

## **A Tribute to Tove Veierød**

### **Chair of UWC Red Cross Nordic**

I first met Tove in London in the offices of Heidrick and Struggles in April 2012 as she was leading the team commissioned to select a successor to John Lawrenson, the Rektor of RCN. I remember quite distinctly how she radiated immediate warmth and encouragement as I fielded some challenging questions from other members of the selection committee - present here this evening - about the perils of social media, cyber bullying and pornography.

Tove was someone I immediately felt that I could work with - and work for.

As some of you will know, Tove committed part of her professional career to politics and served Norway as a Labour politician, as state secretary to the Minister of Culture and Science, and later as Minister of Social Affairs. One of Tove's political legacies is the progressive and supportive legislation here in Norway towards paternity leave. She also made a significant impact on our region - Sogn og Fjordane - by introducing the first state-sponsored *vinmonopolet* which was met with equal amounts of delight and dismay from the local population.

However, her greatest legacy to our region has undoubtedly been her commitment to UWC Red Cross Nordic. Tove, by training, is a teacher and has a genuine and unstinting commitment to education - and she certainly understands the machinery and madness that comes with the territory of a residential campus and an educational model focused on deliberate diversity.

What strikes me most over the past five years of working together as Rektor and Chair of the Board is her indomitable spirit and inexhaustible energy - from transcontinental flights together to her contributions to the strategic working groups for both RCN and UWC International.

Tove even called me one morning from hospital. She had broken her leg late one evening after flying back into Oslo airport - post operation and with a morphine drip near at hand, Tove thought she should call me on a few college matters before the morphine took a full grip on her senses.

Tove also contributes wholeheartedly to UWC International and was elected to be the 'Chair of the Chairs' - chairperson of all the board chairs of all seventeen UWCs and member of the International Board. This election was testament to the esteem Tove is

held in by her peers within UWC - and with great skill and grace, Tove has steered her team to new levels of collaboration and shared understanding.

It was Tove's idea to bring the International Board members to the College in February 2016 so that they could connect with students and staff and see our College in its wintry landscape – and she was rewarded with fresh snow, blue skies, and a skiing expedition for the guests with the Knights at Langeland. Tove recognised the complex logistics that underpinned the success of the event but, for the organising team, it was worth it to see the pride emanating from Tove as she introduced her colleagues to a College steeped in Nordic values and traditions.

Jens Waltermann, Executive Director of UWC, describes Tove's contribution as follows:

'During her tenure as Chair of the Chairs Committee, Tove has fundamentally transformed the role and - maybe more importantly - the spirit of the Committee. The Chairs have become a group of people who know and respect each other and who explicitly wish to work closely together to strengthen the whole UWC movement! It was Tove's clear but subtle sense of leadership, her warmth and determination and her charming way of convincing people that made Chairs meetings not just productive, but joyful events. By doing so Tove has contributed enormously to the future of UWC and has made this organisation much closer and much stronger as a result. We cannot thank her enough. And we will dearly miss her in the Chair's role - but are happy she will remain part of the UWC family.'

My father taught his children the importance of a line from a Rudyard Kipling poem:

[To] 'walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch'

As a surgeon, he understood that this underpinned his professional life within a hospital environment - the ability to connect with fellow doctors, nurses, porters, administrators and, most importantly, patients and their families.

For me, Tove exemplifies this line from Kipling - she connects gracefully with the royal patrons of UWC - Queen Sonja of Norway and Queen Noor of Jordan - as an ambassador of our College and, at the same time, enjoys the opportunity to connect with students, teachers, alumni and many other supporters of RCN. When she is on campus, she takes the time to drop into the kantine to connect with the kitchen staff and, last summer, she generously agreed to come and participate in the first half of Staff Introduction Week. When we have receptions in our house for Board and Council members, Tove always

steps forward to help with the preparations and hosting - and the washing up at the end of the evening.

I admire Tove immensely for this ability to ‘walk with Kings [and Queens] - nor lose the common touch’.

There is simply no trace of ego to Tove.

She is always there for sage advice, a steady and gentle hand on the tiller of the College, and at the same time there is a steel to her which one should not underestimate.

She knows the potential of the College, the challenge and responsibility associated with deliberate diversity on campus and expects those around her to commit wholeheartedly to UWC values, the UWC mission, Nordic values, and the College's strategic plan. She has high expectations of us.

I remember well a conversation in lower kantine at the Council Meeting 2012 when she took me aside one morning as Rektor-elect - with Ingegerd, the Vice Chair of the Board present - and told me my first job as Rektor must be to examine (and change) the residential side of life at RCN – and improve the student experience.

And, at the same time, she understands the importance of home. She often calls me in the office on a Friday late afternoon, and asks me why I am not home with the family. Encouraging and timely emails appear on my screen. She genuinely cares for those who work with her.

It is for a Rektor to find the right balance between change and conservation, supported and challenged by an engaged Board (and Council). It has been an immense privilege to work alongside Tove as Chair of the RCN Board – at all times engaged, challenging and deeply supportive.

Tove has served two terms as Chair of the RCN board - six years of voluntary service and she stands down at the end of this academic term.

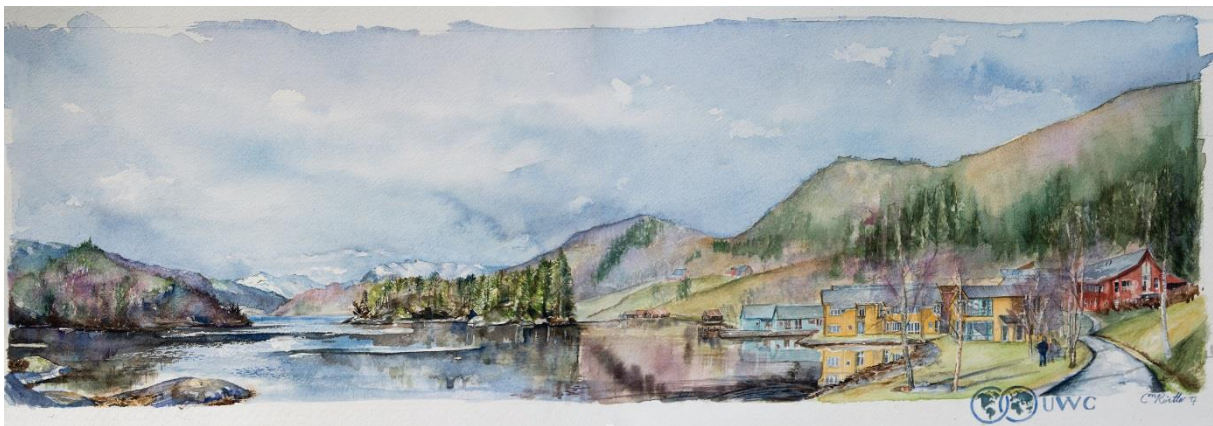
Time on Sunday 22nd May at the Board Meeting to draw your tenure, Tove, as Chair of RCN to a close - and time to pass on the gavel of responsibility to Kristin Vinje, your successor.

Time now for Tom, your children and grandchildren in Oslo, your house in Harstad, and the occasional mid-winter escape to Gran Canaria.

From New Mexico to Changshu China, from Mahindra to the Nordic countries, you have been a proud ambassador and champion of UWC and Red Cross Nordic.

And you have been a trusty servant and trusted custodian of this College.

Tove, I would like to invite you up in a minute to receive a gift - on behalf of the Council, the Board, the students and the staff - and presented by Tess, the outgoing Student Rep on the Board.



It is a watercolour painting of the fjord and our college that we have commissioned from a local artist. We hope that you will place it on a wall at home and that it serves as a proud reminder of what you have contributed to the architecture of the College, past, present and future.

I very much like the end of a poem called ‘The Cathedral Builder’ [John Ormond] in a which a medieval stonemason decides ‘to give it up, / To leave the spire to others’, reflects on the process, the trials and tribulations of contributing to the building of a cathedral stone by stone and quietly, looking upwards, whispers to himself, both modestly and with quiet pride, ‘I bloody did that’.

Chair. Educator. Listener. Supporter. Volunteer and Friend.

We shall miss you – I shall miss you.

Thank you.

Richard D A Lamont

Rektor

Council Dinner - Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April