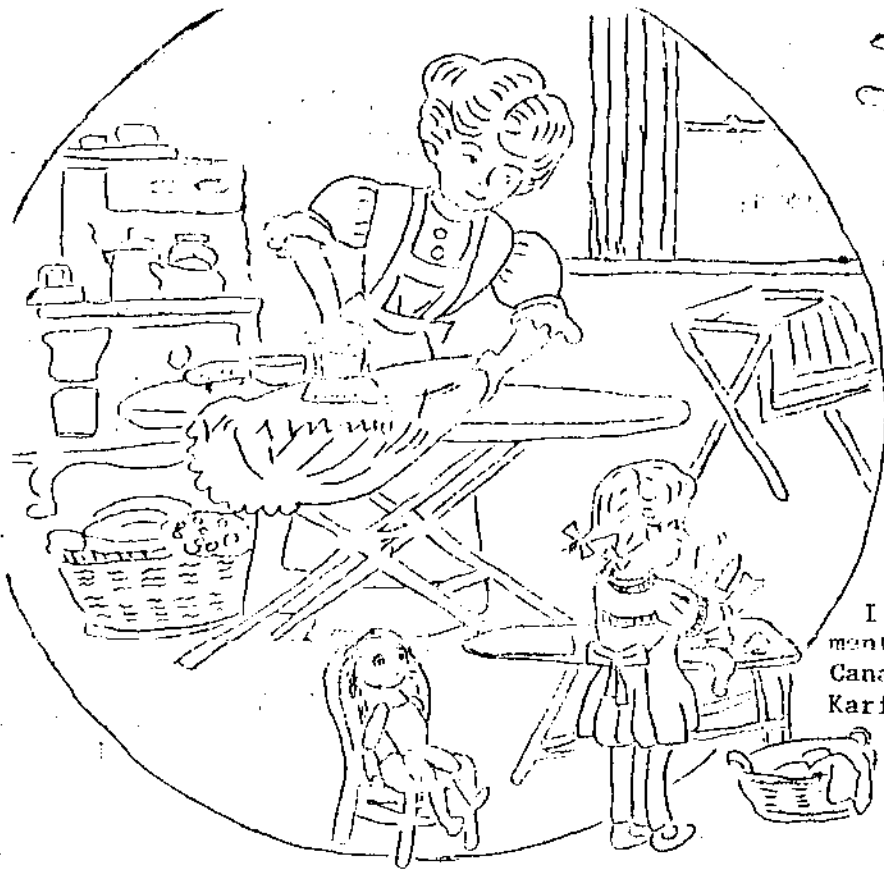


Down Memory Lane

By Aurora Hovey



Our stroll Down Memory Lane this month is with AURORA HOVEY....a very dear lady whose smile and warm and sincere nature brings happiness to all of us here at the Center. She is gentle, soft spoken, and always ready to lend a helping hand wherever she can. She is what friendship is all about....love, concern and sympathy for her fellowmen. Here is her story.....

I was born in a little Swedish settlement on the outskirts of Kenora, Ontario Canada on April 15, 1911, and christened Karin Aurora Linnea Holm. Both my parents immigrated from their native land, Sweden, to this settlement...my father came in 1909 and built a modest home for his family, and my mother and sister joined him in 1910.

The only boy in our family was born two years after me, and then followed another girl. Our house was only two rooms--a kitchen and living area, and one big sleeping room for all. In the back of our house was a big rock, and down below my father built a shed and put a sleeping room above it to make more room for his growing family.

There were no roads in Canada at this time. The only means of transportation was by boat or train. To get to the main town of Kenora, we had to walk along a wooden sidewalk along Lake of the Woods. It was so beautiful up there...we were surrounded by the beauty of Mother Nature all seasons of the year. I am sure my exposure to this country imbedded in me my love of the out-of-doors.

My father was a typical Viking-type individual--blond, blue-eyed and strongly built, and very kind and good to his family. He was a lumberman, and his work required him to be away from home many days at a time out in the woods. He had a big, blond moustache of which he was very proud. I can remember when he came in from the cold...there were icicles and frost around his moustache....Those frosty kisses were something very special!

In contrast to my father, my mother was olive-complexioned, brown-eyed, slender and tall. She was quiet and gentle, and devoted her whole life to her family. She would stay up late many evenings, sewing or mending clothes, fixing our dolls, and doing the many things that only a mother can do to care for her family. She had one of those old knitting machines, and she knit all our stockings, mittens and sweaters on it for us. We use to help put the arm on the spool for her. She was the only one in her family who left Sweden, and she was only 21 years old when she came here, so I am sure she must have been lonely for her family at times even though she never mentioned it.

We had neighbors who had children just about the same age as we were. I can remember in the summer when we use to have severe electrical storms. My mother and the neighbor lady use to get all the kids together and stay up all night watching so no harm would come to us. Also, we use to go to the neighbors to get our milk and carry it home in a tin pail. One time I went up to get the milk, not knowing they had the measles--well, sure enough, a few days later I came down with the measles--then the rest of the kids got them too!

I was just like my mother's shadow and had to be with her all the time. One day, when she was doing dishes, I was up near the counter and fell down and broke my arm. We didn't go to doctors in those days, so they put my arm in a sling and let nature take care of itself. To this day, I have a lump on my arm from this fall. And then there was this darling kitten we had for a pet. We use to dress her up in doll clothes. Then we would put her in the buggy and she would sleep there all day.

We were surrounded by Indians where we lived. The only word I can remember is "BUSHOO" which means "Hello". They lived like Gypsies, wandering around the country side. I can remember seeing them by the lake, scrubbing clothes, fishing, or just congregating together. Every so often they would come to our house and want to trade their beadwork for articles like matches, root beer, etc. For many years I've had a hanging pin cushion that was made by them with the year of my birth on it--all done in beads.

I was six years old when we left Kenora and moved to northern Michigan where my father worked in the copper mines. Well, my father always was talking about farming, so a few years later we moved to Port Wing, Wisconsin. This is where I started grade school and learned how to speak English. We had about four miles to school, and we were transported to and from school in a covered wagon. Many times we would hear the wolves howling in the distance. In the mild months, we had a wagon drawn by horses; and in the cold months, it was converted to a sleigh. To keep warm, everybody had a brick that had been heated in the oven and wrapped in paper. This we would put down by our feet. When we got to school, we put the brick in the oven in school and it was kept warm until we got ready to go home. The school I attended still stands there today. A few years ago, some of the people wanted to tear it down and erect a new building; but I am happy to say that it is being preserved as a historical site.

I can remember the big, red, delicious strawberries we grew...and we sold them for 10¢ a quart! It was our job to watch the chickens so that the hawks wouldn't eat them. Then we had to watch the chickens so the hawks wouldn't eat the chickens. Another job we had was to carry the water home from a spring. We used this for drinking and cooking. Then we had big rain barrels, and we used this water for washing clothes, taking baths and washing our hair.

After about four years, we had to leave the farm as my father was unable to make an adequate living for us. Finally, he found a good job in Iron River, Michigan. I will never forget the day he came to take the family to our new home. He had a brand new 1923 Model T Ford with side curtains, running boards, luggage carrier, and we thought it was the most beautiful car in the world. Well, we all piled in....a big dog, four kids, and mother and dad. We had 200 miles to go, and it took us 12 hours to make that trip. My father had never driven a car before this trip, and his arms were stiff when we arrived at our new home in Iron River.

In 1942 I came to Duluth. During World War II, I worked at the Hong Kong Restaurant as a waitress. This was a good exposure for me as I was very shy and retiring; but I met so many wonderful people while working there, and it helped me overcome this trait,

Now I live at Midtowne Manor, and am very grateful for my lovely apartment and all the wonderful friends I have. I don't need a whole lot of worldly possessions to make me happy. If you are happy within, that is what counts. I have always enjoyed doing for others. It gives me such enjoyment to be able to help, if only in a little way for someone or something I love to walk and be out-of-doors. When I get outside, I feel like a bird....sometimes I wish I could fly. It gives me a lot of inner peace just to be able to walk and breathe fresh air. I believe the only way to live is to be yourself....that is the way I am.

Thank you, dear Aurora, for the beautiful trip you shared with us Down Memory Lane!