

Travel Story of the PHC Baltic & North Seas Cruise - August 2014 -

A Sampling of Northern European Culture

Ron Anderson (rea@umn.edu) 31aug14

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Introduction

This is the story of our experience on the eighth *A Prairie Home Companion* Cruise (abbreviated as PHC and more recently as APHC), lovingly known as the Garrison Keillor Cruise. Nancy and I took the first such cruise in 2005 to the Maritime Islands in NW Canada. This was our second PHC cruise and it took 14 days, August 9-23, 2014 through the North and Baltic Seas.

On this cruise, four of us traveled together: Nancy and me (Ron) and Nancy's parents, Norman and Dorothy Kehmeier. After flying together from Minneapolis to London Heathrow Airport, we slept and rested up in a hotel adjacent to the airport before taking the bus to Dover. The Holland-America Line crew whisked us quickly aboard the Ms Ryndam, a small ship holding 1,200 passengers and nearly 600 crewmembers. Well over 100 of Garrison Keillor's staff and hand picked entertainers were included among the passengers.

The remaining passengers were listeners to his weekly public radio show, *Prairie Home Companion*. Many had gone on all eight cruises, proving their loyalty. The cruise was sold out 9 months before the actual cruise.

The cruise was advertised as a tour of Baltic Capitals, but a better description is a cruise across the North and Baltic Seas with sightseeing stops at seven ports: Copenhagen and Aarhus Denmark; Warnemunde, Germany; Tallinn, Estonia; St. Petersburg, Russia; Helsinki, Finland; Stockholm, Sweden. Northern Europe generally encompasses the British Isles, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden. Our ship touched all of these except Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway. So I am labeling the trip a sampling of Northern Europe.

After launching the journey from Dover, England, we moved on to a full day at sea before arriving at the first port, Copenhagen, Denmark, followed by Warnemunde, Germany, Tallinn, Estonia, St. Petersburg, Russia, Helsinki, Finland, Stockholm, Sweden, Aarhus, Denmark, and finally ended the cruise in Dover, where the cruise began. The ship remained two days in both St. Petersburg and Stockholm; otherwise we spent a day in each port.

A. Embarkation at Dover and At Sea.

The cruise originated and terminated in the shadows of the white cliffs of the Dover harbor on the English Channel. We choose not to sightsee in Dover, but to immediately board the ship upon arrival. The ship's name was Ms Ryndam, the smallest and oldest of the ships of the Holland America Cruise line. Though a relatively small ship, the photos A01 and A02 show the huge size of the ship. From the ship, we had excellent views of the white cliffs of Dover and the Old Town from the ship, as shown in photos A03-06.

The picture of the fishermen on the Dover harbor fishing pier (A06) and the next photo (A07) show the large waves we felt throughout the 2-week trip. Some days the waves were nearly three meters high. Though we often had trouble walking in a straight line down the ship's decks, none of the four of us got seasick during the 3,666 miles that the ship traveled. The next two photos of the schooner (A08 and A09) show how the huge waves bounce the very large sailboat. The first of two photos depicts the bow high in the air and the second the bow making a large splash, nearly taking on water.

Photo A10 captures a great black-backed gull flying in the North Sea. They are the largest gulls in the world with a wingspan of nearly six feet. These large birds hang out in America as well as Europe. We saw them in most of the ports of our trip. Their wings can distinguish them: white on the bottom and black on the top.

The remaining photos (A11 to A15) captured some of the more interesting cloud formations during our two-week trip. The sunset colors enhance their character. All except A13 and A14 were taken in the Gulf of Finland, as we left St. Petersburg. They were taken the evening we departed from Helsinki. I was inspired to begin building a portfolio of cloud images. Look for more clouds in the future.

B. Copenhagen

I had a meeting in Copenhagen in 1999, so I knew generally what to expect. Previously my visit occurred in the late Fall and because of the cold few people walked the pedestrian-friendly streets. Because the weather was warm and pleasant this time and our visit came on a Monday, the parks, streets and plazas were literally packed with people.

At the age of nine, my family traveled through Denmark and the only thing I remember about the country is the statue of the Little Mermaid (Photo B01). It was the first mermaid I had ever seen, so I had an excuse for the image to stick in my memory. Ironically, it remains the most popular tourist attraction in Copenhagen, despite the critics' opinions and its lack of sophistication. Photo B04 Shows how popular the Little Mermaid remains, with hoards of tourists trying to get close to her by sea (note tourist boat) as well as by land. A statue nearby called the Big Mermaid with huge busts gets hardly any gawkers (see photo B05). People were more interested in watching naval personnel practice scuba diving (photo B6).

Copenhagen holds 1.2 million people, most of whom are socially and environmentally conscious. The City uses electric buses, everyone recycles, 64 percent of the hotels are certified as eco-friendly, 75 percent of the food served is organic, and the City this year has been named the official European Green Capital. Photo B02 indicates that the harbor is filled with wind turbines for generating electricity.

Half the citizens of Copenhagen bike to work. The switch to biking is a mixed blessing. I accidentally walked into a bike lane and a fast moving bicyclist immediately yelled at me. Fortunately, the bike lanes are mostly well marked, however, the bike lane widths exceed the pedestrian lane widths even in areas where the volume of pedestrians far exceeds the number of bikers. In the last section of this report, I comment further on this issue. Photo B07 shows the high concentration of bicyclists on typical Copenhagen streets.

In the Central City, the most popular places are the Tivoli Amusement Park and Gardens (photo B08) and the City Hall (photo B09), which marks the hub of the City and sits on the edge of the City Square. The day we walked through the Square, a protest exhibit (photo B10) absorbed much of the space. The political action group was protesting the killing of Palestinian children by Israel's bombing of Gaza. Each placard represented one child killed.

Photos B11 to B13 picture major sites and buildings of historical interest: the Rosenberg Castle, the Round Tower and the Statens Art Museum, in that order. Photos B14 to B17 try to capture typical people strolling on a Sunday afternoon in the City. Parents with children predominate on a warm week day. Compared to other cities we visited, fathers seemed more likely to be spending time with their children.

The Botanical Gardens in Copenhagen was more a place for lovers than for families, as you can see in photo B18. As a garden it did not offer anything rare or exotic, but it did offer a

respite from the busy streets with a pond with pink water lilies, a rock garden with thistle bushes, and a variety of welcome, dense shade trees (photos B19-22).

According to the United Nation's 2013 World Happiness Report, Denmark scores the highest of any country in the world. In addition, compared to other Western countries the people of Copenhagen tend to be hospitable and willing to help. Their concern about others has been translated into 'caring society' policies. For example, the botanical gardens in Denmark and Sweden were free to the public whereas in Russia, the entrance fee was the equivalent of \$20 USD. In Germany, the train station charged one euro just to use the restroom.

C. Warnemunde, Germany

Cruise ships stop at the quaint little resort town of Warnemunde, mostly to allow passengers to take a bus or train 2 to 3 hours to Berlin for sightseeing. We chose to avoid such a long side trip but stayed in the little seaside resort town of 8,000. Though Warnemunde is a little town, it has the largest beach in Germany and the streets were packed with tourists (mostly German) walking around the harbor, shopping, and eating. It reminded me of Newport Beach, California or pre-casino Atlantic City Beach except for the European flavor of all the buildings, and the people seemed more relaxed.

Warnemunde has an old harbor and a new harbor sitting next to each other like fingers in a glove. The new harbor, where we docked, can be seen in photos C01 and C02. The next three photos show the beautiful and popular beach, which attracts thousands of Europeans for their traditional August vacation. The colorful objects on the beach (photo C04) are cabanas to provide shade. Renting one for the day may cost as much as \$15 USD. Photos C06 to C08 depict the character of the town, which is an attractive mix of the old and the new. The Warnemunde Lighthouse is shown in photo C09 next to a modern restaurant called the Teapott. The next two photos were taken from the top of the Lighthouse to show the beautiful, small-town atmosphere of the town. The red streak in photo C10 is the arriving train. A train arrives or leaves every few minutes, mostly carrying vacationers to and from Warnemunde.

The remainder of the photos in this section reveals the crowds and playful atmosphere of the Old Harbor. In the summer, the busy pedestrian walkways make it hard to move quickly. In the winter, it will be a different story. The mime was good at his trade. I dropped a Euro in his jar while taking his picture, and he put out his hand for me to kiss, which I did to the delight of the crowd of children watching him. The organ grinder in the last photo in section C was not only professional, as he had his CD for sale, but he had a most pleasant smile, apparently enjoying his own music.

D. Tallinn, Estonia

Few people can find Estonia on a map, and even fewer know that its capital city of Tallinn is one of the most charming cities in Europe. Its charm derives from the preservation of the 'Old World' in the medieval Old Town and the modern town unobtrusively surrounding it. Its culture reflects its borders with both Russia and Western European countries. It is only 50 miles from Helsinki, Finland, and big ferries go back and forth all day long. Its population has grown to nearly half million in a country with only 1.3 million, partly because it has become a major world center for information technology. Tallinn is ranked as a global city and has been listed among the top 10 digital cities in the world, reflecting the rapid growth of its economy, e.g., Skype was born here.

Tallinn was named a European Capital of Culture in 2011, perhaps one explanation for its popularity. The day we docked at Tallinn, eleven other cruise ships arrived or departed, by far the most popular cruise harbor of our trip.

A third of the City's population is Russian and most of the remainder has ancestral ties to the Nordic countries. Among the former Soviet countries, Estonia has best integrated the East and West in terms of ethnicity and cultural issues.

The mixture of medieval and modern architecture can be seen in the church spires of the first photo (D01) where Western style churches from the 17th Century stand on the left and right (St. Nicholas' Church and St. Olaf's Church, respectively) and the Eastern-style St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral from 1900 sits in the middle. The latter Cathedral can be seen up close in photo D02.

Though its ancient history dates back to 3000 BCE, the city of Tallinn has never been razed and pillaged. Its Old Town is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Estonia has no military, and it avoided having its heritage buildings destroyed in the World Wars. Tallinn is famous for its stories of people linking up hand in hand singing, in an attempt to protect their chances for survival. It worked. The Old Town city wall of medieval times has 40 round watch towers built into the wall. You can see the walls and watch towers in photos D03 and D04.

The historic center of the Old Town is the City Hall (photo D08) and the City Hall Square (photos D09 – D11), now ringed with restaurants. As you can see in these pictures, colorfully clad people stand in front of the restaurants soliciting business. As the streets of Tallinn are packed with people during the summer months, advertising would not be necessary were the number of restaurants not so large. Photos D12 to D15 were taken only a block off of the Town Hall Square, where the crowds and restaurants remain congested but lively.

The final picture (D16) features an unusual type of cruise ship, one with sails in addition to a large engine. The one depicted is *Club Med 2*, but another one (a huge ferry with sails) was also docked in the harbor at the same time. There are only a few dozen large cruise ships with both sail and engine power. Club Med 2 is the second largest with a length of 635 feet and a passenger capacity of nearly 400. Built 20 years ago, it still remains popular.

E. St. Petersburg, Russia

Waking up at the Port of St. Petersburg gave us our first glance of Russia, which included vacant lots and dozens of decaying, high-rise apartments filling the horizon (photo E01). No souvenir stands and few cars could be seen. The City's problem does not seem to be resources but regressive regulatory policies and corruption instead. The Tea Party would over simplify the problem as too much government, but the real problem derives from a repressive organizational culture in which those in power, from low and middle managers on up to the rulers had unchecked power.

Later in the day, our tour guide pointed out that the seaport for cruise boats had been operating for only three years and was made possible by years of dredging sand and dirt from the Gulf of Finland to build a seaport and a huge housing project. They call the artificial port and suburb "reclaimed land." Guess what, that makes everything I said in the previous paragraph misguided or untrue. I am experimenting with the technique of "unreliable narrator" as a communication tool. If nothing else, you now know that you cannot take everything I write as truth. Truthfully, however, most of the apartment buildings near the port were built about 1990, near the end of the Soviet era, and some looked so run down as to match the communist housing projects on the outskirts of most Eastern European cities. Most buildings in St. Petersburg, both office buildings and apartments have enviable architecture, attractive colors, and remain well maintained. Furthermore, almost everyone lives in an apartment; only a few single-family homes have been built recently, and those are in the outskirts of the City.

St. Petersburg, the cultural capital of Russia, lives up to its reputation. Czar Peter the Great (1672–1725) began building it as a cultural exemplar after spending many years traveling in Western Europe. To give his new Russia a fresh start he built museums dedicated to European art and St. Petersburg became the capitol of Russia and its link to the West. The Peter and Paul Fortress on the Neva River, built by Peter the Great, became the launching of the City in 1703. The Fortress remains along side the Peter and Paul Cathedral (photo E02) and can be seen throughout the City because of its bright gold, narrow spire.

The Venice of Northeastern Europe. During the first of two days, we signed up for a tour group on the "Waterways of St. Petersburg." A few years ago the City celebrated its 300 birthday, and during that time it built about 50 canals in the central city, in addition to hundreds of bridges, many with charming designs and metal work (See photos E03-E08). The resulting character of the City rivals that of Venice. The City's streets are wider than Venice, but the bridge latticework and many of the buildings possess more grandeur and beauty.

The Church of Our Savior on the Spilled Blood is as much a museum as a cathedral and remains an architectural and artistic wonder (see photo E09). It's name came from the spot where Czar Alexander II was assassinated by terrorists in 1881. The brilliant mosaics inside and stonework outside make it the most popular destination by both tourists and locals. (See photos E10 to E13). The courtyard around the Church was filled with people, both local and tourists. Photos E14 and E15 give examples of the scenes.

A City of Museums. Two examples of well-known museums are the Russian Museum (Photo E17) and the Admiralty Building at Palace Square (photo E18 and E20). The picture does not do its length justice, as on each side of what's shown in the photo are building continues for at least a city block on each side, which is why they claim it to have to largest building face in the world.

Of the 500 museums, the biggest and most famous is the State Hermitage Museum (photo E18), which houses a collection of more than three million works of art and artifacts within five huge, architecturally unique buildings. The huge Palace Park Square outside the Hermitage main building attracts hundreds of visitors. In photo E19, you can see two actors dressed in costumes of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. Our guide told us they look very much like pictures of the two famous figures in St. Petersburg history.

Our guide told us that they only get 50 days per year with sunshine; hence the architects were challenged to add charm and bright color to make up for the absence of blue in the sky and green on the ground. The City's latitude lines up with Oslo and Stockholm, so not surprisingly it suffers from extremely harsh winters. With a population of 5 million, it boasts of being the largest City in the far-north hemisphere, an accomplishment that the warm-blooded don't find impressive.

A City of the Sacred. St. Petersburg puts most, if not all world cities to shame by its attention to aesthetics, beauty and human well being. Most visible to tourists are the hundreds of thousands of paintings, the 500 museums, and many theatres and concert halls. The City also serves its people with peaceful parks and gardens, many beautiful road corridors, and elegant buildings, all of which reach no more than five floors toward the sky, except on the outer rings of the City.

A bright golden spire or dome can be seen from just about every corner of the City. Probably the largest is the St. Isaac's Cathedral (photo E21), which can be seen from most places in the City Center. Church spires and domes have not been constrained by the five-story ordinance. Of course, most churches are Russian Orthodox, but the people seem proud of the prominence of other religious edifices. Peter the Great not only supported the building of gorgeous cathedrals, but invited people from any religion all over the world to build houses of worship in St. Petersburg. Hence, the Tartar Moslem Mosque recently refurbished (photo E24) and a beautiful Buddhist temple (photos E22 and E23), built nearly 200 years ago, as well as a Jewish synagogue. Communism outlawed organized religion, however a sense of the sacred survived, especially an appreciation of beauty, wonder and other deeply human values such as tolerance.

Gardens of the City. Consistent with its goal of providing beauty for the people, the City maintains over 1,000 parks and public gardens. Most visible are the former gardens of the czars and emperors. Hidden away in the northern section of the City is the world-class St Petersburg Botanical Garden, where it has stood for 200 years. The research institute at the Garden houses seven million specimens and is widely known around the world for its research. In our visit we were most impressed by the enormous trees and many multi-colored banks of wild flowers (photos E25 – E28).

St. Petersburg's primary industries are tourism, shipbuilding, and heavy machine manufacturing. We saw negligible evidence of poverty and inequality. The City continues to invest in infrastructure and civic services. The streets look remarkably clean and the parks manicured. Art in St. Petersburg even fills the subway system, which is the deepest in the world. Its entrances and tunnel walls are adorned with sculptures and artwork that make the subway riders feel like they are passing through a gallery.

The last two photos in this section were taken as the ship wound through narrow channels as it left St. Petersburg through the Gulf of Finland headed for Helsinki. I found the church with a gold and white dome (E29) to be strikingly beautiful and it stood in what seemed like a small seaside town. The cloud formations in the sunset were also amazingly beautiful (E30).

F. Helsinki, Finland

We arrived the next day at Helsinki and the City seemed tiny in comparison to St. Petersburg because it has a population of only 600,000 compared to St Petersburg's five million. Nancy and I traveled to Helsinki in 2002, so we knew what to expect. The downtown shopping areas cannot be distinguished from a city of similar size in the United States. Yet overall it had a feeling of being a highly cosmopolitan city. At least a half dozen gigantic ferry ships arrived and departed from the berth next to our ship. (See photo F01). Each ferry carried dozens of semi-trucks and hundreds of cars and most headed for Tallinn, Estonia only 50 miles away, or to other Nordic nations.

Right across the street from Market Square sits two of the City's landmarks: the City Hall (F02) and the President's Hotel (F03) with the waterfront Obelisk dedicated to Empress Alexandria. Each summer day the Market Square on the main small-boat harbor is filled with hoards of people and classy booths selling cooked food, reindeer hides, or any Finish souvenir imaginable (photos F04 to F07). A short walk away is the amusement park, right on the harbor (see photo F08). Only two block away, but high on a hill, the reddish-colored Uspenski (Eastern) Orthodox Cathedral (F10) seems to command the entire harbor. But before you can get there you have to pass by a tongue-in-cheek statue of an elf watering the pond (F09). I nick named it "Fountain of Youth."

A four block walk toward the business and shopping districts brings you to "Senate Square" and a gigantic white church, the Helsinki Cathedral, that serves as the defining symbol of the City (photos F11-F12). The gorgeous structure is 150 years old and currently serves an Evangelical Lutheran community.

From there we walked to the shopping area for Wi-Fi service and to look for a coat for Nancy. We passed many Lite Rail trains on the way (F13). Photo F14 shows two laudable features of the rationality of the Finnish culture. One is the porous sidewalk material that helps preserve the environment and the other is the sidewalk signage that clearly marks that both pedestrians and bicycles share the same space.

G. Stockholm, Sweden

This is the third time for us to visit Stockholm; I came in 1999 and we both flew in for a long weekend in 2009. As mentioned in the last section on “Family,” Nancy’s brother Ralph and his wife Margrit came up from Germany to spend the two Stockholm days with us. A large share of Stockholm’s “things to see,” is located within a stone’s throw of the Stockholm harbor, or the Old Town, which lies in the harbor.

Stockholm is a vibrant city built on 14 small islands and connected by over 50 bridges. Photos G01 and G02 show views night and day of the old city center with the City Hall and Riddarholmen Cathedral with both car and train bridges in the foreground. On the right of both pictures is the Old Town called Gamla Stan. The Royal Palace sits on the edge of Old Town and across the inlet are examples of the colorful Swedish buildings (G03, G04).

Walking around Old Town can keep one busy for several days, if you stop at one of the thicket of restaurants. People watching is fun as you can see in photos G05 to G12. Photos G13 to G19 show some of the historically important or architecturally appealing buildings including the Nobel Museum, the Cathedral, the Nordic Museum and the Vasa Ship Museum.

The Vasa Museum features a sailing ship so large that most of the masts stick up through the roof to the open air (see photo G18). The Vasa ship became famous from a story similar to the Titanic. It was built as the largest ship of its time and launched in 1628. While still in the Stockholm harbor, it capsized from being so top heavy and remained at the bottom for 300 years, when someone decided it deserved a museum.

The last few photos show picturesque aspects of Stockholm including the gold crown that sits on the railing of the bridge from Old Town to the military base (see G23). The last photo with the rainbow was taken in one of the outer islands as we were leaving Sweden and heading to Aarhus. Stockholm has tremendous variety and appeal. In fact, I originally had twice as many photos from Stockholm edited and captioned for this travel story, but it was beginning to feel like a story of Stockholm rather than the seas of Northern Europe.

H. Aarhus, Denmark

Aarhus is the second-largest city in Denmark and the country's main port. Its population is over 300,000 with the 1.2 in the general Aarhus area. Its settlement dates to the 8th century and is expanding very rapidly because of Denmark’s decision to expand its economy by building a second world-class city. Photo H01 shows how the town looks from the harbor.

The Aarhus Cathedral (H02), the largest in Denmark, was first built in the 1200s as a Romanesque structure but rebuilt as a Gothic Cathedral 300 years later. The Church of our Lady (H03), the oldest stone church in Scandinavia, now exhibits a combination of Romanesque and Gothic architectures.

The Aarhus Botanical Garden (H04) in this small city of Northern Denmark is the best we have visited in recent years. Its main disadvantage derives from its location: hard to find and about a mile from the City Center. It is run by the Aarhus University and staffed by U students. In addition to the beautiful green trees, it features a sizable hill as one big rock

garden. Its most outstanding asset is its enclosed arboretum with many unusual species (H05 to H07 and H12 to H16). The giant lily pads, some of which have a diameter of eight feet, is the most popular exhibit (H08 to H11). While we took pictures, a student waded in 5 feet of water to clean out some of the water clover so that the fish could get oxygen.

The entire arboretum received a continuous misty stream of water while we wandered around. This mist was so dense in parts of the building that it creates a 3-dimensional appearance in some of the photos, especially photos: H05, H12 and H14).

The Garden has a coffee shop in the center of the property. There we took an hour to rest and also take advantage of the free Wi-Fi (See photos H18 and H19). As we were leaving, we encountered Fred Newman and his wife on bicycles (H17). They live in NYC and told us they are used to bike riding in hazardous conditions. Aarhus is a complicated city to navigate but Fred uses a GPS device on his smart phone.

In the basement of a bank, I discovered the free Viking Museum, small but rich with surprising detail. One example was the stone captured in photo H31, within which a cross-had been etched. The 5-feet tall stone was called a *horning stone* when it was popular a millennium ago. At that time Christianity was beginning to seep into Nordic countries, replacing folk beliefs in many Nordic gods. Such stones were created to help ensure a loved one's salvation upon death.

As I was wandering around the beautiful Aarhus Theatre building, I discovered a coffee shop on one side of the building (H24). As I needed to use the WC, I went in to get a cup of tea and discovered the room packed of people listening to musicians and actors. The name of the place was Café Hack and I had come upon a recording of a radio show by the same name that is broadcast every Sunday (H25). Basically, the show is a comedy/music show much like the Prairie Home Companion show from Minneapolis – St. Paul. The main difference seem to be that the cast of characters seemed to be about 5-6 whereas the PHC has a team of 25 to 150 people. Perhaps the music-comedy-talk genre can be popular in many communities and cultures.

From there I headed back to the ship, taking pictures of interesting scenes along the river/canal that cuts the city in two (H26 to H32). Note the variety of people and the many new buildings as well as ancient. Shortly, it began to pour and I was able to catch a cab and return to the ship before departure.

I. Prairie Home Companions and Performances

The Garrison Keillor Cruises are about as edifying as cruises get. Dozens of speakers, singers, musicians and storytellers agreed to facilitate by providing activities that provide relevant new knowledge, fun, or aesthetic flow. Most of the shows and other events were excellent, consistent with the reputation of Garrison Keillor and the PHC team. Getting a good seat at the evening shows required getting there a half hour early.

On this cruise, Garrison Keillor brought along some 15 experts and professional lecturers. In addition to those facilitators and lecturers, Garrison brought along nearly 75 musicians and entertainers. In addition, to his radio band and a cast of characters often appearing on his show, he invited Cantus (a 9-men vocal ensemble shown in I05); Kustbandet (a 12-person traditional jazz band from Stockholm, Sweden); and a collection of opera and Broadway singers, including such well known performers as Maria Jette and Vern Sutton (I22). If you add to these musicians the PHC staff (18 paid and about 10 volunteers plus 6 cruise arrangers), the total goes well over 100. In addition, on board the ship were several musicians, other performers and instructors hired by Holland America, who performed mainly on nights when the ship stayed overnight in one of the ports, namely St. Petersburg and Stockholm.

Most of the performers brought by PHC kept busy delivering music, acting skits or lectures almost every day. On days at sea, the program offered over 40 events each day. On days in port, the evening program generally offered about 15 to 20 events. During these event time slots, it was very common that five concurrent events took place. Given these options and the loyalty of most passengers to the PHC brands of music, many of the events were packed. Here is a list of the musicians and other performers that I remember.

| PHC Cruise Performers | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Garrison Keillor | Fred Newman | Peter Johnson |
| Adam Granger | Freddie Brown | Peter Ostroushko |
| Aoife O'Donovan | Gary Raynor | Peter Sheppard Skaerved |
| Bob Douglas | Heather Masse | Rich Dworsky |
| Butch Thompson | Jed Wilson | Richard Dowling |
| Cantus (9-person) | Kustbandet (12-person) | Richard Kriehn |
| Dan Chouinard | Maria Jette | Sue Scott |
| Dean Magraw | Marian Muller | Tim Russell |
| Eve Daniell | Marie Seidler | Vern Sutton |
| | Pat Donohue | |

There were so many, I could have left some out inadvertently. You'll see photos of many of them in the Appendix I. I would have taken more photos but the stage lighting of the evening shows was very poor and demanded a lot of luck, editing, and other work. So, I concentrated on daylight performances more and settled for a few photos of performers that I particularly liked and to whom I had access. Fred Newman is my favorite and I happened to have a long breakfast conversation with him at which I caught a few photos (I23 to I25).

Heather Masse (I21) has been one of my favorite singers ever since her trio, Wailin' Jennys, released the song "Long Time Traveller" in 2006. She had her two-year old son, August, with her on the cruise, and I caught some wonderful shots of the two together (I15 to I17) one sunny afternoon, both before and while she sang the last song with the PHC Guys All-Star Shoe band. (You can see the Band with individual musicians in photos (I08 to I18). In I19 are a couple of passengers inspired to dance that afternoon.) Probably they are the best pictures of the whole two weeks. Heather, Aoife (pronounced e-fa as in "do re me-fa sol la ti do") O'Donovan, and Garrison sang several trio songs together and sounded wonderful (See I20).

In the last few shows, they offered some surprises with performers out of character. For example, Rich Dworski (photo I08) danced an entire tango with the woman dance instructor as part of the evening show. Sue Scott (I04), guru of female voices, sang wonderfully, and several opera singers sang some pop songs very powerfully.

Probably the most compelling aspect of the PHC shows was that so many of the musicians and actors are truly brilliant. Of particular brilliance is the skill demonstrated in improvisation during the shows by Garrison and others. But most of all is the astounding act that Garrison and Fred Newman put on totally impromptu. You can see this in the photos J02 to J03. Garrison starts with a fictitious story for which Fred is supposed to provide sound effects with his mouth and any little thing he can get his hands on. Neither works from a script because creating an impromptu series of sound events in the story stimulates Fred's creativity and Fred brings out Garrison's creativity in telling a story. Both admit to being baffled on occasion, but that adds to the fun because they and others can laugh at one or the other getting stumped.

Finally, a note about Garrison and the last photos (I27 to I30): Nancy and I have been to Garrison's house for a fund raiser and I talked to him a lot when I recruited him to talk to the U of MN retirees last year. Garrison plays many roles. In addition to his master show directing, singing, and story telling, he is a master interviewer. His technique is to get about 10 inches from the face of the interviewee and to totally concentrate on what that person is saying. (You can even see his lips move with the diction of the person being interviewed.)

On many mornings of the cruise, Garrison scheduled a "Coffee with GK" for an hour about 8am. During this time he wandered from table to table signing books and CDs and listening to people say what they have wanted to say to him for a long time. Every once in a while, he will get into interviewer mode and probe someone's life, but mostly he remains his reclusive, shy demeanor. The pictures of Garrison and me were taken in this context. I did more asking of questions than he did talking. Sometimes talking to him is like talking to a statue, but it is worth the trouble. I felt deeply gratified that the photographs showed a twinkle in his eyes while he was standing with me. If you look on the web, you will see that 98% of the images of him show him with an angry, withdrawn, or stoic face. People that know him well say that it is his shyness. Photo I1, a portrait of him was taken when he was standing with me; it is about the best portrait photo I have seen of him in recent years.

The Future. At the end of the last night's show, Garrison announced that he had agreed to one more PHC Cruise. It will be a 7-day trip beginning March 14, 2015 out of Fort Lauderdale, FL with port stops at San Juan, PR, Grand Turk Island, and St. Maarten. Nancy and I have not decided about going on the cruise as it will be difficult for her to get away from work and because our musical tastes seem to be changing faster than Garrison and the PHC. The cruise details will come out on September 23, 2014. If you are interested, act quickly.

J. Family

For Nancy and me, this was an unusual vacation because we shared it with her parents, Norman and Dorothy Kehmeier. It slowed our walking down and we tended to see fewer sights than we might, but we had many stimulating conversations and warm sharing of family feelings. They flew in from Grand Junction, CO and stayed with us in Wayzata one day before the cruise and two days afterwards. The idea was to reduce the trauma of jet lag, however, it has taken us about five days for that.

In Photo Appendix J, you will see the elder Kehmeiers in a majority of photos. Photos J07 through J10 include Nancy's brother Ralph and his wife Margrit. They live in Germany and flew up to Stockholm for a short vacation, spending two days with us as our ship anchored in the port. It was great to see them and spend so much time with them. We discovered that the cheapest way to get around from place to place, including from the ship to their hotel, was to take the "Hop On, Hop Off" Tour Boat. Fortunately, it did not require any hopping, and it was a very pleasant way to see a lot of the City. Photos J07 and J08 were taken on the small tour boat.

Photo J11 is not a family photo but a picture of James and Nancy Schoepfin from Spokane, Washington. He and I went to Upper Columbia Academy near Spokane in the late 1950s. They happened to be the only non-cast friends on the cruise. Jim had a similar career to mine in that he taught music as a professor at Washington State U in Pullman. He and Nancy met later in their lives and she is an attorney. We really enjoyed spending some time with them.

Photo J12 is not exactly a family photo either, but Garrison was beginning to feel like family. See my comments at the end of the previous section, Section I, about this photo.

K. Reflections on this Cruise

As Fred Newman put it, "this was an epic trip." The primitive artifacts and ancient buildings took us back in time before printing and other arts and technologies that we consider essential aspects of civilization. The trip made it easy to imagine the hardship and gloom that came with harsh winters and gray skies most of the summer, to say nothing of sailing the seas in a tiny boat hundreds of miles to look for land or to plunder other fiefdoms. Many of the harbors and clusters of islands called archipelagos have shallow water and destructive rocks hidden just beneath the surface. Thousands of shipwrecks are said to be littering the bottom of the seas. Viewing the empty skylines may produce exhilaration or serenity. But seas littered with oil drilling rigs and ships have replaced empty horizons. Because of the prevalence of these sea technologies, whales and other sea mammals now are harder to sight in the North and Baltic Seas.

The Northern European Cruise, Glimpses of Globalization. While the European Union has made inter-nation travel nearly seamless within Europe, Russia still makes it difficult to enter and leave its borders. Russia was the only country that required that every passenger's passport information be entered into their database system and checked upon both entry and exit from the ship. Furthermore, in order to do self-guided sightseeing, it is necessary to buy expensive visas several months before entry. We chose to sign up for sightseeing excursions with Russian guides, because then a Russia visa is not required under these conditions.

The principal evidence for globalization on the cruise was the fact that we could almost always see another ship or ships from our windows. My crude estimate would be that 99% of the ships were cargo ships including monster ferries that carried dozens of trucks and 100s of cars and a few people. In a typical port, we would see many more cruise-ship size ferries than actual cruise boats. But there is no such thing as a typical port. In our day in Tallinn, we saw 11 other cruise ships; in St. Petersburg only three; in Arhus they only get about one per week. Stockholm and Helsinki have many more monster ferries than cruise boats. Despite all these differences among harbors and cities, globalization pressures of expanding trade and shipping probably shift the lifestyles of Northern Europe toward greater and greater homogeneity and shared culture.

Cultural Differences and Similarities. One progressive change I noted on this trip was the higher number of co-ed water closets, especially in the Nordic countries. In the USA, handicapped restrooms are often co-ed, and in remote service stations it is not uncommon for men and women to share the same toilet room. However, it is not unusual in Denmark or Sweden to find that men and women share a single sink and each toilet stall is unmarked or some stalls are labeled as male and others as females. This avoids the common problem in the USA where the line to the women's room is far longer than the men's room. The Nordic way solves this problem because a gender-neutral restroom or water closet can re-label more stalls as women's than men's and thus keep up with demand.

All of the places we visited have the same or higher latitude than Minneapolis. St. Petersburg, Helsinki, and Stockholm all are about the same distance from the North Pole as Anchorage, Alaska. Imagine all of the scenes in the attached photos with several feet of snow. Obviously, their cultures have been shaped by the harsh winters and the need to struggle with the elements much of the year. Living without central heating and enclosed vehicles, while hard to imagine now, in many ways must have affected their social life, personal values, and the meaning of their lives.

Rise of Bicycle Power. We were all struck by the huge number of bicycles in Northwestern Europe, especially Sweden and Denmark. On many Nordic city streets, the number of bicyclists is beginning to approach the number of motorists. The concentration of bicycles is much higher than I noticed 10 or 20 years ago. In visits to Holland and Copenhagen in the 1990s, I rode bikes quite a lot, but then the bicycles in general were ridden at a much slower speed and there were fewer of them. In most American cities, the bicycle lobbies have only recently acquired strength and hence little attention has been given to adequate lanes and bicycle right-of-way.

Rising bicycle traffic yields negative consequences as well as the advantages of saving automobile fuel, reducing traffic jams, providing exercise, and reducing obesity. The bicyclists move at high speed next to pedestrian lanes and of course risk injury. In Copenhagen ten minutes after I got off the boat, I accidentally walked in front of a bicyclist and he yelled at me.

The traffic norms of Sweden and Denmark cede the right of way to bicyclists over both motorists and pedestrians. In both countries, the lanes for walking, biking and driving are not always marked. Furthermore, especially in Sweden we saw instances where the sizes of bike lanes were far wider than pedestrian lanes, even in area of high volume pedestrian walking.

The Meaning of Cruising. The long haul (14 days) of this cruise mixed with the many new experiences, both good and bad, caused me to reflect on the pros and cons of cruising and whether I wanted to take more cruises. I also asked Nancy and her parents what their opinions were on cruises. First, the benefits of cruise trips include seeing interesting new places and cultural characters first hand; seeing beautiful gardens, buildings, landscapes, waterscapes and sky; getting served by cheerful waiters and others on ship; having very good food available just about anytime; having a pool and whirlpool available during the days; having time with family; freedom from most fixed schedules; and cabins usually are conveniently close to dining, shows, and other activities.

Now the cons: on cruise ships the Internet service tends to be both very expensive and unreliable, to say nothing of the slow speed. Even though the ship is small as cruisers go, at times it feels very crowded. I have learned a strategy of always looking down while navigating the labyrinth of the cafeteria-style dining room, but then it made me feel very distant from other human beings. I liked it better early in the morning when early risers enthusiastically said 'Good Morning.' In this regard, the cheer and friendliness of the service workers is usually worth remembering.

Our ship the Ms Ryndam, smallest of the Holland American fleet holding only 1,200 passengers, felt less congested than larger ships we have sailed. On the other hand, it is the oldest of the fleet and little things like the showerhead and the bathtub stopper didn't work well. One day the water was black in the tub and sink, which took overnight to fix. Another day the room temperature was very cold.

In my case, I get a lot of stimulation and gratification from photographing the many new images and it becomes intertwined with the meaning that comes from learning many new things. However, the benefit of this type of experience can quickly become a burden in that it takes lots of time to edit and organize pictures and to write about them. I have to continually balance my needs for relaxation and rejuvenation against the rewards of producing creative products.

On the last morning of the trip, I overheard a woman saying the trip was “so much joy and pleasure.” An elderly man remarked as the sun climbed above the flat horizon adjacent to the white cliffs of Dover, “what a glorious world we live in.”

Appendix: 213 Photos organized with Chapter Headings A to J

(38 pages of photos follow)

A. Embarkation at Dover and at Sea



Ryndam Ship



Aft of Ryndam gets Washing in Stockholm



Dover Cliffs and Castle



Dover Old Town from Harbor



Dover, UK and its Famous White Cliffs at Departure Dock



Fishing off Dover Dock in Rough Waves

A. Embarkation at Dover and at Sea



Cresting Spray of Seven Foot Waves in North Sea



Schooner rising with tall wave



Schooner s Bow Splashing in Water



Great Black-Backed Gull



Cloud Mountain in Gulf of Finland Aug 2014



Clouds in Motion - Gulf of Finland - Aug 2014

A. Embarkation at Dover and at Sea



Sky upon Departure from Helsinki



Upclose of Previous Photo



Departing Stockholm and its Archipelago

B. Copenhagen



Little Mermaid up Close



Wind Turbines in Concert in Copenhagen



Copenhagen Harbor



Little Mermaid Besieged by Tourists



Little Mermaid with Implants



Navy Training in Diving by Ship

B. Copenhagen



Bicycles Invade Copenhagen Traffic



Tivoli Gardens Entrance



Copenhagen City Hall and Square



City Square Demonstration Against Killing of Palestine Children by Israel



Rosenberg Castle in Copenhagen



Copenhagen Round Tower - Library Observatory

B. Copenhagen



Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen



Family of Four Bicycling



Doting Father near Little Mermaid



Mother Gives Children Free Ride



Copenhagens Main Pedestrian Street



Botanical Courtships

B. Copenhagen



Duck Preening in Botanical Garden Pond



Thisles in Copenhagen Botanical Garden



Water Lily - Copenhagen



Pink Water Lily - Copenhagen

C. Warnemunde, Germany



Ferry leaving Warnemunde New Harbor



Warnemunde New Harbor



Warnemunde Beach and Old Harbor Entrance



Warnemunde - Huge White Sand Beach and Cabanas



Warnemunde Beach and West Part of Town



Warnemunde Shops and Cyclists

C. Warnemunde, Germany



Narrow Streets and Restaurants in Warnemunde



Kiddyland Baby Car in Warnemunde



Warnemunde Lighthouse and Teapot-Shaped Tea Shop



Village, Train and Moon



Warnemunde Lighthouse and Village



Warnemunde Old Harbor

C. Warnemunde, Germany



Warnemunde Old Harbor Tour Boat



Warnemunde Cobblestone Walkers along Old Harbor



Warnemunde Harbor Explorers



Old Harbor Mime Entertainer - Warnemunde



Mime Entertaining children in Warnemunde

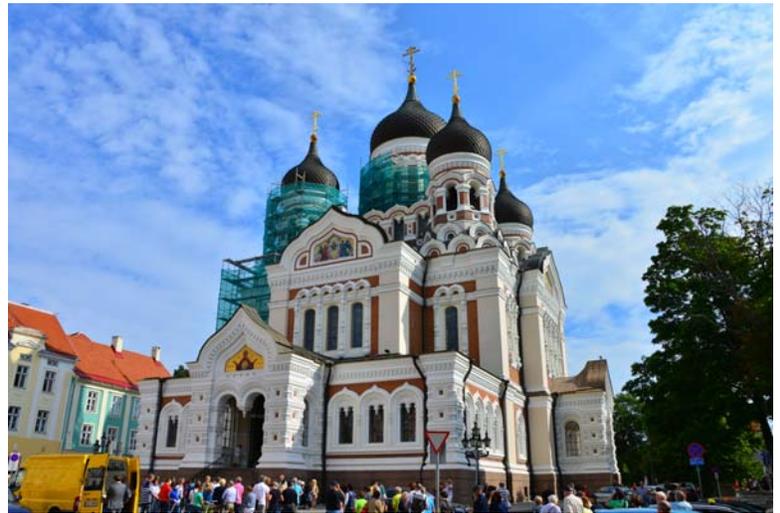


Warnemunde Organ Grinder on Passageway to Ship

D. Tallinn, Estonia



View of Tallinn Old Town from the Ship in Early Morning



St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral - Tallinn



Wall at West Entrance to Tallinn Old Town



Wall at East Entrance to Tallinn Old Town



Tallinn Government Building



Nordic Style Merchant Homes in Tallinn

D. Tallinn, Estonia



Kehmeiers walking by Flower Garden near City Center



Town Hall and Square in Tallinn



Town Hall Square Residences and Restaurants



Restaurant Solicitors at Town Hall Square



Coy Eyes of a Restaurant Solicitor



Street Off the Town Hall Square - Tallinn

D. Tallinn, Estonia



Olde Hanza - Medieval Pub just off Town Hall Square



Entrance to Olde Hanza Medieval Restaurant



Nancy and Two Girls having Fun as Ghosts in Tallinn



Club Med 2 - a 5-mast Sailing Cruise Ship Leaving Tallinn

E. St. Petersburg, Russia



Soviet Era Apartments at St Petersburg Dock in Early Morning



Peter and Paul Cathedral and Fortress



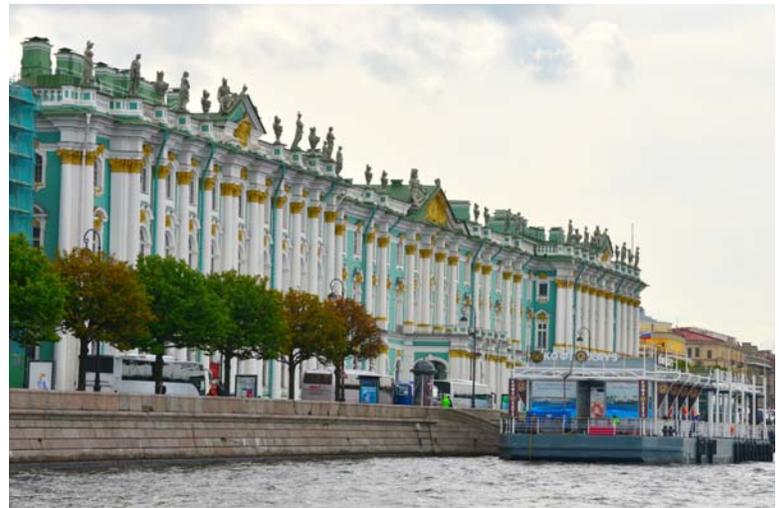
Couple on Canal Bridge



Canal Bridge Railing and Emblem



Colorful Merchants Houses on Canal



Winter Palace

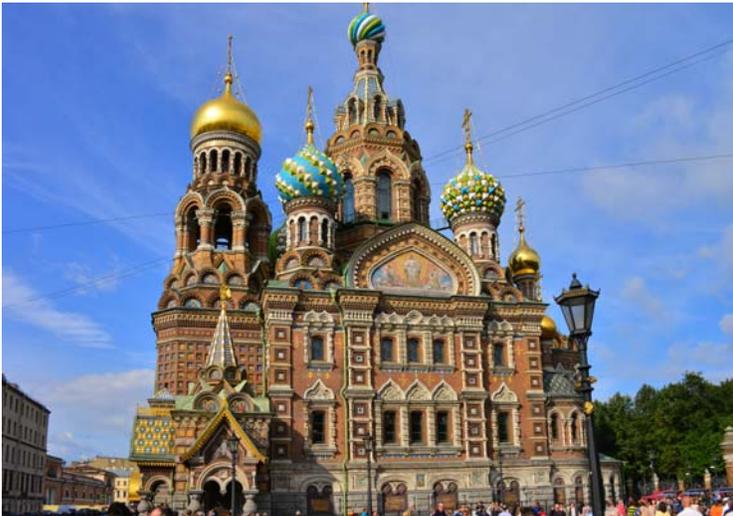
E. St. Petersburg, Russia



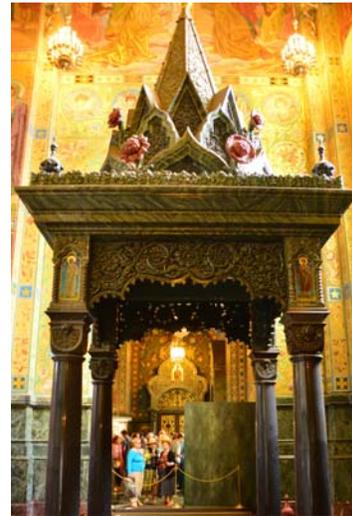
Twelve Colleges - formerly Twelve Administrative Units - St Petersburg



Gold Laced Bldg on Edge of Palace Park



Church of Our Savior on Spilled Blood



Spilled Blood Church Entrance



Church of Spilled Blood with Chandaliers



Door of Gems in Church of Spilled Blood

E. St. Petersburg, Russia



Inside Church of the Spilled Blood



Family at Cathedral



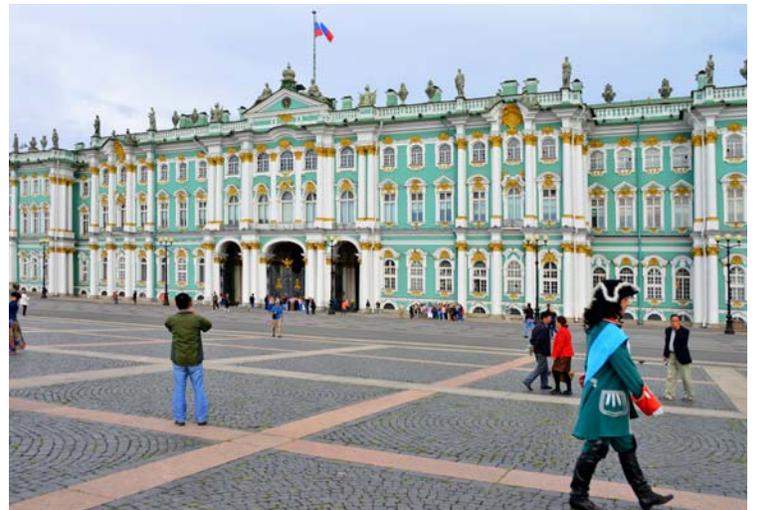
Happy 3-Some at Cathedral



Russian Museum



Admiralty Building at Palace Square - Longest Facade in World



Hermitage - Main Entrance

E. St. Petersburg, Russia



Peter and Catherine the Great Actors in Palace Park



An Hermitage Museum from Canal



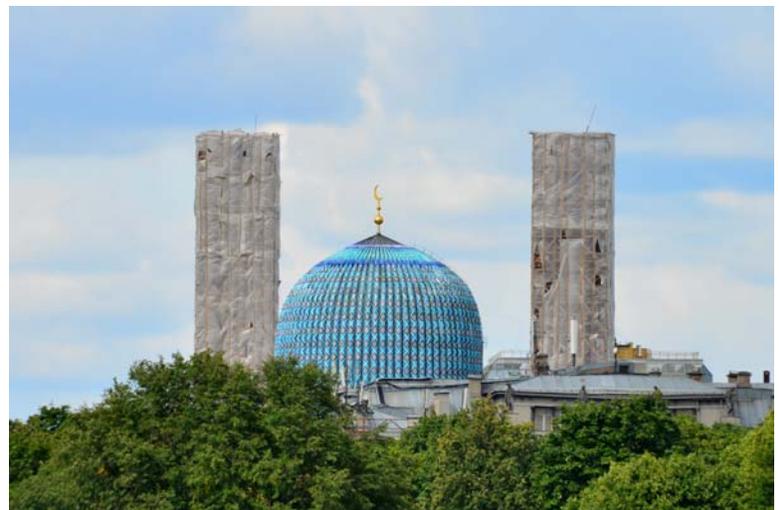
St Isaac's Cathedral



Buddhist Temple in St Petersburg



Prayer Wheeling in St Petersburg



St Petersburg Mosque

E. St. Petersburg, Russia



*Nancy n Guide in St Petersburg Botanical Garden
Tree Canope 140816*



bee white on blue



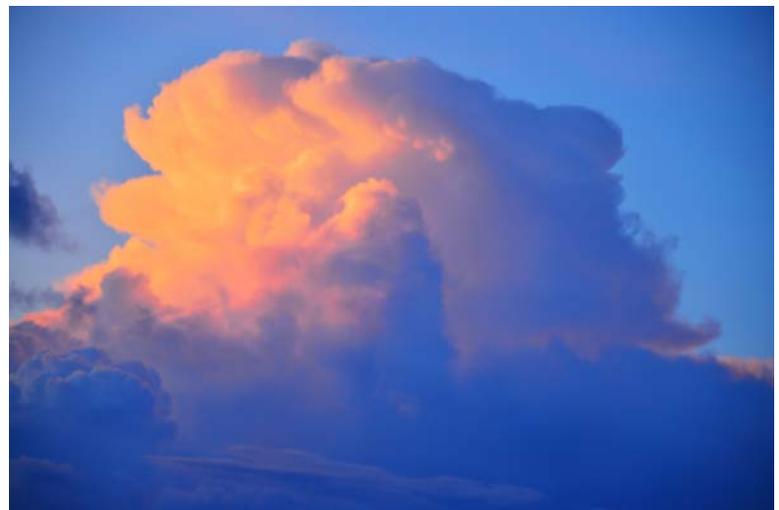
Wild Flower - Narrow Lavender



Yellow Wild Flowers StPetersburg Gardens



Church on NW Russia on Gulf of Finland



Cloud Mountain Gulf of Finland 140816

F. Helsinki, Finland



Monster Ferry Leaving Helsinki for Tallinn as our Ship Arrived



City Hall on Market Square



Palace Hotel on Market Square and Obelisk - Helsinki



Walking the Market Sq Booths in Helsinki



Family walking Market Square in Helsinki



Mother and Daughter enjoying Stone Turtle in Helsinki Harbor

F. Helsinki, Finland



Brother and Sister Enjoying Stone Turtles at Hensinki South Harbor



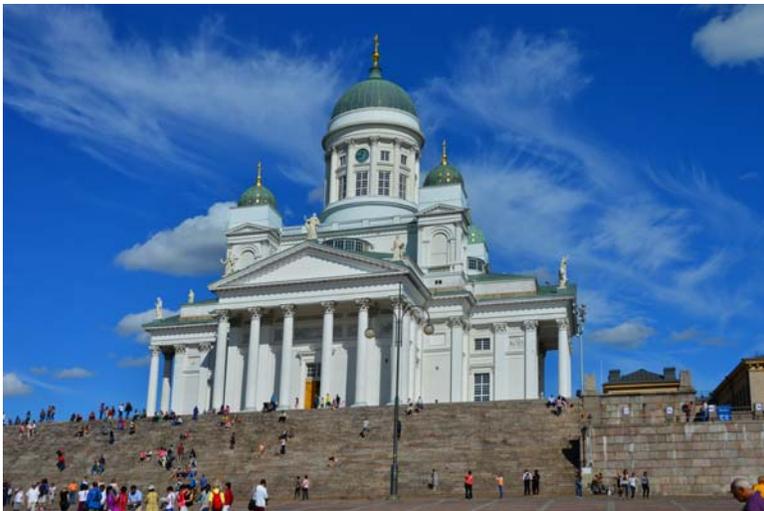
Helsinki South Harbor and Amusement Park



Fountain of Youth between Helsinki South Harbor and Orthodox Church



Uspenski Orthodox Cathedral - Helsinki



Senate Square Lutheran Church - Helsinki



Photo-Posing at Luthern Church - Helsinki

F. Helsinki, Finland



Typical Lightrail Sight in Downtown Helsinki



Sidewalk Signage in Helsinki

G. Stockholm, Sweden



City Hall and Riddarholmen Cathedral at 3am sunrise - Stockholm



Daytime View of City Hall and Cathedral in Stockhom



Royal Palace and Viking Ship - Stockholm



Stockholm Hotel Across Water from Royal Palace



Family in Old Town Stockholm



Immigrant Family in Old Town Stockholm

G. Stockholm, Sweden



Pedestrian Street in Old Town - Stockholm



Stockholm Marathon through Gamla Stan



Miming in the Rain in Stockholm



Stockholm Street Woman



Preschool Class in Old Town - Stockholm



Mother and Daughter Running Souvenir Shop in Stockholm

G. Stockholm, Sweden



Storkykan Building through Gateway



Stockholm Main Square in Gamla Stan



Nobel Museum - Stockholm



Stockholm Cathedral Skorkyrkan from 13th Century



Nordic Museum - Stockholm



Vasa Ship Museum

G. Stockholm, Sweden



Sodermalm Building - Stockholm



Stockholm Amusement Park



Old Town Buggy Near Riddarholmen - Stockholm



Swedish Crown on Stockholm Bridge



Navy on Harbor Rescue in Stockholm



Rainbow over Stockholm Island

H. Aarhus, Denmark



Aarhus Cityscape from the Harbor



Aarhus Cathedral from Harbor



Aarhus Church of our Lady



Aarhus City View from Gardens



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Mysterious Flower in Fog



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Small Flower

H. Aarhus, Denmark



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Butterfly



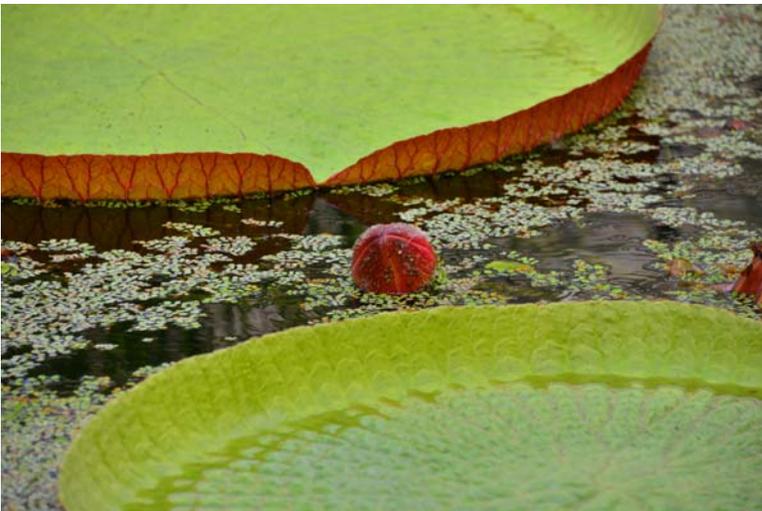
Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Giant Lily Pad



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Cleaning Lily Pond



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Couple Lily Pads with Baby Pad on Upper Left



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Couple Lily with Flower Floating Separately



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Double Mystery in Fog

H. Aarhus, Denmark



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Giant Plant



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Lotus Bud



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Orange Flare



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Plant Cycle



Fred Newman and Spouse - Aarhus Botanical Garden



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - WiFi Nancy and Patient Father

H. Aarhus, Denmark



Aarhus Botanical Gardens - Worshipping Dorothy Kehmeier



Example of Solar Panels in Aarhus



Aarhus Canal Lined with Restaurants



Aarhus City Hall



Aarhus Office Building on the Main Pedestrian Street



Entrance to Cafe Hack in Aarhus

H. Aarhus, Denmark



Cafe Hack Radio Show in Recording in Aarhus



Colorful Bar in Aarhus



Aarhus Father and Daughter



Multi-racial Couple Walking in Park - Aarhus Denmark



Sidewalk scene near Aarhus Train Station



Example of Modern Construction in Aarhus

H. Aarhus, Denmark



Horning Stone in Vikings Museum - Aarhus



Modern Apartments in Aarhus Harbor

I. Praire Home Companions and Performers



Garrison Keillor while talking to Ron Anderson - Aug 2014



Fred Newman getting Sound Jobs from Keillor



Fred Newman the Showman



Sue Scott in Action



Cantus - 9-Men Vocal Ensemble



Morning Glee Club Led by Vern Sutton

I. Praise Home Companions and Performers



PHC All Star Shoe Band Playing Poolside



Rich Dworski - Band Director and Pianist



Richard Kriehn PHC Show



Pat Donohue



Peter Johnson



Gary Raynor

I. Praise Home Companions and Performers



Aoife O Donovan and Pat Donohue



Aoife O Donovan



Heather Masse holding son August while she sings



Heather Masse and son August Singing with the All Star Shoe Band Poolside



Heather Masse and August



Richard Kriehn Performing with the Mandolin

I. Praise Home Companions and Performers



Dancing to the Shoe Band



Garrison Keillor - Heather Masse - and Aoife O Donovan



Heather Masse Singing Solo in PHC Show



Vern Sutton Performing in the Show

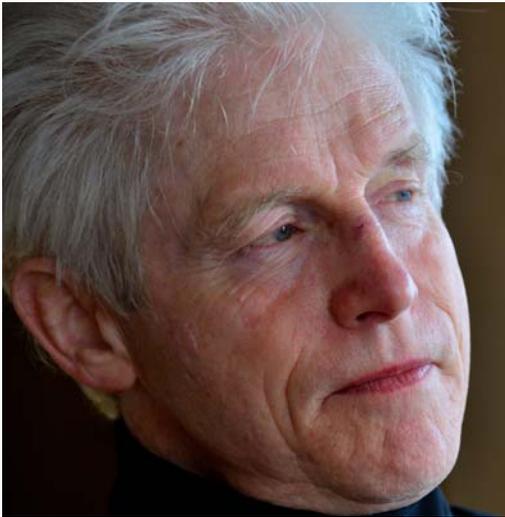


Fred Newman trying out Google Glasses



Fred Seeing an Ice Cream Cone

I. Praise Home Companions and Performers



Reflective Fred Newman



GK Tired and Surprised



Ron and Garrison



Ron Anderson and Garrison Keillor Talking - PHC Cruise Aug 2014



Wayne Briggs - Ron Anderson - Garrison Keillor - PHC Cruise Aug 2014

J. Family



Ron & Nancy at Dinner on Rhydram - Aug 2014



*Dorothy and Norman Kehmeier on PHC Cruise Take 2
- Aug 2014*



Kehmeiers on Russian Street Corner



*The Elder Kehmeiers in St Petersburg Botanical
Garden*



Ice Cream in Copenhagen Harbor Park



Kehmeiers in Helsinki Market Square 17 Aug 2014

J. Family



Margrit in Stockholm - Aug 19 2014



Margrit and Dorothy in Tour Boat in Stockholm Aug 2014



Nancy, Margrit, Ralph, Dorothy and Norman in Stockholm



Ralph Nancy Dorothy and Norman Kehmeier Walking Streets of Old Town - Stockholm



Nancy and James Schoepfin - from High School Days



Ron and Garrison Posing for Camera - PHC Cruise - Aug 2014