

PERSONAL BACKGROUND Name is Ole Karolius Eide Davidson. Born in Vassdal, Tjongsfjord, Norway, south of Bodø and north of the Arctic Circle. He was born on May 4, 1894.

PARENTS Ivar Davidson and Kaja Olson. They were from Vassdal, which is a little valley with two small lakes, and a river, which led to Tjongsfjord. His father was a fisherman.

GRANDPARENTS Paternal grandparents were also fishermen. Their names were David Olson and Kaspara. They all lived together. He didn't know anything about his mother's parents. Fishing was the main occupation there. They would go to Lofoton.

FISHING The men were gone for weeks. They didn't have motorboats but used oars or sails.

VASSDAL They had a cow or two. It wasn't really a farm. There wasn't a wheel that came up to that place except for a wheelbarrow, which was carried up there. It was about a quarter of a mile that everything had to be carried up into the valley, which was shaped like a cup. The only way you could improve your life was to leave. There were only his people living there. A few other people tried to live there but the government sent them out because of the danger of rocks falling. No one lives there now.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS There were four brothers when they came to this country and ended up with seven brothers and two sisters living. Two children died in infancy. David lives in Bonesteel, South Dakota where he is a farmer. Alfred lives in Charles city, Iowa and was a machinist working for Oliver Equipment Co. there. Martin lived in Rhame, North Dakota and then in Hettinger, North Dakota the rest of his life. He was a farmer. Emil lives in Hettinger, North Dakota. Ida is a widow in Hettinger, North Dakota. Odin died. Agnes lives in Spokane, Washington. Arthur lives on the boarder of North Dakota and Canada. He worked with the Internal Revenue at the border.

CHILDHOOD Remembers the boats on the fjord and being scared of the 'Helgelands' whistle. They grew molte in a bog near their house.

CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY The chief goodie that they had was spekulasis (?) which was a kind of triangle shaped cookie. He doesn't remember a tree or presents.

CHURCH LIFE IN NORWAY The church was on Rødøy or Rødoelven which looks like a lion when you approach it. They didn't get to church often. He was baptized by his grandfather at first because they didn't think he would live long. Later it was confirmed in church. It was a big even to go to church and was dangerous if the weather was bad.

REASONS FOR EMIGRATION Ole Sabin (?), a distant relative of his mother's was living in Faribault Co., Minnesota, sent them the tickets. He was a farmer there.

GRANDFATHER He was a highly thought of man. He could stop blood. He lived to be 96 years old.

TRIP TO THE U.S. They left home in a small boat and then caught a larger boat. His mother was sick a lot. They left in 1901 and arrived in the U.S. in June. They stopped in Liverpool, England and then came to this country. Ole was sick on the boat. One night he went to the bathroom and returned to the wrong cabin. They thought he had fallen overboard.

ELLIS ISLAND They went through and he just followed where he was led.

TRAIN TRAVEL They took the train to Minnesota.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS He didn't experience anything that wasn't pleasant. Everything was interesting.

MINNESOTA They stayed with these people for about a year. His parents worked on the farm to pay off their debt.

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY The hired men asked him to get some oil. He came back with 'ull' or wool.

SCHOOL IN THE U.S. There was a county school there in the community called Dell. There was a store, a schoolhouse, and a church in Dell. His clothes made him look like a newcomer. Some of the children were mean to him. The first day he got a spanking. All eight grades were in one school. The longer he went to school the better he liked it. He never knew what grade he was in. There were eighth grade examinations in the town of Frost, Minnesota and Ole said he wanted to go because it was chance to go to town. He wasn't really through with eighth grade. He passed in one subject, history.

FATHER'S WORK They got their own little farm that they rented and his father worked draining sloughs and laying drainage tiles. Ole worked with him.

FURTHER EDUCATION The minister had talked to his father and persuaded him to ask Ole if he wanted to go to school. Ole had impressed the minister during confirmation. His father said he could go to school if he went to the Waldorf Lutheran Academy in Forest City, Iowa.

CHURCH LIFE IN U.S. They became active right away. It was all Norwegian. He recalls some of the pastors, Erik Sandvig, J.J. Akre, and P.B. Trelstad, who confirmed him.

WALDORF ACADEMY They found out that he hadn't finished the eighth grade. They accommodated him and

allowed him to take the classes that would help him finish the eighth grade and other classes if he could handle them. He went to classes from 7am-5pm. He was weak in arithmetic and they gave the same book that he had used in grade school. Peter Sundrof (?), the dean of men helped him with the math.

HOMESTEAD His father took a homestead in Bowman Co., North Dakota near Rhame. Things started to go bad for them in this dry country.

WORK There was no more money for him to go to school from his parents so he and his roommate got a job taking care of the furnace of a millionaire named Thompson (?) during the school year. They got their room for free doing this. He had to borrow \$75 the last semester to pay his bills.

SCHOOL He worked like a fury. He finished the eighth grade and he finished high school in three years. It paid off for the good. He spoke Norwegian there. He was one of the valedictorians and gave his oration speech in Norwegian. He took Norwegian and German too.

WORK That summer he did farm work and made \$150 and paid back the \$75 he owed. One summer, between his junior and senior years, he taught parochial school near Bricelyn, Minnesota. He got \$40 plus room and board.

L.W. Boe was the president of Waldorf College at that time.

ST. OLAF'S Mr. Boe wrote him a letter and told him to go to St. Olaf's. Ole only had \$75, but Mr. Boe told him to go anyway. He went and after about four weeks he and his same roommate Chris Norem (?) got a job tending the steam and light plant at St. Olaf's. They worked every night. The business manager of St. Olaf's at that time was P.O. Halland (?). He told Ole that they could get along with a man at St. Olaf's whether he has any money or not if he means business. Eventually he paid for everything. He borrowed money from Pastor Trelstad several times. He managed to get through until 1917 when he was drafted.

WWI He knew from his number that he was likely to be drafted soon, and he wanted to spend a few months at the seminary. He talked to the president at St. Olaf's and it was arranged. It ended up to be the whole year before he was called. He spent some time overseas and got the 1918 flu with pneumonia on top of it and came home pretty ill.

SCHOOLING He got letter from St. Olaf's and from the seminary saying that each would help him finish his last year in one semester. He chose the seminary. He worked himself real hard and finished the seminary in 1920. He decided to make some money and then he was going to go back and get his college degree. He was things kind of backwards.

PASTORATE He got his pastorate in Sacramento, California and he took a college course in philosophy at one of the Sacramento colleges.

CONGREGATIONS Went to Bozeman, Montana, Livingston, Montana, and Shields River Valley in Montana. (See counter Tape 205 735-763)

MEETING SPOUSE She worked at the seminary baking bread. Her name was Bertha Østby from Sogn, Norway in a place called Søreide. Ole worked one year with his congregation and then they were married.

LIFE AS A PASTOR In the beginning he had three congregations and was traveling all the time. He had this call for four years. He wanted to stay and after he left no one would take this call. They were all home mission congregations. The old idea was that you had to get enough people together to feed the minister.

CONGREGATIONS He went to Bozeman, Montana, Glendive, Montana, Sacramento, California, and while there he was called into the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). He was a reserve Chaplain in the Army.

CHILDREN One adopted son, Paul, who working at St. Regis.

SACRAMENTO He got Dr. Braafladt to take his place there, but after three months he died so Ole had to work there too. He had seven camps. He preached everyday but Saturday. He went to one place each day and stayed part of the day for consultations. He was traveling all the time. On Sundays he would preach three times and drive 250 miles. He would preach for his home congregation, a camp at Lake Tahoe and another one just south of there. His camps were located between Lake Tahoe and Yosemite Park.

LANGUAGE USE IN CHURCH Livingston, Montana and Shields River Valley, California were Norwegian. Bozeman, Montana was English. In Glendive, Montana, they were using Norwegian but had to switch to English to start growing. Sacramento, California was the same as Glendive. In Portland, Oregon the congregation was divided into English and the Norwegian sections. He stopped them from using Norwegian. The Norwegian congregations were dying.

CHAPLAIN Became part of the Oregon National Guard as a Chaplain. In 1940, they mobilized and he spent five years in the service. During WWII, he was overseas for two years. He was in New Guinea and Australia.

TACOMA, WASHINGTON Came to Emmanuel Lutheran Church, which wasn't much of anything. He stayed there for ten years.

JOSEPHINE SUNSET HOME He was the manager and the pastor there in Stanwood, Washington for five years. Then he officially retired.

AFTER RETIREMENT He became assistant and visitation pastor at Hope Lutheran Church in Tacoma where he stayed for twenty years. He quit that in 1980, but he is still included on their staff. He still teaches some groups.

VISITS TO NORWAY He has been back in 1960 and 1966. It was clear to him what his parents had to leave when he saw it again.

TRADITIONS Bertha cooked Norwegian foods.

SPOKEN NORWEGIAN He prays his own prayer in Norwegian.

OLE RØLVAAG He was a professor, a poet, and a historian. He also went by the name Paal Moerck, but returned to his real name when he wrote his big volumes, *Giants of the Earth*, *Peder Victorius*, and *Riket grunlaegges*. His writings were interesting to him because they had similar backgrounds. Other works were *America-Brev*, *To Tullinger*, which was about money, nuts, people, and *Laengselens Boat* which was kind of a psychological book analyzing the Norwegian state of mind.

OLE RØLVAAG He had one class, which Roelvaag taught at St. Olaf.

P.J. EIKELAND This was another man at St. Olaf that impressed him. He wasn't a popular writer like Rølvaag but he knew his Norwegian from A-Z. He wanted Ole to go to Norway to study and become a Norwegian scholar.

NORWEGIAN PEOPLE He is proud of them. They were earnest and sincere in what they believed and what they wanted to do.

PLU He became a member of the Board of Regents or Trustees at Pacific Lutheran College and University. He was in Portland, Oregon when he first became a regent. These were hard times. Money was tight and credit was hard. He remembers that in about 1940 in one day about seven faculty members had come into the treasurer's office asking for \$5 to buy groceries. In 1940 he and his wife moved to Parkland, Washington and rented a house. After hearing about the faculty needing grocery money, he went home and he and his wife dug up \$75 and brought it back to the school. Ole was being paid by the Army. After meetings with the board, he wouldn't be able to sleep because of wondering how they were going to keep the school with no money. He also did some speaking for the college.

BUYING A CHURCH While in Portland, Oregon he worked for one year and then they needed to find a new church. They found a church for sale with an organ in it and bought it for a very low price. This got him a good reputation in finance and got him the Vice-President for Field Work at PLU.

VICE-PRESIDENT FOR FIELD WORK This was money raising job. Ole refused it because he knew that he wasn't the financial wizard that he was believed to be. Dr. Tingelstad was mad because he thought Ole could save PLU.

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS Ole was the first secretary to take the minutes himself instead of having Eastvold's secretary do it. Mrs. Jero was the secretary then and helped him with the minutes. In those days he had to sign all the diplomas. He signed several honorary diplomas including one for Albert Schweitzer. During these years they built all the dormitories on top of the hill.

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH He still had one class. He teaches the women's Circle leaders.

BIBLE STUDY He belongs to a bible study group, which meets at the home. He did organize this group.

The last ten years of his ministry was as a retired person. He was an assistant pastor and a visitation pastor. He retired when he left Stanwood, Washington in 1960 and came to Tacoma where he visited regularly with older people at Hope Church. The two pastors at the time he came were Burton Smith and Aalbue.

HOME MISSION WORK He worked in this area all the time. This meant that he was assigned churches, which were on their last legs, or ones that were trying to start up. In Bozeman, Montana it was a brand new congregation, which didn't even have a place to meet. It was called Bozeman English Lutheran Church. His installation in this congregation took place in an Adventist church. His first call was to three churches, Bozeman, Montana, Livingston, Montana, and the Shields River Valley in Montana.

SHIELDS RIVER VALLEY He preached in schoolhouses, homes and in the summertime he preached outside.

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE He wouldn't change anything.

GLENDIVE, MONTANA After Bozeman, he went to Glendive. He tells the story about how he gained the respect of the chief doctor at the hospital there. Ole was the Chaplain at the hospital. He tells a story about a woman who was disturbed at the hospital and was turned over to Ole for two weeks before she was ready to have surgery. He would also counsel pregnant girls who were ashamed to talk to other people.

ARMY CHAPLAIN He had to deal with people who were mentally and otherwise in bad shape.

TACOMA Next, after the service he came to Emmanuel Lutheran Church on Stevens Street.

RAILROAD PASS The railroad sent him a system pass, which enabled him to travel anywhere that the railroad went. He got this as recognition for his work in the hospital in Montana (which was the Northern Pacific Benefit Association Hospital). (See counter 779)

HOSPITAL WORK After the service he was assistant Chaplain at the hospital out by American Lake (Veterans Administration Hospital). He worked there for three years. He recalls one incident during a Lenten service where a man gave his pipe as an offering. Go to top Maintained by archives@plu.edu © 2002-2003 Pacific Lutheran University