Helsinki Journal, Entry 20, December 17, 2006

I am writing this entry on the day we returned to Helsinki from our trip to Norway and Sweden. Our itinerary was as follows: we left Helsinki at 7:30am on December 15 for Oslo; in Oslo we spent three days; then, following a night-train ride from Oslo to Stockholm, Sweden, we spent two days; and we left on December 19 (last night) from Stockholm on the overnight cruise ship for Helsinki. It was a great trip. It was an exhausting trip. It is good to be home again.


There are many things that I could write about, and we took so many pictures that I could fill pages. However, I must keep things short and so will focus on our time in Norway in this entry. First off, in order to head off the inevitable question, we did not see the fjords. Rather, we spent all of our time in Oslo, the capital city.

Oslo is not a big city, nor is it overwhelming, as is Stockholm. You can see the major sights without too much trouble in two or three days. And some great sights there are! For me, the favorites were of both artistic and adventuristic natures: the Gustav Vigeland Sculpture Park and the Munch (of “The Scream” fame) paintings at the National Gallery and the Munch Museum, and the Kon-Tiki, Fram and Viking Ship Museums – Norwegians revere their famous explorers. I found each of these sights deeply impressive. For such a small city, the sights in Oslo are fantastic and are good for the whole family. We enjoyed our three days there very much.

Two sculptures from Oslo’s Vigeland Park – a truly awesome place.
One of the major highlights of the trip, however, was that we were able to meet with some distant relatives living in the Oslo area. With the Norwegian embassy so accessible here in Helsinki, I took some information that I had gotten this past summer and got contact information for a women who is my mother’s second cousin – their grandmothers were sisters. They are pictured below. My Norwegian counterpart, Anne-Marie, is pictured below on the right. She spent an afternoon and evening showing us around Oslo, for which we were most grateful.

It’s difficult, at this point, to comment objectively on what it means to meet distant family as we’ve done. I think that for an American it is particularly poignant since our country is so young, and we are a people with a limited heritage. What I can say, however, is that there is something unexplainably significant about it.

Oslo and Oslo Fjord from Holmenkollen Ski Jump, which is seen behind the kids on the right.