

A Team of Horses

by Jake Barnes

My dad's dad was a quiet man. He seldom spoke; he never raised his voice. A Swedish farm boy, but not the eldest, he immigrated to the USA when he was in his teens. He bought a team of horses and became an ice man. In the winter he cut the ice from the river; in the summer he covered the ice with sawdust to keep it from melting.

In church he met his bride-to-be, daughter of Norwegian immigrants. They married and she bore him two sons and a daughter.

He had coal black hair the day he died. He claimed to be part French, no doubt the offspring of a Swedish girl and a French soldier, although Ole did not mention this.

For years my grandparents lived in a tiny two bedroom house at the edge of the town where I was born. They had a German Shepherd dog named Keno. I loved my grandma, who was a chubby, jolly woman. My grandfather was remote but never unkind. I always played fetch with Keno when we would go over there for a visit.

I was at their house many times, but I remember two occasions especially. One was the day that WW II began, and the other was the day that the Barnum & Baily circus came to town. I was seven years old when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. I think it was the previous year when I watched the circus parade. The wagons rolled past my grandparents' house on Lincoln Ave. on a lazy, peaceful summer afternoon, and in a cage on the last flatbed in the column was the famous ape Gargantua. The beast sat motionless behind the bars of his cage. He did not look happy.

