

BOWERING, Gerry and Pam

By: Wendy, Neil, and Natalie Bowering



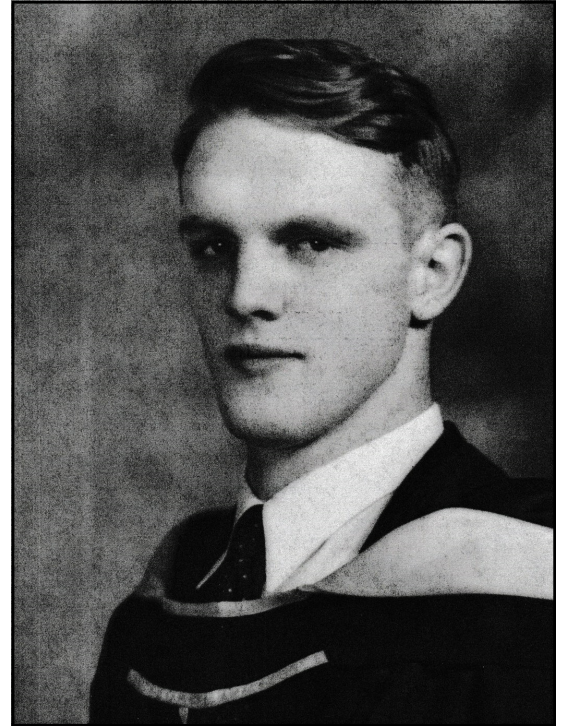
Gerry and Pam Bowering loved the Okanagan Valley and agriculture, especially fruit farming. From the get-go they worked as a team to make orcharding provide for themselves and their 4 children (Doug, Wendy, Bob, Neil), all of whom were born in Penticton and raised in Naramata. The Bowering family were Naramatians for 22 years; from 1946 until 1968. In 1966 Gerry had cataracts removed from both eyes and was strongly advised to give up orcharding. Gerry and Pam sold their properties and bought a home in Penticton as well as a small orchard and house on Olhausen Rd close to Poplar Grove. After the move to Penticton, both worked for the packing house at the foot of Vancouver Hill in Penticton as manager and office secretary respectively. Gerry wanted to return to outdoor work. Mo Lidster took over as manager and Gerry became the field rep to support new and existing orchardists with challenging issues; the position from which he retired.

Gerry's Okanagan Heritage: When the local cleric of the Church of England offered to pay his fare to Canada in July of 1889, Gerry's father, Jabez Harry Bowering, set sail aboard the *SS Oregon* from Liverpool in the UK to Port Levis, Canada (close to Quebec City). He then made his way to Cookshire, QC, where his brother, Edgar, lived. Two years later Jabez made his way to Grenfell, SK, where he worked on farms. While in Saskatchewan, Jabez became part of a close-knit community of Baptists and married a fellow Baptist, Bertha. By the end of his second year in the Grenfell area, Jabez had saved enough to put down the first installment on a quarter section of CNR land. He proceeded to construct a small home, buy a team of oxen, build a stable and clear and plant 18 acres. Jabez felt called to be a minister. He farmed from spring until harvest, volunteered as a minister on Sundays and during the winter months took courses to put himself through divinity college to become a full-time pastor. Jabez and Bertha had a daughter and twin boys. The family moved to Manitoba where Jabez preached both in Brandon and outlying areas. One of the twins died at the age of 2 ½ years. Bertha passed in 1904.

Jabez later married Clara and the then-family of 4 made their way to BC. Jabez hoped to take up a church position in the Kootenays but that wasn't to be. They made their way to the Okanagan, settling in Summerland, where Jabez worked as Summerland's postmaster until the age of retirement. Together Jabez and Clara had 5 children, bringing the Summerland Bowering family to 9.

Gerry, the youngest of Jabez and Clara's 5 children, was born at home in February of 1917 at 10515 Quinpool Drive in Summerland. The family's home was built for Jabez and Clara in 1910 by John Gordon Robertson and Alfredo Biagioni. This character home still stands. It has been nicely preserved and operates today (2023) as a Bed and Breakfast titled, 'The Bowering House'.

While attending high school in Summerland, Gerry and his siblings worked in local orchards as well as the Summerland Fruit Cooperative. A quiet person who enjoyed the solitude of outdoors, Gerry chose to pursue a degree in agriculture from UBC. He became largely deaf in one ear following a lab explosion when at UBC thus was unable to join the armed forces. Gerry graduated with 6 other 'Ag' men in 1942 (photo). Soon after, he worked briefly for the Dominion Experimental Farm, later renamed the Summerland Research Centre. However, Gerry realized his calling was to grow fruit and manage orchards and he did exactly that until the end of the 1960's.



Pam's Okanagan Heritage: Pamela Hickman was born in Vernon, BC in 1923 where, 4 years earlier, her parents, Mervyn Hickman and Blanche Knowles, met and married. Both Mervyn and Blanche had been born in the UK. When they married in 1919, Mervyn worked for Coldstream Orchards in Lavington, BC, a property owned by cousins on his mother's side. The Hickman family (Mervyn, Blanche, Phyllis, and Pam) moved to Ewings Landing (near Fintry and across Lake Okanagan from what is now known as Lake Country). Mervyn managed the Forest House Orchard in Ewings Landing, owned by a Killiney family. When the great depression of the 1930's



Pamela Hickman driving tractor with sprayer equipment

ended, the Hickman family moved to Kelowna where Pam's father secured work as Orchard Manager of Bankhead Orchards, established in 1892 and owned by a group in the UK. Throughout their marriage Blanche focused on raising Pam and her older sister, Phyllis, as well as maintaining home and garden. Like most children whose parents worked in agriculture, Pam learned to help in the orchard. After completing high school Pam took a secretarial course then served for two years with the CWAC (Canadian Women's Army Corps) in Vancouver during the latter part of WW2. Photo following page.



The Start to Gerry and Pam's Life Together: None of the Bowering clan still living in 2023 are 100% clear about when and where Gerry and Pam met. Was it in Vancouver? In Kelowna? What is certain is they married in Kelowna on July 8, 1943. Gerry accepted a job managing a small orchard of wind-swept young fruit trees on the east slope of the Similkameen river in Cawston. Accommodation provided was small, rustic, and spare. In 1944, while waiting for the fruit orchard to come into full production, Gerry and Pam were said to have planted vegetable crops between the rows of fruit trees. This arrangement was not as successful as the property owner hoped. After their first child (Doug) was born in the spring of 1945, Gerry looked for a more sustainable role in agriculture within the Okanagan and in mid-1946, accepted a challenging role as Orchard Manager in Naramata for Carroll Aikins. Mr. Aikins' 100-acre property included at least 38 acres planted in cherries, apricots, peaches, prunes, pears, and apples with a few plum trees thrown in for good measure. Gerry's work included organizing seasonal help for pruning, thinning, and harvesting.

Children, Community Involvements and Home Life: Gerry and Pam's 4 children (Doug, Wendy, Bob, and Neil) were each born in Penticton (1945, 1946, 1950, 1952) and raised in Naramata. An avid sports fan, Gerry assisted with coaching the Naramata boy's baseball team and likewise helped with Scouts. As his responsibilities for Carroll Aikins increased, his family expanded and he and Pam purchased

their own orchards, Gerry let go his volunteer activities with youth. Like most men in the community, he was available as a volunteer in the case of fires. He also served as a BCFG (BC Fruit Grower's Association) representative for a decade, which involved attending annual conventions within BC and Washington State as well as quarterly meetings within the valley. Pam helped in their own orchards, ensured her children successfully passed Red Cross swimming lessons held at Manitou Park and packed fruit seasonally along with most other local mothers at the Naramata Co-op. She occasionally helped with Brownies, Girl Guides, and village fundraisers. Pam loved to sing and was an early member of the Naramata Community Choir, but Gerry did not have a good enough ear/voice to be part of this fold. At the top of his lungs when working in the orchards, Gerry would belt out tunes like, 'Goodnight Irene' and 'Roamin' in the Glomin', always off-key; so funny. Pam and Gerry were avid readers and made good use of the Naramata Library, encouraging their children to do the same. Board and card games were played often in the Bowering home and during the winter months, puzzles were added. Gilbert and Sullivan productions were Pam and Gerry's favourite musical events, staged every couple of years in either Penticton or Summerland. Their kids knew the words to most tunes from these operettas by heart. Gerry and Pam enjoyed fishing at mountain lakes. Most years in late spring, once ice no longer covered Beaver Lake east of Winfield, BC, they packed the car with kids, food and gear and rented a cabin for a week of fishing and outdoor fun.

Bowering Orchards: The contributors to this family history are not 100% certain how many acres Gerry and Pam owned; their best guess is between 18 and 20 acres split between three lots. Two tracts were close together (but not adjacent) near the intersection of Naramata Rd and Old Main Rd. The third was 2.7 kilometers

south of where they lived. In earlier times this third acreage was said to be located “just south of “Young’s Store” (now numbered between 2235 and 2149 Naramata Rd).

The Bowerings’ first orchard purchase was nicknamed the ‘Bottom Lot’. This was mostly cherry and peach trees that extended west and north below Naramata Rd (currently a vineyard numbered 1021 Old Main Rd). Their second and largest purchase, called the ‘Lawrence Lot’ was the one situated 2.7 km to the south of their home on Naramata Rd. Their final purchase, named the ‘Morrow Lot’ (Art Morrow), comprised a farmhouse and orchard. Bill and June June (Not a typo: June Page married Bill June) lived on the next orchard to the north. Jessie and Charles Tyndall lived directly to the south and the Gammons lived on the slope to the east above. Everyone helped with orchard work. Gerry taught Doug about orchards and equipment maintenance. Neil remembers Doug teaching Bob and him in turn. Wendy helped with chores like trapping moles, picking up ‘prunings’, sprinklers and the cherry harvest. A fond family memory is of Gerry heading off to work on his tractor, pulling a wagon with his dog pal, Mike, on board.

Homes in Naramata: Family life for the Bowerings started two old homes, both on orchards near the intersection of Naramata Rd and the Old Main Rd. Gerry and Pam lived in the first home from 1946 until early 1960, when Carroll Aikins, then 78 years of age, sold his orchard properties to Phil Workman. At the time, as mentioned, Gerry and Pam owned and worked two orchard parcels: the ‘Lawrence Lot’ and the ‘Bottom Lot’. In early spring of 1960, they bought the ‘Morrow Lot’, bringing their productive holdings to a size sufficient to support their family of 6 modestly.

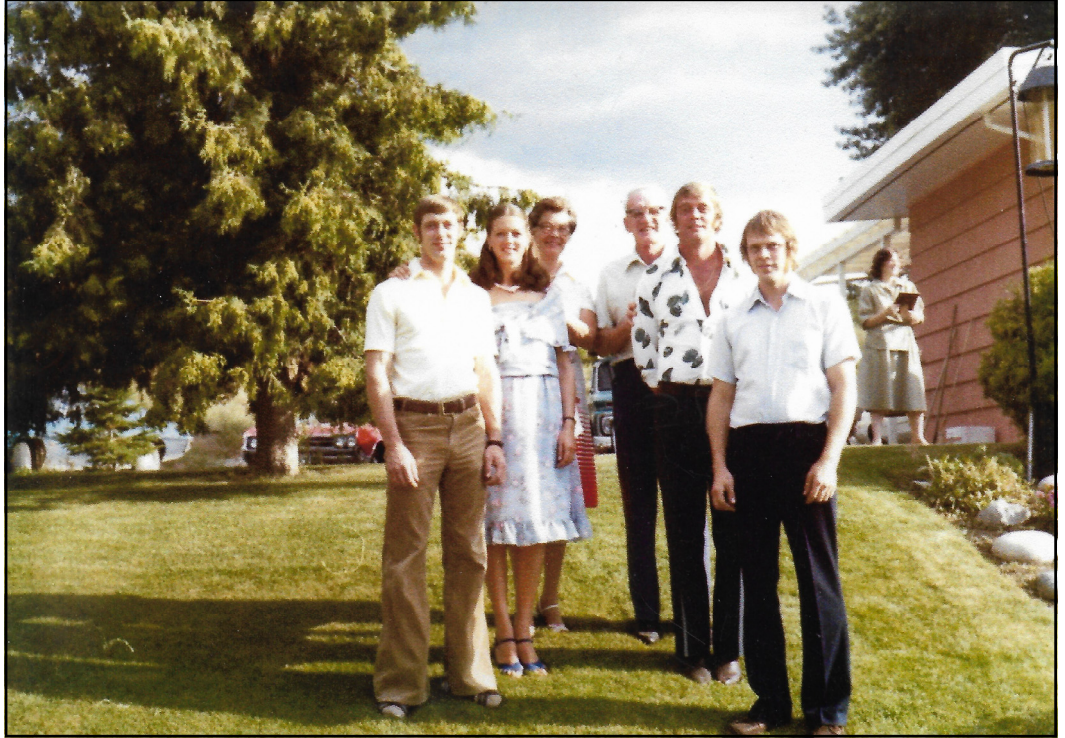
Their first home, the ‘Aikins’s House’, stood exactly where Joie Farm Winery’s offices now reside at 2825 Naramata Rd. This accommodation, coupled with a modest monthly salary, was provided to Gerry for managing Carroll Aikins’ orchards. Tiny initially, the house was expanded in 1950 when Pam was pregnant with their third child. After the expansion the main floor had 3 bedrooms. A new 4th bedroom was built in the attic for their eldest. This home had 3 entrances: kitchen, living room and basement. While there were no porches there were several lawn and garden spaces. Everyone’s favourite was the ‘bottom lawn’, which was surrounded by pine trees and had a central rock garden.

The Bowerings’ second home, the ‘Morrow House’ was purchased through Art Morrow’s sisters in the spring of 1960 through a Veterans Land Act (VLA) loan. This spacious 4-bedroom farm home (2 up and 2 down) had sensational south, west and north facing views (photo taken from Gammon Rd). The Morrow sisters had several large taxidermy pieces plus a collection of seashells, some of which were left on walls and ledges for Gerry, Pam, and children. The former included a Shetland Pony’s hide and a python skin. None of the contributors recall what happened to these somewhat dubious treasures. This home had 3 porches, 2 nice lawns and a huge vegetable garden. It was a happy home which Gerry, Pam and children lived in for several years ending in late 1968. This home at 2830



Naramata Rd still stands. The current owner has preserved the integrity of the property and has replaced all the old fruit trees with new varieties.

Post Naramata: As mentioned, Gerry, Pam and their two youngest boys, Bob, and Neil, moved to Penticton at the end of 1968; Doug and Wendy had already left home. At right is a photo of the family in late 1969 and, below, one of Gerry and Pam taken in 1992.



The Bowering Family Today (2023):

Gerry Bowering passed in 1995 at the age of 78. Pam Bowering passed in 2005 at the age of 81. Doug Bowering and his wife, Elaine, live in Logan Lake, BC. Wendy Binggeli (Bowering) and her husband, Hubert, live in Penticton. Bob Bowering passed in 2020 at the age of 69; his wife, Natalie lives in her and Bob's home in Grand Forks, BC. Neil Bowering and his wife, Debbie, live in Penticton.

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Above: Pam and Gerry Bowering with Wendy and Doug (middle) and Neil and Bob (front)



Above Right: Grandmother Blanche Hickman, Pam with Bob on lap, Fred Coe (Pam's sister's husband), cousin, Daphne Coe, Gerry with Doug standing behind and Wendy on lap, cousin Eve Coe in front.

Middle Right: cousins on lawn l to r: Wendy, Daphne Coe, Eve Coe, Doug, Barbara Coe, Bob

Right: The "Aikins Home" before it became the Joie Winery.

