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# IN MEMORIAM

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## ANSGAR OMAR ASCHIM 1904-1995

C. STUART HOUSTON, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, SK. S7N 0J8

Ansgar Aschim was born on 2 August 1904 at Brandon, South Dakota. In 1912 his family homesteaded near Halvorgate, Saskatchewan, but Ansgar returned to South Dakota to attend high school. After short stints in the U.S. Army and as a railway telegrapher, he returned to Saskatchewan as a farmer, wrangler and blacksmith, and met Christina Grossehmig, the teacher at nearby Antelope Creek School. In 1931 he filed on a homestead near Candle Lake and the next year married Christie.

On the homestead they lived frugally, relying on the land, the creeks and lake for much of their food. In 1937 Ansgar began work with the Department of Natural Resources as a wireless operator, clerk, time-keeper, towerman, and timber cruiser. In winter he went on fur and fish patrols on foot, some of up to 11 days in duration. In January 1942 he purchased three dogs for \$32.40; his dog-team eased travel somewhat. In summer he went by horseback, dog-team, bicycle and canoe. The Aschims moved to Prince Albert in 1947 and in 1963 built their home in the suburban division, Greenacres, north of the city. After a visit to observe the American Smoke Jumper operation in Montana, Ansgar organized the Saskatchewan Smoke Jumpers, the first parachute force for fighting forest fires in Canada. He retired as Assistant Supervisor of Fire Control in 1969.

A subscriber to the *Blue Jay* from its earliest days, Ansgar served as President of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society (SNHS) in 1964-65; in April 1965 he signed the 33-year lease for the quarter section of land which gave the Society legal means to protect a colony of prairie dogs in the Frenchman River Valley. He also served as President of the Prince Albert Natural History Society, 1962-1966.

Ansgar and Christie were a loving, sharing couple. Their daughter, Susie Gordon, recalls that her father "shared his joys as well as the joy and happiness of others. He wept and never hid his tears. He loved people and was always available to lend an ear or a strong arm or a shoulder on which to lean for moral support." Ansgar had a strong sense of justice and a strong moral code, and always stood up for what he believed was right. He and Christie made many trips to Norway, but also visited other countries including England, Scotland, Australia, the Caribbean, the Orient and the South Pacific. Ansgar's dry sense of humour, and his love of ethnic cheeses, were evident in every one of his annual Christmas letters, received in our home over forty years. Ansgar and Christie had hordes of birds visiting their well-stocked feeder in their beautifully landscaped grounds, and Mary and I once spent a weekend there, banding Evening Grosbeaks.



Maurice Street, Ansgar Aschim, Ralph Stueck and Stuart Houston, Aschim homestead, Candle Lake, 12 June 1965 (courtesy of Susie Gordon).

Ansgar and Christie enjoyed 63 years together, sharing an interest in butterflies, moths, birds, flowers and gardening, until Christie predeceased him on 2 November 1995. Ansgar passed away soon afterwards, on 28 December. They are survived by two children, Omar (also a Past-President of the Prince Albert Natural History Society) and Susie, four grandchildren (Omar's son, Kevin, graduated in forestry), and two great granddaughters.

As reported by Betty Cruickshank in the subsequent issue of *Blue Jay*, the highlight of the SNHS summer meet at Candle Lake, 12 June 1965, was the "trek to President Aschim's

homestead in the Birch Bark Creek area. ... the beds of calypso orchids and other rarities are really out of this world! Beauty seekers trod on spongy bog and deer moss, over squirrel middens, beside honeysuckle, blueberry, bearberry, northern comandra, stemless raspberry, mertensia, orchids, and labrador tea. ... Interest reached a high pitch when a pileated woodpecker inadvertently led watchers to its nest." This homestead, the better part of 320 acres, with its unusual variety of orchids, was initially preserved as the Homestead Heritage Park, with a later name change to Homestead Heritage Forest.

