

My Dearest Daughter,

Life happens so swiftly that one scarcely realizes the twilight years have already arrived. I often reflect on everything that has happened in my lifetime, and what I have learned from both the good and the bad. Life's lessons can be hard, but the wisdom earned is priceless.

I remember the excitement when my Father, your Grandfather, told us we were leaving for America. So much to do to be ready! Clothes to be made, food to be grown and prepared for travel, decisions on what to take with us, tears over what had to be left behind. It took almost a year, I believe, for us to be ready to travel. When the day came for us to leave, I don't think I will ever forget my mother sobbing in her mother's arms. My mother was not one to display emotion, so this was most unusual. It took many years for me to realize that this would be the last hug from mother to daughter for their lifetime. It moves me to tears now, thinking of it. But I learned from this that strength grows stronger in those moments when you keep moving forward even when you think you can not possibly go on. My Daughter, you are strong because of the challenges you face each day.

The journey to our new home dims in my memory, I'm afraid. I do remember feeling as if all of eternity was spent on that ship. I was so discouraged when we left the ship and realized that we still had days and days of travel to endure.

Eventually, though, we arrived here in Coon Valley and we were home at last. Looking back at that time, I believe I learned that all hard things are simply a journey to something far better. Making the best of all situations makes it a bit easier to get through, I think. My Daughter, life is indeed a journey filled with joys and hardships. Make the best of each day and you'll have more joy than hardships.

As excited as I was to finally reach our new home, it took less than a moment to realize all that needed to be done. There simply wasn't anything here! I know you have heard the stories of that time, as they have been told over and over again by your grandparents, your father and I. I will simply say that even the simplest of tasks accomplished with ease in Norway took so much time and effort in this new place. It seemed just living each day was exhausting! But we worked hard and we created ways to make things easier. We had so very little in those early years, with no means to replace what broke or wore out. We learned to take extraordinary care of every tool, every piece of clothing, every morsel of food. We may have had

very little, but we had everything we needed. My Daughter, it is not having much that is so important. Doing the most you can with what you do have is what makes the difference in this life.

As I reminisce, I realize that I learned from all that hard work. We all did. We learned to solve problems. If hauling water constantly made chores difficult, we could build pumps to help us pump water from the creek instead. If we didn't have paints to make things beautiful, we could use the flowers from the fields around us to make our own paints. You remember doing that with me, don't you? My Daughter, there is always a solution for every problem. You just have to look for it! Do not waste time worrying, but instead find a way to do something about it. Learn from it, adjust to it, be strong, work together; you will always find a solution!

My goodness but this letter has become long, has it not? All this reminiscing started when you asked me why Grandfather brought us here all those years ago. I suppose he had a bit of what they called "America fever." Truly, I believe he saw a chance to build a better life for his family here than he would have been able to in Norway. As your life continues, continue to learn. Learn how to take care of this land, as every single life on earth is dependent on healthy land and water. Learn from our past and the history of our community so that mistakes of the past are not repeated. This will help your future to grow brighter and better than your Grandfather ever dreamed possible. Learn to tell the stories of our family's history, so that it's not forgotten but becomes part of the tapestry that is life itself.

It grows late, and tomorrow brings much to accomplish. Good night, my Dearest Daughter.

Your loving mother,
Anne Engum-Haugen