

Willian E. Barrett

07-20-2015 by Harry Zirkelbach
Sun and Star date 34131

Bill Barrett was a parishioner of St John's the Evangelist Catholic parish in Denver long before the new Church was consecrated Dec 3 1953 at the southeast corner of E 7th and Elizabeth. Fr. John Moran, pastor, since 1940 when the Church was at 5th and Josephine Streets. In 1950 efforts began to build a new larger house of worship to accommodate local growth. The architect John Monroe designed the building. When the new Church, dedicated in 1953 by Arch Bishop Vehr, it was a complement to Pastor and parishioners, the parish was without debt.

The author Bill Barrett resided in East Denver much of his later life. When in Denver, he was a Sunday Usher at St John's Church 2626 E 7th Avenue Sunday. He worked the noon Mass all weather, arriving 30 minutes early, well groomed, greeting all parishioners by name, seating those who asked. He was an immaculate dresser, never flashy, much like his novels and short stories.

A published author of 21 novels, many made into movies, the prominent ones "Left Hand of God" and "Lilies of the Field".

We understood Bill Barrett more because our back yard neighbor, Carl Luplow, childless in to his marriage to wife Gertrude, similar age to Bill Barrett, They shared the same Sunday noon duty, greeting and Ushering arrivals into Church for the Sunday Noon Mass. . Both exuded charm and friendliness to young and old.

This was one of many obligations of Bill Barrett's busy life.

Carl lived for this Sunday duty.

Bill Barrett was a licensed pilot, and author He wrote throughout his life, prolific in youth grinding out all kinds of twenty-five cent drug store stories, interspersed with his major novels. Still to many throughout Denver Colorado, Bill remained a well groomed handsome figure throughout Denver society.

Then came the day when some group of the litterateur chose to honor Bill Barrett for years of duty to his craft. The Master of Ceremony for this gala was Gene Amole, KVOD Radio owner and columnists for the Rocky Mountain News. Gene also had written many 25 cent tales on the same aviation/adventure topics as Bill Barrett. They were Denver friends for years.

Tickets to the Award dinner at a swank Denver Hotel had been bought by the publishing world, many declining to attend from their home elsewhere in the

States. Enough to allow the benefactor of the event to provide these “complementary” tickets to a dozen St John’s parishioners.

And a fine evening it was. Great food, Bill and his wife Christine toasted and roasted by the Host Gene Amole and several other celebrities. All in all, deserved complements to this man of letters from our very neighborhood.

A later moment proved interesting to me. One of the elderly guests, a neighbor of mine, had been excused to use the men’s room. He never returned. His wife sent me on a rescue mission. The initial search of the Men’s Room and surroundings found nothing. Then a search of each door of the Rest Room found one locked, no reply. Knee to the floor, peeking inside, there’s someone feet and pants on the floor, with no response. The Hotel Detective is called. The door is unlocked to find the occupant sleeping off his too-much-to-drink bout. Carefully aroused, he is well enough to be returned to the closing moments of the dinner.

However when his wife learned the circumstances, she took the family car, denouncing him too. This misunderstanding caused jovial neighbors to provide the ride home for the jilted spouse. No record of their happy reunion.

It is often the asides make any celebratory moment exceptional.

Bill Barrett wrote for popular consumption, was completely unaware of these moments which as a younger man he would have made as entry into his tales of human life as he saw it daily.

