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# In Denmark Born to Canada Sworn

*Edited by Birgit Flemming Larsen*

**In Denmark Born—To Canada Sworn  
Danish-Canadian Lives**

**UDVANDRERARKIVETS SKRIFTSSERIE  
UDVANDRERHISTORISKE STUDIER NR. 9**

**The Danish Emigration Archives Studies in Emigration History No. 9**

# **In Denmark Born—to Canada Sworn Danish-Canadian Lives**

*Edited by*

*Birgit Flemming Larsen*

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in collaboration with  
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## Preface

The Danish Society for Emigration History and The Danish Emigration Archives have great pleasure in presenting this book on the occasion of the 19th Danish Canadian Conference in 2000 in Aalborg, Denmark. The plan to publish the book originated at a meeting of the board of the Danish Society for Emigration History that took place at the Danish Emigration Archives in January 1999. The Society and the Archives wished to commemorate the 19th meeting of the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada and to direct attention to the fine work of the Federation, exemplified in the yearbooks that for so many years have contributed to an awareness of Danish-Canadian emigration history.

This book contains a selection of personal histories, all of which have previously appeared in one of the yearbooks published from 1985 to 1999. These biographies and autobiographies will give readers a look at the lives of Danes who have emigrated to Canada.

We wish to thank Federation president Rolf Buschardt Christensen for permission to make use of this material. Thanks are also due to Tove Klingemann, Aalborg, whose efforts in transcribing these pages made the book possible.

The introductory article *Movement under the Polar Star: Scandinavian Migration to Canada* is written by Harald Runblom, professor of history, Uppsala University, Sweden.

*Birgit Flemming Larsen*

# Movement under the Polar Star

## *Scandinavian Migration to Canada*

HARALD RUNBLOM

»Scandinavia« is the name of a community in southwestern Manitoba. It was founded in 1886 by a Danish businessman named Jens Hemmingsen, who had signed a logging contract with several townships near Otter Lake. Most inhabitants in Scandinavia were from northern Sweden, but some Norwegians also came to live there, and Hemmingsen became its postmaster. It was stipulated that only Scandinavians were allowed to settle in Scandinavia. The requests of Englishmen and Germans who wanted to settle there were turned down.<sup>1</sup> Another effort to stimulate immigration from Scandinavia was made by Swedish Edward Öhlén who started the newspaper *Skandinaviske Canadiensaren* in Winnipeg in 1887.<sup>2</sup> Notably during early periods of immigration, joint ventures between Nordic groups were common, and mixed marriages between Danes, Norwegians and Swedes were frequent.

Most writings about Scandinavians in Canada focus on single nationalities, although the historic experiences of Danes, Finns, Icelanders, Norwegians, and Swedes to a large degree are intertwined. Since histories emanating from ethnic groups often aim at strengthening the cohesion within the groups and promoting group interests, the handling of the past usually stays within the framework of the group. Even the adaptation to host societies in Canada, the United States or Australia—three classic immigration countries—moves in the same direction, since this adaptation or gradual integration takes place in part collectively and along ethnic lines. The multiculturalism policies of Canada, for example, are largely the result of dialogue between representatives of ethnic groups and agents of the majority society. The Multiculturalism Directorate in Ottawa and its branches in the provinces reach agreements with ethnic organizations, whether they be religious, educational or have some other background.

For the above-mentioned reasons, »all-Scandinavian« aspects of Canadian immigration history are easily lost, but in this short introduction, the intention is to point at some links among the groups and to ask what a common origin in Northern Europe meant on North American soil. What

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<sup>1</sup> Otto Robert Landelius, *Swedish Place-Names in North America*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1985, 285.

<sup>2</sup> Lars Ljungmark, *Svenskarna i Winnipeg*, Växjö: Emigrantsinstitutets vänners skriftserie, 1994, 9.

did and do the Scandinavians have in common? On what points do their experiences in Canada differ? What were their choices of destinations, professions, areas of endeavour, relations to the Canadian majority population and to one another? One might also ask whether there is any special Scandinavian distinction or quality in Canadian ethnic life? Given the current state of knowledge, one cannot possibly provide full answers, but hopefully a question asked and a tentative answer given can help to take a step towards deeper understanding of ethnic experiences.

One good reason for a comparative treatment of Scandinavians is that Canadians and Canadian authorities have often placed the Nordic groups in a single category. Until 1891, *Swedes* in the printed Canadian census encompassed Danes, Norwegians and Swedes. Norwegians remained under this heading even longer. Icelanders normally comprised a category of their own. One might add, that Icelanders and Finns have stressed their special distinction more than Danes, Norwegians and Swedes, and to some extent this has to do with their respective time of arrival in Canada. Icelanders showed up earlier and Finns later than the others during the years of mass immigration, and as will be pointed out below, time of arrival is normally an important aspect of a group's place and status in an immigrant community.

As to the European background of these groups, it is fair to speak of Scandinavia (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) as a special region. In so doing one can point at historic, religious, cultural and linguistic aspects. Finland was a part of Sweden from the middle ages until 1809; the so-called Kalmar Union (1389-1523), which was an expression of Denmark's political supremacy and strong position as a Baltic Sea power, included Denmark, Norway and Sweden (with Finland). Indeed, there was much tension within the union, especially between Danes and Swedes, and Danish-Swedish rivalry evoked several wars up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Norway was a part of Denmark until 1814 when Norwegians achieved a high degree of autonomy, although they remained united with Sweden until 1905.

The Icelandic population is almost wholly an off-shoot of those Norwegians who colonized Iceland from 874. Icelandic, long since a language in its own right, was originally a Norwegian dialect, most similar to the Norwegian spoken in southwestern Norway, the birthplace of most of the Icelandic settlers. There are some constant factors in Icelandic history: harsh climatic conditions and catastrophes of nature; conflicts with neighbouring states, not least the British, about the right to catch fish in mid Atlantic waters; and political dependence on Norway and, later, Denmark. There were intermittent disputes about the status of Iceland within these kingdoms, not least concerning administration, taxes and



ecclesiastical matters. Some of the above-mentioned factors also explain why the Icelanders emigrated on a large scale to North America. Mass migration to America started in 1874, following a strong volcanic outburst in northeastern Iceland during a time when Icelanders were beginning to make themselves independent of Denmark. Gradually, they achieved home rule, and during World War II, when Denmark was occupied by Nazi Germany and Iceland was under a friendly American »occupation,« Icelanders declared their independence from Denmark.

The Scandinavians, with the exception of Finnish-speakers in Finland and some 60-80.000 Sami-speakers in Finland, Norway and Sweden have a Nordic *lingua franca* in common. There is mutual understanding among speakers of Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and to some extent among them and speakers of Faeroese and Icelandic. The cultural features that »unite« Scandinavia include Reformation and Protestantism and the fact that all groups experienced early literacy. In addition, there is a Nordic brand of the welfare state. From all Nordic countries there was a large-scale emigration to North America. In modern Europe, the Nordic peoples can be labelled as demographic innovators, i.e. demographic tendencies in Europe are observed early in Scandinavia. In terms of international cooperation Scandinavians are often at the fore. The Nordic free labour market, for instance, which was created in the 1950s and encompasses all five Nordic states, served in some respects as a prototype for the European Economic Community/European Union.

There is good reason to look at and ponder the Canadian-Scandinavian connections as such. In a global perspective, Scandinavia and Canada share a transatlantic sub-arctic sphere, and both areas have a relatively low population density. Also, Canada and the Nordic countries have tried to deal with some of their greater social issues along the same lines. One example, especially related to our topic, is that Canada has served as a model for Nordic countries, most notably Sweden, concerning ideas of ethnic pluralism.

### The Early Scandinavian Presence in Canada

In portraying themselves as a group, Scandinavians in Canada and the United States have normally dug deep into the past. They often refer to Leif Eriksson, who touched land on Newfoundland in the years before the before 1000 A.D. By doing so they stress the presence of their group on the continent before the presence of all other Europeans. For example, two articles (on Icelanders and Norwegians) in the 1979 edition of *The Canadian Family Tree: Canada's Peoples*, published by the Multiculturalism Directorate in Ottawa and representing 78 ethnic groups in Canada, start by mentioning the short-lived settlement of Leif Eriksson and his

followers on Canada's eastern shore. These references to early Norse settlers reflect attempts to dethrone Columbus as the discoverer of the New World and caused bitter conflict among Scandinavian and Italian immigrants in North America a hundred years ago.

To point at an early presence in a country is important for any ethnic group—and this is, in part, what the conflicts between Inuits and the Canadian majority population is all about. An early presence provides legitimacy, status and in some cases even land rights. From a factual point of view, Norwegian archaeologists Anne Stine and Helge Ingstad's finds in the 1960s on the east coast of Newfoundland made it possible to locate and substantiate beyond doubt »Viking« places of habitation at L'Anse aux Meadows.

In addition to Leif Eriksson, all Nordic groups can point at one or another early arrival in Canada. Swedes, even in Canada, refer to the fairly lightweight Swedish colonial settlement on the Delaware River (1638-1654) although its continuity with Swedish mass emigration in later centuries was almost nil. We are now at a stage when the countries from which the population emigrated use historic moments of landing in the New World to maintain links to their descendants in North America. During celebrations in 1938 and 1988, that is 300 and 350 years after the Swedes' arrival in Delaware, even Swedish royalties were on the stage of festivities in America. Since Finland was a part of Sweden until 1809, Finns can rightfully, and do, also refer to the Delaware adventure as a part of their history in the New World. In the Swedish expeditions to Delaware, a number of participants were recruited directly from Finland, while others had first migrated to Sweden and settled in mid Sweden. Special Finnish cultural features included the slash and burn technique, whereby a forest was burnt down and the ground quickly cultivated, and advanced techniques in log cabin construction. According to two American scholars, there is reason to speak of a backwoods frontier, moving west from Delaware and neighbouring states, in which the contributions of Finns were essential.<sup>3</sup>

Finns also refer to early pathfinders in British Columbia who were offshoots of Finnish settlements in Alaska made before the U.S. purchase of this land in 1867, when Alaska was still a part of the Russian empire and Finland was a Grand Duchy under the Russian czar. Danes in Canada often mention Munk's Bay and include Nova Dania (New Denmark), a short-lived tragic settlement, or rather hibernation, 1619-1620 on the Churchill River, which cost the lives of most of the crew. This Danish ex-

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<sup>3</sup> Terry G. Jordan and Matti Kaups, *The American Backwoods Frontier: An Ethnic and Ecological Interpretation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1989.

pedition, which took a catastrophic turn, bears witness to Danish King Christian IV's ambition to find the Northwest Passage.<sup>4</sup>

### The period of mass immigration

The movement of Nordic immigrants to Canada is in line with the main patterns of Canadian mass immigration in general. The influx of people into modern Canada can be divided into four phases. The first ended after the turn of the century, in 1901. The second started in 1901 and lasted until the outbreak of World War I. The Canadian West was settled as a result of strong immigration propaganda, directed by Sir Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior. World War I interrupted the strongest influx ever into the country. A third era commenced with the 1920s and ended with the Great Depression. Due to its small population relative to its resources, Canada has been one of the world's largest recipients of immigrants after World War II. Even during this fourth period of immigration, Canada-directed emigration from the Nordic countries has been considerable.

Despite the early settlement on Canadian shores, it took time before Canada became an important target for migrants from the Nordic countries. Not until the last decades of the 19th century did Canada emerge on a larger scale as an interesting alternative to the United States among Nordic emigrants. Except for Icelanders, until the last decade of the nineteenth century Canada served mainly as a transit country for Scandinavians *en route* to the United States. The city of Quebec became a port of disembarkation from the early days of Scandinavian mass immigration, but settlement in Canada was no real alternative. Notably for Norwegian emigrants, the eastern parts of the country served as a corridor as they made their way to U.S. destinations. Not least for Norwegian shipping lines was it economical to target Canadian northern and eastern ports. Following the great circle as closely as possible, they could reach America after travelling considerably shorter distances than a competing line sailing from southern England to Boston or Baltimore.

More than every second Norwegian immigrant destined for North America disembarked in Quebec, but despite very ambitious propaganda drives from agents who worked for the Dominion, few Scandinavians settled in eastern Canada. There were exceptions among Norwegians and Swedes. Swedes populated Kenora, Ontario, early in its history, and did the same in Waterville, Quebec. Norwegians formed an early settlement in

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<sup>4</sup> Jørn Carlsen, »Jens Munk's Search for the Northwest Passage. The Winter of 1619-20 at *Nova Dania*,« Manitoba, in in *Danish Emigration to Canada*, eds. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen, Aalborg: The Danish Emigration Archives, 1991, 22-35.

Gaspé in Lower Canada as early as 1856.<sup>5</sup> The moves to Kenora and Gaspé were a result of the purposeful efforts of Canadian authorities to attract Norwegians on their way to the Midwest, but the hardships and gradual dissolution in the 1860s of the Gaspé settlement were reported in Norwegian newspapers and must have served as a warning.<sup>6</sup> A Danish colony, New Denmark, developed during the 1870s in New Brunswick.

An almost millennial symbolism can be associated with Icelandic immigration to Canada. A thousand years elapsed between the *landnam* (literally land taking) in 874 and the arrival of 365 Icelanders in Kinmount, Victoria County, Ontario, in 1874. The years thereafter a secondary westward movement resulted in the founding of New Iceland, Manitoba, and soon newcomers arrived directly from Iceland. The bridge between Iceland and New Iceland was established. The evacuation character was obvious as many families in northeastern Iceland were hard hit by a volcanic eruption in 1875. Around 12.000 persons emigrated from Iceland in the years 1870-1895.

When the Prairie Provinces opened for settlement in the 1890s, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, and a number of second generation Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Americans from the Midwest migrated in order to take land in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The first Danes who came to Dickson, Alberta, had been living in Omaha, Nebraska. The movements north across the U.S.-Canadian border accelerated after the turn of the century. E.g., the Danish settlement Standard, Alberta, was founded in 1910 by Danes coming from the U.S.

Later on, immigrants arrived in large numbers directly from the Nordic countries. This has led to a pattern of geographical distribution of the Nordic peoples in Canada where Icelanders are found mainly in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Finns in Ontario, and Swedes and Norwegians mainly in the prairie provinces and British Columbia. The weaker Danish presence reflects the general low level of Danish emigration, especially during the first three decades of the twentieth century. On the other hand, a substantial Danish emigration to Canada took place after 1945.

For the Nordic immigrants of the 1920s Canada offered a strong alternative to the United States. In Canada land was still available, while this was not true in the U.S. The Canadian propaganda during the 1920s still aimed at immigrants willing to start farming, especially at the northern frontier in the prairie provinces. There was a notable interest in Denmark in the 1920s in the opportunities that Canada could offer prospective mi-

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<sup>5</sup> Gulbrand Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier: A History of the Norwegians in Canada*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 22-23.

grants. Agents were active in Copenhagen, many newspaper articles informed about Canada, some of which written by Aksel Sandemose, and the representatives of The Canadian Pacific Railway circulated brochures. The Canadian recruitment campaign continued in Northern Europe throughout the 1920s, but the result did not meet expectations. Scandinavian settlers tended to go to the cities, while eastern and southern Europeans had a stronger inclination to farm. The Finns welcomed the possibility to come to Canada, especially since the U.S. immigration quotas were considerably lower for the Finns than for other Nordic groups. Hence, Finnish immigration to Canada from 1924 numbered around five thousand per year until the Depression impeded the flow, and in 1931 the Canadian government, too, introduced a restrictive immigration policy.

Despite very active measures taken by the Canadian government to entice Finns to the fertile soil of the prairie provinces, the Finnish immigrants finally ended up in other districts and occupations. They preferred to stay in the eastern part of the country, mainly Ontario, where Toronto, Sudbury, and Thunder Bay have had large Finnish populations. Why did Finns, whose land hunger has so often been witnessed, avoid farming in Canada? One can only speculate. Lack of capital and an unbalanced sex ratio played some role. Another factor, whose importance is hard to determine, would be tradition: Finns accustomed to woods and a varied landscape avoided the flatlands with endless prairies. Where they did take land in Canada they combined work as farmers, fishermen, miners and woodsmen.<sup>7</sup>

In official and semi-official ethnic portraits, like the *Canadian Family Tree*, referred to above, there is a tendency to overlook the radical political tradition of Finnish immigrants. These radical tendencies, and a leaning to communism, actually made Canadian authorities question whether immigration recruitment from Finland should continue. Some officials, proposing that the Finnish inclination to socialism made them undesirable, attempted to curb Finnish immigration. Obviously, these attempts had no real effect. On the contrary, after Finland lost part of its territory following the Finnish-Soviet Winter War in 1939-40, Ontario's Premier Mitchell Hepburn worked out a plan to entice 100,000 Karelians to settle in Canada. Hepburn's plan, however, never materialized.

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<sup>7</sup> Concerning Finnish immigrants in Canada, see, e.g., *Finnish Diaspora I: Canada, South America, Africa, Australia and Sweden*, Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981. Most of the articles in this book deal with Canada.

## Aspects of ethnicity

There is a scholarly debate about the character of ethnicity among Scandinavian groups in Canada. Might it here suffice to say, that new interpretations are appearing, some of which point at a special character of cohesion and feeling of togetherness of some of the Nordic groups.<sup>8</sup> There are attempts at redefining ethnicity so as to also include recent Scandinavian experience in Canada. One scholar argues that Scandinavians' relative invisibility may not automatically be interpreted as a sign of low ethnic consciousness.<sup>9</sup> Many factors have an impact on the character of ethnicity: the history of migration, the time of arrival, the demographic composition of the immigration stock, the dispersion of settlements, etc. Only a few factors can be discussed here.

The importance of time of arrival has been stressed above. Lars Ljungmark has noted that Swedes who arrived in Winnipeg at the end of the nineteenth century had a much less favourable situation than the Icelanders, who were considered as pioneers and »an adopted people« to the Canadians. Swedes envied Icelanders.<sup>10</sup> The numerically small Icelandic immigration has been much better documented than its mainland Scandinavian counterpart. Characteristic of the Icelanders, whose descendants are found principally in the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, is their strong expression of solidarity and unity. As an ethnic group they have had a stronger geographic concentration than most of the other immigrant nationalities in Canada. The Icelanders have managed to preserve their ethnic characteristics without thereby forming an isolated group in Canadian society. An early example of their efforts is the first Icelandic school in Canada, founded in Gimli, north of Winnipeg, in 1876, which actually had as its most important goal the teaching of English. The Icelandic milieu in Canada has been strong enough to produce authors, notably Stephan G. Stephansson, who may be included among the foremost in Icelandic literature. A great number of writers have had their work published in the Icelandic daily and weekly papers in Canada. Since 1886 some twenty-five periodicals have been published, many with long lifetimes. When the Icelandic National League of America was founded in 1919 in a period when the pressure against ethnic identification was strong

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<sup>8</sup> David G. Delafenêtre, »The Scandinavian Presence in Canada: Emerging Perspectives,« *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, 1995, 35-58.

<sup>9</sup> Carina Rönnqvist, Scattered Swedes and Single Settlers: On ethnic identity reflected in nationalistic sentiments, gender and class in 20<sup>th</sup> century Canada, in *Swedishness Reconsidered: Three centuries of Swedish-American Identities*, Umeå 1999, 91-117.

<sup>10</sup> Lars Ljungmark, »Swedes in Winnipeg up to the 1940s,« in *Swedes in America: New Perspectives*, Växjö: The Swedish Emigrant Institute Series, 1993, 67-77.



in Canada and the U.S., its primary goal was the preservation of the Icelandic heritage. It is probably fair to say, that, even today, Icelandic institutions exceed in vitality their Danish, Norwegians, and Swedish counterparts. One very important factor for the Icelandic cultural continuity is that Icelanders have succeeded in securing an academic base in the Icelandic Institute at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. This institution has functioned as a point of contact between Iceland and the Icelandic minority in Canada.<sup>11</sup>

An analysis of ethnicity among Scandinavians must include observations of the U.S.-Canadian connections. Since many early agricultural settlements in Canada were by and large populated by first and second generation Scandinavians who had left the Midwest, there were many links to the Midwest. To what extent Danishness, Norwegianness and Swedishness of these people among these categories had been diluted by Americanness thus weakening their Scandinavian identities is a rather difficult question to answer, but it must be kept in mind when one tries to pinpoint the Northerners' ethnicity in Canada. Not least from a Scandinavian perspective, emigration to Canada, the United States, and for that matter other continents, is the result of the same forces in history, and these forces were primarily of a social and economic nature. For many individuals, however, it was more a toss-up whether they ended up in one part of the North American continent or another. Canada and the U.S. were two parts of a larger labour market, and many immigrants, especially after the turn of the century 1900, moved back and forth across the border. Many Finns who worked in mines and industry fluctuated between jobs in the upper Midwest and northern Ontario. One of many mobile Scandinavians was Swedish emigrant John Albert Eliasson, born 1892 in Småland in southern Sweden as the son of a petty-farmer with small prospects to acquire land in his home district. He left Sweden in 1910 and came to British Columbia, where he worked in the forest and probably also in mines. He continued to Alaska, moved on to California, spent some time in his home country but returned to California, where he died in 1961. He is typical of many Scandinavians in that, after a rather active and mobile life, he ended up in western North America.

Some organizations were active both in the United States and Canada. The Swedish-American Augustana Synod, the largest Scandinavian church

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<sup>11</sup> cf. Harald Runblom, »The Swedes in Canada: A Study of Low Ethnic Consciousness,« *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, January 1982, 4-20; and Christopher Hale, Cultural and Educational Achievements of the Icelandic Community in Canada, in *Scandinavian Immigrants and Education in North America*, eds. Philip J. Anderson, Dag Blanck and Peter Kivisto, Chicago: Swedish-American Historical Society, 1995, 137-157.

in America, was founded in 1860, and with its largest membership in the American Midwest, widened its recruitment efforts to all Swedish areas in the U.S. and finally also to Canada. Another example of organizations active on both sides of the border can be seen among Finnish-Canadian socialists who had strong links to their brethren in the U.S. Cooperation across the border sometimes created resentment, and Lars Ljungmark has noted a feeling of inferiority among Swedes immigrants in Winnipeg vis-à-vis Swedish Americans.<sup>12</sup>

For migration historians, it is more difficult to record the individual and collective experiences of mobile and urbanizing individuals than to record life and labour in ethnic agricultural settlements. This has most probably led to a certain bias in our view of the immigration history of Danes and other peoples from Northern Europe. The accounts we can easily lay hands on have a lot more to say about Danes and Danish life in New Denmark in New Brunswick, Dalum and Stettler in Alberta than about Danish city-dwellers and their lives in Winnipeg, Calgary or Vancouver. One should not forget that Scandinavian emigration to Canada is a story of urbanization, either direct or step-by-step. Moves from the European countryside to urban milieus in America were quiet common, and many Scandinavians, once they had arrived in Canada, tended to settle in cities in the west. Even Icelanders, whose agricultural settlements play a great role in Scandinavian-Canadian history, are now largely urbanized and quite a few of them live on the west coast.

It is worth a special note that Danish immigrants in North America, who are more scattered than most other immigrant groups, have followed the Icelandic model from 1919 in organizing on a national scale in Canada. The Federation of Danish Associations in Canada was established in 1981. One might label the Danish ethnicity in Canada symbolic, but it bears witness to the fact that post-war immigrants to Canada, scattered in many provinces and with a mother tongue retention that is lower than that of most other groups, feel the need to preserve the Danish heritage and re-create links to the homeland.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lars Ljungmark, *Svenskarna i Winnipeg*.

<sup>13</sup> Rolf Buschardt Christensen, The Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, in *Danish Emigration to Canada*, eds. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen, Aalborg: The Danish Emigration Archives, 1991, 203-210.



# Anders Carlsen

*Pioneer in New Denmark 1872*

PALLE BO BOJESEN

It will sound incredible and ridiculous to New Denmarkers that the first group of their emigrating ancestors, who were landed at Salmon River in 1872 and had to face all the hardships and primitivity should have written a letter full of praise and flattery to the man who took them over: Captain S. Heller. The letter is written in Danish, but I am convinced that people who know would say: That letter must have been written in English originally—and by the Captain himself. It's a fake! Nobody could have signed such a heap of rubbish!

Here it is in English:

*We undersigned Danish emigrants regard it as our duty publicly to bring captain S.S. Heller our thanks for all the care he with cleverness and insight gave us as our leader from our home to Canada. It will be difficult to find anybody who as he is willing and able to take care of everybody's interest and secure every man his right, even as he during the troublesome journey understood to assist anybody with friendly courtesy. We should like to conclude that all promises given us concerning conditions for our stay, such as free land, house, work and wages have been more than fulfilled, and we have from the government enjoyed a reception and assistance so good, that even our best expectations were surpassed. Hellerup in Canada, July 1872.*

But then again—the positive side: Underneath you find the names of all the pioneers—with the natural limitation of course that women and children are not pioneers—and with natural surprise, that you do not find some names you expected to find. One of the signers is Anders Carlsen, Glumsø, a village in a fertile and beautiful area in the middle of Zealand, »Sjælland«, between Ringsted and Næstved.

To trace him you choose the census from 1845. When his name is Carlsen, he must be Carl's son. Carl who? So you find Carl Andersen and his wife Karen. He is an agricultural labourer and also works as a rag picker. They have 6 children, and number two, Anders Carlsen is 10 years old. Then the Glumsø parish registers tell when Anders was born and baptized and that he was confirmed in 1849. The pastor wrote this remark on him: »Quite well informed and very good conduct«. You conclude that his parents—though poor—have given him a reasonable up bringing.«

Confirmation at that time in those circles also means that you have to find a job, and the pages of the parish registers on *Departures* tell that he started at the Ravnstrup estate near by. The conscription register has his different addresses for the coming years: another estate—the famous Næsbyholm—and various peasants in Næsby and Tyvelse.

In 1858 he enters into military service in the 4th Dragoon regiment. Back in civil life he marries—church unknown—but his wife, Marie Sofie Christiansdatter, brings a son to church in Glumsø in June 1866, where he gets the name Peter. The parish register has a note on Marie Sofie: »The woman came to church (first time after the birth) without being introduced.« Marie obviously had a head and a will of her own.

In 1868 Anders Carlsen is dismissed from the military register due to »varicose veins in left leg.« In October 1870 a daughter is born. She is baptized Karen Kirstine, and when the family emigrates in May 1872 she is one and a half year old. This is mentioned because we find her name next time in the Police Emigration Register, and there she is listed as »no name, 3/4 years«.

Keine Hexerei, nur Behändigkeit! Children under one year of age get a free passage, and this kind of cheating was not unusual. (In fact the signer Lars Clausen does the same thing). New Brunswick was very much in want of farmers at that time shortly after confederation. The new homestead law: *Free Grants Act 1872* had been passed, and Captain Heller had got a contract with the N.B. government to bring Danish farmers over. He succeeded so far and left for Canada with the first Danish group of 27 May 31 1872.

*The Daily Telegraph* in St. John reports that they crossed the Atlantic on the *Caspian* and came from Halifax to St. John on the *Empress*. Capt. Heller will soon be heading back on the *Empress* to Copenhagen to bring over many more fine immigrants.

Heller takes them up the mighty St. John River to Fredericton, the capital, where they meet Benj. Stevenson, who is responsible for immigration and accompany them up-river to Salmon River, where they disembark and make their way uphill to the Emigrant house, their first home and centre for activities in the forest. The house is very primitive, and the roof has not been finished.

Next time we meet Anders and Marie Carlsen is on the 31st of October 1873. On that day 3 Danish families from New Denmark are entered into the church register of the Anglican Church in Andover, a little town about 15 miles from New Denmark. Reverend Leopold Hoyt has taken care of the Danes and continues until a Danish pastor arrives in 1875.

Each family has a child baptized, and the Carlsen girl gets the name Karen Christine! This means that their little Danish born girl of the same

name is not alive anymore. It has not been possible to find anything specific, but it is a fact, that scarlet fever took a heavy toll of small children in the first winter. Rev. Leopold Hoyt did not bury any Dane according to the register, so the Danes have done it without clerical help.

In 1876 the Carlsen family had another child, again a girl, who was baptized Hanne Marie. In 1878 she had a little brother who was called Hans Christian. So the family counted 6 members for some years. They have—as all the rest—had some extremely primitive and strenuous years. They had their 100 acres »free grant«, no doubt good soil, but covered with heavy forest, which had to be taken down, piled and burned, before any »farming« could be done between the stumps, which would remain for years, before they could be pulled out.

Thanks to the fact that the New Brunswick government was sponsor for the Danish immigration the administration had to deliver a written report and a statistical statement every year up till 1879. The first one appears in 1874, and through these statistics it is possible to follow every man/family who stays in New Denmark. Anders Carlsen's lot had number 210 and was situated very centrally on the »New Denmark Corner« and it can be read from the 1874 table that Anders and Marie have built their own house, probably a log cabin, and cleared six acres. From two acres he had a crop of 20 bushels oats, 30 bushels potatoes and 5 bushels buckwheat. The value of the house is estimated at 150 dollars and the crop at 50 dollars. The clearings are worth 20 dollars, so the accumulated family fortune amounts to 220 dollars.

And in this way it is possible to follow the development through 6 years. In 1875 they get a cow, a barn is built in 1876 where they also clear a lot of land and buy 2 pigs and get a calf. Their fortune now amount 830 dollars. 1877 is not a good year, neither is 1878, but this year brings a valuable thing in another way: at long last—after 6 years of hard work they get their deed which they had been promised after three years, given in fact by Queen Victoria herself through the Lieutenant-Governor.

With this deed in hand it became possible to borrow money for further development of the farm. Whether Carlsen did so is not known. The following year brings new developments as a horse and two sheep. Apparently the crop is very good, so their »fortune« now amounts to 1193 dollars. In 1881 a general census took place in Canada and it gives good information on New Denmark. Anders Carlsen is now 46, his wife 42, Peter 14, Christine 8, Hanne 5 and Hans 2.

They are all belonging to the Anglican Church, St. Ansgar's where the Danish pastor Hansen has been in charge since 1875, when he had the choice of going home—because the Danes could not pay him or support him — or joining the Anglican Church. But pastor Hansen was allowed

nearly total freedom, and he used the Danish hymnbook and kept close to a traditional Danish service.

When people are asked about their religion in a census, and the correct answer in fact should be: Church of England, 1/3 answers so. But 2/3 say they are Lutherans, among them the Carlsen family. This is in April, so Anders Carlsen dies as a Lutheran in May that same year—from pneumonia, and is buried in the Anglican St. Ansgar's cemetery. This of course is an extremely hard stroke to the family, but stubbornly Marie sticks to the farm and has a very good helper in Peter. Thanks to him and to good neighbours she keeps going on, and when their house burned down—she had it rebuilt.

Of course Anders Carlsen dies in testate, and it seems to be quite an intricate matter to have »his« possessions legally transferred to his wife. Not until 1890 the inventory of his real estate, goods, chattels and credits is made, and much of course has been changed over so many years. Peter Carlsen married Marie Nielsen, who lived until she was 103 years. They had 4 daughters. Christine Carlsen died at the age of 21. Hanne Carlsen married Jens Johnsen, and they had 8 children. Hans Carlsen married Mathilde Rasmussen. They had 4 daughters and 1 son, Raymond. He died in 1986—the last man of the Carlsen Stock.

But Carlsen blood runs red in many veins in New Denmark and Canada, and the memory of this sturdy pioneer family will live long.

*1987/ Part 1/ 84*

# Freda Holmes, née Frederiksen

*Born in No-Roads Land*

NIELS JORGENSEN

About 100 years ago a group of Danes established a settlement at Cape Scott on Vancouver Island. Cape Scott is the extreme Northwest point of Vancouver Island. Many of the early Danes came from the United States, but some came from other areas of Canada, and some from Denmark. The settlers found meadowland in one area and thought the soil would be ideal for agriculture. They contacted the British Columbia government and asked that a road be built to connect the new settlement with the already existing settlement at Holberg, some 50 km away. The settlers also asked that schools be built. They realized that without a road and school facilities a settlement could not exist for the long term. However, the road was never built. The settlers moved there anyway, hoping the road would be built. This was real pioneering, the area had never been settled before. All supplies, furniture, cooking stoves, tools and agricultural implements had to be brought in by boat, or carried on human backs from Holberg. The trip from Holberg was on a trail across very rugged terrain. Some creeks had to be crossed by walking on logs lying across the water. Despite the remoteness and the difficult access a few hundred settlers established homes for themselves and their families at Cape Scott. During World War I many settlers moved away, and after the war even more people left. In the twenties only a few families remained at Cape Scott. One of these was the Frederiksen family.

Freda Frederiksen was born at Cape Scott in 1925. Freda is the youngest of six siblings. Her parents were Theo Julius Frederiksen, born in Wisconsin in 1871, and Johanna Frederiksen née Jensen, born in Denmark in 1890. Her grandparents on her mother's side, Niels Peter Jensen and Maren Jensen were also at Cape Scott. Both her father and grandfather played important roles in the development and history of the Cape Scott settlement. Her grandfather, Niels Peter Jensen, was one of the first settlers at Cape Scott and he is buried there.

As mentioned above, Freda is the youngest of six siblings. The oldest, Clara, and the two boys, Lars and Hans have passed away. The two brothers drowned in the rough waters off Cape Scott when they were in their twenties. The three remaining sisters Anna, Ellen and Freda are all healthy. Anna and Freda live in the Parksville area on Vancouver Island, and Ellen lives on Saltspring Island.

The Frederiksen homestead at Cape Scott was a farm. Fields of grass and root crops for the animals surrounded the buildings, but very little grain was grown. There were 12 milking cows, some chickens and a horse. The horse was used for farm work, and when a team of two horses were needed another horse was borrowed from the neighbour. This arrangement worked both ways. The first horse Freda remembers was a mare named Flora. Later the Frederiksens had a gelding named Tommy and Freda used to ride bareback on him when there was time for it.

With no electricity all work was done by hand, and Freda took part in it all, from milking cows to helping with the fieldwork. To bring in extra cash Freda's father would sometimes go away for a few weeks logging and fishing. During these periods the rest of the family had to do all the work on the farm. The family did their own home butchering, and initially used salt and a strong saline solution in a barrel for keeping the meat. Later they acquired a canning outfit, so they could cook and can the meat from a freshly butchered animal. They also smoked meat and fish. Fresh vegetables and potatoes were kept in a sand pit in the ground. The pit was covered to keep the sand and vegetables dry. All food was home grown and prepared. About the only food supplies brought in were flour, sugar, coffee and tea. All cooking and heating was done with wood and there were plenty of trees.

There was no lumber yard around, so to make wood into building materials required felling trees, removing branches, and then cutting the logs into boards. A stream-driven sawmill was set up at Cape Scott in the early part of the century. With locally cut boards the settlers built their homes and farm buildings. When the settlement was at its peak a wooden community centre and a church were built.

Freda's schooling was mainly by correspondence. The first time Freda went to a big city was when she was 12, when she went to Vancouver to have her tonsils removed. She had visited smaller towns before, but big places did not have any strong appeal to her. At home they had a telephone, but mail arrived only once or twice a month, whenever a supply boat arrived.

Life at Cape Scott was a lot of hard work, but with some free time. Freda and the other children and young people would go for walks in the woods where wildlife was abundant. Bears and cougars were common, as natural foods for these animals were plentiful, so they never attacked humans. On one occasion the young people went back on the same trail they had gone on earlier and discovered cougar tracks going the same way as their earlier footsteps. A cougar had followed them. Beachcombing was always interesting; anything and everything would float ashore. They found lots of glass fishing balls and even once a crate of oranges. Unfortu-



nately the oranges were salty after having been in seawater for days. The young people also found time for a baseball game now and then.

Freda's mother died when she was twelve, but the rest of the family carried on life at Cape Scott right until the government bought their farm in 1942. This was during World War II, and the Air Force wanted the land for a military installation. The Frederiksen farm was expropriated and the family bought another farm at Nanoose between Nanaimo and Parksville on Vancouver Island. As part of the deal the government provided transportation for the Frederiksens and their belongings to their new home.

Eligible young men appeared on the scene and one by one the Frederiksen girls married. In 1952 Freda married William Holmes and moved to a house near Parksville. Here their four children were born. Their son Lawrence is a fisherman and he has visited Cape Scott. Daughters, Sharon and Judy went with Freda on a visit to Cape Scott about 15 years ago. The daughters liked Cape Scott for natural beauty of the area, but there were few signs of the original settlement. Only a few fruit trees in what was a garden remained. Nature had taken over. The youngest daughter Karen lives close to Freda in the Parksville area. William Holmes died in 1980 and Freda now lives in a house that she and her father built. She is in frequent with the other members of her family.

Freda has lived on Vancouver Island all her life. Although she has never visited Denmark, she and her sister Anna has been in contact with distant relatives there. They have also had a visit of one of their mother's relatives from Denmark. Freda still understands some Danish, which was spoken in her childhood home.

The story of the Danish settlement at Cape Scott is further described in a book by Lester Peterson, *The Cape Story*. This book is out of print, but may be available through the library system. Lester Peterson was born at Cape Scott, and Freda knew him. Lester Peterson has passed away. A good article about Cape Scott was published in an issue of *Canadian Geographic* magazine in the late 1980's. The author of that article is Pat Herzog who at the time taught wildlife and ecology at Lethbridge Community College.

1996/221

# The Schiolders of Frederiksberg and Winnipeg

JOHN SCHIOLER

On a glorious Labour Day weekend in 1995, thirty-five adult members of the Schioler family, descendants of Sofus and Carla, my paternal grandparents, gathered in Winnipeg for what we called a »cousins reunion«. It was a chance to celebrate our Danish-Canadian heritage, to get to know each other better and to track down our family history.

Why Winnipeg? After all, our grandparents were Danes and the seemingly obvious locale for the meeting would have been Frederiksberg where they had ten of their eleven children and lived most of their lives. But this is a family that had spread out, in one generation, to various parts of North America and especially to Winnipeg. Almost all of the eleven children of Sofus and Carla had a connection with Winnipeg. This is their story as seen by a member of the third generation.

My grandfather, Carl Anton Sofus Schiøler, was born in Stenmagle, near Sorø, in 1855. After law studies and work as a journalist, he married Carla Christiane Birch on her eighteenth birthday (1882) and they emigrated to San Francisco a few days (!) later. Two years later, they returned to Denmark, settled in Frederiksberg, and lived the rest of their lives in various apartments in the same district.

The eldest child, Paul Christian Birch (all the children received my grandmother's maiden name), was born in 1883 during his parents' short sojourn in America. He was educated at the Engineering Academy in Copenhagen and soon after went to Panama to work on the Canal. Although from correspondence with my father he seemed to be prospering, he left Central America for Winnipeg in 1907, where he became the City's bridge engineer (the Osborne St. Bridge, for example) from 1908 to 1916. During the Great War, he joined the 90th Winnipeg Rifles, commanding a company of troops in maintaining rail lines to the trenches under fire. At War's end he headed off again, this time to Chicago where, as a U.S. citizen, he again became the City bridge engineer (and, incidentally, a lawyer).

While in Winnipeg in 1907 he married, and had a daughter, Carla, a year later. This marriage collapsed shortly after and Carla died in 1921 at age 12. Paul remarried in Chicago, and had two further children. He returned with his family to Denmark in 1931. While he did visit Winnipeg a number of times in the twenties and thirties, he effectively passed out of the picture at that point and he did not leave an heir to continue his name in Canada. Still, he did have an important long-term impact on the Schi-



oler presence in Winnipeg, since he was able to entice two of his brothers to join him in the early years and they stayed.

The first to take the plunge, in 1909 at only eighteen, was Knud, my father. He worked his passage in the galley of a ship peeling potatoes. I could not find any record of his emigration in the Danish Archives, since technically, he wasn't an emigrant at all: he simply jumped ship in New York and headed off northwest to join his much-admired, oldest brother. There Knud became a labourer with the CPR, among other jobs, catching hot rivets during the building of the Arlington St. Bridge in the west end of Winnipeg. For three years he moved with the Company across the west, eventually pitching up in Calgary, where he married a Scottish immigrant. They returned to Winnipeg shortly after where Knud worked and lived, with two short absences, for the rest of his long life.

He was an enterprising person. Within a few years, he teamed up with a fellow Dane, Pierre LaCour, to form LaCour and Schioler, a construction company that built such structures as the hydro dam at Dryden in north-western Ontario. The partnership was very successful throughout the 1920's and only ceased operation when contracts dried up at the onset of the Great Depression in 1931. LaCour went back to Denmark.

Knud had two children in his first marriage, Inger who was born in 1914 and John Campbell, who died tragically in 1919, at age three in a traffic accident. Knud suffered another great loss when his wife died in 1930.

My half sister, Inger, married a Scottish immigrant who worked for the Bay as a fur buyer in the North and she spent the early years of their marriage moving from Peace River to Regina and then to Edmonton. The couple finally moved back to Winnipeg and Inger continues to reside there at age 83. Unfortunately, she will not leave a Schioler legacy in Winnipeg as her only son died in 1995, having moved down east in the 60's.

During this early period, Knud was very active in the Danish community. A long-time member of the Danish Brotherhood, he was named Honorary Danish Vice-Consul in 1924. Popular with the community, he had his battles with the powers-that-be in Montreal and he gave up his post in 1927. (The heated correspondence on this affair is available in the Danish Foreign Ministry's archives.) He was also a keen, although according to reports not a brilliant, member of the Danish Curling Club for decades and introduced me to the game at an early age. He was a much better bridge player, an interest he also passed on to my sister and me.

Still in Winnipeg, Knud began a new life in the 1930's: he remarried in 1932, I was born in 1933 and he created Schioler & Co., financial agents and insurance, that same year. The latter he maintained until he became ill in the 1960's. During this period Knud was active in the Conservative

Party and served as President of the Credit Granters Association in Winnipeg.

Might I enter a sidebar at this point about my mother, Kirsten Pontoppidan, because she was a Danish immigrant, is a Schioler and spent 45 years in Winnipeg? She came to Canada in 1929, just out school, with her parents. Her father had been the »godsejer« of Thomasminde, one of two properties originally belonging to Hendrik Pontoppidan, long-time Consul General in Hamburg. In Canada he farmed briefly at Olds, Alberta supported by another son-in-law, Rene Boissevain, member of a Dutch family that gave its name to the town in southern Manitoba. My grandparents saw my mother married and then returned to Denmark for good. The immigrant experience had not been a success for them.

Knud died in 1974, looked after to the end by my mother at home. Like Paul before him, Dad will likely leave no Schioler family legacy in Winnipeg. I left the City after college to pursue my studies and career elsewhere and have only one child, Tegan Schioler, who is an Easterner. And my mother has lived in Ottawa since Dad died.

The family fortunes in Winnipeg depend on the descendants of the third Schioler brother to emigrate early in the century. Kai, born in 1888, came over to join his older and younger brothers in 1911. He had worked for an »isenkræmmer« (a nickname he kept) in Copenhagen, and in Winnipeg he went to work for Marshall Fields in the same line. In 1912, however, he made his one big career move: he joined Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works (later called Manitoba Bridge and Engineering) where he was employed for 58 (!) years, starting as office boy (2 years), salesman (5 years), sales manager (40 years) and consultant (11 years). By accident, long after his death, one of Kai's sons-in-law found a long taped interview that he gave to a magazine about his years at the company; it is an invaluable record of a business experience that spanned six decades in the first part of the century.

On the home front, in 1923 Kai married Olina Magnusson, who only died a few months ago at the age of 97. They had four children: Thomas, who was shot down over Germany in 1944; Kathleen (Skynner), who died in 1997. She had two children, Henry John (Ottawa) and Carla (England); Elsa (Woods), who lived in Manitoba until her early death in 1977. She had four children, two who live in Winnipeg, Martha with two children, and Monica, and two others elsewhere, John Kai with one son (Calgary) and Catherine (Holland); and Michael (Phyllis) who has five children, Tom, David, Kim, Kai and Linda, all of whom live in Winnipeg and themselves have ten children with an eleventh expected by the time this book is published. Seven of Kai's great-grandchildren bear the Schioler name (one

even has Dane as his given name) and therefore can be expected to continue the family's strong presence in the City.

To back up slightly, my father bought a house at 187 Lyle Street in St. James about 1918. After the death of his son, he passed the house to Kai (about 1923). This was an example of the close relationship between the two brothers, in fact among all the Schioler siblings whether in Canada, the U.S. or Denmark. Kai and Knud lunched together almost every working day in Dad's office in the Lindsay Bldg. They curled and played bridge together and in the end they died within two months of each other in 1974. The house on Lyle, now called Deer Lodge Place, remained with Kai's widow for several years and was a welcome home to many family members, both local and out-of-town. Michael Schioler has now taken over the house so that Schiolars have lived there for 80 years.

Kai, like all his brothers and sisters, was immensely fond of his mother but, after leaving Denmark in 1911, he only saw »farmor« once again, in 1946, a few months before she passed on. For his part, Knud made many trips back, most notable his first, when he was seated at the Captain's table of the same ship on which he had been a penniless galley worker only five years earlier. Despite their different make-up, both brothers sank deep roots into the soil of Canada.

Paul Christian, Kai and Knud were the trio of brothers who made the greatest commitment to the New World, but all but two of the other siblings spent time there, some for a period of years. For example, the oldest sister, Margrethe, taught at the deaf institute on Portage Avenue in Winnipeg in 1911. The next sister, Inger, did not herself come to Canada, as she died in 1914, but her daughter, Anne Lise, studied nursing in Winnipeg and stayed with the family in 1929. Ellen (1896) never lived in Canada but made several long visits over the years. Gudrun (1899) emigrated to Chicago in 1924 and for several years after spent her summers in Winnipeg.

The three youngest boys, Arne (1901), worked in the United States for a number of years and visited Winnipeg three times before returning to Denmark in 1937. Ivan (1906), who profited from remittances from his elder brothers over the years, became a »landsretsagfører« in Copenhagen and only visited Winnipeg in 1972 at age 66. The youngest sibling of all, Asger (1909) spent four years in Canada, mostly in Winnipeg, from 1929 to 1933, following his legal studies in Denmark.

So, that's why the Schioler family reunion was held in Winnipeg and not in Frederiksberg. Eight of the ten living first cousins (out of an original seventeen) were present, the largest number that we can ever hope to assemble given age and health. From our three days together we have since created biographies of our grandparents and of our parents. We have put

together a photo album of 75 pictures going back to the graduation photo of Sofus from Sorø Akademi in 1872, where he was nicknamed »smukke«. We are now working on third generation biographies and on family history beyond the early 18th century and we shall soon turn to completing a family tree extending forward to the sixth generation from our grandparents. The Winnipeg story, 1907 to the present, has been key to this family history.

Might I make a plea to anyone engaged in a similar family study that comes across a reference to »Schioler« or »Schjøler« to get in touch with me? There must be lots of information out there that could help to piece the story together.

*1998/194*

# Anders and Helene Rafn

AGNES JELHOF JENSEN

Danish immigrants have made a major contribution to the dairy industry in Canada. This is particularly the case in Alberta. Daniel Mørkeberg from Køge established one of the first creameries in Alberta in Markerville in 1989. Mørkeberg's old creamery is now a museum and historic site, not far from Dickson.

When Alberta became a province in 1905, the provincial government appointed Christian Peter Marker as the first dairy Commissioner. Dr. Marker, born in Vium near Kjellerup, served as Dairy Commissioner until 1934. The hamlet of Markerville, where the Mørkeberg creamery was located, was named to honour Marker.

In Calgary the manager of the Northern Alberta Dairy Pool was Christian Emil Christensen from Mejlgård pr Grenaa, who was appointed Danish Consul in Edmonton in 1931. In time the Northern Dairy Pool became the largest coop creamery in Western Canada. The president of this coop was Anders Kristian Rafn, who in Canada called himself Andrew Rafn.

Anders Rafn was born in Marie Magdalene sogn, Sønderhald herred, Randers amt, on September 28, 1868. He was son of »husmand« and tailor Niels Nicolai Peter Rafn and Maren, née Andersen. Anders apprenticed as a miller at Vedø Mølle near Kolind, and at Ny Mølle ved Lisbjerg. He later worked for Røde Mølle north of Århus.

On March 20, 1894, he emigrated to the United States, settling in Nebraska. In 1887, he moved to Montana, and finally in 1898, he went north to Alberta. Here he worked mostly as a farmhand, miller, machinist or hotel porter, until 1920. That year he finally established himself successfully on a 230-acre farm near Bon Accord.

Anders Raven did not spend all his time looking after his fields and dairy herd, which in itself was a full time job. In fact, he spent much of his time in organizational work. He played a leading role in various organizations, as he was very much interested in political, economic and social issues relating to farmers. For instance, he sat on the board of the United Farmers of Alberta for ten years. The UFA formed the government of Alberta from 1921 to 1935.

Anders Rafn was a founding member of the Alberta Wheat Pool, a coop founded in 1923. Later he was a delegate to the Wheat Pool's annual meetings. He was also heavily involved in organizing the dairy pools in Alberta, and was elected president of the Northern Alberta Dairy Pool, the biggest of the three dairy pools in Alberta. In organizing the dairies, he used his experience from the wheat pools. As president, he worked very

closely with the general manager, Christian Emil Christensen, in Edmonton.

In a long newspaper article, which appeared in Odin Kuntze's *Den Danske Herold*, on June 27, 1933, Anders Rafn tells the readers about the Northern Alberta Dairy Pool. The reader certainly gets the impression that here is a man who knows what he is talking about. The article is written in Danish, of course, as *Den Danske Herold* was a Danish language newspaper, published in Kentville, Nova Scotia.

Anders Rafn was proud of being a Dane, and he was proud of the contribution Danes were making to the growth and the development of agriculture, particularly the dairy industry. He would from time to time make speeches around the province, also to Danish clubs. On one occasion he addressed the members of Dannevang in Calgary, telling them about the activities and aims of the wheat pool. For a time he was also president of the Danish club in Edmonton. Indeed, Anders Rafn was very much interested in closer cooperations among Danish organizations across Canada, and supported Odin Kuntze in his efforts to establish a nation-wide Danish Canadian Society.

In 1894, when Anders Kristian Rafn left Denmark for Nebraska, he was 25 years old. Two years later he returned to Denmark, in order to fetch his bride Helene Stahl, from Vejlbj near Århus. The beautiful Helene was not, however, keen of the idea. She would rather stay in Denmark, where she knew the language and had no reason to be homesick. So Anders had to go back to Nebraska alone. However, Helene joined him reluctantly in 1904. But her plan was actually to take her beloved Anders with her back to Denmark. There was no doubt in her mind, when she crossed the Atlantic: She was not staying! It did not bother her that she had no knowledge of the English language and all the strange customs. Those things were not important or relevant, as she was definitely going back to Denmark.

The drought, the dreaded drought, had forced Anders to leave Nebraska, and instead he sought land in Alberta, close to Bon Accord, about 35 km north of Edmonton. On this property in Bon Accord was a one-room house. And there was absolutely no money for steamship tickets back to Denmark. That year the snow came to Alberta in August. It was indeed a splendid beginning for a new life in a new country!

Anders was forced to go into the nearest town to get work, in order to earn some money. Helene Rafn was therefore left alone on the farm, with only a dog to talk to. The house was poorly built and hardly insulated. One cold morning, when Helene wanted to make herself a hot cup of tea, the teapot was frozen to the shelf. She tried to pull it loose, and all of a sudden she stood with the top of it in her hands, while the bottom was still frozen

to the shelf. She decided that it would not do to get angry or bitter in this new land. Yet, she did have her loneliness and her homesickness to cope with. The only way she could survive was by taking one day at a time, no more and no less.

When her first child, Martha, was born, life suddenly took a new meaning. She was now happy and content, holding the beautiful baby in her arms. The women from neighbouring farms had been midwives. One had to help each other, and one did. At that time, it took a whole day to travel to Edmonton by horse and buggy. It was not a pleasure trip, but a journey that had to be well planned, and taken only when absolutely necessary.

At harvest time, all the men went from farm to farm to help each other. For Helene it took a lot of planning to feed and board 10 to 12 men in the one-room farmhouse. In the evening, Helene went to bed first. The men slept on the floor, and they all had to be up and out before she could get up in the morning

Later a son, Rikard, was born. And the same year, Helene bought a sewing machine for two dollars. She usually went shopping in Edmonton once a year. Ever so slowly their situation improved. A new house was built, and it was indeed a happy home. It was about this time that Anders became a member of the executive of the Alberta Wheat Pool, and then president of the Northern Alberta Dairy Pool. He had a talent for organization, and took keen interest in farm issues. He certainly left his footprints wherever he worked.

I visited Helene Rafn in 1963. At that time, she was 90 years old. She complained that her hearing was not as good as it used to be, although she admitted that she seldom missed a compliment. She lived on the farm with Martha and Rikard, still tending her own garden.

She still could recall those first lonely days on the farm. But mostly she remembered the happy times. She talked with tender love about her married life to the gentle stubborn Anders Rafn, who refused to take no for an answer. They had been married 41 years. She was a proud Danish woman. She was also a pioneer, but not by choice. She came to Canada with no English and no experience, but with a heart full of love and understanding. Perhaps the very best ballast to bring to the New World.

*Edmonton 1989*  
*1989/Part 1/146*



# Martinus K. Larsen

1870–1943

ROLF BUSCHARDT CHRISTENSEN

Many of the old Danes in Ottawa still remember Mr. Martinus Larsen, as they stayed with him and his wife Helga, at their home at 113 Nelson Street, when they first came to Ottawa. In the 1920s, many Danish immigrants stayed at the Larsen's house when they first arrived in Ottawa. Their home was not an official boarding house, but they always seemed to have several Danish men staying at their house. An added attraction was the Larsen's two daughters Ellen and Margaret.

By trade Larsen was a butcher. He worked for O. Leclair Ltd., butchers and wholesale pork packers, in the Byward Market. Indeed, it was because he was a butcher that he had come to Canada. Martinus Larsen left Denmark in 1893, to come to work for the Canadian Packing Company in London, Ontario.

In the early 1890s, it seemed that London, Ontario, might be a good place to locate a pork packing plant. The aim was to establish a plant, which could export pork to Great Britain. Increasingly, pork to Britain was being supplied by Denmark; but if Canada could also develop a pork export industry, the trade could at least be retained within the Empire. As the Danes were very efficient pork producers, it was decided to invite some Danes to join in this venture.

Mr. Francis E. Barnes of London, England, supplied the capital to start the Canadian Packing Company, and a Dane with extensive knowledge of the pork packing business, Mr. John H. Ginge, who also invested money in the company, was named manager. The Hon. John Carling, MP for London, and a former Minister of Agriculture laid the corner stone of the packing plant in February 1893.

Mr. Ginge had recruited most of the employees in Denmark, and in Pottersburg, and the plant had CPR tracks on one side of the complex, and Grand Trunk Railway tracks on the other. The Danes all lived in Pottersburg, and Pottersburg therefore has the distinction of constituting the first large Danish settlement in Ontario.

One of the butchers who came over to work in the Canadian Packing Company was Martinus Kobber Larsen, now in his 23rd year. He was employed both as a butcher and as a sausage-maker. Martinus Larsen took a liking to his boss's maid, and in 1896, he married Helga Buchwald, a farm girl from the Hjørring area.



Just after the turn of the century, Larsen was promoted to foreman. He was a popular and respected foreman, and at Christmas time in 1904, the employees of the Canadian Packing Company, presented Larsen with a gold watch. Martinus Larsen eventually left the packing plant, and for many years he ran a hotel in Arva, a small community eight kilometres north of London

Then came the First World War and prohibition, which brought an end to his hotel business in Arva. Larsen then worked for the W. Harris & Co. Abbatoir in Toronto, which in addition to slaughtering, manufactured hides, glue and sausage casings. It was an experience he never forgot, as the stink at the abbatoir was terrible.

After the War he tried his luck in Montreal, but in 1921 he returned to Ontario. He got a job as a butcher in the Bayward Market in Ottawa, and found a place to live on St. Patrick Street, within walking distance of the Market. The following year he moved into a three-story home at 113 Nelson Street, also in Lower Town, where he lived for the rest of his life. This address was to become quite well known, as the many Danish immigrants who came to Ottawa in the 1920s would stay with the Larsen's. Often half a dozen boarders would be staying at the Larsen's, and Mr. Larsen loved talking to them and playing cards with them. His wife, Helga, was kept busy looking after the boarders, and she was extremely good at finding jobs for them, either on a farm in the Ottawa Valley or at a local dairy. Others got jobs in lumber mills, or mines further north.

On New Years Eve in 1924, ten young men presented the Larsen's with a beautiful wooden cabinet wall clock. Accompanying the wall clock was a letter to the Larsen family: »Vi takker Dem mange gange for hvad De og Deres gæstfrie hjem har været for os i det forgangne år. Samtidig håber vi at dette uhr må udmåle mange lykkelige timer for Dem og Deres i den tid som kommer.« The letter was signed by Aage Gustavsen, Svend Hansen, Holger Rørstrøm, Aage Andreassen, Hans Schrøder, Valdemar Østerling, Poul Aage Hansen, Johannes Rasmussen, Lauritz Clemmensen and Vagn Tang.

When John Brown arrived in Ottawa in 1925, he first lived at the Larsen's. John Brown, who had changed his name from Jørgen Brun, remembers Mr. Larsen making »rullepølse« and other Danish specialities in the basement of the house. John Brown worked at Beach Foundry, and here other Danes, such as Carl Hein, Carl Andersen, Aage Charles Gustavsson, Charles Hansen and Robert Meyer, joined him.

The Danes in Ottawa often got together for parties or other social events. They arranged big parties, picnics and church services. They called it The Danish Club. The Club, however, was not a formal organization which was incorporated, and which held annual general meetings accord-

ing to written bylaws. The Club's impact on the larger community was marginal, even though it meant much to the Danes who participated.

Yet, during World War II, the Danish Club in Ottawa was honoured by a visit of His Excellency Henrik Kauffmann, Denmark's »ambassador« to the United States, who told the Danes in Ottawa why he no longer followed instructions from the government in Denmark. They fully supported his position. The Danes in wartime Ottawa also contributed money to The Danish Relief Fund, headed by Pastor Wilhelm Beck in Montreal.

During the War, the Danish ladies in Ottawa formed a Knitting Club, donated the knitted items to the Canadian Red Cross. Helga Larsen was one of the twenty members of the Knitting Club. After the War, Helga knitted for an orphanage in Denmark.

It was during the War that Martinus Larsen was struck by a streetcar on Rideau Street on a dark rainy October evening in 1943. He died from severe head injuries in the General Hospital two and a half days later. Helga Larsen lived until May 1965, when she passed away at the age of 87.

All of Martinus and Helga's brothers and sisters left Denmark to come to Canada or the United States. Martinus, son of Hans Larsen, had a sister, Camilla, who married a Mr. Gilmour in London, Ontario. A brother, Niels H. Larsen, had settled in California. Helga, daughter of Otto F. Buchwald, was one of eight children. Her mother died June 1891, and her father in July 1894, when Helga was only 16 years old. The children were separated after losing both parents, Helga going to work as a domestic for Mr. Ginge in London, Ontario, where at one point also lived two of her sisters and three brothers. Her youngest brother, Otto Buchwald became one of the pioneers in the Danish Settlement of Standard, Alberta.

Martinus and Helga Larsen were active members of the Danish community in Ottawa; for a long time in many ways, activities centred on their home. They did much for the Danes, particularly the newly arrived immigrants. For that they will always be remembered.

*1985/Part 1/40*

# Gustav and Anna Berg

GRETE DAHL

This is a sketch of Gustav and Anna Berg's life experiences, as interpreted through their youngest grandchild from a variety of sources. Perhaps, what was atypical about their emigration was their age. They were in their early 50s in 1929. Since their three oldest children had already sailed to Canada a few years before, it seems that their life plans had been made for them, if they wished to keep their family together.

Gustav Berg was born in København in 1873. His adoptive parents, Anders and Karen Rasmussen, brought him to Bonderup as an infant. Anders Rasmussen was a brewmaster, who owned and operated a brewery in Bonderup. He died in 1888. In 1895, the brewery was formed into a cooperative. In 1896, the property was sold to Gustav, on the condition that he would house and care for his adoptive mother. When Gustav was 23, he was given the job of retailer, »dueller« at the cooperative general store, where he sold everything from spades to whiskey to cigars and sugar.

In 1897, Gustav married Anna Nielsen, born in 1875, daughter of Niels Nielsen, the local carpenter. Gustav and Anna first lived at the general store, and also at Anna's parent's home nearby, when the first two children were born: Axel in 1898, and Astrid in 1900. In 1903, Gustav sold the family property to the cooperative, and bought a former »husmand« house. From here he delivered milk from the farmers to the dairy, and he also did some pig slaughtering. The family remained there for six years. The third child, Dagny was born in 1905, and the older two were ready to start their schooling in Næstelsø.

In 1912, Gustav bought a farm near Bonderup. Here mixed farming was successful, as least as far as the crops were concerned. But as the war years come upon them, great monetary and market fluctuations occurred, so I've heard the stories of granddad's sugar beet and flax catastrophes. In 1914, the youngest child, Elsie was born. She has often been told by her mother that she was a baby raised encircled by smoke rings, made by the soldiers that were required to be billeted with them during the war years. By 1924 Gustav and Anna sold their farm and again bought and ran a general store, this time in Herlufmagle. It was during these years that Anna was busy helping with the birth and care of her grandchildren. Some died at birth, or shortly afterwards. Five grandchildren were born and survived in the 1920s.

It was also in this period that the younger generation was getting restless and thinking of emigrating, for a variety of reasons. Astrid's brother-

in-law had gone to Canada, and he returned to relate his experience. Dagny married in 1927, and in the same year, she and her husband emigrated to New Brunswick.

In the meantime, Axel and Thala, who lived in Terslev, had been busy with market gardening, and raising three children. They too took their young family off to New Brunswick in the spring of 1927. They were followed a year later by Astrid and Christian and their two children, the youngest daughter being only three months old. However, this last family went to Aurora, Ontario, where they had friends, who had emigrated earlier. On the outskirts of Aurora, they lived and worked on a large farm with a house, which was provided to the farmhand family.

Gustav and Anna and their 15-year-old daughter arrived to this house, when they too emigrated to Canada in October 1929. Between Halifax and Toronto, Gustav and Anna made a stopover in New Brunswick, to visit Axel and Thala. Elsie recalls getting off the train in the middle of nowhere, and being driven for a long time, to a simple, cold, wooden house, where they slept in the rafters. When she woke up in the morning, and saw only bush and snow on the frozen ground, her first wish was to return to Denmark. If Anna or Gustav questioned the sanity and wisdom of this move, it was done in their own quiet thoughts. Their expectation was to spend about five years in Canada, and then return to Denmark, a plan that sounds all too familiar, but never materializes. Alas, they were to spend the last half of their life just north of Toronto, never to see Denmark again.

In 1930, Gustav and Christian were renting and farming together at Bayview and Wellington, near Aurora. At this time, Astrid's third child was born. Gustav and Anna later rented a small farm in King's City. In 1936, they rented an 80 acres farm a mile north of Maple, where they remained until 1945.

During those first years of the 1930s, Axel and Thala left New Brunswick, and came to Ontario, where they had their fourth daughter. Dagny had separated from her husband, and gone west with Alfred Jensen, Christian's brother, but eventually, they also came to Ontario. So now Gustav and Anna had all their children and grandchildren nearby, where they have generally remained to the present.

The years in Maple are the most memorable for myself. It was in 1937, that Elsie married Gustav Dahl, and they lived with Anna and Gustav in the large farmhouse, still without hydro, for some of those first years, when their two children were young. That is, my brother and I. The two of us were the two youngest grandchildren, and again Anna was looking after the small ones. Some of my fondest memories are of the berry picking outings with picnic lunches, and taking coffee to granddad out in the fields.

My grandparents, Anna and Gustav, never learned English, a great frustration for them; but for us, Danish became our first language.

It was during these years that a close tie with St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church in Toronto was established. Danes in Toronto have established St. Ansgar's Church in the 1920s. Several church picnics were held on the Berg farm, and also at Chris and Astrid's farm in Woodbridge, and later at Kleinberg. Anna and Gustav were part of a network of stalwart supporters of the Church in this period, and later of the DKU Danish Lutheran Church, and remained so for the rest of their lives.

Gustav and Anna Berg finally retired to a small house in Richvale, with a large garden, which they both loved. They were much occupied with entertaining family and friends at birthdays and anniversaries. Many Danish friends took the bus from Toronto for afternoon coffee under the old apple tree. Anna was most diligent in keeping track of birthdays as more and more grandchildren appeared. Life was not always joyous in these times. It was in the late 1950s, when their son Axel, was killed in a tractor accident, and Dagny and her son both died of cancer.

The last of the annual family picnics that my grandparents attended together after 67 years of marriage was in 1965, at Chris and Astrid's farm in Bright, Ontario. Gustav died in 1966. Anna lived in a small house beside Elsie and Gustav in Richmond Hill, where she maintained some degree of independence. Anna Berg died in 1971.

As I look back on their life and the photos of the many places they lived, I'm dismayed by the fact that here just north of Toronto, there is little, if anything, remaining of their farm and homes. But I am grateful that I can pay a visit to their village in Denmark, and see their farms and houses, as they left them. It is a reminder of the vast social, economic and technological changes they experienced in their lifetime, and the speed at which our own environment is changing.

*1989/Part 1/88*

# Carl Christiansen

## *Family Business Marks 70 Years*

ESTHER THESBERG

Credit without a credit rating and without interest, that was only one of many services that the general stores provided Western Canada's early settlers. Christiansen's store in the Danish colony of Dickson, 20 miles west of Innisfail, Alberta, is no exception. That store played an indispensable role in the lives of the early settlers, supplying them with bare necessities, accepting payment in eggs, butter, cream, cheques, or extending credit until such a time as payment could be made.

The sales record book dates back to the store's opening on May 24, 1909. On entry shows Axel Lundgren paying 25 ø for a hammer. Other sales listed are: eight yards of Print for 1 dollar, two yards of gingham for 30 ø, two pounds of coffee for 30 ø, lady's hose for 25 ø, and men's hose for 26 ø. A lamp chimney cost 10 ø, and a lantern sold for 45 ø. Castor Oil was 10 ø a bottle, size five shoes was one dollar and eighty, a pair of rubbers were 75 ø, and a hat pins sold for 10 ø. On June 3rd, Mr. A. Laurtsen was credited one dollars and a half for seven and a half dozen eggs and one dollar and sixty for some potatoes. Tobacco for five or ten cents and the rare mention of candy for five cents seem to be the only luxuries sold.

Many memories are connected with the old general store; men sitting on nail kegs talking, while the women did their frugal shopping. The tobacco-chewing males often missed their aim at the wood box, hitting the old airtight heater, making a sizzling sound and a potent smell, all part of our childhood.

On Carl Christiansen's birthday, no child was absent from school, unless they were desperately ill, because that day all the pupils paraded down to the store, where Carl's treat awaited us, we were allowed to choose a chocolate bar, a whole bar for ourselves. The delight of biting into that bar after a whole year's anticipation was a never-forgotten treat.

The Christiansen family lived upstairs, above the store and Post Office. They were one of the first families in the district to have a radio with a large trumpet-like loudspeaker, a great improvement on the crystal sets with the earphones. It was not unusual for the Christiansen's to invite the teacher and all the pupils upstairs to hear a special radio program. Mrs Christiansen always had a treat for everyone before they returned to the classroom.

When Carl and Laura's sons Homo and Gordon became old enough to help in the store, the name of the business was changed to *Carl*



*Christiansen and Sons*. Upon Carl's death in 1945, the firm's name was changed to *Christiansen Bros.* and continued as such until Homo died. Gordon and his wife, Helen, then carried on the family business, again naming it *Christiansen's Store*. There is no evidence of younger members of the Christiansen's family continuing the family business. So Gordon and Helen's retirement will mark the end of an era in rural history.

The above article was written by the undersigned in the fall of 1979, on the occasion of the official closing of the Christiansen General store. For several years it seemed that the old store would definitely disappear from rural scene. Vandals broke windows; a hailstorm damaged the roof. The Christiansen's made minor repairs, but for what purpose, for the property was to be sold and then without doubt, the building would be demolished. So the old store continued to stand guard at the corner of the Dickson intersection, seemingly forgotten.

In the summer of 1985, some ridiculous rumours concerning the old store began to surface. Some people suggested that it should be restored as a museum to preserve the history of the first Danish settlement on the Canadian Prairies. The store was no longer forgotten. It became the subject of many heated discussions. Photographers, plus Museum and Alberta Culture officials tramped through it, tamping walls, peering into every nook and cranny, until the verdict was confirmed, the building was indeed restorable. Now the old store received more publicity than it had during the 79 years since it had been built. Pictures of it were published in newspapers and periodicals across Canada and in Denmark. It was even in local TV.

Old general stores have been moved into such places as Heritage Park in Calgary, and to the well-known Ukrainian Village. But Alberta Culture people maintain that the Dickson store is the only general store in Alberta to be restored on its original site.

Finally after much planning and work by the Danish Heritage Society of Dickson, and invaluable guidance, plus grants from Alberta government agencies, the store was placed on a new foundation and stabilized in the fall of 1987.

The store now stands awaiting further funding to complete its restoration. It has seen many changes since 1909, and it knows that those of lasting worth take time. So it patiently waits to begin a new and different era of service. Will this new era of service include the whole hamlet of Dickson?

*February 1988*  
*1988/Part 1/139*

# Pastor Peter Rasmussen

## *Dalum's first Pastor*

BIRGIT LANGHAMMER

Pastor Peter Rasmussen was a central figure in the Danish colony of Dalum, Alberta, near Drumheller, for 35 years, from 1920 to 1955. He was a farmer, as well as a minister, and shared many of the hardships of the early pioneers with his parishioners.

Peter Rasmussen was born on a small farm in Denmark in February 1877, one of four children. He had had very little formal education, when at the age of 17 he decided to emigrate to the United States. He spent three years in Cleveland, Ohio, working in an uncle's greenhouses. In 1897, he went back to Denmark, but returned a year later to the U.S., where he decided to study for the ministry at Grandview College in Des Moines, Iowa. Until 1920, when he was called to Dalum, Alberta, Pastor Rasmussen served as minister in Easton, California, in Sheffield, Illinois and in Grant, Michigan. He was always interested in the folk school movement, and was for a time the principal of Ashland Folk School in Michigan.

After negotiations with the new congregation in Dalum, Pastor Rasmussen accepted the call on January 1, 1920. In May 1920 Pastor Rasmussen, his wife Kathrine (Appel) and their seven children arrived in Dalum, which was to be home until 1952. Dalum at that time did not yet have a school, so the first year the pastor with help from his oldest son, Karl, taught the school-aged children of the community.

In the summer of 1921, the first »Folkefest« was held in Dalum, with Pastor Rasmussen being the driving force. This three-day gathering of the Danish farmers in the area for lectures, singing, devotions, and good fellowship became an annual event. During the winter month, the Rasmussen home was the centre for the annual Folk School, where sometimes 40 to 50 people gathered for a week of instruction in history, literature etc.

Some of the highlights of the pastor's and the congregation's life include: the laying of the cornerstone of Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Dalum on September 8, 1929; the dedication of the church on September 20-21, 1936; the installation of the church bell, shipped in 1938, from Vartov Church, Copenhagen, Denmark. In 1939, services in English were introduced, once a month, and gradually over the years the services changed from the Danish to the English language.

In 1952, Pastor Rasmussen tendered his resignation, but due to difficulties in finding a replacement, he continued to serve the Dalum congregation until 1955, although now living in Drumheller. After the death of



his wife, Kathrine, in April 1956, the Pastor sold his home in Drumheller, and moved to a suite in the Bethany Home in Calgary, a home built by Danish Lutherans. Until his death, he served as Chaplain for the home, and a minister for a small Danish congregation in Calgary.

Pastor Peter Rasmussen died November 10, 1963, in his 87th year, in the General Hospital in Calgary. He is buried in the Bethlehem Lutheran Church Commentary; adjacent to the Dalum church he served for 35 years.

*1985/part 1/74*

# Fred Mechlenborg

## *Community Builder in Dickson—Spruce View*

ESTHER THESBERG

Fred Mechlenborg, an accomplished athlete, won several Seven-Day Bicycle Races. But he was better known as a runner, and as a winner of several marathons, both in Denmark and in Canada. Moreover, he is still remembered in the Dickson-Spruce View area as a skilled and active community builder.

Fred Mechlenborg, whose full name was Lorentz Frederik Marstrand Mechlenborg, was born on a small farm in Frisgaard Mark, near the small town of Lydum, not far from Nr. Nebel in West Jutland, on January 27, 1879. He was the eleventh of 12 children.

Fred's father, Julius, had studied pharmacy for a couple of years, but gave up before he finished his studies. At some point, Fred's father acquired a small farm at Frisgaard Mark, but he also worked as a travelling photographer. Later in life he became a »klog mand« (quack).

Fred went to sea at the age of 14, and before he was 16 years old, he had sailed around Cape Horn in South America by sailing-ship four times. Perhaps already then he thought of settling permanently in the New World.

Fred went ashore in Denmark, however, and he apprenticed as a carpenter in Tistrup, not far from his native Lydum. In about 1900, he settled in Horsens, where he worked for various shops. But it was difficult to find steady work, and instead he started repairing windmills. He even invented a better way to sift flour. Consequently he started his own little shop for repairing and improving windmills. But it was a dying business, as most windmills at the time were being motorized. It was while he lived in Horsens that he began to compete in bicycle races, soon becoming the fastest cyclist in Horsens. He also began running competitively.

In 1905, however, Fred Mechlenborg and one of his older brothers decided to try their luck in Canada. They both left their wife and children behind. They sailed from Hamburg to St. John. Fred went west, and settled in the Danish settlement of Dickson, Alberta, which had just been founded a couple of years before by Danes from Omaha, Nebraska.

Fred Mechlenborg, who was better known in Dickson as Fred Mechlenberg, obtained a homestead. But to make money and thus improve the homestead as required he was in the beginning forced to work in the forest, felling trees. He was nevertheless unable financially to send for his wife and three children in Denmark. His wife too was not able to get

enough money together for the trip to Canada. Eventually they were divorced, and she remarried. Fred, however, never remarried.

In the beginning he bred horses in Dickson. But the local farmers were switching to tractors. Fred then bred cattle, but with little success. Old-timers still remember how he lived in squalid conditions, assisted by a notoriously filthy housekeeper, who kept many cats. Although he could not be called a successful farmer, by normal standards, Fred Mechlenborg was an outstanding and active member of the community. For instance, Fred was the first president of Dickson Drainage District, an organization that levied taxes to pay for the establishment of a large system of ditches to drain lands. Farming and indeed living (just take transportation across flooded roads and fields) would have been nearly impossible without draining the land. Indeed Drainage District helped make Dickson the productive and fertile farming community it is today.

Fred Mechlenborg also put his carpenter skills to good use in Dickson. He was chief carpenter when Spruce-View Hall was built in 1937. He was also foreman for much of the road building in the area. He helped establish the first School District of Spruce View. In fact, it was Fred Mechlenborg and Stanley Stigings who built the first Spruce View School in 1913, at a cost of 860 dollars.

He also sat on various boards, being one of the first directors on the Spruce View Co-Op Board. For many years he served as Councillor in the Poplar Grove Municipal District.

Fred also continued his athletic activities in Canada. He entered The Calgary Herald Marathon Race several times, winning at least on the three occasions. Once, in spite of having tripped over a dog, he obtained the best per mile speed, but lost on overall time. The last recorded race he participated in was in 1909. But he had to withdraw before finish, as he was coming down with »Flu«, and was running a rather high temperature.

There is no other record of him running competitively. But old-timers still talk about Fred's athletic feats. When he needed a horse that was out to pasture, instead of roping it or chasing it into a corral, he would run after the horse until it was all tired out and easy to handle.

My younger sister, Thora, remembers looking out the window one forenoon, and seeing what she thought was a young lad running into the yard and jumping right over the high farm gate. On closer observance, she realized it was Mechlenborg, who was well into his 70s at that time.

Stanley Stevens, a neighbour's boy, who made a name himself in High School Marathon Races throughout Western Canada during 1960s, credits his success to Fred Mechlenborg's training. In 1953, when he was 74 years old, he visited Denmark, and *Vestkysten* in Esbjerg interviewed him. In the early 1960s, he again returned to Denmark for a visit. A few years later

he decided to live out his remaining years in his native land, settling in Horsens, where his three children, Karen, Kaj and Regnar lived.

He died in Horsens at the age of 90, on August 1, 1969. Though he lived a very frugal life without luxuries, he was a man of dignity with an erect carriage and a courtly manner. In the Dickson, Spruce View areas there are many practical memorials to Fred Mechlenborg, a devoted community builder. Here he is still remembered.

*Additional background information for this short biographical sketch was obtained from The Glenbow Museum and Archives in Calgary, The Danish Emigration Archives in Aalborg, and from the City Archives in Horsens.*

*1987/Part 1/174*

# Agnes Christensen

KARL SØRENSEN

When I talked with Agnes Christensen about getting together with her for an interview, I learned, that it was quite a problem to fit me into her busy schedule, but after several postponements I finally met with her one Friday afternoon. I arrived at her apartment to find her busy baking a »Friendship Cake«, and asked me to just relax while she went to some of her neighbours with her cake recipe. When she returned, she admitted to being a little tired, as she had been to a dinner and dance the night before, and her face glowed with excitement, as she relived her moments of glory, when she was waltzing across the dance floor. At 96 years of age she possesses energy and vitality, which anyone, a full generation younger would be proud to have. But then her life has always been a hectic one, full of fun and adventure.

Born in Hjørring, Denmark in 1888, she came to Canada in 1907, persuaded by her fiancé, Emil Christensen, whom she married in 1909. Her first impression of Winnipeg is still vivid in her mind. The walk from the Canadian Pacific station to Norwood area, where she lived the first years. Determined to learn as quickly as possible, Agnes would try and pronounce every street name on this first walk in Canada, and she would memorize the names, so that she could find her way around on her own. Being independent has always been important to Agnes, and she still prides in being self-reliable, and doing everything herself.

In 1911 Agnes' and Emil's first daughter, Esther, was born, and at around the same time the Danish Brotherhood of Manitoba took roots, an organization in which both Agnes and Emil, and later their five daughters, played a very important part. Meetings and parties were held in the old Scott Memorial Hall on Princess Street. Agnes was a great organizer, and she soon became a central figure in the Brotherhood. She was also in charge of making the food and remembers with a mixture of pride and dismay the time she single-handed made over 350 pieces of »smørebrød« for a party.

Family picnics were an important part of the Brotherhood's activities in those days, and Agnes was an enthusiastic participant, both in the planning and in the various games, and racing was her favourite event. She was a fast runner, and usually came in first, until she discovered that a pound of tea was the first prize, and a pound of coffee was second prize. Well, Agnes likes coffee better than tea, and so she would slow down just before the finish line and let someone else win, so that she could get her coffee.

When the Danish Church was build on Bannerman Avenue, Agnes and her family became very much a part of the church and the congregation. Here Agnes' talents were also in big demand, and she remained a faithful supporter till the church was sold in 1960. She has many fond memories from the church and today, herself, her daughter Esther, and two other ladies from the old congregation, still meet once a month for a game of cards and some reminiscence.

With the outbreak of the second World War, Agnes became involved with the Red Cross, and one of her many duties was to meet Danish service men, who came over for training, and make sure they were all billeted into homes, and well taken care of. A task that earned her *King Christian X Medal of Honour*.

Of her many hobbies, bowling is one of her favourites, and for 44 years she belonged to the same bowling league. She had hoped to make it 45 years, but last year she resigned from the league, as it became a bit too tiring, but she still enjoys a game now and then, when a spare is needed. The many trophies gracing a shelf in her kitchen, tells of her sure hand in this sport.

Last year Agnes moved into the new Lions Place, and as the oldest person there, she is also one of the busiest. She participates in most of the activities in the building, and she is not shy about taking anybody on for a game of shuffleboard or a game of cribbage, a game she recently learned to master, and she welcomes the opportunity for a party and a dance. When she took me on a tour of the building, I sensed the feeling of admiration and respect from everyone we met. She was like a queen in her palace, and with her graciousness and regal posture, she could easily pass for one. Her cozy little apartment reflects her personality, warm and inviting. Beautiful arts and ornaments grace the rooms, and many pieces carry fond memories of times long ago. Her concern about whether her grandchildren and great grandchildren will appreciate the sentimental values of her treasures is understandable. She talks proudly about her family. She lost one daughter and her husband passed away almost ten years ago, but she still has four daughters, all living in Winnipeg, five grandchildren, and eleven great grandchildren. One grandson is living in Australia, and a couple of years ago, she made the long trip down under to visit. She still hopes to go back home to Denmark for a visit some day, and if somebody will go with her, she will not hesitate to go.

Agnes likes to be with people, young and old, and if at all possible she will come out to most of the events in our Danish Club, whether they are children's parties or a film evening, just as long as there is a chance to enjoy herself and to have a chat with an old friend or a new acquaintance over a cup of coffee. Her contribution to the Danish Community and to

society as a whole is a great inspiration to us all, and we are indeed fortunate to have her among us.

*March 1985*  
*1985/Part 1/61*



# Laurids Lewis Jessen

HANS KARL JESSEN

Who was L. L. Jessen? He was born on a farm, near Esbjerg, Denmark, on February 12, 1890 and named Laurids Jessen. He was the fourth of seven children born to Karen and Morten Jessen. The name Lewis he added later because, as he said, »nobody could pronounce Laurids in Canada«, so here his name was Lewis. His Danish friends called him Laurids, and on all correspondence he wrote L.L. Jessen.

Laurids grew up with little formal education, but he did inherit and acquired a high level of natural intelligence. His home environment and the simple farmers way of life taught him to be conservative and tight fisted with his money. It also taught him the value of hard work. His mother was widowed in 1902, when Laurids was 12, and she hired a friend to manage the farm. Life became very bitter for Laurids in the following years because of his open dislike for this manager and in 1906, at the age of 16, he decided to emigrate.

He and a brother of his childhood sweetheart left together. They went by boat from Esbjerg to England. This was the first time he had been away from home. On the boat he overheard some people talking and decided that English would be an easy language to learn. He discovered later that he had overheard Swedish, not English.

They eventually landed at Ellis Island, New York, and by chance found their way to a farm somewhere in the eastern USA, where they worked for a couple of years. Much later, he described those two years as the hardest time in his life because of the very inhuman treatment he received. Next they went by train and worked here and there until they finally arrived in California, where they also worked odd jobs for a while.

The two decided to travel north and found lumber jacking jobs in Oregon. About that time they split and Laurids somehow ended up in Canada. His endeavours in the early years in Vancouver are unknown, but he did try to join the Danish settlement located at Cape Scott near the northern point of Vancouver Island. Laurids drifted on from there and got a job surveying in the area around Telegraph Creek. He earned wages as a packer who had to carry supplies on his back to remote camps and cutting survey lines through the bush. He explained that one summer he was only dry three days. All the other days that year it rained or the trees were wet, so he was drenched when he slashed with his machete.

The telegraph line through that area was originally constructed as a link to Europe, but at that time it was used for other purposes. During winter, he maintained telegraph lines that entailed hiking on snowshoes

for miles and miles to locate a break, if the connection was lost. Along the line he could overnight in small huts when needed. In 1913, he built the Jessen Ranch on the upper Nass River. This was a venture in between other jobs. In his spare time, he learned English from books and developed an excellent command of the language. Later in life, he took great pride in his ability to speak English and Danish without any trace of a foreign accent in either language. Very few people can do that.

When World War I broke out, he was drafted into a unit of the Canadian Army. He was soon promoted to corporal, due to his gymnastic training and athletic ability obtained from his Danish school training and he became an instructor of new recruits. These were the boys soon to be sent to the trenches in France. He used to say that this promotion saved his life because the losses in those units he first belonged to were very great and none of the non-commissioned officers survived.

Near the end of the war, the Government decided to send troops to Vladivostok to assist the White Armies of the counter-revolution in Russia. He held the rank of sergeant by then, but he never did see active combat.

After 13 years of a very hard and lonely life he was homesick and wanted to return through Russia to Denmark. The Russian revolution made that impossible and he had to return to Vancouver, where he was discharged from the Army.

Later as a civilian he found employment with *Boyles Bros. Ltd.*, which was an exploration and diamond drilling company. Since he had been an army officer, promotion became easier and he worked his way up the ladder. When he worked as a foreman with a crew in an isolated area, he would at normal bedtime go into the beer parlours and round up his workers, either chase them to bed or put them to bed, so they would be ready for work in the morning. He used to say that it took a strong man to do that, but they had made certain promises before they got the jobs. His company was doing a contract job for the Panama Canal. His chance came when they suddenly needed a new manager on this project and Laurids was asked to take charge.

He managed that project until the contract was completed, and he returned to Vancouver and to *Boyles Bros.* Laurids had become an important person with the company. With his mechanical aptitude he deplored the performance of the diamond drills they were using and he now was in a position to make changes. He redesigned the diamond drilling machines and invented new designs for much more efficient drilling performance. *Boyles Bros* patented those inventions. The owner of *Boyles Bros.* died suddenly and, after some time working for his widow, Laurids purchased the company from her.

Diamond drilling machinery was not very common back then and Laurids continued to obtain contracts in all parts of the world, doing surveys and drilling mainly for mining firms who needed that service. In old family albums in Denmark, they have dated photos and postcards received from him, when he was in South Africa in 1928 and 1929 and again in 1937, in Newfoundland also in 1929, in Australia in 1933, in the Philippines in 1934, in Honolulu and in Japan in 1935, in Ceylon and in Singapore in 1936. In British Columbia he did diamond drilling work for the biggest mining companies, such as *Anaconda* in Britannia Beach and *Pioneer Mines* in Bralorne and many other mining projects right across Canada.

Here in Vancouver he surveyed and drilled the foundation at the south end for the Lions Gate Bridge, when it was first built. All *Boyles Bros.* equipment was produced and repaired at the company machine shop at Clark Drive in Vancouver.

On his business travels all over the world, he detoured twice to visit family in Denmark. First time in 1929, after being away for 23 years and again in 1937. Evidence that he was a strong man was shown that last year, when he carried his mother in his arms up three flights of stairs. His mother had become too feeble to walk the stairs for a visit to her family, who lived up high in an apartment building, and I remember my grandmother as an average size woman. For the family this was a most memorable visit by the farm boy who had made it good in America.

In May 1935, he married his childhood sweetheart Agnes, who also had found her way to Vancouver. Agnes was always ready with lots of good food and hospitality for the many visitors, whether invited guests or people on business. She was a very proficient housekeeper and their home was open to many.

On September 23, 1931, Laurids was appointed by the Danish Government as an unpaid Consul in Vancouver for British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. He held that honorary position until March 9, 1939. He remained as acting Consul until January 9, 1946, when the Vancouver representative for the *East Asiatic Company* was appointed.

As Consul, he helped many Danish immigrants over obstacles in their new country. This was particularly so during the years of the great depression in the 1930's. Through his connections he found jobs for many unemployed Danes.

For his services he was in 1947 honoured with the *King Christian X Liberty Medal*. In 1937, Laurids was instrumental in getting the first Danish Lutheran Church built in Vancouver. He guaranteed a bank loan for 1000 dollars, so construction could start. The church council was hoping that the promised help from Laurids would be in form of a big cheque. His

friend loved to tell that his way of helping was to show up dressed as a labourer and, as such, he put in as much effort as anybody. Laurids was a very diligent and good worker.

The church was completed and it remained a place of worships for Danes until 1984, that year it was sold after a new church was built in Burnaby.

While in the tropics he became sick with malaria and, in later years, there was a resurgence of the effects of that illness. For health reasons, he sold his company to four of his employees in 1938. During the war, however, he carried on as a consultant and emissary for the Company. War-time spoiled all his travel plans, so he bought a farm located on one section of land south of Cloverdale and operated it for about 2 years. It soon became very difficult to obtain help, so he sold this farm and bought a small farm in Surrey. He also had a house on Cedar Crescent, Vancouver and they made their home alternately in both of those places.

His mother had passed away in 1937, shortly after his visit in Denmark and about that time he purchased his childhood home, which he owned during the war.

In 1946, Agnes and Laurids considered moving to Denmark and they sold their holdings in Canada. They purchased and moved into a big house in Esbjerg, near the pastures he knew so well. In 1948, they traded all holdings in Esbjerg for a big farm named *Gørdinglund* located about 25 km east of Esbjerg, and they lived on this magnificent estate for a few years.

During that time they also visited in Vancouver each year and each visit became longer and longer because they both had deep roots in Canada, and soon they resided permanently in the apartment building they had purchased on Davie Street.

They sold *Gørdinglund* to Agnes' brother in the late fifties. In 1937, he had noticed how retirement homes were provided for the elderly in Denmark. He decided to bring this concept to Canada where he knew the need was great. He discussed this with Danish friends in Vancouver; after much planning they agreed to proceed. An association was formed and a Board of Directors, with Laurids as President, was elected in 1941. Later they purchased a big house and farm buildings on 4.3 acres of land in Burnaby, where Dania Home is now located and they had it incorporated on February 12, 1942.

A start was made when a few elderly Danes, in need of shelter, moved into the farmhouse where they initially did housekeeping for themselves. Years later, a matron was hired to clean and cook, and new wings were added to the original building. Money for all this and future construction was raised by prolific effort of the Ladies Auxiliary and by donations.

Laurids liked to socialize with people and, having been a Consul for many years, he knew a lot of Danes all over British Columbia and Western Canada. He solicited those Danes who had done well and asked them to testament funds for Dania Home. It made his friends smile when they talked about this after his death, because he did not leave anything for Dania Home in his own will. Other people obliged, and today the best known of all donors is Carl Mortensen, who now has a manor named after him. His bequest to the association, later named Dania Home, was used in the original purchase of the 4.3-acre farm mentioned above. The biggest philanthropist was Karl Andersen, a Danish friend known as the founder of the city of Prince George. He left by far the largest monetary gift of all the donors and Laurids said that he was lucky to get that bequest before others received it. This gift enabled them to add a complete wing in the fifties. By almost doubling the number of residents and cash flow, this addition brought close to economic balance to Dania Home. Up to that time, Dania Home was not able to operate without financial assistance.

In those early years there was a very strong interest in Dania Home, mainly because it was a private enterprise without any Government support or influence. All members were, with good reasons, very proud of what had been accomplished and it was said to be the first home for seniors started by an Association anywhere in Canada. Many volunteers donated plants, materials and the necessary time to keep up the grounds and buildings. Laurids was the leader in those efforts and when in Vancouver, he was always doing something for the Home. He and his wife Agnes had vivacious personalities and liked to meet people and they held yearly promotion parties usually at their farm or at a downtown Hotel. Many of his close friends, who were the first Directors, told me that without his initiative Dania Home would never have been started at that time.

The Scandinavian Businessmen's Club is today an active organization in Vancouver. In a 1989 membership newsletter it is stated that, the seed to start this Club was sown by the Danish Consul Mr. Jessen in 1946.

On April 3, 1947, Laurids was initiated as member #221 of Vancouver Lodge #328 of the Danish Brotherhood in America. At a meeting of the Lodge on February 3, 1953, he raised a suggestion that the Lodge should contact the other Lodges in British Columbia. There were then three lodges: Prince George, Port Alberni and Vancouver, with a view to obtaining their opinion of forming in Canada an organization comparable to the American dominated Danish Brotherhood in America. That dream was fulfilled in 1981, when the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada was established. Laurids was never very active in the Lodge. His main interest, in terms of service was Dania Home after it got started. He was doing something or other for Dania Home almost every day for the rest of his

life. Laurids Jessen died in his home, just as he arrived home after shopping downtown on February 4, 1960, eight days before his 70th birthday. His funeral was held at the church he helped to build and he is buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Burnaby.

*I came to Canada in 1957 and enjoyed the privilege of getting to know my uncle the last few years of his life.*

1999/211

# Signe (Madsen) Larsen

ROSE A. JENSEN

Ninety-four years ago, on March 12, 1891, in a small house on a new land farm in the colony of New Denmark, New Brunswick a baby girl was born and was named Signe. She was the sixth child in a family of ten who were born to Johanna and Christen Madsen who had come to Canada from Denmark in 1882. Signe grew up and attended school, completing the eighth grade in the one—room country school known as Blue Bell School. Then she joined her older sister Matilda who was nursing in a hospital in Lewiston, Maine. There Signe attended Bliss Business College, and after graduation she worked for a year in a department store in Lewiston. In 1911, at the age of 20, she came home and married a local young man, Hans Larsen, who had come to Canada from Denmark in 1896 with his parents, and who had already bought a farming business, later converted to a potato farm, and with much hard work and careful planning they were able to build a new barn in 1917, and to replace their old farmhouse with a spacious, new and comfortable house in 1920.

Hans and Signe Larsen raised a fine family of four sons, all of whom are still living and all are now senior citizens: Philip is now retired and living in Barrie, Ontario. Donald owns an electrical contracting business in Woodstock, New Brunswick. Jens is farming on the homestead farm in New Denmark. Kenneth, retired after 42 years employment with Canada Packers Co., is living in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Signe Larsen has always been very active in church and community affairs. She has been a member of New Denmark Women's Institute for 71 years and has been awarded Life Membership in New Brunswick Women's Institute. She has also been an active member of New Denmark Historical Society for 25 years.

Signe is now a resident of the New Brunswick Women's Institute Home in Woodstock, New Brunswick. Her failing eyesight has made it necessary for her to give up home making, and she can no longer live alone. We her friends and neighbours miss her. We miss her gracious hospitality, her friendly smiling face, and her helping hand in our community activities. We visit her as often as we can, and she is always most interested in news from her beloved New Denmark.

Her quiet devotion to her family and her community has been a source of inspiration to us all. She was always there to help when disaster touched our lives, there to comfort us when sorrow overwhelmed us, and there to rejoice with us in our good times.



**Signe Larsen—a wonderful neighbour, a wonderful friend!**

*1985/Part 1/36*

# Marius Sorensen

## *Served Three Nations*

CLIFF BOWERING

Marius Bonde Sorensen, called M.B. Sørensen in Denmark and Mark Sorensen in Canada, died on June 16, 1980, at the age of 89. Marinus Bonde Sorensen was a man of three countries. Whether Denmark, or Canada, or England, he held each in his heart with a glowing pride and affection as fierce as they are uncommon in an age and creeping cynicism.

This much-travelled, gentle and cheerful man of 89 years served each nation faithfully and well. When one talked to Marinus Sorensen one learned something of values, self-sacrifice, faith, patriotism, selfless service and the gentle determination with which some men are blessed. Quietly, articulately, the bearded, small-statured man talked about his life. In all his years, he insisted, »providence has been kind to me«.

Born of poor country folk in the town of Vejen in Denmark, he was one of four children raised by a hard-working mother and an equally hard-working father who also was virtually blind. His father made baskets and caned chairs while his mother worked as a seamstress. That is how, without benefit of the state assistance that his father steadfastly refused to consider, the family survived.

A young Marinus Sorensen started off in the dairy business in Denmark, but a visit to the World Exhibition in Brussels convinced him that his future lay in Canada. He came to this country in 1910; first to Pembroke, Ontario, but next year moved to Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, where he managed a government creamery.

When the First World War broke out he enlisted in The Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) and served from August 1914 to May 1918. In what was known than as the Great War, Sorensen said, »Providence was kind to me again«. Almost unbelievably, he survived those terrible years in the trenches without receiving so much as a scratch.

Early in 1921, he returned to Denmark as a member of Canadian Pacific Railways colonization organization, the beginning of a 35-year association with the company. In 1929 he was appointed general agent and five years later became Scandinavian superintendent for CPR. »Never had a thing to do with trains in all those years«, he said laughing.

By this time the Sorensen family, (he had married an English girl) was well established in a lovely villa on the outskirts of Copenhagen. »In 1936, I decided that we should sell our beautiful home«, he said wistfully, »because by that time the Nazis had become very active. I had the feeling that

one morning we would wake up and see ships of the German navy off the city, which would mean the end of Denmark and the loss of our possessions. I was just three years premature in my assessment of the situation«.

The Sorensens bought a smaller house, but when the war threatened, CPR had him transferred to London, England, and it was time to sell again. Marinus took his family back to Canada, bought a house in Brome, Quebec, then returned to England and his CPR job. Later the family moved to Kingston, Ontario.

After the family moved, (Marinus had again returned to Canada), he could only find passage back to England on a CPR freighter. On that crossing—he made four altogether during the war—he shared a cabin with Quentin Reynolds who later was to gain worldwide fame as a war correspondent and broadcaster.

Back in London for a time, he again was sent to Copenhagen. Denmark was not occupied at the time and he enjoyed a certain degree of freedom. »In the office there were letters galore from CP agents in some Baltic countries who had got them through via Sweden«, he recalled. »These dealt with people who desperately needed visas from some country, including Canada, to which they could escape from Europe«. »So I went into the Baltic area to interview them. I suppose you might call them the »boat people« of that period.«

»Then I found myself cut off from a return to Denmark by normal means and began looking for ways to get out.« Again, Providence took a hand in the life of Marinus Sorensen. Providence in the form of friends. »I had some dear friends in Finland«, he recalls, »and they had learned that I was »roaming about« the Baltic area. They had a clear view of what was to come, (Russia and Finland had had their own war by this time), and arrangement were made for me to get to Finland from where passage to England aboard a small freighter had been arranged.«

Later in London, Marinus Sorensen was selected by the BBC to make broadcasts to the Danish people in their own language. Towards the end of the war he was accorded a singular honour: He was made Freeman of the City of London. That honour is bestowed neither lightly nor indiscriminately. The document that attests to this was one of his most cherished possessions.

Marinus returned to Canada in 1946 to become assistant superintendent of colonization for the CPR in Kingston. He retired in 1965. His first wife, mother of all six of his children, died after becoming ill on a trip to the west coast. His second wife, also English, was killed 10 years ago this month in a traffic accident just east of the city. He was severely injured. His eldest child, Eric, a veteran of the Canadian Intelligence Corps in the Second World War and a Queen's graduate, resides in the United States.

The only daughter, Eileen, is married to Vernon Ready, former principal of KCVI and retired dean of McArthur College. Another son, Colin, is a Kingston dentist. During the Second World War, as a member of the RCAF, he was shot down over Tunisia and spent some time as a prisoner of war in Germany. Dennis is a teacher in British Columbia, and Richard, a Queen's Counsel, is a lawyer in Ottawa. Wilfred, a graduate of McGill, is a prominent Kingston architect.

*Mark Sorensen is mentioned (and quoted) in Irving Abella and Harold Troper's book None is too many. Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948, for his efforts to save East European Jews before the war. The week before he died Kingston Whig-Standard writer Cliff Bowering interviewed him. This profile of the man and his life was published two days after his dead.*  
1987/part 1/127

# Johanne Hansen

AGNES JELHOF JENSEN

She was a tiny delicate lady when I visited her in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, in 1964. She was then 72 years old. Her wall was full of photos and memories of a long life in Canada. Her name was Johanne Hansen. She came to Canada in 1917, as the young wife of Valdemar Hansen, and although she had never been back to Denmark, she spoke Danish fluently and beautifully, without a trace of an accent. »Because you never forget your mother tongue«, she said quietly, »and you teach it to the next generation, or you have not done a proper job«, she said. She continued:

I came from Vejle and my husband came from Nakskov. We met in Copenhagen. Valdemar emigrated in 1903. He was then 17 years old and went to South Dakota. When he was home in 1916, we fell in love. He had a homestead »somewhere in Canada«. The idea was that he should return to Canada and I come later. He would then pick me up in New York. But my mother said NO! Either we married and left as a couple, or I would just forget about the trip. She had heard about Danish young men who forgot to pick up their sweethearts in New York, and the captain of the ship either brought them back to Denmark again, or he searched for and found the »forgetful« young man, hauled him on board and married the couple right then and there, whether they wanted it or not.

So we were married and started out for the farm, which was 20 miles from Mossbank, Saskatchewan. The train went as far as Mossbank. From there it was open wagon and horses. It started to rain so I opened my umbrella. But the horses had never seen such a contraption before and got scared. So I had to forget about the umbrella, and just sit there and get wet.

It certainly was a strange country. We used oxen in the fields and drove three miles every day for our water supply. There was no store right around the corner. It took me half a day to reach one, so I had better not forget anything. In 1921 we bought our first T-ford, and I learned to drive it.

We had two girls, Florence and Elizabeth. When the latter was born, I almost died. It was in deep winter, and the doctor got lost in the darkness and the snow. When he arrived Elizabeth was already two hours old, and I was almost bleeding to death. There were no midwives and the women who helped me did not know what to do.

Life on a farm in Saskatchewan was hard and we did not see great results from our endless work. Then came the drought, the dry years with no rain at all. Our cattle died. The fields were bare. Saskatchewan was one big

dust bowl. Many just left their farms. Drove off. We fought and lost. We owed the bank 80 dollars. The bank eventually took our farm.

Johanne Hansen also remembers happier days. In 1925 they went camping. They drove 500 miles in the old model T. Sometimes it caught fire, and they had to leave it alone for a while. There were hardly any roads. Just a couple of tracks now and then.

Much later, Johanne Hansen had to grieve deeply once more. Her older daughter, who by then was a teacher, was killed in an accident, a man who wanted to commit suicide hit her car in Calgary with his own car. Still the tiny delicate woman was ready to meet life on its own terms. »Canada did take a lot from us. But it also gave us great joy«.

*1988/Part 1/134*

# Erik Georg Valdemar Arntz

1896–1993

RUTH ARNTZ

My husband, Erik Georg Valdemar Arntz, was born June 22, 1896 in Holbæk, Denmark. His father, Georg C.F. Arntz, was born in Godthaab, Greenland, January 2, 1843, where Erik's grandfather was employed as the manager of the Danish government trading company *Den Kongelige Grønlandske Handel*. There were six children. When they reached school age, Erik's grandmother went with them in a sailing vessel to Copenhagen. The voyage took around seven weeks, and accommodation was very primitive. One of the ships was tied up at the Langelinie quay for many years. Erik remembers that his father showed him the cabin they sailed in.

Erik's father went to school in Helsingør. In 1863, war was brewing between Germany and Denmark. Early in 1864, Erik's father joined the Danish army as a volunteer. He did not see action, as the war already ended later that year, Germany having won the war. After the war, he took over a small brewery in Holbæk from his brother, Waldemar Arntz, who had bought it originally, but who moved to Odense, where he was offered a position at the large Albani brewery. (For more information on brewer Waldemar Arntz, see *Kraks Blå Bog* 1920).

Erik's father enlarged the buildings. He married Marie Rohde in 1889 and built a nine-room house, surrounded by a large garden. In those days, bathrooms did not exist—the toilet was in the attic, but there were two large bathtubs in the brewery with lots of hot water from the large copper kettles. Here they could take their weekly bath. Running cold water had just been installed in the kitchen.

The Arntzes were one of the prosperous families in Holbæk, and during the years 1890–1912 the business thrived. Holbæk beer was well known in the surrounding countryside, especially on the Odsherred peninsula northwest of Holbæk where the large horse-drawn wagons brought the beer to the local taverns, farms and inns. When the new railroad on Odsherred was built in 1912, *Tuborg* and *Carlsberg*, the two large breweries in Copenhagen, were able to deliver their beer by train to outlying places. This competition and then mismanagement by the master-brewer resulted in the demise of the brewery. It became a limited company in 1913, and Erik's father no longer managed the business. The shareholders appointed a new director. But after a year of mismanagement, the business was sold, and the Arntz family moved to Copenhagen.



Erik's sister, Arna, was born May 7, 1892. Erik had a lovely childhood. He and his friends had all the large gardens in Holbæk and the nearby woods to roam in. They swam and sailed in Holbæk Fjord. They did not have a care in the world. They lived in a dream world.

In the summer of 1904, when visiting his uncle and aunt in Kalundborg, on a hill overlooking the Great Belt, Erik saw the Russian fleet sailing through on its way to Korea and Japan. Another war, the Russian-Japanese, which Russia lost, most of its warships being sunk by Japan!

During the summer holidays, Erik always visited his aunt in Lønstrup on the west coast of Jutland, quite a trip in 1910. First by rail to the town of Hjørring and then by horse-drawn mail coach. He also visited his favourite aunt in Copenhagen, where one day on Købmagergade, she said »See that man over there—that's the composer Edward Grieg«. He was a square cut man in a cape and large hat. On a clear night in Holbæk in 1910, Erik saw Halley's comet. An impressive sight! One could see it for several days in succession.

From 1913 to 1915, Erik worked in a pharmacy as an apprentice from 8 am to 9 pm six days a week. But after his father's death in 1915, there seemed to be no purpose in continuing. In the first place, Erik did not have anybody to advise him, and secondly there was no money left for him to buy a pharmacy, which was the thing to do in those days. So in 1915, he joined the Danish navy, cruising on the naval vessel *Olfert Fischer* through Øresund and Storebælt for almost two years. Denmark was neutral during World War I, but had mined its waters.

After the war, Erik worked for almost two years on a large mechanized farm *Thomasminde* near Aarhus, driving a tractor. In those days many of the large farms in Denmark hired students to do the work. They got no pay, only room and board. During a holiday, Erik went to Copenhagen to see the sights. All theatres were closed, however, and he saw many funeral processions. It was 1918, the year of the influenza epidemic. Many people died. Erik also caught the disease, and had high fever for 24 hours. On his return to *Thomasminde*, nobody was working. All the boys had caught the flu, and he was the male nurse looking after them. They all got over it, except for one farmhand who died.

In 1920, in Roskilde, Erik took a trip in one of the first flying machines. It had an open cockpit. The twenty kroner trip lasted about ten minutes. They flew over the treetops, the roofs of Roskilde and circled the cathedral.

In May 1921, he decided to see the big wide world, so he left for the United States and Canada. He was hired as a sailor by the United States Shipping Board on a freighter, the *S.S. Tonnesit*, bound for Baltimore. However, shortly after having left Copenhagen, the ship ran aground in

broad daylight on the Swedish island of Hven in Øresund. Apparently the captain had fallen asleep. After several weeks in Karlskrona, Sweden, it was decided to proceed to Kiel and have the vessel repaired there, the German shipyard being cheaper. Then they sailed through the Kieler Canal to London, where they took on coal, and finally arrived in Baltimore. He stayed in Baltimore for several weeks.

Having made good money, he considered another voyage. As there was a seaman's strike and it was getting hot and humid in Baltimore, his thoughts went to Canada and his two cousins Svend and Johanne Meyer. They had a farm in Elora, Ontario, and he had promised to visit them. On the way he visited Niagara Falls. He took the *Maid of the Mist*, and suddenly found himself in Canada. He walked back across the Peace Bridge to the railway station and boarded the train (Grand Trunk Railway). When he crossed the border, he and another fellow had to get off, and an immigration officer approached him. Upon hearing that he was a farmer - he took one look at his boots—he was questioned how he had arrived in the U.S.A. upon hearing that it was on the *S.S. Tonnesit*, the man asked why he had chosen a freighter. Because I prefer to work my way across, Erik said. »That's what I say, Sonny,« the officer replied, and patted him on the back.

The farm in Elora consisted of about 100 acres. They had cattle, pigs and poultry, and they grew wheat, oats and barley. It was hard work for both Svend and Johanne, the latter working the fields as well as the vegetable garden. She also churned her own butter, which had a wonderful taste. Johanne was an educated woman who had come to Canada in 1910. It was no easy life for her. The farmhouse, a log cabin, was built around 1850. There was no water or electricity, and a large cook stove in the family room heated the house. The toilet was outside. When Erik arrived, there were four children, three more were to follow. Here Erik spent several years, first helping Svend on the farm, and later working in the local limekiln, where he made good money. It was hard work, especially during the winter (two of his fingers were crooked for the rest of his life). For a while he worked for the Kittycart factory in Elora (3-wheel carts for children, made of wood). This was easy work compared to the limekiln. He made forty dollars a week on piecework— a fortune in those days, when the average wage was sixteen dollars a week. The business prospered until carts made of metal started to arrive. Then they had to close.

Erik often went skating in Elora. One of his friends became the future Mrs. Banting. (Banting and Best were the two famous physicians, who had discovered the insulin which was a cure for diabetes that until then had been an incurable disease). Erik met Dr. Banting twice, in the train from Guelph to Elora, and later in 1926, in Banting's home, on which occasion

he also met the Canadian novelist Mazo de la Roche, the author of the *Jalna* books—and others. Dr. Banting died in 1941 on a troop transport plane off the coast of Newfoundland.

One summer in Elora, some salesmen held a picnic on the Grand River. They played games, and held a swimming competition. Many of the local boys participated. One of them ran at full speed and dived into the river. Erik noticed that he was in trouble. He jumped in and came to his rescue. The salesmen were very grateful and offered him a basket of groceries. However, Erik was too modest to accept.

During the summer of 1925, conditions were getting bad in Elora, so Erik took the excursion train to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, to help with the harvest. The fare was fifteen dollars round trip Toronto-Moose Jaw. The seats could be turned into bunk beds at night. There were blankets, but no bed linen.

Working conditions were fairly good on the first farm. But two fellow workers, a father and son from Butte, Montana, persuaded him to come with them in their car to a farm in Dundurn, a Scottish settlement. It turned out the police had just been there. The car had been stolen, and the chaps drove off fast. He worked there for a while. Then the rain set in, so he transferred to another farm near Delisle. The people there were Ukrainians. They were very poor. The whole family slept in the same room, and there were dirt floors throughout. Erik and another farmhand slept in a kind of hay silo—very primitive conditions. The roads in those days were dirt roads, and it took a long time to get from place to place. It was now the middle of November. Winter was fast approaching, so Erik decided to return to Ontario. He had heard that freight cars were going to Moose Jaw. He made his way to Rosetown, and one evening around midnight he and another chap from Guelph hid in the roundhouse for locomotives. There it was warm. Soon a freight train arrived, and they jumped onto a small platform behind one of the water tanks. Here they hung on, but it was cold. Some of the water from the tank car spilled over onto the platform and turned to ice. The train did stop once, and they got off and ran along the side of the train to get warm. They finally arrived in Moose Jaw at eight o'clock in the morning, where Erik boarded the regular CPR train for Toronto. He spent Christmas in Elora, and during the winter he worked for the CPR shovelling snow for 25 cents an hour. In the spring of 1926, he acquired a job at a large pharmacy firm in Toronto, where he worked until December.

Since his arrival in Canada in 1921, Erik had been able to save some money, so at the end of 1926, he decided to take a long holiday to visit Arna and Otte in Paris. He took a French Liner from New York, arriving in Paris New Year's Eve. Arna was at the station to greet him. It was quite a

celebration. Arna had in the meantime met a young Swede, Otte Sköld, born in China, whose parents were missionaries. They had married in Copenhagen in 1917 and left for Paris in 1920. Otte was then an unknown artist, painting mostly landscapes. Arna supported him for many years, working as a masseuse. Otte was a charming person. He soon got established and had his first exhibition in Paris in 1925. Erik's mother died in Copenhagen April 2, 1925. Many people were at the funeral, also Otte Sköld, who had had great success in Paris, and was getting to be known, also in Sweden.

Erik stayed with Arna and Otte in Paris for about eight months, studying French at the *Alliance Française* and had a good time. In May 1927, Charles Lindbergh arrived at Le Bourget Airport in the monoplane *Spirit of St. Louis* on his non-stop flight New York - Paris, flying about 6,000 km in 33½ hours. What a sensation it was! People at the airport went wild. A few days later Erik went out to Le Bourget. By chance he walked over to a hangar, where several people were standing around. Lindbergh had just arrived. Erik congratulated him, whereupon he followed Lindbergh around in a journalist's car. The journalist was glad to have Erik as guide and interpreter.

In October 1927, Erik returned to Toronto, where he got his old job at the pharmacy firm back. The pay was nineteen dollars per week. Through one of his friends, he got another job in the order department at the Massey-Harris Company, where he started work in October 1928.

In October 1929, on *Black Friday*, the stock market in New York crashed. It happened very suddenly, and many people lost their savings. The Depression was also felt in Canada, where many people were thrown out of work. Erik was fortunate that they kept him as long as they did at Massey-Harris. In the end he and his boss in the Order Department were the only two left, and one day, he said to Erik, »If you go, I won't have a Department anymore.« In December 1930, Erik was finally laid off. He had 36 dollars in his possession, out of which a girlfriend borrowed eight dollars to pay for her rent. He managed to rent a garage and got busy polishing cars and taking dents out of fenders. In this way he got through the winter. Times were bad, however, and he finally had to give it up.

In the spring of 1931, he approached the Ford Motor Company, located near Victoria Park Avenue, the present Shoppers' World Plaza. The office manager, Mr. Harvey, wrote to Detroit on Erik's behalf, regarding a position in their tire production plant in Singapore. After waiting several weeks, he got a negative reply. Times were bad also in Singapore, there being an overproduction of rubber and no demand for cars. Mr. Harvey came to his rescue and offered him a job in their local assembly plant. It was here that he started to weld. He learned it on the spot. His fellow

workers were very cooperative and gave him some hints, but after four months that too ended. After that he worked for a couple of weeks for a Danish tinsmith, Mr. Willumsen, for nothing. He got his dinner and a clean shirt Saturday evenings. He couldn't continue in this way, so he decided to hitchhike to Montreal and try his luck there.

It was July 1931. A Dutch engineer gave him his first ride to Oshawa, then a commercial traveller as far as Trenton, where he slept overnight in a hay field. The hay had just been stacked. The next day he got as far as Prescott. There was a barn close to the highway, and the farmer gave him permission to sleep in the hayloft. The next morning, the farmer asked him, if he wanted breakfast, and soon a pretty girl appeared, carrying a large tray with a pot of coffee, ham and fried potatoes, bread and butter, and a large bowl of strawberries. After that delicious meal, he got a ride with a Toronto grain broker on his way to Ottawa. Here Erik visited friends, who took him back to the highway. He then got a ride with an employee from the federal Department of Agriculture on his way to the Laurentians. But dusk was falling. He lost his way, and suddenly they were on the outskirts of Montreal. They parted. A French Canadian gave Erik a lift to Fletcher's Field, where he watched a soccer game. That night he slept in the lobby of the YMCA. Thus ended his hitchhiking trip to Montreal, which had lasted two days and two nights.

Having his tools sent from Toronto, he set up shop on Place Youville near the harbour, taking out dents on fenders and touching them up. In those days, all the cars were black. The first day he made four dollars, quite a sum in 1931. So he went to a movie. He continued thus till the winter set in. Then he had to rent a garage, which was unheated. Here he washed and polished cars. When polishing, he often had to use his hands to prevent the windows from freezing up. After some time, he got a heated garage. Work was coming in. Holger Guldager, whom he knew from Toronto, showed up, and they rented a small-furnished apartment for 18 dollars per week, where they could cook. Food in those days was around three to four dollars per week. Several months went by like this.

One day a Danish dairyman showed up asking for shelter. He was put up on the loft above the garage. He told Erik that there was a Norwegian freighter in the harbour, bound for Liverpool. Erik had not seen Arna and Otte since leaving Paris in 1927. Moreover, he had never seen his niece, Eva, born in 1928. So he was eager to get away. He asked Holger to look after the business. Erik was then hired as a seaman. The first thing the captain asked him was, »Can you steer?« It was a very old ship, hardly seaworthy. The insurance companies would not touch it. Furthermore, it was one of the coldest winters they had ever experienced—minus 35 C in Montreal. There was a lot of ice in the St. Lawrence River. Some days it



took hours to get through. The captain was drunk most of the time, and there was no cook on board. The food was awful. The vessel was bound for St. John's, Newfoundland, with a cargo of hardware and flour. The food consisted mostly of a kind of fruit soup, in Danish »sødsuppe«, but without prunes. One day, after they had eaten, Erik was going to throw the remains overboard, when some people came running along the pier, begging him not to throw it away. So he emptied the whole basin onto the pier, and they scooped it up in their hands. People were really starving in 1931/32 in temperatures of minus 27 C. From St. John's, they sailed to Halifax, where the vessel was in dry dock for a week, it being too risky to venture across the ocean in her condition. They then proceeded in ballast to Mulgrave, N.S., where they loaded lumber. There were no cranes, so they had to use the ship's winches for loading. Here they spent Christmas.

From Mulgrave, they finally sailed to Liverpool, the whole trip from Montreal having taken nearly three months. On the ferry from Harwich to Esbjerg, Erik had his first regular meal. He arrived at his cousin, Ingeborg Arntz, with one-pound sterling in his pocket. It was now mid-February 1932. In order to make some money, he got in touch with his cousin, Haakon Arntz, who was an importer in Copenhagen. He advised Erik to contact two Italians, who were setting up machinery for making macaroni. He supervised this machine for several weeks, where after he visited the family in Stockholm for four weeks. In early May, he was on his way back to Montreal, this time as a passenger on the *M.S. Braeholm*, arriving in mid-May.

In the meantime, Holger Guldager had used the money they had in the bank, and he had taken in a partner who had paid him 100 dollars, a lot of money in 1932. Erik soon realized that there was not work enough for three. Consequently he pulled out and rented a garage where he worked for himself, washing and polishing cars. In the beginning he made around one dollar a day. But after several months he got a modern spraying and welding outfit. He was now making around three dollars a day and continued thus until 1936. He mostly had his dinner in the dining room of the Queen's Hotel in Montreal for one dollar. Here the food was excellent compared to other restaurants where the food was poor. He always seemed to be hungry. He started making friends, meeting the Schierbecks and Wintermarks, the latter through a young German, who was engaged to Vivi Wintermark. They had a nice home in Montreal and were extremely kind to all the Scandinavians, inviting them for Easter and Christmas. By this time Erik was getting a little tired of always working on a damp cement floor, so when in the spring of 1936, he heard that they needed welders for the Norseman, which was being built in an airplane factory outside Montreal, he took the job, thinking it might be the coming

thing. But it lasted only four months. So it was back to the garage, which, luckily, he had not given up.

Thus the years went by, and he worked in his garage till the fall of 1939, the outbreak of World War II. Welders were in great demand then. He got a job with *Dominion Engineering Gun Plant* in Longueuil near Montreal, where he worked for two years. Here he almost got killed. They were working on large kilns for bauxite, which were being shipped to Jamaica. One day one of the men loosened a bolt or two, and the kiln tipped over. Luckily he shouted at the last moment and Erik jumped aside.

In 1941, Erik left for Vancouver. This was his first trip to the west coast. It was a new experience for him. He worked there for two years as an electric welder. In the fall of 1943 he was back to Montreal, where he worked for Canadian Vickers Ltd. During the war Erik was able to correspond with Arna, Sweden being neutral. He had not seen any of the family since 1932. Therefore in the spring of 1945, as soon as the war was over, he applied for a passport, which was not easy to get. The authorities were advising Canadians against travelling to Europe. But after a visit to the passport office in Ottawa, asking them point-blank whether he was entitled to a passport or not, he finally got it.

One day in the early summer of 1946, he heard from a friend that there was a Swedish freighter in the harbour. He got his pay, ran to the bank and bought a ticket. The *M/S Braheholm* left that evening. Erik got a berth in the ship's sickbay with another passenger, a Finn, who during the war had been placed in a Canadian prisoner of war camp, Finland and Germany being allies for a time. The former mayor of Montreal, Camillien Houde, had been in the same camp because of his anti-war speeches for which the French Canadians rather liked him—and in 1946 he was re-elected as mayor of Montreal. On board Erik sent a radio-telegram to Arna. She was there at the dock in Gothenburg on his arrival. It was a happy reunion. Erik stayed in Sweden until the fall of 1946, when he left for Denmark.

Erik and I met in Denmark in January 1947. We were married in Søllerød Church north of Copenhagen on May 14, 1948. I had a good position as Secretary at Standard Electric in Copenhagen (Head Office in New York) and Erik was working as a welder at Burmeister & Wain. We could have stayed in Denmark where we both had family and friends, but Erik could not forget Canada—the wide-open spaces and the simpler life. In July we set off on the *M.S. Stockholm* bound for New York and Canada, arriving by train in Toronto. The same day we continued to Elora and the farm, where Erik had arrived in 1921. Nothing much had changed—still no water in the house, no electricity and no telephone. Here I spent my first summer in Canada—the garden and surroundings were beautiful. We



swam in the quarry, where Erik had worked, and I felt quite at home there, especially thanks to Erik's cousin, Johanne Meyer, who was a wonderful person.

I was born in Hamburg on February 19, 1912. My father was British and my mother German. I had no difficulty with the language. We came to Denmark from England in 1920. As I was only eight years old, I soon learnt the language and spoke like a Dane. To me Denmark was like a haven far from all the prejudices of war, and I will always be very grateful to Denmark.

In 1948 it was extremely difficult to find a place to live in Toronto, so for the first two years we stayed in rooming houses for fourteen dollars per week, quite a sum then. Eventually through friends we got a flat in the attic of an old house on Carlton Street, which I could furnish with a few pieces of furniture I had brought with me from Denmark. Our first refrigerator was a box, which Erik put up outside our living room window. Later in the spring we advanced to an icebox in the kitchen. Our first second-hand car was a model A Ford in which we drove to Montreal. It took us eight hours to get there. In 1951 Erik bought a new car, and now we could go on longer trips, which we did on our holidays. Weekends we mostly spent in Elora at the farm where we went swimming in the quarry.

Erik was employed in different plants as a welder. For the last twenty-two years of his working life Erik worked in the parts department of Beach Auto Ltd. in Toronto, who were agents for BMW cars. He loved his work and never missed a day. He worked there till he was 88.

For several years I worked in travel offices, which I liked very much. Then in 1964, I was hired by the federal Department of Revenue, Taxation, and there I worked as a typist and secretary until my retirement in 1977.

In 1952 we bought a house on Winnifred Avenue in Toronto, where I had a nice garden. We lived downstairs and rented out the upstairs apartment. Here we stayed until 1958, when we moved to our present house at 92 Swanwick Avenue, where I still live. We have met many people and made many friends during the years, and we have travelled extensively: to Jamaica, Cuba, St. Thomas, the former Danish colony, Mexico, the U.S.A., England, and made several trips to Denmark. In Canada we have been to the Maritimes, Alberta, and B.C. Canada certainly is a vast and beautiful country.

In August 1956 my young nephew, Michael Bonnor, aged 17, arrived from Denmark to stay with us. He studied forestry at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1961. In those days students were hired right out of university for summer jobs. After graduation he was employed by the Department of Forestry in Ottawa. He now lives in Victoria, B.C. and is still employed by the Federal Government as a research scientist.

Erik never really enjoyed retirement. He still went swimming in the large outdoor swimming pool at Woodbine Avenue, overlooking the lake, till he was 93. But he never really got over the day he had to give up his car in the spring of 1990. After that it gradually went downhill. His health was still good, but his mind was going. He died peacefully on May 23, 1993 at the age of 96, after a long and active life.

*1998/215*

# Peter and Asta Jacobsen

INGER BOESEN IWAASA

My parents and the Great Depression arrived in Canada at roughly the same time. My father, Peter Jacobsen, came in 1928, followed a year later by Asta, my mother. She arrived in Calgary in the spring of 1929, three children in tow. Denmark's economy was already in recession, and they had been forced to give up the farm they had purchased in 1922, the year they married. Peter hoped that in Canada he could once again own a farm. He did not want the only future he could envisage in Denmark: that of being a wage-earning labourer.

My mother's roots were in Udby, near Holbæk. She was born Asta Plesner Jensen on December 6, 1899, on the farm where her family had lived since her grandfather was a boy. My father, Peter Boesen Jacobsen, son of Julius and Karen Jacobsen, was born on January 14, 1897, in Sønderjylland, when it was occupied by Germany (from 1864 to 1920). His family moved north to Denmark and continued to move several more times, as his father, a cabinetmaker, bought a series of farms with run-down buildings. These were »handyman specials«, which he transformed into property of some worth. The final move was to Jernved in Jutland, when Peter was an adolescent. His parents spent their remaining years there. His mother's death in the mid-1930s is the first memory I have of hearing about death. I was pre-school, but grasped that it meant an end to the Christmas boxes that arrived from her every year, containing, among other things, knitted socks and stockings for the whole family.

As well as skills and energy, Peter and Asta brought to Canada high hopes. »We were young and strong. We thought we could overcome everything«, explained Mother. Long before they had ever dreamed of coming to Canada they had each taken courses that were to help equip them. For Asta it was a sewing course that included pattern drafting and tailoring. She was to sew every stitch of clothing, except for denim overalls, that her children would wear. She made children's winter coats from old, worn-out adult coats that were taken apart, carefully washed and pressed, the unfaded inside becoming the new outside. She bought remnant bundles from Eaton's catalogues. Each winter our living room became a clothing factory.

Peter had attended a »landbrugsskole«—an agricultural college. I would guess that this is where he learned the art of butchering. His skill supplied all the meat for our table as well as providing this service to some of our neighbours. Each fall our kitchen would become a meat processing plant, producing headcheese, hamburger, sausages (»medisterpølse« and »spegepølse«), roasts, cutlets and stewing meat. A brine barrel in the cel-

lar yielded »rullepølse«, future hams and bacon. When cured, ham and bacon were stored in a granary, buried in the grain, where the mice could not get at them.

Asta and Peter first settled in Edgewater, B.C., on 20 acres of unbroken land covered with evergreen trees and bushes. During the next eight years, Peter cleared and farmed half of it. He also worked as a logger in the bush in winter—that is, if he was lucky enough to obtain work—and on road crews in the summer. He had a hand in building the Kootenay and Big Bend highways. Roadwork was labour he chose to do as a recipient of relief payments.

At home, Asta looked after the farm, including a large vegetable garden. She sold vegetables and chickens to passing tourists. During those eight years, she gave birth to four children. Most of our neighbours were also Danish. Families I remember were: Niels Nielsen, brothers Johan and Johannes Madsen, the Lautrup brothers, »Lille« Poul Christensen and Rasmus Nielsen, who had built our house. Most of these families included children—who were our playmates. Single men I remember include »Store« Poul Christensen, who would later move to Dickson, Alberta, and Carlo Svendsen.

These people formed a small congregation, holding church services in each other's home about twice a month. The current president would conduct the service and read a sermon from a book. Visiting ministers would come. I don't know how often. They would baptize babies, and perform a wedding now and then. Pastors I remember include: Pastor Clement Sorensen of Vancouver, Pastor Paul Nyholm of Dickson, Pastor Emil Nommesen of Edmonton, Pastor Vilhelm Beck of Standard, Pastor Harold Larsen of Tilley, and Pastor Peter Rasmussen of Dalum. Pastor Max Mathiesen of Edmonton, in the little Anglican Church that was borrowed for the occasion, baptized Peter and Asta's first child born in Canada, Inger. There were without doubt several other babies baptized on the same day.

Times were tough for everyone, and most of the Danes would eventually move to greener pastures. Peter was attracted by the prospect of free homesteads in the Peace River country. However, Pastor Harold Larsen persuaded him to consider Tilley. He said that members of the Danish congregation there would help him get started by providing loans for the purchase of a quarter section of land. The farm in Edgewater was sold for 300 dollars. In the mid-1980s it was sold for 7,000 dollars per acre. My father would have been dumbfounded.

The family made the move to Tilley in April 1937. A farm, ¼ section, was purchased. Five more births would bring our numbers to twelve children. »Cheaper by the dozen«, my father said. We provided the farm work

force and were the foundation of a dynasty that would replace the close-knit clannish family Mother missed »hjemme i Danmark«. From the oldest to the youngest, we twelve children were: Gerda Boesen, Ester Boesen, Uffe Boesen (changed to Larry Gilbert), Inger Boesen, Frank Boesen, Gunnar Boesen (changed to Gerard), Julie Jenny, Eva Grace, Frede Boesen (changed to Fred), Eunice Karen, Linda May and Ray Oliver.

Of course, learning to work was an important aspect of rearing children in those days. Every country school expected that there would be absences during spring planting and fall harvesting. It probably enabled the teacher to spend more time on the younger grades. Most were one-room schools. Ours, which served grades one to nine (later, ten), had a junior room and a senior room. All of us received at least a grade nine education. Only the younger ones had access to high school (Tilley High School opened in 1947). About half of us would return to high school as adults, go to university and earn degrees.

Peter's farming career was brought to an end by a heart attack in 1958. After some 22 years in Tilley, Peter, Asta and the two youngest children moved to Bassano, where Peter became the school caretaker. He rashly gave Asta instructions on the proper way to wash floors. Ill health again forced a change of jobs. Peter became a Raleigh salesman. Always a gregarious person, he thrived on visiting farm communities, talking to people and advising about which products were really effective. He became extremely successful, consistently winning prizes as top salesman for Alberta and sometimes Western Canada. Asta felt that he had found his calling. She wondered how their lives might have gone if he had begun sales years earlier.

Asta visited Denmark in 1947 and Peter in the early 1960s. Then in 1969, they both went to Denmark and stayed for about a year. They stayed with Peter's sister, Kathrine Jacobsen, in Varde, as well as with other members of the family on the island of Zealand. Their story does not end as happily. After 54 years of marriage, Peter left Asta. In 1976, he moved into a seniors' lodge in Calgary, where he lived until his death in 1979. He was then 82 years old.

A couple of years later, Asta also left Bassano, moving into a Calgary apartment. She spent her last few years in Father Lacombe Nursing Home. She died in June 1996, at the age of 96 years.

Some odd coincidences happened in our family. Dad died on the birthday of the youngest child (a son). Mother died on the oldest daughter's birthday (their first-born). Years earlier, Dad had awakened on his sixtieth birthday to find the barn in flames. All animals were lost except for a pig and a cat. On Mother's sixtieth birthday, the farmhouse of Julie's family burned to the ground. It had caught fire during their nap. The baby

woke them; the smell of smoke made them hurry downstairs and outside. A short time later the whole house was in flames. They lost everything in it, but felt lucky to have escaped alive and unhurt.

When Mother came to Canada, she was accompanied by her younger sister, Valborg Jensen, Valborg met and married Anfred Pedersen, who had already been in Canada for one or two years. They married in October 1930, and the trip to Denmark became their honeymoon. Thorkild came to Canada in 1958 and worked on our farm that summer. After harvest my parents took him to Edgewater to see where his parents had met and married.

Valborg and Anfred would like to have stayed in Canada, but before she left Denmark, Valborg had to promise my grandmother that she would return. Bedstemor did not want to lose more than one of her three daughters to Canada. Thorkild stayed in Canada for two summers and then returned to Denmark.

Valborg and Anfred inherited the home farm—Mother's and Bedstefar's birth place. I spent a month with them there in 1955—at their silver wedding. I was the only guest who had witnessed their wedding—when I was six months old!

The legacy Asta and Peter Jacobsen were anxious to provide for us consisted of their own love of Denmark and the Danish language. They provided us with Danish books. They read stories to us and taught us songs from the popular *Højskolesangbogen*. They encouraged the use of the Danish language. Indeed, they demanded that we speak Danish in the house. They had also both attended a »Folkehøjskole« in their youth. Some of their values had undoubtedly been formed then.

Citizens of Canada, they still regarded themselves as Danes. I grew up knowing that Denmark contained much that was superior to Canada. Not until I visited Denmark for the first time, at age 25, was I to realize that I was not a Dane, but a Canadian. And yet, much of the Danishness continues to inform and enrich my life.

*Calgary February 1998*  
1998/234

# Ole Jonassen

## *Ole's Past Paints a Picture of Memories*

TONY WHITTINGHAM

»I'm a short, stuffy, little 75-years-old man«, warned artist Ole Jonassen over the telephone. »I'm not a tall, dark and handsome young Swede that you're probably expecting«.

He was right. I had been expecting someone quite different. Until that moment—even listening to his voice—I had formed the picture of a real Viking wielding a paintbrush. He brought the subject up again over coffee several hours later, shortly after I had arrived at his old stone house on the lakefront just west of Amberstview, just west of Kingston on Lake Ontario.

»My past is much more interesting than you'd expect just from looking at me,« he said, pulling himself up to his full height of five foot two inches, and puffing a cigarette—one of 60 a day.

Why was Ole Jonassen so preoccupied with his appearance and with his past? It was something I was never able to figure out—even many hours and most of a bottle of rye later. Because what struck me most about this venerable Dane—not Swede—was that both his feet were planted firmly and squarely in the present. I could not understand how someone so involved in today and tomorrow could devote so much energy to thinking about yesterday.

»It's all part of the joy of living«, he explained, describing his philosophy of life. »If it's all been worthwhile, you never forget what you've done«.

And for Ole Jonassen, that means 75 years of memories. Memories that go back to the little village of Korsør, Denmark, about 80 miles west of Copenhagen, where he was born, four years, as he puts it, before the death of Queen Victoria.

When did Jonassen the painter, Jonassen the craftsman, begin to emerge from this simple rural background? At the age 14, he moved to the big city and became an apprentice cabinetmaker in Copenhagen. Slowly, during the next 15 years, he learned and mastered that trade so well that even today he says he can transform a piece of oak or rosewood in his sleep.

At age 28, Jonassen abandoned woodcarving almost entirely and turned to painting and designing. He likes to recall that he got his real start at painting on a bicycle tour around Europe. With his pocket empty, he used to set up his easel in front of some country inn and start painting. The owner would rush out to chase him away, but seeing his inn immortalized, would change his mind. Feigning reluctance, Jonassen



talized, would change his mind. Feigning reluctance, Jonassen would agree to part with the painting in return for a handful of silver and several nights' board and lodging.

Back in Copenhagen, Jonassen's rise as a painter and designer was fast and dramatic. Within five years he had become a well-known commercial artist. He worked exclusively for the travel industry as a designer for Canadian Pacific, the German and Danish Railways, and numerous European airline companies. His alluring displays beckoned thousands of people to leave their dreary lives and travel far away.

This great decade in his life, the 1930s, Ole Jonassen has well documented. He has scrapbooks full of clippings, letters and photographs showing how he turned the wanderlust into art. Carefully, almost reverently he turned page over page, describing each photograph in detail, translating each clipping, and filling in the background of each testimonial letter.

Ashes fell absent-minded from his drooping cigarette, adding to the general clutter of the kitchen table where we were sitting.

There was the huge 200-foot mural of Emerald Lake he painted for the Canadian Pacific office in Berlin; there was the enormous display he designed and built in Copenhagen's Great Hall for the World Air Fair in 1934; there were the posters and window displays in travel offices all over Europe. There was even the Canadian Pacific display in Copenhagen that drew the wrath of the Archbishop of Canterbury, urging people to »see this world before the next«. The chief prelate of the Anglican Church finally banned this controversial advertisement. »Yes«, he reflected, in his strongly accented voice, »I was the only one in the travel business.« What happened? War came. The Germans invaded Denmark in April 1940, and the travel industry ground to a halt. Ole Jonassen was out of a job. This was obviously a traumatic time. He got to his feet and asked if I would like a drink.

»You know,« he said, pouring rye over ice, »I hardly did another painting for the next ten years.« Not that he lacked opportunity. Many large corporations and even the German government approached him to work for them during the five-year occupation of Denmark.

»I refused, I wanted to keep right out of it. I was not willing to compromise with the German invaders. I was, and still am, a Dane by heart and soul, « said Ole Jonassen.

So Jonassen's life took another twist. He turned to writing. Of the many poems he wrote during this period, one made him into a kind of hero for the people of eastern Denmark. It was a love song dedicated Ærø, a small island in the Baltic Sea. The song is like a second national anthem to the people of that region. It is taught to schoolchildren. Watching Ole



Jonassen's eyes shine as he spoke about this poem, I guessed, correctly, that it was the proudest achievement in his life.

There was also a novel written during that period. It got as far as the publisher and no further. After lengthy negotiations, someone in the publishing house stole it, and it has never been heard of since.

By 1949, Ole Jonassen, now 53, was beginning to get restless. He had married his lovely wife Tove, 16 years earlier, and they had three daughters and a two-year-old son, Ole Jr. They were all looking for something new. »Canada«, said Jonassen, dropping another ash on the table before he could reach the ashtray. »What could be newer than Canada?« »Already this great country had become my second love, after all the rivers and mountains I had drawn for Canadian Pacific«, he explained.

And so to Canada he came, bringing his wife and family with him. By chance, a friend, and former colleague from Canadian Pacific was working for the department of immigration and living in Kingston. He persuaded the Jonassens to join him here. It was tough going for the first little while, Jonassen recalled. The family lived for the first few years at Sydenham »in a shack unfit for a savage«.

Tove Jonassen, Ole's wife, a shy but friendly woman, walked into the kitchen and joined the conversation. They both looked appreciatively around the room in a tacit acknowledgement that times had changed. »For one thing, I could hardly speak English«, he laughed. »Well, maybe things haven't changed that much—I still can't«.

Once in Canada, Jonassen wasted no time in stretching his artistic muscles. He returned both to painting and woodworking, and to designing as well. He had not been in Kingston more than three months, when he attracted public attention by his dramatic facelift to the facade of Webb's Antiques, 85 Princess Street. A Whig Standard story in July 1949, described this work by Jonassen as the »most original store-front in Kingston«.

Jonassen's decorations can still be seen today largely in its original form, though the store has changed hands in the meantime.

Not long after this, while moonlighting as a woodcarver and furniture builder, Jonassen took on a job to repaint the interior of Grace United Church in Sydenham. Looking at the chancel and the records, he remarked casually to the churchwarden that, given a chance, he could completely transform the church into »a place of great beauty«. He was given the chance, and he succeeded. That was 24 years ago. Since then he has redesigned a chancel for every one of his years in Kingston. His carvings and paintings can be found in churches as far away as Peterborough and Ottawa. He has been the designer of more churches in this region than any other single man.

But Ole Jonassen does not have totally serious pretensions about his painting. »Do I look like a serious man?« he asked, grinning. »Do you think it was a serious man who painted the Marco Polo Room at Lino's?«

The Marco Polo Room, The Venetian Room, Murphy's Seafood Restaurant, Morrison's Restaurant, The Wayfarer's Inn, the Masonic Temple, the Ambassador Motel, the Odd fellows Ballroom—these are all Ole Jonassen's creations. His restaurants, halls and public buildings are probably better known to Kingstonians than all his churches put together.

»And now, my friend,« he said, looking at me, »How would you like to join us for a simple Danish feast?« I looked at my watch and I looked out the window. Was it possible? I had arrived at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Now it was dark outside. It was 7 o'clock in the evening. »Come on, Tove,« he said, »Let's show our friend a real »smorgasbord.« In 10 minutes, with scarcely time to object, I was in the midst of a meal. Tove explained that the herring and the egg were traditionally taken together, while Ole introduced me to the finer points of drinking Aquavit, the caraway-flavoured Danish National drink. I asked Ole Jonassen about his next project. Was he going to slow down? A roar and a splutter of Aquavit. »Slow down—never, if God spares me, I hope I have a good many years left to me. Time—there's always too little of it.«

During this year there are several restaurants to be painted and possibly a church or two. There is also a score of smaller commissions: paintings, carvings, room decorations. Things have never been busier, he said. His son, Ole Jr., 26, has joined him at work to learn the trade and to help make the work lighter.

When the brandy appeared on the table at 9:30, I realized it was not Ole Jonassen who was slowing down but I. I began to gather up my notes. »Have we talked long enough for you to understand a bit of me?« he asked. I was not sure.

Ole Jonassen is not a short, stuffy, little 75-year-old man on the inside. Ole Jonassen was born on September 28, 1897, and died on October 25, 1978.

*1985/Part 1/57*

# John Jessen

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In 1922, I had given up my job and did not want another, so my father, Lector I.L.W. Jessen, was thinking of buying me a nursery in Denmark. However, prices were inflated and he suggested that I wait a year or two. But I was in a hurry to get started on something, and when I saw an ad in the paper from a nursery in Ontario, I answered it. For a couple of months I did not hear anything, but then I got a telegram saying, »Come at once«. I replied, »OK«, and contacted the CPR to find out when there were ships leaving for Canada, after first having obtained the military's permission; and in a week got a passport.

My passage was booked on the *S/S Melitta*. I had to go by ship from Esbjerg to Harwich, and then by train to Liverpool via London. We were not, however, permitted to go out in London. It would not have done me much good either, as I did not know one word of English.

The *Melitta* was the smallest of the CPR ships. There were 12 other people, who were going to the United States via Canada. We were six in each cabin, in bunk beds three high. The weather was pretty rough, and most of the passengers (except me) got seasick. The trip took 8 days. We landed in St. John and were transferred to the old immigrant train. It was the old Grand Truck cars, and it was a slow trip. There was only one track, so we had to wait several times on a sidetrack for other, faster, trains to pass. The landscape we saw was desolate, and I was wondering how there could be nurseries in such a wilderness.

After three days we reached Montreal, where we stayed one night and then continued to Toronto. There I had to change trains to go to Clarkson. I was rather tired, so I fell asleep and woke up in Oakville, one station past Clarkson. With the help of a dictionary, I asked the stationmaster how I could get back to Clarkson. He told me to go to the highway and take a bus. I looked that word up in the dictionary and found that »buss« meant a kiss. But I finally did get to Clarkson. I asked in a garage for Sheridan's Nursery, and got a ride on a wagon that was just coming down the road.

The manager, Mr. Steenson, was Danish. He was married to an English lady and they had five children. I was the first Dane to come over and got a shack in the apple orchard to live in. A couple of months later, more Danish men came over to work in the nursery. In 1924, my wife and son and several other Danes arrived.

As soon as the weather improved, we visited Niagara Falls. There were no busses, but we went to the highway and put out our thumb. It took us six or eight cars to get there.

There were no Danish women, so we had all the Danish men visiting us on Sundays. Friday and Saturday my wife baked and cooked. Then on Sunday morning they would come to our house for breakfast, dinner and afternoon coffee and cakes, as well as supper—and the cupboards were bare. We liked the men. They were all really nice fellows. One Sunday Mr. Buck suggested that we should go for a ride in our car. Off we went. When we came back, there were dishes, cups and saucers for 12 people on the table. It was a nice surprise for us, and it showed that they appreciated coming to our house.

In 1929, we decided to go back to Denmark. So we sold all our belongings, and returned on the CPR's *Montclare*. We stayed in Denmark for six months, but found that we were better off in Canada. So back to Canada we went. This time I got a job with a Norwegian architect, Mr. Borgstrom. He had a contract for the entrance to the city of Hamilton, including a botanical garden and rock garden. He hired me for these jobs. It is now the famous Royal Botanical Gardens. It cost 200.000 dollars to construct and is today visited by about one million people a year. About 50.000 tulips are planted every year. It took two years to complete this contract. Some of the rocks weigh over one ton.

Then I got a job to make a park at the home of Lieutenant Governor Herbert Alexander Bruce. He had two farms, and put me in charge of both. When the park was finished, I was foreman for seven years. During those years, I put up exhibits at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto both Brookdale and Sheridan, and won several first prizes.

Thereafter, I started for myself as a landscape gardener in Oshawa. But that did not work out, due to the Depression. I therefore took a job with *General Electric* as foreman. I stayed at *GE* until the war was over in 1945, where after I went to Peterborough and again started my own business.

In 1948, I went to Denmark for a visit on the *Batory*. It was a Polish ship, so you could not understand one word of what the crew was saying. But it was a pleasant trip. In Denmark everything was in short supply, so they were glad to receive things I brought home: 10 lbs. of coffee, 15 lbs. of rice, 10 lbs. of cocoa, cigarettes and nylons and 5 bottles of whisky. My father, who wrote math books, which are still used in the Danish schools, was still alive. We still get royalties every year.

In 1952, I started a nursery for Webles Seedhouse at Port Credit, located on Lake Ontario, west of Toronto. I went to Holland to buy bulbs and plants.

After I had come back to Canada in 1948, my niece wanted to come over. But immigration for women was closed at that time. So I approached one of my customers, Mr. Gordon K. Fraser, who was a Member of Par-

liament. He saw to it that an Order-in-Council was passed so she could come to Canada. I put an ad in the Peterborough paper and she got a job right away. In fact, I received lots of replies and people kept asking me if I could get them a Danish girl. After advertising in *Politiken* (a Danish newspaper) seven girls came to Canada. The only drawback was that none of them had money for the passage, so I lent them the money, which they paid back in monthly instalments. As well, I sponsored ten men to come over and work for me. They are all doing fine now.

In Peterborough I arranged a concert for Kongelig Kammersanger Lauritz Melchior, who was also president for *De Danske Garderforening i Udlandet*. The concert was a great success, and the reception was held at the home of one of my customers, as we were in the process of moving to a new home. Mr. Clarence Neal, president of Johnson Motors, said he would love to host a reception, and invited about 100 people, including the mayor and all the social elite of the city. My wife made »rullepølse«, »spegesild«, liver paste and »klejner«.

Lauritz Melchior and I talked about starting a Royal Danish Guards' Association in Eastern Canada, but nothing came until 1952, when Lauritz Melchior gave a concert in Toronto, to where I had moved. After the concert, he invited my wife and I for dinner at Restaurant *Little Denmark*. Establishing a Royal Danish Guards' Association was again brought up, and this time we succeeded. Brix Larsen, who was elected president at the founding meeting on March 11, 1958, had started it. I was elected the following year, and during my presidency, I had excellent support from, among others, Knud Hansen, Jørgen Birk Andersen, Preben Birk, Knud Larsen and Flemming Hansen. I wanted first of all to obtain a flag. I asked for donations and received 200 dollars in all. But then Herman Hansen donated a flag all by himself, and the 200 dollars went into our general funds. Lauritz Melchior and Peter Heering, by the way, had donated 50 dollars each. The flag was bought in Copenhagen, and later we also bought a Canadian Flag. The biggest task was actually finding old guardsmen. We did, and quickly signed them up as members. In those days we used to get together at Hansen's restaurant on College Street.

Back in those days, I was often involved in immigration. Mr. L. de la Cour, the CNR's Danish agent, used to call me when they had an immigrant who needed a job. Once he wrote to me from Denmark that he was sending a Mr. Paldan over with wife and 5 children. I gave him a job, but he had problems finding an apartment. Mr. Chreighton from the CPR phoned me once, and asked me to take Mr. Paldan and his wife some 150 miles north of Toronto to a mink farm. I took them up there, but it was a terrible job, with a horrible smell and millions of flies. They were to live in a shack with no window glass and no screens. However, I left them there.

But next evening they came back. They had hired a man to drive them down to Toronto for 25 dollars. But they had no money, so I had to pay the fare. I put an ad in the paper, and after staying with us for a week; Mr. Paldan got a job as a gardener with a lawyer.

All in all, I have sponsored 36 people for coming to Canada. Many of them worked for me. And many of them became my friends.

*John Jessen was born February 14, 1898.  
1985/Part 1/ 53*

# Jens Wogensen Gundersen

MARTHA LARSEN

Jens Wogensen Gundersen was born on January 24, 1899, in Vrønding near Horsens, as the son of Kristian Gundersen (dead 1952) and Rasmine, née Rasmussen (dead 1961). This means that January 24, 1989, Jens Gundersen turned 90. Jens' father had a farm, and he also bought cattle, which he exported to Germany.

Today, Vrønding hardly exists as a village any more; but in Jens' childhood there were two blacksmiths, two tailors, two grocery stores, a painter, a veterinary doctor and a harness maker. Jens helped his father on the farm as well as in the cattle business. In 1923, he married Metha Hansen, his childhood sweetheart, the daughter of the innkeeper of Molbjerg Kro. A son, Karl Johan, was born in 1926. But unfortunately, Metha died prematurely in 1927. Jens was devastated.

Jens felt he had to build a new life for himself. Consequently he left his infant son with relatives, and set out for Canada, where he settled in Saskatchewan in the summer of 1927. He knew no English when he started his lonely life on a prairie farm. In the fall he travelled to northern Saskatchewan and found work in a big lumber camp, together with over 300 other men from all corners of the world.

It was hard work, and mealtimes were the highlight of the day. However, table manners were strictly observed, and enforced. There was a big sign saying: »Don't talk while you eat«. All the men had to be washed and have their hair combed. Jens recalls that one Sunday morning a group of the men rolled right out of bed and appeared in the dining room unwashed and with uncombed hair. The six foot tall, bearded Scottish cook then appeared on the scene, and scolded them in his big bellowing voice. He chased them all out, and told them they would not get no breakfast, and no dinner either, unless they came in washed and combed.

In 1932, Jens got on a cattle train and travelled east. Near the outskirts of Toronto, he jumped off the train, and made his way downtown Toronto. He got a room in a rooming house for 3 dollars per week, and 6 dollars and a half for meals. A couple of days later, he put an ad in the paper: »Danish handyman will do odd jobs«. However, the Great Depression was on, and there was no work. Jens then bought a pail and a scrub brush and went from door to door in the neighbourhoods with big homes, asking if there were any small jobs they would like done. Nobody could afford big jobs. Jens' strategy paid off: He painted houses inside and out, varnished floors, fixed wooden storm windows and much more. As he got more jobs than he could handle by himself, he hired helpers. In those days, desper-



ate, unemployed craftsmen were hanging around in the pool halls, eager to pick up a part time job and earn a couple of dollars.

Eventually Jens emerged as a full-fledged contractor with 16 craftsmen in his employ. He became a contractor for Eaton's, and did work for other big firms as well. Eaton's at that time owned several houses and buildings in Toronto containing about 300 tenants, which Jens and his staff looked after. Relations with his employees were excellent. The jobs they performed were perfect. In those days it was much more difficult to mix paint to match exactly the colour the customer wanted. It all depended on the painter's skills and knowledge, not like today where you press a button and a computer gives you the exact colour.

In his business, Jens introduced something quite unknown in those days; profit sharing. When he bid on a big job, he consulted his helpers, and if, for instance, they agreed it would be a 600 hours job, they calculated the price on that basis. Jens would then tell his people that if they could finish the job in less time than the 600 hours, the difference would be paid out as a bonus. This worked very well. The customers got the job done fast and efficiently, and some of the workers got a bonus of several hundred dollars, a small fortune in those days.

From about 1929 to around 1940, Jens also was an agent for several steamship companies, such as the Swedish American Line and the Holland America Line. But this was only a sideline. As time went on, Jens became actively involved in various social activities and organizations. He became co-founder of several clubs, such as Scandinavian Canadian Club, the Danish Canadian Club which later became the Danish Canadian Businessmen's Club, the Danish Bowling club, and in 1936, the Danish section of the Independent Order of Foresters, where he served as financial secretary for 28 years. It was at the Foresters where he met Magnus Jensen and his wife Dagny. Together with these two, and some other Danes, they bought the 52 acres and the property which is today Sunset Villa, the former Crieff Manse in Puslinch, Ontario. Jens' friend, Magnus Jensen, was the first President of Sunset Villa.

In October 1965, Jens moved out to Sunset Villa, and stayed there until 1975, serving as secretary-treasurer, and also part time as manager. From 1965 to 1966, Jens Gundersen was President of Sunset Villa. At that time, the various Danish organizations in southern Ontario often held dances in Toronto, to raise money for their different projects, and to have a good time. Jens remembers meeting a couple of young Danes. Let's call them Peter and Poul. Jens noticed, however, that on several occasions when Peter was there, Poul was not. Jens asked why. It turned out that they shared a room in a rooming house, and they also shared one pair of



good pants, which they took turns wearing! Pant for work was a necessity, and they each had a pair of those. But pants for parties were a luxury!

Back in Denmark, Jens' son, Karl had grown up, and when Karl had finished serving in the Danish army, he too came to Canada. Jens had hoped that Karl would get a college education. However, Karl got together with the other young Danes in Toronto, and soon fell in love with Ella Hansen. They got married, so it was goodbye to college. Karl started his own painting business, which he still runs from his home in Willowdale in the Toronto area. Karl and Ella Gundersen have two children. John, who is now 34 years old, and Joanne, who is 31. John married Cathy Miller and they have a son, Christopher, who is one year old. They live in Clarkson. Joanne married Michael Stucklass. They live in Bradford and have two daughters, Stephanie, who is five years old, and Christine, who is two.

In 1975, Jens married Margeret Greer, a lady who had spent most of her life in Waterdown, where Jens moved to from Toronto. Poor eyesight forced Jens to sell his car. But after a successful operation on one eye, he can now see much better. Unfortunately, Margeret has had several strokes, and she is now confined to a wheelchair. As a consequence, Jens and Margeret had to move into a nursing home in Milton, Petit House, where 350 elderly people get excellent care.

In retrospect, Jens Gundersen feels that he had had an interesting and good life, even if there were many hardships to overcome.

1989/95

# Ernst Borgstrøm

## *The International and Worldfamous Accordionist*

MARTHA LARSEN

Gellin & Borgstrøm, to those of us who are old enough to remember Denmark in the 1920s and 1930s, and indeed the entertainment world of Europe, those names were well known. They were the famous accordion duo that toured Europe, England and Scandinavia, and played to full houses all over. What particularly made them famous were not only their technical skills and charming appearance, but also their repertoire. In those days it was highly unusual, to say the least, for anyone to play classical pieces on the accordion. People expected to find the accordion at a barn dance or on ferryboats. But on the stage of a concert hall? Never!

World War II put an unwelcome stop to their many travels and in 1951, the duo split up. And the Borgstrøms emigrated to Canada, where they settled in St. Catharine's, Ontario. In the early 1970s, Mr. Borgstrøm recorded his experiences on tape, and the following are excerpts from these tapes:

I was born July 31, 1900, at Frederiksberg, and from the day I was born I heard accordion music every day. My father played accordion every night and I sat on the floor listening intently. When I was five years old I thought it would be fun to play the instrument myself. So one day when I was alone in the house, I took out the accordion and started to play. It sounded terrible in the beginning, but gradually I learned to play a few tunes. I did that for about a year while my mother was shopping, so nobody knew about my past time. It was purely by accident that my father found out; it was on a Maudy Monday »Fastelavn« that I took the accordion down in the backyard behind the apartment building and played to the children. To my surprise, the neighbours opened the windows and threw coins down to me. Oh boy, what a lot of candy I could buy now! Suddenly my father was standing in front of me. I was so scared I wet my pants and thought I would get a good licking. Instead he padded me on my cheek and said, »You play quite well. Where did you learn to play?« Then I had to confess, but from that day on, I could play the accordion as much as I wanted.

The time then came when father felt I needed thorough instruction, and he asked several music teachers. They were all willing until father said my instrument was the accordion, which was not recognized very highly in the music teachers' circles.

Finally we found a teacher who was an organist. He did not play the accordion himself, but became very interested and learned the accordion's construction and possibilities. It was 1910 that I started this instruction. I was taught theory and classical music like Mozart and Beethoven, Gounoud's *Ave Maria* and the music for the Danish play *Elverhøj* by Kuhlau.

As time went on my music teacher suggested that a specially constructed instrument could increase the accordion's scope. This instrument was built in Italy to my father's specifications, but I give my teacher credit for coming up with the idea. I gave my first concert in August of 1918. In October of that same year, Herman Gellin from Stockholm offered in and added his assistance at concerts, evening entertainments and dances. My father contacted him and I played a couple of waltzes and opera overtures. Gellin became very enthused about my playing and this became the start of 33 years of cooperation.

In 1919 we performed for the first time in Copenhagen, in *Politiken's* great hall. That was a big success and we were asked to perform many more times during the season. After the success in Copenhagen, we toured Denmark to full houses and then our international career started. We were under contract to *Polyphon*, the record company, and were obligated to make a certain amount of recordings every year. The recordings were to take place in Berlin in the famous variety club *Wintergarten*. This was a very valuable connection: Once you had performed in *Wintergarten*, many doors opened to you. We had 12 concerts in Berlin and during the next few years we became known all over the world and played in Europe, Australia and South America.

While we were touring Holland in 1925, we were asked to play before Germany's exiled emperor, Wilhelm II. We were received at the Doorn Castle and entertained the unhappy emperor and his empress. A few weeks after the performance we were given the titles *Imperial and Royal Accordionists*. This brought us a great deal of publicity and subsequently we played several times before King Christian X of Denmark, his brother King Haakon of Norway, and president Ebert of Germany.

Fame and fortune was not all I collected on my concerts tours. One night in 1931, when I performed in Tallinn, Estonia, I met a young actress and light opera singer, Melanie Nomtak. It was love at first sight. We had only known each other a couple of hours when I proposed and got yes. A few weeks later we were married with friends and relatives warning that this was a crazy thing to do, after only knowing each other for a few hours. But a life-long happy marriage followed, and a son, Boris, was born.

Our travels around the world were not always peaches and cream. Once we were to perform in Glasgow, but because of a general strike on

the railways, we had to hire a taxi to get there. We were late and had no time to practice. The director of the orchestra explained to us that the Scots were very musical people, so we started with Hungarian Rhapsody No. II. No applause at all! I whispered to Gellin, »Now when we play *Tannhäuser* they will like it.« But alas. The audience became unruly and noisy, and the whole performance was a flop. We were sitting in our dressing room, most unhappy and waiting for the second performance. Then the director came in and told us that our music was all right, but that people liked to hear something they knew.

The next day we went out and bought the score for some Scottish music. We practiced and then in the evening played some Scottish tunes. Then people were quiet and after the performance the applause and the enthusiasm was tremendous. After that we could play *Tannhäuser* and other classical pieces. We were accepted and had learned a valuable lesson: Find out what your audience's taste is before you perform.

In the winter of 1929, we had an engagement to perform at the variety club *Plaza* in Berlin, which could accommodate 4,000 people. It was minus 32 Celsius outside. In the morning we had made a couple of recordings for *Polyphon*, and in order not to log the instruments all over town, we put them in a locker room at the railway station. This change in temperature turned out to be catastrophic for the accordions. When we had played a couple of notes, Gellin yelled to me, »You must play alone. My keys are stuck«. Soon after my keys also got stuck, and we had to let the curtain go down. The critics were cruel the next day, and this unfortunate incident kept us out of Berlin for two years.

However, we had many friends in Germany. In between engagements we stayed with a family in Berlin for three years. Their children called us uncle Ernst and uncle Herman. When the war came, our friends' sons were serving in the Germany Army, which in 1940 occupied my native Denmark. One evening when we were performing in Randers, the desk clerk in the lobby phoned to our rooms and said a German soldier was there and wanted to see us. That was one of the sons of our Berlin friends, and under other circumstances we would have been happy to see him. But we could not risk associating with the German occupation authorities.

My partner, Gellin, was Jewish, but a Swedish citizen, so the Germans could not touch him, but he was forbidden to perform in the southern part of Denmark.

On our travels around the world, our wives, Atella and Melanie, often accompanied us. They were good sports and shared our ups and downs. Once when finances were low, they lived on liver paste sandwiches for a whole week, so that Gellin and I could buy railway tickets to our next city. Often we went out for a movie and once in Czechoslovakia, we were sitting

behind a lady with a big hat that nearly obscured the screen. Stella said in Danish: »Have you seen that bird's nest she has on her head?« The lady turned around and said furiously in Danish, »Too bad one has to be insulted by fellow countrymen. I know who you are and I won't forget«. We apologized and invited her to our performance in the evening, and for a drink afterwards. That softened her anger.

I have performed with many famous Danes: Once we were on a tour with Osvald Helmuth and performed as a trio. Other friends were Carl Brisson, Max Hansen, Lauritz Melchior, Peter Freuchen and last but not least Victor Borge. When the war was over, we felt that we would like to get out in the world, after having been cooped up for so long. However, Gellin had now received a licence to take theatre groups around in Denmark and that left us only 3 to 4 months to perform together.

Melanie and I decided to emigrate to Canada with our son Boris. However, only craftsmen were admitted, so I came in as a carpenter. But I hoped to be able to perform and had contacts with several Danish clubs. But then I got a bitter disappointment. I could not perform unless I had been a member of the *Musicians' Union* for a year. I met Victor Borge in Toronto, and he tried to help me, but did not succeed. Then Bill Miller from *Little Denmark*, a Danish restaurant on Bay Street in Toronto, put me in touch with the Canadian accordionist Dixie Dean, who got me a job as a music teacher in St. Catharines on the Niagara Peninsula. Two years later, I started my own school: The Master Conservatory of Music. The Conservatory went well, so I could expand and finally employ seven teachers with 400 students. We have branches in Welland and Niagara Falls. Instruction is given in Accordion, Piano, Guitar and Music Theory. From 1954 until my retirement, I was examiner in our organization, where students are tested from grade 1 to 10.

In 1958, I was chosen to represent Canada at Coupe Mondiale in Brussels, Belgium, and had the joy to see one of my students, Ernest Manfredi, become number two, only half a point behind the winner.

After the Coupe Mondiale, Gellin had arranged a tour of Denmark, where we performed in all the big cities. We were happy to entertain the Danes again, and they were happy to hear us. We were swamped with big flower arrangements. In 1964, a World Accordion Championship contest was held in Toronto. I was the president of the Canadian Accordion Teachers' Association, and it gave me great pleasure to welcome my friends from all over the world.

In 1969, I retired and my son, Boris, took over the Conservatory. He had in the meantime acquired a doctorate in music.

Ernst Borgstrøm died on April 26, 1982, after a lengthy illness. The eulogies expressed the loss suffered by family and friends, and praised his

skills to bring out the most of each student's musical ability, his interest in a student, both as a music student and a person. In himself, he was a gentleman in all senses of the word. Of the highest integrity, musically and in person, he was a man of honour; one who was a credit to his profession and one whom individuals felt it was an honour to call a friend.

Ernst Borgstrøm kept a big scrapbook, some 70 pages in length. He had it with him in the hospital and in the last painful days, he would leaf through it and remember all the happy days he had in half a century. Melanie Borgstrøm still lives in St. Catharine's, and she is an active member of the Danish Lutheran Church of the Niagara Peninsula, where the congregation enjoys her beautiful voice when she joins in the Sunday hymn singing. Boris got married and has a son, Mark, who is now 19 years old.

*Translated and written in Hamilton 1987  
1988/Part 1/ 79*

# Niels Berthelsen

## THE DANISH CANADIAN CLUB, CALGARY

Niels Berthelsen was born in 1903 in Harboøre, Denmark, near the West Coast by the North Sea. He was the second child, out of ten, born to his mother and father, a minister of a Lutheran church. In Denmark, Niels studied law and theology before becoming proofreaders in the telegraph department of a newspaper. In January of 1928, he decided to come to Canada.

»There was very heavy immigration into Canada, mostly to the West, and I decided to come to Calgary. I did not know anyone so I stayed at the Danish immigrant home, the Dana Home, on the north hill«. The Dana Home housed about 50 people, mostly singles, and was run by the Danish Lutheran Church. The Danish minister, Pastor Jens Knudsen, and his daughter helped the Danish people learn the English language and gave the new immigrants guidance.

Niels's first impression of Canada was shaded by a violent snowstorm in Montreal. »You do not get much of an impression of the country in a snowstorm«. But when he arrived in Calgary, his impressions changed. »It was 30 degrees below zero, and when the morning sun shone on the snow-clad mountains, it was very beautiful. I couldn't believe how beautiful the area was«.

His first job was in the spring of 1928. There had been a very late harvest the previous fall and many of the crops were left in the fields. »There was a big demand for help with the stoking and trashing on the farms, but a blizzard came and stopped all operations«. He said.

When spring came in earnest, Niels went to work on an irrigation farm in Duchess until the winter. Then in December, Niels got a chance to work as a travelling passenger agent for the Scandinavian American Steamship Line in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The company owned four ocean liners and every spring there were between 500 and 600 immigrants landing in Winnipeg. It was Niels' job to meet the immigrants and to assist placing them on farms. In 1931, he came back to Calgary to open a branch office; in 1933 he went back to Winnipeg and managed the operation for the company. Immigration slowed down and the office closed in 1935.

While Niels was in Calgary, he met and married Ingeborg Bonke. The couple had their first child, Jack, in 1934. During 1935, Niels sent his new bride and son back to Denmark for a few months. He went back to Calgary and worked at whatever jobs he could find.

Between 1936 and 1939, Niels was employed in Edmonton and Calgary by the Gdynia American Lines, which travelled between Denmark



and New York. In 1939, one of the ships was torpedoed and the passenger lines closed the company.

With experience in the public service sector, Niels was employed by the *Balmoral Hotel*, later named *Calgary Hotel*, which was eventually destroyed by fire. He moved his wife, son and new son, Michael, to Edmonton, when he took the position of assistant manager at the Strathcona and Commercial Hotels. Two months after their arrival, the owner passed away, and Niels managed the two hotels up until 1958. In 1950, a daughter, Dorothy, was born.

In 1958, the Berthelsens acquired the *Stamper Hotel* in Calgary, and the family managed the business for over 20 years. In 1979, Ingeborg passed away, and Niels sold his hotel.

That same year, the office clerk at the Danish Canadian Club was going on holidays, and Niels said he was asked to do the daily cash reports and the banking. »I agreed as I felt it was one way I could do something for the Club. And I've been doing it ever since«. Each and every business day Niels comes into the Club to check the staff's sales' tally sheets for the *Mermaid Inn* and process the cash and charges at the bank. For nearly 20 years, the staff, management and directors have appreciated the watchful eye and careful attention Niels has given his task.

Through those years, Niels has witnessed the steady financial growth of the Club's business in the *Mermaid Inn*, a restaurant/lounge seating 115 people. »Ever since we've moved into our present location, 727, 11th Avenue S.W., the Club has been growing and expanding. With the present economic recession in Calgary, which started in the early 1980s, things aren't as bright as they were in the late 1970s. It would have been nice to see what could have been done«, said Niels. Despite the setback, Niels still believes Canada is the land of opportunity. »There were many tough times during the 1930 Depression, but a person learned to appreciate even a very small job or the half-day job. It's hard to imagine the kind of money people make today. During the Depression, I earned 25 cents an hour. When I managed the *Balmoral Hotel*, I brought home 70 dollars a month, and at that time I supported a wife and two children. After the war, we saw good times«.

Each year Niels has a good time going to Denmark to visit his sisters and brothers. »Eight out of ten are still alive, so that's pretty good«. The oldest is 84 and the youngest is 72. His children have all been to Denmark and Niels said they enjoy seeing the places where he spent his childhood.

Since his retirement, Niels has played an active role in the »Over 55« Club. For his steady contributions to the Danish Canadian Club, Niels was honoured with a lifetime membership in 1981.



# Marie Overgaard

KNUD ELGAARD

Marie Overgaard was born in Copenhagen on September 11, 1903. She was brought up by her mother, Karen Simonsen, her stepfather, Martinus Jensen, and by her grandparents. There were six children. Marie was the oldest, and four half-brothers and then a sister named Else, who was ten years younger than Marie, followed her.

When Marie was four years old, the family moved to Arden, a town near the Rebild Hills and Rold skov, south of Aalborg. Here, Marie's stepfather started a furniture store and harness shop. He was quite a successful businessman and the family were reasonably well off. Marie remembers her stepfather as a very clean-living man.

Marie received seven years of formal education in Arden, leaving school at the age of 14, in 1917. She was confirmed in the Lutheran faith that same year, on September 30, in Storarden.

The four boys in the family were out working for a living quite early in life. In due course, three of them emigrated to South America, where they were successful in establishing cattle ranching enterprises. So successful, that although they could not entice their mother to follow them, their father did; and he too was successful in business in the new country. Unfortunately, because of distance, war and other circumstances, contact was eventually lost with the family in South America.

Having finished school, Marie stayed home to help her mother make a livelihood, operating a »French Hand Laundry« business, as well as with housework. Money was scarce and times a bit difficult.

While going to school, and into her teens, Marie had one main outside interest that was gymnastics. In school, her class went »på kroen« for their gymnastics lessons. Marie joined a group, which became very proficient gymnasts. She feels this was all to the good, as it got her outside of her own little village. The group would perform exhibitions at gatherings in the small towns within the Hobro-Aalborg area. Marie took part right up until she emigrated to Canada. And if you look closely, you will find her in a group photograph hanging in the museum at Rebild Bakker.

Vigand Overgaard was born on the farm near Aalestrup in May 1903. After leaving school, he too worked for his parents six months a year. Vigand had a sister living in Arden, and when he went to visit her in 1925, he met Marie. The economic outlook at this time did not seem encouraging, and Vigand now wished he had more education, a wish he would make several times in the future. And since neither he nor his brothers were

interested in staying and taking over the family farm, he emigrated to Canada.

Vigand Overgaard came to Canada in March 1926. He had borrowed the money for his ticket, and when he arrived, he had exactly one krone left in his pocket, which he saved as a good luck charm. Vigand came directly to the Danish settlement of Standard in Alberta, to work for his sponsor. Eventually he came to British Columbia, where he worked at different jobs. By the end of 1928, he had saved enough money to buy a one-way ticket for Marie to come and join him.

Marie left Denmark for Canada in January 1929. For the Canadian immigration authorities, she carried a letter, signed by her teacher and one other person, attesting that Marie was a lady of good behaviour and not a criminal. She came directly to Vancouver. Within days of her arrival, Marie and Vigand were married, on January 28, 1929. The wedding took place in the private home of Pastor Elias Marius Favrholt, the Danish Lutheran minister, who lived at 707 East 7th Avenue, Vancouver. On that occasion Vigand gave Marie his good luck »krone«.

Mr. and Mrs. Overgaard set up housekeeping in a West End apartment. In the early 1930s, Vigand worked for 10 dollars per week. Then he got 20 dollars per week for a while, diamond drilling for Britannia Mines outside Vancouver. He came home on weekends. Marie and Vigand were never »on relief«, but many other people were. Although the Overgaards never had much money, many a time did they provide a Sunday meal to young Danish immigrants, who were less fortunate. It was hard times, and one learned to be thrifty.

In the mid-1930s, Mr. and Mrs. Overgaard took an extended trip to Denmark, to see if the outlook was any better there—it was not. On returning to Vancouver in 1935, Vigand found employment in a garage at 10 dollars per week. When his salary was raised to 12 dollars and 75 cents weekly, that was quite a treat. At this time, Marie was also working five hours daily, two days per week, for twenty cents per hour.

Vigand had become a member of The Danish Brotherhood in America, Vancouver Lodge 328, in 1932. Both he and Marie were active in the Brotherhood. It was Marie, who presented to the Brotherhood the first Danish flag, which has been made by Mrs. Axel Weidemann and Mrs. Otto Westerlund. That was a special meeting in May 1936, to which the ladies had been invited.

Vigand and Marie had one child, Paul, born in 1937. Although the late Dr. Harry Milburn, who delivered Paul, was asked if it was okay to pay by instalment, the bill was paid in full before mother and son left the hospital. The Overgaards had an antipathy to owing money.

Paul was baptized by Pastor Clemens Sørensen, in the then new Danish Lutheran Church on 19th Avenue in Vancouver. Since Marie and Vigand were not too enthused about raising a family in the West End, they bought a house in the Point Grey area in 1939, with a 150 dollars down payment. Paul lived at home while attending the University of British Columbia, where he obtained an engineering degree. He also received a music degree in violin from the Ontario Conservatory of Music. Paul was married in 1960, and they have three children.

After Paul left home, Marie and Vigand made several vacation trips to Denmark, during the 1960s and 1970s. Marie's sister Else, is still living in Aalborg with her daughter, who is trained as a nurse. The Overgaards lived for 39 years in their house in Point Grey, or until Vigand suddenly passed away in 1978.

During her lifetime in Canada, Mrs. Overgaard's outside interest has been to serve as a volunteer in worthwhile causes. In the beginning, she worked for Canadian Arthritis, one day weekly for nine years. But her main volunteer work has been for *Dania Home*. Marie Overgaard is the last surviving Charter Member of the Ladies Auxiliary of Dania Society, which was formed in 1941-42. She has now been a working member for nearly 50 years.

A few years ago, Marie Overgaard moved into one of the apartments on the Dania Grounds, and so today she lives in Dania Manor. She is still very active in the Ladies Auxiliary. Like a good member of the Society, she attends all meetings and several of the work parties. She also is a volunteer for the new Danish Lutheran Church next door, built in 1984.

Marie Overgaard is a person who looks ahead in life. It was undoubtedly a struggle at times in the past. But that only serves as a contrast to how much better it is today. One thing that was important to the Overgaards was their Canadian citizenship, which they received in 1942. As Marie says, »It's an honour to be a citizen«. Many look up to Mrs. Overgaard, for her dedication and hard work, her friendship and caring, and for sharing. Speaking of herself and her late husband, she says, »Canada has been very good to us«. That is probably true, but for those who know her, it does not take much imagination to conclude that Marie Overgaard has been, and is, good for Canada.

*Dania Society*  
*Vancouver March, 1989*  
*1989/Part 1/160*

# Valborg Gertsen

MARTHA LARSEN

I was born on June 22, 1904, in Copenhagen, and went to school in Clas-sensgade Public School. When I finished my schooling, I started an ap-prenticeship, and after four years became a certified sausage maker »spækhøkerjomfru«. My first job was in a big butcher shop on Nørrebro-gade.

On April 1, 1927, I married Einer Gertsen. He worked as a warehouse manager in a company that sold bicycles. My second job was in downtown Copenhagen on Vimmelskaftet in a delicatessen store, which trade I learned thoroughly so when I met the owner of the butcher store, I sug-gested to her that she should start a delicatessen department in her store. She said she did not know anything about that but this is where I came in, and soon I was running that section. We did very well.

When I worked in Vimmelskaftet store we had assignments from the Danish government to prepare food parcels for the Polar Explorers in Greenland. I found that very interesting: in each parcel there had to be everything they would need in a day for breakfast, lunch and dinner, toilet paper etc. When my grandmother died, I inherited a bit of money, so I asked my boss if she would sell the store to me - to which she agreed. She had paid 4.000 Danish Kroner for it, and she wanted 10,000 when she sold it to me. But I knew it was worth it. This was in 1928.

In 1929, my son, Kai was born—and I had a busy time running the store with one butcher and five clerks to serve the customers. When Kai was 3 months old, I got a 14-year old babysitter. She stayed with us for ten years, and did a fine job looking after our baby. Einer was not trained as a butcher/sausagemaker, but I got the butcher to teach him the trade, so that we could both work in the store.

Then the war came and Einer did not want to sell meat and delicates-sen items to the »occupying power«, German Nazis, so we sold the store and bought another store in Valby, a suburb of Copenhagen. Later we bought another store. But you cannot look after two stores, so we eventu-ally sold the two of them. After the war, my sister-in-law returned home to Denmark for a visit. Einer's brother and her were running a dry-cleaning store in Whitehorse in the Yukon. She told us what a fabulous country Canada was—and she gave us the impression that gold and money could just be picked up from the street. When we went out to shop in Copenha-gen, the dollar bills were just falling out of her sleeves! So Einer and I got tempted and decided to sell most of our belongings and move to Canada.

I should tell you that Kai by now was a young man and after school he went through an apprenticeship to become a tool and die maker. He wanted to become a minister in the Church, but both Einer and I insisted he should learn a trade first. In 1948 we left Denmark after having sold most of our belongings, except the crystal and the Royal Copenhagen china, where I had a complete place settings for 12 people. Little did I know that this was quite inappropriate for Whitehorse, the Yukon, so these things stayed in the boxes for many years.

I arrived in Whitehorse in a Danish fur coat, silk stockings and flimsy underwear, like you wear in Copenhagen. The temperature were 45 degrees below, so that was quite a surprise. When we got settled in the Yukon, the Indians made long boots and moccasins for me and taught me to put several layers of clothes on. They also taught me not to wear leather gloves, but warm mittens.

Originally, the idea was that Einer and I should learn the dry-cleaning business from his brother and then take over a store in Dawson. But when we found out that there were only 58 people living in Dawson, we said no thanks and stayed in Whitehorse. But I would not say we were happy with our jobs. Einer was in charge of the laundry, and Kai looked after the boiler room. Einer was paid 35 cents an hour and Kai and I 25 cents. I did a lot of ironing, which I hated, after having had help for that all my married life in Copenhagen. So one day, I went up to the local Air Force Base, and applied for a job, even if I did not speak very good English at the time. They asked if I could run an industrial dishwasher. I said yes, even if I had never done that in my life. But I learned, even if it was a tearful experience. I often said to myself: what fools we were to leave Copenhagen, and pay Danish Kroner each to come to a place like this! However, both Einer and I were too proud to return to Copenhagen. That would be to admit to failure, and we were too proud to do that.

One of my brothers who lived in Toronto had connections to Westinghouse in Hamilton; so he recommended that we should pack up and come out east, which we did after five years. I must tell you about our living quarters in Whitehorse: at first we lived in a very primitive house, which was heated by only a big oil drum in the middle and a pipe up through the roof. At that time the Americans were building Alaska Highway, and when that was completed, the barracks they had occupied were put up for sale. Einer and I purchased the materials from one such barrack and started to build a house on a piece of land that cost us 260 dollars. The barrack cost 215 dollars. Neither of us had ever done carpentry work before, but we had lots of courage and had lots of laughs while doing this unfamiliar job. When the house was finished, and we proudly went inside on a rainy day, we discovered that we have turned the roofing shingles the wrong way, so

that the water was running into the house, instead of down the roof! Einer dug a basement out and we set a primitive heating system up there. While he was working in the basement, he dropped his cap one day, and when he picked it up he discovered that there was oil on it. He came tearing up and said: We will be rich now. We have struck oil! However, it turned out that Einer's found was a couple of oil drums left behind by the Americans.

It was very expensive to live in Whitehorse at that time, because everything had to be flown in. Milk was 75 cents a quart, and a head of cauliflower was one dollar. A man drove around selling water at 5 cents a liter. He got that from the river, but it was clean and fluoridated. It was difficult to grow anything, as nothing was fenced in. But I managed to grow a few potatoes and even lettuce. The house had no water and plumbing inside, so we got along with an outhouse. All cooking and heating was done on a stove in the middle of the house, and on a very cold day I put on my fur coat from Copenhagen. One day Einer said: »Something smells burnt.« I soon discovered that the front of my fur coat was slowly burning and smouldering. That was the end of my expensive fur coat.

The native population were Indians, and we got along very well with them. The children were so cute with their big brown eyes and small noses. One day when I was baking cookies, a couple of the children came to visit and I gave them some cookies that were a little burnt. Soon I had 20 little Indians on my doorstep. Some time later one of them came back and asked me if I was going to bake cookies some other day, and give him some that were not burnt. Smart little guy!

Sometimes the Indians would put up their tent right outside our house. They had the right to do this whenever they wanted. Often they came to honour their dead. Their cemeteries were up on a hill where they built beautiful little houses and put food inside for the dead. The food was of course, eaten by the dogs.

In 1953, my brother had found jobs for Kai and Einer at Westinghouse in Hamilton, Ontario. So we left Whitehorse. All the little Indian children lined up to say goodbye, runny noses and all. I was very touched by that. The Indians were nice and helpful people.

In Hamilton we became superintendents for a big building downtown that housed a lot of doctors' offices, which I cleaned every day. We were happy in Hamilton, and finally I could get my beautiful Royal Copenhagen china and crystal out, and put it to use when I had company.

In 1952, Kai married a girl of Danish extraction, Helga Pedersen from Sarnia, and they moved to Lakawanna in the United States. There he went to university for seven years and got an engineering degree. I was very proud of him and thought that only my son could do a thing like that:

studying in his spare time and going to classes in the evening. But on graduation day I found that there were many like him.

In 1973, the house we lived in was sold, and we moved out to Sunset Villa, Puslinch, where we had some happy years until Einer died in 1979. Now I am alone here. But I don't feel lonesome with my many friends around me. And my son and his family come quite often to see me. He now is an executive in Rochester, New York, and has two daughters. He pilots his own plane and travels all over the world.

*Based on interview.*

1987/134



# Ewald and Tina Lassenes

DON MOWATT

Ewald Lassenes is one of the older members of the Danish Lutheran Church in Vancouver. In the fall of 1988, he turned 80. He has been president of the Church Board a couple of times, and he was a teacher in the Sunday school for about 20 years. For many years he acted as a deacon, reading the opening and closing prayer.

Ewald Lassenes was born in the southern part of Jutland, and in his youth he worked on farms near Kolding and near Esbjerg. They were 9 children, Ewald being the third oldest. Unfortunately, Ewald's father was an invalid, and the oldest children were expected to give the money they earned to their family. However, the two oldest brothers spent all their money, so it was Ewald who has to help support the family. This put a real burden on Ewald, and he was not pleased with the behaviour of his two older brothers. To escape from this predicament, Ewald moved to the island of Bornholm, where he worked on a farm. His father and family were in this way not able to get his money, and Ewald was able to save enough money to go to Canada.

At about the time Ewald left for Canada, Ewald's father started receiving a government pension, so the rest of the children never really knew what hardships Ewald went through just to support the family. And while Ewald's mother wanted him to stay in Denmark, Ewald was determined to go to Canada to start a new life. Ewald Lassenes came to Canada in 1929. He knew no English and only had an elementary education. But he was determined to get ahead in life, and he was willing to learn and to work. He landed in Halifax, from where he went to Winnipeg, hoping that Pastor Niels Damskov could help him get a job.

He found work on a farm near Camrose, Alberta, and for two years he attended a Lutheran Bible School in Camrose. Later he went to Tilley, where he worked as a grain farmer with Niels Nielsen. Tilley was a Danish settlement, founded on CPR land in 1930, by Danish immigrants from Nebraska and Iowa. The pastor, Rev. Anton N. Skanderup, who was also a CPR agent, responsible for bringing in prospective settlers, was the first pastor of Tilley's Bethany Lutheran Church, which belonged to the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America in Blair, Nebraska. Ewald Lassenes joined the congregation, and indeed his employer, Niels Nielsen, was secretary on the Church Board. Ewald felt very much at home in this synod, as it reminded him very much of the Mission Halls in Denmark.

In 1941, Ewald left Tilley for Vancouver, where he lived at the home of Niels Nielsen, who later became president of the Danish Church in Van-

couver. It was in the Danish church in Vancouver where Ewald met Tina. Ewald had gone to the church with Niels Nielsen; and in 1942, Tina and Ewald were married in Vancouver.

Tina Nielsen was born in Slesvig before World War I, but before the outbreak of war in 1914, the family moved to Denmark. After the war, the Nielsen family emigrated to Canada, settling first in Edmonton, and then in Standard, the Danish settlement founded in 1910, where they lived for a year. The family then moved to Calgary, where they at one point managed Dana Folk School, which at this time was also a boarding house, mostly for Danish immigrants, many of whom were young single men.

Tina's sister, Dagmar, who worked in the kitchen at Dana, in fact met her husband, Aage Pedersen, at Dana. Aage Pedersen was also in time to become president of the Danish Church in Vancouver. After Ewald and Tina were married, Ewald apprenticed as a mechanic, and worked as such most of his life, even though he later also worked as a security guard. For a while he was also in the Canadian army, but due to his health, he was discharged. It was, however, an honourable discharge, which meant he could be called up to serve again.

It was only natural that both Ewald and Tina became active in the Danish Church in Vancouver. Tina has of course been a member of the congregation since she, and her family, came to Vancouver in the 1920s. She still recalls Pastor Alfred Sorensen from Seattle, who came up for services about once a month, before Pastor E.M. Favrholdt arrived in June 1928, becoming the first permanent Danish Lutheran pastor in Vancouver. Pastor Faurholdt used the Norwegian Church on 19th Avenue. After he left, the congregation was without a pastor for nearly two years, and again Pastor Sorensen from Seattle came up for services, which were often held in private homes.

Then in 1932-33, there was Pastor Jorgen Nielsen, who used the German Lutheran Church for services. But he »disappeared«! He simply left town and the congregation without giving notice. After six months, he couldn't take it any more, says Tina. This was during the worst part of the Great Depression. There was little money, and no money for a pastor. Things changed when DKU sent Pastor Clemens Sorensen in December 1935. Already within 13 months, the congregation was able to start building a church on 19th Avenue, a block away from the Norwegian Church. Tina's father helped build the church, and her brother-in-law, Aage Pedersen, was the number two man on the building committee.

But the Danish Church was hardly finished when professor Carl Brink Christensen, the congregation's secretary, died in May 1937. Tina recalls how there was canvas on the floor of the unfinished church at Christensen's funeral.

During World War II, Pastor Clemens Sorensen lived in a very small house (hencoop) on Williams Road on Lulu Island. He had been sent to Vancouver by DKU, but during the war no wages were sent to him from Denmark, and the congregation tried to support him as much as possible, both with money and in kind. Later Mr. Madsen helped him buy a proper house.

Hardly any new Danish immigrants came to Vancouver in the 1930s, and none came during the war. Increasingly the language of the congregation became English. The question of whether the congregation should remain Danish-speaking, or become English-speaking, evolved into a major dispute in the late 1940s. The dispute, which raged for several years, turned ugly, and was very upsetting for the congregation, to say the least. Finally a meeting was called to settle the issue of whether the church should remain Danish under DKU, or become English-speaking and join one of the North American synods. By a majority vote of only two, it was just barely decided to remain Danish. However, the vote did not settle the issue; instead it split the congregation, and many members, including Aage Pedersen, Niels Nielsen and Fred Jensen, left the Danish church. Some of those who preferred English, nevertheless remained as members of the church, or they eventually came back as they felt more at home in the Danish Church.

Tina and Ewald did not attend the crucial meeting, because, »we don't go where there is trouble«. Others stayed away as well, and some never came back.

Ewald Lassen, who taught Sunday school for around 20 years, says that the Sunday school was always conducted in English. The emphasis was not on Danish traditions, but on the study of the Bible. Moreover, the Sunday school had to be in English, as very few children were able to both understand and speak Danish. Some of the Pastors, at least when they first arrived from Denmark, were too Danish. It seemed that they were more interested in perpetuating the Danish language and culture, than in preaching the Gospel. The only way to reach young people and to maintain them as members of the congregation is to communicate with them in English. Young people must feel welcome in the church; otherwise the church will not survive. That is what the »language dispute« and the following split was all about after the war, say Tina and Ewald. Furthermore, both the Norwegian and the Swedish Lutheran churches in Vancouver are now completely English-speaking, and belong to the ELCC.

The many Danish immigrants who came to Vancouver in the 1950s gave the Danish Church another boost in membership, and they accentuated the need for Danish-language services. But the Danish Church is now again increasingly moving toward the same situation that existed just after

the war. The congregation is getting older, and the congregation is more and more using English as the language of communication, at both business and social functions, while services remain approximately fifty-fifty, English and Danish. Baptism and weddings, however, are predominantly in English.

Moving the Danish Church from 19th Avenue in Vancouver to Burnaby did not cause a major problem, according to the Lassesens. The biggest problem was rather the problem with the Granly Church in Surrey, which had been started as an annex church by Pastor Arnold Vang. While some members of the congregation would have preferred to have a Danish Church remain on 19th Avenue, it was a good idea to locate the new church next to Dania, the Danish old people's home on Norland Avenue in Burnaby.

More people are now involved in the new church. At the time, some thought the old church was good enough, and many memories are naturally associated with it. But 19th Avenue is no longer more centrally located than Burnaby is, as the Danes are not necessarily concentrated in that part of town any more. The neighbourhood was becoming run-down, there was a problem with parking, and moreover, the ethnic mix of the old neighbourhood had changed. There were nevertheless some members of the congregation who were offended by the fact that our Lutheran Church was being sold to Chinese.

While Ewald and Tina Lassesen are concerned about the future of the Danish Church in Vancouver, they are pleased to see that their son Kenneth, is taking an active part in the work of the congregation, and that he is interested in his Danish heritage.

Ewald and Tina still try to attend the Danish Church at least once per month. They are known by everybody in the Church, and very much respected. Ewald is also well known for his typical Danish sense of humour. And over the years he has given some very funny speeches.

They have had a good life and have travelled to New Zealand, Australia, the Caribbean, Venezuela, Jamaica and Europe. They have of course visited Tilley and Calgary, where they still have family and friends.

In looking back, there is one day they still recall. That is the day in 1967, when Princess Margrethe, now Queen, and Prince Henrik of Denmark visited the Danish Church in Vancouver. Ewald was president of the Church at that time. He was honoured to show Princess Margrethe the Church. She was very open and friendly. And the Church was full, not one empty seat!

# Esther Marie Morck Thesberg

SHARON THESBERG AND IRENE MORCK

Esther Marie Morck was born on February 28, 1917, in Glen Ewen, Saskatchewan, Canada. Her parents, Inger Christine Morck and Lars Christian Morck, were Danish immigrants. Esther was the oldest girl in a family of nine children. When Esther was nine month old, the family relocated to Dickson, Alberta.

A shy, sickly introspective child, Ester often found refuge in books and dreams. They eased the rigours of a poor pioneer existence. There was, however, always laughter in Esther's life. The pranks and teasing among nine siblings has continued throughout their lives.

Esther attended the Dickson School. Home responsibilities often made her attendance sporadic, yet she remembered by her teachers as an excellent student. Church records reveal Pastor Nyholm rated her as an exceptional confirmation student. After working for various neighbours, Esther was employed by Innisfail Hospital in 1937.

In 1940, she married Niels Nielsen Thesberg, a Danish immigrant. The ensuing years kept Esther busy as a farm wife and mother of 4 children. Niels's faithful support gave Esther a lot of self-confidence. After her family was grown, she was employed as assistant matron at the Senior Citizens Lodge in Innisfail. In 1974, her husband, Niels, was killed in a tragic farm accident. A few years later, she retired to Innisfail, Alberta. Esther is much more, however, than a list of biographical statistics.

She has an ability to dream dreams, see visions, and inspire others to perceive these dreams and visions. Anyone meeting her is warmed by her deep interest in people, her love and zest for life, and her positive attitude in times of difficulty.

Esther has always been interested in writing and in collecting history. She spearheaded many local historical celebrations, and she has written numerous articles about the old days, published in various Alberta and Prairie newspapers and magazines. Esther's commitment to the community has been a motivating force in her life. She enjoys working with people from all walks of life, and draws individuals together to pull toward a common goal. To sceptics, Esther lends a sympathetic ear, but their scepticism only serves to strengthen her resolve. When told that it was ridiculous to even think that a tiny community like Spruce View, Alberta, could build a Seniors Drop-In Centre, Mrs Thesberg replied, »Why not?« The deed was accomplished in 1½ year with Esther as president.

Through the process, many acquaintances became close friends. Because of her work with the Spruce View Drop-In Centre, the local Lions

Club named Esther as Citizen of the Year. Esther has been involved in many other projects and organizations, including Bethany Lutheran Church in Dickson, a local history book, Sunday school, Girl Guides, and the Autumn Glenn Auxiliary.

Her latest, and most ambitious project is preserving the history of Danish immigrants in Canada, and the development of a distinctive memorial to them, to be located in Dickson, Alberta, adjacent to the Christiansen's old General Store, which is also now being preserved, thanks to Esther.

The sceptics once again told Esther that this was a wild pipe dream, but as of 1988, literature from The Danish Heritage Society of Dickson, of which she is president, reaches 450 interested groups and individuals. The Alberta Government too has firmly thrown its support behind the project to build a Museum in Dickson.

Through the countless committee meetings, phone calls, and written contacts, Esther has added more and more people to her already lengthy list of personal friends.

Many people across Canada, in the United States and in Denmark, know that one day Esther's dream will become a reality. There will be a Danish Canadian Museum in Dickson. There will be a local pioneer museum. And the hamlet of Dickson, located in west Central Alberta, will be a unique heritage experience for visitors from all over the world.

*1988/part 1/141*



# Rasmus and Ingeborg Pedersen

JØRN H. NIELSEN

Rasmus Pedersen was born in Gammel Hinnerup, Århus County, on September 23, 1920, as the third youngest of 14 children. Rasmus went to school in a small two-rooms village school, completing his elementary schooling at age fourteen. He spent the next few years as a farmhand. In 1939, Rasmus moved to Århus, where he worked at the docks as a long-shoreman.

In 1945, Rasmus met Ingeborg. They were married on June 9, 1945. Ingeborg Larsen was born in Århus on January 22, 1923 as the oldest of six children. She received a public school education in Århus. At the age of 16, Ingeborg left Århus for the bright lights of Copenhagen, where she worked for the next five years. At the end of World War II she returned to Århus.

From 1945 to 1956 Rasmus worked as a lumberjack, while Ingeborg stayed at home, raising the three boys, which came along. In 1956, the Pedersens decided to emigrate to Canada. On September 1 of that year, Rasmus bundled his family on to a train in Århus, which took them to Bremerhafen, Germany. On September 2, the *M/S Arosa Sun* left Bremerhafen, bound for Québec City, with the Pedersen family and all their hopes and expectations on board.

After going through Canadian immigration, they boarded a train bound for Kingston, Ontario, where Rasmus's brother Peter and his wife Christine greeted them. Rasmus, Ingeborg and the boys settled in Kingston, where Rasmus held a variety of jobs over the next 30 years. Rasmus and Ingeborg worked together for a good life for themselves and their family. Throughout the years in Kingston, Rasmus and Ingeborg have been active in the Danish community. Rasmus has played an active part in The Danish Canadian Club of Kingston, serving on executive, including the position of president of the Club.

Their three sons grew up in Kingston, and they are now married with their own families. Jørn (John) has been a member of the Ontario Provincial Police for many years. Morten is running his own tinsmith business in Kingston. Lars on the other hand, moved to Alberta with his wife, and is working in the oil industry.

In 1985, Rasmus retired from the maintenance staff of Queen's University. He and Ingeborg are now enjoying a very busy retirement at Sandhurst Shores, 25 miles west of Kingston.



# Harry Jensen

WILLY JAKOBSEN

He could be remembered for his many achievements throughout the course of his life, but there is one accomplishment he would probably proclaim. It would be known as the #1 man of the Danish Canadian Club in Calgary, Alberta.

Harry Jensen has lived up to that compliment and homage of his fellow Danish Canadians. Harry was the #1 man of the Club, serving as President of the prestigious ethnic club for 12 years. He is the longest elected president in history of the Calgary Danish Canadian Club.

Harry was first nominated for the position in 1964, and once elected he duly served as the president until 1976. Harry, a member of the club since 1952, was known for his forthright opinions at the club's annual general meetings.

He recalls, »I spoke my mind, and I was often critical. Some members would respond to my criticism by asking me to go on the board. I had been asked for many years, but other commitments prevented me from accepting. Finally in 1964, I had no excuse not to accept the nomination for the board.« Harry was elected and eventually was responsible for many of the developments of the club.

Since 1976, the year when he said, »ah, that's good enough« he continues to serve as a Director. He has been on the board for a total of 21 years serving as the Chairman of the Building, House and Fund raising Committees. After a quarter century of dedication still continues on.

»The club, after my family, is probably the most important thing in my life. It is a highly respected club that brings together the Danish Canadian people of Calgary and surrounding areas. It is something to be proud of, and it is with great pride that people can say, »that is my club««. Like many other Danish Canadians, Harry emigrated to Canada in the early 1950s with his wife, Eva. Son of an independent milkman, he was born in Horsens in 1921. »What was unusual for us was that my father's brother lived in the United States, and he came to visit us in Denmark. We got itchy feet as we wanted to see more of the world.«

Harry was consulting engineer and his wife was a teacher in the public school system. Both taught in the evenings, Harry teaching a machinist's class in a technical school. »We were both young and wanting to get ahead,« reflected Harry. »We wanted to look for a place where you could work hard and reap the benefits.« The couple decided to apply for immigration and the Canadian embassy told him there was an engineering job

in Nova Scotia. From what the Jensens could find out, »Alberta was the best province, and Calgary was the best place in Alberta«.

In the 1950's, Alberta was a fast growing province and with Harry's engineering and construction background, added together with his journeyman cabinet maker's and carpenter papers, the couple figured that they had a good chance for a new start in Calgary. They left for their new home via boat from Sweden that docked in New York.

They embarked onto a train for Chicago to visit Harry's American uncle. Accompanying the Jensens on their trip was another Danish couple. Harry purchased his uncle's old car and the four sped their way across the United States and made their way to Calgary in five days.

In July, the »wild west« greeted the new immigrants to their new hometown. The Calgary Stampede was in full swing when they entered the city. »We thought Calgary was quite a cowboy town, « Harry said. As the tradition of the world famous Stampede, all of the citizens dressed in western attire and partied in the streets. »There were no hotel rooms left to rent in Calgary, so we stayed with a Danish couple until conclusion of the Stampede. That occurrence was quite a thing, as we had no way of knowing that Calgary was not like that everyday!«

In keeping with the Stampede spirit, Harry was told to report to his promised carpenter's job on Monday since »nobody worked during Stampede Week«.

On their first Sunday in Canada, the Jensens were invited to Lars Wilumsen's farm west of Okotos. A spectacular thunderstorm complete with funnels and cyclones terrorized the countryside. As everyone dashed for safety in the basement, a haystack, twice the size of a house, was lifted into the air by the fierce storm. The haystack was swept 20 kilometres away from the farmyard. »There were hail stones as large as eggs. We immediately took a picture for our families back home to prove that we were not biggest liars already in North America.« Harry chuckled.

After the uprising of the storm, events for the Jensens sailed along at a steady pace. Harry was able to find steady employment in the winter with a concrete construction company, which was welcomed news as the couple was expecting their first child in February. The job paid a good salary of 425dollars a month but a person had to work 60 hours a week. Harry was the foreman of the company and many Danish immigrants came to him for work.

One of his fellow Danes, Chris Bakgaard, met Harry at a meeting in the Union Hall, and the two carpenters started their own construction company, *Scandia Construction*. By 1953 they were one of the largest homebuilders in Calgary. »We didn't have much money and we made up our contracts with customers. Most people were good honest people but

some were not. Our contracts had loopholes and weak points, and we were hit with a four plex, a duplex, and a 12-suite apartment. When it gets to getting paid, we did not get paid, and we found ourselves in a position where we couldn't pay our bills. That put a damper on the things for seven years with no credit available to me. I decided to get out of the construction business and go back to engineering.«

Harry moved onto a large consulting firm, *Haddin, Davis & Brown*, which specialized in municipal engineering for sewage plants, water treatment plants, and new subdivisions. After 11 years with this company, his boss started his own company, *Davis Engineering*, and Harry went to work for him as Project Engineer and General Contractor. Within two years, mortgage money became hard to find, and Harry moved to another consulting firm, Underwood, McLellan & Associates. The year was 1966 and Harry had a good job with Calgary as a home base, which was welcome news for Harry and Eva, now with four children at home.

For 11 years Harry was with the company in the Municipal Engineering Department as the Senior Project Engineer. He provided consulting and engineering services to the Alberta towns of Olds, Hanna, Claresholm and Oyen, and Sparwood, B.C. In Calgary, he was Project Engineer for many of the city's new subdivisions. »Those were big subdivisions development days. In 1957 to 1964 we developed over 2.200 lots a year from farmland to residential lots.« Harry recalled. »Those days have never been matched to date.«

As the city of Calgary grew, the Jensen family grew. Harry and Eva had four children, Susan born in 1952, Lisa born in 1953, Gordon born in 1955, and Michael born in 1959. Susan resides in Vancouver with her husband and their four children. She works outside the home as a part-time bank teller and computer instructor. Also living in Vancouver is Lisa, her husband and their two children. Lisa is an assistant manager at a large restaurant in the seashore city. Son Gordon is employed in the seismic exploration industry in Calgary and he has one child from a former marriage. Michael is a plumbing contractor in Windermeere, B.C. and he lives with his fiancée.

While his family was growing up, Harry invested in some real estate properties, and this enabled him to retire in 1978, at the age of 57. He is a 50 per cent owner of *Greenbrook Development Corporation*, which owns and operates mobile home parks in Brooks and Oyen. »Since I have been retired I have been busier than when I worked,« he said. His daily interests include playing the stock market, a habit he started many years with a Danish friend. Harry initially invested small and he says he has done well over the years except for the market's fall in October 1987. »I had a fairly substantial paper loss but I never had to sell. The stocks will come up

again.« Harry could not supply any »hot« tips but he says low to middle oil and gas stocks with six months to one-year term will do well. Harry and Eva share a number of interests. They are avid whist players, and Harry golfs and curls in the Danish Canadian Club's leagues. They enjoy traveling, and each year they take time out for their cabin at Windermere, many visits to Vancouver to see their family and friends, and annual month long holiday back to Denmark, (27 times in 37 years), and a month sun in Hawaii.

When Harry is not away on a trip, he is usually a daily patron of the Danish Canadian Club. His ties to the club are strong. He was originally a president of the Danish Soccer club, later named Calgary Royals. »I was the president, which meant also being coach, trainer, water boy of the soccer team, and Eva used to wash all of the uniforms.« Between 1956 and 1961, the Danish soccer team was highly regarded in western Canada. »We were always a contender for the Alberta Fist Division and the Western Canadian Championships. At the height of our glory, we had over 60 players in the first, second and junior leagues.«

As immigration began to drop off in the early 1960s, the financial strength and the manpower for the teams became strained. The teams folded in 1963. Harry took on other Danish interests. He had been a member of the Danish Canadian Club since 1952 and a shareholder in the late 1950s. When Harry was elected President of the club in 1964, the club had 260 members. The new board elected at this time consisted of young and aggressive members. This strapping young director wanted to make some changes to the club in order to attract more members. The originally Danish Canadian Club location on 7th Avenue was not ideally situated for this purpose. »You could count on at least one fight during a Saturday night dance,« said Harry. The board passed new rules for dress codes and behaviour ethics, and also managed to have all the Danish organizations working together. As a result the Danish Canadian Club became popular with the Danish Community and the membership started to grow at a steady rate. The Danish Canadian Club moved to its present location, 727, 11th Avenue S.W., but they only used the upstairs hall as the ground level space was leased to another business. »In those days, the Board of Directors took their turns selling tickets, bartending and looking after the upkeep of the hall. We had no labour costs for all this work, « said Harry.

The club's *Mermaid Inn*, a daily lounge and dining room, was opened in January 1973 in the space on the street level. The future and the operation of the Danish Canadian Club was altered as the club was now a full-service club with all the amenities and staff capable of catering to its members. Harry was instrumental in the opening of the *Mermaid Inn* and he also coordinated the complete renovation of the upstairs dance hall.

In 1985, the Danish Canadian Club took on another 75 persons banquet room, the Tivoli Room, and a Games Room complete with a shuffleboard, dartboards, and a card playing area was added. The club also welcomed a new Board Room and the upgrading of the *Mermaid Inn*. Harry, building committee Chairman, was responsible for supervising the major renovation.

Aside from his commitment to the Danish Canadian Club, Harry is also dedicated to the Danish people in Alberta and Canada, For eleven years, he has been a member of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council, and advisory board reporting to Alberta's Minister of Culture. Harry was the Alberta representative for the Danish people, but since 1977 the council has expanded and Harry serves the Calgary region. »It is the mandate of the Board to make recommendations on funding programs and services to assist ethnic groups to retain their old country heritage and incorporate it into Canadian way of life,« says Harry.

During Joe Clarck's short-lived term as Prime Minister of Canada, Harry served one year on a similar federal advisory board reporting to the Federal Minister of culture as a representative for all Danish Canadians in Canada.

Harry was also doing volunteers work for Tuxedo Credit Union (now First Calgary Financial) as a member of the Board of Directors from 1958 to 1964. His last year was served as the Vice-President but he resigned in order to fully serve the Danish Canadian Club.

Harry is also very proud of his elected trustee position in 1982 to the Calgary Zoological Society. His present term, concluding in 1989, has found him as a former Chairman of the Construction Committee, the current Chairman of the Botanical Committee, and a member of the Executive board. 1988 has been an outstanding year for Calgary, host city of the Winter Olympics, but the Calgary Zoo has also gathered world attention. The Executive Board of the Zoo was instrumental in obtaining the loan of two Giant Panda Bears from China. The Pandas have enthralled more than a million zoo patrons and the revenues will surpass all the zoo's expectations. Harry is particularly pleased for the zoo and the citizens of Calgary.

Over the years finding a balance between work and volunteer commitments might have been difficult for many people. Not so for Harry Jensen. »I would do it all over again«, Harry smiles. »Everything was just as much a hobby as a job. I enjoyed every minute of it. That certainly goes for the Club.« Conviction clings to his words. This elderly gentleman's dedication and commitment to the Calgary Danish Canadian Club will not fade with time.

# Herbert Jorgensen

MARTHA LARSEN

Herbert Jorgensen (Garder 264-42-II) came to Canada in 1948, arriving in Montreal by boat from Copenhagen. The trip across the Atlantic lasted 18 days.

Herbert was born on a farm near Brønden, Vendsyssel (Northern Jutland) on January 4, 1921. He was the oldest of 7 children, three boys and four girls. He attended the village school and also went to Halvorsminde Youth College, and a year later Try Folk High School, where he got a diploma in farm inspection. Working as an inspector, he watched in disbelief the German occupy Denmark on April 9, 1940.

Herbert was called up for military service with the Royal Danish Guards on November 1, 1942. Having served his six months training, he was transferred from Jægersborg Kaserne, the base camp, to Gothersgade Kaserne in Copenhagen. Livgardens Kaserne in Gothersgade, near Rosenborg Castle, is the Royal Danish Guards' base in Copenhagen, from where they march every day the short distance to Amalienborg Palace, for the changing of the guard at the Royal Palace. At that time the reigning monarch was King Christian the Tenth. However, the guard's duty at the Royal Palace came to a sudden halt, when the Germans took the Royal Danish Guards prisoners on August 29, 1943. The guards were held three days at Gothersgade Kaserne, and then taken to Sandholm Lejren, an internment camp, early in the morning in the back of an open truck.

After being released from the internment camp, Herb was accepted into the Danish Police College in Copenhagen, and after passing the exam he was posted with a riot squad team in Odder, south of Århus in Jutland. But again Herbert's luck ran out when the Germans interned the Danish Police Force. About 2,000 police officers were sent to concentration camps in Germany, and many never came back. However, Herbert put on a civilian jacket and slipped out the back door.

Herbert then moved to Århus, where he worked for the Danish Underground. His apartment was raided several times by the Gestapo, and often he could not go back to the same apartment. In the effort to catch Herbert, the Gestapo one day came to his parent's farm, disguised in civilian clothes, and asked if there was any work for them on the farm. Looking at Herbert's picture on the wall, they asked casually where he was now, but the parents became suspicious and did not give out any information. Herbert's sister quickly ran upstairs and warned Herbert's brother, Børge, who also worked in the Underground, and who was asleep. He escaped by jumping out of the second store window.



After Denmark's liberation, on May 5, 1945, Herbert was stationed at the Århus Police Station. But it turned out to be a short stay. He was called to serve with the Royal Guards and sent to guard the border between Denmark and Germany. After a few weeks at the border, Herbert was promoted to staff sergeant, because of his work in the Underground. He was then told that he could go back to Århus and wait for a call from Copenhagen. However, Herbert did not accept any position with the military, but stayed with the Århus Police Force.

In 1948, Herbert applied for immigration to Australia and Canada. He was accepted into Canada, and left his native Denmark in October 1948, together with his brother Børge. After a few days in Montreal, they were on a Greyhound Bus, bound for Calgary, Alberta, via the United States. That trip took nearly five days.

Herbert and Børge stayed with their uncle, Adolf Skinberg, in Drumheller, Alberta, for a few days. There was much to talk about. Then it was off job hunting. Herbert worked in a furniture store in High River, and on a ranch near Nanton. He also serviced bulldozers in Jasper, laboured on construction sites in Calgary, and drove a sightseeing bus in beautiful Banff, high up in the Rockies.

While working as a carpenter in Calgary, Herbert met Martin Overgaard. Martin was on the Albert Provincial Rifle Team. As well, he represented Canada at the shooting competition at Bisley, England. Herbert was invited to shoot on the Alberta Team; and in 1951 he made the team to go to Ottawa, with the trip being paid for by the Provincial Government. After staying 10 days in Ottawa, Herbert liked the national capital so well that he decided to get a job there. Herbert worked in Ottawa as a carpenter for three months, but then moved on to Hamilton, located at the western end of Lake Ontario, halfway between Toronto and Niagara Falls. Hamilton, known for its large steel plants *Stello and Dofasco*, became Herbert's home in Canada.

In 1953, when the Ford Motor Company built the first car assembly plant in Canada, Herbert became an employee and was later promoted to supervisor. It was a tough job with a production of 60 to 65 cars per hour; but Herbert held this job until his retirement in 1980. In 1952, Herbert met a girl by the name of Frances Krevenky, and they were married in 1954. They had two sons: Tim and Wayne. Tim is now an electronics engineer, and Wayne is an architect. His wife, Frances passed away in 1971 after a short illness. In 1974, Herbert met Jean Marangoni, and they were married in 1976.

As a pasttime, Herbert still belongs to a rifle club in Hamilton. He has received the Hamilton Gold Award Ring for being on the Hamilton Rifle team three times in the sixties.



In 1957 and 1958, it was discovered that there were many former Danish Guardsmen in Ontario, so the Royal Danish Guards' Association, Eastern Canada was started. Herbert naturally became a member. He has served on the executive for many years and he has been in charge of the Guards Shoot since 1958, which for many years now has been held at Sunset Villa. Herbert is also a photographer and has taken an enormous amount of pictures of the Association's activities.

When the Guards' Association joined the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, Herbert became the person responsible for liaison with the Federation. He has attended nearly all the annual Danish Canadian Conferences. Herbert was later appointed the Guards' Association's Historian.

*1987/Part 1/143*

# Gordon and Helen Christiansen

ESTHER THESBERG

The Christiansen store in Dickson has become familiar to most members of the Danish Federation. But what about the people who owned this General Store, the Christiansen family? This brief biography is an attempt to familiarize the reader with the story, leading up to Gordon and Helen's involvement with the Danish Heritage Society of Dickson.

Gordon's parents, Carl and Laura Christiansen, with the six month old, Homo, were among the group of Danish pioneers from Omaha, Nebraska, who in 1903, travelled north and established the Danish colony of Dickson. After a long tiring trip north, the young family set out west from Innisfail with horses and wagon, to their designated homestead. There were no roads or bridges, so the rivers had to be forded, a thoroughly frightening experience for Laura, as she clasped Homo in her arms. A welcome break in the tedious two-day journey was an overnight stay with the Dan Mørkeberg family, at their creamery in Markerville.

The next day they continued, to try to find the stakes that bordered their quarter section of land. The weary three-some pitched a tent, which was their home until the Pioneer group helped each other to build primitive log cabins.

Ventures into the unknown were no new experience for Carl. Orphaned at an early age, sixteen years old Carl worked his way as a cook's helper across the Atlantic, arriving in Iowa, in 1893. To learn the English language, he attended a Danish Folk High School in Elk Horn, Iowa. Later he was a student at Dana College, in Blair, Nebraska. While there, he met and married Laura, second daughter of widowed Marie Christiansen. Some years later, Marie joined Carl and Laura at Dickson, bringing the remainder of her family with her. In 1905, a Post Office was opened in the Christiansen home. The store was built in 1909, and the family moved into the upper story of the building.

Carl and Laura's faith in God, and in the new land they had claimed as their own, sustained them. They contributed much to the growth of the church and community. The extension of credit at the store enabled many pioneer families to survive until such time as they could repay their debts. Although Carl could be brusque at times, he was a sensitive, generous person who could not see anyone suffer real need. He always wore a white shirt, and a tie, even on his annual hunting and fishing trips. It must have taken a lot of effort on Laura's part to keep those shirts laundered without modern washing machines and electric iron.

More children were born into the family—Esther (Mrs. Herald Mogensen), Bernice, and Eva (Mrs. Ejler Castella), all now living in Red Deer, Alberta. Last, but not least, Gordon arrived on the scene, a brother for Homo. When Homo joined his father in the business, the store became C. Christiansen and Son. When Gordon became a partner, an s was added to the Son.

Gordon was baptized, confirmed, and later married in the Bethany Lutheran Church in Dickson. He received his education in the one-room Dickson School, and at the Dickson High School. During World War II, he served a stint in the Army, stationed on Vancouver Island. He was thrown off a Bren Gun carrier and severely injured his arm. He was then stationed in Calgary, and was discharged in 1944.

Gordon and Helene Nissen were married in 1943 at Dickson. Helene (Helen), second youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. George Nissen, was born in Sønderjylland in Denmark. In 1928, when Helen was eleven years old, the entire Nissen family, consisting of parents and eight children, emigrated to Canada. They settled at Dickson, where they contributed much to the church and community. Helen did not find adjusting to a new country, a traumatic experience. Her first Alberta teacher was Miss Ruth Thomsen, who was well able to understand and speak Danish, a great help to the Danish immigrant children in the area. Also, the majority of the children in the school at least understood Danish.

Carl Christiansen died in 1945, and Laura, ten years later, in 1955. Sometime after Carl's death, Homo and Gordon decided to expand the General Store business to include a Quick-Freezer Locker Plant, which was opened in 1947. Homo and his wife, Christine, (Helen's oldest sister) took on the responsibility of the store and post office. Helen and Gordon were in charge of the Locker enterprise, which included custom butchering, curing and preparation of meat for placing in customer's individual lockers, which were rented for storage of meat and other perishable foods. This was before Rural Electrification, and the advent of home deep-freezers.

The Dickson locker operation soon gained a good reputation, bringing customers from as far away as Calgary, who had discovered the excellent quality of the bacon and ham. Also their delicious Danish »leverpostej«, »rullepølse« and dried beef were in great demand. The Christiansen ham and bacon won more prizes than any other Locker Plant in Alberta.

Homo died in 1965, a great loss to the family and community. He was an honest businessman, concerned about welfare of the community that he served faithfully.

Gordon and Helen carried on with both businesses for some years. Later they rented out the Locker Plant, which was eventually closed in late

1970s. Gordon embarked on a new venture in the early 1970s, the Dickson Fertilizer Plant, which he operated until 1982, when he sold it. It was still a vital and active business.

Church and community affairs have always been a great part of Gordon and Helen's lives. He has been a church council member for many years, with an occasional break. At the present time, he is serving a second term as President of the congregation. Helen is a valued member of the Churchwomen. They both taught Sunday school, and were members of the Choir. They both contributed much to the Boy Scout and Girl Guide movement, he as Club Master and District Commissioner; she as Brownie Leader. Gordon was a founding member of the Dickson Fish and Game Association. He played for the Dickson Vikings, later named Rye Kings.

Officially, Gordon and Helen Christiansen are retired. But they are certainly not sitting around twiddling their thumbs. The Danish Heritage Society is grateful to them, not only for the donation of the Store property, but also for their continued support and effort toward the store development, and the proposed National Danish Canadian Museum. Gordon spends a great deal of time video taping Pioneers families in the area, so their stories may be preserved for future generations. They enjoy their hobby farm, 20 km west of Dickson, where they have a cosy cabin, along Crooked Creek. Fishing, enjoyed by both of them, can be real good there at times.

Their immediate family consists of two daughters and one son, plus six grandchildren, third and fourth generation Christiansens, who enjoy spending time at the farm, and in their parental home, next to the Store.

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# Henny Berg Nielsen

## *From Dronninglund to Dundas*

### MARTHA LARSEN

Henny Edel Pedersen was born on August 12, 1924, in Dronninglund, Denmark. Her father was Jens Christian Pedersen, born on November 28, 1896, in Volstrup. He died on July 15, 1974. Her mother was Sofie Pedersen, born on August 30, 1896, at Gjeraa Hede, Dronninglund. She passed away on April 10, 1984.

The Pedersens were married on May 29, 1923, and started their married life on a farm called Smedebakken, where they lived for over 50 years. Their second child was a daughter, Erna, born on August 9, 1926. She married Kai Christensen, who worked in Falbe Hansen's clothing business in Randers. Another daughter, Esther, was born on April 10, 1931. She married Villy Stentoft in 1951. He was a comptroller in a big lumber company in Randers, but is now retired and still lives in Randers. Esther died on May 10, 1994, after a brief illness.

The three little girls on the Pedersen farm started school in Ørsø, with Henny being the first one. After she finished school, she worked in big homes learning homemaking with all the different aspects. After her marriage, she attended commercial college in Dronninglund. All three sisters became very efficient homemakers and gourmet cooks. Henny says her mother was an excellent teacher, who could do anything she put her mind to.

Henny and Carl Aage met at the Dronninglund KFUM (YMCA) at Christmas time in 1940, learning to make Christmas decorations. It was love at first sight, and already in the beginning of 1941, Carl Aage took her home to meet his parents. They were married on September 17, 1944.

Carl Aage was born on September 17, 1922. His father was Christian Berg Nielsen, a furniture manufacturer, who also taught at a commercial college. Christian was a graduate of Aalborg Technical School. He was born in 1882 and died in 1963. Carl Aage's mother, Thora Regine Nielsen, was born on February 14, 1892. She married Christian in Hals on June 5, 1915, and he died on November 25, 1978.

Carl Aage graduated from Dronninglund Realskole and went to Aalborg Technical School on a three-year day course. Then he apprenticed four years as a journeyman in his father's factory and became a highly skilled master cabinetmaker. The Danish word for this is »snedkermester«

which it says on a nicely carved sign on what later became his workshop behind his and Henny's building.

Carl Aage had three brothers: Viggo, born on September 14, 1923, graduated from Aalborg Kathedralskole and went to the University of Copenhagen, where he graduated in Political Science. He entered the diplomatic service, serving with the Danish Delegation to the European Union in Brussels. He died in Copenhagen in 1995.

Another brother was Poul (1926–1982). He learned his trade in his father's factory and afterwards held positions in other cities, lastly in Copenhagen. The youngest of the Berg Nielsen boys was Niels. He also went to Aalborg Kathedralskole, graduating in 1947. Afterwards he graduated in law from the University of Copenhagen and became legal counsel in the big Danish insurance company *Baltica*. He is now retired and lives in the Copenhagen area.

With the German occupation of Denmark in 1940, the usually quiet lifestyle in Dronninglund changed dramatically. Ordinary people were forced to have German soldiers living in their homes, and later many refugees arrived.

In Carl Aage's home they had two soldiers. Despite that they would often have others come in to listen to the forbidden BBC broadcast from London. As well, Carl Aage's father was forced to accommodate a German carpenter in his workshop.

The Berg Nielsen brothers became good friends with a Polish soldier in German uniform. He was not keen on fighting Hitler's war and one day told them that a wooden barrack had been built in a park completely occupied by the Germans. »It ought to be burned down«, he said, and Carl Aage with two other young men sneaked in one night and started a fire. Then suddenly somebody shone a light on the building. The two men went into hiding while Carl Aage had a very narrow escape.

After Henny and Carl Aage were married in 1944, and Gyrithe was born in 1945, Henny did not stay at home doing housework. She helped Carl Aage in the factory where they at one point in time made wooden table protectors for export to the United States.

There was a lot of talk in those years that Denmark's defenses should be better, so that a military occupation could never happen again. Civil Defense became quite popular. Both Henny and Carl Aage became active in the militia and Henny became a »Lotte«. She also went on an instructor's course in Nymindegab and learned among other things to take a pistol apart and put it together again. When she came back to Dronninglund she became a district manager.

On New Year's Eve in 1956, Henny and Carl Aage were at a big party and danced to tape music, which was a novelty at that time. One of the

guests was a friend of Carl Aage who was visiting from Canada. He talked a lot about Canada—so much so that Carl Aage became very interested in emigrating to Canada. He talked to Henny about going and Henny finally agreed when he promised that they should return to Denmark in two years time.

It did not take long to finalize the plans. On March 23, 1957, they sailed from Denmark on the *Stockholm* after first sailing from Aalborg to Copenhagen with the belongings they had decided to take with them. The family said a tearful goodbye to the three (Gyrithe was born February 11, 1945), but were comforted by the fact that they would come back in two years. Carl Aage's brother Niels wrote, »Even if they come back penniless, they will have gained valuable experience«. However this did not happen. They were very successful in their new homeland and they stayed, but returned to Denmark for many visits.

Carl Aage and Henny arrived in Hamilton, Ontario, on April 2, 1957. They booked into Fisher's Hotel, which has since been demolished. On the first day a journalist from The Hamilton Spectator came and wanted to interview a farmer. Carl Aage jumped up, put on his jacket and said, »For 50 dollars I will tell you my story«. »But you are not a farmer«, the journalist said with a big grin, »but is there anything I can help you with?« Carl Aage told him that he was a cabinetmaker and needed a job. The journalist picked up the phone, made a couple of calls, and right away Carl Aage landed a job. Later he worked for a builder in Stoney Creek and became very friendly with the builder and his family. Next he rented a small workshop in downtown Hamilton.

For several years Carl Aage worked in a supervisory capacity for the Valley City Manufacturing Company, which installed furniture in schools and churches. He would travel to the job site, which could be in Ontario or Québec, and hire local people.

His next employer was Mr. H. Harris, president of *Gardeners of Galt*. That company was involved in building the courthouse in Toronto, Queen's Park phase I and II, the Commerce Court and the Toronto Dominion Centre phase I and II.

Henny fondly remembers a Christmas party given by Mr. Harris for his whole staff in a Toronto hotel. All the guests were greeted at the door by Mr. and Mrs. Harris and introduced to the whole family. At that time, Mr. Harris employed several labourers from Portugal, and as a fine gesture to them he said grace before dinner in Portuguese. Unfortunately, Mr. Harris died quite suddenly. After that Carl Aage worked for *Olympia and York* (the Reichmann brothers), when the First Canadian Place was built in Toronto.



Like Carl Aage, Henny got a job right away. They both had a definite advantage over many other Danes that came at that time, in that they already had a good command of the English language. Henny was able to employ some Danish women to clean her house when she worked long hours in her business.

Her first job was in Morgan's Department Store in downtown Hamilton, where she kept track of the inventory in the beauty parlour dispensary. That led to an interest in the beauty business, where after she enrolled in Bruno's School of Hair Design in May and graduated in November 1958. She then worked for Mr. Jack on Main Street West. But in 1960, Carl Aage declared, »You should have your own business«. So on March 2, 1960, she opened *Coiffure de Paris* and built up a very successful beauty business with five operators. In 1969, they bought the whole building and Carl Aage renovated the three apartments upstairs, using his solid knowledge of his craft as a master carpenter. These apartments have been fully rented ever since.

In the 1960s, Henny used her interest in hair to do hairstyles for the Dundas Little Theatre plays. That caused her to do a lot of research to recreate the authentic hairstyles.

On March 2, 1985, Henny celebrated her 25th year in business as a hair stylist. She held a reception in the form of a champagne party for customers, friends and past and present staff members. Everything was decorated in silver and pink, since silver is the traditional 25th anniversary colour. As decorations, but also to entertain the guests, she had done up wigs to recreate the various hairstyles over 25 years. There was the Gibson Girl, the Beehive, short and long shag, the Blunt Cut, the Surf, the Wedge and also Braids. However, Henny has always objected to doing Punk!

Gyrithe is Carl Aage and Henny's only child. She was the first grandchild and loved by the whole family. Ever since she was four years old, she has received a bouquet of flowers for her birthday, a tradition that is still carried on after they emigrated to Canada. At an early age, Gyrithe found out that if she wanted something, and her parents said no, she could trot down to her grandfather's factory and he would say yes. He just could not resist his little granddaughter with the blond (nearly white) hair.

Before leaving for Canada, her father had warned her, saying that they might not be able to afford a nice apartment like in Denmark, but might have to live in a garage. »That is OK«, she said, »as long as it has a window«.

Gyrithe found it difficult to adjust to Canada. She missed her favourite cat, Mis and would wake up at night, crying that Mis had run away. Moreover, school was pure hell, she says. The other children would tease her, and she actually took sick, running a temperature. The doctor that the

family consulted said that there was nothing physically wrong with her. Apparently the shock of being uprooted from her usual surroundings had been too much for her. However, she got through the Canadian school system, and was even on the Honour Roll. After public school she went to Westdale Collegiate, graduating from grade 13 in 1966. It was then on to Teachers College—and Gyrithe is now a teacher at Billy Green Public School in East Hamilton.

Gyrithe says she will never forget her bad experiences as an immigrant child to Canada. Now as a teacher, whenever she gets a new student in her class, whether it is from across the street, across the country or across the ocean, she makes an effort to make him feel welcome in the new surroundings. In 1963, she met James (Jim) Harrison on a blind date. They fell in love and were married on August 3, 1968. Jim is an electrical engineer and works for Comstock, a big construction company. She and Jim have two children. Jennifer, born on December 25, 1972, went to McMaster University and received a BA in music. Later she obtained a bachelor degree in education in London, Ontario, and she is now teaching music in a big school in Mississauga. Gyrithe and Jim's second child, James (James III, born January 26, 1975) works for Comstock like his father. He also attends Brock University in St. Catharine's, where he studies computer science.

When they first arrived in Canada, there was no money for furniture. The big wooden box that had held their belongings on the *Stockholm* was used as an all-purpose table. Gradually, however, they furnished their home. And Henny also got a car, prior to which she had spent a lot of time on the bus. She worked long hours in her parlour, which was open three nights a week. Often they did not eat supper until about 11 o'clock at night. But nobody in the family complained. They stuck together and never lost sight of the goals they had set for themselves.

Gyrithe says she admires her mother a lot, more than she can express. Imagine, to completely change direction at the age of 32, to go to Canada with her family, to get a job in a foreign environment, to continue her schooling—and then to open her own business!

When Wage and Price Controls were introduced in Canada it became difficult to start big building projects like First Canadian Place, which Carl Aage worked on with Olympia and York. To continue in the company he would have had to move to Edmonton. He did not want to move, and so after commuting to Toronto for fifteen years, he retired in 1977.

Carl Aage then decided to work on the building that he and Henny owned. He began by restoring the front of the building, which had been built in 1831. It had been destroyed by fire in 1871, but had then been rebuilt by a tinsmith from Ireland named Peter Brady. The design of the building is with elaborate double brackets under the eaves. Layers of old

paint had built up, and sometimes Carl Aage had to remove a quarter of an inch of paint.

Architect Trevor Garwood-Jones guided the restoration of the facade of the building. When the Dundas Heritage Association saw what a fine job Carl Aage was doing, they took steps to have the building declared a heritage building. It was a proud day on November 30, 1978, when author and TV personality Pierre Burton awarded a beautiful clay plaque to Henny. The plaque is placed quite high up, but the over six feet tall Pierre Burton could easily reach that high.

After the Heritage Project, Carl Aage wanted to build a workshop behind Henny's beauty parlour. He started to dig for the foundation, but then one of the neighbours objected to the plan and eventually took him and Henny to court, saying that it would set a precedent if he were allowed to build. In no time there would be small factories behind all the storefronts, she said. However, Henny and Carl Aage won the case and he could build a nice big workshop.

After a lengthy illness, Carl Aage died on July 13, 1991. After so many years together it was a hard blow for Henny to lose her beloved husband and partner. But she kept busy in her beauty parlour, which now had a lot fewer operators. Henny changed the front section of the beauty parlour into an attractive gift shop, where she sells selected items from Denmark, mostly items from Georg Jensen and Royal Copenhagen.

When the Berg Nielsens first came to Canada, there was a close friendship between them and the other Danes they had met on the boat. It happened quite often that they helped each other with accommodation if one family was stuck for a place to live. They had fun—and the Danish-Canadian Club at Fisher's Hotel held many dances and parties. They were also actively involved with the small Danish Lutheran Church on Stinson Street in Hamilton. The DKU Pastor at the time, Emmanuel Rasmussen, helped the Danes a lot, by taking them out to job interviews, to help them look for a place to live etc. A close friendship developed between Pastor Rasmussen, his wife Anna, and their daughters, and the Berg Nielsen family. Pastor Rasmussen even taught Gyrithe to drive!

After Carl Aage's death, Henny again had more time to spend in the Danish Lutheran Church of the Niagara Peninsula in Grimsby, where she is now the chairperson of the Church Council. She also became involved with the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada. She has in that capacity attended Danish Canadian Conferences in many parts of Canada - in Kingston, Montreal, Edmonton, Nanaimo and New Denmark. She is currently Director for the Ontario Region.

We wish Henny many more good years in her business, which she loves and which keeps her busy from early morning. Henny's store is lo-

cated at 59 King Street in Dundas. She lives at 75 Main Street, apartment 605, also in Dundas, and within walking distance of the store. We thank her for the work she puts into the Danish Lutheran Church and the Danish Federation. She is a shining example of what Danes can accomplish when they stick to the goals they set when they left Denmark and what they can do in Canada to maintain and promote their Danish heritage.

*Hamilton 1998*  
*1998/226*

# Erik Pedersen

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born on April 22, 1926, on Halvagergaard, a farm belonging to the estate of Fussingø. My recollections from that period of my life are few and far between. The only thing that sticks in my mind is that we lived far from any neighbours. Consequently, we three children had to play by ourselves.

That all changed on April 1, 1933, when we moved to Bjellerup Ladegaard in Dronningborg, a suburb of Randers. Dad rented the farm, as he had rented Halvagergaard. Our big move coincided with me starting school. From the earliest grades, I enjoyed my mother tongue, in both written and oral form. In the 6th grade, I passed the entrance exam to Junior High School at Randers Statsskole. Scholastically speaking, this was not the best time of my life. Despite not being too clever, as well as being a little lazy, I managed to achieve a modest Realeksamen.

Upon graduation, I started work in a »general business« with Johan Nielsen. We bought and sold grain, had a depot for a brewery, and supplied farmers with everything from groceries to fertilizer and rope. I learned that hard work does not hurt anyone. Four nights a week, I went to Business College. My workday started at 7:30 in the morning, so I excused myself for occasionally falling asleep during the evening class.

The 9th of April 1947 was the 7th anniversary of the German occupation of Denmark. It was also the day I entered military service. I had been drafted to serve in the Coast Guard, which at that time was part of the Navy. After the training period, we received postings. Because of my business experience, I was put in charge of the dry food on Middelgrundsfortet. Our three cooks were: one mechanic, one carpenter, and a farmer. I cannot say we were fed well—so many hungry sailors came to my quarters, begging for a sandwich. I helped as best I could.

Upon returning to civilian life, I landed a job selling seed. Not too interesting, but at least I was working. The following year, I decided to upgrade my business education. I enrolled in Randers Commercial day courses, where my marks were better than in the High School. Our principal called a meeting one day, and told us it was time to form a student organization. He suggested that I become the first president. I accepted, and a year of pleasurable work followed. I learned to get along with a board of directors; and in June I got my diploma, and went job-hunting once more.

I found a position as bookkeeper and cashier at a shipbroker's office. I must say that it was far the most challenging job I have ever had—before or since. My boss believed in letting his staff learn the hard way; yet he always stood behind us when we goofed. I dealt with people of several na-

ationalities, and had an excellent opportunity to practice my English. I used to change to the fullest. My German and Swedish were rusty, but I managed.

A year passed, very quickly. Then one day I saw an ad in *Jyllandsposten* (a Danish newspaper), talking about Canada in glowing terms. I made the decision to emigrate to that huge country across the sea. On August 31, 1951, I left the Danish shores on board *Castelbianco*, bound for Canada. A couple of people, who were there to see me off, left a bouquet of flowers with a member of the crew. I finally found the flowers at the refugee office on the upper deck. There were about 750 refugees from various camps in Europe on board, as well as about 450 Danish emigrants. The people in the office asked me if I would help entertain the Danes onboard. »What do you have in mind?« I asked. They answered: English lessons. They showed me some mimeographed sheets with sentences like: I can hop, I can run, see me hop, and see me run. I had a better idea, like: Where is the washroom? Where is the bus station? How much does this meal cost?

If the Danes could not say it, at least they could point to the question on the sheet. The people in charge agreed, and made up new sheets. Soon we were ready, and I used a microphone for the first time. I asked for teachers to come forward, and about 20 offered their services. We then asked for students: more than 200 arrived. Unbelievably, most of them could not speak a word of English. I used the opportunity to go from table to table to tell my fellow Danes, what to expect with that little knowledge of English. »Don't worry about your children; they will learn English in school. Worry about yourselves. Go to English classes as soon as you can, after you are settled«. How many took my advice, I shall never know.

I sat foot on Canadian soil at Québec City on September 11, 1951. I proceeded to travel to Montreal, which was my destination. I got a job as a labourer for Maple Leaf Milling Co. I made about 38 dollars a week, and yet I have never gone to as many plays or concerts, as I did while living in Montreal. One day, I attended a party at The Danish Club, and met Henning Sørensen, who was in charge of the Danish short-wave section for CBC. He felt I had a good voice, and suggested I broadcast the story of my work at Maple Leaf Milling Co. CBC paid me almost as much for my effort, as I made in a whole week at Maple Leaf Milling.

In May 1952, I decided to move to an English-speaking part of Canada. I chose Edmonton, Alberta. I set out by Greyhound bus through the United States to Western Canada. One of the most interesting trips I have ever made! I arrived at the YMCA in Edmonton, where I met Ejnar Hjelm, a Danish insurance man. He wanted to introduce me to a customer of his, a Norwegian electrician by the name of Sverre Madsen, as well as his wife



and two sons, Øjvind and Svein. This family had arrived in Canada the same year as I. The two boys had arranged a Norwegian Independence Day program for the 17th of May, on radio station CKUA. It had been a success, and they were asked if it was possible to find both a Danish and a Swedish announcer to start a Scandinavian program. They offered me the Danish portion of the program.

I was apprehensive about accepting. I had no employment. In fact, I wasn't sure I would remain in Edmonton. But within the week, I was working as a stock boy for the Hudson's Bay Company, and I had found a place to stay, so I decided to give the radio challenge a try. Within days, we came in contact with a Swedish engineer, Ernst Almerling, and we became the nucleus of the Scandinavian Hour over CKUA. We agreed on a format consisting of news, views and music from the three countries. I wrote *Politiken* (a Danish newspaper) in Copenhagen, and have received their weekly newspaper ever since, for which I am eternally grateful. The immediate necessity for all of us was records. We borrowed all over town. On October 26, 1952, at 12:30 p.m., our first program went on the air. It was a big day; my life revolved around the program. I borrowed and returned records, travelling by bus.

By early 1953, we realized that somehow we had to raise money to establish our own record library. Three coffee parties later, we had made enough money to set it up. Øjvind and Ernst received help from Radio Norway and Radio Sweden, about 60 and 40 records respectively. Radio Denmark, on the other hand, told me very clearly that no help was forthcoming. When my first shipment of 78 rmp records arrived, I was in seventh heaven. They were packed in straw and only three records were broken. By the time, I had moved up in the ranks and was now selling major appliances for the Hudson's Bay Co. Because of that, I was able to buy a 1940 Ford Coupe. A lot easier to get around! During our coffee parties, we found tremendous interest in Scandinavian cooperation, which led to the formation of the Scandinavian Centre Co-op Ltd. The Danish community in Edmonton had no Club at that time. There had been one before the war, Danish Society »Dania«. We decided to revive »Dania«, which was done. Many people worked long hours to get the Club on its feet.

Another story concerning the Danish short wave of the CBC: My first experience as part time correspondent took place on November 19, 1952. SAS flew the first test flight across the North Pole. I interviewed the pilot in command, Poul Jensen, and the honoured guest, Ambassador Henrik Kauffmann. Henning Sørensen was kind enough to say, »Considering it was your first experience, you didn't do badly«. During the next ten years, I made a number of programs for the CBC, mostly interviews. I ended the majority by saying, »If you are contemplating emigrating, learn the lan-



guage of the country you are going to«. I repeated the same message on my weekly programs, encouraging my listeners to go to English classes whenever possible.

From 1953 to 1963, I was Dansk Samvirke's representative in Edmonton. Did I have any spare time? No, I had none. A popular section of the radio program at that time was »Spotlight on Denmark«. Two people who helped were Shirley Harper and Lenore Sills. They did a great job. I took infrequent holidays, but when I did, a former journalist with *Information* and *Nationaltidende* (two Danish newspapers), Jørgen Holgersen, filled in for me. The program could not have been in better hands.

In December 1956, I changed jobs. I went from the Hudson's Bay Co. to Woodward's, but remained in the appliance department. As the years went by, I interviewed many Danes who came to town, including bishops and ambassadors. Whenever I was in Denmark, I used the opportunity to talk to prime ministers and people from the entertainment world.

My life changed when I courted and married a French-Canadian girl, Therese Trottier, in 1960. In 1961, our program director decided that running the many foreign language broadcasts on CKUA was too taxing, and the station took us off the air. We fought for our rights to broadcast and continue the programs. We succeeded, and three month later we came back with a program every second week.

Since 1954, my news source has been the press agency of the Danish Foreign Ministry, as well as *Politiken Weekly*. Very satisfactory. And yet, this is the only assistance I have ever had from the official Denmark. In 1974, CKUA changed ownership, from Alberta Government Telephones to ACCESS, a self-governing educational network. The transmitter has also changed, from 5,000 watts on AM to 10,000. The biggest difference, by far, has been on FM, where we now have 8-100,000 watt transmitters and a number of smaller ones. All in all, we cover 85% of Alberta, which is roughly 14 times larger than Denmark.

In 1978, I made contact with Helge Krogh, head of the short-wave system of Radio Denmark. He asked me to give a summary of my 25 years in radio. It was a pleasure, and Helge assured me that his listeners enjoyed it. I was paid well over 300 dollars; a princely amount, when you have been working for free for 25 years. I spent the money on records.

In 1979, Birte and Helge Krogh visited Edmonton, and tasted life in Canada. They liked it. In 1980, the Krogh family emigrated to Edmonton. Let me not forget to mention that I have two children, Poul Erik and Anne-Marie, and as of November 1988, a son in law, John Macnab.

The Scandinavian program on CKUA has never been better served than at present. Marianne Morse is the Swedish announcer, and Arne Johannesen, the Norwegian. Both are doing a great job. I must also mention

our producer, director and technician, throughout the past 25 years, Alf Franke, a gentleman and a friend. Last but not least, my wife Therese, without whose understanding and support, I would never have been able to continue this labour of love.

*Erik Pedersen*  
*Edmonton 1989*  
*1989/Part1/142*

# Arne Jensen Zabell

MARTHA LARSEN

Arne Jensen Zabell was born on March 9, 1929, in Montreal. His parents were Danish immigrants, namely Dagmar Marie Jensen and Harry Vilhelm Zabell. When Arne was less than two years old, they moved back to Denmark. They settled in Copenhagen, where Arne spent his childhood. He went to school at Bispebjerg and attended an Efterskole at Snoghøj. Arne's ancestors came from Trelde near Fredericia, and he still has many relatives living there.

In 1946, Arne made arrangements to go to Canada, his country of birth. On January 3, 1947, he left Copenhagen on the *Gripsholm*. His destination was Redvers, Saskatchewan, where he had an uncle, quite a well-known uncle. This uncle was Simon Peter Hjortnæs (Hjortness), who came from Vendsyssel in the northern Jutland. Hjortnæs had come to South Dakota in 1891, and then moved to Redvers, Saskatchewan, in 1901, when looking for some horses. He founded the Danish settlement of Dannevirke. Uncle Simon was a very influential and colourful man, Arne recalls. He was fondly called »The Danish King in Canada«. The main character, Ross Dane (Rasmus Dansker), in Aksel Sandemose's book *Ross Dane*, is undoubtedly based on Simon Hjortnæs.

Uncle Simon owned a large tract of land, and Arne got a 320-acre farm to look after. Arne still owns land out west, and gets a small income from that, although it has not developed into a gushing oil well, he regretfully admits! In the 1940s, agriculture still felt the after-effects of the Depression, so Arne found employment working as supervisor in a pipeline company.

Arne later moved to Toronto and came on payroll of the RCMP »O« Division, as a civilian employee. He worked there for two and a half years, and obtained his grade 12 diploma while in Toronto. Arne then went back to working for pipeline companies, such as Majestic Contractors, and later became supervisor for the Niagara Peninsula for Cole Construction in Grimsby.

In 1960, Arne married Elizabeth Cole from Hamilton. They had two children, Arne Jr., born in 1963, who is now a Militia Trainer in Vancouver, and a daughter, Kirsten born in 1966. Kirsten's married name is Maunder, and she has two children, a boy and a girl. They live in Brantford. Elizabeth and Arne started the Brantford Rent-All Company, a successful business, which they ran for 18 years. Unfortunately, Elizabeth died in 1985, after a long battle with cancer.

When Arne came to southern Ontario, he quickly became involved with the Danish community, and from 1976 to 1979, he served as president of Sunset Villa. During his term of office, and mainly through his efforts, Sunset Villa got a liquor licence, and a registered charity number. In 1987, he was again elected president and served one year, during which year he was also president of the Ontario Region of the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada. He worked very hard to promote the building of more senior's apartments at Sunset Villa, as outlined in its charter. He also sat on a committee, set up to build a Danish seniors centre in Toronto, where old Danes can spend their golden years.

Also politics hold Arne's interest. He was president of the Liberal Party in Brantford, and he ran as a candidate in a provincial election. In 1980, Arne graduated from Sheridan College as a certified hearing aid specialist, and was shortly after hired to look after the Canadian division of *Oticon*, a Danish company which until recently was the world's largest hearing aid firm. He later bought the retail division in Hamilton.

After Elizabeth's death, Arne felt it was time for a change, and started to make arrangements to move to Calgary, to become *Oticon's* western representative. He advertised his Hamilton business for sale; and one day when he was having lunch with a friend at Sunset Villa, he got a phone call from a lady who was interested in buying his business. Arrangements were made for her to come out to Sunset Villa to meet Arne. The pretty blonde lady was Pamela Rainford, and it was love at first sight; so Arne never got to Calgary, but kept business on the Hamilton "Mountain", where his professional know-how, coupled with a charming, out-going personality has won him many costumers and friends.

The Reverend Poul Berg Sundgaard from the Danish Lutheran Church in Grimsby married Arne and Pamela. The ceremony and reception took place at Sunset Villa, in May 1985. From her first marriage, Pamela has a young daughter, Linsey.

Pamela who is also a certified hearing aid specialist, is not sitting idle at home. She commutes to Guelph, where she runs a hearing aid clinic. A couple of days she goes to Kitchener, so she is certainly a busy lady, and a valuable support for Arne.

Arne Zabell has been actively with the Masons and holds the following titles: Past Master of the Doric Lodge 121; First Principal of the Mount Horeb Chapter; Preceptor of the Knights Templar; District Superintendent of the Holy Royal Arch; and 32nd Degree Mason, Scottish Rites.

We Danes in southern Ontario are truly fortunate to have a man like Arne in our midst. In his pocket, Arne carries the following poem (by Stephen Grellet), which expresses his philosophy of life:

I expect to pass this world but once  
Any good service that I can do  
Or any kindness that I can do  
To any fellow creature,  
Let me do it now.  
Let me not defer or neglect it,  
For I shall not pass this way again.

*1989/part 1/98*

# Inger Hansen

## *Danish Born Information Commissioner of Canada*

JETTE ASHLEE

It may seem fitting that Canada's Information Commissioner, Ms. Inger Hansen Q.C., was born in Denmark, because Scandinavia has a long tradition of the ombudsman, a post when exported has retained the Scandinavian designation in all cases. Ms. Hansen has the distinction of being the longest serving ombudsman in the western world. In less than two decades, Ms. Hansen has held three original ombudsmen's posts in Canada: The first Penitentiary Commissioner, the first Privacy Commissioner, and her current position as first Information Commissioner of Canada.

When I interviewed Ms. Hansen, or Inger as she asked to be called, I asked her about the origin of the concept of the ombudsman and open government. Her erudition shone as she spoke of an early example in Turkey. She referred to the stories of the Arabian Nights and mused that the idea of asking citizens for complaints against their ruler may have originated with the Caliph who made such enquiries while wearing a disguise. She speculates that the Vikings, who settled modern day Istanbul, and called it »Miklagaard«, may have learned about the Caliph and taken the idea home to Scandinavia. In Sweden three hundred years ago, the Justice Chancellor was established as an ombudsman to check the misuse of power by civil servants and to abolish secret tribunal decisions. Sweden did not, however, establish an Information Commissioner. The administrative courts and the ombudsman handle complaints concerning access to information in Sweden and in the other Scandinavian countries. Inger feels that freedom of information ought to be entrenched in the Canadian Constitution as it is in Sweden. Canada does not have one ombudsman at the federal level. Instead of one federal ombudsman, Canada has specialist ombudsmen such as the Commissioner of Official Languages, Correctional Investigator, Privacy Commissioner, and the Information Commission is a peculiarly Canadian concept that was positively influenced by the Scandinavian tradition and the more recent example of Watergate in the United States. »Watergate and the USA Freedom of Information Act inspired Canadians to want an Access to Information Law. More sophisticated electorates in the age of computers in all parts of the world, demand open accountable governments«.

Ms. Hansen grew up in the Sydhavnen area of Copenhagen where she attended Bavnehøj Skole, Nørre Gymnasium and Københavns Universitet. In 1950 she left Denmark for Canada and worked at a number of jobs be-

fore entering the University of British Columbia where she was awarded the LL.B. in 1960. Inger Hansens career took her from such prosaic positions as farm maid and invoice clerk to practising law in Vancouver and working in the Solicitor General's Department in Ottawa prior to her first Ombudsman appointment.

Inger Hansen answered my question regarding her decision to come to Canada with a twinkle in her eye that came to be characteristic of her in our conversations. »It's a typical immigrant story, a little of the »ugly duckling««, she said »a lot of adversity but happiness too.« One immediately senses warmth, strength, and love of life in this remarkable woman, qualities of those who had truly lived. Inger Hansen describes herself as an adventurer whose guiding forces has been »A flight from boredom and a strong sense of curiosity. If I had a fairy godmother as a young girl, and she were to grant me one wish, I would have chosen not money, but adventure.«

During the War years when Denmark was occupied by the Nazis, Inger's childhood, like that of other Danish children, was marred by suspension of civil liberties and the terror of the military occupation. Soldiers with guns and grim faces replaced the kindly shopkeepers and citizens of Copenhagen almost overnight. »In a sense, I lost a normal childhood«. »I became politically aware very quickly. On the morning of the 9th of April 1940, I awoke to see twenty-five bombers flying overhead. Denmark did not own that many airplanes at the time. I knew something was desperately wrong. Within one day of fighting and the death of one soldier, Denmark moved from being a peace-loving democracy to a political dictatorship. Despite my youth, I became involved in the underground—on the fringes of battle. I was fourteen the first time I handled a gun, I did not use it, but I knew how and wanted to because I felt oppressed,« says Inger Hansen. »You become conscious of civil liberties early when two Jewish girls are suddenly taken from your class and your teacher cautions you not to talk about them. Later, I heard the girls had gone underground and survived. Although, I was only between the ages of ten and fourteen years old during the occupation, I will never forget the look of want, suffering and political deprivation that I saw so early in my life.«

Prior to World War II, Denmark had established an excellent international record. The Danes were among first European nations to abolish slave trade, to introduce the franchise to both sexes, to suspend censorship, and to provide universal education, which culminated in high standard of literacy. Danish cooperative and trade-union movements, the folk high schools, gymnastics, innovation in agriculture and manufacturing were quiet models of international excellence. Danes opposed the Nazi occupation of their homeland by forming a strong resistance movement of



freedom fighters. As often as they could, they paralysed German transportation and communication lines and transported Jewish people to neutral Sweden. The particular Danish genius for cooperation and community action reached new heights of expression in the Freedom Fighters of the Resistance Movement during World War II.

Denmark was liberated on May 5th, 1945. »A feeling of great joy came over the people. I walked down to Vestre Fængsel and watched the release of Danish Resistance workers from prison. The same day I saw German soldiers, some as young as 14 and 15 years walking down in disarray down Enghavevej. A Commando Post of the Resistance was installed in the basement of our apartment building where Nazi collaborators were interrogated. I saw them too. On the night of the liberation Copenhageners placed lighted candles in their windows to celebrate the end of forced darkness and curfews.« The candles have become symbolic of the liberation in Denmark and can be seen every year on the 5th of May. The atrocities that Inger Hansen saw by the age of fourteen years would never be erased from her mind and helped shape her life-long concern with human rights and civil liberties. »Those of us who saw any of it will never be able to forget.«

The reconstruction of Denmark and Europe was underway when Inger's father asked her what she wanted to do with her life. »I wondered why he asked me, because when I told him that I didn't know but that I definitely wanted to go to university, he objected. I thought of being a poet or a geologist, the performing arts interested me; I had acted in school plays. The only thing that I knew that I didn't want to be was an accountant or a dentist. Anyway, Daddy looked me straight in the eye, and said: »Well, you know, if you have been a boy, I would gladly put you through university, but it is going to be a waste because you are just going to be married.«« Inger did marry shortly after that, »not for the sake of getting married but we wanted to travel through Europe. In 1948 neither of us would have been able to convince our parents that a marriage certificate was not necessary to travelling together.«

The young couple spent their honeymoon hitchhiking through Europe where they saw ruins, hunger and great human deprivation in the aftermath of World War II and the beginnings of reconstruction. On their return to Denmark, Inger found work with an encyclopaedia publisher and »I suddenly realized life wasn't so bad—I had fun. I enjoyed learning, as they used to say at the publishing house, »nothing about everything«. But the restlessness was still there. About a year later, we contracted to work on a farm in Canada, somewhat under false pretences, as farm hand and maid. We were not happy—we didn't get enough to eat, which I know was an exception in a land of plenty. Our room consisted of a bed at the top of

the stairs with a curtain in front. We were scared, but after a month, we ran away. Later, the fear of being kicked out of the country abated, and with the help of friends and government agencies we learned that Canada does not deport people for fleeing oppressive conditions.«

»It was on a trip by bus from Montreal to Sudbury that I decided to stay in this country. I travelled and met a lot of friendly people. In the fall, I saw the beauty of the colours of the trees against the rocks; I fell in love with Canada.« Inger found a job in Sudbury and worked there for two years before going back to Denmark to seek divorce and to study at the university.

Inger Hansen returned to Canada in 1953. She arrived in Vancouver with the sum total of seventy-five dollars because of currency restrictions in Denmark at the time. Inger worked at whatever job came her way before entering law school at the University of British Columbia in 1956. She says that to date, her experience includes about thirty jobs. »If I were to put them all down on a job application, I would have to admit that I was usually the lowest person on the totem pole. Too bad, but I managed to learn a few things about different businesses that were useful in practising law. Such experiences give you an inkling of what a client is talking about.« Besides her work in law, and successively as Correction, Privacy and Information Ombudsman, she includes the fields of domestic engineering, administration, publishing, textiles, import and export, tourism, oil and communications. One senses the adventure that Inger felt working as a farm maid or ranch cook, as a sum of experience to be applied to weightier pursuits later in life.

As a law student at the University of British Columbia, Inger describes her experience in her characteristic way that combines a mix of fun and seriousness. »In the somewhat cliché ridden past, things were different«, says Inger, speaking of 1956, the year she entered law school. »There was no LSAT then, and I didn't top the class, I was not even in the first third, I was right smack in the bottom half the first year. I think there was less discrimination against women in those years when I was law student. Mind you, you had to be either a character or a house pet to survive, but there was not the resistance there is today. I think it was because we weren't a large enough number to threaten the male community. We could be ignored.« As an articulated student with Douglas, Symes and Brissenden in Vancouver, she was sent out with garnishing order to the East End. »When I arrived at the address, some men were sitting there playing poker. I was very new and nervous and had to read to them the way in which I was supposed to serve documents. So I hauled out this document and said, »Sir, are you so and so?« »Yes sure, I am so and so«, came the reply. »Well, this, Sir, is an original garnishing order and I am now serving

you with a copy thereof.« To which he replied: »What is a nice young woman like you doing in a place like this?« This sort of thinking was not reserved for any strata of society in those days. A very prominent man spoke to our law class, comprising two per-cent women and ninety-eight per-cent men, and was quite in earnest when he said: »No lady would ever practice law.««

Inger Hansen practiced law in British Columbia as counsel in criminal matters until 1969 when she joined the federal Department of Justice as a legal officer in the Solicitor General's Department. She was involved in the revision of The Juvenile Delinquent's Act, issues concerning inmate's rights, the Canadian Penitentiary Service, as well as serving as the Department's representative on the interdepartmental committee on the Status of Women. During this period Inger's phenomenal ability for hard work branched off into new political and legal developments for Canada as a whole. Like so many developments in history, progress and enlightened legislation often stem from tragic events.

Following a riot by inmates at Kingston Penitentiary, the Swackhamer Commission was struck. One of its recommendations was to establish visiting committees to deal with inmates complains. The Solicitor General, Warren Allmand, supported the idea, but wanted one correctional ombudsman for all Canada rather than several separate visiting committees. Inger was asked to do the background research and, she admits now: »I was rather hostile to the idea because I thought, that's what lawyers do, what do they need an ombudsman for? But I did the research anyway. Then, one day, I was having an argument with the Commissioner of Penitentiaries and his Deputy in a three-way telephone conversation when he said: »I hate it when you are right, maybe you should be the new ombudsman.« I said, »Would you really hire a woman?« »Maybe«, was his response. Some days later, I got a call to come to see the Minister. I thought that the Minister had thought this was a terrible idea, because he said, »Do you really think you can do it?« I said, »Yes, I would do it«. I was suddenly on my own with a lot of new responsibilities in uncharted territory. Should I start in British Columbia or Québec, I asked myself? I started in the Maritimes at the Dorchester Penitentiary.«

The year was 1973. »At the Penitentiary, I told the guard on duty that I would like to meet some of the inmates. He arranged a meeting with some of the inmates. I was sitting and talking with them in a small room when one of the inmates said that another inmate wanted to join us but could not come to us. The inmate knew, as I knew what he was doing. I said I would try to see him, but he and the others doubted it, as I would have to go through the »dome«. No woman had ever been through the »dome«, the centre hall of a penitentiary, they told me. That day I was escorted

along the wall on the outside. I had a talk with security and this never happened again. From that day forward, I was never denied entry anywhere in any penitentiary in Canada.«

The penitentiary work required Inger to travel more than 50.000 miles a year in Canada. »I was at the receiving end of an enormous number of problems that were very important to every person I dealt with, sometimes fifteen important problems in a day. I respected and cared for each one, but after four years I got awfully tired, I got to the stage where I felt burned out.«

»When I was appointed Penitentiary Ombudsman few women other than nurses worked in Canadian penitentiaries. After my appointment, curiously enough, features on correctional issues began to appear on the women's pages of newspapers. There are now many women who work on the inside of penal institutions. The job was the greatest experience of my life. I learned more about human beings, how legal rights are enforced, or not enforced when you are at the bottom, or, when you can't get a lawyer because the problem is too small. For instance, you can't expect a lawyer to deal with a two-day miscalculation of your sentence, that's when you need an ombudsman who can do it quickly and at no cost. There were many successes and changes after the office of Penitentiary Ombudsman was established and I am proud to say that I was part of them.«

Near the end of her term as Penitentiary Ombudsman, Inger was approached on behalf of the Minister of Justice, Ron Basford, who asked if she would accept the position of Privacy Commissioner. She asked how long she had to think about it, »Until tomorrow« was the reply. »Twenty minutes later, I said, Yes,« said Inger. In 1977, The Canadian Human Rights Act contained provisions for personal information rights. Inger was appointed a member of the Human Rights Commission with special responsibilities for complaints relating to privacy rights. These rights entitled individuals to ensure that information concerning them would be accurate, as well as timely. The legislation was highly appropriate in the wake of the explosive growth of the new technology with its almost unlimited capacity to collect, store and link personal information by electronic means. »It was interesting work, I was breaking new ground, making statutory interpretations with no one to tell me whether I was right or wrong.«

Inger Hansen continued her record of holding some of the first ombudsman offices in Canada. In 1983, Parliament passed the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. The Access to Information Act establishes the right for access to general information contained in federal government records. The Privacy Act gives Canadian citizens, permanent residents and inmates of federal penitentiaries access to information

about themselves. It specifies the uses to which personal information can be put and expands on the rights provided under Part IV of the Canadian Human Rights Act. Inger became the first Information Commissioner in the same year as the Act came into force. She was appointed for a seven-year term as an independent officer of Parliament and reports directly to the Senate and the House of Commons through their speakers. As Information Commissioner, Inger deals with complaints from individuals who feel the government has denied them access to information applied for under the Access to Information Act. Users of the Act include private individuals, students, academics, writers, journalists, and lawyers to name just a few.

Open government is a concept that will not be realized unless attitudes are changed, feels Inger. »Education is one way in which attitudes can be changed. It must be carried on soon and in a manner that reaches all levels of the government as well as the general public. Both the political and the administrative arms of government must take part in explaining and listening. High-profile public discussions on the balance between freedom of information and privacy, between freedom of information and corporate interests should take place. There must be public debate on when right to know should all other interests. The Information Commissioner cannot and should not be the only person to deal with the issue.«

»While I am more convinced than ever that public awareness of the Access to Information Act is crucial to its usefulness, I am not sure that the Information Commissioner, as an independent neutral reviewer, is the appropriate person to conduct public education«, says Inger. »Certainly the Commissioner should not be the only person. In my opinion, the Commissioner's public education endeavours carry with them the inherent risk of an allegation that the Commissioner is biased.«

Inger Hansen regularly addresses domestic and international gatherings on human rights, the role of the Information Commissioner, the role of the ombudsman, privacy, freedom of information and women's rights. She taught a civil liberties course at the Law Department of Ottawa's Carleton University for three years and has given guest lectures at many universities in Canada and abroad. She is the Chairman of the Ombudsman Forum of the International Bar Association, a member of the Canadian Bar Association and the Law Society of British Columbia.

I asked her what role she saw universities taking in furthering the ideas of open government. She explained that students accept the concepts of privacy and freedom of information as a citizen's right in modern democracies. »Once the state legislates openness, there is no turning back.« If she were to teach courses on open government, she would teach the oral tradition that we know from history, as best exemplified by the



Greek City States, and of course, the Alting, the parliament of the Norse peoples, »because of my Scandinavian background. It was a true form of open government, no information is withheld when all citizens are directly involved in oral exchanges of question, answer, explanation and interpretation.« From these early historical examples she would move to the period of history in which few could read and write. »The literate have power, freedom, personal satisfaction while the illiterate, in today's world were barred from access to knowledge with the consequent loss of power, freedom and satisfaction.« She would cover the »Dark Ages«, move through the Enlightenment, to the period of universal education and the role of the state as parent, or »Leviathan«. The course would sum up with present day demands for access to information as a feature of western democracies.

Inger Hansen's pioneering work in establishing three first time ombudsman offices are complemented by the role she has played in furthering the equality of women. I put some questions to her about the current status of women in Canada.

She spoke in her calm and serene manner as she expanded on a quotation she had made seven years before. In an address to the Clara Brett Martin Memorial Dinner in Vancouver in May 1981, she said that: »The 80's is up for grabs of those of the »female persuasion«. Instead of saying give us equality, I think the time has come to grab responsibility, because only when you can take responsibility, will you get it. Nobody is going to hand it to you. But if we do it, if we grab it and hang on to it, we will have equality, recognition, satisfaction and the joy of reaching the top.« I asked her if she had seen major changes in the seven years since she said that. She responded by saying: »A lot more women are grabbing the brass ring with many more making solid inroads in fields traditionally held by men. We now have more female cabinet ministers, heads of boards, deputy ministers, judges, interviewers and so on. The boardrooms of the nation would seem to be the slowest area in opening doors to women. However, women who start their own business are doing very well. Yet, the battle of the sexes cannot be laid to rest as attitudes change slowly. Too many women do double duty by taking all the residual responsibility for the home and children, men will not correct that for women, we must do that for ourselves. It simply did not occur to a lot of men to pick up half the responsibility, of our common lives, not just helping in the domestic sphere. I truly feel this is the last frontier in the issue of equality between the sexes. Once women have equality of opportunity and equal pay the rest will fall into place. I won't be satisfied until mediocre women make it; only when there are as many prominent mediocre women as there are men, will true equality have been achieved.«

At this stage of our interview, I wanted to try to connect the public figure of the Information Commissioner with the private world of ideas that motivated Inger Hansen to scale the top while maintaining serenity, seriousness and adventure in our busy world.

»In my life, my work has been of utmost importance. I view my work as an artist may see his or her creation. I have thought about this a lot and for want of a better term, I sometimes call this the artistic approach to life. It has to do with the happiness derived from concentration, absorption in a subject, whether it is technical drawing, practicing a musical instrument, and writing a speech. I can perhaps explain this better through an example. I knew the Danish painter Robert Leepin, many years ago in Copenhagen. One morning while I breakfasted with him and his wife, I noticed his attention wandering to a painting standing against a wall in his studio just below the breakfast nook. Suddenly, he rose and went to it and brushed on a few dabs of paint. With my naked eye, I couldn't see that the fresh dabs made any difference to the picture at all, but obviously to his eye they did. That action had an impact on me, it was his concentration that absolutely fascinated me, and something that I've followed all my life. Total concentration in a task is one aspect of perfect happiness, not necessarily the recipe for everyone, but it has been very important to me, especially when pleading a criminal case in court.«

My last question to our Information Commissioner was to ask what her Danish heritage meant to her. Inger's Danish heritage added richness to her life, a dimension that allowed her to appreciate other languages and cultures, gave her an edge in entertaining, a reason to serve Danish food to her guests, and a ready-made excuse for making mistakes, »one could always plead ignorance of old or new country ways«; the latter two points were added with her obvious love of jest. On a more serious note, she added that the experience of two cultures lessens one's fear of the unknown.

This piece is a little of Inger Hansen, a Danish-Canadian woman who is a major figure in Canadian affairs while being the longest serving ombudsman in the western world. Her experience shows the beauty of a life based on intelligence, truth, industry and adventure.

*An Interview Ottawa, February 1989*  
*1989/Part 1/68*



# Herbert Flemming Rasmussen

MARTHA LARSEN

A prominent member of the Danish community in southern Ontario is Herbert Flemming Rasmussen, born September 2, 1930, in Odense, Denmark, as the son of cigar maker Svend Aage Valdemar Rasmussen, born 1903, and his wife Anne Vilhelmine Andrea Andersen, born 1898 and deceased 1974. Besides Herbert, the Rasmussens had three children: a girl, Ruth, who died young, and two boys, Bjarne Leif and Freddy Boy.

Herbert went through the Danish public school system and after that served a five-year apprenticeship to become a patternmaker, specializing in making patterns for the moulds used by foundries. At the same time he attended Technical College. In 1951, he married a beautiful Odense girl, Hanne Margit Tønners. The following year, 1952, Herbert took off to Canada. Six months after his arrival, Hanne and their young son, Finn, followed.

Herbert had only 40 dollars in his pocket when he landed. He did not know any English, but his determination and ambition soon landed him a job in Hamilton at Dominion Pattern works as a pattern maker. After that he went to Niagara Falls and worked for Perrini & Walsh Constructors, building tunnels under Niagara Falls. He also worked for Ontario Hydro, Falls Construction and Rojac Construction. The latter firm was involved in building residential homes in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Welland and Port Colborne.

In 1955 Herbert joined the Militia and served for a short while in the regular army as an Artillery Sergeant, before he was in 1972 discharged as a Master Warrant Officer. A rare honour was bestowed upon Herbert in 1967, when he received the Centennial Medal for service in the army. He also received the Canadian Defence Medal given to members in the Canadian Armed Forces for 12 years excellence in the service. Herbert's military career had actually started in Denmark in 1950, when he served with Fyns Livregiment, soon advancing to become corporal.

For 13 years Herbert worked for Welmet Industries in Welland as a patternmaker. He left as plant general foreman and in 1975, he started his own business: Dundas Pattern Co. (1975) Ltd. in Dundas, Ontario. He purchased a choice piece of land overlooking the Dundas Valley and the Escarpment, and started to build his and Hanne's dream home, including all the experience he had gained over the years in the construction business, and avoiding all the mistakes people usually make when they build their first home. It became a beautiful Danish home with lots of open

space, balconies and a generous use of wood, the material Herbert loves to work with.

As time went on the Rasmussen family grew: a daughter, Yvonne, was born in 1953, and after that came three sons: Alan in 1958, Torben in 1960, and Niels in 1964. Soon after coming to Canada, Hanne and Herbert joined the Danish Canadian Club in Hamilton, and after moving to Dundas, the Rasmussen family got involved with Sunset Villa, Puslinch, where Herbert served as president in 1979–1980 and 1981. Hanne has always been very busy with helping at Sunset Villa's various functions. She is now auditor for the Association.

When plans were made to form a national Danish Federation, Herbert invited people from across Canada to come to Sunset Villa, where the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada was formed in June of 1981, with Herb as the first Ontario Region President. Herbert's son Alan, also took an active part in Sunset Villa and the Federation, and as Ontario Director attended conferences in Calgary, Montreal and Kingston, giving a young person's refreshing contributions to the discussions in a mainly middle-aged group.

Finn Rasmussen, the oldest, went to Denmark to go through an apprenticeship as electrician, and after his education was finished he stayed on and married a Danish girl, Wilma Neess. They have two children, Alice and Mark, and live in Nørre Nissum. Yvonne married Stuart McCleod Cox, a civil engineer. They live in Niagara Falls, and have three children, Ian, Emily and Lisa. Alan married Cindy Hamprey and their daughter Leanne was born in 1986. Torben is single and lives in Niagara Falls. The youngest son, Niels is an architectural technologist. Both Alan and Torben are pattern makers and have worked for their father since he started his own business. Hanne is accomplished bookkeeper and looks after the paperwork in the company.

In 1983, Herbert moved his firm from Dundas to Niagara Falls. This meant commuting from Dundas to Niagara Falls for Herbert, and this made him and Hanne decide to sell their dream home in Dundas. It was listed on the front page of the Hamilton Spectator »Homes« with pictures and a big article, and it sold within a few days for nearly a quarter of a million dollars. However, Herbert says he will build another home in Niagara Falls now that his commuting days will be over.

A couple of years ago, Herbert purchased a big boat that he fixed up so that it gives comfortable living accommodation. The boat is moored at a marina on Lake Ontario. Hanne has learned seamanship and navigation, so that with a crew of one, Herbert can enjoy sailing in the summertime. With Alan, Torben and Hanne as partners in his business, Herbert can

now take it a little easier, and look back on a successful career. He is certainly a credit to his old country, Denmark, and his new country, Canada.

*1987/part 1/139*

# Svend Berg

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Svend Berg was born in the town of Kolding, Denmark, February 22, 1931. He graduated from *Kolding Højere Almenskole* with »realeksamen« in 1948. He was an electrician apprentice for four years in the firm of P.W. Christiansen, Electrical Contractor.

From November 1952 to May 1954 he served conscription in the Danish Army, »Hærens Signaltekniske Tjeneste«. The last nine months he taught theory, repair and maintenance of the army's radio equipment. From May 1954 to March 25, 1955 he worked for M.P. Pedersen, in Copenhagen, manufacturer of VHF Telephone Radio equipment for cars.

March 29, 1955, he boarded the *M/S Columbia* in Bremerhafen, Germany, destined for Montreal, Canada, where April 12, 1955, he became a landed immigrant.

The first job he had was with Radio Communication Engineering Company, the weekly pay being 48 dollars. When he received his first pay envelope he had two dollars left of the 60 dollars he had brought with him from Denmark. So it was just in time he had found work. This first job lasted for three month, when RCA, RADIO CORPORATION of America, who paid him 60 dollars per week, hired Svend. He worked for RCA from 1955 to 1962. From 1962 to 1965 he worked for ITT, International Telephone and Telegraph Company. In 1965, Svend went back to RCA, where he stayed until 1976.

During the years he worked for RCA and ITT, Svend travelled and worked in just about all parts of Canada, which made him fall in love with this great land of wilderness and cities and towns, with people who came from many different parts of this world of ours.

It is necessary here to backtrack to 1956, when Svend met Bjorg Klingenberg Sel, who emigrated to Canada, from Oslo, Norway, as an 18 year old in 1955. They married June 1, 1957, and had a daughter named Sonja and a son by the name Peter. Sonja was born in Montreal, and Peter in Whitehorse in the Yukon Territories.

In January 1976, Svend left RCA to form his own company, which he named *Pointe Claire Electronic Ltd.* The company today produces the computer software and hardware required for monitoring and control of Satellite Earth Stations.

In 1979, Svend was elected to the board of directors of The Danish Canadian Society, Montreal. From 1980 to 1986 he was president of the Society. In June 1981, he attended the founding meeting of the *Federation of Danish Associations in Canada*, representing the Danish Canadian Soci-

ety of Montreal, Svend initiated the idea of having a Viking Ship float in Montreal's St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Canada Day Parade in 1984, and thus celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of The Danish Canadian Society of Montreal in 1934. The Viking Ship float won first prize in the parade and contributed to make the small community of Danes and the Danish Canadian Society better known to a great number of Montrealers.

Svend would like to conclude this brief biography on a non-biographical note by saying that he is proud and happy to be a Canadian citizen, but that he is equally proud and happy for his Danish roots.

*1987/Part 1/122*

# Erik Schack Christensen

## *Globe and Mail Photographer*

LOIS SCOTT

Retired *Globe and Mail* photographer Erik Christensen died of cancer in his home in Toronto on March 19, 1995. He was 64. Born in Aalborg, Denmark, home of the fiery brew known as aquavit, he was a slim, elegant and gracious man, whose politeness was so ingrained he had even been known to apologize to a rock he stumbled against. He was an avid fisherman who hated to kill a fish, preferring to tickle it on the belly with the end of his rod.

Mr. Christensen came to Canada on his honeymoon in 1956, landing in Montreal on his 26th birthday with his bride, Allis. They found work as a domestic couple, and when his daily duties as butler were finished, Mr. Christensen looked for work as a news photographer. His pictures were always received with enthusiasm, but the cameras he owned were not yet in general use in North America and editors were uneasy with the smaller negatives. He was unsuccessful in finding a job until he came to Toronto early in 1957 and met Richard Doyle, who was just setting up a new magazine for *The Globe and Mail*. »I don't care what kind of cameras you use,« Mr. Doyle told him. »I want pictures«.

For the next 33 years, first as a *Globe Magazine* photographer, then for the daily, Mr. Christensen spent countless hours on assignments and in the darkroom, recording Canadian history and the people who made it, ranging from Louis Armstrong and Farley Mowat to John Diefenbaker and Pierre Trudeau. On numerous occasions he travelled with members of the Royal Family, and was touched several times by the Queen's smile of recognition when she saw him again. His last photograph of the Queen was taken in 1982 as she signed the document patriating the Constitution in Ottawa. When the new Maple Leaf flag was raised in Ottawa on February 15, 1965, the ceremony began with the Canadian Ensign streaming out in a brisk wind. But as the old flag came down, the wind died. The new flag clung to the pole as it was pulled up, and then dangled limply from the top. Mr. Christensen waited for a breath of air to set the flag fluttering, and when it came, it was only for a moment. But he caught it.

Although he was highly regarded as a fashion photographer and his fashion work appeared in nearly every issue of *The Globe and Mail*, his eye for beauty was probably most evident in his photographs of nature. One of the most beautiful examples of his love of nature was the book of black-and-white photographs that illustrated a long, moving love poem by his

friend Joan Finnigan, *In the Brown Cottage on Loughborough Lake*. Some of his colour centre-spreads in the magazine were reminiscent of the watercolours he painted as a young man, an art he took up again after his early retirement in 1991.

But Mr. Christensen was at home photographing anything, from the rich and famous to the poor, from the streets of Toronto to the streets of Calcutta. He went into prisons, operating rooms, and institutions for the mentally ill, covered sports events and waited all night with police on stakeouts. He was perhaps best at faces, even though he knew that the subjects, at first, were almost always unhappy about the likenesses he caught. Something about the spirit of a person, dancer, musician, writer,

The politician, actor, people doing the things people do in their everyday lives, was revealed by his eye for the telling detail and his meticulous work in the darkroom. There was a Karsh by Christensen.

When the magazine folded in 1971, he joined *The Globe's* staff of daily photographers. »He was the most even-tempered person I ever met,« recalls photo-department colleague Allan Moffatt, who worked with Mr. Christensen for more than 30 years. »He always greeted you with a friendly comment. And he was a great photographer.« Another close colleague described his skill of capturing whatever he was looking at. »You'd think he hadn't noticed something, but he noticed everything. He just didn't let on that he had, and people felt comfortable with him. He always caught some essential quality of a person and he never wanted to make anybody look bad.«

Although he had started working in Canada under the name of Erik Schack, thinking it was less common than Christensen, he soon realized that many people thought he was German and he changed back, first to Schack-Christensen and then Christensen.

In Toronto, Mr. Christensen leaves his second wife, Lois. He was divorced from his first wife, who predeceased him. He leaves his sister and brother-in-law, Inge and Christian Roesdahl in Denmark, sister and brother-in-law Agnete and Ronnie Younger in England, nephews Mads, Jens and Soren Roesdahl in Denmark and nieces Hanne Hotholt in Germany, and Kirsten Younger in England, stepdaughter Judith Scott in Vancouver and stepson Duff Scott in Regina.

*The Globe and Mail*, March 20, 1995.  
1995/149



# Jørgen Birk Andersen

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born January 23, 1933, in Farum, Nordsjælland. I went to school in grade one and two in Bregnerød, then grade three and four in Farum, and then the rest of public school in Bloustrød. I spent one winter, 1946-47, at *Syd Stevns Høj- og Efterskole*. After this I spent four and a half years as an apprentice in the nursery business, working with mushrooms, tomatoes, strawberries and lilacs, all in greenhouses, as well as »planteskole« related work.

After my apprenticeship, I went to *Ollerup Gymnastik Højskole* for five months, and stayed on as »bisse« for one extra month, getting the school ready for the summer semester. This was from november 1952 to April 1953. In the fall of 1953, I was drafted into the *Royal Danish Guard* in Jægerspris, and later I was sent to *Sandholmlejren*, which was a training school for future sergeants and corporals. I wound up in Sønderborg at the Corporal School for about 6 months. After this I was transferred to the 1st Regiment in Høvelte, and later sent to Pioneer School in Holbæk with a company from 1st Regiment. Here we learned how to lay mines as well as how to locate mines and remove them. My last six months in the military were spent in Høvelte, within a stone throw from my parents' home. They had bought a grocery store as well as 10 acres of land back in the early 1940s.

Right after my military service I had the opportunity to come to Yugoslavia with Frederiksborg Amts Elite Gymnastik Team for a two-week tour, performing Danish gymnastics as well as Danish folk dances.

On my return from Yugoslavia, I went on a one-year horticultural exchange program to England, where I worked in the Lee Valley district north of London, about 30 to 45 minutes bus trip from London, where I spent many evenings and weekends at the Danish Lutheran Church's Youth Group. One two-week vacation was taken, zigzagging down to Land's End, and another two weeks up through Scotland and Lock Lomond. I just happened to be in Edinburgh at the time of their annual military tattoo, which was very impressive.

After coming back from England during the summer of 1956, I worked as a full-fledged nurseryman and had the pleasure of touring Denmark on my newly acquired twin-cylinder Matchless motorcycle, which I had brought back from England. Finding my blood itching for more travel, however, I left in March 1957, on board *Stavangerfjord*, destined for Halifax, Canada, where I landed ten days later. A 2 or 3 day immigrant train ride took me to Toronto, where I had been promised a job through CN

Rail. They found me a job at Eaton Hall, Lady Eaton's estate north of Toronto. I started work there on a Wednesday and found out that I was not the only Dane. There was a young Danish girl on the estate and a young Danish farmer working in the dairy section of the estate. My job was to work in the park as well as in the five or six greenhouses on the estate. The place is now Seneca College.

After meeting the two other Danes, I was asked if I would like to go with them to Toronto that Saturday to a Danish dance, held by Sunset Villa. I went along and had a good time. Before the evening was over, whom should I meet, but my next-door roommate from Ollerup Gymnastik Højskole, Gunnar Olsen, who is now living in Stouffville. Gunnar invited me to go to Niagara Falls the next day, a Sunday. On our way down, we stopped at Sheridan Nurseries in Oakville, where Gunnar worked. Here I was introduced to the late Bill Stensson, president of Sheridan Nurseries. I was talked into coming to work for Sheridan, so I gave one week's notice at Lady Eaton's. I was making 98 ø per hour, with a 2 ø deduction for my room in one of Sheridan's houses. Not bad then. However, this only lasted for one year. Then I took a job as a labourer, carpenter's helper, on the construction of the new *City Service Refinery* in Bronte. This was in 1958, the same year as *old guardsmen, primarily from Ontario, founded Eastern Canada Royal Danish Guards' Association*.

After completion of the *City Service Refinery*, I had the good fortune of being hired by Catalytic of Canada, based in Sarnia, the company that took care of the day-to-day maintenance at the refinery. I worked for them till the spring of 1963. At the time Shell Canada Ltd had completed a new refinery adjacent to City Service. I applied for a position as assistant operator and was hired as such. Over the next 20 years I became operator and at the end worked as a temporary shift supervisor.

In 1965, two years after I started working for Shell Canada, I met Anne Bous, the girl I married a year later. Anne was the paymaster for the operating staff at Shell. Our daughter, Karin, was born in 1967, and our son, Chris, in 1969. Unfortunately all good things come to an end. As you might recall, we had an overproduction in Canada of furnace oil, gasoline and diesel fuel starting in 1980. In November 1983, therefore, Shell Canada closed the doors of the refinery for the last time, and the site where the refinery stood, has now been turned into a farmer's field again.

Shell offered me a transfer to Edmonton, to work at their new facility in Scotsford, north of Edmonton. This I declined, however, after some long deliberations with my wife. I was naturally not old enough to consider retirement. I had the good fortune of finding another job. Actually, I had this lined up before I turned down Shell's offer.

Now you may say, I have gone full circle. I am back working in the nursery business, although in another capacity. The company I work for specializes in equipment and supplies for the nursery industry, importing from Denmark, Germany, Holland, Italy, France, England and China. We carry everything from 25 ø bamboo canes from China, to a High Clearance Tractor from France at 45.000 dollars, and much more in between.

During the month of January and February, I get to travel to different shows and this goes for June as well. For most of the imported products we deal in, we have the North American distributorship. During the average week I talk to people anywhere our equipment are required, from coast to coast, as well as handling the container routing from overseas, an average of between 20 to 25 containers. Never a dull moment.

Anne has learned a lot about the Danes over the years. My parents visited every 2 to 3 years, and the very close contact I always had with the Eastern Canada Royal Danish Guards' Association helped too. I was the Guards' Association's treasurer for 18 years, and its president for six years. One of my fondest memories is the Association's 25th Anniversary in 1983 at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto, where we were honoured with Victor Borge's presence and his piano potpourries of old Danish songs and tunes. On that occasion Victor Borge was made an honorary member of our Association.

I have also for many years been active as volunteer fire fighter, the last 10 years in Kilbride where I live. Thirty volunteers man our fire hall. I have been their treasurer for the past seven years.

Other interests I would like to mention are both alpine as well as cross-country skiing with my family. Lots of garden work in the summer time and swimming in our pool. We have about one and a half acres of park and garden.

*1988/Part 1/72*

# Willy Olesen

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The roads we travel as immigrants are in some ways similar and in other ways very unique. We all grew up in Denmark and emigrated to Canada; but have all been involved in many different occupations and experiences. No doubt Danish immigrants have contributed a great deal to the development of Canada and Canadian life.

The youngest of nine children, I was born on a little farm in Hejnsvig sogn, Ribe Amt, on August 9, 1934, the son of Niels Christian and Ane Olesen. My dad was a butcher and my mom was a teacher. Due to health problems my dad was advised by his doctor to sell the butcher shop and go into farming. His heart was not in it however, and he left it mostly to his wife and the children to do the farming, while he continued home butchering for the farmers in the community.

Because I was the youngest I stayed at home until I was confirmed, but then I was sent out to work as a farm hand. I later went to Haslev Højskole, served in the army, and worked as a farm hand in Norway.

In 1952, my older brother, Chris, emigrated to Canada. He worked on farms in Ontario and Alberta. In 1957 he went back to school and he eventually received a Master of Divinity. In 1994 he became pastor in New Denmark.

I came to Canada in the spring of 1957 and worked on a ranch in Olds, Alberta. My introduction to Canadian life was not the most pleasant. Not only did I have to put in a full week's worth of work on the farm where I was employed, but I was also required to do custom work for others on Sunday. I recall summer fallowing with a tractor that had no cab on it. At about 3 or 4 o'clock the farmer came out with lunch to me. He brought a peanut butter sandwich, but he had forgotten something to drink. The hot sun and dust had made my mouth quite dry and the peanut butter sandwich was not really welcome.

When a Danish friend came to visit and asked if I wanted to go to Fort St. John in northeastern B.C., I jumped at the chance. There I worked on construction crews, and did plastering and concrete work. I also tried road construction as an equipment operator and finally went into painting. However, construction in the North was scaled down due to the harsh winter weather and I started to think about what I should do during the winter months. I discovered that it was possible to make enough money in the summer and go to school in the winter, so I decided to continue my education, which I had always wanted. Because I could take one year and

finish with exams at the end of the year, I saw it as an opportunity to commit one year at the time.

The late Pastor Paul Nyholm came to Canada as an ordained Lutheran pastor, to serve the Danish settlement in Dickson, Alberta. He realized that many Danish immigrants were farm boys who could take time off during the winter to learn English and study the bible so in the 1930s he started the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute in Camrose, Alberta. I decided to enrol there because I knew something about the Bible, although I knew very little English.

This turned out to be the beginning of 13 years of schooling. I took two years of Bible School, then grade 10, 11, and 12 at Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute in Outlook, Saskatchewan. Afterwards came four years at the University of Saskatchewan, and four years at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, from which I graduated with a Master of Divinity in 1970. I was also ordained that year.

My first call was as a working pastor in Mackenzie, B.C., to see if there was a need for a Lutheran church in this new, forestry town. I supported myself as a painter, while in my spare time I researched and contacted people who might possibly be interested in starting a Lutheran church. I got a congregation going in Mackenzie, but didn't build a church.

In 1971 I received a call from a parish in Chaplin, Saskatchewan. Shortly after arriving in Chaplin I married Lene Nielsen, another Danish immigrant. My wife was born in Skagen and had come to Canada in the spring of 1970. She had been an assistant pharmacist in Denmark. We met in Vancouver shortly after she arrived. That summer my brother, Knud, with his wife and three children came over for a visit. Knud was Lene's teacher for six years. When they found out that they were all going to be in Vancouver at the same time, they planned to meet.

I stayed in Chaplin until 1973 when I accepted a call to be the pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Fort St. John, B.C. At the first annual meeting in January 1974 I suggested to the congregation that they build some type of care facility for seniors on the vacant land that the church owned. The nearest care facility was in Dawson Creek 50 miles away. So by building next to the church in Fort St. John seniors could receive care without having to move away from family and friends.

The congregation allowed me to pursue this idea, resulting in the building of a 52 bed Personal and Intermediate Care Home dedicated in October 1977. I was called to be the administrator and chaplain, and for the next 20 years that was the road I travelled.

We continued to see a need for new services and added buildings to our complex. In 1980 an apartment building with 50 self-contained units for seniors and a new 450-seat church were built. The basement of the

apartment held recreation facilities that were used by seniors during the week, and by the Sunday school on the weekend.

A second 50-unit apartment complex was added in 1983 with jacuzzi, hair care, carpentry workshop, common dining area, and a sunroom on the top floor.

In 1988 we added a 40 unit extended care facility. In 1992 we renovated and added to one of the wings of the original care home to create a special care unit for the cognitively impaired, this consisted of 22 units. All the buildings of the facility are connected and a tenant in an apartment can visit a spouse or friends in the other units without having to go outside, a great convenience in the long, cold winters.

The Peace Lutheran Care Centre now has all the levels of care including Adult Day Care, Respite Care and Palliative Care. Because of the success of this project the Provincial Government came up with the multi-level care facility guidelines for building senior homes. For four consecutive terms we received three years accreditation, the highest possible, from the Canadian Council of Health Care Accreditation. When we undertook our first accreditation survey only ten percent of seniors facilities were accredited in Canada

I was honoured with the Citizens Award from the city of Fort St. John. I was also honoured to serve on the first Seniors Advisory Council of B.C. In 1992, on the 125th anniversary of Confederation, I was awarded the Commemorative Medal by the government of Canada. In 1995 I was given the Service Above Self award from the Rotary Club.

Because of the Government of British Columbia's regionalization in health care, my position was terminated in the spring of 1997. The care component of the Peace Lutheran Care Centre and the acute care hospital were placed under one administration. We now live in Coquitlam and, among other things; I am on the Church Board of the Danish Lutheran Church of Vancouver.

Fort St. John was our home for 24 years. It is where our children grew up, and it will no doubt always be a special place in my life. It is a terrific community and Church and I will always be grateful for the opportunity I had to be part of the Peace Lutheran Care Centre in Fort St. John, B.C.

*Coquitlam*  
*1999/192*



# Knud Peter Nielsen

1935–1996

Let me tell you a little story about a unique person I knew. An interesting and gifted individual who had great narrative abilities, tremendous musical talent, quick mind and wit, and a very social being. He was someone whom you could truly call exuberant, full of energy and life, someone who looked for the positive in everything. This unique man was my father, Knud Peter Nielsen.

Knud Peter Nielsen was born on September 22, 1935 in Copenhagen, Denmark. We have heard stories that my grandmother was told by her doctor to eat plenty of liver as her pregnancy was threatened several times while she was carrying my father. This she did faithfully, until the day he arrived. When he was born, he weighed less than 5 pounds. My grandfather said to my grandmother when he was born, »I think you'll get a lot of joy from this one« because she had taken such care to ensure that this baby survived, and so she did.

My father was the son of a grocery wholesaler, Peter Nielsen, and a seamstress, Inger Marie Nielsen. He was the seventh child of a family in which there would eventually be eight; two boys, four girls, and then another two boys. Even from an early age my father was very rambunctious and energetic, probably a handful for his parents. His imagination and narrative abilities were developed and honed at a young age. My father and his younger brother Svend were sent to bed at 6:30 p.m. until they were over the age of 10, which gave my father an opportunity of making up stories to amuse his younger brother and to pass the time until they were tired enough to fall asleep. His story telling abilities, as well as the telling of jokes was a part of who he was for the duration of his life. He could tell the same joke numerous times and still heartily laugh at them.

The Nielsen family grew up in humble surroundings, in a three-bedroom apartment shared by this family of ten. It was a busy household, but a joyful one too. All the children sang at an early age, and many of them were gifted musically either in voice or by instrument or both. I remember my Dad recalling his youth, and most often he would reminisce about his sisters taking care of him and his little brother, Svend, all the while singing as they went about their household chores. His sisters had a great repertoire of songs that were sung by heart. Even his parents were involved in this enjoyment of music, his father played mandolin and horn and his mother the guitar. Other early memories were of his mother sewing, with one hand on the sewing machine and the other on a songbook, singing. With such an abundance of music in this household he could not



but be influenced in this direction as well. He was especially spellbound by the music of the great masters: Bach, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Paganini and Buxtehude. He saw the beauty and artistry in their musical scores. My father too was gifted musically, which I will tell you more about further on.

My father was a tough, skinny little kid. He would protect his younger brother with a vengeance, and was not afraid of physically fighting older, bigger boys. He could stand up and fight just to establish his own territory and to show that he was not a person to be messing around with. This earned him respect in their neighbourhood and in the schoolyard; no one was going to stand in his way. He was a feisty individual, and this fighting spirit for what he believed in, continued throughout his life, although later on it was tempered by maturity and life experiences.

Another big factor in his life was his parents' involvement in an inner city Christian mission to reach out to help alcoholics. Once a week his parents would sing, play, preach the gospel and serve food to these needy people. His father would often invite some of the street people home. You never knew who would be invited to come for dinner, or to have a place to sleep for the night; their home was always open. My father carried on this tradition when he in turn was married and had a home of his own, often inviting people home at short notice (or no notice). Our home was also open to people from all walks of life. These early experiences helped to mould his view of people, fostering the belief that all peoples have integrity and are worthy of respect. My father especially had great compassion for those less fortunate as well as for the physically and mentally handicapped.

At the age of six, Knud Peter began violin lessons with Mr. Svend Jeppesen. After about half a year he began to lose interest in his lessons because he wanted to play musical pieces and not just learn how to practice. His mother insisted that he continued practising because she was paying for these lessons. She could be a very stern woman at times, and so her will prevailed. It was shortly after this that my father began to thoroughly enjoy playing the violin and would continue to practise for hours at home.

At the age of nine, my father had three years of piano, organ and theory instruction with organist Kaj Meyer. He quickly caught on, and was able to play the piano much better than these few years of lessons would indicate. He also learned how to play the trumpet from his father and older brother Curt, and had instruction in brass music with Aage Falck Jørgensen from the age of eight until he was 12 years old. My father had instruction in arranging and composing music from 1950–52 with Per Nørsgaard. As well, he received instruction in choir conducting by Svend

Saaby. Music came naturally to him and he learned new instruments with ease. Eventually Dad mastered a variety of musical instruments at an early age; violin, viola, cello, trumpet, trombone, tuba, French horn, actually all brass instruments, piano, organ, guitar and the luhr.

Around the age of twelve his violin instructor, Mr. Jeppesen stated that he was no longer able to help my father progress any further, he needed a more experienced instructor. My father was then given an opportunity to play for Royal Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster and violinist Julius Koppel, at a recital. My father was determined to impress Julius Koppel with his violin playing and therefore practised until he was satisfied that he knew the musical pieces he was going to play, extremely well. At the recital Julius Koppel listened intently throughout my father's playing and my father thought to himself »I'm really doing well, he sure likes my playing because he is not stopping to correct anything!« When my father had finished playing his last note, Julius Koppel began critiquing everything, from the way he held his violin, his fingering, and the use of his bow, to the way the music was played. My father felt totally deflated and devastated. He had worked so hard to impress this man, only to have all of his efforts thrown back in his face. Julius Koppel then stated that if my father was really serious about playing the violin and viola well, then he would take him on as a student, giving him one hour of instruction per week. In order to be able to pay for these lessons my father took on a job of delivering clean laundry using his bicycle after school. Every penny of his weekly wages went toward paying for this one hour of violin instruction with Julius Koppel. He did progress under the tutelage of Koppel. His fighting, competitive spirit arose anytime another violinist was better than he was. He practised and practised until he was in turn the best.

After a number of years under Koppel's wing, my father had to make a decision about his life's road. He realized that a full time musical career was not an easy life, often being on the road, may prohibit him having a permanent home base, and held no economic guarantees. After completing high school, his mother encouraged him to further his studies in something other than music. My father therefore studied commerce and languages, Spanish and French at Sprogakademiet in Copenhagen. He also attended the Berlitz School of languages to further his studies in French. Later, as an adult, he received private tutoring in the Russian language. Some of his studies in his later teens were completed by correspondence through the Sorbonne University in Paris, France.

In his early teens, Peter Nielsen belonged to a jazz group that played together just for the sheer enjoyment of playing music. Later on, this early experience, along with the training that he had received, led him to form various choirs and musical groups within the Pentecostal church to which

he belonged. He became bandleader at the age of 17 at Tabor Kirken in Copenhagen. He also became the choir director at this same church at the age of 18. He possessed a remarkable ear for correct tones, and was able to switch from one singing part to another i.e. from tenor, alto, bass, soprano without effort, and could thus support or redirect the areas that needed the most attention in the choirs. He also had a very nice singing voice himself.

One young lady in the choir had caught his attention. Knud Peter had his mother invite a number of young people home for coffee after church, Ruth Kuhn, my mother, being one of them. He never let on at that time that he was particularly interested in her, showing that he enjoyed everyone's company that evening. Shortly thereafter Knud Peter called Ruth at her place of work, and asked her if she would like to go to lunch with him. She said, yes, that would be nice, and they arranged to meet for lunch. At that first meeting, my father proposed to my mother, telling her that he loved her, and that he would give her two weeks to think about his marriage proposal. She had to give him an answer, either yea, or nay by the end of that two-week period. My mother did not know what to think after that first meeting, but by the end of the two weeks, the answer Ruth gave to Knud Peter was yes. They were married two years later, on October 6, 1956, and his music mentor Julius Koppel, as well as a number of other gifted musicians, played during the reception.

My father obtained employment with the Louie Dreyfus Company in Copenhagen in 1954. This company dealt with international trade and shipping with many countries throughout the world, and their business had many locations around the world, Copenhagen being just one of them. Dad was successful in this line of work, being gifted in speaking a variety of languages, such as Danish, French, English, German, Norwegian, Swedish, and a bit of Spanish and Russian. He rose quickly in the ranks until he was second in command at Louie Dreyfus in Copenhagen. Shortly after my parents' wedding, my father was drafted into the Danish army, as all young Danish men were. This was in the winter of 1956–57, just as the Hungarians rose up against the Soviet Union. Louie Dreyfus told him that they would hold his job for him for as long as he was in the army. Fortunately he was stationed in Hillerød, not too far from Copenhagen, and was able to visit his new bride on weekends. While Dad served his time as a soldier, my Mom continued her job as a secretary for one of the bigger insurance companies in Copenhagen, *Kongelig Brand*. My parents eventually produced four children: Jan-Michael, Heidi, Susan, and Peter.

Approximately a year after they were married, my parents were able to purchase their first apartment, and they have told many times of the thrill of having a place of their own. They did not have too many things in the

way of furnishings, but little by little accumulated the things that they needed. They already had Jan Michael by this time, so Dad was the sole wage earner. As the family grew it became apparent that larger accommodations would be necessary. My parents therefore sold their apartment, and my father sold his car, which enabled them to purchase a house of their own. Their lives were busy; moving into a home of their own, raising a family, having job obligations and making musical commitments.

Life was good, but my father had dreams of raising his family in Canada, in what he called »the land of opportunity«. Three of his sisters (Bodil, Ruth and Elise) and their families had previously emigrated to Canada. Dad too felt the pull and had the urge to try new adventures. In 1967 my father was told that Louie Dreyfus was reorganizing the company and that he and many others would no longer have their jobs. He could have been posted to another location elsewhere in the world, but my father chose this as the perfect opportunity to fulfill his dream of moving to Canada. So on April 25, 1968, Knud Peter, Ruth and their four children emigrated to Canada and started a new road in their lives.

My father obtained a job with *Seven Seas Ship Supplies* and worked as the Assistant Manager for a number of years. He then felt the need to change his occupation because of economic need and to try something new. He studied real estate in the evenings and obtained his real estate licence. He then began a new career in Real Estate services, working for a number of companies and doing quite well. He was a social person, very positive and optimistic which was infectious to the people that he dealt with. Sales came naturally to him. He had an ambition to start his own company and in preparation for this took his Real Estate Agent's exam at the University of British Columbia.

In 1974 he started his own real estate company in Maple Ridge, B.C., called *Arch Western Real Estate Services*. Arch Western branched out into other cities as well, such as Port Coquitlam, a second office in Maple Ridge, and Vancouver. This company provided services other than strictly selling real estate, such as property management and insurance services. He had taken a property management exam at BCIT and the Insurance Institute Agent's exam for insurance other than life. My father also studied micro and macroeconomics, law of contract, land planning, real estate appraisal, and corporate law at the University of British Columbia.

However, when the early 1980s came along with high inflation and high interest rates, and thus very little movement in real estate and the economy in general, my father's company suffered severe losses and he was forced to close down his operations except for one location in Vancouver. At this point my mother joined my father in his business and helped to

run the office, while my father continued selling real estate and both worked on their property management portfolios.

Also in 1974, he volunteered his services to be the choir director for the Danish Church of Vancouver. Prior to this, my father had frequently played and volunteered his musical talents to the Danish Lutheran Church on a less formal basis. Along with my father came Ruth, his two daughters Heidi and Susan, his two sisters and their spouses, Elise and Flemming, Ruth and Arne, to join the choir. My father maintained the role of choir director for the Danish Choir of Vancouver for ten years. The Danish Choir has had numerous singing engagements in British Columbia, as well as in the United States. My father felt the importance of maintaining one's cultural heritage and traditions and he wanted to do his part.

He challenged the Choir to perform to their utmost ability, teaching them how to read notes and how to perform many little nuances in singing. As choirmaster he regularly wrote and arranged music, which the choir performed. He translated songs and verses from English to Danish and vice versa. These musical scores are still part of the Danish Choirs' repertoire of music. He also wrote seven full cantatas, all the scores for a full choir and full orchestra, based on Biblical verses, which were performed for special services in the Danish Church. Some individual parts or songs of these cantatas have been performed on numerous other occasions, such as Mary's Song of Praise. One cantata was written and performed specifically for the inaugural celebration of the opening of the new Danish Church in Burnaby.

My father had long been impressed with the music and history of Buxtehude. Buxtehude (1637–1707) was a Danish-German musical composer and organist, and it has been written that people would walk for days just to be able to participate in his concert and evening song performances, including a young Johan Sebastian Bach, who travelled two hundred miles on foot just to hear his concert and evening song performances. Therefore when the new Danish Church in Burnaby needed an organ, my father volunteered his services and had many Concert and Evening Song evenings to help raise money for the new organ. These Concert and Evening Song evenings were based on the musical compositions of Buxtehude, some of these pieces being rearranged by my father. He would also write musical compositions for the choir to sing, and arranged for visiting artists to perform. Most often he would recruit members of his own family to sing at these special evenings. The Nielsen Singers therefore had to learn many of Buxtehude's pieces, which were often difficult to master. The Nielsen Singers consisted of my mother, soprano, and father, bass, his sister Ruth, alto, and brother-in-law Arne, tenor, his other sister Elise, soprano, and her husband Flemming, tenor. These Concert and Evening Song evenings



were held periodically over a couple of years, and were faithfully attended. All the money raised was by donation. Indeed, the majority of the funds raised toward the purchase of the new church organ were generated through these Concert and Evening Song evenings.

Along with these musical endeavours he also had the privilege of knowing and performing with many other gifted singers and musicians, some of them professionals. He felt such great excitement and enjoyment when music was performed well. In 1988 he joined the Gloria Ensemble Society, a full orchestra and choir focussed primarily on playing classical music. He thoroughly enjoyed playing with this orchestra, and here too he arranged musical pieces for them. He eventually became Assistant Music Director of this orchestra along with his friend, Win Rumpf.

The Scandinavian Business Men's Club was an area of interest to Knud Peter as well. He joined this club in 1983 and shortly thereafter was elected secretary. As secretary he discovered that their constitution was not adequate and therefore rewrote it for the SBC. This revision was ratified and stands as their implemented constitution today. He also wrote or revised many of their forms, i.e. scholarship forms, adjudication forms, membership form etc. that are used by the SBC. He served two years as vice-president and four years as president. During his tenure as president, he saw the membership of the Scandinavian Business Men's Club grow.

Aligned with serving the needs of the local business community, he realized that Scandinavians, although many of them were very successful and influential, did not have their own Chamber of Commerce. He decided to change that, and founded the Scandinavian Chamber of Commerce in 1990. The Scandinavian Chamber's membership grew steadily, and the board arranged many dinner meetings with informative speakers who spoke on current economic and political topics. Many of the speakers are well known, from B.C. Premier Bill Harcourt to Prime Minister Jean Chretien, with many other powerful speakers in between. My father was also part of the committee that regularly wrote and mailed out the monthly Scandinavian Chamber Newsletter booklets.

I believe that one of my father's biggest assets was his ability to see the potential and the possibility in things. He had great vision, and was not afraid to set out to see the achievement of this vision.

His dedication to the Scandinavian community did not end with the founding of the Scandinavian Chamber of Commerce. My father was also a founding member of the Ethno Business Council. The Federal Business Development Bank wanted to encourage business and economic growth amongst the diverse ethnic groups that comprised the city of Vancouver. My father quickly became a key member of this council, regularly meeting and discussing various ways of encouraging economic growth and invest-

ment. He was chairman of Ethno Business Council's Small Business Week Committee. On this council, he met many people, whose opinions he valued and respected.

My father was also co-founder of the Danish House Society, which started in the fall of 1995. The Danish House Society is a charitable organization, which has a number of purposes; such as to educate the public about Danish history, culture and language; to provide bursaries and grants to students who choose to pursue studies in Danish language, culture or history; and to maintain a museum dealing with Danish history and culture which will be available to the general public.

In 1995 Knud Peter volunteered to be a member of the steering committee for the exhibition Resistance and Rescue: Denmark's response to the Holocaust, which appeared at the Vancouver Holocaust Centre from March 26 to May 10, 1995. He conducted the orchestra and asked the Danish Choir to sing at the opening ceremony. Knud Peter also arranged four Jewish patriot resistance songs from Vilna, which were sung at this exhibition. Through documented historical data it explained how Denmark succeeded in saving the majority of its Jewish population from extermination during World War II, either by hiding them, or by smuggling them over to neutral Sweden. My father felt that it was a privilege to be involved in this exhibition. As a way of saying thanks for my father's contribution to this exhibition he was told that a tree would be planted in Israel in his honour. He was very moved by this gesture from the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society.

Knud Peter had also on many occasions been asked to fill in as organist at the Danish Lutheran Church, and in 1995 he took on this position on a permanent basis. He thus played every Sunday morning and some evenings at their Church Services. This position also included playing for other church related events, such as weddings and funerals.

My father had many other interests besides his love of music and the Scandinavian community. He thoroughly enjoyed playing chess, and was extremely good at it. Every time the world chess championships were held, my father would get out his chessboard and set up the pieces, in order to follow the moves of the great chess masters. He would talk about the genius of such and such a move. His biggest advantage, when playing chess, was when they were playing against the clock. My father's strategies were swiftly implemented, he was a fast thinker, and he was therefore able to pressure his opponents quickly. At the same time, he enjoyed playing and teaching chess to his oldest grandson Daniel.

Another area of interest for Dad was reading. He was an avid reader, and many topics caught his interest, such as environmentally friendly and energy efficient homes, economics, he had been accepted into a Masters



program in economics at UBC—nature and science. Above all, he was interested in theology and philosophy, and as a family we had great discussions in these areas. My father also taught himself how to do magic tricks, and entertained us children, other adults when my parents were entertaining, and his grandchildren at birthdays and on other special occasions. He had great enjoyment in watching the astonished faces of those around him. There was always a lot of energy surrounding my father, and most often family gatherings would be lively and fun. His positive outlook and enjoyment of life affected all who knew him. He in turn thoroughly enjoyed being together with his family, extended family and friends on social occasions. Such times would always include singing and the playing of music.

Throughout his life, his early Christian teachings stayed with him, he was a believer in Jesus Christ. His music most frequently focussed on Biblical stories or teachings, and the enormous depth of God's love. My father experienced all of the highs and lows of life, but always had goals and maintained a positive attitude.

During the last two years of his life, my father had drafted plans and worked hard on his new project, an oil-sampling instrument. He had done all the research and contacted potential buyers, finding that there was a great need for this kind of instrument, particularly because it was environmentally friendly. He had everything ready for his new invention to get it on the market and he was very happy and enthused about it. He told my Mom at Christmas that it was the happiest time he had ever had. Unfortunately, he never saw the final fruit of his labour. My Mother and younger brother, Peter, have seen this project through to its completion. The new product has been patented and is now on the market. It was through my father's determination, hard work, and will power that this project was finally completed. The oil sampler is another example of his ability to take an idea, see its potential, and develop a product that would benefit a lot of people.

His first love was always his music. One of my father's dreams was to have a music studio in his home, so that when he retired he would be able to focus more energy and time on writing and performing music. I am sorry to say that he never saw this dream materialize. On December 30, 1996, my father passed away suddenly, at home, of a massive heart attack. He was only 61 years old. He had lived a busy, full and exciting life. He gave us all so much, and we will never forget him.

*Written by one of his children*  
*January 1998*  
*1998/199*

# Inge and Gert Muldbjerg Andersen

MARTHA LARSEN

Danes are a seafaring people that have spread their influence to foreign shores for hundreds of years. During the last 125 years many have emigrated to Canada and been assimilated by the ever expanding population. Most of these immigrants were average people trying to make out a living, hoping that the new country would provide more choices and diversified opportunities. Every family and individual has a story to tell, and this is Inge's and Gert's story as conveyed to me during an interview on January 16, 1999.

Gert Muldbjerg Andersen, the youngest of three surviving brothers, was born on June 5, 1939, in Brejning near the west coast of Jutland, Denmark. His brothers are Leif, born February 17, 1932, and Ulf born February 2, 1937. Gert's Father, Lavrids Muldbjerg Andersen, was born April 13, 1903, in Hover and he died December 19, 1983. His Mother, Marie Andersen née Nielsen, was born April 17, 1904, in Hemmet and died September 4, 1963.

Gert's paternal Grandfather was Anders Andersen, who was born February 10, 1867, in Hover and died December 29, 1930. His paternal Grandmother was Karen Marie Andersen née Mortensen, who was born August 23, 1873, in Opsund and died on April 1, 1952.

Gert's maternal Grandfather was Hans Nielsen, born in Lydum March 21, 1868, and who died July 29, 1953. His maternal Grandmother was Ingeborg Kristine Nielsen née Kristensen, born February 1, 1866 and who died March 23, 1937.

Gert's childhood during the Second World War was spent on a small farm, far away from the general disruption caused by the occupation and subsequent resistance activities. Early recollections are limited to vague visions of airplanes, soldiers, shortages of gasoline and clothing, but a lack of food did not occur. His oldest brother, Leif, missed several years of schooling when the German army seized and occupied the school building as headquarters for the forces in the surrounding area.

Gert has a few memories of those years. One is when he and his brother Ulf took a shortcut through a field—suddenly somebody started to shoot and bullets came whistling through the air above their heads. Quickly they hightailed it out of the field and Ulf later admitted to Gert that he was really scared, »cause he knew that their Mom would really have given him hell if he'd come home and his little brother had been shot!«

When the war ended, and the German soldiers retreated, much equipment was left behind. Leif had gathered up considerable amounts of gunpowder, fuses, etc and was experimenting with their use. He nearly ended up destroying his room and blowing out a few windows. Nobody remembers how he managed to square things away with Dad, but all of a sudden all the »war booty« had disappeared!

In 1946 the family moved to Skjern, where the transition from farming to life in a town was softened by Dad engaging in the sale of farm equipment in the surrounding area. However, the boys were not to partake in »the easy life« and, true to old traditions, they were all sent »ud at tjene« to work on nearby farms. The hours were long and they only went to school one half day a week during the summer, but every second Sunday afternoon was time off. Gert had his first job in the summer of 1950 earning 250 Danish kroner working from May to November. The wages were paid in a lump sum at the end of the work term and his Dad unceremoniously pocketed the money.

The teenage years were spent between school, farmwork and jobs in town. High unemployment rates convinced Gert and Ulf to apply for immigration to Canada, with departure from Denmark in 1957. While waiting for a visa to be issued, Gert went to Oslo, Norway, to work as a handyman at the Hotel Bristol. In 1957 most Danes headed for Toronto, Calgary or Vancouver. Toronto was chosen as it was the shortest distance away and hence the lowest cost.

Gert spent his first year near Milton, Ontario, living on a farm, working for room and board while having a job at a local car dealership. In 1958 a trip to Vancouver was completed only to find the going was tough and the good times had come to an end. The economy had taken a nosedive.

After some time, unable to find work and with money running out, Gert moved to Alberta and found a job near Waterton Park, renovating a motel. Then he was offered a job to become a cowboy on a large ranch, with a horse, saddle, food and lodging in a bunkhouse on the prairies, as well as a 150 dollars salary per month. He has always regretted missing this opportunity. Perhaps the lure of city lights and accompanying activity was just too attractive for a 19 year old.

Gert started to have feelings of estrangement in that a majority of Canadian political decisions were being made in Ontario. Eventually he returned to Milton, later settling in Toronto.

Although the latter part of the 1950s was a difficult time for many immigrants, there was generally a contagious optimism amongst people and a conviction that the next year would be better.

In Milton, he found a »home away from home« at Kathrine and Hans Jorgen Leerbeks. In fact, so did his brother and many more young Danish immigrants. Whether it was their great hospitality, »det fynske lune« or their four daughters that made this home the focal point among young Danes has never been determined. It was, however, not unusual that eight to ten young Danes would show up for coffee and companionship on a Sunday afternoon. Gert later married Inge, the oldest daughter.

In 1961 Gert went back to Denmark to visit his ailing mother. Sadly she passed away in 1963. While in Denmark, he went back to school and graduated in 1964 with a business degree—»højere handels-eksamen«—from Tietgenskolen in Odense. He then went on to become an accountant.

In the summer of 1963 Gert managed to get a work permit and a job in Erlangen, West Germany, which turned out to be a very interesting and stimulating experience. Friendship with a young man at work gave access to a group of young people, who enjoyed life, yet were politically aware. The Berlin Wall was still fairly new. The division and future of Germany were the subjects of many discussions, and emotions would run high. A situation totally foreign to a young man who had grown up under stable political conditions.

At completion of Gert's studies at Tietgenskolen, students were approached by the Danish Foreign Service for recruitment to serve as commercial attaché at Danish embassies worldwide. Gert did not sign up as there was a long list of do's and don'ts, but surely it would have been an exciting career. Gert concedes that he regrets not having attempted this challenge almost as much as not trying the job offered as a cowboy on the cattle ranch.

In the 1960s an active Danish-Canadian Club in Odense named *Dansk Canadisk Selskab* consisted mostly of people with strong ties to Canada and Danes who had lived there. For some time Gert was »the entertainment committee« and responsible for some memorable meetings and parties.

Inge Muldbjerg Andersen tells: »I was born Karen Inge Leerbek September 24, 1943, in Stenstrup on the island of Funen, Denmark. I have three sisters: Margit Johanne, born April 25, 1946, and married to John Engstrom Andersen; Kirsten Marie born January 23, 1948 is single; Aase Kathrine, born August 8, 1950 and married to Leif Wraae. All my sisters and their families live in Denmark. My brother Erik Erland was born January 16, 1941, and died accidentally, when an English army truck killed him July 30, 1945.

My mother Kathrine Leerbek née Hansen was born May 17, 1918. She lives in Denmark, is in excellent health and frequently visits Canada. My father, Hans Jorgen Leerbek was born May 18, 1909 and died on Decem-

ber 24, 1987. My maternal Grandmother, Anna Petra Hansen née Nielsen was born October 10, 1891. She died October 3, 1980. My Grandfather; Lars Christian Hansen, was born April 1, 1885 and died in May 1971.

My paternal Grandparents were Niels Jorgensen Leerbek (1881–1965) and Johanne Marie Leerbek née Pedersen, who died in March 1919. My paternal Great Grandparents were Hans Jorgensen Leerbek (1860–1953) and Karen Jorgensen Leerbek née Christensen (1852–1942).

The above-mentioned Great Grandfather, Hans Jorgensen, bought the name Leerbek around the year 1900. He was a very well known and respected man in and around Gislev, Funen, and received the order of *Ridder af Dannebrog* for long and faithful service as a reeve, »sognefoged«.

There are many stories about him helping people when they needed his assistance. My Dad often told of the time when he received his driver's license on his eighteenth birthday. His Grandfather took him to the police station in Svendborg and told the clerk that Hans Jorgen was there to get his license. The clerk responded, »Fine, but that will take some time«. »No,« my Great Grandfather said, »I told him he would get it today, and that is the way it's going to be«. The clerk said »No, that can't be done«. But Great Granddad proceeded to tell everyone what to do. »You,« pointing to one of the office staff, »will make the coffee,« and pointing to some else »you go get the pastry,« and then back to the first clerk »and you will make out the driver's license«. By the time they finished their coffee my Dad has his license!

Great Grandfather was indeed a man to respect and admire. Gert has often jokingly referred to him as the King of Sydfyn. Our own boys, Eric and Paul, who of course have never known him, picked up on this so much that Paul believed it to be the truth. He told the kids at school that his ancestors were royalty and was very disappointed when we told him it was not so!

My early years were spent in and around Stenstrup on Funen, growing up with my three sisters. My Dad was a farmer and we lived in several places before coming to Canada in May 1957. Our residences in Denmark included four years at Egeskov Mølle, where my Mom ran a restaurant on the weekends. When I started to learn English in school, I often helped Mom translate when she had tourists in the restaurant.

When my parents decided to emigrate to Canada in 1957, my Grandmother was sure she would never see us again. My parents promised to return by January 1965 for their 25th wedding anniversary. Little did she know that travel would become easier in the future and she would see her granddaughters marry and would have several great-grandchildren before she died in 1981.

Our trip to Canada on the *M/S Stavangerfjord* in May 1957 was not a pleasant one. We were all seasick. Only my Mother seemed to manage well. Like many other families we made lasting friendships on the ship. Esther and Kristian Pedersen and their two daughters, Alice and Bente became our family away from home. During the years my parents lived in Canada we celebrated every Christmas and New Year with them.

We arrived in Toronto from Halifax early in the day, after a two and half day train ride. We were all tired, hungry and dirty. On the train we slept on benches, suitcases and on the floor between the seats. After a few hours in Toronto, we were picked up by the owner of *Hornby Greenhouses* and taken to our new home. My parents had been guaranteed a job and a place to live upon arrival. After lunch, the owner took my parents shopping. They were gone for what seemed like forever to a 13-year-old girl, who was in charge of three younger sisters. I was sure he had taken Mom and Dad from us. However, they did return by suppertime with groceries and some furniture.

Our first home in Canada was just east of Milton at Hornby. Both my parents worked at the greenhouses; Dad out in the fields among the carrots and lettuce and Mom inside with the flowers. The house supplied to us was unfurnished, with no indoor plumbing, a wood stove for cooking, but no fridge and no water, not even a pump in the yard. All our water was brought to us in two large tanks every two or three days. Laundry and bathing was done in a small creek nearby.

We started school a few days later in a one-room schoolhouse with about 25 to 30 students, who all tried very hard to make us understand them. At the end of June, when school holidays started, Margit and I took turns going to work in the greenhouse while the other stayed home to look after Kirsten and Aase.

At the end of August, my Dad had grown tired of working the rows of carrots and found a job on a farm near Ninth Line just west of Streetsville. It was more to his liking to look after the cows and work in the fields. It also meant a better house to live in, with indoor plumbing, electric stove, fridge and a forced air furnace. Mom kept her job at the greenhouse. She enjoyed working with flowers and continued to work there until they returned to Denmark in December 1964.

We lived on the farm until spring 1958, when Dad was offered a job in construction, building bridges on the Queen Elizabeth Way. Together with Ken and Nete Jensen, we then rented a house on Highway 25 south of Milton. By September 1958, the one room schoolhouse was closed and we took a school bus to the newly built *Percy W. Merry School*. During weekends and summer holidays I earned money babysitting and picking berries on a farm.



We met many people in Canada who became our extended family. Ken and Nete Jensen and their girls were among them. I spent much time babysitting the four girls. When daughter number five came along, I was asked to be her godmother. Rev. Poul Overgaard-Thomsen confirmed me in the Danish Lutheran Church in Toronto May 10, 1959, when the church was still in rented quarters on College Street. We were a small group of 11 young people and I became good friends with Anne Quist. We have kept in touch all these years and we still get together with Anne and her husband Gerry. They now live in Simcoe.

After working for about two years, I decided that I wanted to spend some time working in Denmark. I arrived just before Christmas in 1962. By coincidence Gert and I met during Christmas shopping in Odense and got reacquainted. For a while I worked in an office in Copenhagen. However, a few months later, I realized that I did not like living in the big city and moved to Hjallesø near Odense, closer to my family. I got a job at Fyns Forum and found a small apartment. My sister, Margit joined me in September 1964.

The rest of my family, Mom, Dad, Kirsten and Aase returned to Denmark in December 1964, after seven-and-a-half years in Canada. They came back home to Denmark to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary January 25, 1965, just as they had promised my Grandparents. Margit and I moved to another apartment, and I got a new job working in the office at *Roulunds Fabrikker*, where I worked until I married Gert March 25, 1967, and we returned to Canada«.

In 1967, Gert married Inge Leerbek in Gislev Church on the island of Funen. The ceremony was performed by Pastor Mogens Predstrup, who was previously a Minister at the Danish churches in London, Ontario, and Edmonton, Alberta. For Inge, this was a most appropriate location, as her mother was confirmed there and her parents had been married there in 1940.

Before returning to Canada in May 1967, they went on a honeymoon, travelling through Europe to such unforgettable places as Venice, Rome, the Isle of Capri, Monaco and Paris. This was done by camping in an old Bedford delivery van. Tourist class, you might say, but the sights they saw and the memories that linger are truly first class. Upon returning to Canada they settled in the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

Having to settle down again, after a few years of absence, was like immigrating anew with the exception of not having the language problem. Their first apartment was a second floor flat at 75 dollars a month. The »immigroant furniture« was supplemented by acquisitions at the *Rummelhardt Auctions* and for about 80 dollars they set up housekeeping.



The days were filled with interviews for work. However, meaningful employment in the accounting field was hard to find, without Canadian experience. Even with careful and prudent management they realized that they needed to get a job. Weekly living expenses for groceries etc averaged 13 dollars. Gert took a job at a Consumer Finance office and Inge found full time work in the warehouse at *Kaufman Footwear*. After about a year, as things gradually improved, Inge was able to work part time as a cashier and salesperson in the Kaufman's outlet store.

In the spring of 1968, Gert became a real estate salesman and in 1969 they moved into their own home. Gert became a real estate broker in 1970 and started to specialize in real estate appraisals in 1974.

Their first son Eric Muldbjerg was born April 4, 1970. Their second son, Paul Muldbjerg was born August 11, 1972.

In 1970 they bought their first rental property as a way to create their own pension plan. Over the years many more properties were added, which Inge manages along with caring for her home and family. During the 1970's, the number of properties reached a level where it was no longer possible to do the work without outside help. While wrestling with the problem of expanding or scaling back, Gert took a position with the City of Kitchener's Legal Department, buying, selling, appraising and managing real estate for the municipality. This tipped the scale in favour of continuing with the rental properties on a part time basis. Now that retirement is just around the corner, they have begun to dispose of some of the properties.

Eric and Paul grew up to be fairly proficient in Danish, assisted by frequent visits to relatives in Denmark, listening to Danish spoken in their home, as well as the usual mixture popularly called »Denglish«. Both Eric and Paul have dual citizenship and hold Denmark in high esteem. Gert became a Canadian citizen in 1978, while Inge kept her Danish citizenship.

Eric's wife Shannon Lynn née Kaufman was born January 3, 1976. They have a son Spencer Erik, born May 4, 1997. They live in Waterloo and Eric is employed at a large Kitchener factory, in the industrial maintenance division, working as an apprentice millwright. He is also a willing helper when the rental properties need repair.

Paul lives in Toronto. He is the chef at a large hotel and has adapted well to life in the big city.

Gert's brother, Ulf came to Canada in April, 1957, a few months before Gert. He went back to Denmark in 1962, returning to Canada in 1970. When Ulf took a vacation in 1976 to Florida, he just never came back. He now lives in Pompano Beach. Gert's other brother Leif lives in Odense, Denmark.

Over the years Gert has found time to be involved in business and professional associations. He is a former president of the *Kitchener-Waterloo Credit Union*; an accredited real estate appraiser, AACI; a former director of the *Waterloo-Wellington Chapter of the Appraisal Institute of Canada*; and a Professional Land Economist, PLE. He is active in several professional organizations such as the *Association of Ontario Land Economists*; the *International Right-of-Way Association*; the *Ontario Expropriation Association*; and the *Ontario Municipal Real Estate Administrators' Association*.

Among associations of a more private nature can be counted the Ontario Club; the Rotary Club; and the Masonic Lodge. He is a member of the *Waterloo County Shrine Club*. He volunteers his time to the Rotary Club working on such fund-raising ventures as bingo and the annual duck race. He is involved with fund-raising for the Shriners' hospitals and enjoys playing in the oriental band during Shriners' parades.

When it's time to relax, the family enjoys camping, hiking and downhill skiing. Inge enjoys her crafts and Gert likes to tinker with and restore old cars. Sunset Villa, of course, holds a special place in their hearts and they enjoy taking time out to help or just socialize at their trailer in the campground. In the late 1980's, Inge became more active in the ladies' group at Sunset Villa and, as a fund-raiser, she wrote an excellent Danish cookbook for the Villa in 1994.

Throughout the years they have kept in touch with the Danish community. Since the 1950's, they have attended functions at Sunset Villa, the Danish Church and the now defunct Danish clubs in Hamilton and Waterloo County. In 1992 Gert was elected to the board of directors of Sunset Villa, where he served in various capacities, including president, until 1997. In the fall of 1998, he was elected president of the Ontario Region of the *Federation of Danish Associations in Canada*. He is looking forward to this new challenge and hopes to have the time and drive to bring useful input into this unique umbrella organization to further the good relationship between Danish Associations in Canada.

Gert's biography is truly a success story. He has come a long way and risen to high professional standing. It has taken a lot of drive, determination and hard work, but the rewards are here now. It is said that behind every successful man stands a woman and, this is where Inge comes in. She has been—and still is—Gert's right hand, always there to help with her knowledge and enthusiasm, thereby making her an excellent partner.

We, in the Danish community, are fortunate to have two such remarkable people in our midst, and now that they hope to have a little more time, we look forward to enjoying their friendship, assistance and support

in sustaining and bolstering membership in the Danish groups. They are still young and we wish them all the best in the future.

*Based on Gert's and Inge's personal notes and an interview January 16, 1999.  
1999/149*

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