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What
a
Life!

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In a small house on a side street in Copenhagen, Denmark on January 20, 1855, a son was born into a family who were later to be my ancestors. He was educated in the public schools in Copenhagen as ^{was} were his brother, who was blind, and his two sisters. His first job was a painters apprentice when he was seven years old. He was seventeen years old when he ran away from home and went to Ireland to learn the stonecutters trade. He soon tired of this and joined hands with an old sea captain. They sailed the seas until he tired of this also. He and a partner took over a ranch in Alberta, Canada which satisfied him for a while. He then left for South America where he contracted Swamp Fever and had to leave in favor of North America again. His sister had come to live in Chicago at that time, so he made his home with her.

It was while he was in Chicago that he met Ann Christiansen who

was later to become my grandmother. They were married on August 24, 1889. Three sons and a daughter were born to them of whom the first son was my father.

When Emil, my father, was six years old he was out playing in the street and a horse trampled him and broke several of his ribs. He was brought home instead of taken to a hospital because, as the doctor said "He cannot possibly live." He did live to become a wanderlust, which trait was probably inherited from his father and grandfather, who incidentally was a sea captain and had been to every country in the world excepting Australia. When my father was nineteen he was in an automobile accident in which he received injuries sufficient to keep him in the hospital for six months. It was just after the accident that he learned of his death. A newspaper had printed an account of the accident in which he was told of his death. That is sufficient proof for me that "You can't believe every-

thing you read in the newspapers. "My father was nineteen when he met my mother. It was by no means a whirlwind courtship because they were not married until three years later on January 7, 1914.

My maternal grandfather was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and when he was three years old my greatgrandparents brought their family to Illinois which was then a new land. My grandfather was a farmer, and not a very good one at that. My grandparents' parents had been friends in Pennsylvania and so my maternal grandparents had practically grown up together. They married on December 30, 1880 and lived on a farm in Tonica, Illinois. They had a family of twelve children and my mother was the eighth.

My mother was raised on her parents' farm in Tonica and attended a typical country school. After grammar school, she attended the country high school and later went to the Chicago Normal College with a girl friend. She taught school for a short time and then was a telephone operator. It was then

that my father met her.

My oldest sister Beverly was born March 29, 1916. Joyce and Lyle followed Beverly and then I was born. It was in Tonica on October 20, 1921 that I began my existence. I was eleven months old when my parents decided to leave the farm in favor of Chicago because my father could be on the farm only a few days at a time as his job with the Santa Fe Railroad kept him in the city. The house that we moved into was about the only one for blocks around. There was prairie from sixty first street, where we lived, to sixty third street, where the street cars ran.

My earlier years were spent in childlike play with dolls, roller skates, velocipede and jacks. Two younger sisters were my companions in these games. Pat, Marion and I had grand times together. I remember Sundays particularly well. After we had come home from Sunday School and had dinner, my dad would take us out and buy us caramel candy.

We had some of the loveliest neighbors that I think anyone could have had. They were Mr. and Mrs. Tucker who had a daughter. She was married and lived in London, Ontario, Canada. This daughter, Elizabeth, who was as old as my parents, was very fond of me. Of course, she liked my sisters, too, but I was her "favorite". Elizabeth and Lorne, her husband, were talking continually of taking me to London with them. I was, thrilled at the thought but I hardly believed that I would ever really go. I was eleven years old when Mrs. Tucker asked me if I would like to go with her to visit Elizabeth. My first instinct was to accept but on second thought I wasn't sure whether I would go or not.

I had a very good part in a school operetta and the Worlds Fair had asked that our teacher bring the group down to the Childrens Theater at the Fair and give a performance. I didn't know what to do! I had wanted to go to London for so long and yet I could

not resist the temptation of singing at the Fair. My mother thought it would be best if I would post-pone my trip to London until the following year so that I would not miss the experience of the Fair.

When I told Mrs. Tucker of my decision she wanted me to go with her for a traveling companion and so she post-poned the trip for a few days on my account. I was to have both thrilling experiences!

Our operetta was very successful and the trip was grand. It was my first train ride and I had looked forward to it for many days. Mrs. Tucker and I played cards and read the "funnies" and all in all we had a good time. Lorne and Elizabeth met us at the train and we went home in their car. I had no idea what their home would be like as I hadn't seen any pictures of it. It was a large brick house with driveway along side of it. My greatest thrill was the yard. It was three times the size of mine at home and it had beautiful flowers.

grass and trees and a croquet set.

I remember the croquet set was my pride and joy. Whenever my friends and I would finish playing with it, I would put it into the box underneath the porch. One night I was in a hurry and left them laying on the grass. That night it rained and in the morning Elizabeth found them. I got a cloth and wiped them dry and they were none the worse for their experience.

My friends were numerous and we had lovely times playing in the park, which was about four blocks away. I was surprised when I first saw the parks because there was so much in them. They had a dozen swings where Chicago we had four. Their swimming pool was large enough for hundreds, wherein ours crowded one hundred. It took a few visits for me to get used to these "irregularities."

It surprises many people to hear some of the opinions others have or form about things that they know nothing about. It was this way with me in London. When some of my friends found out that I was

from Chicago, they were actually afraid of me. They thought that everyone in Chicago carried a gun as a matter of course. When I told them that I had never seen a gangster, and that they did not go around killing people as if it were their business, they were shocked. They had been told that Chicago was the underworld for gangsters and so they thought that they were accepted as other people were.

That first summer I stayed in London for only three weeks. To me it was the nearest thing to heaven. For some reason or other I love to get away from home. Everyone else can stay away for only a short time, then they get homesick and can hardly wait to get home again. I believe that I can adapt myself to other peoples' ways of being better than my family.

The following year, Mrs. Sucker died and Mrs. Sucker left Chicago to live in London with Elizabeth and Lorne. In the spring they took a trip back to Chicago to sell their house and I was

asked to return to London with them. This time I didn't have to think twice. I knew what I wanted.

I received permission to leave school a week ahead of time because Lorne had to get back to work. It was a marvelous trip. We went by automobile and it took us two days because we didn't hurry any faster than we had to. Elizabeth, Lorne and Mrs. Lucker had made the trip between Chicago and London many times and so they knew just where to stay over night and the good places to have lunches, dinners and snacks.

That summer I spent three months in London. Every day that I spent there was more interesting than I had ever spent before. Almost every Sunday we would go to Port Stanley to swim in Lake Erie. Sometimes, Ruth, one of my girl friends in London, would go with us. All we did was swim and play around in the sand and get nice and brown. At the end of that summer I was "as brown as an Indian". Now I did hate to leave to

come back to Chicago and school.

I had thought that I was going to come home on the train by myself. Elizabeth and Mrs. Lucker had different ideas on the subject. They had wanted my mother to come to visit them but she "just couldn't get away." They thought it would be a good idea to get her there and then she could go back with me. Well, I didn't know that she was coming, but one morning Elizabeth told me she wanted me to come upstairs and meet a friend of hers. I went along with her thinking ~~thinking~~ that it would be no one out of the ordinary. My mother was the farthest person from my mind at that time. When Elizabeth introduced me to her, believe it or not, I didn't even know my own mother! When I did recognise her, we both started crying and Elizabeth said she never felt so bad in all her life. She said she never would play a trick like that on anyone again.

My mother spent a week in London with us. He took her around and showed

her the town. When it was time to leave, Lorne took us to the bus station. He didn't like to leave because we had been having such a nice time. He went to Detroit the first day and stayed with some friends of my mother's. The second day we left Detroit and it took us almost the whole day to get back to Chicago but it was a very nice trip. Incidentally, it was very dirty but I guess we have to take the good with the bad.

When we arrived home in a taxi, (I just love to ride in taxis) my sisters were there and they made a fuss over me. I guess I was glad to get home.

During that summer the Kenney family moved into Tucker's house. They had three children, two girls and a boy. John was two years older than I, Marion was just my age and Lucyle was my sister Marion's age. We were good friends for a while and had nice times, but when we started to school we got into different crowds and didn't fall around together very much. Anyway we argued too much with each other to get along very well.

Our grammar school graduation was a very simple exercise. There were twenty six pupils in our class. Thirteen boys and thirteen girls. It was the only class that ever graduated from Hubbard School which was balanced evenly between boys and girls. Our class president, Richard Wright, announced the different numbers for the program.

I used to be a tap dancer and for graduation I did a "Time" dance. I had a costume of green slacks, a green hat with fuzzy on it and a velvet blouse. I was the second one on the program so I didn't have time to be nervous before my number, but after I was finished with my dance and was backstage I started to get nervous. My sister, Joyce, was backstage and helped me get out of my costume. I didn't want her to see that I was nervous, so I had to pretend to be "cool." I guess I was a pretty good actress because she didn't say anything to anyone about my being nervous.

I felt quite grown-up after I had my diploma but after I had gone to

High School for the first few days I found it very different. I was put into a division where there were only four of my graduating classmates. Worse than that, the boy that I had a "crush" on wasn't going to go to Lindholm. He was going to Elden. I do have the worst troubles. I didn't know at first how I was going to get along in High School without seeing more people that I knew but I got along alright after a while.

In my freshman year nothing of great importance happened, but in the first half of my sophomore year, tragedy struck. The semester had been going for only six weeks when my appendix decided it didn't like me anymore so I decided I didn't like it either. I guess Dr. Blair's opinion was the same, so on Friday morning March 12, 1937, my mother woke me up and I got ready to go to the hospital. We went to the Evangelical German Deaconess Hospital and I had, so I thought, the best bed in the room. It faced the door and I could see anyone who walked through the hall.

I was on the third floor in room 317.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning when I was put on a table and rolled down the hall into the elevator. The anaesthetist put a mask over my face and that was the last thing I remembered until the nurse was calling me, trying to bring me out of the anaesthesia. She wanted me to tell her where I was but I knew that I was in the hospital and I was so tired I just wouldn't answer her. That was the worst day I ever remember having spent.

The next day was lovely. There was a girl in the next bed to mine, who was in the hospital for observation. She only stayed for two days so I didn't get to know her very well. On Sunday Mary came to the hospital with an infected jaw-bone. She was in the bed second from mine. We were good friends and we talked about everything we could think of. We had the nurses buy movie magazines for us when they went out. We would read and exchange them. When my dad or mother

would bring me ice cream at night, half of it would always be for Mary. Whenever we would tell them what kind to bring it would be strawberry or pineapple ice.

Many friends brought candy and other gifts to me which made my stay very pleasant. My nurses ate most of the candy, but they deserved it for being so nice to me. They said they never saw anyone receive so many gifts in the hospital before.

When I came home I had to stay in bed for a few days but when I was finally allowed to get up and walk around the house a little I felt terribly awkward. I stayed home for six weeks in all but when I finally went back it only took me about a week to catch up on my work. I thought I would have to drop at least two subjects and concentrate on the two remaining ones, but I was fortunate enough to be able to keep them all and pass in them, too.

That summer I stayed home for

most of my vacation, but at the end of the summer I went to Cedar Lake with my two younger sisters, my cousin, Ardelle, my younger sister's girl friend, Ruth, and my mother. Did we have a good time? Our cottage was just a short distance from the lake and we were in the water most of the time. We swam before and after breakfast, after lunch, before dinner, and we even had a moonlight swim one night. In other words we practically lived in the water.

One day I put shorts and a halter on and thought I'd fish instead of going swimming. I fished and fished and didn't catch anything but a sunburn.

I had been tanned before but I certainly was in misery with sunburn that night, like I never had been before.

And so the summer ended and going back to school was the next job I was to undertake. The end of my sophomore year and the beginning of my junior year were ahead of me before the next vacation. I could hardly wait!

I was so crabby and grouchy around

home that year that my family said they could have looked me up and sent me to China or someplace else far away.

I'm sort of ornery anyway whenever I get a notion to be. Every once in a while if I didn't feel like being nice to anyone I just wouldn't be. It wasn't a very nice way to be, I know, and I don't do it very often anymore because I realize now how foolish it was. Anyway, that year I was much ~~crosser~~ than usual so at the beginning of the next summer I went to see what Dr. Blair would have to say about it. He thought at first that I was just in a general run-down condition and suggested that I eat and sleep more. That was just in my line because I love to eat.

Dr. Blair wasn't satisfied with my gaining a few pounds so he had some x-rays taken of me. After a few days he called up our home and told me to go to bed and stay there. That was on Friday and on Sunday he came to see me. He told me I'd have to stay in bed for three or

four months as I had pulmonary tuberculosis which the x-rays showed.

I dreaded to think of what I would do all that time but I found that it wasn't hard to pass the time. I read a great many books and did some embroidery work. I read at least four books a week. At first I read almost any kind, novels, tragedies, comedies, detectives or biographies, but after a few weeks of these I turned almost entirely to biographies. I liked them best because they were true to life and always different. The other books got to be too much alike. I have noticed since then, too, that when I read too many books of fiction they become boring.

On my birthday, in October, my cousins came over and we had sort of a party. My sisters Joyce and Laje were working nights so they sent me a telegram. About a week after that they gave me a pretty canary. He was as "yellow as a chinaman" so I called him "Chinke". He doesn't sing much except when there is a lot of noise.

Mrs. Blair said I could get out of bed on Christmas. I was glad of this because as anyone can imagine, staying in bed for four months is quite tiring. My sister had been doing my Christmas shopping and I had been wrapping mine and other peoples gifts. I think Christmas is one of the nicest days of the year and it was especially so that year.

In February I started back to school again and I was in the last half of my junior year. I had to make new friends in this class because most of the people I went with before were now in their senior year. It took me almost the entire semester to get used to this new class. It was almost twice the size of my previous class and there were many people ^{in it} that I hadn't even seen before.

Came the end of the semester and vacation. I was sort of glad to loll around and do nothing for a change. My cousin had been graduated from Proviso High School in Maywood in May so she came to stay with me during the rest of May and June.

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School was let out on Friday morning and Friday evening I went down to Tonica to visit my Aunt Pearl and Uncle Noah on the farm. My cousins drove down almost every Friday Evening and came back on Sunday. I was expecting to come back with them on Sunday but my aunt and I talked it over and we decided I would stay for another week. I was glad of this because the country is always so refreshing to one who isn't used to open spaces, fresh air, farm animals and such.

They had the cutest little lamb that was only a month old. I liked it so much that I wanted my picture taken with it. Uncle Noah caught it after a few minutes chase and handed it to me. Was I surprised! It was so clumsy I could hardly hold it. Besides its clumsiness it wanted to get away from me and that made it more difficult to hold. After I finally had the pictures taken, I put it down and it ran over to the fence where its mother was. Its mother had been crying for it because I guess she thought she wouldn't get it back.

That was the only place I went during my vacation this year but my older sisters all went away for two weeks. Those two weeks were grand for my younger sisters and I. We had the house almost entirely to ourselves. It's very seldom that this happens because if one sister goes away the others usually stay home.

A few days before school reopened this fall our whole family was invited to a wedding and reception. My mother said it was the first wedding invitation she received since she and dad were married. Everyone planned to go and I made a new dress to wear.

At the last minute when I tried it on, I decided I didn't like the way it looked on me so I wouldn't go.

Now that I have started my last year in High School, who knows what the future will hold for me? I still say, "What a life I've had, so far."