

Ervin R. Spitzmiller

Ervin R Spitzmiller was born July 7, 1918 at Fort Lyons, Colorado to Gustave and Anna Spitzmiller.

From an article in the Sky Hi News October 9, 2003 by Wendy Kelly

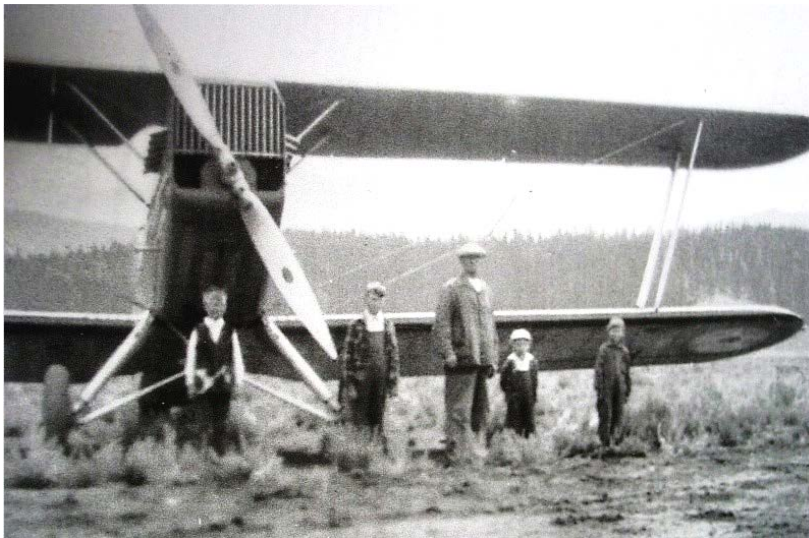
On any given day in the summertime, Ervin Spitzmiller, 85, can be seen rambling down the streets of Grand Lake. Ervin spends three hours each day walking around the village, cane in hand, stopping now and then to visit with old friends, or meet new ones. When asked if that isn't an awful lot of exercise for someone his age, he replies "I don't walk very fast."



Ervin is the last surviving member of the original Spitzmiller family; a name long associated with Grand Lake. His grandfather, Richard, a German immigrant, homesteaded 360 acres near Stillwater Ranch in 1907, just before WWI. To acquire the homestead, Spitzmiller paid an \$8 fee plus \$2 for a license. Ervin's father moved his family to the homestead in the early twenties and decided to try his hand at lettuce farming.

He later sold part of the land to the Knight Brothers of St. Louis, who sponsored Charles Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic. Ervin recalls the days when Lindbergh delivered mail in an army biplane. In those days he gave sight-seeing tours in his plane for \$5 per person. My father and my brother Gordon flew over the Grand Lake area with him. I still have the ticket.

(Lindbergh first started coming to this area as the guest of Harry F. Knight, owner of the Knight Ranch that encompassed 1500 acres on the south fork of the Colorado River. The ranch is no longer in existence today as it sits under what is now Granby Reservoir. One of the largest and best airstrips in the west was added to the Knight Ranch in order to accommodate Knight and his guests.)



The photograph is of an Army plane flown by Lindbergh to deliver air mail in the US. The Spitzmiller family in the picture from left to right: Gordon, Ervin, Grandpa Richard, Gustave (Bud), and sister Barbara

When the lettuce business proved less than profitable, Ervin's father decided to move the family from the homestead to Grand Lake and resume his career as a plumber. Gus bought land at 206 Garfield, a block behind the town part in Grand Lake, and built a house. "The house was built backwards," Ervin says. "My father built the house without consulting my mother. He built the house, then the porch, which is now a bathroom, then the cellar."

Ervin, born in 1918 was the oldest of four children. Gordon, who like his father would become a plumber, was born in 1919 and Barbara was born in 1920. The youngest brother, Bud, was born in 1923 (1927). "Barbara became a Navy nurse and traveled all over the world. She did well in the Navy because she knew how to handle men, having grown up with three brothers." We picked on her mercilessly, especially Gordon. She used to carry her doll around by its legs and hit us with it. My mother was happy when dolls came out with pewter heads since Barbara had broken so many porcelain ones defending herself."

The Spitzmiller children grew up in the house on Garfield Street during the Great Depression. Ervin says they didn't really notice being poor. "We were in the same boat as everyone else," he said. "My father was sometimes paid for his plumbing work with a pig or a chicken." Canned goods, flour and other food stores were kept in the cellar through the winter and the house was heated with a wood-burning stove. Ervin laughs, "My father used to warm his boots in the stove. One time, he forgot to take them out and they burned up!"



Dancing the Maypole Grand Lake School 1924

The family melted icicles in a galvanized wash tub for bathing. "Father would bathe first, then the boys, then Barbara, then mother. We all used the same water so you can imagine how dirty it was by the time it was Mothers' turn. One time we brought ice from the lake and melted it for the bath. Apparently there were fleas in the water because the house was full of them. We didn't get water from the lake after that."

The family rented what they called “the minister’s room” in the house to traveling clergy. Their mother Anna, who was a religious woman, wanted the children to learn about different faiths before choosing one.

“We later started renting a room to tourists and expanded to renting cabins. The court was originally a campground. We built 15 cabins (there is no number 13) and six more next to the house. Mother took care of cleaning and rentals and Eslick’s Laundry washed the linens. The cabins rented for \$1.25 per night, \$2.50 for a double, and showers were 15 cents.”



The Spitzmiller children attended high school in Kremmling, where they boarded during the school year. Barbara cooked and cleaned for her brothers for the first two months before her mother arrived and was given an allowance for household expenses. Ervin recalls that his mother was amazed at how much money Barbara had saved during that short time and still managed to feed them all.

Ervin was drafted during WWII, but was rejected from the military due to rheumatic fever. “The doctor said I had a bad heart,” he laughs. “He suggested I move to a lower altitude for my health. How many people do you know who could walk around Grand Lake several hours a day?”

Ervin Spitzmiller married Mary Ellen Check in 1942. They had six children: Michael, Stephen, Mary Eugenia (Hynes), Anne (Cohen), Christina (Rourke) and Karen (Carmean). Ervin has 13 grandchildren and one great grandchild. He graduated from Denver University and received a Master’s degree in Organic Chemistry from Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He is retired from Bristol Myers-Squibb where he was a pharmaceutical research chemist for 50 years.

Ervin makes his home in Edison, NJ. He spends summers in his Grand Lake childhood home with his daughter Christina and her husband Micky.

An article recognizing Ervin Spitzmiller's 50th anniversary of working with the same company

Ervin R. Spitzmiller began working with the Squibb Institute for Medical Research December 7, 1942. During World War II Spitzmiller researched antimalarials and sulfanilamides using his eyes and mind. Year later, using leading edge technology he prepared ACE inhibitor prototypes leading to fosinopril – the first to purify and isolate the crystalline sodium salt which became Monopril. This benefited not only the company but Spitzmiller himself, since he has taken Monopril for his own hypertension since its introduction to the market.

During his tenure with the company Ervin has proven to be an invaluable employee.

To help celebrate his anniversary, a helicopter trip to the Statue of Liberty was arranged. A reception followed with featured speakers each of whom expressed appreciation for a man who has shared so much of his life with the company.

The Man we call "Spitz"

Who's warm and happy smile greets you each day,
Who's gentle voice says: "Here she is, good morning
Or have a nice day," Irvin Spitzmiller,
The man we call Spitz

Who's always walking around at gala affairs, to
Catch your expressions when you're really not prepared
(he photographed every event)
Who always has stickers for co-workers alike, to
Help celebrate each holiday with delight,
The man we call Spitz

Directors and co-workers can attest to this,
Who's many accomplishments is an endless list,
Who's volume of projects must equal a million,
Who's had work seem to go on without rest,
The man we call Spitz

Family and friends gather to celebrate,
The Golden Anniversary on this date,
Extending Best Wishes, Congratulations too,
Enjoy the gusto and glitz,
I'm proud to know
The man we call Spitz.

Word was received May 23, 2012 that Ervin Spitzmiller quietly passed away two nights ago at his home in New Jersey. He has been losing strength for some time. They are planning a quiet family ceremony in New Jersey. We will certainly miss and remember him.