

American / Danish differences (Risoe, 1962-1964)

Danish and American social structures are different. The danish social welfarism is fully supportive of it's citizens, so that, in general, they become complacent. Americans, on the other hand, have a relatively cold "do it yourself" attitude. In America, one is left to look to his own devices. If an American loses his job, he must find another.

In Denmark, a jobless man is a social liability - a drain on society. He (or she) is immediately placed in another job. He thus retains his self confidence and need not worry about the support of his family.

So, I joined a team of danish physicists and technicians at the Risoe Laboratory (north of Roskilde) in 1962. All of us were competent. But I was hired into the Physics department, whereas my doctorate is in "Engineering Science"! My struggles in completing my Ph.D. thesis (at Livermore Laboratory) involving a Helium-3 proportional counter, equipped me ideally for my part of our precision measurement of the Neutron Half-Life.

Only later did my team realize that I was half engineer! There was, in the minds of my danish colleagues, a significant difference between the american Ph.D. and the danish drphil. (We were all "philosophers" for historical reasons). The danish system requires a formal defence of ones thesis. All concerned were dressed in "white tie and tails", and not only was one's board of professors present but one or two members of the danish government, whereas in America I simply submitted my thesis to three

Berkeley professors for their critical examination. But my engineering background allowed me to simply try things, whereas my danish friends seemed to stay with a more "safe" approach. An example:

Because the neutron beta decay has a relatively long half-life (about 10 minutes) , the counting rate was quite slow. Our signal was therefore our "background" had to be reduced to an extremely low level. Thus, the shielding around our two simultaneous measurement (the neutron flux and the beta-decay rate) crucially required excellent shielding around our equipment. I was responsible for precision measurement of the neutron beam flux (that required development of the world's first flat Helium-3 proportional counter. I did this with an extraordinary technician, Finn Hansen, who was knowledgable, talented, and innovative, as was I

To reduce our background, required knowledge of the shielding that I, as a physicist and a nuclear engineer understood. Both the composition , shape, and placement of our massive concrete blocks at the "DR-3" nuclear reactor were crucial. However, my danish colleagues felt that the manual labor involved involved was "technician's work" and was beneath them. My physicist co-workers understood the problems, but the technicians did not! Therefore, I would down from the Physics Department, alone, and do the "menial" work of moving the large concrete blocks around (using chain hoists) to do what needed to be done to minimize or background. I wasn't, of course, completely successful, but I did what I could, while the others sat in their offices.

One of the first things that I did when I arrived was to have my name painted on our apartment door. This was

routine, but I had "Doctor Wilbur K. Brown" inscribed. Apparently, this was considered ostentatious!

At the same time, with the help of the wife of our group leader ("Ingergrete" Christensen) I joined the Roskilde Kammerkor (chamber chorus) that rehearsed and performed in the Roskilde Domkirke (Cathedral). I should have said that before my wife, Kitty, arrived, I had arranged for both of us to be tutored by a Danish man in Berkeley. In addition, we had brought our one year old son, Walt, and children in every country are loved. All these things contributed to our success in integration to Danish society. I became good friends not only with families of my fellow physicists and technicians, but also with the laboratory director, Niels Busch and his wife Birgitte, and was welcomed to speak with him in his office at any time. Niels was glad to have my views on the somewhat different actions of our government.

The two governments are both democracies, but our government, with three independent "houses" was different than their parliamentary system, the "Folketing" (people's thing). Speaking and singing in Danish with the chorus meant that I had friends throughout the city! Everywhere that I went (in the bank, hardware stores, markets, and the hospital) I had friends! I, of course, made errors when speaking Danish but they themselves were entertaining to my Danish friends.

Another crucial circumstance was that I soon met the laboratory social organizer and "PR" woman, Bodil Aarup. She was absolutely stunning! Not only was she a lovely girl, but spoke perfect English, French, and German. She wrote for the big newspapers in Copenhagen: "Berlingske Tidende", Politiken, and

others! She soon was teaching me danish slang!

She proposed that she and I become a team to welcome and tour visitors through the Risoe Lab. Both of us spoke English, Danish and French and our children played together.

Kitty and I were soon accepted as Danes! I made a crucial contribution to our laboratory measurement, and we were Danes!

When my parents visited, my father, as a self-made success as a branch manager in the Bank of America, was entertained lavishly by the Director of Landmansbanken (Farmers Bank). When Kitty's Swedish father visited us (Walter Evald Lind) I took him on a tour of his boyhood roots in Sweden. To Suntak where he as a baby had lived, then to Tidaholm where he had attended elementary school. He could still read Swedish newspapers and I did necessary translation.

Even before our arrival, Kitty and I had flown to Denmark and taken the Coastal Steamer up along the Norwegian coast to "Sandnessjoen" where I was informed that my grandfather, Ole Andreas Andersen, had been the founder of the city, (read "Sandnessjoen" on my web page).

I detailed my danish grandmother's family in "Our Grandmother" (also on my web page). My laboratory measurements are there as well as my published papers.

My successes there, led to my employment at the Los Alamos Laboratory! In these seven years (1962-1969) I did my entire professional work.

Walt was born in Berkeley, Craig was born in Los Alamos exactly four years later. They both have been achievers and have good marriages. I now live in Durango,

and with help from Walt, have recovered my health and from my sadness at my separation from my wonderful wife, Kitty.

Walt's family: wife Helen Mary and my two grandsons Walker and Andrew, live nearby , and I sing in the chorus of the First Methodist Church.

I am now 80, and I look back with satisfaction (and some sadness) at my life.