

Dear Friends:

It is fast approaching the end of July. As a result, this means that Bob and his fellow travelers, will soon be off for another summertime adventure.

This year, Senator Hugh Farley, myself, and our gifted Geddi Master, Robert W. Geddis, will be sailing off to the cool environs of Scandinavia.

Starting Sunday morning, we will travel to Newark, New Jersey, where we will board an American Airlines Jet for London.

Upon our arrival, we will then venture a bit south, to the famous port city of Southampton, England (and yes, I am sorry to report that all the locals there are in a bit of a sad funk, as their football (really soccer) team was just relegated down a league for poor play). Where is our friend Ted Lasso when you really need him. Believe!!!

At that port, we will board the beautiful Celebrity Cruise Ship Silhouette, a towering, majestic vessel, upon which we will make our home for the next 14 days of adventure. And yes, the three jolly boys will all be sharing the same state room aboard our ship. Close quarters, to be sure, but known to all on the ship, as the place everyone wants to be. (We are after all the center of all fun).

From Southampton, we will embark on a reverse journey of the Vikings of old, travelling from England to Oslo, Norway; then to Copenhagen, Denmark; Stockholm, Sweden; Tallinn, Estonia; Helsinki, Finland; Skagen, Denmark; and then back to Southampton.

It promises to be another adventure of a lifetime, and though our emails and website picture postings, you can, if you would like, come along.

A full itinerary of our trip can be found here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day00/scandinaviaininerary.pdf>

As we have during our past adventures, we will be reporting each day, via email, on what we see, who we meet, and the fun that we have.

If you don't wish to read our stories, kindly just ignore or delete them.

But, as we hope you will, if you do choose to virtually join us, we will be in for the time of our lives, together.

And it will be made all the more wonderful, with your company and friendship.

For as we have long believed, it is the people who make the adventure.

I am so excited to be travelling with all of you, my amazing Dad, and the incredible Bob Geddis (known to all who love him as the Geddi Master – look out Luke Skywalker, Yoda’s got nothing on this guy).

This year’s trip truly promises to be another adventure of a lifetime.

It’s really going to be wonderful!!!

Please stay tuned for our next posting, which will be Monday Evening (July 25, 2023, Norwegian Time – which is 6 hours ahead of New York).

This is, of course, all assuming, that the internet I purchased for aboard the ship works, and is operational (and I suspect it will be).

Otherwise, please note, that it may be a lengthier wait, as the hand written note, inside the sealed bottle, may take a bit longer to float back home to you.

Until such time, please be well, and Velkommen ombord (Norwegian for Welcome Aboard).

Thank you for reading.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

Robert T. Farley, Esq., JD/LLM
The Excited Traveler
7 Glenwood Drive, Scotia, NY 12302
Tel: (518) 986-2037 Email: bobfarley@bobfarley.us

Dear Friends:

Kindly be advised that our introductory email has been posted to our website.

You can find a pdf copy of it here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day00/Day00%20Introduction%20Email.pdf>

In addition to the email we will send you each day in your email inbox, you can also find a similar written pdf copy, together with all the picture files for the each day's adventure, on the website.

Simply click on the relevant day number, and a file directory with hyperlinks will pop right up.

I'm so excited that you will be joining us to share this wonderful adventure.

Our next email promises to be on Monday.

Velkommen ombord (Norwegian for Welcome Aboard).

Thanks again for reading.

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Day 01 - The Great Scandinavian Adventure

Hello and welcome fellow traveler.

So nice to have you on our adventure.

Our day began up and ready at 5 am.

I loaded the car, our nearly brand new Toyota Cross, which two days before captured a flying rubber mallet which bounced off the Thruway and drilled through my front bumper. But despite that little mishap, Little Blue Two (as we call her) was nearly ready to go, despite he now slightly damaged front end.

After loading my way too large suitcase into the hatch and adding my generously packed briefcase, I dove off to get gas and my proverbial iced teas. I went to the Mobil station on Route 50 across from the Glenville Target, as it is a two fer with both a gas station and a Dunkin Donuts. After filling up with both gas and Iced Teas, guess who I met in the station parking lot with a happy smile on his face. None other than Robert W. Geddis, the Geddi Master, and one third of our travelling party. He told me he had just eaten breakfast.

I invited our version of the incredible Yoda, master of all Geddi skills, to join us at my home, where he would leave his car for the duration of our adventure.

I next scooted over to McDonalds, bought some breakfast sandwiches for this morning's journey, and drove the mile back to my house to reconnoiter with the Geddi Master.

Once Home, I added Bob's equally large suitcase, a large black bag with an enormous white G stenciled on each side with white paint. He also had the largest black nap sack I've ever seen to accompany him as a carry on.

After loading all of the Geddi Master's luggage, we ventured back inside my house, said a proper goodbye to Marilyn and Sunny the Wonderdog, and now at about 730 am, mounted up and began our journey.

Ten minutes later we arrived at my Sister Susan's beautiful home at Fox Hollow Drive in Niskayuna. There, ready and awaiting us was my Dad and Mom, bags packed and ready to roll.

My simply amazing father is nearly 92 years old, but looks and behaves like he is 25. With more delightful energy than 6 normal humans, he is always ready and excited for an adventure. A person with a more friendly or kind disposition you would never find. Brilliant, sharp and thoughtful, he is more fun, and more valuable, to be around than anyone you can think of. Forbidden, for what he deemed as security reasons, to disclose his forty

year career as Senator, for the purposes of this trip, we will simply refer to him by the moniker he deserves the most, AmazingHugh.

At Susan's, who was in Maine, we loaded Dad's luggage. Unlike Bob and I, he packed light, and although his suitcase was the exact same size as mine, it was half the weight. He of course also brought his famous samsonite light grey, slimline briefcase, that he brings everywhere, as a carry on.

That brief case, which is older than I am, has travelled the world, and I am convinced, also contains the codes to launch nuclear missiles in a pinch. I also contained his passport and several other "essential" items. (The launch codes and button must be in a secret panel under the main opening.

After loading all luggage, including the surprisingly light superspy brief case, we were ready to roll. Dad and Bob arm wrestled for the back seat, and Dad won. Geddis would have the unhappy role as my front seat copilot.

Before we left, my wonderful Mom, Sharon took a few pictures of the three jolly boys to start the adventure. This is a habit we have done since we started taking these trips.

You can find these photos, together with all other pictures from day one, here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day01/>

The trip to Newark was perfectly uneventful. In almost no time at all (three hours) we had arrived.

We made the smart move to prepay for our parking at the long term lot 6, and were able to pull right in.

After quickly finding a parking spot, we ventured over to Shuttle Bus Stop 2, to wait the bus.

AmazingHugh, Geddi Master and myself all carried our own luggage and were soon aboard the Shuttle Bus with several other passengers, heading to Terminal B.

Quite early, as our flight would not allow check in on level one until 3 pm, meaning that we had 3 and a half hours to kill, we all ventured, luggage in hand, up to the level four food court, and found a three seat table in between the pizza place and Smash Burger.

All of us had lunch and then about 6 bags of pistachios. Each of us played on our ipads and cell phones, with Amazing Hugh watching the Rays game, Geddi Master reading from his cell one, while I watched the Yankee Game. Even doing nothing but waiting, these guys are wonderful company, and the three hour wait passed very quickly.

We all travelled back down to level one to check in.

A delightful British Airways Assistant named Sheldon showed us where we were to cue up. After giving Sheldon a small tip, we prepared to Check in with Gus the Desk Agent. After Checking in Bob and Dad, Gus was sad to inform me that my suitcase was severely over the weight limit. The solution was to unpack my bag in line, in front of everyone, and off load several items into my Dad's suitcase. Good thing Dad packs so light or I would have been completely out of luck before we even started.

After ignoring several glares from the crowded passengers ready to check in behind us, Gus was able to accept all our bags, and we headed back upstairs, with our carry on luggage to Gate 53. We found three seats outside the gate, and proceeded to wait the next 2 and ½ hours before boarding the beautiful British Airways Jumbo Jet that would take us to London.

Prior to boarding I spoke to the ticket agent about if there was any possibility that the three of us could pre-board with the infants and wheel chaired passengers, as my Dad was 92 years of age. The wonderfully sweet ticket agent, Ellen (great name) said in a wonderful British accent, "yes, but of course, simply come on up with the disabled and babies, and we will get you all on board".

When the time came, we fell in line behind a lady in a wheel chair (who had been walking around the airport the whole time we had been waiting) and a very large Hassidic family with 14 children and a pregnant mom. My first thought was I sure hope that Dad has a good job, because I was barely able to make things go with only two kids. He did seem to have a smile on his face the whole time. No so much sad to say for the pregnant mom.

By being able to preboard we were able to load all our carry on luggage into the overhead bins. I took the window seat, with an enormous black box where my feet should go, while Dad took the aisle seat. Poor Geddi Master got the middle seat, like the peanut butter in the sandwich. As is their nature no one complained a wink, no sadly slept much, on the nearly seven hour flight.

After a beautiful landing and a smooth but rather crowded flight we arrived in London. We deplaned right onto the tarmac and boarded a shuttle bus to Heathrow Airport's arrival terminal. Heathrow must be one big airport, because that shuttle ride was mile and about ten minutes long.

Once there, we went through passport control, then picked up our luggage, which made it through without event, and then onto customs. We walked through customs and into the terminal without seeing a human being, except for a single guard at the exit.

Once in the terminal, we found three seats with our luggage, and I went off, after we all took a bathroom visit, to find Siobhan the Celebrity Cruise Agent, for directions to the shuttle. It was now about 630 am London time.

She kindly directed us to take three different seats on the right side of the terminal, and said she would return back to us shortly, when more passengers arrived. Two hours later Siobhan returned with an almost filled shuttle bus.

AmazingHugh, Geddi Master and I then loaded our luggage underneath the bus, with the kind and able assistance of Guy the Coach Driver, and hopped aboard to grab some seats. Dad and I sat together, with Geddis behind us with his enormous carry on backpack. It took its own seat. Dad and I had our carry ons on our laps. Despite being very tired, Dad chose not to launch any missiles, as his briefcase remained closed.

There was rather heavy traffic between Heathrow and our destination of the Port of Southampton.

Southampton is a very interesting town, located at the top of an inlet, in the South of England. 30 miles down the inlet is the town of Plymouth, famous as the site for the launching of England's naval vessels that defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, and then again serving as a major staging area for the Allied Normandy Invasion in 1944. Southampton, where our ship lied in berth, was the site where the famous Mayflower was reprovisioned, before making its historic voyage from Plymouth, England to Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620.

It was raining in Southampton when we departed the Shuttle bus at around 11 am for the Celebrity Terminal. Behind the Terminal stood an enormous 15 deck ship, christened in 2011 as the Silhouette.

Constructed by German based ship builder Meyer Werft, the Silhouette is a floating city. At 122,210 gross tons, it is 1047 feet long and 121 feet wide. It travels at a speed of 24 knots (28 miles per hour) and is designed for 2886 passengers and 1500 crew.

It contains 10 restaurants, 14 bars, 2 pools, a large gym, a large main theater, 6 performance spaces, a library, an outdoor movie theater, 3 help your self coffee and tea stations, 4 outdoor external decks, a casino, and a dozen shops and stores.

Our promised stateroom is 8243, one of several hundred aboard.

After passing through security and boarding check in, the three joy boys, with carry on baggage in hand, were directed to the main waiting room, for cue up to board. Our suitcases would be transferred from the bus to our stateroom automatically after a couple hours after boarding.

We sat in the main waiting room until around noon time, when we were at last directed that our seated row could board.

AmazingHugh, Geddi Master and myself then proceeded up the multiple zig zagging gangways to board the ship.

Once aboard we were ushered to an art gallery on deck five where we were given a security briefing, not unlike the ones received in pre flight mode on an airplane. We were told how to deploy our life jack stored under our beds and where to muster to board the several dozen life boats (each of which hold 23 people) in case of emergency. We are all hoping that this will be a Titanic Free cruise.

We then proceeded to our lovely state room, where we each have our own bed (hooray). Clean, comfortable and efficient, it is submarine like living where no space is wasted. Geddis and I immediately set up and deployed our electronics, power converters, chargers, computers, ipads, cell phones and rechargeable watches. Dad kept his ipad in his briefcase. I charge it if it needs it.

After lunch, at the lovely top deck restaurant, with every food choice imaginable (buffet) our luggage arrived, and we proceeded with the excruciating process of unpacking. With limited space, we each selected a bed, a dresser drawer and 1/3 of the closet and hangers. As anyone of us could have stretched out to use it all, it was the art of compromise and negotiation on steroids.

After unpacking we went to explore the ship. It is huge, with dozens of stairs, elevators and pathways, on 14 decks.

Learning a bit, with little sleep, we all started to crash, and returned back to the stateroom to take a bit of a nap.

Our stateroom has a lovely balcony overlooking the ocean. Although still in port when we placed our heads down, we left the patio door open to enjoy the nice ocean breeze.

Soon the three jolly boys were snoring with a much needed nap. We were tired.

We got up a couple hours later, at 430, toured the theater, and then grabbed our sport coats and went to dinner at one of the ship's nicer restaurants. AmazingHugh got the pork chop and onion soup. Geddi Master got a steak and Mushroom soup. I ordered spaghetti Bolognese.

We each had a nice meal, apple pie for dessert, and coffee (tea for me).

After dinner we proceeded to the top floor of the theater.

There we saw a variety show with a lovely English singer comedian, and then a very good piano man.

Right after the show began Geddi Master began to crash, and took his leave to go back to the stateroom to go to bed.

About a half hour later, AmazingHugh had had enough and asked if we could quit.

I said sure, and we quietly made our exit, where we returned back to homebase 8243, and Dad and Geddis were soon snoring.

For myself, I went out and explored a bit more, taking a walk on the outside decks, in the still light but cloudy twilight, listening to a live trivia show in one of the topside bars, listening to music in a couple of small theaters, buying a hairbrush that I forgot in one of the shops, and then going back to our stateroom to sleep at about 930.

We slept through the night very comfortably to the rock and roll of the ship, ready to awaken tomorrow.

Really looking forward to what an adventure on sea can bring tomorrow.

Until that time, please take care and be well.

Thanks again for reading.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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Day 02 – The Adventure Continues at Sea

Today was a light day spent at sea out of sight of dry land.

The water was a bit choppy, although far from terrible, causing this massive ship to sway and bounce more than I had suspected.

AmazingHugh who has been known to get seasick standing on a dock however, was perfectly fine, and as for me, that's all for which I could ask.

Geddi Master who had suffered through rough seas in Antarctica with us 20 years ago, without anything but a smile, also voiced no complaint or concern.

As for me, although at times its felt like I'm a drunk on a sidewalk as I meander down the hallways, everything is what I like to say "all good".

First, an administrative item.

Although I paid a veritable fortune for high speed internet aboard the ship (nearly \$400), I am sad to report that it tends to be neither. Intermittent and very slow is the order of the day.

Accordingly, I noticed that some of my emails to my wonderful fellow travelers apparently did not land as intended, or at least not on time.

Kindly forgive your correspondent for this issue, as it is truly out of my control. Hopefully as we get closer to land, it might improve. If it does not, please just log into our website, and you will see every day's report by clicking on here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/scandinavia.htm>

Simply select the day number, and you will see all the day's pictures, and at the bottom, a word file of our narrative that was supposed to be in your email. Click it on and it will pop right up.

Again, so sorry for the hiccup, and I hope it will improve as we go along.

We arose early, at 5 am.

I snuck in and showered and shaved while my companions were sleeping.

I had smartly packed a duffle bag, in which I offloaded my dirty clothes. Such should prove most helpful, and assure that when I check it at the airport as my second bag, my first suitcase will no longer be overweight for the trip home.

We'd all like not to repeat another Gus incident.

The weather wasn't too bad, about 65 degrees and partly sunny. A strong wind was blowing, which I am guessing was what made for the slightly choppy seas.

Sadly, my Dad was rather uncomfortable sleeping, complaining that it was really cold in our stateroom. He asked the steward for a blanket for tonight, which was quickly delivered. I also indicated to him that the room's thermostat had been cranked toward high air conditioning. I adjusted it back, something that's not me preference, but since he was shivering all night, we should make the accommodation. And no, polar bear Bob Farley did not set it on cold blast in the first place. Such was the setting that came with the room.

At 10 am we all swayed (kinda literally) down to the Theater to watch a presentation on our future shore excursions.

The presenter covered both Oslo and Copenhagen. It was interesting and informative, albeit somewhat superficial.

At the presentation we were told that tipping is NOT customary in either Norway or Denmark (good to know). Apparently there high prices everywhere in these very affluent countries have it built into the servers' salaries. Geddi Master expressed extreme appreciation at this news, asking if we could somehow bring this practice to Hagaman.

When Dad and I drove up to Lake Ontario last week, we listened to three audio books about Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm. As might be expected, our audio books, as part of the "greater than a tourist" series, proved a much higher learning experience than the presentation. But that is not to say that the theater performance wasn't good too (especially the tipping advice).

After the theater presentation, we all returned to our state room, where I did a little work on my email, and the boy's took a little rest.

Soon it was noon time, and Geddi Master suggested we go up top to the Mast Grill and get hotdogs for lunch. The world's greatest hotdog conisouer, AmazingHugh pronounced the natural casing dog "very good", while Geddi Master seemed okay as well. Although a little spicy for my taste, I ate about half.

But off to the right was a serve your self strawberry ice cream machine. Now that was yummy.

I had a cone, Dad had two, and I think Geddis may still be up there (eating at least three – but in fairness they were pretty small). Isn't nice that all three of us are really boys at heart.

While up on the top deck, the wind was whipping pretty strong, placing an arctic chill in the air. So the three of us retreated back to our state room. While returning, we did notice that there were several people in the pools and hot tubs, which were visible to us on a deck below. Hearty souls all. For our part, we did not join them. It seemed a bit too cool for me, and I'm still of the opinion that hot tubs are basically human infused petri dishes.

Back in the room, I resumed working on my email, while Dad and Bob traveled down to deck three to speak with customer relations. There they discovered that collectively we had \$700 in onboard credits to use on the ship (of course like with anything else, restrictions apply). I had depleted the amount by purchasing a \$5 hair brush the night before.

We were, of course, originally supposed to have \$600 (\$200 a piece, as a kind of rebate). But I had complained after being put on hold for 6 hours with the cruise line back in March, and in an attempt to make me feel better, they awarded my account an extra \$100. Such is why the total inflated to \$700.

As the day was nice but cold, we all jacketed up and walked around the ship. Although the forecast had suggested rain, it was still mostly sunny, windy and pretty out. We wandered, watched the waves, and admired the countless amenities on this amazing ship.

At about three, Dad and Bob needed coffee, which I don't drink. So they left me on the balcony at our state room while they explored upstairs. There they found what they claimed were the world's best oatmeal cookies. Apparently they were so yummy, that when they returned, they immediately went back out again to find some more.

At about 430, they returned and it was time to dress for dinner.

It was Chic night, meaning dress your best. So Dad and I sported suits and ties, and Geddi Master sported his handsome black jacket and black shirt combo. AmazingHugh was kind of energized by the suit, choosing to violate his own rule, and telling bunches of people he was a Senator.

Our Chic trio ventured into the 14th floor dining room for dinner. Dad and Bob had chicken, while I had what they called a minute steak. We celebrated Bob's birthday with fine desserts, as I grabbed a delicious blueberry cake. Although pretty much forbidden for me, it was worth the decadence. It was extremely yummy.

Next the three of us went down to the fifth deck to watch the Shamrock Tenors. This amazing singing group from Northern Ireland was simply fantastic. The day's pics, which can be found here, contain two movies, one of the windy seas and the other of the Irish Tenors:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day02/>

They are both worth the viewing.

The Tenors ended at about 8:30 and then the three of us wandered over to the shops to pick out a present for my mom.

Dad found something special, and Geddi Master, the skillful negotiator that he is, helped my Dad to bargain down the final price. For his effort, Bob was able to receive from Bishoy the Egyptian salesman, a special gift of jewelry.

Bishoy was an interesting guy. A graduate of the University of Indiana, he worked for the American Embassy in Cairo. He also told us that he is a proud Christian, something that is both rare and difficult in Egypt.

Speaking perfect English, he was a delight to learn from, and from all appearances, is the kind of hard working guy we need as a new citizen. He invited all three of us to stay with him at his home if we ever travel to Egypt. We exchanged emails, and gave him a kind, but indefinite, maybe.

Purchase in hand, we all three returned back to our stateroom. There Dad and Bob packed it in, and went to bed, thermostat correctly set for the night.

Not feeling tired, I returned back to the theater for the second show of the Tenors. This time I sat three rows back. They were just as wonderful, as I belted out the tunes I knew along with them, at their invitation. In a theater filled with hundreds of Irish or Irish heritage patrons, believe me, I wasn't the only one singing and clapping. A good time was had by all.

Speaking of clapping, we came to learn that Geddi Master does not clap. He has no objection to me and Dad clapping out our heart felt exuberance, but Bob said only monkeys, otters and humans clap, and he does not wish to be confused with the other two. Dad indicated that both monkeys and otters are pretty smart, but Bob replied, that they weren't smart enough for him.

After the second Irish music show, I went up to the sky bar to watch the music show for a bit (about 15 minutes) and enjoy the beauty of the evening. I then took a walk around the deck, warmed by my sports coat. Although almost 11 it was still twilight. Interesting place these northern climes. It was still rather cloudy so no chance it appeared for early star gazing or to look for the northern lights. Oh well, maybe later in the week.

After my walk I returned to our state room where my Dad and Geddis were fast asleep. It was good to see them comfortable in their night chamber. It has been a busy and tiring few days, and they earned the rest.

And tomorrow we hit Oslo and the fjords, and it promises to be a busy day.

Hoping to talk to you about that adventure tomorrow.

Thanks so much for joining us. It really means a lot.

Until that time, please take care and be well.

Thanks again for reading.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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Day 03 – The Norway Adventure

Today was a wonderful day. Up at 5 am to capture the bathroom, shower, shave and do all that needs to be done in the morning, at 6am I opened the 14th floor cafeteria to work on my email.

Have I told you how very happy it makes me to have you join us on this adventure.

You are so very dear to me, and your company lifts my heart, and it makes me feel so good that you can enjoy each day with us.

Just another kind reminder to note that our ship's email has not been the best. If for some reason a day's email does not come through, kindly check the day on our website and open the word file narrative. Please remember to take a look at the day's picture files as well. Remember you can find them all here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/scandinavia.htm>

Today is Norway. A place I have always wanted to visit my whole life.

Land of the Vikings, renowned explorers, incredible skiers, and movie star, beautiful people.

A sea faring nation, it is a peninsula intersected by countless rivers, unending forests, and breathtaking vistas. A vacationer's dream.

Its Fjords (a long, deep, narrow body of water that reaches far inland, set in a maritime based valley with steep walls on either side) are world famous for their unprecedented, awe inspiring, scenic beauty.

But Norway's art and culture are equally known for their inspiration and effect.

Like any wonderful place, however, it is its people, that make the visit.

Norwegians are friendly, hospitable, handsomely beautiful people, who are very proud of their country, its history and its culture. Better yet, they seem to really like Americans.

Norway's history has long been inspired by its geography.

Formally known as the Kingdom of Norway, because of its status as a constitutional monarchy, it is a located at the very top (north) of Northern Europe, and comprises the western and northernmost portion of the Scandinavian Peninsula.

Norway shares this magnificent peninsula with Sweden, separated by the Scandinavia Mountains, and also shares a small portion, with the northern part of Finland, to its northeast.

Norway's capital and largest city is Oslo, which is located along the Oslo Fjord, and has a population of 634,000 inhabitants. And that will be home base for our adventure.

Interesting fun fact, Minnesota has the largest number of people of Norwegian heritage in the United States, with over 500,000 calling this beautiful country their ancestral home. As seen above, that is almost the same population as the entire city of Oslo. No wonder their football team is named the Vikings.

To put Norway in a perspective in which we are familiar, with a land area of 148,729 square miles, this nation is about the same geographic size as Montana.

And with a total population of 5,488,984, it has slightly more people than South Carolina.

Maintaining an extensive coastline, facing the North Atlantic Ocean and the Barents Sea, Norway's maritime influence dominates its climate, with mild lowland temperatures on its sea coasts, and with interior temperatures, though colder in winter and warmer in summer, its overall climate is significantly more temperate than areas elsewhere in the world, which share its northerly latitudes.

This means that even during its famous polar, northern light displaying nights, during the winter, temperatures are often actually above freezing along its coastline. While during the summer, it is almost the perfect temperature of around 72 degrees.

The name "Norway", actually comes from the Old English word, meaning "northern way" or "way leading to the north".

Norway has long been known as a source of independent, tough, spirited and driven people.

Although they have their own lovely language (Norwegian), nearly everyone here speaks perfect English, and is delighted to speak it with you. As someone who is far from multilingual, I truly appreciate their kindness and aptitude in this regard.

One of the original home bases for the famous Vikings, it is a place that is clearly dedicated to their heritage.

The Vikings were a war based, sea faring, determined people, who explored, invaded and conquered much of northern Europe, Iceland, Greenland and even parts of North America's Labrador.

Largely brutal by today's standards, they were infamous for their pillage, kidnapping and plunder. But beneath their "Hagar the Horrible" exaggerated persona, they were also innovators in ship building, agriculture, military tactics, navigation and engineering.

The age of the Viking was between the years 793 to 1066. A long time to make their impact on the world.

Originally driven by a pagan religion, with the famously militaristic but friendly Thor as its head god, Norway and its Vikings converted to Christianity around the beginning of the 11th century. Some attribute this conversion to a moderating influence in their tactics, militarism and reduced brutality, that soon led to the end of the Viking Age.

But their sea faring society, determination, spirit of adventure and heartiness, for which the Vikings were famous, can still be seen in the eyes and demeanor, of all the Scandinavian people.

Vikings, of course were not limited to Norway, and included people from Sweden, Denmark and Finland as well. But it was Norway, from which they drove the proverbial boat.

Many sociologists have attributed one of the motivating forces for the Viking missions to pillage and kidnap (particularly beautiful women) to the fact that, Norway, with its pre Christianity polygamous society, and multiple concubines of its warlord chieftains, had an serious under supply of the female gender.

This fact, according to these academics, led to the military age males, seeking the greener, more feminine populated, pastures of other lands.

Bringing home the most beautiful women they saw, has left a legacy on all of Scandinavia, and particularly Norway, populated with some of the most physically attractive people in the world.

Walking down the street, it does appear as if almost everyone here is indeed ready for a super model contract.

I guess genetics does have its benefits.

Today, a peaceful nation, Norway now maintains a high respect for law, and is devoted to its constitution.

After the Age of the Vikings, Norway evolved into an independent series of kingdoms.

Then starting in the 12th century, it became a more united nation, under a kingdom with some republican principles.

Under this new Christian centered culture, Norway really began to flourish, growing its population from 150,000 to 400,000, with concurrent agricultural expansion, resulting in a great deal more land being cleared from its forests for farming and animal husbandry.

Between 1537 to 1814, Norway then united with one of its neighbors, as a part of the Kingdom of Denmark–Norway, and, from 1814 to 1905, it then joined in a personal union with the Kingdom of Sweden.

It is now a completely independent country, and it cherishes its independence on many levels.

In fact, Norway was neutral during the First World War.

It also began the Second World War with the same mindset, until April 1940, when it was invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany.

After it was invaded, however, Norway became famous for its strong and violent resistance to Nazi rule.

Today, Norway maintains its independence, once again, but also enjoys close ties with both the European Union (although not a member) and the United States.

It is also a founding member of the United Nations, NATO, and the European Free Trade Association.

On a per-capita basis, Norway is the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas outside of the Middle East.

Although an extremely strong welfare state, with highly generous social services, healthcare, and public pension benefits, as a result of its full scale, 24/7/365 North Sea Oil production, Norway is now an extremely affluent country, that despite its socialist mentality, has not increased its citizen's tax burden in over 20 years.

Due to its high latitude, Norway enjoys as many as 20 hours of daylight during the summer, with temperatures often in the 70s, and as few as four during the winter, with temperatures similar to that of upstate New York.

Its maritime based peninsula, together with gulf stream influence, help to moderate its climate.

We were all excited, as we made a reverse trip of the Viking ships, sailing from Southampton, England.

As we entered the Oslo fjord from the open ocean, one could see the spectacular beauty of which so many have spoken.

A deep channel cut between high hills and cliffs, this scenic cruise, presented beauty all around us.

Cut into the hillsides were several vacation homes, with countless boats and marinas built along the shoreline.

The beautiful day, with partly cloudy skies, only highlighted the pleasantness, as we stood upon the upper deck and then the balcony of our stateroom, to admire the sights.

To me, it reminded me of an elevated version of New York's 1000 islands.

You can find the day's pictures of these event here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day03/>

I feel so lucky to be on this trip.

It is indeed a wonderful adventure that I have always wanted to take.

To be joined by all of you, AmazingHugh and the Geddi Master, only makes it more delightful.

As we started to approach the Oslo Cruise Ship Terminal, not far from the center of town, one could see that this is truly a maritime culture.

A marina, very close to the terminal lay berth to thousands of personal boats. A veritable forest of masts and power boats, it really was incredible.

As we docked, we went to the ship's theater to receive our shore pass, so that we might take our pre purchased, bus based, shore excursion. Highlights of Oslo it was called.

We checked into the shore excursion desk at the bottom of the theater. Arriving plenty early at 12 noon, our pre paid adventure was scheduled to leave at 12:45 pm, for what is called the Norwegian Explorers Tour.

As we took our seats in the theater, we were give three number 27 stickers to place on our jackets. At about 1 pm, the cruise director team, escorted us off the port side of the ship.

Personal inventory is done in a very interesting way on this cruise. Everyone is awarded what they call a sea pass. A small magnetic key card, like you would be assigned as a hotel room, it works as stateroom key, ship store credit card, and ship entry and exit pass. The

has been no need to bring our passports, as the sea pass electronically contains all that information.

Once discharged the off deck two gang plank, we proceeded to the number 27 bus, and our tour guide Anna. She was a lovely, tall woman, with a sweet Norwegian accent, who spoke perfect English, but in a rather quiet voice that was sometimes hard to hear. About 80, Anna was spry, smart and fun to be around. She reminded me a lot of my beloved, late Aunt Mildred, the wife of my late Uncle John Farley.

Once on board the bus (Dad grabbed the best seats right behind the driver) we proceeded out of the Cruise Terminal toward the city center.

To our left was the enormous marina of which I spoke previously, with a forest of masts of countless personal sailing ships, and thousands of small and some very large power boats.

All the sails reminded me of the fact that originally the massive Viking ships had no sails and were powered by oarsmen. Rowing hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles to their destinations.

Starting between the year 900 and 1000, Viking ship makers began to incorporate both Sails and Oars in their designs. The addition of sails allowed the Vikings to travel much further, and it was with this invention that great explorers like Naddodd (the discoverer of Iceland), Erik (the Red) Thorvaldsson (founder of Greenland) and Leif Erikson (the discoverer and settler of North America) were able to travel so far from their homes.

Over time, the Vikings (and their descendant Norwegians) became master sailors, navigators and mariners, leaving their runestone monuments as far east as Minnesota and as far south as Italy, Greece and Persia.

Not surprising that the most recent incarnation of the Norwegian people would own and have ready for deployment, so many ocean going sailboats and personal motor boats.

As we began to drive through Oslo, Anna pointed out many of the sites of the city. From the Royal Summer palace, to the now closed for renovations, Viking ship museum.

As with the old one, the new Viking ship (which I was really hoping to see) was being reconstructed around the ancient maritime relics, as such are far too fragile to be moved and placed inside a new museum.

Oh well, next time I'm in Norway, I'll have to catch that very heralded exhibition.

On the bus we were able to see first hand traditional and newly constructed Norwegian housing. Both were attractive and quaint.

The Royal summertime palace was especially interesting, proving far more modest, than I had expected. King Harold the Fifth and Queen Sonja must live an exciting and opulent life, but I would imagine that their concern for non subjects (like me) is limited.

After a bit of a tour of the outskirts of Oslo, seeing the royal summer palace, and a number of dairy cows and horses in the field, we came upon what looked to be a little group of houses, and then our first stop. The Kon Tiki museum.

The Kon-Tiki expedition was a 1947 journey by raft across the Pacific Ocean from South America to the Polynesian islands, led by Norwegian explorer and writer Thor Heyerdahl.

As I indicated previously, Norway is the home to sailors, adventurers and explorers.

Heyerdahl very much followed in that tradition.

While studying zoology and geography at the University of Oslo in the 1930s, Heyerdahl began to do a deep intellectual dive into Polynesian culture and history, consulting with a man who was then the world's largest private collector of books and papers on Polynesia, Bjarne Kroepelien, a wealthy Oslo wine merchant.

During these studies, Heyerdahl began to be convinced that ancient Polynesians could have crossed the Pacific Ocean by raft. Inspired by his own native Vikings, he began to conceive of a mission to prove his theory, consulting with his zoology professors and international scholars all over the world.

After the Germans invaded Norway, at the age of 30, in 1944, he joined the Free Norwegian Forces, and served in the far north province of Finnmark.

Two years after the war, and after a failed marriage, Heyerdahl, organized and raised the money for a mission where he would prove his raft crossing thesis, by building a Balsa wood raft, and with a small crew of five, sail across the Pacific, from Peru in South America to the Tuamotu Islands in French Polynesia.

The voyage would take 101 days and cover over 4300 nautical miles.

He would write a best selling book about the expedition. It would sell over 50 million copies and has been translated into over 70 languages.

Heyerdahl would also make a documentary film about the adventure, which would win an academy award in 1951. The Documentary can be viewed here:

https://www.facebook.com/crazysailors/videos/kon-tiki/330534151000840/?locale=eo_EO

The raft built by Heyerdahl was named Kon-Tiki, after the Inca god Viracocha, for whom "Kon-Tiki" was said to be an old name.

After his successful voyage, the Kon-Tiki was brought back to Heyerdahl's Oslo, and a museum was built around it. It was this museum that we visited.

There we saw the original Kon Tiki vessel and all that went into building and sailing it.

In 1969 and 1970, now a multi-millionaire, Heyerdahl decided that he wished to recreate another ancient voyage, based upon an Egyptian reed ship design, from Africa to the Americas.

This he did twice, constructing two reed boats, the Ra and Ra II.

Although the 1969 adventure was a bit of a failure, due to unauthorized modifications to Heyerdahl's design made by the Chad workmen constructing the boat, which caused it to take on water and eventually become unseaworthy, the 1970 expedition, in the Ra II, which was built to the correct specifications, was a notable success.

Again, Heyerdahl would write another best selling book about these voyages, together with making another award winning documentary.

In addition to containing the original Kon-Tiki, another room in the museum also housed the Ra II.

These were both amazing, inspirational missions, filled with hard work, creative engineering and unbelievable determination. Heyerdahl, who was described by our tour guide as an incredibly handsome and charismatic man, who she said was renowned for his like of the ladies, did, indeed, accomplish some remarkable things.

He really did seem to be an strong example of that determined, sea faring, Viking spirit, that is Norway and its people.

Across the street from the Kon Tiki museum is the Fram museum.

This museum is dedicated to expeditions to both the North and the South Poles, and the ship, the Fram (Norwegian for "forward"), that carried those explorers, who dared to make the missions.

More specifically, the Fram is a wooden, three-masted schooner, originally launched in 1892, that was designed for these polar missions, to be both unusually wide (36 feet wide and 128 feet long) and unusually shallow, in order to better withstand the forces of pressing ice.

The Fram museum, like the Kon Tiki Museum, also had its museum building constructed around this massive ship.

State of the art at the time of its construction, Fridtjof Nansen, the leader of the mission to the North Pole, commissioned the Norwegian shipwright Colin Archer to construct the vessel with its special characteristics. Built with an outer layer of greenheart wood to withstand the ice, with almost no keel, the rudder and propeller were designed to be retracted.

Nansen also ordered the ship was also carefully insulated to allow the crew to live on board for up to five years, and included a windmill, which would run an electric generator to provide power for the ship's state of the art electric arc lamps.

Initially, the Fram was designed with a coal fired steam engine, but such was later replaced in 1910, with a diesel fueled engine, a first for polar exploration vessels.

Nansen's mission was to explore the Arctic farther north than anyone else, culminating at the north pole.

With the Fram, Nansen got as far as 86 degrees 14 minutes North, but did not reach the North Pole as intended in 1893-94. The first explorer to actually attain the 90 degree goal was claimed to be US explorer, Frederick Cook in 1908, or US Navy Engineer, Robert Perry in 1909, but neither were able to actually be confirmed, and their remains some degree of controversy of their success to this day. The first consistent, verified, and scientifically convincing attainment of the Pole was on 12 May 1926, by Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen.

Sixteen years earlier, in 1910 to 1912, Amundsen, on board the Fram, made the first successful adventure to the south pole, in Antarctica, reaching the pole by foot on December 14, 1911, five weeks before British Explorer, Robert Scott. During the Amundsen expedition, the Fram served as the home base for Amundsen and his crew in the famous Bay of Whales along the Great Ice Barrier.

This museum was extremely interesting, and once again demonstrated the spirit of adventure and determination of the Norwegian people, as they lived their own Viking adventure.

From the Fram museum it was back on the bus, where we next traveled to the world famous Vigeland Sculpture Park. This park features more than 200 sculptures in bronze, granite and wrought iron, from the sculptor Gustav Vigeland (1869-1943).

Vigeland was into interpretative art, with a strong authoritarian presentation. The park, which was completed during Nazi occupation, had originally had its work ordered by the Germans to be ceased, in an claimed effort to assist the war effort.

A Norwegian, who was friends with high ranking Nazi, Heinrich Himler, however, interceded on Vigeland's behalf, and his work was then allowed to continue unmolested, until his death in 1943.

This magnificent park, which took us an hour to walk through, features not only the sculptures, but also a breath taking obelisk, a sculpture bridge, man made waterfalls, multiple, incredible, fountains, and several, immaculate, multi colored, flower gardens.

Although not present in this park, a contemporary Norwegian artist to Vigeland, was also Edvard Munch. A symbolist/expressionist painter, Munch, who has a large museum in Oslo dedicated to his work, became world-famous for his painting, the Scream, which is said to represent the anxiety of modern man. His other notable works include: The Sick Child, Madonna, and Puberty.

Shortly before we entered Vigeland Park, we saw in the distance, the Holmenkollen Ski Museum and Tower, off in the distance. This enormous ski jump facility was constructed for the Winter Olympics, of which Norway has won more medals than any other country. Although last held in Norway in 1956, this Olympic training facility has been rebuilt and expanded 18 times. This jump allows participants to fly through the air, at record distances. Eddies the Eagle would certainly be proud of this facility.

At Vigeland Park we re-entered the bus and took a serious tour of several Oslo City sights. These included their famous new, and gorgeous, Opera House, the Parliament Building, the Royal Palace, the Nobel Peace Center (where the annual Nobel Peace prize is awarded), and Akershus Castle.

With its charming streets, and beautiful, friendly people, this wonderful city brings you in with a magnetism and style that is simply endearing. It is clean, pretty and comfortable. Everywhere, you see people walking, riding their bikes, and talking on the sidewalks. Oslo is simply a great place, and I hope that someday, I can return, and stay longer.

After the tour the bus brought the three jolly boys back to the ship. AmazingHugh, Geddi Master and myself, soon went up and took dinner at the 14th floor cafeteria. A place I have playfully begun to refer to as the trough, as the serve your self buffet almost always has several hungry, large build senior citizens, trying to bump themselves to get to the food in front of anyone else.

Patience needs to be the order of the day at the trough, as the able kitchen staff, will always bring out more of any dish you seek. And Lord only knows that the worst place to be in life is between a hungry senior tourist and her dinner.

After the dinner, all three of us ventured over to the Theater. The show for the night was a combination singing, dancing acrobatic performance.

The singers were good, but after about a half hour of young 90 pound women being thrown or suspended 30 feet in the air, Dad and Bob had had enough for the day, claiming the had to leave before someone broke their neck.

It was a long day, with and even bigger one tomorrow, so we all crashed, and were in bed by 9pm. With jet lag still up us all, we each fell asleep rather quickly.

Tomorrow, Copenhagen and the Dutch.

Until that time, please take care and be well.

Thanks again for reading.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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Days 04 and 05 - The Denmark Adventure - Beautiful Copenhagen

My Dear Fellow Travelers:

Days four and five saw us explore the beautiful nation of Denmark and its magnificent capital city of Copenhagen.

Another wonderful place of kind, friendly people who are very proud of their heritage and their modern, clean, prosperous, and active city.

Up at 5 am on both days we arrived in port around noon on Thursday and departed around 2 pm on Friday.

Big news update for me on Thursday evening (afternoon your time), as we are delighted to report that my beautiful, darling, daughter Katie gave birth to our beautiful, new grandson, Theodore Jay Marcou, 7 lbs 13 ounces.

Pics of my incredible, first grandchild, in all his charm and handsomeness, can be seen in the day four photos here:

(<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day04/>) at pics 0562 to 0565

and on day five photos here:

(<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day05/>) at pics 0775 and 0776.

AmazingHugh and I could not feel more proud or happy at the arrival of our new great grandson, and grandson, respectively.

This has been quite a cruise, which, in the Viking tradition, has spent a great deal of time at sea, punctuated by intermittent adventures on dry land, only then to return to the boat. I keep looking for my horned helmet, shield and sword, but I think the Geddi Master hid them on me (for my own protection). Good guy that Geddis.

The weather has been pretty good, with mostly partly sunny skies, and temperatures in the 60s and 70s. There have been some occasional showers, but then it will clear up to relative blue skies again. I'd say we've been pretty lucky.

As we cruised into the beautiful port of Copenhagen, we were greeted on our port side (that's the left for you land lovers) by a huge line array of spinning, off shore windmills.

I know others might have a contrary opinion, but I think they are rather beautiful.

They are located just off shore of Copenhagen's designated industrial island, on which also sits a huge resource recovery, generating, incinerator which burns garbage for all over the Baltic region. It supplies a large portion of Copenhagen's electrical power. And being on an island, it also has the added benefit of having the particulate (which I understand is rather minimal) blow out to sea, from its tall, white, smoke stack.

Like Norway, Denmark is also a peninsula, but also surrounded by a series of islands. Indeed, Copenhagen is on one such island.

Like the Norwegians, the Danish are also very proud of their Viking Heritage, and are similarly a happy, sea faring, adventurous, friendly, determined people. And despite the fact that the Viking Culture may largely be attributed to Norway, Denmark had an undeniable role in the Viking Age, and in many of the contemporary accounts of the Viking Raids, those commanding such activities were most often referred to by those being invaded as Danes.

More specifically, Denmark is a Nordic Country residing north of Germany, and south of Sweden, with its west coast on the North Sea and its East Coast on the Baltic Sea. Its peninsula is known as Jutland. Copenhagen is on the island known as Zealand.

Although its German influence is pronounced in both its Danish Language and in many of its commercial preferences (nearly every car on the road is a Mercedes, Volkswagen, BMW or an Audi), its affinity is without question more with its Nordic/Scandinavian neighbors.

Its peninsular principality with surrounding islands, however, is not its only territory, as the constitutional unitary monarchical state also includes the semi autonomous territories of Greenland and the Faroe Islands, both of which are in the North Atlantic.

With a land area (outside of Greenland) of 16,000 square miles, Denmark is slightly larger in geographic size as the State of Maryland. Greenland adds another 836,300 square miles, which is 170,000 square miles larger than Alaska (the U.S.'s largest state). It is interesting to note that in 2017, the United States offered to buy Greenland from the Danes, but the offer was firmly declined.

With a population of nearly 6 million people, Denmark is also about the size of Maryland (which has 6.1 million). Its Capital, Copenhagen has a population of 800,000 and a regional population of nearly 2 million.

During the age of the Vikings, the unified Kingdom of Denmark emerged in the 8th century as a proficient maritime power. In 1397, it joined Norway and Sweden to form the Kalmar Union, which persisted until 1523.

The remaining Kingdom of Denmark–Norway endured a series of wars in the 17th century, all of which saw substantial defeats, and territorial cessions.

In 1849 Denmark adopted a constitutional monarchy, with a parliament, which exists today. Like many of its Nordic neighbors, Denmark has high taxes and broad social programs, with generous government based health care, pensions and social services.

Like Norway, Denmark remained neutral during World War I, and tried also to do so during World War Two, until it was swiftly overrun by a Nazi invasion in April 1940. Also like in Norway, during German occupation, a strong resistance movement was active throughout the Country. Indeed, after the German invasion, the highly popular Danish King Christian the Tenth, publicly declared that he would wear the Star of David, commanded by the German occupiers, if the countries Jews were ordered to do the same. Fearing societal uprising after such a statement, the Germans chose not to enforce this edict in Denmark.

Denmark is a highly developed country with a high standard of living. Tipping is frowned upon as insulting to workers. Denmark is also founding member of NATO and the United Nations, and maintains close political, cultural, and linguistic ties with its Scandinavian neighbors, Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

Denmark's northernmost point on the Jutland peninsula is Skagen point at 57 degrees latitude, and which we will visit at the end of our trip.

Upon pulling into port Thursday around noon, we ventured off the ship on our own and took advantage of the free, but lovely, shuttle bus that took us directly into the center of downtown Copenhagen.

AmazingHugh, ever attentive, found the shuttle bus ride to be almost as interesting as a tour, and asked our Russian bus driver several questions along the ride. My Dad has such a beautiful way with people. His sincere, friendly personality is almost always reacted to in kind. There is never a time he does ask a person how they are, where they are from, and little bits of personal, complimentary observations. People just love AmazingHugh, and its really a delight to be in his company. Its easy to see how he was so successful in public life for over a half century. And for me, no one ever had a better Dad.

When we arrived at the City Center, we departed the bus, and decided we should take a walk toward the Danish National Museum. On our way, we saw the famous Danish Canals, the Parliament Building, where I took a picture of Dad and Geddis in front of the door (Senatorial standing does have its privileges), and the museum. In front of the parliament, is another statue, this one with a previous King Christen (a very popular Danish royal name). Dad kept using the popular Irish expression, "look at the boots on em". My response back was simply, "well you know, its good to be king".

The National museum was very impressive. A three story building packed with exhibits all in both English and Danish. We all blanched at the 120 Krogen entrance fee, until we learned that it only translated into about \$18 US dollars.

AmazingHugh and Geddi Master still found that figure to be a little high, but happily handed over their credit cards none the less.

The museum tracked Denmark's history from the stone age to the present time, with countless exhibits and artifacts for viewing and examination.

The best exhibit room was an entire wing devoted to Viking raids and conquests, together with the remnants of an authentic 100 foot Viking ship, complete with battle armor. It was both scary and impressive.

There was also a room by room film presentation (a kind of moving theater) that detailed an actual Viking raid, and what the combatants actually went through, as well as an enormous interactive map, that tracked Viking Raids and conquests from the late 700's until the 1100s. This exhibit was nothing short of fascinating, and I for one, was so glad we were able to see it.

When we emerged from the museum we found it had rained, and hard, while we were inside. AmazingHugh and Geddi Master are indeed lucky ducks, as I had brought two very small umbrellas in my jacket pocket, neither of which were needed.

By the time we walked back to the bus, it was about 4pm, and Dad resumed his chat with our Russian Bus driver, who's name was, that's right, Vlad. Happily chatting all the way back to the ship, my Pops now has another new friend in Copenhagen.

After we dressed for dinner, we went to a sit down restaurant aboard the ship. I got a steak and AmazingHugh and Geddi Master ordered chicken. Mine was fine, but Geddis shared that Dad's and his chicken's died in vein. This cruise has overall been fantastic, but sad to say the quality and preparation of the food has not been anything to write home about (as I write home about it to you).

Perhaps one of the reasons we were not really able to enjoy our food too much was that I, and perhaps my Dad and Bob to some extent, were all nervous over my daughter Katie.

As I previously mentioned, as we sat at the dinner table, she was in an Austin hospital, about ready to undergo surgery for a caesarian section to deliver my grandson. I, at least, was on pins and needles.

After the three of us eat some apple pie for dessert, we ventured to the Ship's theater for a singing, dancing and acrobatics show. As a lawyer, all I could think of was the liability, and the potential accidents waiting to happen. Most of the time, however, all I could do is text back and forth to Austin, checking in on Katie's status.

We left the show early, and returned back to our state room. Although it seemed like hours, in much less than that, I received a text and a picture of my beautiful new grandson. Both he and Katie were doing fine. I at last exhaled a big sigh of relief.

The next morning, I awoke elated. Showered and dressed at 5am, I ventured up to breakfast at around 630.

We were all back at the stateroom by 730am then down at the theater for our shore excursion by 8am.

After checking in and being assigned to the number 28 bus, we soon were allowed to depart the ship and boarded the bus. Dad again made sure that we had the seat behind the driver, but much to his sadness, Vlad had been replaced by Michael from Denmark. Michael, despite Dad's overture's, was much less chatty.

Our new tour guide however, Hans, was excellent. Friendly, understandable and knowledgeable. A native of Copenhagen, he had had a career with IBM, including a few stints in the United States, to his credit.

As we made the trek from the boat back into town, Hans regaled us with several stories and interesting facts. Its nice when the guide has a pride and concern for his city.

Soon we were at our first tour stop. The Little Mermaid.

Copenhagen, of course, is the home town of the world famous story teller and author Hans Christian Andersen.

Born in 1805 and living until the age of 70, Andersen created some of the greatest stories ever. The Emperor's New Clothes, Thumbelina, The Ugly Duckling, The Red Shoes, The Snow Queen (from which Frozen was derived) and, of course, The Little Mermaid.

Andersen was an incredible story teller, whose tales always included a moral of upbeat principle. In the 1960's Danny Kaye and Walt Disney renewed interest in Andersen's volumes of work. A museum to Andersen exists at his former house, and although we would have loved to see it, sadly at two hours away by car, it just wasn't doable.

But here, along the waterfront of Copenhagen is the statue of the little mermaid.

Although rarely visited before the famous Disney movie, today it has proven to become one of Copenhagen's most prominent picture stops. Our Day 05 pics begin with some shots of this remarkable lady.

From a dock nearby the Little Mermaid Statue we boarded a local tourist water taxi, that would take us on a water based journey along the Copenhagen water front and canals.

Here we would see the beautiful Oprea House (where each glass panel will play a musical note when struck), the Blox Building (the home of the Danish Architectural Association – who built the 6 story building to look like Lego Blocks), the Black Diamond (the Royal Danish Library – whose walls are designed to reflect off the water below), Christen the IV's Brevhouse (where here the former 17th century king would buy every soldier a gallon of beer for their service every day), Frederik's Church (with its enormous green dome), Amalienborg (the the official residence for the Danish royal family), the Mearsk headquarters (the global shipping conglomerate – with its seven ray star symbol), and Bergum's Yellow Mansion (a typical palatial home of Dutch Nobility).

The boat tour was loads of fun, and we were able to get a great feel of the city by traveling the harbor and canals of Copenhagen. It really showed what a maritime culture it has, with so many private boats, boat slips, house boats, and commercial and pleasure craft. The canals make a statement how old the city actually is, and how people traveled in the day and age before cars, paddling their boat around town just like in Venice, Italy. Great cities do copy great cities.

After the boat tour, we landed, and much to the Geddi Master's non delight, took to foot, to walk around the city a bit more. On this walk we saw the royal palace and its grand statues. An amazing square dominated by four incredibly large old, royal buildings. The scene really brought me back to a smaller version of Versailles, which I visited last year. But this should not prove surprising, as these palaces were built about a century after Versailles, and even less rich royalty like to copy more wealthy royalty.

We next walked around the near by marina, which is surrounded by high end restored condos. It was a beautiful, sunshiny day, warm and pleasant, and surrounded by my 70 closest new friends from the tour bus.

A few steps from the palace, we made a detour to get some of the most delicious Danish pastry I have ever eaten. No wonder they named it after this place. The crust, the filling, the texture, and the taste were simply perfect. To say it was yummy would be an extreme understatement, and I think it has ruined me in respect to all future Danish, because I really am afraid that nothing will ever compare.

Soon we returned back to the ship via our bus, and now Dad would chat non stop with Hans the tour guide. After identifying him as a new friend, since the bus driver was the strong silent type, AmazingHugh did it again, and now has a new bff for life. He even invited him back to New York, where he said he would give him a personal tour of the Senate. There is a reason we call him AmazingHugh.

After the tour, Dad of course was referring to Hans as the best tour guide ever, and a man that we can understand. He would ask all we would meet, "Didn't you just love that tour guide"? "Wasn't he just the best"?

If Dad likes you, he will always let the whole world know.

Back on the ship it was now about 6pm and time for dinner.

We went upstairs to the lounge, and we ate together. Afterwards, we watched the Piano Man Show in the main theater and then went over to the deck 14's sky club, a top floor lounge, surrounded by floor to ceiling windows. There we clapped the sun down (as my Mom would say) off the port side of the ship, and admired the Oresund Bridge that spans over 8 miles between Denmark and Sweden.

Our cruise ship, the Silhouette, is so tall, that it seemed like it would strike the bridge's bottom as we sailed underneath it. We cleared it, but boy it seemed close. Pictures of all of this are available here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day05/>

It's quite amazing to sail underneath a bridge that used to require people to travel hundreds of miles by boat prior to it being built.

The sky lounge, from which we watched the bridge, is really quite a wonderful place. Every night it hosts trivia, games and some sort of music and dancing. Indeed, one cannot walk 50 feet on this ship in the evening when some singing group or band is not performing. And they are all good.

But one added benefit of the sky lounge is their rocking chairs. Dad and Bob both love them, and nearly fall asleep in their comfort when they are able to snag one. It really is good to see them so happy and relaxed.

And now is as good a time to mention as any, Bob and Dad's new preoccupation with oatmeal raisin cookies. There is a spot in the 14th floor cafeteria that bakes fresh cookies. Dad and Bob discovered they have soft, hot, gooey, oatmeal raisin. Its right next to the ice cream stand. So now, ever free moment, they sneak up to grab "the best cookie in the world", and when they don't have them (or sometimes even when they do) a strawberry ice cream cone. Yep, as older men, sometimes we do revert.

Before we sign off for the day, let me take a moment, however, to offer just a brief comment on the people we have encountered. Like the people of Norway, the people of Denmark could not be more physically attractive, nor nicer. They are so honest, that even the thousands of bicycles one sees people riding everywhere, are stored all along the street without locks.

What a beautiful place, filled with beautiful people. And that term applies in every sense of the word. I have not admired people more since I visited Ireland back in 2016. Scandinavia is simply a wonder of the world.

Well, that includes our report on our Copenhagen Adventure. In just a few days, we will return to Denmark, to visit its northern most city in Jutland, Skagen.

Our next report will be on Stockholm, Sweden.

I hope all is well with all of you in the meantime.

Thank you all for reading.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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Day 08 – The Estonian Adventure – Historic Tallinn

Today my dear friends, we cross the Baltic Sea from Majestic Sweden, and arrive in the Estonian Capital, and historic City of Tallinn.

A fascinating country of multiple contrasts, and interesting people.

First things first, pictures and movies of my wonderful new grandson, Theodore the First, can be found here, starting at file 1110:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day08/>

Thanks to the miracles of cell phones, even when on the ocean, due to the ship internet I purchased, I have been able to facetime and communicate with Katie, Steve and the baby (even though he doesn't say much yet). Katie and the baby are reportedly doing beautifully, and all is well and happy in Austin, Texas.

As for AmazingHugh and Geddi Master, one never could ask for better travelling companions. Always upbeat and ready for any adventure, they are simply an absolute delight to hang around with. Dad is always easy and happy, while Bob is the source of wisdom and humor. In very small quarters, I am lucky to have such great stateroom mates.

The ship pulled into the Port of Tallinn at around 8 am. I was up at the usual 5 am followed soon thereafter by Dad and Bob. We all took breakfast up in the trough (14th deck main cafeteria).

Although the food on the ship has been less than stellar, the company has been, and each meal is always fun and interesting. There is seldom an occasion when either Dad, Bob or I don't introduce us to new friends, and carry on an interesting and friendly conversation.

After breakfast, we returned to the stateroom, packed up, and headed down to the second deck to depart the ship.

We had not booked a formal tour for Tallinn (indeed the only city for which we had not) so today we would be on our own (*explorius maximus*). Not one to want to push AmazingHugh and Geddi Master to walk to far, I had previously gone down to the ship relations desk on the third deck, and bought bus passes for the three of us into the center of Tallin from my new friend Sweety.

Sweety is a Guest Relations officer, and has helped us multiple times of the trip, including when we got locked out of our room, got locked out of the room's safe, and when we had a question on our bill. I have become somewhat Sweety's problem child. She is so nice and helpful, and because Sweety is actually her name, she doesn't mind it when an old fashioned guy like me calls her that. She has been a GodSend.

We boarded the bus around 830, and in no time at all we were deposited at the front gate of historic Tallin. We didn't know we were at its front gate, and did ask a number of people for directions, but between our very bad map (my fault) and the language issues (Estonians aren't as proficient in English as the other places we have visited), it took us a while to get our bearings. But we finally did.

Estonia, like Sweden and Finland, lies along the Baltic Sea.

To its south lies Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. To its east lies Russia, with most of its common boarder being a large lake, Peipus. To its north, across the Baltic Gulf of Finland (roughly 20 miles away) lies Finland, and to its west, across the Baltic Sea, lies Sweden.

With a geographic size of 17,505 square miles, the country is slightly smaller than the state of West Virginia, and with a population of 1,331,000, it is slightly smaller than the state of Maine.

The Estonian capital, Tallinn, is the nation's largest city, and contains 426,538 people.

The official language of the country is Estonian, and its second and third most spoken languages are Finish and Russian, respectively. Many people, although not as many as in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, do speak English.

Estonia is an ancient country, and the land of what is now modern Estonia has been inhabited since at least 9,000 BC. Its culture dates back before Roman times, and after centuries of successive rule by the Teutonic Order, Denmark, Sweden, and the Russian Empire, a distinct Estonian national identity began to emerge in the mid-19th century.

As a result, taking advantage of the Russian Revolution, on February 24, 1918, Estonia declared its independence from Russia. An Independent, Democratic nation since its independence, Estonia declared neutrality at the outbreak of World War II, but the country was invaded and occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940, and then by Nazi Germany in 1941. In 1944 it was again invaded and reoccupied by the Soviet Union, and then annexed into the USSR as an occupied state. From 1944, until 1991, the nation was thus under Soviet control and domination. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Estonia initiated a "Singing Revolution", and regained the nation's independence on August 20, 1991.

Today, Estonia is a developed country, with a high-income advanced economy. A member of the European Union and NATO, Estonia is a democratic unitary parliamentary republic.

Interestingly, Estonia has consistently ranked highly in international rankings for quality of life, education, freedom of the press, digitalisation of public services, and the prevalence of technology companies.

Estonia is especially advanced in computer technology, internet and digital acuity. But that does not mean that this nation is not connected, or not in touch, with its ancient heritage and history.

As we walked into what they call the “Old City”, passing through its historic gates, one would think you were travelling back in time to the middle ages.

The buildings, streets and demeanor are right out of a movie scene, and one would think you were transported back to the Kingdom of Vulgaria from the Movie Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Parts of this Old City actually date back to the 9th century, while still many more are as old as the middle ages. The architecture is breath taking and scary all at the same time.

As we walked through the streets, soon we were at the town hall square. A large square dominated by a tall, towered town hall. Built in 1530, it was built atop a predecessor from 1370. Its tower is 190 feet tall, and its base is 121 feet by 48 feet.

20 years ago, when the three jolly boys ventured to Antarctica, I took a picture of the Geddi Master, seemingly trying to break into the main door of the Cathedral in Santago, Chile. The door, a part of the church from the 1500's was solid and huge. Trying to recreate this iconic picture, Bob replayed the part at the Tallinn Town Hall Door.

You can find the picture here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day08/1043.jpg>

While we were on the steps of the town hall, a very small, very elderly lady, with jet black hair, approached us, shouting a word in Estonian that none of us understood. I turned to her and smiled, and said, “I am sorry maam, but I don't speak Estonian, and I don't understand what you are saying, is there anything I can do to help you”

She obviously didn't speak English, or if she did, didn't let on that she did, and next moved on to my Dad, and did the same thing, saying the exact same word, this time louder, whereby he just smiled, and shook his head politely.

Geddis then turned to us, and suggested she was trying to curse us. As she approached him, he just smiled and shook her hand, which she kind of slapped back.

We don't know if she was asking for money, or something else, but as none of us had any Euros, we sadly had nothing to give her.

She walked away, seemingly frustrated, and somewhat angry.

We hope she didn't place a curse on us, especially since we were all very nice, and didn't understand what she was asking.

Next we went walking around the square, trying to find if any of the restaurants were featuring the Estonian specialty, Pea Soup, which both my Dad and I love.

We soon found out that today being a Monday, nearly all the museums and restaurants were actually closed, and most that were open, offered limited menus, and no Pea Soup for us!

So we ventured around some of the side streets, and soon hit embassy row.

There we saw the Swedish Embassy, the French Embassy and the Russian Embassy.

The Russian Embassy was a large block long, Pink Building with a barrier fence along its sidewalk, covered with protest signs about the Ukraine war. You can see the fence here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day08/1056.jpg>

While in Scandinavia, we have learned two things. First, the climate and sea, and Viking Heritage, has created friendly, hearty, determined, remarkable people. And second, no where in this region, do they hold the Russians in high regard.

And in Estonia, a former satellite state of the Soviet Union, where KGB tortured and terrorized its citizens, and the government oppressed its people, this is the case on steroids.

Dad, Bob and I were really kind of moved by this protest fence. In this former communist – forced country, they haven't yet forgotten the value of freedom, and they are eager and willing to stand up to the Russians.

We next went down to the other gate of the City. Huge and impressive, you can see it here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day08/1074.jpg>

Next to the gate is the Estonian Maritime Museum. We walked inside, but as it was only three small rooms, sadly there wasn't much to see at that venue. The museum of resistance for World War Two and the Russians, and the Submarine Museum, which tells the story of all the Soviet Submarines that were built in Tallinn's port docks, were sadly closed on Monday.

Next we ventured back up the street to St. Olaf's Church. Built originally in 930 as a Catholic Church, the current building was renovated in 1217. It is now a Baptist Church, but we went inside and none the less said a prayer (for the second time in the hour after the lady yelled at us). The church was incredible, and clearly kept to its medieval roots. You can see it here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day08/1078.jpg>

After touring the church, we continued to walk around the Old City for a half hour more, and then decided to head back, before our cruise ship departed the port. Tallinn is lovely, but none of us really wanted to be stranded there. (There is a small black haired lady looking for us).

Rather than walk back to the bus (which was reported to be a 20 minute walk), we decided to skip the bus and walk directly back to the ship (which was reportedly a 6 minute walk).

Well as I led the way, I truly embarrassed my reported ancestor Daniel Boone, because as a trail blazer I really feel down on the job. After 6 minutes and no ship, both AmazingHugh and Geddi Master began to mutiny, complaining that I was going the wrong way (this despite the fact that we could see the enormous ship in the distance the whole time).

Sadly, the security measures that have been taken to separate the cruise ships (there were multiple ones in port at this time) were unknown to me. So, the 6 minute walk, turned into about 20, as we had to meander around the port to find the correct slip. All completely my fault, and yes, as I was repeatedly told, we should have taken the bus back.

We did finally get there, however, and boarded the Silhouette without a problem (except a little delay).

After dinner, Dad and Bob watched a magic show in the theater.

I chose instead to finish some emails and then go up to the 14th deck and walk my miles on the track. It was a beautiful evening with a beautiful sunset.

You can see the sunset here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day08/1101.jpg>

While walking I was also able to call Katie and Steve and facetime with my wonderful grandson.

I was also to facetime with my magnificent NYIA Vice President, Cassandra Anderson. She looked wonderful, and as usual, here upbeat personality, incredible knowledge, and wealth of information, always lifts my heart.

I next tried to reach out to my truly wonderful boss and dear friend, Ellen Melchionni, the President of NYIA. Sadly, however, Ellen was at a fundraiser (she's always working and making us all look good), and I was unable to get through. I was able to connect with her the next day, and as usual, she was so kind and complimentary and helpful. She wished Dad and Bob and I a great rest of the trip, and filled me in on all things I needed to know.

I really miss my team at NYIA. I've never had the chance to work with such awesome people. Led by Ellen and Cassandra, they embody what a fantastic workplace really is.

As I continued walking around the deck, hoping to see the northern lights, which I didn't, I was however, treated to another breath taking sight as an enormous orange moon began rising on the port side of the ship. (The sun had just set on the starboard side).

Here in Scandinavia, the sun doesn't set until around 1030pm. Days are long and nights are short.

Our weather hasn't been the best, but this particular night I was treated to a beautiful sunset and moon rise. Could anyone really ever ask for more?

This has been a simply fabulous trip. Getting the time to spend with Dad and Bob have made it better than I really deserve. Hard to believe, that this adventure of a lifetime will actually be over in just a few days. I am so, so lucky.

Tomorrow we venture the 20 distance, across the Gulf of Finland to Helsinki.

We are all looking forward to it.

Thanks so much for reading.

Please be well, and know you are in our thoughts each day.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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Day 09 – The Finland Adventure – Helsinki

Dear Fellow Travelers:

Day Nine was a wonderful day.

First, I must apologize for my delay in reporting. No adventure would be fun or complete without hiccups. And unfortunately, that occurred with me.

After Finland, I have been out of commission for the next two days.

As many of you know, about ten years ago, I was diagnosed as a rather serious diabetic.

Due to the talent of my exceptional Doctor, Colleen Dibble, I have been successfully treated with a series of medications that keep this rather maleficent disease at bay.

One of the drugs that really helps, is called metformin. A derivative of the lilac bush, it is basically a miracle drug. Indeed, there are now long term trials of this medication showing signs that it has the potential to extend longevity of all human beings significantly.

All wonder drugs, however, have some side effects. Metformin is no exception.

I take four, 500 mg metformin pills every day. Once in a while, this plant based medication, can not be the proper strength, and can cause serious, pronounced, stomach effects.

After Helsinki, at least one of my metformin pills, caused such a problem, and I was down for the count for two straight days. Luckily, during this time, which I was sadly confined to my stateroom bed, were days at sea. AmazingHugh and Geddi Master were still, thankfully able to still enjoy the shipboard activities, while I stayed in bed feeling like some mean person attacked my tummy with a baseball bat.

As soon as I was afflicted however, I have recovered.

My misfortune thereby has caused my delay in reporting, so please forgive me.

So, now onto the wonderful land for the Fins.

Finland is a country as amazing as its people. Beautiful, clean, active, exciting and interesting.

Another Nordic nation, with a Viking heritage, Finland has 5.6 million people in a nation of 130,678 square miles, which makes it slightly larger than the State of New Mexico in land size, and slightly smaller in population than the state of Minnesota.

Finland's largest city is its Capital, Helsinki, which we visited, which has a population of nearly 670,000 people.

A beautiful, active seaport city, Helsinki is illustrative of the maritime nature of the entire country.

Finnish and Swedish are the official languages of the country, but in like most of the countries we have visited on this adventure, our very non scientific observations, seem to demonstrate that nearly everyone in this beautiful country of Finland also speaks very fluent English.

We were up early, around 5 am, and after showering, shaving and breakfast, we left the ship and boarded the tour bus.

Our tour guide, Ilona, was a lovely 70 year old lady, with very short hair and a dry sense of humor.

Knowledgeable, focused and funny, Ilona said her name mean "Fairy Tale" in Finish, so that we could not really believe anything she said.

Helsinki, like all of Finland, is a modern, beautiful city.

From the late 13th century, Finland became a part of Sweden, and in 1809, as a result of the Finnish War, Finland became part of the Russian Empire as the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland, during which the idea of independence began to take hold.

In 1906, Finland became the first European state to grant universal suffrage, and the first in the world to give all adult citizens the right to run for public office.

After the 1917 Russian Revolution, Finland declared independence from Russia.

At the outset of World War II, Finland was invaded by the Soviet Union, and then later by Nazi Germany. It fought both invasions ferociously, and subsequently lost parts of its territory, but maintained its independence and freedom, earning a well earned reputation as a freedom loving, tough people.

Finland largely remained an agrarian country until the 1950s, but after World War II, it rapidly industrialized and developed an advanced economy, while building an extensive welfare state based on the Nordic model.

Since this development and diversification of its economy, the country soon enjoyed widespread prosperity and a high per capita income.

During the Cold War, Finland adopted an official policy of neutrality.

Finland joined the European Union in 1995, and NATO just this year.

It is also a member of the United Nations, the Nordic Council, and the World Trade Organization.

It consistently performs highly in metrics of national performance, including education, economic competitiveness, civil liberties, quality of life and human development. Perhaps most importantly, surveys on Fins rank them as the happiest people in the world.

Our tour guide took us on a wonderful tour of this beautiful city. Although it was a rainy day, you could not hide the glow and magnetism of this town.

We saw dozens of interesting locations including their parliament building, their president's house, their court buildings, their Olympic stadium, dozens of apartment houses, individual homes and schools, two universities, and several shops, businesses, stores and factories.

One of the more interesting sites we got to visit was the municipal power plant. Not only does it produce electricity, but it also heats hot water which it pushes through pipes for heating to hundreds of thousands of Helsinki residents.

How that exactly works, especially in Finland's cold winter climate, I don't exactly know.

An innovative idea nonetheless.

After touring the city, we were treated to the highlight of the trip.

We took the bus up a narrow dirt road, to the Helsinki countryside, to visit an authentic Finnish lakefront summer home.

Finland, like Minnesota, is the land of lakes, sporting over 180,000. Accordingly, Fins love and cherish their summer homes.

This lovely, single story, red, summer home (in which our hostess Andretta lived all year long) could not have proven more charming.

As the 54 of us filled off the bus and into her home, by way of a modest, but well appointed, kitchen, we were greeted by a fabulous layout of coffee, tea, pastries, pie, fresh fruit and ice cream.

After taking a China cup of tea, and a plate of pie, and some home made iced cream, a bunch of us retired to the back porch, and a large wooden table.

Everything was more delicious than I could possibly describe, and the hospitality offered by hostess Andretta could not have been more warm or gracious.

She was a beautiful, cultured, spirited, friendly grandmother, who is as proud of her home as she was of her Finish heritage.

After our wonderful treats and tea, we were next taken on a tour of this home, built in two stages, by scratch, in 1959 and then 1969.

A model of class, efficiency and style, it was as comfortable as it was elegant.

With four bedrooms, eat in kitchen, two bathrooms and a study, this house was built for family and for company.

We then descended into the walk out, downstairs, basement, which now served as a large playroom and workshop.

Interestingly, it used to be an indoor swimming pool, which after her race car driver had passed away, Andretta had filled in, to make this room.

She next said that the most important attribute of the house was yet to come, whereupon she opened the door of the walk out, and led us outside along a wooden deck, to the sauna.

One note here. The Finish people are absolutely wild about their saunas.

They are everywhere. Along the public streets, in every house and apartment, and even workplaces.

One couldn't turn around on our tour, without seeing a bunch of naked or nearly naked people standing in line waiting to enter one.

And next to nearly every sauna, is a pool, or some body of water, for their users to jump into, after their steaming.

Andretta's was no exception.

Her large, multi level, sauna had two long rows of wooden seating, and an enormous fire pit in one corner to heat it.

And of course, it also had a bucket of water to make the steam, and a bunch of birch branches to wack each other with.

Right outside the sauna door, was a large man made pond, with a large spray fountain in its center, designed so that the water would be constantly moving, as not to get funky.

(All that said, I don't believe I'd be overly excited about jumping into the pond, as it was far from a chlorinated swimming pool).

Andretta told us her family (all ages) uses the sauna and pond every day, including in the winter.

Again, maybe not my choice, but good for her.

After the house tour, we were all invited to take a walk around the property, and visit a nearby lake.

Isolated, rustic and beautiful, it really did remind me so much of our own Adirondack mountains.

My Dad grew up in the Adirondack town of Indian Lake, and since the AmazingHugh and Geddi Master decided to decline the walk invitation, as it was raining, when I returned and was asked by him, what he had missed, I simply replied Indian Lake.

Lovely, picturesque and rustic. Many more birch trees however.

After enjoying Andretta's home, grounds and hospitality, we all piled back on the bus and were driven to a local art museum.

As I am not really much of an art fan, nor is my Dad nor Bob, we simply walked around, tried to appear politely impressed, and then spent most of our time on the covered front porch of the building, enjoying the scenery.

We really did get to see a great deal on our four hour tour.

But most of all, we really got to do a first hand, deep dive, into the Finish people and their lives.

The Fins are an amazing, courageous, independent, lovely people.

They, like the Estonians, truly hate the Russians.

As was mentioned previously, at the outbreak of World War Two, Stalin tried to invade Finland.

Despite every disadvantage, the Fins fought them basically to a standstill.

When Hitler did the same thing a little later, invading their northern province of Lapland, he met the same result.

Quite impressive for this little, but wonderful country.

Their bravery and toughness became their trademark.

On the way back to the boat, one lady on the bus, asked a rather odd question to our tour guide, saying if there was one thing she could change about her country.

Ilona didn't skip a beat, responding, "the climate and our neighbors to the East" (the Russians).

It seems like the Russians aren't held in pretty much high regard, anywhere we went.

After returning to the ship, and enjoying an attentive meal from David, our delightful waiter, who came from India, we ventured over to the theater to watch a wonderful singer by the name of Lisa Marie Holmes.

Named after Elvis' daughter, she had a wonderful and powerful voice, and sang everything from pop to Broadway and classical.

She was really magnificent.

From Finland, we would start to sail west, with our next destination being the northern most seaside fishing village of Skagen Denmark.

Thanks so much for joining us.

Please be well, and know you are in our thoughts each day.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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Day 10 – Return to Denmark – Interesting Denmark

My Dear Fellow Travelers:

Well, we are all coming to the short side of our adventure.

For AmazingHugh, GeddiMaster, and of course, myself, it has been more fun than humans should be allowed to have.

I cannot express how blessed I feel, to have had the chance to spend this last two weeks with the best Dad ever.

When I was a kid, everyone would take me aside and tell me what a wonderful Senator he was. My response was always the same. I'd say "I agree, but what you don't know is that he's an ever better Dad".

For 25 years, I was indeed fortunate, to be able to work with him, on a daily basis, when I was an Assembly Counsel, then Deputy Attorney General, and then as Senior Counsel to the Senate Majority.

I stayed on with the Senate another five years after he retired, but quite frankly, it was just not as much fun.

AmazingHugh, as we have referred to him on this trip, has more than lived up to his new moniker. Up early every day, energized and ready to go, Dad always exhibits a simply delightful demeanor, with an upbeat, positive, playful, friendly attitude.

He has tireless energy, and a level of kindness and generosity, that I, for one, could only aspire to. Moreover, at 92, his mental acuity, instant analysis, and high quality and always spot on judgement, dwarf us mere mortals.

Dad is the best storyteller and teacher one could ever encounter.

Wherever we go, he instantly makes new friends, who genuinely love him, while he is always offering an upbeat insight, or interesting story, to anything we observe. He is the definition of the wise, loving, knowledgeable, educated and cultured, person, one just loves to be around.

Interestingly, there were occasions on this trip, when we would have to upgrade our sport shirts and sneakers, to suits and ties. These times were called Chic nights.

When that was the case, without losing one ounce of his trademark humility, my Dad would especially come to life, offering a public glimpse of the Senatorial stature, for which he was famous for over 40 years.

He may have retired in 2016, but put him back in a suit and tie, and he returned to his political mastery, asking everyone their name, how their family is, where they come from, and taking a genuine interest in them and their lives as an individual.

Meet him once, with his warm and bright blue eyes, and you feel like you have a real and trusted friend for life. I have no doubt, had they held an election of the ship, by the time we reached Skagen, and he would have been instantly elected, and beloved, as its President and favorite person.

I have always admired my Dad's innate ability to instantly connect with people.

Some of you may remember, that I had my own, albeit far less influential, career in public office, where I was elected five times. Although I am very proud of the work I did, my greatest hope, both then and now, was to simply become at least a pale imitation of my Dad.

And now, years later, for the past two weeks, I've been able to spend the ultimate in quality time, with the greatest man I've ever known. My best friend, my mentor, my hero, my Dad.

And if that wasn't awesome enough, both my Dad and I, were equally fortunate, to also have the company of Robert W. Geddis.

In 1976, when my Dad first ran for Senate, my mom and Dad were at a political event in Saratoga County.

There my mother, saw a gentleman working tirelessly for another candidate in the race. He could only be described as a human dynamo. She was so impressed, she said to my Dad, right there and then, "you need to get that man on your team".

My Dad took my Mom's advice (which is always good), and the two men befriended each other for life.

And since that time, this wonderful man, hasn't just been our friend, he has been a member of our family.

There is nothing Bob Geddis cannot do.

He has long ago earned his nickname as GeddiMaster.

The lead staff person in my Dad's Senate office, he handled everything from politics to policy.

He could run and manage any mission.

A brilliant mind, with sound, practical judgment, he is the definition of versatility and capability.

He can rewire a circuit panel, navigate a crowd of people, pick the best spot for a political sign, solve any problem. convince anyone of anything, and perform any mission he sets out to do.

He is the dictionary definition of a determined multi tasker, and his fearless ingenuity, assure that everything he does, he does well. He is a winner, and was quite simply the Vince Lombardi of the Senate.

Fiercely loyal, determined, funny, tireless, and always hard working and achieving, no one on earth ever had a better friend than Bob Geddis.

Perhaps most fun of all, is watching the interaction between Bob and my Dad.

My Dad had six natural brothers, all of whom were close and beloved. But Bob is in actuality his seventh.

They simply couldn't be closer, and the respect, affection and enjoyment of each other's company shows.

They give as good as they get with each other, but only in the spirit of 6 year boys, and never with any other indication other than hilarity and brotherhood.

This two week adventure, simply would not have been as wonderful, without the delightful company of the GeddiMaster.

Please also note that he also is a very forgiving person. Never complaining, with a smile always on his face, even when he got stuck in the middle seat of the air flight, or when I accidentally tripped on the cord and unplugging his CPAP breathing machine, causing him to briefly suffocate. (As if that wasn't bad enough, my Dad did the same exact thing, to him back in 2002, when the three of us went to Antarctica). And no, we weren't trying to kill Bob.

Life is about people, my fellow travelers, and so, that was my lengthy way, to explain to all of you, how I have had the two best traveling companions, ever on this trip.

On Day 10, we arrived early at the port city of Skagen, which is a small fishing based village at the northern most tip of a finger like peninsula in Denmark.

Surrounded by the North Sea to the West, and the Baltic Sea to the East, this small strip of land, surrounded by a hostile ocean, is simply a beautiful place for a visit.

As I was sadly still down for the count with my Metformin mishap, only Bob and Dad could make the shore excursion, to partake first hand in the sights of this great little hidden gem of a town.

As there is nothing the GeddiMaster cannot do, he graciously agreed to be our photographer for the day.

The pictures he skillfully took, of the sights and people of Skagen, can be found here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day10/>

Now there needs to be a bit of a disclaimer here at this point in time.

The GeddiMaster has a proud heritage of being of Scotch-Irish decent.

Indeed, in 2016 we were all very proud to accompany Bob as he visited his family's hometown in Northern Ireland.

But make no mistake, because of his Scotch heritage, Bob is very, very proud, of his frugality over his personal spending.

Extremely generous, almost to a fault for others, he does not apply that rule to himself.

This has meant, he carries with him, the absolute worst cell phone in history.

Nicknamed by Dad and I, the Yugo Phone, after the infamous economy car from the 1980s, Bob's phone is guaranteed to underperform and underproduce.

God help us if any of us ever needed that thing for an emergency.

Hours after Dad and my phone get a text, email or signal, Bobs phone will suddenly light up and get one.

It's almost funny, as almost like clock work, hours after we pull into a port city, Bob's phone will suddenly start blowing up with emails, texts and delayed phone calls, all of which are preceded by a very unusual beep like notification.

When at one point my Dad asked, "what the heck is that odd noise", Bob just responded, somewhat sheepishly, "oh tha's just my cell phone".

And to justify his sad telecommunications device, Bob always looks to the positive, commenting that "but it's cheap".

So, if after viewing any of Bob's kind picture taking, my fellow travelers, you ask yourself, why do these pictures look different from the previous postings, please don't blame Bob.

He's an excellent photographer, with a great eye, who indeed, took our family's wonderful and cherished, Christmas Card picture for years.

But on this occasion, he was forced to work with the substantial limitations, using his infamous Yugophone.

Moreover, please also remember, that we are very lucky, that Bob agreed to pinch hit for me in the first place, when I couldn't even get out of my stateroom bed.

And so, it was a beautiful, sunny day, when Dad and Bob mounted up and went in to visit Skagen. The now two jolly boys, off for yest another exploration.

Skagen, Denmark, is this small nation's northernmost town. Located, as previously mentioned, on the east coast of the Skagen Odde peninsula in the far north of Jutland.

The Port of Skagen is Denmark's main fishing port, as well as a significant tourist destination, attracting over two million people every year.

Its name, originally applied to the peninsula upon which it sits, now just refers to the town.

Dating back to the Middle Ages, as a fishing village, and renowned for its herring industry, starting in the 19th century, thanks to its seascapes, fishermen and evening light, it became popular with a group of impressionist artists now known as the Skagen Painters.

The modern port of Skagen opened in 1907, and with the railway connections to other parts of Denmark, tourism soon began to develop. Indeed, the town gained even more prominence, as a favorite place for Danish royalty to vacation. They even built a summer vacation palace, Klitgaarden, along its shores.

A somewhat sleepy little community of fisherman and artists, its population is half what it was in 1980, with today sporting 7,547 residents. Seafood, of course, forms a staple in Skagen's restaurants.

One of the town's most famous attractions is St Lawrence's Church.

Built just outside the village at the end of the 14th century, it has been mostly buried in the drifting sand of the shore's dunes. A remarkable landmark, when it was publicly operating, it could accommodate more than 1000 parishioners.

GeddiMaster took several pictures of this interesting structure.

The Skagen shoreline also is home to several World War Two Bunkers and Pill Boxes, designed by the forces of Nazi Germany to deter invasion from the sea. An invasion which would instead take place hundreds of miles away along the beaches of Normandy, France.

Several landmarks in the town, are closely associated with the Skagen Painters who used to frequent them. These include the Brøndums Hotel, the Skagens Museum, Michael and Anna Ancher's House, and the Drachmann's House.

Skagen's first school was the *Latinskole*, a grammar school, which was in operation from 1549 until 1739. By the end of the 19th century, three schools had been established in Skagen, and in 1921, Skagen's Skipper School was opened to train navigators for both fishing boats and merchant ships. In 1955, a new public school was also built on the peninsula.

In 1974, the Skagen sports center was constructed, primarily to accommodate badminton and tennis. The local football club, Skagen Idræts Klub, was founded in 1946, and has regularly proven competitive in Danish football (soccer).

Skagen station is the most northerly railway station in Denmark, and is the terminus of the national railroad. There are also ferries to Gothenburg, Oslo and Laeso leaving and returning to the town's port.

As can be seen from Bob's Yugophone photos, the typical Skagen house has a red tiled roof, with white trimmings, yellow-plastered walls, and a white fence.

In 1747, the famous Skagen white Lighthouse was built, to help the maritime community of this region. Bob took several picture of this impressive structure.

It is interesting to note, that in 1859, famous author, Hans Christian Andersen visited the town. During his stay at Brondum's Hotel, the future painter Anna Ancher, daughter of the inn-keeper, was born.

This amazing little town, was a special little trip for Bob and Dad.

Upon their return to the ship, I tried to rally for the evening, where the three of us dressed up for dinner and went to one of the Silhouette's fancier restaurants (I smartly chose not to eat due to my tummy issues). With a smile on his face, AmazingHugh made yet another friend, Salzcin, the restaurant manager. A Romanian national, with three kids at home under five, Dad found out everything that this interesting man wanted to tell us.

Salzcin thought Dad was the greatest thing since sliced bread. But then again, who doesn't.

After dinner we all went to the ship's theater for a show, then up to the 14th deck sky lounge to all play trivia.

We were stellar on the general knowledge section, but quite frankly were much less so on the music and arts information section. Two lawyers and a government policy expert should stay in our lanes, I guess.

Tomorrow, we start to sail back to England, and then back home.

This has been one amazing time, and we simply couldn't have made it as fun without you.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for reading, and for sharing our time together.

Please be well.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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Days 11 and 12 - Our Adventure Concludes

My Dear Fellow Travelers

This has been an adventure for the ages.

Scandinavia has been nothing short of spectacular. Best of all has been the company, and the wonderful memories we built together.

After Skagen, our ship, the magnificent Celebrity Silhouette, sailed west to England.

On the morning of August 4, 2023, we arrived early in the port of Southampton, England, from which we started.

We were up especially early that day. I arose at 3:30 am, soon followed thereafter by AmazingHugh and GeddiMaster.

We had packed and submitted our suitcases to the ship's travel services the night before, so all we had now was our carryon bags. Stateroom policed for last minute items, we vacated our home for the last two weeks, and traveled for the last time up to deck 14 for breakfast.

It was still dark out at 5:45am, but I nonetheless took a few last pictures. You can find them, together with the rest of the day's pictures, here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day11/>

After breakfast, we went down to the ship's theater on the 4th deck, to await our departure call.

At 6:45 am, it arrived, and we took to the gang plank and left the ship for the large terminal.

There inside, we collected our luggage, boarded our shuttle bus bound for Heathrow Airport, and began our journey home.

The trip from Southampton to the huge Heathrow Airport takes about an hour and a half.

Unlike the excited energy that existed on the bus coming to Southampton, the trip back to the airport was quiet and somber.

Everyone was tired and thinking of their long trip home.

As the bus dropped us off, we collected our luggage from the underbelly of the bus and placed it in an enormous pile upon a free trolley cart.

What a nice surprise to have what costs at least \$30 in America, be offered for free here.

As others started to collect their luggage, an older gentleman a few feet away from me, backed over another trolley, fell backwards, and crashed onto the ground, on his back, slamming his head really hard against the curb, and the bus, as his trolley came tumbling down atop of him.

His wife screamed, and I did my best to rush to his aid, scooping him up in my arms and lifting him to his feet.

I was very worried for this gentleman, as he really banged his head, hard.

It may not have been the best idea to move him, but he clearly could not be left on the curb laying underneath the bus.

Somewhat to his discredit, the bus driver, who was unloading the luggage, basically just stood there doing nothing, watching us.

I delivered the man to the care and custody of his wife, somewhat carrying him over to her, having to hold him up and support him for a bit, until his senses seemed to somewhat clear.

I felt so bad for him. What a stinky way to end your vacation. Worse yet, as we were on a curbside departure spot, there was no place for this gentleman to even sit down or rest.

His wife took him gently into the terminal, having to cross two streets.

A short while after, after we were able to follow them inside, after recollecting our own bags and trolley, I tried to ask her if he was okay. She looked at me, and smiled, and said "I think so".

After that, Bob, Dad and I scoped out three empty seats inside the Terminal.

It was about 9:30am, and we couldn't check in until 145pm. Another long day, of waiting and sitting around at the airport.

We basically just took turns visiting the men's room, the two convenient stores (to buy cookies, crackers and waters) and checking the large flight status signs. It was a bit of a forced march.

At one point, Dad asked to borrow my cell and called my sister Susan. I tried to gently remind him that it was only 630am back home at the time. Ever the sweet daughter, she answered the phone nonetheless and talked to AmazingHugh.

After an inordinate wait, at 1:45 pm, we were allowed to check in.

The bag check for our four pieces of checked luggage was all automated, which took a bit of practice to get the hang of. I did my Dad and my luggage, and Bob did his own. Soon they were all checked in, and with receipts in hand, saying our bags were on their way to Newark, we began to make our way through security.

Heathrow airport that day was more crowded than any airport I've ever been at in my lifetime.

One could literally not fall down because of the volume of the people.

Security took us a while to navigate, like it always will, with all its special rules about how liquids, coats, shoes, and electronics need to be inspected.

After about a half hour, we eventually made it through.

Dad spotted three empty seats in the sea of people that were in the departure terminal, and like a heat seeking missile, immediately made his way to them, and sat in the center one.

He became rather unhappy when I sadly told him there was a reason those seats were empty, and that he should immediately vacate them.

He had yet to put his mask on, because it can't be worn through security.

I told him that such were the three most dangerous seats in the airport.

With the mass of people, it was rather noisy, and so he kept saying "what"?

I repeated myself, saying "please move Dad, these seats are not right for us".

Finally, he turned around, and saw the 70 uniformed people of the Chinese National Men's Soccer Team, many of which were sneezing, coughing, and hacking, and all without masks.

My Dad, never slow on the uptake, looked back at me, putting his mask on, and said "I understand, as he stood up and followed Geddis and myself further into the end of the terminal.

After checking a map, we found a restaurant, named Weatherspoons. We then proceeded there and found a table with three chairs, almost as if it had been reserved for us.

Ordering two burgers, an absolute pile of steak fries, two cokes, and a tea for Dad, we soon were enjoying a nice, really relaxing, meal.

As my tummy was still a bit off from the great metformin adventure, I only ate a couple of bites, but Dad and Bob ate most of Fry Mountain, and we all got drink refills.

Our flight was scheduled to depart at 4:45 pm, so about an hour before, we headed up for the gate.

From the restaurant, we had to take a train then two large escalators to our assigned gate, at a different terminal, but we were soon there.

At the check in spot, I once again spoke with a very nice lady from British Airlines, who allowed Bob and I to accompany 92 year old Dad to the front of the boarding line. The fact that he walks as well as I do didn't stop our progress, and we were literally the first boarders on the plane.

I placed Bob's immense carryon bag in the overhead bin together with Dad's 1963 samsonite briefcase with the nuclear launch codes. Sorry, no retaliatory missile response while we were on the airplane. My carryon would go under my legs along my seat front.

We resumed our seat assignments with me at the inside window, Bob in the middle and Dad in the aisle. Like sausage in a tube, poor Bob was stuck in the middle again. I tried to bleed into the window, and Dad into the aisle, to give our buddy as much room as possible.

It was a really long flight coming home. Much longer than going over actually. The flight over was just over 6 hours, while coming home was more than 7 and three quarters. Darn headwinds.

During the flight, the airline offered us one of the worst dinners I had ever tasted, but in fairness, with my tummy I didn't give it much of a real chance. Bob and Dad did say, however, that their chicken also died without any merit whatsoever.

Several hours later, I heard with great hope that the flight attendant was offering us pie. That could be okay I thought. Until I heard that it was either chicken and leak pie or vegetarian pie. Sad to say that neither sounded very appealing, so I passed.

With the noise and the flight attendant's accent, GeddiMaster thought they were offering us Cherry Pie. He asked for it several times. But eventually, the flight attendant shouted kindly, "I'm sorry Sir, we have no Cherry Pie, its Veg I Tarian Pie". Bob and I looked at each other with sad, upside down smiles.

At about 730pm, New York time, we landed. At this point, we had all been up about 22 straight hours, and were all kind of fatigued.

We deplaned and headed down to collect our luggage, then to passport control/customs.

From there, about 45 minutes later, we headed to the terminal exit and ground transportation to meet the shuttle bus.

The three jolly boys, weary but still standing, then met the friendly Charlie the Skycab, who kindly helped us collect our bags and board the Bus for Parking lot C.

After quite a wait, and quite a walk, we were all aboard, and headed out to the long term parking. I would say it was in New Jersey, as it was really far away, but the whole airport facility is, so it kind of loses its meaning.

About 20 minutes later we hit the lot, and I tried to get off the bus at the first stop. We are stopped by a nice Asian couple and the bus driver who each say such is not our stop.

So, we continued on, all around to the last stop through the enormous lot. It turns out I was correct, and the Bus driver gave us a bit of a hard time dropping us off anywhere near our car.

It took us a while to walk to our car, and at one point, I had to drop off Bob and Dad with our bags, in the middle of this huge lot, to go get our car, and drive it back to them and pick them and our luggage up.

The lot was prepaid, and as it was now about 10pm, I was glad. But when we pulled up to the exit, the front gate refused to lift, despite my presenting the QR code on my phone.

I eventually pressed the automated talk button and was told that our time expired at 10am (which I still don't think it did). I nonetheless swiped my credit card, bought an extra day, and when the bar lifted blew out of that tomato stand.

Broomhilda (better known as our GPS powered by Google Maps) led us on our way, and up the Garden State Parkway.

After about an hour, just before the Thruway, we were all able to pile out at a rest stop, use the restroom, and buy some Cokes at the only open restaurant, a Burgerking. I would have preferred an unsweetened Iced Tea, but no such elixir was available, so I coked for caffeine. I just can't drink coffee.

Three more hours later, at about 12:30am, 27 hours after beginning, I reached my sister Susan's house in Niskayuna, where my Dad and Mom summer, and dropped him off via the garage.

What a simply remarkable job he did. AmazingHugh was the star of the trip. At 92, one would think he was 50, and right to our finish, he was simply the best. He made the trip for both Bob and I, and we were blessed to have his incredible company.

15 minutes after that, we made my house in Glenville, where Bob had parked his car. This poor guy had another half hour yet to drive himself back to his house in Hagaman.

Ever cheerful and positive, Bob packed up his Toyota, waived a friendly goodbye, and began his trek home.

I carried in my luggage to my kitchen, and made my way upstairs to our bedroom.

Marilyn was sleeping soundly, so I tried to be quiet.

Sunny the wonderdog, greeted me with tail wagging and her trademark doggie smile.

I washed my hands and face, brushed my teeth, and changed my clothes for bed.

As I lay down beneath the cool breeze of the ceiling fan, I thought of the absolutely wonderful time I had, with my Dad, Bob and all of you.

Thank you so very much for keeping us company.

It was the trip of a lifetime, and it was because all of you were there with us.

Please know how grateful I am.

Stay well.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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