

BERRY & SARAH BAKER

Members since 1962

Berry Baker

Birth Date:

October 11, 1932

Place of Birth:

Harlan, KY

Military Service:

U.S. Army 11th Airborne

Sarah Baker

Birth Date:

March 31, 1933

Place of Birth:

Roxbury, PA

Did You Know?

Sarah worked at the Stanley Company for 26 years bartacking button holes.

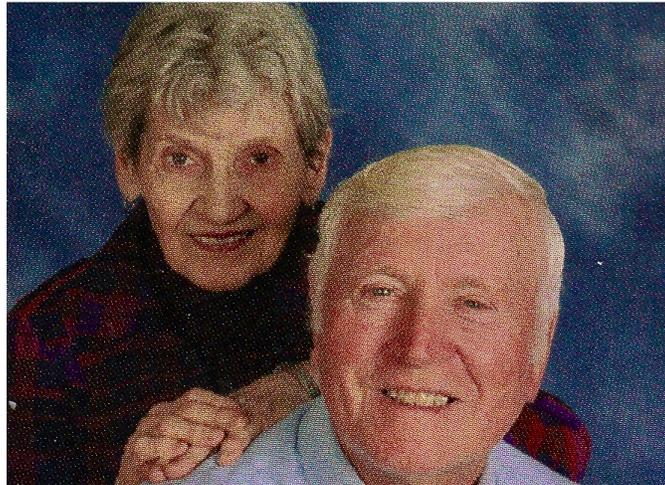
Berry has participated in FUMC work camps to Philadelphia, New York, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

Favorite Hymns:

Have Thine Own Way

How Great Thou Art

What A Friend We Have In
Jesus



A lot of chuckling went on during my interview with Berry and Sarah Baker. I heard the story of their first date, and why it didn't happen. When Sarah saw Berry hanging out at the Stouffer Mill with his red Buick convertible, surrounded by girls from the Penn Hall Preparatory School, she decided to stand him up. But then Berry showed up to see Sarah at work the following evening, and convinced her to go out with him after all. She grinningly admits, "He was really good-looking."

Berry grew up in a family of ten children. His family was originally from Kentucky, where his dad had a job mining coal. Soon after Berry was born, the family moved to Chambersburg because his dad didn't want to raise his kids in such a tough place. By the age of 12, Berry had secured his first job, hauling fruit on a flatbed truck. He remembers passing only two businesses and a handful of homes along Route 30, as he drove from an orchard in Duffield to Craig Hafer's Cold Storage in Chambersburg.

After graduation, Berry began working at Letterkenny Army Depot, where he worked until the age of 55. In his final position, he was responsible for making payroll for 5500 employees at Letterkenny, in addition to 3000 people at another base out West. He remembers his boss calling him into the office and saying, "Let me tell you something. If you don't make your payroll, someone is going to answer to the commanding officer. And it's going to be you." Berry said he didn't enjoy working under that much pressure, which is why he decided to retire.

Shortly after he had begun working at Letterkenny, Berry was drafted into the Army, where he became an instructor for the 11th Airborne Division. As Jump Master, it was his job to make sure that everyone got off of the plane, before he followed them out. Berry says he remembers one fun-loving recruit named Jackson. After telling the men to stand up and hook up for a jump, Berry asked, "Hey Jackson, do you have a joke for us today," to which Jackson replied, "Hey Sarge, this ain't no time to be joking." At one point, Berry was chosen to be a part of a select group of soldiers that was sent to Alaska to test parachutes in cold weather. They ultimately learned that parachutes worked fine in cold temperatures but that planes did not—their propellers would burst. Berry learned a personal lesson as well. Once he ignored his commanding officer's orders about what to wear on a jump, thinking it was too much gear. He says he jumped out, hit the snow, and then nearly froze while he waited to be picked up. At that moment, he decided to wear exactly what he was instructed to wear from that point on.

Berry met Sarah after he returned from the service. Sarah grew up in Roxbury with three sisters and two brothers. Early in her childhood, she remembers her dad working over the mountain in her grandfather's sawmill. He left on Monday mornings and didn't return until the end of the workweek. But after Sarah's mother died of colon cancer at age 44, her dad took a job with the state in order to work closer to home.

Sarah has worked hard all of her life. Just after graduation, she took her first job working in the office at the Capital Bakery. Soon she was also working nights at Molly Pitcher Waffle Shop. It was here at Molly Pitcher, where Berry finally convinced Sarah to go out with him. They were married at FUMC by Rev. Ira Ernst, in 1956.

Berry and Sarah talk about Dick Zimmerman and John Morris as two people from FUMC who have been influential in their faith journey. Berry says these two men knew their Bible as well as anybody he has ever met and that they knew how to encourage others to study Scripture. Sarah remembers learning a lot from both of them, when they taught the Good News Sunday School class, which met in what is now the Choir Room. Sarah is the last living member of this class.

Over the years, Berry and Sarah have served in many ways at FUMC. Sarah helped with childcare during worship services, and they later led the 10th Grade Sunday School class. Berry served as the auctioneer for the annual Mission Fair, and attended over 20 work camps as a crew leader. He says he felt like he got along well with young people and enjoyed working with them and the other adults that would help to lead the teams. "It was a great group of people, and we learned a lot about the Bible while we were there, due to our leaders." Berry's most memorable work camp was in Tennessee, where he led a crew that worked on an elderly lady's house that was built right on the side of a mountain. He says, "I'll never forget it. I walked through the front door, and there was no floor. The woman had lived her whole life on the same property where her mother and father had lived, died, and been buried. We had a real working time. Our kids were fantastic workers. And when we left that house, she had a floor!"

Berry and Sarah say they are most proud of having raised their boys well, who have in turn raised their own families well. Sarah talks about walking their sons, Ron and Don, to FUMC from their home on 4th Street every Sunday when they were little. Berry and Sarah feel that their boys learned so much from the ministers and Bible teachers that they had at FUMC. One son has gone on to become a minister and the other a deacon. Berry says, "I'll tell you something, your kids have a great bearing on your life. We have two great sons, who married good women, and have nice grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And it all goes back to the church."

Berry is also proud of Sarah. Pointing toward her he says, "There would be someone I'm proud of. She is able to handle any hardships and not complain about them. This will start the 4th year of her health issues, and I've never heard a complaint except when she worries that she cannot do her work. With all of her health problems over the years—the stroke, the heart attack, the major operations—she has been tough." He tells her, "We've had 62 years of pretty good marriage, Hun."

Berry and Sarah offer some very solid and practical advice to younger generations. Sarah encourages young people not to start smoking, because of her experience of watching four of Berry's brothers and two of her own siblings die from smoking-related issues. And Berry says, "My advice is not to spend more money than you have. You don't live beyond your means because it puts all of this pressure on you. Accept what you have and be happy with it."