

**PERSONAL BACKGROUND** Born in Rindal, Norway in 1901 on May 13th. Rindal is 10 Norwegian miles southwest of Trondheim.

**PARENTS** Endre Simonseth and Marit Drugli. The names are place names. His mother was from the neighboring county.

**FATHER** Was a farmer on a big farm, mostly cattle, dairy farming and timber. Raised crops for the cattle. Sold milk, cream and butter.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS** Eleven in the family. Everyone stayed at home until they were old enough to go out on their own.

Tore took over the farm when his parents died. Tore's daughter's husband then took over the farm.

Malie married a guy who owned a grocery store. Olina died when she was 20 or 21. Ingeborg. Karen died when 11 or 12.

Eline and Marie are his twin sisters, who are both nurses. Karen married a fellow in the butcher business.

Einar and John came to Vancouver, Canada. John was a logger. Einar operated gas and steam shovels. Magnar does carpentry and painting in Rindal, Norway.

**GRANDPARENTS** Paternal grandparents were Mali Simonseth and Tore Halgumseth. The farm was given to his mother because there were no brothers and she was the oldest girl. The name Simonseth came down from the 1600 & 1700s. Simonseth means 'Simon set on the place.' Name goes way back.

**MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS** Olaug Drugli and John Fredrekli. Olaug was the owner of a farm. John married her and operated the farm. Had a little bit of everything on the farm.

**CHILDHOOD HOME** It was a big place with a red barn. It was a big living house with 8-10 bedrooms with a big front room, living and dining room. The home also had big kitchens. There was an extra room for grandparents.

**SCHOOL** Seven years.

CONFIRMED Yes.

CHURCH Two in the valley. Big main church and a little church named 'kapell' where the minister came every other Sunday. Nels went to the little church because it was closer. Confirmed in the big church, in cars to ride in.

ENTERTAINMENT Considered an adult when confirmed, went to dances, and small parties. Walked around in the woods. Skied to school, which was the means of transportation in the winter.

TRANSPORTATION Had horses. Had a sled for the horse to pull and buggies and wagons.

CHRISTMAS EVE Put on best clothes. Took a bath. Lutefisk and lefse for dinner. Everyone stayed home.

CHRISTMAS DAY Went to church. Second day of Christmas was a holiday. Young people gathered around for parties and dances. Celebrated between Christmas and New Year's. Not much work went on.

PRESENTS Not many. Had a Christmas party for the kids at the schoolhouse. Teacher handed out one apple per student for a present. 'Can still smell the apple.' They were special shipped from Spain and other countries.

CHRISTMAS TREE Had one at home. Homemade decorations. Baked goods hanging from the tree.

Put out food for little birds. Saved a bundle of barley for them at Christmas.

JULEBAKK Ate rice soup. He was big and would reach over to the table from the door and eat it.

WORK Nels worked at home for a long time because he was needed. Did carpentry work, building houses. Helped build his brother's house on the land near the home place.

TALK OF AMERICA At age 22, he started talking about coming to America. He always wanted to go. His uncles had been there. Heard one could pick up gold in the streets in America.

Came to America with his wife, Gertrude. She was from the same district. He met her when she was working for his relatives. They decided to go to America.

Their parents were still living when they left Norway.

Left Norway in September of 1921 or '22. Left from Oslo on the Stavangerfjord. Took the train from Trondheim to Oslo. Spent the night in Oslo and then caught the boat.

DEPARTURE A brass band was playing when they left. Lots of good-byes. People were seeing each other for the last time.

BOAT TRIP Traveled along the coast of Norway to Stavanger and Bergen to pick up people. Went across the Atlantic north of Scotland. Weather was nice.

BOAT TRIP Always something going on, church, dancing, and good food.

ARRIVAL Landed in New York. Took 3-4 days at Ellis Island because a French boat was ahead of them.

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES Couldn't speak any English. Used sign language and got along fine on the train. He describes an incident in Chicago where someone helped them buy some food in a restaurant. Could buy food on the train.

Describes a Swedish friend who bought some shaving soap in Chicago and met a Norwegian barber. Was surprised.

Didn't try speaking the language.

TRAIN TRAVEL Took the train from Chicago to Dawson, Minnesota. Gertrude's friend's boyfriend has a farm in Dawson. Gertrude's friend planned to come with Gertrude and Nels to Minnesota but her plans changed. She came next spring and they were married.

His name was John Egen and her name was Anna Viken. They did farming in Dawson which is SW of Minneapolis. Stayed in Minnesota for four years.

WORK Nels worked on a farm and got a job on the railroad. Got a job with a contractor in Montana building grain elevators in new towns along the railroad tracks. Boss's name was Ed Webster from Winthrop, Minnesota.

Gertrude worked as a hire hand in the fields.

Moved to Watson, Minnesota when Nels began working on the railroad.

MOVED WEST Moved because Gertrude had relatives in Conway, Washington. Had heard it always rains on the west coast.

MARRIED January 29, 1923 in Madison, Minnesota at the county seat.

MOVING WEST Gertrude had taken the train to Scobey, Montana. Nels bought a Model-T Ford. Gertrude went to Redstone, Montana for a few days. He had two children now, Marie and Esther.

WEATHER Problems with the snow. Couldn't see through the windshield. No wipers. Describes the route to the west coast. Were traveling in October by train.

IDAHO Looked good, timber and hills. Looked more like Norway. Came to Everett, Washington. Took a train to Mt. Vernon. Took a bus to Gertrude's relatives.

WORK Nels started working in the woods. Just went and asked for the job. Spent 15 years falling timber in logging camps at Snoqualmie Falls, Oregon, and Peninsula, Washington. Lived at the camps.

LOGGING CAMPS Good camps. It was clean and had good food. They changed the beds every week. Bed maker made beds every day.

LOGGING CAMPS Working conditions were good. Starting pay on scale. Head faller was the boss over others.

'SWEDISH MYSTERY WHIP' A hand saw, buck saw.

LOGGING Nels was second and head faller. Head faller made \$3.75 a day. Second faller made \$3.50 a day. \$3.50 a day as a buckler. Most you could make in a month was \$70. Room and board was cheap.

DEPRESSION In 1929, the logging camps closed down. Stock market crashed. A few camps stayed open. Got better with Roosevelt. Worked in logging camps until WWII.

CARPENTRY WORK Started in 1941 building naval bases in Oak Harbor, Washington. Joined the union in Mt.

Vernon, Washington. Paid \$50. Went to work in Oak Harbor. Learned carpentry in the 'Old Country.' Had done carpentry for 36 years.

LOGGING CAMPS Many Scandinavians, Swedes and Finlanders. Contracting work was a mixture of people. English was usually spoken.

MONTANA Mostly Swedes there. Nels was the only Norwegian. They told stories about Norwegians.

MINNESOTA Everyone spoke Norwegian. The doctor was Irish in the town but he could speak fluent Norwegian.

LEARNING ENGLISH While working on the railroad, didn't practice English because people made fun of you. Boss spoke English. Fellow workers helped him learn English.

ALASKA Did carpentry work on the air bases in Fairbanks.

WORK Worked around Mt. Vernon, Washington and built houses on the island. Now he makes grandfather clocks and cedar chests. He is retired. Sells some of the things he makes.

CHILDREN Marie married Roy Anderson who is a school bus driver. They have three children. Esther married to a fellow who sells hospital supplies and lives in Toledo, Ohio. Karen married to a butcher (this is his sister, Karen). Edmund drives a timber truck for a company in Everett.

Norman worked for Carnation. Now has a business with his brother in Seattle. Grace married to a Wilson who drives trucks, sells potato chips and mayonnaise to grocery stores.

John has a business in Seattle, Washington. Agnes married to a fellow who drives a milk truck in Conway, Washington.

CHURCH Belongs to Free Born Lutheran.

SONS OF NORWAY Belongs. Talking to people. Had friends there.

TRIPS TO NORWAY Twice. He didn't recognize the country. 'Recognized the hills.' Trondhiem was different.

CHANGES Use tractors and machinery. Not horses like in the olden days. People are different.

PEOPLE People in town have changed. Police and railway agents are more polite and friendly than years ago.

CHANGES IN AMERICA Everybody used to know each other. Neighborhood support. Today you don't even know your neighbor.

People don't visit each other as much. Neighbors don't know each other, same in Norway and the U.S. A big difference in people.

Still corresponds with people in Norway.

CHILDREN Can't speak Norwegian. Speaks Norwegian. English at home.

SPOKEN NORWEGIAN Nels speaks a few words.