

Barber, Vernon and Gerry

Vernon Carothers “Bob” Barber had lived all of his ten years in west Texas before his family packed up their possessions and moved to Sandpoint (see Barber, “Vic” and Elmah) in 1934. He was born in his grandmother’s home in Sylvester on June 29, 1924, but by 1927 the family had moved to Becton, in Lubbock county, where Vic raised grain and cotton on 400 acres. For Christmas 1932 Vernon and his two older brothers received ponies from their grandfather and the boys rode them the one mile to school. By 1934 Vic, as restless as all his ancestors, had decided to move the family, along with their best friends Archie and Bessie Clark, to Idaho. With all their household goods packed into the Buick, Vic and Elmah with their four boys Dale, George (“Pete”), Vernon (“Bob”), and Carroll camped their way to Sandpoint that summer. Within a few months they settled into a rented house at 915 Church Street and the three older boys were enrolled at Farmin School.

Vernon’s fifth grade teacher that year, 1934-35, was Vera Prather, and in May of 1938 Vernon finished elementary school. At the same time the family joined the First Baptist Church. The boys



Vernon at Moyie sawmill, 1941

were enrolled in Sunday School, and Vernon was baptised on April 26, 1936, A. F. White, pastor. In the fall of 1938 he enrolled at Sandpoint High School, taking English, General Science, General

Math, and Shop and received all “B’s” except for a “C” in English.

During these years, his father supported the family primarily by cutting fir and tamarack, mostly from around Naples with Forest Service permits, and delivering it to local families for firewood at \$4 per cord. He employed a crew for this work but the four boys worked regularly in the summers. In the fall of 1940 Vic bought the small sawmill at Moyie Springs and used it to deliver railroad ties throughout northern Idaho. By the spring of 1942, with the war broken out, the two oldest boys worked constructing the naval base at Farragut, while Vernon finished his senior year in high school. By the summer of 1942 all of the three oldest boys had joined the navy, while the two youngest, Carroll and Bruce, continued in school.

The summer of 1942 found Vernon in Navy boot camp in San Diego, California, and by the fall of 1942 he was stationed at Navy Pier, Chicago, for training as an aviation mechanic. It was here at a dance for the sailors that he met the prettiest sophomore at Linne High School--Geraldine “Gerry” Trein.



Vernon and Gerry with Vernon’s Aunt Jen, 1944

Gerry was born in Dewar, Iowa, on October 13, 1926 of German immigrants. Her father, August Trein, was born in 1892 near Karlsruhe, Germany, son of a tailor who immigrated to Chicago the following year. Her mother, Katherine Conrad, was born 1897 in Waterloo, Iowa, of parents who both had

immigrated from western Germany. Vernon visited often with Gerry and her family in Chicago, but by late winter he was on to his next assignment in Pensacola, Florida, for gunnery training. They exchanged letters continually; by April Vernon was fully trained in aircraft instrument and

mechanical repair as well as aerial gunnery and was assigned to duty at Kanoeh Bay, Hawaii, where he spent April, 1942, to November, 1944. In one of those letters Vernon proposed marriage to Gerry; she agreed, and they planned to marry while he was on leave between assignments in December, 1944. Gerry's family was quite opposed to her marriage to a sailor she had a passing acquaintance with while he was on temporary assignment in Chicago, so it was with great reluctance they put her on a train in early December, 1944, bound for Sandpoint, Idaho. On December 6 they were married in Vic and Elmah's living room at 401 Church Street and together they travelled to Vern's next assignment—Corpus Christi Naval Air Station, Texas. The following October Vernon was discharged and the couple travelled back to Sandpoint.

At the end of the war all Vic and Elmah's boys were back in Sandpoint; the three oldest were married and the two youngest were still in school. That winter Vic and the boys worked hauling coal in Hannah, Wyoming, but by spring Vernon had enrolled in a watchmaking school on the GI Bill. The school was in Chicago, so Gerry was delighted to spend more time with her family—they shared a second floor apartment with her two sisters, brother, and an aunt. Their first son, Vernon Alan was born May 18, 1946. Each of her sisters had babies that summer, too, so it was crowded, indeed; Vernon, Gerry, and Alan shared a closet-sized bedroom. Watchmaking school finished in the summer of 1947, so the family moved back to Sandpoint where the older brothers had been hauling logs from the surrounding mountains.

Vernon, Gerry, and Alan lived briefly in Moscow before returning to Sandpoint when Vernon became watchmaker for Zenier's Jewelry on First Street. Over the next couple of years all the family left Sandpoint. Vic and Elmah along with the youngest sons Bruce and Carroll, and Dale and his family moved to Fairbanks, Alaska. Vernon and his older brother Pete had moved to Boise with their families. Vernon and Gerry's second son Dean Wesley was born there on December 25,

1950. The family, now numbering four, spent the following summer in Alaska before returning to Boise, where the third son, David Carroll, was born April 19, 1952. By the summer of 1953 the family, along with his brother Pete, was more or less permanently in Alaska where Vernon worked in the family trucking business, V D Barber and Sons, and a daughter, Kathryn Elizabeth “Kitty”, was born February 2, 1954. Alaskan summers are glorious, but the winters are less so. Over the next twenty years the family spent periods “outside”, that is, in the lower 48. The winter of 1955-56 was spent in Long Beach, California, and the winter of 1957 through the spring of 1960 was spent back in Boise. Alaska always won out, however, and in the end all the four children graduated from Fairbanks High School.

In the summer of 1972 Vernon attended the 30 year reunion of Sandpoint High School. He enjoyed it so much that the summer of 1976 he and Gerry—all the children had left home by now—moved back to Sandpoint. They eventually bought five acres in Sagle where they built a small home just large enough for themselves and any children or grandchildren who visited. Vernon was mostly retired—he did occasional repair work on watches sent from Fairbanks. They enjoyed their children, grandchildren, and hobbies. Over succeeding years Dean, David, and Kitty, all moved back to Sandpoint and Alan visited often. Vernon bought a Piper Cherokee and brushed up on his flying skills he had learned that winter in Long Beach. Together with Gerry they used it to visit Alaska, the fly-in at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and other sights around the west. Gerry enjoyed quilting, knitting, and keeping in touch with her family scattered from Alaska to Chicago to California.

In late 1991 Gerry was unexpectedly diagnosed with cancer and she died on April 1, 1992. Vernon was completely disconsolate and died of heart disease shortly after, on July 29. They are buried together at Pinecrest Cemetery, Sandpoint.