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From The Old Country to the Prairie
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The class, From the Old Country to the Prairie cannot be given credit for a renaissance of interest in the roots of my life or those of my community. I have been steeped in family history from my earliest years partly because I am lucky enough to have had a long history of family stability behind me and also because all my forebears came from one place, Norway, and talked about it.

My parents respected and revered their own parents, providing for their personal needs and listening to their stories of how it used to be. My mother's brother has made it his hobby to research, collect, compile, and cogitate upon his own family history and was extremely helpful while I was doing research of primary sources for a Historical Research class years ago (a copy is included). I have never gotten back to that project; however this class has given me a renewed interest in doing so.

Before completing that project, however, it seemed sensible to gather some information about my father's family since he is the only one who could provide it for me. He married late and spent years listening to his parents discuss Norway and his family. He has an accurate memory for details which can be relied upon. I have researched none of the material he gave me and documented only the parish and immigration records from Norway, but I am confident it is well founded. Later time may allow the historical research required, but for now I have a very short oral history of my father as told to me by him. I am sure in subsequent visits new anecdotes and bits of information will be added. Every paragraph deserves pages of development,

In short this class has motivated me to put down on paper all my father has told me. The books we read suggested questions I should ask and proved to me that, no matter how commonplace, the story of a family is important and exciting and instructive.

As I learned about myself and my relationship with my mother in my first trip into the past, so also have I learned in this new venture. I have been told that my temperament is much like that of my paternal grand mother. Perhaps they are right. Her capacity for hard work, her stubbornness, her ease in putting thoughts on paper, her singing ability, her devotion to fan her desire to be in charge all seem to have been passed on to me

In Tingelstad parish (a part of Brandbu parish) in the district of Hadeland lived a cottager named Ole Eriksen. In his lifetime he was variously called Solbjoreie, Dvergsteneie, or Almseie depending upon which farm he was associated with at the time or later on, Badstuen after the cottage, Badstua, in which he lived. He had been born the son of Erik Erikson in 1829 at Solbjoreie. On December 4, 1853 while living at Dvergsten, he married Johanne Hansdatter at Grinaker Church in Tingelstad. Johanne was born in 1832 the daughter of Hans Pederson, a husman at Dvergsten. (A husman was a

second-rate hired man who lived in a small cottage on a large farm doing all the odd jobs and being paid in flour, shoes, or cloth.)

Ole Erikson was a small man but he had a hard, tough reputation, His parents had died when he was very young so he knew only the oldest sister of his siblings. (She became the mother of Lars Stensrud and Mrs. Gilbert Hilden of Watson.) Having discovered who his brother was, he introduced himself by jerking his brother from his girlfriend's bed and throwing him out of the house. They became acquainted while his brother tried to beat him up. This brother emigrated to Wisconsin.

Ole made his living by felling trees and acting as a guide for hunters in the woods. He also snared live birds for sale in Germany. These birds were native in Norway and officials were trying to establish them in Germany's forests. It is thought that the birds were large game birds something like the American wild turkey. During the winter Ole wove baskets under water for sale. However, his greatest love and greatest vice was gambling at cards. His daughter, Martia remembered her father coming home late night in the winter with a gambling buddy and at the door handing over his overcoat. He had lost it in the game. The records show that they were the recipients of some poor relief, however they were never without food. Barley bread was their staple.

Eleven children were born to Ole and Johanne. Randi - 1854, . Erik - 1859, Mary - 1862, Hans - 1864, Martia - 1868, Oline - 1870, Johan - 1873, Ole - 1875, Johanne - 1879, and two who died too young to be recorded in the parish records or the census. Johan and Ole died while quite young of scarlet fever; Oline nearly died during the same epidemic. All the children went to school to learn reading and writing; however the girls were not taught arithmetic because it was considered unnecessary. Martia read very well and wrote as fast as she could think. There were no women teachers. The pastors taught the confirmation lessons. She was confirmed October 1, 1882 in a large class of perhaps 40 young men and women. The students stood up along the outside walls of the church and in the aisles. The pastor walked around and asked them questions. One of her fellow confirmands was Erick Anderson who later figured heavily in Martia's life.

When my grandmother, Martia, was little, someone gave her a rag doll. She was so excited because toys were unheard of and she took it with her everywhere. One of the neighbor boys grabbed the doll away from Martia and chopped off its head. Martia picked up the pieces and took them home to her father. He carefully sewed the doll back together and placed a big hunk of a homemade nail in the neck. The next time the boy stole her doll and chopped off its head, he broke a big piece out of his father's axe head. He really got the buttons whipped off his pants.

Martia remembered her sisters and brothers when they were little picking large berries called molte to sell. They were large yellow berries like raspberries only as large as crab apples.

When she was fifteen years old she was sent out to work at Tinglestad, a

large farm, where she had the sole care of the cattle. She milked them, fed them, cleaned their stalls, and went with them to the saeter in the spring. She stayed there with them all summer making butter and cheese from their milk. Each week someone from the farm came up to carry back the produce.

Tingelstad had large barns with concrete mangers and Stalls and basements. During the winter manure was scraped into trapdoors where it collected in the basement. In the spring clay was hauled in, mixed with the manure, and the mixture was spread on the fields.

One summer she didn't go to the saeter but stayed on the farm to help cut grain with a curved grass hook. She cut twice as much (twelve measures) as the ordinary workers did.

Martia was satisfied working at Tingelstad. She liked her duties. She had a room of her own, she was paid relatively well, she looked forward to a whole week of festivities at Christmas, and she received ample clothing and shoes.

Shoes were provided by itinerant shoemakers who would come to the farm and work for two or three weeks at a time. The softer leather was used for the daughters of the farm and the cheaper leather used for the girls who worked there. The sympathetic shoemakers would spend extra time working the leather for the working girls so their shoes actually fit and wore better than those of the daughters.

During her Christmas break she and the other hired help would go to neighboring farms (a different one each night) Yulebokking and dance until morning. The evening ended by doing the morning milking.

Martia always sang at her work. Many times over, an old man on the farm would ask her to sing "The Husman's Visa" (a ballad about the lot of the husman). Then he, would say, "That's true every word." and then he would cry.

On the Tingelstad farm there was a welfare boy ut paa legd who lived in the barn. Indigent children were often placed on farms to work. The family was expected to feed and clothe them and provide clean lodging for them. This particular boy was not being treated well and Martia told the authorities. The family never understood why they had been investigated, but conditions improved for the boy after that.

In 1888 Martia's parents, Ole Eriksen Badstuen and Johanne Hansdatter emigrated from Norway to America. They took with them three of their daughters; Martia (20), Oline (18), and Johanne (9). Their son, Hans, had come to America four years before. He worked at the Dvergsten home in Watson, Minnesota and had earned enough money to send passage for his parents and two youngest sisters. (Mr. Dvergsten was Johanne's brother.)

Martia hadn't planned to go along; however, a relative, Gulbrand (Gilbert) Hilden of Watson sent passage, forty dollars, for her saying he couldn't

imagine her being left alone in Norway. She was obligated to work for him to pay off the passage debt at a dollar a week. She really didn't care to go because she liked it in Norway and she knew she would have to work just as hard there as she had in Norway. She was certainly right. Hilden's were hard employers. Mrs. Hilden felt housework was beneath her since they could afford hired help so Martia cooked all the meals, did the housework, milked all the cows, and scrubbed all the clothes on a board for the Hilden's and their twelve children. (And Mrs. Hilden was Martia's first cousin.) In her spare time she was to spin. After the forty dollars was paid, Martia refused to work for less than two dollars a week and room and board. Mr. Hilden grudgingly paid it when she threatened to quit and get a job at the Riverside Hotel. Her sister, Johanne, was working there already as a housemaid. After the Hilden's built a new house, they hired an extra girl.

The passage from Christiania to New York City took only three weeks. They traveled by steamboat in which cattle had been hauled the year before. They brought their own food; dried meat, sausage, cheese, flatbrod -in a small round topped trunk. (The round topped trunks were preferred because others could not be stacked on top, thus one had easier access to one's belongings.) Food was provided on the boat but they used only the potatoes. The entire family was seasick most of the way over except for Ole himself. He found a card playing buddy in Erick Anderson who was traveling alone and was also bound for Watson, Minnesota. Erick had a bottle of whiskey with him which ensured his friendship with Ole Erikson.

Erick was the eldest son of Anders Amundson and his wife, Sirri, born in 1868. She had inherited Rekstad, a small farm (four or five acres) large enough to pasture a few sheep, two cows, and a few chickens. Anders made his living as a carpenter making log houses. He had a brother who made spinning wheels. They had one other son, Anton, born in 1870 and a daughter, Bertha, born in 1877.

Erick went to school, could read well and write a little although he didn't enjoy it. His father was fairly successful in these early years so Erick didn't have to work very hard. He made shoes and for a time, worked for a place that raised horses for butchering. He remembered swimming them out into the lake in order to clean them.

When he was eighteen years old his mother died, probably of a tumor or goiter. Two years later he got a chance to go to America. A neighbor, Pete Canton, who had immigrated to America, sent a ticket to his brother to come.

At the last minute the brother decided he didn't want to go. "I'll take the ticket!" His father encouraged him by telling him that going to America was just like a trip to Christiania. "If you don't like it, you can come home." They certainly knew very little about the immensity of this decision to travel to America. Since there was no real opportunities for him in Norway and he was only twenty years old with no responsibilities, he made plans for his adventure. Passing by a local family lunching on an unappetizing meal, Erick said to himself, "There you can sit eating mysmorr, but I'm going to America and eat eggs every day." (Eggs were delicacies and only for company. It is unclear what mysmorr actually was, but morr is described as the fat from the innards of butchered animals.)

When the time for departure came, Erick's father, Anders, walked with him all the way to Christiania, seven Norwegian miles, (forty-nine American miles) to see his oldest son leave for America. That was the only time Martia saw her future father-in-law. She described him to her children as big and husky with dark curly hair.

Anders later married his hired girl, Ingebord Moogenhagen, and had six more children: Sophie, Hans, Margaret, Karl, Ingvald, and Lars. All emigrated "but Ingvald and Lars. Times were harder for Anders second family partly because it was so much larger and he was no longer a young man.

In 1930 after Anders and Ingebord had both died, Erick was contacted by officials in Norway because he was the rightful heir to the small acreage there. He and Anton signed away their rights so that their youngest half-brother, Lars, could inherit. Ingvald had died in 1926 of pneumonia.

Becoming new Americans meant deciding on a new name for the immigrants. Ole and Johanne took the name of Aim and Erick called himself Rekstad after the farm in Norway.

The trip from New York City to Watson, Minnesota by train was apparently accomplished without incident. All were expected and western Minnesota had become quite civilized by 1888. Erick arrived in Watson with exactly fifty cents to his name and promptly began working for his friend Pete Canton to pay off his ticket money. He later worked one year for Gilbert Hilden, the same man for whom Martia was hired girl.

On July 5, 1890 Martia and Erick hired a team and buggy from Hilden for one dollar, drove to Montevideo, and got married. Her brother, Hans Aim, and his wife stood up for them. One of their best wedding presents was a hen from Oste Peterson. They established a home in Watson where Erick built the "Gary" house. While they lived in Watson, four children were born: Andrew - 1890, Ole - 1893, Jenny - 1894, and Helga - 1896. (Notice they followed the Hadeland, tradition of naming the first-born son after the paternal grandfather and the second-born son after the maternal grandfather.) Erick worked on the railroad until 1897 when he sold the house and moved to a farm owned by Hans Kanten one and a half miles west of Watson.

The house on that farm had so many rats in it that they finally moved in 1901 to the Peterson farm five miles north of Watson. There the last three children were born: Anna - 1901, Edwin - 1902, Rudolph - 1905. In retrospect, Erick could have rented that farm all his life since it was always owned by non-farmers. He was successful there, he owned some of the best horses in the area, his children had the advantage of being near school, church and town. However, his brother Anton, who had followed him to America, had in 1894 settled in Grace Township nearly 20 miles from the nearest town. In 1905, Erick chose to buy 160 acres near him for twenty-five dollars an acre.

The soil was heavy black gumbo awash with sloughs. No land was available at

that time near Watson for the amount of money he wanted to pay. As it was, a mortgage was necessary to secure the land. The following year the family moved to their own farm. There was a small three-room house with a loft, a new granary, and a 'stable on the farm. For four years it rained on that heavy soil. No crop was harvested; in fact, Ole could boat from their house to the neighbor's house a mile to the southeast. A mortgage, no crop, and a large family forced Erick to sell his fine horses. 1910 was the first year they were able to show a profit on the farm. Later in 1920 a county drainage ditch was begun and finished in 1923. It lessened the risk of crop loss just in time for the dry thirties to begin.

Erick rented pasture land and a barn from the adjoining farm north of him where he kept eight milking cows. Later, he rented 100 acres of slough and meadowland from the farm to the south. In 1913, he rented the Hendrickson farm to the west. It had a larger house, so they moved there. But a year later, the farm was sold so they had to move back to their own farm. Since that small house couldn't hold them all, the children slept in the granary. They decided they must build a house. Andrew, who had gone to South Dakota in 1907 to find work, came home to help. Ole did the farming and hauled the materials for the house from Benson. The house, excluding labor, cost one thousand dollars. It had a front room, dining room, kitchen, and three bedrooms.

By 1914, when the house was being built, the four oldest children had pretty much struck out on their own. Andrew, who had been working out for seven years, later married Hilma Haug, the daughter of the man he worked for in South Dakota and settled in the Willow Lakes vicinity. They had one daughter, Arlene. Ole worked out among the neighbors, threshed in South Dakota, and was home in the wintertime. Jenny worked at various places as a hired girl and in 1918 married an Irishman, Jim Jones, a man for whom she had worked. He was twenty years her senior. Their children were Charlotte, Elwood, and Arlene. Helga worked but on a daily basis but was home most of the time.

Sunday was a day of rest at the Rekstad house, but it, was uncommon for the whole family to go to church. They belonged, of course, to the local Norwegian Lutheran Church, Jevnaker, named and designed after the Jevnaker church in Norway. Erick would drive the buggy to church and take with him whichever children were reading for the minister at the time. There was no family devotions or regular Bible study. Grace at the table was reserved for company.

However, everyone went to the Christmas Tree, that celebration that has evolved into the Children's Christmas Program. Rudolph remembers the first one he went to as a five-year-old. Early in the season, a collection was taken from all the members (perhaps two dollars) to cover the cost of apples, oranges, candy, and one present for each child. (It was not the custom then to give presents within the family at Christmas.) Rudolph saw all the children around him receive a present and he didn't get one. All the presents were distributed and there wasn't any for him. He cried all that day and the next. The following day Erick hitched his horses to their

sled and drove twenty miles to town to get a present for Rudolph. He never forgot that present, a toy with a bell on it with a hammer to make it ring.

When the family lived near Watson, all the older children went to school in the town school. One day Grandpa Ole, who lived in town, saw that Andrew and Ole had skipped school. Later in the day while the boys were eating at the table, they saw their Grandpa coming to visit. They disappeared in a hurry knowing full well that he would tell on them and they would get it. The older kids all went to school on a pretty regular basis even when they had to walk the two miles to the country school in Grace township but Rudolph had other plans. It was too cold, or it was too far, or it was a waste of time. Whatever reason he devised, his parents let him get by with it. His mother always stuck up for him. He was the youngest and quite possibly her favorite. Consequently, he attended school as little as possible and never went again after the seventh grade.

But Rudolph was not lazy. From the age of six, he herded cows following them all day from the meadow south to the pasture north keeping them out of the crops. He wasn't allowed to milk until he was about eight because he was too little. Once he had learned, he was sorry he had. When Rudolph was ten, a neighbor Ted Anderson, offered him an old pony if he would come and get it. He wasn't slow in taking care of that transaction. He called the pony Ned. From then on he rode his pony while he herded cows. The animal lived only a year or two and when it died, Rudolph skinned it out and sold the hide for two dollars. By the time he was eleven he was allowed to drive the binder during harvest. (Edwin had to shock grain, but Rudolph was too little.) He had earlier done some plowing and by 1918 when he was thirteen he used a gang plow all day.

There were German neighbors to the north, the Gensmers, who had a boy two years younger than Rudolph. Because all the mailboxes were on the south corner, the Gensmers would walk by the Rekstad farm to collect their mail. Rudolph would watch Friebert, the Gensmer boy, but he would never say anything because he spoke only Norwegian and Friebert spoke only German. Later they devised a language of their own and became fast friends. When the Gensmers went to town to shop they would leave their two children at the Rekstads to play.

When Rudolph and Friebert were very little they would play at trapping crickets in a little box with a screw on it that Friebert had found. One day Friebert lost his cricket trap down a pocket gopher hole and did he ever cry. It was never found. As they grew older they moved on to bigger game and would spend every Saturday and Sunday hunting with air rifles.

But baseball was Rudolph's first love. He began with a rag ball and a homemade bat and ended by being one of the most sought after players among the local teams. He trapped muskrats for \$.32 a pelt, mink at \$10 a pelt, and skunk at \$5 a pelt in order to pay for real bats, balls, and gloves. This money also bought all his clothing after the age of ten. One day he got seven skunks in his traps. He skinned them, all out, changed his clothes, and went to bed. It seems he hadn't gotten rid of the smell

because when he lifted up his bedcovers and took a whiff, his bed smelled like a skunk den.

Nearly every township and small town had a baseball team. Each team had official uniforms and every Sunday afternoon there was a game according to a pre-arranged schedule. The teams imported players to ensure victory. There was even a Negro pitcher from Minneapolis on the Milan team.

Rudolph played on various teams beginning as a pitcher at eighteen but settling in at shortstop most of the time. He usually played on the Grace or the Gracelock teams. When he was twenty-five he noticed he was slowing up some and he quit. "If I couldn't be the best, I didn't want to play." After that he would sometimes fill in on other teams (in fact, Mandt beat Gracelock once when Rudolph was playing for Mandt as a substitute) but he never played regularly after that.

Rudolph's first trip to town took him to Benson when he was five. His parents were taking a trip to Randall, Minnesota to visit relatives and Rudolph was to go with them. He didn't want to go. He wanted to stay at home with his seventeen-year-old brother, Ole, who had driven them to the train. To Rudolph, Ole was the most wonderful person in the world. They finally had to lie and tell him that Ole was not going home and was going to wait right there in Benson for them. Of course, they tricked him. When they came home the train took them to Montevideo and Ole picked them up there.

He remembers the wild strawberries in Randall. There had been a forest fire there the year before and the strawberries were so numerous that they filled milk pails full of them. Between the homes of the Alms and the Olsons was a pathway which crossed a dry creek bed. Over the creek bed had been placed some logs to serve as a bridge during high water. Rudolph scared up a partridge under those logs and it was a toss-up as to which was the most frightened. "Pa and Ma got a boy in a hurry."

In 1915, the whole family went to a Hadelandlag in Montevideo. Ole, Edwin, and Rudolph went in the buggy. The rest of the family rode with Lars Olson, the man who built their house, in his Model T.

Ole and Andrew bought a new Model T Ford in 1917 for \$360, but shortly afterward they were both drafted to serve in World War I. While they were gone Erick learned to drive and used their car. Later, in 1919, when the boys returned, he bought a car also. The prices had gone up in the meantime. This car cost nearly \$700.

Both Andrew and Ole saw action at the front lines in Argonne, France. Ole was under fire for six weeks and narrowly missed injury when his pant legs and backpack were peppered with bullets. Andrew was at the front for two weeks before the cease fire. They had been together in training at Ft. Lewis, Washington, but were split up when they got to France. Ole wrote home for news of his brother, but no letters came from Andrew until late December, a full month and a half after the armistice. When they came home Andrew took off his uniform and never put it on again, but Ole wore his

around the neighborhood.

By 1923, Rudolph had made a few trips to town by himself in the family car. He rode along with Friebert the first time he was allowed to take the car alone. It was an Overland 90. Henry Johnson and Edwin Wollschlager were in the back seat. Friebert wasn't much of a driver and the carburetor had been set pretty fast. They careened down Main Street in Montevideo at 25-30 mph narrowly missing pedestrians. Rudolph covered his eyes and when he finally dared to look around, he saw Henry and Edwin standing up in the back seat screaming about the people that were nearly being run over. They finally got the car parked on the south end of the street where they made sure they stayed late enough so that there wouldn't be anyone on the streets when they went home. They went to the movies for \$.10, ran the slot machines, and played pool.

Quaker Oats had just come out with their new round boxes for oatmeal and two of the boys had brought some to feed their baby chicks. As they were going up First Street hill, all of a sudden the door on the car flew open, out tumbled the round oatmeal boxes rolling down-the hill with Rudolph and Henry chasing behind. They just caught the oatmeal before it splashed into the river at the bottom of the hill.

The next Saturday night the same crew went to town with one added, Chester Jones. Just as they rolled into town some of the town boys hollered out, "Here comes them sawed-off farmers." Well, no one could stand for that! Off went our heroes up the hill after them. But they never caught up to the town boys.

Rudolph's father, Erick, was a handsome man, small in stature with a big mustache and large powerful hands. He was a gentle quiet man who while resting was happy just smoking his pipe. He never said much around the house, never disciplined the children except with a hard look and then only if Martia demanded it, never swore, and never mistreated his animals. His only failing was that he didn't like to work. He did like to visit. When he took a load of grain to town he would never get home until past midnight because he talked to all the neighbors on the way to and from.

His brother Anton was most things Erick was not. He was a big man, good-looking with curly hair and a mustache. He had a violent temper and was strong as an ox as long as that temper lasted. His language was mean and abusive although he didn't treat his family badly. Back in Norway when he and Erick were chopping timber, he displayed his true Viking heritage. The snow was six feet deep on the level and he and Erick had to shovel the snow out to make a place for the logs. When they returned with the logs, they found strangers had stacked their timber in the cleared space. Anton's temper went on a rampage and if the timber hadn't been moved promptly, those strangers would have found Anton's ax in their skulls. His temper and superhuman strength demanded the respect of his neighbors in America too. In the early days roads were not so well defined. When he came home one day to find his pathway cut off by a barbed wire fence and wooden posts, he grabbed the wire, broke the fence posts like toothpicks, and roared so loud

and long he could be heard at Erick's place a full two miles or more away. He never found a fence across his path again. On another occasion he was waked up by a woman who had gotten her horse stuck in a large mud hole. Of course, he didn't like his sleep disturbed so his temper began to rise. He pulled, on his pants, stalked out of the house and down the road, found the horse completely mired down, grabbed it by the tail and dragged it right out of the hole backwards. "I never knew a man could be so strong."

Their sister, Bertha, was the least fortunate of the three. She had a weak mind and attempted suicide twice. Once at Erick's house where she tried hanging herself in the granary and once at Alton's when she jumped in the cistern. (Anton dragged her out.)

She never had a home of her own always working as a hired girl and saving, every dime she ever made. She was hospitalized three times: at Fergus Falls after a boyfriend had deserted: her, at Yankton after being frightened by her employer, and at St. Peter after all her money was lost during the depression. She died at St. Peter in 1935.

Rudolph's mother Martia was an untiring worker, an organizer, a leader. She had natural musical abilities and a love of writing. She was stubborn, she was sharp, she was loving, she was tough. She loved to visit but she preferred not to learn to speak English although she must have understood it. There were Irish and German and Norwegian people all living together in Grace township and somehow she communicated with the women in the neighborhood and the peddlers who came to her door. She didn't like it when the children spoke English around her. She couldn't abide gossip and refused to allow it in her house. Her greatest joy in spare moments was to write letters to her schoolmates and to Erick's stepmother in Norway.

She wanted her children to stay home with her never encouraging them to marry. (I don't believe Rudolph ever would have if his mother had lived.) Andrew married a Norwegian girl so there couldn't be much argument about that although he lived so far away. She didn't care much for Jenny's choice, an Irishman, but they did live nearby and came to visit every Sunday. Many times Rudolph would sit home on a Sunday afternoon when he would rather have been somewhere else just to entertain his non-Norwegian speaking brother-in-law. Martia thought Helga's choice, Jens Jolstad, was all right. Erick really like him-a farmer from Norway. They had married in 1917, first lived near Kerkoven, and then moved to a farm only a mile across the field to the southeast of Erick's farm. They had six children: Mildred, Evelyn, Pearl, Irene, Donald, and Percy. When Edwin married Angeline Bjorgan in 1937 he bought the Hendrickson place that the whole family had lived on in 1913, so he also stayed nearby. Martia knew only one of their children, Jeanette, the other two, Elaine and Larry, were born later. Ole and Rudolph married after she had died. Anna never did.

Martia was not happy in Grace township. She never let Erick forget that life had been easier and more prosperous near Watson. Whenever she raged on him, he would say nothing. He did offer to move back but she didn't want to do that either now that they were established in Grace. People liked coming to

visit Erick and Martia even if she refused to allow them to play cards (in those days no one played just for fun; money was always involved) and she never served liquor (except for a little brandy at Christmas). She was the boss until Rudolph grew up. She and Erick would talk and talk about Norway and how much they would like to go back for a visit, but, of course, there was never money for that.

Randall was more like Norway and she would like to have gone there to live (they had a small property there). In 1937 and 1933 they spent their summers at their house "in the woods". If one of the boys would have gone, they would have moved, but the boys couldn't see how they would make a living there.

Every spring the Rekstads would butcher beef and pork. The pork was put in crocks and covered with brine. Later it would be fried for the table. The beef was dried or made into sausage. In later years much of it was canned (boiled, three hours in the jars). This canned meat was served with a cream gravy that was oh! so good. Chicken was always boiled never fried. Martia's garden would provide almost everything else they needed for their table-ground cherries, tomatoes, beets, cabbages, potatoes, onions, radishes, carrots, cucumbers and corn from the field. Gooseberries, cranberries, and apples were made into sauce. The first peaches were bought in 1913. They were for sauce, but Rudolph stole one and rearranged the peaches so no one ever found out. Company dinner always included sauce for dessert; pie was only for threshers, Martia made bread nearly every day for her large family and for the relatives who would come to stay sometimes for months.

Rudolph remembers his mother as always being old (she was thirty-seven when he was born). She worked awfully hard and had a hired girl only the few years before her daughters were old enough to help. She was sick a lot too.

She spent from Christmas to May of 1913 in bed. The doctors never determined what her trouble was. During that time Rudolph helped with the cooking always remembering to put gloves on before he fried the meat. Helga thought that was quite a sight to see her brother protecting himself from the spatters in that way .

On January 17, 1940 Erick celebrated his seventy-second birthday with a house full of sons and daughters and grandchildren. Rudolph remembers noticing how funny his mother's eyes looked as they were sitting visiting. After the company went home (only Rudolph and Anna still lived at home; Ole was living with Helga) and before the family had settled down for the night, Martia suffered a heart attack which killed her instantly. Rudolph drove to Helga's to get Ole, then to pick up Edwin, and then to Burgess' store on the 17 mile corner in order to telephone for Dr. Bergh. He came right out in his Cadillac. It was so cold that he wore two overcoats, one fur coat and one topcoat. The next day Anderson Mortuary came to get her body.

From the time Rudolph was old enough to work, Erick let him make all the farming decisions. What and where to plant, what machinery to buy, when to harrow, cultivate, harvest, plow, etc. Ole, Edwin, and Rudolph had a bank

account together and farmed all the land as one unit. They got along very well letting the youngest be the boss. They farmed with an F20 and an F12 planting corn (which was picked by hand), oats, wheat, and sometimes flax. They also owned a threshing machine, a corn sheller, and a truck with which they threshed and shelled corn for all the neighbors. At one time the three of them farmed up to 680 acres. Erick got all the crop from his 160 acres; Edwin got the crop from his 120 acres; Helga (whose husband Jens had been accidentally killed while hunting in 1935) got the crop from her 160 acres; and Rudolph and Ole split the renter's share of the remaining 240 acres.

They were able to avoid financial tragedy during the depression, although Erick did lose \$1000 in the Watson Bank. The DeGraff Bank also closed, but he was able to get his money from the bank at Benson. The farm was mortgaged now and then whenever a large expenditure was needed as in 1920 when the barn was built and in 1924 when they built the chicken coop. Martia was excited about her new chicken coop and wanted all new things in it (no old boards or roosts were to be put in her new chicken coop). Rudolph wasn't above teasing her a little.

"What's Dad doing?"

"Oh, he's in the chicken coop putting up the old nests."

Martia grabbed her shawl, threw it across her shoulders, and high tailed to the chicken coop only to find Erick wasn't even working there.

In 1934 Rudolph met the new schoolteacher. He had seen her before when he was shopping, at Montgomery Ward because her brother worked there. Her name was Mildred Moen and Herman Bang introduced them in the A & P store in Montevideo. She taught in the local school until the spring of 1938. He never took her out, although they were often at the same social gatherings and she was sometimes at his sister Helga's house. Two years later, the fall of 1940, Rudolph asked Mildred to the show. They were married February 8, 1941.

Rudolph bought the farm from his dad for \$50 an acre. The following August Erick and Anna moved to town. After Helga moved to town, Ole stayed on her place until he married Mabel Iverson, a widow with two children, in 1943. He bought the house next door to Erick. Jenny also moved to Montevideo after her husband's death in 1942. Only Edwin and Rudolph remained on the farm.

They are all gone now but Jenny, who is in a nursing home, and Rudolph. He is retired and lives in Montevideo. The farm is still his and is farmed by his daughter and her husband, although renters live in the house, There is a grandson, just two years old, living in New Jersey. His name is Erick Rekstad.