

Vernon A. Long

1919-2000

Vernon Arthur Long, born December 5, 1919 at Anselmo NE to Arthur and Mary (Lehmkuher) Long, departed this world March 19, 2000 at Sterling Regional Medical Center, Sterling, CO from kidney failure. When he was small, Vernon's family moved to Arnold, NE, where his dad farmed and he grew up. Vernon attended Yucca Valley Country School until he and his spotted mare were expelled from school for roping the outhouse, with the teacher in it, so they could have a longer recess, (His dad was on the school board and the vote was unanimous). So, he and the spotted mare had to ride 12 miles to town school. Mr. Hare was the principal and he was strict, so Vernon made it through the 8th grade.

He then went to work for his Uncle George Brown, who was foreman at Sunnyside Ranch at Tryon, NE. Uncle George was the one that taught Vernon to be a "cowboy." Aunt Millie (George's wife) is the one that protected Vernon from Uncle George when he pulled all his stunts and disasters.

He entered the Marines in 1942 at Des Moines, IA and took his basic training in San Diego, CA. He served his term in the South Pacific, Guadalcanal, Tinian, Saipan, Tulagi, Okinawa, Marianas Islands and Ryukyu Islands, but was called home because his mother was sick. His second turn overseas he served in DUKW, a "Duck Unit" that transported supplies and wounded to and from the ships off the islands. One day a general showed up at the "Duck Unit" to tell the men how good they were doing. Vernon was wearing his helmet, no shirt, cutoff Navy pants and thongs. The general looked at his attire and asked what he was. He said, "Marine, Sir," and gave what his unit was. The general told him to get in uniform. About that time the bombs started falling. Vernon's orders were to take his Duck to open sea if shelling started. So, he saluted and left the general standing on the beach. Later Vernon said, "I never thought to ask the general if he wanted to go along."

In 1946 Vernon met and married Edna Miller and to this union came John, Peggy, Jim and Norna. After trying his hand at farming south of Arnold, Vernon chose to be on horseback. They moved to Mack, CO and went to work for Harold Young who had B.L.M. in the Book Cliffs, mountains and desert country. Harold had two mules, called Romeo and Juliet that they packed on. Romeo was a mean mule, always trying to kick, bite and pull back. Some deer hunters were snowed in up on the mountain and when Vernon showed up with his mules, they asked him to pack their stuff down the mountain. So they packed their sleeping bags, etc. on the mules (the sleeping bags were the expensive down filled type). Part of the trail was just a narrow edge and Romeo decided he wasn't going to do it and pulled back. Well, Vernon had Romeo tied to Juliet's tail and Romeo was going to pull all of them off the cliff, so Vernon cut the lead and Romeo fell off the cliff and every time he hit the oak brush it would tear a sleeping bag and a puff of feathers would fly. Well, Vernon figured that that was the end of Romeo, mounted up and rode off, to the hunters' total disgust because they wanted their stuff or what was left of it. Vernon told them they would have come back up the gully from the bottom. When they got to the bottom, there was Romeo standing at the gate, sleeping bags, pack saddle, etc. hanging in shreds and hardly a scratch on him. The hunters were in a snit because there was nothing left of the stuff and Vernon was disappointed because Romeo lived.

In 1958, they moved back to Arnold and went to work for Bud and Sue Beshaler. He worked for Bud sixteen years. Every Christmas he went to their house and watched the family open their presents. There were eight of them and it was always a wreck, but Vernon liked wrecks and loved the kids.

Vernon was an avid coyote and coon hunter and had dogs. He taught his mare, Candy, to jump fences when he was hunting so he didn't have to open gates. (Vernon hated opening gates). Of course, keeping Candy home after that was impossible. Along with the horses, the coon dogs were his pride and joy. Rag, Rowdy and Blue were his best dogs and night champions. He'd work all day and hunt coon all night. At one time, between coyote hounds and coon dogs, they had 26 puppies running around. Anybody could show up any time and be welcome to go coon hunting.

Horses and dogs were wonderful, but the love of his life was the B.Y.F. Vernon and Verna Forrester were the leaders for the youth fellowship at First Baptist Church. That's where all the kids came in. They had the best parties in town! Sleigh riding, ice skating, roller skating, hayrack rides, swimming, (at the pool or the gravel pit) and volleyball in the church basement every Saturday night. Vernon and Verna worked very hard to make it fun so all the kids knew you could have fun without drinking or getting in trouble. Devotions and prayer were always a part. Vernon said he felt like he learned more from the kids than he ever taught them. He did his best to help all the kids he could. He loved them all.

Vernon and Jean went to work for Fort Rock at Seligman, AZ. The ranch had old bucking stock for their saddle horses. The guys working there told Vernon he could have 'Old Moose' for one of his horses. Vernon knew they probably thought that being from NE he couldn't ride a bucking horse and being the new guy, they gave him the worst horse. The horse barn was built on a flat rock and horse was big enough to pull a plow and he really didn't know whether he could ride him far enough to get to the edge of the rock if Moose got his head. So, not being his 'first rodeo', he stuck his toe in the stirrup and let it slip. The old horse blew up and bucked off. After Moose quit bucking, Vernon caught him at the edge of the rock, stepped on the old horse and rode off. The guys in the barn peeking out the door were disappointed, but Vernon sure wasn't.

From there they went to Meeker, CO and worked the summer on the Cross L (+L) outfit in a camp. After the camp job was over, we were in town washing clothes. There was a lady there with piles and piles of jeans. Vernon asked her how many kids she had and they got to talking and he said he was looking for a job. The next morning he went to talk to her husband about a job and came back that afternoon with a company pickup and we moved to Piance Creek, southwest of Meeker for Bus and Mary Norrel. Vernon did all the riding for the ranch. We moved six times a year to different cow camps.

From there we went to a cattle pool east of Meeker, CO working for Jack Russel and Tom Pierce. They had a beaver pond right beside the cabin. Those two older beaver used to like making the cabin part of the dam. They would run water down the side of the cabin and on down the road. Vernon used to chop a hole in the dam every day so they had something to do besides make the cabin part of their dam.

In 1976 Vernon and Jean (Andre) were married. To this union came Tabatha. Vernon worked six months in Kansas at the Keller Feedlot. But, when the grass on the mountains started turning green they went back to the cattle pool in Meeker. There was a forest fire east of the pool with a big mushroom cloud of smoke. Vernon said it looked like it was right on top of the cabin so he figured 'momma must of just burnt the bread again.'

They also found out Tabatha had a heart murmur and had to have surgery so it was time to move back to civilization. In December 1977 they moved back to NE. When Vernon applied for a job at Grace Land & Cattle, they asked him if he was mechanical. He replied, "I know how to put gas in the pickup and drive it. What I do best is astraddle a horse and I don't put up hay or build fence. If you have a job like that I sure need one." They hired him anyway.

Vernon was full of fun and never met a stranger. It didn't take long for him to be the 'favorite' in the neighborhood. There was regular card parties at Rackett Hall and it was soon known by all that Vernon could bid on anything (especially the three) and make it. Everyone in the neighborhood was always glad that he was always first one to the brandings so everybody could park in front of him because he never looked behind him when he backed up. They got a new Chevy pickup - the first and only new pickup they ever had. Vernon had the caker on the old company pickup and just backed up and smashed in the side of the box of the new pickup. Tabatha was standing in the seat beside him and said "should we just run away from home and not tell momma?"

Once we had been to a horse sale and had just got the horses unloaded and put in the corral. Merlyn flew over about that time and got on the radio and asked Vernon "how many horses you got down there?" Vernon got on the radio and asked back, "Do you want me to count the ones in the barn, too?"

Calving was his favorite time of year. Also, the time when we had the most wrecks. He was good at what he did whether it was with animals or people. He had a way of making you feel special and good about yourself. We all have stories to remember and tell.

Vernon loved life and lived it to the fullest. There are so many people that were very important in his life, but there are too many 'people stories' to tell. He loved telling his stories and would have liked to have me relate them all, but no one has that many days to spare.

Vernon was a 'walking disaster' but the 'funniest' and 'most fun' disaster you could ever know. He loved to laugh and we will all miss his laughter.

Vernon leaves to mourn; wife, Jean Long of Oshkosh, NE; sister, Laura Chesley of Bristol, SD, son, John Long, Oshkosh, NE; daughter, Peggy (Dennis) Beatty, Arnold, NE; son, Jim (Pam) Long of Arnold, NE; daughter Norna (Frank) Scott of Arnold, NE; daughter, Tabatha Long of Mitchell, NE; 10 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren; also many other family members and friends.

Services were held March 24, 2000 at 10:30 a.m. at the First Baptist Church in Arnold.

The Arnold Sentinal Thursday, March 30, 2000