

**A Short History of the Illustrious Brown Family**

**(Gramps and Mingy and their Arrival)**



Walter Harold Brown  
San Francisco (undated)

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abbreviated

## A Short History of the Illustrious Brown Family

I happen to think that the Brown family is rather special. This is not merely because I am a part of it, but because of their surprising talents and intellects.

The proximate cause of this is the presence of the genes and influence of Herb and Donna Brown.

My father, Herbert Walter Brown, whose education did not extend beyond High School, progressed from a delivery boy for the Bank of Italy in San Francisco to the Manager of his own Branch of the Bank of America. My mother, Donna Louise Anderson, had come from extremely bright and determined Scandinavian parents (my Grandfather, a ship's Master in the Alaska Packers, and my Grandmother, a strong-willed and gifted Danish girl who raised seven quite unusual children (six girls and one boy). My mother's education took her two years beyond High School, to complete "Teacher's College", and to find herself teaching elementary school at the age of eighteen.

Herb and Donna moved their family at an early age to Piedmont, California where the schools had the best reputation in the San Francisco Bay Area. This was a financial reach for them, but they managed it well.

It soon became clear that their two children, Herbert Anderson Brown, and myself, Wilbur Knight Brown, were slated to become outstanding students. A fellow student complained to me when we were adults that "Herb" always won the Spelling Bee in their class. I followed just one year behind Herb quietly vowing to outdo him if I could. The competition had a mutually salutary effect: My bother Herb was soon spending his Summers building radios in our garage on Crofton Avenue. I soon saw that I had no electronic talent and satisfied myself working first on bicycles and later (with Herb) on "Motor Scooters". It was soon evident that Herb has a superior talent for internal combustion-engine vehicles (which I did not), and which lasted for his entire life, and which he passed on to several of his children.

All this time, although I enjoyed working with Herb on vehicles in the Summers, I committed myself to excelling in school - in which I succeeded. At the end of High School,

I spent most of my time reading, and upon graduation, won the Mathematics Award for the year. I graduated 10th in a talented class of 100, and had fallen in love with Kathryn Lomilla Lind, who was first in our class. I was captivated by both her youthful beauty and her vocabulary - which I had happily discovered was equal to my own.

Upon graduation from Piedmont High School in 1950, Kathryn ("Kitty") attended Mills College in Oakland where she studied Chemistry, while I attended the University of California in Berkeley. I passed an NROTC test (Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps) with such a high score that I was granted a 4-year scholarship to study Physics.





BILL

KITTY

CRAIG

MICHELE

DIANE MARIE LINDA

WALT

(This took some financial pressure off my parents, too, because I was paid a monthly stipend beside supplying of all my books and materials by the Navy.)

The year 1954 was a banner year: Kitty and I graduated from our respective universities, were married on June 27, and I received my Commission as Ensign in the U.S.Navy.

We soon found to our delight that my ship, the U.S.S. Boyd (a Destroyer) was in drydock being overhauled in nearby Mare Island Naval Shipyard. We joyously settled down to married life in a quonset hut (QH 459A) on the base.

In the meantime, my brother Herb, also graduated from the University of California in Berkeley after studying Electrical Engineering, received (through the ROTC) his Commission

as 1st Lieutenant in 1954 in the U.S. Army. Both Herb and I returned to the Berkeley campus in 1956 after serving in the the Army and Navy, respectively. I entered Grad School

in Nuclear Engineering (a new and exciting field), and Herb made a fine match by marrying

a Physical Education Graduate Student, Betty Jordan of Sherman, Texas. They settled in nearby El Sobrante overlooking the city of Richmond.

Then followed some extraordinary Grandchildren of Herb and Donna Brown. The first of Herb and Betty's children, named Jordan, almost immediately after his boyhood, dove into Computer Science. Jordan was so brilliant, and so enamored of Computer Science, that he moved directly into software development without pausing for the distraction of college. To this day, Jordan is so deeply involved in computer science, that he has made significant contributions to the the field throughout his career.

Bill Speaking: You can see that I haven't gotten too far yet. Still, it's a beginning. I figured that I was the only one who could do the section on my mother and father. Then, I started on Herb's side of the family first, but soon realized that I couldn't even do Karen justice, let alone Stew and Ann, so I stopped there. I can easily do Walt and Craig, no problem there.

So just do what you think is right for Jordan, Karen, Stew and Ann. You can probably best

write them yourself rather than turning them over to the specific kids. Just interview them when necessary....

There are pieces that I started to write, but left out because it wasn't the right time to include them: 1.) Herb and Betty moving to LosAltos, Herb moving into Satellite electronics testing etc. 2.) My finishing my MS. and Ph.D. at Berkeley, working in Denmark, then returning to Los Alamos, and my career and our life there.

I haven't the computer smarts to send many pages at once, so I'll scan each, attach it to an email -- one by one. Bill

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Dear Betty:

Thus far, I have not explained how my father's genes contributed to our "Illustrious" Family.

Here, I relate an anecdote which may shed some light on the subject: It took place at our Lake Almanor house during a visit after my mother's death. Dad slept upstairs in the hide-a-bed. Each morning he would come down for breakfast, followed by the status of the Stock Market that day. Bear in mind that Dad had advanced Macular Degeneration and could not read. He taught me what the symbols at the top of the columns of stock values on the first day, and thereafter had no need to repeat the lesson.

He would ask me to read the day's numbers from the stocks that he held, then, when we had finished that, he would do a surprising thing: He would calculate the value of each stock he held by recalling from memory how many shares he held, and multiplying mentally. When he had done that for each stock, he would quickly calculate the total value of his holdings at that time and compare it with that of the previous day! He never wrote anything down, he did it all in his head! Very few people could accomplish such a feat, certainly not I (even though I was good with numbers myself). His performance, morning after morning, was pretty amazing! He did it all in a minute or two, effortlessly! at age approximately 90 !

End of anecdote:February 9,2006 *Bill*