

# Memories of Michael Mickelson

by his son

Franklin Michael Mickelson

I have been thinking about writing about Dad and a lot of the things he did and putting it on a disc. I lived with him a lot longer than any one else in the family, so I heard the things about his life over many times when family or friends would come to see him.

Dad, Hiram Swensen, (Butch's, Raymond Swensen's, dad) and Charles Stevensen, were hunting when they came across fresh bear tracks in the snow. There was just a skiff of snow falling. They tracked it to a den close by. Dad asked Hiram if he would go in to see if the bear was there. Hiram told to make his own social calls. Dad crept slowly into the den and said he saw the bear just a couple of feet away sniffing to see what it was that had come in. Dad never said, but I believe the bear was getting ready to hibernate for the winter. Dad said he could feel the hair rise on his head and he backed out very slowly. When he was out of the



den he had Hiram and Charles get behind a tree or a log where they could shoot when the bear came out. Then Dad shot into the den. He said that dust came rolling out of the den, but no bear. They got a pole and poked into the den. There was no response. Dad said he did the most foolish thing of all. He crawled back into the den and tied a rope around the bear's foot and dragged him out with one of their horses. The horse panicked when he saw the bear and ran. He went on one side of the tree and the bear on the other side and they wound up side by side. They had a hard time calming the horse down. When Dad shot into the den, evidently, the bear was curled up. The bullet had gone through his front paw and then through his heart, and lodged in his rear leg.

Dad told me about some of the things he remembered when they lived in Denmark. He said that their home was a farm with a building that held everything. The house was in one end, then the hay, then the chickens, then the horses, then the cows, and finally the pigs. Of course there were only a dozen chickens, a couple of cows, a team of horses, and one or two pigs. He told me that he remembered a pit they put the waste and manure into. It would be hauled out on a sledge pulled by their horses and scattered on their farm for fertilizer.

One day when Uncle Knude, (later changed to Canute) was about four years old, he crawled out on a plank that spanned the manure pit and fell in. Grandfather Antone jumped in, up to

his waist in the manure, and rescued his son. They had a hard time getting him to breath, and cleaned up again.

After their fourth son was born, Antone said that he was not going to raise his boys to be German gun fodder. Antone had been in the King's Elite Guard of 2000 men. They were sent to fight the Germans who had invaded the provinces of Holstein and Schleisvig. All of the Danish were killed except Antone and three others who were able to walk out. They watched the Germans put the dead and the wounded in a trench and pour quicklime over them to destroy the bodies. Antone was wounded in the hip. It was partly the cause of his death at an early age in 1890.

I have the original ticket, bought through J. L. Olsen, travel agent, from Bremen, Germany, to Ogden, Utah, Aug. 3, 1881. The amount was 1027 Kroner, and 37 Ore, Danish money. While they were on the ship Dad liked to go to the prow and lay on his stomach and watch the ship cut through the water. He also saw nine whales in a group. They reached New York on Dad's eighth birthday, Aug. 28, 1881. They came from Ogden to Franklin, Idaho where the railroad ended. Antone's brother, Christian, was to meet them but had been delayed and they had to stay in the station overnight. The stationmaster was really good to them and gave them blankets to sleep on the floor. This had been a hard trip because they spoke no English. The next day Christian came and they started their trip to Gentile Valley. They had to stay overnight on the way. The next morning a rider came through and told them that the station in Franklin had been robbed and the stationmaster killed. Grandmother Gitte was very sad because he had been so good to them. After they got to the Valley Antone started getting logs for a house. They built a one-room cabin, which was where our house driveway was. They built a trundle bed. At night the kid's bed slid out from under the big bed. The next year they logged out enough logs to make a floor in their home. The put the logs on a cross saw horse and sawed the boards the length of the log with a rip saw by hand.

Dad told me about going with his father to get the logs. He said that one day they had the log cut and ready to put on the wagon. They sat down on the log to eat lunch when a bear came and wanted their lunch. Needless to say the bear got the lunch and they went home without the log.

The Shoshone Indians used to come and camp on the creek bottoms. Some times as many as 500 teepees could be seen. One spring morning Dad went up on the hill north of the house to pick some buttercups for his mother. He was startled by three Indian braves with headdresses yelling and riding straight toward him. He said he didn't run, he flew, to the house. When he got there he looked out the window and saw them laughing and telling his father how little boy run heap fast.

After they arrived in the Valley Dad wanted to go to school. He cut willows for firewood two days a week so that he could go to Mr. Elliot's school over the hill on Whiskey Creek for three days. His education was about third grade level but he was the most intelligent man I have ever known There were no fences and the cows were just let go. He said that some days he would have to go as far as the Niter store to find them.

In Sept. of 1890 Antone passed away leaving Dad, who was 17, the burden of caring for the family. There were Canute 15, Henry 13, Theodore 10, Annie about 7, Rebecca about 4, and

Antone Otto 3 months. On his deathbed he had them all promise that they would not join the Mormon Church.

One story he told me was about finding a deer track. After trailing him all day he gave up and went home. The next day, he went back and trailed him for about an hour and then found where someone had shot the deer and dressed it out. Later on George Dalton told me how his fathers family, who had just come from England, were living in a tent and starving. Uncle Canute told them that Michael had been trailing the only deer that had been seen for a year or two and he knew where to get him. They shot the deer, the Dalton's had food, and Dad never knew what had happened.

I was just reading his notebook for 1896 where he had killed 769 ducks, and 15 geese. This was the way he provided for his family of four brothers and two sisters. He would kill ducks and geese, dress them, and freeze them on the side of the house, then ship them to Denver for the hotel and restaurant trade. Mother told of one night when he brought home 112 ducks and 16 geese. This was shortly after they were married and his whole family helped in an all night operation of cleaning and picking ducks. They also sold the feathers for pillows, etc. for \$5.00 per pound.

Antone's family was Lutheran faith, but there were no Lutherans in the Valley, so they went to the Presbyterian Church. One day the Pastor told the congregation that he would no longer be there. After church Dad asked him why he was leaving. He said that the Methodists had offered him more money. This started Dad to thinking and he started investigating LDS teachings. He was baptized in March of 1899 in Trout Creek. This was against a promise he had made to his father on his deathbed. He prayed that he might have some sign that his father approved. When he came up out of the water with ice floating in it he had to walk a hundred yards to the house in his wet clothes with a wind blowing. He said he was warm all the way and as he came in the door he knew that this was his father's approval. All his brothers and one sister joined. Four boys became Bishops, and one, Henry, a Stake President. Dad served twice as bishop and had a total of 32 years in the bishopric. The last few years of his life were spent as a stake missionary, which he enjoyed very much.

One of the ways he provided for the family was shearing sheep. He and his brothers sheared for several herds that came into Soda Springs for shearing and getting ready to go on the open range for the summer. Then in the fall they loaded grain on the train for shipping. This required loading grain bags of 100 to 120 pounds per bag on the boxcars.

In 1897 he built a house for his mother. It was a very nice home with three bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, parlor, a large pantry, and two big porches, with steps leading down to the ground. One was used as a sleeping porch in the summer. The kitchen



Michael Mickelson and Sarah Emeline Harris  
on their Golden Wedding Anniversary, 19 July 1949.  
Picture taken from the book  
*The Ancestors and Descendants of Anthon Peter Mikkelsen and Githa Jensen, 1980, p.63.*

opened onto a screened porch that was on the ground level. Mother (Sarah Emeline Harris) came to the open house when it was finished and jokingly chose her bedroom even though at the time she didn't know Dad. However, two years later, it was her bedroom. They were married July 19th, 1899 in the Logan Temple. Mother said it was like moving to Denmark because no one spoke English. She said she learned Danish in about three months but she didn't let the family know it. The man who built the house, for less than \$1,100.00, was a Mr Waite. Two or three years later he married grandmother Gitte and they moved to Downey, ID. Dad gradually bought out his family's shares of the farm and he had just his own family to occupy the house.

Then, about 1903, Gitte's brother, Soren Jensen, came to live with the family. He was a bachelor about 60 years old. In September he would sew his underwear on and it never came off until it was warm, probably in May. During the winter he would haul the manure out on the field. When they would ask him to do something else he always said he had to scatter manure. He lost his pocket knife in the creek, spent a couple of hours walking up and down on the bank, and finally waded out waist deep and got it. Then he lay on the bank to dry off. He said that he could not get that good of a knife in America. They were only that good in Denmark. He only stayed a year or so then went back to Denmark because he thought that with all the cinder cones around he would be blown out of his grave.

Dad told of the times he had to carry mail because people took turns since there were no regular mailmen. Also, that some times, he rode a horse 40 miles to do his home teaching.

About 1918 he bought a sawmill from Alfred Hansen and ran it until 1941 when he sold it to Rex and Lynn Robinson. I worked in the timber with Dad and my brother Melvin, starting in 1935. Mostly, I worked at the mill with Dad off bearing the lumber and slabs from where they dropped from the saw. One day I let a trim about eight feet long get into the saw and it hit Dad in the head then went through a brace and out across the road where it stuck about a foot into the bank. Dad was unconscious for what seemed like hours but it was only about thirty minutes. A customer helped me revive him with cold water and massage. Then we took him to the hospital where they took about fifteen stitches in his scalp. He had a severe concussion but came out of it pretty good.

One day, in about 1920, Dad and Harris went to the mountains with a logging wagon to get logs for the sawmill. After the logs were loaded they went to hitch the team to the wagon. The one horse must have fainted, Harris said, because he fell against Dad, knocking him down. The fall drove an axe into Dad's chest. He rode down the mountain holding the wound together with his hands. When they got to the mill they could scoop the blood out of the sheepskin they were sitting on with their hands. He told Harris to unload the wagon and he would walk home. It was at least a mile and a half through deserted fields. When he opened the door he collapsed, unconscious. Mother tried to stop the bleeding by stuffing flour in the wound. Dr. Kackley happened to be in the area and came and stitched Dad up. He said that only a hardheaded red-blooded Dane could have survived.

One of the times he went hunting on Caribou Mountain he and the man with him came across a bear den. Dad had the man stand behind a tree with his rifle trained on the den. Dad fired into the den and a huge Grizzly came roaring out. The man's rifle misfired, and the bear headed straight for Dad. He put three shots into him. Finally, when the bear was nearly on top of him, he shot him and bullet came out of the top of the bear's head. They put him on a

short-coupled wagon where his nose touched the doubletree and his hind feet were over the rear axle. They weighed him and he was nearly 1100 pounds. Another time he set a trap for a bear at the mouth of Mickelson Gulch. Going up the next morning he could hear the bear roar from about a mile away. When he got closer the bear was curled up chewing on the trap. He heard Dad and lunged toward him. Dad said he was surely glad that the log chain they had on the trap wasn't any longer.

One time Dad and Melvin and a couple of others went hunting elk near Darby, MT. They shot a big bull elk and dressed him out and went to find some more. When they came back a large brown bear had taken possession of their elk and refused to leave. Melvin had to shoot him to get their meat back and to get it ready to pack out. They didn't want to kill the bear because they were so far into the mountains and it just made problems for their packhorses. They were fifteen or twenty miles from their base camp. Melvin had this bear rug for a long time.

Dad had a rifle that was very good. It was a .256 Newton and people used to say that all Michael had to do was find a deer track, aim the rifle in the direction it went, and the deer was a goner. On one occasion Dad, Melvin, myself, and Riley Dixon, who was the Chief of Police in Pocatello, went hunting east of Lago. We sat down on a small ridge to eat lunch and decide where we would go next. Dad was about 70 years old and had lost the sight in his right eye a few years before. Finally he said he would go over through a small patch of timber and get to the top of a small ravine where there were usually some deer. We were to give him a few minutes to get situated before we started our drive. He had only been gone a few minutes when we heard a shot followed a few seconds later by another shot. Melvin made the comment that if Dad had his sight, and didn't have to shoot left handed, we would have meat. When we got to where Dad was he was getting ready to dress out a nice two-point buck. The deer had jumped up and was dropped on his third jump. Another deer jumped up and Dad dropped him on the third jump too.

One time when Dad was younger he had a dead horse up on the hill behind the house for coyote bait. We had a hired girl to help Mother and she asked Mom how she could get an April fool joke on Dad. Mom told her to just tell him there was a coyote by the bait. When Dad came in from morning chores she gave him the message. He grabbed his rifle and headed out the door. A few minutes later he came back dragging a coyote. He had looked out the window and could see the coyote before he grabbed his rifle.

Dad told us about one of his neighbors, a Dutchman named Gottlaff Neuenschwander. He came over to our place one day asking for some grain for his chickens. Dad told him that he would give him some and they started to fill a big seamless sack. These sacks were big and would hold about three bushel of wheat. When they had about what Dad thought he could carry he asked if that was enough. Gottlaff said, "Yust a lilla bit more." So they put more in and he still wanted more. Finally, the bag was so full they could hardly tie it. Dad helped him get it on his back and he crawled across a plank that was used to cross Trout Creek. This was about ten o'clock in the morning. He was just going over the top of Bassett's dug way at sundown.

One time Gottlaff came to Molly Bassett and asked, "Vould you like to puy some shakkins?" Molly told him, "Sure I'll buy some chickens. How many do you have?" "Aye got von." He replied. Then at threshing time he came and was watching the men pitch the grain into the

machine. He was told to stand back or he might get hurt. He replied, "Aye know vot aye'm doing." Just a few minutes later they heard a yell. Clarence Bassett had run the pitchfork through Gottlaff's upper lip. He stood back a little farther. One day he was stacking hay for John Sorensen and the man running the Jackson Fork kept waiting for him to say trip so that they could pull the trip rope and release the fork full of hay. He never yelled so they went around the haystack. He had fallen off the stack and broke his neck.

I have always been very pleased about having Michael Mickelson as my father. The worst day of my life, at that time, came the 24th of June 1950. My wife, Louise, and I were standing in the barn door talking when Mother came outside and yelled, "Mike, come quick. Hurry." We ran to the house. Dad was lying on the floor by the kitchen table. He had a massive stroke. We put him in the car and rushed him to the Soda Springs Hospital. He stayed for four days, and then we brought him home. His left side was paralyzed. He learned to walk fairly well. He passed away Sept. 27th, 1952.

Their children are Ethel Josephine, May 14, 1900; Estella Bergetta, Feb 24, 1902; Harris Antone Mar. 16, 1905; Melvin Theodore, June 21, 1908; Clark Alexander, May 11, 1912; Reao Henry, Aug. 20, 1915; and Franklin Michael, Aug 30, 1921.



**The Family of Michael Mickelson and Sarah Emeline Harris, 1939:**  
 Back Row, L-R: Franklin Michael, Reao Henry, Harris Anton, Melvin Theodore, Clark Alexander  
 Front Row, L-R: Ethel Josephine, Michael (father), Sarah (mother), Estella Bergetta.  
 Picture taken from *The Ancestors and Descendants of Anthon Peter Mikkelsen and Githe Jensen*, 1980, p.64.