

My Grandfather, Olaus Martinsen (O.M.) Akre died an untimely death in 1923 at the young age of 46.

We know that on the evening he died, O.M. paid a visit to the Ole Kaldor farm. This information, as well as being in the stories passed down, was documented in the newspaper accounts. This account was confirmed by Mildred (Akre) Joel, Olaus' daughter. She also said that he was there to see Ole Kaldor's mother, Ragna, who was ill. Olaus being a "lay minister" often visited people in need – singing to them and praying for them. *This is the account that was most told and heard among the Akre families.*

Wife

A different account in the Gustav Tastad Family History Book recorded that there was a meeting at the Kaldor home that night to call a new minister to the church. A check in the Skudesnes history book noted that Rev. Quanbeck was Pastor from 1921-1923 and Rev. Gjesdal from 1924-1931. There might have been such a meeting in 1923.

A phone discussion was held on January 20, 2012 with Ed Tastad. He recalled the day of O.M.'s death well. It was Sunday and the Tastad family was at the Akre farm for a family gathering. He recalls that they came for dinner, spent the day visiting and stayed for an evening meal as well. He remembers O.M. leaving for Kaldor's that evening by horseback, recalling that it was for Hymn Singing – something that happened quite regularly.

Grandpa did not return home that evening. Grandma (Lena) was not overly concerned, thinking it had become late and Grandpa decided to "sleep over". However, when he did not come home the next morning, she was worried and called the Kaldor home. (Yes, they did have phones at that time, though Ed said that she would have had to pay a 15 cent "long distance fee"). The disturbing news was that Grandpa had left Kaldor's at 10:00 the previous evening. Ed said Mandius Akre (O.M.'s brother) and one of Grandma's hired men went to search for him and found his body not far from home. It was also told that Trygve (Torgersen) Grindhaug and brother Kris Grindhaug went to search. However, Trygve's son said that right after harvest, Tryg and Kris would have left for Vancouver to go fishing so they probably were not part of the search. Mr. Kaldor had gone to search as well. Dr. Monkman, from Loreburn, was called. Ed said that his Dad, Gustav Tastad, accompanied the Doctor. According to the newspaper report the body was found lying in a doubled up position with a bruise on his forehead. The Dr. determined that he had died instantly from a broken neck. It was thought he had been thrown from his horse.

The part of the story that fascinated me, as a child, was about the horse and dog. The horse and his dog had stayed guard with the body all night. One newspaper article said the horse stood guard at the body's head while the dog pawed at the body, trying to waken him. Another account said the dog had the horse's reins in his mouth and that the horse had worn a path from pacing around the body.

The death notice was recorded in the Regina Herald and the Loreburn newspaper. It was noted that Grandpa was a prosperous farmer and well respected in the community. However, it was the beginning of a difficult time for Grandma – left to raise 8 young children and carry on the farming operation.

Karen Hopkins, March 8, 2012

Note: Grandpa's body was found on the road allowance just south of the farm where I grew up.

*Kaldor's head being
singed as he lay*