

Uncle Hans in America recalls:  
By Ingeborg Sandbakk in 1989

#### MY LIFE ON THIS EARTH

Born March 22, 1899 and will be 90 this year. My parents were Petter Pedersen and Jakobine Karlsdaughter. They lived 10 years at Stavfjord before moving to Skveieren in Mørsvikbotn. We were 10 children in mother's second marriage, but two died as small children. Father died when I was age 8. Ingvald was the oldest of us children at age 22; Konrad was age 19, Erling age 14, Julia age 12, Inga age 10, Petra age 5 and Magnus, age 3. These were hard times in which to survive so all had to help in any way possible. The three oldest children were hunters and at this time there was much fox and ptarmigan or grouse, in the wooded areas. Father was an eager hunter and the sons received good instruction in hunting from him. When I had reached adulthood (grown enough) we four brothers, Ingvald, Erling, Magnus and I, all together shot 70-80 grouse one day. We hunted in the Sverigesveien, Kobskar, Rønfjell and towards Korken. Homes in that area told that they heard gun-shots all day. When we had reached age 15 and even before we were allowed to go out hunting. Konrad left for America in 1911. Konrad was a good hunter. many fox and otter and seal and we shot sea-birds to eat. All taken care of and used. We operated a small farm area which usual for that time.

The first day Martin of Storeide was out hunting, he had received a strong message to join us. It became a long trip. First up on Rønfjell, next over to Korken and on to Horndalskorken. We shot grouse over all the area and in the end came near Liryggen and then home. But as Martin reached home there was a hole in his shoes and his stockings so he was actually quite barefooted. Yes, grouse he had gotten plus a big lesson about hunting. Later, he and brothers Robert and Olav became intelligent hunters. My brother Erling who had eyes as sharp as an eagle kept up with hunting as long as he could walk in the mountain area..his biggest/best interest. Konrad went to America to his cousin, Andor Olufsen who was married to Hanna from west Gausdal. They had become farmers and sent the travel ticket to Konrad.

I and like others intended to go to Lofoten (far north and off Norway coastline) to earn money. The first time was when I was age 15. My share would be around 75 kr. In autumn I began to hunt, but I don't recall how much came of that. The following winter I was at Lofot-fishing, but without any compensation. The following summer I took part in the fishing of herring using nets. Then we took a big haul (full-nets) by Reinvik and then it came to 900 kr, divided. It was divided between Ingvald, Erling and mother. The following winter I went with Peder Pedersen of Bonå to Lofoten but the end result of shares became almost nothing. I spent two years at fishing herring at the Vestlandet (westland) with Bernhard Jensen and the one year we could share 700 kr. One year I was on the same sort of fishing with Torolf Skog. Otherwise, various such trips over-all. One year we had a good herring-strike at Skveirvika. Then I got 700 kr of the sharing.

So, with autumn came the hunting. I bought some grouse to add to my own, from other hunters. I packed them in cases and sent them to Oslo and in this way earned a good amount. I went over to Stavfjord and bought it there. From Amund in Lasvika I bought a case and paid five kroner for it. There I packed the grouse that I had obtained on this trip and sent the case from there to Oslo. Then I rowed the boat back to Stavfjord and went all the way over the mountain. I had been thinking of the trip to America so it meant to hang-in and earn money. Northside of Stavfjord, right over from Sandbakk, Magnus and I took down 40 cordwood in the autumn time. Edvard Isaksen wouldn't believe we had been able to do so much but we were supposed to supply that much. Our mother was staying with Edvard and Petra when we were working in the forest and one day she saw we were on the way into the house. She said to Petra, "Now we will hear what they have to say as they step in..they will say, FOOD". It was the first we said as we came into the house. We could not take much time for cooking coffee or to take a long break for eating while in the forest. Money received for the wood was divided to mother, Magnus and me. One year, Petter Sørensen, Elius and I took down 70 cordwood near Martnesvika. Petter Sørensen was very easy to work with. Prices for the cordwood was reported to be 50 per cord but when we sold it in the spring season, we were given only 25 per cord and we had to also pay for the rental of the forest area. Some of the cordwood was put on the houseloft (house storage room, upper)...between Saeto and Sildhophammaren. We would throw it out over the rocks when the snow was deep. We took a good amount of the wood in the herring waters too and Per-Benoni moved the wood down the water-way.

I went to North Dakota in 1925. Konrad had rented a farm there - Hamlet bay. We came first to Ellis Island and from there we were sent here and there. Konrad came to Stanley bay to meet me. First I worked for Andor Olufsen and Hanna where I stayed for one year. I worked on the farm and planted wheat. Then I got a job with another farmer where I operated a binder and took part in threshing during harvest. With Andor I plowed all of his land - 150 acres, plowing with 6 horses pulling the plow. Andor also had other methods he used to earn money. We also went to the Missouri River to fish with nets and did hunting, for prairie-chickens.

When harvest was over, I drove a school-bus. It was a sleigh, built up so as to hold 7 young people plus the driver - me. When we reached the school, I put the horse into a stall as I sat on the school-benches with the young children, so I could learn English.

With spring season I began work on a farm south of Wildrose. The farmer's name was Dalseng. There were various jobs to do on this farm including driving the binder. During threshing I was paid five dollars per day and other times I was paid four dollars a day. I received 15 dollars a month during the winter. Another offered me 50 dollars per month, plus food during the winter.

That autumn I went along with Andor and family to Alaska. We arrived at Petersburg near Christmas. On the way there we visited with the Walle family and Hans Vinkenes. He attended high-school in Gig Harbor in 1935. There was 4 feet of snow at Petersburg. We went out hunting and shot a deer that had come down to that area because of all the snow. We put out a net in Petersburg Creek and got 70 salmon of various sizes.

Later that spring we did herring fishing. We had to pay 20 dollars the first trip and then Andor quit. At that time farming had failed. I went out on a new trip and earned enough money to pay for the trip. Later I got work at a herring-oil-factory and salting of the fish, and worked there about 3 months. Andor and family went to Gig Harbor and got a new farm where they had cows and cultivated and grew logenberries. One year they obtained 27 tons of berries. Andor became ill and died of cancer.

In the autumn I got work at a fox-farm on an island where they had up to 500 fox that freely wandered around. As far as I remember, we cooked mush for the fox using up to five sacks of oats mixed with meat scraps from a slaughter house in Washington. We obtained heads of wheat that we split up and dried for fox food along with the mush. A year later my brother Magnus came and was there with me a year on Level Island. The eagles were mean and ready to hunt the fox. While there we shot 68 eagles and 12 deer. The boss shot bear. We had a fine time there, much food and living free. We got 100 dollars each in a monthly salary..so when the year was up we had 1200 dollars saved. We received two dollars each for eagle claws we delivered. This kept us in pocket-money. The man who had worked at this fox farm before wanted his job back but the fox farm closed down a year later.

In three months I got a job at another fox farm. Later that fall we went to Ballard and worked at a saw-mill in Seattle. Magnus and I got a job at a salmon-farm near Petersburg. There were large enclosures for catching salmon in the traps/nets with sticks of timber that held up the nets. The two salmon farmers were a good distance apart having a small house up in the timbers where they lived. When we got tired of eating salmon, we could slip the line with a hook out the door and we would be fishing small halibut. One day I slipped on a stick and fell into the net, but it went well with me. Magnus and I had that job for three summers.

I had to go to Sedgevick in Alberta to meet Selmer who had come from Norway to be my wife. She had to go to Vancouver to stay for one year before she could come into the states. We were married late in December but she had to remain there until October a year later. She lived with Mrs. Knutsen. I bought a farm from Mrs. Inga Walle. Inga had lost her husband in some accident. She had two small children and could not keep up the farm. There we began farming. We had a fine farm to the end with up to 20 cows and 9 heifers. We got to buy 65 acres that was connected to our farm and paid 900 dollars for it in 1942. To begin, we had only three cows but had to buy a great deal of cattle food.

When Magnus and I worked at the salmon-farm there was canning done there of the salmon that was sold as income. After we had settled into farming, Magnus and I would go back to the salmon-farm to work 1929 and 1930. Selma kept doing the work with the cattle and she picked the berries that were sold. To begin, we had an acre of berries but later increased it to 4 acres of logenberries. At first we sold 20 (L) per day and later sold 350 (L) per day. We received 10 cents per kg. but later during the depression period prices dropped to 2 cents per kr, so it didn't pay to pick for sale any more. In 1931 Magnus returned to Norway, got married and settled at the home place.

We had three children that suited us well and they received good training/education as well. Selma died of cancer in 1946. We continued with farming, bought a new tractor and did well. Seven years after Selma died, I married Nellie who was widowed. That was in 1955. In 1964 we sold the farm and built a new house on new land that we obtained for 14 dollars per acre. During the depression years farmland was considered of little value. Nellie died of heart failure in 1974. Of late I have sat here in my new house and have had quiet days, free of all work. I row out to the salmon when the weather permits. I have made four trips to Norway and fished haddock in Mørsvikbotn.

So, wealthy I am not, but have enough and if I live so long, I will take a trip to Mørsvikbotn this year to celebrate my 90th birthday.

Comments:

I have included this history from Uncle Hans as he tells of the life and work and hardships that emigrants experienced in seeking a better life and living. It's a bit of history for that period of time and was very well received so we could be a part of it too. For many, life in America went well but for many others, not so well. They received nothing without high costs..nothing free. It was hard work, much wear and tear and more of the same.

Uncle Hans lives at Tacoma area.

Thanks, Uncle Hans.

These after thoughts were written by Solveig Korseberg Rud