

My Half-Norwegian Family

On December 6, 2018, the Parliament of Norway passed a new law to allow dual citizenship for certain group of people. According that new law, three members of my six-member family will be life-time Norwegian citizens.

The story started with a unexpected event. In Summer 1999, my son Winston, then a senior vice president of a software company, took a two-week vacation in Lofoten Islands. Kristin Botnen, a Norwegian teacher, was helping her friend to manage a hotel in Lofoten. On the first sight, they fell in love with each other. Kristin was born in Kobe and lived there till 3 years old, see Figure 1, when her father was a Minister in the Norwegian Seaman's Church in Japan. Her preference to oriental culture and people is understandable. After a year of email exchanges, Winston invited her to tour the US and to visit my family. Winston presented her a \$6000 Tiffany diamond ring, similar to that presented to Madonna. In 2001, a wedding ceremony took place in Oslo.



Photos of Kristin Botnen at age 1 and age 3, taken in Kobe, Japan, circa 1975.

In 2001, I was a technical lead of IBM's worldwide speech synthesis technology. Norwegian is one of my fields. I prepared part of my father-of-the-groom speech in Norwegian. Local people said that although some pronunciations are not accurate, it is fully understandable. I said that I am totally confident of the marriage, because of the similarity of Norwegian culture and Chinese culture. In most Western languages, the word grandma means both mom of mom and mom of dad. The word grandpa means both dad of mom and dad of dad. In Norwegian, there are four different words: farfar, farmor, morfar, and mormor, similar to those in Chinese. Family value is highly honored on both cultures. Family ties are very strong in both cultures.



In 2005, our first grandchild Marcus was born. In the above Photo, it is clear that the words in Norwegian are much better than English or German. Less than two years afterwards, our second grandchild Nora was born, see the Photo below, taken in 2014.





Marcus and Nora are good juvenile athletes.



Nora's sweater was knit by her mormor.

The 2008 financial crisis hinted that the U.S. might not be the best place to live forever. A Plan B to move to Norway emerged. In Summer 2011, my son made a bold decision to resign the position as the Chief Strategist of a mid-sized software company, to live in a remote Norwegian town Rødøy for a full year to serve three purposes. First, to establish a new software company specialized in speech technology. Second, to resume Kristin's teaching career. Third, to put Marcus and Nora in a Norwegian primary school to learn Norwegian language.

Their plan was proven to be a complete success. In Fall 2012, Winston established a software company. The first product Voice Dream Reader, an app for Apple devices, was a huge success. See the entry of Voice Dream in Google. Kristin recovered her job in Boston as a school teacher. According to the current law, Marcus and Nora have dual citizenship at birth. At age 22, they have to decide whether to take U.S. or Norwegian citizenship. On Dec. 6, 2018, the Norwegian parliament passed a new legislation to allow them to have life-time dual citizenship if they live in Norway for more than two years at 22 years old. Both are already qualified. Therefore, any time they can move to Norway. If this happens, I may apply for a position of Visiting Professor at the Norges Teknisknaturvitenskapelige Universitat. In July 2004, when I was a visiting professor at Hamburg University, I visited Stavanger and neighboring areas, and a tour inside the Tonstad Hydropower Station. The knowledge about Norway's hydroelectric power stations as energy storage devices is included in my lecture series and textbook Physics of Solar Energy.



Education is a national priority in Norway, it is free for all citizens including higher education. The Stavanger Agriculture Museum is also a local educational institution.



More than 98% of electricity in Norway is generated by hydropower. The Tonstad Hydropower station is actually an energy storage device for Denmark, who heavily depends on wind power.