

FAMILY BACKGROUND Gertie Hjortedal was born Gjertine Karia Eriksdatter Storebø on September 24, 1894, at Storebø, Huftarøy (Hordaland) which is about four Norwegian miles south of Bergen.

PARENTS Mother was Kari Zachariasdatter Drønnen. Her father was Erik Eliason Storebø; he was the fourth generation of Erik Eliason - Elias Erikson (patronymic naming system).

FAMILY SCENE Her father was a boat builder and also owned a 25 acre farm with timber land and animals: 10 milking cows, 45 sheep, 3 pigs, 40-50 chickens. Girls cared for the animals.

BOAT BUILDING Father made four small fishing boats per year, which sold for 500 kroner per boat. The timber was selected from the woods, cut down, and fashioned by hand. Gertie has a cup, which shows the biggest boat her father made; it took one year and sold for several thousand kroner.

SIBLINGS Eleven girls - no boys: Marta, Synnøve, Bertine, Anna, Johanne, Jortine, Emelia, and Gjertine.

Mother made and sold butter to customers in town. Made cheese from cow's milk, which was also fed to chickens and pigs. The children had religious teaching at home as their father read a sermon each Sunday.

WORK When 15, Gertie asked father for permission to attend business college. Father refused because she was a female. Gertie received enough money from her mother to go to Bergen and find a house job. After six months, she had sufficient funds to enter business college and pay tuition, while continuing with her job. She earned eight kroner (\$2.25 per day) plus room and board, working until 4 pm, attending school from 4-8, and working until 10 pm. She 'made it', but did not get good marks.

FATHER'S REASONS Her father always wanted a boy; was angry about it and didn't like the girls. If Gertie had been a boy, she could have gotten anything she wanted - so her father told her.

BUSINESS COLLEGE She was 16, but doesn't remember much about it.

EMIGRATION Two older sisters were in America and bragged about it. She was interested and her father offered to pay her way, but she was too proud and refused. She paid her own way over to visit her sisters. She was going to come home but had met 'this fellow' (Oystein Hjortedal) in Haugesund earlier, so she stayed in America.

WORK IN NORWAY She had several jobs in Bergen, including grocery store positions.

NURSES TRAINING : She entered training in 1921 at Aklaa? Hospital and graduated in 1924 with good marks.

Gertie liked to help people and felt nursing was her 'call' in life. There were 64 in her class, and they worked 12 hours per day.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY She was on night duty when Øystein Hjortedal came in. She had already asked for her passport, and so they talked of America. He wrote many letters to her from America afterwards and later traveled to Chicago just to ask her to marry him.

NURSING She had a choice of two jobs: Riks Hospital in Oslo or a hospital in Haugesund. She accepted the latter.

MARRIAGE Two years later they were married, had a wedding dinner, and received many gifts of sterling.

SETTLING IN They traveled back to Marlin, Washington by train, passing through Spokane. Marlin just depressed her, so she sent applications to Deaconess Hospital in Spokane. But then, she got pregnant and 'was stuck'. Tells a story about a meaningful flock of chickens and a large rattlesnake, which she hammered to death (by decapitation) and the chickens ate!

Two weeks before her first child was born, Gertie traveled by train to her sister (also a nurse) in Glasgow, Montana. A 'beautiful baby girl', Gladys, was born and baptized in Glasgow. Two weeks after the birth, she and Gladys returned to Marlin.

EDWALL They moved here (about 1930), and Gertie took up gardening: very successful first garden as neighbor gave them 12 loads of horse manure. Gardens were important during the Depression, especially since Osten worked half-time for half-pay, \$65 a month. She started to tithe to the church, \$6.50 a month: tells about tithing. They had enough food and money for themselves, God, and hoboes. Made use of 25 pigs' heads from neighbor to make headcheese. Tells story about Norwegian hobo and head cheese. Another story about 27 hoboes and her freshly baked bread.

Son was born in Edwall. Couldn't wake doctor, so Oystein fetched a neighbor lady who arrived after the baby was born at 1 am. Gertie instructed the 'shaking lady' on how to proceed with the baby and herself. By 3 am, all three were in bed; everything had gone perfectly.

LIFE IN RURAL AMERICA People were nice. Gertie continued to improve her English by reading and comparing English and Norwegian Bibles. Tells stories about using her skills as a nurse, adapting to the Western environment, killing a 'huggorm' in Norway when she was nine.

NURSING IN NORWAY Jobs were readily available and pay was 220 kroner per month (\$55 a month). After working two years at Haugesund which was close to the North Sea and 'stunk like herring', Gertie moved to America.

BOAT TRIP She traveled alone as a passenger, not an immigrant. Gertie was met by a traveler's aid in New York and taken to a cousin's big beautiful home.

Her sister from Glasgow arrived in one week. Tells story about seeing her first black person.

AMERICAN FOOD Some foods were strange: corn on the cob, multiple layered sandwiches. The fish tasted rotten compared to the fresh Norwegian fish.

She had sent an application to Fairview Hospital in Minneapolis, so she went there accompanied by her sister. The hospital gave her a job with no pay, only room and board because she didn't know English. With a good friend and recommendations, she left for Chicago and received a job with the Cook County Hospital. Here she was helped greatly by another Norwegian lady employee - Mrs. Rasmussen from Stavanger.

WOMEN AND EMIGRATION It was better then than now, as jobs were readily available. Spokane reminded her of Bergen, and she liked it.

WORK Gertie later worked as a private duty nurse for 17 years. Tells story about Catholic-Lutheran communion practices while employed at Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane. From there she became the head nurse at Riverview Terrace when she was 60 plus years old. She retired a few years later.

CHILDREN Gladys Kate Johnson lives in Denver, Colorado. She studied nursing at St. Olaf and then married a lawyer, Hans Johnson, from Hawley, Minnesota. Her son, Erling John, lives in Spokane and is Director of Financial Affairs for Spokane Falls Community College.

RETURN TRIPS TO NORWAY Gertie went right after WWII. She was seasick on the boat trip back, so she drank two tablespoons of whiskey and slept.

CITIZENSHIP Gertie could have had citizenship through marriage, but she obtained it on her own by studying three months. Her name was changed from Gjertine to Gertie at this point.

REGRETS ABOUT LEAVING NORWAY Gertie regrets not taking the Oslo job.

SCANDINAVIAN CLUBS She went once to the Sons of Norway. Because of the gambling, playing cards, drinking, and smoking, she never went back.

NORWEGIAN HERITAGE Gertie wasn't planning to stay in America, just visit her sisters. Her sister in Glasgow was so sorry she came. She was a head nurse in Trondheim and never felt at home in America. Because of the

children, Gertie felt satisfied and happy in America. Tells story about trying to learn English by attending school with Gladys (6) and Erling (4).

SPEAKING NORWEGIAN Snakker litt om jul: grønt tre, synger norske sanger, ekstra god mat, julehelgen. Spiste lutefisk, bløtkake, krumkake, goro. She continued to bake many of these items here: lefse, flatbrød, krumkake, fattigmann, goro, lumpe, and julekake.