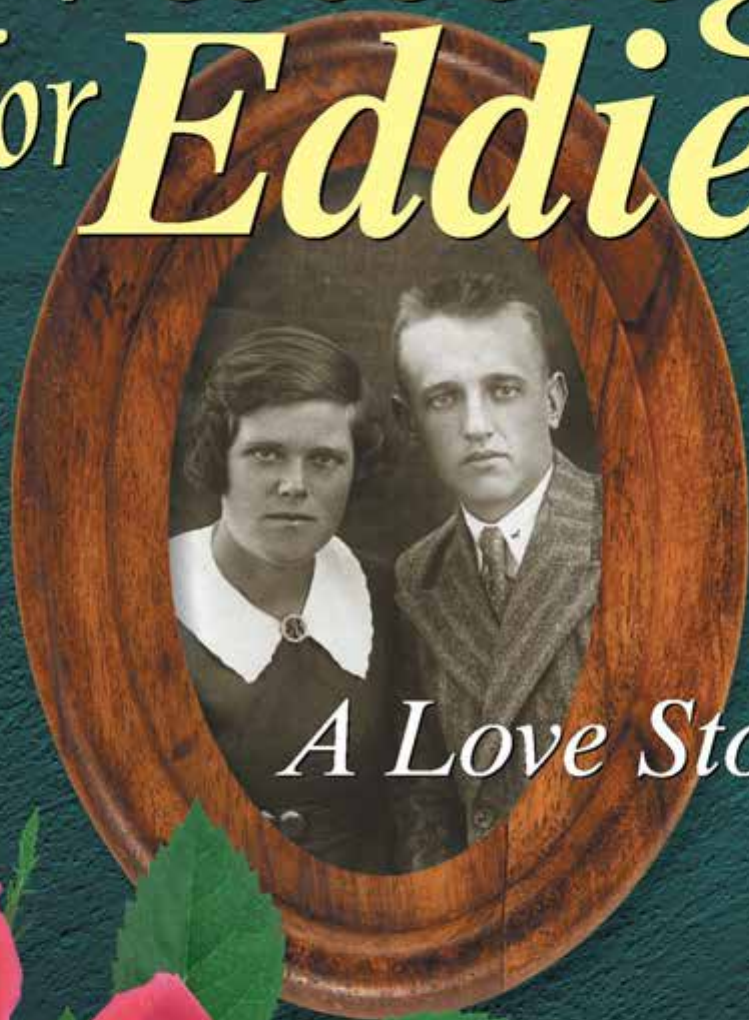


Waiting for Eddie



A Love Story



By

Albert & Karl
Konrad



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A Love Story

By

Albert & Karl Konrad

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Preface

With retirement comes time, with time comes remembrance and the need to share our family's story. We two brothers, Karl and Albert, have both passed our allotted biblical three score and ten. Time is no longer a friend in telling the story. It is time to put words on paper so that when our voices become stilled the story will not be forgotten.

It is a compelling story that begged to be written. But it was mostly talk until Albert joined Karl in full retirement in the spring of 2016. Once he was settled in his retirement he began to write and Karl joined in. Being a preacher Albert could tell a good story but it was Karl who knew the facts. He was, after all, 2 ½ years older and remembered much more of the details. They spent a week together in August of 2016 organizing the planned book.

The love story of our mom (Liese) and dad (Eddie) is one we have heard and told over the years. We boys have often talked about writing the story which began in Ukraine when Communism ruled the Soviet Union. For us boys the family's story starts in 1943 and takes our family on a perilous and tumultuous journey by train and horse-drawn wagons through Poland to Germany. It becomes the story of a single parent, who had lost her husband during WW 2, and then not knowing the language or the people, decided to come to America to start a new life for herself and her boys.

We thank the members of the Holly Seventh-day Adventist church who opened their hearts and pocketbooks to get our family settled and

begin our education in America. We are also indebted to our Uncle, Willy Hann, our cousins, Paul Hann, Hans Kampen, Eduard Pabst and Stephen Kampen for their written accounts of our family's journey of faith. We appreciate the good work of our editor, Gerald Wheeler, as well as Teach Services, Inc., our publisher.

We dedicate this book to our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren as well as to all those who encouraged us to get it down on paper. The joint writing and integration of the story has turned out to be a blessing to our own faith-journey. It is our prayer that it will be a faith-building benefit to all those who read it.

Eddie & Liese's boys,

Karl and Albert

Chapter One

A Preacher a Picture a Promise

Eddie and Liese's love story began long before they met. It all started with a brother's search, a pastor's wisdom, a picture's allure and a promise made.

Liese's brother, Willy, was a man of thought, decision and action. His mother had recently passed away, and at the age of 24 he concluded that it was high time for him to be on his own, and that meant getting married. He made it a matter of prayer. None of the local girls made his heart sing or satisfied his longing for a life time companion. In his search, he finally visited their pastor, Elder Friedrich Remfert, and asked, "Do you know any young ladies that I could meet that are not from around here?"

Eddie and Liese's love story began long before they met. It all started with a brother's search, a pastor's wisdom, a picture's allure and a promise made.

The pastor didn't wait for Willy to finish his thoughts before he interjected "Willy, I thought you would never ask. I do have some possibilities for you!" He got up and went into another room to get some pictures that he carried with him of the young men and women that he had met in his travels for the church. He always carried the pictures with him for he had

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a burden for the church and for the young people of the church. With Stalin's vendetta against religion it was important that the youth know of others of like faith. It would enhance their ability to find a life-long and like-minded companion. So, he gladly handed him the pictures of the young women and said, "Willy, here are some nice young ladies. Look them over and choose one you want to meet."

Willy looked each picture over carefully. All the young women were fine-looking. But one appeared rather proud and another gave the impression that she wanted to be the boss of everything. And on it went until his fingers came to rest on the photo of 18-year-old Alma Konrad. He saw her smiling face and said to himself, "*This is probably the best of them all. I want to get to know her!*"

As he showed the Pastor the photo, a smile crossed the man's face. "I wondered if you would choose her. I am sure that once you get to know her you will want her to be your wife. You see if you marry her you must call me uncle for she is my niece."

That picture started a correspondence. Alma lived 1,000 kilometers from Willy's home. Her father died when she was 7. She had an older, married sister, Hilda, and a younger brother, Eddie. Her mother had married a widower and two half-sisters had joined the family: Theresa and Rosalia. Letters and more photos led to a long-distance romance. After a stint in the Russian Army, Willy made the trip to her home town. There he asked her to marry him, and she accepted. The newlyweds established their home in Khortitza where Willy lived. Economic conditions in that area were more favorable, because of the huge hydro-electric Dnieper River Dam project under construction there.

Eventually, Alma's mother, stepfather, older sister, Hilda and her husband Alexander, her younger brother, Eddie, and sister, Theresa, would also move to the area. With that the love story of Eddie and Liese slowly but surely began to come to life.



Alma, Willy, Theresa, Hilda, Eddie & Liese early in 1943.

Chapter Two

Beginnings – Liese

Liese's life started on July 10, 1910 as one of 11 children born to Henry and Katharina Hann in the Khortitza area of Ukraine. Her German ancestors had begun a journey in the early 1800's that eventually led to Ukraine from East Prussia. They came at the invitation of Russia's Catherine the Great who promised them that they would have religious freedom, local self-rule, no taxes, and most importantly, exemption from military service. The offer made in 1763 stood for decades, even after Catherine the Great's death in 1796. So, it was that a group of German settlers including those of the Hann family commenced their search to find a place of freedom and opportunity.



*Liese at 24
in Khortitza, Ukraine.*

For some unexplainable reason they halted near Warsaw, Poland. At the time Poland was under the protection of the Czarist government of Russia. The group found a promising portion of land near Warsaw and started a settlement of German people called Neuhoﬀ. It was here that both Liese's grandfather, Karl Edward Hann, and her father, Henry Karl Hann, were born. In Neuhoﬀ Karl Hann met and married a Mennonite (German-Dutch

Anabaptists) young woman by the name of Maria Stobe. Together they had three sons and three daughters. While Karl was Lutheran, and Maria a Mennonite, they agreed to raise their sons as Lutherans and their daughters as Mennonites.

Life in Neuhof was very difficult. Their oldest son Henry, Liese's father, born on December 3, 1864, survived babyhood but his two brothers died in infancy. He spoke often of the hard life in Poland by saying "In Poland the breadbasket hangs very high, and is unreachable for poor families." In 1889, at the age of 25, Henry decided to leave Poland and seek his fortune elsewhere. He had seen an advertisement in one of the newspapers that a Mr. Walmann from Ukraine, had a large estate farm and needed gardeners. It was just one of many enterprises that the man was involved in. He also owned a factory that produced agricultural machinery not just for the local region but for all of Russia. Deciding that here was what he had been looking for, Henry would fulfill the goal of his ancestors to go to Ukraine.

His long journey ended in Khortitza. The fact that he could speak both Russian and German impressed Mr. Walmann, and he hired Henry as chief gardener of the entire farming operation. Eventually he met a young woman by the name of Katharina Friesen, who was the head of all the female employees in the estate cafeteria. Though she was nine years younger than Henry, having been born on March 11, 1873, her beauty and good manners attracted him. She was a faithful believer in the Brethren



Liese's Father (1902)

Mennonite Church. But Henry had been raised and registered as a member of the Lutheran Church. Katharina would not marry outside of her faith and told Henry that if he wanted a good Lutheran wife he should go back home and find one. He did so and returned with not just one but two good Lutheran ladies, both of whom were his sisters. He told Katherina that he could not stop thinking about her during his journey and that in his heart she was the only one. From his mother Henry had learned what Mennonites believed and was quite willing to join Katharina's faith. It did not take long for him to study with

the local pastor and become a baptized Mennonite.

In the summer of 1893 the local Mennonite pastor married Henry and Katharina. It was the custom of the day that in lieu of a honeymoon the families of the couple invited everyone to a three-day celebration. Since

their parents did not live nearby, Mr. Walmann provided the place, time, and many of the gifts for the celebration. He regarded both Henry and Katharina as valued employees, essential for the successful running of the estate.

One of the gifts that Mr. Walmann gave them for their wedding was a gold-decorated German Bible. He had inscribed an admonition on the fly-leaf that said: “To my dear Henry and Katharina. If you will read this Bible daily and will live according to its words you will become the happiest and richest people in the world.”

Once the celebration ended and the couple had settled into their new life together, they made good use of the special gift. Starting in Genesis, they read a portion of the Bible every day. The daily reading and study led to a major change in their beliefs and life style. It was not long before they discovered what the Bible said about what day God had designated for worship.

Their first encounter with it occurred when they read the account of Creation. “Und Gott segnete den siebenten Tag und heiligte ihn, darum daß er an demselben geruht hatte von allen seinen Werken, die Gott schuf und machte.” Genesis 2:3 (Luther Bibel 1545) (“And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.”) New Living Translation (NLT). But it was not until they reached the 20th chapter of Exodus that they both began to wonder about just what day they should worship on.

Henry began to think about the fourth commandment and its injunction to keep the seventh-day holy. As he was tinkering in the shop after breakfast one day, he had a conversation with God. “Dear Lord,” he prayed, “I see the truth of the seventh-day Sabbath, but I just got married, so please be patient with me and give me one year of peace on this matter as I need to get better acquainted with my wife. After that Lord, I promise to share this truth and my conviction with her. Please just one-year Lord. Amen.” From that moment peace came to his mind and the issue did not bother him anymore.

Eventually he all but forgot his prayer, but God had not. A year later Henry was once again working in his shop when suddenly he felt a hard nudge from the side. It startled him, especially because he was alone. He looked around just to make sure that no one else was there. When he glanced at the calendar hanging on the wall, he immediately remembered the promise that he had made to the Lord about giving him peace of mind for a year. But hard as he tried he could not think of a way to keep his promise to talk to Katharina.

Finally, he left the shop and went back to the house where he silently paced back and forth in the living room. “What is the matter Henry?” Katharina asked after a while. “I have never seen you this agitated before. Have I done something to hurt you or displease you? Are you unhappy with me?”

“Oh, no sweetheart. You could never do anything like that” he exclaimed. “It is something else that we need to talk about.”

“Well Henry, please tell me what it is.”

So, he related the whole story of being convicted about the seventh-day Sabbath, his prayer to God, and his promise to do something once the year had passed. He described his confusion about what he read in the Bible and what their pastor always said about keeping the Ten Commandments and of Sunday being the Lord’s day for worship.

“Of course, he always tells us that,” she replied. “What is wrong with that?”

Henry asked her to look up the fourth commandment in the book of Exodus and read it. She did, twice, and she too was puzzled. “Gedenke des Sabbattags, daß Du ihn heiligest. Sechs Tage sollst du arbeiten und alle deine Dinge beschicken; aber am siebenten Tage ist der Sabbat des HERRN, deines Gottes.” (2 Mose 20:8 Luther Bibel 1545.) (“Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy. Do all your work in six days. But the seventh day is a sabbath to honor the Lord your God.” (Exodus 20:8-11, NIRV). Then they paused and prayed together about the seeming contradiction between God’s Word and what they had known and practiced all their lives.

In the end, Katharina said, “Henry, if that is what the Bible says, then we must do it. So, let’s continue to study. Maybe we will find more information on this later.” It pleased Henry that his wife had such an open heart and mind, and together they covenanted that they would accept whatever the Bible taught and live accordingly. So as to not disturb the church and their friends, they decided they would keep the Sabbath holy at home and on Sunday they would go to church. By doing that they thought they would be in full harmony with the Bible and at peace with their neighbors.

Small tightly-knit communities do not keep secrets well, neither do they tolerate life-altering differences. It was not long before the neighbors wondered why they did not see the couple “around and about” on Saturdays doing their normal chores. One Saturday they decided to check up on them, and when they came to their home they saw that the whole family was neatly dressed and studying the Bible. “We came because we

were worried but we see that all is well. How come you are all dressed up? This isn't Sunday."

Henry explained to them why they were not in their working clothes. He tried to show them from the Bible what it said about the Sabbath, but they were not interested. They went straight to the pastor to inform him about the heresy that they had just uncovered.

That led to further conversations and eventual excommunication from the local congregation, because of "heretical Jewish beliefs." The pastor informed Henry's boss that something needed to be done. Mr. Walmann visited and tried his best to dissuade them both from their supposed heretical teaching. When he saw that his efforts were fruitless he, said, "Henry, I, myself, don't understand what you believe and why you are practicing Saturday worship, but you are one of my very best employees, and I need you here on the estate. You can't work on Saturday and I can't let you work on Sunday so you must complete the necessary tasks in five days." Both Henry and Katharina were able to continue to work for some time under this arrangement.

Small tightly-knit communities do not keep secrets well, neither do they tolerate life-altering differences.

After continued harassment from their former pastor and several of the church members, they both decided it was time to leave the estate. Moving to the next settlement, Nikolaipol, Henry struck out on his own. There he earned a living as a gardener and security guard for area farmers. He watched their field and gardens for predators and fires by night and grew fruits and vegetables to sell by day. The income allowed him both to care for his family and to save enough money to build his first house for their ever-growing family. From the time of their marriage till about 1910 eleven children were born, seven boys and four girls. Unfortunately two of the boys and one girl died in their infancy.

Even in their new home and work they both felt the sting of the isolation that their new-found belief in the seventh-day Sabbath brought. Unaware of any other individuals who worshipped as they did, they prayed that God would strengthen their belief and help them find others who shared it.

One Friday afternoon a man driving a horse drawn wagon stopped at the house and introduced himself: "Hello, I am Mr. Schlagel and I am

selling religious books and need a place to stay for the weekend. Would you folks have an extra room or bed that I could rent?" They agreed to give him room and refused any money. Glad for the change of pace that visitors brought, most people during those days would share their accommodations free of charge.

Schlagel unhitched his horse and entered the house. Since it was Friday afternoon, Katharina was in full preparation for the coming Sabbath. Surprised by her activity, he asked, "Isn't today Friday? Folks don't usually spend their time cleaning the house and getting ready for church on Friday. They do that on Saturday. Why are you cleaning today?"

Quickly Katharina explained that though they were believers in Christ they were getting ready for worship on His Sabbath day.

The man then introduced himself as a fellow Sabbath keeper and that he represented scores of other Sabbath observers in Russia. He was an American pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who had come to Russia to distribute literature to the German-speaking villages in the area surrounding Khortitza. It thrilled Henry and Katharina to learn that many others also honored the seventh-day Sabbath. They were not alone in their faith and practice. After further study and baptism, they became members of the Seventh-day Adventist church and eventually participated in the establishment of the first Adventist congregation in the area.

During the early 1900's prejudice once again raised its ugly head in Nikolaipol, and they moved back to Khortitza. Initially Henry went back to work for Mr. Walmann as the chief purchaser of breeding cattle for the estate farm. This was the family's final move it would be there that most of their children would grow up.

Now began a period of relative prosperity broken by the ravages of World War I (1914–1918) and then the Russian Civil War (1917–1921). Both events interrupted the lives of Khortitza's residents. The civil war raged on in frightening ferocity until Lenin and the Communists got the upper hand and were in power. Things were chaotic in Ukraine during this period of constant upheaval.

The various factions of the civil war targeted the Mennonite colonies, because they were far better off than the regular Ukrainian peasants. Marauders invaded the Mennonite homes, murdered, raped at will, and spread various diseases until most of the local population contracted typhoid fever and many died. The famine, pestilence and violence of the times also severely affected the Hann family. On Christmas Eve in 1919 Henry finally succumbed to typhoid fever and passed away. As his life ebbed slowly away his family could hear him in prayer: "Unser Vater in

dem Himmel! Dein Name werde geheiligt.” Matthew 6:9 (Luther Bibel 1545). (“Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name,” NKJV). To the very end he expressed his faith and trust in the Lord to care for him. Liese also contracted typhoid and was expected to die. In fact, they saved the left-over lumber from her dad’s coffin to be used for hers. But as was often the case when Liese was involved, God had not spoken His word yet. By His Grace Liese survived and lived another 63 years.

Henry’s death left Katharina alone to care for her children, ranging from Katie, the oldest at 24, to Liese as the youngest, at 9. She ended up having to count on her second eldest son, Henry, to lead the family. The army had drafted her oldest son, Eric, and sent him off to Turkey, and Else had married in 1918. During the intervening years 6 of the 8 living children found companions and married. Willy, the youngest of the boys, was married in 1932. That left two of the children, Gerhard and Liese, both single, to care for Katharina. The passing years were anything but kind for her. Finally, on May 4 in 1932 she could fight no more, and her body gave out. The children took her to be buried near her beloved Henry. Liese and Gerhard remained single longer than any of their siblings. She kept house and worked on the collective farm as a store keeper.

People wondered about Liese’s inability to find the right man to marry her. They gossiped that perhaps she was meant to be a spinster. For Liese, it was not that she wanted to be alone all her life, but rather she intended to make sure that she found the right man to spend her life with.



Liese and her brother, Gerhard in front of the Family Home in 1935.

Chapter Three

Beginnings – Eddie



*Eddie at 18
in Khortitza, Ukraine.*

Eddie's life began on June 17, 1918 as the third of four children born to Wilhelm Konrad and his wife Mathilde (nee Remfert) Konrad. Eddie's two sisters, Hilda and Alma, and a younger brother, Friedrich completed the family. His father, Wilhelm, initially worked on a farm owned by a Seventh-day Adventist pastor/farmer, Karl Friedrich Remfert. Wilhelm quickly fell in love with the farmer's oldest daughter, Mathilde, and they married. The Remfert farm was near the small city of Blumenthal located in Zhytomyr county, Volhynia province, in the northwest corner of Ukraine, bordering Poland to the west and Belarus to the north. During the mid-1800s many Germans had settled in Volhynia.

Shortly after Eddie's birth his dad entered the Adventist ministry full time and in the early 1920's the denomination transferred him east to the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic where he provided care and nurture to Adventist church members living in that area.

Not long after their arrival, the region experienced severe famine and starvation. The famine began in the early spring of 1921 and lasted through 1922 resulting in the deaths of an estimated 6 million people. The economic disturbances caused by WW1, the Russian Civil War, rail networks that could not distribute food effectively, as well as the lack of rain all combined to exacerbate the intensity of the famine. It became a national catastrophe affecting most of the grain-growing regions.

Eddie's grandfather heard about the terrible conditions and invited the family to come back home. In contrast to the rest of Russia, their region had experienced a bountiful harvest. Not only was there plenty of food but also room for all of them on the family farm. He was willing to give his son-in-law land on which to build a house. The invitation was God-sent as it would allow Eddie's father to continue his pastoral work for the church members who lived near the homestead.

Making the decision to return home, the family purchased tickets and quickly boarded the train, eager to get on the way. What should have been a journey of just a few days turned into a trail of tears and death. The difficulties of the post-revolution times, uncertain train schedules and spreading famine, caused the journey to take over two months. Their food supplies ran out and there was very little available for purchase. Typhoid fever ran rampant throughout the train. No one seemed to be immune from it. When the train stopped at Kiev, Eddie's dad succumbed to the scourge and died. Along with scores of others who had died, he was carried off and buried outside of the city in a mass grave.

All alone, with no husband, and four children to care for, 250 kilometers from home, and no way to contact her parents about the situation, Mathilde had to decide by herself how to proceed. The station master informed her that the nearest depot for Blumenthal was in the city of Zhytomyr. They arrived at that station, it was the middle of winter, the children sick, and still forty kilometers from home. Things seemed so grim that Mathilde felt hopeless. Her husband had always taken



Eddie's Father (1918)

care of situations such as this. Here she was, in dire straits, without his strength and experience, but she believed that God would sustain them.

In desperation, she bowed her head and prayed. After concluding her prayer, she noticed an elderly man driving by her family in a one-horse

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Meeet Eddie and Liese Konrad. Theirs is a story of love, separation, faith, and survival that spans decades. Their story begins in 1910, when Liese was born in the Khortitza area of Ukraine and doesn't end until her death in 1981 in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Follow their journey from their early courtship and marriage, beginning a family, and having to say goodbye due to the vagaries of World War II, to the decades-long separation and the trials of Liese being a single immigrant mother and Eddie becoming a prisoner of war and his subsequent life of hardship under a Communist regime.

World War II destroyed many lives, and ripped apart many families. The Konrad family is no different. They must work together to escape to safety in the midst of a world falling apart. Liese must fight for the very survival of her children. All the while she hopes and waits for her husband to return. She never gives up on her faith or her God, and she never stops waiting for Eddie.



Albert and Karl Konrad wrote this book to honor the love story of their father and mother, Eddie and Liese Konrad. After spending their early childhood in eastern Europe, Albert and Karl immigrated to the United States with their mother, Liese.

Albert became a pastor and studied at Andrews University where he earned both BA and MA degrees. He is currently retired and resides in Churchville, Virginia, where he attends the Staunton SDA Church. In his spare time, he likes to read, preach, or volunteer. Albert is still learning the art of doing nothing in retirement!



Karl became an educator and retired as Professor of Chemistry Emeritus after serving at Southwestern Adventist University for over forty years. He also graduated from Andrews University with a BA degree and then went on to receive his PhD in Chemistry from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He attends the Keene SDA Church, and when he has the chance, Karl enjoys prison ministry outreach, volunteer tutoring, Bible study, and practicing his chef skills making healthy waffles and other dishes.



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