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Redmond History Repeating Itself

BY RONNI WILDE — CBN REPORTER ON NOVEMBER 14, 2019 BUSINESS & INDUSTRY, E-HEADLINES

(L-R Bruce Barrett and Pete Rencher | Photo By Ronni Wilde, Pete Rencher, Bruce Barrett | Photos Courtesy of Bruce Barrett)

Back in the mid-1960s, two adolescent boys moved to Redmond with their families and met in their sixth-grade homeroom class. When they became friends, little did they know that their lives would become intertwined for decades to come, and that history would repeat itself right within their own families.

“My family moved here in 1965. My dad was in the lumber business in Northern California, but his parents lived here on a ranch. We came to Central Oregon because it was the only place my folks could afford a home,” said Bruce Barrett, a Realtor with Windermere Real Estate’s commercial division in Redmond. Barrett’s grandparents owned a 75-acre farm at the time — part of which is now Tony’s Hay Depot — where they raised quarter horses, and Barrett said his grandfather was renown for his horses.

Pete Rencher, also with Windermere Commercial in Redmond, moved here with his family in 1964 when he was ten years old. They had purchased a small ranch northeast of Redmond, where they

raised cows and horses. Both boys were raised around farm animals in what was then the very small and rural Redmond, an area with only about 3,000 residents.

The boys started sixth grade at the old John Tuck building and met each other in homeroom class.

“Pete was friendly to me, and we’ve been best friends ever since,” said Barrett. The boys continued to grow up and attend school together, and meanwhile, their fathers became acquainted in the late 1960s when they both moved into small offices in a building located at 538 SW Highland Avenue. Barrett’s father, Gerold, had gone into the insurance industry, and Rencher’s dad, Frank, owned a company called Timbersteel, which built steel buildings. Though in different lines of work, their offices were next to each other and they got to know one another.

“Our lot in life was the same,” said Barrett. “Our dads both came here with the idea to start a business in a small town, and their lives crossed when they worked in the building together. They became friends and went to the Redmond Bus Depot restaurant together for lunch almost every day. They both prospered and did well, were community-minded and raised good families.” Barrett’s father ultimately became the mayor of Redmond, serving in that capacity from 1969 through 1973. Although Rencher’s father passed away five years ago, Barrett’s dad celebrated his 100th birthday last May. “The two of them cut a wide swath together,” said Rencher. “They made a name for themselves.”

As their fathers enjoyed each other’s friendship and became leaders in Redmond, their sons did too, finishing out school together at Redmond High. The boys served side by side as leaders at the school, with Barrett becoming student body president and Rencher becoming senior class president in 1972. After graduating high school, they both went off to different colleges, but returned to their hometown upon completing their studies.

Back in Redmond, Barret pursued a career in business consulting, and Rencher worked in commission sales, joining Windermere about 20 years ago. “Seven years ago, I talked Bruce into joining me here. How often do you get to work with your best friend 50 years after high school?” asked Rencher with an obvious affection for his pal.

After such a long-term camaraderie, the two men enjoy a jovial competitiveness with each other.

“Pete is tall, but I was taller than him in sixth grade,” Barrett said with a laugh. Grandchildren are another source of friendly competition between the men: “Unlike Bruce, I have six grandkids,” Rencher said, poking fun at his buddy.

As Barrett’s and Rencher’s friendship flourished, so did their work. Windermere Real Estate enjoyed steady growth over the years, and the time came that the company needed to expand its facilities.

With Redmond offices located at the corner of Sixth Street and Highland Avenue, the building directly across the street came onto the market, so Windermere purchased it.

The building address — 538 SW Highland Avenue — is the very same building where Barrett’s and Rencher’s fathers had met and become friends in the ‘60s. Windermere moved part of its staff into the building in mid-October, and, knowing the history of their fathers, there was no question that Bruce and Pete would be among the realtors to move across the street. Now, their offices are located in the exact same corner of the building where their fathers sat 50 years ago.

Though the current version of 538 SW Highland Avenue is quite different than the former version that their dads enjoyed all those many years ago, the building is a homey suite of offices with a small living room accented by a stone fireplace next to the entry. It was remodeled and a second story was added in 1994, and, most recently, it had served as the Redmond John L. Scott Real Estate offices.

“We grew out of our building, so we needed additional space,” said Julie Fahlgren, managing principal broker of Windermere in Redmond. “This building made sense because it was across the street.”

Fahlgren said she had many agents on board waiting for office space, and there was need for additional conference space too. The new building has two conference rooms. “We are growing, and we need to accommodate the growth. A lot of agents are virtual, but Windermere agents tend not to be. We like to have a place to meet clients and sit down together to conduct business.”

Fahlgren said that a lot of thought was put into who would stay in the existing building and who would move across the street. “We wanted to split the energy between the two,” she said. “We wanted top producers in both offices. When we heard about the history with Pete and Bruce, it definitely made sense to put the two of them in there. We just think it’s really special. We are still a small town, still wholesome, and these things really do happen,” she said. “I’m sure they were in this building as children visiting their dads. It’s adorable.”

“All these years have gone by, and this office is probably where I’ll end my sales career,” said Rencher. We are reaching that age where we are thinking about what to do next.” Though the two best friends get to see each other every day at the office — just like their fathers did — Rencher laments that they don’t get to spend a lot of time together outside of work because of their busy schedules. “Bruce won’t say it, but he’s really a full-time caregiver for his dad,” he said. “Bruce cares for his dad mornings, nights and weekends, but when we retire, we’ll catch small-mouthed bass out of the John Day River together.”

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