

ALICE SHOVE CONGER-HUNTER

Born Chicago, Illinois, July 8th, 1870

Parents were Crayton Hall Conger and Louisa Agnes Shove.

Shortly after the great fire of 1871 the family moved to a farm at Oneida, Illinois, where they lived until 1877 during which time I had one year of schooling. My father's health failing and hoping it might be improved by a change of climate he and my older half brother bought what was then known as a "Post Traders" store in a small Army Post in New Mexico where we lived until 1881 when it was necessary for mother to go where there were schools. Since my father's health had not improved with the change of climate he passed away in May of 1880.

In August of 1881 we arrived in Dexter, Iowa, where we lived until after I was graduated from the newly organized two year high school and had acquired a teacher's certificate and a small country school. I continued teaching the following year in Linden, Iowa, and the next in DeSoto, during which time my mother had received an appointment as teacher in the Des Moines schools and removed to that city. At the close of my year in DeSoto I was surprised by receiving an appointment to a position as "stamp clerk" in the Des Moines Post Office, and it was there I met Guy Hunter whom I married on June 15th, 1892, but continued in my position in the Post Office for another year.

Our first child, Donald Conger Hunter was born November 25th, 1893.

During this following period of domesticity my husband's mother was using all her powers of persuasion to get him to prepare himself to follow in his father's profession, namely the practice of medicine and he went so far as to matriculate in the University of Iowa. Being of a naturally conservative mind he began to worry lest something might happen to his family if he should give up his position and leave them to shift for themselves.

As I was preparing to visit my mother and sisters in Chicago that summer to show off our baby, Guy suggested to me that I should take the opportunity to enquire about the study of dentistry for women. Although at the time I had no intention of taking up that profession, I did make the investigation of available schools. I found that of the two whose standards were highest, only one, the Northwestern University was the only one that would accept women students and that it had never done so before.

Upon my return home I did everything I could to encourage my husband to go to Iowa City but when the time came he refused to give up his job and I finally consented to take my 22 months old baby and stay with my mother and sisters. It was not an easy matter to keep up with my studies and have the responsibility of a baby who had the usual children's diseases such as whooping cough, etc., and be in a strange city away from our beloved father-in-law physician. Never-the-less and in spite of the

sacrifices made by my husband and others of the family I succeeded in completing my course, and was graduated in 1898 and "with honors" but which because I was a woman, I was not permitted to use. "Honors" meant to the men who earned them the privilege of returning to the College for the following year as a Demonstrator in the clinic for pay and this was practically the same as a post graduate course. However, at the end of the next year I received an "Honorary Diploma" the same as those who had had the experience I had been denied.

Following my graduation I returned to Des Moines and practised my profession for eight years when my husband was persuaded to invest in a lumber business in North Dakota and this necessitated our removal to that state and for the following years my life was that of the usual wife and mother of a family in a frontier town.

During these years two more children came to us, Robert Heaton Hunter born December 14th, 1909 and Janet born March 5th, 1911, and our first born (Donald) was drowned in 1913.

Also during these years in Dickinson I was active in the formation of a Suffrage Society, assisted in the acquisition of a public playground with a trained director during the summer and a public library. I assisted in persuading the women members of the P.E.O.'s and other clubs that we of the far western part of the state were equipped and able to entertain the State Federation of Women's Clubs and also the State Conference of P.E.O. since prior to this time there had been almost no contacts between the women of the eastern and western parts of the state. Our first attempt to entertain the State Federation was a huge success and opened the way for many succeeding meetings and warm friendships formed.

In 1922 owing to many unfortunate factors beyond our control, such as drouths, grass hoppers, and other conditions affecting the economic situation, it was decided that whichever of the partners in the business should find a satisfactory position elsewhere should leave since the business could not then support the two families. Guy being the one who was offered an appointment as Travelling Auditor with the Equitable Life of Iowa, from which company he had resigned to go to North Dakota, we were the ones to leave the business to the other to succeed or fail as time would prove.

A few months after our return to Iowa a vacancy occurred in the office of the school dentist in Des Moines in the spring of 1924 and I was called upon to fill that position for the remaining two or three months of the school year. Later I was elected to continue as a full time operator and remained in that position for nearly eight years when it was decided to abolish the office and send the children needing the services of a dentist but who could not afford their own private one, to the City Health Center for treatment, leaving me with out any compensating work.

During a vacation some years before I had had some little success as a sales person selling an encyclopedia for children, and being in no condition to re-establish myself in a private practice of dentistry, I was persuaded to become an agent for the New York Life Insurance Co. which position I filled until 1949 when physically incapacitated to the extent I was forced to accept a disability clause in my contract and retire to the Home for the Aged. In 1942 I lost my mother, in 1944 my husband, and in 1946 my only child left, my precious daughter.