



Vernon Irving

Life Story

Well-rounded is a word that accurately describes the type of man that Vernon Charles Irving was. Vernon was well-rounded not only because he had knowledge of all types of miscellaneous information, but because he could discuss everything from birds to gardening to heavy equipment and then tell you about one of his grandchildren all in the same sentence.

It was 1933 - the year that prohibition ended and President Franklin Roosevelt began broadcasting his "fireside chats" to weekly radio broadcast. It was also the year that Vernon Charles Irving was born in Kalamazoo County at his grandmother's house on May 19 to Everett and Mary (Lawrence) Irving.

Vernon was the next to the youngest of the four children in the Irving family. Vernon's childhood was spent bikeriding with his brother, raising pigeons, and moving. He started school in Battle Creek and went everywhere from Hartford to Benton Harbor until he graduated from Paw Paw High School in 1953.

During high school, Vernon was in the Future Farmer's of America association-FFA and continued his hobby of raising fancy pigeons. Underneath Vernon's high school yearbook picture the quote, "words are to be used on rare occasions and rare occasions are few." Just as he was graduating high school, Vernon was drafted into the US Army as a mechanic in 1953 and served till August of 1955. Vernon took one boat ride to Korea and never moved until his tour of duty ended and he came home in 1955. In the military Vernon was a mechanic that worked on heavy equipment.

After the army he worked at Town and County grocery store. The major perk of this job was that he met his future wife, Maxine Spealman, there in 1956. It was at the company Christmas party that Maxine and Vernon's love blossomed. They went to the party separately and were in line for food together when the waiter asked "table for two?" and Vernon took a chance, spoke up, and said "YES!"; hoping that Maxine didn't object. Vernon drove Maxine home that night and they have been together ever since. Once they got to know each other more, they fell deeply in love and were never separated. In 1958, the same year that Prince Charles became the Prince of Wales and Visa and American Express made their debuts, Vernon and Maxine Spealman were married at the Leonidas Community Church on July 6. After their wedding they went honeymooning in Grand Marais, Michigan. Later on Vernon bought Maxine the cabin they honeymooned in and they have been there every year since they were married.

The newlyweds lived in Kalamazoo for one year after they were married and then moved to Fulton where they have lived for 43 years. Together they had four children, all of them born in Vicksburg hospital while Maxine and Vernon lived in Fulton. After they were married, Vernon continued to work in the grocery store until he began

his employment at the General Motors factory in Kalamazoo in 1966. He worked there until his retirement, after nearly 25 years of dedicated service, and the plant was closed. He was a tool maker for GM and he loved his job.

Being a tool maker was only one of Vernon's many talents and interests. His hobbies included gardening, mowing the lawn, traveling and birds. Vernon had a garden big enough to feed the entire extended family and when anyone came over he made sure they never went home empty handed. As his kids put it "he was afraid we would all starve to death in the winter". His garden included both fruits and vegetables. And although mowing lawn may not seem like a hobby, to get the lawn looking as good as Vernon did took talent and time. Vernon is a man that took pride in his lawn and spent hours mowing it several times a week. While Vernon spent a great deal of time around his house and could fix everything, he loved to travel.

He took the family on trips all over the United States. They have been to every state but California, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and North Dakota. The family trip to North Dakota was planned for this summer. In 1976, all 6 of them took a trip around the United States in a big green station wagon with no air conditioning.

Although the family saw almost everything America had to offer, Vernon's favorite place was still Grand Marais, Michigan. Many of the family's traveling ventures included camping with the children and grandchildren. On these trips, Vernon could experience the outdoors and look at the birds and flowers as well as hike. Vernon knew every type of bird out there and could identify all of them. He took his kids hiking and would walk to the end of the trail with them then walk all the way back to get the car to drive and get them so they didn't have to walk it twice. Everything he passed in the woods he could tell you something about it. They went camping up north on Lake Superior and the family could often be found picking up Aggets and stones. Vernon could be found in the woods with a pin on his hat that said "Don't complain, camp in the rain." After he retired, he took his grand kids up north often. There are 9 of them and he mowed the lawn, camped, traveled and watched the birds go by. Vernon's favorite possession was a 1957 Golden Hawk Studebaker and his cabin up north where he would eat his favorite foods, hot dogs and sweet corn.

A few words that describe Vernon are kind, considerate, loving, caring and always himself. He could always find some way to connect to people. Whether it was with his son-in-law on cars and sports or making new friends at church where he was a regular attendee of the Factoryville Bible Church, he always knew everything about everyone and he could talk to you about things you liked and others about things others liked. He was truly interested and knowledgeable. He was a 4H leader for 15 years and a 25-year volunteer of the Wakeshma Township Fire Department. He could fix and remodel anything. His last project was remodeling the bathroom at his home in Fulton. He finished the project on Friday and got sick on Easter Sunday. He always had a pleasant smile on his face and will be missed by his friends, family and church family.

His family will always remember camping in the U.P. on Lake Superior with Vernon. He was a giving man who would drive the grandchildren around and went to all their events. He was always willing to lend a hand and help his family. Vernon and Maxine's entire life was one big favorite memory, and they never had one serious fight in their 45 years of marriage. He is a man that enjoyed life and will be greatly missed by the many in his life that enjoyed it with him.

Vernon Charles Irving died peacefully at his home on Friday, June 13, 2003 with his loving family by his side. He is survived by his wife of 45 years Maxine; children: Paula and her husband David Armstrong of Climax, Daryl and his wife Nancy Irving of Fulton, Fran and her husband Michael Van Bruggen of Fulton, Victor and his wife Shannon Irving of Killeen TX; siblings: Eloise Bruner of Commins, Jean and her husband Keith McPherson of

Florida, Carleton Irving of Cersco; 9 grandchildren and 10 nieces and nephews.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at 11 am on Tuesday, June 17th at the Factoryville Bible Church. The family will greet friends on Monday from 2-4 and 6-8 pm. at the Rupert, Durham, Marshall & Gren Funeral Home in Vicksburg.

To read Vernon's life story, share a memory, make a donation to the Factoryville Bible Church or VNA Hospice or to order flowers, please visit his personal memory page at www.lifestorynet.com.