kirkenes, still in Norway east of the North Cape, and about 10 miles from the Russian border. We took SAS flights back to Oslo, changing at Tromso, which is the largest city and features the only university in the world north of the Arctic Circle.

Work Report: On Tuesday, October 18, the first session of the shop improvements program was presented by Tom (from 7:00 to 7:30). Nineteen volunteers attended, viz: Mark Russell (in charge of the overall session), John Bacino, Steve Bryce, Mike Ciosek, Anne Cleary, Dennis Dragon, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Jeff Kennard, Bob Koury, Paul Kratunis, Dave Leon, Jerry Lucas, Brent McDougall, Edwin Paschall, Matt Richard, John Schubel, Neal Sobocinski, and Dennis Tiley.

The improvements session was on shop tools -- where to keep those used “all the time,” those used occasionally, and those seldom used. Since the surface is barely scratched on this subject, suggestions for improvement are herewith limited. From the session came agreement on better placement of screwdrivers and hand files and painting of the shop to make it lighter.

The fuel system on the Mountain Wagon was thoroughly checked over and cleaned. The low-water shut-off was by-passed for testing the strength of the burner. The car should be fired up to see if there is improvement. The nozzles were cleaned, and the poor-steaming of the Model 725 was studied.

Final tail light work continued on the '37 Packard. Rail joints were tightened on the Lionel trains layout for the continuing project of more even conduction. The defective sight glass on Locomotive 402 was addressed, and a new glass of correct size and length was ordered.

On Wednesday afternoon, October 19, two volunteers answered the call: Dave Leon (in charge) and Tom Marshall.

The newly-installed pilot, which did not fit properly in the Model 735, was removed and re-worked. By filing grooves in the side of the casting, it was possible to install a new hex-head bolt and spacer to tighten the small lug and hold the pilot unit solidly in place. Everything was re-installed and “plastered up” with insulation. It is ready for testing.

On Thursday, October 20, John Esch, the state boiler inspector, paid his annual visit to the Auburn Valley Railroad. Brent McDougall and Tom Marshall were present. The inspector approved both locomotive boilers for another year, and we had a good discussion about safety valves. He will approve any kind of valve we install, so long as it has an official seal from a certified pressure-vessel shop. If the seal has been tampered with, the use of the boiler is in violation of the code. There are two such shops in Delaware County, but previous contacts with these shops have not proved helpful.

At the Work Session, a repeat of the shop storage “course” was held between 7:00 and 7:30. Better organization and storage of sockets for bolts and nuts was discussed, and it was agreed that improvement in this area is badly needed. Relocation of heavy stationary machines and locations for new work benches were discussed.

Attending the session were 13 volunteers: Tim Ward (in charge), Devon Hall, Bill Schwoebel, Steve Bryce, Jim Personti, Tom Marshall, Ted Kamen, Bob Jordan, Neal Sobocinski, Bob Wilhelm, John Schubel, Jerry Novak, and Lou Mandich.

The boiler of Locomotive 401, having been “cut loose” last week, was lifted from the frame and running gear by Jim Personti and his son. The frame, trucks, and all moving parts were loaded onto the Personti trailer for a complete rebuild in Jim’s shop, as was done on Locomotive 402, recently returned to service.

Work continued on piping up the new boiler in our Model 87. The '37 Packard crew has all the lights working properly, the battery installed, and the front floor back in place. The wiring harness project is nearing an end. Acquisition of the proper running board rubber mats is now holding up returning this car to service. A pressure relief valve on the boiler of Locomotive 402 was replaced with a better one from the 401, now out of service.