

It's the birthday of novelist **CORMAC MCCARTHY**, born in Providence (1933), author of the "Border Trilogy": *All the Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing*, and *Cities of the Plain*.

It was on this day in 1875 that **THE LARGEST RECORDED SWARM OF LOCUSTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY DESCENDED UPON THE GREAT PLAINS**. It was a swarm about 1800 miles long and 110 miles wide, stretching from Canada down to Texas. North America was home to the most numerous species of locust on earth, the Rocky Mountain locust. At the height of their population, their total mass was equivalent to the 60 million bison that had inhabited the West. Swarms would occur once every seven to twelve years, emerging from river valleys in the Rockies and sweeping east across the country. The size of the swarms tended to grow when there was less rain, and the West had been going through a drought since 1873.

It was on this day in 1875 when farmers just east of the Rockies began to see a cloud approaching from the west. It was glinting around the edges where the locust wings caught the light of the sun. People said the locusts descended like a driving snow in winter, covering everything in their path. They sounded like thunder or a train and blanketed the ground nearly a foot deep. Trees bent over with the weight of them, and they ate nearly every living piece of vegetation in their path. They ate harnesses off horses and the bark of trees; they ate curtains, and clothing that was hung out on laundry lines. The locusts chewed on the handles of farm tools and fence posts and railings. Some farmers tried to scare away the locusts by running into the swarm, and had their clothes eaten right off their bodies.

Similar swarms occurred in the following years, but by the mid-1880s, the rains had returned, and the swarms died down. Within a few decades, the Rocky Mountain locusts were believed to be extinct. The last two live specimens were collected in 1902, and can be found at the Smithsonian.

**My Aunt Raises Violets from Africa**

by Janice Moore Fuller

All those loose threads  
from her sewing, trailing  
off bobbins toward Chattanooga,  
Nashville, Myrtle Beach, Niagara  
Falls. She snapped them at the hem  
with her teeth, those worn  
hitching posts.  
She never learned to drive.  
Didn't leave Grandma's  
yard for thirty years.  
Her Singer just hummed.

She never stopped wearing  
that engagement ring he gave her at twenty,  
measuring time by how deep  
it sank into her finger  
even after he died, still her fiancé,  
an old man living with his mother.  
We only whispered his name.

At night, after the Bible verses,  
she'd coat herself with vapor rub,  
thick and Vicks blue,  
then dial up the DJ  
who knew her voice,  
yearning for the smooth of Englebert  
soothing her into bed  
back to back with Grandma.

When I spent the night,  
we'd tend the violets  
lined like bassinets  
along the north:  
double lavenders, crystal  
stars, angel blues, pink  
persuasion. So careful.  
We never touched their velvet  
not even the undersides.  
We just turned them each day,  
their faces straining  
toward the sun.

"My Aunt Raises Violets from Africa" by Janice Moore Fuller,  
from *Sex Education*. © Iris Press, Tennessee.  
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**INSIDE PASSAGES** by Holly Harden

On the office table next to me is a small box of cherries Albert Webster, our stage manager, brought back to the ship from his visit to Bergen Thursday morning. The cherries are unbruised and sweet. They're as big as small plums and taste so good. I'd like to think they were grown here, in Norway, in groves wherever fruit grows best, on mountainsides or meadows. Truth is, the truck pulling away from the store read, "Washington State Cherries."

That's what I like about travel. You go places and you find things, and they make you laugh or pause or think, "Oh, for cryin' out loud." Like the salmon/apple/grape combo my husband sampled at dinner last night. Or the many filmy yellow jellyfish that came floating up out of the depths as we pulled away from port. Or the curious piles of rocks we saw up on the mountain in Geiranger, little shrines to something we missed. And the smell of the ice cream shop, and the sounds in the harbor at noon.

I can't show you photos of any of this. I'm not a picture taker. I have a camera but I often forget it, and when I don't, I tend to not bother. I'd rather write about it, to be honest, and it's been that way for as long as I recall. Not so much for others to read, but more as a reminder to myself: This is where I've been, and this is what I found there.

When people ask how I go about writing as I travel, it's tough to give advice. Everyone's different. Not

everyone wants to write. But if you're looking for a easy way to preserve the experience, I say find a notebook and your current favorite pen and let 'er rip. Just for the heck of it, I've included a few suggestions below.

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1. Every trip consists of two journeys: the external one, which is what you're seeing, hearing, smelling, doing, etc.; and the one inside, in your mind. Weave them together for a good travel journal.
2. Use all five of your senses, for Pete's sake. There's so much more around you than what you see.
3. Tell the truth about what you're thinking. Write about even what's uncomfortable.
4. Show, don't tell. Be descriptive as heck and specific. Being vague is a waste of time.

5. Don't concern yourself with time and order and what happened next. Write about what you want to write about. Even if things get mixed up.

6. It's tough to find time to keep a journal while you travel. So write when time finds you, when you're waiting for the bus or for someone to finish showering.

8. Try speed writing. Record as much as you can for a certain amount of time. This will give you a bit of focus and will require a bit of discipline. As most important things do.

9. You don't have to be traveling to keep a travel journal. Write before you go. Write after you return. Journeys begin when you first think about getting out of Dodge, not when you get on the horse.

10. Don't set yourself up. If a day passes and you don't write, no huge deal. If you forgot to mention trolls, big whoop. Write for yourself. No apologies. None.

*Holly Harden is a writer from Scandia, Minnesota. She has an affinity for spatulas. The rubber ones with the wooden handles.*



## FIELD NOTES Coastal Heaths by Rick Strimbeck

A Norwegian coastal heath in high summer can be a little otherworldly: an open and windswept blanket of dusty green and purple, laid over rocky hills and flat moors alike, with a backdrop of distant blue mountains on one side and the skerry-dotted sea on the other. The purple comes from the flowers of the common heather, *Calluna vulgaris*, called *røsslyng* in Norwegian, which is also common in bogs. The vegetation is a botanical hodgepodge of plants found from bogs and alpine tundra, with only a few heath, sedge, and wildflower species that are coastal purists. In Norway, coastal heaths are found only on the outermost islands and coast, where the warm water

offshore moderates the climate in winter so that frost is relatively rare. But climate alone does not a coastal heath make. Like the alpages (alpine pastures) of France, coastal heath is a cultural landscape, the product of a three-way interaction between climate, sheep, and fire, with the last two elements under control of Norway's human inhabitants, in some areas dating back to 4000 BC, long before the time of the Vikings. Farmers cleared the natural forest, grazed sheep, and periodically set small fires in winter and spring (so they wouldn't burn too hot) to "refresh" the vegetation. By Viking times much of the natural vegetation of the outer islands had been converted to

heath. Coastal heath played its own small part in world history: this is the heath that fed the sheep that grew the wool that made the sails that drove the long ships that bore the Viking raiders, traders, and settlers to England, Newfoundland, Andalusia, and Kiev. But in the age of oil, many of Norway's island farms are being abandoned, to be reclaimed by trees and shrubs, which have been held at bay by tooth and flame for, in some cases, thousands of years.

*See the APHC naturalists throughout the day in various locations throughout the ship. All good naturalists wear Gore-tex as an outer layer.*

## PASSENGER NOTES

Traveling is about luck. It is about being in the right place at the right time and seeing at least some of the things listed in the guidebook. We have been out with the naturalists at 5:30 every morning to take in the wildlife. While evidence of tectonic and glaciers has been rather easy to observe, our timing with regard to puffins and whales has not been spectacular. Someone would shout, "Puffins!" and we would say, "Where?" Only to get the reply, "Oh, they're gone now." In Ålesund, however, we came into some luck. We were walking down a street after the rain had stopped and saw a large earthworm. My companion, a gardener with a soft spot for earthworms, stopped to consider rescue operations when we noticed that the earthworm was under attack by a much smaller, flat, black worm. The earthworm coiled and wriggled like a snake to deter its attacker. It got free and you could almost feel it panting and running for dear life, with all that an earthworm can muster. It was looking hopeful. However, the flat worm was faster and with a quick lunge, it latched on to the earthworm. Judging from the earthworm's reaction, that did not feel good. While the flat worm was munching away, a seagull (we think it was a *Larus Canus* or *fiskemåke*) whooshed down and got a two for one. We crossed the *Larus Canus* off our list and walked on, pondering life's big questions. —*Benét Hermind*

### Suggestion from Table 118 (submitted to the editors of the *Ballast* on a doily):

Table 118 First Seating (2nd show time) thinks you should get a town in Minnesota to change their name to Lake Wobegon and then build a theme park called Lake Wobegon. You could have rides like these:

1. Pontoon boat driven by Methodist Minister (cooker on back) drawing skiers
2. Jettison Brothers roller coaster ride
3. Naked parasailing
4. Rocket-powered snow mobile ride
5. Swimming with dolphins
6. Sons of Knute duck decoy clay pigeon shoot
7. Norwegian bachelor farmers "Tunnel of Love"— they have only one seat
8. Acme Building dating service for hard up detectives
9. Ketchup spa and hot tub- swimming in ketchup for what ails you, hosted by Barb and Jim
10. Side Track Tap
11. Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery for snacks and goodies

12. Daily parade led by the 1930-something Chevy coupe septic tank, leading with Sherman tank with the beauty queen riding on barrel
13. Chatterbox Café with Beebopareebop Rhubarb Pie
14. Guy Noir Lost and Found Booth
15. Meet Crispy the Rescue Dog or Buster or Rex
16. Larry's house with the scary basement
17. Sing with Dusty and Lefty at the Side Track Tap Karaoke Bar
18. Wedding Chapel with Pastor Inqvist presiding
19. Evelyn Wood Obedience Center
20. 1 acre farm with the Norwegian Bachelor Farmers' Petting Zoo
21. Bertha's Kitty Boutique Pet Souvenir Shop
22. A store to buy red sneakers and red socks —"Guy's" Shoes

...We had more but they're written on our tablecloth. — *Table 118*

*Got Notes? Drop 'em at the HAL front desk— 4:00 p.m., no later. Please. Last day to submit is today, Friday, July 20th!*

## THE BOOK NOOK by Marcia Pankake Generations on the Move

### Nikolai's Fortune

written by Solveig Torvik  
University of Washington Press, 2005

Two of our cruisers, Anne H. and Mary Jane W., each recommend this novel-memoir. From shreds of family history, an American builds the tale of her great grandmother, grandmother, and mother, from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Beginning in the Finnmark where Finland abuts Norway in the north, she tells of Finnish emigration to Norway, and then of Norwegian emigration to America, and a reverse trip. We read of terrible poverty, difficulties in finding work, physical and emotional hunger, but also of strength and endurance, such as that which carried a twelve-year old girl on a five-hundred mile walk in the winter. The conditions under which some of our ancestors lived, even as recently as in World War II in Ålesund, when Torvik ate brown bread with tightly-rolled bits of brown paper baked into it, seem incredible. Such deprivations caused Norwegians to migrate, as they drove Torvik's parents to Idaho.

*Marcia Pankake is a retired librarian and long time editor of Prairie Home publications. She can tell you anything you might wish to know about "Kristin Lavransdatter."*

## THINGS OVERHEARD

"Wait a minute...you're telling me there was a bust of Dolly Parton in the gargoyles of that church?" — over dinner, discussing St. Olaf's Cathedral in Trondheim

"I feel like I'm in a Bergman film."  
— in Bergen

"Excuse me sir, you're snoring."  
"I always snore when I'm asleep."  
— in the Rubens Lounge during the main show

"It's a ship, not a boat."  
— on the gangway

"What day is it?"  
"Dunno..didn't take the elevator."  
— at breakfast

## VIKING NEWS by Christina von Nolcken

### A VIKING IN LOVE

This comes from Egil's Saga, a work I discuss in my second lecture. Egil is in love with Asgerd, who grew up in his parents' household. But she marries his older brother, Thorolf. Egil takes sick at the wedding, though we only realize why much later, after Thorolf has died in battle, when Egil bears the news to Asgerd.

As autumn wore on, Egil grew extremely miserable and spent a great deal of time with his head buried under his cloak. One day [his beloved friend] Arinbjorn came and asked him why he was in such low spirits.

'Even though you suffered a great loss when your brother died,' he said, 'you have to bear it like a man. People have to go on living. What are you composing these days? Let me hear something.'

Egil said he had just made this verse:

Beauty must bear with  
My boorish manner:  
Braver in boyhood  
I lifted my brow;  
Now my cloak must cover  
The craggy cliff-face,  
When wife, widow and mother  
Worry my mind.

Arinbjorn asked who this woman could be that he was writing a love-song about. Then Egil spoke again:

I seldom conceal  
Her name in song,  
Gradually her grief  
Grows less:  
If your ear can interpret  
The art of verse,  
You'll soon make sense  
Of what I say.

'This is a case,' said Egil, as the saying goes, where a man can tell all to his friend. You want to know the name of the woman in my verse, so I'll tell you. It's your cousin Asgerd, and I hope you'll help me win her.'

He does win her, and theirs is a long and, as far as we can tell, happy marriage.

*Christina von Nolcken is the PHC Norway Cruise Viking expert. She gets a wild look in her eye when she talks about all things Viking.*



### CAN'T GET ENOUGH?

Take some home.

### WE HAVE CDS, BOOKS AND DVDS FOR SALE.

Quantities are limited.

## You Really Ought to Know

You may want to think twice about taking a cab once we arrive in Copenhagen. We are many; taxis are few. Holland America travel will provide you with ground transportation from the ship to the airport. All you do is fill out the form we'll deliver to your cabin, drop it in the Holland America Shore Excursion box by 3 p.m. Friday. We'll charge you a mere \$41 per person and your Sunday ship-to-airport issues will be taken care of. How's that for a deal.



## APHC Camera Club

### Calling all shutterbugs!

Drop off your digital photo cards to the APHC Info desk in the lobby before 4:30 p.m. each day and we just might add them to a slide show.

**Final opportunity to submit photos for the Camera Club is Saturday, July 21 by 3 p.m. Get 'em in soon!**