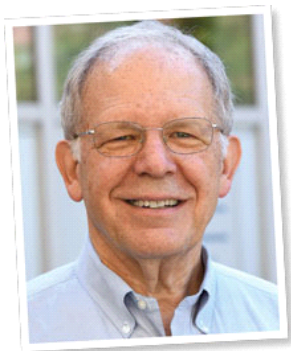


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Thoughts for This Thanksgiving

Bill McCurry



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This is a time to reflect on what we should be thankful for and what to share with others. This year, I ask you to let me share what I learned this past summer when I enjoyed a few weeks in Norway. It was a surprising and amazing wake-up call I won't forget.

We think we know a lot until, through travel and conversation, we expose ourselves to new ideas and places, which uncover facts we hadn't learned, or more important, we were misinformed about.

Here's what I learned:

Norway borders the Atlantic Ocean. We tend to picture Norway as a north-south country running up and down like neighbors Sweden and Finland. Wrong!

The town of Kirkenes is further east than Istanbul, which is at the edge of the Asian continent. On the map you see Norway curves over the top of both Sweden and Finland in a big bear hug before going south between Finland and Russia.

Kirkenes was the first town liberated in WWII. It was the most bombed mainland European city and totally burned to the ground.

The Nazis had a heavy water plant in southern Norway to build atomic weapons. Nine Norwegian Resistance fighters sabotaged it. (There are a number of streaming videos based on this raid. I recommend "The Heroes of Telemark.")

The Nazis invaded Denmark and Norway the same day. Denmark surrendered that afternoon. Norway never did surrender. Their Resistance fighters continued to battle even in exile.

Based on percentage of GDP committed, Norway is Ukraine's biggest supporter against the Russian invasion. The BBC reports the U.S. "only" contributes 0.33% of GDP to Ukraine, while Norway contributes a staggering 1.71% of GDP, more than six times the U.S. investment. The Norwegians I spoke with support this because they're still aware of how Germany attempted to run over their country. They're astute students of history and have learned you can't appease a bully.

The biggest "adjustment" I had to make was the impact this small country had on World War II. Their attacks on German naval targets are underappreciated by most of us. There was comparatively minimal involvement of U.S.

forces in the far North Atlantic, resulting in minimal U.S. news coverage or historical reporting.

The point of this “historical trivia” is to share the obvious, but often overlooked, fact that our personal knowledge is a focus of where we get our news and who did or didn’t teach us world history. Once we “learn something,” we assume it to be true and reject any conflicting information. That’s dangerous to both individuals and society as a whole.

This danger comes to us in both our work and private lives. For instance, you likely know when a pesticide regulation changes you have to keep up with it. If since 1970 your garden center’s leadership ignored OSHA and has never been compliant, it can be hard when an unexpected inspection hits and you suddenly realize your knowledge was dead wrong and your ignorance is costly and damaging. This isn’t to criticize OSHA, but to point out when reality forces us to change our wrong/inaccurate, preconceived, long-held attitudes, it’s very challenging—and inconvenient.

Many Norwegians went out of their way to thank Americans for our economic support after WWII. They appreciate our leadership and want it to continue. As a smaller country, they realize they must align themselves with those who have similar values.

So, in this Thanksgiving season, let’s reflect on and be thankful for all we have in the U.S. where, despite our faults, thousands of immigrants face death to share it with us. Let’s remember our obligation to vote intelligently. And let’s commit to doing our part to make our country even better in the year ahead. **GP**

Bill would love to hear from you with questions, comments or ideas for future columns. Please contact him at wmccurry@mccurryassoc.com or (609) 731-8389.