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Jensen, Ib (1934–2006)

SVEN HAGEN JENSEN

Sven Hagen Jensen, M.Div. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA) has worked for the church for 49 years as a pastor, editor, departmental director, and church administrator in Denmark, Nigeria and the Middle East. Jensen enjoys reading, writing, nature and gardening. He is married to Ingelis and has two adult children and four grandchildren.

It was said of Ib Jensen that “Ib loves the Faroe Islands and the Faroe Islands love Ib.” He gave 45 years of service as a literature evangelist to the islands.¹

Ib Christensen Jensen was born July 11, 1934, at Bedsted, Thy, in the northwestern part of Denmark² and worked as a farmer. While engaged in 1960 to a young woman he encountered the Adventist message. When he chose to be baptized and joined the church, it caused a break with his fiancée. Then he had a dream that showed him that he should go from door to door and tell about Jesus.³ Because of his unpretentious nature, he found literature evangelism difficult and was ready to give it up. His sales were few. Then he joined a more experienced colporteur, Anker Serup, and together with support from kind church members, they managed to make a modest living.

In 1961 church leadership asked him to go to the Faroe Islands to sell magazines and books from the Danish Publishing House. On foot and on bicycle and often by boat he visited the homes and was well received, although he could not speak the local language and they barely understood his heavy west Danish accent. His humble and modest ways, however, opened doors. Although he would easily get seasick, he defied the fierce winds and rough seas to reach the most isolated homes. Sometimes he would get stranded on a small island because of the weather. Then he would spend the time helping with tending the sheep, gathering in the hay, or doing household chores. People would offer him a bed to sleep in, and he ate at their tables. As bridges and tunnels began to connect some of the main islands and he got a little car for transportation, things became easier and sales improved.

Jensen began with selling *Sundhedsbladet* (a health magazine) and religious books printed in Danish.⁴ As books started being published in Faroese, his visits became even more popular, and he placed books in most of the islands' 16,230 homes (2002).⁵ The popular children's book series *Skýmingarløtuni* (Bedtime Stories) and *Trúfastir vínir* (Faithful Friends) went especially well, 30,000 and 16,000 volumes respectively.⁶ At times he would sell more than the publishing house could supply, quite contrary to the rest of the Danish Kingdom, where literature evangelism had a hard time. When the publishing house had problems financing a reprint, Ib Jensen invested the money himself. He would also buy up the stock of Danish books that had failed to sell in Denmark and either sold them to his costumers in the Faroe Islands or gave them as gifts. When you visited his small one-room apartment under the church building in Tórshavn, you would find a large section of it filled with boxes and stacks of books that he hid behind a curtain. Books became his life. Through the years he would visit individual homes on the islands several times. His name became a household one, and everyone knew that he was a Seventh-day Adventist. Even if you happened to meet a Faroese on the street in Copenhagen and asked if the person knew Ib Jensen, you would almost always get the answer: "Oh, you mean Ib, the man with the books."

Such close contact with the Faeroe population gave him many opportunities to share his testimony, explain Bible doctrines, and pray for the families. On one occasion he had just sold two first volumes of W. L. Emmerson's book *På Vandring med Mesteren* (Footprints of Jesus), when the woman in the house began to cry. When Ib Jensen asked for the reason, she pointed to a little bed in the kitchen where her paralyzed girl of 4 or 5 years lay. The girl had never been able to stand or walk. He suggested to the woman that they pray together. And there in the kitchen they knelt by the stove. First the mother prayed and then Ib Jensen. Afterward he went on his way with his books. A year later when he returned with the next volumes, the mother could not hide her joy. The daughter had been healed and now played outside with the other children.⁷

Ib Jensen's own favorite book was *Maran Ata* by Ellen G. White. He used it for his morning devotionals every year. It was heavily underlined, and he had memorized many passages from it. When he was not engaged in selling his books, he would help around the church and the church school in Tórshavn. As a deacon he also picked up the elderly people and brought them to church. Never marrying, Jensen considered the church his family. His delight was mission. Especially enjoyable was the time during the summer when a small group from Denmark would come year after year for two weeks to join the pastor, Ib Jensen, and other local church members in their annual Harvest Ingathering campaign and visit the homes that he had entered for so the many years. Ib Jensen gave 45 years of faithful service to the church and the population in the Faroe Islands before he lost his life in a tragic accident on June 24, 2006.⁸

SOURCES

Danielsen, Jens. "Du var tro over lidt . . ." *Adventnyt*, January 2002.

Jensen, Sven Hagen. "Ib Jensen, obituary." *Adventnyt*, September 2006.

Johannesen, Birgir, *Sagaen om Syvendedags Adventisterne på Færøerne* (unpublished paper). In author's private collection.

Schantz, Børge. "Nu må du æ skryw for møj!" *Adventnyt*, January 1999.

NOTES

1. The Faroe Islands is a small group of 18 islands in the Atlantic Ocean 320 kilometers north Scotland and about halfway between Norway and Iceland. It is an autonomous territory within the kingdom of Denmark.?

2.

Unless otherwise stated, this article is based on the author's personal acquaintance and friendship with Ib Jensen.?

3. Børge Schantz, "Nu må du æ skryw for møj!", *Adventnyt*, January 1999, 13.?
4. Danish was taught in school and widely understood and read in the Faroe Islands.?
5. Jens Danielsen, "Du var tro over lidt...", *Adventnyt*, January 2002, 4.?
6. Birgir Johannesen, *Sagaen om Syvendedags Adventisterne på Færøerne*, 19.?
7. Børge Schantz, "Nu må du æ skryw for møj!", *Adventnyt*, January 1999, 13, 14.?
8. Sven Hagen Jensen, "Ib Jensen obituary," *Adventnyt*, September 2006.?

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