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Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March '87

### Tales from an Itterant Jobber Letter 3

Dear Reader,

The rest of Saturday wandering around Skipton getting last minute shopping and getting everything packed and loaded into the car. I'm very pleased at the trunk capacity of the car. With the rear seat down I could even get my skis in with no trouble. Adrian has been a great help and friend to me – he is such a nice guy – kind, thoughtful, generous and helpful; most sons look up to their father but here is one father who looks up to his son. Then, as you've seen I'm fortunate with all my family.

Well finally I set off on Sunday at 7:30 am saying farewell to Adrian and leaving him to tidy up the flat and generally seeing that everything was turned off. Why does it always rain when I've got a long journey to make? However, the SAAB came up trumps and I drove at a leisurely pace cruising about 60 to 70 mph and arrived at Harwich with lots of time to spare having travelled 303 miles. When I arrived on board I was given the VIP treatment. The firm had only booked me on the best the boat had to offer; a Commodore Class cabin with a fridge full of free drinks – vodka, whisky, Bacardi, beer, coke etc, a basket of fruit – free tickets for breakfast, sauna and a free drink at the bar and a lovely stewardess who offered me coffee and any Sunday papers I cared to have; not that I was able to enjoy all these little luxuries as you will learn very shortly! However I did settle down with my coffee and whiled away a couple of hours browsing through the papers until it was time to shower and dress for dinner. Well you have to show a little class sometime! I must say here and now that these ferries bore little resemblance to the cross-channel ferries that you and I took from Calais to Dover, those were old tatty, dirty and Spartan, built to carry as many gullible people as possible at exorbitant rates with little in return over a short journey of 25 miles and about 5 hours. The DFDS ferries, in contrast, were virtual floating hotels; thick carpets, tasty furnishings and décor, crisp linen on the dining tables; cocktail bars and lounges, cinemas, dance orchestras, everything to cosset you in idle boredom for 24 hours, weather permitting for little more than the cross-channel cousins charge and I didn't even have to pay! However as I've travelled on these ships so often I'm really bored with the menu as it hasn't changed over the years. After dinner I took myself off to the lounge to watch the dancing and fun and games that was organized. I sat down and ordered my drink, struck up a conversation with a comely student from Stockholm and spent a pleasant evening until bedtime just before midnight. I thought it wise not to stay up too late. I can't recall the boat rolling at all at that stage. In fact I'm positive that I went straight to my cabin without staggering at all but, about 2 am, I was awakened by such a banging and clatter, all the things on the table in the cabin were thrown on the floor, ashtray, loose change, wallet and if I hadn't hung onto the side of the bed, I'm sure I would have rolled off too! When the boat breasted the crest of a wave the propellers came out of the water with such a rattle the whole boat shook and then down in the trough we would go yawing and rolling so much so I felt positively seasick. You know how you wait until the last moment hoping it will subside but finally I had to dash to the toilet to heave and retch my dinner up and thus was the pattern set. I was up and down like a yoyo and even when there was nothing left to bring up I was still trying to throw up and that's the worst feeling of the lot.

All the while I was hoping and praying that the ship would stand still, if only for a moment so that I could recover a little but there was little chance of that and I thought any instant now the ship would crack up. There was so much noise going on, at one stage I changed over to the other bed which happened to be at right angles to the one I was using. This was a big mistake – so I learnt something worthwhile. It is better to be lying along the length of the ship rather than lying across the ship i.e. it's better to be in a pitch condition rather than a roll condition. You can tell how bad it was, my porthole was being lashed by spray and foam and I was on the seventh deck! Eventually even the worst nightmare has to come to an end. Day dawned and I took a quick wash and shower but getting dressed was an effort as every time I stood up I was overwhelmed by nausea and I had to lay down after each item of clothing was put on. Finally, I staggered out of my cabin and down to the lounge on the way to the dining room for breakfast, not that I felt in the least like breakfast but knew I had to get something down me. What a sight confronted my eyes on entering the lounge – all the furniture was skewed around whichever way, there was broken glass everywhere and the plants were overturned and the soil all over the carpet. When I reached the dining room I found it was closed to passengers as all the stewards were busy putting the tables and chairs to rights and breakfast was delayed so it was back to the lounge where it must have been near the centre of gravity of the boat as it appeared not to be rolling so badly. Here I sat where I could see just how rough the sea was through the large picture windows. Can you imagine me with my head held in my hands and feeling thoroughly miserable and yet --- worse was to come for through the tannoy system came one of those “this is your captain speaking” messages. We were informed that contrary to the ETA of 4-30pm this day we wouldn't arrive until 7am the following day. God damn it, the boat must have been going backwards throughout the night. It's like being on a roller coaster and wanting to get off and not being able to but, with a roller coaster it only lasts a couple of minutes not another bloody day, I could have wept! But looking on the bright side, was it déjà vu or just good fortune that prompted me to book my connecting ferry from Stockholm to Finland a day later? I was proposing to spend one night in Gotenborg but of course that's gone overboard (ha-ha). So let's say it was the forward planning of a seasoned traveller because the firm had booked me to catch the Monday evening sailing which I cancelled at Harwich and re-booked for Tuesday's sailing from Stockholm. Having allowed some time to elapse and feeling slightly better I presented myself for breakfast only to be asked by the steward if I should like bacon and eggs, I very nearly threw up. As it was, when confronted by food, all I could manage was some cereal (a good standby), tea and a cheese roll and it wasn't until 5 o'clock that I dared to have another morsel. By then the sea was calmer and I felt somewhat better. Well nearly four pages on being seasick. I leave you to judge whether I'm a budding author or a tiresome bore.

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March '87

Before continuing with my travelogue I must explain about my address and phone number. First of all the address: it's customary to write it as I have done i.e. Rantakatu is the street name (katu means street) so it's Ranta street, number 9 is the number of the apartment block and as4 means flat 4. Unfortunately I do not have a phone in my flat so the only way you can reach me by phone is during the week and before 9am your time as we are eight hours ahead of you and 9am is 5pm here when I go home from work at 6pm. The only way I can call you is at work too as the public phones only use 5Markkaa coins and you require about 3 coins every minute so I would be feeding coins in every 20 seconds and I would need a pocketful to have a reasonable conversation; to convert to US Dollars would cost about \$2.75/min. Meanwhile, making use of the works phone has one problem too. Unlike Germany I'm not able to pay for the call so I'm a little loath to use it ergo, I'll just have to write to you more often. OK back to my saga. Having completed my evening meal and

being positively bored I decided to take in a movie and get to bed early as we were to disembark at 7am. It meant rising at about 6am in order to get some breakfast. Thank heaven I enjoyed a restful night as I had another epic journey ahead of me. No sooner had the boat docked I was down into the car deck as I didn't want to spend a minute longer on that boat and as soon as I cleared customs and passport control I headed straight for Volvos. Gotenborg must be my second home town as I know it so well. I went directly to Volvo without faltering once. At the gatehouse Volvo provide a small visitor's lounge and there I awaited the arrival of Cliff Webb (I introduced you to him when I had all that trouble with the Chevette). We killed a pleasant half hour swapping news. I learned that he was to join us for the following weekend at Uusikaupunki, just spending the weekend with Geoff. I left him with the Sunday papers and headed for my own flat in Askim. The Orbings were very surprised and very pleased to see me, treating me like a prodigal son. They insisted that I have coffee and cakes and I spent a few hours with them talking about old times. But at about 1pm I thought it best to make an early start for there was a journey of 400 miles and a 5 hour drive ahead of me from Gotenborg to Stockholm. Did I say that it always rained? Well this was the exception to the rule because this day was beautiful, blue skies and not too cold and because I was early I chose the pretty route on Route 40 and then E4 round by the big lake. I must say here and now I must have been off my head as I had scant instruction to find my destination. All I had to go on was the fact that I had to find the terminal of the Silja line in Stockholm. The route to Stockholm was no problem as I'd been there twice before and it's adequately signposted. I didn't even possess a map of Stockholm so it was fortunate that I started early. At about 6pm I arrived in Stockholm and it was already getting dark when I realized my predicament but I managed to see the ferry signs so I followed them faithfully only it directed me to the wrong ferry. It was the Viking line instead and, as I found out later, my ferry was at the opposite end of town. So what was I to do, I got out of the car and enquired of a passer by who just happened to have a map with him and he directed me. I don't know whether it was my boyish charm or what but he ended up giving me the map. From then on it wasn't a problem and I arrived at the terminal with a couple of hours to kill which prompted the start of this letter, so since this is the last sheet of paper I'll end this letter now but continue the minute I get another pad.

I'm enclosing a few snaps I've had printed from slides but pictures of the other walks in Germany will have to wait until I return to Skipton as I was unable to find a suitable place to have prints from slides in Skipton. These few were printed in Germany but I have got some nice slides and I promise I will send you some when I am able. I do hope you received my postcards and chocolates in good condition, I thought that as they were by appointment to the King of Denmark they may be just up to your standards! I have missed hearing from you but you haven't my address yet but as soon as you receive this letter I would love to hear from you.