

ERIK GUNNAR NILS ERIKSSON

Our grandfather, Erik Eriksson was born 27 August 1866. His occupation, as listed on our parents' wedding certificate, was Company Director, Swedish Pulp Mill. Our grandmother was Maria Lorisa Noring, born 31 July 1867.



Erik and Maria Eriksson

They married some time around 1886 and had 5 children, 3 girls followed by 2 boys.

Karin	Married Gustav Helsing, a well known local painter Child – Per Erik who lived in Uppland Vasby, outside Stockholm
Anna Maria	
Margaret	
Erik Gustav	Born 1900 Married Ragnhild Children Bengt Erik and Lars Erik (lives in Sydney)
Erik Gunnar Eriksson	Born 1910, Uppsala, Sweden Married Elizabeth Carrucan in Stawell, Victoria 2 July 1946 Died in Broken Hill, NSW, 30 October 1968, aged 58 Occupation – Diamond Driller

Erik Eriksson was the village head in a town called Boras, inland from Goteborg. He ran the local timber mill and an associated glass factory that made crystal glassware. So the family were brought up in relatively wealthy circumstances.



A family photo taken around 1918.

Erik Gustav is shown as a young man on the right second row.

Our father, Erik Gunnar, is shown second from left in the front row. The young boy with the hat next to him was Russian and had fled from the revolution with his grandmother (third from the left, third row from the front).

The woman in the front row, second from right, was the children's governess.

The 3 girls in the family are all in the second row and are Margaret (far left), Anna Maria (second from left) and Karin (fourth from left).

Our grandparents, Erik and Maria, make up the final two positions in the second row.

Most of the other people are employees of the glass factory and sawmill that Erik Eriksson managed.



Anna Maria



Anna Maria and Margaret



The family in front of the family home in Borås. Our father is the small boy standing in front.



A family gathering as sketched. The relative high class of family living is evident.



Marriage of Erik Gustav and Ragnhild. Our father is in the front in the sailor's uniform.

Erik Eriksson died in 1927 and the family fortunes quickly changed. This was the start of the Great Depression and with the main family income gone, the family was unable to continue as it had previously. A previous friend of Karin had emigrated to Australia some time previously so arrangements were made for Gunnar to be sent to stay with him on his farm in outback Western Australia.

Our father arrived in Fremantle in 1929 as an 18 year old, having travelled via America where he had stayed for a short time. Disaster struck immediately upon arrival in Australia – the ship dragged anchor, drifted onto rocks and sank, leaving him with nothing except for the clothes in which he stood.

Speaking hardly a word of English, he somehow made his way to the required farm and spent the next few years there working for what amounted to bed and board. Surviving the Great Depression in rural Australia was not a pleasant experience.



Photos of dad as a younger man in Australia

Teaming up with some other young men, dad drifted into drilling and eventually made this his career. Together they formed a company called Australian Diamond Drillers. The company name was eventually changed to Mineral Drillers Limited. In 1956, the company name changed once again to Mindrill. It was taken over by Rockbite Pty Ltd in 1976. Under one company name or another, dad worked with the same people throughout his working life until he was eventually forced to compulsorily retire in 1964. But more of that later.

Diamond Drilling jobs came in many formats and involved many more facets than mineral mining. He was working in Singapore at the time of the Japanese invasion, presumably helping the Army Engineers. He recounted in later life that he had managed to force his way onto one of the last ships to leave Singapore. Once back in Australia, he immediately applied for a Swedish passport to avoid any subsequent compulsory military service. Having seen the war at first hand as a civilian, he was not keen to revisit it as part of any Armed Forces.

He met our mother while drilling water bores in Stawall soon after the war. Mum was a teacher at Stawall High School. They married on 2 July 1946 in the Stawall Catholic Church. By that time, dad had changed the spelling of his family name from Eriksson to Erickson. He said in later life that this was to avoid confusion in the spelling.



Marriage of Erik Gunnar Erickson and Elizabeth Carrucan, Stawall, Victoria, 2 July 1946

Within a year, the first child was born – Michael Eric Erickson. Our mother was forced to give up her teaching career to care for the new addition to the family.

Preliminary work on the Snowy Mountain Scheme had started in 1946 with dam construction scheduled to commence in the early 1950s. Dad was soon working at the Tumut 2 Camp alongside other mining engineers and surveyors (this camp has since been flooded by the Tumut Dam). Conditions were primitive to say the least. This was not a town but rather a tent city with minimal facilities.

Dad shifted from there to Captains Flat, in the hills outside Canberra, to work in the Captains Flat gold mine. A second son, Terence Eric Erickson, was born at this time. The house where they lived abutted directly onto a fast flowing stream and mum lived in dread that one or other of the two boys would find his way to this stream, fall in and drown. Pregnant with a third child, Betty decided to come home to her family at Eltham to have the baby. This wild environment was no place for young children.

Dad stayed with the Snowy Corporation throughout the early 1950s and eventually worked his way up to the position of Supervising Driller. Mum remained in Eltham with her family of 3 boys and eventually returned to teaching.



Hylton Baker, dad and an engineer at the Snowy Mountain Scheme, 30 September 1951.

In 1958, a reconciliation of sorts was attempted and the family moved to Queenstown in Tasmania. Dad was working at the Mount Lyall Copper Mine and mum taught at Queenstown High School. After one year, mum and dad went their separate ways once again, mum returning to Melbourne and dad continuing on with his roving life as a diamond driller.



1958 – Mt Lyall Copper mine, Queenstown, Tas.

During the next few years, dad travelled extensively and worked on many famous projects including the Rum Jungle Uranium Mine in the Northern Territory and the Wittenoon Asbestos Mine in Western Australia. He also spent periods working in Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and South America.



Working in Papua New Guinea in the early 1960s.

His family in Sweden had unsuccessfully tried to trace him after the second world war. Although mum urged him on many occasions to renew his Swedish links, it was not until 1960 that he finally made the move, contacting his brother and sisters and travelling home.



Hr Gunnar Eriksson med sin syster Karin här i Borås, fru Hellsing.

Boråsare på hembygdsbesök efter 33 år i Australien

Hos familjen Hellsing på Hasselbackagatan i Borås bor för närvarande en före detta boråsare, som efter 33 år i Australien nu återvänt till Sverige för ett kortare besök.

Vid 17 års ålder tröttnade herr Gunnar Eriksson på livet vid Borås läroverk. Äventyrslusten tog överhand, han packade sin kappsäck och reste till Australien för att med ungdomlig optimism och framåtanda skapa sig en framtid. Efter en månads lång resa kom han fram och började söka arbe-

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A newspaper cutting showing Gunnar Eriksson with his sister Karin

There, he met his older brother Erik Gustav, now the captain of an ocean liner. They continued to meet whenever Erik Gustav's ship berthed in Australia.



Erik Gustav and Gunnar in Sweden



Reunited – Erik Gustav, Karin, Anna Maria and Gunnar

Life was tough and dangerous. While working in Tasmania in the early sixties, one of his fortnightly jobs was to drive down from the mining area to Burnie and collect the company payroll. On one occasion when he did not return, a full search found him badly injured at the bottom of a steep gully – his 4 wheel drive had left the road. Major surgery followed and he carried a steel plate in his skull from then on.

In 1964, dad failed a medical test, being diagnosed with heart problems. He was compulsorily retrenched from Mindrill, much to his great disappointment. In an attempt to carve an alternate career, he bought a laundromat in suburban Melbourne but it was not successful.

Putting this all behind him, he successfully applied for a Drilling Supervisor job with CRA Exploration (still in existence and now a subsidiary of Rio Tinto) and was able to return to his rough life in the outback.

In 1966, dad flew to New York, met his brother and accompanied him on his final trip from America to Europe as captain of the 'Cumulus'. Then he spent further time with his family in Sweden before returning to Australia. In 1967, he caught up with Erik Gustav once again – in Sydney this time – as his older brother enjoyed a retirement trip around the world. This was the last time he would see any of his family.



Gunnar and Erik Gustav at the Sydney Chevron Hotel, 1967

In 1968, dad was working in Broken Hill on a drilling project. One hot day, he complained he was not feeling well and went to rest under the shade of a tree. When co-workers came to check up on him half an hour later, he was dead – victim of a massive heart attack. The date was 30 October 1968 and dad was aged 58 years.

He was buried in Eltham Cemetery. His wife Betty died in 1990 and was also buried at Eltham in a grave close to that of her husband.

They are survived by their 3 children, Michael, Terence and Timothy and their respective families.