

Gary Kenna Brown – A Swedish-American Relative with Roots in Våxtorp, Sweden

by Burks Oakley II
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Introduction

My mother was Grace Florence Brorström (1916-2000). All four of her grandparents were Swedes, who immigrated to America in the 1880's. Since she was 100% Swedish, that means that I am 50% Swedish. Over the past few years, I have become very interested in learning more about my Swedish ancestors. I have been using DNA to identify additional Swedish and Swedish-American relatives, with the twin goals of (1) confirming my existing family tree and (2) adding new branches to the Swedish part of my family tree.



The view overlooking Stockholm City Hall (Stockholms stadshus).

I have enjoyed getting to know my new relatives who live in Sweden, and I have been fortunate to be able to visit Sweden in each of the past three years. Getting to know my Swedish relatives is priceless!

My Swedish-American First-Cousins and DNA

Three of my Swedish-American first-cousins, namely Annmarie Brorström DeMattia, Susan Brorström Baker, and Stuart W. Eck, have their DNA profiles on the Ancestry.com website. Their father, Paul Thure Brorström Jr. (1913-2001), was my mother's older brother. If I identify an individual who has a DNA match with me AND with one of these cousins, then I know that this individual has to be related to me on my mother's side of my family – that is, the Swedish side of my family.

Due to the way that DNA is passed down from generation to generation, I know that my Swedish-American cousins have DNA matches with distant cousins that I don't have. So recently I have been looking at their DNA matches on the Ancestry.com website, hoping to find new distant cousins on the Swedish side of our family. While all three of these individuals (Annmarie, Susan, and Stuart) have the same father, Stuart has a different mother than Annmarie and Susan. Therefore, anyone matching both Stuart and Annmarie, or both Stuart and Susan, has to be related to their father, and therefore related to me. So even if I don't have a DNA match with someone who matches two of my Swedish-American cousins, I can infer our relationship.

I should add that relationships with distant cousins go back the most number of generations, and finding these relationships is most likely to add new branches to my family tree. So while it is nice to find a DNA match with a first-cousin once-removed (1C1R), that really doesn't add anything new to my family tree. But finding a 4th-cousin (4C) with a DNA match often adds a new branch to my tree.

gkbbrown

I looked at Stuart's DNA match with his half-sister Annmarie on the Ancestry.com website, and then I examined a list of the people in the Ancestry.com database who share a DNA match with both of them. The following screenshot shows some of the people who match at the level of Stuart's fourth-cousins:

← AncestryDNA Home > Member Matches for Stuart Eck

Pedigree and Surnames Shared Matches Map and Locations

Shared matches with Annmarie Brorström

4TH COUSIN

- ★  **Eva Josefsson** (managed by SternerJosefsson) 5,322 people
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins [?](#)
Confidence: Extremely High  [View Match](#)
- ★  **Ann Lipot** 3 people
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins [?](#)
Confidence: Extremely High  [View Match](#)
- ★  **Lise-Lotte Kolmberger** No family tree
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins [?](#)
Confidence: Very High  [View Match](#)
- ★  **Trisha Gable** 243 people
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins [?](#)
Confidence: Very High  [View Match](#)
- ★  **gkbbrown** 1,820 people
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins [?](#)
Confidence: Very High  [View Match](#)

The first four of these people are known to me – Eva Josefsson, Ann Lipot, Lise-Lotte Kolmberger, Trisha Gable (nee Lipot) – they all are related to me on the Wennström side of my family. I previously have written narratives about my relationship with these individuals. But *gkbbrown* was a new one to me when I first saw him on this list.

I next looked at the DNA match that Stuart has with *gkbbrown*:

← AncestryDNA Home > Member Matches for Stuart Eck

★  **gkbbrown**
Member since 2002, last logged in yesterday

 **Predicted relationship: 4th Cousins**
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins ([What does this mean?](#))
 Confidence: Very High [?](#)

Amount of Shared DNA
45 centimorgans shared across 3 DNA segments

Stuart and *gkbbrown* share 45 cM across 3 DNA segments.

I also looked at Annmarie's match with *gkbbrown*:

AncestryDNA Home > Member Matches for Annmarie Brorström

gkbbrown
Member since 2002, last logged in yesterday

Predicted relationship: 4th Cousins
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins ([What does this mean?](#))

Confidence: High

Amount of Shared DNA
43 centimorgans shared across 3 DNA segments

Annmarie and *gkbbrown* share 43 cM across 3 DNA segments. [I should add that Susan and *gkbbrown* share 32 cM across 2 DNA segments.]

Based on the 2016 study by the noted genetic genealogist Blaine Bettinger, the size of my cousins' DNA matches with *gkbbrown* is what would be expected for fourth-cousins (4C) or fourth-cousins once-removed (4C1R):

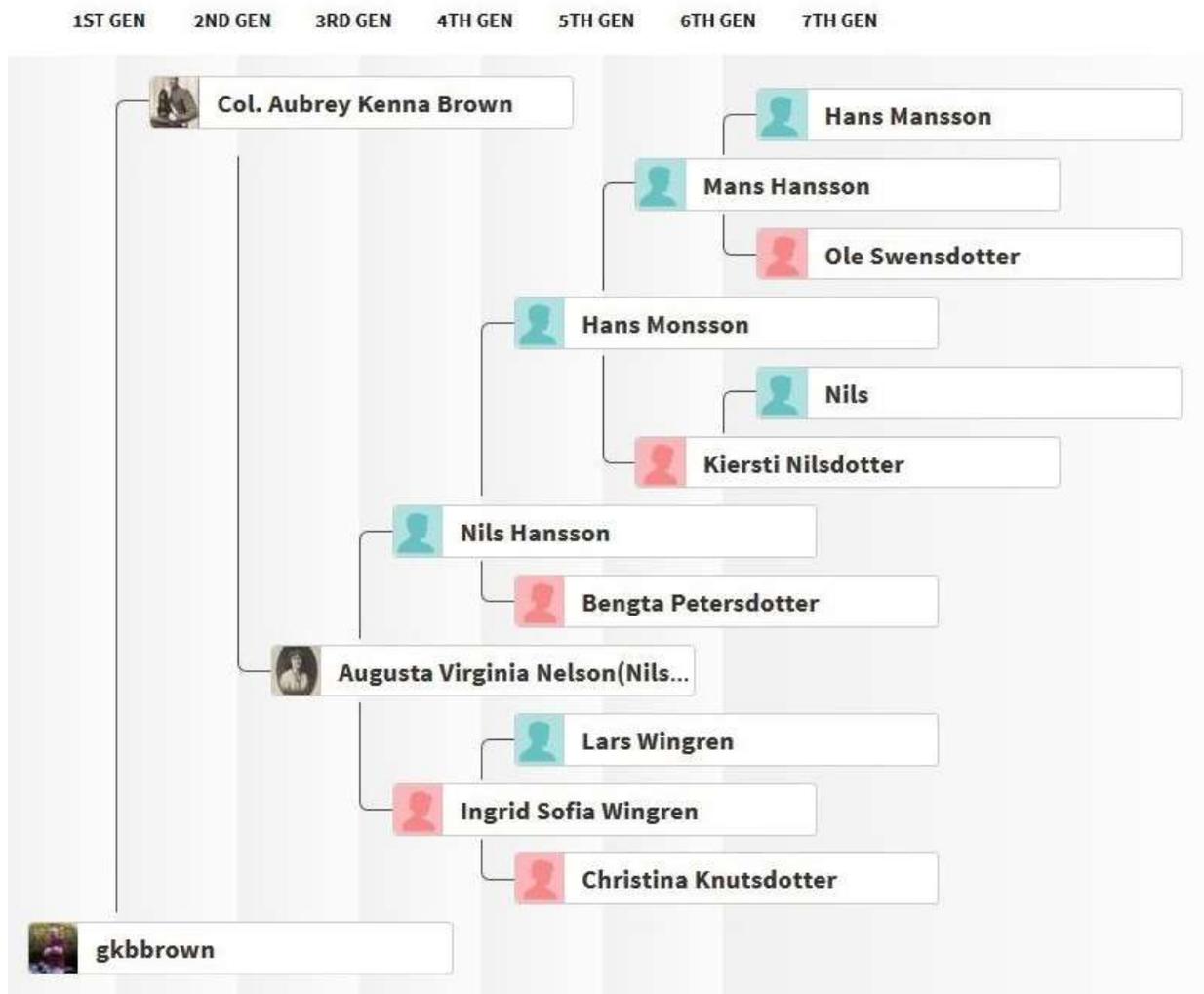
The Shared cM Project – Version 2.0
June 25, 2016

Blaine T. Bettinger
www.thegeneticgenealogist.com
CC 4.0 Attribution License

							3 rd -Great-Grandparents		5C
							2 nd -Great-Grandparents		5C1R
							Great-Grandparents		5C2R
							Great Grand Aunt/Uncle		6C
							Great-Grandparents		6C1R
							Great Aunt/Uncle		6C2R
							1C1R		7C
							1C2R		8C
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These matches would be at the very far extreme for a fifth-cousin (5C) relationship (0-42 cM, average of 17 cm).

I next examined the family tree that *gkbbrown* has on the Ancestry.com website, looking for any Swedish ancestors. Here is the relevant part of his family tree:



His paternal grandmother (*farmor* in Swedish) was Augusta Virginia Nelson (Nilsson), and she was a Swedish immigrant (she probably changed her surname from Nilsson to Nelson and added the middle name Virginia when she immigrated). Here is a screenshot with information about Augusta from *gkbbrown*'s tree on Ancestry.com:



Augusta Virginia Nelson(Nilsson)

Vital Events (4 of 15 timeline events)

Birth	22 Mar 1883 Våxtorp, Halland, Sweden
Marriage	9 Jun 1917 to Col. Aubrey Kenna Brown Chicago, Cook, Illinois, USA
Death	3 Jan 1966 San Antonio, Bexar, Texas, USA

Parents

 **Nils Hansson**
04 Aug 1839 - 18 Nov 1889

 **Ingrid Sofia Wingren**
Aug 10, 1848 - 23 Feb 1922

Spouse and Children

 **Col. Aubrey Kenna Brown**
11/23/1880 - 25 Mar 1955

 **Col. Aubrey Kenna Brown**
Aug 25, 1920 - Aug 11, 2015

OMG!!! She was born in Våxtorp, Halland County, Sweden!! My Wennström ancestors lived in Menlösa, which is less than 5 km straight west of Våxtorp. And many of my Wennström relatives lived in Våxtorp and are buried in the church cemetery there (and several of my Wennström relatives still live nearby).

Working backwards, I learned that Augusta's great-grandparents, Måns Hansson (1762-1840) and Kierstin Nilsson (1766-1844), were married on 13 June 1790 in Våxtorp. So this branch of *gkbbrown's* family lived in Våxtorp for many generations. At this point, I was 99% sure that we have a common ancestor in Våxtorp that will account for the DNA matches described above.

Unfortunately, in looking at *gkbbrown's* family tree, I didn't see a connection that would be at the level of a 4C or 4C1R or even 5C relationship. So I then did what I often do when I need information about my Swedish relatives – I sent an e-mail note to my Swedish cousin Lise-Lotte Kolmberger and asked her if she could identify the relationship. Lise-Lotte is an expert genealogist, and she and I are related on the Wennström side of my family; accordingly, she has ancestors in the Våxtorp area. If anyone could figure this out, it would be Lise-Lotte.

I was amazed that Lise-Lotte wrote back the next day – here is an excerpt from her e-mail note:

I started to search and then checked my own tree and yes!

Our joint ancestor Ola Nilsson (born 1775-07-09 in Våxtorp) is the brother of Kierstin Nilsson (born 1764-03-11 in Våxtorp, died 1822-10-01 in Våxtorp).

She married Måns Hansson (born 1762-02-28 in Våxtorp, died 1840-03-03 in Våxtorp) in 1790-06-03 in Våxtorp. They had 4 sons; Sven (born 1791-10-04 Våxtorp), Pär (born 1798-08-04 Våxtorp), Hans (born 1801-09-10 Våxtorp) and Bengt (born 1804-02-28 Våxtorp).

Hans was the father of Nils Hansson!

Nils and Ingrid Sofia had at least 9 children. Augusta was born only Augusta, no Virginia. My guess is she took it [the Virginia middle name] when arriving in USA!

So, relationship confirmed!

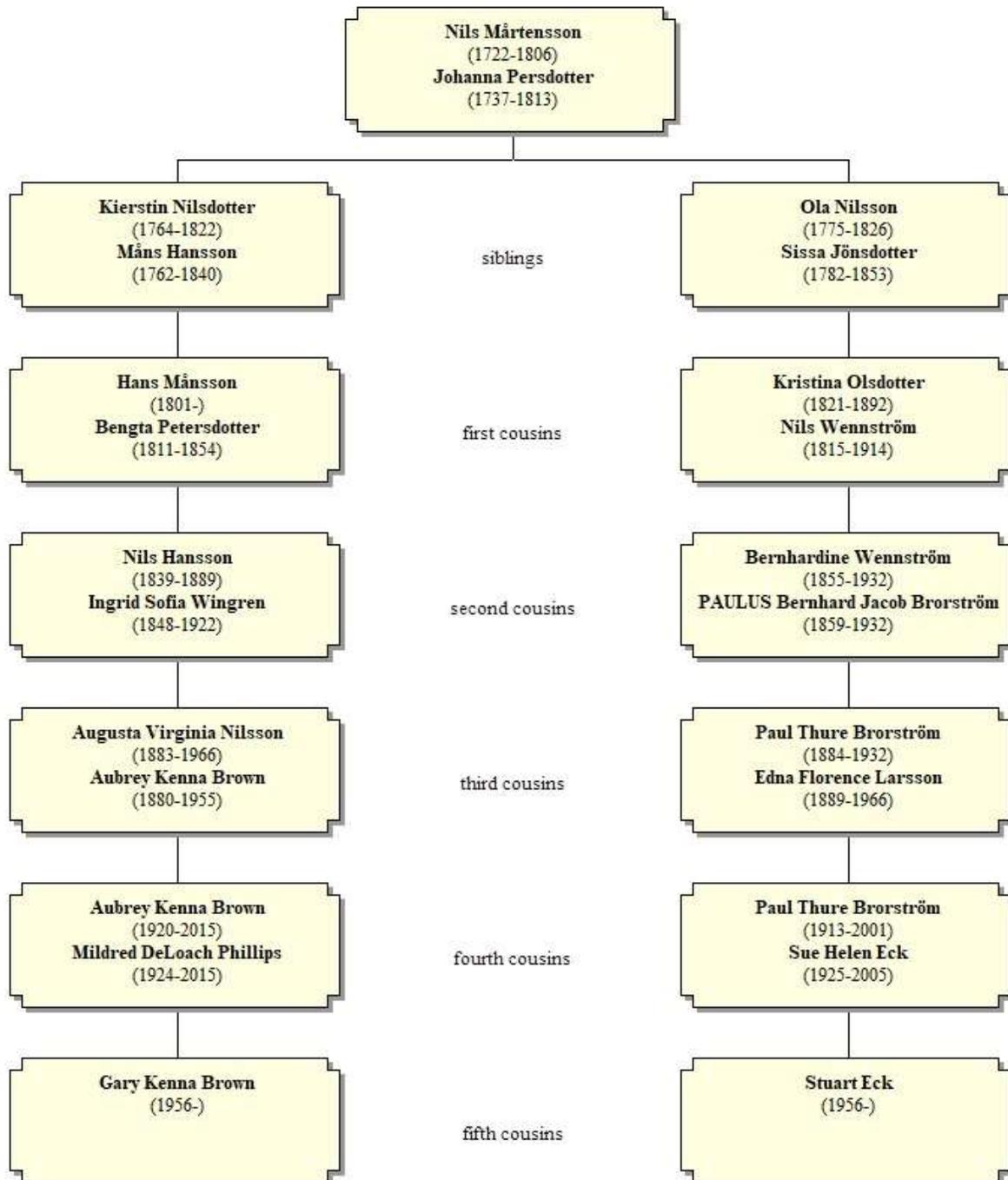
Oh my – this means that **gkbbrown** is also related to Lise-Lotte through our common ancestor Ola Nilsson (1775-1826).

Who is gkbbrown?

In adding this new branch to my family tree, I learned that **gkbbrown's** father was Aubrey Kenna Brown (1920-2015) – he was the only child of the Swedish immigrant Augusta Nilsson (1883-1966). A Google search turned up Aubrey Kenna Brown's obituary (reproduced in Appendix A), and this obituary mentioned that one of his sons was Gary Kenna Brown, M.D., of Knoxville, Tennessee. Gary's initials would be GKB, so my guess was that he is **gkbbrown**. A subsequent message on the Ancestry.com message system, followed by several e-mail exchanges, confirmed that **gkbbrown** is indeed Gary Kenna Brown.

Our Relationship with Gary Kenna Brown

Here is a chart showing how my first-cousin Stuart Eck and Gary Kenna Brown are related:

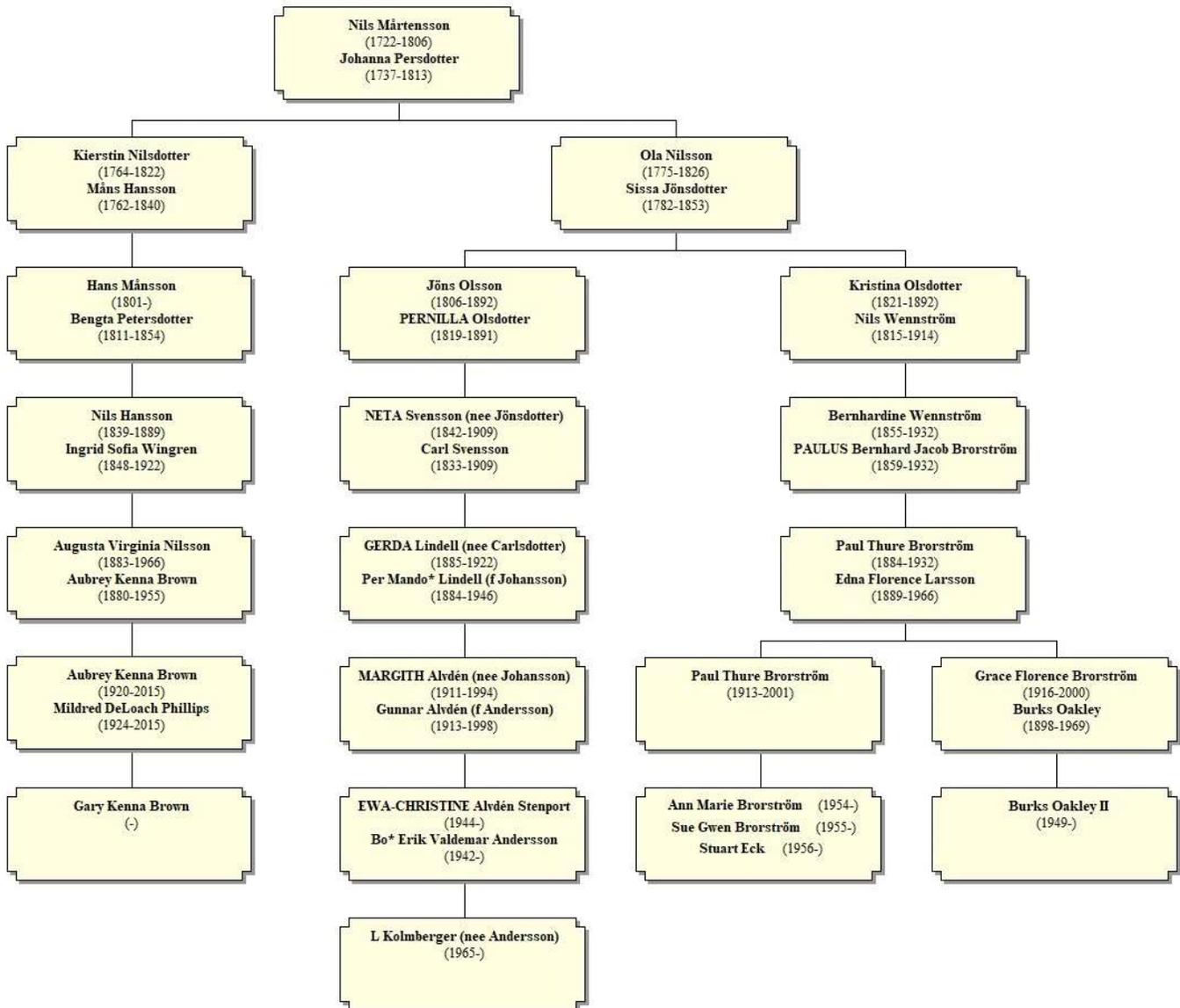


Stuart and Gary are fifth-cousins. The size of their DNA match (45 cM) is just larger than the largest DNA match (42 cM) found in the 2016 Bettinger study.

Of course, this means that Annmarie, Susan, and I also are 5th-cousins with Gary (see next page). And the fact that I don't have a DNA match with Gary also is consistent with the Bettinger study, which found that some 5th-cousins don't

have a significant DNA match – the relationship simply goes back too many generations.

Using all of this information, I constructed a chart showing how Gary K. Brown, Lise-Lotte Kolmberger, my Swedish-American cousins, and I are all related:



Summary

In this short narrative, I have described how I identified a DNA match between my Swedish-American first-cousin Stuart Eck and Gary Kenna Brown, and how (with Lise-Lotte's help) I was able to identify our common ancestors. We all are

descended from Nils Mårtenson (1722-1806) and his wife Johanna Persdotter (1737-1813), who lived in Våxtorp, Halland County, Sweden. This DNA match is about as far back as one can go with DNA. I'm grateful that my Swedish-American cousins had their DNA tested on Ancestry.com, since I don't have this DNA match with Gary – but they do!

Gary lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, and I'm looking forward to meeting him the next time that I am passing through.

Appendix A – Obituary of Aubrey Kenna Brown, Jr., M.D.

http://www.tdtnews.com/obituaries/article_f29f8d86-4208-11e5-bc16-f3d0b1402a1c.html



Aubrey Kenna Brown, Jr., M.D., aged 94, passed away peacefully at his residence on Tuesday, August 11, 2015. He was born on August 25, 1920 in Greenville, South Carolina to Dr. Aubrey and Augusta Nelson Brown, Sr. His family moved to numerous military medical army posts throughout his early years, including stations in Iowa, South Carolina, Texas, and Panama.

Kenna graduated from the Texas Military Institute in San Antonio in 1938. In 1942, he graduated from the Citadel Military College in Charleston, South Carolina. That same year, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He continued his education and graduated from the University of Tennessee School of Medicine in 1945.

In 1945, Kenna married Mildred DeLoach Phillips of Memphis, Tennessee. He served an internship at San Antonio's Robert B. Green Hospital, after which, he was inducted into the U.S. Army at Ft. Sam Houston Brooke General Hospital. He served on staff at Tripler Army Hospital in Hawaii for three years, 1947-1949, before transferring to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. During the Korean War, Kenna served as surgeon of the 24th Infantry Division in Korea as well as the interim commanding officer of the 24th Division Medical Battalion. After the Korean War, he served as Chief of Surgery at the station hospital in Camp Zama, Japan.

After completing his residency in Ear, Nose and Throat (E.N.T.) at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C., he served as Assistant Chief of E.N.T. for two years. He was then transferred to Fitzsimons Army Hospital in Denver, Colorado, where he became the Chief of the E.N.T. service. In 1964, he was transferred to Brooke General Army Hospital in San Antonio, Texas where he served as Chief of E.N.T. In 1966, Kenna retired from the military after 22 years of active duty, with the rank of Colonel.

Upon his military retirement, Kenna accepted a position in the Division of E.N.T. at Scott & White Clinic. During his time at Scott & White, he served as Chief of the E.N.T. Division from 1970-1981. He was elected as President of the Clinic Staff Organization in 1974 and was also honored to serve on the Scott & White Hospital Board of Trustees and the Scott & White Clinic Board of Directors. In 1979, he was named a Professor of Surgery of the Texas A&M University College of Medicine.

Kenna was a Diplomate of the American Board of Otolaryngology, a member of the American Society of Facial Plastic Surgery and was a Fellow in the following: the American College of Surgeons, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology and the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. In addition, he was a member of the Texas Otolaryngological Association and a member of the Texas Society for Electron Microscopy. Kenna retired from Scott & White in 1990 at age 70.

Always an avid outdoorsman, Kenna enjoyed camping, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, and bow hunting with his family and many friends well into his 80's. Kenna was a founding member of the Bell County Piddle and Paddle Society, a canoeing club. He was a voracious reader, with a lifelong love of learning.

Kenna and Mildred were founding members of St. Francis Episcopal Church, where he served for many years on the Vestry and as a Layreader. Kenna was a loving and devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. All of his friends and family enjoyed his delightful, dry wit and sense of humor.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 70 years, Mildred Phillips Brown, and a son, Aubrey Kenna Brown, III, who died in infancy in 1946. He is survived by his four children: William Phillip's Brown and wife, Debbie Lehmkuhl Brown, of Austin, Texas; Gail Brown Avots, and husband, Andre Avots, M.D. of Temple,

Texas; Gary Kenna Brown, M.D. of Knoxville, Tennessee; Beth Brown Lang and husband, Steven Frank Lang of Austin, Texas; five grandchildren, Kristin Avots Murphy and husband, Donovan Kip Murphy, M.D. of San Francisco, California; Lauren Avots Bryan and husband, Wesley Kriston Bryan of Houston, Texas; Erik Kenna Avots, of Austin, Texas; Aubree Marie Brown of Austin, Texas and Laura Phillips Lang of Austin, Texas and one great-grandson, Luke William Murphy of San Francisco, California.

Memorial services will be held Tuesday, August 18th, at 10:00am at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Temple, Texas with the Reverend Brad St. Romain officiating. A reception for family and friends will be held in the parish hall following the service. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials to be sent to Baylor, Scott and White Healthcare or to St. Francis Episcopal Church.



Aubrey Kenna Brown, ca. 1942
Citadel, Charleston, SC
[Photo from Ancestry.com]

Appendix B – Photos

Here are several photos that are relevant to this narrative:



The Church in Våxtorp. May 2018.



The gravestone of Augusta Nilsson in the church cemetery in Våxtorp. She is not to be confused with the Augusta Nilsson in the current narrative. This one was born Augusta Amalia Wennström (1861-1942); she was a daughter of Hans Petter Wennström (1835-1923) and thus a niece of my ancestor Nils Wennström (1815-1914). Photo taken May 2018.



Selfie taken with Lise-Lotte Kolmberger in her backyard in Billdal, Sweden. May 2018.