

May 17, 2011
From: Barry H.Wells
Subject: How I got to Sweden

The 'How I got to Sweden' part is simple, I married one. I lived and worked in the Richmond area for many years, I had taken course work in 'computer programming and data processing' and one day got a job with the then Virginia Department of Highways' in the 'Location and Design' Division; now the Virginia Department of Transportation. I remember doing segments of I-64 and I-77; memory is a little uncertain on whether I-85 or I-95 segments were there also. In those days no computers were used directly. It seems they wanted engineers and would train those that they wanted. They were less interested in my computer background than in my high school drafting classes. There was a road segment of I-77 from the portal of the East River Mountain Tunnel out for about a quarter mile where I estimated 800,000 cubic yards of fill material. Several years later, on a traffic safety study, I got a shock when I saw this project under construction and saw the 800,000 cubic yards; on paper versus in fact are two different things. I then went to work with Wilbur Smith and Associates for a number of years. There were traffic safety studies, traffic signal system projects and still some highway design work. Lets see there was Petersburg Signal System, Portsmouth Signal System, Norfolk Signal System, Richmond Signal System, Johnstown(Pa.) Signal System, Lincoln Highway (Ill.) Signal System and a consultant activity in Texas on Signal Systems. Here the traffic stastics were loaded into a program to develop traffic flows; in or out or both directions. I know before I left the 'States' that Petersburg's system was shut down because of their economic condition versus maintenance costs. After W.S.&A. I went to work for the County of Henrico, Virginia, Department of Public Works, Traffic Engineering Division. With the 'County' most of the design plans were done by computerized drafting / autocadd. This went on for twenty years.

Somewhere at the beginning of working with Henrico County I met the person that would become my wife and the mother of our children. She had relatives in the U.S.A. one of which resided in the Richmond area.

Totally we had four children, the last of which was borne in Sweden; all of which are dual national.

Around 1993 or 1994 My, then, wife wanted to return to her 'Gammla Sverige', home sick. The differences between cultures was a factor. The children were young and she wanted to get them in Sweden before the August School term began. In November I went for a visit to see how things were going. When I got back I was notified that the State general assembly was to vote on an early retirement bill early in 1995. This bill passed, it required 10 years of service in a position covered by the V.R.S. and an age of 50 years. I was 49 and a half and had to wait for several months before receiving the pension plus a deferred comp plan. I then packed up and moved to Sweden; I could not be away from my babies any longer. When I arrived the reception was the cause of our fourth child.

Having a pension allowed me to take course work at Stockholm's Universitet, One must speak Swedish if one is to be long in Sweden.

I should note that my ex-wife was adopted. When we were first in Sweden she found out where her biological family lived which is up in the North of Sweden. After 4 years in the South we moved North. We both began working for Norrlands Universitet Sjukhus (Norrlands University Hospital), she as a nurse and I in administration. This is all in the Umeåuniversitets (Umeå University) area.

The adventure turned sour and the marriage failed. I continue on in my direction and she in hers.

I still enjoy my babies, even though they are no longer babies. I've noted to my oldest daughter that there is a consulate in Norfolk, Va. and as she is quite proficient in Swedish I feel she could qualify for that position. It's a joint facility between Norway, Sweden and Denmark. I, on the other hand, am half deaf. I can understand Norwegian but not Gammal (old) Norsk (Norwegian) I can understand Danish (Dansk), if they speak slowly. There are factors in the way things are said that one learns but everything must be put into context. There are illusions, there are abridgments, Most of the time it's a matter of reading peoples lips. An item here is 'jag ska hor av mig' literally translates 'I'm going to hear from me' but means 'you're going to hear from me'

I now plot out the last adventures in life to see if I'll have the energy and time to do things.

I stopped smoking many years ago, I exercise regularly; bike ride, take out the dog. I watch what I eat and have a balanced diet. I've gone from 104 kilos (229 lbs.) down to 81.5 Kilos (179 lbs.) My friend who is a M:D. suggests that I should get to the 80's. Then there were two aunts on my fathers side; twins, one lived to 103 the other lived to 107. They were in the Richmond papers at every birthday. Advances in technology can be a factor. The idea is, given the statistics, I don't know how long I have left. Nor do any of us.

I do know this, the first thing on my agenda is to get a place in the 'warm'. I can, then, do pretty much what I enjoy. I Enjoy History and archaeology and there is a place on the Aegean Sea that is not too far from the site of ancient Troy. Other thoughts involve getting apartments for one or more months in places like London: When last there I had my nose a foot from the 'Magna Carta'. There is much more there that I should like to see. Who knows, a month or two in Paris, Rome, Athens, Egypt Et cetera. I make my plans and hope I have the time and energy / stamina for these things. I've given a little thought to going to Nepal and standing at the foot of Mt. Everest, but I think the elevation of the first base camp at 17,000 feet might be a bit too much. I think I'd have to try 'Machu Pichu' first. I want to see the Egyptian pyramids and the ones in Mexico and compare. The 'Great Wall', the 'Forbidden City'. We'll just see what this body will let me do.