

Autobiography-Erika Saltzman

I was the fourth child in a family of five: born Erika Olga Stoeckly, September 7, 1915 in Garden City, Kansas. Both of my parents were reared and educated in Switzerland. My father was a mechanical engineer and my mother, who was trained as a Kindergarten teacher - a very new concept in education at that time, taught Kindergarten in St. Gaul.

I had a tranquil and happy childhood, for we were a family who were close and did many things together.

After finishing the local schools I followed in the footsteps of my older brother and two sisters by attending the University of Colorado at Boulder. In the spring of my Senior year I was initiated into Phi Beta Kappa and was awarded a scholarship for graduate study. Consequently in the fall I returned to the campus and worked for a Master's degree in the field of Geography.

The following spring, with the country still in the clutches of the Great Depression, I felt lucky indeed to receive the offer of a teaching job in the Cortez, Colorado schools for the lavish sum of \$75.00 monthly for nine months. I was of course quick to accept the contract. My first impression of Cortez when I arrived in September was that of a very small town "on the edge of no where!" It had in fact the appearance and standards of a frontier settlement. However its picturesque location near Mesa Verde National Park, the peculiar mountain-like rock structures called Shiprock and Ute Mountain and the famous "Four Corners Area" along with its attraction for the Navajos which almost any day could be found sitting in wagons and milling around the streets gave this town a special flavor that made it an interesting place in which to be for a few years. My years there were happy ones.

After four years I married the Superintendent of schools. We stayed on an additional four years and then moved to Brentwood, Missouri, a residential suburb of St. Louis where my husband was again Superintendent of schools.

During those years I was somewhat "at home". I was involved in the kind of activities that most women would be involved in

under similar circumstances: church, Garden Club, League of Women Voters, United Fund, Women's Fellowship of the Brentwood Congregational Church, several times on the Board of Trustees of the Church, as United Fund Chairman for Brentwood. I was Secretary for the East Central District of Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri and President of the local Garden Club Council, etc.

In 1958 on a return trip from a Florida vacation my husband died in Franklin, Kentucky, from a heart attack. This event made an abrupt change in my life. In the year that followed I had to learn to adjust, to accept being alone, to make all the decisions, to care for the car, to put up the storm windows, to do the income tax and a myriad of things. I also enrolled at Washington University (and later took several summer sessions at Denver University) in preparation for returning to public school employment, this time as a librarian. The next fall I was employed by the Webster Groves Public Schools as a librarian where I set up and administered a library in a newly-built Junior High. My interests became school oriented. I served on numerous school committees (no one is immune to this chore) and in various offices in Delta Kappa Gamma, Kappa Kappa Iota, and on the Board of Directors of St. Louis Suburban Teachers Credit Union, etc. Probably the most meaningful contact of this period was my fortunate association with P.E.O. Chapter ID of Webster Groves, a night chapter. Many of the women in the group were teachers and close friends. The ties of sisterhood became strong.

In the spring of 1975 after completing sixteen years in my second round with public education I decided that the only ice and snow I wanted to see ever again was on some distant mountain. Consequently I turned in my resignation, sold my home and turned the car in a southwesterly direction to Arizona.

I feel fortunate to be a part of a new P.E.O. Sun City Chapter. I feel disturbed about leaving my former chapter, but I find that P.E.O. members are the same everywhere--wonderful and extraordinarily delightful.

Erika Saltzman

Chapter ID Missouri