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Shakedown Cruise in Sweden

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Shakedown Sail Through Sweden

Delivery of a 48' Swan from the Nautor plant rewards her crew with fine sailing and exquisite sightseeing. By Eric Greene

My first impressions of Scandinavia were formed at 30,000 feet as we flew over the vast wilderness of northern Sweden. Abundant lakes stood out in high contrast to the snow-covered forests dominating the countryside. Without a hint of civilization in sight, our prospects for outfitting a boat for its shakedown cruise seemed quite remote.

After landing in Helsinki, I jet-hopped on a 707 around Finland, finally reaching Pietarsaari, home of Nautor. Our new *Dove*, a New York YC 48, was our family's second Nautor yacht, so I had already formed a strong expectation of what

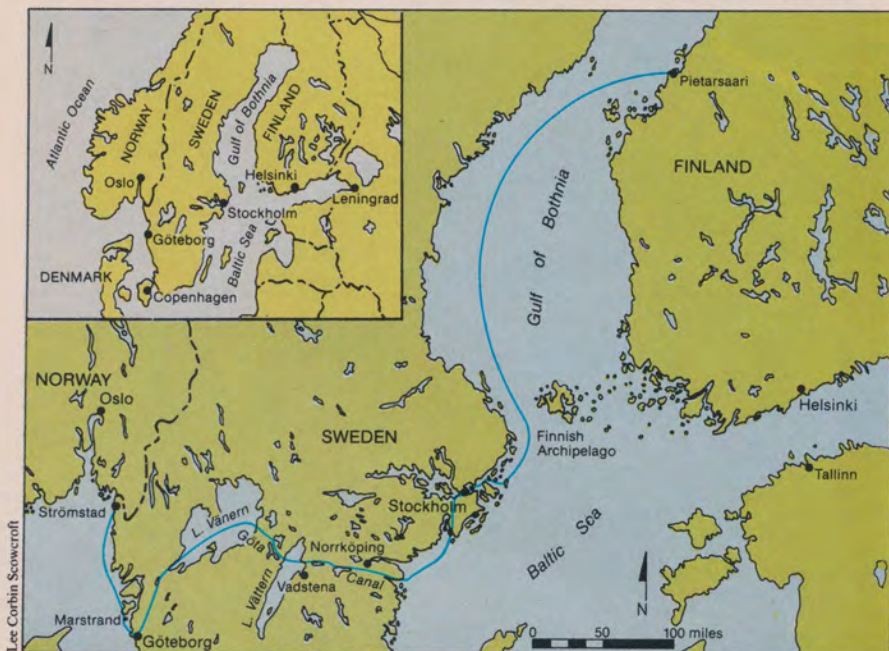
the yard would be like. Judging from the workmanship of our former *Dove*, a Swan 43, I had imagined an old-world boatyard with elderly craftsmen painstakingly fitting and forming joinery. To my surprise the yard more resembled a factory than a craft shop, with component parts stacked up and hulls moving along an assembly line. Nautor even had a pool to test each yacht's watertight integrity, because most hulls were shipped rather than sailed to their owners.

This meant that *Dove* was one of only a few boats being commissioned at the yard's remote dock, and we soon learned that the complexity of

finishing the detail work is compounded once a boat leaves the factory. Yet chores such as installing our headstay system out in the crisp spring air seemed to enhance our anticipation of the first sail. Often, we found ourselves working late into the night as we waited for darkness to signal dinner time. This usually meant eating at around midnight since that was the time that the sun went briefly below the horizon. New gel coat on the coamings reflected the orange glow of night while we readied *Dove* for the 5,000 miles she would encounter before reaching her new home, in New York's Manhasset Bay.

Dove's crew on the leg to Stockholm was my dad, Stu Greene, a friend, John, and myself. Considering that sailing through the night with only three aboard might be pushing it—with a new boat in icy, unfamiliar waters—we gambled nonetheless. But most of our sailing turned out to be downwind, which kept the work and the wind chill factor to a minimum. The Gulf of Bothnia offered a terrific sense of loneliness under its grey cover. In the absence of shorelights or traffic, the sun became our closest companion in its circular sweep of the horizon. We sailed in daylight for three days, which greatly reduced the hazards of navigation and an unfamiliar deck layout.

In order to get one good night's sleep we made a landfall in a calm bay on the basis of our dead reckoning and Omega position. (We had been stay-





With John at the helm, Dove has her first chance at windward work on the smooth waters of Lake Vättern.

ing close to the Swedish shore on the way down figuring that if we got lost, we wouldn't end up in the U.S.S.R.) The harbor we found was uninhabited and it might not even have been the one we picked on the chart. There was no problem running aground, however, as the bay was so deep we had to tie a line to a tree on shore and drop the plow about three boatlengths away. We were all able to sleep while the boat sat square to the current.

Light air forced us to motor much of the remaining distance south. As we approached the odd-shaped light tower off Stockholm, our diesel sputtered dry. We were apparently fitted with too small a prop, and it almost doubled our fuel consumption. Cautiously, we made our way under sail through the archipelago to Sandhamn. After our attempts to bleed the engine



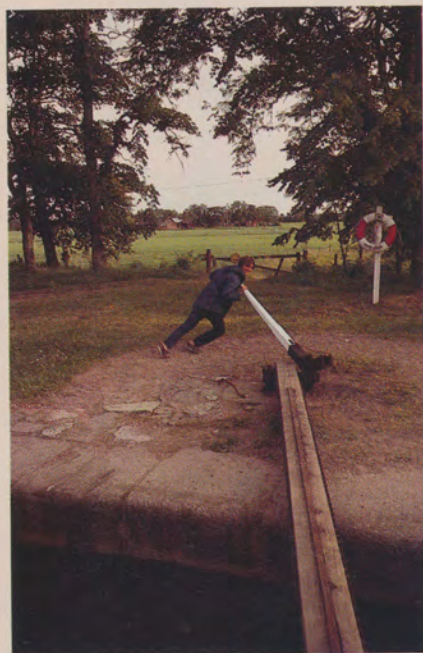
Photographs by the author

An oft-painted skiff reflects Finnish boatbuilding pride.



On midsummer evenings, Finland's night sky remains aglow.

Before *Dove* was delivered across the Atlantic, to enter the ocean-racing sweepstakes in her home waters near New York, she was given a grand cruise through Scandinavia's seas and canals.



Self-tended locks take muscle.



Stu Greene oversees Dove's descent.



failed, we went in search of a Volvo repairman, which was harder than one might think, despite being in Sweden. This gave us time to gaze at the armada arriving for a race that weekend.

John went to visit a friend in Stockholm, so I was left to convince my dad that we should join the race anyway with a crew of two. We started unofficially behind the fleet, but soon sailed up to the leaders in the first light-air beat. Then we set the spinnaker and pulled into the lead. But when we noted that the only way to get into the harbor was to cross the finish line, we intentionally missed the last mark to avoid being counted as a finisher. This created an uproar among the Swedes, who shouted instructions in their native tongue. The confusion was all settled afterwards at the club in the fine Swedish tradition of Aquavit.



A typical Göta lock, one of 64 on the canal, opens into the wider waterway.



As the canal twists through verdant Swedish countryside, Dove shares the waterway with other private pleasure craft.



The first gathering of the Greene clan in Dove's sunlit cockpit.

We had arranged to rendezvous with the rest of my family in Stockholm. Leaving the remote island of Sandhamn, our course wound inland amid a dense array of rocky islands. The mile-long Djurgardens canal that brought us to the city center was striking with its sweep of groomed lawns and colorful summer houses along the shoreline. Entering the city at twilight, we felt overwhelmed by electric scenery in the urban waterway. We were able to bring the boat right inside the city and tie up alongside a quay that bordered on a park and a busy intersection. The location was unexpectedly convenient to Stockholm's cultural and business activities.

By now it was June, and time to decide how we would spend the next 10 weeks getting to the Canary Islands, our departure point for the Atlantic



Modern craft lie along the moat of a 14th-century castle in Vadstena.

crossing. We took out our large planning map, which happened to be the dime store variety, and examined various routes. Sailing south through the Baltic Sea would save us considerable time, but the intrigue of crossing Sweden via the Göta Canal made us elect this more scenic route.

The Göta (pronounced Utta) Canal traverses Sweden from south of Stockholm, west to Göteborg via lakes Vättern and Vänern in the interior. The present waterway has been in existence for a century and a half, but efforts to cut a trans-Sweden canal date back to the early 1500s. In those days the Danes could easily control the approaches to the Baltic, effectively cutting off Stockholm's trade with the world. The strategic value of the canal, therefore, provided the impetus for engineers to conquer waterfalls and link existing bodies of water to create an alternate shipping route. As a result, one sixth of the 345-mile waterway is manmade.

The 64 locks are mostly manually operated, oftentimes by the user. We had to travel on the waterway by daylight only, so we were usually limited to a few locks each day. The lock-keepers lunch hour would also halt traffic, which made keeping to a schedule difficult.

Dove was the first of a handful of American boats to pass through the canal that year, and this made us quite popular. Because Swedes are taught

English as a second language, we were able to communicate with many of the younger people. They had very loyal feelings for their country, particularly as Bjorn Börg was in the headlines every day. The countryside was also emotionally charged for the upcoming Midsummer's Eve ceremony celebrating the year's longest day. Each town had its own festivities that included dancing around a maypole.

During their brief summer Swedes take full advantage of the sun and are quite comfortable sunbathing and swimming; we, on the other hand,

huddled in sweaters. Though the towns and waterways were bustling during the day, the Swedish nightlife seemed rather subdued, with the exception of Stockholm. There apparently is a strong sense of family homelife that overshadows the life in pubs and other gathering places.

Dove's pace across the country was somewhere in between those of the pedestrians and cyclists who paralleled our route. The small wooden footbridges and many of the older sluice gates exemplified Sweden's deep roots in engineering and design. Indeed, the canal itself was an ambitious project, which became particularly evident when at one point we motored over a freeway of speeding traffic.

After passing a series of six locks that consumed most of our seventh day on the canal, we finally reached the open water of Lake Vättern; but the disappointing lack of wind meant keeping the main furled as we chugged towards the town of Vadstena. The majestic beauty of its Gothic architecture was set off by a long midsummer's sunset. We eased *Dove* along the harbor's breakwater into a slip located in a castle moat. The paradoxical blend of aluminum spars and stone structures reflected the people's equal dedication to the past and the advance of modern life.

After leaving Vadstena we were finally able to sail. The boat moved powerfully under the force of the cold breeze, and the lake offered the per-



One of the non-navigable waterways cutting through the heart of Helsinki.



A weekend regatta of small boats in the harbor of Fiskebäckskel, distinctive by its landmark church spire.

fect opportunity for us to get some tacking out of our systems.

The waterway next connected to the smaller Lake Viken. This was a sort of halfway point, located at the maximum elevation of the canal. We began descending from our 300-foot climb as we worked our way between the remaining sluice gates.

Motoring became quite routine, with the waterways well marked and widening. Approaching Göteborg, the traffic increased in size and density, and we became a less significant element, in the flow of larger shipping. The overcast skies produced a cold breeze that blasted the steel structures in the harbor, echoing its industrial

Eric Greene, photographer and ocean racer, now does his sailing in the state of Washington.

nature. We stayed in Göteborg just long enough to receive a shipment of forwarded spare parts, then moved on.

Sweden's west coast also has a beautiful archipelago that provides protected coastline cruising. We sailed to Marstrand among thousands of daysailers crowding the channels. The high per-capita boat ownership in Sweden was quite obvious in these busy passageways.

Our stay in Marstrand was extended by bad weather, which gave us a chance to appreciate the harbor and watch the Six-Meter worlds getting underway. The storm that kept us harbor-bound was also responsible for several Six-Meter dismastings. The pattern eventually gave way to a high pressure system that followed us up the coast to Norway. We found the ports on the west coast to be more

beautiful examples of an early maritime society.

Sailing north toward Norway may have seemed counterproductive to our effort to get the boat south, but it was worth the detour. Still, with the short summer calendar in mind, we left Sweden on a warm morning and passed close to a glorious ketch, *Gratia*, allowing us one last look at the warm faces of Sweden.

During our five-week stay in Sweden *Dove* was berthed in 30 different towns across the country, including the cities of Stockholm and Göteborg. The only other way to have had such a close glimpse of the entire country and its people would have been on a walking tour. Even so, our accommodations could never have matched the ease and comfort of our moving summer home, *Dove*. □