

**FAMILY BACKGROUND** Osten (Øystein) Johannes Hjortedal was born January 29, 1890, at Hjortedal, Skånevik, Hordaland, Norway. His father was Johannes Hjortedal and his mother Gunnhild Mosdal. Hjortedal's county seat was Skånevik, which was located on the Åkrafjord, about 18 Norwegian miles south of Bergen. This is western Norway fjord country characterized by rugged mountains and fjords.

**HJORTEDAL FARM** This large farm containing pastures and mountains belonged originally to Osten's great grandfather (a Mosdal) who divided it between his three sons. Years later, Osten's father at 20 bought the farm. His original name was Mosnes, but he became Hjortedal when he acquired the farm.

**PARENTS** His father was born in 1847, but there's no records of his folks. His mother's ancestors came from Telemark years before. His parents were married in 1876.

**CHILDHOOD** The farm had cows, goats, and sheep. They rented out the extra land for a cash income and cut wild hay for the animals.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS** There were three children: Joergen, Osten, and Angjerd (Angerd ?). Joergen immigrated to America in 1904 and returned to Norway in 1910 to get married. He immigrated to Glasgow, MT in 1913, but wife remained in Norway. Joergen returned permanently in 1915. His wife's folks had a fine farm for her and Joergen to take over.

Angjerd married and had five children. She died at 34 of tuberculosis, which was a secondary infection to Spanish flu. Sabrina, the husband's sister, raised the children very well.

**CHILDHOOD** The Hjortedal farm was sold in 1892, but they stayed on as caretakers. His father was a shoemaker and also bought a share in a fishing outfit. In 1902, Osten and the family moved to Mosnes (further up the Åkrafjord). When 14, Osten became a fisherman.

**FISHING** In winter, Osten worked as a cook on Utsira (an island in the North Sea) on the second floor of a building. The younger guys started with the land jobs. He had to carry water and fuel and help cook simple food for 24 people. The herring fishermen came in daily to eat and sleep.

In 1905 Osten and some family members went sardine fishing having been outfitted by a wealthy uncle. They were lucky - ran into a school of sardines, and they caught and sold enough to pay off the outfit plus have salaries. The sardine season was in August, and the sardines were caught inland in fjords, not at sea.

**EMIGRATION** Osten and a friend immigrated to America on March 12, 1911. They left from Stavanger and caught the big ship (Tyronia ?, Cunard Line) in England which took them to New York. They arrived in Glasgow, Montana on April 14, 1911. The entire ticket from Stavanger to Glasgow cost \$84.

**BOAT TRIP** It was a good passage; Osten and his friend, Lundval ?, were on the second deck and the food was reasonable. The weather was good, and they entered the New York harbor on Sunday, April 10, but weren't allowed to land until Monday.

**ELLIS ISLAND** Osten was impressed by the big buildings and the big room where they waited to be processed. The Norwegian Lutheran Church had pastors present who helped the immigrants with the language and further travel. Osten and Lundval boarded the railroad in New York and went straight to Chicago, transferred and went to St. Paul, transferred to the Great Northern for the final leg to Glasgow. They were met by three fellows who got them food and room. Next morning a friend of Osten's brother gave them jobs.

**SETTLING IN** When Osten began work with the railroad his pay was 15 cents an hour, and he worked 10 hours a day, six days a week. Within a year he became a 'relief' (part-time) foreman who earned \$70 a month and had a homestead also. As a section laborer or foreman, he maintained the railroad line: pick and shovel work changing rails and ties. His crew was seven Norwegians and one American, so they spoke Norwegian. His next crew was smaller and less Norwegian, so Osten learned English from one of the men who was bilingual.

**LANGUAGE PROBLEMS** No problems as many Scandinavians helped him. Tells a story about one humorous situation.

**MONTANA ENVIRONS** Osten 'put up' with the hot, dry summers and the awful cold winters for 11 and a half years. Then, he quit and moved to Spokane.

**MONTANA HOMESTEAD** He took up a quarter section four miles from Tampico. He had no equipment, so he hired the work out. The railroad job took him from Tampico to Hinsdale in 1919, where he worked for two years. In 1921 he quit and intended to go to Seattle, but accepted a job for the Great Northern outside of Spokane. Talks about railroad seniority system and management.

**RETURN TRIP TO NORWAY** He had promised his folks that he'd return in 10 years, and he did, spending four months in 1921 visiting Norway. Things were the same.

**WWI** At this time Osten was a foreman in Tampico. Nine Italians in his crew registered and returned to St. Louis, and he had to hire 14-15 year old kids. The government took over the railroad and decreed that the existing RR workers couldn't quit even to enlist. They were 'frozen' on the job.

**SCHOOL** Osten had none in America, just newspapers and dictionary. He read Skandinven, Visagutten ?, Norwegian literature, and corresponded regularly with 10-11 people.

**CITIZENSHIP** He applied at the county seat after studying from a book. The judge (inspector) asked tough

questions, but Osten passed and was granted citizenship in 1917.

**TRANSPORTATION** Osten has a 'life pass' to travel free by rail. His first car, a 1919 Ford, was purchased jointly. He later sold his half interest and bought a succession of Fords.

**DIFFERENCE IN AMERICA** Yes, the food.

**LIFE IN EASTERN WASHINGTON** Moved to Edwall in August 1922 and has lived in several towns close by while employed by the RR for 47 years: Bluestem, Mohler, Marlin, and Hillier ?.

**MARRIAGE** Osten returned to Norway the Christmas of 1925 due to an elderly mother. However, he stopped in Glasgow first to do homestead business. While having dinner at a friend's house, the wife requested Osten to greet her sister, Gjertine, a nurse in Haugesund.

Osten already had a Norwegian girlfriend, but she didn't want to emigrate. He met Gjertine as asked and eventually married her in 1928 in Chicago where she worked in Cook County Hospital. Gjertine was 33 years old, and he 'saved her from being an old maid'. (Lively exchange of words at this point!)

**SCANDINAVIAN COMMUNITY IN SPOKANE** It was very strong: Danes, Finns, and Swedes. He joined the Sons of Norway. There were also Scandinavian stores where Norwegian was spoken. The smaller communities had more Germans and Irish except for the Danes outside of Odessa.

**SCANDINAVIAN JOBS** 1) lumbering 2) carpentry - construction 3) farmers.

**ORGANIZATIONS** The Sons of Norway had singing, speakers, and dances in a rented building. Osten was not active in the other groups.

**RETURN TRIPS TO NORWAY** He has returned to Norway twice by boat and twice by air: 1921, 1925, 1966, 1968. The changes in Norway 40 years later were big; Norway is very advanced and modern.

**NORWEGIAN HERITAGE** Osten is proud of his heritage, feeling the people are characterized by honesty, industriousness, and dependability.

**SPEAKING NORWEGIAN** Snakker litt norsk om barndom og jul: nye klaer, 2-3 uker lang, spiste fersk fisk og lutefisk, flatbroed, osv.