



Mr. Jesse E. Aber, Jr. passed away peacefully of natural causes November 24 with his wife of more than 55 years, Yvonne Hastings Aber, by his side. Jesse, or Bud, as he was known since childhood, was born February 1, 1921 in Buffalo, New York to Jesse E. Aber and Elizabeth (Toulmin-Bradbury) Aber. As a young boy he roamed the ancient hardwood forests of the outlying areas discovering and reveling in the wonders of nature with his brother Dick and friends, but often alone. He loved to find and collect arrowheads and spear points of the native Seneca Nation Tribes and learn the ways of the woods. Dad's love of woodworking began at a young age carving animals and making slingshots of native woods such as black cherry and crab apple. He soon became known as "Indian" by his friends whiling away summer days swimming and fossil hunting in the deep slate creek canyons by summer and skating for miles on the same creeks by winter.

He met his future love of his life, Yvonne in kindergarten and later got up the nerve to ask her skating on the local rinks of South Buffalo. As he grew up he was attracted to engineering and assisted his father, one of the earliest Professional Civil Engineers of New York State, with his land surveying practice. He was always fascinated with horses and in 1936 was invited to join the New York National Guard 121st Regiment Cavalry, Medical Troop. He and his young trooper friends often exercised the troop mounts racing through the expansive parks of Buffalo, learning proper riding and care of the horses. His first date with his future wife Vonnice was the Regimental Cavalry Ball of 1937. He graduated with honors from South Park High School in 1939 and continued land surveying with his father.

He garnered an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, but failed to pass the eye examination due to a childhood injury forcing him to withdraw. Soon after he was accepted at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor School of Civil Engineering. At Michigan he was invited to join the University chapter of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, of which he was a life-long member. The lure of the sea led to his earning his Seaman status with the U.S. Merchant Marine. Dad put his engineering education on hold when the call of duty for World War II prompted him to enlist and enter the U.S. Naval Officer Training Program at Notre Dame University as a Midshipman in 1943.

He soon achieved a commission as Ensign. After a short stint with the Navy's Seabees Engineers he learned about the newly formed Navy Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) and joined Team Number 6 as an Ensign and soon thereafter was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant j.g. He was eager to see action in the Pacific Theatre since his younger brother Dick had remained in the cavalry and was now in the thick of battle in New Guinea.

During training on the Hawaiian Island of Maui for the invasion of the Japanese-held islands of the Marianas and Saipan, he suffered a serious injury to his right foot forcing him to be admitted to hospitals in Hawaii and stateside, including Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland. There he again had the opportunity to call on Yvonne, by then serving at Bethesda as a U.S. Navy Wave Pharmacist Mate as the Navy and Marine casualties from both the Pacific and European theatres continued to mount. As soon as he had medical clearance to resume his service duty he headed back to Hawaii when UDT founder Captain Draper Kauffman hand-picked Bud to be Executive Officer of UDT Team 12 where he commanded 84 sailors and 14 officers for operations in the Pacific and South China Sea as the war with Japan wound down and tensions began to rise with the Chinese Communist government.

Dad decided to forgo continuing his career with the Navy and was Honorably Retired September 1, 1946. He resumed his education at his beloved University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, graduating with honors with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering June 14, 1947. His love of horses and adventure led him to the thoroughbred horse racing country near Aiken, South Carolina where he immersed himself in the curious world

of horse breeding, training, and racing with a variety of colorful characters. But destiny emerged when he again encountered Yvonne Hastings on a visit home and they were married after a romantic courtship December 1, 1951 at St. Jude's Episcopal Church in Buffalo.

Dad had always wanted to sail and the family bought a Snipe Class racing sailboat in the mid-1960s, racing on weekends at the Cuba Lake Yacht Club in the Allegheny Mountains of Western NY. Sons Gordy and Jesse served as crew on Uelele, learning to sail by trial and error. Mom and daughter Cecily joined in for the pleasure sailing too. Family ice-skating eventually gave way to downhill skiing in the late mid-1950s, and the family joined the Concord Ski Club in Colden, NY as charter members. During this time Dad served as a Little League baseball coach and a Sunday school teacher at Saint David's Episcopal Church. Dad eventually brought his love of skiing west and volunteered as a coach with the Eagle Mount Ski Program for the disabled, becoming a Bridger Bowl regular until finally hanging up the boards at the age of 82.

The family worshipped at St. David Episcopal Church in West Seneca serving as laypersons and attending regularly, except when skiing or sailing when the children were told to be thankful to the Almighty in lieu of church attendance while savoring His wonderful works of nature. Bud was Town Engineer of West Seneca, following in the public service footsteps of his father who had been Erie County Chief Civil Engineer. Dad started his own consulting civil engineering firm Aber, Huffcut, and Krehbiel, eventually consulting on his own, and years later became a partner in Conable, Sampson, Aber in Orchard Park during which time the partners designed elements of the new Buffalo Bills Football Stadium.

He designed and oversaw construction of numerous civil projects, including the West Seneca Public Library, one of the first very tall free-standing municipal water storage towers and later, a complete restoration of the historic Genesee County Courthouse along Lake Ontario. One of his favorite design projects was the Chateau Gay Champagne Winery situated on a high escarpment of the Niagara River where 200-year old French vineyards flourished from the local climate. The family returned to the winery to visit the proud owner many times.

Dad was so proud of son Gordon's service in the U.S. Navy Riverine Force during his tour of duty in 1967-1968 in Vietnam in river patrol (PBR) gun boat support and mission insertion for Navy SEAL units. He and Mother were relieved greatly upon the conclusion of Gordy's Navy service and his matriculation at the University of Miami, Florida. Mom and Dad loved visiting her Mother, Father, sisters and families, and son Gordon and his wife Debbie in the St. Petersburg and Clearwater area every spring.

After son Jesse and daughter Cecily went west to attend Montana State University, Dad finally had his avenue to the Rockies to which he had always been allured. In 1977, Dad and Mom bought a place on the Spring Hill Road outside of Bozeman and began to explore the community and local environs. But Dad was not ready to retire so he soon was licensed to practice as a Professional Engineer, P.E. and Land Surveyor under the laws of Montana. As he began to launch a consulting business in Montana, a very interesting opportunity presented itself to work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Both loving travel and having a sense of adventure, Dad and several months later, Mom moved to the Kingdom. The firm's contract with the Saudi government expired three years later, when the Royal Saudi Air Defence Ministry asked Dad and one other engineer to stay on and renegotiate their own contract, which they did. He monitored the construction of numerous projects and military defense systems for the Kingdom until 1986 leading up to the Desert Storm campaign to oust Iraq from Kuwait. He was proud to witness the precision of the multi-national air campaign and the restoration of the sovereignty of Kuwait.

Living abroad meant great opportunities to travel and Mom and Dad toured the Alps, Scandinavia, Egypt, the British Isles, Holland, Denmark, and France to name a few places. But their favorite place besides Hawaii was

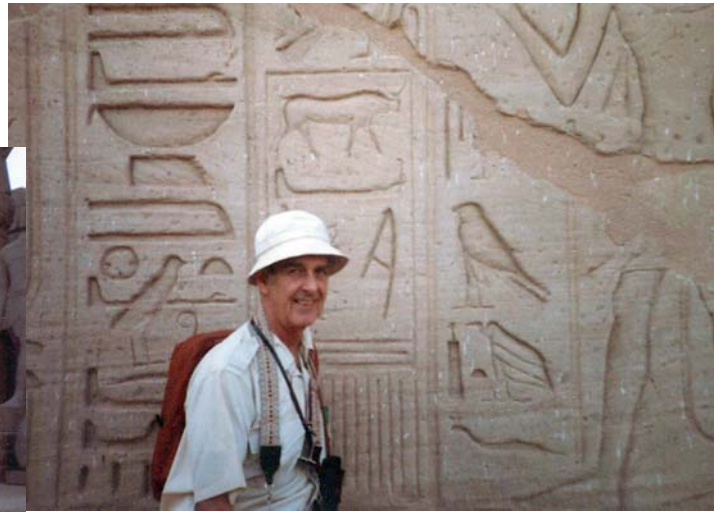
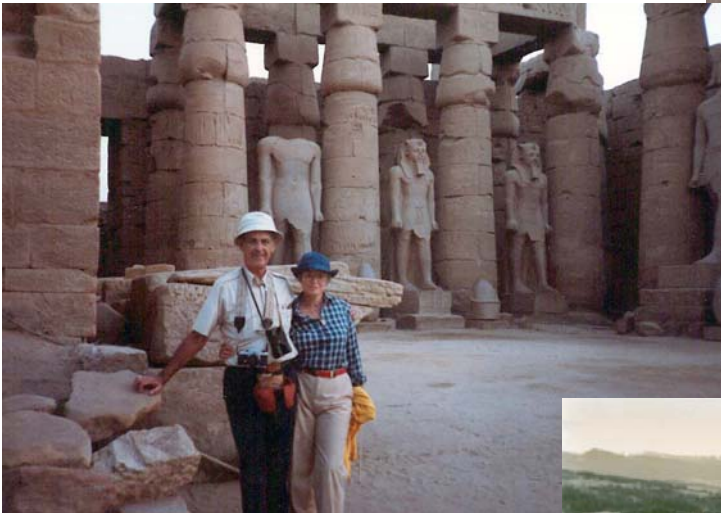
Provence in the South of France, to which they returned several times for vacation. In 1986, Mom and Dad returned to Montana and found a piece of upland on Dr. and Jane Newhall's former ranch in Bridger Canyon on the Jackson Creek Road. He helped design and oversaw construction of their beloved Alpine style oaken timber frame house on the flanks of the Bangtail Range of Bridger Canyon. Mom and Dad moved into their final residence for the last chapter of his life, where they were blessed and fortunate to live together for nearly twenty years. Dad named the place The Mountain Farm, harkening back to his family ancestry of farming since the early 17th Century in the Great State of Maine.

Dad loved fly fishing, canoeing, and skiing with his daughter Cecily, her husband Tom, and Grandson Leo Johnson of Bozeman, son Jesse, and numerous buddies he met and hung with in Bozeman. He even ended up, by chance, having a background character role in the now famous movie, "A River Runs Through It." It is only fitting that the name Aber is Old Scottish meaning confluence of two rivers or where a river meets the sea. Dad and Mom returned to Maui every fall as their love affair with the islands and beaches endured.

Jesse was a board member of the University of Michigan Club of New York State, the Western New York Republican Party, the Society of Professional Engineers, and the Masonic Lodge of Buffalo. He was licensed to practice Civil Engineering and Land Surveying in 11 states including Montana. He proudly retained his status as a Retired Naval Officer and his service to the Navy is memorialized at the U.S. Navy Underwater Demolition Team and SEALs Museum and Visitor Center at Ft. Pierce, Florida where he once trained and is honored as Executive Officer of UDT No. 12.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Jesse and Elizabeth Aber, his sister Susan, and brother Richard. Dad always had time for his children Gordon, Jesse, and Cecily to help with schoolwork and college educations and will always be known for his integrity, compassion, sensitivity, humor, stoicism, athleticism, leadership, and unwavering love for his family and friends. He was so grateful to The Lord for his many happy, healthy, and rewarding years, especially those here in Montana. Those interested in donating in his memory should support the Eagle Mount Skiing and Equestrian programs and the Bridger Bowl and Montana State University Ski teams.







Mom & Dad



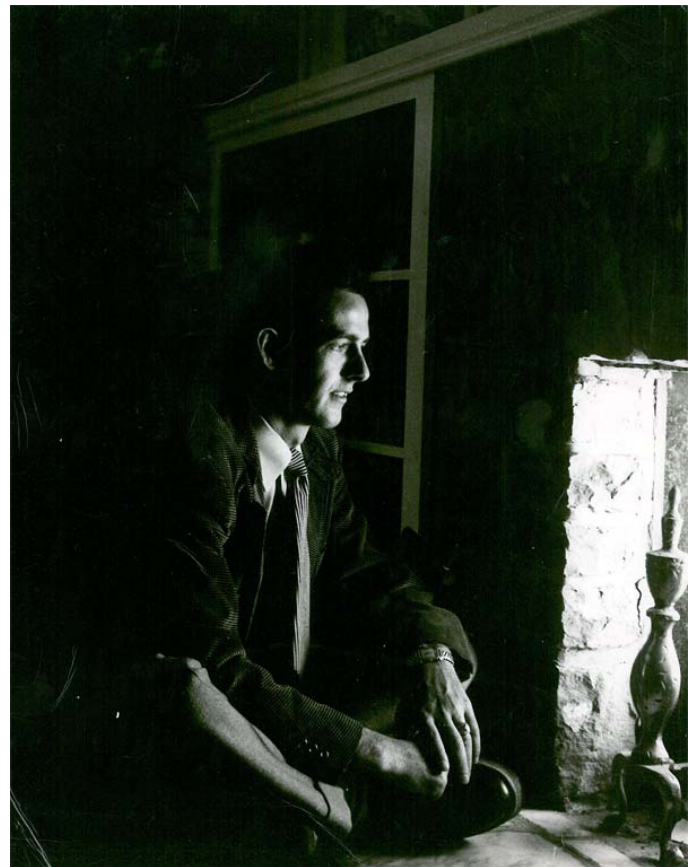
Dad Canoeing the Smith River  
July 1993



Mountain Farm



Dad & Cecily – Bridger Bowl Pierres'





"Dad's 86<sup>th</sup> Birthday with Grandson Leo and daughter Cecily."



"Dad and Granddaughter Kathryn"



