

Tillie Sulz's Trip by Ingrid Pottkamper

On August 1st 2010, Hans and I arrived in Neepawa, Manitoba with our 5th wheel trailer, ready for our trip to Wetaskiwin, Alberta with Mom, Matilda (Norberg) Sulz, for the 80th Jubilee of her arrival in Canada from Sweden. All together there were 17 families, with 77 people who arrived in Wetaskiwin in May 1930, in two separate groups. My Mom and her family were among the second group to arrive, 2 weeks after the first group.

My Grandparents were sponsored by my Grandmother's older sister Maria, who had married my Grandfather's oldest brother and come to Canada early in the century. A widow, Maria needed help to farm her land in the Coronation area, since her husband's death in 1919; and my Grand-parents thought it was a wonderful opportunity to start fresh in a new country. However, little did they realize how much more advanced the farms were in Sweden, where Grandpa Norberg worked, than compared to Canada!!!

On August 3rd, we left Brandon and headed west. We stopped at the Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park Visitors Centre, and walked around the old Goodwin House. Then we continued north to Kindersley where we spent the night.

Mom had no trouble getting used to her bunk bed in the trailer and quite enjoyed being waited on for meals!!



Next morning we continued west into Alberta, and stopped at Coronation, Alberta to try to locate the farm where Mom had lived for nearly a year! Unfortunately, the records were packed up for an office move and there was no way to get this information. Instead, we found the old creamery building near the railway tracks, where my Great-Aunt and Grandparents had taken the cream to be sold, those many years ago! Mom found this quite amazing as she had travelled here with her father several times; but still wished we could have found the farm!

We then continued on to Wetaskiwin and settled in at our trailer park. That evening, after dinner we found the train station where all those Swedes had disembarked those 80+ years ago! Mom just couldn't believe she was at the same spot that she'd been at 80 years before, as a 12 year old girl!



The next day, we visited the Reynolds-Alberta Museum! It's an amazing museum which we thoroughly enjoyed, and Mom just couldn't believe all the old tractors and threshing machines she saw. She was constantly pointing at the machines she recognized from those many years ago!! We even had a ride in a very old model car which she remembers her brother having had one similar!!

On Friday before the celebrations, we decided to drive out to Svea church and cemetery, where we took some quiet time to look around, and found Mom's Uncle Matias' grave. He was Maria's husband who died at age 39. Mom was really pleased to see it – something she heard about many times, and now finally saw with her own eyes!



From here, we visited the Ukrainian Village just east of Edmonton. It was a lovely day for a drive, and very interesting with its churches, school, stores and farmhouse! We saw hay being loaded on a horse-drawn wagon by hand, and inside the farmhouse were a number of kitchen items which Mom remembers her mother using: a hand cream separator, a wooden dough kneading bin to name a few!

Saturday started with a visit to the Wetaskiwin Museum which has a lovely display of Swedish and Ukrainian items donated by local families. We met up with a number of people whom Mom knew from Meadows, and also several from Sweden. She was very excited! After lunch, we went back to the trailer to let Mom rest before getting ready for the Jubilee dinner. As she rested and knitted in the trailer, Hans and I took some time to watch some of the air show.



Figure 1 Mom with Gerry & Mari-Jane Norberg and Anne-Marie Dabarius (Buskas)

That evening, we arrived at the hall for visiting and dinner. It was lovely for Mom to meet Sig Buskas and learn that Maria Norberg had been instrumental in raising him!! Maria was a widow with little or no income so after his mother had died, Maria worked as a housekeeper until Sig's father remarried!! It was extremely interesting to have discovered this tidbit of information which we had never known before!! Mom very much enjoyed talking with Nils Buskas also, as well as reconnecting with her long-lost girlfriend from Meadows days – Ellen Mykle who moved to BC when she married!



Figure 2 Mom with Carol, Alma and Lennea Malmas

We were also pleasantly surprised with the unexpected arrival of my cousin Gerry Norberg and his wife Mari-Jane who were on their way to BC for an anniversary holiday! Then we also met up again with the Buskas family from Sweden who were in Canada tracing their Mother's roots – it so happened that my Mom was their Mom's God-mother!! We also saw '3 Malmas girls' from meadows, whose mother had been a good friend to Mom after she lost her own Mother so early!



Figure 3 Nels, Buskas, Seig Buskas, Nels Hoas, Tillie Sulz, Viktor Norberg, Ellen Mykle

Then, being part of the "We Were There" group from Gammalsvenskby, was such a pleasure for her also.

On Sunday, worshipping at the Svea Church, where all the Alberta Swedes worshipped all of these years, was a tremendous experience for Mom also!! Even the weather co-operated! The time spent at the cemetery after lunch, went so quickly; time for more group pictures by the cairn and then some quick goodbyes from close friends on their way home, and not enough time for other goodbyes.

We left on Monday August 9th and by dinnertime on Tuesday Mom was safely back at the retirement home in Neepawa with a lot of stories about her experiences – so I was told much later!!!

Mom felt very honoured to have been able to have been a part of these Jubilee celebrations, and being recognized as the oldest person in attendance was a surprise for her! She enjoyed seeing and talking with so many people! It was a wonderful trip, and I'm so glad we were able to do this for her! I know she kept saying how amazed she was that she had been able to take the trip at her age – nearly 92!!



Mom passed away November 14th, and her younger brother Victor followed her on November 16th! They are both at peace and I feel very sure they have reconnected with all those Swedes who have gone before them!

**Figure 4 Mom with her girlfriend
from Meadows, Ellen Mykle**