

# William John Zulker



*"A Life Well-lived"*

October 15, 1898 - June 29, 1960

My Father - William John Zulker  
Oct. 15, 1898 - June 29 1960  
by William Allen Zulker

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William John Zulker was born on October 15, 1898 in Berlin, NJ. He died on June 29, 1960 in the Medical Arts Hospital in Montrose, PA. A funeral service was held at the Poulson & Van Hise Funeral Home in Trenton, NJ with the Rev. David W. Allen, pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Trenton officiating. Burial was at the Atlantic City Cemetery in Pleasantville, NJ where his infant son - Robert William born on Jan 19, 1924 and died July 2, 1924 - was buried on July 5, 1924 three days after untimely death due to illness.

At time of his death Dad was temporarily living at the Montrose Bible Conference in Montrose, PA where he and Mother were working as volunteers for their second summer. Their permanent home was at 85 Ridgewood Avenue, Ewing Township, Trenton, NJ, where my sister Ginny was also living.



#### THE BEGINNING -

Starting at the beginning of his life, the information I know is very limited. He was the son of John (1857-1924) and Mary Jane Plum Zulker (1859-1925) and lived on a farm located on the outskirts of Berlin, NJ. Presently, in 2012, there is a street there named Zulker Avenue which we just assume was named for the family who lived there.

His siblings were: Josephine (1879-1880), Robert (1884-), Rebecca (1887-), Elizabeth (1890-1923), Jack ( 1895-1953).

Dad's mother passed away in 1925 but before that time he went to live with his brother Robert. Uncle Bob and his wife (name?) lived on a small farm in Northfield, NJ as did his sister Elizabeth with her husband Alfred Doughty. I remember visiting there when I was just a small child. I have no knowledge about Dad's schooling, but heard that one of his first jobs was as a butcher.

Dad met mother - Virginia Idell Carr (June 4, 1903-December 13, 1985) at the Wesley Methodist Church in Pleasantville, NJ, just a few miles from Northfield. She said that her parents would not allow them to marry until she was seventeen, and they did on July 9, 1920, just three weeks after her birthday, at the church on the corner of Pleasant and Linden Avenues,. She was living with her mother Elizabeth Cordelia Boogar Carr Ott and her stepfather Walter Haseltine Ott in the house on the opposite corner.



Mother and Dad



Wesley Methodist Church, Pleasantville, NJ



Wedding Party

The marriage ceremony was performed by Rev. J. L Surtees, with Norman Adams, Georgeanne Bennett, and Mother Ott as witnesses.

Apparently, Dad and Mother lived in a second-floor apartment on Pleasant Avenue just across the street from the church and a few doors from Main Street where Betty said that she, Walt and Robert were born. Either then, or shortly thereafter, Dad was employed as a clerk with the Gulf Oil Company in an office just a block or two away. Mother may have been working at an ice cream parlor as she had done before marriage.

On April 9, 1921, their first child was born - Elizabeth Josephine (d. October 6, 2011). Then twin sons were born - Walter Leathem (January 19, 2004 - March 11, 2009) and Robert William (January 19, 1924 - July 2, 1924).

About that time, Dad bought a house - a Cape Cod bungalow - which Walt remembers as being purchased from the Sear's and Roebuck's catalog. It had two bedrooms on the first floor, with kitchen, living room and bath, plus two bedrooms upstairs. It was at 121 Linden Avenue on a lot next to Mother's parents - Walter and Elizabeth Ott - and may have been a part of their property. It sat directly opposite Wesley Methodist Church.

105 Linden Ave. Pleasantville, NJ



There another set of twins was born on December 20, 1926 - William Allen and Charles Bates.

## CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE, NJ - 1927-1933 or 34

In the Summer of 1927 Dad was transferred by the Gulf Oil Corporation to Cape May Court House, NJ, a town where the Cape May County Court House was located. Dad apparently sold the house on Linden Avenue to Eugene and Josephine Berry (Mother's sister) for he then rented "the stucco house" as the family called it, which was on the East side of the main street, which I think was Route # 9. (Due to the "Great Depression" of the nineteen-thirties and a growing family, and then World War II, he did not own his own house again until 1946 after he had moved to Trenton, NJ).

At Cape May Court House, there was a move from "the stucco house" to a house on Mechanic Street around the corner from his office, and a third move to another rented house on Mechanic Street. It was owned by a Mr. Joseph, whoever he was. This too, was just a short walk to Dad's work.



Gulf Oil Company - Cape May Court House, NJ

Across the street from Joseph's house was the county prison - which we liked to call "the jail," and our older brother Walt told us that the sounds emanating from there were the prisoners calling out for help. I remember being frightened by that. The family attended the Methodist Church which I very vaguely remember, having attended vacation Bible School one summer.

Because we lived close to where Dad worked, he walked to the office each day, and we children would wait outside our home each evening, looking down the street for him. We were living there in 1933 when on January 16, Mother gave birth to daughter Virginia Idell at Mrs. Applegate's maternity home located on the main road south toward Wildwood.



Chuck, Walt, Bill  
Betty, Dad, Mother, Ginny

Among my memories is the 1929 Whippet passenger car that Dad owned while we lived at Cape May Court House. Occasionally we would all pile in the car and go to the beach at Sea Isle City, but we had to wait until Dad got home from work. It was not the most enjoyable experience going to the beach late in the day or when we would have to jam together in the old car wearing wet and sandy bathing suits. Of course, in those days our suits were made of wool and itched terribly. I can still picture Dad jumping up and down in the surf as we watched him enjoy the late day plunge. He, however, never learned to swim.

We would also go to the nearby Seaville Methodist Camp Meeting grounds at South Seaville, NJ where Grandpa and Grandma Ott owned a cottage as did Uncle Gene and Aunt Josephine Berry.



Grandpa Ott's Cottage, Seaville Camp Meeting

One old memory is when Dad was so excited about a new road (Ocean Drive) that was planned to connect the barrier beach towns from Cape May to Atlantic City without having to go inland. Bridges were being constructed to span the various bodies of water between them. It seems that at that time, we must have moved already from CMCH and were living in Lakewood when Dad heard what was happening. He wanted to be there. So, on the day when one of the bridges was slated to open, Dad piled us all into the car. I can vividly remember sitting in the car waiting until the ribbon was cut and we became one of the first cars to cross over on the bridge. The toll charge was 25cents. The exact location I do not know.



Dad and Mother

LAKEWOOD, NJ - 1933 or 34

Sometime in 1933 or 1934 Dad was again transferred by the Gulf Oil Corporation to Lakewood, NJ. He rented a large two-story house on County Line Road (for \$26.00 a

month) on the outskirts of the town, just a short walk from his office. It had four bedrooms, one bath, and was owned by Mr. Thompson.

I guess Dad still owned the '29 Whippet into the early thirties, but somewhere along the line he purchased a 1933 four-door green Chrysler. Chuck says that the license plate number was LV 33Z and that the doors opened forward as was the case with some other cars in that era. Sometime during World War II Dad purchased a 1938 Buick from a car dealer in Toms River, NJ who said that it had been owned by Admiral Charles Rosenthal, the commander at the Lakehurst Naval Station. He was recognized for using the dirigible and helium-filled blimps for naval reconnaissance in locating German submarines during the war. Dad's new car was so long that he had to build an extension onto the back of the garage. He constructed it "frugally" with just enough space for the motor to be covered without having to move the entire back wall. Frugality was a characteristic apparently carried over from his German heritage. But it also could have come of necessity resulting from the Great Depression of the early thirties. Nevertheless, it never seemed to bother us as children, and we never knew until later in life how poor we had been.

Dad always had a small vegetable garden behind the house, but there was also a beautiful rock garden with blooming flowers. Dad also sent us down County Line Road to pick strawberries at Matthew's farm, and we climbed wild-cherry trees to strip cherries from the branches which became the most delicious jelly cooked by Dad. Of course it cost nothing except sugar, and was a staple throughout the winter.

Dad also encouraged each of us children to find jobs doing anything we could to earn money. When I was only six years old and still living at Cape May Court House, Dad came home one day and saw me standing on the sidewalk in front of our house selling lollipops. He asked me what the price was, and when I said it was just one cent, he asked me how much they had cost. When I told him that they cost me a penny each he replied by saying that I couldn't make any money that way. So, his suggestion was that I go back to the American Grocery Store on the corner, (forerunner of ACME), purchase three 5-cent candy bars selling at 3 for 10 cents, and sell them for a nickel each, for a total of 15-cents. In that way I would earn a nickel for every three bars I sold. I did just that, standing in front of our house waiting for customers to walk by. Chuck tells me that the manager, Mr. Llewellyn, was also the choir director at the Methodist Church. That may account for his kindness to me, the little candy-boy.

Shortly thereafter, when we moved to Lakewood, NJ, my candy business flourished. Somehow I got a dollar and bought thirty candy bars - Hershey chocolates, Nestles, Mounds, Goldenberg's peanut chews, etc - carried some of them in a small candy box, got on my bicycle and went door to door in the neighborhood selling them for a nickel each. It seems that few people could say no to a little kid who thought he was a big-time businessman. I would go to the local gasoline stations where there always seemed to be a couple of mechanics or people waiting for their cars to be repaired. There would be electric company workers installing new telephone poles, or workmen repairing the streets. I even found a perfect spot just off the road alongside the Lakewood golf course at the seventh hole. By then, all the golfers were ready for a snack. My candy business continued even when I was old enough to get a paper route, which paid \$2.50 a week. But I was making more selling candy, thanks to my father's advice.

Dad was also pleased when I was old enough to get a job delivering newspapers. I did not have a bicycle of my own at the time, so Dad took me to purchase one at the Pep Boys' Store in Asbury Park. It cost \$35.00. Dad advanced the money, and when we got home, he took a little spiral notebook, wrote, "William owes me \$35". He then said that I was to pay him \$1.00 each week from my paper route, and until it was all paid off the bicycle was his. A great lesson!!!!

There were no easy handouts from parents to children in those days. Other than paying for basic clothing needs, we children paid for whatever else we might want.

It was not easy for Dad or any other father to keep food on the table and pay family bills during the Great Depression. That would be particularly true of the typical person without special skills training or a college education. Dad had neither. I doubt that he or many of his generation finished high school. Chuck thinks that Dad only went as far as the fourth grade or fifth grade.

#### A HARD WORKER - ADDITIONAL JOBS -

In addition to his regular employment with the Gulf Oil Corporation in Lakewood, Dad took on a second part-time job as sexton (janitor in those days) at the Methodist Church where the family worshipped. Those were the days before oil-burners when buildings were heated by coal furnaces that required round-the-clock attention. It meant that to have the church warm on Sunday morning, Dad had to get the furnace going on Saturday afternoon or evening and then banked the furnace for low heat during the night. He rose early Sunday morning and went to the church, stoked the furnace, got it going sufficiently, came home for breakfast, changed clothes and went back for Sunday School and morning worship. Then later in the day, he went back and got the building warm for Youth Group Meetings and Evening Worship at eight o'clock. It was a long day for him.

Weekday meetings at the church meant that a similar pattern was followed with a run or two to the church during the day.

Several hours were spent cleaning the church on Saturdays. Dad assigned each member of the family to specific areas. I recall sweeping down the back stairs to the second floor Sunday School rooms, and having Dad come by to inspect my labor. I recall hearing him tell me what a good job I had done, but to go back up to the top again and "this time, do the corners of the steps."

When we thought we had finished and were ready to go home, we had to wait until Dad made sure everything was perfect and the furnaces set just right before we could leave. As "exhausted" children, we often stretched out and rested on the un-cushioned pews waiting to go home.

A memorable sight for me was being with Dad on an early Sunday morning as he performed his last task before going home for breakfast. He took a large dust cloth in each hand and dusted both the back and seat of each pew, even in those areas of the sanctuary seldom occupied except on special days. Dad said, "This is the house of the Lord, and we must be sure that it is warm and clean for those who enter."

#### 1941 - World War II

At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack and when the United States entered World War II, Betty had graduated from Lakewood High School and was attending Evanston Collegiate School in Evanston, Illinois. Walt was in his Senior year in high school,

Chuck and I in the ninth grade and Ginny in elementary school. After Walt graduated in June 1942 he enlisted in the US Navy and left home. Dad was finding it increasingly difficult to meet all the bills. He had already taken on a second job as sexton at the Methodist church, but that was not enough. He took on a third job as the sexton at a three-story office and residence building in downtown Lakewood, right across the street from the YMCA. I believe it was Second Street and Lexington Avenue. His job was to keep the coal furnace going, to clean the two first-floor offices daily, and to keep clean the stairway to the second- and third-floor apartments. There were two apartments on each floor. The outside sidewalk at the front and side had to be cleaned when it snowed. I never heard what his financial pay was, but a part of it was that he moved us all into one of the two third-floor apartments and we left County Line Road.

I remember helping him clean the offices and help keep the furnace going and shoveling the sidewalk.



Ginny, Bill and Betty at the Lakewood Methodist Church -1992

One of the advantages I had at the time was in getting work at the YMCA two-lane bowling alley setting up pins by hand. We also went swimming in the indoor pool many times, and I actually passed the required swimming test, having earlier learned at "the Arch." ("The Arch", as we called it, was a small railroad bridge over a small creek about a mile from our home on County Live Road. It was perfect for skinny-dipping in a secluded wooded area where only boys were allowed.) At times when we were there, one of the boys would hear the train coming, which meant that we all had to jump into the water until the train had passed by.

Down the street from the Apartment House was a Movie Theater where I saw my first movie. How well I remember the preliminary Newsreels that showed war scenes with crashing airplanes and soldiers trudging through snow covered fields.

The Theater was also the training site for boxer Buddy Baer, an up and coming professional boxer who was a brother to the famous boxer Max Baer. People sat in the theater seats watching him box and dance around in the ring that was constructed on the stage. On one occasion, I as a fifteen-year-old boy went up on the stage and took a couple of pictures of Buddy with my brownie camera.

Also, on the same street were Gertner's Bakery and Munch's Meat Store, both places where I worked. Chuck worked for the News Store on the street delivering newspapers.

When Dad was transferred to the Trenton, NJ office of Gulf Oil in the winter of 1943, he commuted to Trenton from Lakewood until he was able to find a house to rent. Because of gas rationing during the World War II, he could only get enough gas to make the trip once a week. So he rented a room at Trenton YMCA, drove up on Monday



morning and returned late on Friday evening. We all had to work harder to fulfill his janitorial work responsibilities at the church and at the apartment house.

After he found a very nice house - 121 Park Avenue in Hamilton Township, the southern end of Trenton, he with Mother and Ginny moved there. Dad rented a room for Chuck and me with a family friend, Mrs. Miller, so that we could finish our Junior year at Lakewood High School. We purchased meal tickets at the nearby diner where we ate lunch and supper. We ate breakfast in our room. When school ended in June, we joined Mother, Dad and Ginny in Trenton.



121 Park Avenue - corner of Shiller

1943-5

Shortly after moving to Trenton, Mother began working part-time at the local Five and Ten Cents Store in order to meet expenses. Dad had lost his two janitorial jobs in Lakewood as a result of the move, but soon became the sexton at the Pearson Memorial Methodist Church at White Horse just couple of miles from home. It was then that I got a job as a stock-boy at the Eton Boys' and Men's Clothing store in center city - employment that I held for the next two years during high school and moved up part-time into sales as well. (I also was re-employed there after I returned from the Army and before I went to college - Bob Jones University in the fall of 1948).

When Chuck and I reported for classes in the fall of 1943 at Hamilton Township High School we were informed that we had to repeat our Junior year because we had come from a lower classed school at Lakewood. That is another story. So we spent two more years in high school. (That extra year in high school may have protected us from active duty and battle during WWII because the War in Europe ended in May of our senior year, and came to an end with Japan during our basic training in the Summer of 1945).

We both graduated in June 1945 and went into the Army. During that summer, our sister Ginny was afflicted with polio and was close to death but recovered.

In 1946, while Chuck and I were still in the Army in Germany Dad and Mother moved to a house at 135 Independence Avenue, just a few blocks away from 121. As stated above, it was the first house that Dad was financially able to purchase since the one in Pleasantville in 1926.





Dad



Dad and Mother



Dad and Mother

Dad was a hard worker and a quick learner. Somehow, he learned bookkeeping, at least all that was required to keep the books for the local Gulf Oil Corporation distributing gasoline to gasoline stations, auto repair garages and other businesses. Starting in Pleasantville, he continued doing that at Cape May Court House, Lakewood, and Trenton, NJ over a period of thirty-three years, retiring as "Senior Clerk" with the corporation in November 1958. I shall never forget the day when he was told by the company that he was through.

I accompanied him, driving the car to the Drake Hotel on Spruce Street in Philadelphia where he was to meet with a corporation executive. At that time, I was the minister at the Bethany Temple Presbyterian Church in West Philadelphia. It seems likely that he and mother had stopped off at our home beforehand. When he came back to the car where I was waiting, he told me that his employment was terminated - with a statement such as he "was too old to continue any longer with the company." He was only sixty. I know that he was greatly disappointed.

*The Trenton Times* newspaper of October 29, 1958 reported that he was honored at a testimonial dinner by his fellow workers, and presented with a gold watch by the district manager J. D. Baxley. He officially retired from the Gulf Oil Company on November 1, 1958.

It is interesting to note that the attorney Edward M. Lamar, who helped mother settle the estate after Dad died, wrote a letter to her with an enclosure from the Gulf Oil Corporation. It stated that "the amount of accumulated contributions standing to the credit of Mr. Zulker in the Annuity Fund at the time of his retirement on November 1, 1958 was \$1,252.47. [This is almost unbelievable]. Less the total annuity payments received by Mr. Zulker during the period from November 1958 to May, 1960, \$282.91, the cash refund due Virginia I. Zulker, beneficiary is \$969.56."

Neither Dad or Mother ever spoke of their personal finances, but it seems unlikely to me that they had any sizeable savings. I know that by the time Mother came to live with us in Wayne in 1975 she was living only on her Social Security monthly benefits.

## DAD'S FAVORITE SPORT - GOLF



Dad didn't have much time for recreation or sports. In those days, few people did. Though baseball has been called the American favorite past-time, and has been played since the 1880's, golf seems to have been the sport of the wealthy and elite since the early 1900's. The Seaview Country Club Resort and Golf Course in Absecon, NJ is located just a few miles north of Pleasantville where Dad lived. It is one of the oldest courses in the USA having been started in 1914 just a few miles from Atlantic City, known at the time as "The Playground of America" where the rich and famous vacationed before air-travel became so easy. Dad used to tell us of his days as a boy when he was the caddy at the course. It was there that he learned to play and enjoyed it whenever he could. But time and money prevented him from developing his interest.

It was after a day at work that Dad would come home, gather up his canvass golf-club bag and clubs and drive to an isolated place where he could drive some balls. Chuck remembers that there was a gravel race track near our home in Lakewood which I think was one of the locations I remember where Dad went. He would station my brothers and me way out in the field to watch him drive and then we would retrieve the balls. Another open field was along the railroad tracks between Dad's office and our home. (That was also a favorite place for us to fly our kites). While living there on County Line Road in Lakewood, I remember going with him on one or two occasions to the Brielle Golf Course, about twenty minutes from home, where the greens-fee was half-price after 5:00 pm. Dad was able to get nine holes in before dark. When he played all eighteen holes he always scored in the low 80's.

A great delight for him was when he and Mother were working at the Boca Raton Bible Conference in Florida in the winter of 1959 that he met the professional golfer Sam Snead, somewhat of a hero to Dad. Snead was the top golfer for four decades and still holds the record for winning the most PGA tournaments - 82.



38th Anniv.

### DAD'S CHRISTIAN FAITH -

One of the Bible verses Dad quoted was, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Psalm 84:10.

Though Dad was not a preacher nor a Sunday School teacher, nor did he sing in the choir or pray publicly, he prayed at each meal, served the Lord in keeping the house of the Lord warm and clean, established a Christ-centered home life with Mother's help, and set us all an example of daily walking with the Lord in conversation, conduct and around-the-clock life-style. He also led family devotions which it seems we had every Sunday afternoon in our living room, kneeling at the sofa or chairs to pray. It was at one of those moments that as I knelt in prayer I "gave my heart to Jesus." It was the first memorable spiritual experience of my life.

It is to be remembered that Dad never drank alcoholic beverages nor used tobacco, never gambled nor used profanity. His life was a steady, unassuming witness to all that the Bible teaches as to what it means to be a redeemed follower of Christ.

It is impressive to realize that following his unexpected enforced retirement, and despite the absence of any retirement nest-egg, he and Mother volunteered as a handyman receptionist at two different Christian Conference Centers in service for Christ. Little did he know it would be the last two years of his life, with an untimely death at age sixty-one.



1959 leaving for Boca Raton

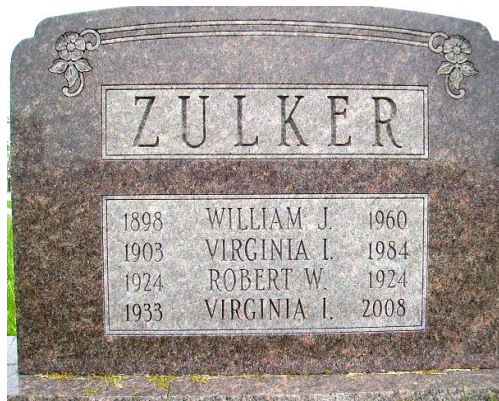


Bill's College Graduation 1953



Dad, Bill, Mother at Bethany Temple 1957

In the Bible we read a very interesting comment by Jesus about a woman who had anointed the head of Jesus with oil. When others wondered why she had done that, Jesus said, "She has done what she could." In other words, he was inferring that each person has a unique way of serving the Master. How appropriate it would be for us to say the same of Dad - "he did what he could" - he used his God-given abilities to serve Christ. What more could one ask or expect?



Atlantic City Cemetery - Pleasantville, NJ

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William Allen Zulker  
July 26, 2012