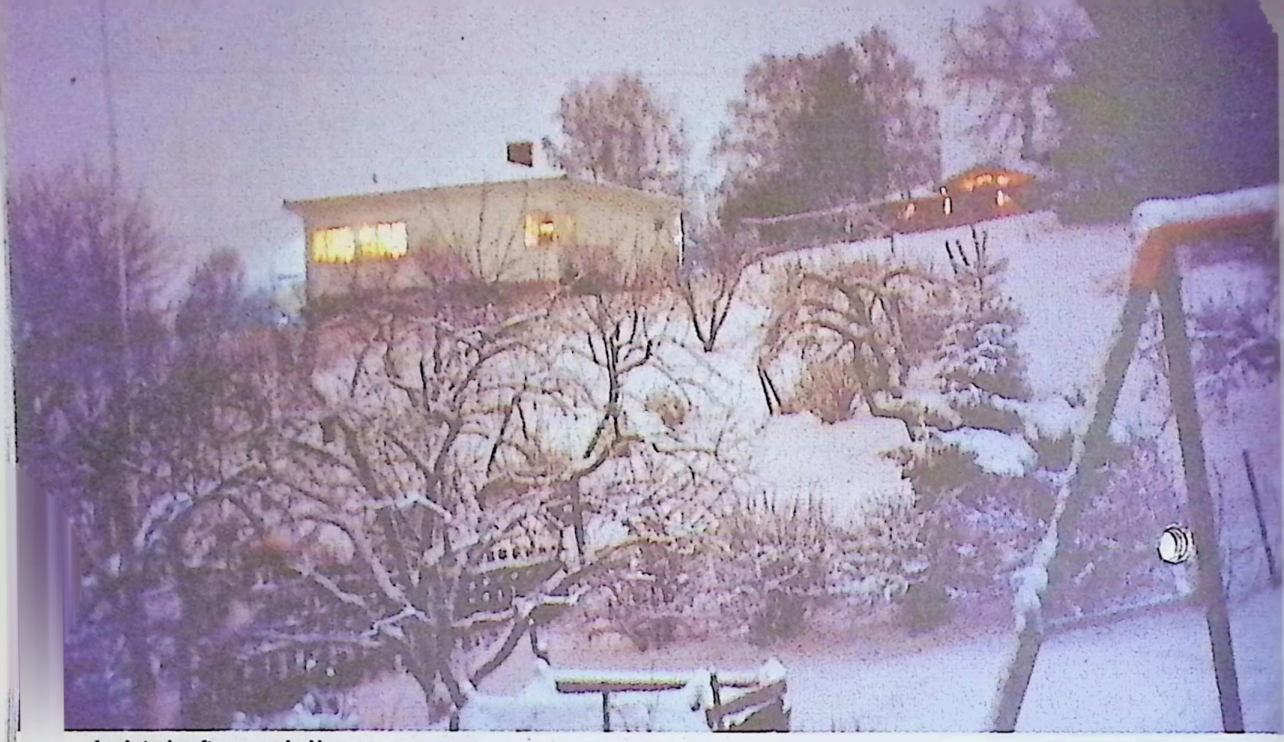


A winter's afternoon in Norway.



My new home in Raelingen sat midway up a small hill at a swing in the road.



The winter's Nitelv River. Follow the footprints...

one or a few ceiling bulbs that cast undeniable light across the breadth of space and in Hatiya, I would see later, kerosene lamps and candles held ground from their being no other option. But in Norway each room had numerous light sources. There were lamps with metal skeletons that could be bent in strained configurations for reading or sewing, table and free standing lamps in classical or modern design, of ceramic, copper or glass, and candles, regularly lit, on shelves, tables and windowsills. On the ceilings as often as not were no lights at all. My Australian father was forever telling us to turn off lights as we left each room, to conserve electricity. It wasn't the environment he wished to save but the bill, and candles were out of the question save for blackouts since they would burn the house down when we forgot about them. In Norway nobody cared about either. 'It is dark in winter,' they said, 'We need light.'

The Norwegian way of light was initially annoying, absent of the convenience of a single switch, especially when looking for something in luggage for example; and because every lamp seemed to have its switch in a different place. But after a while I reconsidered. The grades of shadow from lamp to lamp, the meeting of light arcs and the flickering ceiling patterns of the candles were like people gathering, mimicking the changing shades and arrangements of life. Light in Norway was a continuous conversation. Outside, with the night sky turning a soft pink from the reflection of the snow, to such arrangements Norway gave a nod.

Snuggled under the doona on that first evening in Rælingen, on the fold down velvety couch that was my bed, I was ecstatic. Picturing a globe in my mind I was quite in awe I was now at the top of it. 'Norway,' I repeated to myself, 'I'm in Norway.' It was reassurance I really was.

To be continued...