

John De Kleine – Bio

At approximately 10 AM on February 19th 1933, Maria Katherina De Kleine went to the bathroom with her midwife and John was born in the same manner as his two brothers and three sisters. The only difference was that John was born in Paterson, New Jersey and his brothers and sisters were all born in the Netherlands.

Shortly thereafter the family moved to Brooklyn, New York, then on to Long Island where John became a part of everything that had to do with the ocean. John's father was a commercial fisherman and had his own trawler, unfortunately, John was too young to spend weeks in the North Atlantic catching fish during WWII. We even had a German submarine land on the beach where we lived. They weren't very knowledgeable about the area though because the Coast Guard station was within 100 yards of where they landed and they were blown out of the water. Lots of excitement for a kid.

After the war the trawler was in need of a lot of repairs and parts were scarce, so we went back to Brooklyn where John's dad managed apartment buildings. Some of John's brothers and sisters went to California to make their mark there and, while still in high school, John went there too. After graduating John enlisted in the air force to see the world. He got sent to Texas for basic training, then to Biloxi, Miss for further training in radar. Upon completion of training he was asked where he would like to be stationed since radar operators were needed everywhere. Since the Korean war was still going and he was gung-ho to be in the thick of things, his three choices were: 1. Korea, 2. Europe, and 3. Alaska. They then sent me to Roslyn, Long Island – only a few miles from where I used to live. A bunch of us then requested transfer to Korea, Europe or Alaska. They got sent to the Philippines and I stayed put. Eventually, they got tired of my constant requesting transfers and finally sent me to Canada – the far north. A place called Ramore which was just south of Hudson Bay. We had our last snowfall on the 4th of July and the summer actually warmed up to 70 degrees a couple of times. The snow returned on labor day and most of the winter stayed around 60 below zero with 20 plus feet of snow. It actually warmed up on the days that it snowed to about 30 below. I learned a lot there. When the temperature is 70 degrees, the lakes are tempting to cool off and go swimming. However, only the first inch of water is warm – the rest is still just above freezing and full of leeches. Also grizzly bears are 100 feet tall and are not cuddly pets – you are considered food to them. Wolves are not dogs to be petted, moose are not big cows or deer and all animals, no matter how small or cute, are dangerous. City folks learn fast up there.

There I met my darling wife who was in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) stationed 300 miles to the south. Our meeting was over the phone – she chewing me out for not reporting in when I went on duty. Actually, it was the crew we relieved that didn't do the reporting and left the field phone off the hook. Well, I had to go down to her base and see who it was that burned my ear. We met, fell in love, and had a military wedding in the middle of a snowstorm. During the winter I got frostbitten and got transferred to California before the next winter. We got a car in Detroit and drove route 66 all the way to California where I was stationed east of San Diego in a place called Laguna Mountain. We rented a house in a town called Descanso – across the border from Tecate, Mexico. A nice, quiet place.

When my 4 years were up we moved to the San Fernando Valley. Win was pregnant and had our first child in L.A. County Hospital since I was recently discharged and had no insurance. I went to college at night and worked in the aerospace industry building and testing rocket engines. I got into the electronics end of things and finally started teaching people how to stay alive around all the rocket propellants and such. In the meantime we had more children – two beautiful girls. Unfortunately, one of them was born with cerebral palsy and had to have special care. Win took care of everything. Eventually, she had to be placed and is still doing well. In our spare time we started camping on weekends and took long camping trips during vacation times. When our goal was met by putting a man on the moon and bringing him back alive, the program ended and 100,000 of us got a pat on the back and laid off.

When I was on unemployment, I thought how about being on the other side of the window passing out money instead of receiving it. I applied, was accepted and started working for the state. I worked in San Fernando for 7 years in unemployment insurance and then transferred to Oroville to work as a supervisor in job service – helping people find jobs. When the state computerized I became the computer guru in northern California since I was weaned on computers in the aerospace industry. We found a home in Paradise and have been here since. I retired in 1996 and have been busier than ever doing all sorts of things. When Jim and Maryjane moved in next door and invited Win and I to go camping with Good Sams, we thought it might be interesting. It turns out it has been. And here we are.

Winnifred De Kleine – Bio

On the 25th of June 1933, I was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada to Thomas Wilfred and Rose Marie Rogers. I had an older brother and a few years later would have a younger brother. So being the only girl in the family, guess who was daddy's favorite.

Life started out living in the cold, far north as dad worked on the building of the trans-Canada highway during the depression. A small town called Matheson above the arctic circle was home. A place where the ground was frozen all year, the vegetation was pine trees and blueberry bushes, all the wildlife considered you food, the cabin had a wood stove for cooking and it was the only source of heat in the winter. On the plus side, the night sky was wondrous - there were a million stars and the aurora could keep you fascinated for hours on end. After five years of 60 below zero winters, my family moved south to Aurora, Ontario and planted roots there. It was much warmer – only 15 below zero in winter. Growing up, going to school, making friends and getting a job with the Bell telephone company was the progression of life.

A friend thought it would be fun to join the Royal Canadian Air Force and asked me to come along for moral support. At the recruiter's, they asked me to fill out the paperwork also to accompany her friend. As it turned out, the friend was rejected and I was accepted, and so started basic training and then on to radar school. Upon completion of training I was stationed at a small base near Sudbury, Ontario called Falconbridge. While there I met my future husband, John De Kleine, who was stationed 300 miles further north at a place called Ramore. He was there in the American Air Force manning an early warning radar site. My first meeting with John involved me chewing him out for not answering the field phone as it was the only means of communicating between the bases and was supposed to be kept available. John traveled to my base to see who chewed him out and one thing led to another until there was the first military wedding on my base in December of 1953.

In August of 1954, John was transferred to Laguna, CA (not Laguna beach) and we moved to Descanso, CA for a year, then to the San Fernando Valley when John was discharged. There we settled down in Mission Hills and started to raise a family. Unfortunately the 210 freeway decided to build through our home so we moved to Granada Hills. I was working at House of Fabrics as an analyst in the main office and was building a career when John (who was working for the state) was transferred to Oroville in 1979. We picked up stakes and moved to Paradise and have been here ever since.

