

My Summer Vacation

By George Suther

I've said many times that being retired is like "every day is a vacation day." But sometimes we get the opportunity to go on a real vacation to some other place, away from home, for a while. Such was the opportunity that I had this past June – to spend 3 weeks in Denmark. You know Denmark, the country just to the north of Germany, which participated in World War II for a total of two hours before surrendering to the Nazis in 1940.

Patty and I flew to Copenhagen early in June to visit her daughter, now living there with her family, which includes four youngsters. Much of our time was filled with caring for those two girls and two boys. A typical day would start between 6 and 7 AM as the house became filled with the sounds of getting up, breakfast, and getting ready for pre-school. Keeping all four occupied was the main chore. Sometimes two would be entertained by the same thing, but often there would be four different activities for the four of them.

Around 9 AM, the three oldest were off to pre-school, a ten minute walk away. This was sometimes a chore of its own, with different walking speeds and being distracted by different things. The walk was along residential streets, so traffic was not a problem, but sometimes there was rain, which resulted in puddles and another distraction.

The middle part of the day was filled with cleaning, laundry, shopping and other stuff that was best done in relative calm. Around 4PM, the evening chaos began. This time included playing in the yard if it wasn't raining, dinner, and preparation for bed. It sounds like it should be easily accomplished, but that usually was not the case. Sometimes there would be a TV, an iPad and an iPhone all playing different programs or games, and that would still not be enough to hold interest of all of them.

The weather for the three week period was generally pleasant, but cool. Daytime temperatures were mostly in the 60s, with nightly lows in the middle to high 50s. Being as far north as we were, sunset was pretty late and sunrise was pretty early. I was outside one evening around 11PM and it was still not completely dark. I don't know exactly when the sun came up, but I got up one night to watch Lightning hockey on the TV, and it was light before the game ended around 5AM. When the day was clear and sunny, it was quite pretty around the area.

Patty and I did take one day to tour the city for a while. On a boat tour of the harbor, we saw the relatively modern Copenhagen Opera House. Construction was completed in 2004 at a cost of nearly \$500 million US Dollars. It has around 1500 seats, all angled for the best experience. We didn't stop there, but it is an impressive building from the water.



Directly across the canal from the opera house is the Amalienborg complex, which is the official home of the royal family in Denmark. It is made up of four residence houses around a central palace yard. A short distance from the main palace is Frederik's Church, also known as the Marble Church. The Opera House, the palace yard and the Marble Church are in a direct line across the waterway between them. Research indicates that the foundation of the church was set in 1749, but the construction was not finished until 1894.



After an initial 5 years of work, the site stood as ruins for about 130 years before being completed.

Patty and I also toured the city on a Hop-on-Hop-off bus, but after I messed up the reservation, and mis-located the boarding spot, there was no time to actually hop off and see anything. We were able to find the Hard Rock Cafe in downtown Copenhagen, at which I enjoyed an American cheeseburger and a Budweiser.

On our last weekend, we took a day trip north of the city to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, which is located directly on the shore of the Øresund Sound in Humlebæk. The sound is the body of water that separates Denmark from Sweden. There is a big open area where kids play and frolic, and the three oldest kids had a grand time in this area. It is kind of hard to see in the photo, but there is land on the other side of the



water, and that land is Sweden. The Scottish artist Peter Doig was featured the day we were there, with 30 of his oil paintings on display. The name of the museum has nothing to do with the US state of the same name. The name is derived from the first owner of the property, who had three wives named Louise. The museum was created in 1958.

As I said, the kids had a grand time, much of it spent on a grassy hill between the upper level and lower level of the museum. Here are some action photos I was able to get while they played on this hill. On the left is the 5-year-old Isabelle, going into kindergarten this year. The top two on the right are the twins Lukas and Sadie, just recently 3-years-old and in pre-school again this year. And the latest addition to the family is the soon to be one-year-old, Mateus, on the bottom right. I understand my efforts to get him to actually crawl have been successful, and he is now mobile.



Both flights, over and back, were uneventful, but long – 8 hours in the air over the Atlantic Ocean, but that is a small price to pay for three weeks with these little ones and their parents. But it is tiring for an old guy, not used to keeping up with youngsters. They were all on this side of the Atlantic in March this year, and I'm hoping that they will be back before too long. Or, maybe we'll have to go back there to spend more time with them before they get too old. This was a vacation.