

A Grandma Memory....  
by Shirley Sundgren Braswell

By way of explaining, Dixie Hansen and I share a Grandma, so everything you know about my Norwegian half, is what Dixie may have shared with you. While I am the eldest of the living cousins, Dixie is the more inquisitive, industrious, and detail oriented. I am more into riding on her coat tails for all my family history. I am sure you can appreciate her work in the field of genealogy, and perhaps are a bit envious of my treasure trove! Dixie, thank you for your perseverance your commitment to discover our roots.

My Grandma, **Marit Tobiasdatter Steivang, a/k/a, May Thompson Hansen Wick**, was a wonderfully industrious Norwegian woman. Widowed when my mother and her brother were very young, she was energetic, wise and managed her home with efficiency and great love. One of the ways she created income was by selling the rugs she wove out of fabric scraps and ribbons and such. I had so much fun in her wonderful flower gardens on either side of the back walkway....making earrings out of Snap Dragons, picking Zinnia and Daisy blossoms and sometimes even the stems with them! She was jolly and loved to laugh. Later in life she married a second time to a wonderful Norwegian gentleman, Fred Wick. I spent many days and weeks with her during the summer. Often we would go to the basement to weave the rug she was working on. We would talk and talk as she operated the huge loom. I have one of her smaller rugs with my mother's ribbons woven through it. She had a chair for me to sit upon next to her, a "grown up chair". The legs had been lowered, and my feet could touch the floor! I was so proud to sit in that chair! Grandma would offer a "cold drink" to us. This was way before many soft drinks were found in any vending machine. The cold drink was always a different flavor. Grandma would save all the juice from canned fruits, mix them together, add a little ginger ale, and we were well satisfied. No Kool-Aid for us!

Our Dad's company moved us from Minneapolis and from then on, Grandma would visit us at Christmas for three months or so. What a pleasure to have her with our family in the many cities in which we found ourselves living. She shared milestones of our lives with great joy. When my brothers and I had families, Grandma was re-named GG for the little ones that came along.

The bracelet story is by far the most amusing tale about Grandma. My mother inherited a lovely 18 karat gold bangle bracelet from Grandma and wore it on very special occasions. When it was passed down to me I was very happy to wear it almost every day, for inside it was inscribed "May, 12/25/08". I treasured it knowing it was a gift from the Grandpa I never knew, Alfred Maynard Hansen. I have often repeated to friends how I came to own the bracelet, and how romantic it was with the inscription. As years went by, my very wise Uncle and Aunt and cousins, along with my Mom began to "interview" Grandma about coming to America at age 16, how later she came to Minneapolis, and about her courting life. It seems she had many callers...my Grandpa being one, and another young man, a jeweler, she said. " He gave me a gold bracelet...but... I liked you father better."....sigh. So much for my romantic notions...

I am very proud to be a Scandinavian, being half Norwegian and half...(shhhh) Swedish. It has been well noted that I am STUBBORN on both sides! If you see me this weekend, I will be wearing the bracelet. Grandma would be so happy to know I am with you all.