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From Samsø to California & Return 1952

By Edvard and Harald Degn

Translated from the Danish with an introduction by James D.
Iversen. Edited by Birgit Flemming Larsen

Two brothers, Edvard and Harald Degn, decided in 1952 to travel from their home on the island of Samsø, Denmark to the United States in order to visit their brother, Alfred Degn, who lived in Santa Maria, California, and who had emigrated from Denmark in 1926, 26 years earlier.

Their trip not only gave them a chance to see and visit with their brother Alfred after a very long separation, but also gave them a chance to tour this large country and to compare the differences between the United States and Denmark. The diary of the trip reflects their observances of the country, its people and its landscape. They wrote not only about the differences between the two countries but also of how their former fellow countrymen in Denmark were prospering, and how well (or whether) they had been able to continue the traditions and customs of "the old country". Many years before their trip, Edvard and Harald had started a business of selling motorcycles and bicycles, and later sold cars and farm machinery. Thus, their business background on Samsø explains their interest in visiting various manufacturing plants and businesses in the United States, as recorded in their diary.

They spent a short part of the stay in Chicago, where they met with an aunt and some of their cousins who had also immigrated to the United States from the island of Samsø. The aunt was Bodil Marie Rasmussen, to whom one of the copies of the diary had been sent, in August of 1952, about 5 months after their visit. Bodil Rasmussen's grandson, Jorgen Rasmussen, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Iowa State University, has that copy of the diary in his possession.

Professor Rasmussen has responded to receiving the translation of the diary from Danish to English as follows:

“As a (third) generation Danish American, reading (Jim Iversen’s translation) of this diary of the American trip of my grandmother’s nephews both gladdened and saddened me. Here were a couple of intrepid Danes, who, shortly after the end of World War II, decided to visit the United States to see how their relatives, who had emigrated some years (earlier), were doing. Not only did they accomplish this by means of a coast-to-coast tour, no less! – but they managed to arrange a tour of the Studebaker auto plant, something that I never experienced despite growing up only 20 miles from it. These nephews were some impressive fellows.

Despite their practical abilities, however, maybe they were a bit naïve. They came to the US expecting to visit some Danes, who now happened to live in America. What they found instead were Americans, who happened to be of Danish heritage. The myth of America as the melting pot always has been most compelling. Wherever we, or our ancestors, are from, we are all one. The down side of the melting pot is the loss of diverse national heritages and cultures. The former Danes that the nephews met had become Americans, fine. But we can understand the nephews’ sadness that those who had been their countrymen now retained so little of their Danish heritage.

The nephews were impressed by much of what they saw in the US. They, unlike the relatives they visited, however, were not enticed to emigrate. The United States was a nice place to visit, but they preferred to remain Danes. Their balanced view of American’s strengths and drawbacks generates a number of astute and insightful evaluations of the country a half-century ago.

Although South Bend, Indiana (home of Studebaker) was only 20 miles from my home, the town of La Porte, and on the rail line that one took to Chicago, where the nephews would visit their Aunt Bodil, my grandmother, they did not stop off to visit my father, their cousin. My father had six brothers and sisters. Why he was the one who received the diary of her nephews’ trip when my grandmother died, I don’t know. The diary was found among his things when he died. For years we were uncertain just what it was.

Then we asked Jim Iversen if he could give us some idea what it was about. He found it so fascinating that he did a full translation. Once you start reading you'll soon see what grabbed his attention. How fortunate that this document came to my father and Jim now has brought it to life."

Extracts from a Diary
February 5 to April 2, 1952

Those who as young people traveled out as emigrants nearly always had the desire to again visit the old country at least once. Most did realize that desire.

Many of us who remained at home have also had the dream to go over and see how it went with those who left. Unfortunately, that dream is not often fulfilled, so when that did happen for us, it became an event we will always remember.

Therefore this account has been written, which is more like a diary pieced together in an imperfect fashion.

Our wish to visit our brother in California had long been our desire together with a yearning to tour in America. When one finally makes that decision, there are so many things to get in order, and so when the trip was planned in January 1952, we had to hurry to make preparations. Because of our business the trip had to be in the wintertime, when we both would be free for a couple of months. We had to leave our house in the best condition possible. The work had to be finished and the year's accounting done and the tax forms completed. There were many things to think about, but everything was accomplished.

It is not so easy to receive permission to be a guest in "God's Own Country". We telephoned the American Consul General on the necessities for obtaining a tourist visa and how long would it take. We were informed that normally a visa could be obtained in about a month, and the consulate sent us forms to be filled out. Here we had to give precise information on personal conditions, family conditions, political activity and much more. In addition we had to

obtain information from family in the US, criminal activity (if any), copies of proof of vaccinations, etc.

A visa to the USA cannot be obtained without a guarantee from family or friends in the US that we can stay with them as well as guarantee that we would return before the expiration date of the visa.

Once the different papers were posted we could after more conversations meet at the Consulate on the 6th of February in order to finally obtain the visa. We may assure that "Uncle Sam" takes no chances when it comes to receive guests to the country. There were an uncountable number of papers filled out and our fingerprints were taken, and in addition we had to undersign a formal declaration that we at no point had been members of the Communist, Nazi or Falangist parties. After that we were taken in to the Consul, where we had to swear that everything we had written was correct. Now finally the desired visa could be delivered to us. After that we went to the National Bank to exchange money, which was a maximum \$50 per person. We were then directed to the Farmer's Bank, where the "hard" currency was delivered. Here we should state that the entire ticket, travel to and return from California could be purchased with Danish Kroner. These were obtained at Ø.K. (East Asiatic Company), after the visa had been obtained. It took all day in Copenhagen to get these things accomplished.

The first day of the trip, **February 7**, dawned with cold and sour weather.

We got to the pass control in good time, and all in all that went very easily with no pain. "Stavangerfjord" was supposed to sail at 10 o'clock in the morning, but it was 10:30 before the gangplank was raised and the cables were loosened. One young woman with a little child stopped on the gangplank just when it was about to be swung in. She just barely made it on board. One should not come too late to the ship when sailing to America.

"Stavangerfjord" is no modern boat. It was launched shortly after the end of the First World War, and so now it is over 30 years old. It is 13,700 tons, so it is not so small. The crew consists of 300 men, and there are places for about 700 passengers. It is sufficiently

seaworthy, so several travelers to America choose it instead of one of the newer ones. The sailing through the Sound and across the Skagerak to Kristiansand, Norway occurred in fair weather, and we reached Kristiansand at 1:30 am on 8 February. We stayed there only two hours, and soon our ship steamed away through the night across the North Sea.

The weather got worse with a strong headwind. Many passengers became seasick and we stayed a little longer in our bunks than usual. The unpleasantness soon got better, however, and one gets used to the sea. There was breakfast at 8am, lunch at 12:30 pm, and dinner at 6:30 pm. The food was satisfactory, but not quite like the Danish.

On Saturday the 9th of February, the weather again was good, and all men were on their feet. There was instruction for the passengers regarding life vests at the respective lifeboats at 4pm. All proceeded according to program.

One learns to know different interesting people. One young engineer was on his way for further education in San Francisco. A young Danish-Jewish couple was headed to the Midwest to begin anew after their turbulent existence in Denmark and Sweden during and after the War.

The 10th and 11th of February went by uneventfully. Monday afternoon the captain had a party for all the children on board. That was held in the tourist class activity room and there was good attendance. Treats consisted of Coca Cola, ice cream and cookies, of which there was plenty. Afterwards several of the small guests sang solos or entertained. The orchestra played and there were solos sung by adults. In addition there were arranged several games and contests, which were much enjoyed. The hall was full of passengers from all three classes.

After the end of the children's program there was arranged a "bingo play" in the cabin class activity room. We won 42 kroner with only a few kroner of input. In the evening there was a very enjoyable dance.

We got acquainted with a young man who was sent over by his company for a 3-month study visit in the United States. He is a manager in a large confections factory in Copenhagen and had letters of introduction along to about 30 different companies in America. He planned to travel around in most of the states and of course hoped to learn something in the process.

On Wednesday, the 13th of February, there was again very windy weather with high seas. The day passed with long walks and conversations on deck. In the evening there was performance by different artists, partly the ship's own amateur performers and partly from among the passengers. The presentation was quite good.

In the evening we saw a bit of America, as we passed a lighthouse at Cape Race in Newfoundland.

On Thursday the 14th of February, the ship's doctor was quite busy. A young Finnish mother delivered a son, however two months premature. The boy died shortly after birth. In addition a two-year old boy was operated on for appendicitis.

We had expected to reach Halifax in the evening, but we were already a number of hours late.

On Friday, the 15th of February, we reached Halifax at 8:30 am. The weather was cold, minus 8 degrees (18 degrees Fahrenheit). The city has about 200,000 inhabitants, but it didn't look appealing, and the weather was not inviting. We were at the quay for about two hours and about 100 emigrants were off-loaded. We were informed that the final arrival at New York would take place at 8am Sunday morning, so we were happy to learn that already the same day we could board the train. The captain's farewell dinner was at 6 o'clock in the evening. That was very enjoyable. The tables were decorated with Norwegian and American flags. In addition there was arranged on a large table in the middle of the dining room a very fine exhibit of the ship in miniature as well as several coast panoramas. The dinner consisted of soup, fish, roast goose, ice cream, coffee and several fruits. The conversation was constant

except for a thanksgiving and reminder that we would soon be separated from the good friends we had made on the 8-9 days co-existence on the boat. The little boy who was born the day before was early in the morning buried at sea with the captain conducting the service, as one of our friends on the voyage later informed us.

At our arrival in Halifax the two patients were taken by ambulance to the local hospital. In the evening the wind started up again. That was an unfortunate thing to happen at the same time as our good dinner. A collection, about 2000 kroner, was taken on behalf of the young mother for her hospital stay in Halifax, which was fortunate because it was obvious the young couple hadn't much money.

During the day we had been up to first class to visit an old Danish American from Chicago. He and his wife travelled home for a visit to the old country every year. He was one of those who had made his fortune in America. He owns a large construction company in Chicago.

On Saturday the 16th of February the humor was high and everyone was in good spirits. We were informed that we would be in New York harbor at 8pm, but the ship had first to sail into its berth at the quay and the passengers would be expedited from on board Sunday morning. In the evening we could begin to see land, and the traffic on the ocean became more and more lively as we approached the harbor. One big English passenger ship reached and passed us in the space of a few hours. When darkness fell, we could more and more see the lights from the great city, and an extraordinarily impressive spectacle it was to behold the city from a shorter distance, when our ship first dropped anchor in the harbor.

Already early on Sunday morning a number of US government employees came on board and before we had berthed at the quay at Hoboken the many passengers had gotten their papers perused and stamped, so when finally the gangplank was laid out could the first passengers quickly begin to walk on land. The civilian passport people were gruff and haughty to most passengers, and especially to the immigrants, who besides their many papers also had to present

their x-rays which were opened and examined. The customs officials, on the other hand, were courteous and talkative, and when all the passengers' baggage had been put in order alphabetically, and because there was a great effort by the customs people to expedite matters, the customs procedures went relatively easily. Gifts that had been brought along had to be shown, and we had to pay duty on everything brought in.

We were soon through customs, and we could hire a taxi and drive to New York Central Station to obtain the train tickets with the ticket receipts we had brought along. Here we had our first difficulty, as it appeared that our travel agent "American Express", from whom we had ordered our tickets, was not open on Sunday, and we had therefore a very difficult time at the Central Station to get that straightened out, and as there were several lines to choose from the question became a bit difficult.

In the meantime, after about an hour, the matter was taken care of, and we had only a little time left to wait for our train, which was scheduled to leave at 3pm.

When one walks off the ship to the land in New York, the city makes a very big impression. This busy city with its many skyscrapers and with its fearsome traffic in the streets can nearly take one's breath away. New York should be visited at length, but that we had to forego, because our train was scheduled to depart at 3 o'clock.

One thing we were very surprised about in New York was the disorder in the streets. They were flooded with paper and other debris, and it didn't seem like they were often cleaned. New York Central Station, only one of several train stations, was overwhelming in dimension and quite nicely decorated. It seemed as though the entire world's people streamed through it. People of all colors and races moved among each other. We stretched our necks and said, "Did you see him over there", or "No, look at those two over there."

We were in the Central Station's restaurant, and it quickly seemed very American, that we could sit at a long table and almost get fed by a conveyor belt.

The food was good, cheap, and served quickly. As soon as one sat down a glass of ice water was set in front of us, and that seemed

to be the custom in all restaurants and drug stores in America. The waiters didn't wait for an order of beer or some other drink as in Denmark. On the other hand, drinking coffee seemed to be obligatory, and was served and enjoyed with the meal.

Our train left Central Station precisely on time, and it was with a sigh of relief that we could set ourselves on our pleasant seats on the train. It was snowing lightly when we moved out of New York, but we were happy to see open country again. The railroad follows the Hudson River for quite a distance, and we could for a long time see the attractive mountains with communities on the other side of the river. Soon it became dark and the lights were twinkling. We could relax while our train continued on in the night to our prearranged goal of St. Louis in Missouri.

In the evening we could fold the chair backs down and simultaneously put the footrests up. So we could sort of lie down and nap a bit. A real night's sleep it was not, however, and in the early light of day on Monday morning we could begin to notice the landscape we were traveling through. It was flat farmland with close villages much like many places in Denmark. The ground in most places, however, had not been fall-plowed and we could see that much of the corn stubble was still standing. As we traveled farther southward the snow disappeared, and in several places we could see herds of long-haired red and black pigs in the cornfields.

One thing which surprised us very much was to see the overall deteriorated conditions of the buildings out in the country. All the buildings were built of wood, in any case all of the farm buildings. Even in the larger station towns the buildings were of wood, and it seems that many of them had not received any paint for many years. There were boxes and all kinds of junk, wood and iron lying around nearly all the houses and ugly grim-looking sheds with rusting corrugated metal roofs in all the most unlikely places.

We were impressed by the boundless disorder which was prevalent. It came to be predictable, that even outside the worst-looking house, worse than a Danish chicken coop even, there would be a "Dollargrin"¹ of recent vintage. That was the most surprising to see on this train ride to Missouri, the awful-looking houses and the overwhelming number of cars. This abundance of cars is true all

over America, and it is numbing to consider all the good cars. No American family with any self-respect can be without a car, and many families have two or three or more depending on the size of the family.

It was related to us that even school children down to 15 years of age can get driving permits, on the parents' recommendation and if there is a good reason for it.

We traveled past "car cemeteries", where hundreds of cars including postwar models were piled in rows for cannibalizing.

On Monday the 18th of February our train reached St. Louis at 11:30pm. St. Louis is a very large city, and there was here, as elsewhere much traffic on the streets. We quickly noted that the weather was milder. The sun was shining and the weather was delightful.

The first thing that caught our attention at the railroad station was the large number of colored people, especially Negroes. They were by far in the majority and were many shades of color from very light brown to very dark. In order to find the most to see of the southern states we had planned to travel from St. Louis with the "Southern Pacific" through Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California. We were not disappointed in our expectations at seeing many extraordinary things. This route is also called the "Sunshine Route" and not without reason. We had a stay in St. Louis and went out to see the city. The many Negroes dominated the picture. We visited a large monumental building with a memorial hall for those who had fallen in the World Wars, and the accompanying museum of exhibits from the Wars impressed us. Then back to the train station.

Our train was scheduled to leave at 5:30 in the afternoon, and we had a very long continuous train ride ahead of us, before we would first change trains in El Paso about 2000 km farther west. The trip across Arkansas gave us the same impression as Missouri. Great flat stretches with farmland and farms spread overall. No buildings were especially good to look at from the train. We could notice that we were traveling farther south. It got steadily warmer. At dawn

On Tuesday the 19th of February we reached Dallas in Texas. Here there was an especially long stopover before we should travel further, and we began to be more impatient to reach the end of the road.

After the train finally left the station and we came out into the country again we could notice the new landscapes which passed our window. Now it was no longer farmland but hills and mountains with groves of scrub trees and some poor land where there were residences only once in a while. We continued westward and especially after we had passed through the large city of Fort Worth the landscape became wilder. Now once in a while, we began to see the oil derricks pop up out of the landscape, and even the landscape was wild and desert-like, the small stations became more frequent, because of course the rich oil-districts require many people to work at getting the oil out of the ground and in the refineries. The impression of all those pumps, thousands of them, which day and night and year after year pump oil out of the ground, will always be with us. We at home are happy that we have even only one pump situated near Tønder. In Texas it was like the oil was jumping out of the ground.

We arrived at El Paso about 11pm, and as expected, that didn't leave us enough time to go out and see the town before we had to switch to the next train. El Paso is very Spanish influenced, at any event, as far as the population is concerned. One sees many of plainly Spanish type, but also many Mexican, or more correctly, Mestizo, of blended Spanish and Indian origin. We had some difficulty in El Paso in getting our baggage switched to the other train, but finally the difficulties were overcome just in time that we could take our place in the reserved Pullman car before the train began to move. The time was about 1am and there was no possibility to see more of the city. Our fellow passengers were a mixed lot. We especially noticed an elderly Mexican couple who certainly had just crossed the border and no doubt didn't travel by Pullman every day. The man had on a hat as large as a mill-wheel and the wife was in clothing which is not seen at home for every day use.

Our train would only stop for a few minutes in San Luis Obispo – our final destination. We were a bit concerned about whether the family had received our telegram, so if they would be at the train station to meet us. But there they were. Our joy and happiness was great on both sides, but when people have not seen each other for 20 years, it takes a bit before one finds his voice. Alfred had to concentrate quite a bit to search for words before the Danish words would come. His wife could neither understand nor speak Danish, so it was up to him to communicate.

We got into the car and drove the 50 km to Santa Maria and covered that quickly. When we reached the home we talked and drank coffee and talked again so it was far into the night before we got to bed. It was so enjoyable to sleep in a real bed again after so many days with our clothes on.

Alfred had taken some vacation and already on **Friday the 22nd February**, it was agreed that we would go on a longer tour in the car to see the different places in California. Early on that Friday morning, our suitcases were again packed and laid in the trunk of their delightful 1949 Plymouth, which should roll us around on the highways of California.

Our first goal was Fresno, the “raisin city”, where we wanted to visit an elderly Danish-American woman, an old acquaintance. In the evening we stopped at one of those well-known places found overall in California, a “motel”, more closely defined as a motor hotel. A long low building with parking places in front. One can rent a room with kitchen and bathroom as well as extra beds if desired. In front of the door to the room is the parking place for the car, and all problems are thus solved at once. If one wishes to prepare food in the kitchen that can certainly be one. There is an electric range or a gas range and all the kitchen equipment. Of course, people can also go out to a restaurant to eat and only use the room at night. In addition it is normal to find a TV set in this motel room, so if one does not want to go out, the room can be used to see movies for the entire evening.

After we had gotten a good evening meal we got into the car again, and drove to a “Drive In”, an open-air movie theatre outside of town. In such a movie theatre one simply drives in with his car

and finds a place in a row of cars. On the right side of the car is a stand with a speaker and cable. One simply takes the speaker off the stand and hangs it in the car, pushes the button, and closes the window. Now we are ready to see the show. In front is a very large structure which holds the movie screen. The operator sits in a tower in the back. If one is not too far back in the rows of cars one can see just as well as in a normal theater. We were, however, quite a way back from the screen, and so the picture was a little hard to see. We could, however, follow the whole thing and the sound, of course, came through the speaker in our car. If one has a nice roomy car to sit in, it can be a very enjoyable way to see a movie. We watched a film which was about the world situation. This was a dramatic movie, which I am sure has not been shown yet at home.

It was late before we got back to our nice motel. Saturday morning we drove out to find the little town of Easton, outside of Fresno. Here was our old acquaintance Mrs. Clara Sørensen supposed to live, and after some searching we found her house. Fortunately she was at home.

We were welcomed with open arms, and we had to finally go with her to visit her several children, who lived in and around Fresno. Protest from our side was useless, and soon she was ready to ride with us. It was not long before we didn't regret that we had begun to visit these "children". First we drove out to see her oldest son Chris Sørensen, who owned a large farm near Fresno. We were very welcomed by Chris Sørensen, who is about 50 and a man of pure Danish descent, a man who has done well. He could not speak Danish and in general did not have much to do with the large numbers of Danes one finds in and near Fresno.

Chris Sørensen has been an unusually successful individual and his fresh-packed fruit is sold all over the U.S.A. We were in to see his private home, and that nearly took our breath away, when we saw this magnificent residence. The house is quite large and spacious and with many rooms. The kitchen is unique and the large spacious living rooms are furnished and decorated with excellent taste. We can nearly believe that anything one can find in the modern household can be found in Chris Sørensen's home. As a special logo Chris Sørensen has selected the old wagon wheel. The

wagon wheel is on the label of his fruit boxes. It is burned into the tiles in the kitchen and in the bathrooms. The leather furniture is likewise decorated with the wagon wheel, as well as the carpets. Much of the furniture is built with the wagon wheel as a motif. Yes, even the headboards on the house's beds consist of half of a wagon wheel.

We got permission to photograph Chris Sørensen's house both inside and out, and after we had thanked him for his welcoming reception, we drove on.

We finally reached Mr. N.H. Mortensen's private home, where we were invited in for lunch. We were heartily welcomed by his wife, who is the daughter of Clara Sørensen. After lunch we had the opportunity to see Mrs. Mortensen's splendid home, and during that Mr. Mortensen himself arrived. We now had a conversation about Ferguson tractors and Ferguson dealerships and after a while we drove off.

In the meantime an invitation came by telephone that we must come out and visit another of Clara Sørensen's children, mechanic and farmer Harry Sørensen, who lives outside Ridley.

Here also we received a hearty welcome, and soon we were again seated at a well-supplied table. This time for dinner. The gathering was most cordial and festive although there were some language difficulties. After we had finished eating, Mr. N.H. Mortensen and his wife came to the place, and we had a delightful time.

Harry Sørensen is one of those who recognizes his Danish heritage, and because he is a member of the Danish Society in Ridley, a chapter of the Danish Brotherhood, he invited us along to a visit to the Danish meeting house in Ridley, where there was a festive meeting with coffee, dancing and card playing as one wished in the evening.

We came just in time for the coffee table, where we as visiting Danish guests were presented and bid a special welcome. That, however, was all in English. We had the opportunity to talk with a number of old Danes of the second generation. Our impression is that the Danish Societies will survive, but the Danish language will in many places die out, and it could not be otherwise. Indeed many of the first generation who in their lives have not been back home on

a visit have nearly forgotten how to speak Danish and many of the second generation have on the whole not learned it, and there are others who on the whole are not even interested.

Of course, the adjustment is not the same everywhere, but as a whole one can say with certainty that the use of Danish will die out. Too few Danes emigrate now. We talked to some who call themselves Danes but they, on the whole, understood not one word of Danish. And also many Danes have married Americans and here understandably the interest in Danish is less, but on the other hand, we also met other examples such as one woman whose parents were Danish, but was born in America and with remarkable success got her American husband into the Danish Society, and even taught him to speak Danish.

In Fresno and the surrounding area there must be 6-7000 people who are Danish or of Danish descent. After that interesting visit to the Danish meeting house in Ridley, we drove back again.

On Sunday, the 24th of February, the sun shone early as it nearly always did in California and after a good breakfast with our dear hostess and after having photographed both here and there we took a heartfelt departure with promises to write and send pictures.

On Monday the 25th of February we toured around San Francisco and were among other places at the Norsk Amerika Liniens (Norwegian American Line) office in order to obtain our passage home, which was set for the 21st of March, with the SS Stavangerfjord.

San Francisco impressed us with its bridges, the 8 km long Oakland – San Francisco Bridge and the huge Golden Gate Bridge with the longest suspension span. We took a lot of photographs and hope they turn out.

Another thing which made a strong impression on us in San Francisco was the unusually steep streets. Several places it seemed we were in doubt whether we would be able to drive up them. In any case one should have a powerful and superior automobile and have good brakes in order to negotiate the hills. When driving down such a street it seemed as if we were in danger for our lives

like novices in the hands of the driver. That evening we stayed in San Francisco.

On Wednesday morning the 27th of February we again left Santa Maria and turned southward. We passed through the really peaceful part of California on the way to Los Angeles. Among other places we visited was the little Danish town of Solvang ca. 65 km (40 mi) south of Santa Maria, but more on that later.

We reached Los Angeles in the evening and we settled in to a motel in North Hollywood. Because our room had the most delightful television apparatus, it was difficult for us to tear loose to go out in the town and find something to eat and to see some of the large city. Despite that consideration, we did go out to see something, and we decided in the evening to attend a burlesque theater for a midnight show in order to see some of California's beautiful women. The show consisted of performances by dancing ladies and various skits, etc. The scenery was magnificent, and the dancing ladies performed partly in beautiful flowing dresses and partly in almost nothing. The dancers were very capable, but parts of the show were so daring that a portion of the show certainly would not be allowed back home.

On Thursday morning the 28th of February we left Los Angeles again to go back to Santa Maria. Alfred should be home before evening, when his club (or lodge) "Knights of Pythias" would have a party in the evening on the occasion of the opening of a sports locale for children. Alfred is on the board of the lodge and was "primus motor" for the event. When we got to Santa Maria towards evening we were met by his wife with the information that there had been a whole series of telephone calls from lodge members about the evening's arrangements. Now he was busy changing clothes and left home again.

The Lodge has its own building in Santa Maria. Several of the directors had already arrived and were busy getting things ready. Our old friend "Papa Johnson" was busy making soup in the hyper-modern kitchen, and we had to quickly go to the bakery to get the cakes reserved for the coffee. The party began at 7pm. First as a

fund-raiser for the Sports Hall there was an auction of fine packages which had been brought by the women. The bidding was lively, and some packages went for as much as \$5.

When the auction was over we were all sat down, opened our food packages, and the soup was served. The conversation was lively, and we felt quite at home as guests at the party. The lodge members were doctors, lawyers, businessmen, laborers, and a few farmers. After the meal we were treated to a talk in the Lodge's hall. The lecture was on sport, primarily sport for young people. In addition we were introduced with a special welcome by the president as Danish guests on a visit to Santa Maria, and while the gathering applauded we had to greet to all sides.

The Lodge "Knights of Pythias" in Santa Maria is an old chapter of a large brotherhood of the same name, which has chapters all over the USA. The Lodge has a Society for men and an auxiliary for women and only when there is a special event can the women come to the men's gathering. There is a club meeting once each week, and the real meetings which are secret, only admits members. Members can bring male guests who can participate in conversations after the meetings.

On Saturday the first of March we found ourselves all day in Santa Maria, and we went out to see the town. There are about 12,000 inhabitants and the city is attractively situated in a valley. The streets are broad and with nice well-kept buildings and beautifully landscaped with palms and other tropical vegetation. Just in Santa Maria there are 12-14 churches of different denominations, and it seems that each denomination strives to support their church.

On Sunday the second of March we went to church service in the afternoon in the large Methodist church. The church is quite spacious and there were many in attendance. The service was formal and nice, but unfortunately we understood very little of the sermon and also the hymns were unknown to us. A large choir clad in sumptuous red robes was quite decorative and sang well.

In the afternoon we were invited to visit our old school comrade from Samsø, Marinus Jensen, who lives in San Luis Obispo. On the

way there we stopped to visit Tage Jensen who lives in Shell Beach (just north of Pismo Beach) on the Pacific coast. He went with us further to visit Marinus Jensen. When we arrived we received a hearty welcome from Marinus and his wife.

A whisky-soda was served as soon as we arrived, and the conversation became quite lively. Marinus Jensen has a large and delightful home which cost him ca. \$35,000. He may soon buy a larger and more costly house. A very nice dinner was served in the evening. Marinus Jensen, who has been home on a visit twice since he emigrated in 1926, has also kept up with developments back home, and he still speaks excellent Danish. His wife who is American is very lively and she related several jovial anecdotes in Swedish-American, as she declared that she was Swedish, but it turned out that two of her grandparents were Swedish. Marinus Jensen operates a trucking business and his four trucks which deliver wares to groceries and he serves a fairly large district. We were in to see his workplace, and came quickly to the conclusion that it is easier to operate such a business in America than in Denmark, because the wares come in standard packaging in the USA.

After several hours of jovial visiting we left Marinus Jensen and his wife and rolled again towards Santa Maria. We stopped again at Tage Jensen's and had an additional couple hours conversation over a strong whisky soda.

On Monday the fifth of March Alfred's vacation was over, and we had now made arrangements that we should ride with him around on his tour to the different restaurants, hotels, barbershops, etc. That was a trip of over 100 km (60 miles), and we visited the several smaller towns in the region as well as the large military installation Camp Cook which is as large as a medium size provincial town at home.

In the afternoon we got a test of the American police vigilance as we were out on the highway and were stopped by a patrolman, who drove up beside our car. Alfred had to get out and show his driver's license and a lively discussion ensued when the patrolman insisted that we had been driving too fast, because the speed limit on

this stretch of highway was only 45 miles per hour. We strongly insisted that we had maintained a speed under the limit. The patrolman then decided to give us just a warning in a very gruff tone, and then we could drive on.

Our tour included the little Danish town of Solvang. It lies beautifully in a valley between high mountains and near the old Spanish mission of Santa Ynez. There has been so much told about Solvang so that we will confine ourselves just to inform that the town has about 1500 residents, of whom 600 to 800 are Danish or had Danish parents. A somewhat special characteristic is that all the people greet each other on the sidewalk. Several places we were greeted with the Danish "go' dag" and of course when we were in a Danish gift shop we were greeted by the manager and others in perfectly good Danish. You can also buy a Danish beer here, and at the Danish bakery we were in to have a little conversation and got a rye bread to take home for the evening. The church was built in completely Danish style as were other buildings in town. The known Atterdag College or High School towers on a hill outside the town. The college, as is known, was founded by Pastor Nordentoft about 1911. It is easy to get along with the Danish language in Solvang and many families speak Danish in the home, but in general the primary language is English, however. For the time being the Danish language is held in honor in Solvang, and they also celebrate "Danish Days" in the summer. Then thousands of tourists come from near and far, especially Danish. We talked to many Danes in the town about people at home we knew in common.

On Wednesday, the 12 of March we were in Santa Maria, however, with two trips to San Luis Obispo when Alfred's wife drove us in the morning in order to get papers in order before our travel to Chicago. After a lot of negotiation with the officials, and with our good friend Marinus Jensen's help we finally were delivered a "sailing's permit" at the city hall. This permit is necessary to leave the USA. They want to be sure that people with a visitor's visa haven't earned any money during their vacation in the USA. In the evening Alfred drove us again to San Luis Obispo and we were there together with Marinus Jensen and Alfred at the train station to register our large

sized baggage which should get to the ship in New York a few days before we ourselves get there. In the evening we were up to Marinus Jensen's private home for a cup of coffee and a farewell drink. The time got late. After we said goodbye to Marinus Jensen and his lovely wife we again drove back to Santa Maria.

On Thursday the 13 of March we were up with the chickens to see the sights one more time before the travel and to get the whole family photographed. Our visit to Santa Maria and therefore to California was drawing near the end. We had in the preceding days driven over 6000 km (3600 miles) around to the different places in California. We had wandered in the snow in the Yosemite mountains; we had picked oranges off the trees, lemons and olives near Fresno. Now we again had to go out on the long train ride through San Francisco and eastward to our intermediate goal, Chicago. In the home in Santa Maria we had not spent all that much time during our stay in California, and despite Alfred at the end of our tour would like us to stay longer, we had to continue eastward if the trip were to continue according to plan.

Alfred had now lived in California for 27 years and had in this period worked in Santa Maria, first with Knudsen's Creamery Co. and later at another dairy. He married in 1934 and his wife Dixie was born in California of Danish parents. Some years after marriage he got the position, as stated earlier, with Mr. Johnson's large laundry business. Here he had now been for many years the traveling sales representative and the firm's best man. He receives a commission and has a good weekly income, approximately \$100. He says he is a poor man, and he had an illness some years back, but is now quite well.

His talk of being poor one can take as a sort of Danish humor. He owns clear and free a delightful villa with all modern equipment, and a very large garden with development possibilities, a nearly new car, and likewise a nearly new tractor for garden work and to rent out. In addition he has investment funds. That doesn't sound like a poor man in Denmark. At any rate his activity if home in Denmark would give him the opportunity to buy a large farm. He is just about to complete a deal for a business in the city and from the

middle of the summer 1952 he will be his own boss. He hopes it goes well, and he is looking forward to it.

The daughter Dixie Alice is 15 years old and in school and wishes to continue her education. The elderly 80 year old mother-in-law owns two houses in the vicinity, and she offered one of her houses for our use the entire time we were in Santa Maria. After enjoying a splendid dinner, the last in the home in Santa Maria, we were all together in the evening at Alfred's brother-in-law Erwin Lyda and wife, where we used the last hours together before leaving having a cup of coffee and a nice conversation.

At 11 o'clock Alfred started the car after we had said our goodbyes to the family in Santa Maria and then we drove out to bid farewell to "Papa" and Mrs. Johnson. They promised to visit us, when they again travel to Europe. We shall see. We got to San Luis Obispo Ca. 12 o'clock, and it was a happy surprise to see Mr. and Mrs. Tage Jensen at the train station. Mrs. Jensen had been on a visit to family in Seattle, and she had just flown back from Seattle. We were glad to see her and thus got the opportunity to at the last instant get a greeting from her to take back with us to Denmark.

The departure time was drawing closer, and we had much to say before so many miles came between us, so the minutes went by very fast. We were all a little serious at the last. We thought: Do we see each other again, or is this the last handshake? Then the train came. It stops for only a few minutes. We find our car and we depart again. The departure whistle sounds. We enter at the last minute. The train departs. The last words we hear are Alfred's "Greet those at home from me" and the train trip has begun. We now have a 60 hours almost uninterrupted train ride in front of us before we reach Chicago. During the night we rode through the State of Nebraska and most of the State of Iowa. Here is the good farm land. In the early daylight hours of Sunday morning we could again begin to observe the Iowa landscape. Gently rolling terrain. All farmland. Large fields of stubble of wheat and corn. Horse, cows, sheep and pigs wandering over the fields. Spring was not yet quite here, but most of the snow had gone. When we got farther east and into Illinois the population density started to increase and we could see that we were getting closer to Chicago. We finally got to Chicago at

1:40pm on Sunday afternoon and we quickly hired a taxi to the address of our elderly aunt (father's sister). Here the family was home and we were welcomed with open arms. Aunt Bodil Marie Rasmussen is now 82 years of age and came to America the second time in 1925. All of her six children live in the city or nearby. She herself now lives with her daughter Jennie who is married to a custodian at one of the city's large slaughterhouses. Aunt Bodil is well and of sound mind although she has some difficulty walking. She was very happy to see us and to get greetings from home. She understood us quite well, but had some difficulty in speaking Danish. Jennie, on the other hand, spoke quite good Danish without blending the two languages together, and she is also keeping contact with the family by letter with family and friends in Denmark. Her husband could not understand a word of Danish, but he spoke slowly and clearly so we could have a conversation any way. He is a very lively and hospitable man, and we were all soon sitting together at the well-supplied table.

In the evening we met cousin Jens and his wife as well as cousin Otto and the conversation now turned to the old days. Later in the evening Otto drove us on a tour around the city and afterwards delivered us to another part of town to the house of cousin Carrie Ness and her husband, where we were scheduled to stay overnight. We were also heartily received here, and we absolutely had to have something to eat even though we had already had dinner earlier and it was soon midnight. We were also upstairs to visit cousin Dagmar who lives in the same building as Carrie. Our third cousin Rose, who is a widow and lives in another part of the city also appeared so it was a big family gathering. It was very late before we got to bed, and we had previously been on the train for three nights.

On Monday, the 17th of March, however, we were up early for expedition again. At noon we should again go eastward on the train. Carrie and Rose went with us to the train station. Chicago, with its 4 million inhabitants is a mighty city, and we rode a longig ways through the subway to get to the station. Chicago is a very dirty city, and it is well known for both its good and bad. Carrie told us that some years back her nearest neighbor was the notorious

John Dillinger "America's public enemy number one". Until he was arrested, however, there was no one in the neighborhood who knew anything about him. Our train was to leave precisely at 12 o'clock and soon we stood at the window to wave farewell again.

Next goal: South Bend, Indiana which we reached at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Here we got off in order to visit the Studebaker factory. From Nordisk Dieselauto in Copenhagen we had gotten an introduction pass to the factories, and we were welcomed with unusual friendliness by Mr. McNeill, who offered us coffee in the factory's large and very nice cafeteria. We had difficulty because of the language barrier but we managed in spite of the difficulties. After finishing with coffee, we were invited in to see Director Mr. A.E. Albini, one of the leaders within the company. He was very nice and presumably had time to engage in conversation. It was by now too late in the afternoon to have a tour of the factory that day, and since we were not scheduled to leave for New York until the next day at 1 PM, it was decided that we would be able to have a tour the next morning.

Mr. Albini reserved a hotel room for us for the night and at the same time invited us to dinner in the evening. Because there was still some difficulty with the language, he called an office director, Mr. V.A. Keil was a nice and very pleasant man, with whom we were happy to talk to, except he didn't really know very much Danish. He himself was born in the States but his father came from Holstein, and his mother was born on Samsø, from where she came to the USA from Copenhagen when she was very young. Mr. Keil was assigned the responsibility to pick us up at the hotel at 6 o'clock and take us along to dinner. Precisely at the appointed time he stopped his new Studebaker at the front, and we rolled away. First Mr. Keil wanted to show us some of his town, which he seemed to be quite proud of. South Bend is a city with a good 200,000 inhabitants, and with a significant amount of industry. The city was of a good size, but according to Mr. Keil, it was also a good place to live.

After we had driven around for a little less than an hour, we pulled up at a fine restaurant outside of town. We went in and were soon sitting at a luxurious table. "Don't hold back at taking food,

Studebaker is paying", was the refrain of Mr. Keil. We had all what we could wish for, and the conversation was lively. Mr. Keil was a jovial host. "I like you", he said. "You will come with me home and see my children and my wife." Mr. Keil has a very nice home on the edge of the city and after we had been introduced to his wife, both of the children were roused out of bed so we could see them. Mr. Keil invited us to his club. That evening there was a musical program and a large 60 person orchestra. That was a very enjoyable time, and it was late before Mr. Keil drove us back to the hotel.

On Tuesday morning the 18th of March one of the Studebaker factories new buses was outside our hotel. It had been planned that we should be on a driving tour around the city and area before we started the factory tour at 10 o'clock. It was a very nice tour of South Bend. We saw the large college with the associated Catholic Church "Notre Dame". We visited the church, and after that we saw the large stadium. We also saw the Bendix factory, which employs about 12000 workers. Also Singer has a sewing machine factory here, with about 4000 employees.

At 10 AM we stopped in front of Studebaker's main administration building. We received a little book about the factory and saw an exhibit with a little group of Americans who were also touring the factory. This lasted about two hours, was very interesting, and we saw all the departments possible, although in that length of time it was not nearly possible to see it all. The Studebaker factory was started as a wagon manufacturer in 1858 by the 5 Studebaker brothers. In 1902 they fabricated their first electric powered car and in 1904 they exhibited their first gasoline-powered automobile. The development since then has been enormous. The work here is as in all automobile manufacturers, on the assembly line basis. It is very interesting to follow all the steps in fabrication right from the raw material to the completely finished car.

An entire book could be written about the Studebaker factory. Here we only comment that today there are 21,000 laborers and 1500 office workers. At the end of the two assembly lines there are so many new cars rolling off that it takes a large staff of chauffeurs to drive them away. How many cars were finished each minute we did

not learn, but the number is large. The factory's area is so large that we had to drive around in a bus from one department to the next. After having finished the factory tour we thanked all the men for all the hospitality, and then we were each surprised with a cigar lighter with the Studebaker initials. We went out and quickly a chauffeur showed up with our hand luggage to the car, and he drove us to the train station. The visit to Studebaker had been a tremendous experience, and our reception had been much more hospitable than we ever could have expected. On the further train ride from South Bend to New York there is nothing special to tell about. We traveled through the states of Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York, and early Wednesday morning we were in New York City.

We now had two days to see the city before the "Stavangerfjord" was scheduled to sail. Our first heroine was at the Visitors Bureau on Park Avenue, where we were directed to a good inexpensive hotel and also received other interesting information. Then out to experience the town. We took a sightseeing bus tour in the afternoon — in the center of the city and with several important stops. A visit to Chinatown closed the tour. We were into several Chinese shops and bought some small things. We also saw a Chinese temple. Chinatown is a special part of the city which is populated only by Chinese people. We went by a restaurant where all of the people were eating with chopsticks. Very interesting!

In the evening we were out to see the life of "amusement". New York with its neon billboards is a magnificent spectacle. The large show area "Latin Quarter" was filled with people, and the many variety shows were open. The shows were over after dark, and we hurried back to our hotel. New York with its numbered streets and avenues is very easy to find around in.

On the 20 of March we were again out early and walking around to buy souvenirs, etc. We couldn't resist taking the tour to the top of the Empire State Building as it costs \$1.50 per person to go up to the observatory on top, floor #102. The building is 1050 feet tall, and in clear weather it would be possible to see an area where more than 15 million people live and work. The view was magnificent, but unfortunately that day there was a little mist in the weather. There

is a restaurant at the top and a shop where they sell postcards, souvenirs, etc. The trip down on the elevator went very quickly, and you get the same problem as when landing in an airplane, namely pressure in the ears, but that disappeared quickly. In front of another known skyscraper "Rockefeller Center" there is installed a large artificial ice-skating arena, and we saw young people show their best artistry on skates. We closed the day by going back to Times Square to buy a Danish newspaper.

On Friday the 2nd of March we were up early to get things packed in order to get to the boat on time. The passport control opened at 8AM, and when we arrived at 9AM there were already many people on board. It went smoothly with the several formalities and a half-hour after our arrival we were on board. We were glad that we earlier at the Norwegian American Line's office in San Francisco had gotten all the information about the trip, so that we had our "sailing permit" in order as otherwise we would have had a fearful amount of problems at the last instant. Many passengers had not gotten this famous piece of paper filled out and so at the last instant had to go to one office or another back into the city.

When Stavangerfjord" at 11:30AM cast off the hawsers and the gangplank swung in, the ship's orchestra first played the American national anthem and "Ja, vi elsker dette landet" (Yes, we love this land), the Norwegian anthem. All passengers stood with bare heads, and the ship slowly slid from the quay. Many people were on deck and there was much waving of hats and handkerchiefs.

The Statue of Liberty was soon out of sight, and in the afternoon we passed the Ambrose lightship. After that there was only ocean and more ocean as far as the eye could see.

Most of the passengers on the trip home were either Americans or Norwegian-Americans who were on the way for a visit home to the "old country" as the Norwegians call it. We made here a very interesting acquaintance, because every morning on our walk on deck we encountered a very friendly Norwegian, a Rector at a high school in Oslo. He had been on a 6-months study tour in the USA and spent most of his time at Harvard University to study American history. We had many lively discussions including about the time

when Norway was a part of Denmark. Quite a few of the passengers used a lot of their time in playing cards. Others sat with a glass of beer or snaps in front of them the whole time. The ship was scheduled to stop at Bergen, Stavanger, Kristiansand and Oslo, but not Copenhagen, and therefore we had already in San Francisco arranged to take the train from Oslo to Copenhagen. We would rather have just sailed directly into Copenhagen, but on the other side of this coin, we now got this tour of the Norwegian coast and that enriched our trip somewhat. At 8 o'clock on Sunday morning the boat lay in the harbor at Bergen and many passengers left the ship. All passengers irrespective of destination had to go through pass control, and could thereafter walk around the city, and we availed ourselves of this opportunity, because the boat was not scheduled to leave until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. It was snowing and slushy underfoot, but that could well be normal weather for Bergen. It is easy to see that Bergen is a bustling city with much ship traffic — there were many steamships in the port. It was a relief to once again get hard ground underfoot and also nice to come in to a restaurant and see people sitting and taking their time. The difference is striking after just having come from New York. We remember a conversation with one of our Norwegian friends on board. The man is a machine master and was on his way home to visit his family after three years of sailing to New York and Jamaica. "America is not a country for me", he said. "The people are restless and pale and unsatisfied. They do not have a fresh color and active lifestyle as we have at home in the old country". And we could agree with him to some extent, although most Americans will tell you that the USA is the only country in which to live.

It was a quiet Sunday in the streets of Bergen and after a couple of hours of walking we turned back toward the boat which sailed again in the afternoon, bound for Stavanger. Sailing into the deep Stavangcrfjord took a very long time, and it was after 8PM before we went into port. There were many people at the pier meeting many of the passengers. Again quite a few people left the ship and also a quantity of goods was unloaded including some 'dollar-grins' (American cars) which the Norwegians also needed.

Tuesday morning we were up very early, and all the passengers who had stayed overnight were now assembled at the last breakfast time on board before we spread to the four winds. Most of us, however, were Danish who traveled further on the Express from Oslo at 9:30 AM. We were in company with some of the employees from the East Asiatic's "Erria" which had burned at the Pacific Coast on the 20th of December, 1951. They had stayed onboard the vessel and had removed some of the furnishings onboard. Left onboard were only 4-5 men who were involved in towing the ship to Hong Kong where it would be rebuilt. These seamen related several incidents from the ghastly fire on the ship.

In Hälsingborg Swedish passport control came onto the train together with the Danish officials. The Swede stamped our passport for travel out of Sweden and shortly after we got the passport stamped for entry into Denmark. The customs officials also visited us in the compartment while we rode across the sound to Helsingør. That all occurred easily and pleasantly. After another hour our train rolled into Copenhagen's main train station. Here on the platform we were met by our wives and other good friends. The reunion happiness was great.

In a brief two months we had now traveled forth and back from a trip on ship, train and automobile totaling Ca. 26,000 km (16,000 miles). In addition to having darted around California this way and that we had traveled through 22 states in the US and along the way touched three other countries, namely Canada at Halifax, Mexico at El Paso, and Scotland at the Orkney Islands. Finally, we had concluded our travel home through Norway and Sweden.

Our perception of America as a land of great opportunity was certainly increased by our visit, and it is incontestable that the average man over there has many more good opportunities within his abilities, economically, than he would have here at home, but whether one's satisfaction with his existence is greater, we shall leave unsaid. In the meantime, we hope and believe that our trip has resulted in more tight and strong ties with the family on the other side of the pond. We will feel closer in spite of the thousands of miles which separate us. Likewise, old friendships have been renewed and new ones established. We will continue to recall our

many varied and different impressions and experiences with fondness in the years ahead.