

Tracing **PASTS****Celebrate Barbara Winge's life**

Genealogist Linda Pazics Kleback formerly was a researcher at the Bay County Public Library. She now lives in Maryland.

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**T**he Bay County genealogical community lost one of its outstanding members on Oct. 19 when Barbara Walker Winge went to join her ancestors. Barbara was a passionate genealogist and did much to promote research here. We met in the early 1980s, and she was to have a great influence on my genealogy career.

When you met Barbara, you quickly learned this was a Georgia girl. Her Southern roots were deep and solid — and well researched. With documented ancestors dating back to America's early days, she was a proud member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. But her devotion to her ancestry was not just something she talked about now and then.

Barbara was a woman who did things. She wasn't just a member of the DAR and UDC; she was an active member who worked tirelessly to promote genealogy and history. An early member of the Bay County Genealogical Society, she spread the word about the joys of genealogy at every opportunity. One of my first memories of a genealogy event was working with Barbara and her husband Bobby at a fair at Tyndall Air Force Base. We had a large U.S. map displayed on a bulletin board, and Barbara stopped all those passing by to ask where their ancestors came from. We stuck a pin in the town. By the end of the day, we had a map full of pins and a lot of folks who were now curious about their family history. It wasn't the kind of high tech display we'd probably create today, but it was fun and did the job.

One of the best things Barbara ever did for me was to introduce me to the Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research every summer at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. This is a weeklong event of concentrated genealogical study. We attended together for several years, and it was some of the most enjoyable time I ever had in genealogy. She introduced me to the teachers and librarians who were to be so crucial in my professional development.

We also had a good time. One of my favorite stories was about the time one of the local girls attending IGHR offered to lead a caravan to the Birmingham Public Library so we could do some research

there. Those of you who know me are aware I can get lost turning a corner so I was grateful to have a guide. In the spirit-of-sharing, we offered to take along two out of state librarians who also were attending. All was well until we got in the car, and our leader took some time to speak to another researcher. The librarians, both beautifully dressed and oh-so-professional, had a meltdown, yelling that we needed to get going because we were missing research time. Barbara and I just looked at each other and silently debated tossing the angry women out of the car. Our better selves prevailed, and we hauled the yelling librarians to the library where we went our separate ways. When we got in the car to go back later that evening, I announced there was to be quiet on the way home. Barbara looked at me, grinned and said "Amen." The trip back to Samford was peaceful.

Barbara loved to encourage new genealogists, and many local people started their research because of her. One who went on to great success was Sharon DeBartolo Carmack. Sharon came to Panama City when her husband was stationed at Tyndall. She was interested in family history, and Barbara helped her get started. In those days, she was very shy about getting up and sharing her finds at the Bay County Genealogical Society meetings, but both Barbara and I insisted she was doing great work and needed to share. Today, Sharon is one of the premier genealogists and lecturers, and her career started in Panama City with the help of Barbara.

Barbara was a generous genealogist. The Genealogy Collection at the Bay County Public Library has many books donated by Barbara. She also did lots of indexing. She helped with the Bay County Cemetery Inventory that went on for many years. During the years when she was employed at the Bay County Public Library, she helped with the Local History collection and assisted many visitors. She touched so many of our resources and touched us as well.

Barbara was no saint. She was stubborn and opinionated and had a glare that could stop you cold. She also had a warm heart and a generous and giving spirit. I am so grateful this Yankee girl got to know Barbara, the Southern lady, and to be inspired by her.

A Celebration of Life service will be Nov. 12 at the Parker United Methodist Church to honor this remarkable woman. I'll be there in spirit. I have no doubt Barbara will be there in spirit as well, enjoying the celebration — and then spending the rest of the day asking her ancestors in person just who their parents were.