

## ALICE SHOVE CONGER-HUNTER

I was born in Chicago, Illinois on July 8th, 1870. My parents were Crayton Hall Conger and Louisa Agnes Shove. Just prior to the great Chicago fire of 1871 my parents moved to a farm near Oneida, Illinois, but my father's health failing soon thereafter, he decided to try a change of climate and in 1877 joined with my half brother in the purchase of a Post Traders business in northern New Mexico in an army post named Fort Union.

Trinidad, Colorado was the end of the railroad line and the remainder of the trip was made by stage coach. I was 7 years old at the time and have a dim recollection of that journey.

Since the altitude proved detrimental to his health, he left the family and started back to Illinois hoping to recuperate. He stopped in Seneca, Kansas, to visit a brother, but failed rapidly and died there before word reach my mother.

There were no schools nor opportunities of any sort for the family of five youngsters in Fort Union so, with the aid of the half brother and a half sister, the family arrived in Dexter, Iowa in 1881 and I began my education in the primary grade, having had but one year of schooling at age 6 and a private tutor for a very brief period in New Mexico. At age 11 I did not even know my multiplication tables.

I have a dim recollection of the journey to Iowa, recalling that I was car sick coming through Kansas where ripe peaches were offered at the stations for 5 cents for 15 and the odor or sight of a peach was unbearable to me for years to come.

We continued our life in Dexter, my mother becoming a teacher in the public school there as soon as her youngest child an invalid baby could be left at home with others.

I progressed in my education and was graduated from the high school at 17, acquired a teachers certificate and a country school to teach, which profession I followed for nearly three years.

At this time my cousin who was then a Congressman from this district secured a position for me in the Des Moines Post Office as a stamp clerk. It was there I met Guy Hunter to whom I was married June 15, 1892, but continued to work in the Post Office until the summer of 1893 when I went to Chicago to visit my mother and attend the World's Columbian Exposition.

On November 25, 1893, my first child, Donald was born. When he was 22 months old at my husband's suggestion I went to Chicago to begin the study of dentistry, taking my baby with me and living with my mother and sisters until my graduation with the degree of D.D.S. in 1898, and earning a Demonstratorship which was offered to a few in each class who held the highest grades. Upon entering

the Northwestern University Dental School I was one of three women who were the first women ever permitted to study in that school. At the end of our freshman year the Northwestern bought out the American Dental School acquiring a large building with its equipment and many more students, by which transaction four more women joined our class so that upon graduation we were 7 women among 180 men. Although the Dean admitted I was among those entitled to a Demonstratorship, I was not permitted to come back for the years work in the clinic which a Demonstratorship meant simply because I was a woman and at that time the faculty decided it would not be wise to permit a woman to teach or advise the men. Naturally I was much disappointed at this injustice and was thoroughly surprised at the end of the next year to receive an "Honorary Diploma" just as I would have earned had I been permitted to serve.

Upon my return to Des Moines my husband and I moved into a large house which permitted an office and its equipment yet furnished living quarters for the family and I began the practice of my newly acquired profession.

During this period of about four years my practice grew and a niece who had been my assistant as well as housekeeper was married and left me. Upon the request of a woman physician friend and thinking I could help myself and someone in need, I agreed to take a young woman and her baby from the Salvation Army Home, agreeing to help her with the care and education of her child. It was a very short time before she gave the child for adoption and left for a brief life of dissipation and death. Trying another girl and child proved to be quite as disappointing and because of the death of my husband's father we decided to move into his family homestead and I obtained an office in a downtown office building where we remained for four years and until the death of his mother.

At this time an uncle of his had persuaded my husband to invest in a lumber business in Dickinson, North Dakota, and in 1906 we were uprooted and started on a very new and different life. For me it meant the usual one of wife, mother and home maker. Being in need of surgery long put off I went to the Mayo's before I left for North Dakota and was not able at once to resume the practice of dentistry and it was not very long before I had two more children, a boy Robert H. born December 14th, 1909 and Janet born March 5, 1911, both born in Hahnemann Hospital in Chicago.

In the fall of 1913 I took these two children to Anoka, Minn. to visit my mother and a sister living there, leaving my older son Donald C., then 19 years old, with his father. On October 8th of that year I received a wire from Dickinson telling me that Donald had gone duck hunting at the Northern Pacific reservoir and had been drowned. The family brought his remains to Minneapolis for cremation and his ashes placed in a crypt in the beautiful building at Lakeside Cemetery. We remained in Anoka and Minneapolis until after Christmas when we returned to Dickinson and took up life again.

Though the economic situation had been growing more and more difficult in the Dakotas for some time owing to several causes beyond our control, it was finally decided that our business would not support our two families and that either my husband or his partner my sisters husband should seek employment elsewhere, leaving the other to keep things going there. It finally fell to our lot that my husband was the one to be given the position of travelling auditor for the Equitable of Iowa where he had been when we left Iowa many years before.

We returned to Iowa in 1922 and in 1924 I was asked to take over the office of school dentist in the spring until the end of the school year at which time I was retained for a full time job for nearly eight years. It was then decided to discontinue the office of School Dentist and send the children needing such care to the City Health Center, which left me with no job and the care of an aging mother.

Since I had had some brief experience in selling books during vacations, I was persuaded to interview the manager of the New York Life Insurance Company who persuaded me that I had ability enough to warrant me to try selling Life Insurance after a brief training period. While not any super salesman I was able to remain active in that capacity until arthritis made it physically impossible for me to carry on longer.