

FAMILY BACKGROUND: Aagot Johanna Christiansen was born July 24, 1889 at Falkfjord, Austvgby, Nordland, Norway. Aagot's parents were Ole and Gunelia (Olsen) Kristiansen. Her father was a fisherman at Lofoten, and mother was a housewife. They had a self-sufficient farm and grew a lot of potatoes and hay. Describes the countryside. Aagot's father went fishing for cod in the Lofotens three months during the winter.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: Aagot had three siblings: Alfhild, Clara, and Olaf. They all came to America. Alfhild and Clara became farmers' wives in northeast Montana. Olaf died at 22 of pneumonia. Alfhild and her husband later moved to Alaska.

GRANDPARENTS: Her maternal grandmother, Gjertrud, lived with the family on the Pederson's farm in Falkfjord. Her husband Ole Pederson died long before Aagot was born. Aagot's paternal grandparents also died before she was born. Their names were Kristian and Ingeborg Gabrielson.

HOME IN NORWAY: Aagot's home in Norway was good-sized. The women were in charge of taking care of the cattle. Aagot's oldest sister was 13 years older and the next oldest was six years away.

SCHOOL: To attend school in Norway the children had to stay with people at the place where the school was located. The school was on a different island (Hulloya ?). When they were small, they went to school for three weeks at a time, then came home for six weeks and went back for two weeks. They did this for the first three years. The second class was similar. But when they were in the third class (11-13 year olds), they stayed for three weeks at a time and went home for four to five weeks.

CHRISTMAS: They didn't have a tree at home but the school did. There was a big party at school between Christmas and New Year. The family didn't go to church on Christmas Day because it was 14 miles away on Hadseloya. They went to church regularly in the summer but not in the winter. For confirmation they stayed with people at Hadseloya. At Christmas, the family went visiting on Christmas Eve, but on Christmas Day no one left the house. Everyone sat around singing songs, *etc.* There were a few presents, but not too many.

On Christmas Eve they ate risengrynsgrøet. On Christmas Day, they had brown (beef) stew, potatoes, kringle, cookies, and lefse.

In the summer they made white goat cheese everyday and also brown goat cheese (geitost).

CHILDHOOD: Aagot says they used their hands a lot to card wool, knit, crochet, and bake lefse. She goes on to talk about making flatbroed and Nordlandslefse or gnikalefse.

Aagot also remembers that as children they were always out in the snow skiing or sleighing. Aagot made her skis from staves from her fathers' barrels. After Aagot finished school she stayed at home for one year, working there and for a neighboring widower, taking care of the cattle.

EMIGRATION: Both of Aagots' sisters were in America when she decided to come over. One left in 1911, and the other in 1913. Aagot left Norway in 1916. Her oldest sister was married to a man named Tyggen Olson. He had a friend at work in Norway, and they both talked of going to America. Then they decided to do it. In a few years, they sent a ticket for the next sister (Clara). She went over and then married one of her sisters' neighbors, a farmer. Aagot wanted to travel; she really wanted to get out of Norway and was interested in the 'wide open spaces'. Aagot speaks of how no one now lives at her birthplace; people have moved to the cities, etc.

Aagot's mother wanted to go to America also; her father thought about it, but changed his mind so often.

Aagot was 17 years old when she left for America in August 1916 during World War I. All that she took with was her clothes. She traveled by herself on a ticket sent to her by her sister. The day she left Aagot felt sorry to leave home, but it was exciting. She didn't think that she would come back. It was hard on her mother to see all her children leave. Aagot sailed from Bergen on the 'Bergensfjord' direct to New York. Because of the war the ship was held up for one night at 'Orknøyene' (Orkney Islands). All the ships heading for America were stopped here; she discusses why. The ship arrived at Ellis Island two weeks later in the evening. It took a whole day to get through Ellis Island. Then they spent a night on the second floor of the railroad station ('they' being the passengers going west). They were packed like sardines and had to spend the whole next day there also. It was really dirty at Ellis Island. There was a man outside the train station selling packages of food for one dollar for the train ride. One had to have a certain amount of money before entering the US - about \$100.

CROSSING AMERICA BY TRAIN: Aagot then took the train from NY to Chicago, and another train from Chicago to Minneapolis. There, a Norwegian man told them to spend the night at a hotel instead of sleeping at the train station. Met the rest of the passengers going west the following day. They finally got on the train to Dooley, MT. Dooley is 20 miles from the North Dakota line in the northeast corner of MT. Aagot was met at the station by one of her sisters and her family.

SETTLING IN AND WORK: Aagot was very homesick; the country was dry and changeable. She worked for the farmers in Dooley and lived with her sister and brother-in-law. Then she got a job with another farmer working in a house from 5 am to 10 pm. Aagot earned \$3 a week with room and board. All these big farms (600-800 acres) grew wheat.

The hardest thing about moving to America was learning the language. Aagot learned by listening and reading. She worked for Norwegians who spoke Norwegian in their homes except for the children. She learned most of her English by helping her own kids when they were in school.

MARRIAGE: Aagot got married to a Norwegian bachelor one year after being in America. Kristoffer Solheim was from Tysnesoy (Hordaland) which is south of Bergen. Kristoffer had a farm in Dooley, and Aagot's sister knew him. Aagot met him when he was running the rig for the threshing crew for which she cooked. They were active in the church that they helped build in Dooley. Their wedding was very small. They just went to town and had a preacher marry them in November 1917. Kristoffer had homesteaded in Dooley and built his own house. Aagot's husband came to America at age 16.

Husband's father had died when he was six months old.

FARM IN DOOLEY: Their farm had 320 acres (half a section) of land. They rented another half section to grow wheat. They lived in a little shack, which they added on to. They had four children: Myrtle who married Stanley Dreyhold and who now lives in Tacoma. Next came Gladys who lived in Hoopa, California. Then came Caroline; she and her husband both worked in Boise for the railroad. Last was Agnes Anderson who also lives in Tacoma.

In 1934 when Myrtle was 12, they left Montana and moved to Sand Point. There was a serious drought and they couldn't grow anything. Also, in the 1930's, Aagot's husband was very ill and almost died. Aagot wanted to go west to the Coast. They moved to Sand Point and Aagot's husband worked in the forest. They moved to Tacoma in 1942 during World War II. Aagot worked in the shipyards as a plumber. Her husband did all sorts of work as a laborer. They were paid about \$40 a week. Talks about the children some more.

Aagot talks about all the houses they have lived in Tacoma. They took a trip to Minnesota after she and her husband retired. Her husband had emigrated to Albert Lea, Minnesota. When they returned to visit, her husband couldn't stand the weather anymore. They went back often after their first trip.

Her husband died of cancer in 1967; they never got back to Norway.

ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES: They were not active in the church in Tacoma; she didn't really like churches. She lived with her daughter after her husband died. Aagot now takes care of an older gentleman who has no family.

She was a member of the Daughters of Norway, Nordlandslaget. She speaks of why they didn't go to church here in Tacoma when they were so active in Dooley, Montana.

RETURN TRIP TO NORWAY: Aagot flew back to Norway in 1968. She visited her old school chums and saw the old home. Parents had moved to Melbu.

NORWEGIAN HERITAGE: When her children were little they spoke Norwegian. But as they grew up they spoke English, and they taught her. Aagot did not cook Scandinavian food very often in her home, once in awhile in Montana - baked goods mostly.

Aagot speaks in Norwegian; she explains how she feels about what being Norwegian means. 'Nordmennene er gode folk!'