

CHAPTER THREE

It was the eighteenth day of August, nineteen hundred and nine when the heat was almost unbearable in Georgetown, Texas where my parents lived. The iron beds were so hot that they could not be touched. Relief was granted the next day when the rains came which finally cooled the house.

This was also the day I was born to August Gerhard Teinert and Mary Magdalene Falke Teinert. I was the second child. My brother, Albert August Ernest was born March, eleventh, nineteen hundred and seven and died of pneumonia that same year in July.

I was named Elsie Pearl Janet. Before I was born Pearl Hadde, a neighbor and good friend of my parents insisted that the baby would be a girl and should be named Elsie after my Aunt Elsie. Pearl after her. Perhaps my parents wanted some say in the naming of me because the name Janet was added. My mother always called me Elsie Pearl and most of the family on her side used the double name. My father called me Elsie and most of the relatives on his side did the same. My parents were a very devoted and lovely couple, but they each called my name as they desired it to be.

I was baptized in the Wallburg Lutheran Church as Elsie Pearl Janet.



Elsie Pearl Janet Teinert

Our house was located on a corner lot with a picket fence around it. The front entrance door opened into a long hall. On the left side of the house were the bed rooms. I suppose there were two of them, but I only remember a front bed room with two double beds, probably a cradle was put between them when my last brother was born.

On the right side of the hall was the parlor. My brother Roy Charles William was born April twenty-second, nineteen hundred and eleven. He was about two years old when

he wanted a ribbon in his hair because I had a ribbon in mine. He cried until my mother combed his hair and put a ribbon in it. A lady friend visited us in the parlor, and my mother introduced Roy and me as her two little girls.

After church one Sunday we had dinner at Aunt Lischen and Uncle Traugott's house. Arnold and Emil were a little older than I was. I might have been about three years old. The two boys invited me to watch the pigs. There were lots of pigs.

That night was a horrible night in our house. There were pigs all over the room in our house. Pigs were everywhere. I screamed and screamed. It was a nightmare.

A grown cousin came to visit us. For some reason she seemed to want to just stay in the kitchen. Roy and I got tired of the kitchen. The cousin tried her best to make us happy, but how can one be happy in just one room. Our mother and father did not even come in to see if we were happy. The next day everything was better. Roy and I found a baby boy had moved into our house. He was named August Gerhard Frank. My mother wanted this son to be named after his father, but my father had to add Frank to the baby's name. This day was December 5, 1913.



Elsie, A. G. and Roy Teinert.



A. G. Teinert

There was a huge rocker in the parlor which my father used to rock Roy on one side of him and me on the other side. My mother used the smaller rocker to rock the baby to sleep. Perhaps by all three children being rocked at the same time it kept jealousy between children from appearing.

A gallery was across the front of the house and one Sunday evening my parents were enjoying and listening to the two nearby churches. The congregation of one church

were singing "Will there be any Stars in my Crown". The other church members were singing "No Not One."

My mother was easily frightened when anything happened to one of her children. One day I swallowed a nickel and she became terribly upset and kept watching and hoping that nickel would pass. She and I went into the back yard. A neighbor walked along the fence and saw my mother. He called, "It will be here early this afternoon." My mother asked him how he knew. He remarked "Why it is in all the papers." The friend was thinking of the air ship that was coming to Georgetown that day, while my mother was thinking of the nickel I swallowed.

There are a few more incidents I recall of my early childhood. There was the nice sized child piano that was mine with a stool right for a three or four year old child. Genevieve lived across the street; she had a nice rocking horse that I enjoyed. I think her father was Dr. Gates. The Hadde's had Mary Jane and we were good friends too. Once I was invited to eat with them. They served the most wonderful new dish called Pork and Beans. I went home to tell my mother how great they were.

A few block away lived the Burkhardt's, good friends of my family. Marguerite was about my age. She had two brothers a little older. I think one was named Heinrich, but do not recall the others name. Years later when we were living in Giddings we got a letter that twin girls were born.



Elsie Pearl and Roy



Mother, Elsie and Roy

While Roy was the baby in our family, I recall the big baby buggy that had space for Roy to be placed in it. Since the front could be opened, I could sit in front with my feet hanging down. This is the way my parents would stroll in the evening to visit the Smallenbert. If this is not the correct name, then it is similar to it. They had no children

while we lived in Georgetown, but later when we lived in Giddings, Hildergarde was born. While visiting here my mother would knit a pale blue and white cover for the new baby expected in our family.



In January my grandmother, Johanna Kasperick Teinert died. Since my brother A.G. was only a month old my mother could not attend the funeral. She was buried in Serbin cemetery. This church in Serbin was the first Missouri synod Lutheran Church in Texas. I cried when my father left because I wanted to go with him.

Soon after this event my grandfather Andreas Ernst Falke visited us. Andreas in English is Andrew which name sometimes was used. He persuaded my parents to move back to Giddings. My mother was very reluctant to leave as she had made many good friends here. My grandfather was quite insistent, and they moved in February of nineteen hundred and fourteen.

While we waited until a home was built for us in Giddings, we stayed with our grandfather and step grandmother. Roy and I had a lot of fun crawling all over our grandfather while he was comfortably seated in his favored rocking chair. He would call us "Dauernickel". We laughed.

Years later Aunt Elsie told me the word meant “Good For Nothing”. To us it sounded as if it meant “I Love You”.

Roy and I were allowed to roam all through the large house. We even were allowed to play the beautiful expensive music box that was placed in the entrance hall. The box played several beautiful songs. It had bubble bees buzzing, and small drums were beating. Today that box would cost several thousand dollars. Today I cannot understand why we were allowed to play it.

On the enclosed porch was a huge picture of “Custer’s Last Stand”. It covered almost the whole side of one wall. This picture fascinated me and perhaps this was the beginning of my love for history. The statue with the guardian angel watching over the little girl, and boy standing near the rim of a cliff, was another favorite.

The new house was ready, and we moved into it. It was nice living on the same block that Aunt Mamie and Uncle Robert Falke lived ,with their four sons. Albert was born later.

The first night that we lived in the new house, Aunt Mamie and Uncle Robert Falke invited us to have supper with them. As the days past, Roy and I became good friends with our cousins, Fred, Clarence and Robert; Charlie was at this time not allowed to play outside without supervision.

Since my Aunt and Uncle only had boys and I had two brothers I became very girl shy. Perhaps I thought I was a boy too. Girl cousins did not disturb me. They were cousins, the others were girls.

Not long after we moved in this neighborhood, Aunt Elsie and Uncle Henry also had a house built for them. Their house faced one street while ours faced the other street with only a fence between us to separate our back yards. One day my mother went to visit Aunt Elsie, but she did not take even one of her children. Our cousin, Alma Teinert stayed with us. My mother stayed a long time and I got very restless and impatient. Alma cheered me by saying when my mother comes home she will have a nice surprise for me.

Finally mother did come home looking very happy and told me Aunt Elsie and Uncle Henry had a baby girl in their home. I was disappointed because I had expected something good as candy for cookies.

Mutter Bohot took care of Inez Bell which helped Aunt Elsie very much. Mutter Bohot was a very well liked woman who often worked with one member or another of the Falke family.

Aunt Hulda Ward came to see us, She was mother’s sister too, and brought along Gena, whose name really was Eugenia Bell and I think Clara, The other children were born later. Gena took after her father, Uncle Joe Ward, who was a band director and could play every wind instrument. Gena at this time, about six years old, could sing beautifully and one of the songs she sang “Was hello Central, give me Heaven”. At this time when using a phone one did not punch a button, but called for Central, operator, for the number wanted.

Sometime later Aunt Elsie and Uncle Henry gave a party. Aunt Hulda and Uncle Joe with children; my parents and children etc. attended. When Aunt Elsie walked into the kitchen she found most of the icing was eaten off the cakes. I think Gena was the leader, and the rest were the followers in removing the icing.



Hulda Falke Ward



Eugenia Bell

It was not long before my parents decided we needed a larger house, so another house was bought and with some remodeling it became a very nice place to live. It was located several blocks away from the first house, but only one block from my father's sister, Theresa Teinert Lehmann and Herman Lehmann and their four children. Three of these children were girls, and since I had played mostly with boys it had made me girl shy. By nature I was a very shy little girl.

The lot was a large one with room for a stable for our horse, and we also owned our own cow and hogs. There also was room for a large garden, and lots of room for flowers and a place for children to play.

Croquet was a favorite game of ours by the time I was seven or eight years old. The swing was made of wood, the seats were facing each other, and could be used to play that it was a train.

On "Fogel Hochzeit" or the Wedding of the Birds, which came on January 25th each year, my mother would put a plate for each of her children on one of the seats of the swing. Then we would go into the house to rest. When we went outside again, we found the plates filled with cookies, fruit and candy. It was wonderful the birds allowed us to celebrate their wedding too.

Forty-two parties given by my parents were popular. My mother loved people and the more friends that came the merrier she was. The day the beautiful mahogany self player was brought to our home was indeed a happy day. One young lady from across the street; her name, Annie Ferris, came over to enjoy it.

The living room was semi circular one with a gallery built around it. There were many windows in the living room and when opened, guests either in the room or on the gallery, appeared not to be separated. When a party was given, some dancers danced in the room and some on the gallery. The self player provided the music. Sometimes musicians played, but this I recall better at Aunt Theres's house.

The tacky (Jeannine remembers these to be taffy pulling parties) party my parents had in our home was a lively event; the house was filled with laughter. My cousin, Anita Beckman, who was nine years older than I was, came to the party with her hair combed as Mrs. Katzenjammer in the funny paper.

Texas and perhaps the whole south did not send their children to school until they were seven years old; the northern children commenced at six years of age.

When I was seven years old in 1916 I started in the first grade in the Lutheran School in Giddings. We now lived close to Aunt Theresa, papa's sister. There was Herbert, Gertrude then Lydia who was my age and Ruth, the youngest child in the Lehman family. Lydia was in the first grade with me.

In the first grade we had to learn to read and write in German and in English. Pastor G. W. Fischer taught the younger classes and Teacher Griebel was teacher for the older children.

This was a Lutheran school with only two rooms, but I think we were taught more subjects than the schools teach today in the first grade. Many of the students, especially if they came from the country, did not speak English until they started school. By this time Wendish was not spoken at home to the young ones, but German was predominant. Therefore in the first grade we learned to read in English and in German; we also learned to write in script in both languages.

Rev. Fisher always expected his pupils to write in script in the English reading and the German reading lessons. I did not mind writing in English, but my arm got so tired writing the German lesson; it is so much fancier.

School was fun, but somehow Lydia could always jump rope longer than I could and it made me try even harder without avail. Running was different; not many any age could beat me.

Pastor Fischer was a very kind teacher. One day the first air-plane ever to come to Giddings landed on some vacant property near the school. Pastor Fischer allowed the whole school children to walk over to see the plane. By this time I was in the second grade. Airplanes were then called airships and not more than two people could fly in it.

Ruth Bigon, an older girl, helped me to look inside of the airship. She told me to look very good as I may never see another one. Then we returned back to the school.

Some time later Rev. Fischer heard the sound of the airship. He said we may all go outside to watch it fly away. My seat was on the last aisle away from the door-way, but I was one of the first children to get to the opening. There I fell down, and one child after another ran over me. When the last child was outside I got up and limped outside too. Blood was coming down my legs, but I remember the airship flying away. This was 1917 or perhaps early 1918.

I told you I was very girl shy at the time I started school except for cousins. One day a little girl in my first grade class wanted me to walk with her to my father store to buy some candy. I tried to get out of going, but the girl kept on begging me. Finally after school she and I walked to town, entered my father store. We passed my father kind of fast. I knew where the candy was. I picked up a sack and filled it with candy. Then as we ran passed my father, I threw the nickel on the counter in front of him. I went home.



Teinert & Lehmann Business - left side, Robert Falke, center

My mother always enjoyed making and buying pretty dresses for me and there was always a pretty hat to wear when I went to church or to town. It seems as if on my mother's side of the family they were always competing with each other who could dress their girls the best. So am sure my mother sometime was in despair as I would enjoy going bare footed when one was dressed up for company.

Some of the girls and boys that lived in the country did not wear shoes to school in warm weather. This I longed to do, but this wish was never granted. There was another thing I admired about the children living in the country. They often brought sandwiches with lard and sugar smeared on the bread while mine had a meat or something most people enjoyed better then sugar on lard. On some occasions I would trade my sandwich for theirs.

Sunday afternoons were often spent in driving to the country to visit with Aunt Emma, Uncle Carl and their twelve children. Aunt Theresa and Uncle Herman with their four children often came too. Quite often there would be still more relatives and friends there. You could hear Wendish, German and occasionally even some English spoken. Since my mother and father were true Wends I find that I must be one hundred per cent Wendish.

A young woman from the country lived a great part of the year in our home. She would help my mother keep house, cook, and take care of the children.

I always enjoyed these girls, because it was fun watching them bake cookies. We nearly always had home made cakes and cookies. Often on week ends I was invited to go home with them. Most of them had boy friends. Alma was engaged to Ben Mertink and one day Alma borrowed our horse and buggy, then she and I drove to stay with the Mertinks as preparations for Alma's and Ben's wedding was near. They spent their time in slicing the feathers from geese in order to make feather beds and feather pillows. This was fun with the whole family working together.

CHAPTER FOUR

In July 1914 my parents moved to Houston. We lived on 2009 Travis St., which at this time was a residential section in Houston. It was a pleasure to ride in a car on Main Street and see all the beautiful homes with lovely flowers taken care of by yard men. Town ended on Main Street when one passed McKinney Street. At night it was simply outstandingly beautiful to see the street lights on, and cars being driven after supper just to see the lights.

The house was two story, and it was located on 2009 Travis Street near enough to be able to walk to town. A street car's rail was on the middle of our street. At first even a nine year old found the noise from the street car made it difficult to sleep, but soon we all got accustomed to it and tuned it out.

Travis street was made of wooden bricks, and when it rained the bricks would swell and some of them would pop up.

Fannin School was ten blocks away on Louisiana Street. Sometimes Roy and I walked alone and sometimes with several neighbor children. At this time Ellen Moore was my favorite playmate. Her father was Dr. John T. Moore; she was the youngest child in the family. We each had a small doll with lots of clothes so many hours were spent playing dolls.

My mother did not feel it was wise to leave Georgetown to come to Giddings, and the day came that proved she was not mistaken. My father went bankrupt; and in July 1918 we moved to Houston. It was war time, men were needed, and my father found employment in the city immediately. My mother with their three children went back to Giddings where my mother supervised the packing and my father remained at work at Henke @ Pellot.

Life in the city was very different than the slow life in a small town. We had always talked German and English in Giddings. It was not long we children stopped talking German at home, and especially in public. I am not sure if it was forbidden to talk German or not, but one soon realized it was wiser not to use German.

Movies with titles as "To Hell with Kaiser" and you saw the devil with his pitchfork taking the Kaiser to the fire. School children made fun of my German brogue; the third grade teacher was upset because my report card from the Lutheran School in Giddings was made up in German. I was a very shy girl, I became more so. Once the teacher said a German word, then asked me what it was. I knew the word was "fork", but I just stared at her.

November eleventh of nineteen hundred and eighteen came. The War was over. Aunt Elsie, who lived in the country a short distance from Giddings, heard the shooting and the noise in Giddings and thought the war had broken out in town.

In Houston one could hear the cry of **Extra ! Extra !** Newspapers were selling fast. We had no radios or televisions then, but the word **Extra !** brought many person out of their homes to buy and Extra.

In November 1918 my parents bought a seven room house on Pecore in Woodland Heights. My mother loved this neighborhood and for seven years we were happy here.

Just a few years ago we stopped using oil lamps, and in the city nearly every one had electricity. Times were changing. We heard that a bridge was going to be built across the Brazos River on the Hempstead Highway. This meant no more waiting our turn to get on the ferry, and it was not necessary to take advantage of the waiting time by eating our lunch on the grounds. All we had to do was to drive across the bridge and keep going.

One time Roy and I were invited to go with some elderly friends of our parents to Giddings. They really were not so very old, but when one is in his or her early teens anyone some years older than ones parents makes them appear aged.

Mrs. Telger was very upset with her husband's driving and remarked "You have been driving twenty miles an hour on this whole trip". Roy and I looked at each other and smiled because our father always drove at least thirty miles an hour.

Rosa Langer was the first girl I met when we moved to Pecore. We both were ten years of age. Emelia Windt, who also was ten years old became my friend and by the time we were old enough to go to high school Irma Dippel moved across the street from our house.

Irma chose to go to Heights High School while Emelia and I chose Central High School located down town. Irma and Emelia's family belonged to the Lutheran Church, Texas Synod. We belonged to Trinity Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.

The greatest football game in Houston was between Heights and Central High School. Pastor Behnken always attended that game. The year Irma and I were freshmen in high school, she and I took a street car to the football grounds. She sat on the Heights side of the stadium, while I was on the side for Central. We won 12-10, a very exciting game.

The street car to town had students from both schools, everyone yelling for their school. Everyone but Irma and I were yelling. I felt since Irma's school lost the game that it was not for me to be the first to join my classmates. Finally Irma could keep quiet no longer, she yelled for her school and maybe I out yelled her for mine.

Mr. Mercado, our Spanish teacher was a most interesting and loved by all of his Spanish classes. He enjoyed telling stories in Spanish to us after the lessons were over. It became an unwritten law that all students must know their translation without errors so that there was time for Mr. Mercado's stories.

One of his stories was about a trial in a court room. One witness did not appear when she was called. The judge finally said, "We will have to go on without Sarah Mooney. Everyone laughed for it sounded as if the judge said "ceremony." The judge went home and told his wife about the funniest thing that happened in the court room that day. The wife wanted to hear about it so he told her about the missing witness. His wife said she did not see anything funny. The judge replied, "I do not either now, but it sure was funny in the court room."

The only two clubs I belonged to in high school was the Elaphisn Literary Society and a tennis club.

Houston did not have enough senior high schools in 1923. In the eighth grade one became a freshman in high school and by the time one was a senior, one was in the eleventh grade. The eighth and ninth grade attended school from 12:55 to 5:05 PM. The other school went in the morning.

Emelia and I took piano lessons from Mrs. Anderson. Each June there was a piano recital at the Main Street Auditorium. The Recital was in the evening, perhaps 7 PM, maybe 8 PM. We invited several boys from the seventh grade to come. Can you imagine several of these boys came to a piano recital.

Isadore was my first boy friend in high school. He was in my history class and would walk me to the street car line after school. He wanted a date on Sunday afternoon, but I was not ready for dates at fourteen. I enjoyed talking and walking in the halls or to the street car lines, and I did appreciate the ring Izzy [he told me I could call him that] carved for me from a dice.

It seems as if the boys, most attracted to me, had very dark hair and dark eyes. Isadore was a Jew, there was an Italian and one from Russia. Bessie asked why I always had dark haired boys talking to me. Years later I met someone with black hair and brown eyes, he was born in Berlin, Germany. I married him.



Elsie's H.S. Graduation Picture and Invitation, Sam Houston High, 1927

We graduated on June 3, 1927. Joyce Wright as soon as exercises were over married Leland Hodge. Joyce wore a wedding dress under her robe the night we graduated. After the exercise was over, Joyce and Leland Hodge were Married. They lived in Houston for awhile then moved to Washington DC. About the time our first son was born, their first child was born. Joyce wrote she was giving birth to the future President of the United States. Several years later Bessie married Joyce's brother, Quentin Wright.



Elsie's Confirmation picture