

Childhood Memories of Gene A. Hansen

FEATURING

Gene A. Hansen

MY CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Written by Gene A. Hansen, circa 2006

I was born in Mink Creek, Idaho on 25 March 1931. My parents were John Micarl Hansen and Johannah Elizabeth Christensen. I was the youngest of 8 children, having 3 sisters and 4 brothers.

At the time of my birth, a midwife, Nancy Rassumsen was with my mom and she helped delivery me. All 8 of us were born in the same 2 room log house that had a shanty built along one end that served as a kitchen. As the years went by the house was added on too, but it was basically the same old house.

In the late 1920's their was a famous boxer by the name of Gene Tunney, and that is who I was named after. I don't really know how they came up with Arden. I was blessed the 7 June 1931 by Ezra Larsen in Mink Creek.

The home was located on a farm that my grandfather Hans Hendrick Hansen homesteaded in 1885. Mink Creek was a little settlement that was about 95% Danish and they had joined the church and emigrated to America. After my grandfather could no longer take care of the farm, my father took over the homestead, and this is the farm we all grew up on.

I must of been one of those special spirits that had to come to such kind and loving parents when they were much older then most. My mother was 44 and my father was 55. But they were excited to have me come into their home. My brother Duke had been the baby for 10 years until I came along. He was not too happy about that, but it was not long until I was loved by everyone in the family. My oldest sister Leona, was now married and had two children of her own when I was born, so I was an instant uncle.

Being born at the beginning of the great depression of the 1930's was not the best for anyone, but my parents managed with what they had. We never went without food from the farm, and warm clothes to wear, but the dollar was not worth a great deal. Their were always things that you could trade with your family or neighbors and I don't ever remember of ever going without any thing, especially the love that was shown in our home. Farming was hard work and my parents were hard workers and things were not easy for them when they were raising us.

Being the youngest, I was the apple of my mom and dad's eyes, so you see I became "quiet spoiled." My 3 sisters were now married when I was about 3 and had children of their own, so I became much closer to my nieces and nephews then my own brothers and sisters. They were Verl & Colleen [Leona]; Deloris, Evelyn, Ray [Ruby]; Betty [Afton]; and Larry [Jed].

Our next door neighbors were the Jepsen's, and they were our 2nd cousins. They had a large family and three of their children, Don, James and Ruth were closer to my age and became my closest friends. Almost any day of the week you could find us together doing something.

I don't remember to much before I was about 5, but I do have some fond memories growing up on the farm and parents that loved me. Both my father and mother taught me that what ever I tried to do, I was to do my very best and to stay with the task until it was completed. I was given little chores to do, but most of the time it was having fun and playing with my friends and the farm animals.

We had a grassy area between our house and the Jepsen's, called the "Grass". This was the neighborhood playground. In the summer we played games like softball, kick the can, run sheepy run, red rover red rover,

and hide and go seek. In the winter we played fox and the geese and went snow sleighing. The snow was so deep, we never worried about fences and could go a long ways before stopping. We also built snowmen and igloos. Another game I like to play, was marbles. I always had a big sock full of colored marbles. When I was old enough to have my own pocket knife [6-7], we played a game called mumble peg. I remember my mom getting me a little pair of high top boots, and on one side was a pouch I carried my little knife in.

At the bottom of this grassy area was a huge dirt bank that was perfect for playing with little toys like trucks and tractors. I could build the neatest roads and tunnels there. It was my favorite spot to play. My brother Duke would build me miniature wagons, hay derricks and even a small scale thrashing machine that would actually work.

When I was between 6 and 8 I was given a few more chores to do. I helped gather the eggs, feed the calves, pigs and the chickens. One of the tuft jobs I didn't like that much, was turning the handle to the milk separator. This machine separated the cream from the milk. But I always liked churning the butter for mom in the old wooden churn.

We didn't have running water in the house, so one of my jobs was to pump the water from the well and carrying it into the house. Another chore I helped with was carrying wood in for our kitchen stove.

During the haying and thrashing season, all the neighbors would help each other with their crops. One of my jobs was trumping hay in the hay wagon. The men on the ground would pitch the hay into wagon and you would trump it down so you could get a bigger load. It was a hot and dirty job. Once in a while there would be a snake in the piles that came into the wagon. Once the hay was taken to the barn, I would ride the derrick horse to draw the hay into the barn. Old "Bess" was the old horse I rode.

In the spring after the frost in the ground had gone it was garden planting time. My father always had a good garden along with a big orchard of fruit trees. My dad was very particular as to how things were planted, whether it was a row of corn or a field of grain it didn't matter. He didn't like any weeds of any kind in the fields or around any of the farm buildings.

I can remember to this very day the time when I was helping him cultivate our patch of corn. I was riding "Old Bess", and she was pulling the cultivator with my dad guiding it up through the rows of corn. It was about 10 o'clock in the morning and I was getting tired of doing this. I stopped the horse, jump off and told him I was tired and ran for the house. As soon as I got to the house, I knew I was in trouble and waited for my dad to come in for lunch. He had his lunch and he and mom talked for sometime, but I kept my eye on him all the time. He came out the door and he knew all the time what I was up too. I tried climbing up a tree so I would be safe, but I was not fast enough. He caught me by the leg and pulled me across his knee and this was the first and only time I can ever remember my dad spanking me. As young as I was [about 7-8], he taught me a great lesson and explained to me that you just don't quit a job until it was finished.

Another special time was in the early spring the ewe sheep would have their little lambs. During lambing season someone would have to stay with them. I would go with my mom and dad and be there when these little ones were born. I remember how gentle and good they were with these little lambs and how comfortable they made it for them with clean deep straw to lay on.

We always had a small herd of sheep along with 8-12 milk cows and several horses for working the farm. We also had pigs, chickens, a few turkeys and geese. During the summer months after the alfalfa fields were harvested we would herd the cows in these fields. Herding cows was rather boring. Some of the time the neighbor kids would be together and would have a good time.

At the end of the day we would bring the cows back to the corral. Along the way back we did something exciting. This was walking bare footed in cow pies. We thought this was great, especially when they were warm and fresh. It was a good thing we had to cross the creek before we got home. Our feet did look a little yellow at times. Now that I think about this, it was pretty gross.

Some of my fondest memories was going to see my grandmother Christensen [Thomine Matilda] in Preston. She was the only grandmother I ever new. My other grandparents had passed away. Things I remember was that she always had sugar cubes [for their coffee] on her kitchen table and she would let me have some. When my parents or aunt's and uncles were there they would all speak in Danish. My grandmother was just a little women and always wore her hair up in a bun.

Easter was another fun time of the year. By early spring most of the snow had melted and the south slopes of the mountains were getting warm. The tradition was to go hiking in the mountains, pick the wild flowers and gather pretty rocks along the way. When it was lunch time we would build a fire and take out our potatoes and cover them with mud and toss them into the coals to bake.

I must of been 8 or so when I fell out of an apple tree. I was helping my dad pick apples and fell and landed on a stick and it ran into the calf of my right leg. I still have the scar to remind me of that accident.

We always had 2-3 cattle dogs around the farm. One time when we were visiting my sister in Salt Lake, mother got me a little Boston bull terrier and I named him "Boots". He was so smart and the cutest little dog you could ever have. He could do so many tricks and I loved that dog. I had him for 2-3 years and then he was killed. When I was 10 or so I got another "Boots" just like the first one.

I was a rather fussy little kid when I was little. Everything had to be just right and there was a place for every thing I had. When my nieces and nephews from Salt Lake came to visit us they were a real pain in the neck, because they would break my toys and leave things in a turmoil.

Before I started school, my sister Afton was married and was going through a divorce and her little girl Betty came and spent one winter with us. She was about 3 years younger then I and we became very close. We became just like brother and sister. We even shared chicken pocks together.

When I was about 5 1/2 school was going to start and that meant my best friend, [Ruth Jepsen] would be going to school and I would have no one to play with. I fussed about this and said I wanted to go to school with "Rus". So my mother went and talked to someone and I got permission to start school a year earlier then I should. My mother thought I was too little to start school. Anyway she made a deal with Ruth that if she would watch out for me, she would get paid 5 cents a day.

My first grade teacher was Miss Crane and the school was located on the banks of Mink Creek called [Klondike] it is the old yellow school house that still stands today. The class was made up of both first and second graders. In the rear of the room was a pot bellied stove that was used for heating. The boys job was to bring in the coal and dump the ashes. My second grade teacher was still Miss Crane, but then we moved to the new school house just south of the Mink Creek chapel. My third grade teacher was Miss Jenkins.

From where we lived we had to walk down to the main road to catch the school bus. In the spring and early fall the school bus was a wagon with long rows of seats on both sides. It had rubber tires and was pulled by a team of horses. In the winter, the wagon then was mounted on a set of snow runners. Once in a while, when it was a nice day we would ride our horses to school.

Some days when I didn't feel like going to school, I would miss the bus on purpose and play hooky. I would play along the creek until about 10am and then I would come back to the house. Mother would ask me, "Did you miss the bus?" I would tell her I was sick and didn't feel like going to school. She then would tell me, "If your sick, you can just take of all your clothes and stay in bed." That was bad news for me. One of the things that I insisted on was wearing a little blue tie to school, especially in the first grade.

I don't remember going to church that often. We always seem to have company every week end, and the good cook my mother was, she was expected to stay at home and cook for them. When I did, I would walk with my mom. We lived about 5-6 miles from the church house, my dad didn't go that often, but he was a good and honest man. I remember just a little about going to primary, it was held in the Mink Creek chapel after school.

I can remember the day I was baptized. It was my 8th birthday. I don't remember any of the family being there except my mother. Norman J. Larsen baptized me on 25 March 1939 and I was confirmed the 2 April 1939 by Leslie Keller.

Some of my childhood diseases were: Eczema all over my head when I was a baby. I had chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever. When you had these type of diseases you were quarantined for a period of time and they would place a sign on your door to stay away. When I had a chest cold or sore throat, mother would put a mustard plaster on me. It was a damp cloth with mustard on it and it was placed on your chest. Did it ever burn, but the cold would be gone. The best cure for stomach ache was good old castor oil.

In the winter we had to dress very warm. Mother would always make me wear long brown stockings and long handled underwear. I can remember how she bundled me up so good I could hardly walk, but how I enjoyed the snow.

We did not have any in door plumbing, so the trip out side could get pretty cold in the winter time. Bathing was done in a big tin bath tub. Warm water would be added after each one had his turn in the tub, so the water got rather bad.

Another experience we had was morning prayer in our home. We would turn our chairs around and kneel down. As I remember it was always my dad or mother that said the prayer, I don't ever remember saying it.

Speaking of prayers, when we had our neighbors helping us during the haying season, the family you helped was responsible for the noon meal. Mother had all the hay men and the family sitting at the table, and my dad called on Julius Jepsen to say the blessing on the food. Well he prayed and he prayed for such a long time, I didn't think he would ever stop. When he did, I turned to my mom and said:"Is He Our Heavenly Father". She hushed me and laughed.

So this ends some of my early childhood memories. It was a great being a little boy during this period of time. If I had to live it over again, I would not of changed one thing.