

## VERN SAUTER AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born Nov. 3, 1939 as the third son of Walter and Lydia Leno Sauter with two older brothers, Duane and James. My sister Pat joined the family in 1948. I've enjoyed having been born in late 1939. It's given me the opportunity to tell my kids and wife, Martie, that I grew up during the depression. Through the years it's been a running joke for us as I assume the role of knowing what growing up during the depression was like to an unbelieving audience.

To help with the story telling I recently read the book, 'FOUR WINDS' by Kristen Hannah. A wonderful resource to understanding growing up during those hard years.

Back to my story I have always felt that I had an idyllic childhood growing up in Tuttle I knew everyone and everyone knew me and I doubt I ever had a day growing up when I did not interact with a close relative. They were everywhere, calling me "Ole" until I got into high school. Every kid in town or from the country was a friend and we were expert at entertaining ourselves. After World War II we played war all summer usually in the Batterberry's yard, I guess because their yard had contours that we could imagine were battlefields. Branches were weapons and dirt clods were grenades. We spent hours playing that we were each a soldier like Audie Murphy. Rather than making us warriors when we grew up I believe it strengthened our patriotism. Another event that strengthened patriotism was the annual cemetery preparation the week or two before Memorial Day when families would return to Tuttle to honor their deceased family members, some of who were in the military. There would also be a ceremony with a patriotic speech and the firing of a twenty one gun salute. Plus the playing of Taps by a local high school band member. If my memory serves me correctly our cousin, Burt, did this. A bonus was the time my dad and I had together in getting the cemetery ready. Good memories

Another memory was when we had major blizzards the school would close because the rural students could not make it in because of the roads. All the town kids would make it to school to play basketball and other games. It was always a fun day.

Another memory of my younger years was summertime entertainment that was devised by us kids. On those long summer evenings we played a game called Duck-em. All the town kids came to the school grounds and we would divide up into two teams. One team could go hide any place in town over the first half hour. Then the other team would go looking for them. The seeking team would break up into smaller groups and go hunting the hiding team. We would communicate by yelling. I Because of the size of Tuttle you could always hear your team members yelling and would join back together as we came closer to finding the hiding team. The groups would include kids from the 6th and 7th grade through high school. How was that fun. I recall one evening when I was in the 7th grade and on the hiding team some of the high school girls decided to teach me the art of kissing. I was a good student. Life time memories came out of growing up in Tuttle.

When I was 5 years old, because I lived so close to school, I would go up to the school at recess time to play with the kids out for recess. Both afternoon and morning. My parents told me they put me in the first grade at 5 years old because I was up at the school all the time anyway. School years were good with an interesting mix of teachers. I enjoyed my friends and the band and athletics. I did graduate as valedictorian at 17 years old but was always reminded it was because I didn't have a Heidt cousin in my class. The older cousins will understand this. My one regret from going to Tuttle high was the limited number of courses we were offered. The only college grads in Tuttle were either teachers or preachers. So my horizon of what the future could hold was limited.

After graduating from high school I followed my brother Jim to Jamestown College. I loved those four years. I was a decent student who was able to broaden my horizons while I earned my pocket money by working in the campus post office and giving dance lessons to some members of the Jamestown Country Club. I was 21 yrs. old when I graduated from The University of Jamestown. The three summers following graduation I worked as a case aide at the North Dakota State Hospital in Jamestown. This eventually led me to a career in Social Work.

The fall after graduation I taught social studies in New Salem, ND. I had two enjoyable years there and made some good friends. I enjoyed teaching but recognized it was not something I wanted to do as a lifetime career. If I had stayed in the education field I imagined I would have prepared myself to go into school administration. As luck would have it, Burt was a graduate student in Social Work at Denver University by then and because of my experience at the ND State Hospital I applied for admission in Social Work at the University of Denver as well. I was fortunate enough to receive a National Institute of Mental Health grant which paid my tuition and living expenses. So in the fall of 1963 I enrolled and ended up as Burt's roommate at DU. I have always been grateful to Burt for taking me in and showing me how to get by in Graduate School. It completed our educational journey together. We went to elementary school, high school, college and graduate school together. I started elementary school a year before he did and he graduated from grad school a year ahead of me.

I met Martie at a coffee reception the first day of graduate school. Fortunately we were assigned to the same first year internship which gave us an opportunity to get to know each other before we started dating. We had an interruption in our relationship in the first few weeks of grad school. My father died in October that fall. I went home and came back three weeks later. Martie would tell you she wasn't sure she would ever see me again as we already were moving toward our first date. We finally got together on a classmate outing a short time after I returned to Denver. We went to a club on Outlook Mountain above Denver. There was a dance floor and we spent the afternoon dancing with each other. I think by then we both knew that our relationship would move forward from there. The complication was that she was engaged at the time but stopped wearing her engagement ring when we started dating. Going dancing was a big part of our dating. We had several favorite dance clubs that we went to regularly in Denver. I proposed to her that next spring and she said yes. We got married, in spite of being

discouraged by our professors, on August 28, 1964 in Abilene, TX. The temperature that day was 107 degrees which was hot to this ND boy. The reason we were discouraged by our professors was that they were cautioning us that going to graduate school and being in the first year of marriage would be a challenge. They probably had a point but the fact that we are celebrating our 57th anniversary this coming August also suggests that we knew what we were doing.

After we graduated in June, 1965 we both took jobs in Denver. I went to work at the Ft. Logan Mental Health Center. At the time it was one of the top Community Health Centers in the country. While there I got wonderful experience and training that served me well during my career. Martie went to work at a state institution for severely handicapped children. She by far had the tougher job with a caseload in the hundreds. I used to worry about her because of the exhaustion that came with the position. Fortunately about a year later she got a therapist job at the Denver Mental Health Center where she had done her 2nd year internship. They knew her and were very happy to get her back. It was a wonderful experience for her which also helped her with her future career.

In 1968 we moved to Amarillo, TX for me to take a position at an adult mental health center. By this time Martie was pregnant with our first child, Jennifer. After an adjustment period to parenthood Martie took a position at Amarillo Community College and set up the first Mental Health program in Texas for training workers to work in psychiatric programs. After six months I was offered another job in Amarillo. The facility I started out at didn't have a clue as to how to use a social worker in their program. I just moved across the street to a children's psychiatric hospital where I primarily worked with children and parents and got excellent experience and set me on a track to work with children which I did for the rest of my career.

Three years after coming to Amarillo, a city we enjoyed and made many friends I was offered a new job at a new children's psychiatric hospital being established by the Methodist's Children's Home in Waco, TX. Martie was pregnant with our second child, Amanda, when we moved. After we found good child care Martie came to work at the same facility I worked at. She was hired to do play therapy and supervise play therapy. After several years she took a teaching position at our local community college, McClennan Community College in the Mental Health Program. She eventually became the director of the program. In addition to training mental health workers she also became a licensed Drug and Alcoholism counselor and added a training program for drug and alcohol counselors. She also established an Associate degree in Social Work. She taught for 38 years before retiring.

I started out as Director of Social Work on my job which entailed doing therapy and supervision. Eventually I became Director of Outpatient Services. We eventually became an accredited children's psychiatric hospital and I became the Clinical Director. I spent 31 years in this program after taking off a couple of years to do private therapy. All in all, I have had a very satisfying career.

We have found Waco to be a nice community to raise our kids in. We have moved once since coming here and are very happy with our home. Against all logic we have added four rooms since our children left. The extra space was helpful during the pandemic and is very helpful when everybody comes home for holidays. Both our girls graduated from Texas A&M. Both also have two Masters Degrees. Amanda started out in the corporate world and then decided she wanted to teach school. After getting her credentials she taught school in the Austin area for about 10 years. She ended up marrying a childhood friend, Chris, has two step children and now lives in Tyler, Tx. She tried teaching in Tyler for 1 year but that didn't work out so she had an opportunity to get back into corporate work when she was offered a job with DeloitteCorp. As a recruiter she works from home and has a very nice job. Kept working from home through the pandemic. Knock on wood. So far no Covid in our family, we all have been vaccinated with the exception of the grandchildren under 16 yrs. Hopefully that will be available soon.

Our other daughter, Jennifer also started out as a Social Worker and was Director of a couple of Children's programs in Austin. She retired from that after she married Vince, a career military officer and a Minnesota boy. They moved to Ft. Sill in Lawton, OK. After Jennifer got pregnant later that year Vince had to take his battalion to Iraq with his artillery Unit to join in the war. Jennifer was put on bed rest for the last 4 or 5 months of her pregnancy. We brought her home to stay with us. Our first grandchild was born at a hospital about five blocks from our home. Coincidentally her OB-Gyn was a former baby sitter of hers. We have pleasant memories of those months. It was like having a child return to spend the summer with you. We ate meals in her room as well as visited, watched TV and played games together. We also enjoyed having our granddaughter, Grace, with us for the first four or five months of her life. Vince returned from Iraq in good health about four months after Grace was born. He was then transferred to Washington, DC to work in the Pentagon for the next 10 years. By the time they purchased a home in Arlington, VA our second granddaughter, Delaney, was born. Vince eventually retired as a Colonel and joined the corporate world at a think tank, Mitre, Grace will graduate from high school this year and Delaney will be a Jr. This coming year.

Jennifer stayed home while her kids were in elementary school doing the PTA thing, taking the kids to dance lessons, etc. She worked for a period of time at an agency that distributed books to low income children. That agency closed for financial reasons and several months after Jennifer set up a non profit with the same mission, giving books to low income children that had few resources in the community for age appropriate books. Her program is called R.E.A.D. (Read Early And Daily). She has done very well with it. A couple of years ago she received a grant for \$50,000 to purchase a used school bus from USA Today. She painted it in bright colors and uses it for a book bus to deliver books around the Arlington neighborhoods. She has been recognized for her efforts in the community and continues to grow community support. The pandemic reduced her mobility so she compensated by virtual connections to read books to children in the community. It has been enjoyable for Martie and I to have them in the DC area. Before the pandemic we went up there 2-3 times a year. We have seen all the monuments and

places of interest several times It helps to have a place to stay and local guides to take us around the city.

This has grown much larger than I intended. However my biography would not be complete without mentioning the struggles that come along in every body's lives and we have had our share of ours. When I was 17 we found out that my father had leukemia. I remember feeling like the bottom had fallen out of my world. This was back in the days when cancer was a death sentence with very few treatment options. With my families support and encouragement I continued pursuing my education goals. My dad was in and out of the hospital in an effort to keep his strength up. He was very brave in how he handled his disease. I remember one summer when I was waiting for the fall term to begin I commented to him that I wished the summer was over. His simple, but profound response was, "don't wish your life away". At that moment I realized how important every day of his life was to him Since then I have tried to live my life with an awareness of how precious time is and not to waste it with worry about things I can't control. Wish I could say that I was always successful at doing this, but of course I haven't been. I probably waste as much time worrying about things I have no control over as everyone does. My father died at the age of 54 when I was 23 years old

I was tested on this principal in 1994 when I was 54 yrs old and was told that I had Prostate cancer and also had a heart attack the same day. Of course, I was in the hospital for my heart immediately. About a week later the drs. found a life threatening blood clot in my right leg and had to have emergency that afternoon. Thank God, I had competent Drs. Several weeks later I had a biopsy on my Prostate and discovered it had metastasized into my lymph nodes. This took away the options of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. They had one drug they could give me which might help for about 2 years.. I certainly worried about things I couldn't control. Fortunately my family rallied around me. Since medical options were limited or non existent we decided we would have to find another way to fight the cancer. Martie found a nutritionist in Austin whom we started going to. He had very good credentials and immediately put me on a very strict diet and started me on non prescription supplements. The main thing he gave me was hope and a path to wellness. It was important for me to buy in to this program, which I did. I saw him several times a month for at least 2 yrs. He continued to adjust my diet and supplements. We did most of our grocery shopping at Whole Foods in Austin. After a couple years my PSA was below detectable levels and has remained that way to this day. I stayed on that program until 2004 when I had a stroke which I recovered from rather quickly with no residual effects. This coming May 6th it will be the 27th anniversary of the cancer. I also should mention that Martie had me on every prayer list on most of the churches in Waco and there are a lot of churches in Waco. She would ask anyone she came in contact with to pray for us. I was probably the only person in Waco that had grocery check out staff and sackers praying for me. Just to throw in a few more things. I also have type II diabetes but control that with a 5.1 A1C. Then in early December, 2019 I took a bad fall that broke my leg in three places plus a broken clavicle. Surgery repaired the leg with two plates and 7 screws It also got me a month in the rehab unit in the hospital plus four more months of outpatient rehab. But as I like to say I walked out of rehab with no pain and no cane. During that recovery I went

from a wheelchair to a walker to a cane to going solo. By the time the quarantine hit I felt like I had already been in quarantine for 5 months..

All in all we feel like we have had a blessed life. I have a wonderful support system with Martie, the rest of my family and many friends. I have gotten better about not worrying about things I can't control. It gives me something to work on. I am also experiencing our cousin zooms as a support system. I hope the rest of you experience it the same way. I love each of you.