

## Chapter 40

### *Our 50<sup>th</sup> year Celebration*

Anne had been my faithful companion and support throughout all the journey recorded here. As we had spent much time in Wales in recent years, indulging my desires to immerse myself once again in the Welsh culture and language, I decided that for our golden wedding celebration, we would honour her desire to spend some time touching her roots in Norway. Thus it was that I suggested we spend a holiday in the land of her father.

We knew this would be expensive but I was determined that ‘no expense would be spared’ (from our limited resources) so that Anne would have a time to remember. We began to plan a month in Norway, staying with family if we could for most of that time, but also driving around to see some of her relatives and our friends. One day we had two visitors – Jon-Kore and Helene were old family friends, living in Stavanger. Their son was working in the oil fields of Alberta so they had come to visit him – and us. On hearing of our plans, they immediately offered us their summer cottage on the island of Flekkeroy, just off the coast of Kristiansand, Norway. We could have it free for as long as we liked after their summer use! We changed our plans to enable us to spend almost three months in Norway and a month in Wales.

In July we had a wonderful celebration for our anniversary, arranged by our daughters and hosted in my old church. Many nice things were said and many friends came to celebrate with us. I was able to write a poem for Anne in appreciation for all her love and support over 50 years – and to present her with her ‘medal’ (which said “No1 – the best!”). She had always said she deserves a medal for living with me for so long!! Three days later we packed our bags and left for UK and Norway with the intention of spending the first two weeks with Anne’s niece as she nursed her father through the latter stages of dementia. Sadly, he died a few days after we arrived in Norway so we needed to return to Wales for the funeral service and to comfort his daughter. We would return to Wales again after our three months in Norway, visiting friends throughout the south and, of course, our new church ‘home’ in Cardigan.

Ryan Air is one of several airlines in Europe which offer greatly reduced prices for travel between smaller airports. We arrived at such an airport near to Oslo, close to the home of Jon-Kore and Helene’s other son, with whom they were staying. We were met at the airport, taken to their home for a meal and then driven to Flekkeroy. What a beautiful place! A couple of days later we drove to Stavanger to enjoy a brief holiday in that lovely city, reminiscing about the time when the Anastasis had visited there in 1993. Then another great blessing – we were given a car and a cell phone to use during our time in Norway!! Truly, our Lord is correctly named Jehovah Jireh (the Lord our Provider). We soon settled into our new home with a wonderful view over the water to other homes on that island. Days were spent in hiking the many trails and clambering over the rocks to several of the secluded inlets. On other days we would take a trip in the car to more distant scenic places. For fellowship we attended a church on the mainland where a congregation of ~150 would gather in a school, mostly young families with small children. We enjoyed those times so much even though we had little grasp of what was being said. Sometimes they would provide us with our own interpreter. Among the friends we met were Mike and Eve-Greta, he a Canadian, she Norwegian. They were building a special house near us so we were able to spend quite some time helping them in their project. All the while, Anne was honing up

on her Norsk for the time at the end of our vacation when we would be in Oslo with relatives, some of whom speak no English.

One weekend we drove out to Jon-Kore and Helene's winter cottage, situated in the middle of a large area of marshland. Of course, in the winter it is all some metres under snow but, for our visit we needed to wear rubber boots to traverse the marshland. The houses are winterised with sod roofs, some with quite large plants and bushes growing on them! The land all around is ideal for growing blueberries and it was our joy to pick many litres and enjoy them with our meals. Waffles with whipped cream and blueberries cannot be easily beaten, especially when eaten in the company of good friends.

For our last week on Flekkeroy and our two weeks in Oslo at the home of Svein and Mae, Anne's cousin, our daughter Corinne flew in to join us. She has a great interest in geneology but had little information on Anne's father's family beyond two generations. She did know that Peder Olsen, Anne's grandfather had lived on a farm at Nordalen, a few miles north of Oslo, so one day, borrowing Mae's car we drove to that region. Corinne began to talk with a man at the local community centre and, within two hours, had Anne's family line all the way back to 1150AD – 17 generations!! Boy, was she excited!! I knew Anne had Viking blood in her!!

Svein and Mae were wonderful hosts with whom we were able to have much sweet fellowship. I cannot imagine our future trips to Europe not including a return visit to see them, especially as flights between UK and Norway are so reasonable, compared with Canadian/American airlines.

We returned to Wales at the beginning of November, not an ideal month to spend time on vacation, especially as our dear friend Jenna had asked if she might join us for that part of our time abroad. We assured her she would always be welcome with us but warned that the weather in UK in November is usually the worst of the year, with fog, drizzle and cold wind. She said that she was not so much interested in seeing the beaches or walking the trails but wanted to meet our friends, see our roots and enjoy our company. So it was agreed, recognising that we would need to hire a car for some of our time 'at home' so we could take Jenna around. Imagine our delight when the very next day, I received an email from Steve and Sulwen, Mt Zion Cardigan, saying how disappointed they were that they would not see us in November as they were spending that month with their son in Thailand. However, we were welcome to use their car and home for the whole month! Our fears about the weather were unfounded, as that November must have been the warmest and driest on record – we even sat outside for our morning coffee, were able to hike many of the wonderful coastal trails and show Jenna much of the beauties of our homeland – she will never forget that holiday, especially the fish & chips and cream slices!

We were able to see Steve and Sulwen within a few months as they did a house and car swap with a local pastor for four months early in 2012 but that's another story and I've reached the end of this one. Maybe I'll add some more chapters if the Lord gives me many more years, but I wanted to write this book, not just to tell a story but to honour the Lord who has led us on this most remarkable journey. We have come to know and love Him more and thank Him that our "lot has fallen to us in pleasant places".

I cannot but think that the only reason I have such a story to tell is because of three things:

- My heart longs to experience the Lord as response to Paul's prayer of Ephesians 1:17
- The Prayer of My Heart remains that I might be kept in His will
- He is pleased to give me more of His blessings because I am quick to tell others of them.

May my life always be 'to the praise of His glory' – Ephesians 1:14

*Gareth*

October 2012