

# BALTIC CRUISE AND DENMARK TRIP

## AUGUST 9 TO AUGUST 30, 2010

And so we begin the second great journey in this, our fourth year of blissful retirement from useful labor, by traveling to Stockholm, boarding a cruise ship that will sail the Baltic for ten days and take us to relatively exotic ports, and visiting Copenhagen before driving around the rest of Denmark. Our only concerns before leaving the U. S. of A. are: (1) Will the Icelandic volcano (Eyjafjallajökull by name) erupt again, thus interfering with our overseas flight? (2) Will the brutal heat wave\* that has enervated much of

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\*It has been an unusually hot summer in Eastern Europe. Moscow has been ringed by forest fires and St. Petersburg, one of our destinations, has seen temperatures over 100°F. In fact, a Houston native, if you can believe it, having taken the identical *Regent Seven Seas Voyager* itinerary that we'll be following, but from July 8 to 18, reported on *Cruise Critic* how beastly hot she found the various museums and churches in St. Pete, none of which had the benefit of modern air-conditioning.

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this part of Europe break by the time we get there? And (3) Will my sciatica\* be well-enough behaved that we can enjoy ourselves?

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\*Readers of my New Zealand journal (<http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/NewZealand2010.pdf>) will recall that the sciatica that began in October, 2009, was but a mild nuisance during our travels earlier this year. This summer, however, the pain in both of my legs increased to the point that I had an MRI done in early July, visited a neurosurgery practice on July 27, and was advised to get a cortisone shot directly to the area of the spine where the bulging discs were impinging on the sciatic nerve. Alas, it was not possible to schedule an appointment for the magic injection before our August 9 departure. It's a shame, really, because I now realize (post-injection in early September) that the shot would have provided substantial relief.

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In the course of this document, I will occasionally use the acronyms **TMOU** and **TWOU** to refer, respectively, to Prof. Dr. Mr. Ron Magid and Prof. Dr. Mrs. Lee Magid. My loyal readers, whose numbers can be counted on the finger (no, not *that* finger) of one hand, will know the meaning of these abbreviations. For the rest of you, here's what I wrote in my New Zealand travelog:

These two expressions were used extensively in my Scotland travelog from 2001 (<http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/europe01.pdf>) and are "explained" in the index to that travelog (<http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/eur01index.pdf>) as follows: "At several points in the document, I found myself using the expressions 'the man of us' and 'the woman of us' ... It's not plagiarism if I admit that I lifted these expressions, albeit quite subconsciously, from a favorite book. A prize of *inestimable* value will go to the first person who can identify the source." Although thousands (and, perhaps, even millions) of readers have enjoyed or hated or fallen asleep reading the Scotland travelog, not one has come forth to claim the prize. So the offer still stands.

Alas, nobody who has also delved into the 2010 New Zealand travelog has claimed the prize. Is it possible that I have no readers? Or are they just too lazy to do the necessary research? Or is the question too damned hard? Or pointless? Well, the offer stands: a prize of *inestimable* value awaits the first person who can identify the source of these expressions.

OK, here's the truth of the matter. One tortured soul, Dr. Julian E. (call me "Jay") Parker, a former Ph.D. student of mine and now languishing in South Carolina,\* did deduce the author to whom I referred but not

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\*Ah, yes, the great state of South Carolina, which started the U.S. Civil War by firing on Fort Sumter. More recently, South Carolina has "distinguished" itself as the home of Gov. Mark ("You mean the

Appalachian Trail *isn't* in Argentina?") Sanders; Rep. Joe ("You lie!") Wilson; Sen. Jim ("If we're able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo. It will break him.") DeMint; the late Sen. Strom Thurmond (who is, mercifully, still dead); Miss South Carolina (and her memorable answer at the Miss Teen USA pageant); and football coach Steve Spurrier.

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(alas) the book.\* Nice try, Jay, and too bad - you are now disqualified from the contest. But for the rest of the 6.7 billion Earthlings who would like to compete, here are some more hints to the author's identity:

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\*Stop the presses! Yet another example of a South Carolina GOP politico acting stupidly has just surfaced. Glenn McConnell, president of the state senate, came to a meeting of the National Federation of Republican Women dressed in Confederate soldier garb. Pictures show him alongside a couple of ... um ... "darkies" who are dressed as slaves. How amusing! (See <http://www.fitsnews.com/2010/09/14/how-republicans-party/> )

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An American, he has written nearly 20 novels or collections of tales. He is 80 years old. He lives in an eastern state but *not* in South Carolina. He sprinkles neologisms like *herward*, *himward*, and *usward* in his writing. In his most recent collection of stories, he wrote "The terms of the endowment are *un-fiddle-withable*." And he often begins dialogs with expressions like "Well, yes ..." or "Yes, well ..."

Back to the matter at hand. Arrangements for the cruise had been made with Stefan Bisciglia of *Specialty Cruise and Villas*, a family-run travel agency in Gig Harbor and part of the *Virtuoso* network of travel agents around the world. Stefan had helped us set up our accommodations in the North and South Islands of New Zealand early this year; and had worked with us on selecting the cruise line that offered the best value and most interesting destinations without the pomp and ceremony of larger\* cruise ships and

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\*We selected a medium-size<sup>#</sup> ship, as these things go: 700 passengers and 450 crew. Stefan also advised us to book a cabin closer to the front of the ship, so as to minimize vibrations on the open sea. On the ship that we selected, all of the suites had balconies: we had the smallest (at 306 sq ft plus 50 sq ft for the veranda) but it turned out to be much more than adequate. This was, by far, the most popular size, but had we been Arab oil barons or U.S. bankers or NBA stars, we could have had suites as large as 1300 sq ft, not including the grand piano, swimming pool, man-cave, and heliport.

<sup>#</sup>The ship may be considered "medium-sized" although it looks huge when we sail by it on our Helsinki harbor cruise on August 12. Nevertheless, it pales in comparison to the recently commissioned *Royal Caribbean Oasis of the Seas* which accommodates over 6,000 passengers and has 16 decks. It is so large that on its maiden voyage in 2009, when it had to pass under the Great Belt bridge Denmark (more about this bridge on p. 41), the smokestacks had to be lowered; and, by traveling at low speed, the vessel was able to run deeper in the water. The newspapers this week (early November, 2010) described a similar close call for this ship with a *normal* air draft of 72 m going under the Great Belt bridge with a clearance of only 65 m.

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longer voyages that require formal wear at one or more dinners. In every regard, *Regent Seven Seas* was the clear winner. Indeed, one of the chief features of this cruise line is that the price is all-inclusive: unless one wants to make purchases at the ship's *très chères boutiques* or throw away money at the casino, there is no charge for anything. (Well, there is a fairly steep fee for a very slow and quixotic internet connection; and there would have been significant roaming charges had we used our cell phone.) Thus, all meals, wine, liquor, service, etc. are included. There is even a policy that forbids giving gratuities to the staff. Perhaps most surprising is that the price includes the delivery of two bottles of whisky and one bottle of wine to the room. We took advantage of the former, ordering one-liter bottles (huge!) of single malts Macallan and Glenfiddich (not our preferred brands, but the available list was limited to these and three others - and the "price" was right); the Macallan we consumed, little by little, in various Danish hotel

rooms, although we left the last one-third to any staff person at the Copenhagen Hilton who wanted it; the Glenfiddich we carefully packed in our checked luggage - I'm pleased to report that it survived its arduous journey intact.

The cruise we chose was scheduled for 10 days and would allow us to visit Stockholm, Helsinki, St. Petersburg (for three days), Tallinn, Riga, Visby, Gdansk, Berlin, and Copenhagen. We also selected (from a fairly long menu) a number of *no-charge* excursions and guided tours provided by the ship's staff; the only exception was a modestly priced outing: a 3.5-hr bus ride, each way, from the port of Warnermünde to Berlin and a six-hour tour through the capital city. In addition, at Stefan's advice (and the advice of many experienced travelers writing for *Cruise Critic*), we arranged for a private guide and car during two of the three days in St. Petersburg. This turned out to be a very wise decision.

Just four days before leaving Gig Harbor I fully charged the two batteries for my faithful Sony Cyber-Shot camera. It's fortunate that I also checked the camera to see if it was working properly. It wasn't!! According to an expert at Robi's camera store in Tacoma, the sensors were broken and not worth repairing. So, with only four days to learn how to use it, I bought a Pentax digital camera, a better instrument than the one that I was replacing but, still, compact enough that it could be carried in a shirt or pants pocket. In the course of the trip, I took some 1900 pictures!! I considered uploading *all* of them to my Picasa account but finally decided against it: some of the pictures were awful; others were poorly lit; some were very very very very repetitious; and some showed the two intrepid travelers in a less than flattering light. At this point, I don't know how many I'll upload, but by the time this account is "published" you'll be able to view them at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>. (To put the seven Baltic-Denmark albums in the order that we visited the sites, click on *upload date* at the top of the picasa page. Also, the correct dates for the first two albums are 2010, not 2009.)

### **Monday, August 9 to Tuesday, August 10**

For our 2:05 pm nonstop flight on Lufthansa from Seattle to Frankfurt, we arranged for the ever-reliable Harbor Towncar and Airport Service to pick us up at home at 10:30. We arrive at Seatac at 11:15, check our luggage at the counter, and breeze through Security, taking advantage of an expedited lane for Business Class passengers. (A word about this: yes, there's much greater comfort and leg room in Business Class than in Coach, but the extra expense is really hard for me to justify. Not so for TWOU! Nevertheless, part of the price paid to *Regent Seven Seas* covered Coach tickets, so for a "relatively" modest supplement we were able to upgrade the tickets to Business.) By 11:45, we are in Lufthansa's lounge (shared with a few other international carriers) where we remain until 1:30 when the plane was boarding.

We spend our initial minutes on board the Airbus\* 330-300 learning how to operate the seat-controls

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\*As proud citizens of the great state of Washington, we are passionate haters of Airbus, not because their plane is necessarily of inferior quality but because the company cheats and lies and prevaricates when it competes with the blessed Boeing for contracts (especially with the Department of Defense). Of course, Boeing also cheats and lies and prevaricates, but only in a good cause. As with the locavore movement in food, it's good for our state's economy for airlines and the military to "buy local." But we have no choice today - an Airbus is all that Lufthansa flies.

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and entertainment system and finally master them (as I knew we would). The doors close early (too bad for those who are late) and we push back at 1:57 - according to my notes, we are not actually airborne until 2:13, which seems much too long, even for a leisurely drive along Seatac's taxi strips. We fly northeastward, entering Canadian air space very soon. The video display tells us that we are in British Columbia and then Alberta, but there's no way to confirm this visually, considering the thick cloud cover. (Does this "experienced" traveler *really* think that he can distinguish one Canadian

province from another from a height of 30,000 feet even if there are no clouds? Well, no. But he does begin to wonder why he bothered to change our seats from the middle section to the side, given that there's no ground to see.) According to the video display, we will fly north of Hudson Bay before turning to the east and passing over Greenland and Iceland on the way to continental Europe. At about 3:25 (PST) the clouds dissipate and we can finally see the ground. Guess what? Canada looks just like the U.S.!

At 3:45 (PST) we are served appetizers, just to be sure that we don't perish from malnutrition. Ten minutes later we are over Athabasca Lake - beautiful and very large. A meal is served. Of course, the Magids order different things: fettuccine for TWOU, beef short ribs for moi. At 5:00 PST we are approaching Hudson Bay and by 6:00 we are over ice and water, but we are far enough north that the sky is still light. In fact, we will not pass into darkness at all during the course of the flight.

The plane is not as luxurious as was Air New Zealand's, nor is the crew as attentive. Nevertheless, the chairs convert into "lie-flat" seats, which are *almost* horizontal. (I miss the weird individual pods that isolated each passenger on Air New Zealand's 747.) Lee stretches out at about 7:00 PST but I continue reading. After a while, I make my seat horizontal and try to get some sleep, but I succeed for only about one hour (typical of my behavior on airplanes); I do keep my eyes closed for another hour or so, before sitting up and reading some more. At about 8:00 PST, we are over Greenland and it is still light outside.

Having finished the *TIME* and *New Yorker* magazines that I packed, I start reading Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Shards of Memory*, a compelling tale of an unusual expatriate Indian household in England and the U.S. and of the guru who dominates their lives. At 9:00 (still PST - I don't know why I keep quoting Seattle time, given that I'd already advanced my watch nine hours) we are passing by Iceland and an hour later the Shetland Islands. [A tragedy of immense proportions! Somewhere, somehow, some way, while I was asleep I lost my official (cheap) ballpoint pen that I use for crossword and Sudoku puzzles! Did some cad take advantage of my inattention and pilfer the valuable thing? I just know that I'll never be able to solve the puzzles that I brought with me, if I have to use my more expensive pen. Lee, bless her heart, seems to have an unending supply of these cheap pens, all of them pirated from various Marriott hotels around the world. Whew! I'm saved.]

Breakfast is served at 10:30 PST. (Well, ya see, it may be late evening in Seattle, but it's early morning wherever we are now.) We cross the coastline at Amsterdam and head straight in to Frankfurt, setting down at 8:55 am (local time, now), ten minutes ahead of schedule. The elapsed time of the flight: just under 10 hours. The plane stops on the tarmac, so we need to be bused from the plane to the terminal. One wonders about German efficiency, given that it takes a surprisingly long time and several failed attempts for the "driver" of the staircase to get it positioned properly at the airplane's door. The bus driver seems to be taking the great circle route to the terminal - we meander this way and that, but finally do arrive. We next need to find the gate for our Lufthansa flight to Stockholm. This requires passing through Immigration/Passport Control after standing on a very very very long line that moved very very very slowly. *Finally* (10:00 local time) we are at the gate, some two hours ahead of departure time (12:14). When we inquire if there is a Business Class lounge where we can relax, we are informed that it is on the *other* side of the immigration check-point. Somehow, it doesn't seem worth the effort to fight this battle again, so we sit near the gate and wait. The people-watching is actually pretty interesting - using the same gate is a charter flight to the Canary Islands and the passengers seem unusually low-class and (perhaps) inebriated already.

Our flight to Stockholm is a code-share between SAS and Lufthansa. The plane is a single-aisle Boeing 737 with 3-3 seating, which (at least in the U.S.) does not usually have more than one class. Nevertheless, they define the first several rows as Business Class by assigning passengers to the window and aisle seats, leaving the middle seat open. (To this frugal, penny-pinching, tightwad, it seems like a huge waste - but it does give us a lot of elbow room.) A hot lunch is served on this short flight. We have wheels-up at 12:28 and we land in Stockholm at 2:11, nine minutes ahead of

schedule. It was sunny and mild in Frankfurt, but Stockholm is cold and grey.

At baggage claim, we see many people who have labeled their luggage with the special tags that *Regent Seven Seas* has provided. Most of them have also paid for *Regent* to transport them from the airport to the Hilton Hotel, the same one we've chosen. By not selecting this option and by booking our room individually, we saved a good \$700(!) - surely the taxi cannot be this expensive. And it isn't. The hotel has an excellent location: near the water, near tourist sites, and near the cruise ship terminal that we'll need to find tomorrow.

When we get to the check-in desk, we learn that the King Executive room that we booked is not available. Instead, we are given a conventional King room, despite TWOU's vociferous protests of unfair treatment, anti-Americanism, and anti-Semitism (and she's not even Jewish!) but to no avail. Our hurt feelings are soothed, somewhat, by a reduction in price and by being allowed to use the Executive Lounge. Big whup! Our room is adequate, I suppose, although management's insistence that the air-conditioning is working does not agree with our assessment. At the cost of significant street noise, we open the windows to get some breeze and cooling in the room. Still upset by the switch in room quality (which, by the way, had a shower but no bathtub), Lee asks for the email address of the supervisor and writes a sharp note expressing our unhappiness. Maybe we shouldn't be surprised, but we never receive even a *pro forma* reply. I'm sure that the genteel Swedish hotel staff have already labeled us as "ugly Americans" but what the hell - it's our vacation, dammit.

We go for a walk and cross the bridge over Riddarfjärden (well, that's what it's called on the map) to the island of Gamla Stan (Stockholm's old town), where we had stayed when we were last here in 1998. We walk for about an hour before returning to the hotel. At the Royal Palace, we see several royal guards, with their black boots, blue uniforms, metal helmets out of the Kaiser's army in WW I, and carrying serious-looking rifles affixed with bayonets. Surely the strangest sight is the group of well-lubricated men dressed in kilts and other highland attire - it seems that a Scottish football (soccer) team is playing against the local boys this evening.

The desk clerk informs me that a maintenance man has checked the A/C and found it satisfactory. Well, maybe to *him* but not to this certified (and certifiable) ugly American! The maintenance man told the desk clerk that the unit was putting out air that was 18-19 °C. Yeah, sure. It was at least 25 °C and humid in the room. We decide to investigate the hotel's Executive Lounge, but stay only a short time. The food is minimal and unappetizing: the culinary highlight is beef on a skewer, said beef being as unchewable as the skewer itself.

Back in our room, I continue reading *Shards of Memory*. We take advantage of the hotel's wi-fi (free, if you can believe it). And we go to bed at 9:30 (by this time I am completely exhausted, having had very little sleep on the plane) and we sleep right through to 7:00 when the alarm wakes us.

### Wednesday, August 11

Breakfast at the hotel (in the main dining room, not in the disappointing Executive Lounge) exceeds expectations - there is an elaborate and wonderful assortment of cold cuts, cheeses, and fish along with hot selections of eggs, sausage, bacon, and beans, and a nice variety of rolls and breads.

At 10:30 we go for a walk in a section of Stockholm near the hotel. Our goal (correction: TWOU's goal, but I'm a relatively willing participant) is to visit places that are mentioned in Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy: *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*; *The Girl Who Played with Fire*; and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* (which rival the important trilogy of my youth: *Tom Swift and the Atomic Dildo*; *Tom Swift and the Islamic Terrorist*; and *Tom Swift and the Electric Armpit*). Turns out, TWOU is a devoted fan of the adventures of Lisbeth Salander, the demure, peaceable, and conservatively dressed main character of the trilogy, and Mikael Blomkvist, journalist, busybody, and all-around horny guy. (The only reason that I know these things about these characters is that we've seen the movies based on the first two books.) She (i.e., Lee, not Lisbeth) and a Gig Harbor friend had read the first

two volumes last year. When she (i.e., Lee) learned, early this year, that the third volume would not be published in the U.S. until May, she called a bookstore in Auckland and reserved a copy - we then made plans to visit said city in February to pick up the book. I'd like to think that that was not the only reason for visiting New Zealand, but I do have my doubts.

So ... we visit (and take pictures) of Mikael's apartment building at Bellmansgatan 1; of Tabbouli at 22 Tavastgatan, which is the model for Samir's restaurant in the book; and Mellqvist Kaffebar on Hornsgatan 18. Thank heavens we have to get back to the hotel for noon check-out, lest we are forced to visit all of the other Salander-Blomkvist sites around town! For a long list, see:

<http://www.stieglarsson.com/millennium-stockholm-map> and

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/07/13/entertainment/main6673608.shtml>

We check-out of the hotel at noon, but it's too early to head to the port so we hang around in the lower lobby and read until 1:30 when we hail a taxi. The extraordinary service of the cruise ship staff begins as soon as the taxi pulls to the curb: people come over to take our luggage (we assume that they are not robbers). We ascend the gangplank (metal with steps, alas, not wood as on a pirate ship) and pass through security where our pictures are taken and we are issued an ID card for re-entry and a key to our room. We also fill out a health questionnaire (yes we are healthy, no we've not had any tropical diseases), and we are strip-searched by tall beautiful blue-eyed blond Swedish women. (OK, they weren't blue-eyed.) We are ushered into the large auditorium where we wait until the announcement is made telling us that our cabin (729) is available.

The pictures of the stateroom at Regent's web site do not lie or exaggerate: the room is wonderful. [http://www.rssc.com/ships/seven\\_seas\\_voyager/suites/d\\_deluxe\\_suite/](http://www.rssc.com/ships/seven_seas_voyager/suites/d_deluxe_suite/) There is ample storage space, a large walk-in closet, full bath and shower, sitting room with comfortable chairs and sofa, writing desk and chair, balcony with two chairs, and (of course) fresh fruit and champagne for our arrival. Available on the TV are the ship's information channel of events for the day; a channel for "view from the bridge"; information on the ship's speed, direction, wind speed, etc.; daily menus from the restaurants; and (when satellite transmission allows) FOX News (oh, good!); a Euro version of CNN; and SkyTV from Britain. We rarely turn the TV on during our ten days on board, except to get updates on our position and estimated time of arrival at various destinations. At 3:30 we take advantage, for the first time, of the free food: we go to the Pool Grill, outside on Deck 11, for ice cream.

At 4:15, the ship's alarm is sounded and we put on life jackets and assemble in the auditorium prior to going to our assigned "panic" area on one of the outside decks. Fortunately, this is only a test - "had it been a real emergency you would have been given directions to jump overboard, unless sharks are visible in the water." The ship leaves the dock at 5:00 and we sit on the balcony for a while, watching our traversal through Stockholm's beautiful archipelago. We will cruise overnight and arrive in Helsinki at 9:00 tomorrow morning. Because Finland is one hour later than Sweden, I re-set the time on our alarm clock and my watch (Lee is weird - she's keeping her watch on PST). Our new camera also has a function that allows easy re-setting of the time for any location around the world. (I don't realize, until August 18, that I have set the year as 2009! Thus the time stamp on our pictures will have the correct date and month and time but *not* the correct year until our arrival in Visby.)

We relax until 6:00 when we attend the first of three lectures by Richard Tallboys, a British diplomat who had served all over the far East including a stint as ambassador to Viet Nam. His title: "The Bear Surrounded: Russia and Her Neighbors." It is a rather dry presentation, "enhanced" by unimaginative slides and unfunny anecdotes. And I am disappointed that there are no bears in the story, none at all. We decide to have dinner at *Compass Rose* (Deck 4), one of the two large restaurants that do not require a reservation: the food\* is good, the service excellent, and it's all free!!! I also appreciate that

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\*In her journal, the food-conscious WOU lists what was ordered at every single meal, both on the ship and later in Denmark. In the interest of brevity, I'll borrow her description of this dinner, *only*.

If you're really curious about the others, you can steal a peak at her journal - if she'll let you see it. So, she had clam chowder, flounder fillet with Latin spice, and cherry tart; I have wienerschnitzel for the main course. I leave it to your imagination to wonder why my meal was given such short shrift.

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the servings are not huge, contrary to what we've heard about cruise ships. (By the end of the cruise, I'll get very accustomed to walking out of a restaurant without paying - this will probably not be appreciated when we begin touring Denmark.) After reading for a while, we go to the Observation Lounge on Deck 11 at the front of the ship to sip a wee dram of single malt whisky (free, of course) and to enjoy(?) the piano-tinkling of resident pianist Vlado (also, alas, free). A very noisy foursome (probably British) prevent our hearing all of Vlado's fine work. We grab a coffee at the Coffee Connection (Deck 5). To preserve my legs, which are hurting from sciatica on and off, we take the ship's elevator most of the time unless we are traveling only one deck away. We read for a while, then go to bed at midnight (Helsinki time).

### Thursday, August 12

Damn! I awaken at 2:00 am and am unable to get back to sleep. I would have thought that I'd still have a sleep deficit from the overseas flight, but apparently not. I toss and turn until at 3:15, then get up and read until 4:00. To get enough light to read (without turning on overhead lights that would awaken the sleeping princess) I place the desk chair near the bathroom and turn on the bathroom lights. Then from 4:00 until 5:00, perhaps I sleep a bit but most of the time my eyes are wide open, so once again - a book, a chair, and the bathroom lights. I return to bed and, maybe, get a little sleep before the alarm goes off at 7:00.

We are still in open waters. The good news is that the overnight journey did not cause any motion sickness. (Lee had purchased one of the wrist bands\* that are alleged to cure seasickness, along

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\*At least, it was not in the \$25-\$85 range that it takes to get a "Power Balance Bracelet" or related necklace like those worn by your favorite ath-uh-letes (Shaq O'Neal, Tim Lincecum, and others). According to *TIME*, the manufacturer claims that the bracelet works its spell "by two embedded holograms whose internal frequencies react positively with your body's natural energy field." Noted. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2021057,00.html>

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with hangnail, bad breath, and gout, but did not wear it. We had also purchased scopolamine patches, but did not put them on. Anyone wanna buy an unused wrist band and set of scopolamine patches?)

We discover three undesirable features of our cabin (and probably of all of the other staterooms on the ship): (1) the cold water faucet at the sink initially dispenses cold water (good!) but then switches to warm water (bad!) and continues in this mode; (2) the bathtub fills very slowly; and (3) the floor of the shower stall is tilted such that water runs away from the drain. A fourth "problem" - that the shower dispenses warm water that is not hot enough - turns out not to be the case; by the next day, we will master the confusing set of controls that set the temperature and speed of the water.

By 8:00, although we can't see land from our balcony (on the starboard side), the video-cam on the captain's bridge does show land on the port side. In addition, the TV channel dedicated to facts and figures of the voyage shows a map with our path indicated as now turning toward the coast. I feel relieved. According to the data channel, the outside temperature is now 76 °F and our speed is 5 km/hr. I don't know if the speed is accurate, but we learn that the temperature is not - every day, no matter what the time or the location, the temperature is shown in the range 75-77 °F.

We have breakfast in *Compass Rose*, the same dining room that we used last night. The selection is good, the food excellent, and the service first-rate. According to the information sheet that was given to us last night,\* the shuttle bus to downtown Helsinki is scheduled to depart the port area at 9:30.

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\*Every evening, a schedule for the next day's activities is placed on the bed when the maids come to pick up trash, turn down the sheets, and leave chocolates that are in wrappers displaying inspirational messages. Oh, boy! These information sheets are typically six pages long, printed on heavy paper: one or two pages are usually devoted to biographical information about various members of the crew; another consists of advertisements from "concessioners" on board who will be delighted to help you part from your money in exchange for art purchases, gambling, lacquered boxes, etc. One page is very useful, as it describes all of the scheduled events for the day - excursions organized by *Regent Seven Seas*, movies, team trivia contests, meetings of specialized groups such as Friends of Bill W. (which we learn refers to Alcoholics Anonymous), Friends of Dorothy (which is LGBT), solo travelers, Elks (and other animals), etc. In addition, every morning, a newsletter titled *USA TIMES* (there are also versions for Australia and England, but none for any other nationality ... so there!) is placed on the door. This gives short summaries of the day's more important news events (e.g., we are able to follow Zsa Zsa Gabor's time in the hospital and we can read about a vigil in Memphis marking the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Elvis's death), the weather in U.S. and international cities, and sports (e.g., every baseball score, the standings, brief articles, etc.)

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When we disembark at 9:30, we discover that the time for the bus has been changed to 10:00. So we return to the ship and wait a suitable time before returning to the dock. Our plan is to walk around Helsinki in the morning, then return to the ship and take one of the organized excursions in the afternoon: a harbor cruise around Helsinki.

The main street of downtown is a disappointment. All of the office buildings and department stores are in nondescript unimaginative buildings, typical of what one would imagine to be the norm during the period of Russian influence (even though Finland was never part of the U.S.S.R.). We see statues that are dedicated to hard-working men and women (too bad that we can't read the inscriptions), although one tableau of muscular men who are sporting sledgehammers and other tools of destruction has been decorated with blue and white scarfs, apparently the colors of the national football (soccer) team. Our first stop is at the Academic Book Store, recommended by Rick Steves, to purchase a good driving map of Denmark. The morning is quite warm and very humid, a bit of a shock for those of us from the cooler and dryer Pacific Northwest. Also, my sciatica is acting up, which makes walking up/down stairs a bit of a challenge. Still, one must soldier-on and persevere, right? So, limping (moi) and drenched with perspiration (both of us), we visit several churches, most memorable of which is TempPELLIAUKIO Kirkko, the Church in the Rock, built in 1969. According to a web site, "The underground Rock Church is built inside of a massive block of natural granite in the middle of an ordinary residential square. From ground level, the shape resembles the ancient tomb at Newgrange, Ireland. But the structure is barely visible from outside, with only the copper dome poking out of the rock. Try to see it from above - it looks like a flying saucer has lodged itself in the ground. Inside, the church is circular and enclosed by walls of bare rock. The ceiling is a giant disc made of copper wire. The interior is lit by natural light streaming through 180 vertical window panes that connect the dome and the wall. A solid copper-colored balcony provides a nice view of the church interior from above. The combination of natural and man-made materials in the Rock Church is striking and explains its popularity." When we are inside, a young woman is playing Bach (very beautifully) on the piano, but our visit is marred by the crush of Eastern European, Italian, and Japanese tourists who push and shove and take pictures and converse loudly - I think that "ugly Americans" are now found in every part of the world.

We visit the very impressive Lutheran Helsinki Cathedral (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century), situated at the top of a staircase of at least 7000 steps (or so it felt to this gimpy traveler). But, from the top of the stairs, one



gets an excellent view of the square and much of downtown. The interior of the church is very beautiful. We return to the place where the shuttle bus let us off, only to learn that it will not return to the ship for another 45 minutes. (I think it's the driver's lunch break.) So we go to a nearby department store in the hope that it might be air-conditioned; it is, but only barely. We then take the bus back to the ship at 12:45, just in time to board the bus again for travel to the dock where the harbor cruise will begin. Our guide, on the bus and on the boat, gives an excellent description of Finnish life. I assume that all of the following is correct: Finland has about 5 million people (mainly in the south, as one would expect) and about 6 million saunas (pronounced SOW -nas); the literacy rate is 100%; the country is the 15<sup>th</sup> wealthiest in the world; people prefer to buy apartments rather than rent them, but the cost is high - about 1-2 million euros; the unemployment rate has risen to about 10% during the global recession.

Among the sights on the harbor cruise is the huge yacht *Pelorus*, owned by Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, who also owns most of the oil fields of Russia as well as the English football club Chelsea F.C. (Another very wealthy Russian, 6'8" Mikhail Prokhorov, owns the New Jersey Nets. I wish that some rich sugar daddy would buy the hapless New York Mets and hire some talented players who do not break down in mid-season.) Married twice, Abramovich's current girlfriend is the beautiful Dasha Zhukova, who was profiled in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*. Russian born but raised in the U. S., she attended UC Santa Barbara where her dream of becoming a physician was dashed because she "struggled with organic chemistry": (Many students have struggled with organic chemistry, but few have turned out quite so well-off as Ms. Z.)  
[http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/09/27/100927fa\\_fact\\_ioffe](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/09/27/100927fa_fact_ioffe)

Even larger than *Pelorus* is *Sea Cloud II*, a commercial sailing ship. (The sails look very real, but I'll bet that there are backup engines, just in case.) It, too, is docked in Helsinki harbor. Methinks that there are some wealthy folk in this Scandinavian nation. We see two large ice-breakers, which are in use during the winter months when much of the Baltic freezes over. Although there are open waters in climates that are just as cold, ice forms on the Baltic because: (1) the water is brackish (0.6% salinity) vs. a salinity for the ocean that averages 3.5%; and (2) the Baltic is very shallow (55 m on average). Freezing begins in the northern Gulf of Bothnia in November and reaches the Gulf of Finland in February; thawing doesn't occur until late April. (In a severe winter, ice can even form around southern Sweden and Denmark.)

Our harbor cruise takes us past islands, beautiful homes and villas, and some surprisingly low bridges (duck!!) before returning to the starting point. We then have about 45 minutes to stroll around Market Square, visit the stalls where all sorts of vegetables, fruit, meat, and fish are sold, before taking the shuttle bus back to our ship at 3:45 where we head for the Coffee Connection for some coffee and cookies, having deprived ourselves of any lunch.

**UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATIONS** (but that doesn't make them any less true). They say that comparisons are odious\* but they are, nevertheless, useful when discussing the merits and demerits

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\*Or, as it was stated by the immortal Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, "Comparisons are odorous." (I think that I much prefer his version.) Dogberry was the master of the malapropism - my favorite is "Our watch, sir, have indeed *comprehended* two *auspicious* persons."

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of various countries, peoples, and (especially) baseball teams. So: (1) Stockholm's center city is far more attractive and classier than Helsinki's, whose buildings remind me of the faceless, cold, antiseptic structures that we saw in Dresden and other cities in former East Germany. Of course, I am judging this based on only limited explorations of the two cities, but one would think that any attempt to present a more attractive face to visitors would have been done in the touristic spots that one visits. This is especially surprising, given how rapidly the Finns have acquired both wealth and technical expertise. (2) On the other hand, there is much less smoking in the streets in Helsinki than in Stockholm. In the latter, the noxious aroma of cigarette smoke pervaded most public places. (3)

Unlike Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes, 100% of whom are tall, blond, blue-eyed, and beautiful/handsome, Finns are "ordinary" looking without a single distinguishing characteristic. That is, they are tall or short, blond or brunette, fair or swarthy, fat or thin, etc. I hope that they won't be insulted by my saying that they look very much like Americans. (Well, at least they don't have the pale and pasty look of the English who appear never to have gone out in the sun ... if there is any sun in that country.)

At 5:00, TWOU attends a lecture on "Russian Lacquer Legends and Fairy Tales" which she enjoys so much and is so completely brainwashed that she purchases a lacquered box at the ship's boutique. We have dinner at *Compass Rose* again, then spend the evening in our room reading. We go to bed at midnight (Russia time, one hour later than in Finland).

### Friday, August 13

My "sleep problem" from last night appears to be solved - I slept through the night until the alarm clock woke us at 6:30. We decide to have breakfast at La Veranda - unlike *Compass Rose*, where one orders from a menu, this restaurant is completely buffet style and self-service. The room is very crowded and our table is far from the serving line but that does not stop us from returning several times to get additional goodies. And the goodies are very nice, indeed: cold cuts, cheese, cereals, breads and rolls (even bagels), and hot offerings (eggs, bacon, ham, potatoes, etc.). At about 7:20, while we are eating, we arrive at the dock in St. Petersburg. (We learn that the city has two docks where cruise ships put in: a pleasant one near the center of town and, alas, this one which shares its berth with a working port: cranes, container ships, etc. But, because we have some down time before we can disembark today and tomorrow we have the opportunity to watch the port activities and take enormous numbers of pictures.)

Yesterday morning, we discovered that the ship's data channel would always show temps in the range 75-78°C and so it is, again, today. It had been reported that St. Petersburg was having a heat wave, so we are dubious about the accuracy of the number. As we look out onto the pier, we see dozens of buses and private cars that are lined up, waiting for passengers who have booked one or another of the tours. In contrast to the arrangement in Helsinki, the walk from gangplank to waiting vehicle is very short, but the time expended is quite long - there is a building for immigration in which unsmiling aparatchiks, all of whom look like Leonid Brezhnev (even the women), carefully scrutinize the person standing before him/her before deciding whether to allow such person to proceed or, for the unfortunate few, to be sent to Siberia.

At about 8:00, a group of well-dressed men and women (clearly KGB functionaries) who had been waiting in the area between the immigration building and the ship make their way up the gangplank and onto the vessel. They are accompanied by a couple of police. Apparently the ship's papers are in order because passengers are allowed to leave, beginning at about 8:15. The lines to present oneself at immigration are long and very slow-moving. Finally, TWOU and I show our passports and ship-issued IDs to Ms. Brezhnev, who considers the documents, gives us the evil eye, stamps something on some official pieces of paper, and allows us to proceed to the exit door.

We go outside but our private car doesn't arrive until 9:00. (It turns out that they had come before 8:00, not realizing that it would be another hour before passengers disembark). The guide is a well-dressed, short, middle-aged woman named Marina and the driver is Vladimir. Whereas her English is impeccable and idiomatic, she tells us that Vlad can understand but not speak the language. I have my suspicions - I'm sure that he is recording every conversation that takes place in the car; hell, he probably planted bugs in the pockets of our clothing and on the soles of our shoes. The car is a Mercedes Benz SUV that has some years on it and that makes falling-apart sounds when we bounce over potholes. Marina informs us that the car belongs to Vlad, not Esperance (the agency that arranged the tour). The drive within the port area is over bumps and holes and other obstacles, but

even in the city the car lets us know whenever it encounters any sort of impediment. Marina's patter seems automatic and memorized - and perhaps it is, as she conducts many of these tours during the summer months. Several times she encourages us to interrupt with questions, but when we do so she seems less than happy and returns to her spiel as soon as possible. (I try to drive images of Natasha Fatale and Boris Badenov from my mind, but it's difficult.)

We drive into the city and see many of the sights from the moving car. According to a web site, "St. Petersburg is built on the delta of the River Neva and is spread out over numerous islands of varying sizes, frequently prompting the nickname the 'City of 101 Islands.' Over the centuries numerous bridges were built to connect these islands across the various tributaries of the Neva and the city's many canals (Moika, Fontanka, Kanal Griboyedova, etc.)." And, in fact, we cross the Neva and the various canals many times as we traverse the city. The car bounces and is jostled as Vladimir encounters train tracks, potholes, and uneven pavement while studiously avoiding other drivers whose "antics" lead to a few near-misses. Vladimir pulls the car to the side of the road to allow some picture-taking of statues, official buildings, onion-domed churches, and the river but many of my photos are blurred because they are taken from a moving vehicle. St. Petersburg drivers and pedestrians are reckless and we see several near accidents involving machine and human. At one point, we pull off the road to allow me to take some pictures and find ourselves at the end of a long line of parked cars, all of them parked illegally. Vladimir does some brilliant maneuvering to back out of the parking area and onto the street without hitting anyone or anything.

Our first stop at 9:45 - and the one that topped the wish lists of both TWOU and TMOU - is the Hermitage Museum. According to its web site, "The collection of the State Hermitage includes more than three million works of art and artefacts of the world culture. Among them are paintings, graphic works, sculptures and works of applied art, archaeological finds and numismatic material. The main architectural ensemble of the Hermitage, situated in the centre of St Petersburg, consists of the Winter Palace, the former state residence of the Russian emperors, the buildings of the Small, Old (Great) and New Hermitages, the Hermitage Theatre and the Auxiliary House. The museum complex also includes the Menshikov Palace and the Eastern Wing of the General Staff building, the Staraya Derevnya Restoration and Storage Centre and the Museum of the Imperial Porcelain Factory." Yes, the buildings are huge and imposing!

Marina, who has a degree in art history, is our guide which means that we go where she tells us to go and look at what she tells us to look at. We are "marched" from room to room, rarely given the opportunity to view pictures not on her official list. At one point she goes to a café (I think her feet were hurting) and allows us forty minutes(!) of free time us to view the collection without supervision. The paintings and sculptures span many centuries, but we are less interested in religious art or in Greek and Roman sculpture (to Marina's great displeasure) than in the impressionist and modern masters, all of whom are well-represented: Renoir, van Gogh, Cezanne, Gauguin, Picasso, Matisse, and so on. There are very few abstract paintings (a Kandinsky seems to be one of the few) nor are there Russian artists, such as Chagall, whom I had hoped to see. Apparently the modern Russian masters are housed in other venues. At about noon, another docent arrives - she takes us through the Gold Room where many treasures of ancient and imperial Russia are stored: Scythian gold from the 7<sup>th</sup> century; Greco-Roman jewelry; diamond-encrusted horse bridles and swords; and other "essentials" for the typical household.. (One gets the impression that the Czars lived pretty well.)

**OBSERVATION:** In every room in the Hermitage there is a guard, usually a well-dressed middle aged woman, who often sits near a window hoping to catch a bit of a breeze. Unlike the situation found in art museums in Hungary, Austria, and Czech Republic, where the guards not only followed one everywhere and looked suspiciously at each visitor, these women seem quite bored. None gives the impression of being a poverty-stricken pensioner who is forced to do this work for a low salary. (Perhaps they're all KGB? Could be.)

**OBSERVATION:** The rooms of the Hermitage are very hot and stuffy. Even the open windows don't

provide much relief. And the crowds make it worse. However, over and over, Marina works her magic to get us to the front of lines where we are glared at by the peasants and impoverished serfs behind us. Some of them are from our cruise ship and others, but they're just on a "regular" tour instead of a private one. The battle between my democratic principles and my desire for speed and comfort rages, but for just a short while. After all, we are paying a bundle for this private tour and so we deserve special treatment, eh Comrade?

At about 1:00, we drive to a coffee/pastry shop for a snack. Marina pays for herself, but TWOU and I have tarts and coffee at a cost of 300 rubles (about \$10). My lemon tart has actual pieces of lemon rind in it - yecch! During our time in the museum and at lunch, Vladimir and the car disappear, somewhere, but return when summoned by cell phone. The same thing happens many times during the rest of today and also tomorrow.

We drive to Peter and Paul Cathedral, Russian Orthodox, located within the Peter and Paul Fortress. The fortress was built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century by Peter the Great\* and is the oldest structure in St.

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\*Later we will learn about Catherine the Great, another royal from the "Great" family.<sup>#</sup> (One can't help being reminded of a wonderful puppet character from the musical comedy *Avenue Q* named Lucy The Slut - when she was in the hospital, her medical chart read Slut, Lucy T.)

<sup>#</sup>Could these other famous people also be related: Alexander T. Great, Frederick T. Great, Albert T. Great (better known as Albertus Magnus), and T. Great Gatsby? In fact, a vast number of rulers and religious figures have dubbed themselves (or been dubbed by their devoted followers or frightened subjects) "the Great"; for a comprehensive list, see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_people\\_known\\_as\\_The\\_Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_known_as_The_Great)

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Petersburg. The fortress and cathedral are named in honor of Saints Peter and Paul\* and are the

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\*My supposition that these edifices were named after the maker of *Almond Joy* and *Mounds* is shot down by TWOU.

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repository of the remains of almost all of the rulers of Russia, from Peter T. Great through Catherine T. Great to Nicholas II, who was murdered, along with the rest of his family, in 1918; his remains were sent to the cathedral in 1998.

Only Peter II and Ivan VI are not located here. The bones of the former are in a cathedral at the Kremlin and as for the latter ... well, according to Wikipedia "Ivan VI Antonovich of Russia, (1740 - 1764), was proclaimed Emperor of Russia in 1740, as an infant, although he never actually reigned. Within less than a year, he was overthrown by the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, Peter the Great's daughter. Ivan spent the rest of his life as a prisoner and was killed by his guards during an attempt made to free him." Ivan VI was the son of the grand-daughter of Ivan V (1666 - 1696) who served as co-Tsar (not co-star) with Peter I, whom we have already encountered as Peter T. Great (1672 -1725). Czar Great founded St. Petersburg (I didn't know it had been "lost") in 1703 and it remained the capital of Russia for about 200 years. Moscow became the capital after the 1917 Revolution. During its existence, the city has also been known as Petrograd (1914–1924) and Leningrad (1924-1991).

And then, of course there was the much earlier Ivan IV (1530 - 1534), better known as Ivan the Terrible (Ivan T. Terrible). Again, according to Wikipedia, "Historic sources present disparate accounts of Ivan's complex personality: he was described as intelligent and devout, yet given to rages and prone to episodic outbreaks of mental illness. One notable outburst may have resulted in the death of his groomed and chosen heir, Ivan Ivanovich, which led to the passing of the Tsardom to the younger son: the weak and possibly mentally retarded Feodor I of Russia. His contemporaries called

him 'Ivan Grozny,' the name, which, although usually translated as 'Terrible,' actually means something closer to 'Awe-Inspiring' and carries connotations of might, power and strictness rather than horror or cruelty."

Lots of intrigue in the royal families of Russia, eh? Not much different from what one encounters in the histories of England, Sweden, France, etc. etc. In fact, modern-day Republicans in the U.S. pale in comparison to these truly ruthless predecessors.

Finally we drive to Yusupov Palace, a magnificent building that was the home of the very wealthy and well-connected Yusupov family. Once again, Marina waves her magic wand and makes crowds of people on line ahead of us disappear as we gain entrance. The day is hot and the palace is even stuffier and more uncomfortable than was the Hermitage. (We are very appreciative that Vladimir's car is air-conditioned.) Marina takes great delight in relating the story of the murder of Rasputin, which took place in this building. In fact, she has nothing good to say about the man who, she contends, was pure evil. But let's let Wikipedia tell the story in all of its sordid details:

Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin (1869 - 1916) was a Russian mystic who is perceived as having influenced the latter days of the Russian Emperor Nicholas II, his wife Alexandra, and their only son Alexei. Rasputin had often been called the "Mad Monk," while others considered him a *strannik* (or religious pilgrim) and even a *starets* ("elder," a title usually reserved for monk-confessors), believing him to be a psychic and faith healer.

It has been argued that Rasputin helped to discredit the tsarist government, leading to the fall of the Romanov dynasty, in 1917. Contemporary opinions saw Rasputin variously as a saintly mystic, visionary, healer and prophet or, on the contrary, as a debauched religious charlatan. There has been much uncertainty over Rasputin's life and influence as accounts of his life have often been based on dubious memoirs, hearsay and legend.

[The next several paragraphs detail Rasputin's career as "adviser" to the royals. The reader should seek out a picture of Rasputin - upon viewing it, one can only conclude that this is a deranged and dangerous man. I'll now conclude with Wikipedia's account of his murder, told with almost as much relish and glee as did Marina when she told it to us.]

The legends surrounding the death of Rasputin are perhaps even more mysterious and bizarre than his life. According to Greg King's 1996 book *The Man Who Killed Rasputin*, a previous attempt on Rasputin's life had failed: Rasputin was visiting his wife and children in Pokrovskoye, his hometown along the Tura River in Siberia. On June 29, 1914, after either just receiving a telegram on exiting church, he was attacked suddenly by Khionia Guseva, a former prostitute who had become a disciple of the monk Iliodor. Iliodor, who once was a friend of Rasputin but had grown disgusted with his behavior and disrespectful talk about the royal family, had appealed to women who had been harmed by Rasputin to form a mutual support group. Guseva thrust a knife into Rasputin's abdomen, and his entrails hung out of what seemed like a mortal wound. Convinced of her success, Guseva supposedly screamed, "I have killed the antichrist!"

After intensive surgery, however, Rasputin recovered. It was said of his survival that "the soul of this cursed muzhik was sewn on his body." His daughter, Maria, observed in her memoirs that he was never the same man after that: he seemed to tire more easily and frequently took opium for pain relief.

The murder of Rasputin has become a legend, some of it invented by the very men who killed him, which is why it has become difficult to discern the actual course of events. On December 16, 1916, having decided that Rasputin's influence over the Tsaritsa had made him a threat to the empire, a group of nobles led by Prince Felix Yusupov and the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and the right-wing politician Vladimir Purishkevich apparently lured Rasputin to the Yusupovs' Moika

Palace by intimating that Yusupov's wife, Princess Irina, would be present and receiving friends. (In point of fact, she was away in the Crimea.) The group led him down to the cellar, where they served him cakes and red wine laced with a massive amount of cyanide. According to legend, Rasputin was unaffected, although Vasily Maklakov had supplied enough poison to kill five men. Conversely, Maria's account asserts that, if her father did eat or drink poison, it was not in the cakes or wine, because after the attack by Guseva he suffered from hyperacidity and avoided anything with sugar. In fact, she expresses doubt that he was poisoned at all. It has been suggested, on the other hand, that Rasputin had developed an immunity to poison due to Mithridatism.

Determined to finish the job, Prince Yusupov became anxious about the possibility that Rasputin might live until the morning, leaving the conspirators no time to conceal his body. Yusupov ran upstairs to consult the others and then came back down to shoot Rasputin through the back with a revolver. Rasputin fell, and the company left the palace for a while. Yusupov, who had left without a coat, decided to return to get one, and while at the palace, he went to check on the body. Suddenly, Rasputin opened his eyes and lunged at Yusupov. He grabbed Yusupov, ominously whispered in his ear, "You bad boy," and attempted to strangle him. At that moment, however, the other conspirators arrived and fired at Rasputin. After being hit three times in the back, he fell once more. As they neared his body, the party found that, remarkably, he was still alive, struggling to get up. They clubbed him into submission. Some accounts say that his killers also sexually mutilated him, severing his penis (subsequently resulting in urban legends and claims that certain third parties were in possession of the organ). After binding his body and wrapping him in a carpet, they threw him into the icy Neva River. He broke out of his bonds and the carpet wrapping him, but drowned in the river.

Three days later, Rasputin's body, poisoned, shot four times, badly beaten, and drowned, was recovered from the river. An autopsy established that the cause of death was drowning. His arms were found in an upright position, as if he had tried to claw his way out from under the ice. It was found that he had indeed been poisoned, and that the poison alone should have been enough to kill him. There is a report that after his body was recovered, water was found in the lungs, supporting the idea that he was still alive before submersion into the partially frozen river.

Subsequently, the Tsaritsa Alexandra buried Rasputin's body in the grounds of Tsarskoye Selo, but after the February Revolution, a group of workers from Saint Petersburg uncovered the remains, carried them into the nearby woods, and burned them. As the body was being burned, Rasputin appeared to sit up in the fire. His apparent attempts to move and get up thoroughly horrified bystanders. The effect can probably be attributed to improper cremation; since the body was in inexperienced hands, the tendons were probably not cut before burning. Consequently, when the body was heated, the tendons shrank, forcing the legs to bend and the body to bend at the waist, resulting in its appearing to sit up. This final happenstance only further fueled the legends and mysteries surrounding Rasputin, which continue to live on long after his death. The official report of his autopsy disappeared during the Stalin era, as did several research assistants who had seen it.

Whew! And we thought that Dick Cheney was scary!

**OBSERVATION:** In mid-city, we encounter what appears to be a bridal party walking across the street. We will see similar scenes over the next two days. In fact, it was one of these bridal parties that was responsible for all of the illegally parked cars mentioned on p. 11. According to Marina, it is the custom for young married couples to re-visit the places where they had had their first dates. How sweet. But it is truly weird to see women in white gowns and high heels teetering along cobblestone paths.

We return to the ship at about 5:00. Our final "sight" is of the cruiser Aurora. According to Wikipedia,

"On 25 October 1917, Aurora refused to carry an order to put to sea, which sparked the October Revolution. At 9.45 p.m. on that date, a blank shot from her fore-castle gun signaled the start of the assault on the Winter Palace, which was to be the last episode of the October Revolution. The cruiser's crew actually took part in the attack." We tip Marina and Vladimir, 40 and 20 € respectively, as had been suggested by Stefan. (We have no Russian currency, but the people at Esperance said that Euros would be acceptable. Rubles were not available for purchase on board the ship, so any expenses that we had - e.g., for meals - were handled with credit cards.) I note that the battery in the new camera shows zero charge, possibly because I left it on even when not taking pictures; I keep this in mind over the next couple of weeks and have no further problems, but when returning home I purchase an extra battery to take with me on trips. We have dinner at *Compass Rose*, after which we relax in our room for the rest of the evening, but first we make an executive decision. We had been planning on a ship-sponsored excursion for tomorrow: "An Evening of Russian Song and Dance." Considering how exhausted we are at the end of the first day of touring St. Petersburg and the fact that the hall for the singing and dancing is not air-conditioned, we turn in our tickets.

### Saturday, August 14

Finally, a peaceful night in which we do *not* lose an hour owing to time-zone change. Tomorrow, it is promised that we'll regain one of the three hours that we've lost - I hope that it comes to pass.

We have an early breakfast at *La Veranda* so that we can get to our guides and their car by 8:30. The first stop on our day's adventure is at a metro stop where we board a train and travel one stop down the line. I don't recall the names of the two stations, but the decor is amazing. Marina tells us "It is forbidden to take pictures" but a web site that I consult after I get home suggests that picture-taking is permitted if flash is not used. Too late. At the first station, there are massive wall sculptures showing brave Russian laborers, muscular men and even more muscular women, axes and mallets and hammers in hand, working hard to build a great socialist society; at least that's how I read them. We see chandeliers with alternating motifs of hammer/sickle and stars. There is a huge mosaic, a monument showing a heroic woman and dedicated to the suffering endured during WW II. Another sculpture is of Lenin, smiling beatifically down upon us. (The most famous connection between Lenin\*

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\*You've got to hand it to old good old Vladimir Illich Ulyanov (Lenin's given name). Among his most salient comments was "Whenever the cause of the people is entrusted to professors, all is lost." How true, how true.

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and trains is the Finland Station, not far from The Hermitage but across the Neva, where Lenin arrived in October, 1917, to take charge of the revolution.) Vladimir (our driver, not the embalmed former dictator) plus car meet us as we emerge from the second metro station.

We drive to the outskirts of the city, past the summer residence of President Medvedev (or whoever happens to be president at the time). We also pass many expensive-looking homes belonging to Russia's new breed of oligarchs. Our destination is Peterhof, the imperial palace of Peter the Great, modeled after Versailles (and all of the other outrageously ornate palaces that 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century rulers built). Peter did not live to see the completion of the palace. Construction was halted at his death, but resumed in 1740 under his daughter Empress Elizabeth who commissioned the Italian architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli to do the design. The interior is, as expected, an exercise in grotesque ostentation, thus confirming my long-held view that the rulers of Europe were a miserably unfeeling and boorish group of despots. Because pictures are not permitted inside the palace, I have only my nightmarish memories of the excesses to remind me.

The grounds are equally spectacular; this time pictures are permitted. There are tree-lined paths, canals, flowers in bloom, magnificent fountains of all sorts, golden sculptures representing stories from Greek mythology, and long lines of people waiting to gain admittance to the palace. Again, I am

thankful (while feeling very guilty about it) for Marina's ability to make the crowds disappear when we arrive at the entry gates. Most memorable are a pair of *wasserspiels*. In one, brave visitors are "invited" to skip across some stones before a fountain turns on and drenches them; at the other, there is a cupola, entry to which requires that one navigate an open space before the artificial rain begins. After seeing two brides yesterday, we encounter yet another on the Peterhof grounds; this one has a most painful scowl (probably because her feet are killing her) and is accompanied by a very unpleasant-looking man (the groom? security? KGB?) and trailed by an even more unpleasant-looking woman (the mother? security? KGB?).

We drive to a pleasant tea room not far away. This time, Marina allows me to buy her lunch; she is reluctant, but I remind her that she paid our fare on the metro as we had no Russian currency. Vlad again does his disappearing act but resurfaces when it's time to move on. I'm not very hungry, so I have only coffee. The waitress also brings a glass of water and ice. Lee is concerned that the ice is made from tap water but Marina insists that it is safe and, in fact, I suffer no unpleasant consequence. Our next stop is in the town of Pushkin where we visit Catherine's Palace. If ever one needed evidence of the excessive spending of the tsars, tsarinas, and tsarlets (I made that up, but if Hollywood can have starlets ...). This baroque monstrosity was built at the order of Empress Elizabeth (remember her?) who again commissioned Bartolomeo Rastrelli (remember him?) to do the design. The palace is named after Elizabeth's mother, Catherine I (wife of Peter I aka Peter the Great; for some reason, *this* Catherine is not called "the Great.") As we walk toward the palace, we encounter

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\*Catherine T. Great (aka Catherine II) ascended to the throne after a coup deposed her husband, Peter II. She ruled from 1762 to 1796 and fought in several wars, annexed the Crimea, was instrumental in the partition of Poland, opened trade with Japan, and was a great patron of the arts. Her private life is also of salacious interest. According to Wikipedia, "Catherine, throughout her long reign, took many lovers, often elevating them to high positions for as long as they held her interest, and then pensioning them off with large estates and gifts of serfs. After her affair with her lover and capable adviser Grigori Alexandrovich Potemkin ended in 1776, he would allegedly select a candidate-lover for her who had both the physical beauty as well as the mental faculties to hold Catherine's interest (such as Alexander Dmitriev-Mamonov). Some of these men loved her in return, and she always showed generosity towards her lovers, even after the end of an affair." There is also a rumor involving her and a horse, but this is a family journal and not a suitable venue to describe it in detail.

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another bride, who looks only moderately unhappy, on the arm of her fella, who also looks only moderately unhappy. Here, indoor pictures are permitted; amazingly the camera lens does not shatter from the excess of gold and silver on display in each room. The outside temperature is high; and the heat and humidity inside are even worse. We are happy to emerge into the fresh air. Upon leaving the grounds, we encounter yet another bride; this one seems singularly displeased that I am taking her picture. We stop at the monument that commemorates the Siege of Leningrad from 1941 to 1944 during which about 1.5 million citizens died.

**OBSERVATION:** OK, I admit it, I'm a poor student of history - never liked it in elementary school or in high school or in college, although I do now read books on aspects of history that interest me: e.g., biographies of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the founding of the American republic, the presidential election of 1800, and so on. I've rarely paid much attention to the history of Europe, and so these three days in St. Petersburg (or Leningrad or Petrograd) have been filled with revelations. Although I've not read much Russian history, I'm very familiar with the symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975). His strained relationship with Stalin's government and its with him are the subject of countless monographs and essays. I doubt that anyone really knows the subtext of some of the more political music that he wrote. Attacked in *Prada* in 1936 for writing music that "favored the destruction of the state" (really!), he responded with the tuneful and patriotic *Symphony No. 5* two years later. He was denounced again in 1948 and much of his music was banned; he, himself, lived in fear of being arrested at any moment. Throughout his life, he walked the fine line between being



true to his artistic sensibilities and trying to demonstrate his allegiance to the state. Three of his symphonies are clearly programmatic and, through their titles and the nature of the music, describe major events in the history of St. Petersburg: *Symphony No. 7 "Leningrad"* (written in 1941-2); *Symphony No. 11 "The Year 1905"* (1957); and *Symphony No. 12 "The Year 1917"* (1961). The 7<sup>th</sup> is a tribute to the people of the city who endured the terrible siege by the Germans; its first movement features a hideous and repetitious marching theme, clearly the invading army. Shostakovich was in St. Petersburg for the first two years of the siege and only reluctantly agreed to be evacuated to Moscow. The 11<sup>th</sup> describes the failed "Bloody Sunday" revolution of 1905 when some 100,000 unarmed striking workers, thinking that the Tsar was in residence at the Winter Palace, arrived with petitions, only to be fired upon by the Tsar's troops; estimates are that a thousand were killed or wounded. The symphony's four movements are titled: "The Palace Square"; "9 January"; "In Memoriam"; and "Tocsin"; the music of the second movement portrays a fearsome volley of rifle shots, seemingly lasting forever, before there is deathly quiet. The 12<sup>th</sup> with movements "Revolutionary Petrograd," "Raziv" (a town near St. Petersburg from which Lenin directed the attack), "Aurora" (the ship that fired on the palace), and "The Dawn of Humanity," describes the 1917 assault on the Winter Palace and the overthrow of the Tsarist regime. Powerful music, but one can't help wondering about Shostakovich's motive: was these works written to soothe the Communist regime or, perhaps, to inspire the Russian people to be optimistic that better times are coming. It's sad that the composer did not live to see the end of the regime in 1979.

I had studied (if one can use that word) the Russian language during the summer of 1959 when I was commuting between a job at Merck (in Rahway, NJ) and my parents' apartment in Queens, NY. A friend and I would go to a class at NYU, taught by a gruff and uncompromising Russian speaker to a roomful of hot and exhausted people who were eager to get home. Over the decades, I retained a few of the phrases and a vague memory of the Cyrillic alphabet. Marina was very helpful in getting me to pronounce those signs whose words were cognates of English.

At the end of a long day, we make two final stops, the first at a mid-city market place with stalls that are staffed by the butcher or baker or farmer who is responsible for the goods. We then go to a modern supermarket (no pictures allowed - why?) where we can view the canned goods, produce, meat, and fish on display. And then it's back to the ship where we say good-bye to Marina and Vlad (and provide them with slightly higher gratuities of 50 and 25 €, respectively). We return to our room, exhausted and drenched with sweat, made worse by a leaking water bottle that I had been holding on my lap during the drive back. Whew! I thought that I had had a "wetting accident" and that I needed to have the Detrol discussion with my doctor. We had planned to have dinner at *La Veranda* (Italian Night!) but find it closed; it had opened very early for people going to the ballet (one of the more expensive St. Petersburg excursions) and would open again from 10:30-11:30 for late returnees. So we have dinner at *Compass Rose* again. The food is excellent, as before, but it seems as if the service is getting a bit spotty. We spend the evening in our room. I begin reading Edward Larson's *Magnificent Catastrophe*, which is about the American presidential election of 1800 that resulted in an electoral college tie between Jefferson and Burr.

**OBSERVATION:** I ask Marina her opinion of Gorbachev. Contrary to the view of most Americans, she is most uncomplimentary. Granted that freedom is greater and people can live where they want and can travel to other countries, the economic situation gets worse each year. There is increasing income disparity; and the corruption among the oligarchs is a national disgrace. She complains that her salary is very low, despite her college training. Indeed, she also teaches English in school to supplement her income as a tour guide. She doesn't much like the educational system: she gave up full-time teaching (at the college level?) when the students coming to her classes were increasingly unprepared.

**OBSERVATION:** On the way to Catherine's Palace, we visit a small Russian Orthodox Church. The congregation remains standing throughout the service and all of the women cover their heads with shawls. Marina, claiming to be a non-believer, was unable to answer my questions about differences

among Russian, Greek, and Roman Catholicism.

**OBSERVATION:** The cruise ship's passengers are of all ages, ranging from children (some of whom are very annoying) to doddering seniors, even more decrepit than I. Some of these are in wheel chairs, some carry oxygen tanks, and some shuffle very slowly down the hallways. Between these age extremes are a large contingent of 40-50 somethings, many of them looking quite prosperous, whose goal seems to be to make purchases at the ships' boutiques, attend the musical shows, drink and dance, and not take advantage of the cultural opportunities at each port. Oh, well, *chacun à son goût*, as the French say. (Loose translation: Elio Chacon's son is in the goo again. Elio Chacon, as everybody knows, is one of the original New York Mets. In their memorable 120-game-losing opening season, he contributed his best with a BA of .236 with two HRs.)

**OBSERVATION:** In the city, there are large numbers of stylish young women (not that I make it a practice to look at young women, mind you), maneuvering remarkably well in very-high heeled shoes on cobblestones and broken streets. I'll bet that the orthopaedic surgeons who specialized in broken ankles are making a bundle. In contrast, most Russians (on the streets, in stores, in the metro) are not stylish. Rather they have the detached and despondent look affected by New Yorkers. What is very common (and expected) is the broad Slavic face with high cheekbones. Still, there are few smiles and many sour expressions.

### Sunday, August 15

It rained overnight. It had looked threatening much of yesterday afternoon, but the rains did not begin until after dark. We are awakened at about 5:00 by thunder and lightning. Despite the precipitation, it does not appear that the air quality is much improved. Again, we have breakfast at *La Veranda*. On the way to the restaurant, we stop at the self-service (and free!) laundromat to wash a load of clothes while we eat. We then spend the rest of the morning in our room, reading and, occasionally, going onto the balcony to take pictures of the port, the cranes, the cruise ships, and the container ships.

The tour that we booked for this afternoon is of the cathedrals of St. Petersburg. (Originally, Esperance had some cathedrals on their suggested itinerary, but we replaced them with other things, knowing that we'd get to see them today.) The bus leaves the dock at about 2:00. Our tour guide, Polina, is delightful. She is, perhaps, in her late thirties and has an even better command of English (and its idioms) than did Marina. (Our driver is named Vladimir. Are all drivers in St. Petersburg named Vladimir? Are they all KGB?)

Our first stop is at St. Isaac's Cathedral (on Nevsky Prospekt), the largest Russian Orthodox Cathedral in the city. It is a massive structure, indeed. Its golden dome can be seen from some distance away. Construction took place over a 40-year period in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the Soviet era, it was converted into a Museum of Atheism! Picture-taking is permitted, so I have lots of images of the interior, the murals, the carved doors, and the sculptures. An excellent description of the history, architecture, religious works of art, etc. is at: <http://www.nevsky-prospekt.com/isaacs.html> This web site also has many excellent pictures.

Also on Nevsky Prospekt is Kazan Cathedral, a massive structure that looks something like the Brandenburg Gate. Like St. Isaac's, it dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. When Napoleon invaded in 1812, the city and the cathedral were defended by Mikhail Kutuzov, who dedicated his victory over the invaders to Our Lady of Kazan, whose icon (or at least a copy of it) had been placed in the cathedral at its founding. (It is not true that the 1812 Overture was written by either Kutuzov or the icon.) Like St. Isaac's, this cathedral didn't survive the Soviet era without major destruction and looting by the government. It was closed and then re-opened as Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism. This is the only active church that we've visited, and there is a long line of the devout waiting patiently to pray before and then kiss the icon. An employee cleans the glass surface after each smooch.

Finally, we head to the Church on Spilled Blood. As we arrive, the skies have become quite black, there is thunder and lightning, and a torrential downpour begins. Most of us (TWOU and I, included) have no raincoats or umbrellas, so we all run across the courtyard and huddle near the entrance, waiting for our intrepid (and thoroughly drenched) guide to arrive with the tickets. It's a shame that we can't linger outside taking pictures, as this is a classic Russian church with several onion-shaped domes in blue and gold. The name derives from a notorious event in Russian history.

Alexander II had ascended to the throne in 1855. Among his most notable accomplishments was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. But being a Tsar wasn't all beer and skittles. There were, in fact, many attempts on his life. Wikipedia has the following account:

In 1866, there was an attempt on the tsar's life in St. Petersburg by Dmitry Karakozov. To commemorate his narrow escape from death (which he himself referred to only as "the event of 4 April 1866"), a number of churches and chapels were built in many Russian cities. Viktor Hartmann, a Russian architect, even sketched a design of a monumental gate (planned, never built) to commemorate the event. Modest Mussorgsky later wrote his Pictures at an Exhibition; the last movement of which, "The Great Gate of Kiev," is based on Hartmann's sketches.

On the morning of 20 April 1879, Alexander II was briskly walking towards the Square of the Guards Staff and faced Alexander Soloviev, a 33-year-old former student. Having seen a menacing revolver in his hands, the Tsar fled. Soloviev fired five times but missed, and was sentenced to death and hanged on 28 May.

The student acted on his own, but other revolutionaries were keen to murder Alexander. In December 1879, the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), a radical revolutionary group which hoped to ignite a social revolution, organized an explosion on the railway from Livadia to Moscow, but they missed the tsar's train.

On the evening of 5 February 1880 Stephan Khalturin, also from Narodnaya Volya, set off a charge under the dining room of the Winter Palace, right in the resting room of the guards a story below. Being late for dinner, the tsar was unharmed; although 11 other people were killed and 30 wounded.

Alas, tsars (unlike cats) do not have nine lives and so. Wikipedia tells the rest of the story:

On 13 March, 1881, Alexander fell victim to an assassination plot. As he was known to do every Sunday for many years, the czar went to the Manezh [an exhibition hall] to review the Life Guards. He traveled both to and from the Manezh in a closed carriage accompanied by six Cossacks with a seventh sitting on the coachman's left. The czar's carriage was followed by two sleighs carrying, among others, the chief of police and the chief of the czar's guards. The route, as always, was via the Catherine Canal and over the Pevchesky Bridge.

The street was flanked by narrow sidewalks for the public. A young member of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) movement, Nikolai Rysakov, was carrying a small white package wrapped in a handkerchief. "After a moment's hesitation I threw the bomb. I sent it under the horses' hooves in the supposition that it would blow up under the carriage ...The explosion knocked me into the fence."

The explosion, while killing one of the Cossacks and seriously wounding the driver and people on the sidewalk, had only damaged the bulletproof carriage, a gift from Napoleon III of France. The tsar emerged shaken but unhurt. Rysakov was captured almost immediately. Police Chief Dvorzhitsky heard Rysakov shout out to someone else in the gathering crowd. The surrounding guards and the Cossacks urged the tsar to leave the area at once rather than being shown the site of the explosion. A second young member of the Narodnaya Volya, Ignacy Hryniewiecki,

standing by the canal fence, raised both arms and threw something at the tsar's feet. He was alleged to have shouted, "It is too early to thank God." Dvorzhitsky was later to write: "I was deafened by the new explosion, burned, wounded and thrown to the ground. Suddenly, amid the smoke and snowy fog, I heard His Majesty's weak voice cry, 'Help!' Gathering what strength I had, I jumped up and rushed to the tsar. His Majesty was half-lying, half-sitting, leaning on his right arm. Thinking he was merely wounded heavily, I tried to lift him but the czar's legs were shattered, and the blood poured out of them. Twenty people, with wounds of varying degree, lay on the sidewalk and on the street. Some managed to stand, others to crawl, still others tried to get out from beneath bodies that had fallen on them. Through the snow, debris, and blood you could see fragments of clothing, epaulets, sabers, and bloody chunks of human flesh."

Later it was learned there was a third bomber in the crowd. Ivan Emelyanov stood ready, clutching a briefcase containing a bomb that would be used if the other two bombers failed. Alexander was carried by sleigh to the Winter Palace to his study where ironically, twenty years before almost to the day, he had signed the Emancipation Edict freeing the serfs. Alexander was bleeding to death, with his legs torn away, his stomach ripped open, and his face mutilated.

Well! So, a church was constructed on the site where Alexander was murdered, hence the name Church on Spilled Blood. The interior is most famous for its mosaics covering an area of 7700 sq m. The walls are covered with gorgeous paintings and mosaics.

Our tour guide, Polina, is a wealth of information. One story that she tells is that at the forming of the Kingdom of Rus (from populations of Slavs, Norse, and others) in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Prince Vladimir,\* it

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\*This is not the driver of our private tour car nor of our bus. Rather, he is Vladimir Sviatoslavich the Great (so *now* we know the origin of "the Great family"! ). According to our friends at Wikipedia, "He was the grand prince of Kiev who converted to Christianity in 988, and proceeded to baptize all of Kievan Rus.' His name is spelt variously: in modern Ukrainian, for example, as Volodymyr; in Old Church Slavonic and modern Russian, as Vladimir; in Old Norse as Valdamarr; and, in modern Scandinavian languages, Valdemar." And now we know where J. K. Rowling got her idea for Lord Voldemort!

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is said, sent emissaries to sample the various religions of the known world to determine which should be imported to this land. He rejected Islam because of its prohibition of alcohol, or so the legend goes.

**OBSERVATION:** On the bus ride back to the ship, Polina answered questions. In light of Marina's disenchantment with Gorbachev, I asked Polina for her view. She agreed that life has become much more difficult because of the growing income disparity and corruption. Now there are homeless people, something that never existed before. Pensions are too small to survive on and food is very expensive. Gorbachev instituted *perestroika* and *glasnost* without foreseeing the difficulties that might result. The implication of her comments is that under government control, food was more plentiful and at lower cost. Can this be true? Restrictions on travel are now lifted; for example, Polina has traveled to the U.S., England, and elsewhere. Nevertheless, she thinks that most people were better off under the Communist regime, even though her parents were dissidents under Soviet rule; she recalls *samidzat* copies of books and speeches being read overnight and passed on to the next person.

**OBSERVATION:** Polina was quite outspoken about the current Russian administration. As was true among Western observers, most Russians initially considered Medvedev as merely a figurehead, but have since come to believe that he really is in control and is making his own decisions. Nevertheless, she believes that Putin will become president, again, at the end of Medvedev's term. One of the other passengers asked if she thought that the Communist Party was likely to return to power. She said

that it wasn't going to occur, ever. ("Ever" is a very long time, I do believe.) Her argument was that the Party did not *need* to return to political power as long as the leadership is making bundles of money from their control of the gas industry and real estate.

**OBSERVATION:** She said that Russians do not always get reliable and impartial information from the government, but neither do we in the West. She noted that while only a few older Russians speak English, all children are now studying the language in school. She quoted figures more dismal than the usually reported 1.5 million deaths from starvation during the siege of St. Petersburg, another indication that the government's versions are not always accurate.

**OBSERVATION:** In agreement with what I reported about Alexander II, she called him a great leader who made numerous reforms for the benefit of Russians who were low on the economic scale. She speculates that had he lived, there would have been no 1917 revolution. Hmm. Another passenger asked what her opinion was of former President Bush. Skirting the answer, somewhat, but making clear her view, she replied that she and her friends bought the books about Bush's butchering (bushering?) of the English language, and got great enjoyment from them.

**OBSERVATION:** Finally, she told us that Estonians (in two days we'll visit Riga) hate the Russians ... and with good reason. Once when in Tallinn, she tried to buy a loaf of bread. The merchant refused, claiming that he doesn't understand Russian. When she tried pointing at the loaf to express her intention, he ignored her. We (and most of the passengers on the tour) tip her generously, not only for her knowledge and forthrightness but also for having got drenched when getting tickets for our visit to the Church on Spilled Blood.

The regulations of the cruise ship allow patrons to reserve one dinner meal, each, at *Prime7* and at *Signature*. The former is a steak house, the latter a French bistro. Lee thought that she had reserved the latter for tonight, but in fact it was the former. After dinner,\* we relax in our room and read. We

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\*On p. 6, I promised that I'd not describe any more dinners, but I'm now going to violate that vow because TWOOU was ebullient in her written account of our meals at *Prime 7*. So ... the free wine was a Zinfandel which she describes as "not as tasty as some of the reds at *Compass Rose*, but it is still good." Then, "Ron has shrimp cocktail, then clam chowder, then the 10 oz fillet with twice-baked potato and green beans. His dessert is an apple 'crisp,' in which a thin-sliced almost raw apple sits in a pastry basket. Lee has foie gras sliders with rhubarb chutney, a Caesar salad, the 6 oz fillet with bearnaise sauce and twice-baked potato plus corn casserole. Her dessert is an excellent key lime pie." (The only improvement I'd suggest for this is that it be given in French.)

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are also pleased to be able to set our alarm clock and watches back one hour. As was true when leaving Helsinki, we set sail about 10 minutes ahead of schedule; an all-night journey will get us to Tallinn at about 8:00 tomorrow morning.

## Monday, August 16

We get up at 6:00 to allow time for two showers and breakfast before today's excursion that's scheduled for 8:00. The ship arrives in Tallinn at 7:10, nearly an hour early. From the window we see lots of church steeples, modern glass-sided office buildings, and tall apartment buildings. Again, we have breakfast at *La Veranda* along with everyone else on board (I guess that we're all trying to get to early excursions because we're in port for only eight hours).

**OBSERVATION:** It's amazing how many of the "older gentlemen" on board have grey hair as compared to how few of the women! And people claim that chemistry has no relevance in our lives! I also wonder how many of these shuffling old codgers could be about my age, perhaps even my

classmates from Yale '59? 'Tis, indeed, a sobering thought.

We buy Estonian Kroon (abbreviated EEK - really!) on board at the exchange rate of 10 EEK to 1 USD. The official rate is 11.84, so we are taking quite a hit. On the other hand, the ship will buy back any remaining kroon at the 10:1 rate. Because of this, I convince myself that the rate doesn't matter at all, but Lee is convinced that it does. My argument goes like this: if someone were to come up to us on the street, offer us 100 EEK, and tell us to spend as much as we want but to return what remains, isn't this the same as buying and selling EEK at the same rate (10 to the dollar)? TWOU says NO. She's probably right, but I still need to convince myself.

The morning is sunny, with a nice cool breeze. Will it persist throughout the day? We'll see. Our Tallinn tour guide on the bus is a delightful woman named Ann (at least we think that's what she called herself). She, like Marina and Polina, teaches English to adult learners when she is not guiding tours. En route to the city, she gives us information about Estonian history and modern life. The population of the country is 1.3 million but has decreased over the past decade. (About 120,000 people have "grey passports" - they are ethnic Russian but are citizens of neither country and did not choose to become Estonian citizens when the USSR collapsed in 1991.) The language is about 30% the same as Finnish, but some words that are similar have quite different meanings and can get the speaker into trouble. For example, "Have you seen my wife?" in Estonian is understood by a Finn as "Have you seen the ghost?" and "The hotel room is not clean" is heard as "The body is not yet decorated." (The possibilities for mischief-making are unlimited.)

The Estonian economy is growing at about 6% a year and the country is energy-self-sufficient based on large deposits of shale oil (which is also a principal export). It also exports timber and electronics while counting tourism as a major source of income. Estonia belongs to the European Union and will, next year, adopt the euro as its currency. It has a social tax of 33% (20% pension, 13% health), a flat rate income tax of 21%, along with a VAT of 20%. Unemployment has shot up to 14% after having been as low as 4% in 2008. A dangerous trend: many young people, particular MDs, leave after finishing their education and head to Finland where salaries are higher.

Ann grew up when the country was under Soviet occupation. Russian was a mandatory subject in school (five days a week throughout her school years). English is now taught to all children, whereas Russian is optional. In college, many of her courses were obvious propaganda (e.g., there was one on "Scientific Communism," whatever that might be). The current population is about 70% Estonian, 25% Russian, and the remainder scattered among Ukrainians, Finns, Belarusians, and others; in Tallinn, Russians number 50%. I ask Ann if the Russians have been here a long time or just since 1944 and if they are assimilated into society. Her answer is that most have come since the end of World War II and most (but not all) have blended into Estonian life. In fact, this smaller group retains their Russian citizenship. Tellingly, however, Putin launched a "return to Russia" campaign a couple of years ago, but only 24 (!!) people accepted. Estonia has at one time or another been under the control of Sweden, Poland, Germany, Russia, and others - in fact, it has been an independent nation for only 40 years (20 years between the two world wars and 20 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union) in its long history.

Our bus ride takes us past the Great Coastal Gate and Fat Margaret's Tower (the origin of which name is not revealed in any of the web sites I visited) and then to the upper old town, high above the rest of Tallinn. We walk along cobblestone streets past the impressive city wall, the Toompea Castle (now Parliament), the Russian Orthodox Alexander Nefsky Cathedral, the Lutheran Cathedral, and the charming narrow streets. We then travel by bus to a park outside the see where there is an open-air museum, called Rocca-al-Mare, dedicated to Estonian farm life. After walking the grounds and viewing the interiors of several old buildings, we are served coffee or tea plus some tasteless cookies and meat-filled buns. We then assemble outdoors to watch six young dancers, in a colorful native garb, perform traditional dances while an accordion player provides the music. The nice breeze that was so welcome this morning has picked up and Lee's hat (to protect her from the hot sun) is blown

off - and retrieved by the chivalrous yours truly.

At about 12:30, the bus deposits us in the lower city, the center of commerce, where we enjoy strolling past shops (some of which we enter and even make purchases, to the clear annoyance of TMOU who describes himself as a buyer and not a shopper), alongside outdoor restaurants and bistros, through large open squares, and along narrow streets (we pass the "wall of sweaters" consisting of shop after shop offering sweaters and other knitted goods). One gets the impression that the population is prosperous and that it enjoys life. We return to the ship in mid-afternoon, have some ice cream and coffee, then rush to hear the second Richard Tallboys lecture: "An Ambassador is an Honest Man" at 3:30. This talk is more entertaining than was the first, but still not scintillating. While in the theatre, we hear the ships engines fire up at about 3:50 as we depart Tallinn for Riga. We sit on our veranda and read from 4:30 to 6:00, then go to their *La Veranda* for dinner (Italian night again). We then return to our room and read some more. I get some excellent pictures of a spectacular sunset.

## Tuesday, August 17

We again have a storm during the night. The ship rocks a bit more than normal and the waters look very choppy; water splashes onto the windows, but at least the sky looks promising.

On our New Zealand trip earlier this year, actor Jemaine Clement (of *Flight of the Conchords*) was on our flight from Los Angeles. On our return flight from Wales and Ireland last summer, Ty Pennington (of *Extreme Home Makeover*) was on board. Culturally deprived ignoramus that I am, I know the name of neither "celebrity." But now, I think that I spot a minor celebrity on board our cruise ship. There's a passenger who resembles the British actor Samuel West, a staple of various *Masterpiece Theatre* productions, who also played the hapless clerk who was crushed by a falling bookcase in *Howards End*. Upon further review (as they say in the TV sports biz), I decide that it's not he.

**On-board amenities:** (1) The TV channels are devoted to CNN International, FOX News (oh joy!), and SKY TV deliver programming, but only when satellite transmission permits.\* (2) A newsletter

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\*I failed to enter the following in my daily notes, but it probably occurred on the morning of August 17. We had tuned into CNN International and, O rotten-rotten-rotten-luck, came in on a report that Bobby Thomson had died. For the ill-informed among you, Mr. Thomson was the New York Giants baseballer who hit the HR in the 9<sup>th</sup> inning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> game of the 1951 NL Baseball Playoffs that ended the season for my blessed Brooklyn Dodgers and caused this 12-year-old to burst into tears as he watched the TV broadcast. Yes, THAT Bobby Thomson! And to compound their sin, CNN then showed the old TV footage of the horrible event, along with announcer Russ Hodges screaming, "The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!" Oh, woe! In my pantheon of the world's greatest evil-doers, alongside Bobby Thomson is Mait Jones, my friend since our freshman year at Yale, but also my mortal enemy because on every October 3 he sends me by email the complete details of that game from 1951.

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(geared to either US, British, or Australian passengers - the rest of the world be damned) appears on the cabin door each morning. Today's informs us that Sylvester Stalone's new movie has grossed \$35 million; that Texas Senator (and world-class troglodyte) John Cornyn is angry (I mean really really angry) about the plan to build an Islamic cultural center right at (or, more precisely, a few blocks from) NYC's Ground Zero; and that there was a bomb threat at Lourdes, where 30,000 gullible (oops. I mean devout) pilgrims have gathered. Oh, yes, it reports that the high temperature in Seattle, today, will be 96°! We have a good laugh about this until we discover, upon our return, that the temperature was in the 90s for three straight days. (3) The TV set in the room offers more than 150 movie titles, some of them quite recent; we are too busy or too disinterested to take advantage. (4) On the floor

below ours is a well-stocked library of books, newspapers, magazines, and DVDs. (5) The TV channel "View from the Bridge" consists of images from a video cam located at the front of the ship; most of the time it shows only open waters. (6) Another channel gives the salient data about the ship's condition: speed, wind speed, outside temperature, position in latitude and longitude, wind direction, and ship's direction. As mentioned earlier, we have no faith in the quoted temperature. (7) Three channels are devoted to menus from the various restaurants. (8) One channel describes the "activities" for the day: movies, lectures, gambling, dancing, getting laid (oops, I made that one up). (9) One channel provides music, if one can use "music" to describe that sort of bland new-agey pabulum. (10) Best of all, as mentioned on p. 2, every passenger is entitled to two bottles of liquor and one of wine, delivered to the room.

A land route from Tallinn to Riga is only 450 km and is estimated to take under five hours, but the ship's journey is scheduled for 19 hours! That is, we left Tallinn a little before 4:00 yesterday afternoon and don't arrive in Riga until close to 11:00 this morning. The reason, it seems, is that although the two countries are adjacent, the water journey must take a circuitous route to skirt various small and large islands in the Gulf of Riga.

My sciatica has been acting up the past few days. I have some pain when walking on uneven pavements on city streets and some difficulty when ascending or descending stairs on buses, at cathedrals, etc. But, noble trouper that I am, I ignore the pain most of the time. (Alas, I can see the future and already know that August 28 is going to present some new problems for me.)

We decide to have breakfast at *Compass Rose* today. I wonder what immigration will be like in Riga. (In Finland and Estonia, we disembarked without even needing to show our passports; but in St. Petersburg we were carefully scrutinized before being allow to set foot on the soil of Mother Russia.)

Because we will not dock until late morning, we take advantage of the down time by reading (TMOU) or attending a lecture (TWOU) on *Fabergé* and its founder, Carl Fabergé, known affectionately as "Imperial Jeweler to the Tsars." The company's most famous product is the Easter egg, available in various sizes and made of precious metals decorated with gemstones. Mercifully, none were offered for sale in the ship's boutique. Once the spell of the jewelry lecture has worn off, TWOU joins her husband in the room to read.

We arrive in Riga at 10:45 and are docked on the Daugava River, very close to an attractive suspension bridge that seems clogged with traffic no matter the time of day. It is a warm and humid day, the air quality is poor, and it feels like it might rain (but, in fact, doesn't).

**PUN ALERT:** When people die here, do they undergo Riga Mortis?

Our tour bus departs at 1:45. The excursion is supposed to last 3.5 hours and, in fact, does take exactly that long: my last picture in the city will be snapped at 5:10. Our guide is named Valentina and, although fluent, her English is heavily accented\* and a bit difficult to understand. She also

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\*Prior to this, our only other contact with someone who spoke Latvian as a child was the late Gleb Mamantov, a colleague at Tennessee and Head of the Chemistry Department from 1979 to 1995. He and his family fled Latvia in 1944 to escape the advancing Russians and lived for four years in a displaced persons camp in Germany. In 1949, the family emigrated to the U.S. where Gleb earned the B.S. and Ph.D. at LSU. He was very proud of his use of written and spoken English. Although accented, his speech was vastly clearer than Valentina's, except for an inability to express the consonant pair TH (for example, he would pronounce 1,000 as "tauzend"). One can imagine his horror when a typesetter for a journal misspelled a word in the title of a research paper as Flourescence. In 1993, he returned to Latvia for the first time in 50 years where he was made a lifetime member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

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seems to be on auto-pilot much of the time, spewing streams of facts and features while barely pausing to take a breath or for questions from the group. On the drive to downtown, we learn that Latvia's population is over 700,000 (down from nearly 1 million in 1991), making it the third largest city on the Baltic (after St. Petersburg and Stockholm). Latvians and Russians, at about 42% each, are the two largest ethnic groups in the city; the remainder are Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles, and others. The language is closer to Lithuanian than to any other; in fact, citizens from each country can understand one another. (To my untrained eye, the written language resembles Hindi.) The city is about 15% green space and about 1% water, at least that's what I wrote in my notes. Valentina also recommends that we make another trip to Latvia and take a tour, 70 km, with a company whose name sounds like Ron Darling - surely not!!

Valentina says that the average salary equates to about 920 USD per month. The country has an income tax of 23% and a social security tax of 24%. The three principal religions are Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Russian Orthodox, but the estimate is that only about 17% believe in a deity. The average family size is 1.5 children and the divorce rate is very high at 33%.

We find that the city is filled with tour groups on foot, several of them from *Regent Seven Seas*. Valentina leads us from site to site, but often does not wait for the entire group to reassemble before soldiering on to the next venue. As noted, she seemed to be programmed - but to her credit she did get us back to the ship on time. Even when we're close enough to hear her patter, her speech is often lost in the traffic sounds and other sounds of the city. It would have been much better had she worn a portable microphone, as did Polina and as do some of the other tour guides in Riga.

Riga seems not as prosperous as Tallinn. Aside from the mobs of tourists, locals do not seem to be mingling in the city center, nor are the outdoor cafes as well populated. Also, to the extent that one can judge, the facial expressions are much more dour. As we walk and also travel by bus through the city, we see rather ordinary buildings and drab public squares. The most interesting architectural features are the *art nouveau* (or *jugendstil*, auf Deutsch) sculptures, gargoyles, and designs on the sides of office and apartment buildings. Terraces and gardens have rather elaborate iron-work fences. Mikhail Eisenstein, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian architect and father of pioneering film director Sergei Eisenstein, designed a dozen of these buildings. We visit the Jugendstil Museum to see its magnificent spiral staircase. (For images of the human figures on the surfaces of buildings, you can consult this URL: <http://www.szecesszio.com/category/latvian-jugendstil-in-riga/> or the pictures that I've posted at Picasa.) According to Valentina, the apartments in these old buildings are very small (200-500 sq m) and very pricey (in the millions of euros). Another famous resident was Richard Wagner, who lived in Riga during 1837-1839 where he wrote *The Flying Dutchman*. (This seems as wrong-headed as if Rembrandt\* had painted *The Drapers' Guild of Latvia*.)

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\*One of Rembrandt's best known paintings, mainly because it was used for the cover of the Dutch Masters Cigar box, is *The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild*.

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The old town is more interesting, some of these structures dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. There are churches (of varying denominations and age), shopping squares, residential and office buildings and although I took nearly 200 pictures I'm unable to identify what is in most of them. Partly this is because the plaques and legends are written in a language so remote from English or German or French that I can't even begin to guess the words. In one square there is a very tall Christmas tree, adorned with flowers, in celebration of the legend that the first Christmas tree was in Riga, some 500 years ago. Toward the end of our forced march, we visit a lovely city park. On a small bridge over a canal, an iron fence is adorned with hundreds of bicycle locks. The tradition is that when a couple marries, they put a lock on the fence, then toss the key into the canal to signify that the marriage will go on forever. (Considering the 33% divorce rate, this tradition is more "wishful thinking" than reality.) By the end of the day, although we had exchanged our remaining EEKs (ya gotta love it!) for Latvian Lats, we spend not one lat on food or souvenirs.

(Back in the States, I have just consulted the journal being kept by TWOU. She has details, ten pages worth, on Riga's buildings, the churches, interesting historical vignettes, character studies, and so on. I'm so jealous! There are two choices that I could make: (1) plagiarize what she's written or (2) ignore what she's written. I choose the latter, and so my Riga journal comes to an end.) It has been a long day and we are very hot and tired and covered with sweat. What better remedy than a cold drink (*mojito* for Lee, beer for me) on the ship's pool deck!

We have dinner at *Compass Rose*. The ship leaves the port at 6:45, so I take pictures from the dining room of the departure past ugly freighters, cranes, and other industrial paraphernalia. At dinner, there are two interesting conversations going on at nearby tables. Now please understand, I don't eavesdrop (well, not usually, anyway) but these conversations are so animated and so loud that one can't resist listening. Actually there is a third "situation" that bugs TWOU more than it does me. There is a large extended Spanish family of at least three generations on board. This evening, the younger children are seated near us and are "supervised" (or not) by a teenage sibling and a dour-looking Nanny. They are noisy and unruly ... but eventually they leave the dining room.

And now for the two conversations. In one, a rather loud Canadian man, wearing a yellow bowling shirt, is explaining the rules of Canadian football to his male companion (while the two women at the table carry on a quiet conversation between themselves). Further, he boasts about the wines that he bought *by the case* for a charity dinner at his home. And he continues with a learned disquisition on the proper way to decant red wine. His final words of wisdom: "In my life, I've done nearly everything that's immoral or illegal." (I worry that he may be packing heat, but as everyone did go through metal detectors when we boarded maybe we're safe.) Does the phrase "Ugly Canadian" carry the same weight as "Ugly American"? In this case it should.

The other conversation is almost beyond belief. I'll type this from my own notes and failing memory, then check Lee's account to see if she has details that I missed. Imagine a middle-aged couple, she of considerable girth, he looking frail, dragging an oxygen tank, and wishing he were somewhere else. We first sense the turmoil when she complains, loudly, to the waiter that lobster, although not on the menu at *Compass Rose*, was supposed to be delivered to her table because she couldn't get a reservation at *Signature* or *Prime7* (I forget which). She then informs the waiter, in no uncertain terms, about the proper way (the *only* way) to cook a lobster (i.e., broiled not boiled and with the claws still attached, etc.) The poor harassed waiter, reeling from the barrage, calls over his dining room supervisor, a delightful woman with whom we had already had pleasant interactions. Concluding the barrage about the lobster, the patron then turns to the subject of salt. That's right, salt. Good old NaCl. Common table salt. The woman, now bestowed (by the Magids) with the *nom de guerre* Madam Salt, complains that every meal she's had on board has been lacking in salt. Asks the supervisor, "Why not add salt when the meal is brought to your table?" "It's not the same as when salt is added as the food is being prepared!" After a bit, the conversation tails off (or we've lost interest) and the supervisor leaves. Shortly afterwards, the chief chef (I like that combination of words), Klaus Reinmüller, wearing his kitchen whites and chef's toque, comes to our table and says, "I understand zat you haf complaints about ze food?" "No, not we," I say laughing, "It's the woman at the table over there. She says that there's not enough salt in the food. But if you're interested in our recommendation, please do not increase the salt in your cooking." So he walks over to Madam Salt's table and the conversation, if that's what it can be called, begins anew. She claims that government guidelines require that we should all have more salt in our diet. That's strange - my memory is that the USDA says that we eat too much salt and has proposed a *maximum* recommended daily allowance. (Lee's recollection is that she advised the supervisor that *Regent Seven Seas* should not be intimidated by Big Brother's views on how much salt is good for us.) She finally recommends that the kitchen staff watch TV cooking shows on the matter of salt and learn from them. Somehow, she is finally mollified, the chef leaves, and *mirabile dictu*,\* her lobster does arrive. When it comes time for

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\*Tom Heffernan of the UT English Department had a very ordinary student who turned in a paper that was better than Tom expected. He congratulated the student and wrote "mirabile dictu" on

the page. The student, incensed, went to the department head to complain that his professor called him a miserable dick. True story (if Heffernan is to be believed).

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us to order dessert, the dining room supervisor comes over to take our order. I ask her if she had "fun" with her demanding diner. Later, when she brings us our second cups of coffee, we tell her, again, how much we enjoy the food. She's very appreciative and says that we've made her day. So, just to be mischievous, as we're walking out I whisper to her, "By the way, there's too much salt in the food." Laughter ensues. (On the preceding page I talked about the Ugly Canadian. Now we know that there is at least one Ugly American also on board. We will see her and her husband several more times during the cruise, but are never close enough to detect other weird conversations.)

Madam Salt may have a soul-brother. In the November 5, 2010 issue of *The New York Times* is an article about Texas governor Rick Perry: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/05/us/politics/05perry.html> He has written a book that many observers think is an opening salvo in a possible presidential bid in 2012. In the book, he writes "We are fed up with being overtaxed and overregulated. We are tired of being told how much salt we can put on our food, what windows we can buy for our house, what kinds of cars we can drive, what kinds of guns we can own, what kinds of prayers we are allowed to say and where we can say them, what political speech we are allowed to use to elect candidates, what kind of energy we can use, what kind of food we can grow, what doctor we can see, and countless other restrictions on our right to live as we see fit." Whew! I wonder where Madam Salt stands on issues of school prayer and gun control, but I can guess.

We return to our room to read. And we turn clocks and watches back one more hour, in preparation for our arrival in Sweden tomorrow. (It's at this point that I also realize that the time stamp in my new camera has been set for 2009. So, while turning the clock back one hour, I turn the calendar one year ahead.)

### Wednesday, August 18

TWOU awakens at about 2:00 because of heavy seas that are causing every panel in the ceiling and wall to creak and rattle. TMOU, untroubled and conscience-clear, sleeps through it. The weather is supposed to be a bit cooler today, which would be most welcome. In fact, the skies are bright and there is a nice breeze as we round the northern tip of Gotland and head toward Visby where we arrive at 7:45. According to Wikipedia, Gotland "is a county, province, municipality and diocese of Sweden" (can't they decide on which *one*?) and, at 3,140 sq km, the largest island in the Baltic Sea. Its principal town and capital is Visby. We return to *La Veranda* for breakfast.

**OBSERVATION:** The vast majority of the staff in the dining rooms and the cabins are Asian, but very few are Chinese or Japanese. One sees faces that suggest India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines.

**OBSERVATION:** In every city that we've visited thus far, there are surprisingly few wild haircuts and hair color, tattoos, body piercing, etc. So are Lisbeth Salander and her pals not representative of the region?

At about 9:00, we are directed to the Constellation Theater where a large crowd has already assembled. The cruise ship is anchored some distance from shore, so small tenders (tender mercies?) will carry us to the port. Everyone needs to get a tender ticket (or even a rough one), hence the crowd. Because the Magids had visited Visby 12 years earlier, we decide against any of the organized tours; thus we are the last to be issued tickets for a tender. (The temptation to swim to shore quickly passes because the distance is quite substantial.) At about 10:00, we are finally able to board a tender ... and a lovely one it is. (♪ *Love me tender, love me sweet ...* ♪) After the last tender

has departed, the ship moves to a new anchored position to take on potable water. I do hope that the tenders will be able to locate it in its new location.

**PUN ALERT:** I hope they won't be asked to tender our resignations if we don't get back. Or as Keats said, "Tender is the night/ And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne." Right!

We walk past the Visby Hotel, where we had stayed in 1998,\* and head to the nearby Gotlands

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\*The dedicated reader will recall my contention that TWOU never, ever forgets a restaurant meal. As evidence, I quote from her journal entry: "However, we do find Rosengarden in the Stora Torget ... Lee ate gravlax with mustard sauce there in 1984!" (That's from a solo visit 14 years earlier than ours in 1998.

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Fornsal (the museum of antiquities) that we were so impressed by on our first visit. And it does not disappoint. The first room has a vast array of ancient grave stones, head stones, and capstones, all carved and painted with spectacular designs and runes; some date from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Another room has graves and skeletons that are 9,000 years old. And another has Viking treasures and old armor. Finally, there is a section devoted to Swedish life in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

We wander through the city, along the 13<sup>th</sup> century city wall (with its spectacular guard towers and town gates) that surrounds the town, past several ruins of very impressive cathedrals; all of the courtyards are closed (because tourist season ended on August 15!) , so the best that we can do is peek inside the iron gates and take what pictures are possible. We pass the ruined Churches of St. Karin, St. Lars, St. Drotten (I thought that it was Denmark where Shakespeare alleged something was rotten), St. Clemens, and St. Nikolai, all dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries when Visby was an important city in the Hanseatic League. We stroll through the old residential area with its charming (and very small) houses, in the shadow of the wall that looms everywhere. We enter Santa Maria Cathedral (Domkyrken S:ta Maria), also from the 12<sup>th</sup> century but still standing. It is a functioning church, unlike all of the other ruined cathedrals, and very lovely.

After all of this walking, I'm getting hot and tired and my sciatica is beginning to act up, so we stop at a restaurant for a refresher. I sit at an outdoor table to reserve it while Lee goes inside to order. Alas, they have no beer, so I settle for a coffee; TWOU has a Latte and a very rich-looking dessert. As we make our way back to the pier, we stop in a number of shops so that Lee can unload her Swedish currency, thus saving that country's economy from ruin. We get to the tender at 2:15 and it finds its way back to the mother ship. I'm glad that we cut the day short because it looks like a storm is coming. An ice cream at 3:30 hits the spot.

This morning's USA TIMES reported another Seattle day over 90°. This is too much, think I, so we go to the ship's library and locate a copy (actually a photocopy) of today's *USA TODAY*. In fact, Seattle is experiencing a heat wave. I take advantage of the free time to do a second load of laundry. I had hoped to do one tomorrow, but our excursion to Gdansk leaves too early in the morning.

All of the tenders having tenderly delivered their precious cargo, the ship is underway at 4:45, 15 minutes ahead of schedule. Dinner, tonight, is at *Signature*, the French restaurant on board. The food is excellent, but the service is (to put it mildly) pretentious. Regardless of whether the table has as few as two people (ours) or six (one near us), all of the main courses are delivered at once, each covered by a metal dome. As many serving people as are needed surround the table and, at the count of *un deux trois*, all of the covers are lifted simultaneously. I'm should be impressed, but I can't help giggling.

Back in the room after dinner, we enjoy some drinks. I finish *Magnificent Catastrophe* and begin Jane Gardam's *The Queen of the Tambourine*.

## Thursday, August 19

*This* time, I'm the one who is awakened during the night by the creaking timbers; I have a hard time getting back to sleep. We rise early to get a meal at *La Veranda* ahead of our tour bus's 8:30 departure for Gdansk. The ship arrives in the port of Gdynia (which is 27 km from Gdansk) at 7:30, a half-hour early.

**ANOTHER UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION:** One "type" of female passenger on the cruise ship fits an interesting profile. From her dress and the excesses of makeup and jewelry and perfume, she is clearly a woman of means, but not one who bears the stamp of having graduated from one of the Seven Sisters. Nor is she a trophy wife on the arm of an elderly gent. Rather, she gives the appearance of having grown up on the mean streets and, having met her man or run her own business or whatever, has now reached the stage where all is right with the world. (*Her* world.) Her face is hard and angry-looking and may well have benefited from (or been ruined by) several encounters with Botox. She spends much of her time in the ship's boutiques, purchasing things that she doesn't need, just because she can.

**AND ANOTHER:** On our walking tour through Riga there is an interesting couple: he is frail and slow of foot, whereas she can best be described as one mean old broad. She has a cigarette-scarred voice that would scare a longshoreman. Toward the end of our walking tour, she growls at her husband, "Gimme some money so that I can use the goddamned bathroom." Does he have a voice? I never hear him speak.

Gdynia is a working port with lots of cranes, freighters, and tankers. The day is sunny, breezy, and cool. Our tour bus is a magnet for the previously-mentioned Spanish family, many of whom pile on board along with their noisy children. Oh, joy! Our tour guide is a delightful young man named Tomas. As we drive toward Gdansk, he tells us about the cities that we are passing through. Gdynia has a population of about 250,000. It had been a sleepy town prior to World War I, but in 1920 the Polish government decided to build a major seaport there. The city began to grow shortly afterwards. It was occupied by the Germans during World War II, renamed *Gotenhafen*, and turned into a naval base. The people of the modern city are very much profit-oriented and business-savvy; alas, the architecture is ugly and unimaginative, and the buildings are covered with graffiti. (Tomas jokes that he is taking us back to the 1970s and 1980s "when Diana Ross sang *Chain Reaction*, Barbra Streisand sang *Season of Love*, and it was still socially acceptable to buy Old Spice as a Christmas present." Quite a jokester, that Tomas!)

We drive south through a forest and emerge in Sopot, population 40,000, about 10 km from Gdynia. Sopot is known for its beaches, its night clubs, its restaurants, and its *laissez-faire* attitude, quite the opposite of what prevails in Gdynia. It is not unusual to see drunks staggering out of the all-night bars and casinos in the morning, at just the time that the industrious people of Gdynia are going off to work. According to Thomas, Sopot has a statue of a man that is deliberately hung upside down so that when it rains, it collects the tears of the 500 women he deserted. Alas, Lee's notes and mine differ on the man's name. Lee has written Kinsley and I, on the bouncing bus, write something that looks like Klar Kuster. I can find neither name on the web nor can I find any reference to an upside-down statue. Sigh.

Poland has been in the EU since 2004, but will not start using the euro until 2013. In 1989, under Communist rule, the average salary was \$20/month; it is now \$1300. The income tax rate has three brackets: zero for incomes below 3,000 Zloty (about \$990), 18% for incomes above 3,000 and up to 85,000 Zloty (\$28,000), and 32% for incomes over this amount. One pays 8% for health insurance, but one has no choice of the primary care physician. TWOU, in her journal, is quite insistent that Tomas told us the following fascinating facts: (1) Poles do not each lunch but have a second breakfast of sandwiches and tea (sounds like lunch to me!) and (2) 25% of all storks are born in Poland (which must do wonders for the delivery of human babies). Can that stat be true? Apparently

it is. According to what looks like a reputable web site, "Every year 41 thousand stork couples, out of 160 thousand living all over the world, come to Poland. Thus, every fourth stork is Polish!"

Another 10 km to the south lies Gdansk, population 435,000, and what a history it has had! From 997-1308 it was part of the Kingdom of Poland, but from 1308-1454 it was made part of the territory of the Teutonic Order. During this time, its name became Danzig. After the Thirteen Year's War, it became part of Poland again where it remained until 1569, having reestablished the name Gdansk. For the next 230 years, it was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but in 1793 it became part of Prussia. From 1807-1814, it was the Free City of Danzig, but this didn't last long because from 1815-1871 it became part of Prussia again. From 1871 to 1918 it was part of Imperial Germany, then a free city (1918-1939), then part of Nazi Germany (1939-1945), and for the next 44 years part of the People's Republic of Poland. From 1989 on, it is been part of the Republic of Poland; and it is to learn about this last period of history that we have come here. (For details on the kings, emperors, conquerors, etc. involved in these incredible power struggles over one city, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gdansk>.) Gdansk is less prosperous than Gdynia, but Tomas rationalizes this by saying that families are valued over wealth. Perhaps.

We arrive in the old city which was restored after the 1940s bombings, first by Germans and then by Russians. The first shots of World War II were fired by German ships on the harbor of Gdansk. Two days later, England and France declared war on Germany. Our first stop is at a shop that sells amber, a major export of the city as the majority of the world's amber deposits are along the Baltic coast. An employee gives us a lecture about amber and tells us how to recognize the real stuff from the fake. We then have 30 minutes of free time to wander through this public square, snoop in the stores, and take pictures of "the green gate," the town hall, and the Neptune fountain. The facades on the storefronts and the statues are spectacular, much in the spirit of the Jugendstil that we encountered in Riga. Shoppers and strollers are everywhere and the stall owners are doing a thriving business. We return to the amber shop, partly to rejoin the tour but mainly so that TWOU can purchase a pendant made of .... you guessed it ... amber.

Tomas then takes us on a walking tour of old Gdansk. We pass all sorts of historic buildings about which he has clever stories, none of which I can remember because I had no opportunity to write them down. We visit the enormous St. Mary's church with its spectacular astronomical clock, dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The clock displays the time and date, the phases of the moon, the position of the moon and sun in relation to the zodiac signs, and the calendar of saints. It is quite impossible to figure out at first meeting; I'd love to have some time to study it. (Alas, it does not predict the outcome of NFL games.) The church was built to accommodate 25,000 worshipers (all standing, of course). The walls are decorated with masterpieces of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque painting. (Many works of art had been pilfered by one occupying power or another over the centuries.) Originally a Catholic church, it became Lutheran in 1577. There are over 500 floor tombs; German Lutherans saw no disrespect in walking on them because what they house is, after all, just flesh. The most recent addition to the church is a the tomb of Maciej Plazynski, a social activist and humanitarian, who died in the April 2010 plane crash that also claimed the life of President Lech Kaczynski and many high government officials.

We walk back to the bus via a street of former brothels, now lined with amber shops (surprise!). Anna Schilling, Copernicus's cleaning lady (who was really his mistress) lived here, but recently-discovered letters between the two of them dealt entirely with astronomy. Sigh.

We go next to the Museum of Solidarity. It is below ground and very impressive. There are wall posters, videos, newspaper articles, etc. describing the start of the Solidarity Movement. According to Wikipedia, "Solidarity is a Polish trade union federation founded in September 1980 at the Gdansk Shipyard, and originally led by Lech Walesa. Solidarity was the first non-communist party-controlled trade union in a Warsaw Pact country. In the 1980s it constituted a broad anti-bureaucratic social movement. The government attempted to destroy the union during the period of martial law in the

early 1980s and several years of political repression, but in the end it was forced to start negotiating with the union. The Round Table Talks between the government and the Solidarity-led opposition led to semi-free elections in 1989. By the end of August a Solidarity-led coalition government was formed and in December 1990 Walesa was elected President of Poland."

Tomas is very emotional as he describes the events that occurred when he was a young boy. He begins his narrative at Christmas, 1970, when the government lowered the prices of refrigerators and locomotives(!) but raised them on sugar and flour. This led to protests in both Gdynia and Gdansk, after which the government promised a pay increase; so the people returned to work. In August, 1980, the 16,000 workers at the Lenin shipyards (those now called the Gdansk shipyards) mounted a protest in support of Anna Walentinowicz, a crane-operator who was laid off for political activism in her 60s. (At age 91, she died in the same April plane crash that claimed the life of the president earlier this year.) Lech Walesa, who had been fired because of his militant activities four years earlier, was six hours late arriving at the protest because his wife was delivering their sixth child. When he reached the shipyard, he was forced to climb over the gate; he joined the deliberations with the government that led to the Gdansk Agreement in which the government permitted the formation of a labor union, Solidarity. The list of 21 demands were written on plywood and posted on the shipyard's gates. When Solidarity signed its agreement with the government in August, Walesa used an enormous ballpoint pen carrying the picture of John Paul II. (The plywood plank containing the demands and the pen are among the items on display in the museum.)

In the ensuing years there were arrests and martial law imposed by President Jaruzelski (at the insistence of Brezhnev) and there were armored vehicles in the streets, running down the crowds that would gather. Finally in 1989 Walesa headed new talks that led to the formation of a parliamentary government. Solidarity won 99% of the seats in the first government and Walesa became president of the country. One of the most impressive displays in the museum is a set of large red dominoes: Poland → Hungary → DDR → Czechoslovakia → Bulgaria → Romania → Lithuania → Estonia → Latvia → Moldova → Ukraine → Belarus → Russia → Slovenia → Bosnia - Herzegovina → Macedonia → Croatia → Serbia. (Did we leave anyone out?)

We walk to the monument erected to honor the ship workers who were killed during the 1980s. And from there, we go to the Gdansk shipyard to see the gate that Walesa had to climb to arrive at the meeting with the authorities. The tales that Tomas spins are wonderful and dramatic, filled with wonderful vignettes, but one can't help wondering how much folklore and urban myth have crept into Poland's "creation myth" in the few years since (cf. George Washington and the cherry tree).

**SEVERAL MORE UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATIONS:** Let the xenophobia rage - I'll admit it, I'm prejudiced. Against certain people. I've mentioned the large extended family of three generations of Spanish speakers, probably from Spain but that's not certain. (Lee overheard another passenger's saying that the family is related to ARod, but that's unlikely.) The children, who sat at the dinner table next to ours the same evening that we encountered Madam Salt, were noisy and unruly, as kids often are. But there was essentially no supervision by the nanny nor any attempt to quiet them. Well, at least they left ... eventually, although on another occasion we were nearly bowled over in the ship's staircase by a marauding group of kids. A significant portion of the adult contingent is on the Gdansk tour bus with us. Often, when Tomas would be giving information over the bus's PA system, the adults would engage in loud conversations in Spanish that drowned out the travel information. Perhaps they don't understand English (unlikely, but possible) but that's no reason to interfere with everyone else's opportunity to listen. And then at the Gdansk shipyard, I try to get a picture of the historic gate, but each of them, one at a time, has to run up and stand in front of the gate so that his/her picture can be taken by someone else in the group. The oldest member of the group, the patriarch I assume, seems to have a sense of entitlement. He orchestrates the picture-taking, bringing one and another member of his posse up to the gate to be photographed. I finally give up and take a picture with one of them standing in the way. Beyond this, we were jostled by the adults inside the Museum of Solidarity. End of rant.

We return to the ship at 2:00 and race to the 11<sup>th</sup> level grill where a German buffet is on offer. Or I should say *had* been on offer. What remains is cold and soggy, and it's also hard to find a place to sit. Such is the price of trying to improve one's knowledge! Also, the wind has picked up and there is a threat of rain, so we eat quickly and get inside, but not before I explore Level 12 just to see where it goes and what's available: a small outdoor tennis court; golf driving range and putting green; and shuffleboard. The ship leaves port at 3:00 and we go to the third Richard Tallboys lecture: "Do Europeans Understand Each Other?" Dinner is at *Compass Rose*. At a nearby table, there is a tall, lightly-browned man and his white wife, along with a contingent of very attentive and fawning fellow diners. The wait staff is unusually solicitous; several different employees come over to greet him effusively. Clearly he is a celebrity: possibly a drug-smuggling mafia don or, more likely, a well-known Hollywood type. I think that he looks like Smokey Robinson, but what do I know about popular culture? We'll never know his identity, for certain, but at least we can report that a celebrity is sailing with us (even if we'd not seen him until the next-to-last day of the cruise).

When we return from dinner, there is a note indicating that we must have our suitcases packed and in the hallway by 11:00 tomorrow evening. This could be interesting, given that we are scheduled to begin a 12.5-hour excursion to Berlin at 8:30 in the morning. To make the situation even more ominous, at 9:00 in the evening Captain Pier Paolo Scala (why is he not a tenor at La Scala?) makes an announcement on the ship's public address that because of high seas, we won't arrive in Warnemünde at 8:00 am, as scheduled; instead we'll be delayed about 1.5 hours. So we pack our suitcases tonight and hope that we'll be back from tomorrow's excursion before 11:00 pm. Of course, if we're not back, neither are our fellow tourists - and what can the ship's staff do to us (except to throw our luggage overboard when we try to give it to them later than requested)?

### Friday, August 20

I have a light breakfast at *La Veranda*, having consumed so much food in recent days that it borders on the immoral. (TWOU overdoses on Eggs Benedict, today's special.) At 8:15, the captain announces on the PA that we will dock at 9:30; cruise director Lorraine Weimerskirch (love that name!) announces that the excursions will proceed as planned and that we should assemble in the Constellation Theater at 9:15, ready to disembark on a moment's notice. Because the schedule is shifted by about 1.5 hours, she announces that the ship will not sail until 11:00 tonight, thereby implying that we tourists had damned well better be back by then - otherwise, sayonara! She also announces that the deadline for putting our luggage in the hallway is extended to 12:30 am and that *La Veranda* will be open tonight from 10:30 to midnight for those who've not had a chance to have dinner. (According to today's USA TIMES, the high temperature in Seattle and in Berlin will be 72°.)

Our bus departs at 9:35 on its 3.5-hour trip to Berlin. The passage through Warnemünde is painfully slow, but finally we're in the open countryside. The tour guide is a young woman named Tina; she will be replaced by another guide once we reach Berlin. That's good because she seems tentative in her spiel and surprisingly unknowledgeable about the area, even though her command of English is quite good. At about 11:30, we halt at a rest stop so that people can do ... whatever. A small box lunch (sandwich, piece of fruit, cookie) is distributed to the passengers.

Sitting near us is team member from the ship's Destination Services, a very pleasant young woman from South Africa. She's served on cruise ships for five years, the last two with *Regent Seven Seas*, and has sailed to New Zealand, Asia, the South Pacific, and (of course) the Baltic. She travels with her boyfriend, also a crew member; this is a practice encouraged by the cruise line as a way of retaining good young employees. She and her boyfriend have no permanent home: when they're in South Africa, they stay with her parents, when they're in Australia, with his. Having encountered several "difficult" clients during our time on board, I ask if she has had to deal with noteworthy problem-cases. She said that she has, that there often are voyagers who are not satisfied with anything and who get angry when things are exactly the way their travel agent said that they would be.



I tell her the saga of Madam Salt - she replies that she'd never met anyone quite like that. She and the rest of the crew have cabins on Levels 3, 4, 5, and part of 6; their rooms are equipped as are ours and are about the same size, but shared by at least two people.

At noon, the bus leaves the rest stop and heads toward Berlin. We pass many farms, some of which are equipped with large windmills that are spinning lustily. Fifty minutes later we are on the outskirts of Berlin, where we pick up our guide, René, about 40 years old and married. Despite the French name, he is definitely German; having studied for a full year at Brown University, his English is superb. He "warns" us that we have a full program (a forced march?): six hours, going all over the city, making many stops, and visiting interesting places. Indeed, we do make relatively few "indoor stops" but lots of photo stops.

But first, some vital statistics: Berlin has a population of about 3.4 million of whom some 470,000 are foreigners (largely Turks and Eastern Europeans). Like the U.S., unemployment is high (12-13%) and most people rent rather than buy. The cost of living is quite low: René claims that prices are 1/3 those in Paris or London, but I can't find confirmation of this on the web. (The number seems absurd - maybe he meant 1/3 less?) Berlin was, of course, the center of German arts and culture before Hitler's rise to power in 1933. In May, 1945, he and his mistress committed suicide in a bunker that was located below the Reich Chancellery. According to Wikipedia, "Some of the corridors of the bunker still exist today, although now in disuse and sealed from the public."

We drive past the obligatory nudist beach (oops, too fast to take pictures) and through a district of mansions. Our first stop is at the Allied Museum. As described by Wikipedia, "It documents the political history and the military commitments and roles of the Western Allies (US, France, and Britain) in Germany – particularly Berlin – between 1945 and 1994." In addition to military hardware, there are displays about the Berlin Wall, Checkpoint Charlie, the Berlin airlift, and Jack Kennedy's memorable visit in 1993. We then drive to the Airlift Memorial in front of Tempelhof Airport. The airport terminal, now unoccupied, is *enormous*. It had been a major commercial airport prior to World War II and was enlarged and reinforced during the war. In June, 1948, the Soviets canceled all land traffic into the allied-controlled sectors of Berlin. They did, however, allow flights to Berlin along three 25-mile-wide air corridors across the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany; U.S. and English planes were warned not to stray from this corridor, lest they be shot down. The airlift of food, coal, and other essentials continued for the next 11 months. The memorial symbolizes the three corridors that were open to allied flights; for a picture, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin\\_Tempelhof\\_Airport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Tempelhof_Airport).

We next travel to a busy commercial area that had once marked the intersection of the American, French, English, and Russian sectors. This is where Checkpoint Charlie was located, but in its place now is a facsimile building with a replica of the famous "You are now leaving the American Sector" sign. (There are also replicas - actors I suppose - impersonating border guards; for a few euros, they'll permit you to take their picture.) The Berlin Wall was erected by the Soviets in 1961. In 1989, thousands of celebrating young people climbed the wall and began dismantling it by hand. The full demolition of the wall was completed by 1991. The wall, as such, no longer exists. Various major streets have cobblestones crisscrossing them, signifying where the wall had been. (We'll see what remains of the wall at a later stop today.)

Just a few blocks from Checkpoint Charlie are several Trabants on display. The Trabant (affectionately, or disparagingly, called the Trabi) was one of the worst cars ever made. They were produced from 1957 to 1989; its 26 hp engine could move the car from zero to 60 in ... 20 seconds! According to Wikipedia, "There were two main problems with the engine: the smoky exhaust and the pollution it produced—nine times the amount of hydrocarbons and five times the carbon monoxide emissions of the average European car of 2007." If one is brave, a Trabi-safari tour of East Berlin can be arranged for a modest sum.

Shortly before 3:00, René takes us to a midtown shopping area where we are encouraged to stroll or

window-shop or buy a snack. In Daimler City Center, Lee and I find a fast-food bratwurst place in an American-style food court where we again encounter the Destination Services woman. It's a bit difficult to carry on a conversation (the restaurant is noisy) but I learn that all of the crew members are invited to go on any of the excursions that they wish, as long as they are not on duty that day.

And we are off again, past the Holocaust Memorial which consists of 2711 concrete slabs of varying height spread out over 19,000 sq m. According to the designer, "the stelae are designed to produce an uneasy, confusing atmosphere" and I suppose they do. It would have been nice to stop, but parking is difficult and we are on a "forced march" (or, more precisely) "forced drive." One block away is the Brandenburg Gate, but although we stop for a photo-op, we can't get close because security has blocked it off for tonight's "Dinner for Democracy" and its 1500 guests. (Nobody from the cruise is invited, damn it.) Again we see the cobblestones marking where the wall had stood before it was demolished. The streets in the area have distinct names: *Strasse des 17 Juni* commemorates an uprising by East German citizens in 1953, whereas famous political figures are commemorated by *Willy-Brandt-Strasse*, *Yitzhak-Rabin-Strasse*, *Konrad-Adenauer-Strasse*, and *John-Foster-Dulles-Allee*. Not far away is the Berlin Philharmonie (home of the Berliner Philharmoniker) which is, of course, on *Herbert-von-Karajan Strasse*.

The bus drives by, but doesn't stop at, the Reichstag (where parliament sits) and the nearby modern chancellery (built in 2001) where Angela Merkel and her administration are housed. I snap pictures from the moving vehicle. We cross the River Spree and gaze upon the huge Hauptbahnhof (1400 trains per day) and then it's on to East Berlin with its ugly government-built buildings along what had been the dividing line between East and West. We traverse Museum Island and stop at the Gendarmenmarkt, the spectacular square that is the site of the Konzerthaus (where the Berlin Symphony Orchestra plays) and the French and German Cathedrals (both now museums). In December, 1989, at the Konzerthaus, Leonard Bernstein led an orchestra made up of musicians drawn from both East and West Germany as well as the four occupying powers. The central work was Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> symphony, the "choral" symphony, featuring Schiller's "Ode to Joy" in the fourth movement. Bernstein, however, had the singers replace the word *Freude* (joy) by *Freiheit* (freedom).

Next, we stop at the East Side Gallery, an unusual name for a 1.3 km section of the wall (the longest intact stretch of wall that remains) that has been decorated by over a hundred artists. (A number of the paintings have been defaced by graffiti.) We drive beneath the famous deep pink pipelines which carry water from construction sites to the river. Heading back to the city center on *Unter den Linden*, we stop at The *Neue Wache* (New Guard House), built in 1816 and an example of German neoclassical design with its stone steps and its portico of Doric columns. Originally used as a guardhouse, it was been a war memorial for 80 years. Located in the East German sector, after reunification (according to Wikipedia) "the *Neue Wache* was rededicated in 1993, as the 'Central Memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Victims of War and Tyranny.' The GDR memorial piece was removed and replaced by an enlarged version of Käthe Kollwitz's sculpture *Mother with her Dead Son*. This sculpture is directly under the oculus, and so is exposed to the rain, snow and cold of the Berlin climate, symbolizing the suffering of civilians during World War II." Across the street is the neoclassical *Staatsoper*, commissioned by Frederick II in 1741. Across its facade are the words *Fridericus Rex Apollini et Musis* (dedicated to King Friedrich, Apollo and the Muses). Across the street in another direction is the *Kronprinzenpalais* built in 1663; it served as the residence for crown princes but is now an exhibition hall for art works. Finally, across the courtyard from the *Neue Wache* is Humboldt University,\* Berlin's oldest university, dating from 1810. Among the more

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\*Of particular interest to chemists is the fact that August Wilhelm von Hofmann taught there in the mid-1800s. The name is familiar to organic chemists for his discovery of what are now called the Hofmann elimination and Hofmann degradation. (To an outsider, elimination and degradation might sound pejorative, but in fact they are apt descriptors of the reactions he discovered.) Perhaps his greatest achievement was as mentor to the English chemist William Henry Perkin. According to a much-told tale, the 18-year-old Perkin was home from school during Easter

vacation and working in his home laboratory. (Well, didn't *you* work in your home laboratory during school holidays?) Perkin had the idea of synthesizing quinine  $C_{20}H_{24}N_2O_2$  from condensation of two allyltoluidine molecules ( $C_{10}H_{13}N$ ) with an oxidizing agent. Alas, instead of quinine he got a red-brown precipitate. "Encouraged" by this, he tried the reaction with aniline (which was not very pure) and got a black precipitate containing 5% of a dye that we now call aniline purple or mauve. Against the advice of Hofmann, he quit school, founded the British dye industry, and made a fortune. At the age of 36, he returned to academe and basic research; among his discoveries is the Perkin condensation.

famous students and faculty were Heinrich Heine, Arthur Schopenhauer, Albert Einstein, Georg Hegel, Max Planck, Otto von Bismarck, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels. But, I ask, did they have a Division I football team?

Leaving the area, we drive past the Philharmonie. What a bizarre-looking building! I don't care that it is the home for great music by one of the world's outstanding orchestras. Next on our excursion's to-do list is a "shopping opportunity" in a busy section in the middle of the city. Considering our late start, we wondered if this could be dispensed with. But NO - vee are Chermans und vee vill follow ze schedule. Lee recalls that the name of the multi-story mall is the Europa Center and we are amazed, as we wander about, to find a *waffen* (weapon) store selling all manner of serious-looking weapons such as assault rifles. (When we mention this later on the bus, one couple says "Oh, too bad we missed it, our sons are really into guns." Oy!) We pass a KFC with what looks like a diplomatic plaque that reads *The Republic of Fresh - Botschaft*; there is even a war-like chicken as part of the official seal. So we wander about (it's close to 5:00) and we are getting burnt by the late-afternoon brilliant sun. Attempts to find air-conditioned refuge in the various stores are met with failure.

We have one last stop: the enormous Charlottenberg Palace, built in the 1600s on a commission from Sophie Charlotte, wife of King Friedrich I (not to be confused with King Friedrich II, aka Frederick the Great, yet another member of the "Great" family, see pp 11-12). René takes his leave at this point (his car is parked not far away) and we embark on the long drive back to the ship. There is, again, one pit stop and one box of food (sandwich, fruit, sweets). As we enter the parking lot next to the cruise ship at 10:30, I notice a huge crowd on the other side of the immigration building. *Was ist's*, think I? Is there a terrorist on board? Is someone smuggling whisky from the ship? As we get closer, we discover that the crowd is the entire crew, ranging from Captain Pier Paolo Scala through the officers, dining room workers, chefs, seamen, butlers, maids, etc. all of whom are kick-dancing and singing *New York, New York* and *Hello, Dolly* while applauding and cheering the returning passengers from both our bus and the others that arrive at about the same time. 'Tis most weird and a bit embarrassing. From our cabin's balcony, we watch and listen to the continuation of the welcoming reception as the rest of the buses arrive.

## Saturday, August 21

We dock at Copenhagen (or *København*, as it is spelled in their quaint native tongue) at 7:45 while enjoying our final on-board meal at *La Veranda*. It is a bright, sunny day, with moderate temperatures.

We have been issued a "purple tag" to indicate the time that we are scheduled to leave the ship and retrieve our luggage. This is all done very efficiently. We and our bags are whisked by taxi to our hotel, 71 Nyhavn, whose address (surprise!) is Nyhavn 71. Our room, of course, is not yet ready\* at

\*Yet another *ugly American* makes an appearance in the lobby shortly after we arrive. She is incensed that her room is not ready! At 9:00 in the morning!! And even more incensed that the front desk staff cannot find her a suitable room at another hotel. Life is so difficult for some people, eh?

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9:00 am, so we stow the luggage; the lobby is not air-conditioned, so I wonder what we'll find when we get to our room. We head out for a walk to explore the environs. The hotel is in a beautiful area,\*

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\*According to the hotel's web site, "The corner of Nyhavn and Copenhagen Harbour is where the waters, business people, opera singers and lovers meet. Whatever the reason for your next visit to the heart of Copenhagen, 71 Nyhavn Hotel provides an ambient setting for every occasion." "Opera singers"? Well, the opera house is on a close-by island that can be reached by water taxi. "Lovers"? Well, that's up to the patrons, I suppose. And as for "ambient setting," well that could describe anything from a flop house to a 5-star hotel.

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at the end of a canal that fronts the multi-colored homes, warehouses, and businesses that were part of the city's bustling waterfront. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many of these 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings are now boutiques, restaurants, and hotels; and lining both sides of the canal are many outdoor restaurants and taverns.

Neighbors in Gig Harbor had told us that there are two canal tours that embark from this canal: a modestly priced one and a rather expensive one. We leave our luggage in the lobby and arrive, first, at the less expensive one only to find that it is a 20-minute wait for the next sailing; so we swallow our parsimonious (i.e., cheap) pride and go to the more expensive, only to discover that it is fully booked. It matters not, we reason - we can always go on a harbor cruise at a later time. (How are we to know that three solid days of rain will ensue?)

We walk through the beautiful Rosenborg Palace Garden (dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century) and past the Rosenborg castle to reach the National Gallery (Statens Museum for Kunst), Copenhagen's principal art museum, at its 10:00 opening. As expected, the collection is largely Danish (and excellent ... and free!) but other European artists are well represented, and the modern gallery is superb: Picasso, Braque, Leger, Matisse, Modigliani, and others. We tour the museum (un-air-conditioned, of course) for about 1.5 hours, then go to the museum's café for some ice cream. (Alas, after a pleasant day with no pain yesterday, my sciatica is acting up today, thereby limiting the amount of exploration we're able to do.)

**OBSERVATION:** The lower-denomination coins (25 and 50 øre) seem no longer to be in circulation, but the 1- (about 20 US cents), 2-, and 5-krone coins all have a hole in the center. Why? The 10- and 20-krone coins are unholy, so to speak, and of course the paper currency (50 krone and up) is without holes ... usually.

From the National Gallery, we walk to the Resistance Museum which details life in Denmark during the Nazi occupation of World War II. The museum is close to Copenhagen's most famous tourist attraction: The Little Mermaid - except that she's now on loan to Shanghai. The collection is excellent, but there is very little English signage and the building is stiflingly hot; also my sciatica is becoming a problem, so I sit for much of the time that Lee explores the museum. As we leave, I tell the two men at the desk that I'm surprised to see no mention of the story I'd heard, wherein Niels Bohr melted his Nobel Prize medal so that it would not be found by the Nazis when they invaded. They had not heard the story, and so that got me wondering if I'd made it up. Well I did - sort of. On returning home, I consulted *Heisenberg's War* by Thomas Powers where I thought I had read the tale. What *did* happen is that Bohr took the Nobel medals from James Franck and Max von Laue, which had been left in his possession for safe keeping, and dissolved them in aqua regia; he left the solutions in bottles scattered throughout his laboratory. After the war, the Swedish academy recast the medals from the solutions and presented them in 1952. So it's not surprising that the museum employees had no knowledge of what I thought the story was.

Our return to the hotel takes us through the Amalienborg Square and past the palace where the Danish royal family lives in the winter. Very impressive are the many quaintly-garbed guards with their bearskin hats and *Nutcracker* toy soldier uniforms, standing outside their tiny guard houses, patrolling the grounds, their serious-looking rifles with bayonets an indication that they are not just there for the pleasure of the tourists. At 2:45, we are shown to our room which is pleasant but small. And, yes, it does have air-conditioning ... sort of; the air-flow is minimal and the cooling not so good. Oh, well, it's Europe, after all, and we need to accustom ourselves to being uncomfortable. Right?

We then go for a short walk in the immediate vicinity of the hotel, view the opera house across the water, and poke our noses into storefronts. Back at the hotel, we ask for a dinner recommendation at a place that serves "real Danish food" (whatever that might mean). They suggest a place that is a relatively short distance away by foot.

It has begun to rain as we cross a very busy street and head for a pedestrian way (Strøget) that is bustling with stores of all kinds, people of all kinds, and many many open umbrellas. After about 25 minutes, we reach our destination: Københavner Caféen. It is a fascinating place - small (and hot) with a lively crowd of locals who are having a good time. There are old beams overhead, and all of the tables are wooden. At one table is a group of six men who are eating and drinking(!); one person, apparently the designated driver, is being virtuous. At another table, in a private room (but not private enough), is a bachelor party of ten; from time to time, there is a raucous cheer and loud singing as the entire party stands, clinks beer steins, and salutes the lucky/unlucky man who is about to surrender his freedom. (One recognizable song, sung in English, is "Get Me to the Church on Time.") Lee orders gravlax followed by pork, while I have a salad and then hakkebøf (hamburger steak). The portions are *enormous*, much larger than I've ever seen in a restaurant. (Which begs the question, why are Danes not obese?) My salad is huge, easily big enough for two. The owners, a husband and wife who seem to do all of the serving and cooking(!), place a barstool next to our table; on this is balanced a tray with platters for our main courses and vegetables (red cabbage, pickled cucumbers, etc.) and a bowl of boiled potatoes (enough to feed a hungry regiment). I ask the man, "Why such enormous portions?" He answers, "My wife and I don't eat this way, ourselves, but when Danes go to a restaurant, they expect to eat well." We are unable to finish what has been brought to us, not even close. The final bill (including two beers and two coffees plus cookies that we didn't even order) is 641 kr, about \$115 - fairly pricey, but within reason.

With our bellies filled (an understatement) we return in the rain to the hotel. We are wet (from the rain and the sweat) and are barely comforted by the very minimal air conditioning. Sigh. On the positive side, there is a good internet connection so we catch up on email and news. Words out of context: Ron to Lee, who is reaching into a plastic bag filled with goodies, "Could you lay your hand on my nuts?"

**OBSERVATION:** The Danes are very healthy-looking people. One reason is that they ride bicycles nearly everywhere. Today, and over the next nine days, I take pictures of hundreds and hundreds of bikes parked near train stations, bus depots, stores, etc. In downtown Copenhagen, bicyclists tend to be daredevils, as in NYC, but I never see one get hit by a car. It is estimated that 36% of people commute to jobs or school by bike; the goal is to get that number to 50% by 2015. There are bike paths throughout the city, some of them with their own traffic lights. And as we'll see when we get into the countryside, there are always bike paths alongside the various roads.

**OBSERVATION:** The population of Denmark is about 5.4 million, 1.9 million of whom live in metropolitan Copenhagen. The literacy rate is over 98%. Copenhagen is located on the eastern shore of the island called Zealand and is separated by The Great Belt (Storebælt) from the island of Funen, which we will visit in three days; the islands are connected by an incredible bridge (more later). Funen is separated by The Little Belt (Lillebælt) from Jutland, which is a peninsula to the north of Germany. According to an official web site, "Danish citizens may choose between two systems of primary health care: medical care provided free of charge by a doctor whom the individual chooses for

a year and by those specialists to whom the doctor refers the patient; or complete freedom of choice of any physician or specialist at any time, with state reimbursement of about two-thirds of the cost for medical bills paid directly by the patient. Most Danes opt for the former. All patients receive subsidies on pharmaceuticals and vital drugs; everyone must pay a share of dental bills."

**OBSERVATION:** The average height of Danish men is 6', putting them second to the Dutch at 6'1"; Danish women average 5'10". Surprisingly, Denmark is only 36<sup>th</sup> in longevity (the average life expectancy is 78.3 years), just ahead of the U.S. (78.2 years). Health care and pensions are generous and are financed by what are considered the world's highest taxes: a VAT of 25% on most goods and services (including groceries); a progressive income tax ranging from 43% to 63%; and, as we'll learn later on, the tax on purchase of a new car is 150%(!!!) Nevertheless, Danes seem very pleased with the services that they receive and there seem to be no attempts to lower the tax rate. Along with Norway and Sweden, Denmark has the most equal distribution of family income in the World. The average income is about \$36K, second only to Switzerland among European countries.

### Sunday, August 22

We have breakfast in the hotel's dining room, an attractive below-ground-level affair with a very pricey dinner menu posted (more about this tomorrow when we decide - or have it decided for us - to have dinner here.) We notice some very tall men who are eating here; similarly, at the restaurant last night several men at the next table were very tall. I have the same feeling of inferiority that I experienced years ago when living in Houston - those Texans are really tall.

Our room barely cooled down overnight, a consequence of the minimal air flow from the supposed Danish version of air-conditioning. A nice circulating fan would have been nice. Yesterday afternoon, we had reported that two of our lamps wouldn't come on. The desk clerk came to the room and tightened the bulb in one of the lamps (I could have done that, had I known that it was loose) but decided that the other bulb had burned out. When he removed it, he dropped it on the desk where it shattered - a torrent of tiny pieces of glass rained down on the desktop and onto the floor. (We will find pieces of glass for the next couple of days.) I took the occasion to inquire into the health of the air conditioner. He confirmed that it was working perfectly.\* Ha! He also confessed that Danish air

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\*Which reminds me of a joke told to us by a guide at the Edinburgh Castle. He asked, "Do ye know what's worrrrn underrrr a Scotsman's kilt? Nothin' is worrrrn underrrr a Scotsman's kilt. All of the equipment is in perrrrfect worrrrking orrrrderrrr." But I digress

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conditioners do not work as well as those in the U.S. Well, I could have told him that.

We walk a good distance (in the rain) to the National Museum (Nationalmuseet) near the commercial center of the city. It is the largest museum of cultural history in the country. We had visited this site in 1998 and are pleasantly surprised to see many more signs in English alongside the Danish. The collection is superb, cataloguing the history of Denmark from prehistory through Roman times, the Viking era, the middle ages, and the modern era. Flash photography is permitted, but some of the pictures that I take are either too bright or too dim and also too blurred. Nevertheless, the collection of artifacts from ancient graves, of gold jewelry, of swords and shields and helmets, of carved stones, etc. is extraordinary. There is even an exhibit devoted to Inuit culture. And miracle of miracles, the museum has satisfactory air conditioning.

Unable to get a place in the very crowded museum café, we walk to Strøget (the pedestrian street) where we find a coffee shop. We sit at an outdoor table and a waitress takes our order: coffee for both of us, "Gelato d'Italia" for me, and "red Tartuffe Gelato" for Lee. The waitress returns and says that Lee's choice is not available, but mine has arrived by that time and it is *huge* (it's not only boiled

potatoes that are served in large quantities in Denmark): three large scoops of gelato plus a tank-car load of whipped cream, so we share it. While sitting at the café, a bevy of young women emerge from a below-ground storefront; all are wearing orange boots and yellow shirts bearing slogans written (alas) in Danish as are the signs that they carry. The protest is against "SLAVEHANDLEN BLEV IKKE AFSKAFFET i 1792" which, according to an online translation program, means "Slave trade was not abolished in 1792." I can't make out enough of the rest of the words in the photos that I took to determine which country's slave trade they are protesting, but they also seem totally uninterested in asking me to join them. That's their tough luck!

TWOU has developed a nasty cough. We find a 7-11 (yes, even in Denmark) where she can buy some Halls cough drops, but she wants something stronger for nasal/chest congestion. We are directed to a pharmacy on "H. C. Andersens Boulevard," a very busy commercial street with stores, hotels, restaurants, and the entrance to Tivoli. The pharmacy is an interesting place: unlike an American drug store, there are no medicines on the shelves. Instead, one takes a number and waits to speak to one of some seven pharmacists. Lee describes her symptoms to the pharmacist who recommends some pills. (For the record, the medicine made by GlaxoSmithKline is called Duact and contains 8 mg of acrivastin and 60 mg of pseudoephedrine, tablets to be taken three times a day.) Thus "armed," we walk to a residential neighborhood that was highly recommended by Rick Steves for its interesting homes. Not only do we fail to perceive the homes as interesting but there is a sudden and violent rainstorm (complete with thunder and lightning), against which, even with umbrellas, we are totally outmatched. We find a construction site awning to stand under, but said awning has developed several leaks. Finally, the rain lets up enough that we can resume our walk back to the hotel along Strøget. Halfway there, the skies open again, so we seek refuge in an arcade. Resuming our walk and avoiding the ubiquitous puddles, we make it back to the hotel, quite wet but relieved to be inside. Because Lee had had the excellent idea of opening our windows (despite the alleged air conditioning) early this morning, the room is fairly comfortable.

Like all bad things, the rain comes to an end, so we walk to a café along Nyhavn called Cap Horn. According to the restaurant's web site, "The old house in which we are situated is the former Løvens Hotel (The Lion's Hotel) that later became Hotel Kronprinsen (The Crown Prince Hotel) and it used to be a hangout for some of the area's notorious women of easy virtue. In those days the smell of tar, new rope\* and fish mixed with the sound of horses' hoofs on the cobblestones and the shouting and

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\*This is yet another reminder of our Scotland trip in 2001. On Islay, we visited the Ardbeg Distillery. The whisky's web site describes one of its vintages: "The deep smokiness of Ardbeg emerges with the hallmark aromas of tarry rope and cigar smoke, yet it is soft and scented with woodsmoke, burning incense sticks, and cappuccino coffee." Yum! Tarry rope and cigar smoke. Yum!

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clinking of glasses echoed in the street. Today some of this atmosphere is still there, however with less inventory being thrown about these days!" On the assumption that the rain is but a distant memory, we choose to eat outdoors rather than inside the restaurant. Because it's a chilly evening, blankets are provided for those who need/want them. The Magids are tough and eschew such comforts. The food is excellent: I have baked salmon and Lee orders a three-course spread with soup, mackerel, and dessert. The tab (including a 10% gratuity) is a very reasonable 532 Kr (about \$94). On the walk back to the hotel, we stop for an ice cream (for the one of us who hadn't had dessert with dinner) and spend the rest of the evening in the hotel room, reading.

**OBSERVATION:** As one walks the streets in the touristic neighborhoods and in the downtown commercial district, we hear a wide variety of languages (Danish, Spanish, Italian, French, Russian, German, and several that we cannot identify); there is even some English.

## Monday, August 23

The morning is sunny and relatively cool. Can this fine weather hold? No! (Read on.) After breakfast, we take a taxi to the Avis office to pick up the rental car in which we'll drive around Denmark for the next six days. I remark to the taxi driver that there certainly is a large number of people on bicycles on their way to work or school or to shop. The driver, less charmed by this scene than am I, responds that "Ninety-five percent of bicyclists have no brains." Methinks he's had an encounter or two with a two-wheeled menace in downtown traffic. We have a considerable wait at Avis while our car is made ready. And we are disappointed that the Audi A4 that we thought we had ordered turns out to be a diesel-powered Ford Mondeo. Well, we had had a Mondeo in New Zealand and found it quite acceptable (despite its having had its steering wheel on the *wrong* side) but this Denmark Mondeo is a hatch-back station wagon and much larger than anything we had wanted. (Indeed, as we drive around Denmark, we discover that station wagons are more popular than any other type of vehicle. We see very few SUVs and essentially no pick-up trucks.) Another drawback of the vehicle: it has no instruction manual, something we would love to see when (in future days) the sensors indicating approaching disasters on either side or from the rear begin to drive us to distraction. The car is a six-speed stick shift, necessitated by our having required that it be air-conditioned. (Apparently Danish rental cars with A/C do not have automatic transmission.) Nevertheless, despite its size it proves to be a nice car to drive.

We head out of town (getting a wee bit lost while doing so) to Roskilde, about 40 km west of Copenhagen. Our destination is the 12<sup>th</sup> century gothic Roskilde Domskirke. The cathedral is the main burial site for Danish monarchs since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. According to Wikipedia, "Perhaps the most famous of Roskilde's bishops was Absalon, the warrior bishop, who founded Copenhagen which he gave to the See of Roskilde. Absalon later became the Archbishop of Lund. He was responsible for the construction of Our Lady Church in Copenhagen which in the twentieth century superseded Roskilde as Denmark's National Cathedral. King Valdemar deposited the relics of St. Canute Lavard in St Luke's on 25 June 1170, the same day as King Canute VI was crowned in Roskilde Cathedral, the only Danish coronation held at Roskilde. Absalon's successor Peder Sunesen began an ambitious expansion of the cathedral in 1200 modeled on the cathedral at Tournai, Belgium where he had been an abbot under his mentor, Bishop Stephen of Tournai." You'd better remember these names because there's going to be a quiz, but only after we get the full list of Danish monarchs when we are in Jelling, a few days from now. We explore the cathedral's interior and marvel at the massive marble tombs that the now dead kings enjoy (so to speak).

We walk about downtown Roskilde, taking pictures of the incomprehensible (at least to English speakers) signs and of the three giant urns, about twice the height of an adult, decorated with painted figures and what appear to be ancient runes. These were commissioned in 1998 to celebrate the 1000-year anniversary of the founding of the city. We then drive to the nearby Viking Museum, a wonderful place with the wreckage of five Viking ships from the 11<sup>th</sup> century on display. In 1070, these five ships were deliberately scuttled in Skuldelev in Roskilde Fjord to halt an invasion from Norway. There is also a video of the voyage of Sea Stallion 2, a 2004 recreation of one of the scuttled ships. It carried a 65-person crew of mostly novice sailors, many of whom got very sea-sick as the ship sailed from Dublin to England to Scotland and finally to Denmark, a journey of 1700 km. The arduous return voyage, two years later, is the subject of the video that's shown at the museum. For more information: <http://www.vikingtoday.com/ships/denmark/seastallion-from-glendalough.htm>

**OBSERVATION:** I hate foreign tourists, even if we are such. On the streets of large cities (Copenhagen) or small (Roskilde) or any in between, they have no sense of space. They stand in groups in the middle of sidewalks or streets, thereby blocking human or vehicle progress. We are jostled, pushed against walls, and just generally manhandled. Well, it's not really that bad - especially in light of the groping now performed, *legally*, by TSA agents at airports.

We return to Copenhagen and park in the very very very small parking lot adjacent to the hotel. We



had hoped to take a canal boat ride, but the rain which has begun disabuses us of that notion. At the hotel staff's glowing recommendation, we plan to eat at Zeleste, but a check of TripAdvisor suggests that tourists are not as high on this restaurant as are the clerks at the front desk. Among the more devastating comments are "Worst meal of my life" and "Got food poisoning" (although honesty compels me to report that there were good reviews as well). So I ask at the desk for an alternative recommendation and she suggests Fiat, not far from the hotel. The reviews are promising and so I make a reservation. But then the skies open up. If I thought that yesterday's storm was extreme, it was nothing compared to the volumes of rain that cascade down and are flooding the streets today. Something, indeed, is rotten in the state of Denmark - the weather! So ... we cancel the Fiat reservation and decide to eat in the hotel's dining room, Pakhuskælderen. The menu is entirely *à la carte* with most of the main selections in the 150-200 Kr range. Our bill (including the gratuity) is 986 Kr (about \$175) but the food is excellent (if also a little "precious"). And best of all, we remain dry! After dinner, we return to our room and read.

## Tuesday, August 24

After breakfast, we check out of the hotel and drive (without getting lost) to Humlebæk, 37 km north of Copenhagen. Our destination is the Louisiana Museum (in Denmark?). The surprising name is explained as follows. The museum was opened in 1958 in a villa that, according to the web site, "had been built and named in 1855 by the Master of the Royal Hunt, Alexander Brun, who was so fortunate as to be married to no fewer than three women in the course of his life – all called Louise." (This is lucky? Sounds to me like an obsession. Or at least a desire not to order new monogrammed napkins and bed sheets.) We arrive at 10:30, thinking that the museum opens at 10:00. It doesn't. And so we have to wait until 11:00. Thanks, *DK Guide!* On the way, we drive through periods of sun, then rain, then sun, then rain, repeat, repeat, repeat. Fortunately, the sun is out while we are at the museum and in its sculpture garden.

But the wait is well worth it. It is one of the best modern art museums I have ever visited, not only for the excellence of its collection but also for the manner in which the collection is displayed. There is a vast sculpture garden with works by Richard Serra, Louise Bourgeois, Jean Arp, Max Bill, Henry Moore, Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, and others. (I hate to be a name-dropper, but it's the only way that I can describe the extent and quality of the collection.) The sculptures are well-separated and situated on beautiful green lawns, many overlooking Øresund (the strait that separates Denmark's Zealand from Sweden). Inside, one large room is devoted to the Danish artist Asger Jorn; also represented in paintings and sculptures are Francis Bacon, Alberto Giacometti, Philip Guston, Pablo Picasso, Jean Tinguley, Robert Rauschenberg, and others. There is a special exhibit of Andy Warhol silkscreens of several of Edvard Munch's paintings (including "The Scream"). The Munch originals are displayed with Warhol's various "copies" alongside. There are also Warhol's famous silkscreens of Chairman Mao and Marilyn Monroe (the original odd couple?). Alas, photos of the special exhibition are not permitted (although I take two before realizing I'm not supposed to) but the rest of the museum is so well-lighted that I get many excellent photographs even without flash.

After 2.5 hours at the museum, we drive south toward Copenhagen; the skies (*naturellement*) have opened up, the rains have come, and driving is sometimes difficult. Southwest of Copenhagen, we reach the E20, a major highway that takes us to the west coast of Zealand where we cross The Great Belt on the magnificent Storebælt bridge. Built in 1997, it consists of two spans: an 6.8-km suspension bridge, the third-longest suspension bridge in the world, to a small island called Sprogø; then a 6.6-km bridge (combined rail and cars) to the island of Funen. The *Caribbean Oasis of the Seas* barely fits under the suspension bridge, as I wrote on p. 2. The toll (220 Kr, about \$40) is steep, but still one pays it gladly instead of swimming across the body of water.

We drive toward Odense where we stop to change drivers. My rotten luck - Lee has had excellent weather leading to Odense but now I have to drive in rain and squalls as we approach the west coast

of Funen and go over the "Little Belt Bridge" (Gamle Lillebæltsbro), a mere 1.2 km long without a toll, to Jutland and then to the town of Kolding. (Fear not: we will return to Funen and explore it thoroughly. Well, not really. Funen does not have much of interest, at least for tourists.) The total driving distance today is about 260 km.

The Hotel Koldingfjord is in a beautiful location, at the top of a hill overlooking the head of a fjord in the town of Kolding. The hotel and conference center consist of several buildings. The facility was a Christmas Seal sanatorium for juvenile TB patients in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; there is a main building and several outlying structures called Beech Hall and Magnolia Hall, which were dormitories for the patients; and Christian Mansion and Dagmar Mansion, which were schools. Each building has guest rooms, 134 in all.

We are assigned to yet another building, Skovly (which translates as "in the woods"), whose original purpose is not made clear. To reach it, we park the car at the end of a covered walkway and walk along a red carpet (!) to a stone wall. There are many steps that one can climb (if one is young) or an elevator for those of us of the senior persuasion. The elevator rises through a mountain shaft (strains of the *Hall of the Mountain King* would be appropriate, even though it was written by Edvard Grieg, a Norwegian). We are now high above the other buildings which are, as I've already said, already at the top of a hill. Once inside Skovly, we take another elevator to the third floor where we find our room - it is not only beautiful but has a wonderful view of the fjord. The furniture is modern and there is lots of storage space. There is an "easy" chair that looks as if it would be difficult to exit, a desk with desk chair, a small table, two beds pushed together, and a large window that, once one discerns the mechanism, can pull down as a window or slide open as a door. I did not mention air conditioning ... because there is none. But the evening is cool, up here high on the mountain, and the open window allows the entry of cool air (plus some insects). There is also coffee service in the room, something that we did not find in 71 Nyhavn.

Because the hour is late, we have dinner in Café Louise, the casual restaurant associated with the main dining room. It is nothing special, but that's OK. We do have a nice view of several staff who are cooking substantial quantities of beef, pork, and chicken on large outside grills, presumably for the people who are attending various conferences. Lee is convinced that the meat and especially the chicken are being undercooked and that everyone who eats it will die. That's my girl - always concerned for the welfare of her fellow man. Back in the room, I finish reading *The Queen of the Tambourine* (very enjoyable) and begin *The Black Tower*, a 1975 novel by P. D. James.

I also reflect on how nice it was to have someone else (i.e., Regent Seven Seas) plan our tours - no worry about language, about parking, about admission tickets, whatever. In the past - and, indeed here in Denmark - we\* had always done our own trip planning. I also became quite enamored of the

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\*When I say "we" I really mean Lee. Whereas I'm in charge of the BIG things in our lives: classical music CDs, baseball stats, etc., she gets great pleasure out of devouring tour guides and web sites to pick the best destinations, restaurants, hotels, etc. for our journeys. Do I feel left out? Hell, NO. I am granted veto power (sometimes) - and that's enough. Besides, I have all of those baseball stats to keep track of.

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luxury of our cabin and the food on the cruise ship. It's a rare thrill to walk away from the dinner table without paying. (I doubt that such behavior would be acceptable off the ship.) One downside of the ship's amenities, however, was the slow and erratic internet connection. In contrast, the Copenhagen and Kolding hotels provide very fast connectivity - and it's free.

Oh, yes, I also reflect that my darling spouse has given me her cold. She's nearly recovered now, but I'm congested and coughing. I've started taking leftover medication from the Copenhagen pharmacy.

### Wednesday, August 25

The morning begins sunny and breezy, but so did yesterday - and we know how nasty the weather became. Maybe today will be better. We have breakfast at the hotel - there is an excellent assortment of hot and cold dishes, but unfortunately the tables are largely occupied by people attending one or another convention.

**OBSERVATIONS:** (1) Wind turbines abound throughout the country. We saw them in the waters around Copenhagen's harbor; in the countryside of Zealand, Funen, and (so far) Jutland; in the waters alongside The Great Belt Bridge; etc. Denmark gets 20% of its electricity from wind; it is also (by far) the world's leading manufacturer and exporter of wind turbines. An interesting article in *TIME* describes this: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1881646,00.html> (2) As noted earlier, there are bicycles nearly everywhere, both in the cities and in the country side. Bike paths parallel all of the auto roads and even have signs directing cyclists to different lanes, depending on which way the cyclist is proceeding; these lanes may be side-by-side or, in some cases, on opposite sides of the auto road. (3) As noted earlier, we see amazingly few SUVs. Regular sedans and station wagons (like ours) constitute at least 95% of vehicles on the road. (4) We find classical music stations on the car radio, but it's difficult to recognize the pronunciation of the names of composers and artists; and, of course, many of the names are of musicians who may be well known in Denmark but not in the U.S. We would listen intently to long strings of Danish talk to catch a familiar name, if one were spoken.

We drive to the small town (population about 8,000) of Ribe, about 55 km west of Kolding and close to the North Sea. Of course, the rains have begun and the winds are fierce. So what's new? According to Wikipedia:

Ribe is Denmark's oldest surviving city. Ribe began as an open trading market on the north bank of the Ribe River where it runs into the ocean. Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, Frisians, English and other who occasionally brought exchange goods from all parts of northwestern Europe. The landscape is flat, wind-blown and sandy without any particular fine harbor. Up until the late Middle Ages boats could sail up to Ribe on the river. Ribe Market was sanctioned by either King Angantyr (Ongendus) or King Harald Hildetand as early as 705. In Viking times Ribe was a bustling international trade center which made it an ideal starting point for Christian missionaries from Hamburg to begin the process of the Christianization of Scandinavia.

Harald Klak, a co-king of Denmark, was forced from Denmark by his co-king, Horik I, and fled to Germany to get help from Emperor Louis. The emperor put off Harald's request and offered him the Dukedom of Frisia as a consolation prize, if he would become Christian. Harald agreed and was baptized with his wife and family and "four hundred Danes" in his company. Harald returned to Denmark in 826 to try to reclaim his lands. Harald took a priest along to continue the work of making the Danes Christian. The monk's name was Ansgar. Harald's quarrelsome nature soon asserted itself and he fled back to Frisia. Ansgar was forced to leave Denmark.

The first church in Ribe was built in 860 by the missionary monk Ansgar who went on to become Archbishop of Hamburg. It was a timber church built with the permission of King Horik I on the south side of the river across from the market. Ansgar won the confidence of the king, who had in 845 burned Hamburg, Ansgar's own city. Young King Horik II closed the church in Hedeby in reaction to the increased success of Ansgar and his companions. But Ansgar won Horik the Younger's friendship, and the church was reopened. The Danes in Hedeby and Ribe complained about the church bells which they feared might scare away the land sprites.

Great names, eh? Somehow it makes the battles between Democrats and Republicans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century seem tame.

We first visit the cathedral (Ribe Domkirke), built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is a magnificent stone structure. The interior is stark rather than extravagant, but there are beautiful stone engravings on the walls and floors. The tombs of several Danish monarchs are there. We then wander through the old town, along cobblestone roads, enjoying the architecture of the town hall and of the restored homes and storefronts. Most buildings are made of brick or stucco with large wooden planks embedded; very few of them have anything close to 90° angles anywhere. In its heyday, Ribe was *the* major trading center of Jutland, sending drinking glasses to the Frankish region, amber and pottery elsewhere, and (of course) weapons to any army that asked for them. (The Pentagon could take lessons from them.)

We visit the Ribe Museum (Museet Ribes Vikinger) for displays on the founding of the city, the Viking era, life in medieval times, and on to the present. Alas, poor Ron - his sciatica is acting up; worst of all, every cough (recall - he has caught Lee's cold) sends extra jolts of pain to his legs. So he does a lot of sitting while Lee (who is now cold-free) explores the museum's collection.

The skies are beginning to darken, but the rains hold off (barely) as we drive to the town of Tønder (♪ Love me Tønder, love me true ... ♪) and the even smaller village of Møgeltønder. Tønder's population is about 7,000, Møgeltønder's about 900. They lie about 55 km south of Ribe, only 3 km from the German border (surely they won't invade again, will they?) and close to the North Sea. Møgeltønder is charming. We walk The Castle Street with its cobblestone streets and sidewalks, enjoying the lovely homes, churches, and (miracle of miracles) sunny skies. The town is the home of Prince Joachim, son of the current Queen of Denmark; he is also part owner of the Schackenborg Castle Inn (Schackenborg Slotskro) which we walk by. Because it is already 3:30, we decide not to visit Tønder, but return, instead, to Kolding.

**OBSERVATION:** On the drive to and from Møgel- and just plain old Tønder, we pass lots of fields with cows and horses, but it seems that Denmark has no sheep. Clearly this is not Ireland or Scotland or New Zealand. But then ... suddenly ... a field full of sheep.

**PUN ALERT:** Be still my heart. I wanna make ewe mine. I love ewe.

**ANOTHER OBSERVATION:** It surprises us to see that Danish drivers on the open road are wild and addicted to speeding. This seems contrary to their character. Maybe it's their way of expressing dislike of the high taxes.

On our way back to Koldingfjord, we scout around the town for a suitable place for dinner. A clerk at the hotel front desk strongly recommends Bone's\* Real American Restaurant (strange name!). It

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\*The restaurant's web site has a long saga, a *very* long saga of one Sam Bone who, allegedly, is the inspiration for the restaurant. It asks the question Hvem Er Sam Bone? (Who is Sam Bone?) and begins its answer in a quaint variant of English: "Sam Bone walked out of school in 1965. Headed north without speculating further about how, except that Canada could be a target for his idea of a career as a lumberjack. So when the fourth July's festivities had died down, he placed himself at the roadside and placed the homemade sign visible to passersby trucks: 'Canada or Bust.' His first success was a bearded giant from Tulsa, Oklahoma, which in its 18 wheels were on their way north in a Mack full of goods. The guy introduced himself as Chip and could, without break and without repeating himself, swearing continuously for several minutes over the little tin cans which constantly came in his way down on the pavement somewhere in front of the radiator." OK, the English is a bit rough, but you get the idea. Well, this goes on for three pages. Sam is a cook in a logging camp and claims to be able to make authentic American spareribs. Among the characters introduced in the tale are Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, Al Capone and Vito Genovese; and there are arguments, murders, and wars. On a sleepy, lazy day, make it a point to take a look at the complete saga at <http://tinyurl.com/2a7hf79>

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turns out to be an American style barbecue joint. And the American theme is emphasized by the decor: pictures of baseball players (Jackie Robinson, Warren Spahn, Stan Musial, Roy Campanella, Ty Cobb, others); baseball and football pennants (Detroit Tigers, Cincinnati Reds, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Chicago Bears); a catcher's chest protector; ads for soft drinks (e.g., Dads root beer); pictures of John Wayne and Elvis; auto license plates from various states; an airplane and an old bicycle hung from the ceiling; baseball bats; a life-sized mannikin of a baseball manager in uniform; lots of other memorabilia; and (best of all) one of those classic Big Boy Hamburger statues that used to adorn restaurants of that name. Oh, yes, the food was also quite good.

#### Thursday, August 26

The morning is nice and sunny with only light winds. Also, my cold (I mean Lee's cold that she cruelly gave to me) is showing hints that it might be ending. We have breakfast at the hotel; again the food selection is excellent and this time the dining room is much less crowded.

**OBSERVATIONS:** (1) The well-mannered Danes walk out of a restaurant when they want to smoke or use a cell phone. (2) We continue to marvel at the bikes and the bike lanes or paths that are everywhere. (3) Lee finds an online Danish travel site that plots a route for one's travel and informs the user just how much CO<sub>2</sub> is being consumed by driving. It then asks the question, "Wouldn't you rather take the train?" See ( <http://www.rejseplanen.dk/bin/query.exe/en> ) (4) Though the use of higher-level mathematics that the casual reader would never understand, we convert the car's gas consumption in km/l into mpg and find that we are getting about 40 mpg; then conversion of krone into dollars tells us that we're paying a staggering \$5.77 a gallon. (5) Speaking about unsafe drivers, TWOU confesses that yesterday, on a section of open highway that had no posted speed limit, she hit 150! (OK, it was "only" km/hr and not mph, but it's still pretty damned fast.)

We drive about 40 km due north to the small town of Jelling, getting only a little bit lost on the unmarked minor country roads. (Well, perhaps they were marked but the words were in some strange language, doncha know?) Our goal is to see the huge mounds and carved stones from the 10<sup>th</sup> century and to visit the adjacent exhibition center for information about the history of the area. According to Wikipedia:

The Jelling stones are massive carved runestones from the 10th century, found at the town of Jelling in Denmark. The older of the two Jelling stones was raised by King Gorm the Old in memory of his wife Thyra. The runic inscriptions on these stones are considered the most well known in Denmark. The larger of the two stones was raised by King Gorm's son, Harald Bluetooth, in memory of his parents, celebrating his conquest of Denmark and Norway, and his conversion of the Danes to Christianity. The stones stand in the churchyard of Jelling church between two large mounds. The stones represent the transitional period between the indigenous Norse paganism and the process of Christianization in Denmark. They are strongly identified with the creation of Denmark as a nation state.

Gorm the Old (9??-958) and Harald Bluetooth (935-985) are only two of the memorable names that we'll encounter among the ancient rulers of Denmark. There will be much more on this when we visit Lindolm Høje on August 28. Gorm is buried in one of the mounds (or perhaps inside the adjacent church - web sites are indecisive on this point); the other seems to have been for rituals. Queen Thyra, Gorm's wife, may also be buried here. In the exhibition hall, the very pleasant and knowledgeable man at the desk (Hans Ole Matthiesen) is also a participant in the archaeological work that is still going on; in fact, he's written a very informative booklet on what has been found. The excavation has uncovered buried houses, a palisade, stones marking the outline of the trip to take Gorm to heaven, gravesites, and so on. Gorm is the first in a 1100-year unbroken line of monarchs leading to the current Margrethe II. (And to think that we consider the Bushes to be a never-ending dynasty.)

Harald seems to have been an interesting dude. He was king of Norway and of Denmark and tried to unify the countries (such as they were) but his popularity in the former waned when Sweden attacked and took over much of the land. He was able to hold onto Denmark when he drove German invaders back across the border. (And as Tom Lehrer sang, albeit about the Germans of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "We taught them a lesson in 1918 and they've hardly bothered us since then.") Translation of one of the stone's runes reveals Harald's claim that he converted the Danes to Christianity,\* although other sources suggest that they were Christians already.

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\*In 939, there was a German invasion led by Holy Roman Emperor Otto I The Great (936-971), yet another member of the "Great" family that we first encountered in St. Petersburg. He was the son of Henry I the Fowler (it sounds better in German: Heinrich der Vogler) and Matilda of Ringelheim, but you probably knew that. German texts claim that it was Otto who converted the heathen Danes to Christianity.

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**OBSERVATIONS:** Because Mr. Matthiesen is eager to share his knowledge with us, I quiz him on things only vaguely related to Jelling's history. (1) I ask where Denmark got its name. He replies that the Danes were a tribe (about 500-600 AD) who roamed over the territory, terrorizing the population; when their people adopted Christianity, they ceased their philandering. Maybe. Had they not done so, they'd be remembered today as the "Hell's Angels of Denmark," or so he says. (2) Modern Danes pay a 50% tax on their salary. When I ask about the dearth of SUVs on the road, he replies that there is a tax of 180% (!!) on the purchase of new vehicles. (Despite this levy, there are still numerous cars on the roads, both in the cities and in the countryside.) In return for the stiff taxes, Danes enjoy free health care, free university, and other services; and seem quite content with their situation. John Boehner and Mitch McConnell should take a look. (3) He confirms what we had heard earlier: that income disparity is much lower in Denmark than in other countries. He says that there are still rich and poor, but there is a large middle class; if one wants a job, one will find it. (Unemployment is less than 5%.) Denmark avoided much of the difficulties of the recession because, he says, Danes are industrious and because a large amount of the national income comes from exports.

Inside the exhibition center, there are replicas of the large stones, with paint colors that they might have had before Nature had had its way with them. There are translations of the runes, photographs of the excavations, and charts of the royal lineage. We then walk across the street from the museum and stroll about the stones and the two mounds (too high for this sciatica-impaired traveler to climb, although others are doing so) and then inside the adjacent wooden church, built on the site of the church that Harald constructed in 965. At about 11:30, we leave Jelling and drive some 80 km northeast to Aarhus (or Århus) on the eastern coast of Jutland. After some wrong turns, we find a parking garage in this rather ugly, grey, noisy city (population about 300,000); there is even litter on the street. Walking past the train station, we marvel (yet again) at the vast numbers of bicycles parked there. How does one find one's own bike? Who knows?

We obtain a city map (from an inebriated clerk - surprising!) at the Information Office and walk through a rather pleasant shopping area toward the ARoS Art Museum of contemporary art. This is a fascinating building with circular inside ramps (think Guggenheim in New York) and exposed plumbing (think Pompidou in Paris). The collection is interesting but not outstanding. We are fascinated by several rooms of photographs by a Dane, Jacob Holdt, from his travels through the seediest parts of the southern U.S. He shows people holding guns (and looking like they know how to use them); crosses burning on lawns; petitions to bring back the death penalty; gun racks in trucks; black slums; prayer meetings; and all the other lovely things that make the south a place that causes many of us to cringe. Once again, we call upon Tom Lehrer to put in song exactly what these pictures are saying: "I wanna go back to Dixie, I wanna be a Dixie pixie, and eat corn pone till it's comin' out of my ears. I wanna talk with Southern gentlemen, and put my white sheet on again, I ain't seen one good lynchin' in years. The land of the boll weevil, where the laws are medieval, is callin' me to come and nevermore roam. I wanna go back to the Southland, that 'y'all' and 'shet-ma-mouth' land. Be it ever

so decadent, there's no place like home." You go, Tom! One exhibit room in the museum carries the placard "Arctcity Nutidskunst" but doesn't live up to its promise. Maybe we've translated the Danish incorrectly? Nah.

Leaving the museum, we walk through the grounds where there is a sunken outdoor amphitheater, many art installations, a lake, and the very modern city concert hall. On the way back to the garage, we walk to Møllestien, a short street of old houses that have been faithfully preserved and are beautifully kept. Before reconnoitering with the car, we stop at three stores where Lee does her best to spend her Danish krone (a purse, a blank notebook, and a ceramic mug). (Did we discover these shops by accident? We did not. As I mentioned earlier, Lee thoroughly studies the places that we'll visit and produces a marching plan from which deviations are neither encouraged nor permitted.) I stand outside the "purse" store and take pictures of the family groups proceeding down the street on their bikes. Just before reaching the garage, we pass the magnificent 16<sup>th</sup> century cathedral, which boasts the longest nave\* in all of Denmark; it is also the tallest church in the country.

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\*I think that this is different from Kent's speech in *King Lear*: "A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir to a mongrel bitch: one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deni'st the least syllable of thy addition." Whew. Talk about speaking ones mind!

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We retrace our journey, driving 100 km back to Kolding, but instead of returning to the hotel, we find the restaurant Bella d'Italia in an old house, downtown. The food is very enjoyable. We get back to our room at about 8:00. Throughout the day, we have experienced excellent weather (with only one period of strong wind and rains when driving through Aarhus) - not bad, considering the wretched weather over the past several days. (As for TMOU, his sciatica is causing pain, damn it, and his cold persists - he is sneezing a lot and has very little voice, a "blessing" for which nobody complains.)

## Friday, August 27

It is a sunny day, today, relatively cool, with broken clouds. I decide to check our home phone for voice mail messages, but there is only one: Dr. Iyengar's office, asking if I want to get the cortisone injection today (not too damned likely!). When I checked a few days ago, there were two messages: one from Cascade Blood Center asking if I'd come in to donate blood this week (not gonna happen) and one for Lee from Chico's, announcing some wonderful sale.

Following breakfast, we check out of the hotel. On backing the car out of its parking space, I hit (gently, to be sure) a truck that had pulled up behind me. To be fair, the Mondeo's annoying alarm system had beeped loudly, but as it does this all the time, even when there is no apparent danger, I ignore the warning. The damage is very slight: a small amount of the truck's white paint is deposited onto our car's dark blue body.

We drive some 300 km due north to Skagen (population about 8,000), a town at the northern most tip of Jutland on a sandy spit that juts out into the sea. The final 50 km or so are along the water and very scenic. Even the first 250 km are attractive as we drive past rolling terrain and prosperous looking farms (some with prosperous looking horses). On the way we pass through Fredrikshavn (some 40 km south of Skagen) where we've booked a hotel for tonight. Along the way, the bike paths are filled with numerous groups of cyclists, clearly traveling together for a pre-weekend outing, some of them in serious biking gear, some not. One group is adorned in identical yellow shirts with Danish wording on them. One person is wearing a red fright wig while another sports a purple coiffeur. Alas,

we have no pictures of them.

Our goal is the Skagens Museum which houses the masterworks of the Skagen painters, a late-19<sup>th</sup> to early-20<sup>th</sup> century group of artists who took up residence here. Even though the town is small, we can't find the museum. We stop at a small art gallery to ask for directions. The proprietor, an elderly woman, has a very limited command of English (something that we've rarely encountered in Denmark) but eventually provides enough information for ... for us to get lost again! Lee sees a large city map posted on a billboard, so we go to it and locate the city's information bureau. (Her hand-drawn map is a thing of beauty.) At the office, we finally get clear directions to the museum.

The museum is excellent - well laid-out and extremely well lit so that I'm able to take many excellent pictures without the use of flash. The most notable artists of the colony were Michael Ancher and his wife Anna, P.S. Krøyer, and Viggo Johansen. Their work is highly professional and very pleasing. The collection includes numerous landscapes and seascapes, but consists mostly of portraits of the local population, at work and at play. There is also a display of a set of some correspondence, mercifully translated into English, from Michael and Anna, separately, to one Thorvald Bindsbøll, a local potter and (apparently) a good friend. They thank him for three pots that he gave them, but do not hold back on saying what they really think of them. The letters are too long to quote in their entirety, but here is a sample. From Michael: "It looks as if you took a certain quantity of *merde* and simply slapped it on, wiping your dirty fingers on it at sundry points." And from Anna: "We have made a discovery. Your pots kill everything in our lounge!" (The full correspondence is posted in the Picasa gallery of pictures from the trip.)

One display in the museum is of a time-line, describing notable artistic and historical events during the period when the Skagen school flourished. Thus, we learn the identity of the man after whom tonight's hotel is named: "Herman Bang is fined for his novel 'Generations without Hope,' which is condemned as pornographic." Cool! And how appropriate for someone named Bang. (On reflection, I find it surprising - and very welcome - that all of the signs at the museum were in English. This is something one might not expect in such an out-of-the-way town.)

We have a snack in the museum's café before heading south toward Fredrikshavn. Along the way, we stop to take pictures of the huge sand dunes on both sides of the road and of the beaches at the water's edge. We drive through the small town of Ålbæk which is situated on Ålbæk Bugt., the bay that separates Denmark from Sweden.

We arrive at the Herman Bang hotel and are initially depressed by the down-market appearance of its lobby and by the parking lot that is a several storefronts away. The elevator looks as if it's seen better days, and when we reach our floor, we find that we need to go up about four additional steps to get to the hallway where our room is located. What a surprise, then, to find a very attractive corner room, large, nicely furnished, wooden support beams overhead, a huge modern bathroom (with its own TV), and a balcony looking out onto a pedestrian mall (a somewhat noisy mall, what with the revving of motorcycle engines). In fact, this is our first hotel with a separate shower and tub (cf., Kolding had a combined tub/shower and Copenhagen had only a shower.) It is also by far the least expensive hotel on our trip. Looking down on the mall, there is an unusual piece of public art: a very large metal screw, maybe 15 feet tall, with a square nut near its top. There is also a large dental implant clinic directly across the street. According to its web site, translated (more or less) into English:

Welcome to Frederikshavn Implant Center / Dental Team v / dentist Herluf Kristensen. On Frederikshavn Implant Center / dental team, we offer dental treatment of high academic quality by experienced dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants. The clinic was established in 1976 by dental Herluf Kristensen, who quickly got so much to do that he had to hire an additional dentist and staff. Innovation has always been the focus of the clinic, and 20år ago started Herluf Kristensen with the first implants. Thus, we have over the years built a vast experience and knowledge and are able to undertake all aspects of implant therapy (insertion of implants, crowns,



bridges, hybrid prostheses, bone structure, bone graft and sinusløft). We also offer all kinds of modern dentistry: Plastic, periodontal therapy / soft laser tooth whitening / jewelry, general surgery, loose and fixed prosthodontics (dentures, crowns and bridges). We are always using the latest equipment at the clinic and places great emphasis on hygiene is top notch. In Frederikshavn Implant Center / dental team, we pride ourselves on being a team where everyone - regardless of function - are equally important. With a strong team, we are able to provide our patients the best service and advice in a dynamic, professional environment. With fresh flowers, candles, movies and music, we try to create a pleasant atmosphere so that everyone feels welcome at the clinic. Motto: Do not walk in others' footsteps, as one never before. We've always done things our way. We do not look after what others are doing. We try to be ourselves, and we are to date been well advanced. Do you have any questions please feel free to call.

Well, maybe it sounded better in the original Danish.

Fredrikshavn (population about 23,000) is an old fishing village that now has ferry connections to Norway and Sweden. Because laws against public drunkenness are less strict in Denmark than in those other countries, many young men arrive by ferry with the intention of getting thoroughly smashed. Oh, joy! Fortunately, they are not staying at our hotel. We think. We stroll through the pedestrian area, taking pictures of the stores (and noting that several are empty storefronts). On the walk to our restaurant, we pass the town's most notable structure, Krudttårnet, a 17<sup>th</sup> century powder tower. It is a huge cylindrical building with a white stucco outer surface and a red conical roof, looking much like a flattened silo. The hotel staff had recommended Frank's, an upscale restaurant on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of a 12-story office building, adjacent to a hotel. Walking to the restaurant, the city seems "dead" - pedestrians and cars are very few, and this is early on a Friday evening.

The best thing that can be said about the restaurant is that it provides a magnificent view of the city, of the working port, and of the ferry terminals. A crane is unloading coal from the freighter *Henriette*; two Stena Line ferries arrive while we're eating; the larger of the two, probably from Göteborg, unloads a huge number of cars and trucks, then reloads and is gone in less than an hour. Docked in the port is the freighter from the Falkland Islands, *Ernest Shackleton* (who was an Anglo-Irish explorer of the Antarctic in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century).

The worst thing that can be said about the restaurant is that it has a very inefficient, awkward, and slow-moving waiter, a young man who seems to be the only employee present. (One assumes others are doing the cooking, but who knows?) The food is excellent (I have lobster bisque, cod, and dessert on a *prix fixe* menu) but it is delivered extremely slowly. Although only three other tables are occupied, the young man seems incapable of dealing with such an overload. Well, perhaps he is new here - he carries bowls of soup the way I do: with two hands, eyes fixed firmly on the liquid level, taking tiny steps to avoid jostling the broth. His English is also quite limited. One feature that I did enjoy is the bowl of boiled potatoes that are part of the meal. The waiter arrives carrying a huge bowl, doles out two potatoes to each of us, and then leaves the rest of the bowlful at the table.

**OBSERVATION:** Boiled potatoes must be a curious Danish affectation - every meal, except for last evening's dinner at Bella d'Italia, has come with boiled potatoes on the plate or in a bowl or ... on the plate with extras in a bowl (as at København Caféen and at tonight's restaurant). Even the breakfast buffet at Koldingfjord offered boiled potatoes along with the scrambled egg, bacon, pancakes, etc. In fact, even the BBQ restaurant in Kolding served boiled potatoes to complement the baked (Lee) or french-fried (Ron) taters that we ordered.

**PUN ALERT:** For dessert, we are served some sort of apple crisp. TWOU: "I like it. It's not too sweet." TMOU: "I didn't know that you could speak French."

**OBSERVATION:** The study of English is mandatory in Danish schools, beginning in third grade and continuing for at least seven years. It is estimated that some 86% of the population is fluent in written

and spoken English. Certainly our experience over a week-and-a-half is that Danes are very comfortable conversing in idiomatic English. The only people we've met whose command of the language is limited were the elderly woman in Skagen, the young waiter here in Odense, and a few teenagers who worked at convenience stores or gas stations; probably the latter belong to a group who didn't take academic studies seriously or who dropped out of school early.

After the dessert, we order two coffees ... and we wait and wait and wait. Finally I walk to the bar, where the waiter is standing, to cancel the order and ask for the check. We get back to the hotel at 8:30 and the activity in the street is beginning to pick up. Too much! In the building directly across from us, through an open window, an extremely loud party is in full swing with music (live or amplified, it's hard to tell) along with loud cheers and screams. Perhaps the revelers are some of the Swedes and Norse who have come to Fredrikshavn because of its lax laws on drinking? At about 10:30, the partiers close their window (shutting out some of the sound) but open it shortly afterwards and resume their festivities. We try closing our window, but the room gets too hot. There is a ceiling window in the bathroom, but opening that lets in only a little cool air and a whole lot of music and shouting. Finally, the revelry subsides and we are able to get to sleep.

### Saturday, August 28

The morning is sunny and relatively cool. We had expected clouds and rain, but are able to contain our "disappointment." We check out of the Herman Bang and drive 65 km south to Nørresundby, a town just north of Ålborg.

**OBSERVATION:** For much of our driving time, we've been listening to a radio station that has some strange characteristics. All of the commentary (which is often extensive) is in Danish, except for an occasional interview (with a performer, actor, producer, whatever) which can be in English. The music is mostly classical (but see below) but there are occasional interludes of pop (sung in English), rap (sung in whatever), and jazz. At around 5:00 pm (rush hour), there are periodic interruptions for TRAFFIC and for ALARM; we know this because those words appear on the dashboard display. As for the classical music, never is it more than an aria from an opera or a movement of a concerto or symphony. We are surprised to have heard only one piece by Denmark's native son, Carl Nielsen; in contrast, the music of Dvorak and Schubert is very popular. This business of playing just one movement is annoying enough, but the most bizarre event occurred during a Murray Perahia performance of a Bach partita. Suddenly the music stopped. DAMN, said I. Then the announcer started humming the melody. DAMN, DAMN, DAMN!! Then the music resumed.

In Nørresundby, we are heading to the Lindholm Høje Museum. There is a field adjacent to the museum that is populated with sheep, some white and some brown, that are greatly in need of a fleecing. (Where is Bernie Madoff when we need him?) I ask about the sheep at the museum, but it turns out that the field and the animals belong to someone else. These are Icelandic sheep and they are known for their shaggy coats. Oh. The museum is dedicated to displays of Viking life. The museum is on this particular site because just outside it there are some 700 graves ranging from 400 AD (the Iron Age) to 1000 AD (the Viking era).

My sciatica is acting up (pain is now in my thighs as well as in my calves), so I do a lot of sitting while Lee wanders through the museum. There are exhibits of farm equipment, armor, graves, and jewelry. The manager of the museum is kind enough to photocopy three pages from a booklet so that I have a permanent record of the succession of rulers in Viking times. Now pay attention to these names because you'll be asked to repeat them at a time you least expect.

Around 714, Willibrod visits Ongendus, the ruler of the "wild Danes." In 810, King Godfred is murdered and in 819 his sons share the kingdom with Harald Klak. Ebbo, archbishop of Reims visits the Danes and baptizes Harald Klak in 826. Alas, something must have gone wrong

because in 827, King Klak is exiled. In 845, Horik I takes over but he is killed in 854 and is succeeded by Horik II. There are wars with the Saxons and the Germans, but things settle down when Gorm becomes king. As we've already learned, Gorm is buried at Jelling and is succeeded by Harald Bluetooth who is converted to Christianity in 965 by Poppo. Who? Don't ask. In 986, Harald Bluetooth dies in exile and Sven Forkbeard is made king. (Bluetooth? Forkbeard? I'm not making this up!) In 1013 Sven Forkbeard conquers England, but dies the next year. In 1019, Canute the Great takes over. (Here we have yet another distinguished member of the "Great" family of royals.) He dies in 1035 but is succeeded by Hardicanute (♪Hardicanute and Tyler too♪) who reigns until 1042 when he is replaced by Magnus the Good. Five years later, Svend Estridsen becomes king ... and thus endeth the chronology of the period 800 AD to 1100 AD.

While the older of the men at the desk is photocopying these pages for me, Lee engages in an interesting discussion of books with the young man sitting there. We note that he's reading, in English, Ken Follett's *The Pillars of the Earth*, which Lee had read earlier on the trip. They then talk about other Follett books, about the historical novels of Edward Rutherford (both of them had read *New York and Sarum*); and then they turn to the Stieg Larsson trilogy. Lee recounts the saga of how she purchased a copy of *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* in New Zealand last February, five months before it would be published in the U.S. (see pp 5-6). I feel terribly left out. Before leaving town, we fill the car for only the second time on the trip; because there is no manual, we have no idea what the tank capacity\* is. Once again, we get about 40 mpg, although I question the reliability of the

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\*Had we been smart, which we are not, we could have looked on the web for the car's specs.

Upon returning to the states, I note that the tank's capacity is 56 L, so filling it the three times we did with 36, 39, and 40 L of fuel was just about right. See <http://tinyurl.com/3xjlype>

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number because the pump kept shutting off.

After leaving the museum, we walk through the field of grave stones, stone circles, and the like. We then drive south, about 260 km, past Århus and almost to Kolding, before turning to the east and crossing the Little Belt bridge to Funen and its capital city, Odense (population 166,000). This is Denmark's third largest city and boasts that it is the birthplace of Hans Christian Andersen and Carl Nielsen. Of more current interest, it is also the birthplace of tennis star Caroline Wozniacki and of Peter Eastgate, winner of the 2008 World Series of Poker. Oh. During the drive, the sunny skies have given way to clouds and rain. So what's new? By the time we reach Odense, the sun is out, again, and the air is relatively cool. Our hotel, near the center of town, is the Clarion Collection Hotel Plaza (not the most picturesque of names). It's an old hotel, but perfectly adequate. Alas, there is no internet connection, the first time that we've encountered this in Denmark. Also its parking lot is challenging, with very few spaces that are so close together and narrow that parking the car and getting the doors open presents huge difficulties. The room is small, but acceptable; there is also a shower but no tub (which doesn't bother me at all but causes TWOU to sprout yet additional gray hairs.) As we enter town on the way to the hotel, we pass by modern office buildings, small factories and warehouses, and attractive homes - an eclectic mix, but pleasing.

**PUN ALERT:** Lee remarks that the hotel fits the guide book description of "frumpy" but I suggest that a better adjective would be "odensity." (OK, it's not a pun. It's not even witty. But for this journal to be complete, it's essential that I include it.)

**OBSERVATION:** More about the radio station. Today we actually heard two *complete* pieces of music: a Haydn symphony and a Brahms piano trio. Maybe the radio station's policies are different on Saturdays? As before, interspersed with the classical selections are such oddballs as sea shanties, pop songs (again in English), and lengthy interviews in Danish in which the only words we can identify are Bob Geldorf and Bono.

**OBSERVATION:** Having now driven over most of the Danish real estate, we can report that the highways throughout are excellent. The motorways are clearly signed and sport nice, wide, good surfaces. Typical speed limits on the motorways are 90 km/hr within city limits, 110 in the outskirts, and no restrictions elsewhere. Danish drivers, like those in Germany, stay to the right unless they want to pass. We never see anybody passing on the right (so, of course, we have to resist our American tendency to do so.) Some drivers do take advantage of the unlimited speed zones. For example, I was tooling along at a cool 130 km/hr when a car breezed past me at about 160-170. The secondary roads are also very good, whether within a city/town or in the countryside. Even the very minor roads in farm country (e.g., around Jelling) are very good; best of all, not a slow-moving tractor is in sight. We are also comforted that we can drive on the right side of the road in a car whose steering wheel is on the left, as ordained by any decent deity worthy of attention. England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and New Zealand (all of which we've visited recently) should take note! I also love how the km seem to melt away on the car's odometer, unlike the slowly advancing miles on American cars. This is yet another reason that the U.S. should adopt the metric system without delay.

After checking into the hotel, we stroll through the immediate neighborhood, encountering several churches, the Odense Teater (no, it's not a building devoted to breast-feeding), the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hotel Grand, and a pedestrian mall with interesting public art. My cold is progressing (or regressing, it's not clear which): my voice is returned almost to its Stentorian splendor but I still have a dry cough and my nose is stuffed.

We walk to a local restaurant: Den Grimme Ælling (The Ugly Duckling). It is a fascinating place, populated by local families made up of multiple generations. It is entirely self-service, although there is a hot meat counter where a chef cuts slabs to order. When I ask what the four meats are, he replies, "Cow, young cow, pig, turkey." OK, that's succinct. There is a cold section for salads and a warm section for vegetables and potatoes, all kinds of potatoes, lots of them, piled high. Our bill for all this plus two beers and two coffees is a very reasonable 422 kr (about \$72). Just as we are about to leave, there arrives the all-female equivalent of a stag bachelor party (much like the hen parties that we encountered in Ireland). Marching in are *some 20 20-somethings* (that sounds weird, but it's correct), all voluptuous and squeezable, but not by those of us males who are of the blissfully married persuasion.

Upon returning to the hotel as the sun goes down, we discover that our room is not as acceptable as I had reported. There is almost no light for reading: one bed-side lamp doesn't work, the other is low wattage, the ceiling light is even lower wattage, and the only decent source of light is the desk lamp and the bathroom. Oh, well, it's just for one evening.

## Sunday, August 29

The day is partly cloudy. The forecast is for rain, today and tomorrow, in Copenhagen and vicinity. Breakfast at the hotel is reasonably nice, although the scrambled eggs are quasi-petrified and not very warm (even though we are the first guests in the dining room).

**OBSERVATION:** On the taxi ride to the Avis dealer in Copenhagen, you'll recall (p 40) that the driver contended that 98% of bicyclists have no brains. After observing cyclists for a week-and-a-half, both in the city and on the open road, we see no evidence to support his assertion. The bicyclists stay in their lanes, obey the traffic signals, and with only the rarest of exceptions don't dart between cars in dense traffic.

I am pleased to report that my cold is nearly gone. But not forgotten. Last night, I had several nosebleeds as a result of all of my sneezing and blowing. It's amazing that they didn't begin until then. I'll need to have many tissues on hand, should my nose let loose while I'm driving. What is not good is my sciatica. In addition to the pain, which I've become more or less conditioned to accept, this

morning my right leg nearly gave out when I rose from a chair. Later today, it will give way again when we change drivers and I try to enter the car on the passenger side. I find that I can't life my leg onto an ottoman without using my hands to move it. This is not good!

I had remarked on the minuscule parking lot at the hotel. I thought that our car was fairly large, but it is dwarfed by the Toyota Land Cruiser that has parked next to us. Fortunately, said behemoth pulls out before we have to leave, a good thing because I think that it would have been impossible to enter our car on the driver's side.

We leave Odense (and Funen, there being nothing touristic to see on this island, or so my intrepid tour guide informs me) and retrace our path over the magnificent Storebælt bridge (where we take wonderful pictures of the gathering storm clouds) and toward Copenhagen, but we then turn to the southeast and cross a small bridge onto the island of Møn, some 160 km away from Odense. Just before crossing to Møn, we stop in Vordingborg where Lee leaves me in the car as she explores the Gåsetårnet (Goose Tower), the only part of Valdemar the Great's (aka Valdemar IV) castle that is still standing. (This, I can assure my reader, is the *final* member of the Great family that we'll encounter.) It is sunny at this point, the last sun we'll see. (For more on various Valdemars, read on.) A strange sight on the island is the large number of police stationed at various intersections in towns, large and small. Have they detected terrorists here? Nope. It turns out that there is some sort of in-line roller-blade race on the streets and the police are there to prevent the skaters from being run over by cars (or vice versa).

Our plan is to drive the 30 km to the eastern end of Møn to see its famous white cliffs, but there is much rain and wind and squalls; and we find ourselves driving on a dirt road that is becoming muddy and slick; and we get to a parking lot with lots of cars and then realize that we need to walk through the muck if we want to see the cliffs, so we cut our losses and head back to the mainland. Nevertheless, the drive across the island (when the roads were actually paved) is interesting: small towns, churches (some from the 13<sup>th</sup> century), factories, farms.

Møn has been populated for some 10,000 years. From Wikipedia comes this (not so) brief account of its history:

During the Mesolithic era (6800-3900 BC) there is evidence from findings of small flint and bone tools that inhabitants of the island lived by hunting and fishing. The landscape was largely wooded, with hazel and increasingly oak and alder trees. From around 5400 BC reforestation was complete, forming an inaccessible forest and forcing out the last of the big animals such as aurochs and moose. Human habitations have been found along the eastern coast.

The Neolithic era, (3900-1700 BC) saw the start of cattle farming spreading inland from the coastal settlements. Flint axes were used, and trading occurred in flint, gold, copper, and bronze. This era saw the start of barrow building for the dead, and settlements have been found at Rødkilde. Barrows became larger, longer and contained multiple burials. More than 100 large graves have been found on Møn. The period from 2400-1700 is known as Dolktiden, after the flint daggers which became common at that time. Bronze was also in use, imported from the south.

Around 2000 BC, a new wave of people arrived on Møn, the Stridsøksekulturen (the battleaxe people). They brought with them goats, sheep and horses, and their trademark stone battleaxes. They used simpler graves with small round mounds.

Bronze became more common, hence the period 1700-500 BC became the Bronze Age and flint ceased to be used for tools. Large round mounds were used for burial, and more than 200 of these have been found on Møn. Each mound covered a single grave, containing a coffin made from a single split and hollowed oak tree. From 1000-500 BC, graves became smaller and

cremation began to be practiced. Graves were encircled by a ring of stones. Fewer items were buried with the dead, as a result of changes in society which made grave robbing more likely.

From 500 BC, iron began to be used in the Pre-Roman Iron Age. The climate became cooler and wetter, causing difficulties for agriculture. Few remains have been found from the period 500-0 BC, but Celtic culture became an influence.

The Roman Empire stopped short of Denmark, but from 0-400 AD in the Roman Iron Age there is evidence of imported Roman goods in silver, bronze and gold. Little has been found from the post-Roman Germanic Iron Age until about 800 AD. Two treasure hoards have been found on Møn from the Viking Age 800-1050.

Are you ready to learn the names of more rulers? Well, here's what Wikipedia says about the post-Viking era on Møn:

The last recorded independent ruler of the island of Møn was Hemming, son of Sigvard Snogøje (Sigvard Snake-eye) in the early 800's, who carried out raids on other territories. Møn itself was subject to raids, particularly Vendians from Rugen and Fehmarn. [Snake-eye? Bluetooth? Forkbeard? What's with these guys?]

The castle of Stegeborg was begun around 1220 in timber, then rebuilt in brick by 1245, despite this being a relatively peaceful period. On the death of King Valdemar II in 1241, a dispute arose over the succession, which led to the island being raided by Lubeckers who took the part of one of the claimants, Knud Duke of Blekinge who was imprisoned by his brother Erik Plovpenning (king 1241-1250) in Stegeborg. [I am *not* making this up! I just hope that Wikipedia isn't making it up either. Is it possible that Valdemar served as J. K. Rowling's inspiration for Lord Voldemort?] The Lubeckers conquered Copenhagen, then Stege to release the Duke. These raids continued intermittently into the 16th century. The succession was also led to further raids in 1260 when the island was seized by Prince Järmer of Rugen. The Germans gained rights to establish a trading outpost at Brøndhøj. A Norwegian, Alf Ellingsen, was also attracted by the island, defeating a defending fleet of 30 vessels to raid Møn and other islands during the reign of Erik Glipping (1259–1286). Glipping granted Stege a town charter, granting it sole rights to trade and tax certain commodities, which existed until 1857.

From the middle of the 12th to the mid-17th century Møn became a Danish crown property and was managed by a feudal lord. Its relative importance meant that appointments were made from the ranks of highest Danish nobility. The lord had responsibility for maintaining order and collecting taxes, hosting visits from royalty and important guests, and judging legal disputes. As a royal possession, the island was used as surety against loans made to the crown, and passed into various hands while debts remained unpaid. This gave the pledge holders the right to extract whatever revenue they could from the island while it remained pledged as security. Prince Witslav of Rugen held the island for 20 years from 1286, resulting in rebellions against him and further Norwegian raids.

Ready for more? Then read on:

The island, and Stege in particular, prospered in the 14th century from the results of herring fishing, reaching the height of its wealth around 1500. It adopted a coat of arms including three herrings, and the town defenses were strengthened. Around 1430 a rampart, wall and moat were created around the town by Erik of Pomerania. Three towers were created at each of the main approach roads, of which only Møllerporten still partly survives. However, the fortifications were no defense against fire, which at one point destroyed the greater part of the town, or against the plague.

In 1447 King Cristopher of Bayern granted the town rights to trade outside Møn, within the remainder of Denmark. In 1450 Christian I of Denmark forbade farmers to trade goods outside of Denmark, with the direct result that they sailed directly to Germany to sell their goods, bypassing the town of Stege, which was starved of goods and revenue. In 1476 the town received confirmation of its historic rights, and in 1481 a further law forbade foreigners trading with farmers on Møn. This was reaffirmed by King Hans in 1507.

In 1510, the Lubeckers attacked Møn in retaliation for the trade sanctions, failing to take Stege but destroying the island's second largest town, Borre. The trade war continued, and in 1524 Frederick I again felt the need to repeat the ban on trade on Møn anywhere except in the town of Stege. In 1533 Frederick died, leading again to a dispute over the crown. The townspeople sided with the previously deposed Christian II, but the castle was in the hands of Christian III. As a result the castle was taken by deceit by townspeople and blown up. The four leaders were hanged, but the castle was not rebuilt. In 1538 Christian III once again repeated the trade ban, as the citizens of Stege still could not obtain sufficient food for the town.

At the start of the 16th century around 2000 people lived in Stege. However, the herring fisheries were in decline and the town was taxed heavily to pay for continuing wars. Farmers began to sell goods to the harbour at Grønsund, and the island was again pledged against a debt. By 1582 Frederick II was obliged to cut taxes on the town and waive unpaid back taxes, as the town was effectively bankrupt. In 1583, trade with Germany was again banned. Christian IV granted land outside Stege to the town so that the inhabitants might grow food for themselves. In 1627 more land was granted.

The death of Christian IV in 1648 meant the end of the 30-year war, but his successor Frederick III commenced war against Sweden. Copenhagen was occupied and Swedes sought to invade Møn by walking across the ice from Zealand. This was prevented by the islanders, who maintained a 3-mile long opening in the ice to stop the invasion force. However, in May 1659, 3,000 Swedes invaded from the island of Bogø against a force of 500 defenders. Stege was occupied, the town hall and 300 farms destroyed, the island looted and the harvest lost. At the end of the war, in 1660, the island's population was reduced to 670.

Frederick III introduced direct rule, replacing feudal regions with counties and attempted to restore the economy. However, in 1664 Møn was again pledged against loans, this time to a Dutchman Gabriel Marselis. In 1684 the pledge was redeemed, at which time Stege was half in ruins, almost all the forests had been cut down and many farms had been abandoned. In 1685, four battalions of cavalry were sent to the island and stationed at Marienborg. To build barracks at Marienborg, their commander Colonel Von Plessen demolished damaged buildings in Stege to re-use their stone, including the town wall and two of the gate towers. The third was converted into a prison.

Let us pause at this juncture to express our sympathy for Danish school children. Whereas American kids need to know about only assorted explorers, generals, judges, editors, politicians, writers, revolutionaries, and 44 presidents over a span of some 500 years, Danish youngsters learn the history and names of their ancestors over millennia. Whew!

The miserable weather and my miserable leg convince us to return to Copenhagen, some 120 km distant. Filling the tank at a gas station near the airport at about 3:30, we drive to Parking Garage P10 and ascend to level 5 to find an unmanned Avis drop-off point. Lee, bless her heart, spies two baggage cars at the end of the ramp, so she secures them for our use. We take the elevator to level 0, then walk outside Terminal 3 until we find the Avis office. The clerk doesn't even ask about any damage and so I don't volunteer my itty-bitty minor mishap at Koldingfjord. From there, we go up in one elevator, walk across an overpass, then down in another elevator, across another path, and finally reach the Hilton Hotel lobby. It is now 5:00.

In contrast to the Stockholm Hilton, our room in this hotel is large and modern. It is even large enough for us to stow our two purloined baggage carts; this way, we'll not have to scrounge new ones tomorrow. We have dinner at the hotel's buffet - very nice with cold meats and hot, salad, bread and rolls, etc. And, of course, potatoes. Because my right leg is still weak, Intrepid Scout Lee ventures forth on her own to reconnoiter the most efficient walking route for us to take tomorrow when we go to the airport for our 11:10 flight to Amsterdam.

In the evening, we read, pack our suitcases so that they'll pass airport security restrictions, and have our last swigs of the Macallan single malt that I had liberated from the cruise ship. As I've already carefully packed and cushioned the unopened bottle of Glenfiddich, we see no reason to take this open bottle as well, so we leave it for whichever cleaning person discovers it first.

### Monday, August 30

We get up at 6:30. Here is the daily health report on our favorite senior citizen: my leg is less numb and seems to have more strength, but maybe I'm fooling myself; my cold is essentially gone, except that when I chanced to blow my nose this resulted in a major nosebleed.

Enough of that! Breakfast at the hotel featured an excellent spread of cold and hot offerings. The scrambled eggs actually taste as if they had once been real eggs! And for the first time in Denmark, we see real sunnyside-up eggs; I can't resist having one. Lee has a soft-boiled egg and reports that it is not only free-range but that it is cooked properly: neither too firm nor too runny. (Similarly, belying its crummy ambience, the Odense hotel also served a correctly cooked egg.\*)

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\*This affectation concerning properly cooked soft-boiled eggs is not unique with TWOU. In *The Black Tower*, by P. D. James, which I began reading in Kolding, Detective Adam Dalgliesh finds the breakfast at a boarding house not quite to his liking: "There was a bowl of stewed apples ... and a row of boiled eggs, each in its eggcup and individually named. The two remaining were cold. Presumably they were all cooked together earlier in the morning and those who wanted their egg warm took the trouble to be on time. Dalgliesh helped himself to the egg pencilled with his name. It was glutinous at the top and very hard on the bottom, a result which he felt must have taken some perverse culinary skill to achieve." Whew! And then, in the September 13, 2010 issue of *The New Yorker*, one of the "fillers" comes from the *London Daily Telegraph* and bears the heading *There'll Always Be an England*: "Surely of more importance than the correct way to eat a boiled egg is the timing of the cooking in the first place. My own foolproof method involves placing the egg in a pan of cold water, bringing it to the boil and timing the cooking with a leisurely recitation of Henry V's speech at the siege of Harfleur. If, upon reaching the line 'Cry God for Harry, England, and Saint George!' the egg is then plunged into cold water, the white will have set while the yolk remains delightfully runny." What a shame that the cook at Dalgliesh's boarding house had not been privy to this instruction!

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We check out of the hotel at 8:00 and using our "borrowed" luggage carts, the ones that we sequestered yesterday and stored in our room overnight, to transport the suitcases and to serve as a walker for me, we make the long trek (including two elevator trips, one upward and one downward) to the KLM counter. (Actually, both legs today's trip are Delta code shares with KLM, so we will get the frequent flyer points on our Delta accounts). The line for business-class passengers is supposed to move swiftly, but ours (alas) does not. The explanation? The four American travelers in line ahead of us, two couples, are all shown in the airline's computer as having the same address in the States; this causes consternation among the security forces who are determined to protect us from terrorists who do or do not live at the same address.

When we get our boarding passes and check our luggage through to Seattle, we need to go to an



upper level to get to security and then to our gate. This creates two problems for me: my "walker" has to be left behind and we don't see the escalator that we could have used instead of the stairs; so, toting my two carry-ons in one hand, I manfully ascend the stairs by pulling myself up using a bannister. Groan.

Security differs from the practice in the U.S. We are required to remove our belts, show our liquids in their plastic baggie, and remove all items (wallet, keys, pens, cell-phone, IED) from our pockets, but we are permitted to leave the shoes on our feet. I then pass through a full-body scanner, the first time I've done so (although in the intervening months these will become increasingly common in American airports) and am chastised(!) for having left a tissue in my shirt pocket. Who knew that a tissue would cause the machine to flag me for a further pat-down? Leaving Security, there is no choice but to pass through a *huge* duty-free area with shops of all kinds, designed to help separate travelers from their excess money. We resist. (It reminds me of the gift shops that most zoos in the U.S. require that one pass through as one leaves the premises.)

We make the long walk to the concourse and find the Delta/KLM business class lounge. It is on an upper level, but fortunately there is an elevator that we can use. We find a small unattended baggage cart just "begging" to be adopted, so we requisition it to use as my support system. The A/C in the lounge is minimal, but it's nice to be able to sit after all that walking with my bad leg. On leaving the lounge at 10:30, we head to Gate A4 and find a very long line of all of the passengers with no opportunity for the "privileged" (i.e., those of us with business class tickets) to get to the front. Very slowly and one at a time, each of us goes past a security agent who checks boarding pass and passport before allowing entry to the plane. Because there is no system for boarding the plane by zones or rows, passengers enter randomly through the single door and quickly block the narrow aisle. Despite this, everyone is finally seated and the doors are closed at 11:08, just minutes ahead of schedule.

In contrast to the Lufthansa/SAS flight from Frankfurt to Stockholm in which business class on the Boeing 737 had no passenger assigned to the middle seat of the 3-3 arrangement, on *this* 737-400 all seats are occupied; Lee and I are issued boarding passes for the window and middle seats. We sit at the gate for some 10 minutes after which the captain comes on the PA and announces that all of the luggage will have to be removed from the hold because two pieces belong to passengers who have not boarded the flight. Our itinerary calls for us to reach Amsterdam at 11:25 and depart at 1:50, so there's not much wiggle-room in the schedule. All of the luggage is finally on the tarmac at 11:27, the "criminal" bags are found, the luggage is reloaded, and we push back at 11:34; I suspect that our plane was given special clearance because we take off at 11:46.

A light lunch is served but I pass because I know that we'll be well-fed on the next flight ... assuming that we make it. It's a bonus that we're in Row 2, as this puts us close to the exit for rapid escape; I just hope that it's not a long walk to the gate for our Seattle flight. We arrive in Amsterdam and wheels are down at 12:45. We have arrived in Concourse D, Gate 46 (which is, of course, at the end) and need to walk through immigration/passport control and then all the way to Concourse E, Gate 3. Having found another small baggage cart, we arrive at the gate area (one of us hobbling) at about 1:00.

Only one or two people, at a time, are allowed to enter the departure lounge. We are met by a security agent who questions us thoroughly about our carry-ons: have they been under our control at all times, did anyone else have access to them, could someone have slipped something inside one of them, did we receive any gifts, did we make any purchases (where? when?), and so on. He also asks about gifts that we might have received from foreign nationals, including those that are in our checked luggage. He is most suspicious about the pair of inexpensive Russian dolls, given to us by Marina in St. Petersburg, and can't believe that we've been carrying them with us for more than two weeks without their having exploded. Finally, we are allowed to proceed. But there is now a final security check point, just before the jetway to the plane. We remove belts, empty pockets (this time I do

remove my tissue), show liquids, etc. (and, as before, leave our shoes on) before going through another full-body scanner and a final pat-down by an agent (male, alas). And finally, we are allowed to board and settle into our seats at about 1:20.

Idiot! I suddenly realize that I have left the folder with my N.Y. Times crossword puzzles and Sudokus on the plane from Copenhagen; they and my "lucky" pen with all the right answers are still in the seat-back pouch of the 737. Lee, calmly and forcefully, convinces me that under no circumstances do I want to retrace my steps in the vain hope that the 737-400 is still at the gate. (Whatever would I do without her?) The doors of the Airbus A330-300 are closed at 1:42 and push-back occurs at 1:50.

We are subjected to Nanny treatment by the flight attendants. They are, to a person, officious and patronizing, and quite filled with a (an?) hauteur that is not deserved. We guess that they are holdovers from Northwest Airlines, which merged with Delta some time ago and which had an arrangement with KLM. Whatever ... it is not pleasant. While we are taxiing to the runway, these supercilious "mommies" endear themselves to us in the following ways: (1) one of them barks instructions about removing items from the floor, even my briefcase which is far removed from anyone's feet but which she now insists be put in the overhead compartment; (2) a little later, another nanny notices that the pillows/blankets, which we never even requested, are on the floor, so we are chastised for this and said offending items are placed on a nearby seat - a good thing that nobody is sitting there; "I'm sorry, but it's a company rule," she says (the same argument as used by Adolf Eichmann); (3) another warden wanders about the plane to take dinner orders, but even though the Magids are seated ahead of most of the passengers, she skips by us and takes orders from the late arrivals - the result is that when we push the call button to notify her that she'd never visited us, the entree that I want is no longer available because she had just given the last one to the previous passenger.

Meanwhile the pilot is doing the longest airport taxi I've ever experienced. Is he lost? Sight-seeing? Marking time until cleared for takeoff? Who knows? (I suspect that we are pursuing a land route to the Brussels airport where we'll finally get air-borne.) At long last, we have wheels-up at 2:17 pm (or, as my watch now shows, 5:17 am Seattle time). The pilot announces an expected flying time of 10 hours, a little less than what is published. During the flight, I finish the P. D. James book (poor Dalgliesh never does get a decent soft-boiled egg), work on a few Sudokus (generously provided by TWOU), and start Fred Kaplan's *Daydream Believers* about the many many dumb moves made by the Bush II administration in their pursuit (so-called) of foreign policy. We arrive in Seattle at 3:08, about 15 minutes ahead of schedule.

Do things run smoothly at this point? No, they do not! Because we are in business class, we emerge from the plane quickly but still find ourselves on a long line at passport control. We choose the line for American citizens, but several people in line ahead of us are foreign nationals, as we learn when their time at the agent's desk is extremely lengthy and the questioning very detailed. Did they join the wrong line deliberately or was it a language problem? Probably neither - I suspect that they just didn't pay attention to the posted signs. We then pass through Customs surprisingly quickly (no need to pay duty on excess purchases as we did on our return from New Zealand); the agent, however, is amazed when he asks how many countries we had visited and we tell him the answer. And then something strange - rather than being allowed to leave the Customs area with our suitcases, we are required to put them on a conveyor belt where they will be delivered to one of the carousels in the baggage claim area of the terminal. So we do so, walk to baggage claim, and get reunited with our suitcases. There had been a request not to use cell phones while in the Customs lobby, so I wait to call Harbor Taxi to announce our arrival. When I finally turn my phone on, I find that the driver has already left a message wondering if we've arrived. So I call and leave a message on the company's answering machine. About ten minutes later, Steve calls back; he says that he'll contact the driver before he leaves the airport area and have him come to pick us up. Despite fairly heavy traffic on I-5, we're home at 5:00.