

The Ackerman Family History

John Ackerman, my grandfather, born April 6, 1924, was the third child of George and Helen (Behm) Ackerman. Upon his birth he was given the name Lloyd, but his brother, Fredrick, three years his elder, referred to him as Johnny. So excited was Fred about his new baby brother, that he sat out on his front steps and asked anyone within earshot if they would "like to see his little Johnny?" Why he picked this name no one can say, but it took and the boy was known as John ever after. In fact, my grandfather disliked the name Lloyd so much that he legally changed it to John as soon as he could.

My grandmother Arlene, a lively woman with a vivid memory and a friendly disposition, remembers her childhood fondly despite the fact that she also grew up through the Great Depression and World War II. She explained that her social life revolved around her family and that they relied upon each other greatly.

John and Arlene had two children, Gary Allen (my father), born May 14, 1946, and Gayle Arlene, born January 13, 1951. Both are high school graduates. Gayle married Fredrick Brooks and had a son, Bryan, my only cousin on the Ackerman side of my family. Gayle and Fred were divorced and she later married William Bishop.

As an interesting side note, I am told that the Ackerman name lives on thanks to a family dog. Apparently, my father was not quite a toddler when he managed to break away from his mother's watchful eye and crawl onto the nearby road. Moments before being run over by a gravel truck, the dog grabbed him by the diaper with his teeth and pulled him to safety.

Gary met his wife Elizabeth Ann Altmann, born July 6, 1945, while she lived in Marshfield, Wisconsin and courted her by sneaking there from his home in Antigo with the family car. He would attempt to "cover his tracks" by disconnecting the odometer cable, which was obviously not very effective since I heard this story from his parents. Gary and Elizabeth were married on August 28, 1965, and supported his new family with a job at the power company, often requiring him to work in dangerous conditions for meager wages. He once illustrated how scarce money was to them in those days when he referred to bologna as "lineman steak," explaining that that was about as much extravagance as he could afford. Among other part-time jobs, including volunteer fireman and police officer in Stratford, Wisconsin, he was hired by GTE, again as a laborer, and was able to rise up within the corporation through time and the company's investment in his on-the-job education, to his present job as a specialist in computer systems. To his credit, he is a man of determination and ability, the kind of person one would seek out for advice or help.

Gary and Elizabeth had three children: James (Jim) Edward, born August 8, 1966, Leon (Lee) Wayne, born June 18, 1969, and Susan Marie, born May 9, 1973. Elizabeth worked as a unit clerk at St. Joseph's hospital for many years until around the time she had her daughter. She then became a full-time housewife. After almost 24 years of marriage, Gary and Elizabeth were divorced. Gary was later married to Colleen Stone and now has two stepchildren, Sara and Brad. Elizabeth, has moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma where she is employed as a receptionist at a doctor's office.

Jim completed college and moved to Provo, Utah where he lives with his wife Laura and is employed as a telecommunications engineer. Susan graduated from UW-Eau Claire with a bachelor's degree in psychology and is working at the Eau Claire Academy as a unit manager. Lee is the only Ackerman to remain in Marshfield where he lives with his wife of three years, Rhonda Renee Wehe, born September 1, 1970. Lee is employed at Norwood Health Center as a Developmental Disabilities Technician and Rhonda, a college graduate as well, does family counseling for Children's Service Society of Wisconsin.

*Submitted by Lee Ackerman
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