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The Family History of Alex Gabel

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The Family History of

Alex M. Gabel

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Alex Michael Gabel authored this family history as part of the course requirements for HIST 550/700 Your Family in History offered online in Spring 2022 and was submitted to the Pittsburgh State University **Digital Commons**. Please contact the author directly with any questions or comments:
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Generation One

Alexander Michael Gabel (1999-) was born at Menorah Medical Center in Overland Park, Kansas on Tuesday, May 18, 1999, to **Craig Lee Gabel (1971-)** and **Leesa Marie Gaber (1970-)**. Alex's mother labored for 12 hours before being wheeled into an operating room for a cesarean birth. Other than the unplanned c-section, it was a relatively uneventful and routine birth. For the first five years of his life, Alex and his parents lived in a small, two bedroom house in Liberty, Missouri. The Gabel family increased by one when **Ashlee Christine Gabel (2003-)** was born. After his sister's birth, Alex temporarily moved into an upstairs attic bedroom but did not enjoy sleeping up there, so he moved back downstairs to share a bedroom with his baby sister. Alex did keep the attic space as a play area to escape to when he needed to get away from his sister and her baby ways.

Alex attended pre-school at a local KinderCare Learning Center. It was at this Center that Alex would lose his appetite for vegetables due to another child's adamant belief that eating carrots would make his eyes glow. Afraid to test this theory, Alex stopped eating all vegetables, not just carrots, from that day forward and well into his later teen years. Alex's parents often share the story from his kindergarten year at Manor Hill Elementary when they received a phone call from his school notifying that Alex's lunch account was empty. His parents wondered how this could happen since it was only the second week into the month. His parents discovered that Alex had self-

identified as a breakfast eater and would get off the bus every morning to have breakfast in the cafeteria despite his mother having made him a hearty breakfast at home. Alex's 'second breakfast' adventures ended abruptly after the discovery.

In the summer heat of July 2005, the Gabel family moved from Liberty, Missouri to Olathe, Kansas. Alex no longer had to share a bedroom with his sister, and he no longer had to ride the bus to school. He entered the Olathe School District in the Fall, attending Mahaffie Elementary - his enrollment papers list that Alex is allergic to clowns.

When Alex began middle school at Santa Fe Trail, he joined the Cyclone football team. Because of his physical build, he was often put in lineman positions. He continued to play football in high school at Olathe Northwest (ONW) as a defensive lineman and on special teams. Alex also added wrestling to his school sports participation. A highlight of his wrestling career was earning the 2017 Class A Region 6 Heavyweight Champion title.

Alex attended ONW because he was accepted into the eCommunication Twenty-first Century program. Aside from traditional high school courses, he would also study a specific track which included choices in web design, animation, broadcasting, and journalism. Alex chose the broadcasting track where he learned that he felt more at ease behind the camera than in front of it. During his senior year, he was "the voice of ONW" reading the daily announcements over the PA system. Another highlight of his high school experience was traveling with the

Raven Pride Band to perform in the 2015 Veteran's Day Parade in New York City. Alex made his national television debut seen holding a corner of a huge American flag representing "Olathe High School" as the band marched down Fifth Avenue.

Alex is an Eagle Scout. He began down the path to Eagle as a Tiger Cub in first grade. His parents were his Den Leaders all during Cub Scouts, helping him and his fellow scouts to earn their Arrow of Light before crossing over to Boy Scouts. While in Boy Scouts, Alex joined the Order of the Arrow (OA), an honor camping program, and the Tribe of Mic-O-Say, a leadership program. Alex earned his Vigil rank in OA. In Mic-O-Say, Alex is currently a purple paint Shaman and continues to "work his paint" during summer camp which he has been attending since sixth grade. As an adult, Alex can continue to elevate in status with the tribe.

After high school, Alex decided to attend Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. He has enjoyed college life in Pitt as an active member of the Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity where he served as fraternity president for a year. A highlight of his time with the fraternity is the back-to-back Yell Like Hell first place finishes, and the annual 72-hour trampoline-a-thon to benefit Kansas Special Olympics. Deciding on a major has been difficult for Alex. He began his freshman year as a Broadcast Journalism major, switched to History Education, and now has settled on a Communication major with minors in History and Coaching. He hopes to return to the Olathe School District

to coach while continuing his work as a video editor for a telecommunication company.

Generation Two

A1a. Craig Lee Gabel (1970-)

A1b. Leesa Marie Garber (1971-)

Craig Lee Gabel (1970-) was born at the Navel Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland on November 23, 1970. Craig is the fourth and final son born to **Lester Eugene Gabel (1937-)** and **Jane Nancy Bumpus (1938-1990)**. Other children include, **Randall Eugene Gabel (1960-)**, **Scott Alan Gabel (1962-2020)**, and **Todd David Gabel (1967-)**. The Gabel family came full circle beginning and ending at the Bethesda Navel Hospital with the births of Randall and Craig. Craig would not spend many years in Maryland as his family moved frequently as a result of his father's active duty U.S. Navy status. Shortly after Craig's birth, the family returned to Guam, where his dad would finish his time in the U.S. Navy.

After his father's retirement, the family finally settled into Evergreen Lakes, a newly built subdivision in the tiny country town of Catawissa, Missouri. Craig would attend elementary school close by at Nike Elementary. The school was actually a repuposed Nike missile base run by the U.S. Army from 1958 to 1968¹. The Meramec Valley School district converted the barracks into a school which opened in 1970².

¹ https://www.emissourian.com/nike-missile-base-reunion-may-30n-operated-1958-to-1968/article_a9b22736-3131-511c-93d7-8c02970bff86.html

² <https://www.pacificmissouri.com/199/History>

Craig was a swimmer. He began his swimming career in Guam at age five and continued swimming until he was 16. Craig excelled in freestyle and butterfly strokes. In fact, he still holds a record from 1986 and is listed as 23rd in the Top 25 for 13-14 year old males in the 100 meter butterfly with the Rockwoord Swim Club in Ellisville, Missouri³. Craig's mother often said that he was good enough to make the 1988 US Olympic swim team.

After graduating from Pacific High School in 1989, Craig attended Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg to pursue a degree in aviation. Previous to flying in college, Craig attended a summer program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautic School in Daytona Beach, Florida in 1988, where he had his first solo flight at Ormond Beach. Craig left CMSU prior to graduating to open a business - an airbrush shop in the World's of Fun amusement park. Craig had spent many summers working as an airbrush artist at Six Flags in Eureka, Missouri, and when he learned that World's of Fun was in need of a new airbrush shop owner, Midwest Artworks was formed.

World's of Fun opened in Kansas City, Missouri in 1973. It was founded by Lamar Hunt - the same man who founded the Kansas City Chiefs⁴. Midwest Artworks ran out of World's of Fun from 1992 until park ownership sold to Cedar Fair in 1995 and all leasees like Midwest Artworks were replaced by the park's new owners. It took Craig a few years to find his new career path in IT telecommunications with

³ https://www.teamunify.com/ozrsca/UserFiles/Image/QuickUpload/lcm-top-age-group-times13-14-boys_069621.pdf

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worlds_of_Fun

Sprint, a company he would remain at for nearly 20 years before being downsized and picked up by another telecom company.

During the early 1990s, Craig experienced many of life's ups and downs. His mother passed away very unexpectedly in April 1990. He got engaged to his high school sweetheart in 1991. He opened Midwest Artworks in April 1992 and was married in December of the same year. He and his new bride decided that Kansas City would become their new home base - leaving both of their families back in the St. Louis area.

Leesa Marie Garber was born on December 25, 1971, in Washington, Missouri to **Janet Christine Blackwell (1951-)** and Daniel O'Brien. Janet and Daniel divorced a year after Leesa's birth, and Daniel relinquished all parental rights at the time of the divorce. After the divorce, Leesa and her mother moved into the home of her maternal grandparents, **Earl Edward Blackwell (1911-1999)** and **Clara Cudd (1913-1996)**, in Union, Missouri. In August 1974, Janet married **Robert Earl Garber (1946-)** who legally adopted Leesa. Other children include, **Robert Edward Garber (1978-)** and **Nathan Robert Garber (1980 -)**.

After the wedding, Leesa and her parents moved into the home that Robert had built in a new subdivision called Evergreen Lakes in Catawissa, Missouri. Their new home was located on a former U.S. Army Nike missile base. Specifically it was located off the former airstrip connected to the Nike base which had become the Pacific Drag Strip/Raceway Park⁵ from 1963-1967. Not only was this 1/8th mile strip host to the AHRA Mile Super Stock Nationals, but the murder of Eric

⁵ <https://www.pacificmissouri.com/199/History>

Frey by Dr. Glennon Engleman, a local dentist implemented and convicted of four additional insurance-related murders, took place on the property⁶. Of course, Leesa knew none of this until much later in life; she just thought the 'drag strip' as it was called was the perfect place to ride her bike.

Although Nike Elementary had opened and was within walking distance of her home, Leesa only attended kindergarten at the school. Her parents opted to send her to St. Bridget Parochial School. Leesa would attend St. Bridget for eight years – attending Catholic Mass six days a week, being taught by nuns who lived adjacent to the school.

In 1986, Leesa met her future husband, **Craig Lee Gabel (1970-)**, at the bus stop on her first day of high school. Although Leesa and Craig lived in the same subdivision they hadn't met until this day because Leesa had attended a private school until eighth grade, and within the subdivision they were separated by a lake and forest. Although their paths hadn't crossed until that day, they did share similar childhood memories of growing up in the small Evergreen Lakes community. Where, at Halloween, instead of neighbors just handing out candy, they would hand out bags marked with their names, and often containing full-size candy bars.

After graduating from Pacific High School a year after Craig, Leesa followed Craig to CMSU. She set her sights on either a Psychology or English Literature degree. And like Craig, she would

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glennon_Engleman

leave CMSU before earning her degree to help him start Midwest Artworks.

While Craig focused on the business, Leesa focused on planning their December 26, 1992 wedding 'back home' in Pacific, Missouri while living in Kansas City, Missouri. The ceremony was held in the same church that Leesa's parents were married - St. Bridget Catholic Church. After the honeymoon in Estes Park, Colorado - life settled down until Alex entered the picture in 1999. By then, Craig had his career path in IT and Leesa found hers in technical writing.

Craig and Leesa would spend the next years focused on their family - taking trips, being active in their kids' school life and scouting, Craig served as Scoutmaster for both Alex's scout troop and was instrumental in starting a troop for Alex's sister - helping both kids to earn Eagle Scout. The family did hit a brief bump in the road in 2008 when Leesa was diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL). Leesa became very active in the cancer advocate community. She'd attend rallies for organizations such as the American Cancer Society, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and LiveStrong Foundation at the capitol in Topeka, Kansas and Washington. D.C. - often bringing Craig and the kids along. Fighting cancer became a family affair. Then in 2016, Leesa caught another type of bug - she decided to run for public office as a KS State Representative. She ran a very successful campaign and came very close to defeating the two-term incumbent in the primary. Realizing that she could actually do more good within her local community than in the statehouse, Leesa turned her focus to the

Olathe Junior Service League where she is currently serving as president of the organization.

Generation Three

A1a1. Lester Eugene Gabel (1937-)

A1a2. Jane Nancy Bumpus (1938-1990)

A1b1. Robert Earl Garber (1946-)

A1b2. Janet Christine Blackwell (1951-)

Alex's paternal grandfather, **Lester Eugene Gabel (1937-)** is the last living child out of seven (five boys, three girls) born to **Benjamin Frank Gabel (1900-1976)** and **Mary Jane Mihlfeld (1901-1990)** in Phelps County, Missouri. Lester joined the U.S. Navy in 1956 and was assigned as an electrical engineer on an AWACS (airborne warning and control system) military plane. Many of his missions involved flying into hurricanes to monitor the weather - his job was to make sure the electrical system maintained itself during the stressful flights. He met **Jane Nancy Bumpus (1938-1990)** on a double-date with a fellow Navy man. Lester and Jane were married in New York on May 23, 1959. Lester's Navy career had the family moving frequently to such places as Guam (twice) and Newfoundland. After Lester retired from the Navy, the family spent a transition year in Ironton, Missouri running a campground. Lester began his second career with McDonnell-Douglas as an electrical engineer in 1978. Lester moved his family to Catawissa, Missouri in 1978 and there they would stay until each of the sons moved out to start their adult lives. Soon after Jane's death in 1990, Lester moved to Delaware to work for Boeing. During his time in Delaware, Lester remarried in 1994 to Rita Freeman, a long-time family friend who knew Jane very well. They returned to Rita's home in

Ellisville, Missouri in 1998. Unfortunately, Rita passed away suddenly in 2000. Lester would marry again in 2003, this time to a woman who was related to his late-wife Jane by marriage, Ann Charlesworth.

Jane Nancy Bumpus (1938-1990) born in Buffalo, New York, was the only daughter born to **Charles Lake Bumpus (1905-1963)** and **Irene M. H. Shorr (1908-1944)**. After marrying Lester in 1959, Jane would spend many years as a stay-at-home mom, seeing to her growing family. Once the family settled in Catawissa, Missouri, Jane pursued a nursing degree, and worked as an LPN at a nearby senior living center. Jane passed away suddenly on April 29, 1990 due to complications from a heart attack and Type 1 diabetes.

Alex's maternal grandfather, **Robert Edward Garber (1946-)** is the second son born to **Earl Nicholas Garber (1911-1975)** and **Elizabeth Alvena Webb (1913-1981)** in St. Louis, Missouri. After high school, Robert started working at the local General Motors (GM) plant. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1965 with hopes of an overseas assignment. However, he was denied and remained stateside in Fort Carson, Colorado during the duration of his service until 1968. When his service was over, he moved from the city of St. Louis to the small town of Catawissa, Missouri to build a new home in a newly developed subdivision called Evergreen Lakes. He was one of the first to build in the small community. Robert also returned to working for GM. Life in a small town was limited, but the one thing that could be counted on was Friday/ Saturday Night Bowling League at the local bowling alley. It was here that he had a chance meeting with his future wife, **Janet Christine Blackwell (1951-)**.

Janet Christine Blackwell (1951-) is the second daughter born to **Earl Edward Blackwell (1911-1999)** and **Clara Cudd (1913-1996)** in Union, Missouri. Janet was a quiet and studious child with a heart of gold. After high school graduation, she went on a mission trip to Kent, Washington where she ministered to local Native Americans on their reservation. While there she met Daniel O'Brien whom she would wed and have a daughter with in 1971. The marriage barely lasted a year. Janet and her daughter moved in with Janet's parents in Union, Missouri. One weekend, a work friend suggested that Janet go with her to a local bowling alley to have a little fun. This is where she met her future husband, **Robert Edward Garber (1946-)**.

Robert and Janet had a brief courtship. They were wed on August 10, 1974 in St. Bridget Catholic Church in Pacific, Missouri. Soon after the wedding, Robert began the process to legally adopt Leesa as his own daughter. Leesa would not realize that Robert is her step-dad until many years later. While the family grew from three to five, the house in Evergreen Lakes remained the same. Robert continued working at GM for many years, eventually retiring from the company. Janet went to work with her sister as an accountant at a local insurance agency; she changed jobs to shortly after her sister's death in 2005 to work as an account manager for a local school district where she would eventually retire from. Robert and Janet still live in the same home after nearly 50 years of marriage.

Generation Four

Alala. Benjamin Frank Gabel (1900-1976)
Alalb. Mary Jane Mihlfeld (1901-1990)

A1a2a. Charles Lake Bumpus (1905-1963)

A1a2b. Irene M. H. Shorr (1908-1944)

A1b1a. Earl Nicholas Garber (1911-1975)

A1b1b. Elizabeth Alvena Webb (1913-1981)

A1b2a. Earl Edward Blackwell (1911-1999)

A1b2b. Clara Cudd (1913-1996)

Online searches for Alex's Generation Four entries returned little more than birth and death dates. Alex's mother, Leesa, was able to provide a brief family history for her parenteral and maternal grandparents.

Earl Nicholas Garber (1911-1975) and **Elizabeth (Betty) Alvena Webb (1913-1981)** were married in St. Louis, Missouri in 1942. Earl worked at the Falstaff Brewing Company for many years. Earl and Betty lived in Robert's new home before he married Janet; they moved in with their other son after Robert's marriage.

Earl Edward Blackwell (1911-1999) was born in Gerald, Missouri. He spent his youth working on his family farm. Earl joined the U.S. Army in 1942 and was sent overseas to England to work as a mechanic. **Clara Cudd (1913-1996)** was born in Middlesex, Surrey, England. During the war, she worked in an ammunitions plant. She also experienced the German air bombings directed at London and surrounding areas. Clara met Earl at a USO dance, and they married in Surrey North Eastern, Surrey, England on October 28, 1944. Clara arrived in the U.S. on March 2, 1946, aboard a 'war bride ship' in Ellis Island, NY. The delay was due to immigration restrictions in place because of the Immigration Act of 1924 that was partially resolved by the War Brides

Act approved by Congress in December 1945⁷. Earl and Clara returned to Earl's hometown where Clara remained a stay-at-home wife and mother. Earl started his own auction company, becoming a popular local auctioneer.

⁷ <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/war-brides-act-1945>