MORRIS JOSEPH NELSON

(Written text and photographs provided by William John Krause II). Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) was born on March 7, 1912, in Tampico, Montana, and was the son of Nels Christ and Mary Elizabeth (Johannesson/Nelson) Nelson. He was the seventh child of twelve brothers and sisters born to this family. He was baptized in the Lutheran faith. Pete attended Buggy Creek School and later farmed and ranched the family homestead in the Buggy Creek Community. Pete spent his lifetime on the original homestead of his parents farming and raising cattle. One of his few but memorable experiences away from the family homestead was a trip he took Elias Stensland to the Chicago Stockyards in Chicago, Illinois. This was during the period of time prior to cattle trucks and local auction barns when cattle were shipped by railroad (train) to the Chicago Stockyards. Until the 1940's there were open ranges to let cattle graze during the spring and summer months. After branding in early spring the cattle were herded by horseback from the homesteads to graze on the open range. The ranchers would check their cattle periodically during the summer on horseback. In the fall each rancher would separate his cattle from the herd identified by a brand placed on the flank or an earmark or both. During this round up the cattle would again be driven (herded) back to the homestead by horseback. Those cattle ready for market were then herded to the Tampico stock pens, loaded onto cattle cars, and shipped to Chicago by train. The Tampico stock pens were about three miles from the homestead. Pete Nelson's brand was NJ—Pete was considered a good broncobuster and all around cowboy. He had many friends and loved to have kids and youths in his company. Pete Nelson never married. Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) died January 2, 1975, in Glasgow, Montana, following a massive stroke. Burial was in the Highland Cemetery, Glasgow, Montana.

*How Morris Joseph Nelson received the nick name Pete. Remembrances of Lorraine Marion (Nelson) Bain and Mary Elizabeth (Bain) Fain McCoy: The Nelson family owned a very stubborn mule named Pedro. In his early years Morris Joseph Nelson had a very stubborn personality and after a time was referred to as Pete (English translation for Pedro) and the name stuck. From his childhood on Morris Jacob Nelson was simply referred to as Pete although his mother often referred to him as Peteec Puut to her grandchildren.

Remembrances of my uncle, Pete Nelson, by William John Krause II (Bill) after spending summers and many holidays at the homestead (1946-1953): Of all my uncles I spent more time with uncle Pete than any of the others. Evidently our relationship had a rocky start, as my aunt Lorraine is fond of reminding me. Milking was done by hand and Pete had a Jersey milk cow named Betsy that was a bit skittish when being milked. The story has it that I hid in the manger, covered myself with hay and waited until Pete drove the milk cows into the barn and began milking. I had positioned myself in the manger in front of Betsy. As he was milking, I sprang up in the manger and yelled “Hi There Pete!” Betsy kicked over the milk pail, knocked Pete to the floor and bolted from her harness and escaped out the barn door. Thus began my relationship with my uncle, Pete Nelson. Pete taught me to bridle, saddle and ride a horse. In the very early days he let me drive a team of workhorses, a team of Belgians. They were large, broad powerful horses rather than taller horses such as the Clydesdales that everyone is familiar with. They were gray in color. I was allowed to drive the team with uncle Pete aboard during harvest time when a wagon was loaded with shocks of wheat being transported to the threshing machine. Pete also let me drive an old Chevy pickup truck at a very early age. He let me drive water barrels from the pump down at the spring up to the residence prior to the arrival of electricity at the homestead. We did a lot of traveling around the homestead checking fence and on cattle and the horses. I helped Pete repair fences and over time all the diamond willow and wood fence posts were replaced by steel ones. During this period of time uncle Pete would place pennies upright on the wood fence posts and I would shoot them off with a twenty-two rifle.
This was great fun and he taught me how to shoot. Over time I became quite good with the open sights on this little rifle. In the spring Pete would drive me along country lanes north of the homestead, when we were checking fence and cattle, and I would head shoot young sage hens (Centrocercus urophasianus) for that evenings supper. I was very careful not to shoot the larger, older birds, which were tough and had a strong game flavor. As I grew older, I was allowed to drive a tractor and operate a tractor pulled binder to harvest wheat and oats. I would later use these skills in South Dakota when I worked during the summer months in high school as a farmhand. On one occasion when harvesting oats, Pete was on the tractor and I was on the binder, a very small rain cloud appeared that some lightning but very little rain associated with it. We decided to keep working and finish up the field we were harvesting. As the cloud was passing by overhead a lightning bolt stuck beside us and ball of green lightning formed at the point of the strike and then bounced across the field and between the tractor and binder. Needless to say we hurriedly got off the equipment and took an early lunch in the safety of the old Chevy pickup. Two other incidences happened at the homestead that developed in me a deep respect (fear) of lightning. The first of these occurred when I witnessed a lightning bold strike an old white horse named “bullet” that belonged to my uncle Floyd. Bullet was hit in the head and killed instantly as he stood on a nearby hillside. The second event was after a severe lightning storm when uncle Pete and I drove around to check on things. When we were driving near the Ben Borsen farm across highway 2 from the homestead we discovered three dead cows that had been killed by lightning. Evidently, what had happened was that the cows had their heads through the stands of a barbed wire fence looking for grass on the other side when the lightning hit the fence electrocuting the cattle.

Three other experiences on trips to the open range located north of the homestead stand out in my memory when I was with my uncle Pete at the homestead. The first of these was during the spring when a large muskrat was found migrating across the open range. As we drove up to muskrat, the muskrat stood his ground, and standing on his hind legs, barred and clicked his teeth. I was given the opportunity to shoot the muskrat but declined to kill such a courageous creature. The muskrat was allowed to continue his journey across the prairie in search of a new home. On another trip to the open range when exploring some small streams on this treeless plain I was in search of young mallard ducklings (I would often find and catch them but had to release them after I finished playing with them) a most unusual event occurred. As I explored this region as dad and Pete were checking cattle something shoved me from behind knocking me down. As I looked around to identify my attacker much to my surprise there stood a young buck antelope or pronghorn. He continued to butt me and I began to play with this magnificent creature of the open plains. When my father and uncle returned to my location they too were amazed. Even more amazing was the fact that the antelope followed us back to the homestead despite the attempts of uncle Pete to lose him and leave him in this area. When we arrived back at the homestead my dad photographed the antelope with an 8 mm camera that he had just purchased. The antelope was examined for injury as it was thought he may have been shot and this could explain his unusual behavior. He was healthy and showed no signs of injury or disease. The antelope stayed on the homestead and because of concern for its safety wildlife officials were contacted and antelope was eventually relocated to a wildlife refuge. The other experience I had with uncle Pete and my father on the open range area was when they took me to a small cliff area (a buffalo jump) that had been used by the North American Indians to stampede buffalo over in an attempt to injure and kill them for harvest. We were hoping to find a buffalo skull but only found a few bone fragments.
One of my fondest memories of Pete and the homestead was when I spent the summer months with him “helping out”. We would sleep in the bulk house located a short distance behind the main residence. This was a simple, single room structure without electricity or running water. It had a single window, a small table with three chairs, and several single beds. Lighting was by a kerosene lantern. It was just a sleeping quarters but spending the summer nights there and talking before falling asleep was an enduring experience for me. It was during this time I was introduced to the outdoor drive-in theater by my uncle Pete. On some summer evenings we drove the pickup to Glasgow to see a western movie together with popcorn and soda pop. These were my first experiences at a drive-in theater and I was amazed. Uncle Pete loved westerns, and loved to read westerns authored by Zane Grey. Pete had an extensive collection of Zane Grey paperback novels. Pete also enjoyed hunting deer and antelope (pronghorn). One of his proudest moments was when he took a large bull elk on horseback near the “Pines Area” located near the Fort Peck Reservoir. Pete Nelson was a chain smoker and always rolled his own cigarettes. I was absolutely fascinated to watch him skillfully hold the cigarette paper between two fingers and then carefully shake the exact amount of tobacco from a narrow can of Velvet he carried in his shirt pocket into the trough of paper he created with his fingers. He would then lick one side of the paper and carefully roll the paper and its contents into a cylinder before crimping the very end with his thumb and forefinger. He would then light up using his thumbnail to strike the match.

Pete Nelson was a kind generous person who was always willing to give of himself to help others. He had a major positive influence in shaping my views on life in general through his generosity.

*My favorite story about my Uncle Pete by Mary Elizabeth (Bain) Fain McCoy:* In the late 1960's/early 1970's Pete was just coming in from the fields and as a car pulled up off of Highway 2 which ran near the homestead, and followed him into the yard. There were 4 “hippies” in the car, and they explained to Pete that they were about out of gas and asked if he could spare a couple gallons. Pete said “sure” and motioned for them to follow him (he was still in his pickup) over to the gas tank that they kept out on the farm for all the farm vehicles. Pete got out of the truck and put a couple gallons in the tank and told them that would be enough to get them into town to fill up. One of the fellows stepped out of the car and told Pete to keep pumping and fill it up. Pete told them no – they had enough to get to town and they had better get going. “You don’t seem to understand, you’re out numbered – fill up the tank!” the fellow insisted. Pete reached into his pickup, pulled out his shotgun and said “I just evened it up. Now you get the hell out of here”. Sure enough the guy got back in the car and they high-tailed it out of there.
A photograph taken 20 miles west of Anaconda, Montana, in 1941, of (from right to left): Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete), Harold Couigon, Grant Woods, and Pete's brother, Max Walter Nelson.

A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) (left) sitting on the fender of an automobile with his nephew, Martin Chester Nelson (Jim), in 1942 near Tampico, Montana.

Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) standing near two automobiles at the original homestead near Buggy Creek in 1942.
A photograph taken in the Highland Community near Tampico, Montana, in 1942 during harvest. Beverly Ann Nelson and Floyd C. Nelson Jr. (Sonny) are pictured on the binder, their father Floyd Ernest Nelson is sitting, and Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) is standing near the tractor. Note the shocks of wheat in the foreground, the binder, and the steel-wheeled tractor.

A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) (standing) and his older brother, Floyd Ernest Nelson (sitting). Highland Community near Tampico, Montana. Date 1942.

A photograph taken of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) in 1934 fixing a corral at the original homestead in the Buggy Creek Community near Tampico, Montana.
A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) (center) taken in a wheat field on the original homestead near Buggy Creek, Montana. Standing next to him is his brother, Floyd Ernest Nelson (right) and an unidentified individual (left). Date 1937.

A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) (center) taken in 1935 at the original homestead near Tampico, Montana.

A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) (left) taken on the original homestead near Buggy Creek, Montana. Standing next to him is William John Krause (Johnny) and Pete's brother, Max Walter Nelson (far right). Date 1937.

A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) (right) and a friend, Chickie, taken at the original homestead near Buggy Creek, Montana.
A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) taken in the corral near the barn with a saddle horse on the homestead located near Buggy Creek, Montana. Date unknown.

A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) taken at the homestead near Buggy Creek, Montana. Date unknown.


A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) with the mount of the bull elk he shot while on horseback near the Pines Area of Fort Peck, Montana. The image was snatched from a 8 mm movie film taken by William John Krause (Johnny). Date: unknown.

A photograph of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) relaxing in his recliner in the living room at the homestead near Buggy Creek, Montana. Date unknown.

A photograph of Nelson brothers and sisters at the Buggy Creek, Montana, homestead residence. From left to right are: Lorraine Marion (Nelson) Bain, Floyd Ernest Nelson, Anne Mathilda (Nelson) Stull, Hazel Ruby (Nelson) Krause, Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete), and Max Walter Nelson. Date: thought to be the mid-1970s.
The Baptism Register from the First Lutheran Church of Glasgow, Montana, lists the birth of Morris Joseph Nelson (Pete) as being born in Tampico, Montana, on March 7, 1912. Baptism at the Lutheran Church was on September 8, 1912.


SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS


IN MEMORY OF
PETE NELSON
BORN
March 7, 1912
PASSED AWAY
January 2, 1975
SERVICES
First Methodist Church
January 6, 1975 2:00 P.M
OFFICIATING
Intern Pastor Robert Palan
BURIAL
Highland Cemetery
Arrangements
Bell Mortuary
Glasgow, Montana

MORRIS NELSON

Morris (Pete) Nelson, 62, a lifelong resident of Valley County, died in the local hospital Jan. 2 after a week's illness. Funeral services were held at 2 p.m., Jan. 6, in the United Methodist Church with Intern Pastor Robert Palan of First Lutheran Church officiating.

Music was provided by Mrs. Robert Martens, organist, and Mrs. W. J. Trumbull, vocalist.

Pallbearers were Bernard Boreson, Norris Braaten, Walter Cornwell and Erwin Miller of Tampico, Howard Cornwell of Hinsdale, and Charles Wood of Glasgow.

Burial was in Highland Cemetery. The local mortuary was in charge of arrangements.

A son of Mr. and Mrs. N. C. Nelson, Mr. Nelson was born in Tampico March 7, 1912. His parents had homesteaded there in 1911. He attended Buggy Creek School and later farmed and ranched on the family homestead. He was baptized in the Lutheran faith. He never married.

Survivors include three sisters, Mrs. Anne Stull of Willows, Calif., Mrs. John (Hazel) Krause of Pickstown, S.D., Mrs. James (Lorraine) Bain of Dallas, Texas; four brothers, Max and Floyd Nelson of Tampico, Martin L. Nelson of Glasgow, and Victor Nelson of Napa, Calif.

He was preceded in death by his parents, three brothers and two sisters.

Relatives coming from a distance to attend the services included his brother-in-law, John Krause, and a niece and her husband, Dr. and Mrs. Rollin W. Pederson, and their children, Billy and Barbara.

Women of the Tampico community served lunch in the church basement after the service.
MABEL ELIZABETH NELSON

(Written text provided by William John Krause II). Mabel Elizabeth Nelson was born on April 12, 1914, at the Buggy Creek Homestead near Tampico, Montana. She was the daughter of Nels Christ and Mary Elizabeth (Johannesson/Nelson) Nelson, original homesteaders to Buggy Creek region of Montana.

Mabel Elizabeth Nelson died on September 27, 1916, in Tampico, Montana, of a brain tumor. Mabel Elizabeth was 2 years, 5 months and 15 days old at the time of her death. She was buried in the Highland Cemetery, Glasgow, Montana.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

The obituary of Mabel Elizabeth Nelson published in the Glasgow Courier on page 7, September 29, 1916, under the subsection of the paper entitled "Local Brevities".