

C O P Y O F M A N U S C R I P T

written by C.J. Muri. Original in possession of  
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field, Minnesota.

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I, Christian J. Muri, was born in Nordre Bergenhus, Norway, on August 19, 1871 and was the fourth child in a family of six children born to Jorgen Muri. I think the countryside where we lived was about the most beautiful in Norway, and for that matter, the most beautiful I have seen in any part of the world. Less than a half mile from our home the famous Oldenvand lake, so crystal clear that it was like looking into a pool of blue glass, stretched at the foot of the Nordfjord mountain. The lake was like a chameleon in its ability to change from one shade of blue to another. In early morning with the sun shining on it the blue was that of robin eggs and then as evening would come on or clouds would bruise the sky, the color would become the midnight blue of swallow wings. I remember this because, as a boy, I spent most of my leisure time either fishing on the Fjord or watching it from the lower summits of the mountains.

We lived at the South end of the lake or on what was known as Nordfjord near the town of Olderen. This was a fair sized village and we did most of our training there. The entire lake and farm community was in a valley about one mile wide and about twelve miles in length. The farm land was sloping and rolling and the soil was very fertile and excellent for all kinds of crops. On all sides of the valley mountains lifted their heads into the sky and many of the peaks were covered with snow the year around.

Flowing into the lake and running less than half a mile from our place was the Olden River, fresh as a spring, and fed by the icy mountain streams that tumbled down toward the valley. This was full of salmon and other fresh water fish and it was an easy thing to catch all that could possibly be used for home consumption. In addition the whole area was famous as a summer resort and people from all of Europe would flock there during the summer months to fish and frolic in the mountains. These rich tourists would pay the farmers in the vicinity goodly sums of money for fishing privileges and accommodations such as food and guides.

The community as a whole was made up of well-to-do farmers, that is well-to-do as people were considered in Norway in those days. My parents were quite well fixed and owned a little more land than the average. This land had been handed down from generation to generation and was usually inherited by the oldest son. We always had a surplus of grain that we stored in

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graineries in case of crop fallures and sometimes this would amount to three or four years accumulations of harvests. In this way we were never hit very badly even in case of total failures and it worked as sort of an insurance.

Our principal crops were barley, rye and oats. Our methods of farming were rather primitive as we sowed by hand, broad-casting the seed, cut by a reaper and threshed by a flail. We also had a large herd of cattle and sheep which helped to supply us with necessary supplies during the winter months. My father owned an interest in a nearby mill and this enabled us to have all our flour ground at no additional expence.

I started school at the age of seven and finished at the age of fifteen. As was the custom in our part of Norway, we would go to school one day and the next day we would stay home and study the lessons that were assigned to us. The next day we would in turn review the lessons that we were supposed to have learned and woe be onto us if we had not learned them. The majority of lessons were memorized rather than learned and I don't believe they have methods of learn<sup>ing</sup> like that today.

I was confirmed at the age of fifteen by Reverend Sebastian Gelmeyden, and as being confirmed is recognized as Graduation 8 grade, I started work in earnest. I worked at home for my room, clothes and board for the first two years and then at the age of seventeen I hired out on a farm for sixteen Kroner, or four dollars a year and all my keep. This may seem like a very small amount but it was really about average then. The second year at seventeen I received sixty Kroner or fifteen dollars and my keep. At the time I was twenty I received about fifty dollars a year.

Our community, like most in Norway, was very religious and there were few dances or parties except on special occasions like weddings. However, there were quite a few social gatherings and religious meetings and during the winter months, sports such as skiing and skating played a large part in our recreation. In all my time in Norway I only saw one drunken man and I didn't actually know what was the matter with him.

Like all youth, I dreamed of far off places and a great future and it seemed to me there was little or no future in Norway. I had been planning for years of the day I would set sail for America, which symbolized the land of golden opportunity to us. I had saved my money from the time I had started working and in the year of 1893 six of us young fellows who had the same ideas bought tickets to Churches Ferry, North Dakota. We took a steamer at Bergen that year to Newcastle, England, where we caught an American steamer to New York. We encountered a bad storm in mid ocean that lasted three days. No one was allowed on decks during that time and it was rather uncomfortable. Otherwise the trip was very pleasant and we took advantage of the many forms of entertainment such as dancing and programs that were afforded us.

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On May 10, 1893 we saw for the first time the emblem of freedom and equality, the Statue of Liberty, and you can believe me when I say we were all very thrilled. We left New York almost immediately so we didn't have an opportunity to see any of the city. However, we stopped in Chicago and Minneapolis and were greatly impressed by the size and speed of American cities. They were so much different from the quiet valley we had lived in that it was almost like dreaming. About our only adventures was when we were accosted by a stranger in St. Paul who wanted to show us their town. He spoke our language and was very smooth and I think it was his intention to get us drunk and take our money. We did not fall for it however, and he left us alone.

Our trip from Minneapolis to Churches Ferry was the most interesting to us as we figured the country would be the most typical of that we were to make our home. We all found jobs almost immediately and worked around on farms in that part of the country. I only worked there for about a year and in 1894 I went to Forsythe, Montana and worked on the section for \$1.35 a day until 1896. That year I started working out on a farm again and filed on a homestead in Butte Valley about one mile from Harlow. I built a log house and broke up 43 acres and raised 1146 bushels of wheat on this land the first year. I got more land and continued farming until 1928 when I turned the farm over to my sons.

In addition to farming I took up selling nursery stock and sold subscriptions to farm magazines as sort of a pastime. From this I went into insurance and even today I sell some insurances. I was married to Marie Bjorle in 1897 and 7 girls and 4 boys were born to us. The children are all grown up now and married and Mrs. Muri died in 1933 from complications of disease.

My most prosperous years were from 1915 to 1920 though I have not been in want at any time. I have a two room house that I live in alone as my children have all left. I subscribe to the Grand Forks Herald and several small papers. I read a number of books and I enjoy listening to the radio very much. My hobby is my garden and I spend most of my time with my flowers and plants. I feel that I have a fine garden and like to spend my time puttering around in it.

As to the government programs I am not familiar with those dealing with agriculture and do not wish to commit myself on them. I think WPA is a fine thing, although I have received no personal benefit from it. I think it helps a great many deserving people.

I am deeply grieved by the fate of Norway and it seems incredible that any race or people would seemingly admire and follow Hitler as the German race does. I am an old man and would gladly give up my life if I could see Hitler die. I wasn't in favour of the last war but I do believe something should be done about Hitler, at least to giving Great Britain all the material aid we are able to. More than ever I am glad I am living in the United States and would not wish to be anywhere else in to world.