

## **Porpoise hunting with a revolver, and other stories from my childhood (A story for Marion)**

I want to begin by recounting one of the first incidents I can remember. It was the spring of 1940 and Norway was at war with Germany. The atmosphere among people was tense, and it was probably the constant topic of conversation, and we kids probably thought it was both scary and exciting at the same time. The first incident happened around May 1940, and I was 4 years old. We were going to evacuate before the Germans came to Mørsvikbotn, and we were going to Sandbakk to live with my mother's brother, Olav. To get there we had to bring the cows and the sheep in the boat that was taking us there. Something dramatic happens as we are in the middle of this. Two German fighter planes pass directly over where we are, and we all run ashore to hide under some bushes. We were all scared because we didn't know if they were going to shoot at us, but fortunately, they were gone without anything happening. We could go to Sandbakk and put the cows and sheep ashore there.

I can't remember much from our stay there, but it can't have been easy for the adults when we were there, because Olav was away fighting the Germans in the war. We were probably there for two weeks, and then we moved home again. I remember as we came in Nordfoldfjorden fiord we came across German war ships. They didn't do anything to us, but it was ominous to be so close to the war. It is told that one of those ships went aground at Mjånes in Mørsvikfjorden fiord. This is at the beginning of the war, and as time passed, many things happened. The Germans came to our house and we were told they were moving into the house we lived in. There was no use protesting, we kids had to sleep in a closet on the second floor. The Germans had then taken over the living room and most of the upstairs, and they also took the out buildings, which is where they prepared the food for their soldiers. There are a few incidents from that time that I still remember. On the spot where we had our cabin, there was a pier for offloading fish. We would also go fishing on that pier. One time there was a large boat there, and I was on board to fish from the boat. As I am standing on deck with my line in the water, I suddenly hear big bangs from the other side of the fiord. I was probably too young to understand how dangerous this was. It turned out later that the Germans had thrown hand grenades on Sildhopsskjæret, and splinters flew over towards the boat. An adult man was also on board the boat, and he hid below deck without thinking about bringing me with him to safety.

Another time I had an experience that could have ended in tragedy for me. It was probably at the end of the war and the Germans were retreating to southern Norway. They used to set up camp below our house at night, and then they left the next morning. We kids used to think it was exciting to search the camp area to see if they had left something behind. So, one time I was there alone to look, I find a nice and shiny object that I think looks interesting. I guess boys are like that, that we want to unscrew things that can be opened to see what is inside, but this time was different. I carried this thing home. As I approached our house, a German soldier was standing there and when he saw what I carried in my hands he turned white in the face and immediately took it away from me. It turned out that I had found a large and dangerous hand grenade. I was meant to live longer, and that is probably why I didn't try to pry open my find this time.

As winter progressed in 1945, there was heavy traffic going south, and much of that traffic was large wagons pulled by two or four horses. The Germans were not always kind to the animals. We had been at war for five years and many of them were probably worn out and unstable, and they probably took that out on the horses. The barn at home had a hatch in the wall and from there we could watch the road when the Germans passed by. One time I saw two horses pull a wagon on the road. The road was icy and slippery so it was difficult for the horses to pull the wagon up the hill. When the horses couldn't pull the wagon, the German furiously hit the horses as hard as he could, but that did not help. The horses then started to kick the wagon with their hind legs, but then the German soldier put a pointy stick against the wagon so that every time the horses kicked the pointy end would pierce the horses' hindquarters. This was a gruesome mal treatment of animals. I was nine years old at the time, and I will never forget that incident. Some horses could not take the treatment they had to suffer, and died along the way and were dumped at the side of the road before the Germans continued on their way.

When the war ended many horses were left behind in Norway. My father bought one of these horses that we kept for many years, but the horse was damaged by the treatment it had experienced. It was not a gentle animal like most horses, and could bite if it was something it didn't like. The Germans also had dogs they used in the war. I can remember they were not good dogs. We called them bloodhounds, and they were noisy when many of them were here together at night.

I now want to tell you about when we went porpoise hunting with a revolver. I was nine years old when the war ended, and like so many boys at that age I wanted lots of exciting experiences. This event happened after the war was over and it was during the clean up after the war when this took place. A truck had run off the road past the house where we lived. We were three boys who went there to see what we could find. In a bag we found a revolver and bullets. This was very exciting, and it didn't take long before we tried to fire the revolver. One of us boys was four or five years older than the other two, so he was the leader. None of the adults knew we had found the revolver. It probably sounds a little strange that we took the bag and the revolver, but it was this war. It was different to take something that was related to the war, we wanted to take as much as possible to hinder the Germans.

Some time after this happened we set off on a porpoise hunt. We went out in the boat that belonged to the other two boys. We rowed to where we have the boat house, and in that bay we found porpoises. The oldest boy was supposed to pull the trigger, and we are full of suspense. The porpoise was not on top for very long before it went down again, so taking aim and pulling the trigger had to happen quickly. It wasn't easy. The boat was rocking a little and that made it difficult. The shooter now tried to kneel down in the boat and then he put the revolver on the edge of the boat for a better aim, but when the boat moved a little that didn't work either. Then it happens, he stands up in the boat and lets the hand holding the revolver hang down his side and we hear a loud bang. The boy gets scared and throws the revolver overboard and the last we see of it as it sinks to the bottom of the sea is a silk cord that was attached to it. A commotion broke out in the boat. We didn't know he had shot himself in the foot, so we were more concerned about the boat sinking. We thought the bullet had gone through the boat, but we soon became aware that instead of shooting the porpoise, he had shot himself in the foot. We brought the boat to shore, and the injured boy managed to run home. The two of us left behind in the

boat were not doing very well. We expected the boat to sink, but nothing happened, so we took the boat to where we had taken it. It turned out the revolver bullet had lodged against the heel of the boot so it was inside the boot. The revolver is still on the bottom of Skveirvika bay, but this happened more than 60 years ago so there is probably not much left of it today.

In the five years the war lasted there wasn't much to be had in the shops, and people generally didn't have much money. It didn't happen often that people could buy sweets, but then there were kind Germans who gave us candy. Fruit was not available, and I was 9-10 years old the first time I tasted an apple. I recall that one time we had heard there was something very good called licorice, but I had never seen or tasted it. I ran into some older girls one time on my way home from school, and they told me they had licorice they wanted me to taste. I didn't know what licorice was supposed to look like so I tried a taste of what they had, but they were trying to trick me and it tasted bad. When that happened I was seven years old and it was my first year in school.

I can tell you a little about when I went to school. The schoolhouse sat along the road that goes down towards Mørsvik. My first year in school was 1943, and I remember the first day of school. It was very exciting and I did have butterflies in my stomach. We had a female teacher who was very nice, but she tried to be strict sometimes. I remember when we were leaving school to go home on that first day. It was me and a girl. We were both from this side of the fjord, and were picked up in a boat to be rowed across from Mørsvik to Storeidet. It was windy out there and I was in the front of the boat feeling very seasick. That was my first day in school. We didn't always have transportation, and then we had to walk the entire way. It wasn't always easy, the weather was harsh back then too, and we usually had to set out very early in the morning to get there on time. My second year in school was compromised by the fact the Germans took the school house and chased us home. It was difficult without a school building, but we had classes in a private home in Sildhopen from time to time. In the fall of 1945, the Germans were gone, so we started school in a German barrack at Forbakken north of Mørsvik. In the beginning we had to walk back and forth to school, but later on we had transportation. The final years I attended school in Sildhopen, and I was confirmed in 1950.

My memory from that time is that I was not a good writer, and writing essays was my least favorite subject. Other than that I think I probably was a busy boy who was into everything. One time the girls were after me, and they blocked me up against a window, which resulted in my backside going through the windowpane. It was five against one, and the girls had to buy a new window. It wasn't that I was worse than other boys, and I remember I liked school as well as being with the other kids.

In closing I want to include an event I will never forget. It took place just after the war was over and we were having a Christmas party at school. Norwegian apples were finally available in the store. My sister, who was a little older than me was part of the planning committee for this party. They were going to hand out gifts to the children and they had bought a crate of little red apples to be included in the gifts. This crate was put in the basement at our house, and I can still remember the smell of those apples. The temptation was too much for me and one day I grabbed an apple without permission. That was not a good thing to do and I had a very bad conscience for having done that. Maybe I was punished for it, because I was not at that Christmas party. Shortly before the party I got sick, and I had to stay at home alone in bed when everybody else was at

the party. Perhaps I was punished for taking that apple. I don't know, but maybe that is the way it was.

*Farfaz (Paternal grandfather)*

*(Translated by Schweig Dreyer)*