

HENRY E. THARP

It was a dark and stormy morning when I was born in southern Kansas at the depth of the great depression on the very day of the worst dust storm of the entire dust bowl.

Raised on a Cowley Co. farm by loving parents with my only sibling, a younger brother, I graduated in the top 10% of my High School class at the midpoint of the last century. During the early years, a lifelong interest in Family History was nurtured at large family reunions and by listening to the first hand experiences of my Grandfather and two of his brothers during the Oklahoma Land rush. They had participated to stake out the claim where my Great Uncle Jess had already long been living, a true "Sooner."

Four years of study at Emporia State, interrupted half way through by four years service in the USAF during the Korean War, resulting in two undergraduate degrees, followed by a year at the University of Illinois where I earned my Masters. All 3 degrees were in Speech and/or Theatre, which was to be my life's work.

During my year at Illinois, while working towards my MA, I held an Assistantship, teaching Public Speaking, and serving as a shop assistant to the Theatre's Technical Director.

I then spent one academic year working in NY as the Assistant Technical Director of the Theatre at Hofstra. I then joined the faculty of the University of Louisville, KY, as an instructor of speech and Theatre, and Designer & Technical Director of the University Theatre.

After my first two years at the University of Louisville, I took a two year leave to return to Illinois for Doctoral studies, on an Assistantship as the first assistant to the Theatre Costumier. Then, after my return to U of L for two more years, I was hired by the Louisville Children's Theatre as its Designer/Technical Director, a position I held eight years: the only time in my working life (other than that in the USAF) I was out of academics.

The Theatre Department of the University of Missouri hired me back into academics in 1974, and back west of the Mississippi for the first time since I had left Kansas in 1958. After 23 years at MU, I retired and moved to Kansas City, in part to be near the Genealogy library and really get serious about Genealogy.

I have belonged and/or still belong to several professional and other organizations: The National Collegiate Players; The Speech Association of America; The American Theatre Association; The American Educational Theatre Association; The United States Institute of Theatre Technology (I was inducted as a FELLOW for life in 1988, after serving on the Board of directors and in various Offices); The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (I was my local's delegate to most international conventions during my 24 year tenure with the union); MENSA (in the highest, 99th, percentile). I am a Life Member of both: the Illinois State Genealogical Society and the Jackson County, MO, Genealogical Society, and a Past President of the latter.

I have done volunteer work at the Music Hall, the Folly, Lyric, Midland, and Starlight theatres, as well as been an ambassador tour guide at the KC, MO, Public Library. I am proud and happy to have been one of the first volunteers at the Midwest Genealogy Center, the largest public genealogy library in the US, where I continue to volunteer today.