

# THE STORY OF GRANDPA'S LIFE

~ TORLEIF S. KNAPHUS ~

By Linda Knaphus Spotz Duncan

**Note:** *This is Grandpa's story as he told it to me when I was about thirteen year's old (about 1957). I have made no changes in the typing of the written story as I typed it here in 1976, nineteen years later, and I have no accurate way of knowing a factual way to re-word or make any changes. It was indeed a fun day I spent with him as he told me of his life.*

As my life's work, my religious belief, and my place of abode became different than my ancestors, I will write a little and briefly touch upon my life's history so that my descendants may know the reason for these changes and learn something about the place where my childhood was spent and where my ancestors lived.

As my thought goes back, I remember well when we children were playing games watching the beautiful color and forms of the floating clouds in the western sky. Midsummer night when we were playing and dancing around the big bonfire, the golden glow in the west changed to a cool lemon color in the northeastern sky. I remember well our home in Vats on the western Norway by the highway leading from Haugesund to points of interest in the Hardanger fjord. Our house was red trimmed with white with heavy on the mud roof. There were beautiful mountains and many lakes around our place where we used to fish and swim and when we talked or laughed it echoed back to us from the rugged hills across the lakes in the still atmosphere we clearly heard the chatting and quarrelling of the people who lived over there. I remember when we planted and sewed, when we cut the hay and carried it home on our backs. In the day, we told the time by the shadows in the mountain slope and in the evening by the height of the golden flow on the mountain peaks.

I can never forget when Mother called the sheep down from the green pasture high up in the cone-like mountains by our place to the north. Every goat, cow, and sheep had each his own individual name and when mother called, they immediately came. Either it was for an afternoon snack or to be tucked in for night. Neither can I forget the Sabbath day when we went to church, which stood on a green slope at the south end of a long narrow lake called Vats Vandet, which lies near our place to the east. And as the people came rowing out with their different colored boats chatting and singing and the majestic mountains to the east with birch wood on the lower slope and the different painted farm homes below all reflected in the still clear lake it was wonderful to see.

Around the lakes are homes and estates which saga and history is known for hundreds of years back. When I was a young boy, I heard tales like this: Long, long ago there came to Eike in Vats a great nobleman whose name was Alf and settled there, so from that time it was called Alfseike in his honor.

About 130 years ago across a deep lake by our place to the south lived a man with his family whose name was Lars. He was a tailor by trade and widely known as a folk dancer. We heard folks saying that after the services in the church were over and the folks still were gathered on the church lane, he danced for them and his feet were frequently seen over the crowd. He was a descendant from the nobleman I just have mentioned. After a short happy life, Lars died, leaving his wife with five children: Martha, Bjorn, Jon, Astred, and Anna Martha. . Eight weeks later another boy was born whom they called Lars. As the children grew up, they all left home except Martha and Lars. Bjorn became a schoolteacher and at a young age, immigrated to America and so did his sisters Astred and Anna Martha. Jon married and moved away, so the responsibility of keeping the family fell on Martha and Lars. From his early youth, Lars was known as an active energetic fellow. Besides working the place, he was teaching school. But then there was a little well-built girl, Liva Alfseike, who would not go to school and as her mother insisted she answered, "I will not go as long as that big dummy is teaching." So we see that she had already noticed the man that became her future husband.

*(To this point Grandpa had already written. The rest he told to me, Linda Knaphus Duncan)*

Liva Alfseike and Lars Larsen Knaphus were married. Then one cold winter night, December 14, 1881 I was born after Mother's labor pains of forty-eight hours. I came as a little blackish-bluish baby and I was laid aside as dead. The nurse laid me in cold water and spanked me, but nothing happened--- so I was again laid aside as dead. Being dissatisfied, a neighbor laid me into the tub of cold water, and spanked me with all she had—THEN FIGHT THE FIGHT!!

I was given the name of Torleif Severin Knaphus. I had three brothers, Andrew, Martin, and Lars—Andrew was the only other one of my family to join the Mormon Church.

On cold winter evenings, our family would often sit around the fire playing games and having a good time. Some of us would be helping Mother while my Father was making new wooden shoes for the next year. I remember that often the west windstorms would lift our house right off the ground and it would come down with a bang. When our family was together, I would often wrestle with my brother and my Father would laugh heartedly.

One Christmas I can remember well. We celebrated them very different than we do here in the United States. We had no Santa, but Ulinisa, who is a dwarf. We would have a Christmas tree about 2½ to three feet high. It would be placed properly on the table. We received few and little presents, and if we received nothing we would have to carry the rams horn. Usually Mother tried to make us something, like a stocking, so we would not have to carry the ram's horn.

On Christmas Eve, we would gather at 6 o'clock and have a big feast. The dinner consisted of Ula Mush (made with rice and milk. It had abutter eye in the center and sugar and cinnamon and sugar on the top), one orange each and a slice of bakery bread with butter. Then we would have lefsa with sugar and butter on it. Although our family had no religious sect, my father would say grace over the food in Jesus' name.

On the first day of Christmas, we read out of the Bible. On the second day, we attended services. Then on the third day, we celebrated and many of us had a nibble on the bottle. On the final and fourth day of Christmas, we visited homes of friends to play games and tell jokes.

I used to walk the mile to school every morning in my homemade wooden shoes. I started school when I was eight years old and finished when I was about thirteen years old. I fought all the boys in school that didn't run away from me. When I went home at night, I would jump.

When I was nine years old, I had to earn my own living. I used to herd sheep and work on farms. In my thirteenth year, I worked the whole year on the farm. My pay was on new suit for a year's work of sixteen hours a day. When I was fourteen years old, I managed the farm. I remember each night my brother and I would carry home enough feed for three cows and twenty-four sheep.

I first began my career when I was nine and ten years old. I made my own art books and painted many portraits of leading men I saw in the newspaper. Our barn was very near the road so my father would hang many of the portraits up for the people passing by to see and buy. I also used to carve heads of birds and leading people in wood when I was about nine or ten. When I was fourteen my brothers wanted to send my art book to them. Soon after that I started my apprenticeship in Haugesund. One year later I went into the business in Ølen Fjord. I worked on homes and furniture.

I once went to Ofroid or Eikfjord? to do some finger painting on some drinking cabinets. While I was there I stayed in a big log cabin that was eight-hundred years old or built in the twelfth century. Forty people could stay there at on time. The fireplace was 100 feet square, and there was no chimney. The smoke went through the roof. We all sat at the table like knights at a round table.

Not long after this I became a sailor for two years. I used to sail from England with coal to Iceland, and returning with fish. I remember once on the trip to Iceland as we neared the Shetland Islands, a great hurricane came upon us. The wind was so strong that the sail and cross beam were blown down, and the keel was above the water. For seven days we battled the winds and storms, without food or sleep. Then finally, we landed in Edinburgh, Scotland, and only one life had been taken.

Once on a return trip to Iceland a great storm and snowdrift hit us, we had to dodge against the bitter weather for twenty-one days before we could get to the harbor. The food rations were very low, and so for many days we lived on nothing but black coffee and crackers with worms in them; but worms or no worms we ate what we had. After I was out of the Navy, I finished my apprenticeship and became a decorative painter.

I had always been good in athletics and had always done a lot of track work. I was chosen to represent Haugesund at a track meet of all of western Norway. I was nearly

twenty-years old at this time. However, I announced at this time that I was going to devote all my time and energy to art.

I went to Oslo and began to work as a foreman. I worked all through the fall, and then I was permitted to copy the old masters in the National Gallery. I then attended the Kings' Art School under Professor Lars Utne and Professor Dietrich.

Then I was given a free scholarship to the Roman Art School. But I refused it as I was already a convert to the Mormon Church.

I joined the Church in February 1902. When I was baptized, I had to cross the frozen ice to the water in which I was to be baptized. I remember well how cold it was when I was emerged.

In my twenty-fourth year, on December 20, 1905, I immigrated to the United States. We came across in small boats or vessels. When we were in the North Sea we hit a bad storm. It filled the kitchen cabin, and I was standing in water up to my ears. I arrived in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the early spring of 1906. I proceeded in painting on sugar factories.

In 1909, I was married to Emelia (Millie) Helena Christensen. We were married in the Salt Lake temple. I remember once, soon after our marriage, we had but one dollar to our name. Millie said that we should give it as fast offerings. This we did and my family has been blessed from it ever since. Millie and I had eight children: Kimball Irving, Harold Leon, Olive, Grace Lavern, Torleif Melvin, Anne Marie, Irene Goldie, and John Hafen, but our son Harold died when he was five years old of diphtheria. After our marriage we moved to Central, Utah.

In the year 1912, I became a citizen of the United States. About a year later in 1913, I went back to Europe in Paris to study for seventeen or eighteen months. At this time my brother, Andrew, was called on a mission. Our wives stayed in our house with my only son at the time. While I was over in Europe, I entered in an exhibit the Ulinac, which was the best sculptor work there. (Sculptor work design) When I returned to the United States, I attended the Arts Student League in New York for four months.

*(End of the interview)*