

Lotte Møhl sent this to TENEN as a response to the obituary that appeared in TENEN vol 28, nr 4 - May 2018, with the idea that they may like to publish it, which they did.

TENEN - Karen Finch: The mention of the death of Karen Finch sent my thoughts to the past - far back to my childhood, when I came to know Karen. At that time, during the war, I was living together with my mother, Gerda Heerup, later Klint, in a lovely apartment in 29b Amaliegade, in the building of the Museum of Fine Arts, 'Kunstindustriemuseet'. My mother was a librarian for the Kunstindustriemuseet's library, and therefore she was allowed to live in a flat in the building (an "embedslejlighed" (official residence).

Some of the professional training courses of the Kunsthandvaerkeskolen were also based at the museum. The idea was that the young students should have easy access to study the collections as well as the museum library. And the entrance was the same as for us, 29b Amaliegade. Amongst the departments there was cabinetmaking and the weaving school, under the leadership of Gerda Henning. I remember Gerda Henning herself always wearing beautiful, long, striped skirts floating up the stairs. There was also a colourful flock of young weaver girls and then there was the legendary teacher, Bente Myrner, who taught generations of weavers the logic of the knowledge of binding. ??

In spring the stock of wool from the school was aired in the yard (my mother was not amused, she thought, that the moths continued all the way up to our apartment), "Grønnegaarden", and there, weather permitting, the weaving girls were often sitting plaiting edges or repairing threads on their pieces of work. Mother's apartment was quite big and as she was on her own with me it suited us fine that we had a weaving girl living in so she could look after me when I came home from school. One of them was Karen. She came from a big farm in the Viborg area where I was once allowed to visit for the autumn holiday - that involved amongst other things the slaughtering of pigs - one of the farmworkers put the chopped off tail of a pig in my rubber boots to tease the 'Copenhagen' girl! But that is quite another story!

In the last year of the war I moved to my maternal grandmother in Hareskov, because it was too turbulent in the city. During that period, I had already moved schools several times, because the school buildings had been progressively expropriated to house refugees from the German bombing. My mother told that she had often had weaving girls staying overnight at the apartment when they couldn't get home to their digs on account of air raid alarms or shootings.

On the 4th May 1945 she also had the house full: later she often spoke of that jubilant evening when she and some of the weaving girls, Karen being one of them, walked arm in arm into the city to mingle with everybody else at the joyful and ecstatic celebration of freedom! The next day, 5th May, the English fleet arrived. My mother, Karen and other weaving girls went out to Langelinie to see the ships, and here Karen saw Norman Finch who was a soldier in the fleet. And it wasn't long before she went with him to bombed out London. On account of the war Norman had not been able to get an education, because he had to be a soldier. They had no money and had to live in a tiny apartment with Norman's family. Later Karen visited the Royal School of Needlework and told them that she came from Denmark, and that she was a trained weaver! And so her career began.

My mother had contact with Karen for many years, and she and I visited Karen and Norman a couple of times in their hospitable house in London, where Karen was always deeply engaged in one or other exciting projects about the history of textiles. A lovely person and an impressive life history!

Lotte Møhl

Weaver, born 1936