

Dec. 4, 1995

Dear Kristina & Tom

Enclosed is a brief copy of my Autobiography. I thought you might be interested in remembering some of the incidents I could recall personally. Thanks to Ozzie for helping me bring back some childhood memories. Dad helped me get it together & organized. It was fun to do and perhaps will help our children to visualize what life in our family was like a generation ago.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Love & Best Wishes.

Mom

Autobiography
by
Dorothee Edith Trowbridge
1995

This is a brief story of my life based on recollections and occasional snapshots taken on special occasions. The order of events is generally in sequence but may be interrupted with anecdotes that come to mind later and were inserted in the narrative. Most of the narrative was written by my husband, Leslie W. Trowbridge. None of the material is taken from diaries or previously written records. My brother, Oswald Kohring, has assisted me in recalling some of the events of my early childhood.

My parents, Karl Kohring, and Charlotte (Heyde) Kohring were both born in Germany. My father was born in Dziembow, Germany, near the Polish border. My mother was born in Berlin. After their marriage, they emigrated to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada in approximately 1915. Four older siblings, Paul, Oswald, Hildegard, and Heinz, preceded me in the Kohring family. I was born on Aug 1, 1923. At that time, Paul was 8 years old, Oswald, 7 years, Hildegard 5 years, and Heinz was about 2 years of age.

We lived in a small house at Macmillan and Nassau Street in Winnipeg, next door to a Jewish synagogue. When I was less than a year old, on a cold winter day, the water pipes in the house froze. My father tried to thaw them out by holding burning newspapers under the frozen sections. Unfortunately, the house caught on fire and the fire department had to be called. There was a lot of smoke damage but the house was saved. During the fire, my mother placed me in a small basket outside the front door to avoid the smoke. The older children were also outside shivering in the cold wintry air.

Shortly after I was born, my father left for Chicago to find more lucrative work. While there, he shared an apartment with another man. He eventually sent money to our family in Winnipeg to join him in Chicago. One inducement was to suggest that our family could pick cherries in Chicago! Perhaps he had seen cherry trees on the Michigan side of Lake Michigan, but this was a good 200 miles from Chicago.

When we arrived in Chicago, we lived in a basement apartment at 2160 N Clark Street, close to the streetcar track, where streetcars screeched by constantly. The basement flooded frequently under heavy rains. Father was a laborer – a hod carrier working for a contractor who constructed buildings in Chicago. Later, Father became a dry waller and plasterer. Although conditions were good for laborers in Chicago in the late 1920's, our family of five, which became six and then seven, and then eight with the births of Elfriede, Charlotte, and Gertrude, obtained welfare and other benefits from the city.

A common cry on the streets was heard from the Jewish fish seller who called "Fish "Fish". My mother bought fish from him so our diet had plenty of fish in it. The fish were Lake Michigan chubbs that had been smoked and were called "Gold Eyes.

Paul went to a technical or vocational school while Oswald and all the other children in our family went to Chicago public schools. We spoke German at home but learned English in school. "Vater"

as we called my father was often jailed on weekends for various offenses, mainly for disturbing the peace.

We lived in several locations in Chicago during my childhood. All of these were on the north side of the city. We started at 2160 N Clark Street, a basement apartment which had gas lights. Then we moved to State and Division when Elfriede was in the 4th grade. Louise Kupsch, Oswald's future wife, lived next door. Mr. Kupsch was a minister in the Baptist Church.

Following this, we moved to Clybourn Avenue when I was in high school. At the time I met Leslie, in 1942, we lived on Vine Street. It was at this location that Vater had a great idea for saving fuel bills in the winter time. He located a source of pecan shells at some establishment in the city. He had a truckload brought to our basement to supply our wood burning furnace. This worked fine for a week or so, but then we noticed flying insects emerging from the pecan shells. Soon they come in hordes and covered the walls of the entire house. Memory conveniently fails me as to what finally happened after this event!

When I was twenty, we lived on Seminary Avenue and at the time I was married, we lived on Belmont Avenue. So we became acquainted with quite a lot of Chicago's North Side.

From any of these locations, it was a relatively short distance – perhaps 20 minutes by streetcar or walking – to Lincoln Park beach and zoo. During my growing up years, Mother (we called her Mulla) took her family of kids frequently to the beach to swim. Perhaps that is why I enjoy swimming so much even now, nearly seventy years later.

We also visited the cages of elephants and other wild animals. My brothers, Ozzie and Paul, helped themselves to the lettuce heads intended for the animals. A memorable event, according to Ozzie, was to be in the proximity of an elephant when it exercised its penchant for flatulence!

As a child, we sometimes went on excursions across Lake Michigan to Benton Harbor. I don't remember what the conveyance was or who paid for it. I also spent many hours walking dogs for the occupants of the posh apartments along the lake shore. One of these was Melvin Purvis, the FBI agent whose claim to fame was that he cornered and shot John Dillinger the notorious gangster and outlaw of the early thirties.

At one of our locations, we were near the Biograph Theater, which gained notoriety in the thirties, also, by being the scene of the "Valentines' Day Massacre" where seven gangsters were mowed down by a rival gang during prohibition days. These events, and frequent similar ones during that period, helped to give Chicago a bad name as the "city of gangsters and outlaws".

Other kinds of activities went on in Chicago, also. One of these was the farm of "Daddy Brooks" which took in homeless, pregnant, girls and cared for their offspring. Somehow, my sister, Gertrude, stayed one summer at this farm. When she returned at the end of summer she had lost weight but still wanted to go back to the "Daddy Brooks" farm and did not recognize her own family. She was only two at the time.

During the war, I had several jobs, in Chicago and elsewhere. My favorite was with Montgomery Ward as a receptionist. I admired my supervisor, Mrs. Smith and after leaving Wards, I corresponded with her frequently, even after marriage. On a trip to the Northwest, when our children were grown, I called on her at her home in the state of Washington.

Another job I had was in Florida, working for a land developer and construction contractor. It was here I learned to drive a car and enjoyed sightseeing in the Everglades and other Florida landmarks. During the war, also, I went to Gallup, New Mexico, and spent some weekends exploring the Indian reservation and getting to know something about the Navajo culture. I visited a "Hogon" a hut like structure in which the Indian family lived. For more than two years, I corresponded with Leslie, who was stationed in India and China as a weather officer. We became engaged and I looked forward to his return to Chicago at the end of the war. This occurred in December, 1945. After a few days, he left for his parent's farm in Milladore, Wisconsin. For Christmas that year I went to visit him at his farm home and had a chance to renew acquaintance with his parents and brothers Bob and Charles. As a Christmas present, I took him a pair of wood skis and a pair of leather ski boots, of the then current style. He still has the boots, but the skis got demolished in a skiing accident at Perkinstown, Wisconsin, where we had gone with Oscar and Dorothy Koerner on a weekend skiing trip. Leslie came down a ski jump at too slow a speed and when he came to the end of the jump, instead of sailing out onto the snowy trail, his skis pointed downward and the tips got stuck in a snow bank. The momentum carried him forward and the skis stayed behind. Both skis broke in half at that point and the ski – jumping was over for the day.

[addendum insert]

The following is some information which I had written previously – about 1984 - concerning our family.

Mother Charlotte Heyde was born in Berlin. As a young girl, she sold retail shoes. Her father was a shoemaker. The hours on her job were from about 7am to 9pm. For work she owned just two white blouses and two black skirts. She saved her money and purchased the boat tickets to Canada.

Charlotte had a brother and a sister. After living in the United States many years and at age 60, she visited her brother and sister in Berlin (behind the iron curtain), having earned the money herself by doing housework and giving companion care to several families in Chicago and New York.

Charlotte was well groomed and had good posture. Her young friends and she frequented the gymnasium in Berlin, where she may have met Karl, her future husband.

Karl Kohring was handsome, tall and courtly. Charlotte had two suitors. Karl being the best looking won her hand in marriage.

Karl's weakness for women plagued the family as did his consumption of liquor. He was quick witted, loved making deals, worked as a clerk to an attorney in Germany. After trying various means of

earning a living, he settled on building trades such as masonry, plastering, tuck pointing, and paperhanging. After several years in Winnipeg, he went to Chicago in 1922, having his family follow a few years later. He rounded up some laborers and embarked on the work of tradesman mentioned above. For at least one year, he repaired a movie house. He arranged for his family to present his business card which permitted them to attend the movie free of charge.

I went to Lincoln School Kindergarten in Chicago. My mother placed me on a sled or little red wagon and took me to school. Every day in the summer, we spent on the beach near the north side of Chicago. We were not forced to go into the water. We all learned to swim on our own. Inclement weather changed our beach and park forays to winter walks in the park, attending free out-of-doors concerts, and amusement park trips.

Karl would have his children (junior high age) take his statement for work done to the businessman for whom he did work and would have us bring home the check. Doing this, we learned to get around Chicago very comfortably. I think these experiences have made me rather fearless when encountering transportation systems in other cities. My philosophy is, "You can't get lost. Just stay on the bus and sooner or later it will come back to where it started"

On Sundays, we would take a ride to the country in our truck. On the way back, we would buy a \$2 bushel of apples and usually ate quite a few before the family arrived home. We attended Grace Lutheran Church. It was a little embarrassing to receive a large basket of food at Christmas. We received free immunizations, dental care, and other health care from the City of Chicago. I shall have to remember them with a gift someday. The social services department assigned Mrs. Rohrig (Bea) to our case. Karl had a hard time providing for us because he was generous – he would lend any fellow money, or satisfy his desperate need for drink. He left home for good several times. This didn't bother me too much when I was small, but a junior high age it was harder to take. This disappointment didn't last too long, usually only a few months, because we were better off without him.

Several times a week, before 7am, we were given a clean pillowcase to take to the bakery. There the clerks placed about 20 of yesterday's sweetrolls in the pillowcase. This along with the frozen cream on the top of the milk bottle which had set outside overnight and had produced a one inch layer above the lip of the bottle was a fine way to fill an empty stomach.

Our talented sister, Hildegard, was a special person. She was like a second mother to us. She had great pride in being as well dressed as she could be. She suffered polio as a teenager, resulting in a lifetime of back problems. Hildegard was a leader and she ruled the four younger sisters by insisting upon good table manners, a clean house, and good behavior. She produced plays in which we all starred. We all attended Sunday school. On Halloween – several years in a row – her costumes, worn by herself or younger sisters, won first prize. She dressed Trudy, a beautiful toddler, as Mae West or other movie star and made a hit.

In 1930 when Charlotte was 4 and Trudy was 2, the children began to summer with two families who had no children of their own, and who wanted to care for under privileged children. They loved these toddlers and asked if Mulla would permit them to be adopted. We discussed it and decided to

keep the family together, even though the children would have had new clothes, toys and ice cream every day!

All the children started earning their own spending money while in upper elementary school. With this money, they were able to buy school clothes and supplies. A dressmaker would have us purchase new material, a dress pattern, and would sew a dress for just a few dollars. Beginning in fifth grade, we had two new dresses a year, which we washed and ironed every day until they sparkled. We also polished our shoes just about every day. Once my shoes were ladies high tops, button shoes that reached almost to my knees. This was very mortifying because they weren't in style at all and it was very unpleasant to wear them.

Some of us earned money walking dogs, baby sitting, and running errands. If one goes to the park daily, something is bound to occur that you don't like. Several times, men exposed themselves to us. My mother went into action when we reported a certain sleazy character. He was taken to court. I was interviewed in private and was shown the offender through one-way glass. He was fined and never bothered us again. He did live in our neighborhood and we did get "looks" from him afterward.

Often we children would take a lunch to the park or would spend a day at the zoo or at the beach. Mother was at home cleaning, washing, cooking, and mending. There were ten members in the family so it kept her very busy. Generally speaking the parks were safe and pleasant places to spend time.

Welfare recipients were given sacks of flour, boxes of prunes, sugar, dried milk, and other supplies. At times we required food supplements. We were somewhat embarrassed at getting "welfare" but it kept us going.

It was a thrill for me to get postcards from Oz, my older brother. During the depression, the WPA gave my father work, and Oz was lucky enough to get into the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) in Alaska and other places. During the war, Heinz spent some time in the US Army and served in Germany after the invasion.

Our parents spoke German at home. The older children learned English at school and brought English home to the preschoolers. Our parents picked up English well.

I consider the family successful. The girls all married good spouses and stayed married. Leslie and I will celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary next year. Kenneth and Elfriede have been married equally long. Hildegard and her husband, Edward Slindee, were married 35 years when she died. Trudy married Don Pattison, a stockbroker, in New York. Charlotte married David Caldwell and they live in Falls Church, Virginia. Charlotte's first husband, John Chamberlain, was killed in World War II while parachuting over Germany.

[Addendum Insert 2]

Following is a chronological listing of events in my life from birth in 1923 to 1993. Some of these items may duplicate what has already been reported but a little redundancy never hurt anyone! This is in tabular form for ease in referring to particular years.

Year	Age	Grade	Comment
1923	0		Born in Victoria hospital in Winnipeg Canada on August 1 st
1924	1		
1925	2		Elfriede was born in December in Chicago. She married Kenneth Johnson
1926	3		
1927	4		Charoltte was born on April 18 in Chicago
1928	5	K	Lincoln School, Belden Ave Chicago
1929	6	1	Gertrude (Trudy) born July 25, Chicago
1930	7	2	
1931	8	3	
1932	9	4	
1933	10	5	Alcott Grade School, Chicago
1934	11	6	Walked dogs, soda fountain, child care. Leslie came to World's Fair. I didn't see him.
1935	12	7	
1936	13	8	Graduated Ogden Elementary School on State Street, Chicago
1937	14	9	Waller High School, Orchard St
1938	15	10	Hotel soda fountain
1939	16	11	
1940	17	12	
1941	18		Graduated Waller H.S.
1942	19		Worked as receptionist at Montgomery Wards. Cold by front door. Met Aviation Cadet Leslie Trowbridge, Sept. 30 1942
1943	20		
1944	21		Worked for construction company in Gallup, New Mexico. Visited Navajo Indians
1945	22		
1946	23		Married Leslie of Milladore, Wisconsin on August 31 1946. Went to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin where Leslie taught elementary school. After two months of marriage, had appendix out at Elkhorn hospital
1947	24		Moved to Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin where Leslie taught Physics, Senior Science. David was born August 31, 1947 in Wisconsin Rapids
1948	25		Leslie received M.S. at U of Chicago
1949	26		Tom was born in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin on December 8
1950	27		Leslie began work on M.S. at U of Wisconsin
1951	28		Edith was born in Wisconsin Rapids on November 8 She got to see her great grandmother Clara Koerner at the farm in Milladore one time before Grandma Koerner died.
1952	29		
1953	30		Leslie finished M.S. at U of Wisconsin

1954	31		Moved to Whitmore Lake, Michigan when Leslie got job at University School in Ann Arbor, and started work on Ph D
1955	32		Worked in ice cream store in Ann Arbor. Family ate mistakes and all gained weight
1956	33		Had new house built 1261 Creal Crescent
1957	34		Howard born in University Hospital in Ann Arbor on May 12
1958	35		
1959	36		Leslie went to Bowdon College for data
1960	37		Leslie took half-time contract to finish dissertation
1961	38		Les graduated U of Michigan with Ph D
1962	39		Moved to Greeley, Colorado where Leslie taught Science Education and Earth Science. Lived in rental house across from Maplewood school. Howard started Kindergarten
1963	40		Moved to present address. New house at 2001 21 st St. Kids all attended Lab school of Colorado State College
1964	41		Started college at UNC. I just took one course – Earth Science – first. Taught by Leslie
1965	42		Continued college. Majored in Home Economics
1966	43		Chemistry was hard but Dr. Beel was a good teacher. David, Tom and Edith helped me
1967	44		In summer, went to Guam where Leslie taught elementary science workshop. Whole family went. David worked at University of Guam for the summer to earn money for college. Tom and Dave learned scuba diving. I went to Saipan with Edith, Tom and Howard while Leslie and David toured Japan at end of the summer. Leslie's father died in June
1968	45		
1969	46		I graduated with Bachelor's Degree in June. Edith graduated from high school, and Dave graduated from Reed College all the same year. The family (Les, Edith, Howard, and I – still at home) all moved to New York City in the fall. We lived on Houston St. in a 30 story apartment building for six months – then another apartment in Washington Square for rest of school year. I taught Home EC in P.S. 77 in Manhattan
1970	47		
1971	48		
1972	49		Finished M.A. in Vocational Home Ec.
1973	50		We moved to Falls Church, Virginia, for the 1973-74 school year. Leslie was President of National Science Teachers Association. I taught at Woodson Senior High in Washington, D.C. Howard went to high school in Falls Church
1974	51		
1975	52		Howard graduated from Greeley Central H.S.
1976	53		This was the year of the Big Thompson flood in Colorado. I occurred on my birthday, August 1 st . This was also the Centennial of Colorado's admission to the union
1977	54		Went to Chunghua Provincial College in Taiwan for semester. Leslie taught physics. We traveled the island with the seniors on their senior trip
1978	55		

1979	56		
1980	57		
1981	58		Grandson Leslie James born Feb. 13 Grandson Adam was born at NCMC on May 10
1982	59		
1983	60		In the reorganization of UNC, Leslie lost his job. We moved to College Station, Texas, where Leslie taught at Texas A&M University
1984	61		We moved to Taipei, Taiwan where Leslie taught in Physics Department of National Taiwan Normal University. John Cappo, Edith's stepson, went with us for the year. He learned to speak Chinese and stayed in Taiwan to the present. Julian born
1985	62		We traveled the year using Eastern Airlines "Get up and Go" package. We visited Pittsburg (David and Cynthia's home), Seattle, New York City, etc.
1986	63		We moved to Cedar Falls, Iowa, where Leslie taught physics and physical science at University of Northern Iowa. Allison born
1987	64		Leslie was re hired at UNC in the Earth Sciences Department
1988	65		Granddaughter Sarah was born at NCMN on May 26
1989	66		
1990	67		Leslie retired from UNC in August. We moved again to Cedar Falls, Iowa, where Leslie taught physics again at UNI
1991	68		This spring completed fifty years of science teaching for Leslie. To celebrate, we took four former students and Elly and Kenneth from Naperville out to dinner at "Ninos" in Waterloo, Iowa.
1992	69		Adam and Sarah Trowbridge lived with us this year under temporary custody for 18 months. They then lived in a foster home with Mr. and Mrs. Gomez, Evans for 18 months.
1993	70		N February, we went to Taiwan to teach a course during "lunar new year". Bob and Nina Ward, Virginia Hash, and Dave McCalley from UNI also participated
1994	71		In February, we again went to Taiwan to teach a course to M.A. students. Roy and Sara Unruh, Virginia Hash and Dave McCalley participated
1995	72		This year we obtained permanent custody of Adam and Sarah Trowbridge who now live with us. Adam goes to Lab School. Sarah goes to Jackson School. (Adam presently lives with his Dad at 1038 23 rd St, Greeley)
1996	73		This is the year we will celebrate our fiftieth wedding anniversary. So far no definite plans have been made, but it will probably be a simple get together for immediate family, perhaps a little reception in the Fellowship Hall of the First United Methodist Church in Greeley.

Other memorable events

A few other recollections are added, in no specific order. One remembers certain events that stand out. I did not keep a diary so these are just "recollections"

Over the years, I have attended regional and national science teacher conventions, accompanying Leslie to New York, Atlanta, St. Louis, Seattle, Anaheim, Jamaica, Kansas City, Portland,

Vancouver, Denver, and other places. I usually attended some meetings but mostly socialized. At several, UNC had a coffee hour and it was pleasant to meet old friends and former students. These usually drew 60 or 70 people and kept us in contact for many years.

One memorable trip was in 1974, when Leslie and I attended the meeting of the ASE (Association of Science Educators) in Leeds, England. It was during a coal strike in England so our accommodations were a bit chilly and the hall where Leslie spoke in Leeds was definitely “overcoat” temperature. Most exciting of that trip was our visit to Trowbridge and Taunton, where Leslie’s forbears lived before heading for the “colonies” in 1637.

Another trip to Trinidad-Tobago is well remembered. We enjoyed the tropical temperatures and met some very nice teachers – mostly British – who were conducting classes in the staunch British system of “O” levels and “A” levels.

We also had a chance to work in Jamaica for a month and enjoyed certain excursions with a car that was provided us. Herbert Thier from the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley, accompanied by his wife, also took part in both of these events in the Caribbean. We became fast friends.

Most recent of the trips was a two month stint in Cairo in 1994, where Leslie worked for the curriculum Center of the Ministry of Education. Spent many enjoyable days sightseeing, meeting new Egyptian friends, and socializing with the wives of three other consultants who were there at the time. Nancy Burkman and Virginia Gionatti were always ready to see the sights, ride the subway, go to the pyramids, or just plain “wander” in Cairo. A wonderfully educating experience.

It has been a wonderful life. I never dreamed I would get to do all these things. We had such a nice family who made us feel proud. And now we have two grand children to see through their “growing up” stage. People say we will get younger because of this. Perhaps! In the meantime we are enjoying life, keeping healthy and busy and thanking the Lord that we can enjoy life to the fullest.

Dorothee