

These are the stories Peter told his children about the war.

"Peter won medals in the war

One medal was because he was wounded. He had a scar on the back of his hand from grenade. He was in the trenches when the enemy attacked. The German soldiers who were shooting a machine gun were killed. Peter took over the machine gun and killed several of the enemy.

One medal was because a boy fell in the river who couldn't swim. Peter could swim, and saved him.

Peter got body lice so bad he was hospitalized. One day a general came into the hospital ward and started pointing to men, saying, "I'll take him, and him, and him." He pointed to Peter, but the doctor said Peter was too sick to go. Those men went to the Russian front and died.

Peter was stationed on both the Western and Eastern fronts, in Russia, Belgium, and Poland. He was in Poland when the Russians signed the peace treaty.

Peter got two weeks leave each year. When he became a Lieutenant in 1917 he got three weeks leave.

At one point he was somewhere in the east and was leading a foraging party for food. He led his men down into a home that was half underground. It had a mud floor and a big brick stove. An old grandmother was curled up on the stove trying to stay warm, but there wasn't much fuel. The parents and children were huddled in a corner, frightened of the soldiers. Strung across the ceiling were a few cobs of maize, with just some kernels on each. His orders were to take all the food he could find, but he turned his men around and told them there was no food available in that home.

Peter saw his brother Niels get killed.

After the war Peter went home to Hjerpsted. He was given a job of decommissioning mines that washed up on shore. He was given a rifle and was supposed to shoot them so they would blow up. That got boring, so he started taking them apart until he got to the part that would blow up, then shooting that.

Later he went to Hamburg and became a policeman, until he earned enough money to travel to America.

Peter earned enough to travel second class, because he had heard how rough it was traveling in steerage. He took the boat, then the train from New York to San Francisco and up to Ferndale, California. He had a friend there who had written to him to go to Ferndale. He worked as a farm hand and for a dairy. By the time my father Niels was a little boy, he was driving a truck around the valley picking up milk for the dairy. Niels sometimes went along with him".

Indsendt til Museum Sønderjylland – Sønderborg Slot af barnebarn Cindy Hansen.