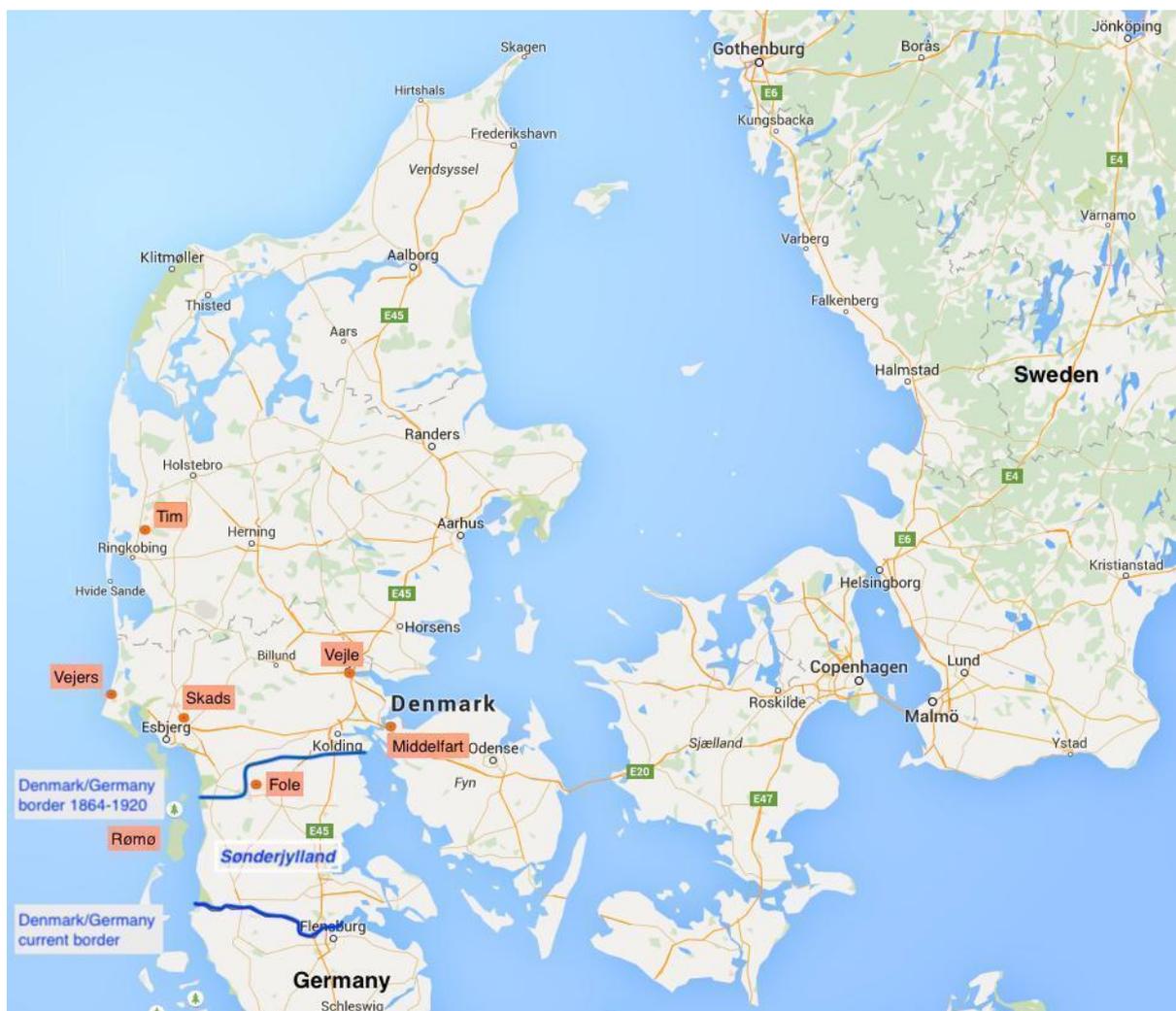


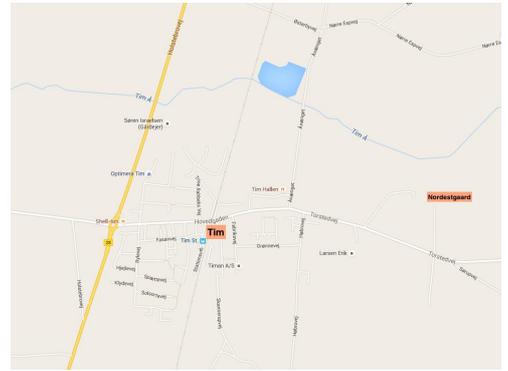
SØREN PETER NORDESTGAARD'S CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

I was born 20th of March 1949 on Ballegaard farm in Fole, Sønderjylland (South Jutland), Denmark, son of Alfred Lind Nordestgaard and Marie Møller Nordestgaard (nee Nielsen).

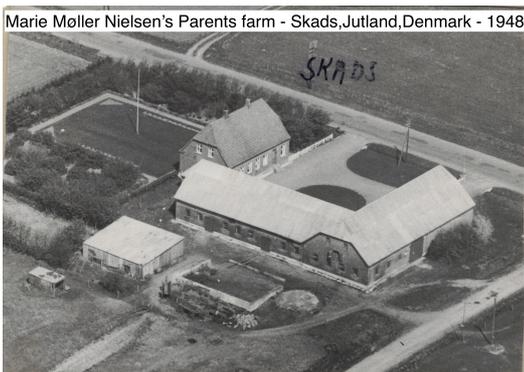
On 15 May 1949, I was christened Søren Peter Nordestgaard in Fole parish church. It is common for people in Denmark to have two first names. I was named after my mother's father, Søren, and my father's father, Peder. The different spelling of Peter is due to my father not ensuring, that the priest got the spelling right - both names are common. I was always called Peter at home, because my sister, Lis, who is one year older, could not pronounce Søren. This has caused me problems ever since because on all official documentation I'm called Søren. My brothers Leif and Eilif were born in 1952 and 1958 at the hospital in the nearby town of Gram - Lis and I were born on the farm.



Nordestgaard is the name of the farm in Tim, Vestjylland (West Jutland) where my father's father was born. It was common practice for people to be unofficially known by the name of their family farm ie "Peder from Nordestgaard". In 1905 a new law gave people the option to legally take the name of their family farm as their surname. My grandfather was christened Peder Lind Graversen in 1872. He changed it to Peder Lind Nordestgaard in 1905.



My mother was born 6 February 1924 on a farm in Skads, Vestjylland. She had two older brothers. When she was still a toddler she contracted polio. As a result one leg was a bit shorter than the other and she had a slight limp. Her mother died from pneumonia when Marie was 10 years old. After completion of primary schooling she was keen to go to high school in Esbjerg, the next big town. Marie was a good student and her teacher tried to convince her father to let her continue her studies, but to no avail. For the next 5 years she had several farmgirl jobs on nearby farms besides helping with housekeeping duties for her father and brothers. Her father did employ a housekeeper, but his plan was for Marie to eventually take over that role. She did convince her father to let her attend *højskole* (Danish folk high school) for 3 months in the summer of 1943. From January 1944 she became full time housekeeper for her father and brothers.



My father was born 26 October 1919 on a small farm, also in Skads - one of 11 children, 7 boys and 4 girls. He was the youngest boy. At the time most kids left school after grade 7; but Alfred wanted to do further studies and begged his parents to let him attend *efterskole*. His mother was supporting him, but his father didn't think they could afford it, because the fees were 300kr and the country was going through a rural financial crisis. Alfred then got the idea that he could earn some money by selling a load of turnips on the market in Esbjerg - the next big town. His father let him borrow his horse and cart and he sold enough turnips (700 turnips at 25øre each) to make a profit of 175kr. With that money and a state subsidy he could afford to attend *efterskole* for 5 months in the nearby town of Bramming. His father died from pneumonia the following year, after driving in an open horse and kart 50km in heavy rain to his granddaughter's christening in Skodborg. Alfred's 8 years older brother, Magnus, took over the running of the family farm, until it was sold 5 years later. With the proceeds of the sale his mother built a 3 storey house in the main street of Skads. She lived on the top floor and rented out the rest of the house. Alfred left home at this stage and for the next 7 years worked in a variety of farming jobs in Vestjylland and Sønderjylland.



Peder Lind Nordestgaard



Cecilie Mathilde Nordestgaard



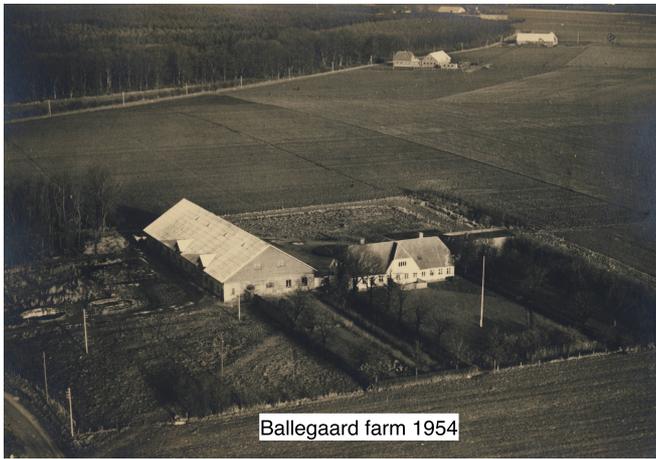
Alfred Nordestgaard (front right) and his siblings - 1932



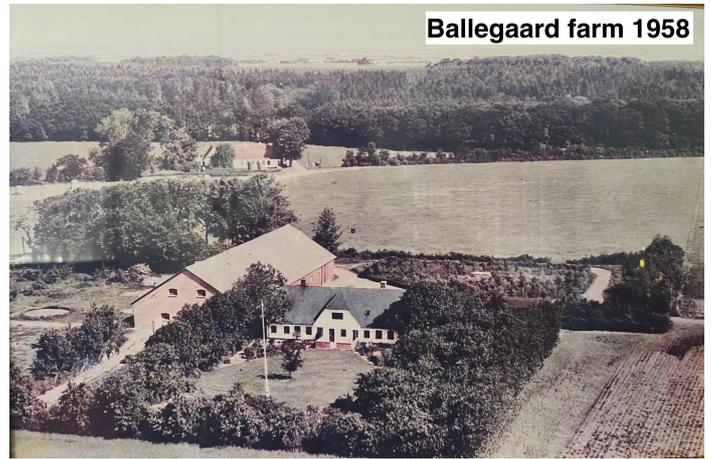
Marie and Alfred (3rd and 4th from left) Folk dancing - Skads - 1945



Marie and Alfred Nordestgaard



Ballegaard farm 1954



Ballegaard farm 1958



Ballegaard farm 1949

Marie and Alfred met at a dance at the community centre in Skads in 1942. They probably knew of each other before then, because their parents' farms were only a few kilometres apart. They became engaged in the spring of 1944 and married 3 May 1947.

Sønderjylland was historically part of Denmark; but it was lost to Prussia in the war of 1864 and became part of the German empire after the German unification in 1870. The population of Sønderjylland - also known as Nordslesvig (Northern Schleswig) - was predominantly Danish. The German government had a policy of germanisation, and to assist in that process, it bought 36 relatively large Danish-owned farms and installed German tenants. The plan was to turn these farms into model farms and thereby impress the Danish population with German efficiency. The farms were known as *Domænegarde*. My birth farm, Ballegaard, was one of these farms. After Germany's defeat in the First World War, the Danish government asked the allied powers to implement a plebiscite, to determine if the people of Sønderjylland wanted to belong to Germany or Denmark. In 1920 the plebiscite was held and 75% voted for a return to Danish rule. The Danish state was now the owner of the 36 *Domænegarde*, and it decided to subdivide these large farms into smaller farms to give young farmhands the opportunity to buy a farm on preferential terms. This process was gradually implemented over the next 30 years as the current tenants leases expired. In 1946 Ballegaard was subdivided into a main parcel with the farmhouse of 33ha, and 5 smaller parcels of 7ha each. The average farm size in Denmark at the time was 18ha but 7ha was considered sufficient for a family to make a reasonable living.

Alfred Lind Nordestgaard had been working on farms in Sønderjylland for several years when Ballegaard was subdivided. He applied to purchase the main parcel and was the successful applicant, partly because the government committee, that made the decision, took into account what role the prospective buyers had played during the German occupation of Denmark from

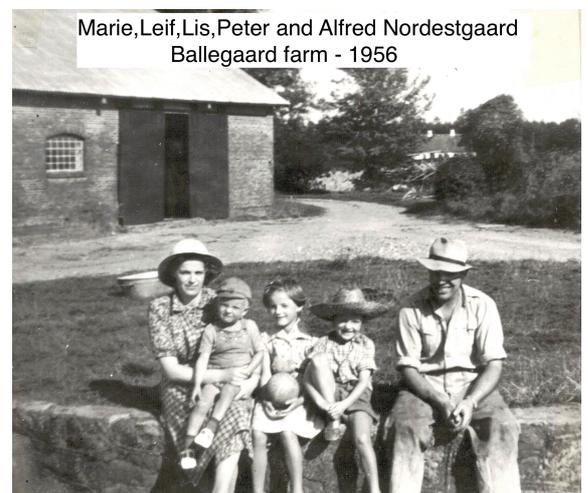
1940 to 1945. Alfred's older brother, Niels, had been involved in the resistance movement, and Alfred had on many occasions assisted Niels as a courier. I don't know what other factors contributed to him getting the farm, but he was probably smarter than the average farmhand. He must have felt very lucky, because he had no savings and his only asset was his old motorbike. The state gave him a loan of 60000kr to cover the purchase. The stable buildings had burned in 1946 and he managed to get a 30000kr loan from a bank to rebuild one of them. I'm sorry I never asked him how the locals felt about a young outsider becoming the owner - with state assistance - of the once biggest farm in the parish. I can imagine there was some envy.

Alfred took possession of Ballegaard in January 1947 and moved in. Marie joined him after their marriage in May the same year. My sister, Lis, was born the following year and I was born a year later.

I was only 9 years old when we sold the farm; but I still have many memories from that period of my life. It was a mixed farm with milking cows, pigs and chickens. A variety of crops were grown: barley, oats, rye, hay, turnips and sugar beets. In addition to a large lawn bordered by flowers and bushes, there was a vegetable garden and an orchard with assorted berries, apple, pear, and hazelnut trees.

We had hired help. The standard practice was for farm owners to hire staff on half or full year *fæstemål* (contract) on May 1 and November 1. I remember three of the farmhands and one farm girl - some of them may have stayed on for more than one term. They lived on the farm and became part of the family.

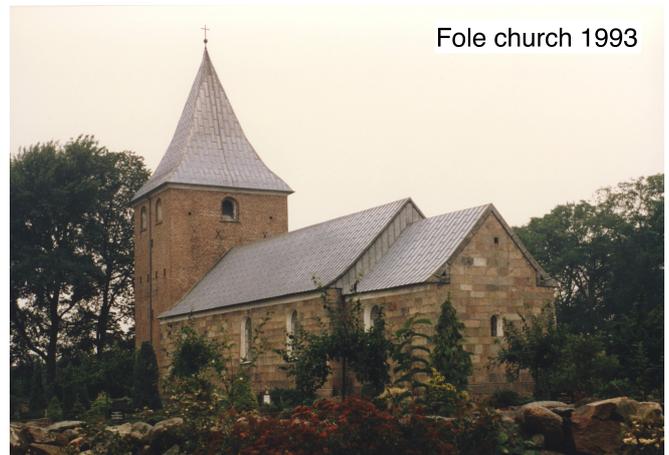
Like most farms we did not have horses but a tractor - first a large *John Deere* and later a very noisy *Hanomag*. There were around 20 cows that had to be milked morning and evening. In winter they would stay in the stables day and night, but in the warmer part of the year they would be returned to the grass paddock after milking. It would often be my job to assist with herding the cows to and from milking. The paddocks had electric fences to prevent the cows from wandering off - you got a nasty shock if you touched them. Every day a milk truck would come and pick up our milk urns and take them to the coop dairy in Gram. I remember once being allowed to join the milkman on his round. Every day the urine from the cows was drained from the stables into underground storage tanks and the manure was collected and carted to the dung heap. In spring both were sprayed onto the fields as fertiliser - creating a very strong smell in the process. We had many pigs - I think that may have been a profitable business.



Harvesting was the main job of the year. It was a labour intensive process. First the crop was cut and bound into sheaves with a reaper-binder machine, then the sheaves were manually

placed into A-shaped stooks for drying and to prevent vermin eating the grain. Next the sheaves were collected and taken to the farm and fed through a threshing machine to separate the grain from the stalks and husks. The stalks were bound into bales and the grain collected in bags or storage bays. The invention of the combine harvester made it possible to perform all the above tasks with one machine. These machines were too expensive for individual farmers to buy; but there were businesses that, for a fee, would carry out the total harvesting process with a combine harvester. We did not make use of that service; but I did see combine harvesters being used on farms in the neighbourhood. At the end of the harvest season a *høstgilde* (harvest feast) was held at the local *forsamlingshus* (community centre) in Fole. This feast was one of several held each year at the *forsamlingshus*.

Fole was a small town. There was a school, a pub and a church with a manse. Small businesses included a grocery shop, bakery, smithy and a bicycle repair shop. The bicycle repair shop also had a tiny lolly shop, that we would usually frequent on the way home from school.



Our farmhouse had two lounges: one for daily use and a *store stue* (big lounge) used for special occasions like Xmas dinner and when we had visitors - we kids were not allowed to play in there. Before Xmas my mother would decorate the Xmas tree in the *store stue* and we kids would only see the tree on Xmas eve when we had the evening meal. The main course was always roast duck with sugar browned potatoes and red cabbage. The desert was always *Risalamande* (Danish Almond Rice Pudding). After the meal the stearin candles on the tree would be lit and we would walk around the tree holding hands and singing Xmas carols. Then at long last it was time for the most important task of the evening: the opening of presents.

None of my parents immediate family lived nearby, and we would only see them a few times a year - mainly at major family events. Most of them lived near Skads 40 km away.

On Sundays we would occasionally go on family outings like visiting castles and museums or going to the beach. The nearest beach was on Rømø island 45 km's away.

I remember my first cinema experience. One evening, after my dad had finished the milking, the whole family drove to the cinema in Ribe 15 km's away to see a movie in the *Far til fire* (Dad of four) series. Fole did not have a cinema; but they did sometimes show movies in the *forsamlingshus*. They would place a movie projector on a table and erect a small screen. One summer evening Lis and I rode our bikes there to see a movie called *Det var på rundetårn*.

We kids would ride our bikes everywhere. Our school friends lived either on farms or in Fole and we would ride our bikes to their homes to play or they would come to our farm.

Television had been introduced; but we didn't have one. TV sets were very expensive and I only knew of one household in the district that had one. We did have a radio, and Lis and I would listen to broadcasts in Danish of classics such as "Around the World in 80 Days" and "The Children of the New Forest".

I remember collecting trading cards. The first ones I collected were included in the *Rich's* chicory coffee substitute packets. These cards were based on the *Peter Pan* Disney movie. Later I collected movie and sporting star cards from chewing gum packs.

Another hobby was constructing models from cut-outs that were included on the back of cereal cardboard boxes. For example it could be airplanes, cars, trains or buildings.

Fridges and freezers in private homes were not common and we didn't have one. I remember that we made use of the communal freezer house in Fole, where you could store your meat - probably for a fee.

We hardly ever ate out. When we were on outings we would bring *smørrebrød* (Danish open sandwiches) with us. My mother had a special metal box with trays, enabling the sandwiches to be transported without being squeezed. We would find a spot at the side of the road and consume our meal sitting at our foldable picnic table and chairs.



Alfred, Lis, Peter and Leif Nordestgaard having lunch on side of road - 1958



Ford Vedette 1957 - identical to ours

In 1956 I started in grade 1 in Fole public school. The school had grade 1 to 7 classes, but only 3 teachers - an elderly Mr Ehrenreich and a young married couple. Each teacher had to teach several grades in the same classroom. On the first day we were supplied with wooden pencil cases with sliding lids - blue for boys and red for girls. My first text book was the *Ole Bole ABC*, which had been standard issue in all schools since 1927. Mr Ehrenreich taught religion. I can only recall him teaching the old testament. I liked the lessons, because he made it exciting to hear about the battles the Israelites fought against neighbouring countries - like the Philistines. When he came into the classroom, the first thing he would do, would be to draw a map of Israel on the blackboard: the coastline at Haifa jutting out in the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee joined by the Jordan River. My sister Lis and I rode our bikes the 3 km to school - regardless of the weather. We had to stay at home a couple of times, due to the roads being impassable after heavy snowstorms; but I do not recall my father ever driving us to school.

Sadly Ballegaard farm is no longer. When we visited in 1993 no one was living on the farm. Farming in Denmark was now only profitable if it was carried out on a larger scale. The new owner was farming the land together with other farms he owned. The farm buildings were slowly deteriorating and he would probably have liked to demolish them and make use of the land; but they were heritage listed. We visited the farm again in December 1999. The buildings had by then been damaged beyond repair in a major storm. On our next visit in 2005 the buildings were gone. The owner must have got permission to demolish.



My father had developed problems with his back from the hard physical work on the farm, and he decided to start a different career. In October 1958 my parents sold the farm and bought a service station in the city of [Middelfart](#) on the island of Fyn (Funen). The sale price of the farm was 300000kr. After paying their debts they had 95000kr left over - 45000kr of that was used for the deposit on the service station. My mother was not happy about leaving the farm - she loved the large garden and life on the land.



Alfred and Marie Nordestgaard's car business - Brovej 114-116, Middelfart, Denmark - 1961