



Life Review of Barbara Geertsen

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From an Interview with Grandma

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Introduction

My grandma Barbara Geertsen is an amazing role model, and I am one of many people who is blessed to know her. I have never seen my grandma without a smile. She has an infectious positive attitude, and her spirit radiates for miles. My grandma has always been there for me. All growing up, I loved going to grandma's house because she had the best candy, toys, and hugs. Every birthday she would call me and take me out to lunch. She showed up to countless dance recitals and softball games. I love how personable my Grandma Geertsen is. She is exceptionally loquacious and can talk for hours. She truly is an incredible figure in my life, and I'm so grateful to be her grand daughter

Birth to Early Childhood

Barbara Jo Geertsen was born April 2, 1949 to Joseph and Dorothy (Dot) Bateman. She was born at St. Marks Hospital in Ogden, Utah and weighed 4 pounds 9 ounces. Barbara is one of seven children. She has three older siblings and three younger siblings: Brent, Betty Lynn, Barton, Jan, Bonnie, and Bob. Unfortunately, three of her siblings (Betty Lynn, Barton, and Jan) did not survive infancy due to having the RH factor. The RhoGAM shot was not yet developed. Due to these undesirable events, Bonnie and Bob were adopted. Barbara and Bonnie both had blonde hair, bright blue eyes, and outgoing personalities. Nobody was able to tell the two sisters weren't blood related. Barbara got along well with her siblings, but there were challenging days.

Barbara had a stubborn little temper. She liked being the youngest, so when Bonnie was born it was a hard transition. At five years old, Barbara had had enough. As any little girl would do, Barbara packed her little red suitcase, and she went to Rendy's house to have a sleepover.

Rendy was catholic, so they prayed and “did the cross thing.” Even though they had a night of fun, Barbara missed her family. Too headstrong to admit this, she grudgingly walked through her front doors where her parents welcomed her home with open arms. Secretly her heart was full, and she was happy to be home.

Barbara was an active kid. Her childhood consisted of love and laughter. It was rare to catch Barbara without a smile and a baby doll in hand. Her dad Jo made her a cupboard, and she loved to play house with mini dishes and fake food. Roller skating on the cement basement was one of her favorite past times. In the summer, Barbara loved to go boating. In the winter, she loved sledding and ice skating. Simply playing in the snow brought her much joy. Anytime a snowstorm came, Barbara would get bundled up in coats, gloves, and hats. She looked like the little boy from *A Christmas Story*. She was padded so well she never got cold or hurt.

Barbara spent majority of her childhood with her family. Her mom Dot would help her make a “circus.” A tent was built out of sheets, and Barbara and Bonnie would pretend to be clowns or kitties. The girls’ specialty show included hula hooping. They would charge the neighbors five cents to watch their “circus.” Barbara could never sit still. Gymnastics was a hobby she quickly loved and practiced every second of every day. At eight years old, Barbara was baptized and became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This small choice influenced the rest of her life. She had a cheerful manner, and the highlight of her week included going to church and other related activities. At eight years old, Barbara also started to learn how to play the flute. Although Barbara was an outgoing kid, she became more timid as a teen.

Teenage Years

Entering middle school, Barbara made two lifelong friends Pat and Pam. They were thick as honey. She could tell them anything. In 1964, the three best friends were part of the first ninth grade class to enter Hillcrest High School. They tried out for cheerleading and all made it. Barbara experienced a whole new world of girls. The girls she met were mean and wild, but this did not hold Barbara back from enjoying her high school experience. Barbara was in a crucial phase of life where she sought approval from everyone. She went out of her way to get to know people, and she didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings. Cheerleading helped Barbara push herself socially. She gravitated towards people who were loyal, spiritual, and playful. Senior year, Barbara was head cheerleader. She led her team with love and virtue. Barbara had a burdensome time graduating high school because she didn't want to leave her home base. Leaving school felt like leaving her family. Graduating high school ripped Barbara's heart, and it was painful seeing everyone go their separate ways.

Young Adulthood

Following her teenage years, Barbara attended the University of Utah. She joined the Alpha Chi Omega sorority. College helped Barbara's confidence and personality shine. On Halloween, Barbara got set up on a blind date with her sorority sister's brother. The young man, Leonard Geertsen, was wearing a white tailored shirt with black tailored trousers. His hair was combed back, and his smile was "so dang cute." Lenny was a romantic gentleman. They went to a party, and Barbara quickly caught feelings for him. Lenny sang in her ear, and he had a good voice. They did the swing dance all over the floor. Outside looking in, one would think they'd been dancing for years. When Lenny dropped Barbara off at home, he played it cool.

Barbara went on other dates with different men, but she couldn't stop thinking about Lenny. A couple weeks following their first date, Barbara and Lenny officially started dating.

Being only 18, Barbara was madly in love. She and Lenny went on multiple dates a week. Singing, dancing, or driving, they always had a good time. A couple months later Lenny proposed. Christmas Eve, close to midnight, Lenny started to get antsy. Barbara was sitting on Lenny's lap when he opened up the ring and popped the question. "Will you Marry me," Lenny asked, "I love you." Barbara gasped, and inside she said, "holy crap." Unsure what to say, Lenny assertively said, "You either say yes now or it's over." Barbara gave an indefinite answer, but Lenny allowed her time to think it over.

Barbara previously had a navy boyfriend, Ray, whom she wrote off. Coincidentally, he appeared on Christmas Eve a little after midnight to ask Barbara's hand in marriage. Dumbfounded, Barbara found herself in an unimaginably arduous situation. Two men within one hour had asked to marry her. Barbara immediately did what she knew best and pleaded with the Lord. Ultimately, she wanted a man to take care of her and her future children. She wanted to build a life anchored in the gospel. Revelation revealed to her that Lenny was the man she was meant to marry. She gave Ray the dismal news, and he was crushed. He wished her all the luck in the world and went on his way.

Barbara returned to Lenny giving him the elated news. Lenny was delighted, and a sense of peace was placed over Barbara. She knew she had made the right decision for herself and her future family. Barbara and Lenny's spirits aligned. They understood each other. After being engaged, Barbara met Lenny's family for the first time. They were sweet and dorky. On July 12, 1968, Barbara and Lenny were married in the Salt Lake Temple. Boyd K. Packer was Lenny's

mission president and was able to marry them. Barbara's wedding reception was one of the most memorable days of her life. It was like a high school reunion. Her bridesmaids wore a subdued lime green dress. She was constantly smiling and laughing, and the whole day felt like a fairytale. Barbara didn't want the day to end because she knew a whole new life waited for her and Lenny to experience together.

Their wedding was a magical experience with heartfelt conversations and tears. Knowing she would never go back home, Barbara was scared and excited. She had never owned a car, let alone her own checking account. Lenny was a great help in aiding Barbara to this new lifestyle. Lenny was 5 years older and extremely smart. He got his master's in business and was a CPA. The Geertsen side of the family was excessively sarcastic. Barbara wasn't accustomed to sarcasm, but she quickly learned to be. Barbara immensely matured the first couple months of marriage. She learned the best thing you can do is not react, but rather walk away. Every time she used this "strategy" she came out feeling like the top soldier.

Transitioning to Motherhood

After six weeks of marriage, Barbara was pregnant and incredibly sick. Barbara and Lenny lived in university student housing. At the time, the Vietnam war was going on. Lenny had a school deferment, but was about to turn 24, and would be subject to the draft. He was able to join a reserve unit at Fort Douglas and never had to go to war. Barbara gave birth to a baby boy at just 20 years old while Lenny was away at summer camp. He flew home that weekend, where he saw his baby boy for the first time. He was able to take them home before he had to return to finish his camp. They decided to name him Gary, after her cousin who had died. Following Gary, Barbara gave birth to Angie at age 21, Tom at 23, Scott at 25, and Dan at

29. Giving birth to Dan was a terrifying experience for Barbara. She almost lost him. After having Dan, Barbara felt revelation that she would “never pass this way again.” Her revelation was confirmed by doctors telling her she had growths on her ovaries. The doctor was afraid the growths would turn into cancer. She had a hysterectomy to prevent cancer developing. Fortunately, all of Barbara’s kids were RH negative, and she didn’t have to bear the difficulties her mother went through. Barbara claims she’s “never felt closer to the lord than childbirth.”

Lenny had a great desire to provide for his family. He didn’t want Barbara to work, so she didn’t. Barbara spent her time raising the kids which was a full-time job. Their five kids were silly and mischievous. They were all pleasant babies. Barbara was relieved to have at least one girl among her four boys. Barbara would describe her kids as “her passion” Although Lenny worked full-time at a firm, he spent every other waking second with his kids. Lenny was an exceptional father who loved to coach his boys’ sports teams in his free time. Barbara and Angie were the cheerleaders. Barbara and Lenny valued family above anything else. As a family, they took yearly trips to Lake Powell and Bear Lake.

As the five kids grew older, the love Barbara and Lenny had for them grew stronger. Barbara was “enthralled with teenagers.” Being a teenager was her favorite stage, and now her kids got to experience that. She got to watch her kids develop into the “giant spirits” they are today. Barbara and Lenny strived to have a happy marriage. Barbara learned to not take Lenny’s strong personality too personally. She found her voice and spoke her opinions. At the beginning of their marriage, Barbara took sarcasm as criticism and demeaning. She was a sensitive soul. She learned to accept and love Lenny for who he was. Lenny always honored his priesthood, and he was a good husband. He was always there for Barbara.

Transitioning to Grandma

Once the five crazy kids grew up and went to college, Barbara had another difficult time adjusting. Angie was Barbara's rock. She would not have been able to raise the four boys without her wonderful daughter by her side. Angie got married and moved to Las Vegas. Barbara felt as if she'd "lost her right arm." The five kids were now off living their own lives. One by one the kids got married, and the grandkids started rolling in. Between the five kids, 19 grandkids emerged. Barbara's "tree" was complete. Barbara and Lenny were supportive in their five kids lives, and they have been even more supportive in their grandkid's lives. Barbara is so full of love, and she'd give her life to anyone of her kids or grandkids.

Conclusion

Barbara is an inspiration because she continues to have a positive outlook on life no matter the circumstances. As she's aged, Barbara has dealt with many health issues. She's faced anxiety, depression, arthritis, sciatica, and spinal stenosis. She's had major back and ankle surgeries. Barbara loves to eat sugary treats which has resulted in severe dental work. As Barbara would say, "I love my life and I'm not finished. We've been so blessed. Sometimes you have to back up to see your blessings. I've felt empathy for people who have pain, and I have a greater appreciation for my body. Every day I get up with a positive spirit who seeks joy." Anyone who truly knows Barbara can attest that she is the definition of positivity. Barbara is and will continue to be a significant role model in hundreds of lives.

