

THIS IS MY LIFE  
Jorgen Nielsen 1981

I, Jorgen Nielsen was born in Denmark, in the year 1886. At the age of 16, I had the urge to travel. I had relatives in the United States, so I bought my ticket, and soon was on a boat, headed for the States, which was known as the "Land of Riches." When the boat docked in New York harbor, I was ready to get off and get my feet on dry land again. I then went to my Uncle and Aunt's home in Irving, South Dakota. I started back to school, and when my Uncle moved to Askov, Minnesota, I tagged along. It wasn't long before I started eyeing the pretty girls in town and one day, as I entered the hotel, my heart started pounding, because there I saw a beautiful girl and when my eyes met hers, I knew I had found the girl I wanted to be my wife. I finally got enough courage to go over and introduce myself. She told me her name was Anna Lund, and she was born in Denmark in 1890. At the age of 2 she came to the United States with her parents. I asked her for a date and would she like to go to a dance with me. She said yes, she would, so we walked three miles to the dance hall. I guess she thought she needed a chaperone along, as she asked her girl friend Nikoline Krag to join us. After several dates, I knew I was in love with Anna, so I asked if she would marry me; she said yes, so on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1911, we were wed.

We bought a farm and settled down. In February, 1912, our 1<sup>st</sup> bundle of joy arrived. We named him Axel. Then in August the following year, our little girl, Marie, was born. She was our 1<sup>st</sup> girl, and that is why she is now known as the "oldest sister". Anna and I then thought our life was complete, but then the next year we were blessed with another darling little son whom we called Ole and in the years that followed there were 3 more daughters

born whom we named Karen, Agnes, Esther and a son we named Carl. Life went along very smoothly. We were very happy and worked hard on our farm.

In the fall of 1925, Anna and I decided to move our family out West to Oregon. Anna's folks had moved to Oregon for their health and were writing letters to us, wanting us to bring our family to Oregon, where there was a lot of sunshine and very little rain. Anna and I had a discussion and decided to go into town and see about buying a car to transport our family to Oregon. We then counted the children and there were seven. Counting Anna and Myself, that would be a total of 9 and with all our luggage we knew we would have to buy a 2 seater. We went into town and found just the car we needed. It was a 1920 Model T Ford Touring. It was black and a real sporty looking car, equipped with side curtains that we could put on in case of rain. We bought it and proudly drove it home to show to our family. Anna and the children thought it was a beauty, and Anna was anxious to learn to drive it. So I taught her so she could help me drive to Oregon as the boys were still too young to drive. Anna and I and the children discussed the trip to Oregon and finally decided we would go. So in June, 1926, we sold our farm and furniture. We bought a tent and the morning of June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1926, we packed clothes, bedding, food and the children, and were ready to take off for Oregon. Anna had a big brim hat, that she couldn't bear to leave behind, but where would she put it so it wouldn't get squashed? She then got the bright idea of pinning it to the cloth top of the car. She decided that was a good place to hang other things. So into a sack she put some bread and a Home cured ham, and it was pinned to the crossbows, alongside the hat. The townspeople gathered to see us off and bid us farewell. They thought we had lost our minds, starting out with our family on such a long trip, and they doubted we would make it. But we were determined. Well, the 1<sup>st</sup> day we made it to Brainard, a town about 70 miles from our home town. There we had our first flat tire and had to buy a new one. The next morning as we started out our

new tire blew out. That was just the beginning of a lot of tire trouble, as we had to buy 8 new tires, and had an average of 3 flats a day on our trip. When we stopped at gas stations, the ones riding in the front seat had to get out, as the gas tank was under the front seat. But then to save an extra stop later, I would say "Kids, it is time for all of you to get out and take a walk down the path behind the station." I always had to remind them, when they got out, to be careful not to step on their baby brother, Carl, who had a bed on the floor between the seats and also be careful not to upset the big can or let it fall out. In the can we kept our dishes, silverware, butter and cereals and such.

Carl was only a year and ½ old which was a blessing, as he didn't require much room. Poor little Carl – we almost lost him in Brainard. We had stopped at a store to buy groceries, for our evening meal, and had left the children in the car. We told the oldest to take care of the younger ones. It was the first time they had been in a big city and there was a lot of things to see: big buildings and cars on the streets and they forgot to watch Carl. As Anna and I came out of the store, there was a crowd congregated around our car --- we rushed over to see what had happened and soon learned Carl had fallen out of the car on his head. He wasn't hurt, just badly frightened.

We stopped driving early in the evenings and would find a camp ground and get our tent set up and give the children a chance to run and get their exercise. We arose early in the morning so we could get a good start, before there was too much traffic.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> day was uneventful and we made good time. The 3<sup>rd</sup> day as we were going across the prairie on Hi-Way #10, which was then a dirt road with grass growing between the ruts, we could see a storm approaching in the distance. Thank goodness, we had the side curtains, which we hurriedly put on. We had just put the curtains on when the wind and rainstorm hit. I was afraid the wind would blow the curtains to shreds and possibly upset the

car, as it was hitting us broadside. I immediately turned the car around so the rear was towards the wind. It didn't last long and we were soon on our way again. Except for a cloudburst in Montana, we had fine weather most of the trip.

I was a little worried about the mountains we had to cross. While putting up camp in a town in Montana, Anna was visiting with a lady. She asked Anna where we were heading and Anna told her we were going to Oregon. The lady replied, "Oh, No!! You will never make it over the mountain called Camel Hump. It is a very steep uphill grade." Of course, this upset Anna and she was really worried. "Jorgen, what will we do now?" she asked. But I assured her we would make it. So the next morning we started out – we were going to make it or else. After all, we did have 6 children in the car that could push if need be. We started up the grade, the Ford groaned and sputtered and strained, but we were too heavily loaded. I turned to the children and said, "Now Kids, you are going to have to get out and walk and help push the car up over this steep mountain." And with their help, we finally reached the summit. After we made it over the Camel Hump Mountain, I knew we had it made and nothing would keep us from getting to Oregon.

On July 3rd, we crossed the Oregon line. We spent the 4<sup>th</sup> of July at Hood River. I will never forget that beautiful Columbia River Hi-Way, as it was the first paved road we had been on, on our 2200 mile trip. The morning of July 5<sup>th</sup>, we headed for Junction City, where Anna's folks were eagerly awaiting our arrival. We thought Junction City would be a good place to settle down and immediately rented a house. I found a job working for the railroad. I wanted to try farming in Oregon, so we moved out on a farm. But after clearing the land of blackberry vines and building fences, I tired of that, and went to work in Mill, and moved the family back into town.

It was Springtime and in the Spring a man's fancy turns to thoughts of love and soon our two eldest found their true loves and were married. We had lived in Oregon 7 years by then.

The following Easter Morning the Easter Bunny left us a cute, baby girl, whom we named Evelyn. She was a sweet little thing and we decided to keep her, after all, one more wouldn't make much difference.

One day we realized our children were all married and instead of 8, we now had 16 and Anna and I were alone. So we decided it was high time we quit working so hard and started traveling and living it up. After all, we were in pretty good health and as the old saying goes, "there's still fire under a snowy roof."

Time has a way of passing by too swiftly when you are happy and enjoying life. I have heard it said that happiness is the key to a long life. It must be true as Anna and I are now celebrating our 70<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary and I wouldn't trade my Anna for a younger model – not that I couldn't keep up with a younger one, after all I am only 94 years young.

Anna and I have always been socially active – attending church, potlucks, card parties and lodge meetings. We enjoy playing cards with our family when they come home for a visit. I enjoy playing "31" with the kids. I can beat them most of the time, as I am an experienced player and I get a kick out of winning their nickels.

The other day Anna and I were reminiscing and we chuckled thinking about the jobs we had done when the children were not around. Like the time Anna wanted the upstairs windows washed on the outside, so she went upstairs and washed the windows! I climbed up on the roof and replaced some shingles. I could tell a few other things, but I better not.

Every Spring we plant a garden and raise some of our own vegetables. Anna plants a lot of flowers and spends much time with her flowers. We have our fruit trees and a walnut

tree, so in the Fall, we are busy picking the fruit and drying and shelling the walnuts. It keeps us out of mischief – but I will say that mischief would be more fun.

Anna is never idle – she is always busy cooking and baking and when she sits down to rest, she is making quilt blocks or doing fanciwork. She says just because she is 90 years young, isn't any reason to just sit in her rocking chair all day.

Remember the First National Bank's motto "Lets' build Oregon together." Well, we certainly helped do that. At the last count our immediate family had grown to 98. No doubt there will be more on the way and the count can change from day to day.

God has been good to us and our family, and we count our blessings every day.

Retyped by Janice, using Grandpa's spellings, spacing and punctuation