



## FROM "ANNA WENNBERG 1889-1988"

By Gösta Wennberg

### Part 2

#### FROM ANNA WENNBERG'S DIARIES

[...] Friday September 1 (1905) (ABOUT HELGE) (Mom is now 16 years old.) Today we have had rollcall. Just imagine that I'm in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, it's a little bit grand. When I left home I met Helge. I really like Helge. All evening we were out walking.



September 4, 1905: It is a long time since I saw Helge. I really would like to know if Helge likes me, I think that's almost impossible to know.

Sunday, September 10. 1905: I love you love you love you, Helge. - You don't know it but I do it anyway.

December 29, 1905. (ABOUT LITERATURE) Now Christmas Eve has passed. Among other things I got Gösta Berlings saga, which was the best of the Christmas presents. Oh, it is wonderful. Kajsa [Karin] and I have been skating on Rocksjön. Quite fun. We fell like peas and almost broke our bottom vertebrae. [...]

Monday April 8, 1907. (ABOUT LITERATURE) I read quite a lot of funny books. Yesterday I got one from my aunt. She says it is very well written. Grandma reads books by McLaren aloud. They are really wonderful books, and make you want to live a noble and unselfish life when you read them. Yes, if I could; but I must be the most imperfect being ever created. [...]

Friday, September 20 (1907) (ABOUT A VISIT AT FRAMNÄS) Oh yes, we really messed things up when we were at Framnäs. The night before we were going – exactly one week ago – Signe [Wennberg] and I sat in the room of the boys and talked until 12 o'clock. We danced some Boston which uncle Gösta [Helge's father] heard, so the following morning he had a serious talk with me, then with Signe, then with the boys. After that I thought that all the talk about this was over, but it wasn't. It was the first thing that he talked about when he came to Rosenlund. Yes, one commits terrible sins but interestingly enough I do not have a bad conscience. The youngsters of today are really terrible.

Monday, September 30. 1907 (mom is now 18). (ABOUT GOING BY CAR – THE FIRST INVITATION [FROM UNCLE GUSTAF] TO HER 6 YEARS AT ROSENLU ND) (There had been a family dinner at Rosenlund). ...The most fun part with the whole dinner was that we could go there by automobile. One sat so comfortably and it went so fast. ...

I have been invited to stay at Rosenlund for a time this autumn. It will be really fun. Of course, I had planned to go to Germany but that I can do in the beginning of next year. It is not so fun going around at home and not really having anything to do. [...]

Monday, October 7, 1907 (ABOUT HJALMAR SÖDERBERG'S DOKTOR GLAS) (She had stayed for a couple of days with the Wennbergs in Jönköping) – At the Wennbergs I read a very strange book. Doktor Glas by Hjalmar Söderberg. A horrible picture of a marriage. Likely, and awfully enough, very true. You shouldn't read books like that, because they give you a less than happy outlook on things.



*Kerstin is a terrible child. I wonder what she will be like as an adult. She always screams to get what she wants. And if she doesn't get it she acts hysterically. She screams, yells, stamps and makes noises so that it sounds as if the house is full of kids. Yes, she could really be helped by coming to someone that she respected. [...]*

Wednesday, April 1, 1908. (Rosenlund – mom is now 19). (TIRED) Yes, I am now at Rosenlund feeling well. I do not have much to do and I don't think I would have the strength to do it. As soon as a work a little more than usual I become tired.

Sister Kerstin

Now and then she writes about Helge, here called h, and she tries to get rid of the emotional bounds that she has to him.

Thursday, April 2, 1908: Now those silly thoughts are gone, although I had to fight against them. I wish that I didn't have to meet h. for at least some years so that the feelings could really change. As soon as I become calm I become worried again; I cannot resist liking him because of his magnificent eyes.

Tuesday July 20 (1909) (ABOUT LIFE) This Friday I will be 20, it almost sound as it wasn't true and still it is reality that I've became so old. All those "empty" years, when so much was going to happen but never happened, when was there to be enjoyed, but never was, when the sun could have shone on my way but never did, when fortune would smile and everything would be a dance on roses which instead became thorns.

With sadness and grief I think back upon all those years, from which I expected so much but which gave so little. With sadness I think upon how fast life goes and with grief not upon the past years, but upon everything that should have happened, everything I would have experienced during those "empty" years.

I remember so well when I had my 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, how I longed for becoming 20 and believed that the 10 years ahead of me were unforeseeable and would be wonderful. And now they have gone, now I am really on the threshold between youth and maturity, and now there is a big difference. I no longer look forward, no longer look upon life with the eyes of faithful child. Instead I wish I could go back, now that I know what life and people are like.

I feel bitter, bitter in my mind and disappointed about everything, and wish that my life will be different than what it looks like...

July 23, 1909, mom writes that she has seen the doctor. "Now I will lie down for three weeks and see if that makes me feel better." - It must have been by this time that they discovered the arsenic poisoning which she talks about in the interviews.

Thursday, August 5, 1909 (WHILE IN BED) Yes, today, one week ago, I laid down and since this

*Friday I haven't tasted a bit of food. Laying down have been nice because I have been so tired, so tired, so I have hardly had the energy to turn around.*

Saturday, September 4, 1909, (UP WALKING AGAIN) Yes, now I am up walking again. Have been up for two weeks soon. It feels wonderful. I feel a lot better although my nerves are acting up... sometimes I feel so unhappy, just crying...

Sunday, January 2, 1910 (ABOUT HELGE) (ABOUT THE PROBLEMS WITH COUSIN MARRIAGE) (Shen writes about a short infatuation for Gunnar Serner during the fall, but – ). When I met Helge a noticed too well that I have him, and no one else, cherished deep in my heart, although I have for a long time been hiding him, locking him in... [...]

*Anyway I would never dare to marry Helge. I do not think that I would be happy with him, no more than I now believe that I would be happy without him. Moreover, one shouldn't just think about oneself, but also about the coming generations; it can never be good that cousins marry, although Helge explained to me that this is just superstition.*



(March 1, 1910, she is at Stora Hultrum again, where she is in a good mood).

March 10, 1910 (ABOUT SISTER GRETA) Of course, that is Greta's favorite expression. She is a madcap of first rank. Happiness personified. I would give much for being so ebullient. One can see how it is ingrained in her. It is interesting to come from the empty quietness to so much youth and vitality. It is as if I had been spirited away...

Fiday, July 22 (1910) (ROSENlund AGAIN) (Mom is now 21.) It is with different feelings than I had when I was 20, that I am now meeting the new year. [...]

Sister Greta

Lund, October 28, 1910 (ABOUT ANXIETY) Oh yes, now I am in Lund again [where Lydia lived]. Alas, it is my nerves which deceived me into going down here. In all my body there is an all-encompassing anxiety which permeates me. Sometimes I feel so tired of life that I think it would be a release to just lie down and die. I know it is terribly wrong to think that way, yet I feel so weak and powerless; every moment of the day is an eternal fight against the evil that wants to take control of me.

Rosenlund September 17, 1910. (SO MUCH BETTER...) Since the last time I wrote here a long time off fight and despair has gone by, and with the help of God I have been able to overcome most of it... I have never felt so as I did this autumn... Oh, I'm so happy that I am so much better and on Monday Helge will visit me, my dear boy... [...]

Tuesday, June 27, 1911 (DAD PROPOSES TO MOM!) Helge proposed to me tonight. I cannot write more, it would be sacreligious. I just know that it feels strange and was strange. I cannot understand it yet; he has loved my all those years. If I only had known...

Then nothing is written in the diary until October 12, 1912. Mom was in England later that fall – obviously she then had problems with her nerves again.

October 19, 1912 (DEPRESSED) (STILL AT ROSENLOUND, 23 years old). It has been a long time since I opened this book but then why should I write. I'm just bitter and unhappy and I find my whole life to be a hopeless walk in the dessert. I have destroyed my own happiness and it is only when Helge's personal influence is there to me that I feel good and happy.

I feel so bad, for Helge's sake, that he cares for me. I am not worth it and if it would not be the worst thing that could happen to him, I would break up with him. But I don't think that I would dare to, because Helge is the only thing I have that makes life worth living.

Helge is my sun, my life, all my rest of happiness and peace. So why can I never be with you Helge. You could have made my life so rich and happy beyond words, if you hadn't come so late. Now I am only a shaking bundle of nerves, only able to suffer. Soon I will not carry on more... and around my heart there is a gnawing anxiety that hurts and gnaws, always without break, and inside me, always always, I shout for peace, for happiness, for Helge.

But alone I go here, alone alone in body and soul. And the worst part is that I have no hope, no courage to face life. The best parts of me, which originally were meant to do the struggling with life – are dead and charred. And here I sit; today it is five years since I came here, and cry. I cry over my wasted life and my inability to enjoy life.

New Years Day of 1913. Mount Phasant Pulborough Sussex England. I cannot bear any more. Good Lord, help me. Anna.

#### END OF THE DIARIES

[...] Mom and dad were married for exactly 40 years. Dad died in a severe car accident in August 1953. [...] Brita found in Mom's posthumous papers a "letter" which Mom wrote to Dad the fall after his death. It will now be reproduced.



October 28, 1953. At Stina's. Helge, my love, where are you and how are you? You maybe see how things are with me. It is difficult for me to know what direction I should take. Do you want me to stay at Skeda? Yes, maybe I will, but this fall it seemed impossible. The autumns have always been difficult to me, maybe worse than you ever knew. My love, you don't understand how I miss you. No one does. You know that I always said that I couldn't live without you. But I have to. I have to carry on.

We had such a good time together, especially when we were alone. Of course we took different ways but we got on well with each other. And you always wanted the best for me. - How nice you had made the kitchen when I came home this spring. By then you worked to much. I think you had a some bleeding behind your eye; that's why you were so tired this summer. Yet you were so glad and happy all summer and had so much fun with your carpentry and your painting down in the bath house.

October 31. All Saints Day. Today has been a difficult day, Helge, I miss you so and I think about you all the time.

November 4. Dear Helge! A memory came to me this night, from the Rosenlund years at fall, when

*it was dark, early, damp, black. It was before the time of the tramway, i.e. it stopped by the underpass. Driver Svensson used to pick up my uncle and me by the Victoria. The laundry house by Vättern's beach, this boring ugly building with all the windows sharply shining; everything sad and black, and we were on our way to Rosenlund and my sick Aunt Elin, the anxiety, the gloominess. No variety, no hope for a young person. Often I experience the same for me, the sharp light, the gloominess, my life at that moment and the slowly going horse cab. This is one of my quick memories. You never appreciated my talking about Rosenlund but I have to get rid of all my memories from that place.*