

## **I was My Only Relative at My Wedding**

*11-10-2015 by Harry Zirkelbach  
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Freedom, New Brighton, Marion Hill, Erie (all in Pennsylvania), Detroit, Navy, Japan, Washington DC, Denver. These had been my home for pieces of the twenty-nine years when on April 28, 1951, in keeping with the formulae tradition of the Catholic Church, marriages on Saturday, Barbara Foley and Harry Zirkelbach exchanged vows to be husband and wife, before family and friends plus the stern eye of the Pastor, Mgrs William Higgins at St Philomenia's Church, 14th and Detroit, become a married couple before a small gathering, that before the vow exchanges, contained none of my relatives.

In the days prior to the wedding, Mom in Erie, walking across the Street in front of my parents' home, was struck by an auto, injured. The family decides, miss their sons' wedding.

I was the only one in our extensive family living west of Youngstown, Ohio. Dad's Aunt Mary had settled there, southwest of Erie, bordering the east Ohio state line, raised a large family. Our family never visited her, but she visited Erie relatives most years. Our families, anchored to the Home Town, Erie Pa., a ritual before WW II.

That war, scattered the male youth of these forty-eight States all over the globe. And as is known, collecting scattered things can be challenging, especially when the object scattered has been changed by the momentum, some now unrecognizable. So it was after 1945, not all youth returned home to stay.

In the breaking of a piece of pottery, shards fly everywhere. Each part of the whole now has no connection to the whole. It would now be so for the millions in the US Armed Forces. They went where sent, to strange places, often found this thrilling, always controlled by some unseen hand. Their newly found freedom, excitement, too much travel, peril, danger, adding the unbelievable friendships made each moment. Still for the majority, that unseen magnet, home, draws them there on leave, and at discharge. Most of the 125,000 pieces of Erie, returned alive and remasined.

Following three years in the Navy, I join my former Commanding Officer, settling in Denver in 1948. The work that brought us here never materialized. He was Best Man at our wedding; Barbara's sister Betsy, Bridesmaid. Christmas the same year, our Bridesmaid married that Best Man, and then my Navy buddy became my brother-in-law, a peaceful bond in friendship.

I had chosen Denver for home, employment. Then chose to marry. Spend the remaining days there. And so it came to pass.

Almost all our relatives, friends, today live here in metro Denver.