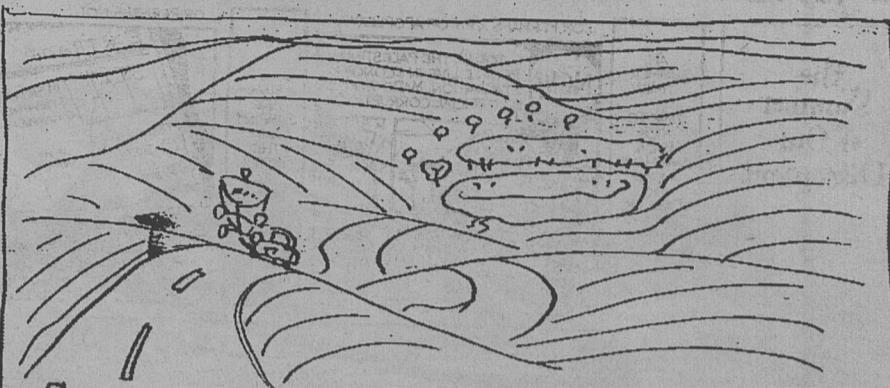
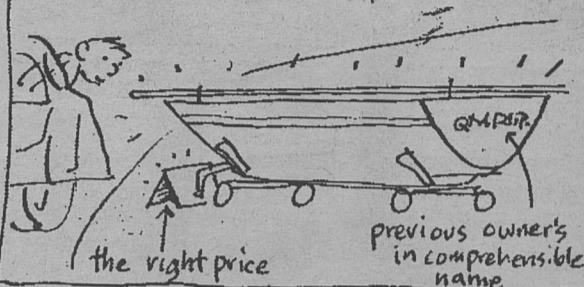


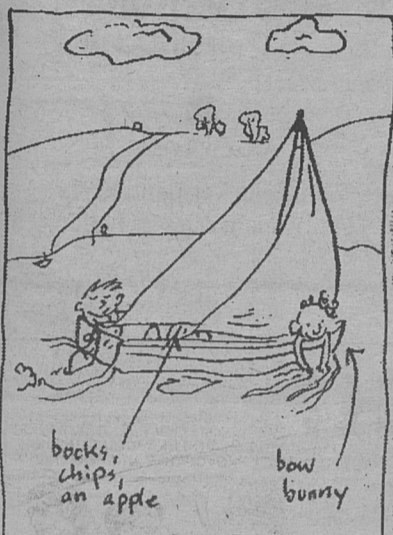
Green Landers

Messing About
in Boats

We had bought snowshoes, skates and skis when we moved to Vermont. Then we saw the boat.



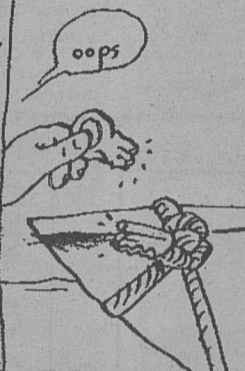
At first it was fun. We trucked it all over, to check out the lakes & ponds...



Until one day at the boat access, a rope got knotted. I had the bright idea to use a key

just to loosen it....

5 seconds later

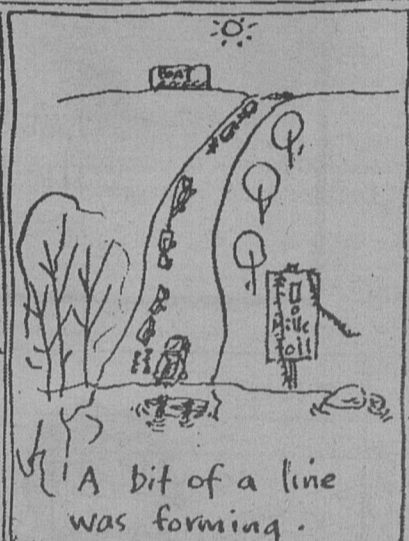


Tell me that wasn't the key to the truck

...Um



trailer sinking forgotten into the silt



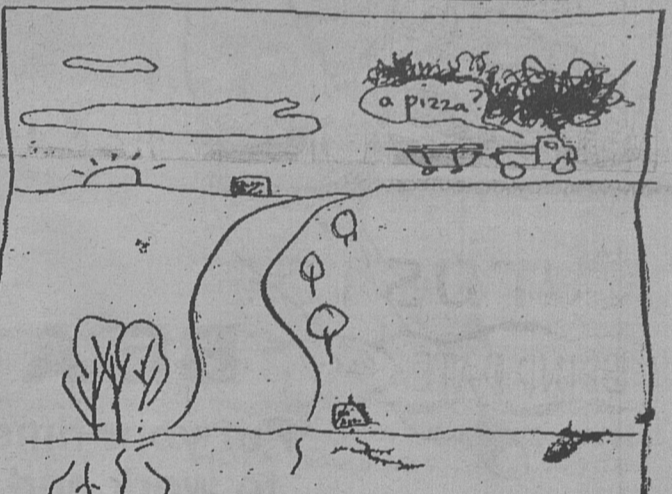
1/2 hour later 13 guys had moved the truck out of the way.



huge fare will use travelling time to stew

2 hours to go home by cab for the extra key.

So do you want to go for a sail?



Scandinavia

continued from page 11

ly more dramatic as we approached Norway, and the pass at the border is a glacier-scoured, boulder-strewn area pockmarked with small lakes and surrounded by snowy mountains and dramatic waterfalls. We found the border crossing deserted and just drove straight through.

Our first fjord sighting came when the road began following a long steep-sided lake and we realized that the "lake" was actually the ocean. For the next 140 miles, the road wound through the mountains and fjords of the mainland and then the mountains, fjords, and bridges of the Vesterålen Islands. Our destination, the Lofoten Islands, is at the end of the archipelago and is accessible only by ferry or plane.

We spent the "night" (and we use that word loosely) at the Rainbow Vestfjord Hotel in Svolvær. We'd picked the hotel out of a list, and how could we pass up the rainbow reference? (It's actually a chain, so you can stay in Rainbow Hotels all over Norway.) Little did we know the hotel was actually on the docks, and we could hear workers unloading

fish on the docks 24 hours a day. We spent some time sightseeing (which you can do even at midnight) before falling into bed.

The next day we toured a Viking archaeology site and continued on the E-10. Fishing is a major industry in Lofoten, and nearly every harbor town has huge wooden racks covered in cod drying in the 24-hour sunlight. The racks were a mixture of function and art, with their odd angles straining towards the sun to soak up the warmth and store it for the cold months to come. We tried to imagine what the winter would be like, when it is dark for two months at a time, and everything is frozen.

The scenery continued to get more and more dramatic and, as if to add emphasis, the road got narrower and narrower until it finally ended in the town of Å, the last car-accessible village in the chain of islands. (Å, appropriately enough, is the last letter of the Norwegian alphabet.) Peaks on the islands rise over 3000 feet from sea level, almost straight up in many cases. Many of the fishing villages are built on a combination of piers and skerries (small rocky islets) in the harbors because there isn't enough flat on the main islands.

Words fail us in trying to explain the sheer magnitude and ruggedness of these islands. Although the town of Å turned out to be quite nice, the crowning jewel of the islands is actually the nearby town of Reine with its steep mountains and quaint village houses with green and red roofs shining in the sun. It was jaw-droppingly beautiful.

Biking, Vikings and Big City Life

Reluctantly, we drove back to Kiruna thinking that the mainland scenery, which we had thought so dramatic just a few days before, was now merely scenic. We caught an overnight train to Uppsala, a thriving university town an hour north of Stockholm. One of our first surprises in Uppsala was the number of bicycles — there must have been hundreds parked outside the train station. A tribute to the low crime even in cities, many of them weren't even locked!

Visiting Uppsala (because Stockholm's hotels were booked solid) was something of a happy accident, since Uppsala is the home of Carl Linnaeus, a famous botanist who created the genus-species Latin naming system that we still use

today. We toured gardens that were part of the university's grounds, and also visited Linnaeus' own gardens and home. The old part of Uppsala, Gamla Uppsala, has three huge Viking burial mounds and a fabulous new historical museum.

The last day of our trip found us in Stockholm. We were prepared to be disappointed after having been in the exotic northern wilderness, but Stockholm was amazingly beautiful and engaging. Built on a series of islands and connected by bridges and ferries, it feels unhurried, clean, safe and efficient. In Stockholm we found a nice balance of traditional tourist fare (the Royal Palace, the Vasa Museum, and Gamla Stan) and our own interests (an aquarium, the Postal Museum, and the Royal Coin Cabinet). Like many big cities, Stockholm seems to have something for everyone. Stockholm does have a vibrant gay population, and their pride parade is held every year in early August (see www.stockholmpride.org).

Ready to Return

Sweden and Norway are very gay friendly, and travel is easy and efficient (getting a rental car is really easy in Kiruna!). The language barrier

is not great, as nearly everyone speaks excellent English — though most signs and some museum displays are only in Swedish or Norwegian. Though Scandinavia has a reputation for being expensive, the current favorable exchange rate made most prices very similar to visiting cities in the US. Exceptions include gasoline (\$4-5/gallon) and alcohol, which are both heavily taxed. Restaurant meals can also be very expensive, but pizza, sandwiches, and fast food are reasonably priced.

Ultimately, we came away with an increased appreciation for the unspoiled wilderness that is available to us here in the US. We also have a renewed sense of urgency about pushing legislation forward to gain equal family rights for gay and lesbian couples. Increasing numbers of European countries are recognizing the value of all families by offering equal protection under the law, and the US continues to shuffle its feet. What is possible there must be possible here. ▼

Elizabeth Hane lives in Underhill Center. Stina Bridgman lives in exile in Earlville, NY where Elizabeth will be joining her next month.