

Barbara Jane Spitzmiller

(written by Susan Larson for Tombstone Tales 2019)

I was born on July 14, 1921. My father was Gustave Spitzmiller. When he came to Colorado in 1907 he stopped at Stillwater Ranch and there was an old log cabin with a dirt roof and floor, a door but no windows and father decided to stop there overnight. Along came the prospector who owned the property and said "I need money, so I'll sell you this homestead for \$100 cash." Folks thought he was crazy, but father bought the land and rode to Hot Sulphur Springs the next day to record the sale. He convinced his father to buy up this land and move there which they did in the summer of 1910.



Gustave married my mother Anna in 1917 in Denver and they moved to Fort Lyon for four years. Ervin, Gordon and I were born there. Because of his love for the mountains he returned to Grand County where I was raised and another brother, Bud, was born in the house he built in Grand Lake. Father was a plumber and he owned a lot of real estate and he built a number of cabins to rent to the tourists. Mother took care of the cabins with help from us kids. The cabins on the Court located across the street from the Library and six cabins up the hill from the Library now called Lupine Cabins.

Gordon, Bud and I were all in the service during WWII so mother and father took care of things alone. I was a Nurse in the Navy. In 1950 while living in California after being discharged from the Navy, I met and married my husband Richard Tazer. Richard was a doctor and I was his nurse. In January 1952, after only 1 and a half years together, he passed away unexpectedly. That was about the time I was recalled to service during the Korean War. I never remarried. After his death I was stationed in Okinawa, Japan. I was discharged again briefly, but returned in 1956 to Bremerhaven, Germany on the USS Hahn to pick up Hungarian refugees. I was also stationed in Illinois, Washington State, Spain and Iceland. In 1969 at the age of 48, I finally retired from the Navy as a Lieutenant Commander.

After retiring, it became clear my family needed me back in Grand Lake to help with the operation of the cabins. Father died in 1972 and Mother in 1977. Gordon had his own plumbing business to run so I was left to run the cabins. Since the cabins were not winterized, they were only open in the summer. In the fall I turned off the water, removed the curtains and covered the windows with brown paper. I labeled each paper by which window so it could be reused each year.

I usually travelled in the winter, sometimes with my brother Bud before he died. Town folk might describe me as “reserved” or “aloof”. I didn’t have close friends. (Although, Barbara was a member of the Birthday Club and kept a scrapbook of picture - an exclusive group of approximately 12 women who met once a month to celebrate someone’s birthday.) I attribute this to my years as an officer in the military - female officer who was used to rules and regulations.

In my day I was an avid golfer and started the Teacups Women’s Golf Group. I was also on the Grand Lake Metropolitan Recreation District Board for awhile. I was active in the Grand Lake Women’s Club (my mother was a Charter Member), and was president of the club from 1976 – 1977. I often gave presentations on my travels abroad.

As time went by and the years wore on, health issues appeared, and local folks would help me open the cabins and get them ready for the season. I lived to be 79 and died almost 20 years ago on September 26, 2000.