

**This is my life**  
**Amy Benson**  
*(written in 1993)*

Amy Constance Nelsen was born on Thanksgiving Day, 1905. She was the oldest of 12 children born to Ned and Anna Nelsen in Murray County, Minnesota.

After a year, they moved to South Dakota where my sister, Ethel, was born. In 1908 we returned to Minnesota, moving onto Grandma Sina & Grandpa Jens Nelsen's farm. Amy started school in District 108 when she was six years old. Then her father bought a farm south of Dovray and moved one day before Amy's 7<sup>th</sup> birthday. Amy then had to go to a new school - District 25 in Murray County. These were one room schools with all eight grades. Ethel got to start that same year after Christmas. We walked to school, which was about  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles away. There were 20 or more pupils, some almost 16 years old. They quit then, as that was the law - to go until 16.

We had to go to school several miles away to take 8<sup>th</sup> grade exams. These I passed at age 14, and was the first to graduate from District 25.

I got whooping cough that fall and was unable to start High School and missed a year. In the sixth grade, I had a teacher I so admired, I decided I wanted to be a teacher too.

I started High School in September 1922, I stayed with a German family that spoke German most of the time, so it was pretty lonesome. They were real strict, they would not let me go out anywhere at night. Uncle Dave came one night and wanted to take me some place, but they wouldn't let me go. When my Dad brought me there, he said something about them taking care of me, and they really took that to heart.

The second year, Ethel had graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, so we both went to Westbrook High School. We drove a horse and buggy 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles one way for two years. Then Leslie and Irene graduated and went too. Leslie drove a car when the roads were passable and a sleigh or lumber wagon otherwise. Dad didn't think girls could drive a car. He had wanted Mother to learn to drive, but she wouldn't.

When I was still at home, we shocked grain and picked corn. We stayed out of school for two weeks in the fall for that.

We milked cows and took care of chickens. When Ethel got bigger, I stayed in the house to help mother with the 11 children that were younger than me. I was always so glad I wasn't kept out of school, but I know my mother surely could have used help with all the work. (In those days, we never got to town more than once or twice a year.)

I graduated in 1925, and went to Normal in Fulda for 1 year. I stayed with friends who lived two miles out in the country and I walked. I milked two cows morning and night to help pay for my board. There were only 2 boys and 6 girls in the class. I taught the same two schools I had attended earlier. These were 8<sup>th</sup> grade schools, with up to 20 pupils in all 8 grades. My first year, I had six beginners. I got \$85 to \$90 per month and had to do janitor work too.

The last school was my home school. The school board came and asked me. I hesitated, but Dad said I should take it. I had one brother, Donald, and two sisters, Nina and Ardys, attending. Also two first cousins, Evelyn and Jay Nelson, attending.

I was married in 1930 to Anton Benson. Anton was born in New York City. His parents came to Minnesota when he was three years old. His father had to be in a different climate, then lived to age 75. Anton went to country school and attended High School for 1½ years before he was needed on the farm to help his father. The first year he started after Christmas, but passed all the subjects. He was on the school board from the time we got married until it closed. He also was both trustee and deacon at our church and was on the hospital board. I had known him since High School, as his sister was just a year behind me. We went together a couple of years before we got married. We didn't have a big wedding. We were married at the parsonage with my brother Leslie as best man and Anton's sister Esther as bridesmaid. After the wedding, we left for South Dakota to visit my Uncles, Aunts, and cousins. We lived on the Benson family farm. This is still in the Benson family. I had saved my salary from teaching and bought all new furniture for our home when we got married. My great-grandson Joshua is the fifth generation there.

When Roger married, he took over the farm and we moved into Westbrook. We bought a house in town, a two bedroom rambler without a basement. Two previous parties had lived there. The first owner was a cripple and had no children. The second couple was retired and had no children at home. Two sisters and two brothers also are in town. Ethyl, Vera, Leslie, and Lloyd, who lives across the street from me.

My youngest sister, Betty Ann, died the same month we were married. In fact, she was sick and went to the hospital the day after we came home from our wedding trip to visit relatives in South Dakota. She had a ruptured appendix, and in those days they had no experience treating that. She died two days later.

Anton and I had two sons - Roger born Feb. 8, 1932, and Ronald born Dec. 17, 1933. They went to country schools until they graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and then went to Westbrook High School. Roger graduated in 1949 and Ronald in 1951.

They were both in the army. Roger was stationed in Korea while the war was on, and Ronald was at Fairbanks, Alaska. He had been in camp at Fort Bliss in Southern Texas where it was real hot. Then was sent to Fairbanks where it was

30 below, and he had to sleep outdoors the first nights there. I sure worried about him.

One year after Ronald came home, he lost his left hand in a corn picker. This even happened on my birthday. Both boys had wanted to farm, but after the accident, he gave that up. He went to Dunwoody Institute and took up welding. He got a job and is still working in Minneapolis.

Roger married a neighbor girl, Carolyn Busswitz, on October 1, 1961. They have three children, Shelley born on June 27, 1962, Tammy born on August 4, 1963, and Erik born on March 4, 1967.

Tammy had spinal meningitis when she was a few months old and is severely brain damaged. She has been in a home in Windom for some time.

Shelley graduated from Westbrook High School and enlisted in the army where she spent time in Germany. She married Tom Keeler on August 19, 1989. They have two boys, Brandon born on August 17, 1984, and Therron born on July 4, 1990. They are now divorced and Tom is in the service.

Shelley works at the school in Westbrook and gives piano lessons. She graduated from Southwest State in Marshall in piano. She plays for the church also.

Erik graduated from Westbrook High School and went to Canby and graduated from the Technical Institute in Welding and Metal Fabrication in 1988. He married Angela Johnson of Canby on August 18, 1990. They have one boy, Joshua born on April 19, 1992.

Ronald married Eleanor Leseman from Mizpah, Minnesota, on May 7, 1960. They have two children, Alan (born March 27, 1962) and Lynn (born on May 18, 1963) and three grandchildren, Alexander, Kyra, and Jacob. Alan and Lynn graduated from Rockford High School in 1981 and went to Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, where they graduated in 1985. Alan majored in Hospital Finance, and Lynn in Organizational Communications.

Alan married Paula Lammi, a girl he met in college from Carlton, Minnesota, on July 20, 1985. They have two children, Alexander born June 26, 1991, and Kyra born August 24, 1993. Alan is working for Baker's Square restaurant as an assistant manager/cook.

Lynn married Mark Arvidson, who she met while working as CVN, on October 6, 1990. Mark is from Red Lake Falls, Minnesota. They have one son, Jacob, born June 17, 1993. Lynn is employed at Minnegasco and works in their Human Resources department, Mark is employed by Fingerhut as a Manager in Information Systems.

I had earaches a lot when I was small which affected my hearing. My father was almost stone deaf, I worried that I would be that way too. I have worn a hearing aid for over 40 years.

I always had a big garden and strawberry patch (I even sold some at 21 cents a quart). I canned a lot of vegetables and fruit. At the farm, we boarded three different teachers, Ardis Daniels, Emma Orlasky, and Viola Soneberg. Vi stayed with us three years.

I was a charter member of the neighborly club, started in 1940. My friends got me to join in the card club (pinochle), and the birthday club. I was treasurer of the Ladies Aid for 2 terms and attended Bible Circles.

I never drove the car much. If there was someone else going along who drove, I had them take me.

Anton went to the nursing home in 1986 and died there on April 6, 1988, two days short of age 88.

My parents lived to a ripe old age. Anna was 88 and Ned almost 98. My grandchildren remember Grandpa Ned as a card player (he like to play 31) who always had gum in exchange for a kiss.

The Nelsen family has really grown. The eleven children have produced 48 living grandchildren, many-many greats, and dozen great-great. The Nelsen family gets together on an annual basis in August for the Cousins' Picnic in the park in Westbrook.

All my aunts and uncles are dead except for Aunt Myrtle who is 93. I am the oldest of all the Busk cousins, too.