

This is My Life

ZELDA GUSTAFSON MOENCK

My mother and father were both born in Cottenberg Sweden, and got married there. After a few years of marriage they had a child that died in infancy from a disease called disentary, a disease that was fatal to children. This would have been my brother.

After a few more years they came in an ocean liner to America. There were several boats that came over at the same time. They were called boat people and immigrants.

First my parents went to Arkansas, but didn't find what they were looking for, which was granite rock. My father had graduated from a school that would not give honor to their diploma until they had work that could support a family and have a trade. My father's trade was stone cutting in granite.

My oldest sister was born in Arkansas. When she was three years old my family moved from Arkansas to Ft. Dodge. My father had been told there was plenty of work in the Ft. Dodge area for stone cutters. But, there wasn't in Ft. Dodge because he had to go where there were hills. So, after some thought my father went to Evanston, Iowa and started to build our home. My father would take the train to Evanston to work on the house. After my father had the house partly finished he moved his family

to Evanston. During the time he was building the house I was born in Ft. Dodge on January 21, 1900.

In Evanston my father bought 54 acres of land. We also had a few cows and chickens. When the weather had warmed up we planted apples, peaches, plums, raspberries, grapes, gooseberries, and what not. This is what our father told us when we were old enough to understand.

One time when he was working on our house he ran out of nails, and he took the one way train to Ft. Dodge to get some nails. When he got the nails he had to carry them home in a pail on his shoulder. He said he had to stop many times and cut across hills and country to shorten his trip. That was the only house we had as long as my father lived. While he built the house and planted things he also had to work at his stone cutting.

The house he built was two stories high. The house also had a cellar under it. It had a cistern built outside so that we had plenty of water for washing. He also fixed a place on the hillside where we had cold spring water the year round. In between this he would have to work on the inscriptions on the tomb stones. He had to hand chisel them out by lantern light in his shop. My sister and I loved to see the sparks fly from the stones when we were little.

When I was little I had several jobs to do. One job was to carry spring water up the hill and put it in the cellar. I also had to help milk the cows and put the milk

into crocks in the cellar and then skim off the cream and make butter. In time we had enough cows so that we sold butter to have extra money to help buy groceries with.

In the spring my father would plant potatoes down by the river next to the hills. It didn't take long and soon we were eating potatoes. As the potatoes grew it was the kids job of weeding them and in dry times we had to carry spring water to put on them. The potato bugs had to be picked off twice a week, or they would kill the plants. This was another job that the children had to do because they didn't have sprayers then. We had to pick them off by hand. We had a little can of kerosene to put them in so they would die right away.

One day as I was getting ready to go down to the garden my mother told me to put on a pair of overalls, the boys overalls, because it had rained the night before and they would keep my skirt clean and dry. Well, I put them on and it was a disgrace those days to see a girl or a lady in mens clothing. When I had finished working in the garden I started up the hill. I heard men talking and I didn't want them to see me in overalls so I hid until I didn't hear them any more. Then I went home and mother said my oldest brother had been home to give me a ride on the motorcycle that he had just bought. Maybe you think I didn't cry, but I had been wanting a ride on a motorcycle for so long. To tell the truth, I never did get that ride on a motorcycle to this day.

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My mother was very handy to help when babies arrived, there wasn't any telephones or Drs., so when her nearest neighbor and friends time came they came after my mother. They lived across the field from us. Mother helped deliver a six pound boy and then stayed there for a few days to help out. My sister's took care of me.

One day they took me over to see the baby and I was scared of him. He was so tiny and was the first baby I had ever seen and thought he never could be big like the rest of us, but he did and when he was a young man big enough to work he got a job that lasted as long as I can remember. He got a job running a milk truck in Fort Dodge. His name was Phillip Nugent, son of Andy and Mrs. Nugent.

My father cut some beautiful stones for tombstones that are still standing in old Oakland Cemetery in Fort Dodge. One stone in Oakland Cemetery that he made when we still lived in Fort Dodge is the one on top of the hill. You can see it as you drive by on the road. It has a large statue of an American soldier standing on top. It is the monument for the American soldiers and every year they have a special service for it. At one time they wanted to move it up town when they made a certain street but it had been put in too far and good so they gave up on trying to move it.

Another job that my father worked on along with other men was the laying of the first street, Broadway, in Fort

Dodge. They used pieces of wood that looked like brick but they were a big flop because the first time it rained they all floated up. This just about broke my father's heart.

When I was young we had so many snakes that we had to watch where we went in the woods. One day my dad told my sister, brother, and me that if we would kill the snakes in the orchard he would pay us one cent per snake. Well, we told him that we would and my sister and I carried a long stick between us. When my brother would kill a snake he would hang it over the stick and then we would carry them up to dad for the pay off. We thought it was fun and we had pennies for candy. Dad would put the snakes on the brush pile to burn up.

I loved to fish. I would spend many days down by the river bank fishing. When I would catch a fish I would break a branch that was shaped like a Y and stick it in the water. I would put the fish on the stick through the gills to keep them cold until I went home. My parents never had to worry about us getting kidnapped as we never heard of bad people those days. Some days I would catch frogs and put them in a sack and keep them under cold water until the men would put them on throw lines. Then they would row the boat across the river with the string of frogs and leave them over night. They sure would catch some big ones.

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One day when my brother was working the bottom land I had to take his dinner to him at noon, this part still scares me today. It was terrible hot day and after my brother ate his dinner he layed down on the green grass to take a nap. I was sitting on the grass when I looked up and there was a big black water moccasin snake coming through the grass. It was heading right for my brother's neck. I screamed and my brother jumped up just in the nick of time and grabbed a stick. The snake was all curled up ready to jump when my brother hit him just in time and killed him. We heard later that it was one of the most poisonous snakes around. They were usually found in the water. That was the last of me wanting to go fishing down by the river. I was so afraid of snakes.

Boys were boys along time ago also. When it was Halloween time my oldest brother took a wheel barrel from the grocery store and climbed up a telephone pole and fastened it up there. My brother also had the pleasure of getting the wheel barrel down. The man that ran the store knew it was my brother because he was as strong as an ox and the only one who could have done it. He never tried that again.

Mr. Daniels, the grocery man, used the wheel barrel to get his groceries from the depot. The train would bring the supplies from Fort Dodge.

My mother never had a washing machine and everything had to be rubbed on a washboard and hung outside to dry.

When the cloths were brought inside they were ironed with hot irons that had been kept on the cook stove. My family never had a telephone either.

Pretty soon my fun days were over and school days started, with things to worry a poor kid like me! One day I was going to school and we had had a big rain that froze during the night and all the tall weeds were covered with beautiful frozen stems that sparkled in the sun. I loved my teacher and I was determined to have a bouquet for my teacher. The tall weeds were so pretty when I got to school, but I don't remember if the ice had melted off, or some was left on. My teacher told me how lovely they were and thanked me and kissed me. That made my day. (Oh, to be young again.)

When I was in the eighth grade I had to take a test. I had to take the train to Fort Dodge and take the tests in a room at the court house. My teacher told me I could stay with her over night which I did so I could get there easy. When I woke up she was already gone to catch the one way train to Evanston and I couldn't find anything in the house to eat. I only had enough money to get me back home on the train and my dinner at noon. I was sure that if I was hungry I would never pass the test. But I did, even if I was scared to death. I got my diploma for the eighth grade. I also got a 100% for making a perfect drawing of the blood veins going through the body. I

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guess that was a pretty important part of the test. The eighth grade was as far as I got to go in school.

My next big step was that I found a boyfriend. Rudy was his name and he was liked by everyone. We were married when we were about twenty years old. We had five handsome sons that all got married and had families of their own.

We raised our family on a farm just west of Duncombe, Iowa. Rudy did a lot of custom work for his friends and neighbors. He also sold DeKalb seed corn for many years.

We had a good life together until cancer took Rudy away from me. For good measure I have had good health until the last couple of years. I have never had any operation of any kind and never any broken bones. I still have 17 of my own teeth in my head and I still can see to quilt.

My writing is getting worse but at least I have been able to get down a few memories of the things I did growing up.

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall
not want. He maketh me to lie
down in green pastures; He leadeth
me beside the still waters. He
restoreth my soul; He leadeth me
in the paths of righteousness for
His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death, I will
fear no evil; for Thou art with me;
Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort
me; Thou preparest a table before
me in the presence of mine enemies;
Thou anointest my head with oil,
my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me all the days of my life;
and I will dwell in the house of the
Lord forever.

In Memory

ZELDA M. MOENCK

JAN. 21, 1900 - DEC. 26, 1991

Services

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Duncombe, Iowa

1:30 P. M.

DECEMBER 29, 1991

Officiating

REV. ROBERT MARTIN

Congregational Hymns

#261 WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

#17 HOW GREAT THOU ART

Organist

CAROL ANDERSON

Interment

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP CEMETERY

Duncombe, Iowa

Casket Bearers

BRUCE MOENCK	GARY MOENCK
DANIEL MOENCK	JAMES MOENCK
DARRELL MOENCK	KEITH MOENCK
DEAN MOENCK	THOMAS MOENCK
MATTHEW SCOTT	