

Years ago, I thought that if I couldn't live here on Coe Creek, on the homestead settled by my great-grandparents, I would like to live in Norway. In spite of my Swedish heritage, somehow, that country to the west of Sweden held a fascination for me. It might have been reading about the heroism of the Norwegian patriots during the German occupation in World War II, or it might have been the pictures of the fjords and mountains. I don't really know the reason.

Then, the first time I visited Scandinavia, on the way home I flew over Norway—over the Vidda, that harsh plain in the interior of the country. That looked like a demanding, yet intriguing landscape. And, on my time in the border country of Sweden, I had a chance to meet some Norwegian relatives, cousins of my dad. Their mother and my grandfather were siblings, and she had moved across the border after marrying her Norwegian husband. So, there were always those connections.

So, although I felt very deeply the relationship I had with my Swedish background, I had a little nostalgic-like wish that there was a bit more connection to that country between Sweden and the North Sea.

On one of our trips to Scandinavia, we were fortunate to have a chance to visit friends in the northern part of Norway, seeing that beautiful sheep farm in the mountains. We spent several hours on the shore of the North Sea on a chilly, rainy, windy October afternoon. I loved that day.

Recently, we indulged our curiosity and sent our DNA samples to one of the companies that tests saliva and determines the participant's background. We got our results a few days ago. Over forty percent of my heritage is Norwegian.

Now, I need not be ashamed of saying *tyttebaer* instead of *lingon*, *molter* instead of *hjordron*, or *bestemor* instead of *mormor*. And when I put my glasses in their case, the easier word is *brillehus* instead of the long and awkward Swedish *glasögonfodral*. I will continue to bake *lefser* as well as *rågakakor*, the *krumkaker* don't have to change their name to *strutar*, and if I hit the wrong key and make an ø instead of an ö, I won't bother to change it.

This does not mean that I am abandoning my Swedish heritage or the language I have worked hard to acquire. On the contrary, this revelation in regard to my genetic makeup makes the Scandinavian background I have richer and more diverse.

And, it also brings me into a closer connection to Runo, for his DNA analysis showed that he was more Norwegian than Swedish—over 50% of his heritage came from across the border from where he grew up. Along with a high percentage of Swedish and a little Finnish, it is no wonder that—as a young man—he had sandy hair and a red beard. My second most prominent ethnic heritage was Swedish, but I also have a quarter of my makeup from Germany, the homeland of my mother's father's family. A bit of Irish is also in the mix.

All of this is nothing more than a curiosity. We are all humans—and if we go far enough back, we came from a valley in Africa. We are related to each other in the most meaningful ways, regardless of ethnic background, race,

language, national citizenship, or “legal status.” It makes the Wall a little ridiculous, doesn’t it?