

# **JOURNEY TO SUNSHINE MOUNTAIN**

*By Peter Pillsbury Sr.  
With reflections by Cynthia Pillsbury*

## **Journey to Sunshine Mountain**

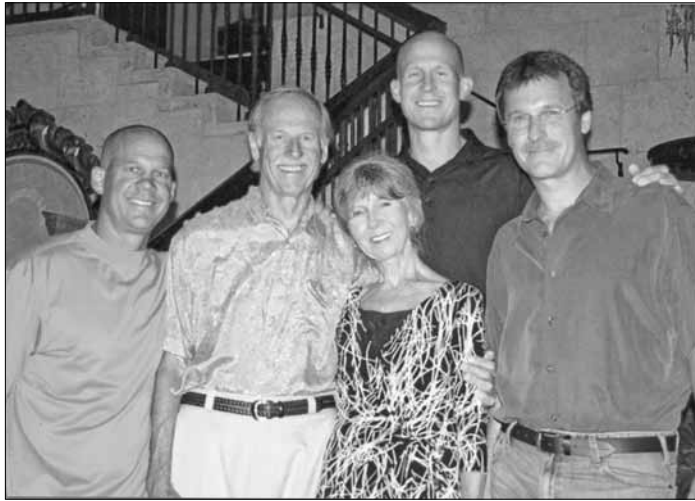
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Cover design by Whitney Pillsbury

Photos and documents from the Pillsbury Family Archives.



This book is dedicated to our sons who learned during our family journey that life is full of possibilities.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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I am especially grateful to my family for encouragement during the years of writing this memoir. They likely wondered whether I would ever finish it. Cindy's help recalling the details of events, her editing acumen and support have been invaluable. Her reflections interspersed throughout the book greatly add to its story. Thanks to our friend, Jim Ames, who did the first draft editing and critique, to Yvonne Scroggs for her responses to the manuscript and to Alicia Robertson of Robertson Publishing for her encouragement and putting it all together. My nephew, Whitney Pillsbury, was the creator of the cover.



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## PROLOGUE

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It is my intention that this writing will add unique insights into the time period known as the sixties. I have consciously endeavored to create more than a family chronicle.

The era between 1963 through 1975 was a time of change and social upheaval rooted in post World War II and the Cold War 1950s. Many of the social activists, anti-war crusaders and counterculture hippies of the sixties grew up in the fifties in tightly knit, lily white communities well insulated from people of color and poverty. They went to church on Sunday, enjoyed family vacations, did not question authority, held conservative, Neo-Victorian values about sex and often equated liberalism with communism. Our nation, so it went in the fifties, was blessed by God and could do little wrong. The possibility of nuclear annihilation was always present and was the major issue for the time. It was a world that hid its deep social problems of poverty and racism, where divorce was uncommon, where sex was seldom mentioned and rarely flaunted, and “damn” was a cuss word. It was for those of us who lived in it an isolated, secure, unrealistic and almost antiseptic environment.

As we came of age at the dawn of the sixties, a social and political storm was brewing—a storm that would blow the cover off the tightly contained 1950s. The storm hit with a fury: The Civil Rights Movement, a new focus on poverty, the struggle for a decent life in the inner cities, an unpopular war in a distant land called Vietnam, the questioning of religious beliefs, the Free Speech Movement on the Berkeley campus, and a sexual revolution. Under such an onslaught, the values and life styles of the fifties quickly eroded for many of the young who were coming of age. The specter of nuclear war that had hovered over the fifties took a back seat to issues and crises in our own back yards. Confronted by the growing storm, many of us became disillusioned with the foundations of our upbringing. Our perceptions changed

so that we began asking questions we'd never heard asked, much less thought about: questions about prejudice, poverty, white privilege and religious doctrine. We noticed things wrong with our country – things that had not been talked about in our well insulated communities. Authority and middle class values were questioned and the hypocrisy of our nation laid bare.

The change was palpable in everything from dress to religion. The grey flannel suit gave way to tie dye; mainline religion was shaken by questions about the existence of God; authority was under siege in Berkeley and on campuses across the country. For many young people “rebel” became a mark of pride. Unlike the teenage *Rebel Without a Cause* depicted by James Dean in a popular movie of the fifties, most of the young rebels sought a cause for a nobler culture, peace, racial and economic justice or simply for love. Thus, the sixties were given birth and they carried on in youthful rebelliousness, and sometimes naive exuberance.

One might say that the young have always rebelled, and this is true. However, this rebellion was different. It was more visceral, more holistic and widespread, and more deeply rooted than other social rebellions in contemporary history. It affected superficial and/or transitory norms like dress and hair styles, alienation from the world of parents, and sexual repression. Yet it also bore deeply into issues of racial and social injustice, peace, the growing divide between rich and poor, and an overblown fear of communists. As a result, our society would deeply and dynamically experience cultural, social, racial, and political change.

By the late sixties and early seventies, young people were becoming disillusioned. They had seen too much violence and killing on our campuses and streets and in Vietnam. They had witnessed the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Tired of the extremism and political correctness that had taken over much of the left, which was being called “the movement,” these young people were tired of listening to the meaningless “wannabe revolutionary” debates about Trotsky or Lenin or the wisdom of Mao. Many of the young rebels sought a new life that embraced love, peace, drugs, simplicity, spirituality, and

nature. They traversed the country, especially during the summer, hitchhiking or traveling in old vans and hand built campers. They congregated in places like Vermont, Colorado, New Mexico and California to set up communes, or they hung out together in urban areas or under rural skies. These were days of life and love!

Most of the travelers and seekers were young and single. We were a tightly knit family, and we too got caught up in one of these summers—the summer of 1971. After selling our Detroit house and most of the belongings that we had accumulated during eleven years of marriage, our family of five set out on a journey of unknown destination and duration.

We had tried in the early days of our marriage to live like young married people had in the fifties, but there was a restlessness, a desire for adventure, and a longing for a deeper meaning to life. We had become disillusioned with our life as social activists in the inner-city of Detroit. We felt trapped in a cycle of social negativity and empty, impersonal political rhetoric. We sought to create a new culture for ourselves, one that countered the negativity of a radical political agenda, the materialism and militarism of our society, of sexism and racism. Our consciousness was moving from changing the world to fit our beliefs to a thought given voice by Socrates: “If one seeks to change the world, he must begin by changing himself.” We were embarking on a journey of self-discovery. We were seeking spiritual and social clarification and a community that would be affirming to our new awareness.

The story you are about to read is our story—in its own way it is a uniquely American story; it epitomizes a turbulent time in our nation’s history. This is not a story that represents all myriad aspects of the colorful sixties and seventies. It is a slice of that history experienced by a young family that rode the crest of its wave of rebellion, change and possibility. It is an attempt to share, preserve, and bring into focus a vibrant snapshot of our adventurous family and its journey during those times.



## CHAPTER ONE

### STRANDED

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It was several days before Christmas, 1971. We were driving in our outlandish house on wheels, a fifties vintage school bus converted into a double-deck, colorful hippie wagon. We were headed to California, now late in the afternoon; we had driven on the interstate around Salt Lake City, Utah and had just penetrated the desolate wasteland surrounding the Great Salt Lake Desert where sand and sky meet on a distant horizon. Sand was everywhere – blown across the road and piled in drifts.

Just as it was for the early pioneers, a first view of this barren, forbidding, endless landscape gives the traveler about to enter a sense of wonder and apprehension. We had prepped our boys ages eight, ten and three about the important and often devastating role this desert had played in the lives of the early settlers heading to California; but we assured them that, given our “modern” vehicle, we would make it across just fine.

We eagerly looked across the sea of sand, the far off horizon faintly visible in the fading light of day; through the windows we felt the dancing rays of heat that arose from the warm ground. It was without warning that a loud grinding sound and smoke came from the right front wheel! The bus was becoming uncontrollable, and the only place for us to go was the narrow shoulder of the highway.

After bringing the big rig to a stop, I jumped out to examine the damage. The lug nuts had completely sheared off the right front wheel! I stared in disbelief. The tire, still smoking, was separated from the hub and wedged under the fender. It didn't take long for my pragmatic nature to kick in, and I started to think about what to do. I knew I had tools to dislodge the tire and get the drum off. I pondered, “What will I do when I get it off?”

I had no idea why this had happened, but I did notice that the tire I was about to remove, nearly new when we started the journey, was now bald and in some spots had thread showing. I glanced over at the other front tire and could see that it too was bald. I wondered how we would get ourselves out of this situation in such a desolate environment. After all, hadn't the Great Salt Desert been the downfall of many a westward pioneer? This was not a good place for us to break down! We were on our own, but so had it been for the pioneers. Perhaps in the same spot their oxen might have died or a wagon broken down.

Parked by the side of Interstate 80 on the edge of the desert, where the wind of each passing big rig rocked us from side to side, we gradually figured out what we would do. The wheel and drum had to come off and would need repair and new lugs. The tire, although in sad shape, still held air. After a struggle, I got the wheel and drum off. Jacking up this traveling monstrosity with a small jack was no easy task. It was obvious that, somehow, I would need to get to Salt Lake City for help, about ninety miles back. The plan was that in the morning I would hitchhike with the drum back to Salt Lake City and get it repaired. We would then limp across the desert on the threadbare tires and find a way to replace them on the other side.

With a plan in mind, we settled down for the evening, watched a magnificent sunset, had a good dinner, played games, read stories and thought again about the early pioneers. The three boys took all this in stride. They enjoyed playing in the sand piled by the roadside. They knew we had a mechanical problem, but life in the bus went on as usual. The constant roar of the big rigs kept us company throughout the night. This was our westward trek, our history, and we would make it to our destination.

We were able to flow with this formidable breakdown, because in the life style we were living, time was not a critical issue. This view of time was a factor in the way we approached problems, even big ones like the situation we were in. There was little stress. We were confident that we would get the problem resolved even though it might take a while. To us, no problem, including this

one, was insurmountable. We had our “home” right there with us along with plenty of provisions. We were about as self-contained and self-sufficient as you can be while traveling. However, today, encountering a similar situation would be quite different. Besides calling road service on my cell phone, I would be stressed over the interruption of my schedule. However, on the bus the word “schedule” was not in our vocabulary. We were wanderers through geography and time, moving toward discoveries about ourselves and the world. We had dreams of land, community, open space, clean air, and spiritual growth.

Each day was more or less lived on its own, as the only day. Time was not important to us because we were not beholden to or attached to anyone else nor was anyone expecting us to be somewhere at a specific time. In fact, our parents and other extended family members did not even know where we were. What was important was what was happening there on the edge of the Salt Lake Desert; it was for us not a disaster but an event in our life. We were, so to speak, unencumbered by the future or by the past. Life was what was, and we would embrace it and enjoy it. We now call this living in the moment and see it as a spiritual virtue related to consciousness.

Our approach to time when we got stranded became clearer to me years later when I heard a Buddhist scholar describe the three states of being. One state is the ego which is striving, trying to achieve. Another state is the true self that lives in harmony with the moment, totally aware of what is but does not push against it. The ultimate state of being, true consciousness, is a unity of the ego and true self where one is completely aware of what is and at one with it while also doing what is necessary to live successfully in the world. I’d like to think that was our state of mind beside the road at the edge of the Great Salt Desert when we did not panic, become angry or despair; we embraced the situation, rather than try to push against it; we accepted the consequences of our behavior, lived in the moment, took in a magnificent sunset and enjoyed a peaceful evening with our family. At the same time, we came up with a practical self-sufficient plan to resolve the problem.

Yes, we were stranded and had a difficult problem to resolve in one of the most desolate areas of our country, and we were flowing with the situation. But you might be wondering, how did we get into such a predicament in the first place? Why were we living and traveling in an old converted school bus painted bright yellow and blue? Were we destitute laborers crossing the country in search of work? Were we irresponsible wanderers? Were we just nuts, or was there purpose to our travel? The answers to these questions will unfold throughout the unique story I am about to tell you.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EARLY YEARS

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Our journey began a long way in time and geography from our breakdown near the Great Salt Desert. Cindy and I met in the summer of 1958 on a blind date in Dallas, Texas. We were both twenty years old. I had completed my second year at North Texas State University in Denton and was living in Dallas for the summer, and she, seeking adventure, had left her family in north Georgia and had come to Dallas to become a Braniff airline hostess. The blind date was arranged by my best friend's girl friend, also in the hostess training class. After considering several prospective girls as she got to know her classmates, she decided Cindy was the best match for me.

On a warm summer evening, my best friend and I went to the Loma Alta Hotel to pick up our dates. The girls were staying at the hotel during their training in preparation to work for Braniff Airways. While we were sitting in the lobby waiting for them, two young women with envelopes to be mailed walked across the floor to the hotel desk. My friend said to me, "I think the one on the right is your date." My eyes focused on a beautiful young woman dressed in a white blouse and plaid peddle-pusher pants. The two women took care of their mail and disappeared back into the hotel. A short time later my friend's date appeared with the girl in the white blouse and plaid pants whom we had picked out a few minutes earlier. We were introduced and ready to set out on our blind date. This was to be a casual, get-to-know-you first date event. We didn't have a plan about what to do for the evening, but after the awkward few minutes of introductions, we agreed that miniature golf would be fun, even though none of us were big miniature golf players.

Like many young people, we were looking for something to fill time while we were together. We decided on miniature golf.

During a fun-filled game and a chance to become acquainted, we relaxed and had a great time together. Afterward, and on a lark, we decided to go for a nighttime tour of Mrs. Baird's Bread Company near the Central Expressway. Our friend's family owned the bread company. We took the tour never disclosing that we were accompanied by the owner's daughter. We learned about the bread baking process from start to finish and tasted fluffy white bread still hot from the oven. Although an unusual first date, it was fun and memorable. I was ready to take Cindy out on a real date with just the two of us!

As I reflect back on this blind date of over fifty years ago, I am captured by how a single event can change the trajectory of our lives. This encounter, which then appeared to be an ordinary blind date and a time to have fun, changed both our lives. Prior to this chance meeting, Cindy was launching a career and new adventure in her life, and I was looking toward finishing college and attending theological seminary. But, on that warm, humid night in Dallas, unbeknownst to each of us, our lives were being altered forever. We were destined, from that fortuitous meeting, by the mysterious energy of the universe, to share our lives together. We fell in love, drawn together by a dynamic chemistry that included a shared desire for adventure.

Within a year after meeting, we were married on May 14, 1959, and, from the beginning, our spirit of adventure set us apart from other couples we knew, and the seeds of our discontent with the values and politics of our parents and the communities we grew up in were beginning to germinate. However, at the time, our sights were set on traditional goals of career and family. Not in our wildest moments of fantasy would we have been able to imagine ourselves with three young children living like gypsies in a converted school bus.

After we were married, Cindy joined me at North Texas State University as a fulltime student. The college semester before we were married had been an academic disaster for me; I nearly flunked out and was placed on scholastic probation. My interests were not focused on academia, but rather on courting Cindy who



was working and living in Dallas fifty miles away from the college campus.

During this time of being students together, we enjoyed an idyllic year of intellectual growth and life on a college campus. My grades jumped from D's to straight A's, and I was taking an unusually large and challenging number of units. I became enthralled by the study of history. The rapid rise in my grades roused notice in the Dean's office. I was called in and questioned about my grade changes: "How could you be a D student and on probation one semester and then with hard classes and a larger than normal class load be getting straight A's the next semester?" It appeared that he thought I had been cheating, so I explained that I had been courting a wonderful woman, I was now married, and inspired to succeed. My explanation was accepted.

The A's became important to me and made me realize that I could be an excellent student. However, in reality what was more important were the changes in my thinking, or to put it another way, my growing ability to think and question. A strong dose of revisionist history and the writings of William Appleman Williams on American diplomacy were shattering many of the historical myths I had grown up with, particularly the idea that everything our country did and had done was based on the highest morals and ethics. I was moving sharply left from the solid, simple Republican values of my parents, and it felt liberating and

as if new worlds were opening up for me. So it was with this new found intellectual questioning that I graduated from college.

Around the time I graduated in the spring of 1960, we learned that Cindy was pregnant. Our lives were changing and the idyllic year of study and intellectual growth now seemed like ancient history. We were going to be parents and were moving on to a new place and a new experience. I had been accepted into Princeton Theological Seminary to study for the ministry. In the late summer of 1960, we packed our belongings into a U-haul trailer and headed to Princeton, New Jersey.

In Princeton we settled into the upstairs apartment of a salt box house built in the late 1700s or early 1800s. It was located south of the river just outside town and was close enough to campus for me to ride a bicycle. The owners, themselves, had made the upstairs of the house into an apartment. Their quarters on the first floor and our upstairs apartment shared a common front door, so there was not much privacy.

The landlords were obviously proud of what they had done to create the upstairs apartment which brought them income to support their retirement. However, they tended to get a bit carried away with their feeling of pride and ownership. One day we returned from an outing to find them in our apartment with people we did not know, but obviously their friends, showing it off to them. Cindy was taken aback by this invasion of our privacy and afterward did not feel comfortable living there.

The next year our living arrangement improved; we moved to seminary housing, another upstairs apartment at 20 Dickinson Street, between the seminary and the university. This was a perfect location, and our privacy was never invaded! Our new apartment had only one bedroom, though it was large, and a postage stamp sized kitchen.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SEEDS OF DISCONTENT

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I went to Princeton Seminary because of the career path I had chosen, and what I believed to be my calling, the Presbyterian ministry. It puzzles me how I chose this path. I had not had a personal religious conversion nor had I any special interest in spirituality. I think the path began during my college years when my parents became involved in starting a new Presbyterian Church in our Dallas neighborhood. Since I came home most weekends from college, I got caught up in the church and began seeing myself in the role of a church leader and of fulfilling the command of the Gospels to spread love. I began contemplating the idea of the ministry as a meaningful profession. In retrospect I realize that my decision lacked depth of understanding and passion for the traditional ministry of the church.



Miller Chapel at Princeton

However, my contemplation became a goal, so I applied to Princeton Seminary and was accepted. The seminary was founded in 1812 on the campus of the then Princeton College, and it has a rich and formidable history in American Presbyterianism. We loved being in Princeton where early U.S. history was palpable, and in the fall nature painted the town with her finest palette of colors. Our minds were stimulated by the intellectual discourse in such an esteemed climate of learning. It was in this beautiful, historic and intellectual setting

that the seeds of my discontent with traditional social values and religious doctrine began to grow.

The seminary had a daily chapel service where attendance, although not mandatory, was expected. It was held in the picturesque and historic Miller Chapel. Inside, the hymns were sung resoundingly by the majority male voices and echoed with so much power and beauty that they could send a chill up the spine of a nonbeliever. Yet, to me, this service seemed old and worn and was not relevant to my thinking. It was the archetype of staid Presbyterian worship. At each service we dutifully recited the Apostles' Creed:

*"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."*

Right from the beginning of my seminary career, I found myself questioning the meaning of these words and discovered they had little relevance for me. Yet, they represented the core of faith. I had no idea about a Holy Ghost; my idea of communion was a symbolic celebration based on a myth, and there was no space in my rational mind for heaven, hell and resurrection. Here I was in the midst of an institution dedicated to the continuation of Presbyterian doctrine while questioning nearly all that it stood for! Furthermore, unlike many of my classmates, I had not had a conversion experience that led me to a "personal" relationship with Christ. Despite these shortcomings, strangely, I never questioned the validity of my presence in the seminary, perhaps because it gave me a platform to express my growing rebelliousness.

My rebellion was drawing me to a social expression of Christianity as opposed to that expressed in the esoteric doctrine of the church. I was most interested in following the example of Christ which I understood meant to be engaged in social transformation—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, loving the outcast and challenging the misuse of power. This rebellion was not easy; I fought my social transformation leaning or, at least, tried to reconcile it with the doctrine of the church. I continued to struggle with the absence in my life of the Christian concept of a “conversion experience” and of a personal relationship with Christ. I wanted to have these experiences, but I never had them.

It was, however, the social transformation message of the gospels that fueled my passion, and I found myself drawn to radical, social views of theology and questioning the non-rational, faith based doctrine of the church. The Christianity that I was drawn to was neither what the seminary taught nor what devout Presbyterians believed. This was the beginning of a critical dilemma.

Given my less than orthodox views, it is not surprising that the traditional ways of worship lost significance for me. I, along with a small group of likeminded seminarians, created an alternative chapel service. This service was informal and focused on theology in relation to social issues rather than church doctrine and tradition. Our daily reflections that went on within earshot of the hymns resounding from Miller Chapel focused on the meaning for each of us to live in the world as witnesses to God’s love. Of course, these counter-chapel efforts were criticized by some students, but they were generally ignored by the administration.

While both my theology and social awareness were changing, so too was our family. During our first winter in Princeton, on a cold, snowy night, January 25, 1961, Peter Jr. was born. Cindy took time off from work at Educational Testing Service to bond with our new son and recover from his birth. We were parents, with only a partial awareness of what this new responsibility meant, and we were learning as we went along.

*Cynthia's Reflections*

*Six weeks after Peter was born, I returned to work at Educational Testing Service, but I couldn't wait to pick him up each afternoon and take him home for his celebratory bath in the canvas baby swing tub which he loved. He was always a happy child, and I regretted having to leave him while I worked.*

*I resigned from E.T.S. before we went to Long Island for the summer. There I had long mornings with Peter when I pushed his stroller on a country road all the way to the bay beach in the clean air and warm sun. We had joyful times together.*

*Upon returning to Princeton, I took a job with the Westminster Foundation, a job that demanded much less of my time away from home. I could work afternoons while Pete watched the baby as he studied— a much better arrangement!*

The changes in our life continued. Twenty months later on a sunny, cold, Princeton day, November 6, 1962, David was born! It was a birth that had been accompanied by much drama. Just about the time of David's impending birth, American spy planes flying over Cuba uncovered evidence of Russian missiles being set up. Our government aggressively demanded the removal of the missiles. This confrontation escalated into the major crisis of what had been called the Cold War between the U.S. and Russia and brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Threats were made from both sides. At the time, President Kennedy sternly warned the Soviets that they must remove the weapons or we would destroy them. Neither side appeared ready to back down.

We, but especially Cindy, about to deliver a baby, were frightened. The threat of nuclear war, so imminent in the fifties, had been almost erased from our thoughts. Now such a war seemed inevitable and that in itself was bad enough. However, our situation was even more troubling because of the impending birth of our baby. It was suggested that people take precautions to protect themselves. It felt like the world had gone crazy and all that was near and dear to us was perilously hanging from a cliff ready at

any moment to fall into oblivion. It is hard to fathom just how close we came to annihilation.

We knew it was critical for us to be prepared. The old house we were living in had a dirt floor basement accessible through an outside hatch door; it was musty and filled with cobwebs. We carried blankets, food and supplies into this dingy basement to help in the delivery of our baby who would be born within days. It was our makeshift air raid shelter ready for us to occupy at the first warning of attack. The tension grew, and we increasingly believed that the nuclear war we had feared so much as kids was upon us. I can remember how much relief we felt when it was announced that Russia was removing the missiles! Nuclear destruction had been averted at the very last moment, and Cindy would be able to deliver in the hospital!

*Cynthia's Reflections  
Preparing to give birth*

*Our soon-to-be-delivered baby was my top priority. Anticipating the event also gave me a sense of calm in the midst of chaos and forced both Pete and me to take one step at a time. We cleaned the cobwebs and swept the earthen floor, filled jugs with water, gathered bedding, towels and some clothes. Next we would bring food.*

*Preparation for this potential emergency was necessary, but I was not overwrought with fear. Once we had settled on where our alternate birth place would be and set about getting the necessary supplies in place, we had a sense of being in control of the situation. I was not oblivious to the danger at hand, but the magnitude of delivering our child held paramount importance. I had not yet even considered a plan for our lives together, during possible emergency circumstances, with both an infant and a toddler. Fortunately, a plan was not needed because we had good news that the threat had been averted. What a relief!*

*A few days after this good news, my mother arrived from Georgia to help care for our family during the birth of David,*

*another strong, healthy boy. He was born on a blustery, sunny afternoon November 6, 1962 at Princeton Hospital the day after Mother came. We were now a family of four!*

The changes in our life as a family brought about new challenges. With two toddlers, Cindy had her hands full. Our family had doubled in number, and we were learning how to be parents! We partitioned our bedroom to make space for our baby boys. I helped supplement our income, which had shrunk dramatically when Cindy left ETS, by working holidays and weekends at the Wine and Game Shop on Nassau Street. Working in a liquor store was frowned upon by some of my more conservative classmates. They likely saw this as another one of my unorthodox behaviors inconsistent with their beliefs about what a divinity student should be like.

We had wonderful friends and social life while in Princeton. Cindy found several spouses of my classmates who had young children and spent time with them. We enjoyed the beauty of Princeton in the winter when it was blanketed in white. Near enough to visit my parents, who now lived in Bernardsville, New Jersey, we were happy to see them from time to time. However, our lives were very busy with school, work and keeping up with two little boys.

In my final year at seminary a life-transforming opportunity arose. About the time of David's birth, I heard about the All Africa Christian Youth Assembly to be held in Nairobi, Kenya during the upcoming Christmas, 1962 break. I had been elected president of the student body of the seminary (surprisingly, because I had consistently questioned the status quo), and I thought it would be important for the seminary to send a student representative to the Assembly in Nairobi, so I made an appointment with the seminary president, James I. McCord. "Jas I," as we students called him, was a large man in girth, intellect and heart. I told him what I knew about the assembly and asked for his help in sending a student. He inquired about whom I had in mind sending. I threw out a couple of names. He pondered for a moment and then said,

“Why don’t you go?” I had no thought of going myself. I had a wife and two young children. “I want you to go,” he said, as if he was finalizing a deal. How could I refuse? This was “Jas I”, one of the pillars of American Presbyterianism, telling me what he wanted me to do.

I went home filled with pride because of the president’s confidence in me but unsure about traveling half way around the world—especially at Christmas time and being away from my family. However, it didn’t take much discussion before Cindy and I were in agreement that I should do it.

After telling “Jas I” that I would go, he made a few telephone calls to the Presbyterian Mission Office in New York City; details were quickly resolved (necessarily, because it was already late fall). I soon had plane tickets, passport, and necessary shots. The Mission Office people got behind the trip and paid for everything.

I was ready to embark on the journey of a life-time. Very early in the morning after Christmas day, 1962, I took my well packed suitcase, kissed Cindy and the boys goodbye, and embarked on the biggest adventure of my life. I was headed for Africa! The train from Princeton Junction to New York City was deserted and cold, and, as the train wheels clicked and clacked over the track, I felt alone and a bit scared by the unknowns that were before me. I made it through Grand Central Station and to La Guardia.

The first leg of the journey would take me to London for a brief overnight stop. When I got to the hotel in London, it was the waning hours of Boxing Day and the pub was still lively. Due to jet lag and my excitement I could not sleep, so I went out to see London. At this time of the early morning, the streets were quiet and covered with snow that glistened from the street lights. Somehow, I found my way to the Parliament buildings and Big Ben. I stood looking in awe at this sight. The buildings, roofs covered with snow, and Big Ben were all lighted up. I was in London!

The next day, before catching an evening flight to Nairobi, I did my own walking tour of London. I couldn’t afford a professional tour, so I sloshed around in the melting snow and saw as many of the sights as I could in a day. I had not slept for twenty-

four hours but my adrenaline was flowing, and I did not want to miss anything. However, being on foot and using the underground, I was quite limited in what I got to see.

The flight from London to Nairobi was on a small (compared to the inter-continental flights of today) BOAC jet which seemed to rattle its way through the night sky. We made a brief stop-over in Rome and then headed out over the Mediterranean across North Africa. My sleep switch was still off. The plane was over the Sahara Desert just as the sun was coming up. The rainbow of colors on the horizon dancing on the vastness of the desert engraved an image in my memory so beautiful and vivid that I can see it to this day.

As we made our descent into Nairobi, I was overwhelmed by the fact that I was seeing Africa! It had once seemed distant and dark. I moved quickly through the small Nairobi airport along with others on the plane that had the same destination, and I made my way to the University campus located on the outskirts of town where the Assembly was being held. I settled into a dormitory with other attendees. From the window of my room I could see the roof tops of simple houses made with mud walls painted white and roofed with palm leaves. The white of the houses contrasted with the brilliant floral colors of pink, red and orange that were everywhere. It was a few days after Christmas. I had left the snow and cold of Princeton and London and was now in a tropical paradise. My senses were absorbing, what I call, the allure of Africa.

The Assembly literally opened up new worlds for me. Young people and some older ones from all over the globe and especially from Africa gathered in a large hall at the University. I do not remember much about the content of the meetings, but I do recall how exhilarating and expanding of my world it was. I had never experienced so much diversity! During that week in Nairobi my world became small and inter-connected, as I bonded with people from many diverse cultures and traditions. I remember how chills ran up my spine when the entire Assembly sang “Bwana Ibariki Afrika” (God Bless Africa); I felt moved to the core of my being by

the words and the energy of this powerful anthem.

Among the close connections I made during the Assembly, was one with John Onyango, a Kenyan from the Luo tribe. John was a student at a theological college (more about this in a later chapter). His skin was dark, dark black, his eyes twinkled when he laughed, which he did often, and his glasses perched precariously on his wide nose. I liked him from the moment we met in the dorm, and we spent much time together during the Assembly sharing aspects of our lives. In a very short time we became like brothers. The most difficult part of leaving the Assembly was saying goodbye to John, because I assumed I might never see him again.

At the conclusion of the Assembly, I left Nairobi on a plane bound for Khartoum with great memories of Kenya. On the plane I had the privilege of sitting next to W. A. Visser't Hooft, a renowned theologian who had addressed the Assembly and was returning to Geneva. He was General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, serving as general secretary from 1948 to 1966. He had participated in resistance against Adolf Hitler during the Second World War. A man of distinction, he seemed humble and treated me as an equal. He shared stories of his amazing life. (Little did I know at the time that I would be, only months later, working in Geneva in the organization led by him.) When he learned that I was going to Ethiopia, he suggested that I go to a particular market and purchase a painting depicting the story of the Queen of Sheba. I did manage to find the painting while in Addis Ababa. It has hung in all our houses and triggers my memory of a great man and a rewarding experience. The General Secretary and I parted in Khartoum, he for Geneva and I for Cairo.

I arrived in Cairo very late at night. What most impressed me about the city was that it seemed to never sleep. From my hotel room in the middle of the night I could hear and see a city fully alive with people and business activity. The excitement of touring this ancient city the next day with my friend Milan and the noise outside my window kept me from getting much sleep. I had met Milan Opochensky in Nairobi, and I arranged to meet him

again in Cairo. Milan was a Christian student from Czechoslovakia, then a harsh communist country under a Stalinist-like rule. I had never had a conversation with a person from a communist country before. Milan and I became friends. Years later I learned that he had become the Chief Executive of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Milan and I met the next day and traveled together into old Cairo, which looked like a city made from sand. We took the most crowded bus I had ever seen, and I was constantly holding onto the valuables inside my coat as I felt the deft hands of pickpockets touching my body. We had an invitation to meet with Bishop Samuel, a Coptic Orthodox Christian leader whom we had met in Nairobi. He was a short man and wore the traditional long black beard and black gown of his calling. He was happy to see us and showed us the ancient temple. Years later, it was sad for me to learn that on October 6, 1981 Bishop Samuel, along with the President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, had been assassinated.

The next day Milan and I had a great time together riding camels out to the grand pyramids and we then said our goodbyes.

From Cairo, I went alone to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The mission office in New York sent me to see an example of the Church's mission work in Ethiopia. It was arranged for me to fly to a remote area in the southeastern part of the country. At the airport I was led to an Ethiopian Air DC 3. Inside I found a row of hammock like seats along the side of the plane. I climbed over cargo of woven baskets smelling of traditional spices and was greeted by



At the pyramids

a tall blond man, the only other traveler, who described himself as an American doctor who had been on assignment by the CIA to attend to the health of an Imam in, Sudan. He told me that the Imam had

been assassinated right before his eyes, and he, the doctor, was lucky to escape with his life. He too had come along to find out about the medical work of missionaries in the southeastern part of Ethiopia along the banks of the Blue Nile.

We got into the air with no problems. The DC 3 is probably one of the most versatile and reliable aircraft ever built. This was soon to be proven to me. A speaker crackled near my ear and a voice with a definite Texas drawl said, "Welcome aboard." It turned out that at that time Trans World Airlines operated the Ethiopian Airlines and most of the pilots were American. I felt quite comfortable with a good old boy from Texas at the controls. However, my comfort soon turned to discomfort as we banked over a steep green hillside dotted with a few dozen people. It was announced that this was our first stop. We landed, or I should say bounced, onto a tilted dirt runway on the top of a hill. It was the first of three stops, each one as challenging as the first.

Our final landing for this leg of the journey was on a dirt runway in a remote area not far from Gambella in eastern Ethiopia near the Sudan border. A crowd dressed in bright colors and some with very little dress at all came out to greet us. People from the mission station were there to take us back along nearly impassable roads to their compound and an undeveloped, primitive environment.



Arriving in southeastern Ethiopia



Near Pokow village

While at the remote mission station we had hoped to visit the local village. However, we were disappointed that it was off limits to foreigners because the inhabitants were mourning the death of a young man who had been devoured by a crocodile

the day before while hunting in the Blue Nile. We learned this was not an uncommon occurrence.

The dedicated and hardworking missionaries welcomed us with as much hospitality as they could muster in this primitive environment. They were happy to have another doctor around, and I was soon to learn the reason why.

At the mission station, I was introduced to a young native man who had come to the station pushing a wheelbarrow contraption loaded with his scrotum, swollen to a gigantic size by elephantiasis! He was so miserable that he would rather have faced death than go on in his condition. The doctors, in a great act of compassion, planned to operate on him the next day.

The operation was held in the "clinic," a makeshift building with no real operating room—just a table with a pad on it. The windows were screened, kind of. The doctors used a cloth soaked in anesthesia to keep the patient sedated. They had only rudimentary surgical instruments, some provided by the visiting Doctor, but with great skill and dexterity and the welcome hands and expertise of the visiting doctor, they removed this young man's monstrosity. It was an incredible thing to witness.

The next day when we left, the man was barely clinging to life and the doctors were frantically trying to keep him alive and free from infection. Hoping for the man's full recovery, I returned to Addis to catch a flight to Jordan. I was headed to

Israel, but since I had been in Egypt, I could not go directly to Israel. Israel would not let me into their country coming directly from their enemy, Egypt. By going through Jordan, I could slip into Israel without having to show my passport stamped with an Egyptian visa.

I got into Israel with no problems. One of my professors who went to the Holy Land each summer for archeological work had arranged for his guide to show me as much of the Holy Land as he could in one day. It

was an extraordinary day, and I think my guide and I saw all the high points including the Wailing Wall, Mount of Olives, Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the hypothetical tomb of Christ. We even enjoyed a delicious lunch on the banks of the



The Dead Sea

Dead Sea. This was the first time I tasted hummus. I thought this strange paste was delicious, and all I could find out about it was that it was made from chickpeas.

The one day quick tour of Israel was amazing. I doubt anyone ever covered as much of the holy land as we did in that one intense day. The next day I flew to Rome for a one night layover before returning to New York. Despite only being in Rome for the night, I did not want to miss anything, so I signed up for a tour of Rome by night. As we drove by it, the ancient Coliseum was flooded with light that lit up its columns and walls and created deep shadows. I walked down into the catacombs and saw the outside of the Vatican. Several times the tour stopped at a restaurant and glasses of white wine were poured. I over indulged, I realized later, in cheap wine.

The next morning dawned with an awful hangover; all I wanted to do was stay in bed, but I had to get my flight to New York. The bus ride to the airport took forever, and I don't do well on busses even without a hangover. By the time I stumbled off the bus I was really sick. Memory fades from this point other than every bump in the long flight home made me feel nauseous.

I was looking forward to getting home and especially meeting Cindy in New York for an evening by ourselves before returning to Princeton. Cindy had arranged with friends to look after the boys, and she made her way into the city anxious to see me and to enjoy an evening in the city. I arrived in her arms so exhausted and sick that all I could do was get a cab back to the train station, go home to bed, and sleep it off. What a way to come home and such a disappointment for Cindy! However, my sojourn to Kenya was, for me, one of the highlights of our living in Princeton. The world had become a much smaller place for me; I was now more interested in other cultures; and I was ready for more adventure.

The births of our two older boys, our great friendships, and my life-transforming trip were not the only memorable things that happened while in Princeton. In addition, summers were spent serving a small church in Springs, New York near the tip of Long Island just beyond East Hampton. Springs was a sleepy little community with a few families whose roots went back generations. It was also becoming a colony for artists, the most famous being Jackson Pollock. When school was over at the Seminary, we closed up our apartment, packed our car full and headed for Springs.

We spent two enjoyable summers there. My work in the little church did not take much of my time. I gave a sermon on Sunday and led a small youth group. The rest of the time we spent exploring the tip of Long Island and spending endless days on the nearly uninhabited beaches which stretched west toward East Hampton and east toward Montauk.

The church provided us a small stipend and a house. The house was actually a half of a small house, owned by Weezie, one

of the warmest hearted people we have ever met. She was short, round and full of humor and kindness. She loved us, and we loved her. During those two summers she became like a grandmother to Peter Jr.

We found much to do in this Long Island paradise. Cindy and Peter Jr. were most at home on the beach. We kept Peter harnessed and tethered to a stake driven into the sand, so that he had freedom to move about and we could relax. Since I was a local minister, I got invited by some of the clergy to play golf. They enjoyed the privilege of free golf at the exclusive Maidstone Country Club. The course, one of the first one hundred golf courses built in this country, was unlike any I had played on. It stretched out alongside the ocean with lush greens and fairways lined by sand and tall wispy grass.

While in Springs, we made friends with some unforgettable characters; Ernie was one, a mix of Italian and Native American. A church member, he was about thirty-years old and not married. We developed a liking for him and, apparently, he for us. He introduced me to Scuba diving and clamming in the shallow waters of the bay. He taught us to place the clam shells on the outdoor grill, and as soon as they popped open snare the meat with a fork, dip it in melted butter and enjoy. Ernie brought us fresh fish and one time the largest lobster I have ever seen. We borrowed a pot large enough to cook it from the church kitchen. It provided us with lobster for most of the summer. Ernie had an airplane and took us up one night for a flight over eastern Long Island. The lights along the shoreline sparkled like countless Christmas tree lights defining the irregular shape of the land against the dark sea, what an awesome sight!

I was invited to go out on a sword fishing boat. The men on the boat were descendants of whalers, and they fished for swordfish just like their ancestors had for whales. The boat had a very high tower and a perch out over the bow where the harpoon man positioned himself. From the fisherman in the high tower, the boat was guided to swordfish as they sunned themselves on the surface. The fish, if the fishermen were lucky, were caught by

driving the harpoon into the fish; then the fight was on to haul the powerful creature in.

The day I went out the sword fishing was not good because of the rough seas, so for my benefit the men changed their focus from swordfish to tuna. The man in the tower spotted a school of yellow fin, and the boat turned as we cast out trolling lines. I soon had a huge tuna on my hook and after about a half-hour fight got him into the boat. By this time I was exhausted and so seasick that I could barely function.

The sea got rougher and I got sicker. I was down in the belly of the boat moaning when I heard the captain say that it was time to head back in. I went up on deck and slowly made my way to the bow. Miraculously, my seasickness went away, and I was able to enjoy the long rough ride back to port. I am not sure what this incident says about the mental aspects of seasickness. However, for me at the time, the sudden transformation was like a miracle. Back home at Springs, we ate and even canned tuna for days.

Although our time in Springs was like an extended vacation, it created some problems for me. By the second summer, I was feeling hypocritical about holding a service every Sunday with the awareness that I represented a doctrine that had only symbolic meaning for me. In setting up these services I had dutifully followed what I was learning, and (questioning), in seminary. For instance, the Apostles' Creed was always recited by the congregation sometime during the service. As I have already indicated, this creed includes phrases like: "I believe in Jesus Christ...who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary" and "...On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven..." And "I believe in the Holy Spirit...the resurrection of the body..." I had already concluded that the creed did not fit my understanding of the world, so I viewed it as symbolism and myth. The problem was that others, including the parishioners, did not see it this way. According to their way of thinking, one had to believe in this creed in order to be a Christian, and it was not right to question it. My view of Christianity was quite different. I believed that one could follow the example and spiritual message of Christ and his

teachings without these doctrinal trappings, but I did not feel free to share these views with the people sitting in the pews.

Despite the ecclesiastical issues that I faced, we loved our time in Springs, so it was a sad day in late August of 1962 when we pulled out of Springs and drove out through East Hampton for the last time. We were headed back to Princeton for my last year in seminary and then onward to whatever the future had in store for the four of us.

Overall, the seminary experience was a time of intellectual growth and an opportunity to bond with great friends. The memory of the experiences we had in the idyllic environment of Princeton has remained with us. Most of all, for me it was a time of awakening; it was a momentous change in my point of view about the church and Christianity. This change set me swimming against the current of tradition and expectation. There were other events which I will try to trace that pushed me further against the current and carried our family with it.

As I reflect on the events and the changes which occurred in our early life together, as we swam against the current, I think about our parents. Both sets of parents, I believe, had thought that we were headed toward a typical life of a Presbyterian minister and wife and that we would raise our children like we were raised. At each step along the way, and there were many more to come, we must have made them question our judgment if not our sanity. Upon graduating from seminary I did not follow the traditional path of ordination and a small parish. I sought a fellowship—a way to postpone my decision about ordination—to work with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland for one year. With the fellowship in hand, we were off to Europe and more adventure!

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LEARNING TO EAT FONDUE

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Our trip to Geneva started out with unexpected events. On a warm September day, 1963, as we drove down Henry Hudson Parkway along the Hudson River and alongside the towering skyscrapers of New York City, we could see the smoke stacks of the black and white hulled Steamship, the SS United States, conspicuously high above the roof of the dock. We could hardly believe that we would soon be on board this grand ship and headed to Europe!

Boarding ship was like a first day in graduate school, because many of the passengers were students heading to fellowships in Europe. We were pleased with our quarters. We had ample room for the two of us and two young boys in a well appointed state-room with two small portal windows. We filled the room with our travel bags and infant paraphernalia as we anticipated crossing the Atlantic with dreams of Europe. After landing in England, we would go by train to Geneva. It seemed romantic, so full of adventure.

My aunt and uncle, Virginia and Russell Scott, drove from their home in northern New Jersey to wish us *bon voyage*. They got caught up in our excitement and came on board to see our cabin. As a going away present, they gave me a pebble grained passport wallet. I still have this wallet and have carried it on many travels. Each time I pull it from my pocket I think of Ginny and Russ and their kindness of sharing in our adventure.

The ship's whistle blew a startling blast to announce that visitors must leave. It was time, we thought, to be on our way. Excitement was mounting, and we anticipated slipping out past the Statue of Liberty into the vast Atlantic Ocean and then on to Europe.

But we didn't go anywhere! The ship remained at the dock throughout the night, and we were given no reason for not sailing. It was rumored that the crew had gone on strike, paralyzing the ship and stranding the passengers. We opened the portal for fresh air but the stench coming up from the stagnant water around the dock was sickening. Peter, our older child, kept asking, "Mommy, Daddy when will the boat go?" We were getting restless. That evening everyone still seemed hopeful about the ship's departure. We went to bed expecting that the ship would get underway during the night.



In our cabin waiting for the ship to leave

In the morning we were awakened by the crackle of the ship's speaker: "Due to labor problems, this voyage is being canceled; all passengers are to disembark by noon." No other information was provided; our only directive was to get off the ship! We were disappointed and confused about what steps to take. "What would happen with our belongings, which were stored in the hold of the ship, items to set up housekeeping in Geneva?" we wondered. We both let out a big sigh of frustration and tension. "What are we going to do?" we asked each other. We couldn't just transfer to another ship; there were none available.

The SS United States, a stately old ship, never again sailed under the flag of our country. Years later I saw her picture in a newspaper—she had become a work horse cruise ship in South America, living out her last days ferrying tourists to ports in the southern hemisphere.

As we disembarked from our overnight stay on board ship, we were exhausted and bewildered as to our next step, and by now David, the baby, was sick with a raging fever and Peter Jr. was showing signs of sickness. After disembarking, I made a call

to the Presbyterian organization that was sponsoring our journey. My frustration was understood by them immediately. They arranged for us to go to a hotel. Our sponsors were a great support. After a night in the hotel they called: "We've got you on a Swiss Air flight through Portugal and then to Geneva; you leave tomorrow night." This was a great relief and it rekindled our excitement, but the thought of a transatlantic red-eye flight with two sick kids was not appealing.

We asked, "What about our trunks with all our additional belongings which were destined for the ship's hold and to be claimed at the port in England?" We quickly had to make special arrangements to send these by freight. It ended up taking over a month for us to get them in Geneva. We could not imagine how we could live for long without these belongings. This, I believe, was our first lesson in un-attaching ourselves from belongings. Throughout much of our life, as we've moved around the world with kids or lived in a school bus or a small rural cabin, we've left things behind or discarded them and lived with very few personal possessions.

On the night of the following day, with sick kids and bleary eyes, we managed to board the evening plane for our flight to Geneva with a stopover in Lisbon. We were to have a sleepless night on the plane with children vomiting and in constant need of diaper changes. This was not how we had imagined our adventure would begin. We had expected the excitement and romance of an Atlantic crossing on a luxury liner but, instead, experienced a travel nightmare over the Atlantic.

During the flight we took turns holding seven month old David while he cried and kicked, his little body burning with fever. The plane stopped in Lisbon. This layover was scheduled to be long enough to allow us time to get away from the airplane and to wander freely around the airport. However, at that time, Portugal was under military control, and the airport was locked down. As we left the plane, we were herded together with all the other transit passengers, into a small, dingy room where we would remain packed like sardines and guarded by gun toting troops for several hours until time to re-board.

When we eventually arrived at the Geneva Airport, it was a welcome site. Again, our sponsors had come through like champs and had arranged for us to stay at a little hotel in old town Geneva. We nestled into the soft down covers, exhausted from our journey, and went into deep sleep. We stayed in this little hotel for a couple of days while our children recovered and our apartment was readied.

Within a few days we were settled into our apartment which was in a new high-rise complex called Chemin de Palettes near the Geneva suburb of Grand Saconnex; it was and still is one of the most diverse areas of Switzerland because of the abundance of international organizations present in the area. The west side of our two bedroom apartment, sunny in the afternoon, looked out onto a balcony. We had beautiful hardwood floors and a modern kitchen. However, there was a major problem we needed to resolve. We did not have any furniture! Hans, whom I would be working with at the World Council of Churches, and his wife, Angelica, offered us much support and help. They found enough furniture to get us started.

Later, we added pieces picked up in used furniture stores, but our two bedroom apartment remained sparsely furnished. One of the pieces we acquired was an antique washstand with a marble top. When we left Geneva, we regretted leaving this beautiful piece of furniture. This was another case of leaving things behind that we had become attached to and the beginning of a pattern in our life; it became easier each time we did it. I think it was this being unattached to things that made us able, more than once, to leave one life experience and move into the next one.

Life at the Palettes was full of international, as well as Swiss experiences. There was a Migros grocery store on the main floor of our apartment building, a welcome convenience because we had no car. We learned to eat Swiss Fondue—a traditional Swiss dish. It is prepared in two ways; one is to spear meat with a skewer, cook it in hot oil, and then dip it in sauce. The other way is to use two different types of cheese, emmenthaler and gruyeres. The cheese is melted in boiling fendant wine to which is added a bit of garlic and a shot of kirsch liqueur. Small squares of French

bread are speared with a wooden skewer and then dipped into the cheese mixture.

Our first attempt to eat cheese fondue did not go well. The combination of wine and cheese, perhaps too much wine, did not sit well in our stomachs. We thought we'd never eat it again. However, within a few weeks we did, and this time we enjoyed it. We were determined to learn how to make fondue ourselves, so I went to the Grand Passage department store and purchased a clay pot and burner. These are now family treasures that we use each time we have fondue, and that is several times a year.

Over the years, cheese fondue became our staple for birthdays and other special celebrations. There were other new food experiences as well as fondue; one we enjoyed eating almost daily was Swiss yogurt. Also, we spent many happy evenings with couples from all over the world who lived in our same complex, sharing dinners from various cultural traditions.

Meredith and Dee Handspicker, an American couple, lived in the Palettes and became our friends. Meredith, Jerry as we knew him, was also working at the World Council of Churches. He later became a professor of theology at Andover Newton Seminary. Our families shared the adventure and commonality of being Americans in Geneva with young children, and we enjoyed each others' company. We were concerned about the isolation and lack of community in the Palettes and the absence of any play area or organized activities for older children. Another concern was that a family had use of the laundry facility only one day during a two week period. This was an issue especially for those, like us, with babies in diapers. Others had concerns about rents increasing.

These concerns led Dee Hanspicker and me to organize a tenants' association. We invited tenants and a few people from town, including a local pastor, to a meeting in our apartment. I conducted the meeting by going over our concerns in my limited French, and then I facilitated a lively discussion that I comprehended only partially.

At the meeting, a decision was made to form an association and to address concerns that tenants had brought to the meeting.

I wonder to this day how I facilitated a successful meeting with such little knowledge of French. At the end of the meeting, the pastor came to me talking rapidly in French about the meeting. I, sheepishly, had to tell him that I did not understand what he was saying, at which time, someone jumped in to translate. The result of the meeting was the formation of a tenants' association. The association succeeded in getting the management to make some needed changes.

The experience of forming the tenants' association was documented in an article I wrote for the World Council of Churches *Monthly Letter About Evangelism*, No. 7, October 1964, Geneva 64:53 (E). The article tells the story about forming the association and also reveals my developing understanding of Christianity as an expression of service toward others rather than unquestioning belief of the doctrine of the church. Here are excerpts from the article:

*....A number of the staff members of the World Council of Churches and their families live in a modern apartment complex on the outskirts of Geneva which houses about 450 families of differing nationalities. The complex consists of four large six story buildings, two supermarkets, other stores and a school. The buildings stand parallel with each other, and as they swarm with active young families behind glass walls, they have the appearance of split ant hills. Life in such a split ant hill is marked by a feeling of isolation and individualism and little real community life. ....The children in this apartment complex, called the Palettes, have been provided with absolutely nothing in the way of a safe play area and equipment. They run and play among the parked and moving cars.*

*....What is God's message for this human isolation in a sea of humanity?*

*Some of us began to wrestle with this question on an informal basis. Our first answer was that a church was needed. We launched off into a discussion of ways of beginning and forming a house church in the midst of the apartments. However, for a few of us simply beginning with a church organization*

*did not seem to be the first answer to the needs of the community.... We decided finally that we would begin with the realities of our world in the Palettes, and not with a church as such, by becoming involved in community activity and therefore trying to discover how and where the Lord of the world was present in our community.... We couldn't find any community activity in which to become involved. Therefore our first job was to find and encourage a group of people interested in some sort of cooperative responsibility for the life of the community of the Palettes. Much to our amazement, it did not take us long to find these people. There was a wealth of concern and talent just waiting to be organized. ....Within this small representative group much enthusiasm developed. No one questioned the need for some form of community development; thus we immediately found ourselves in deep discussion about community needs. This discussion took form around several main points: a concern for the lonely people, a desire to tap the vast educational resources with the community (such as the representatives of international organizations), a desire to promote some form of social activity. After a few meetings and continued discussion a plan of organization and a method of implementing some of our concerns and desires was developed. We formed ourselves quite spontaneously into an ad hoc Tenants Association....*

Nearly fifty years later Meredith found me via Facebook, and we corresponded about our time in Geneva. He told me that in 1988 he was in Geneva and visited the Palettes apartment complex.

Meredith (Jerry) wrote:

*"When Dee and I went back to Palettes in 1988 we saw that the Tenants' Association still had a bulletin board on the wall beside the Co-op store. We read it in French and English of course! They are still carrying on activities of various sorts and appear to be very involved in the community of Palettes. Needless to say, Dee was thrilled that your work continues to bear fruit. Jerry"*

The little seed Dee and I planted that night so many years ago in our sparsely furnished apartment in Geneva has indeed grown and had an impact.

My work with the World Council of Churches was affording me the opportunity to pursue my interest in living out my Christian Faith in the world. Yet, even in the environment of the WCC, I was continuing to struggle with how to reconcile my social perspectives and non-traditional beliefs with the doctrine of the Church.

While all this was unfolding for us in Geneva, back home, the Civil Rights Movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King was engulfing the entire country. I was thousands of miles away, isolated from changes here that I was so passionate about, and I longed for a connection with this great social change in our nation. Therefore, I was unduly excited when I heard that Bob Spike and Andrew Young were coming to Geneva to attend an international mission of the church meeting that I was charged with organizing under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. They sailed to Europe on the Queen Mary; I think the main reason for the trip was to give Andrew a respite from the stress and struggle of the Civil Rights Movement. Bob, a United Church of Christ minister, played an influential role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Andrew Young, also a United Church of Christ minister, was one of Martin Luther King's chief assistants and had been in the front row of nearly all the major marches. He later became mayor of Atlanta and was President Jimmy Carter's Ambassador to the United Nations. I was excited about the opportunity to meet both of these men and learn firsthand what was going on at home. We spent a delightful evening over dinner with Bob in our apartment while Andy visited with some other people. Bob, in his charming manner, shared with us an insider's view of the Civil Rights Movement. The stories he told further stoked the fires of social justice that burned within me. Years later, we were saddened by his mysterious murder—a crime that, I think, has never been solved. It is not hard to assume that he ultimately paid with his life for what he believed!

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TRAVELERS WITH NO ROOF

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During the spring of 1964, my fellowship with the WCC was winding down. I knew that because of my struggles with traditional Christianity I was not spiritually ready to go home and lead a congregation, yet I felt pulled to become involved in the Civil Rights Movement, but I also had a lingering desire to return to Africa. As I pondered what to do, I heard of a position in Kenya which involved running the Limuru Conference Center in the highlands above Nairobi; the center belonged to the Christian Council of Kenya. The little bit I knew about the position suggested that there were many opportunities to develop the center and promote its potential influence in the newly independent nation. For me, it was an opportunity to move forward with my social theology.

I applied for the job and an interview was set up. The interview took place at the Geneva Airport with two leaders of the Christian Council of Kenya, John Kamau, General Secretary and Stanley Booth-Clibborn, Anglican missionary (who later became a bishop in the Church of England). They were on their way back to Kenya from attending a meeting in Europe. Stanley had earlier settled with his young family in Kenya. I liked him right off and saw in him some of my own lust for adventure and fascination of involvement in a developing country. Kenya had become an independent nation the previous year, and this event brought about the replacement of European leadership of the Christian Council of Kenya with an indigenous leader, John Kamau, who belonged to the powerful Kikuyu tribe.

We sat together in the terminal, and I responded to an informal interview. As we discussed aspects of the job, I could hardly control my enthusiasm about going to work in Kenya! To think

that I could return to this beautiful land and to this newly independent country was a cause for great excitement. I think I would have gone to Kenya no matter what job they offered; my vision and commitment of service to Kenya far exceeded their job description. I had a vision of being there and helping develop this newly independent nation.

My excitement and enthusiasm must have impressed John and Stanley – they offered me the job right there, sitting on the hard wooden benches in the terminal. After a brief discussion with Cindy (she was as excited as I was), I accepted it! The details would be worked out, and the Presbyterian Church would continue to provide us with basic support (I think this fact helped seal the deal). The Christian Council of Kenya would provide housing, a car and a small stipend. We were full of excitement and anticipation about this new adventure!

There would be a few months between the end of my WCC work and our day of departure for Kenya, so during this time we planned to see more of Europe. With a loan from my oldest brother we bought a new, tan VW Bug with a sliding sunroof. Since we were on what was called a subsistence income (translates to very low budget), we could not afford to stay in our comfortable apartment and travel at the same time. So, again not following convention, we decided to move out of our apartment and live in a tent as we navigated our way through as much of Europe as we could. Along with the tent, we purchased the necessary equipment of cooking gear, sleeping bags, ponchos, etc. A top rack was added to the VW so all our travel gear could be hauled. The idea of living in a tent with two children for three months was the kind of crazy adventure we embraced!

*Cynthia's Reflections*

*Our new home*

*During springtime of our year in Geneva, Pete phoned me one afternoon and asked if I would like to live in Kenya. My heart took a leap as it still does at the thought of potential adventure, so without hesitating, I said that of course I would!*

*He responded, with "Really?" But in fact he was not surprised that I said yes.*

*We were young and unencumbered and had begun to believe that most anything was possible. We had learned from experience that two young children could adapt quickly and that we could travel with them quite easily. Keeping ourselves organized and our stuff pared down to minimal helped all aspects of family management fall into place.*

*Prior to sailing for Africa, we moved out of our apartment at Chemin de Palettes and lived in our camping tent on the edge of the Foyer John Knox campus. During this time, Pete was completing his work at the WCC. We were completely welcome to use all the facilities there at the Foyer, except, of course, we slept in our tent. The students there were welcoming to our whole family and loved interacting with our children; they were all young adults and many were curious about our family, probably identifying somewhat with their own futures.*

*One morning, after we had all slept soundly with our little Volkswagen parked alongside the tent, next to where we slept, I walked outside the tent and saw the car door open on the passenger side (the side next to our tent). I walked toward the car thinking, "how could we have left the car door open?" I then saw that the glove box was open too, then realized that my camera was gone, full of pictures of the boys I had taken the previous day as they happily played on the slides and swings at the Foyer J.K. grounds.*

*Pete had by now joined me at the car and discovered that our passports were also missing, along with a gift check we had received in the mail. He quickly contacted the Swiss police and learned they had already found our passports tossed in a ditch alongside a road. What a relief that was, and how lucky we felt! We arranged to have payment stopped on the check and retrieved our passports, so, considering the circumstances, it turned out alright. Only the camera was not to be found. We were careful to lock our car after that incident!*

*Each night in the large dining room we enjoyed delicious food while conversing with vibrant students who seemed enchanted with our children. While dining with them I noticed that most enjoyed their main course first and had a large plate of salad afterward. I assumed it was their custom and I considered adopting it, but I never did.*

*However, I also noticed that these European students ate with a knife and fork differently from Americans, utilizing their fork by keeping it attached to the meat or vegetable they had cut and eating it with their left hand. This custom made perfect sense to me, so instead of setting my knife down and switching my fork to my right hand to eat what had been cut, I adopted their way (instead of the American way)! The European way still makes sense to me, but, now that we live in the U.S., I usually conform rather than draw attention to myself.*

*Another custom they followed at Foyer John Knox was using their cloth dinner napkins for a whole week. After dinner the students folded their napkins and placed them in a cubby cabinet for use the next day. They were laundered and replaced at the end of the week. The American custom is usually to wash napkins after each meal, but we use ours, at home, for a few days before laundering, recalling our European experience. We seldom use paper napkins.*

*We happily accepted the offer to use bath facilities while guests at the Foyer. The women's bath had modern and multiple sinks, showers, and a bath tub where I could bathe the children. We had the essential comforts of home and were quite content to be there for a few weeks.*

My initial experience with the tent was humbling because it uncovered my impulsive tendency to move quickly with little pre-thought and a hope for the best outcome. After purchasing the tent in Geneva, we set out with our children on a much anticipated camping trip to northern Italy. This was to be our shake-down trip before moving out of the apartment and permanently into the tent. The Volkswagen Bug was crammed full with our

gear, and the roof rack was bulging as we headed south toward Lake Lugano and adventure in Italy.



**Our tent at Foyer John Knox**

The trip was spectacular and included a ride, while sitting inside our car fastened onto a flat railroad car, through the Simplon Tunnel that goes under the mountains from Switzerland to Italy. It was constructed in 1905 and is considered the world's greatest tunnel.

In the late afternoon, we settled into a camp site at the edge of beautiful Lake Lugano, which nestles into the Italian Alps. We were thrilled by the magnificence of the hills and tall mountains surrounding us. We were also anticipating the comfort of our two room tent which had looked so large and comfortable in the store. Now the time had come to set it up and unpack our other camping equipment.

We pulled the tent from its bright blue bag and laid it out on the ground. The steel collapsible frame was dumped from its bag. We started by fitting the frame pieces together, but the pieces did not go together like we thought they should and there were no

directions. We tried and tried but could not get the poles to work the way we thought they should. Aggravated, we concluded (wrongly as it turned out) that the tent was missing poles. We would not have a tent for the night, and, to add to our problems, there was a threat of rain. Going to a hotel was out of the question—we had no discretionary money and just enough to get us, so we thought, back to Geneva. Disappointed, frustrated, and mad at the store for shorting the poles, we stuffed the tent and its fittings back into the VW bug, filled up the roof rack, and headed back to Geneva as the last of the sun's rays drove like shimmering spikes through the dark rain clouds.

To make matters worse, we ran out of money and almost didn't make it back to Geneva. When we started the trip, we had a fifty Swiss franc reserve and thought this was sufficient for the trip. As we left the campground in Italy, we had 2,000 lire, enough, we thought, to get us back to Geneva. We pulled up to the Simplon Tunnel toll booth and the guard informed us that the toll was 1900 lire. That left us with 100 lire and we had only a half tank of gas. Worse again, we had lost the form we filled out when we entered Italy. I tore through everything in the car but could not find the form. I didn't have the money to pay and get to Geneva and didn't have the required form. The kids were tired, hungry and fussing, and I was beyond frustration. Finally, after unsuccessful attempts to explain our predicament to the guard, he took me to his superior who simply looked at me, smiled and said, "Good-bye." We made it back to Geneva.

The next day, with tent bag slung over my back and the bag of heavy metal poles under my arm, I strode angrily into the Grand Passage, where I had purchased the tent, and declared through a clenched jaw that they had sold me a tent without all the parts. I made it clear what their negligence had cost us! The sales person calmly suggested that we go upstairs where there would be room to lay the tent out.

We trudged upstairs lugging the heavy bags and, as we had done in Italy, laid out the tent and its poles. The super confident clerk snapped the poles together and proceeded to slide them in

place, while I stood waiting for him to see the problem and apologize, and, *Voilà*, the tent stood up! He stood back with a look of, "I told you so," on his face. I could see clearly what I had missed in my haste and frustration in Italy. The tent was shaped differently than I imagined—the walls rose at a steep angle narrowing to a small roof area. I had assumed that the tent would have straight walls like a house. At the camp ground I could not get out of my misshaped paradigm. Tail between my legs, I returned home. Had I just taken the time to set the tent up once before going camping, all this would have been avoided; so much for my impulsive behavior.

We had successfully made the transition from apartment dwellers and were now ready to become nomads with no permanent roof over our heads. It was the spring of 1964. We left the Foyer John Knox (described in Cynthia's Reflections) and set out on a three month journey by heading south through much of northern and central Italy. In Venice, we camped on the edge of town where an orchestra performed on the steps of a cathedral in the late afternoon. Inside greater Venice we were enthralled by St. Mark's Square and the Cathedral adorned with gold. While in the Cathedral, David then two and a wearing a harness with a leash (try keeping up with a two year old in a crowded square),



Saint Mark's Square

fell and banged his head on the marble floor. He let out a horrific scream, but no one seemed troubled by it; he recovered quickly and tugged on his “leash” for more space to run.

The kids let us know when they were hungry no matter where we were. Since eating in restaurants was costly, we carried a few essentials like peanut butter, bread, and apples. Hunger hit the kids as we came out of Saint Mark’s Cathedral, so I set off to find bread. I returned with a fresh baked loaf, and we had a memorable picnic on the steps of St Mark’s with dozens of pigeons looking for any small morsel we could spare. There were many perfect moments like this – more than I can recount – and I love the memories.

Learning how to live in a tent, sleep on the ground and cook on a small stove was not easy. We encountered extremely cold weather, oppressively hot weather, and pouring rain. Each type of condition presented its challenge. I remember trying to stay warm in the tent on bitterly cold and windy nights. We finally caught on to layering up when we went to bed. Cindy had with her T shirts, two sweaters, a flannel nightgown, slacks and wool socks. There were several nights when she put almost all of these to use! Once while camping in the hills overlooking Florence, we were hit by a cloudburst we thought powerful enough to wash us down the hill into the city below. That night, inside the tent, we ate dinner in the area for sleeping which had a waterproof floor – it was the only dry spot. Over time we adjusted to the challenges and became quite proficient in camping. I think we could have written a book about family camping through Europe.

On another trip, we headed for Vienna and planned to cross over into Czechoslovakia. Our ultimate destination was the Prague Peace Conference. We camped in Vienna, and a friend studying there took us on a grand tour. Our day started with his gift of apple strudel, and I can still conjure up its rich, buttery taste. After that, we marveled at the beauty of the Schonburnn Palace where in 1961 President John F. Kennedy held an historic summit meeting with Russian President Nikita Khrushchev concerning the future status of Berlin.

When we crossed into Czechoslovakia, we experienced a different world. It was a country under the Stalinist-like rule of President Novotny. The towns were drab and the stores empty of goods and people. We were required to register with the police in each town where we stayed.

We had been invited to visit a Christian family in the town of Nove Mesto. When we arrived at their modest frame house and were greeted by them, we explained that we would camp out while there. However, they insisted that we stay in their house. Of course, we accepted.



Stopping for lunch in Czechoslovakia

After our required registration with the police, we settled in for a delightful few days. We have never eaten so much rich food! The problem was that I ate until I literally got sick. What I did not realize was that their view of hospitality was to keep serving you food until you stated an emphatic and demonstrative, "No more!" One special memory was our trip to the pine forest to gather mushrooms. Beneath a magnificent canopy of tall pine trees, we gathered pails full of wild mushrooms from an abundant supply. Our harvest was turned into delicious dishes after we returned from the forest.

These were good people. The husband was trying to keep a small congregation of Christians intact despite government repression. The wife was a long way from Chicago where she had grown up and was trying to cope with the difficulties of everyday survival. They had, they told us, suffered many indignities because of their faith. For instance, their children had not been allowed to join the government sponsored Communist Youth League.

Despite their limited freedom and outright persecution, they seemed happy and committed to their work. What struck me was how steadfastly they held on to their Christian beliefs in the midst

of the repression. Years later, when Czechoslovakia became a free society, I remembered them and thought how relieved and peaceful they must feel because of the changes.

From the warmth of these wonderful people we drove into the drab, rundown city of Prague. The tyranny of Communism had taken the vitality out of the great city, but it could not reduce the majesty of its buildings and bridges although they were in need of repair. We set up camp on a very hot day along the Vltava River that runs through the city crisscrossed by magnificent ornate bridges. The kids were coughing and had fevers, but we thought, after some rest, they would be fine. It turned out that they had strep throat.



Climbing steps in Prague

We had been invited to the Peace Conference by Milan whom I had met at the All Africa Christian Youth Assembly in Nairobi a year and one half before. After the assembly, we had hooked up and traveled to Egypt together. I contacted Milan about our sick children; he responded with concern over their health and arranged for a doctor to examine them. The children were given antibiotics, and we were promptly moved into a hotel – all at government expense!

Cindy cared for the boys in the hotel while they recuperated, and I attended meetings at the Peace Conference. She felt watched continuously by a particular maid and believed she might be a spy, but, if a spy, she was a friendly and efficient one.

During this hotel stay, Cindy's quickness averted what could have been a tragedy when David, two years old, climbed part-way out of our seventh floor window only to be grabbed by his mother at the last moment. Mom was our hero in Prague.

After Prague, our extended journey through Europe took us

to Berlin, another unique experience. We had been invited by a young West Berlin couple we had met in Princeton to stay with them in their Berlin apartment. We knew that the young woman was pregnant and about to deliver, yet they insisted on our visit. We arrived at their apartment and were informed by the landlady that the young woman had indeed given birth a few days before, but tragically, she had died in childbirth. She insisted that we were still expected to stay. We did stay and shared the grief of our young friend. It was a painful visit.

While we were in West Berlin, we were encouraged to visit Communist controlled East Berlin which was then separated from the west by the infamous wall. East Germany was as repressive, if not more so, than Czechoslovakia, but there were small struggling Christian communities there also. With our kids in tow, we went through the menacing checkpoint at the formidable wall that separated the two cities, carrying a basket given to us by our West Berlin friend containing a few Bibles hidden among packages of coffee, cigarettes and candy. We were smuggling Bibles into East Berlin! We had not even considered the possible consequences.

Like Prague, we found East Berlin a drab, rundown city. It was quite a contrast to the glitter and affluence of West Berlin just on the other side of the grotesque wall topped with jagged glass and barbed wire. We found our way by foot to the address of our contact, where we unloaded the Bibles and other supplies and shared coffee and news of the free world beyond the confines of the wall.

Back in West Berlin, we left our grieving friend and crossed France to get to Taize, a monastic community in the south. Visiting this area is like going back to the Middle Ages. Huge medieval castles sit on hilltops overlooking the lands where serfs once worked. As in Vienna, we met a seminary friend, a native of Holland, who was studying at Taize. While he pushed the baby stroller for us, we wandered through the medieval village and shared cheese and a bottle of wine at a rustic table in a small, ancient stone building. As a fire roared in the massive old fireplace with Louis XIV coins embedded in the mantel, we renewed our friendship with our Dutch friend from Princeton.



Our friend pushing David, Peter Jr. in front

After returning to Geneva and a few more weeks of camping at the Foyer John Knox, we were off to Africa! Another adventure and, again, we planned to travel by ship—from Genoa to Mombasa, Kenya, East Africa. This time the ship actually departed, and we had a wonderful journey. No labor problems! Prior to sailing, we spent a few days in a small hotel in Genoa, our balcony overlooking a bustling square. We enjoyed sitting there watching all the activity. For dinners, we'd go down to the square and buy fruit, cheese, bread and wine—an easily accessible meal—and eat on the balcony.

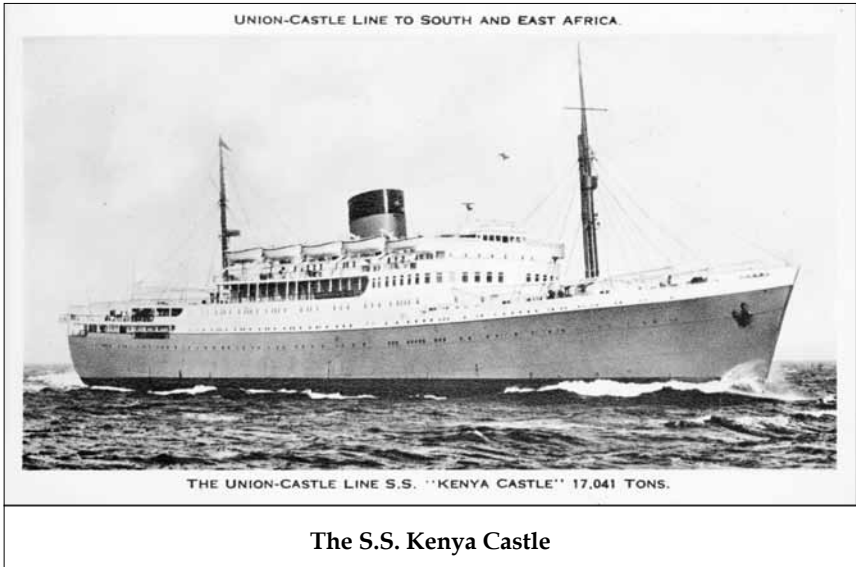
On the day of our departure from Genoa, our belongings were loaded onto the Kenya Castle bound for Mombasa. The VW Bug was left on the dock for later shipment to Kenya. By today's standards this was a small passenger ship, just 550 feet long. Our journey took us out into the blue Mediterranean, through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea, through the Gulf of Aden, into the Indian Ocean to the port of Mombasa.

When the ship arrived at the entrance to the Suez, Cindy, along with other passengers, climbed down a rope ladder off the ship into a small boat which delivered them to shore and a waiting tour bus. She would tour Cairo and stay overnight while I stayed on ship with the kids; I had visited Egypt a year and a half before. The Cairo group would rendezvous with the ship at the south end of the canal on the Red Sea.

After picking up Cindy and her fellow travelers at the south end of the canal, we steamed leisurely through the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. We arrived off the coast of Kenya after a two week voyage. Arriving in Mombasa brought back memories of the feelings I had when I landed at the Nairobi airport almost two years earlier. I was glad to be returning.



Our VW left on the dock for later shipment to Kenya. The Kenya Castle is in the background



The S.S. Kenya Castle

## CHAPTER SIX

### A NOT SO GOOD WELCOME

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We stood at the railing of the Kenya Castle as the coast of Africa reached out to welcome us. We slipped into the Mombasa harbor, watching the bustle of the port ahead, taking in the sights of black skinned workers shouting in a strange language as they prepared to tie up the ship, and savoring the first scents of Kenya, our new home. We were filled with excitement, the anticipation of adventure, and service to the newly independent country. I was as moved and excited as I had been when landing in the Nairobi airport nearly two years before. Africa has a mysterious way of drawing you into its soul through its vastness, its color, its primitive beauty and the warmth of its people. We had no way of knowing what was ahead for us, but we were soon to find out that our time in Kenya would be full of awe and stimulation coupled with frustration and, ultimately, sadness when we left.

After disembarking from the Kenya Castle, we were soon on the train from Mombasa to Nairobi – a trip made famous by Isak Denison in her book, *Out of Africa*. We stayed up late in our first class berths with faces pressed against the windows as glimpses of Africa slid by while the train made its slow climb to Nairobi. The train left the lush coastal region of Kenya and traveled through miles and miles of dry, sandy, brush country spotted with an occasional small village that had sprung up near the track. At each stop along the way, crowds of small, smiling children came up and pressed their hands against our window like they were trying to touch our pale faces. Dinner was in an elegant dining car served in four courses on fine china.

After climbing into the highlands, the train chugged into Nairobi; we tumbled from our bunks and welcomed our first African morning – a romantic journey even with two overly excited kids. Several months later I took this same train back to Mombasa to

pick up our car, which had been shipped to us. This time I traveled what was called "African class." I sat on wooden seats with people carrying large woven baskets and old and worn suitcases. There was no dining car to go to, in this class, and the toilet opened directly to the track below.

Upon our arrival in Nairobi, we were looking forward, after months of camping and traveling by ship, to getting settled in our house at the conference center in Limuru, and I was anxious to start my work. My job was to direct the center which had room to house about forty people for conferences and to develop programs to assist in building the new nation.

We were soon informed that the house we were to occupy at the center was not ready. Delays were not unfamiliar to us, since we had a similar experience a year earlier in Geneva with our apartment and, therefore, did not think much of this delay. We moved into the YMCA in a tree shaded area of Nairobi. We were there for about a week before being told that the house at the center was still not ready and that another interim place had been found for us nearer the conference center. We assumed, "Oh well, this is Africa and things run on a different schedule."

Our new living space was in a compound run by a group of American Pentecostal Missionaries. They were welcoming and taught us much about the practicalities of living in this different culture. We were given a guest house that seemed especially luxurious after our long journey. We had not slept on such a comfortable bed in months. Our boys enjoyed the open land and a chance to be outdoors.

This was our first experience in seeing how the Europeans (and in this case Americans) used the native people as servants. All our meals were prepared for us by a Kikuyu cook. This was like a resort and we enjoyed it. However, it was disturbing to see the traditional British class structure that colonialism had imposed still being played out in post independence Kenya. During our stay in Kenya we felt uncomfortable with this servant relationship which even many of the well to do Africans perpetuated. However, in reality it did provide much needed jobs and appeared to be acceptable to the Africans.

*Cynthia's Reflection, Chapter 6*  
*Going to Limuru*

*After our rail journey from Mombasa, we arrived in Nairobi, a vibrant, bustling city in the sun at the surprising altitude of five thousand feet. Soon after we arrived, we were given a tour that included higher elevations. Not far outside the city, we reached an elevation of around six thousand feet and saw beautiful coffee plantations along both sides of the road. As we continued on, at around seven thousand, five hundred feet, we witnessed tea plantations thriving on both sides of the road, continuous as the altitude climbed; driving farther, at eight thousand feet, we were nearing Limuru, and we saw tropical growth everywhere, particularly pineapples and bananas, growing out of the vivid red soil. This was rural countryside, almost exactly on the equator, and it would be our home in Africa. Conveniently, we were only twenty miles from Nairobi.*

*Once we reached Tigoni, near Limuru, we noticed an open market where the local people brought their produce to sell or barter, but we did not stop that day. Our primary point of interest that day was to see the conference center and the house we would live in, although we had been told the house was not yet ready for us.*

*We toured the conference center; it had been well described to us, so there were no surprises. We also saw the college campus and the professors' housing, within easy walking distance from the center, and we looked forward to knowing the students and staff there, our new neighbors. Although our house-to-be was presently occupied, no one was home, so we were allowed to look inside. It was adequate and simple; I liked the cork floor tile and the fireplace. Most of the house, however, was tiled with grey linoleum which had a cold, dreary look, and there were iron grills on the bedroom windows. Next to the front entrance was a patio by the garden. All in all, we felt lucky to have such a nice house!*

After several days spent with our generously hospitable new friends who were providing our bed and board, our patience for getting our own house was wearing thin, and we felt we were getting the run around. Finally we got to the heart of the delay when we learned that our wait to move in was because the current occupant of “our house,” Mbiru, the elderly uncle of John Kamau, did not want to vacate the house. He had been serving as the center’s interim administrative secretary and director, and he did not want to give up his new found position, his power, and his house to anyone and especially a young American family. He might have felt, rightly so, that Kenya’s newly won independence should open up opportunities for elderly men like himself.

The fact that the occupant of our house was my new boss’s uncle also made things a bit messier. The people in the CCK who were assisting us (most of them were Europeans) did not want to demand that Mbiru vacate the house, although it was clear that the house was designated for us. We quickly learned that nepotism and deference to elders were common practices in the new Kenya. Eventually, the uncle reluctantly moved out, and we moved in.

Settled in our new house, I was ready to begin my work as director. However, Mbiru had other ideas and never accepted us as rightful occupants of the house nor me as the director. This lack of acquiescence on Mbiru’s part turned out to be a portent of things to come.

At the time, Mbiru seemed like a mean spirited old man, but in retrospect I don’t think he was a mean person. He had grown up under alien British rule and might even have taken part in the Mau Mau uprising against the colonists. His country’s achievement of independence was a dream-come-true for him and his contemporaries and an opening of doors of opportunity and status. The door that opened for him, or so it likely appeared to him, was directing the conference center and having a nice house to live in. He saw this as a permanent, not an interim, role for himself. So, when the door closed for him upon my arrival, and he was asked to move, there is no wonder he felt like white rule was

still in effect. Unknown to us, we had fallen into a situation much more complex than it appeared on the surface and, over time, we would figure out and understand how out of place we were in this newly independent African nation. However, for the present and having recently arrived in Kenya, we were ready to get on with the work we came to do.



**Limuru Conference Center  
(Our house was off to the right.)**

Our house and the conference center were next to each other. To get to the conference center from Nairobi we turned off the Nairobi-Nakuru Road at Limuru and eventually onto a rutted dirt road. We'd learn that this road had two conditions: in dry weather it was deeply rutted and dusty, and in the rainy season it was slick and rutted to near impassability.

The house was a well built stucco bungalow with a central fireplace for heat, large windows that looked out at the green lawn and gardens of the conference center, and an adequately equipped kitchen. The house had metal bars on the windows which gave it a prison like appearance. We were informed that the bars were there to keep out thieves. The thought of thieves in such a remote area created some stress for us. We later learned that the

thieves had found ways to circumvent the formidable window bars. They would take a long pole and poke it through the bars of an open window to lift bed covers, clothing, and other items right out the barred windows.

*Cynthia's Reflections  
Life at the conference center*

*Soon after we moved into our house, a teen aged girl stopped by to inquire about work. I planned to work in the conference center office part of each day, and I needed someone to watch the boys, so I chose this girl, Joyce, a Kikuyu girl, for the job; she was called an "ayha", (one who cares for children) an East Indian word adopted by the Kikuyu. She spent most of her time walking around wherever the boys roamed, talking with them and visiting with those they met. They frequently came into contact with Kikuyu staff at the conference center, all friends of Joyce, and their conversations were loud, joyful, and, I imagine, full of jokes and teasing. They laughed easily and often and displayed the most beautiful and whitest teeth I've ever seen.*

*Once, we left Joyce in the care of Peter and David while we spent the evening in Nairobi. When we returned, I noticed the banana basket was empty. We purchased a small sized laundry basket of bananas weekly at the local market; it was early in the week, so the basket had been almost full when we left. I asked Joyce about the bananas, and she said, "They ate them;" when I asked why she allowed them to eat so many, she said, "They cried." I explained that she did not always have to give them their way when they cried, but she hung her head and shook it in disbelief, seeming to communicate that she thought my idea of depriving them of something was bazaar. Not because of this incident, which caused no harm, but because I realized Joyce's frame of mind did not yet readily produce adult decisions, we decided not to leave her alone with the boys, especially when we were as far from home as Nairobi.*

The gardens surrounding the house and the conference center had not had much care. When I discovered that all I had to do was put a flower stem into the ground and it would take root, I got into gardening. I put down stems in newly dug beds around the house, and soon we had a magnificent garden of carnations and native flowers. This was a gardener's paradise!

There was a cement lined pit in the front yard that had been used by the builders to mix mortar. We converted this into a sand pit for the kids. Under the watchful eye of Joyce, a Kikuyu girl who watched over the boys while Cindy worked in the conference center office, they played for hours in the sand. Joyce would, from time to time, walk them to her village and bring them back covered with dust or mud, depending on the season.



**Limuru house before addition of office**

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### LIFE AND DISILLUSIONMENT IN KENYA

Because of Mbiru's obstinacy, I could not get office space in the conference center. After much discussion and haggling, it was agreed to build office space onto our house. Construction started on a room off one end of the house. It was built with cinder blocks, covered on the inside and out with stucco, leaving the room with a damp cement smell for the entire time I used it. The added space was more than adequate and provided a comfortable, convenient office.

3 TIMES OF EAST AFRICA, Sept./Oct., 1963

#### PRESIDENT NYERERE ON DOING GOOD

A 140-BED Catholic hospital was opened at Kibicho (Diocese of Mombasa) by President Nyerere recently. It was built through self-help and contributions from various people, including a personal gift of \$30 made by the President last year.

Speaking on the occasion, the President thanked all those who helped to build the hospital. He agreed with the Church's view — explained by Fr. Joseph Babu when welcoming the President — that her work is not confined to the care of souls, but that she has also a task in the social field.

He added: "For this reason we, the leaders of Government, who are responsible for the temporal welfare of the people, asked the assistance of our religious leaders right from the moment that we started the struggle for progress.

"And even now we turn to you with the request to teach our people the ordinary things of life, such as reading and counting; to improve their financial position, that they may eat sufficiently and dress neatly; and finally to take part in the war, which deserves our attention especially on this occasion, the war against disease."

Considering the unwanted conflict between people who seemed only to care for spiritual affairs and those who gave all their interest and energies to material progress, the President regretted that some members of the first group doubted the second



#### SURGERY FOR CARDINAL

RICHARD CARDINAL CUSHING says he will undergo surgery "of a serious nature" when he returns to New York from the Vatican Council in Rome.

In a despatch from Rome to the "Boston Globe," the 70-year-old primate's comment was disputed by his personal physician, Dr. Richard Wright of Milton.

"In all honesty, there is nothing that really has to be done," Dr. Wright said, "certainly nothing serious. I would swear on a stack of Bibles that there's nothing serious."

A member of the Cardinal's party said the surgery would involve "growths on his neck."

● Pictured at the Limuru conference, left to right, Fr. Desmond; Rev. Dionis, of the Christian Council of Kenya; Rev. Tighebaar, Reformed Church; Miss Martha Njeri; Mr. Peter Pillsbury, of the Limuru centre; Mr. Kibicho; and Msgr. Njenga.

#### Churchmen discuss ecumenism

FROM PAGE 1

the acceptance of other Christians was only partial, whether the Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church were identical entities, and whether Catholic ecumenical prayer meant in reality "a return to Rome." Lively, friendly discussion followed the talks of both Msgr. Njenga and Msgr. Kibicho.

### CALL ON SOUTHERN SUDAN

THE standing committee of the Synod of the Church of the Province of East Africa has said in Nairobi, after a meeting, that it is perturbed at reports "which strongly suggest that, in the Southern Sudan, the exercise of religious liberty has virtually ceased to exist."

A statement issued by the Anglican Bishop of Zanzibar

bills of Tanzania and Kenya where our Heads of State have given such a positive lead in ensuring that such liberty is in fact accorded to their subjects.

"But we could not allow our enjoyment of such liberty to engender complacency regarding the less fortunate situations in other parts of the world where repression, followed by partial relief

bloodshed accompanied by the destruction of religious buildings, and that religious leaders and their followers have either lost their lives or fled the country.

"It would appear that it has not been possible for those who could be in a position to help or to mediate in this situation to do so.

"We quite deliberately pass no judgments, but in the spirit

#### Ground breaking Ecumenical Conference

Despite the problems of getting settled into our house at the conference center, I quickly got to work holding conferences to train and support local teachers, retreats for church groups, labor union discussions and a conference of Kenyan church leaders

on ecumenism. This work was greatly fulfilling and exciting and brought the center national recognition. It was exciting to meet the many people, Kenyans and others, who came to the conference center for meetings. I especially enjoyed the opportunity to put my organizational and creative talents to use in setting up various meetings and trainings.

We were getting to know more about our surroundings. Just up the road from the center was the Leakey Primate Research Center. The Leakeys, famous for their anthropological work in Kenya and research on primates, housed the monkeys they were studying in cages on the property. Several of these cages were near the road, and we'd walk up in the evening so that the kids could enjoy the chatter and antics of these playful creatures. We were unaware of the significant scientific work that was going on at the research center at the time and had only a slight awareness of the importance of the Leakeys' work. We later learned about the impact they had on anthropology and the study of primates.

Although we never met the Leakeys, we did become acquainted with other neighbors. One of these neighbors was Kariuki who lived in Tigoni, in a large house which had the look of an English estate, which it had been. The downstairs rooms had high ceilings and heavy ornate furniture. Kariuki was a man of great charm and intellect, and he became a good friend of ours. He had graduated from the London School of Economics and played a major role in the East Africa Power and Lighting Company. He and his wife, who was active and visible in Kenyan politics, were separated. His two small daughters – Wanjiru and Wanjiko about the ages of our boys – lived with him. We had many traditional African meals with Kariuki and the girls. We'd sit down on high back chairs at his long dining table and be served steaming hot ugali (cornmeal mush), heaps of cooked greens, and meat cooked over a charcoal brazier. The most memorable time spent with this warm and caring man was when we went on a picnic together. Sitting on a blanket spread with a variety of food and a bottle of wine we talked, shared stories about our lives and took in the beauty of the countryside.

*Cynthia's Reflections  
Observations of Kenya*

*Sunlit seascape of pale yellow sand, water and sky of blue, punctuated by black-skinned people dressed in white; this was my first glimpse of Kenya as we arrived at Mombasa Harbor. Days later, as we drove into Limuru, our world was thatched huts against green grasses, a plethora of exotic tropical flora, bananas and pineapples ready for picking; all set upon a varied topography of rich, red soil.*

*A kikuyu woman, bent by sticks she had gathered for firewood on her back, fastened to leather headband holding the wood steady, trudged along the red dirt road, barefoot, huge hooped earrings swaying, a child walking beside her with infant tied to the child's back – the first Kikuyu woman and children I saw in Limuru; I was to see many more. I felt shocked, even outraged, that such work could be expected of a woman. Why were not men, who had strong backs, carrying wood if it must be carried? However, I wanted to not judge this world by standards which I, from the outside, thought unreasonable. I tried to be an observer.*

*In addition to gathering and hauling firewood, another job for women was planting and caring for the shamba (garden), primarily greens (like collards), sweet potatoes, and corn. They and their daughters kept babies wrapped tightly against them as they worked. The children never wore diapers; they simply had bare bottoms until they were trained, a sensible custom where there is no paved street or house with floor covered over by wood, tile, or cement.*

*Once we were settled at the conference center, I helped Pete a few hours each day in the office while Joyce, a Kikuyu girl, watched our little boys. Soon after Joyce began working for us, she told us that she was to be married soon, and in her shy manner (smiling while looking at the ground) she let me know that we were to pay her wedding expenses. We did pay the expected sum, but it was a stretch on our subsistence allowance.*

Nevertheless, I've no doubt that Joyce's perception was that our wealth was boundless. As strange as it seemed, it was my understanding that it was customary for a white employer to pay such expenses.

We were invited and were, of course, present at the wedding. It was held in a small rustic church, left behind by English settlers who were fast leaving Kenya because of independence. The bride, Joyce, wore a taffeta chartreuse dress and the bridesmaids wore fuchsia. The wedding was unique in its bright colors, though otherwise a replica of western tradition including candelabra. I felt a little disappointed it was not (what I imagined to be) more Kikuyu. Upon reflection, I realized I had been romanticizing instead of accepting the western influences, brought by missionaries, which had been broadly accepted by many Kikuyu.

Kinuthia was in charge of a large vegetable garden at the center which provided most of the conference center's food. One day he knocked on our back door, a Dutch door that lets the top half swing open. He, with his beautiful smile, stood at the door and held up a giant cauliflower still surrounded with green leaves, so gorgeous I couldn't believe my eyes! He watched my face and burst out laughing as he gave it to me.

Kinuthia liked to surprise us! Another day, after the rains came and the boys had been playing outside in the sun, we heard a knock on the front door, and Kinuthia stepped inside. This time the surprise was bigger than a cauliflower! It was David, then two and a half, masked completely with red mud, held high with both Kinuthia's hands. Again, he watched our faces, and we all, including young Peter, had a good laugh as we followed Kinuthia carrying David to the bathtub.

Stephen, friendly, handsome and young was the driver of the minibus for the center and a highly valued employee. (He also spoke fluent English, as well as Swahili.) We invited him to bring his wife for a visit, so they came one afternoon, and she brought in her arm a bouquet of beautiful flowers from her own garden. We all had tea together and smiled many smiles. We

*didn't speak much Kikuyu, but the visit was enjoyable because we were connecting emotionally with each other. How kind, brave and generous of her to come! I know she was pleasing her husband; I hope the visit pleased her as well.*

On December 12, 1964, late in the afternoon our family drove to Nairobi. It was Kenya's first Independence Day anniversary celebration, and we were going to celebrate this historic event with thousands of Kenyans in the National Stadium on the outskirts of Nairobi! We eased our way through hordes of walkers and parked in a dusty lot outside the stadium which was about the size of a small college stadium. We joined the people crowding into the arena and found seats. There was much exhilaration in the air, and everyone was celebrating. We sat in the midst of a sea of jubilant Africans and must have looked like four snowflakes dropped on black earth. We were entertained by dancers dressed in colorful native costumes representing the forty ethnic tribes of Kenya. At one point the Kikuyu women started their traditional shrill, high pitched trilling which grew in intensity for some time until it reached its crescendo, bringing the crowd to its feet. Political leaders from other countries addressed the crowd. However, when President Jomo Kenyatta, their George Washington, stood to speak, the atmosphere was charged with anticipation. He thrust his trademark fly-wisk into the air and bellowed out two words imbedded in the Kenyan struggle for freedom, *Uhuru* meaning freedom and *Harambee* meaning pulling together. The crowd erupted in unison with shouts of *Uhuru* and *Harambee!* The entire celebration was awesome, electrifying; we were witnessing a milestone in Kenya history.

Many other experiences and sights were etched in our memories such as the beauty and changing topography of the drive from Nairobi to Limuru. Leaving Nairobi we drove along the Nakuru-Nairobi Road past the white buildings of the university where I had stayed during my first visit to Kenya and then began a climb of over three thousand feet. At the lower elevations the road wound through coffee plantations known to produce the

best coffee beans in the world. The coffee plantations gave way to tea plantations at the higher elevations.

And the rain! We had never experienced anything like rain in the highlands of Kenya! There were two seasons – the dry season and the season of torrential rains. The temperatures remained at their same variance, never going above eighty degrees nor lower than fifty. There was no easing into a spring or fall season as we have in North America. One day it was dry and the next day torrential rains marked the beginning of the wet season. Then, just as abruptly, the rains ceased one day and it was the dry season again. When rain came, it seemed like a huge faucet had been turned on in the sky, and it could not be turned off! Each stretch of rain was separated by brief interventions of mountain fog, a fog that enveloped us like a silver blanket.

Getting around to the villages and even into the Center from the main road was quite a challenge during the wet season. For the African villagers, primitive roads were meant for walking, and in the rainy season they walked the roads barefooted in ankle deep mud. The women trudged along in the mud with blank looks on their faces, bent over by the large loads of firewood on their backs. It appeared that they were always doing the hard work, while the men, swallowed up in oversized British army drab green wool trench coats which gave them a bit of protection from the rain, walked along casually conversing with each other or half-heartedly prodding a few scrawny cattle.

For us the primitive roads were meant for our Volkswagen bug or the conference center van. Whether we turned left at the bottom of the center driveway to go to Nairobi or right to go toward Tigoni Village, we were likely to get stuck in a slushy rut or simply slide off the road. When one of these occurrences happened, and it usually did, the barefooted African men, bundled in their trench coat attire, would jovially come to our rescue and miraculously lift our little car out of its mired condition. They would then push us along until the tires found firmer ground to catch onto. One lesson we learned about the muddy roads was that once you got going you did not stop, and you tried your

best to control the car as it fishtailed down the road.

Nairobi, city in the sun, with its mixture of African, European and East Indian cultures, was our connection to the larger world and it provided us with many unique opportunities. Although a busy city and trade center for East Africa and the capital, it had a small town atmosphere. It was founded in 1899 by the British colonialists as a rail depot about halfway between Mombasa and Uganda. The swamp land surrounding the depot became home to a city with a mix of wide avenues and narrow streets, some shaded by large trees and others adorned with brilliant flowering jacaranda and other exotic bushes. There were older stately buildings and shiny new ones. While we were there a new Hilton Hotel was constructed, a sign of the coming changes. The historic New Stanley hotel was still a hangout for locals and a much sought after venue for tourists. It is perhaps best known for its community bulletin board where people posted notices and personal communication.

Sounds of the minaret and church bells could be heard at the same time. Sharply dressed business men and women walked the streets along with people in typically colorful native dress. Sadly, there were also beggars crawling on their hands and knees. It was an African city and also an international city. It was a city which was easy to like, especially because it gave us respite from our isolation in Limuru.

We visited the shops (dukas in Swahili) along Bazaar Street. Most of the shops were owned by East Indians who lived with their extended families in the rear of the shop. They were the entrepreneurs of Kenya. They had come years earlier to help build the railroad and ended up staying. They were given a status slightly above the Africans by the colonial government; therefore, they had more opportunities to establish themselves economically and thus became the backbone of most of the business and commerce in Kenya. However, much of the wealth they created left Kenya because they sent it back to their families in India.

In their small dukas they sold everything from spices and meat to cameras. We frequently visited these shops to buy our meat

and curry powder (Mr. Fernandez, the East Indian cook manager at the conference center had taught us how to make curry). We'd check out the meat of free range, grass fed cattle, hanging from hooks in the shop's open façade, pick out a chunk of well aged beef, have it wrapped up in old newspapers, and keep it in the car unrefrigerated until we got back to Limuru. We'd roast it over the charcoal flames of a grill I had made to fit inside the fireplace. This was by far the best meat I have ever eaten.

Often when I went into Nairobi, I'd head to a little Italian restaurant which had delicious lasagna, park in front, my mouth watering (it was that good!) and go in for a most satisfying meal. Across the street from this restaurant was a government sponsored coffee shop. For a shilling, I could buy a pound of freshly ground coffee which I left in the car parked in front of the Italian Restaurant. While I savored the lasagna, the rich Kenyan coffee filled the car with an incredible aroma that accompanied me on my trip back to Limuru. We learned to make our coffee the African way by dumping generous portions of this amazingly aromatic coffee into a tea pot, covering it with boiling water and letting it steep under a tea cozy. When it was ready, each cup was filled by pouring the black, steaming liquid through a strainer. No coffee has ever tasted better!

Next to the government sponsored coffee shop was the Chemchemi Cultural Center. This too was government sponsored. Its director was a famous South African author and painter, Ezekiel Mphahlele. Several times I wandered into the cultural center to see the art on display and talked with Ezekiel. I learned that he had been banned from writing and creating art in 1951 by the apartheid government in his native South Africa and was living in exile in Kenya. I also learned that he was giving art lessons at no cost. So, I signed up and started art classes. I was not, nor have I ever been, much of an artist, so my reasons for doing this probably had more to do with excuses to eat lasagna, smell the aroma of good coffee and talk with Ezekiel than to do art. I did, however, sincerely want to learn how to paint. I tried hard to learn, but after awhile I sensed Ezekiel's frustration with my lack of talent and

dropped out. But I have never forgotten the kindness and influence of this man, who because of his beliefs about the rights and dignity of people of color in his native land, had to live in an unfamiliar place and teach untalented people like me how to paint.

I was intrigued by a piece of clay sculpture, a two foot high statue of an African Christ carrying the cross; it was prominently displayed in the art center. The face of the Christ was African. It expressed Christ-like character, and reminded me that the meaning of Christ belongs to all cultures and that to depict Christ as an African is as appropriate, perhaps even more so, than the white Christ on the walls of churches I had observed as a child. Alice Karanja was the artist who created this special piece.

When I knew that I'd be leaving Kenya, I went into the center and, much to Ezekiel's delight, I bought the sculpture. I had no idea how I would get such a large and heavy ceramic statue back to the States in one piece. I took the statue to a local cabinet maker who built a box to fit it. The box was lined with foam and the art treasure gently rested inside. The lid was nailed shut and a rope handle affixed to one side of the box. It was heavy and all I could do to carry it. The box stayed with us as onboard baggage all the way back to the United States. It remains to this day one of our prized treasures from Africa.

Although Nairobi was a cosmopolitan city, many of its surrounding neighborhoods were shanty towns of tin roofed shacks and open sewers that were teeming with humanity, having left tribal lands and migrated to the city to look for work. In these slums, early signs of Kenya's unstable future were visible. The tribal structure which had given stability in the rural society had broken down in these newly formed urban areas.

Historically, Kenya represented a geographical region which was home to forty ethnic tribes. Each tribe had its unique culture and language. For centuries they had lived in near isolation from one another except when war broke out between them which it often did. There was no sense of a national identity among the tribes. However, when the British colonists came, they tried to create a national unity among the tribes, and after independence

in 1963, the country was thought of as a union of tribes. However, embedded in this new imposed national identity was a recipe for future social unrest because the tribes remained fiercely independent and had little experience in operating together as a unified nation—the nation of Kenya had been a British concept.

Kenya was experiencing massive social change. The cities, especially Nairobi, became the big mixer of tribal ethnicity. Now in the city, people of various tribes found themselves a long way from home and their ancestry. Their tribal connections were dissolving, although their tribal identity remained strong, and thus the stability of the old culture was crumbling. The economy was unable to support this massive migration to the city, urban poverty was rampant, and vast slums surrounded Nairobi. I worked in one of these slums with a sociologist from Egypt who was studying these massive social changes. I learned about the situation and its potential impact. We were trying to find ways to provide help and assistance to those trapped in these depressing neighborhoods.

It became apparent that Kenya would need to resolve the long history of conflict between the tribes, or tribal conflict and violence would ensue and spill over into politics. Signs of the latter were already visible. The Kenya we experienced was primarily dominated by the Kikuyu tribe in business and government, and tensions with the strong Luo tribe were already emerging. The first major sign of infighting came in 1969, after we had left Kenya, with the assassination of Tom Mboya, a Luo. Mboya was a young, brilliant leader who helped found the trade union movement in Kenya and was Minister of Economic Planning in Kenyatta's government. He was also a founder of the Kenya African National Union Party, the party that successfully struggled for independence. He was openly critical of the rampant corruption in the Kenyatta government. It is believed that he was killed because of the threat he posed to some (likely Kikuyu) who were in positions of power and feeding off this corruption that had replaced honest government. This terrible assassination was an early sign that the social stability necessary

to build the infrastructure of a stable nation was eroding.

Tom Mboya was known to me because of his affiliation with the labor unions. Through my work at the conference center, I was helping mediate relationships between management and leaders of the new labor movement. I was attempting to bring them together in dialogue to seek common ground and lessen their developing tensions. It is my belief that these efforts were a significant contribution to the peaceful development of labor unions in Kenya.

Kenya had its social problems, but it also had abundant natural beauty that attracted tourists from all over the world. We took several trips to different parts of the country, and one of our most memorable was to the white sandy beaches outside Mombasa where we camped for a week.



Leaving for Mombasa

We left Limuru early on a foggy morning, so typical of the rainy season, for the all day drive to Mombasa. As we had done



in Europe, we were loaded down with camping gear and excited about our destination. As we drove along the road early in our trip, a giraffe ran alongside and in front of the car much to the boys' delight.

The road in those days from Nairobi to Mombasa, most of the way, was dirt and just wide enough for two vehicles. We had been advised to watch for elephants crossing the road, and more than once we had to swerve around huge piles of their droppings in the middle of the road. There were a few towns—Machakos, Kibwezi and Yoi—along the way, each town comprised of a dirt

road lined with tin shack shops and a few vehicles but plenty of barefooted people. Most of the road, however, was desolate and lined with dense brush on each side.

After arriving in Mombasa, we camped along an isolated white sand beach which stretched in both directions as far as we could see, and the water was warm and blue as the sky. As we set up camp, we were surprised to see, alongside the campground, numerous baboons swinging from tree to tree, chattering away and apparently having great fun. They entertained us during our entire stay; they never came close or frightened us in any way at all.



Camping on the coast in Mombasa

I shudder to think that this pristine Indian Ocean area is now overrun with fancy resort hotels. One of the best things about our time in Africa is that we were there before any major development, and Africa was still the primitive land I had read and dreamed about as a boy. We enjoyed idyllic days in this paradise.

Except for a Dutch family camped a quarter of a mile away, we had the entire camping area and the beaches to ourselves. Fruit peddlers would come by each day with fresh mangoes and other

delicious fruit. We learned how dangerous the sea can be. One day our beautiful stretch of pristine ocean was invaded by a pack of Portuguese Man of War jellyfish (Blue Bottles) who moved in close to the beach. Up to this point things had gone smoothly with the exception of Peter getting knocked down by a big wave and causing Cindy great fright; then our first warning of the jellyfish came when he cried out in pain from a jellyfish sting on his foot. These creatures have long, stringy tentacles that spread out in the water for three to six feet and deliver quite a jolt to a swimmer. After the incident with Peter, we were careful and had only a few minor stings.

However, our neighbors, the Dutch campers, liked to swim and snorkel quite far out near the outlying reef. One day we heard screaming from the reef and in the distance could see a person rapidly swimming toward shore. We ran to meet the man as he came up on the beach and we could see the long red marks all over his body from the tentacle stings. He was in pain and in a minor state of shock. Fortunately, he was a doctor and able to treat himself, but it took him a few days to recover from his ordeal. This scary event put an end to our swimming. However, despite the jellyfish, this was probably the best beach experience we have ever had.

There is much geographical diversity in Kenya from the tropical coast to the snow capped top of Mount Kenya. One of the most significant parts of this diversity is The Great Rift Valley which carves a deep and expansive crack between the coast and the highlands and is an awesome sight to behold while standing high on a rim above the distant floor. This incredible geological phenomenon runs from Northern Syria to Central Mozambique. Many fossil remains of early humans have been found in the Rift, and it might have been the cradle of human history. From Limuru, where we lived, the Rift was a short drive. Even to this day, I can feel the awe of standing on a ledge just off the road high above the valley floor. The view extended for miles; Lake Naivasha and herds of animals, especially zebra, could be seen in the distance. It was breathtaking. We crossed the valley several times, but the

most memorable was the visit made with a friend I met on my first trip to Kenya in December 1962.

As I shared in an earlier chapter, I had met John, a student at the nearby Saint Paul's Theological College, when I attended the All Africa Christian Youth Assembly in Nairobi right after Christmas, 1962. During the days of the conference John and I became good friends. When I left the conference to fly home, I said goodbye to John, neither of us expecting to see each other again.

The day we were allowed to move into our house at the conference center John and I reconnected. I walked over to the theological college to look for him. As I approached the small campus, I could see a group of people sitting out on the grass. Getting closer, I thought I recognized John and called out his name. Startled, he turned toward me with a look of astonishment; how could I be appearing in front of him? We ran toward each other ending up in a bear hug. I excitedly explained to him how I got there, and he was thrilled to know that I was living next door. Sharing news of events that had happened over the past year and a half, we walked to my new home. I eagerly introduced him to Cindy and the boys, and from there our friendship grew.

John invited me to travel with him to his home village near Lake Victoria. It was break time for him from school. We packed our gear in the Volkswagen bug and headed toward the Rift Valley, Kisumu, Lake Victoria and John's remote village. Along the way we stayed with friends of John's, sleeping under mosquito netting to ward off malaria carrying insects and eating ground nuts (peanuts) for breakfast.

John told me at one point that we would have to park the car and walk the rest of the way into his village. It turned out that his small village was way back in the bush. There were no roads leading to it, just trails cut through the thick vegetation. As we walked along a narrow dusty trail under the burning heat from the sun, I heard a hissing and rustle of grass. Looking toward the noise, I saw the head of a Black Mamba snake moving quickly alongside the road. The Black Mamba is the second largest venomous snake in the world, and its bite is among the most deadly.

They are known to be very aggressive and greatly feared. I was stunned, and had I known at the time of the snake's aggressive nature and the power of its venom, I'd have probably run in the opposite direction. However, seeing such a magnificent and lethal creature so close up in the wild was not uncommon in this tropical environment.

Arriving at John's village was like a grand homecoming. It was comprised of about a dozen mud huts with smoke spiraling up lazily from the center of thatched roofs. John's extended family, young and old, came out to greet us. His mother ushered us into one of the huts, dark and smoky inside. There were a few furnishings and a central fire, its smoke drawn up through a hole in the roof. The floors were made from cow dung that had been wetted and pounded into a near cement surface and then etched with intricate designs. It was immaculately clean.



With John Onyango

A chicken was slaughtered in our honor and was soon roasting on the fire in a big pot. When the meal was ready, we sat in a circle. The ingredients in the pot, similar to a thick chicken stew, were spooned onto our individual plates, and we scooped it up with bread similar to cornbread. As we ate, John translated for his elders a lively conversation about my family and country. After our bountiful meal, we headed back to Limuru again staying with John's friends along the way.

One of our family trips set the stage for a memorable and funny, yet tense, experience. We left our little house in Limuru on a foggy morning, headed for several days of camping in the Amboselli Game Reserve, a large wild animal preserve on an ancient dried lake bed at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. I had, so I thought, thoroughly researched the trip and had been assured by a government park official in Nairobi that camping inside the reserve would not be a problem. I was instructed to report to the park headquarters before setting up camp so that I could be

shown the camping sites. I assumed (wishful thinking) that there were protected areas set up for family camping, just like in Europe, so no big deal. However, this was Africa, not Europe!

After driving for most of the day, we left the black topped road and followed a dirt road for many miles which led us to the park. The land was flat and dry, without a sign of civilization. It was populated by scattered sage-like shrubs. A few gnarled thorn trees struggled to grow out of the dry terrain. There were occasional curves in the road that came up suddenly and caused us to navigate the turn by swerving out into the dry sand alongside the road and kicking up clouds of dust as we fishtailed back onto the road. I imagined myself a driver in the famous East African Safari Road Race.

We arrived at the so called park headquarters; I say so called because it was one small building surrounded by a twelve foot high stockade fence and gate. I have never been quite sure how we found this "headquarters," because the dirt road disappeared once we were inside the reserve and became no road, only tracks of prior vehicles. I think we were either unusually adventurous or quite crazy to have persevered in coming this far. We were determined to find the family camp ground and its imagined safety.

The kids were excitedly anticipating the wild animals: lions, rhinoceros, elephants, wildebeests and especially cheetahs. I climbed out of the dusty VW and ambled up to the building. A young African dressed in traditional safari khaki met me at the door. It was clear right away that our language of communication was going to be Swahili. "Jambo, Bwana," and I launched into a broken Swahili explanation of the camp ground we were looking for. The young man looked puzzled, but he understood that we were there to camp and view wild game. "Kuja hapa, Bwana," he said, as he moved toward the VW. I followed him. He explained that he needed to get in the car with us — already four of us — and show us the camping area. This all seemed okay, but I had hoped that the camping area was somewhere inside the twelve foot fence and formidable gate.

With the young man stuffed into our already crowded Volkswagen, we went out through the big gate, beyond the comfort of the high fence, and drove for about ten minutes before the young man said, "hapa." "Sisi ni kwenda kambi hapa?" ("We are going to camp here?") I asked in amazement. "Dio, Bwana" ("Yes, sir") was the answer. There was nothing but sand, brush and a few scrub trees. There was no evidence that anyone had ever camped in the spot he had led us to and there was no protection. I surveyed the surroundings and did observe way off in the distance what looked like a safari camp with several tents. So, I thought, "This is where we are supposed to camp and therefore it must be safe." We took the camping gear off the top of the car; leaving Cindy and the boys, I drove the young man back to the headquarters by following the tracks we had made in the sand. These same tracks were the only way to find my way back to our campsite.

After returning to the "campsite" we set up the tent (by now I was a pro at it), put our folding table and chairs out in front and relaxed. Before dusk we went over to check out the big safari about a half mile away. It turned out to be a few Americans on a trip of their life time. They each had their own tent with a comfortable bed, a red oriental rug covering the tent's floor. The camp was equipped with a shower and tables were full of food and beverages. African servants were everywhere and dusty Land Rovers were parked nearby. They seemed a bit surprised that we were out there by ourselves with no guns or guides.

As the sun slid below the horizon dominated by Mount Kilimanjaro, and daylight waned, soft shadows appeared on the snowy top which covers the summit of this majestic mountain like icing on a cake. It seemed we were in a perfect spot and, again, experiencing more of the magic of Africa. Dinner together with the lantern's dim light and the wild sounds in the distance was both soothing and exciting. After dinner, we put the kids down in the bedroom area of the tent and contentedly sat outside reading by the lantern's flickering light. We were having our own safari of a life time too and a lot cheaper than our luxuriously camped neighbors.

Engrossed in my reading, I was getting a feeling like one gets when being stared at. I looked up and to my shock beheld a large elephant about twenty-five yards from us! I didn't know much about elephants, but I was scared. Whispering to Cindy, I said, "Don't panic, but there is an elephant out there!" We didn't panic, but we did nervously and slowly pick up the table, lantern and chairs and move them inside the tent. Somehow, we felt more secure in our tent. In reality, this massive creature could have crushed us all with one foot. We breathed a sigh of relief when the elephant moved off to the side. Nevertheless, by now we were conjuring up horrible images of the elephant coming through and stepping on our children. We considered leaving but quickly realized there was no way we could find the park "headquarters" or the neighboring safari in the pitch dark. We were on our own!

The next thing that happened sent our apprehension rocketing. The elephant, somewhere by the side of our tent, found a tree to tear apart for its sumptuous pulp. We could hear the power of this animal as it tore into the tree. Soon it quieted down and so did we. The elephant must have had its fill from the nearby trees and had meandered on. We went to bed much relieved and were looking forward to the day ahead in the reserve (all that the word reserve meant was a protected area for the animals; we humans were on our own).

It was not long before we were awakened by loud noises which we recognized as the roaring of lions and the trumpeting of elephants. When you are afraid and marooned in the dark of night in the African bush, it's amazing what the imagination can conjure up. We began to imagine a herd of elephants being stalked by lions. The herd, in its fear, could stampede, running wildly through our little campsite. So, like birds who protect their young inside the nest when feeling danger, we picked the kids up and scurried into the VW Bug. Somehow, we felt safer in this tiny car.

What a miserable and frightening night we spent. My six foot one frame did not fit well for sleeping inside a VW Bug. The bug was equipped with a sunroof. During the night I would poke my head up through the roof and look around. Each time I reported

back to Cindy that we were surrounded by elephants, but they seemed quiet. This information did not give us comfort! Neither one of us slept, but the kids did.

As morning light came on slowly, in the dimmest of light I could still make out the elephants. As the light grew brighter, the perceived elephants became brush and scrub trees. In the black of night they had given the image of elephants because that's what my frightened mind expected to see. We had a big laugh and some breakfast. We then broke camp—no intention of spending another night of horror—and toured the dry lake bed by car for a few hours. We saw a vast array of African animals in their wild habitat including one illusive cheetah and then headed for home. That was our one and only safari.

We did enjoy many other less adventurous trips. We received an invitation to have tea with a couple of English ladies who had lived in the country for many years and had just completed a climb of Mt. Kenya, visible from their rustic homestead. Their house was typical of the old settler houses. It was a long, rectangular building with white stucco walls and a thatched roof which hung over a porch that extended the full length of the house. Kerosene lanterns hung from the porch rafters. The surrounding area was lush with vegetation. We were treated to a sumptuous English tea and conversation.

Several times we received invitations to visit people who came to the conference center for various events in their villages. These were poor people who lived in huts, scratching out what they needed from the land. Their graciousness to us has never been forgotten. We would drive along rutted roads to visit and arrive in a cloud of dust and scattering of chickens, greeted by lively children in khaki shorts or bright dresses and the usual running noses.

Some of the huts were round while others were rectangular. The roofs were covered with overlaid dried leaves. To get inside we had to squeeze through a small door. Inside there was a polished dirt floor, and the air smelled of smoke from the central fire. Tea was served British style, with warm milk and sugar, infused

with the aroma of charcoal which we drank as we visited, sitting on makeshift chairs.

There were many tastes and smells that were different from our accustomed diet. While attending an event at the farm home of the secretary of the Christian Council of Kenya, we were introduced to a Kikuyu drink. The drink is similar in texture and taste to kefir, but it is not made in the same way. A piece of burning charcoal is placed in a large gourd to add flavor to it. After the coals are removed, a substantial amount of cow's urine is sloshed around inside the gourd and poured out. It is then filled with fresh milk and left to sit for several days. The result is a thick milky drink that, surprisingly, is quite tasty.

One cold morning I responded to a knock at our door. On the other side, I found a young boy dressed in khaki shorts and shirt, barefooted despite the cold. He enquired in English, "Do you have any work for me, Bwana?" He had a sad aura about him especially in his eyes. He told me his name was Nathaniel, and he was an orphan who slept wherever he could in the local villages. He had once attended a primary school. I put him to work in our gardens and paid him about twenty-five cents a day for his labor. He was very grateful. As our family got to know Nathaniel, we became fond of him and enjoyed his company.



Nathaniel in his school uniform

I liked working in the garden with Nathaniel. One day, as we worked, he shared the hardships of his life with me. In between sobs, he told me how alone he felt and how hungry he was. I was touched by him and invited him into our house for dinner, and we opened our hearts to him. Years later when he told the story, he said that I said to him, "There is always room for one more." He went on to call this his day of "always one more room for one."

On that day, and on many others, Nathaniel sat down with us for dinner; this experience, sitting at the table with us, was for him, a whole new world. We taught him how to sit at a table and use utensils, and he was always a charming guest. What we didn't realize was that we were breaking colonial custom—it was not appropriate to invite the “natives” of Nathaniel's class into your house unless they were servants. So, again, we were in trouble for breaking the rules of the status quo.

Nathaniel had never seen Nairobi even though he lived only twenty-five miles from the city, so I invited him to go with me on a trip to the city. He was beside himself with joy and anticipation. As we approached the outskirts of town and passed the college, his eyes opened like big saucers. He was amazed at what he was seeing—the contrast to his village of mud huts. It was a most memorable day for him and for me.

Nathaniel became a part of our family, so we arranged for him to have a bed in the center where there was space. Eventually, we managed to get him into a boarding school in Naivasha, across the Rift Valley. He was always appreciative of our support, and for many years after we left Kenya he regularly corresponded with us.

Seventeen years after we left Kenya, he wrote that he had built a small, cinderblock house on the outskirts of Nairobi and named it *Pillsbury Square*. He gathered his friends together for a dedication of his new house, and he read them the following, written by himself. The following is a family treasure copied verbatim from the original typed and signed copy.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*It gives me great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of my beloved father Peter W. Pillsbury. His aim was not Moon, Mars, Saturn or Jupiter “But his aim was geared towards my Destination”. It is 17 years ago since Pillsbury left Kenya when he realized that he has laid strong foundation for his son in Kenya of whom this building bears the witness. I have used my own hands to build this house which has taken me nine months to build as a sign of dedication to his service.*

*Today, living as free man with my wife Sarah conducting my own affairs as proud man without the indignities, humiliation and subjugation endured during my childhood.*

*Peter Pillsbury and his beloved wife Cindy, although far away from Africa and Kenya in particular, they are not like early Missionaries who left behind many buildings or other material things as we read of them in East African History. They are a man and a wife who are amongst the most outstanding world has produced. Peter W. Pillsbury is a pioneer in breaking down the racial barriers. He always gets concerned over the political unrest which surrounds us such as Uganda and Rhodesia all the way to S. Africa.*

*He is a rare Jewel in my life and family, we have been together spiritually. It was on Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964 when a new chapter was opened which is known as one more room for one.*

*I have the heaviest responsibility of carrying forward the task of helping my neighbors to get one more room for one. For it is by so doing that I shall be doing the wishes of Peter W. Pillsbury.*

*This house has been built 25 Kilometres West of Nairobi Capital of Kenya. Off the road "Great North Road" Locally known "Nakuru-Nairobi Road. I therefore request you to say "Long Life to Pillsbury and Cindy", As you shake hands with your friends. Also one minute for a prayer so that God may sustain them until we meet.*

*Nathan M. Rafiki.*

We sometimes fail to understand the impact of little acts of kindness. Nathaniel helped us to understand this, and that was his gift to us. For unknown reasons, his letters stopped, and, sadly, we lost him. We will always hold him in our hearts and be, as he called us, Mom and Dad.

It soon became apparent that the leadership of the Christian Council of Kenya had no intention for me to run the Center even



Inside Nathan's house

though that is what I had been brought there to do. It turned out that bringing me in was the idea of the few well meaning Europeans who were still active in the Council. Obviously, the decision did not have true support of the African leadership. This was further reason for Mbiru's attempt to hold on to leadership of the center and his open contempt of my presence. These were the struggles inherent in moving from a colony to an independent nation.

Independence had brought a greater sense of pride to the black Kenyans. After many years of being told what to do by white colonialists, they were standing up and saying that they were now in charge. Mbiru did not have the skills, as I had, to develop the center, but that was not the issue. It was their center, and they should have chosen whom would run it. I had become entangled in the battle for their African self-determination. This situation would, eventually, cause us to leave Kenya long before our work was finished. Little did I know that I would face a similar situation again in Detroit.

Mbiru stayed on as the administrative secretary of the Center and became my nemesis. He planned to stay in control. We clashed, and I felt terrible frustration over not being able to make changes which were to me so obviously needed such as getting the center more engaged in nation building. Others saw the stalemate between Mbiru and me, and discussed possible resolutions with me. As a result, a special committee was appointed to study the problems which I had surfaced at the Center. The committee's major recommendation was to hire a new director, a young Kenyan studying in the U.S.

The hope was that the new indigenous director would be able to resolve the problems and move the center forward on its mission. At the same time, in our hearts we knew that, for ourselves, we needed to consider going home. We were in the wrong place to be of service. The days when Europeans (and white Americans) from the outside could lead were over; it was now the time for Africans. Even though I was able to make meaningful work for myself, organizing conferences and leading groups, the frustration and conflict with the African leadership of the Center grew and ultimately led to our abrupt departure.

In addition to the self-determination issues, I think I had pushed the elders too hard with my social action and change agenda in a culture where the elders are honored for their presumed wisdom. It was simply not appropriate for a young twenty-five year old white, or black, to push for change against the will of the elders. Also, as I said before, and this was probably the main reason for leaving: as a newly independent nation, Kenyans should have their own people in charge of leading their own institutions.

Deciding to leave was a tough decision because we loved Kenya and its people and, among the young and progressive Kenyans, my work was appreciated. We set a date for our departure. I was moved by the words of Andrew Hake, an English clergyman who dedicated most of his life to Kenya. He spoke to me privately at the Nairobi train station when we left, "Peter," he said. "You have done in such a short time more positive things for this country than others have accomplished in years". These

were affirming words from a man I deeply respected and they helped assuage the sadness of leaving. The train trip to Mombasa was anti-climactic. We boarded a ship in Mombasa for the return trip to Europe, and after a brief stay in Italy, we boarded another ship, this time bound for New York.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A SERMON EVERY SUNDAY

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Sadly, we left Kenya knowing that we had made the right decision to leave but aware that we were heading to an unknown future.

We traveled again on the Kenya Castle, reversing our journey to Kenya, heading for Naples. As we slowly made our way up the coast and ultimately into the Mediterranean, the balmy weather of springtime in the Southern Hemisphere gave way to the cool of fall. After arriving in Naples, we took advantage of our wait time by traveling to Rome, but we didn't get to see much of the city because David became sick. However, Peter Jr. and I took a day trip to Pompeii. We were surprised by how much of the city had been unearthed. It was like entering the town as it had been on that fateful day in AD 79, when Mount Vesuvius erupted in a gigantic blast of molten lava. Unearthed figures of people and animals were encased in hardened lava; the agony of death was visible in their contorted bodies, and the artifacts of everyday living left as they were on that awful day.

Disappointed that we did not get to see more of Rome, we headed back to Naples to board the Raphael and complete our journey to New York. A star ships of the Italian line and touted as one of the great ocean liners of the day, the Raphael was quite a contrast to the Kenya Castle, lacking its simplicity and intimacy. The Raphael was a gaudy ship, like a Las Vegas hotel. Our budget room was on a lower deck with no porthole. We glided out of Naples and around Gibraltar through the Strait and into the stormy, wintery Atlantic. The ship pitched and bobbed all the way to New York Harbor, making for a most unpleasant passage. It was too cold and wet to walk the outside decks, so we were confined to the inside. It was an anti-climactic trip. Our

adventure of hopeful and positive intentions, which had presented us with new, and sometimes inexplicable experiences, was ending; we were headed home uncertain about what was next in our life. We could have been on the grandest ship with luxury suites, calm seas and sunshine, but we still would have felt apprehension because we were returning to an uncertain future.

The roughness of the sea and the rolling of the ship made us seasick, and we relieved the symptoms with medication, which led to a near tragic event. Each evening the boys ate dinner with the other children aboard before we went to eat with adults in the main dining room. After their dinner, we took them back to our cabin and bedded them down making sure that they were asleep before we went to eat. One evening, after we had left, both boys woke up and David managed to find the bottle of sea sickness medication and swallow nearly the whole bottle. Peter Jr. informed us of this when we returned to the cabin. In a state of panic, we rushed David to the ship's hospital where they pumped his stomach and kept him overnight for observation, and his mom kept constant watch. After a tense night, the ship's doctor told us that David would be fine. After this incident, we ate with the boys.

*Cynthia's Reflection*  
*Seasick Pills*

*David was three when he swallowed the seasick pills. After his stomach was pumped, I sat with him, not only to comfort him but to keep him awake. He had also been given caffeine because staying awake was crucial. The nurse assigned to monitor David's progress checked his eyes intermittently and, each time, would exclaim, "Mamma Mia!" Her excitement further troubled me; it caused me to believe his situation was even graver than I had thought. I knew only a few words of Italian, and the nurse spoke no English.*

*I was very worried about David, so, for me, staying awake was not difficult! In addition to my concern about David, I felt extremely guilty for leaving our boys unattended in the*

*cabin and, obviously, for my own unthinking carelessness in not properly concealing the seasick pills!*

*I continuously talked to David, steadily encouraging him to respond. It was a team effort! He was very determined to stay awake, comprehending, even at his tender age, the urgency of our plight. Our encouragement for each other was reciprocal; as I encouraged him, his brave young spirit was encouraging for me.*

*The nurse continued to monitor David's progress, and, gradually, her comments became more relaxed, and she smiled! Her now softer words and her smile gave me great hope. The grey, morning daylight was now breaking. Finally, I felt the great blessing of relief when the doctor examined David and announced that he was fine. We were all supremely thankful and happy!*

*The lesson I learned was that I must watch over my children with greater diligence! I am forever grateful that we still have David!*

On a cold dreary morning in the late fall of 1965, we slipped past the Statue of Liberty and into New York Harbor. We were home but unsure of our next steps. This was quite a contrast to the excitement and anticipation of our leaving two and a half years earlier. As they had done when we were stranded in New York Harbor, the Presbyterian Church Mission Office provided us with a furnished apartment, so we were quickly settled. The apartment was in a complex owned by the church and available for returning and furloughed missionaries. It was near Barnard College and less than a block from Riverside Presbyterian Church. Our apartment was up a few floors, and to get there we passed through an entrance with a doorman and then rode the elevator. We thought this was pretty fancy.

Our time in New York was exciting but full of frustration not knowing what was next for us. We had never lived in a big city and now, here we were in one of the largest! We took advantage of as much of what the city had to offer as we could afford. We

visited the Museum of Natural History several times where the boys had a chance to gaze up at the monstrous dinosaur skeleton and wonder, as I had as a child, what the world was like when these huge creatures roamed. The Hayden Planetarium was especially popular with Peter Jr. and was the spark that ignited his life-long passion for the stars.

Cindy's days were spent with the boys. Each day, weather permitting, included an outing to nearby Grant's Park which picturesquely overlooks the Hudson River. The park is dominated by the tomb of Ulysses S. Grant, a hero of the Civil War and eighteenth president. On these daily outings, the boys and their mom hurried the several blocks to the park anticipating the other children, the swings and jungle gym, the boys oblivious to the park's historical significance.

My days were spent on the subway as a messenger for the Presbyterian Mission office delivering or picking up visa applications for missionaries from the various embassies. I was like a mole that traveled underground to a specified destination, surfaced, and then went back underground. The subways were my daytime home and became as familiar to me as the streets I grew up on.

*Cynthia's Reflection*  
*New York City*

*Our accommodations in New York exceeded all expectations! The cozy home was elegantly furnished throughout and met our every need. There were two bedrooms, a living room and dining room, all furnished with beautiful, dark mahogany furniture. The kitchen was well supplied, complete with utensils and even fine china. A book with recipes and directions for use of appliances was on the table. We were generously offered the use of bed and bath in a vacant apartment for my parents' enjoyment when they came to visit.*

*A handy contraption, before unseen by us, made "taking the garbage out" a delight. It looked like art from a Dr. Seuss book! Our boys were intrigued by this thing that was a silent*

*butler, contained inside a long closet, which opened to each floor of the building. Inside the closet was a pulley-driven rope which threaded through the center of several square wooden platforms. We could stop a platform by holding the rope, then set our garbage on the platform, give the rope a tug, and magically, (it seemed) send it on its way below to be collected. This convenient invention might be commonplace to some, but, for us, it was a unique wonder!*

*While living in New York, Pete's job required him to spend hours each day inside the subway system. David, Peter, and I also were dependent upon the subway for appointments, although we walked to most of our destinations. The A&P grocery store was a six block walk; we went there three times each week because we needed three walking trips to carry a week's supply of groceries. We also walked to Grant's Park almost daily for the boys to play, getting plenty of walking exercise.*

*I kept busy, naturally, meeting the needs of two young boys; at the same time, I was worried about our future, because I knew that Pete was unsettled about what path he might take within his chosen profession. Given his philosophical and theological differences with the church, I was aware that he felt uncertainty about finding a job in which he could serve with integrity. I did not disagree with Pete about his religious dilemma or his philosophical views. However, he had made a commitment to this vocation, and I did expect him to stick with it, because I knew of nothing else on the horizon. I was a mother with two young sons, and I felt dependent upon him to provide for us. We had used up our savings; we did not own a house; we did not even own a car! Our stay in New York was limited.*

In the evenings I'd fill out applications for inner city church positions. I was drawn to the inner city because of the challenges the church faced in an environment of poverty, segregation and deteriorating neighborhoods. Also, in the inner city I thought there would not be so many conflicts with my unorthodox theo-

logical views. However, I was completely unaware of what working in the inner city would be like and how it would ultimately alter the direction of my career and our family's life.

The applications resulted in a few interviews but no job offers. One potential job interview took us to Baltimore to interview for a position in an inner city church. The job seemed promising, but in the end, I was turned down. This was deflating, since I had never before been turned down for anything. "How could they not want me," I pondered and questioned, "What is wrong with me?" Perhaps my questioning of the church's doctrine came through in the interviews. Frustration over what we were going to do was mounting when an invitation came asking us to come to Detroit to be interviewed for a pastor position in an inner city church. We all four flew to Motor City.



**Redeemer Presbyterian Church on West Grand Blvd.**

Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Detroit was dying if not already dead, a victim of white flight to the suburbs. It was old—a big, Gothic structure on West Grand Boulevard down the street from the General Motors Building and its high end shops, across the street from the prestigious Ford Hospital; on the other side was Motown Records, which was making music history. The

church in its heyday had been a religious home to sophisticated, white Presbyterians; it had been a mark of elegance with its gothic towers overlooking the wide, stylish boulevard decorated with trees, shrubs and flower gardens where ladies had pushed fancy baby carriages and fashionable people strolled.

That's the way it was once; however, by the time we got there the congregation, once large and white, was small and mostly black. The neighborhood of old grand homes and fancy apartments was in the process of giving way to rundown old houses, crowded apartments, and broken down cars parked on the streets. The church and its surroundings had the look of an old and worn tattered coat; it still looked like a church but the infrastructure was crumbling. Ford Hospital, a teaching hospital renowned for its medical care, was across the street from the church. The hospital sat like an isolated island in the midst of this changing sea of poverty and humanity.

Members of the Presbytery (governing body in Detroit) wanted to help transition Redeemer into an integrated church. I was eager to take on the challenge. They sensed my eagerness and offered me the job. My only directive was to help the church reflect the changing neighborhood. I wanted to be on the cutting edge of action for the church in the city and connected to the Civil Rights Movement.

As a family, we thought of ourselves as average Americans settling into our vocations, me as a minister and Cindy hoping for a normal life as a wife and mother. This normalcy was soon to change as were our lives. Unknown to us, we had moved into the eye of a storm of social change of whites abandoning the central parts of cities and fleeing to the suburbs. The inner cities were left as mostly black and poor, ghettos hemmed in by a surrounding ring of white suburbs.. This was a storm that ultimately engulfed much of the country during the sixties and seventies.

It was early spring 1966; we left Detroit and headed back to New York with a job offer in hand and feelings of great positive anticipation of the opportunities that lay ahead. It didn't take us long to pack up in New York and head back to begin our adventure in Detroit.

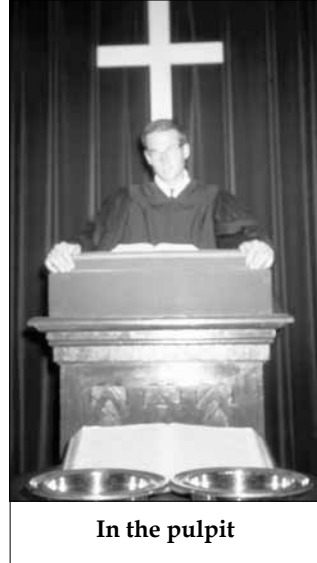
When we arrived at our new home, along with the moving vans, I was informed that I was expected at a retreat the next day. Dutifully, I left for the retreat leaving Cindy and two boys in a house into which the movers had dumped our belongings, surrounded by strangers and the inner city. We were used to new and different situations after three years of travel and living in strange lands, yet it seems incredulous to me now that I would leave Cindy in a situation like this. However, at that time in our lives, Cindy thought it her duty to support me even if it left her in a difficult situation, and I thought it was my duty to pursue, at almost any cost, my career.

The retreat turned out to have a major influence on me. It was led by Saul Alinsky, whom I had never before heard of. He had been hired by the most forward thinking leaders of the major church denominations to teach a hand-picked group of inner city community organizers who had started a fledgling community organization in our new neighborhood. The church leaders were looking for a way to be relevant in the midst of the social and racial change swirling about them. In the end, I think they got more than they bargained for.

Saul, I quickly learned, was one of the best known radicals of the day. He had pioneered a highly renowned “people power” based organization in the Back of the Yards area of Chicago; he had gone toe to toe with the infamous Mayor Daly, authored a well known book, *Reveille For Radicals*, and trained Cesar Chavez, the Hispanic organizer who was making waves in California organizing the grape pickers. I quickly realized that I was in the company of a celebrity and a genius; Saul challenged many of my middle class values and was clearly a man deeply committed to social justice. I was quickly taken by his views of social justice.

In Chicago and other cities, Alinsky had demonstrated that a small group of well organized poor people could control their own destiny despite the power of the establishment. Over several years, along with a few others, I was taught by Saul. He opened my eyes to the injustice in our community and motivated me to make a difference through empowering people in the community to take action.

As pastor of the church, I had to preach every Sunday. Each week I was faced with the agony of “the sermon.” It was not because of an inability to interpret scriptures and put ideas together. I had had outstanding training in Biblical exegesis and homiletics, and I was a good public speaker. No, the cause of the agony was deeper and one that I understand better in retrospect than I did at the time. At the time, it seemed like I was struggling for ideas and themes on which to build a sermon, so I would pace the floor and become more and more tense and aggravated—not the behavior you would expect from a pious clergyman thinking about the joyous task of preaching the word of God!



What was becoming evident to me was that my pain over the sermons was related to my struggle with faith. I knew what the twenty-five to thirty faithful parishioners sitting each Sunday in the first few rows of the giant sanctuary wanted to hear, but it was not what I believed. They wanted to hear the traditional Christian stories, stories about the salvation of their souls and the joys of heaven. Reading my old sermons through the lens of who I am today, I can feel the battle that was going on within me. I was trying to walk a fine line between not wanting to be seen as too radical and expressing my emerging unorthodox beliefs and social concerns.

Like many young people, I wanted to change the world by righting the wrongs I saw, but much of the church’s doctrine and issues of faith did not have relevance for me. Yet, I felt an obligation to give to the small group of parishioners what they expected in the way of Christian tradition. They did not want to hear me questioning, especially at Easter or during a funeral, the resurrection of Jesus or the mythology of heaven and hell; so I dutifully tried to maintain tradition and doctrine, which had little or no

meaning for me, while attempting to point the congregation in the direction of social action.

The group of parishioners I was trying to minister to, although small, was diverse. There were a few elderly whites who were still members of the church, more because of circumstances than of choice, in an integrated congregation. They could not afford to move to the suburbs as many of their white neighbors had done, so they were destined to be part of an inter-racial community whether they liked it or not. In addition to these reluctant white Presbyterians, there were a few educated, middle class black members who did not live in the surrounding community and who, I think, saw their attendance as a statement of belonging to an inter-racial church. The rest of the congregation was made up of poor blacks who lived in the community and who likely would have been more comfortable in a Baptist Church. There were many expectations I needed to fulfill as the pastor of this diverse group; however, one of the expectations was for me not to impose my liberal interpretation of the faith and the church's doctrine.

*Cynthia's Reflections*  
*Detroit*

*When the invitation came for us to visit the church in Detroit, we were excited. "If they were willing to pay the expense of flying our family there," we thought, "they must be serious." We took the trip; the people were hospitable and hopeful that Pete would take the position as pastor of their church, which he did. We were all thrilled to have found our new home!*

*We were happy, and we were successfully planted in Detroit, two blocks from Ford Hospital. A large, two story house, a manse, was provided for us featuring a walnut paneled dining room with French doors, a fireplace in the living room, a sunny library, and a stairway with curved, walnut banisters. Our house was on a corner where kids liked to hang out and pass around a bottle of Dr. Pepper. Pete built a sandbox for Chris near the cherry tree in the back yard. Numerous, exotic*

*perennial bulbs flowered in the spring. There was a double garage at the back, by the alley, built for smaller cars long past, so we parked our new Plymouth Valliant on the street, near our front door.*

*Pete was, once again, able to provide for our family, a great relief for me! While maintaining his professional integrity, his work evolved over time, and he seized opportunities to reach, with greater depth, his true purpose of serving humanity. Despite disapproval of some "Christians" in the Presbytery, he was able to continue working, still within the accepted (by most) Christian framework, with Jesus as his model, serving the poor, the needy, the outcast, and the downtrodden.*

*As for my part, I got busy right away checking out resources; once I discovered the Detroit Art Museum, I felt I had found a home, and I spent many hours of spiritual relaxation there amidst amazing art. The boys and I discovered the children's library and its programs along with the children's museum and children's theater, with its many drama productions. Less importantly, we discovered a savings bank down the street within walking distance, so the kids took their small savings and opened accounts (with my encouragement.)*

*Our neighbors came from diverse walks. Living near Ford hospital (a teaching hospital), there was a turnover of young, medical intern couples living in the house next door; across from us, a widow ran a boarding house; next to her lived a couple who served as janitors of Redeemer Presbyterian Church; down the street lived the family of an Episcopal chaplain for the hospital. In the second house from us, lived a family who migrated from the South to Detroit, for work in the auto industry. Gary, a boy from this family of eight, was a best friend of our boys, and all the kids enjoyed playing together with our kids. Occasionally, Grace, their mom, and I took the whole gang of our kids to theater productions together.*

## CHAPTER NINE

### FROM SOCIAL ACTIVISM TO COUNTERCULTURE

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Redeemer Presbyterian Church, as I have indicated, was in a racially changing community. It stood like a monument to a bygone era of affluence. The community we came into along West Grand Boulevard was anything but affluent. Local residents, fed up with the conditions of their neighborhood and with some heavy handed urban renewal activities of the city, had founded a community organization with support from the major church denominations. It was called the West Central Organization (WCO). I jumped into the organization with both feet and tried to pull in reluctant church leaders, who thought the organization a bit too radical, with me.

It didn't take long for an issue to immerse in our community that would test the commitment of Redeemer Presbyterian to serve its surrounding area. The West Central Organization became locked in a heated battle with the city over a research park slated for part of our community. It was touted as an urban renewal project, when in reality it was an urban **removal** project which forced poor families, some home owners and some renters, into near homeless conditions.

The reason for this potential homelessness was because there was a shortage of affordable housing in the city, a scarcity that had been well documented. The people being dispossessed of their homes had no place to go within their community, and they were proud of their community, as they should have been. Although it was depicted by the city as a rundown, blighted neighborhood, in reality the houses and yards were neatly kept. It was a place where both white and black families lived comfortably together. By the time the West Central Organization got involved, parts

of this once nice community looked like they had been bombed. Once elegant apartment buildings that had most recently been home to lower income families had been cut in half by the wrecking ball, exposing floors of rooms with no walls to the outside, yet with furnishings neatly arranged in each room. It was a startling and sad sight. To me it seemed unjust for the city to uproot the residents of these buildings, at least without helping them secure alternative housing.

The city, so they said, was making way for progress and renewal albeit with little concern for the impact on the poor. It was done under the guise of removing urban blight. Obviously, there had been little planning for the relocation of residents and/or there was a callous insensitivity to the needs of these generally poor people who had little voice. It is likely that the city leaders thought the people in these houses could be pushed around with little reaction and that a massive research center would boost the city economically. A reaction, to their surprise, did come from the West Central Organization.

The WCO brought new numbers to the equation of urban renewal in west central Detroit, and these numbers represented people. I became one of the leaders of this struggle against the city and helped mobilize the liberal resources of the Detroit area churches to lend support to the protest, which included marches and anti-slogans, sit-ins and arrests all geared to embarrass the city leaders, expose their insensitivity and get them to stop the research park project.

*The Detroit Free Press*, September 27, 1966, ran a banner headline "Clergymen Defy Mayor to Open Vacant Home" with a picture of a sea of clergy in front of a boarded up house on Hobart Street in the area being razed to make way for the research park. Clergy from all over the Detroit area had bravely responded to our call for support. The group included Rev. C Kilmer Myers, the Episcopal Suffragan Bishop of Michigan and other prominent clergy mostly from the suburbs. They too shared my activist values and those of my urban colleagues. Their participation was welcome and encouraging. We continued to be a major news story for the rest of the fall of 1966.

Our actions resulted in a large protest and a much publicized meeting with Mayor Jerry Cavanagh. I stood outside the mayor's office because it was thought, due to my leadership in the protests, that my presence in the meeting with the mayor might be too inflammatory. The meeting ended abruptly in a stalemate while 100 clergy stood outside the mayor's office. He would not budge and refused to halt the project, so it was checkmate time! The protesters returned to the house on Hobart Street to continue the occupation vigil. Subsequently, the mayor responded by having the fourteen house sitters, myself included, arrested and charged with felonious assault (charges which were later dropped).

## Clergymen Defy Mayor To Open Vacant Home



**No Arrests  
Are Made  
By Police**

**House to Get  
New Occupants**

**BY GARY BLONSTON**  
Free Press Staff Writer

The West Central Organization (WCO) and more than 100 Detroit clergymen defied Mayor Cavanagh and invited arrest Monday by taking over a vacant house claimed by the city for urban renewal.

While two plainclothes policemen watched, priests and ministers recruited by the WCO from throughout the metropolitan area pried open the doors of two near-northwest houses, knocked plywood boards off the windows and moved in with cleanup crews.

A WCO spokesman said the group would move a distressed family into the house.

Free Press Photo by ED HAIN

**The crowd of clergymen and supporters defied arrest in front of 5778 Hobart**

Detroit News front page the day before arrests. I am on the porch and getting ready to address the crowd

Being arrested and put into the Detroit jail was one of the worst indignities of my life, but it was, I believed, for a good cause. We were treated like common criminals and stripped of our belongings, rings, watches, etc. My gold wedding band which I was forced to remove was never returned. They were obviously going

to teach us a lesson for our outrageous activities against the powers that controlled the city. I was escorted to a small cell with walls smeared with excrement. After several hours, we were released under a court order and greeted as heroes by the exultant crowd awaiting us outside the downtown police station. I, personally, experienced a feeling of triumph, because we had held together and had growing support. The *Detroit Free Press* made the arrests front page news, and I was emerging, not by my choosing, as one of the key spokesmen for the entire protest. I was often on local television espousing our cause against the city and pointing out the injustices to the people in our community.

One of my ministerial colleagues was Father Michael O'Hara. We connected through our involvement in the West Central Organization. Father Mike was pastor of St. Patrick's Catholic Church. He lived by himself in an old, brick rectory on the West-side with a cook and housekeeper. The once proud and affluent parish, like Redeemer Presbyterian, had been abandoned by the white, Catholic, auto working families as they fled the inner city to the suburbs of Highland Park, Dearborn and Birmingham. The neighborhood surrounding the parish was, when I met Mike, populated with poor black and white families, much like the community surrounding Redeemer Presbyterian Church. Mike had joined WCO and our efforts to fight the city over the development of the Research Park. We became friends and fellow "warriors" in the urban renewal struggle. He often would invite me to lunch at his "house" and also entertained Cindy and me for dinner. These were special times of good fellowship.

Mike was soft-spoken but intense and passionately believed that the church had to be helping relieve the indignities suffered by the poor. He connected with the local people and became a supporter of WCO. He was always there when needed. He often put his feelings about the experiences he was having with the protest into words on paper. I was humbled and honored by what he wrote about my leadership. After the massive demonstration and house sitting which I described above, Father Michael O'Hara wrote the following article for his parish bulletin:

*“It all began last Friday with a call from WCO....The voice on the phone went on to say that Bob Knox’s [the housing commissioner for the city of Detroit]men were boarding up more usable housing in this city that is presently plagued with a housing shortage. ‘Come to the rescue.’ So over to Hobart St. There must have been twenty policemen over there guarding a vacant home on the steps of which sat a few women and children and Peter. Peter is the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church which is located in the Research Park Area. Peter’s full name is Peter Pillsbury, a man with the guts required of a true member of Christ. Peter led this resistance against another attempt to destroy a community.”*

This was the nature of my calling—to be there to help and protect the vulnerable from the unchecked and dehumanizing actions of the city leaders. For me the decision to support the West Central Organization and play a key role in this protest was simple. It was an extension of my belief in the social transformative power of the Gospel. I saw the job of the church not as saving souls to get to Heaven but of witnessing to the meaning of Christ by serving the poor and minorities in our society. In the beginning I was energized by the role our little church was able to play in doing this work. However, as city government and community became more polarized and my leadership role emerged the, support from the small, integrated, although mostly middle class black, congregation began to wane.

Many of the church members believed that I was going too far. They simply wanted a nice church to attend on Sunday and support for their middle class values; they did not want a center for controversial social activism. This negative view was also shared by many of the conservative Presbyterians in the suburbs that surround Detroit. They saw me as a rabble rouser giving the church a bad name in the larger metropolitan area, and they attacked the work of WCO. I was beginning to think that the church was part of the problem of social injustice rather than a tool to eradicate it. My disillusionment with the church became more intense.

In retrospect, I know that the non-supportive church members and the city leaders were decent and well meaning people, but at the time all this was going on they seemed to exemplify social injustice. Furthermore, from what I have learned through many life experiences, there might have been more constructive ways on both sides to resolve the problem. But, at the time, I did what I felt I had to do just as the mayor and his team did what they felt they had to do. We were all, in a sense, limited by our roles and short-sighted-vision.

However, our ultimate goal was to build, through the community organization and alliances with churches, a power base on the west side of Detroit to counter-balance the raw, uncontrolled power of city government. All this was affecting my thinking and irrevocably altering my career and personal direction. I had basically given up on the church as an instrument for social change; my questioning of church doctrine was becoming more public, and my hope of bringing about a change in the direction of the city seemed lost. I was uncertain, again, about my future.

During this time of social activism in the inner city, Cindy was supportive and tried to be active in the church. She and the two boys would dress up each Sunday and come to Sunday school and the service. She even found time to help out with vacation Bible School.

The boys attended the local school and were the only white students. To get to school they walked with the neighborhood kids. Their journey took them down the block past the tenements, across a vacant lot and finally over the Edsel Ford Expressway to Fairbanks Elementary School. Yes, it was located on the banks of the freeway. In the afternoons and on weekends the boys played in the neighborhood. Even though we were the racial minority, this had been true in Africa too; life seemed quite normal.

Our neighborhood was not immune to violence and other aspects of poverty. From our open windows we could hear sounds of drunkenness and violent family arguments echoing from the tenement apartments farther down the street. Houses were continuously being broken into, but ours was not. Maybe it was

spared because I was a minister, or maybe it was because we lived on a corner and people were frequently in and out of the house.

When we heard that a woman's body had been found in a vacant lot the kids crossed on the way to school, we started to consider other options for their schooling. We were torn between trying to live authentically in the community and being responsible parents for the future of our boys, but we knew that we had to make a change. After visiting the Friends School near downtown, we decided to enroll the boys there. A wealthy benefactor from suburban Detroit provided us with the tuition we could not afford. Cindy began taking the kids to and from school by car each day. This school turned out to be a great experience for the boys. They still had all their neighborhood friends.



**Our family Detroit Spring 1967**

*Cynthia's Reflections*

*Pete invited Saul Alinsky and several of his colleagues to our house for a meeting. Since it was to be in the morning, Pete asked me to cook and serve breakfast. This request did not seem unreasonable to me, though I hadn't anticipated the need to care for one of our sons who would be sick with mumps at the time of the meeting.*

*I cooked and served these men their breakfast of bacon, scrambled eggs, biscuits, orange juice and coffee in our elegant walnut paneled dining room. We lived in a turn-of-the-century house with a butler's pantry separating the dining room from the kitchen. This design created a barrier isolating the kitchen entirely from the dining room, so I discovered that I was feeling like a cook/waitress. I felt awkward and alienated in my own home! I felt there was something amiss and I should not be feeling this way; my dilemma was that I could not sort out how to do it differently and feel okay. I completed the serving and clearing and left the group to finish their meeting.*

*I cared for my son, moving up and down the stairs at every opportunity, wanting to give my full attention to him because he needed it. I could have insisted on canceling the breakfast because David came down with mumps, but I did not have the courage to cancel in the face of upsetting Pete. David did heal in good time. Nevertheless, it seemed unthinkable to actually request cancellation of the meeting for reason that I needed to care for our sick child which, by far, was the greater priority for me! What a martyr I was!*

*This incident I now recall from many years ago stands out as a turning point, typical of the ridiculous behavior I had been willing to embrace because of my image as a wife.*

*We lived in a large house in Detroit with two little boys. My husband was seldom home because of his extensive work in the community. I had no car regularly available to me, no family near, and only a few new friends who did not live in the inner city as we did. Life was starting to look less than ideal. It happened to have purchased a book; The Feminine Mystique,*

*by the famous Betty Freidan; I picked it up, started reading, and began to understand some of the reasons for my martyr behavior. I attended a few women's liberation meetings where discussion centered mostly on the institutional behaviors in society that favored men over women, important but not personal for me. My concerns were immediate and related to family and children, an example of which I described.*

*I began to critically examine my life, even saw a psychiatrist weekly for several months while my self esteem expanded and I began to develop strategies for better meeting my own needs. Pete, at the end of this chapter, began to critically examine his life, too, from another perspective. This was the beginning, as we put it all together, of creating a "whole" new life for us.*

The boys were aware of my activism. Cindy brought them to some of the demonstrations, including the one where I was hauled off to jail. They understood, well beyond their years, issues about racism and injustice and could clearly articulate their views on these subjects.

Our clash with the city over the proposed Research Park was just one aspect of growing tension. The July riot of 1967 drastically changed the political and social climate of the city and caused me to evaluate my role as a social change agent in a nearly all black community. We were vacationing at my sister's home in Aspen, Colorado, enjoying the clean air and pristine river that literally flowed through her house when a TV news bulletin reported that a disturbance had occurred on 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Detroit, just a few blocks from our home on Poe and Bethune.

The disturbance, kindled by the pent up anger of poverty and racism that I and others in the community had tried so hard to address, ignited an inferno in a matter of hours. The TV news showed West Central Detroit was on fire—homes were being burned, shops looted, snipers were firing into the streets. Thousands had been arrested and held on Belle Isle, and the National Guard was called in. The news was mind boggling to us. This was now happening

on our street and in our very own front and back yards while we were having a refreshing family vacation.

After getting news of the riot, my brother-in-law, a photographer, and I drove twenty hours non-stop to Detroit. When we arrived at our house, the neighborhood seemed like a war zone. Much of it looked as if it had been bombed, with houses and shops gutted and smoldering and tanks rumbling down our street rattling the windows. More than once, nearby gunfire sent us diving for cover on the floor inside our home.

In the midst of so much destruction and show of force, I felt helpless. It was far too late in the game for a white social activist minister to assume he might have any positive impact on the situation. Frustration over lack of the city's sensitivity on behalf of Research Park and pent up rage over years of racism and poverty had now morphed into a major explosion. It was the beginning of a long demise for the city and that demise continues to this day.

Today, West Central Detroit has become the Pompeii of America. Much of it looks like the inhabitants left all at one time running from an impending disaster, and what remains are many unoccupied, boarded up, decaying houses. In fact, in a Wall Street Journal editorial commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the riot, the journalist stated that the riots created an exodus of middle class blacks leaving an economic vacuum in this area of Detroit. This exodus included Motown Records which had occupied a converted house on West Grand Boulevard just down the street from Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

Given the immensity of the riot and the damage and explosion of racial frustration among the Black community, it was hard to find any way to be helpful, especially for a white activist. I did discover a temporary niche. Along with some other concerned white clergy, I helped by cataloguing prisoners who had been arrested looting and were being held in a makeshift camp on Belle Isle. Our job was to notify relatives of the prisoners so that they would know that their loved ones were alive. Not much else could be done. The lines of bitterness had been indelibly drawn across the city. The heart of the city had been broken. In looking

back after forty years and seeing the current condition of Westside Detroit, I know that it never recovered. Sadly, it has become the most decaying city in America.

The aftermath of these events was soon to affect me personally. One day, after the riot, I was working in the church when the secretary brought a young black man into my office. He was dressed in a dashiki and a skull cap. He was polite and got firmly to his point. He told me that it was time for me to leave the community. He said, "You are no longer welcome in our community," and he chillingly added, "If you do not voluntarily choose to leave, then you will leave in a box." He was serious.

His message did send a chill through my bones, and I understood it.

Black Power had taken over the movement for racial justice. Black Power emphasized racial pride and social and economic power through exclusively black organizations. Their symbol was a defiantly raised, tightly clinched black fist. They were clear in telling whites that "whitey" had no place in this new movement. This was a radical departure from the Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King where Blacks and Whites worked together for racial justice. However, it was understandable young Black Americans had become impatient with the slow pace of civil rights and wanted to take care of their own problems without the help of "whitey."

It was during this time of Black Power that I turned the church over to black militants for a major—no whites welcome—address by Stokely Carmichael, a leading Black Power advocate. You can imagine how reactive the conservative Presbyterians in Grosse Pointe and Birmingham were when they saw the front page of the Detroit Free Press heralding this Black Power meeting with no white admittance into one of "their" churches.

On the night of the presentation by Stokely, the church was guarded by young black men dressed in black uniforms and berets. This event at the church was too much for many of the white suburban church members to tolerate and too much for the most conservative clergy—they had had enough of me and my social

change ministry, so they increased their personal attacks and demanded that I be thrown out of their church.

I did not need the reaction of the conservative clergy to know that it was time for me to change my focus on helping bring about social and economic change in areas that were predominately black. White social activists were out of place in the inner city. It was a struggle that belonged to the black community, not my struggle.

In Kenya my struggle had been similar. As a white foreigner with progressive ideas and a liberal philosophy, I was not well accepted by the old church leaders. In their culture young men like me were to listen to the elders and follow their lead. I was threatening the status quo and their comfort—not a good thing for a young man to do, especially a white outsider. It was also about the color of my skin, which represented years and years of colonial subjugation. Here I was again, in Detroit, in a situation of living and working in a predominately black community and, increasingly, being viewed as an outsider and a person of the wrong color.

Realizing that our role in the community needed to change, Cindy and I joined an organization called People Against Racism, which in its beginning, was supported by many of the same denominations and church leaders who had supported WCO and were committed to fighting racism in the white community. At first, we were impressed by the bright young people who were leading the organization. They understood that the role of whites was to work on racism issues in their own communities and fight against forms of its institutionalization.

This time it wasn't just me; Cindy was also involved. We attended regular meetings, studied the history of race in America and participated in demonstrations. However, ultimately, we found the leadership of the group dogmatic and inflexible. Conversations became focused on radical political correctness and romanticized revolutionary theory. Most of the supportive church representatives had withdrawn support from the group because of its growing radical nature. Disillusioned by attitudes we were

experiencing inside the organization, we slowly pulled back. People against Racism had started out with a laudable and focused mission, but like so many organizations during those days in Detroit, it seemed to get caught up in revolutionary rhetoric and dreams.

During all this racial and social upheaval going on around us and the need for me to find a new focus for my social activism, Cindy gave birth to our third son, Christopher on March 9, 1968. We now were the happy parents of three children and, once again, our future was unclear. However, we were thrilled to have three healthy boys.

An opportunity was developing for me. The city's post mortem of the riot gave birth to the "New Detroit Committee." It was funded by the powerful Ford Foundation, and, as its name implied, its job was to create a new Detroit out of the ashes of the riot. One of the committee's mandates was to fight racism in suburbs that virtually sealed off the Westside ghetto—the riot torn area of the city. With cooperation from the faith groups, the committee formed a number of Inter-faith Action Centers in those suburbs.

They hired a tough and savvy executive director to run the Inter-faith program who had political experience working with the federal government in Washington D.C. Despite my radical background in the city, I was, surprisingly, hired as the director of the Dearborn Inter-faith Action Center. My job was to organize people in this all white community (known then as one of the most racist towns in America) to address the racism that was institutionalized in their businesses, clubs, schools and churches. The spirit of Dearborn, home of Ford Motor Company, was symbolized by Orville L. Hubbard who was mayor from 1942 to 1978 and known as the "Dictator of Detroit." Hubbard was also known as an outspoken northern segregationist.

The new organization I had joined as a director had many challenges. I think the direction that the Civil Rights Movement took after the horrific summer of 1967 set back progress that had been made in integrating some areas of the city. The violence in the in-

ner city caused white people living in the suburbs to be even more fearful of blacks than they already were. The defiant attitude and anti white behavior of the black power movement, understandable as it was from my perspective, fueled the fears of many white people. The result of this fear helped to create greater segregation and ghettoizing of Detroit and of most American cities, and much of it remains to this day.

Shortly after my transition to the Inter-faith Action Center, another important event in my life unfolded. Because of connections I had made in Princeton Theological Seminary and because of my reputation as a social activist, I was invited to visit Cuba with four other American clergymen. The invitation to go to Cuba had come directly from Fidel Castro, the president of Cuba, through Carl Ogelsby. Ogelsby had been president of Students for a Democratic Society, 1965-1966 and was a radical writer and activist who had been to Cuba and met Castro. The invitation was specifically for a group of American clergy. Travel by Americans at that time was strictly forbidden, and even now, it is restricted.

The group of five clergy including myself, a Catholic, an Episcopalian, a United Church of Christ representative, and a Presbyterian, met at the Mexico City airport. I felt an immediate affinity for these men. They were committed Christians and caring individuals with deep concern for social justice. One had worked in Latin America for many years and one was working on a film about the life of the Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara. Somehow, through church influence, we got approval from the American State Department to make the trip. However, we could not fly directly to Cuba; we had first to go through Mexico, but the Mexican authorities were uncooperative in giving us exit visas to Cuba. For nearly a week we went to the government offices in Mexico City, and each time we were told that the person who could help us was not there. For all practical purposes we were being held in Mexico on political grounds—the Mexican government did not have positive relationships with Cuba. Finally, our persistence paid off, and we were granted visas.

However, the struggle to obtain exit visas provided us time to go outside the city. Our group was invited to Cuernavaca to visit

the famous Mexican muralist, David Siqueiros. He was a radical political activist who captured in his art a passion for the plight of workers. He was arrested in 1960 for opposing the President of Mexico by leading protests against the arrests of striking workers and teachers. His most famous work, "March of Humanity on Earth and Toward the Cosmos," completed in Mexico City in 1971, is said to be the largest painted mural. When we visited with Siqueiros, he was in the process of creating this masterpiece.

Siqueiros, the old revolutionary artist, welcomed the five of us into his house with open arms. I remember well his greeting, "Mi casa, su casa." We sat around a table on his patio next to a swimming pool, drank margaritas and talked social revolution. After a time, he took us out to a large studio where he was working on models for the March



Members of our group visiting with Siqueiros

of Humanity and walked us through the panels he had created. Here was social and art history being made. This was an extraordinary experience! I had not previously realized the supreme talent and scope of Siqueiros' work, his fame as a social muralist, and how imbued his life had been since youth with social and art history.

As we left, he presented us with a letter written by one of Fidel's sisters, who was living in Cuernavaca at the time, for us to deliver to Fidel. With the warmest of best wishes he sent us on our way.

While in Cuernavaca, we also spent time with Ivan Illich at his Intercultural Documentation Center. Illich was a philosopher and socially radical, anarchist Catholic priest. His center was billed as a language school for missionaries and others desirous of working in Latin America, but it was also a place that attracted free thinkers from all over the world. He, perhaps, is best known for

his book on “de-schooling” that criticized contemporary practices in education. We had a lively discussion with him about a range of social and political issues in Latin America.

Shortly after our stay in Cuernavaca, we got clearance to leave Mexico City for Cuba. We boarded an old Cuban Air DC3 and headed for the infamous island. During our stay in Cuba, we were to meet with Christian communities within the island as well as see the educational and health systems and other aspects of Cuban life.

As guests of the Cuban government, we were treated very well. Cuba in those days was investing huge resources in their youth. Education was mandatory, the schools were modern and vibrant, and all kids had medical care. Free daycare centers were provided for working parents. These centers were clean and run by, it appeared, caring adults. We did, as planned, meet with members of small Christian communities; I remember them being surprisingly open and even critical of their government. I am quite sure that we only got a partial glimpse of Cuban life under Communism, but we did get a fairly open view.

Everything on the island, other than the facilities for children, was in need of parts and repair. The Havana Hilton, where we stayed, had lost its pre-revolution luster and was in need of replacing nearly everything from carpets to bedding. The big sliding glass doors that opened onto balconies had not been washed in years. The elevators groaned their way up and down. The hotel was packed with Russians who were providing expertise in many areas including engineering, defense, and agriculture. The streets of Havana were missing big chunks of asphalt, and old, worn out American cars bounced along over the rough roads coughing out black smoke from the cheaply refined gas and the burned out engines; they were literally being held together by baling wire. Because of the American trade ban there were no parts available to repair cars and other parts of the Cuban infrastructure composed of American manufactured goods from an earlier era.

One highlight of Havana was the Coppelia ice cream shop that we could see from our room at the Hilton. Hundreds of people

would stand in a queue that stretched for blocks to get a taste of ice cream. One evening we stood in line with the Cubans and, after a couple of hours, were rewarded with delicious ice cream. Lines such as these were everywhere because there were so many shortages of everyday goods. Cuba obviously had problems. However, it was clear to us that they had made great strides in the quality of health care and education for all citizens.

We took a packed, overnight ferry to the Isle of Youth where Cuban young people were turning the island into an agricultural paradise. We tried to sleep with all the others on the floor of the ferry, but sleep didn't come; so we spent most of the night playing chess. On the island we were greeted by young people enthusiastic about the revolution and, from the look of their clothes



Young Cuban women working the fields on the Isle of Youth

and leathered skin, they were working hard to build the future of Cuba. Several young men challenged us to a rousing basketball game—I think, despite our lack of sleep the night before, we won, and we were playing in street shoes.

Back in Havana, we were taken to visit the offices of an organization promoting the solidarity of the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America. There we were introduced to the head of the organization who had been with Fidel and Che in the revolution. We talked with him about revolution and social change movements. As the conversation went on, he became pensive, and then he shared his opinion about us. His approach was gentle and affirming. He said that the problem with what we were about, particularly our involvement on behalf of black people, was the wrong struggle for us. In essence he said, and with some eloquence, that we needed to accept ourselves as white, privileged Americans and define our own liberation. In other words, don't

keep seeking to remedy other people's problems and avoid your own.

I was greatly affected by these words from the Cuban leader and they affirmed the thinking that was already going on in my mind. Over time, I understood his words to mean that change must start with ourselves—who we are. I needed to stop looking outward at the oppression others experience and look inward at myself as a white, middle class American and assess what I need to do to become a more fully whole human being! We can only change ourselves and, through our own change, affect others.

My new position as Director of the Inter-Faith Action Council was partially in sync with the insights shared by the Cuban leader. As I indicated, the center was in Dearborn. Our center was charged with building good will toward people of color, assisting white people to come to grips with their own personal racism, and also with institutionalized forms of racism—systematic policies and practices that create disadvantages for a specific race.

My Cuba trip seemed to mark a pivotal time for both Cindy and me (although she stayed home in Detroit) because we were both moving in a more inward direction; as a result, Cindy's life began to change. She no longer desired to limit her purpose in life exclusively to family and to her husband's professional goals. She wanted more breadth and meaning in her life. She was influenced by the new women's liberation movement. This led to her seeking an identity for herself outside the home. She enrolled in classes at Wayne State University. We began to restructure our roles at home by sharing the house keeping and child care.

I believe Cindy's desire for change in her own life had a strong influence on the changes beginning in mine. With her prodding, I read A.S. Neil's *Summerhill*. This book caused me to examine my relationship with our boys. I had been quite traditional in my relationship with them, especially regarding discipline. Cindy, the ever good mother, encouraged me to examine the way I related to our boys as an authority figure. I was transformed by this book. Summerhill was and still is a school in England founded in 1921 by A. S. Neil where children are given the freedom to experience

democracy and grow to their fullest potential without adult coercion. Their current website states that it is a place:

*Where kids have freedom to be themselves...*

*Where success is not defined by academic achievement  
but by the child's own definition of success...*

*Where the whole school deals democratically with issues,  
with each individual having an equal right to be heard...*

*Where you can play all day if you want...*

*And there is time and space to sit and dream...*

I learned that kids at Summerhill made choices, even choices about what they would study or not study. These choices were okay as long as they did not infringe on the rights of others and the child took responsibility for the outcome.

In our house it had been, in relation to the kids, my way was the only way. I ruled, as my father had done, with a stern hand and was quick to administer a spanking. These behaviors changed after reading *Summerhill*. We started having family meetings where everyone had an equal voice, and we discussed and agreed on rules. Spanking and other forms of punishment were outlawed and personal responsibility encouraged. The change was remarkable, and we all took an active part in running the household and talked about our successes and mistakes. The dinner table became an exciting family forum where the children could share their concerns about life in the family, war, racism or a problem with kids in the community. This change was profound for our family. In addition, the reading of *Summerhill* sparked my interest in education and led us to be involved in the founding of one of the first "free schools" in Detroit.

Since I had left Redeemer Presbyterian Church, we had to vacate the house on Poe and Bethune because it belonged to the church. We found a house to buy just a few miles north in the suburb of Highland Park, another area that was moving toward becoming an all black community. We bought the house from a widow who had lived in it for many years. She was anxious

to vacate this changing community and was willing to sell it for \$19,000. It was a large two story frame house with shingle siding and cement pillars with lions' heads at the entrance. The interior decoration reflected the 1940s. It was surrounded by other proud, substantial houses which had been home to solid, white middle class families since the 1920s. Similar to our neighborhood on Poe Street, a few white residents held on, but most of the homes were being occupied by black families. However, there were white families living on both sides of us. One was a large working class family that probably did not like the changes in the neighborhood, but could not afford to move. On the other side lived a city councilman and his wife—a long standing Highland Park family trying to hold on to the past.



Peter Jr., David and friends on Poe Street

We had a great time redecorating the old house to fit our sixties values. We stripped all the painted woodwork, like archeologists uncovering layers of history down through years and years of paint and color changes to the original beautiful mahogany which had been painted over many years ago when natural wood went

out of vogue. Our archeological work continued as we steamed off the old wallpaper layer by garish layer right down to the bare plaster. We then covered the walls with wallpaper of bold flowers and stripes which came alive at night in the black lighting we installed creating a psychedelic ambiance!

The dining room with its striped, black lighted wallpaper, mahogany trim and opulent crystal chandelier was our gathering place for great “feasts” with many of our counterculture friends. We sat around the big table set with our sterling silver, large wine goblets, cloth napkins, bowls and platters of food, accompanied by rock music and entertained by black lighted wallpaper, luminous with color, dancing off the chandelier’s crystals.

We had bought the house with the idea of setting up a small urban commune. After all, it was imperative for our countercultural brains to question the traditional family living arrangement. Three other adults, over time, joined us in the house and shared responsibilities. In actuality this communal approach worked quite well, yet our family of five remained the foundation of the household. The boys always had a caring adult around, and there were plenty of people to share the household chores and finances. We felt enriched by the company of additional adults and believed their presence was also enriching to our children.

This out of the ordinary living arrangement, I think, caused our Caucasian city councilman neighbor some consternation. He and his wife undoubtedly felt the presence of differing values in their neighborhood. In their minds, we were white people not living like white people are expected to live. We had loud parties with many people who must have looked strange to them wearing their colorful sixties garb coming and going. We did not fit their idea of “good” neighbors.

Life in Detroit was not always easy, but despite some of the downside of living there, we managed to find great resources to explore and enjoy such as the Upper Peninsula, museums and theaters, camping on the shores of Lake Huron and partying with wonderful friends. We have always looked for the positives in our experiences and have not allowed ourselves to be victims; in

our own way we have tried to shape our environment and existence to fit our vision of how it should be. We have always chosen pioneering over settling; thinking over blind acceptance, love over anger and violence, and possibilities over pessimism.

Up to this point what we had done had been tolerated, though not accepted enthusiastically, by our respective original families, but what was yet to come likely sent them over the top and wondering about our sanity.

## CHAPTER TEN

**DISENCHANTMENT AND PERSONAL CHANGE**

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Detroit, even though we had good friends, excellent schooling opportunities for the boys and top quality museums and entertainment, no longer felt right for us. By the beginning of 1970 we were seriously thinking about leaving, and the idea grew as we more and more embraced a counterculture life style and felt our purpose moving from social activism to inter-directedness and self-awareness.

As I have indicated, after the riot in 1967, understanding purpose was difficult for white social activists, like me, who had worked to bring about change and racial equality in communities that were mostly African American. With the onset of the Black Power Movement, we didn't, or so we thought at the time, have any place to go. (Remember that I had been told in definite terms, by the guy who came into my office, to leave the black community where I lived and worked.) The young, radical voices in the black community had branded us as "white honkies" (a disparaging word for whites used by militant blacks) and told us that we were not welcome in their communities nor in their battle for racial justice.

Being an activist for justice in a black community one day and the next day being branded, by some of the same people you had worked with, as a racist honky was disturbing. It was not easy for me, but I, at least, had the perspective of the experience in Kenya. Also, I had listened to the wise words of the Cuban revolutionary who pointed out the problems of engaging in the black community's struggle.

A further effect of the post riot period was a cloud of self-deprecation that spread over many of the young white activists who had created self images connected with the struggle for racial jus-

tice. The militant black voices denouncing everything white had a powerful influence. It was hard to find anything good about being white; many white radicals beat themselves up over who they were by emphasizing all the bad things that our culture of white supremacy had perpetuated such as war, racism and poverty.

It appeared that blacks owned their power movement exclusively and were celebrating everything black, while the young white activists wallowed in remorse over losing their self images. Some white activists began to fight back, or so they thought, at the white establishment and at their own identity. They romanticized political revolution as it had been played out in Algeria and Cuba. However, in the end, about all they could do was discuss in endless meetings the importance of or the meaning of one revolutionary figure over another. Mao and Lenin and a few third world revolutionaries became cult figures, and meetings centered on debates over politically correct ideology.

Given this negative scenario and the wise words I had heard from the Cuban revolutionary, it is not surprising that I embarked on an inner-personal journey of change. During my tenure with the Inter-Faith Action Council, I continued to meet with the more radical leftist leaning group, People against Racism. However, I was pulling away mainly because of the realization that, as I have indicated, much of the Left's behavior came from self-deprecation over being white. This adolescent, self-deprecating behavior surfaced in anger directed at other white people in dehumanizing ways. Good people, with viewpoints different from those on the left, were labeled white honky, racist pig or capitalist pig. Police-men, who were trying to do the jobs expected of them, were called pigs, and politicians who supported the war were baby killers.

Obviously, this name calling was dehumanizing to the recipient; however, I believed it was also dehumanizing to the ones who wrote or shouted the names. When one is in conflict with another person, resulting in applying dehumanizing labels to the other, one is denigrated; both are dehumanized, and the commonality shared as human beings is destroyed. Furthermore, when we humans tag fellow humans with disparaging labels, the gap

between us widens and our path to a resolution of our conflicts is made more difficult.

My awareness of this dehumanizing process had roots in seminary where I first encountered the “I-thou” relationship proposed by the renowned philosopher, Martin Buber. This provocative concept affirms how we need to treat another as a human being just like ourselves. The other is worthy of our understanding and love, not an object of our hatred. One is reminded of statements found throughout the Old and New Testaments: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” To enter into this relationship proposed by Buber one must first love himself. It is this self-love and the love for others that was so sorely missing in many of the white social activists. They were consumed by their self-deprecation and projected this onto others.

Dehumanizing others as a means to social change stood in stark contrast to what I knew of great social change agents like Gandhi who, by applying a non-violent, “I-thou” approach, turned British Imperialism on its head and the approach of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who non-violently and lovingly changed America. I clearly saw that my way forward was going to be through understanding and love. I began reading about personal change and transformation (and there were plenty of books to choose from in those days!) and eastern religions. I started on an introspective journey to look inside myself and embrace the “I- thou” concept.

As I was beginning this personal change, a contingent of Presbyterian ministers and lay people, unhappy with my behavior as a Presbyterian social activist, petitioned for my defrocking—they wanted to banish me from their Church. An ecclesiastical trial was held in a large suburban church. For an entire evening the church leaders debated my worthiness to be a minister while, with Cindy by my side, I sat quietly like a distant observer.

The accusers had no idea that I had begun my personal journey away from the behaviors which had upset them and turned them into angry, unchristian like people. Some members of the Presbytery labeled me a heretic and others defended me, likening my work to the tradition of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (a German

theologian who gave his life resisting the evils of Nazi Germany during the Second World War.) Bonheoffer, through his books on theology and his eloquent and moving *Letters and Papers from Prison*, had indeed influenced my thinking. He had a disdain for the other-worldly piety of the Church and called for Christians to be fully present and active in the world even if this meant challenging injustice and hatred, a belief he followed to his death! I was honored to be considered in his tradition; however, what I had done paled in comparison to his life and sacrifice.

Many good people came to my defense, but those who attacked were vicious. However, in the end, and to the dismay of my attackers, my ministry was upheld, and I was not defrocked. What didn't hold up was my faith in organized religion to carry out its mission of love. I was shocked that so many self-professing Christians could act so unchristian like.

Through this stressful time of attack on me personally, I became clearer about my relationship to organized religion and the creeds of the church. Many well-meaning "Christian" people, who attended church each Sunday and recited statements like the Apostles' Creed were, I believed, caught up in trying to make real the great myths that surround Christianity (virgin birth, resurrection, holy ghost, etc) rather than focusing on the essence of Jesus' teaching which is about love—love which can transform people, communities, organizations and even the world.

Shortly after this trial and my vindication, I formally left the church and sought new dimensions of spirituality in philosophy, Eastern religions and in the new age, counterculture movement that was rapidly growing. I have no regrets or hostility over what these people did in trying to defrock me, nor do I make apologies for my actions. In fact, I am grateful for the entire experience, for it opened up a path to consciousness and enlightenment that I continue on today. As a result, I hope that I have become a better person.

Another event that would also shape our thinking was taking place on the other side of the globe—the war in Vietnam. By 1968 the anti-war movement had heated up with large demonstrations

in Washington DC and other cities. When the Black Power Movement forced young white activists out of the black communities and most of the civil rights struggle, they found a new cause in challenging “the white man’s war in Asia.” However, the anti-war protests brought, for many of the protestors, greater and greater estrangement from their roots in white mainstream America.

We, too, got caught up in the anti-war movement and felt some of this estrangement. On November 15, 1969, Cindy took a bus, along with other anti-war protestors, to Washington, D.C., while I stayed with the kids. She joined more than a half-million people demonstrating their opposition to the war. She could smell tear gas in the air as police tried in vain to hold back the demonstrators, and she could feel the power of the surging crowd. This protest was one of the great events of the anti-war movement which would bring an end to the war in four years.

*Cynthia’s Reflections*

*Demonstrating against the war in Vietnam*

*I was among the last to fill one of few seats left on the bus for the anti-war demonstration in D.C. November, 1969. Our collective purpose was to exhibit a presence, demonstrating that we, along with throngs of like-minded Americans, wanted an end to the war in Vietnam.*

*We arrived at our nation’s capitol and walked as a group toward a spot where a larger crowd was gathering. We heard anti-war chanting; there was some movement of the crowd, and soon after that clouds of tear gas began to appear. It was slightly irritating to my eyes but not terrible yet. The movement of the crowd increased as those near the source of gas were moving away. I didn’t see who was releasing the tear gas; visibility was rapidly decreasing; however, there were great numbers of medics dressed in white, wearing masks and carrying first aid kits helping demonstrators who were overcome by the gas. I protected myself as best I could with my red handkerchief scarf and moved quickly to better air, though it was hard to find.*

*The release of tear gas caused a great deal of confusion and created anguish for many. I did not understand the justification for using tear gas and trying to stop our nonviolent demonstration of opposition to the war. I thought it was our constitutional right to do what we were doing!*

*I could hear, somewhere in the distance, some people making speeches, but the air was too thick with gas to walk in that direction. I began looking for someone in our group to partner with, and I soon did; we joined the others and decided it was time to head back to Detroit. Overall, the demonstration probably did make a difference in bringing about the war's end, but, at the time, I did not feel I had accomplished anything much by being a part of it.*

*Moving to the big house in Highland Park was a wonderful change for our family; we were still in the city, but we were not surrounded by the degradation of violence and decay that appeared to be growing in the area near Ford Hospital where we had lived for four years.*

*I was taking classes at Wayne State University during this time, and in Highland Park I loved the convenience of walking half a block, stepping onto a city bus, and riding there and back again without need to find parking space! I felt so lucky that I could go to school, engage myself in academic pursuits, and be surrounded by people who shared ideas that I had never thought of before! This kind of sharing happened in the company of Pete and with our friends too, of course, but the classroom diversity was especially enriching for me!*

*I felt safer in our new home for myself and for our children. I felt lighter and I laughed more; I enjoyed the parties we held in our house. Our children were more relaxed in our new neighborhood and their playmates more culturally diverse; a few of them were also white. Pete and I had more neighborhood friends, some who were parents of our children's friends.*

The social upheaval of the mid to late sixties, which I have been recounting, caused us to re-evaluate our life. I had become

aware that most of what I had done while in Detroit had a negative stance to it: I had engaged in opposition to the city establishment; I had clearly voiced my feelings about the destruction of the Research Park area; I had made my negative views on the Church known; I had demonstrated in opposition to what I felt was wrong. As I reflected, I realized that this was too much of living life in the grip of negativity, and negativity is not healthy for the human spirit.

Clearly, an inner voice was telling me something: "Seek a more positive, constructive journey." I had come to believe that change begins in one's self and felt we needed a new environment, outside the influences of Detroit, in order to begin our journey of introspection and self change.

An evolution of sorts began for our entire family. We embraced the hippie counterculture, and, once we had decided to leave the city, our developing hippie image flowered! This new image provided obvious clues that our focus was changing from urban social action to counterculture. We embraced "back to the land," a new hippie led cultural wave and began envisioning living off the land connected to a community of like-minded people. The magazines and books lying around our house were different now – political and social action journals were replaced with *Mother Earth News*, *The Whole Earth Catalogue*, books on counter life styles, gardening, and house construction. We were especially taken by a book about the life of Helen and Scott Nearing, *Living the Good Life*. They had gone back to the land in Vermont during the Great Depression and in 1952 re-settled in Maine where they lived the remainder of their long lives. They became almost entirely self-sufficient. Their stories emphasized hard work, self-sufficiency, individualism, harmony with nature and community—all the things connected with our vision. We were inspired by the Nearings' story.

Our evolution could be seen in the changes of our clothes. We had always dressed in conservative clothes. For me it was typical business attire, for Cindy traditional skirts and dresses. The boys had short hair and dressed in traditional little boy clothes. This

changed radically for all of us as we embraced the hippie movement. The new look, for me and the boys, included the popular wide bell bottom pants, with plenty of color, worn over boots. One thing that really set me apart was my shirts. Cindy began making bright colored peasant style shirts with large collars, billowy sleeves, and handmade buttons for me. They were comfortable and eye catching. I wore them everywhere!

Cindy also made shirts like mine for the boys and cut open the lower legs of their pants and sewed in bright material to create a bellbottom design. Their hair grew long and was held out of their eyes with colorful headbands. David joined together with kids down the street and formed a seven-year-olds' rock band called the *Butterflys*. They wrote their own lyrics and put them to whatever music they could make. Their music might not have been in tune, but they were definitely in tune with the counterculture.



Our family 1970

Their lyrics reflected the social issues that surrounded them: peace, social justice, and racism.

*Cynthia's Reflections*  
*Clothes*

*Sewing the hippy clothes was fun. My sewing machine sat on a big, wainscoted and screened porch with a glider at one end. The sunlight streamed into the room as I stitched up cute things for my boys and for Pete. The bright yellow prints for shirts and bell bottoms were my favorites. Clothes were just clothes – fashion, or art objects to me. I never attached much personal meaning to them except for their comfort and pleasure of wearing. Pete and I sometimes discussed our differing views on this subject.*

Clothes symbolized my new identity; they were, so to speak, the cover of my new book! The other visible aspect of me that changed was my hair. First came the mustache (which I still have), then a beard, and nearly shoulder length hair held out of my eyes like the boys, with a headband. I was going through a metamorphosis of visible outward changes, but what was not so visible, even to me, were the internal changes—the introspection and self-awareness. I am reminded of a quote from *The Little Prince*, “And now here is my secret, a very simple secret. It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

Clothes can reflect, to a degree, how one thinks or wishes to be perceived. Certainly in the sixties and on into the seventies, but, perhaps, no more than during any other period, style was connected to a social and political culture. One could, or so we thought, tell a person’s social or political persuasion by how they dressed. Our clothes seemed to make a statement that we were no longer connected to the bland and conservative fifties, nor were we identified with the “suits” (a derogatory term used by the radical war protestors to identify those who perpetuated the war and the power elite.)

What the new clothing symbolized as rebellion and inner changes in me were likely not changes but were a re-discovering

of my true self – a self which developed in my childhood and now was becoming part of my adult makeup. I was always to a large degree self-directed, free thinking, questioning of conventional authority, and creative; much of this persona goes back to a small lake community in northern New Jersey, Mountain Lakes, a quiet, picturesque, suburban town of large homes and well-educated people, where my young self image and values were shaped. I remember an idyllic childhood of freedom to roam and pursue interests as they arose such as fishing, sailing, photography and sports. No one checked on me during the day, and I came home when I was ready and when I knew dinner would be on the table.

In this environment, there were few controls in my life. Other than at school, adult supervision and involvement in activities was non-existent; adults were there when I needed them but otherwise left me on my own. It wasn't that they didn't care; they did, and they taught me good values, but they just let me be. This was easy to do because the town was a safe cocoon. It was a time, unlike today, when parents did not hover over and organize kids' almost every move.

Sports activities were organized by us kids with no adult supervision. We set up a football league with uniforms and scheduled games; at other times we put together informal games. In this environment, I developed a strong sense of independence and an ability to make things happen on my own. My world was seemingly large and unaffected by authority. It is no wonder that, since this childhood, I have rebelled against controls and authority and have sought to make up my own mind and find my own way. I have expected to move through life with the same freedom I had in this idyllic setting, and, I think, to a great extent I have done this.

Back to the way clothing reflected my new image, a funny situation occurred having to do with our new clothing look. Shortly before we left Detroit, a friend and benefactor who had provided us financial support when needed and more importantly friendship, invited us out to dinner. He lived, surrounded by wealth, on a lake north of Detroit. His neighbors were some of Detroit's auto

magnates. We were introduced by a mutual friend who thought this compassionate man would be interested in my social action work.

When I got the invitation to go to Cuba, I turned to him for funds to make the trip, and he readily agreed. Our attraction toward each other was unusual, but we did become good friends and would often meet for lunch in fancy restaurants and talk about personal change and human potential. Toward the end of our time in Detroit, we met for these lunches as usual, but my look was now “sixties hippie” while his was still sixties business suit; we were definitely the odd looking pair!

My benefactor friend and his wife met Cindy and me at the Red Lion Inn. I have heard that this was the restaurant where Jimmy Hoffa, the infamous labor union leader who mysteriously disappeared in July 1975, was last seen alive! Cindy and I arrived in our most tasteful hippie attire. A large burly man at the front desk came around and blocked the entrance into the dining room. He informed me, “A jacket is required for male diners.” I responded, “I don’t have a jacket.” I think he was about to ask us to leave, but seeing that we were guests of very respected and regular customers, he offered me a choice of two coats to wear. Evidently they kept some on hand for such occasions. I sized up the two jackets and chose the plaid one that seemed unusually large. I figured that I could meet the coat requirement, add some humor and show how ridiculous I could look by wearing a coat several sizes too big. I was quite a sight, and we all had a good laugh. We enjoyed our going away meal with these wonderful, open-minded, fun-loving people.

There were other outward countercultural symbols in addition to clothing that we embraced. Rock and roll music became a big part of our life. This music actually had its beginning about the time Cindy and I graduated from high school in the mid-fifties—music with Bo Diddley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, Bobby Darin, Little Richard and others. It was a blend of jazz, blues, country, folk and even classical resulting in a big beat, electric sound, and it gave voice to feelings of rebellion and change. Our house

reverberated with the sounds of the Beatles, Doors, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Moody Blues, Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish and many other rock groups. I had originally heard the Beatles'—now a classic album—*Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, while visiting my sister's family in Aspen, Colorado.

My brother-in-law in Colorado had humongous speakers along the wall of their living room, and as they belted out the Beatles' music, the whole house shook. I was enthralled by the beat and raw power of the music and wanted to dance wildly. No music had captured me so completely. Several months later I was in Chicago attending a meeting with some church colleagues. One evening we strolled through old town Chicago, at that time a center of hippie culture. The air was electric with activity and pungent with the aroma of marijuana and incense. I led the group I was with into a record shop and pointed out the bright cover of the *Sergeant Pepper* LP, saying, "This is great music and someday it will be a classic." I think these somewhat conservative church people thought I was crazy. This was just one of many rock and roll albums I would purchase. The music, so full of energy, rebellion, love and hope, expressed how I felt.

Like clothing and music, drugs were a major part of the hippie counterculture. Drugs, so it seemed, were a fast track to enlightenment and self-awareness. Marijuana permeated the counterculture. A few puffs of marijuana relaxed the mind, created more playful and joyous behavior. Under the influence of marijuana people were more easily caught up in the gyrating wild rhythms of rock music, and some became able to see more vividly the natural world. Its influence helped to contemplate the intricacies of a flower, the meaning of life, or to drift off into a world of blissful fantasies and possibilities. However, many hippies wanted a more powerful mind altering experience than marijuana provided, and they found this experience in psychedelic drugs.

Timothy Leary was a Harvard professor of psychology and is thought to have been the godfather of the psychedelic dimension of the hippie counterculture. Leary's professorial research had led him to Mexico where he experienced mind altering psilocybin

mushrooms which were being used in religious ceremonies. He discovered the power of these drugs to open up the brain and psyche to new dimensions of thought and perception. He then began his own experiments at Harvard with psilocybin and LSD. These experiments involved poet Allen Ginsberg, Richard Alpert, later known as Ram Dass (who would come to espouse enlightenment without drugs) and students at Andover Newton Theological Seminary.

Leary and some of his followers began moving out of the mainstream academic environment and into the growing counterculture phenomenon, and he ultimately became a counterculture guru and icon. Many young people who embraced the counterculture were seeking greater spiritual enlightenment. Leary, through a series of college lectures, promoted LSD (a mind altering chemical also known as acid) as a quick path to enlightenment; many young hippies began using it and dropping out of the mainstream. Leary's influence on the counterculture grew, and as a result, President Nixon, no saint himself, called Leary the most dangerous man in America.

The terms, "turning on", "tripping out" and "dropping out" became etched into the jargon of the counterculture. The songs of the Beatles, The Moody Blues and other rock musical groups reverberated with images of psychedelic "trips." These drugs stimulated the imagination, freeing the takers to imagine peaceful dimensions of life and death and a world dominated by peace and love. These imagined states were translated into real life as much as possible.

In 1969 Cindy and I drove to Toronto to see the play *Hair*. *Hair* was the ultimate expression of the counterculture movement. Its pulsating music, bright colors and gyrating performers seemed designed to take one on a trip into a new realm of time and space. It celebrated the best of the counterculture movement, a time when people believed in love, peace and harmony of all life; it was "The Dawning of the Age of Aquarius." To see it was an experience of the times. How wonderful it was to exuberantly celebrate such profound concepts.

The drugs of the counterculture provided users with amazing experiences and often led to spiritual enlightenment and richer understanding of what life can be. However, the same drugs destroyed the lives of some people who became dependent on them; also, overdoses were not uncommon and caused injury to many. Using psychedelic drugs was a shortcut to spiritual awareness. Many, as we did, wanted to find paths to enlightenment that were not drug dependent. As I mentioned above, Richard Alpert, who had worked with Leary at Harvard, became a popular proponent for a non-drug path to enlightenment through practices of eastern religion such as meditation, philosophy and mysticism. This was the path we sought and it had a lot to do with what would ultimately bring us to a remote area of California where we could continue our personal journey of spiritual awakening and enlightenment.

After coming to California, we heard Alpert, by then known as Baba Ram Dass, speak at an Earth Day celebration on the campus of University of California, Davis. We were enthralled by his words about living a spiritual life and living in the now. Afterward, we bought his insightful book, *Be Here Now*, which we read and reread. With many of the others who came to celebrate Earth Day and hear Ram Dass, we chanted, meditated and slept on the ground in sleeping bags. It was an energizing and enlightening experience!

One significant alternative to drugs was the path of meditation, and one of the most popular forms of meditation was introduced to the counterculture by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. This was known as Transcendental Meditation (TM) and was embraced by many members of the counterculture including the Beatles. After settling on Sunshine Mountain in northern California, we too were drawn to TM and have practiced it for many years. In addition, we have also incorporated Buddhist meditative practices, music and repetitive sounds.

While in Detroit, we held great parties in our big house that reflected the psychedelic counterculture. We'd either begin with an elaborate dinner in our classic dining room with its crystal chandelier or just have plenty of food available in the kitchen or at

the bar in the basement. Guests dressed up in their most colorful hippie regalia. Cindy was always radiant with her long dark hair flowing down her back and dressed in a long skirt, colorful blouse and sequined vest. Music blared from our large speakers, black lights brought out iridescent colors of the wall paper, and strobe lights flashed almost to the beat of the music. Jumping, gyrating dancing went on wherever there was space. The mood was enhanced by the ubiquitous joint being passed around. These were joyful parties. Our councilman neighbor might have had a different opinion because of the loud music!

Another aspect of belonging to the counterculture was taking up a craft. I became interested in working with leather; pouches and vests were *de rigueur* for my new image, and I made them myself. Initially, I tried sewing on Cindy's little Singer machine, but it wouldn't punch through the leather, so we scoured the thrift stores in search of a treadle machine with the muscle to sew through leather. Soon I was the proud owner of an antique White sewing machine perched on a wrought iron frame with a handsome cabinet and drawers.

It took me a while to get the swing of the treadle – you've got to use your hands and feet at the same time – but in short order I was a sewing fiend. With Cindy's guidance, I made patterns for vests, pouches and other items which I laid out on large sheets of leather spread on the floor. Having never designed or sewn clothes before, I had a lot to learn. With Cindy's help, I did improve but never mastered the intricacies of good design like she did with the peasant shirts. Pouches were pretty easy – not much to go wrong – but the vests were another story. I never could get the cut right. They did fit, but not perfectly. I wore them anyway over my peasant shirts, topped off with a beaded necklace, but no one ever asked me to make one of my leather creations for them!

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### LEAVING THE CITY

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We had been seriously considering leaving the city when a frightful and unforgettable event occurred that nudged our consideration toward decision. The commune had been dissolved, and our single family of five was now living in the house. The children were asleep upstairs, and Cindy and I were asleep in our bedroom adjacent to their rooms.

About 2:00 a.m. I was awakened by a noise in the upstairs hallway. Thinking it was one of the kids up to use the bathroom, I called out son Peter's name. No sooner had the word "Peter" left my lips than a man dressed in a tan trench coat appeared in our bedroom doorway. (There was enough street light filtering through the blinds to see.) By this time Cindy was awake, sitting up and trembling next to me. The man was calm and said, "Be cool." My response (sounds crazy now) was, "Can I help you?" He responded by saying that he was looking for someone and thought they lived here (not a plausible reason for entering our house in the middle of the night). He mentioned that he was looking for a red Volkswagen (my red VW was in the driveway.) This was clearly a falsehood. I responded, "Oh, they live down the block a ways; if you go down about five houses on the right you'll see a red VW," also a false statement on my part. This satisfied him, or seemed to, so the intruder turned, walked out the bedroom door, across the wide, upstairs landing, down the stairs, through the outside entrance and its door, and left. We hurried down the stairs and bolted the door while watching him back out our driveway and head down the street.

This intrusion might not sound very threatening as you read about it. However, let me assure you that the impact of this has lingered with us for years. Our minds rehearse what happened

and what could have happened. We have no idea who this person was or how he got into our house if, in fact our door was locked. This event served, in our minds, as further confirmation that it was time for us to leave the city of Detroit.

*Cynthia's Reflection*  
*The Intruder*

*The intruder, the man who came through our front outside door, through the entrance room and the main front door, walked to the stairs, up the stairs, past the first landing, across the top landing, and finally, through our bedroom door and into our bedroom scared me more than anything in this world has ever scared me!*

*He was standing about two feet from the foot of our bed, directly in front of us; I could see from the streetlamp, as I lay trembling, his shadowy figure that revealed a white male of medium height wearing a trench coat and a hat. Pete's response to him, "May I help you?" was incredulous if not miraculous! I think, across the universe, there is no other person who would have responded in such a way! Whatever the intruder had in mind, I do not know; what I do know is that Pete's response was perfect. It created the possibility for an alternate intent (for this unknown person's unknown intent) which he accepted, allowing him to save face.*

*I think the likely reason for the intruder coming into our house was that our neighbor might have engaged him to discover something illicit about us. I think he was an agent who reported back to our neighbor that he had found a sleeping family, and he might have even reported that he felt a little embarrassed having disturbed their sleep. (I had these thoughts after, not during, the intrusion.) The experience impacted us, causing us a feeling of vulnerability.*

During this time of contemplating leaving, we planned a trip. Our journey was to take us north through the upper states and

into Oregon where we would camp on the beach in the rain forest and then drive down to Colorado and stay a while with my sister's family in Aspen. As we planned our trip, we never considered how cramped we might have been, along with our camping gear, in our little Plymouth Valiant until Bill and Rita offered us their huge Ford station wagon.

My work in Dearborn connected me with some amazing and caring people who were the very antithesis of Dearborn's national image. Bill and Rita were among these people—two of the most generous, loving people we have ever met. Bill was a middle level executive in Ford Motor Company and went to work each day in a suit, yet they were both totally accepting of our counter life style and reached out to us in many friendly ways. When they heard about our trip, without hesitation, they said that we needed to take their large Ford station wagon on the trip and leave our Plymouth with them. The Ford was provided to them as part of Bill's compensation package, and they would not take no for an answer.

The night before our planned departure I drove the Plymouth over to Dearborn and exchanged cars. I had never driven such a luxurious car before! That night we tied our camping gear on top of the long, sleek station wagon and made ready to leave early the next morning. Here we were, a hippy family, leaving the motor city in a luxurious car. Maybe this would have made a good advertisement for Ford. The three boys took over the back of the wagon, and Cindy and I had plenty of comfortable space in the front.

Almost everything about the trip was a contrast to life in Detroit. The beauty of Oregon captivated us. We camped along the coast west of Portland. The campsite we chose had become an encampment for young hippies, and we soon found ourselves part of their unique community. The tall redwoods created a distant canopy above us and the sound of the ocean crashing against the rocks was our music. The young people, living off food stamps, adopted our boys who seemed to be smaller images of themselves. Along with our new friends, we climbed

the steep cliffs overlooking the ocean, made sand candles on the beach and shared life together for about a week.

*Cynthia's Reflections*  
*Our trip to the West Coast*

*Our West Coast trip was our first; Colorado was the farthest west we had been, so we anticipated the beauty of the Oregon Coast, our destination. We headed straight to a rainforest camp ground. No cars were allowed in the camp ground, so we parked high above the beach and camping areas. Wheelbarrows were provided for hauling gear to our campsite.*

*Walking along a path to our campsite, we entered a forest of ambient gentle mist, soft, fragrant, springy earth beneath our feet, and trees, towering, giant redwood trees effortlessly providing shelter, their generous canopy spread above us, quieting our minds and slowing our walk, absorbing our every care. We stayed nearly a week and walked on pristine beaches, explored coves and small peninsulas, investigated shells and sea life brought by the tides, made sand candles, shared campfires and meals with other campers, and played with kittens our children found. It was hard to leave this paradise.*

We did not want to leave Oregon without seeing one of the great counterculture icons—Ken Kesey and his famous bus. We had read the story, *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test*, by Tom Wolfe about Ken Kesey and the merry pranksters who traveled across the country in an old school bus painted in psychedelic colors and who were usually high on acid. We found our way to Kesey's farm and pulled into the driveway in our impressive car. Boldly, we all got out of the car, and as we did a head poked out from an upstairs window. It was Kesey! He said that we were welcome to go around back and look at the bus. We found it, a shrine for the counterculture, sitting in the midst of old vehicles and machinery. It was unmistakable, a work of psychedelic art. Unknown to us at the time, in little more than a year we would be in our own bus.

On the way from Oregon to Colorado, we camped, in total isolation, on a snow covered mountain pass above Yellowstone National Park. The views were breathtaking, and the air we breathed felt pure and refreshing. The boys played in the snow while we set up camp. The beauty of the Rockies captivated us and provided a peacefulness that fit with our new inward journey. This environment helped create a spiritual experience—an experience we knew we wanted more of.

Aspen, where my sister lived, seemed like a crossroads for the counterculture; there were many bright young people living a hedonistic life style far outside the mainstream culture. A significant aspect of the Aspen scene was the use of psychedelic drugs. Prior to our arrival that summer in Aspen, we had learned about these drugs from reading *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test* by Tom Wolf and from stories about Timothy Leary. In Aspen we were surprised at the plethora of these drugs that seemed to be easily available.

However, what most captivated us were the dramatic Colorado mountains, clean, crisp air, beautiful places to hike and people who were enjoying the spectacular surroundings; we felt mesmerized and transformed. The beauty that surrounded us caused us to know beyond a doubt that we wanted to live in a similar environment.

We arrived back in Detroit on a typically humid, smoggy, warm, summer day. As we entered the wall-encased Edsel Ford Expressway, we could feel the oppression of these conditions closing in around us, swallowing us up into the negative aspects of our life in Detroit and the antithesis of the beauty, purity and tranquility of the west. Returning from our amazingly refreshing trip west, our thoughts about leaving Detroit were confirmed.

After this trip, my inner journey continued to intensify. In the beginning, my involvement in the social change movement was for the right reasons and with good intentions; but, as I've indicated, after the riot and the trip to Cuba, my situation had dramatically changed. I needed to find out who I was and what positive contributions I was capable of making to the world. I

asked myself questions like, "What does it mean to be human and connected by love to other human beings? "What could I help build for the good of humankind?" "How could I tap into what is good about our country and build a better, more humane society?" The counterculture movement was a welcoming path, away from the negativity and growing violence in the radical social change movement, toward positive behaviors and self-awareness. I knew that the journey for me now was not to a place on the map, as it had been in Europe, Africa and Detroit. My journey now was to be a place within me and within our family.

Leaving my radical social image behind was easy, but it was difficult to leave a hard earned and respectable clergy profession and move into an uncertain future for my family. But, for me, it was necessary because the tide of what had given my life meaning was ebbing, exposing the bareness of my profession, the uncomfortable negative persona of my social action, and the little positive impact my social activism had produced. Yet, this new path promised to carry me and our family on a new and refreshing adventure which might lead us to a discovery of ourselves, our common humanity, what is good about America, and hope for the future.

We began preparing to leave the city and head to Colorado to build a new way of life. After selling the house at no profit and a garage sale, we left, with sad goodbyes to friends who came by to see us off, on a warm day in May, 1971. We were filled with anticipation of what our uncertain future held in store for us.

Looking back, it seems crazy for a family with three young children to head out on an adventure with a vague destination, no job and very little money in the bank. In fact, we had a little savings and my small cashed-out retirement. When I formally left the church, I was allowed to take the money I had built up for retirement. We vowed to hold this money to buy land once we settled somewhere. I cannot imagine, in today's world, setting out with so much vulnerability. Perhaps what drove us was the same audacious attitude that carried the early pioneers westward as they sought a new life. We, or so we thought, were invincible

as we went in search of ourselves and the land and community that we hoped to find.

Therefore, from a community of well-loved friends, out of the gray, polluted city with its concrete walled freeways, ghettos, urban decay, traffic gridlock and negative social action movements we went—a U-haul van full of what was left of our belongings after a garage sale, pulling behind the U-haul my red VW bug, Cindy driving our old Dodge van converted for camping. Each night, after pushing along the highway westward, we pulled off the road and set up camp. The kids would usually sleep in the van and Cindy and I on the ground with the sky as our ceiling. We quickly got into the vagabond life style and looked like we had been gypsies forever, except for the U-haul. We felt confident and happy.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### A COUNTERCULTURE SUMMER

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We arrived in Carbondale, Colorado midday and followed directions to the Whole Earth Farm where we had an invitation to camp for as long as we wanted. Finding the farm was a journey in itself. Leaving the main road which leads past Mt. Sopris, we bounced along a crude dirt road turning periodically in neat right angles that respected the precise survey of property boundaries, past vast acres of dry sage and through gate after gate that had to be opened and closed. After what seemed like a journey to nowhere—the directions at this point were useless because we had already gone through more gates than indicated—frustration was setting in. We were lost and there was no place to turn our truck around with car in tow.

Nobody, we thought, given our perspective from city living, could live way out here. As our frustration grew to panic over being lost and desperately seeking a place to turn around, we made a turn up a steep hill with wheels spinning, spewing out dust and rocks. Looking back, we could see a cloud of dust marking our path across the flat land below; we made a slight turn and then we saw it, the Whole Earth Farm, a small white house, dilapidated barns, and a newly planted garden. In the background rose beautiful Mount Sopris, a large cone-shaped mountain that rises majestically and dominantly out of the dry valley near Carbondale. For a moment it felt like we were back in Amboseli Game Preserve at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro. It was desolate and its beauty breathtaking. Only one person was home at the house, and he informed us that the communal group living there had just completed planting a huge garden and in celebration had gone to party in Aspen. We were directed to set up our campsite by a swift flowing irrigation ditch. This would be our “home” for the

summer and the beginning of an extraordinary experience.

We had been invited to stay on this magical property by its owner, Sue, a single woman who had acquired this simple but beautiful ranch in a divorce settlement. It was isolated and insulated from the rest of the world, and beautiful Mount Sopris was so near that it felt touchable; it was tranquil and had a spiritual quality. Sue had attracted a diverse bunch of hippies, divorcees, college dropouts and seekers to the farm to share the labor and the bounty of an attempt at organic gardening. I think part of her motivation, also, was to bring herself company within the desolate surroundings.

We were relieved to have at last arrived and to have found the atmosphere welcoming and friendly. Our plan was to stay through the summer, and, beyond summer, we had no idea what was in store for us. Our life was being lived in the moment and the moment we were in felt good; we were experiencing the freedom we had wished for back when we were planning to leave Detroit.

In the first stage of our move from Detroit, although while in Europe and Africa we had learned to not get attached to our belongings, this time we wanted to hold on to some furniture and other household items because we did feel attached to them. We, painstakingly, packed them into a rented U-Haul truck. However, as we unloaded and stored these things in an old barn at the farm, our attachment seemed to evaporate. Once again, possessions were becoming less important to us. Later, as we continued our journey farther west, many of the items in the barn were left behind for good. A truck full of belongings was too big a burden to haul. Like we experienced in Europe and Africa, losing attachment to things allowed us to move more freely, physically as well as spiritually. Contradictorily, over the years, there have been times when one of us has said, "Oh, I wish we had the rocking chair or pottery we left in the barn."

The old blue tent and camping gear, purchased years before at the Grand Passage Department Store in Geneva that had been our "home" as we traveled through Europe, the African bush,

camping trips in upper Michigan and across the U.S., was home once again at the Whole Earth Farm. This latest campsite was a distance from the farm house, beyond the old barns and near a few scattered trees. To get to the house, we followed a dirt road that had been worn into the dry, sandy ground along a swift-flowing irrigation ditch. We arranged a makeshift outdoor kitchen and made ourselves ready to take up residence.

The tent was quickly abandoned as a sleeping quarter once we discovered the dry weather, and the night sky made a spectacular ceiling to contemplate as we drifted off to sleep. Ever since our summer under the sky in Colorado, we have had an attraction to the night sky. While in Colorado, during the cool nights of summer we bedded down with the Milky Way stretched out brilliantly above us. We had longed for the sky and for nature in general during our urban confinement. Later, when we settled on Sunshine Mountain, we slept outside under the brilliant sky on a wrought iron bed placed by the garden so that we could protect our newly planted vegetables from the overly interested deer. When we built the house on Sunshine Mountain, we made sure that it had a sleeping balcony.

During the summer of 1971, as word spread across the country about this unique farm in Colorado, the Whole Earth Farm became a haven for an array of hippies and wanderers from both coasts and in between. There were usually about ten to fifteen others besides us spread out around the farm. Life was as isolated from the real world as was the farm itself. Clothes were often cast off while people worked under the hot sun in the garden. It was a peaceful and caring community that embraced everyone who came. I never witnessed an argument or harsh word; there was no evidence of sexual promiscuity and the work in the garden was shared by all. Life flowed in a harmonious way, and the farm was enveloped in a spirit of love and camaraderie. It was a contrast to the divisiveness and harshness we had experienced in Detroit.

I especially remember one young member of the group because of an amazing event. He was a tall, muscular, bearded newcomer who traveled in by himself from the East Coast where

he had heard about the farm; we didn't know much about him. He was quiet and polite. One hot day a group was trying to round up three wild horses that had broken free and were threatening to trample the garden. We were running frantically around the horses as they darted, confused and frightened, through giant sage bushes as we tried, with little success, to corral them behind a fence. This young man, stark naked (he'd been working in the garden), moved slowly and confidently toward a large white stallion who was obviously quite wild and the leader of the pack. He spoke softly to the horse and cajoled him into calming down. He slowly and tenderly rubbed his hands on the horse's neck and then in one quick jump mounted him. Using the horse's mane as a rein, he guided him toward the fence and inside. The other animals dutifully followed along behind as we stood in astonishment. With the horses successfully corralled, we went back to our work or to our fun. I have no idea how this young man accomplished such a feat.

At the farm, we enjoyed doing things together, so for the Fourth of July we planned a group trip to Aspen for the festivities and fireworks. Everyone pitched in making sandwiches and a huge batch of cookies. We loaded all our goodies into a couple of cars and headed for Aspen about forty minutes away. Aspen in nineteen seventy-one was not the Aspen of today. It had not yet been discovered by the Hollywood set. It was, however, an upscale mountain town and premier ski resort. During that summer, there were great numbers of hippies in town. We looked forward to a festive picnic in the park and fireworks after dark. When we pulled our food out of one of the cars' trunk we were met with a strong smell of gasoline. Somehow, gasoline had leaked into the trunk. Every bit of the food tasted like a drink from a gas pump. What a disappointment! Our hopes of an awesome picnic went up with the gas fumes; however, we all flowed with the misfortune and went on to have a good time.

There were a few other similar outings like trips to the local hot springs; however, most of our days were spent in the idyllic atmosphere of the farm. We enjoyed sitting by the irrigation

ditch, about six feet wide and four feet deep; it rushed into a large pipe that went some distance beyond before the pipe opened up again into the ditch. For us refugees from the city, this marvelous ditch was as good as living by a babbling mountain stream. It brought water for cooking and bathing right to our front yard. It was refreshing on a hot day to jump into the cold, clear, swiftly running water. However, two unforgettable events related to the irrigation ditch, which most of the time gave us much pleasure, were about to terrify us, disrupting all pleasure and peacefulness.

Early one evening, while we were reading, eight-year-old David jumped up and screamed, "Chris (three years old at the time) fell in." Quick as a flash and in the nick of time David jumped in and pulled Chris to safety just as he was about to go through the large irrigation pipe. Had David not seen him fall in, Chris would not likely be with us today. It was that close! We wrapped a towel around Chris who quickly recovered, and we all hugged and trembled and recovered and were grateful to our hero, David, for saving our precious Chris. We were extremely cautious after that!

There was another scary incident that involved the ditch. It ran by the house and through the farm, making its way a long distance before reaching our campsite. We were aware that the owner's brother, a medical doctor, and his family had come for a visit. We stayed to ourselves that day, keeping out of the visitors' way and were enjoying a leisurely time around the campsite. Near sunset we sat down at our folding camp table for dinner, and we began hearing something like sounds from a baby but couldn't figure out where they were coming from. I happened to look out to the irrigation ditch and saw what I first thought was a doll floating along in the current. The "doll" made gurgling sounds; it was a little girl! Like David had done before, I quickly jumped into the rushing water, grabbed the child and climb out with her cradled in my arms. By now, we could hear the voices of people frantically searching for the child. We yelled to them, and the father and a couple of other adults came rushing toward us. He frantically took the girl from my arms and laid her on her side and gently worked to get a fair amount of water out of her

lungs. Once the child seemed back to normal, they took her away abruptly without a word said and without making eye contact with any of us.

Of course, this was a traumatic event for them and likely left them emotionally drained, but I've often wondered why this father never expressed any gesture of gratitude to us for saving his child. Surely the child would have been lost had we not been in our campsite. Did he somehow blame us for the child falling into the ditch? Was he embarrassed because he had allowed his little girl to stray and fall into the ditch? I felt grateful to have saved her, but the lack of acknowledgement was puzzling.

On a lighter note, we constructed a sweat lodge next to the ditch. Willow sticks driven into the ground near the ditch were bent and lashed to make a frame which was covered with black plastic. Inside there was room for a few adults. When we wanted a sweat bath, stones would be heated in an open fire and then transferred by shovel into the lodge. Water from the ditch splashed onto the hot rocks gave off intense steam. The heat and steam would eventually drive us out, dripping in cleansing sweat, into the cold ditch water and then back into the lodge. This ritual would be repeated several times and then a final bath and cool down in the refreshing ditch water. When all sweated out, we'd lie down under the magnificent Colorado sky and pick out constellations. Ten-year-old Peter Jr. was interested in astronomy and had already become quite knowledgeable; he became our celestial guide.

There was an idyllic aspect to our life throughout the summer and fall of 1971. The slow pace was a far cry from our overly active lives in the city. We were enjoying the beauty of the surroundings and the days of being together as a family. But like life in general, it was not always idyllic. We faced some prejudice because of our life style, and we had to scrape and work hard at times to make ends meet.

One experience was particularly troubling and still haunts me. Our nine year old son, David, wanted to learn to play the guitar so that he could add music to the song lyrics he had been writing

for a couple of years. Although our money was tight, we wanted him to have this opportunity and there were people around who could teach him to play. David and I, excited about the promise of getting a guitar, went into town to make the grand purchase. This was to be a special event for both of us.

We found a music store on the main street, so in we walked, full of happy anticipation to purchase David's guitar, but we were bombarded with angry shouts from the store owner who came charging at us, "I don't allow people like you in my store," "Dirty Hippies, get out of here!" David was scared, and I was stunned and with disbelief. Never before in my protected life had I felt stabbed by hatred toward me like this.

I felt awful that David's innocent excitement about purchasing a guitar was met by such bigotry and hatred. How could we be so despicable to the store owner that he could not welcome us as customers? Was it simply because we were wearing leather headbands, handmade colorful shirts, jeans and boots, our hair was longer than mainstream, and I had a beard? I knew, of course, that we had done nothing wrong; nonetheless, I felt guilty because of the hurt to my son and even guilty because my presence exposed the store owner's hatred. I think about this experience often and it remains painful. We did manage to find a store that did not discriminate, and we bought a youth sized guitar. This experience gave me a deeper understanding of the prejudice many people endure in our society. Certainly, my situation was different. It was my clothes, beard and long hair that drew hatred, not the color of my skin or my ethnicity. The clothes I could change, the hair I could cut, and the beard I could shave, but one cannot change the color of their skin or their ethnic heritage! I experienced firsthand how visual images can expose hatred.

As I mentioned, on the farm, we had helped in the vegetable garden mostly by pulling weeds. However, despite all our efforts, the organic farming did not go well. This probably had something to do with the fact that if you squeezed the whole lot of the inhabitants of the Whole Earth Farm that summer you'd only have gotten a drop or two of farming sense. The weeds

outdid the vegetables and even back breaking pulling did not deter their triumphant march through the garden. What few vegetable plants the weeds did not push out were further decimated by insects. The use of chemicals was out of the question because of the commitment to organic gardening. Very little produce made it to market.

Summer was coming to a close and some of the residents of the farm headed off for warmer climates and/or for other endeavors, leaving the garden to the victorious weeds and the final ravaging by fall frosts. This was a good lesson for us; it was not easy to grow your food organically from Mother Earth's soil. We had much to learn if we intended to live off the land.

Toward the middle of August we could feel the change of season—fall was getting ready to move summer out so it could take over its chilly residency. We started thinking about what we would do in preparation for winter. It was obvious that “home” by the ditch would not work for us in a Colorado winter. We would have been content to stay at the Whole Earth Farm, and Sue made it clear that we were welcome. However, the one option we looked at for shelter was the foundation of a house, not far from the main house, that had been torn down or had fallen down many years before. Building a simple shelter on the crumbling concrete presented us with too many challenges, so we looked for other options.

### *Cynthia's Reflections*

*As I look back, life at the Whole Earth Farm seems like a dream, partly nightmare, because of our near tragedy with Chris, but it was mostly joyful because it was summer with purple Mt. Sopris in view, open space, people having fun, and we were unwinding. It was a strange interval in our lives and it held a surreal quality because of the extreme contrast between our old environment to this new one. The natural surroundings were astonishing; we watched Mount Sopris as the light changed her purple from amethyst to indigo, watched*

*puffy clouds float against the noontday bright blue sky, and the darkening sky as shadows fell late in the afternoon. Later, we watched the stars come out as we stretched out beneath the sky. It was the beginning of our transition to a new way of living.*

*We had been living a city life that entailed some undesirable aspects. The air was not clean; the noise was perpetual; neighbors were close – only a few feet separating houses in our block – tenement housing close by, Ford Hospital across the street, shopping area dirty and rundown, theft all around us, a suicide directly across the street during the time our children walked home from school, and burglaries next door and across the street at a neighbor's house. Some neighborhood children, on their way to school one morning, discovered the body of a dead woman in an abandoned lot two blocks from our home. I prefer not to dwell on the negatives, and we tried to keep them in perspective; however, living within these conditions was sometimes a strain. I mention this reality because I think it influenced the abandon we experienced during our stay at the Whole Earth Farm. The juxtaposition of Detroit and the farm created a staggering contrast.*

*We found ourselves surrounded by people who looked robustly healthy; they were tanned by the sun and had color in their cheeks – not a common characteristic of most city dwellers. With the exception of the farm's owner, they were not engaged in working for income, and they all seemed to be on a lark. Most had money in their pockets and traveling on their minds. (This was clearly evident at summer's end when they all exited.) This young farm population freely shared their spirit of lightheartedness and fun, and our family of five easily joined in. We did some work in the garden, but we did more playing and marching with music that included homemade percussion instruments along with pots, pans and spoons, and dancing with the children and adults together. We also launched balloons, and painted lots of pictures.*

*We went through a period of recklessness in our newly found freedom away from the city and away from the more*

*purposeful life of conventional work. We were in the midst of a new life stage, akin to adolescence, and, as adolescents do, we were trying out as many new experiences as possible: living outside—cooking, eating, sleeping, stargazing, everything outside, mostly living irresponsibly with no source of needed income and little thought of tomorrow. And we had three children!*

*We were the only family at the farm with both parents intact, so we lacked the reinforcement and shared values that the presence of at least one other normal family might have given us. (We, at least temporarily, took leave of our common sense!) We were surrounded by single people, mostly in their twenties, who were themselves practicing adolescents.*

*The group dispersed at summer's end, and so concluded a leg of our journey filled with fun and abandon, beauty and love of nature, and the beginning of a new, but still somewhat jumbled perspective on how we might continue our journey. We reclaimed our common sense and continued our short term journey by going to Aspen where we would enroll Peter and David in school and make a bus into our home on wheels.*

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE BUS

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We spotted the bus driving by a vacant lot in Carbondale and instantly knew that it was the answer to our housing problem. It had a faded for sale sign on its windshield and looked like it was hiding amongst the weeds that had grown up around it. Obviously, it had been sitting in this desolate spot for a long time. We learned it had been converted, after many years of carrying children to and from school, into a ski bus to transport skiers to the slopes. Although old, the bus had a nice coating of metallic blue paint and a rack welded to its side to carry skis. The price was right and the test drive okay. We envisioned it becoming a home on wheels that would provide us with protection for the coming winter.



Peter Jr. by bus as we found it in Carbondale

After selling our two vehicles so we could pay for the bus, we closed up our camp at the Whole Earth Farm and added some things to the other items we had stored in the barn. We

said goodbye to our friends and took with us the memories of a unique summer. Craig, my bother-in-law drove us to Carbon-dale to pick up our new “home” and our only means of transportation. I climbed up into the big driver’s seat, and the boys sat proudly spread out in three of the many seats behind me. I, cautiously, since I had never driven anything so large, drove the bus off the weedy lot where we had re-parked it after the test drive. We then drove about thirty miles to an old barn above the town of Aspen. I well remember that first drive; I was intimidated by the size of the bus during that drive but soon felt a commanding sense of power sitting up high above the road with the large steering wheel in my hands. I liked double clutching, as I worked my way through the gears; I also liked the sound of the high speed rear end automatically changing ratios as speed or incline increased.

The barn in Aspen, where we parked the bus for its renovation, was on a hill within walking distance of town. Its owners, friends of my sister and her husband, had invited us to use the barn’s parking area for the bus while we worked on it. The barn, rustic on the outside, had been artfully converted into comfortable quarters for the guys who owned it. A ledge on a hill above the barn’s parking area became our new campsite. Down nearer the barn, where there was work space and electrical power, the metallic blue bus sat ready for another conversion—this time into our home on wheels.

There was room on the ledge to pitch our tent and set up an outdoor kitchen. It was a good location for a camp but not as spacious as our spot at the Whole Earth Farm. Cindy had become quite the outdoor cook and by this time was baking bread over an open fire. I have a snapshot of her in my mind dressed in a long skirt which she’d gather in her hand as a holder to move the black, iron pots around on the fire. She had a knife and sheath that I had made for her hooked on her waist. It was a joy to watch her, long dark hair flowing over her shoulders, as she adeptly moved about her chores. She never complained about loss of the real kitchen she left behind in Detroit or about her traditional female

role as the food preparer. Although the women's liberation movement had influenced her life and mine too, in our present life style we didn't get hung up on traditional role stereotypes—especially now when these roles (Cindy focusing on the family and me on the transformation of the bus) made sense and were part of our survival. Our meals prepared over an open fire and eaten in our outdoor “dining room” were some of the best we've ever had and kept me well nourished while I worked every day and into the evening at a frenetic pace on the bus. We knew that a weather change was imminent and would drive us from our tent, so we were pushing hard to get the bus converted into a living space.

Our family and friends must have thought we had lost our minds. A postcard sent by Cindy to her parents and found among their belongings, when she went through them after her mother's death, summed up the direction of our bizarre life style. The card shows an awesomely beautiful picture of the jagged, pyramid-peaks of Maroon Bells near Aspen and a lake surrounded by abundant wildflowers, typical of much of the raw beauty of Colorado. On the other side of the card, she casually wrote a note to her parents:

*Dear Mother and Daddy,*

*Just a note to let you know we've left the farm—have purchased an old school bus and are turning it into a house—building lofts on top, etc. with Craig's help and tools. Camping in Aspen—will stay here at least thru fall—then more traveling—California, and Mexico probably—will teach kids ourselves—take care.  
Love, Cynthia.*

This must have landed like a bomb on her parents who were steeped in the conservative values of the South. I wonder how I would feel and react if one of our successful sons told me he was quitting his job and giving up his career in exchange for traveling around with his wife and children in a converted school bus. Today, many years later, we puzzle at our thinking, and ask ourselves, “How could we have done what we did?” However, we

do not regret our actions, and we highly value our many experiences.

The bus underwent an amazing transformation, and it took on its new shape in a serendipitous fashion. As we remodeled the bus, we discovered the possibilities as we went along—rather than having created a well-planned design.

However, getting to the point of driving the converted bus down the road was not easy and had a steep learning curve for me. I had no building experience but got some help from a talented brother-in-law. The seats came out and were carted off to the dump. As we surveyed the space inside, we felt confined by the lack of head room. With a borrowed torch, (I had only used one briefly in a high school metal working class) I began cutting out the roof and struts which had been added to make it safe for kids. It was amazing how all this metal, which seemed so formidable, melted like plastic from the heat of the torch. Soon the entire top was open from the windshield to the back emergency door. No more feeling of confinement! But now I had to figure out how to raise and cover the opening so that it would be weather tight.

I knew that whatever was built on top of the bus could not be heavy, yet it must be sturdy and resist wind and rain. A plywood structure emerged, mounted above the space where the roof had been. As this structure rose up about four feet above the original roofline from the side windows of the bus, its walls flared outward at a slight angle. Curved rafters were cut from plywood and attached between the slanting walls. A skin of thin plywood was curved and glued over the rafters for a roof. With the flared walls and the curved roof, this addition gave the bus the look of a Conestoga wagon. This fully enclosed upper level extended about six feet beyond the back and over the front, and at each end we added large windows donated by my brother-in-law.

The bedrooms were on the upper level extensions. Hinged skylights, opening up above each bed to the expansive night sky, were added to the roof. Observing the night sky from bed was important to us because we had spent the entire summer sleeping

out beneath the brilliant Colorado sky and felt a connection with the celestial canopy. Later, as we “tooled” down the road, the kids would open the skylights and ride with their heads sticking out, long hair blowing in the wind, waving at people along the way. The roof was sealed with bright yellow epoxy paint. In order to support the upper level extension over the rear, a porch had to be constructed. This meant more welding—I was becoming adept at it by now—a new skill for me. With the high roof, porch and bright yellow added to the metallic blue, the bus had a new, quirky look.

With the bus enlarged and the outside sealed, we stood on the inside and made rough plans for the interior; again, it was more serendipitous designing. It seemed reasonable that a small kitchen area and WC could go down the wall behind the driver’s seat, and the opposite side had space for a small booth to seat two adults and three children. For a touch of elegance, we hung an antique stained glass lampshade above the table, a gift from a friend when we were at Redeemer Church that now sits on a table in our house.



Cindy in the bus

Toward the back, along the kitchen wall, we built a couch with storage underneath. Opposite the couch we installed a discarded wood stove. The stovepipe went through the bus wall and, from the outside, it added an even more whimsical look to the overall contraption. We also attached a small, outside-venting propane heater to the side of the bus. The dividing walls and cabinets were constructed with salvaged barn wood weathered by many Colorado winters which provided a look of rustic elegance. The metal walls were covered and somewhat insulated

by gluing on remnants of colorful carpet, and the ceiling was insulated by gluing on sheets of Styrofoam.

The inside of the bus was transformed into a practical, functional, although tiny, compared to the five bedroom house we had in Detroit, space for our family. The "master bedroom" was up front with a full sized mattress and a chest of drawers with legs cut off to fit in the four feet of head room. We spent many perfect nights lying in bed looking up at the magnificent Colorado sky through the skylight. The back upper bedroom had a single bed mattress for each of the two older boys and a smaller mattress at the back below the big window for Christopher. Storage was limited due to all the bus windows. An ice chest, and, when available, nearby cold streams provided "refrigeration." A few final touches were curtains for the windows, a crude sound system comprising an old tape deck wired into the bus's six volt system, and a couple of kerosene lanterns; we were ready for winter in Aspen, or so we thought.

The bus had the look of a gypsy wagon and would get looks of surprise and exclamations of amazement wherever it went. It was quite a sight to behold. At the rear on one side was a stovepipe



that bent upward, resembling a drawing for a Dr. Seuss book; the pipe finished its tilted path just above the lower windows. It was attached on the inside to an old wood stove that had been discarded. The ski racks, attached to the side of the bus and left over from days of ferrying skiers to the slopes, were filled with firewood. Pots and pans hung below the ceiling of the rear porch, and bicycles were strapped to both sides. A blue rocking chair, tied securely, gave the porch the look of a restful spot to sit on a pleasant summer evening.

Besides taking care of all the campground chores while I was working on the bus, Cindy was looking for educational opportunities for the two older boys. She approached the Aspen Community School for advice. They became interested in our family situation and accepted the boys, at no cost, as students in the school. The school had a controversial history mainly because of its independence from the public system and had recently established a relationship with a world renowned teacher, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, and lured her to Aspen to guide the school. Ashton-Warner, from New Zealand, was considered one of the greatest educational innovators in literacy of the Twentieth Century for her work with the Maori children of New Zealand. She tapped into each child's storehouse of imagery, and by teaching them key words, opened up expression of this imagery through reading and writing. Our boys flourished during their brief time in this school, and we were grateful for the opportunities they had. Some years later, when I was involved in education as a teacher and administrator, I learned more about Sylvia's methods for teaching reading and used them successfully with my students.

Time seemed to fly by during the time I was transforming the bus. I had some frustrations due to my lack of building experience, but with the help of others willing to give advice, I managed to overcome what I did not know. Despite the challenges, I enjoyed the work and the creative act of molding the unique shape of our new home, and in the end I was proud of the results, and the construction skills I learned would come in handy later on.

By the first of September the bus was ready for occupancy. We eagerly broke up our camp and settled, with our newly acquired

dog, Shiva, into the luxury of an indoor kitchen, real beds and a table that we could all sit around. We were ready for the change of seasons, or so we thought!

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE SHOCK OF WINTER

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We moved our new home on wheels into the forest above Aspen, off Independence Pass Road. Fall in the mountains was beautiful, as the aspens turned various shades of red and yellow, painting giant swatches of color across the mountainsides. Each day was crystal clear with cool mornings and warm afternoons. A mountain stream provided us a place for ice-cold baths. A shovel and the forest floor was our WC. Once or twice a week we drove the bus into Aspen to shop and just hang out. During each trip, we noticed heads turn as our outlandish home on wheels went by.

Cindy longed to visit some of our close friends we had left in Detroit and she also needed to wrap up some financial matters. We agreed that the trip would be a good thing for her to do. The big question was how could she get there? We could not reasonably afford the price of even a bus ticket. She started surveying the bulletin boards around Aspen looking for a ride to Detroit. Eventually, she located some students who were driving east and could drop her off in Detroit. Travelling with people she did not know seemed okay with us at the time because we trusted the world we were living in; however, in retrospect it seems like a crazy way to have traveled.

While she was gone, the boys and I hung out in the forest and had a great time together. We did not have access to a phone, but occasionally Cindy would leave a message for me at my sister's house. Near the end of the two weeks, I got a message that she would be hitchhiking back with a woman and her baby. At the time, this seemed okay with us for the same reason that the ride to Detroit seemed okay. However, if one of my granddaughters told me today that she was going to hitchhike half way across the

country, I would do everything I possibly could to stop it. But in those days it seemed like a natural and safe thing to do because young people were constantly hitchhiking long distances.

A couple of days later, I was extremely happy to see Cindy come trudging up the trail toward the bus along with her traveling companion, babe in arms. I was so glad to see her! We invited Susan and baby to spend the night with us in the bus, and we had a great dinner together. Mother and baby slept on the couch that was positioned at the back of the bus across from the wood burning stove.

When Cindy recalls this trip today, she is flabbergasted at her risky behavior and thinks that it was irresponsible, especially as the mother of young children, however consistent it was with her adventurous nature. But in those days we did things that seemed reasonable to us; yet in retrospect, they seem bizarre. As we reminisce, we tend towards amazement at some of what we did and how we got the audacity to do it.

### *Cynthia's Reflections*

*My trip to Detroit, once I found a ride with two students headed for the East Coast, was simple. We drove all day (I in the back seat) and stopped for early dinner at a burger restaurant. We drove a few more hours and stopped for the night at a National Forest Campground. There, I rolled out my sleeping bag onto a picnic table – the first (and only) time I've ever done that; however, my student companions had done it often. We three actually slept pretty well that night, each with a table to ourselves; there were no disturbances.*

*We approached Detroit in the late afternoon where I connected with close friends, a family with young boys who were playmates of our children and the next day with another family, neighbors whose children had been playmates with our boys. Leaving their friends had been a hard thing for Peter and David; we had not anticipated how deeply they would miss them. During my visiting, I found time to transact our finan-*

cial business. Then I had the job of deciding how I would get back to Colorado.

My return trip from Detroit back to Colorado, although it frightens me now to even recall the memory, (rationally, knowing it might have turned out differently) was to be a hitchhiking trip. Although I had drawn money from the bank, I was determined to spend as little of it as possible. Saving for our travels in the bus was our top priority.

The solution to my return trip problem came while I was visiting with the second family I mentioned. They had another visitor, a mother (with infant child), who was headed for California. The young mother, Susan, asked me if I'd like to hitchhike with her, and I thought, "Why not? I won't have to spend precious money on travel, it'll be easy getting rides with a baby in tow, and we would all three be safer as a group." The baby girl was nursing and seldom cried—she would be a pleasant child to travel with.

Our first ride going out of Detroit was with a business man who was traveling to somewhere in Iowa. Our ride was comfortable during those few hours while in the backseat of his black Buick sedan. He informed us that he was nearing his destination and would be turning off the highway soon, so we prepared to separate at a spot where we would likely get another ride.

Luckily, getting rides was easy; I think drivers' heart strings were pulled seeing a baby out on the road with two young women. The rides we got were long ones, so thumbing was quite minimal. Our only fright came soon after we had accepted a ride when, as we sat in the cab, next to the driver of his gigantic truck, he noticed a trucking friend of his not far behind in his own truck, so he and his friend began communicating with each other by phone. Though the content of communication on our end did not seem threatening, our driver did clearly communicate that he had passengers. My companion and I gave each other signals that we sensed trouble, so we quickly asked to be dropped off and got out as fast as we could. (The

*easy communication, and the easy agreement Susan and I had, even in intuitive situations like this one helped keep us safe.) If we had not had immediate agreement, we might have been less fortunate. Possibly, our decision about getting out was a miscue, but we were relieved to be free from the danger flags that we had sensed, and we never looked back. Otherwise, we had no frights, and our mode of travel turned out to be easy, comfortable, and inexpensive.*

*Our next ride, immediately after we had escaped from the first truck experience, was in another truck, almost identical to the first one, with a driver who turned out to be a godsend for us. We traveled the rest of the day and into the early evening with him. I'll relay an experience that now seems like a dream in retrospect, but it actually did happen! You'll probably think that Susan and I both must have taken leave of all good judgment, but here it is: Our driver, Jeff, after pleasant conversation for most of the day, was approaching his destination. He asked us where we planned to sleep that night, and we said that we planned to find a campground. (We knew that some of the small towns approaching the mountains had urban campgrounds.) He then told us that he lived near his sister who had a three-year-old daughter, and he was pretty sure she would be glad to have us spend the night in her apartment. We looked at each other and nodded agreement because we had both come to trust him during the day's drive. He contacted his sister and got her permission to bring us to her home. When we arrived at Jeff's sister's apartment building, it was night. We walked upstairs to the second floor with Jeff. He knocked on his sister, Mary's, door; she opened it to the hallway where we stood, the four of us, her brother with two women and an infant. She gave us a friendly welcome; she then offered us the use of her bathroom and gave us her living room for sleeping. Jeff sat for a short time, chatted with his sister and with us, kissed his three-year-old niece and soon left for his own place. We slept soundly that night, Susan and her baby on floor mats, and I slept on the couch. Mary even gave us coffee and toast the next*

*morning before we left to find our last ride which took us all the way back to Aspen!*

*We arrived in Aspen to find Pete crushing rosehips, (abundant in the Colorado fall), and feeding them to Chris as a vitamin C taste treat and to help cure his cold. Pete and Chris both looked completely beautiful to me at that moment when I first saw them, Chris with his wild and blond little three-year-old boy hair and cheerful chatter and Pete's face with such a happy smile; I felt ecstatic to be back home with them in the bus! Peter and David had not come home from school yet. They were so busy in school and playing with friends, I think they barely noticed that I had been gone.*

Our life in Aspen was getting difficult. The days were shorter and the morning chill was beginning to have a bite to it. Baths in the mountain stream were painful. However, we were oblivious to the hardships of a winter in the Rockies that lay ahead of us. We were, despite a few hardships, enjoying a remarkable fall of golden Aspens.



**The bus in the first fall snow**

By mid-October we had to leave the forest for fear of getting snowed in. Good people reached out to help us and we appreciated their support. We frequently noticed that those who had become friends, many connected with my sister's family, seemed enchanted by the bus and by our adventure. We were invited to park the bus in the yard of friends of my sister. We found a not too obtrusive spot on their property and settled in for the winter, or so we thought. We enthusiastically welcomed their offer of occasional shower use. Since we were now living in a more developed area, we needed indoor toilet facilities. The bus had a small WC and makeshift shower; however I had not made them operable. The shower was not feasible because it had no hot water, just cold water from our small water tank mounted above the closet. I set up a chemical toilet which was cumbersome to maintain. However, we felt quite comfortable parked near our friend's house. At night we'd take long walks and come back with sore necks from looking up at the sparkling fall sky.

Our stay in this yard did not last long. One day while I was gone, a policeman knocked on the bus door and informed Cindy that we could not stay there. He was polite and exhibited no malice. He openly told Cindy, "The neighbors pay an arm and a leg to buy a house here and they simply don't like the idea of someone living here for nothing." I am sure there was more to it than what he told Cindy, but we had to leave. About this time, our bus insurance, issued by a local agent, was cancelled. It was obvious that our friend's conventional neighbors did not want to see our bus parked in their Aspen neighborhood for the winter.

We sought another location and were invited by another friend of my sister to park at her place outside town near the Aspen Music School. This spot worked out great. Soon after parking there we got our first snowfall and enjoyed sledding on the hills. My brother Greg, recently back from Vietnam, came to visit us in this snowy spot, and he was able to navigate our little kitchen area well enough to cook us a meal of egg fu yung that he had learned to make in Asia.

Winter was getting harsher, making getting to school difficult for the kids, so we needed to get closer to town. We soon found a secluded place, closer to town, to park the bus. It was behind my sister's house on the roaring Fork River, near Aspen and on the road to Independence Pass. This, we thought, is where we would be for the rest of the winter, but we hadn't seen the worst of winter yet. We got the kids' skis out of storage in the old barn at the Whole Earth Farm, so they could join their classmates in weekly skiing.

We were comfortable until the Colorado winter really took hold, engulfing us in a blanket of snow and sub-teen temperatures. The wood stove inside the bus was working fulltime to keep us warm, but our need for firewood was becoming a problem because we had no way to haul a large quantity of wood, and we had little dry storage space. The poorly insulated metal walls of the old bus, even though I had added some insulation to the ceilings and walls, became a freezer compartment in minutes after the stove's fire went out. Another serious problem began to develop; the metal walls of the bus attracted condensation from the heat on the inside and the cold outside. This condensation began to freeze inside the bus near the kids' beds where the bus's added upper section had been attached to the metal sides. It melted and froze depending on the heat inside the bus; their beds were getting wet and mildew was forming on the walls. We were living in an icebox! It became obvious that we could not survive a Colorado winter in the bus.

The cold weather was not our only problem. Money we had set aside for living was running out. We needed to find work. Cindy got a menial job in one of the resorts. Since we had no transportation other than the bus, and we could not easily move the bus every time someone had to go to town; she walked the mile to town and back. Lacking proper cold weather gear, she came close to getting frostbite on these cold walks. She soon decided that she could not endure the hardship, so she quit the job after a short time.

*Cynthia's Reflections*

*Employment in Aspen (from my journal)*

*November 27, 1971*

*Chateau Dumont Condominiums: I handed my application to the person in charge of maids with mixed feelings about even seeking such a job because I don't have immediate need of money, but we feel we should have every possible dollar in hand for when we buy our land.*

*The idea of being a maid is humiliating to me, but probably it is no more so than other jobs in this town of tourism as its main industry, (I rationalize). The town's business is about catering to wealthy luxury seekers.*

*I was hired without even being asked if I planned to work here the entire season. I'll get \$2.00 per hour with 25 to 30 cents bonus on each hour at the end of the season. I'll forfeit the bonus, of course, because we won't stay the whole season.*

*I rationalize that I won't mind the job because I'll have time to dream and think. I'll see how it goes.*

*November 28, 1971*

*Pete and I talked about me taking this cleaning job. We discussed how class distinctions are ingrained and of stigmas that go with lowly jobs, how it could feel demeaning. I justified it as work for money, pure and simple, and it could enrich my range of experience.*

*Nov. 29, 1971*

*This job is hard! It's a race against time to get every toilet scrubbed, every bed changed, and all the chrome polished! The system is rigged to cheat the maids; they told me to report to work at 8:00 (when I punched in), only later to discover that I'm paid only for hours spent actually cleaning! (We began work at 9:30.)*

*Nov. 30, 1971*

*Not so bad today; I learned to flow with the confusion and disorganization. I connected with Mrs. Miller (Mama, she*

wants to be called), the head maid. Her reality jolted me into the realization that I have been spoiled all my life (at least in contrast to her). I have never before had to work so hard, but this experience is temporary for me. Mama has been a maid for years, and, as far as she knows, has no alternative for the future. She gets mad at her boss and "feels like throwing the rag" at him when he criticizes her, and she feels like telling him to do the work. Then she remembers about the bills coming in this month, so she swallows her pride and goes home to her trailer house in El Jebel Trailer Court, numbs her pain with the leftover Jack Daniel's found while cleaning that day, sleeps, and returns to "punch in." She meets with the maids in the laundry room next morning.

After Mama showed me how to make the beds correctly, we went to clean the kitchen. She had been scrubbing the oven while I ran the vacuum. I cleaned the sink while she finished cleaning the stove; I suggested that she polish the chrome while I washed the floor. She said, "Oh, no, I'll wash the floor while you polish the chrome." I sensed her deferring to me was her way of exhibiting good will, so I took up the rag and cleaned the floor; she did not protest as she matter-of-factly polished the chrome. While she worked, she told me of her various health problems including her bleeding ulcers and her walking pneumonia.

As we finished cleaning the condo, I suggested that perhaps I could work with her for a while so I could quickly learn how to clean. She responded, "I'll be back next Friday, and I'll take you with me and you'll learn in a hurry what it's all about."

It feels good to walk in the early morning air and watch the sun peep over the snow-capped mountains. My face tingles from the crisp, cold air.

December 1, 1971

I was so fatigued last night when I got home that I could not move. I fell into bed without eating or even reading to the boys, but they understood.

*I walked to work each day in the daylight, but when I returned at night, it was so cold I couldn't feel my toes and I worried about getting frostbite.*

*One of the best things that happened was getting to take a shower during cleaning time! No doubt there were rules against it, but I could not pass up this opportunity! The other maids understood my situation and were cooperative. I never appreciated getting a hot shower so much! (Inside the bus there was tanked running water but no shower.)*

*December 6, 1971*

*I decided to quit my job. I first went to the office and told Marlene who hired me. I then went to the laundry room to find Mama and tell her. When she walked in I told her I was quitting because the work made my back hurt. She offered Christopher (now three) some ice cream she had found which he happily accepted, and we chatted. She told me that she was quitting also on December 14.*

*We discussed the work and its problems. When Christopher finished his ice cream, we said our farewells. I touched her face and kissed her on the cheek and was surprised by the softness and warmth of her skin.*

*December 15, 1971*

*In two days we'll be leaving for California with hopes of warmth, a milder climate, land to own, and people who want to build a community with us. I look forward to losing myself in the adventure and meeting new people.*

*I am conscious of wearing a persona that pales next to Pete's more vivid one and am aware that I will remain in the shadows for a while. Pete describes me as being a "private person" and it's true, especially in contrast to him. He wears no masks and has no façade; he puts his whole self out for anyone who wants to see; I, on the other hand tend to move more slowly and with carefulness. Neither of us behaves this way intentionally. In fact I sometimes would rather be as Pete is. I admire him for his childlike openness and his forthright faith in the unconditional acceptance of humanity.*

I found an opportunity to make money helping a builder finish a house he had promised to complete months before in Steamboat Springs. It was a job unlike any other I have ever had or ever want to have. After a long drive on snowy roads, we arrived in Steamboat at a half finished log style house just outside of town along a stream. It had snowed about a foot and the weather was below freezing. Our job was to finish the roof and hang sheetrock. We worked all week out in the elements by day and slept in sleeping bags on the floor of the unheated house by night. In the morning my boots were frozen and my body aching from the cold. I wore the same clothes all week! The only bright spot was the morning breakfast in a warm restaurant. One of my jobs was to unload a truckload of sheetrock by myself. I endured and made some money; however, if I were to write an essay on “the worst job of my life,” this would be it.

The harsh realities of winter were causing us to transition from fantasy of living through the winter in Colorado to reality. We needed to do something soon to get out of the cold. For several evenings we sat at the little table in the bus under the kerosene lamp, while winter closed in around us and ice built up on the inside of the bus, studying a map of the U.S. We were looking for a place to escape from the misery we were experiencing. We were pretty sure we would head west and then to Mexico or Alaska, but we did briefly consider going east, perhaps to the Southeast near Cindy’s family. As we looked at possible places to go in the East, we saw urban sprawl that made it difficult to get away from cities and their pollution. We wanted to be as far away as we could from



The bus snowbound

urban areas! So we turned to the western part of the map where it seemed there were more open spaces farther away from urban areas. The West also had an allure for both of us and seemed to fit our wanderlust.

The West won out, and we started searching for places to go from Mexico to Alaska. In retrospect, our lives and those of our extended families would have been very different had we gone to the Southeast. We might not have become so distant from our parents and other family members, but then again, we might not have grown in the positive ways our independence far away from family demanded. We shall never know. We do know the sadness that we felt over the limited involvement we had with our extended family.

We were regular readers of the *Mother Earth News*, a magazine about alternative life styles. We picked up a new issue while we were contemplating our next move. Inside was an ad for inexpensive land in California and the opportunity to form a cooperative community. This looked like an exciting prospect, so I wrote to the people who had placed the ad and got an encouraging response.

Our original intent had been to buy land in Colorado and make our new life there. During the summer we had looked at land in Crested Butte, but it was much too expensive for us. In those days CB was a quiet mountain town with a rutted, dusty dirt main street. It was on the verge of being discovered and developed as a premier ski area. We loved the town and the friendly inhabitants and were disappointed that we could not afford it. I have often thought about how the trajectory of our lives might have been different had we settled in Crested Butte.

We accepted the fact that land was too expensive in Colorado, and we were convinced that winters were too snowy and cold. After a positive response from the realtors in California, our decision was made easier. We would head west if we could extricate the bus from its snow and icy prison and visit California to see how we liked it there. Ultimately, our plan was that we would push on to some other faraway place after staying for a while in California.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### CALIFORNIA OR BUST

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We had decided to head to California, but the bus was entombed in its frozen parking spot, surrounded by four to five feet high walls of snow, wheels frozen to the ground, icicles hanging from the roof almost to the ground, while inside the condensation continued to build up and turn into ice. We were miserable and had to escape.

A break in the weather was necessary for us to have any chance of making our getaway before the spring thaw. Luckily, a break came in mid-December with sun and above freezing temperature. It was our window of opportunity to escape. There was just enough sun on our parking spot to unfreeze the wheels from the ground and give the engine a chance to start. We quickly got the bus ready for the road by tying down loose items on the inside. We jumped our frozen battery from a friend's truck. The engine groaned and, to our great relief, started. We managed to back out onto the dirt road, which had been partially plowed, and made our way to the main road. We said goodbye to my sister and her family and went by the Aspen Community School to pick up Peter and David.

By mid-afternoon, full of excitement over our new adventure, we were headed down the road to Carbondale and Glenwood Springs. It was California or bust! At Glenwood, we turned left onto Highway 70 and headed west. The icicles had fallen off and the ice buildup on the inside had started to melt, creating a damp mess. We pulled over for our first evening on the road in the little town of Rifle, Colorado. Our route would take us into Utah and then across Nevada.

We had never been out on the highway with the bus. I found that it handled well for such an oversized vehicle; I, in fact, felt ex-

hilarated driving it! It was like driving a big trailer truck, sitting high above the cars. The cassette tape recorder and speakers I had hooked up provided tunes to listen to while the kids played, and Cindy sewed or read. We drove leisurely, never covering a great many miles in a day. Each evening we pulled over into an out of the way spot, settled down, and prepared dinner; then we'd read stories to the boys. These were wonderful evenings shared as a close knit family feeling safe and secure in our home on wheels. As I think back from the perspective of the random violence in today's world, I am amazed at how safe and secure we felt during those nights on the road.

As I indicated in the first chapter, life for us on the bus was lived in the moment. This living in the moment was becoming a major theme in our life. We were not driven by the clock, not tied to a schedule or a destination; we lived as joyously and peacefully as possible regardless of the challenges. We did not look to the future for our fulfillment or to the past for sustaining memories. We were not pushing toward something; we were living in the moment, embracing whatever was happening. Even though we were somewhat cramped inside the bus, we did not think back to when we had a big house to roam around in. This was it; we were wanderers, content in the process of traveling and feeling "at home" wherever we were, embracing each day and night as a new experience while we were comfortably contained as a family inside our whimsical travel vehicle.

Learning to live in the moment has been one of the major legacies of our time on the bus. Being in the moment did not mean that we had no goals. We did have simple goals such as getting to California (and then moving on) and building community with like-minded people. However, we were not ruled by these goals; reaching them was not the most important thing in our lives. Most important was what was right before us—our life with its challenges and joys which were unfolding around us each day. There is, I believe, no greater feeling than the peace and stillness that come from being so much in the present that there is little focus on the past or the future. This realization of living in the

present, which came from the experience on the bus, has greatly enriched our lives and a recurring theme.

On the second day we drove from Rifle to Grand Junction, Colorado and parked for the night in a shopping center lot. The next stop was Green River, Utah. We pulled onto a side road, cooked our dinner and played games with the boys. Just as we were getting ready to bed down, a car drove by the bus and someone angrily shouted, "Dirty hippies, get out of town." We debated on leaving, but decided not to be intimidated by prejudice. Needless to say, sleep for me was not good that night. Fortunately, other than our experience in Aspen, this turned out to be the only prejudicial response we received in our bus. However, it was a hateful reception to Utah and left us wanting to get across the state as quickly as possible.

We left Green River early the next morning heading for Salt Lake City. When we got to the interstate highway near Springville, Utah, I was able to get the bus up to the amazing speed of fifty miles per hour. At this speed we seemed to be flying around Provo and Salt Lake City. Little did I know that the high speed driving was causing problems with the front tires.

We turned onto Interstate 80 and drove along the edge of the Great Salt Lake. There was excitement in the bus over anticipation of crossing the Great Salt Desert. We had read stories to the boys about what a formidable barrier this desert had been to the early pioneers heading west. By late afternoon we made it to the edge of the desert and planned to get across and into Nevada by sunset. The bus, as you already know, had a different idea.

As we got ready to descend into the whiteness of the desert, a growling and grinding in the front end brought us to an abrupt stop alongside the road. The wheel lugs had sheared off the drum of the right tire wedging it up under the fender. When we bought the bus in Carbondale it had new tires. Now, both front tires were worn to the threads.

While I was assessing the damage and contemplating our dilemma, an old pickup zoomed by and then slowed down, pulled off the road and started backing up along the shoulder to where

we were. A young man got out and sauntered back toward our bus. As I went to greet him, he said, "Hey man, haven't you people been around Aspen?" He recognized us from having seen the bus there. He was heading to California, he said, to house sit for a famous singer. We talked for a while just as though we had met an old friend on the street; we then watched a magnificent sunset over the desert. After that he said goodbye and headed off, literally, into the sunset. I cannot recall any conversation with him about our predicament.

As I write this, I wonder how a young man could leave a family stranded in the middle of nowhere and not offer to assist them. I am not sure what the answer is, but I think in part it lies somewhere in the counter life style we shared. This life style, which, despite all its implied focus on love, was really quite self centered. Many people were "doing their own thing." It evidently did not occur to him to offer, or for us to ask, for help. Together, we simply flowed with the situation until he drove off into the diminishing sunset. Also, our family was called in those days "a together group." We appeared to others to be self sufficient, to have our "act together," as they said; therefore, it is not entirely without understanding that he could leave us without offering assistance.

However, for the sake of good memories of those days, I would like to be telling how the guy in the pickup rescued us. I would like to tell how he helped me figure out what to do, and then drove me the many miles back to Salt Lake City to get the needed parts. Also, I'd like to tell how he then saw us safely on our way before driving off into the sunset. I should add, in fairness, that no one else stopped to help us either. Maybe it was because they felt put off by our unconventional appearance and perhaps, even saw us through the eyes of fear.

Early in the morning, after breakfast, I left the stranded bus and crossed over the highway median, with the drum in my arms, to the eastbound lanes and stuck out my thumb. To my amazement the first approaching big rig stopped and gave me a ride all the way to a tire shop near Salt Lake City.

While I was gone, Cindy and the three boys went about their usual activities of playing, reading stories, and eating lunch. We did not feel stressed by our predicament because we were so comfortably self-contained in our home on wheels and had enough food and water to last for days, and, as I have already expressed, we did not have a need to be anywhere other than where we were. We were confident (although a bit naïve) that we could solve the problem.

The guys in the wheel shop in Salt Lake City were helpful. I acted like I knew what I was doing and did not want to let on that I didn't know much about axles and tires in fear of them gouging me for the repair. They had the new lugs in the drum within in a short time, with the encouraging words, "It'll be as good as new, but you'd better get that front end aligned before going across the desert." This was all routine for them and only cost a few dollars. I was thinking, "Yeah, the drum is as good as new, but the tires that need to get us across the desert to the first town are worn down to their threads."

With the rebuilt drum in hand I headed back out to the road. It wasn't long before a couple in a sedan stopped to pick me up. They were headed for someplace west of the desert. I told them my situation, and they let me climb in for the ride back after placing my unusual baggage in their trunk. As I think back, I wonder why this couple stopped to pick up a scruffy hippie standing by the roadside with a rusty old car part. They turned out to be delightful, and we had a nice visit during the two hours it took to get back to the bus. They did not seem surprised by the bus (I had prepared them well), and I assured them we would be fine. People can be so good!

*Cynthia's reflections*

*I was concerned about getting the bus repaired, of course, but confident that Pete would be able to handle it, so I was not worried about the outcome. I did have an uneasy feeling about being alone with our children for most of the day on the desert highway; however, I was not feeling fearful.*

*It became obvious that Pete had not only planned what to do about getting the bus fixed; he had also planned for our protection during his absence. He remembered that we had in our possession a 32 caliber pistol! My mother had brought it in her purse on the plane to Detroit when she came to help me soon before Chris was born. She and Daddy had been worried about our safety there in the city since the riot in 1967. Seeing this pistol when Pete presented it to me was the first time I had thought about it since that time in Detroit. I was startled but listened to his instructions of how to use it. It was only then that I realized this might be a fearful situation. Before leaving, Pete assured me that he would return safely and all would be well.*

*Though having a gun was unsettling at first, it did give me a sense of security while it also awakened me to the gravity of my responsibility. My plan for the day in addition to caring for my children was to bake bread, so seeing the boys happily settled making hills, valleys and roads for their toy cars in the abundant coarse sand on this perfect December day in the desert helped me to focus on my bread baking job.*

*We were stocked with whole wheat flour, yeast and other necessities, so I got started mixing the dough, kneading it, letting it raise, punching it down, letting it raise again, punching it again and forming loaves which fitted nicely in our small propane oven. Peter, David and Chris were well into the flow of play by the time the bread was raising the first time. After surveying the roads and highways they had built, we had lunch together; then we had a quiet time reading and relaxing inside the bus before the older ones went back out to play and while Chris, only three, had an afternoon nap.*

*Scant traffic passed during the day, mostly trucks, but there were no incidents. Soon the bread was in the oven, its aroma still lingering in the bus when a car pulled over and Pete emerged, smiling. We were all overwhelmingly happy to see him home again from his urgent and successful journey! He got to work immediately fixing the bus.*

*Even though our boys showed no signs of stress during the bus breakdown and repair, I'm sure they had some anxiety about it. Regretfully, though, I don't remember asking them to share their thoughts and feelings about it. Our dinner that evening featured fresh bread, and we were on the road again before dark sharing a spirit of celebration!*

In short order, I had the drum on and the threadbare tire secured with new lugs. We were ready to roll deeper into the desolation of the desert and to destinations beyond on two front tires with questionable ability to take us very far. As we slowly crossed the desert, the words of the guys in the shop haunted me: "You'd better get that front end aligned before going across the desert." Apprehension was high, higher than it had been during the breakdown. One of those badly worn tires could "go" at any time! After what seemed like an endless slow-moving journey, we rolled into Elko, Nevada with a sense of accomplishment and relief.

Apprehensive about how we might be perceived and treated in this remote town, we stopped at the first gas station and told the attendants about our mechanical difficulties. To our surprise, they were not put off by our appearance or our vehicle, and they took a genuine interest in us. The source of their open response to us, I believe, lies in the legacy left by those who settled the west in the eighteen hundreds—a legacy of rugged individualism, self-sufficiency, depth of character and a resistance to conformity and regulations. This legacy has become imbedded in the rural culture of the West and breeds acceptance and tolerance for all types of people. It seemed that it was a legacy shared by the welcoming people in Elko, Nevada and later by many of the "locals" in the rural area of California where we ultimately settled.

The attendants in the gas station checked all over Elko before they found a set of tires that would fit the bus; however, those they found were a bit undersized, but we were in no position to be choosy. Before installing the new tires, they explained to me what had caused the problem. The front end was so misaligned that the tires were literally going down the road turned partially sideways. Each mile meant more and more rubber wearing off

the tires. Eventually, the torque from the angled tires was too much pressure for the lug nuts, so they just broke off under the strain.

These guys could have put new tires on the bus, charged us an exorbitant amount of money, and said goodbye, but they were good people, too caring and honest to take advantage of us, so they sent us to a shop for the needed alignment. Again, we were welcomed and helped. We stayed in the bus while two men spent half the day straightening out the front end alignment. Elko, during that short stay, grew on us, and we had serious, however fleeting, thoughts about staying there. I have fond memories of this open-hearted town.

We were back on the road and headed to California. Before us was the barren, rolling landscape of Highway 50 that cuts across Nevada in an endless series of undulating asphalt stretching out, hill after hill, as far as the eye can see. This spacious, wild country of hills and plateaus, shaped by wind and water into amazing forms, would be our travelling companion until we got to California. We left Elko in the afternoon. We were well rested and decided to drive after dark for a while, so we stopped at a high overlook above Elko where we enjoyed dinner and another beautiful sunset.

With the smell of fresh popcorn popping on the wood stove, we bedded the kids down and set out on the road again in a light rain, tunes playing and windshield wipers sweeping back and forth to the beat of the music, and a wisp of woodstove smoke marking our trail. This was a night on the road to remember: Cindy and I sitting together up front, navigating the seemingly endless expanse of eastern Nevada and sipping coffee. Time stood still for us and adventure beckoned.

We had never been to California, and we thought of it, much as those earlier settlers whose trail we now followed, as a land of temperate climate and opportunity which was now a Mecca for alternative life styles. We had been warned before we left Colorado of the winter treacherousness of Donner Pass, gateway into California on Interstate 80.

I thought the ribbon of road taking us over hill after hill, straining the bus to its limit on each incline, would never end. Finally, a town! Reno appeared before us, seemingly, out of nowhere. It was late in the day and snow was visible on the surrounding mountain peaks; the sky ahead looked dark and menacing. We knew that California was not far ahead. Reno disappeared quickly behind. Soon the "Welcome to California" sign was in front of us, and our cheers went up. Coming into California was a thrill; it had taken us nearly seven days! With apprehension about how the bus would perform on the high mountain pass at Donner Summit, which loomed ahead high up in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, we pushed on.

We had heard stories of the Donner Party and their fateful encounter with Donner Pass; little did we know what lay ahead for us. Common sense would have dictated that we pull over somewhere in Reno, spend the night and learn more about the treachery of the pass and the weather conditions. But we were in California and there was no holding us back, or so we thought.

We began climbing up the steep highway which winds along the Truckee River walled in by mountains of barren rock. The old engine struggled to pull its load up the incline; we were definitely a slow moving vehicle and kept to the right to let others pass. The sky was getting darker and closing in on us. In a short while, the foreboding sky delivered its cargo. Snow was swirling around us and the highway was turning from grey to brilliant white. We were beginning to panic and wonder about our fate.

We saw a sign faintly through the snow that said "Truckee next exit." As we headed down into the picturesque town of Truckee, at the base of the steep climb to Donner Pass, it was a Christmas wonderland like one sees on holiday greeting cards with twinkling lights and newly fallen snow. Truckee was then a sleepy logging and mining town with an authentic frontier atmosphere. It was transitioning into a mountain tourist spot, much like we had found Crested Butte. We slowly inched our way along the west side of the rail tracks which run through town. The tracks keep going over the mountains and, eventually, into Sacramento. We

found a place to park near the tracks. Snow was still falling; it was December 23, 1971, and the highway had just been closed to all vehicles without chains.

We were apprehensive because of stories we had heard about the pass in winter; perhaps we would be marooned here in a snow bank for days waiting to get over the summit. We didn't know that closings like this one were frequent in winter and usually only lasted a few hours until the storm cleared and the snow was removed. For all we knew, like the Donner Party, we might be in Truckee until the spring thaw—Aspen all over again! We were truly living an adventure. After firing up our wood stove, we settled down for what we thought might be a long stay.

The next morning we awoke to rays of sun coming through the bus windows. The storm had passed, and we were encased in a blanket of crisp, brilliant whiteness. After refueling the wood stove with wood carried in the ski racks, which had been welded to the side of the bus, it was time to have breakfast. After breakfast, I ventured outside to find news about the pass. I hadn't walked far when I ran across a gnarled old mountain man; I enquired about the pass. "Yep, that thar pass is open." After I pointed out the bus to him, he looked at me quizzically and asked, "You gonna drive that thing up over the pass?" My answer was obviously affirmative.

Soon we were on the highway which, amazingly, was totally clear of snow. With snow piled high alongside the road, it gave the feeling of driving through a tunnel. Reaching the summit, at a little over 7,000 feet was a chore for the old bus, but like the little engine that could, it eventually reached the top and enjoyed the easy ride down the other side until reaching the Highway 20 exit toward Nevada City.

By the time we got to Highway 20, it had started raining heavily. The rain, so typical of winter in the Sierra foothills, shared the ride with us all the way to Dobbins. We were enthralled by the beauty along Highway 20, and the way it winds through pine forests and spaces carved out of huge hills of granite. In some places it seemed like the bus might not fit between the sheer walls of

granite that encased the narrow strip of road. We stopped briefly in Grass Valley for gas and to phone the people we were headed to see about land, for directions to their house

I don't remember a lot of anticipation during this serene drive along Highway 20. Cindy expressed a feeling of calmness after we stopped in Grass Valley for gas where she had stepped out into the temperate rain; the climate was a contrast to the harshness of winter in Colorado. We had made it to California, and we felt relieved to be nearing the end of this leg of our journey! We still had vague thoughts of ultimately pushing on to Alaska. (We had decided it would be a better choice for us than Mexico.)

We pulled into the driveway of Sam and Joyce Middlebrook, the people we were coming to see about land, just as darkness was taking over; it was Christmas Eve; they welcomed us into their home. We felt a warm connection with them right away while we had tea together in their living room. Joyce told us a neighbor had phoned a few moments earlier to inquire what that thing was that drove down the road toward their house. Fortunately, with good humor, she could tell him that she and Sam had been expecting us. We felt happy to be there, and after tea with them, we settled down for a rainy Christmas Eve in our bus.

We learned that Sam and Joyce came to the foothills from Berkeley; they had been married for only a short time and were attempting to blend together Joyce's five children from two previous marriages with Sam's two children from a prior marriage. Sam had grown up in Dobbins, only a few miles away. His dad, a San Francisco businessman, fearful of a Japanese attack during the Second World War while they were living in San Francisco, moved the family to a remote, four hundred acre ranch above Dobbins.

Sam and Joyce were later drawn to the area because of Sam's familiarity with it, and because of the potential it held for a simpler lifestyle than the one they had had in Berkeley where Sam worked as an engineer. They envisioned, much as we did, developing a cooperative community: each family would own their own land and have family autonomy, yet they would cooperate in

helping one another by sharing tools, buying food cooperatively, and sharing community life together.

When we arrived on Christmas Eve 1971, the Middlebrook family had been at their Good Earth Homestead just over one year. They had invested in land surrounding their farm—parcels they could sell to people who shared their vision. Beyond this, they had not yet progressed toward fulfilling their goal. They were obviously both talented people, as evidenced by their starting a real estate company and the comfortable, yet simple, home they had created.

We knew from the moment we were greeted by them that these were unique people; they were welcoming and open to divergent ideas and ways of living that were alternate to conventional life styles. Sam looked like an engineer with his closely cropped hair and spectacles, and he approached life with an analytical flare; Joyce, on the surface, had the appearance of a typical housewife and mom. There was nothing hippie or counter life style in the way they looked or acted—after all, they were in the real estate business—yet they both held values divergent from the mainstream. What soon became apparent was how consistently open and accepting they were to us, strangers arriving in a bizarre looking school bus.

Over time, we saw this acceptance played out as they welcomed others, all unique and some clearly weird characters, into the Good Earth Homestead. Another quality that stood out in Joyce and Sam was their generosity; they epitomized the meaning of *mi casa, su casa* (my house is your house). The day after we arrived was Christmas, and we were invited to Christmas dinner in their home; it was a grand feast with extraordinary food, including vegetarian dishes all prepared by Joyce.

Christmas morning we had the best present we could imagine! We were welcome to take a bath in our friends' bathroom, an activity we were to do many times until months later when we built our real house. The bathing we did in their house has special meaning for us. First, to open up one's bathroom on a regular basis to be invaded by a family of five for a weekly bath is an act

of great generosity. For us it was a luxury. We looked forward to soaking in a tub filled with warm water, taking our cold sponge baths in the bus was not a pleasant way to keep clean.

The day after Christmas, Sam saw that we were running low on firewood, so he brought us wood to replenish our supply. Within a few days he invited Cindy and me to go up into the forest and cut firewood. We piled into his truck (we had no vehicle other than the bus) and went up into a pristine forest covered in a light dusting of snow. Sam brought out his chainsaw, and he explained in the manner of a good engineer that we would be cutting only the hardwood trees, oak and madrone, because they made the best firewood.

This was the first time that Cindy and I had seen a chainsaw in operation. Sam taught both of us how to use this menacing tool. This was, so to speak, our baptism with the chainsaw, a tool that would become a fixture in our lives. Another special memory of this trip was that Sam showed us how, when its bark is cut, a madrone tree actually bleeds red sap, the color of its bark. This forest adventure with Sam and the experiences he provided that day was one of many events that endeared Sam to us.

We felt as if we had known Sam and Joyce for years. We came from different paths but were drawn together by shared goals for living on the land, growing our own food, building an alternative life style in a loosely knit community, and educating our children. Our bond grew quickly, and soon we were looking at land they had to offer and we could afford. Our connection with them was tightening, our roots were already growing into the soil of the California foothills, and we were going to stay!

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### SUNSHINE MOUNTAIN GETS ITS NAME

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A few days after Christmas, we were planning a trip to see San Francisco for the first time. Early one morning, along with Sam and Joyce, we crammed into the seat of their yellow Dodge pickup (one of us had to be sitting sideways) and headed for the city over three hours away. Cindy and I were excited about seeing the city by the bay which we had heard so much about and that had played such a prominent role in the counterculture movement. As the exit signs for Berkeley appeared, my mind began to race through recent history.

I thought about the beginning of student radicalism with the Free Speech Movement on the Berkeley campus of the University of California in 1964-65, the epicenter of the hippie movement at Telegraph Avenue, and People's Park started by flower children and free speech radicals on a vacant lot in the middle of the city. The focal point of the park was a large cooperative people's garden. I was full of anticipation as we turned onto Ashby Avenue; what had only been images in my mind were becoming real! After a tour of Berkeley, we crossed over the Bay Bridge into San Francisco.

The first view of San Francisco was magical, and the magic repeats each time I go to the city. Bathed in sunlight and surrounded by sparkling blue water; we saw tall buildings and surrounding hills covered with houses as we came over the Bay Bridge. We took in the famous pier area, Lombard Street known for its steep, tight turns, and some other spots special to Sam and Joyce. By early evening we were ready to head back to Dobbins. We were exhausted and full of great memories from this whirlwind trip; we had fun all day relaxing and getting to know each other. We had taken in so many images in such a short time; it reminded me of my one day tour of the Holy Land.

The connection we were making with Sam and Joyce, along with the affordable land that we could purchase from them, as well as our mutual goal to build a community, seemed to be sufficient reason for us to stay in the Dobbins area; our wandering days were over. We moved our bus out into a meadow some distance from their house, a sign that we were settling in more than we had originally planned to, and we began talking to them about land. The kids' schooling was becoming a concern, so we decided to teach them ourselves.

A page from Cindy's diary captures the essence of our home school: January 3, 1972:

*We decided to start our own school! We had, of course, taken our children out of school, and we learned from our new friends that the local schools were not meeting the needs of their children. Joyce had been in consultation with the local school principal who was cooperative in making materials available so that we could, together, teach our children.*

*In the beginning, we were highly structured and set up regular academic subjects with one adult assigned to each subject. We had nine students aged three and a half to fourteen and four teachers. I taught reading and writing. Pete taught Spanish. Joyce and Sam taught math, science, and mechanics. Friday was arts and crafts day.*

*We had hard-working students who were serious learners, making teaching fun for the teacher. We read the Helen Keller Story and did some activities to empathize with Helen's condition like walking blindfolded in wooded areas, touching leaves and other natural textures and tasting jelly, apples, and bananas. The kids loved reading literature that had activities they could act out themselves. Acting out the story provided inspiration for their writing.*

We were shown land that was for sale in the area. We settled on a five acre hill our new friends owned with a 360 degree view of the surrounding hills and purchased it for \$2500. It was hard

to believe that we could buy land so inexpensively; however, this was due to Sam's and Joyce's divergent values. They were not in the real estate business to make money but rather to make affordable land available to people like us and others with similar values.

The five acre parcel we purchased was gentle rolling land with lots of oak trees, a few conifers towering above the thick brush that had grown vigorously since sheep grazing had stopped many years before, and remnants of barbed wire from fences that had long ago fallen down. In winter, when we bought the land, the grass was green and soft and the surrounding hills verdant; spring brought an eruption of wildflowers. By late spring the magnificent wildflowers dried up, the grass became dry and brittle and the hills turned golden.

We believed we had purchased a bit of heaven. Our intent was to build a simple house, grow a garden, raise animals, and generally become as self-sufficient on the land as possible. We didn't plan to do it alone; the idea was that other families would buy adjacent five acre parcels and, together, we would build the envisioned cooperative community.

Towns in our area were tiny and unmarked by boundaries; technically, our land was in Oregon House which included a small store, old schoolhouse used as a community center, and a twelve by twelve foot post office. Along with its sister town, Dobbins, Oregon House sits in the foothills that roll gently up into the Sierra about fourteen hundred feet above sea level, between Marysville and Grass Valley, on the edge of the Plumas National Forest and at the gateway to the Lost Sierra.

This area of the mountains and foothills is known as the Lost Sierra because of how history has overlooked its vibrant and prominent role in the gold rush. It was home during the days of '49 to many a prospector and their colorful entourage of shop keepers, Chinese laborers, dance hall matrons and prostitutes. They lived in boom towns like La Porte which is over two thousand feet higher in altitude than Oregon House. In the 1850's La Porte was a booming gold mining town and the site of the first downhill

ski racing competition in the United States. The changes brought on by time and progress have all but obliterated the remnants of those glorious days of the nineteenth century when these foothills were overrun with gold fever driven men and the women who inevitably followed. The decayed remnants of their mining towns dot the surrounding hills.

Some who had been drawn to the area by gold stayed to harvest lumber from the tall trees, and they built prosperous businesses. When we arrived, most of the residents of the area had been here a long time. Many worked in the lumber industry and a few ranched. We bought goat milk from a leathered rancher named Nick and his wife Sue. They lived in an old weathered farm house that had once been a dance hall and stage stop. They were friendly neighbors, and they treated us as if we had been here all our lives. Sadly, most of the local houses like theirs that dated back to the 1800s have now fallen down or have been torn down.

The bus was crowded on rainy days, so when the opportunity arose to purchase an old camper trailer, I jumped at it. The trailer wasn't much, but it would give us an extra "room." A couple of local hippies planned to use it on a trip to New York, but it was plain to see that the flimsy thing would not make it out of California. It had been made, many years before, of soft fiber board—not a very durable material. The small windows were still intact allowing in some light, but so did the floor because it had holes rotted through it. My overly generous offer of \$25 for the rig was quickly accepted.

We hauled the trailer out into the field where the bus was parked. Nestled close to the bus, the trailer underwent a thorough makeover. We had already discovered some beautiful weathered and aged wood fallen from old cabins in the area. The foundations had rotted away leaving only the boards. We gathered a load and used it to cover the outside walls of the trailer. The roof could not possibly hold out the rain, so we covered it with boards and old shingles. I covered the floor with plywood. It was transformed into what some would call a shack, but we referred to it as

the cabin, and it provided overflow space on rainy days and room to hold classes for our home school.

Now that we were land owners, we anticipated getting settled on the land as soon as possible, but we'd have to wait for the rains to end before it would be possible to put a road into the land. I would often hike over to our land early in the morning and sit on a rock, in what was to become our front yard, listening to the rhythmic mooing of the cows in the partially fog-shrouded valley below, and enjoying the stillness and feeling at one with my surroundings. I had little awareness of the hard work, problem solving, trials and tribulations that lay ahead and that would be necessary for us to actually live on this land.

When spring came, access to the land was our first priority. There was a remnant of a narrow, rutted road worn into the dirt and rock long ago by a sheep herder. With help from Sam, we surveyed for a road which would wind through a few of the other parcels that we were hoping other like-minded people would purchase. A major problem confronted us—we had to ford a stream that raged during winter downpours. As with everything we did, we were on a tight budget, so building a bridge was out of the question. We were fortunate to locate an old four feet in diameter culvert that had been left at a construction site down the hill toward Marysville. We got a deal on the culvert and arranged for a truck to get it to our road site. We then negotiated price with a local dozer operator and soon a huge yellow monster was plowing through dirt, rocks and trees. It didn't take long for this huge machine to carve us out a road and to cover the culvert, now settled in the streambed, with dirt.

This road was to give us a challenge during the first few winters until we developed an adequate base of rocks and gravel. The road base would turn into soft, slick mud from the torrential winter rain. I was constantly hauling pickup loads of small rocks gathered from the land to fill the ruts and provide stability to drive on.

More than once, people who came to visit during a rain storm slid off the road, and ended up at a precarious tilt on the embank-

ment. I would haul out heavy rope, chain and a come-a-long winch, and down the road we'd slide to pull them out. Ropes, chain and winch had to be hooked onto the stuck vehicle and then secured to a stout tree or our truck. Inch by inch, with rain dripping off my hat and clothing, I'd crank on the winch lever and pull the vehicle back onto the road, and then I filled in the ruts with a fresh a lay of rocks. We took these difficulties and others as part of life on a homestead; we knew that, eventually, the sun would shine and dry the road to a dusty hard surface.

Our funds were getting low. We had been living off what we had earned at odd jobs in Colorado and some occasional work I got in Oregon House. We had left the city with the sum of \$7,200, my total retirement account with the Presbyterian Church,. In those days, this seemed like a lot of money. We were intent on using it for land purchase and house construction, so we did not draw from it for living expenses, although it was tempting at times. After the land purchase, we had less than \$5,000 left. This was soon reduced by \$500 to buy an old red, quite worn Ford pickup truck which we named Old Red even though much of the original red paint was gone. The driver's seat had a hole worn in it exposing the springs, and every time it went over a bump the glove box would pop open.

Imagine planning to develop land and build a house with less than \$5,000! Fortunately we were all healthy, because we did not have health insurance and would have to rely on the public health hospital in Marysville if one of us needed medical attention. We had no concept of what lay ahead of us; all we knew was that we had our land and that was enough. As we had been doing, we were living in the moment.

Finding a job proved way more difficult than finding the land and the truck; as a matter of fact, there were few jobs in this depressed area—especially for someone with little or no experience at manual labor. My first idea was to utilize my credentials as an educated and experienced professional, so I decided to pay a visit to the community college and high school, both about thirty miles away in Marysville.

I had saved a wool suit from my professional days—three buttons, narrow lapels—that was now out of style. But I wasn't too concerned with style, so I cleaned up, combed my hair, trimmed my beard and put on the most uncomfortable clothing, I think, I had worn since dressing up for Easter as a child. The wool pants made me feel like I was being gone over with sandpaper and itched something awful. I felt like a bumpkin as I drove to town in the old red truck. I think I was actually living an illusion—the illusion that for someone interviewing job applicants what mattered most was what was inherently inside that person rather than outward appearances.

I believed that because of my education and experiences I had much to offer the world of education. I did not consider, at that time, that some type of credentialing was necessary. At the college, I hardly got through the front door. They dismissed me right away based on what they saw and my lack of proper credentials, and they were clearly not interested in my talents and experience. I was rejected before I could open my mouth. How naïve I was!

At the high school, however, I got to talk with two teachers in the history department. They were intrigued with my background and skills and, at least, acted interested in me. As it turned out, they did not have the power to help me in any way. However, I did learn from them about substitute teaching, so I signed up to substitute for other teachers. Being a part of the growth and development of young people, even though I was a substitute teacher, was fulfilling for me. However, at the time, I did not consider teaching as a career option; it was primarily a job to help us have enough money to survive as homesteaders.

This is the same district where, years later, I became superintendent. When I became superintendent, the two history department guys were still teaching at the high school, and so were many of the teachers for whom I had substituted. I don't think any of them connected me, when I was superintendent, to the long-haired, bearded guy who had once been a substitute teacher. As I recall it now, I chuckle because it never came up.

Eventually, I found part time regular work, and this work did not require dressing up in old, outdated, itchy clothes. A land speculator from the bay area owned a nearby ranch and had sold our friends the land they were living on, as well as the land they held to sell people interested in a cooperative community. Occasionally, the speculator and some of his cronies came from the Bay Area up to the ranch house to drink and play poker. The speculator was a large man who carried a little extra weight around his middle; his perpetual side kick, Nick, was about half his size. They were a comical pair and seemed to have a great time at the ranch drinking whisky, playing poker and escaping from their wives who never, to my knowledge, came to the ranch.

I think the speculator, more out of kindness than need, offered me a job as a part-time maintenance person around the ranch house for \$3.50 per hour. We needed the money, so I jumped at the "opportunity". My job responsibility consisted of finding work that needed to be done, so I spent a lot of time chopping down weeds.

One of the side benefits of working at the ranch was my relationship with Chet and his family. He and his family lived in a smaller house on the ranch property. They ran a large herd of cattle on the ranch in exchange for caretaking it. Chet had lived in the area all his life, and he walked with the bowed legs of a man who had spent a lot of time on a horse. He chewed tobacco and spat juice while he talked. He was a warm, kind, accepting man. If anyone could have judged me as a crazy hippie from the city, it would have been him. But, no, he was able to move beyond a stereotype that I might have fit and connect with me on a personal level. We became great friends, and our families got to know each other. Our friendship carried on for many years.

Another special person came into our life, the postmistress, Angel. She was everything to us that her name implied. She, like Chet, had lived in the area all her life. She also could have seen me as an unwelcome hippie outsider, but that was not her nature. She, too, reached out to us with kindness and caring. She knew

that we were struggling to make ends meet, so she would pay me to do fix-it jobs around her little post office building. Part of the building had a dirt floor, so she hired me to pour a concrete floor. This was my first experience at pouring concrete, and I learned as I went along. This is how life was for me; I had to become skilled quickly in how to make a living working with my hands, often more-or-less faking my skills as I went along.

Angel's welcoming spirit and acts of kindness touched me deeply. Angel and Chet were two examples of the kind of people we discovered in California, our new home. They were people who accepted us with openness and warmth. They could see beyond what many cannot and looked at one's character, the truth of who a person really is. They taught me, as a recipient of their kindness, about acceptance and caring.

By springtime, the two older boys had their fill of home schooling and wanted to venture into the surrounding world. Cindy visited the two local schools. One was a small kindergarten through grade eight red school house situated in the national forest. The other was an even smaller school, kindergarten through grade five located close by in Dobbins. In the end, the decision was to send Peter Jr. to the school in the national forest because he was already in fifth grade and David to the one in Dobbins; he was in fourth grade. Peter's school was accustomed to kids from families living back in the woods whose hair might be long and who wore clothes similar to his own, but Dobbins School was quite different for David. He was, it seemed, the first long-haired kid they had enrolled. With long and blond, usually tangled hair flowing down his back, puka shell beads around his neck, wearing American flag print bell bottoms, a peasant shirt with billowy sleeves, and leather boots, he was quite a hit. Both boys adapted well to their new environments and did well in school.

In order to meet expenses and have money to build a simple house, our amazing bus had to be sold. At the time, this was not a hard decision, because we were ready to live in a house. Although in retrospect, I wish that we still had it stowed away in a barn as a keepsake. We advertised it in the Bay Area, and almost

as soon as it was advertised, we had a buyer. The buyers drove up from Berkeley to pick up the bus, and their plan was to drive it to Alaska. I sadly watched as they drove away, and I have often wondered what happened to our unintentionally conspicuous, outlandish bus that we called home for more than a year.

Now that we had purchased land, thoughts turned to how we were going to live on it. The road was now in place; our next hurdle was to build a simple cabin to be our temporary house until we could get a larger one built. The structure we planned to build as a transition house would be twelve by fourteen feet. Living in a school bus for nearly a year taught us that we could survive in a small space, especially when we could sleep outside during warm summer months; by winter we planned to be building a larger house.

As a start, we found two discarded telephone poles that would serve as the foundation. These were laid out on the ground according to our dimensions and leveled with rocks under the ends. Floor joists and flooring were then laid on top of the telephone pole foundation. Nearly all the materials that went into this house were scavenged from old, fallen down buildings up the road. Other things like windows and doors were purchased for nearly nothing at Quit Yr Kickin', a junk yard near Marysville.

We got help building from Jonathan, a friendly and colorful local character. He was an artist and craftsman who had moved to the foothills from San Francisco. An accomplished painter who painted his work on large canvases, most with an emotionally dark side to them; he also built exquisite furniture for high paying customers in the Bay Area. We learned, as we got to know him, that he knew a lot about building, so we got him to show us how to put the pieces together to make our simple shelter.

He became a close friend who usually had a long and convoluted humorous story to tell. A year or two later he brought home a woman much younger than himself and introduced her as his new wife. She was a pretty girl who seemed somewhat naïve and probably disillusioned about her new circumstances. It wasn't long before she left, and we never saw her again.

Sometime later Jonathan sold out and moved back to San Francisco. We kept in touch, and on a trip to San Francisco, we all five visited him. He had moved into a large and beautifully decorated Victorian house with a bunch of men who were obviously gay. They were hospitable and gracious to us, and we had a good visit. This was our first experience with openly gay people. A year or two later Joe and a young male partner paid us a visit. After that, we lost touch with him and, unable to make contact, do not know what became of him.

It didn't take long to get the small building up and livable. We did need to make one more important addition, an outhouse. My experience with outhouses, other than camping, had never been forgotten. When I was in the seventh grade, my family moved from New Jersey to Farmer's Branch, Texas, just north of Dallas. In those days Farmer's Branch was a cow town. My first and only day at the local school was an experience of culture shock. The farm girls looked like hardened women compared to the girls in suburban New Jersey, and they teased me about my accent. But the worst thing of all was that the restroom was an outhouse!

By the time I got home, after the first day, I was nearly in tears. My parents understood my predicament and got me enrolled at Preston Hollow Elementary School, located in an upscale North Dallas suburb, and drove a long distance each day to get me to and from school. Thankfully, the new school had inside toilets! Also, the girls looked and dressed like pre-teenagers and didn't tease me about my Yankee accent because many of them were also transplants from the north.

Bad memories of outhouses aside, we had to have one. We located a spot for it about twenty-five yards from the cabin. Later, when we built the larger house, the distance between the house and the outhouse was about fifty yards, and, when the rain came down in cold sheets, these fifty yards became a challenging gauntlet. The outhouse was a substantial structure about four feet by four feet and constructed of old weathered wood. It had one window with a beautiful view of oak trees and a door with the traditional half moon cut into it. Despite my aversion to the outhouse

at the school in Texas, I learned to live quite comfortably with ours. Chris tells a story about sitting in the outhouse (only age four at the time) and watching a beautiful king snake lounging on the header above the door. He was the only lucky one of us to see the beautiful black and white striped creature!



**Christopher outside our first dwelling on Sunshine Mountain  
(Notice the attached trailer)**

We made it through late spring and summer in this small cabin. Several memorable events took place during this time. The first was my birthday in May. Jim, a refugee from the city, had purchased a five acre parcel next to ours. Jim was educated at Stanford and studied for a Master's degree in journalism at UC Berkeley. He had had a career in journalism and, like so many of us, decided to drop out of the mainstream and seek a new life within the counterculture. Like us, he responded to a "land for sale" ad by our friends in *Mother Earth News*. He purchased five acres that adjoined our land and settled, by himself, into an old sheepherder's tent that, from its look, must have been found in a discard pile. The tent had seen better days! Can you imagine

us—the way *we* were living—thinking that this guy must be nuts? We became good friends and remain so to this day. We even put in a shared water well (more about this later).

Cindy planned a birthday celebration for me and invited Jim and several other new friends. We gathered on the floor of our tiny cabin because we had only a couple of chairs. Jim had a present for me, *Mr. Blanding Builds His Dream House*, a thoughtful and humorous gift since we were still planning our real house with no electricity or indoor plumbing. This had been a popular book in the 1950's and later a movie. How thoughtful and fitting for my circumstances although not too similar to Mr. Blanding's. The book remains on our shelves.

Our cabin provided us with temporary living space, but it did not provide relief from the record searing heat of that first summer, because it had no protection from the intense afternoon sun. I remember a heat related event that has always been quite humorous to me, although not to Cindy. The summer took us by surprise. We had never experienced 100 plus degrees! When these hot days came, and we had little escape—no air conditioning and little shade—we started questioning our judgment in settling into such a blast furnace.

It turned out that the first summer was one of the hottest on record. Cindy's cooking on a gas stove inside the cabin would send the already unbearable inside temperature rocketing to sauna-like extreme. One scorching day inside the small cabin ablaze with heat, the outside thermometer read 115 degrees. Cindy painstakingly cooked a meal, constantly mopping the sweat streaming down her face. I remember that I was outside trying to get a breath of breeze when, having reached her boiling point (not so figuratively speaking), she appeared at the door with a large pan in her hands and slung it as hard and as far as she could, cursing, "This place is a damned inferno, and I am ready to leave!" We didn't have much for dinner that night, but it was too hot to eat much anyway.

I think it was around this time that we gave our land its name. We considered naming it Inferno Hill or Hell's Kitchen.

However, we settled on the name, Sunshine Mountain, which carried with it more than the idea of heat and incorporated the idea of enlightenment and hope—our journey of letting the sunshine in to enlighten our lives. Of course, with our land at an altitude of 1500 feet and part of the rolling hills, our use of the term mountain was a bit of hyperbole. Our hill is still called Sunshine Mountain.

My mother descended into the first summer of our living off the land just after we completed the cabin. I don't know what I was thinking when I agreed to her visit. Ma got off the plane in Sacramento dressed in a pastel pantsuit, looking like she was headed to a resort and not knowing what was in store for her. The last time she had visited us was in Detroit in our house, and by comparison, a fairly normal lifestyle. What a contrast! She likely figured out quickly what she was in for when I opened the passenger door to the old red pickup and threw her luggage into the truck bed. When she shut the truck door the glove box opened up on cue!

Our accommodations for this brave yet fastidious seventy-year-old lady were less than rustic. I can't imagine what she must have thought during her first trip to the outhouse. Now, I, being about the age she was then, cannot fathom how I'd feel if I went to visit one of our kids and had to use an outhouse!

We set up a bed for Ma out in the open under an oak tree alongside the cabin. We didn't think much about this bed location because we had a bed out by the garden ourselves. The placement of our bed was of necessity, because after planting the garden, we did not know that the deer would feast on it; we had a lot to learn! To keep the deer out of the garden, until we had time to erect a fence, we set up a bed with an old wrought iron bedstead painted red right next to the garden. I kept a rifle under it in case the deer decided to come around. However, our dog, Shiva, kept the deer at bay. Sleeping outside was not a problem for us; our experience in Colorado, sleeping for days under the sky, had filled us with the joy of outdoor sleeping, and for many years, we would set up an outdoor summertime bed.

My mother was a good sport, but I think she must have wondered at our sanity. She likely asked herself, "How could this son, with a master's degree, live like this?" The mental image I have of her is waking up in her outdoor bed, slippers neatly lined up under the bed, her suitcase resting on a crude board table held up by rocks, slipping into her robe and heading for the outhouse. I have often wondered what stories she must have told about us upon her return home in Texas.

Once the small cabin was constructed on its telephone pole skids, we started thinking about retrieving the things we had left behind, stored in the barn at the Sweet Seed Farm. It was finally decided that the older boys and I would go back to pick up this stuff. Cindy and Chris, then four years old, would stay behind. At dawn on a cloudy day in May, we threw sleeping bags and camping gear into the old red truck and headed for Colorado. It was a two day drive that took us over Donner Summit again, and again it was snowing, even in May. However, this time the snow was not sticking to the road.

We carried extra oil so that we could replenish the oil that leaked from the rear main bearing as we travelled down the highway. We picked up a hitchhiker who was heading east. He threw his shabby pack over the side of the truck and sat in the open bed. As the sun was setting in an amazing palette of colors, we pulled off the road and set up camp. Like we had done so many times before, we cooked our dinner on a camp stove and then spread our sleeping bags out on the ground to sleep accompanied by the rumble of passing trucks. The hitchhiker traveled the rest of the way with us into Colorado, which we reached at the end of the second day.

After picking up our things at the farm, and before heading back, we spent a day visiting friends and my sister's family. On the return trip, Old Red drank up oil almost as rapidly as gas, but it made the trip back without a problem. Nearing California, once again, we had a rush of feelings—we were headed home! Cindy and Chris were there to welcome us; we were at our little cabin on our own land. What a welcome sight! That night we slept under our own sky!

As a child, I looked forward every month to the arrival of *The Reader's Digest*—especially the story entitled *The Most Unforgettable Character I've Ever Met*. In the course of our travels, but especially during our homesteading in California, we ran into many unforgettable characters. While we were settling on our land and thinking about building a house, a cast of characters came to the Good Earth Homestead—some were unforgettable.

Rex, a tall, lanky, black-bearded young hippie wandered into our realtor friends' Good Earth Homestead and stayed for about three years, living by himself in a hut on the rear of the property. Rex was a bright, talented Stanford dropout from the Midwest in his early twenties. He was not untypical of the youth of the day. He had sound values and was seeking a respite where he could feel accepted without the pressures of society and the menace of the war in Vietnam. He was warm hearted, and he loved kids and music. His wardrobe was simple: a pair (maybe even a backup pair) of old worn army fatigue pants, tee shirt and combat boots. The kids loved him, and in many ways he was still like a kid himself. He seemed most content when playing and singing music, for which he had talent. He, along with a few others, provided us with hours of high quality musical entertainment.

Randy was the polar opposite of Rex. As I look back, I think Randy was just downright crazy. I am not sure how he filtered into the homestead community. But he, his wife, Alice, and their little girl arrived one day and decided to stay. They made arrangements with Sam and Joyce to build a "shelter" on their property. What Randy constructed was quite ingenious and amazing. He used old lumber to form a platform and frame. The frame was then covered in translucent four-mill plastic. That was their house! Maybe Randy was not any crazier than the rest of us, but his dwelling was decidedly bizarre.

One cold, rainy winter evening a group of us gathered in Randy's and Alice's house for a meal and visiting. When we arrived, bundled up against the cold and dampness, Randy greeted us stark naked through a parting of the plastic flaps that served as a door. Nakedness was not shocking to us as we had participated

in plenty of skinny dipping in the creek. But this show of nudeness did not fit into any rational thought. After a time, while most of us were still wrapped in sweaters, someone asked Randy how he kept warm. His reply has given us many laughs over the years when we get cold, "I just tighten up my pores," he replied casually, and continued with the rest of the conversation as if nothing was unusual. So, here we were sitting on the floor of a translucent plastic shelter on a cold winter evening with our "host" in his birthday suit. How bizarre!

Then there was Ricardo. He came to the Good Earth Homestead shortly after Rex. He was a wanderer and follower of Meher Baba, a somewhat far out spiritual teacher and self-proclaimed avatar (his message circulates on the web today). Ricardo was dark and good looking with piercing brown eyes. His emotions—positive, negative or romantic, were quick to surface. He said that he lacked self control and needed Meher Baba's help to keep in line. I heard him say, "Every time I lie down to make love with a girl, I see Meher Baba standing at the end of the bed telling me 'no'." But, from what we saw he didn't pay much heed to Baba's remonstrations.

One cool spring evening we had a birthday party for Cindy and invited our small community. The festivities were held outdoors around a roaring campfire. Ricardo came to the party, and the teenage daughter of neighbors came along with another family. This young woman, in a rebellious state with teenage hormones at full throttle, had been attracted to the intermittent visitors of the Good Earth like Ricardo who, as I have already indicated, was endowed with an extra dose of testosterone. It was easy to see that there was an attraction between these two. They quietly without anyone noticing disappeared into the darkness. Had we been more aware of the circumstances one of us might have been able to step in for the absent Meher Baba. Ricardo could not control himself, but endeared himself to everyone. Eventually he drifted on, and all that was ever heard about him was that he had ended up in Brazil where he got a young girl pregnant; so much for heeding his guru's words.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### HANDBUILT HOUSE

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We were not true believers, like so many were, ready to blindly follow some new age guru off into the sunset; rather, we saw ourselves as a close family unit with the resources to create a future consistent with our values. In contrast to the negativity and alienation we felt in Detroit, we were now full of youthful idealism, utopian visions and hopefulness. We believed that we could create a life that was completely integrated rather than fragmented, a life that was not exploitative of others, that exuded peace and love, that was in harmony with nature and that supported traditional American values of individualism, pioneering, hard work and cooperation. We were, however, naïve about what would be required to create this dream. We didn't know much about building structures, and we knew even less about living off the land. We had given little thought to how we would support our family as the children grew up. What we did have was confidence in our abilities to control our destiny and a belief that everything would turn out all right.

We were on the way to fulfilling our lofty vision, energized by the challenges we faced, and encouraged by the success we were having. Our plan was to build a small house, larger than the cabin we were living in, just large enough to meet our basic needs. When we purchased the land, it was green, and water from the abundant rainfall ran off the hill in small rivulets. By late spring the rains stopped, and the land turned from green to golden. The dry grasses crackled under our feet and the ground became rock hard. It was obvious that nothing would grow here without being watered, and we planned to have a large vegetable garden.

We picked a flat spot for the garden behind where we planned to build the house and away from the trees. Our land had never

had a shovel pushed into it and the hard, dry soil resisted every parry with the shovel. Eventually its resistance gave way to the breaking up of large clumps of soil interspersed with way too many rocks. The result of days of digging, pulling out rocks and raking the soil into something manageable was a garden plot of forty by forty feet. After topping the soil off with a pickup load of manure and dusting it with rock phosphate, we were ready to plant. We planted tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, corn, beans, squash, tomatillos, cucumbers, carrots, garlic, onions, marigolds and sunflowers, and we had the best garden we have ever had. We have been gardening in this same plot, now, for forty years.



The garden

Before starting on the house we needed a well to supply water to the property, and we knew nothing about wells. We decided to drill a common well with our neighbor, Jim. This made sense to our pocketbook and was in keeping with our vision of a cooperative community. But we were not aware that with no electricity, pumping water to multiple properties would be challenging.

We contracted with a local driller to put in the well. He went over our property with two willow sticks. He held a “Y” shaped stick in both hands and stretched his arms out in front of his body. He then walked over the property, and several times the stick quivered in his hands and bent toward the ground, “There is water here,” he would say with confidence. We had never seen such witchcraft, but others assured us that water witching was a proven art. With our lack of experience in water wells, who were we to question? He found a few areas on the property he was confident would yield water. Enthralled with his showmanship and encouraged by these mysterious findings, we signed a contract.

The huge drilling rig sounded like a battalion of tanks coming up our dirt roadway. Dust was swirling everywhere as it slowly made its way to the edge of our property where the dirt roadway ended. An assistant was driving the rig and the owner was bringing up the rear in a dirty, brown pickup truck. They did not go to the spots which the owner of the rig had previously designated by his witchcraft. Rather, he and his assistant engaged in an animated conversation about where to drill.

The assistant was doubtful that the rig could be moved beyond its present location on the northwest edge of the property because of the rough terrain; the owner did not think it was a good location for drilling and appeared to want to move the rig up to one of the spots he had designated. Eventually, the assistant won out, and they started drilling right where they had parked the rig. It turned out their criteria for a “good” spot to drill was a convenient spot for them rather than one which had been designated by the willow sticks. In our state of ignorance about the process and because of our willingness to defer to the experts, we said nothing about the spots he had picked out through his water witching.

The rig definitely could have been moved to one of these spots, but it might have taken a little effort to clear the way. In hindsight, it was evident that they did what was most convenient for them, and perhaps the water witching was, after all, just for show. In this case, our lack of knowledge and assertiveness was costly.

We were anticipating getting a significant flow of water from a relatively shallow well. At ten dollars a foot, we literally watched our money going into the ground. Fifty feet no water, seventy-five feet no water; at one hundred feet still no water, and problems developed with the angle of the drilling. Our stress level was going up; if they did not hit water, we'd still have to pay for the drilling at ten dollars a foot and then try another location. The drilling angle problem was remedied and the big rig roared and shook as it pushed the six -inch diamond drill down through granite looking for water streaming through a fissure in the rock.

At about one hundred and ten feet into the hole, a trickle of water started coming to the surface. We relaxed even though we were beyond our budget for the well. Another ten feet and we had about two gallons of water per minute flowing from the hole, which was now one hundred and twenty feet into the ground along with twelve hundred of our precious dollars. We knew that most all wells in the hills were eighty to one hundred feet deep and produced large volumes of water. We were sitting at one hundred-twenty feet with only two gallons per minute. We had to go deeper, regardless of the cost because we thought we needed more than two gallons per minute. We watched in panic, as our money we had for building a house was going down a hole in the ground.

One hundred-forty feet was going to be our limit. When the drill reached this limit, we were still getting the same two gallons per minute. We'd have to live with an amount that in the reality of water wells is a trickle. Feeling disappointed and down on our luck, we paid the well driller and set our sights to making do with what we had; after all, we did get some water. Had we known more about drilling water wells in the hard rock of our land, we would have likely been able to negotiate with the driller to pull out of the well when it was obvious that it was not a good location and move to another spot. However, we had to live with what we had, and that presented us with major challenges which I'll write more about later.

The well was in, and we were ready to turn our attention to

building a house. Since we had very little money left to fund the construction, some of our needs would have to be met in less than modern ways. For instance, indoor plumbing would be at a minimum and the outhouse would have to stay. We learned, much to our bewilderment and consternation, that a building permit was required by the county to build a structure large enough to minimally meet our needs. This was a major philosophical affront to our values of wanting to be free of regulation and control. Since we owned the land, we believed that we should be able to do whatever we wanted with it. We fretted and complained to each other about such unreasonable rules and regulations and wondered, "How could 'they' tell us what to do on our own property?" Had we known about building codes in the county before buying land we would likely have moved on to an area more supportive of our libertarian philosophy. The reality was that we needed a house. We had to find a way to accomplish our goals despite the county's regulations.

After we got over being offended by the rules of the establishment, we began inquiring about possible alternatives; we learned that there were no restrictions on tepees; we actually considered living in tepees. I can see myself now still living in a tepee! However, with Sam's help, we learned that we could get a permit for a building no larger than four hundred square feet. Since many areas of the county were remote and undeveloped like ours, the building department did not want to limit land development. They turned out to be friendly and helpful and showed us how we could build a dwelling suitable for our needs and meet their standards.

Electrical power was about a mile away and to get it to our property would cost all the money we had. We had been living without electricity for over a year and did not feel a pressing need for it. In fact, we believed (or rationalized) that electricity would pollute our back-to-the-land purity. However, we had the foresight (or maybe it was a conflicting value) to wire the house for the eventuality of electricity. Four years later, along with our new neighbors who shared the cost, we had power brought in. In

the meantime we enjoyed the simplicity and challenges of living without electricity.

On a beautiful spring day, we sat down with Sam at a table, under the big oak tree next to our chosen building site, and began designing the house and creating a rough drawing of the plan that would satisfy the building department. The design conversation went something like this: "We need to stay within four hundred square feet to meet the county specs." "How about a sleeping loft to maximize usable space?" "I like a barn roof and lots of windows across the front." Gradually, and somewhat magically, a drawing emerged of a rectangular building that looked like a tall barn with lots of windows—nothing architecturally special, just a basic, functional building twenty-five feet by sixteen feet. Sam made the crude sketches into a construction plan, put his engineer's stamp on it, and it was approved by the county building department. We were ready to begin construction!

As I write this, I am amazed at how we thought, or didn't think, in those days. Prior to our gypsy-like experience in Colorado and then on the road, we had lived in a large, five bedroom house. We were now planning to live in a house of a mere four hundred square feet, and it seemed like it would be quite adequate! Obviously, this small-space thinking was aided by our minuscule budget and the fact that our children were still small.

By the time we had the house plans approved, I had found a job as a carpenter's helper. This job provided me with a chance to learn skills that I would need to build our small house. I showed up on the first day with my lunch in a bag, ready to go to work. I tried to act like I knew something about what I was doing, which was helping lay out a foundation. Out of necessity, I was a fast learner, quickly absorbing information and skills that have benefited me ever since. But, in the beginning, I did feel a bit like a fish out of water because I had none of the necessary paraphernalia such as a leather tool belt and basic tools customarily owned by carpenters.

I went home after the first day on the job, tired but enthusiastic about what I was learning, and expressing feelings of insecurity

over what I did not know but trying to act like I knew. I said to Cindy, "If I am going to masquerade as a carpenter, I need to look like one. Will you please go to town tomorrow and get me a leather carpenter's apron?" Cindy understood my dilemma and drove Old Red to town the next day to purchase the apron. I must admit that I'd been admiring these macho looking leather aprons for some time and wanted one to replace my flimsy white, rather sissy looking canvas one.

Cindy, along with four-year-old Chris, drove up to the work site while I was sitting on a pile of lumber eating lunch and getting some needed rest. She had my new leather apron! I buckled it on with pride and rubbed a little dirt into it to try and camouflage its newness. At least I now had the look of a carpenter. To go along with my new workman's image, I jokingly and affectionately referred to Cindy as Peaches, saying, "A carpenter's wife has to be called "Peaches." She thought it was a cute name and laughed at the image it brought to mind. Taking on a carpenter's job with little experience is another example of how we believed that we could do and accomplish almost anything. Little knowledge or experience? Well, then, I'd learn as I went.

After masquerading all day as a carpenter, I'd come home and work on our house. The foundation would be pier and post, so all the holes for concrete and piers had to be dug in what turned out to be hard clay, rock infested soil. But each hole was dug with enthusiasm, because it meant another step closer to our "real" house. I'd be so tired by nightfall, even though dirty and sweaty, my body would fall onto the bed by the garden and I'd sleep until the sun came up over the hill in the morning. After breakfast, I'd head back to my carpenter job. The \$3.50 an hour I was making wasn't great pay, but it helped to buy our building materials.

To save on construction costs, I started looking for deals on used lumber. One of the commissary buildings at Beale Air Force Base near Marysville was being torn down and the salvage was being sold. This building had been constructed during the Second World War with very high quality lumber—lumber better than that available in the lumber yards of 1972. I managed to make a

deal to buy enough tongue and groove redwood siding to cover our entire house. I bought one by twelve knotty pine to cover the inside walls and enough two by tens for floor joists. The original house on Sunshine Mountain has part of Beale Air Force Base in it—in the spirit of “swords to plowshares.” Whenever I crawl under the old house and look up at the floor joists, the recycled two by tens catch my eye. Such high quality lumber cannot be found today.

We got additional lumber from Bill Treloar’s mill up the hill on Moonshine Road. This lumber was rough cut Douglas fir with hardly a knot to be seen. I built a wooden rack for the back of the truck so that I could haul long pieces of lumber from the mill to our property. After getting paid each week, I’d run up and get a load so that we could continue building. One evening, I loaded more than I should have onto the truck. Before getting to Bullard’s Bar Dam, the rack gave way and the lumber crashed to the bed of the truck and was scraping the road. Although worn out from a day of hard labor, I unloaded the lumber, rebuilt the rack, loaded the lumber back on and headed for home where a late dinner was waiting. When things like this happened, we usually didn’t complain or cuss but accepted reality and the moment and did what we must.

Bill Treloar, the mill owner, was another person whose family roots went back years into these hills. He had worked hard at his small sawmill and had the look of a rough, weathered mountain man, a man who had made his own way and who marched to the tune of his own drummer. He was friendly and open, and I always enjoyed my conversations with him.

Most of the back-breaking work I did myself. The trusses for the roof were designed by Sam, but I built each one of rough sawn two by six lumber by first laying it out on the ground. Each cut of lumber was done with a hand saw because we had no electricity and could not afford a generator (we also didn’t like the air and noise pollution that a generator would bring). It took four people to lift and move one of the roof trusses and place it on top of the walls. One day while lifting one of these heavy trusses, my

foot slipped and my ankle was seriously sprained, if not broken. Having no medical insurance we did not go to the doctor with injuries. Cindy helped me wrap the swollen black and blue ankle. The pain was terrible, but I went back to work on the rafters and continued to work at home and on the construction job with a swollen, painful, wrapped ankle that, thankfully, did eventually heal.

The rough construction on the house moved quickly. What I would learn one day about laying out walls on the construction job, I'd come home and apply, before dark, on our little house. Most of the framing was done with the family working with me in the evenings. I can remember the exhilaration of seeing walls go up from the work of our own hands. It was truly hand work. We learned how to saw square cuts with a hand saw and to hammer a nail. Of course, the lack of power tools meant that some of the work had a crude, unfinished look to it, but that was fine with us.

Once the walls were up and the trusses in place, the building inspector came to check the framing for code compliance. On the walls, we had used standard two by four construction with finished lumber from a lumber yard. The rafters and ceiling beams were constructed out of rough wood from the mill. The inspector looked over the walls and nodded in approval. Tilting his head upwards, he started to squint and shake his head. My stomach churned. Pointing to the beams and rafters, he said, "These are not graded and stamped. They don't meet code." He left me with little choice but to tear off the roof and replace them with finished graded lumber. I wondered, "What had become of the county's cooperativeness?" It seemed like the bureaucracy of government was spoiling my dream.

I decided to go up to the mill and talk it over with Bill. When I told him the story he was furious. "For years, I've sold the county lumber for bridges and buildings and no one ever said anything about graded lumber," he said, while grinding his teeth in anger. "They know my lumber and its quality!" He pondered for a moment and said, "Come back tomorrow and I'll have a stamp for you." Bill went to Grass Valley and borrowed a stamp from a

lumber grader. When I got there the next day he handed me the stamp and an ink pad. I went home and stamped the beams and rafters with the *number one select* stamp Bill had given me.

I waited a few days and then called for the inspector to come back. When he arrived, I was apprehensive. He walked into the house and looked up at the same beams and trusses that he had seen before, moved his eyes toward the fresh stamp on each piece and simply said, "Looks good." He approved the framing and left. I was left pondering how silly rules and regulations can get within bureaucracies. Later, when I ran a school district, I tried to keep this in mind.

The form the house was taking was following its function, which was determined by our needs. At the west end we created a loft which spanned half the house. It had a truss railing to give it support and a ladder for access. It would be Cindy's and my bedroom. The other half of the building was left open all the way up to the fourteen foot high peak. It was a beautiful high ceiling that helped make the small house feel larger than it actually was. All the wood in the ceiling was left exposed, providing us with a cathedral-like ceiling of wood.

Shingling the roof turned out to be a tedious, time consuming and hard job, so we sought neighborly help from the pool of unforgettable characters I described in the last chapter who had gathered around the Good Earth Homestead. Randy, the one who closed his pours to keep warm, was eager to help. He came over and started laying rows of shingles like a madman. When he got a row to the edge of the roof, he'd just let the shingle hang over and rapidly start a new row. His help was appreciated as well as his speed. However, I pointed out that we needed to trim off each row at the roof's edge as it was laid, to which Randy responded, "No, man I know what I'm doing; we can go back and cut them after all the shingles are down."

After all the shingles were down, Randy disappeared from the Good Earth Homestead and left me to trim the shingles which turned out to be a very difficult task. Like I told him, they should have been trimmed as each row was laid. What was left, to re-

main for many years until the roof was replaced, were unsightly jagged shingles along the roof's edge. This, I guess, was a small price to pay for help in the tedious job of laying shingles.



Finishing the house with help from friends

The inside of the house was a twenty-five by sixteen foot rectangle. The side facing north was enclosed with old windows of varying sizes purchased at the junkyard. We fitted the windows together in a mosaic of shapes, along with a beaten up but classic French door, and sealed them the best we could. When winter came this windowed side of the house leaked cold air, but while indoors during the winter, we could see the view we loved of the rolling foothills from anywhere in the house.

We took the woodstove out of the bus before selling it, because we knew we would need it in our new house. Like some of the things in the house, the woodstove had been salvaged from a dump heap in Colorado. Its cast-iron legs were missing and the top was cracked. As I had done in the bus, I put together a foundation of bricks for the stove to sit on. The stovepipe went up fourteen feet and through the roof. In the cold of winter our small

stove heated the house and provided a feeling of continuity with the bus. Many a cold evening we sat around the stove feeling its warmth and absorbing the homey ambiance of glowing kerosene lanterns.



Inside the house

One important need we had not resolved in the house design was a bathroom. Since we did not yet have a septic system, we planned to use the outhouse, but we still needed a way to bathe. We did not want to give up any of our limited space in the house for a bathroom, so we decided to build a small, ten by ten foot bathhouse at the back of the house and connect it with a foot-bridge composed of a few boards. Water from the well was piped three hundred feet to our house and plumbed into the kitchen and bathhouse. There was no setup for hot water.

We found an old, claw foot tub at the wrecking yard and put it inside the bathhouse. The lack of hot water was resolved by placing a three burner propane heating unit (also found at the junk yard) under the tub. To take a bath one had to fill the tub, light the burners underneath, and wait a few minutes until the water for a

luxurious hot bath was ready. A simple enough process, but we quickly learned, painfully, during the first bath, that it had a major flaw. The burner would get the bottom of the tub almost red hot, making sitting down in the tub feel like getting branded on the rear with a hot iron, and it actually left blisters! We quickly solved this problem by building a wooden platform for the bottom of the tub. Sitting down in the warm tub on this platform protected our rear ends and made for a delightful bath experience. During the summer, we were able to heat water for the tub by curling up several hundred feet of black plastic pipe and leaving it in the sun.

We also had a large rain barrel outside the bathroom to gather rain water for use in washing. Cindy loved to have warm rain-water, heated on the wood stove, poured over her freshly washed hair while she sat in the tub. Our bathroom was not modern, but it met our needs and got curious looks from visitors. I remember many a relaxing soak in the tub while enjoying the uphill, eastward view out the large window next to it.

Hot water for cooking and washing dishes was heated on the wood stove in a big black kettle like one might see at a campfire. Sometime after the house was finished, we found an old, yellow porcelain wood cook stove in an abandoned cabin. We tracked down the owners of the property, and they sold us the stove for twenty-five dollars. It was not in very good condition, but we managed to rehabilitate it and use it instead of the propane stove. It took a while to figure out how to stoke the fire and use the tiny oven for baking bread. During the summer, heat from



Our wood stoves

the wood stove was unwelcome, so we moved the propane stove back into a corner of the kitchen for hot-weather cooking.

We had created a small, comfortable, and unique house built with our own hands and with the help of our friends. We felt

at home in our hand built house for all the years our boys were growing up and beyond. Today, it houses our family and guests when they come to visit Sunshine Mountain, and it vibrates with the joys of an amazing time in our lives. It will always be our house on Sunshine Mountain!

*Cynthia's Reflection  
Handbuilt House*

*After living in the bus, I longed to live in a house. I was not particular about the design. Almost any kind of house would do, as long as it had adequate floor space, walls, and a roof; those were my initial criteria. I left the design to Pete and Sam, because they were required to work within parameters required by building codes.*

*Pete is a windows person; from his home, outside views from the inside are his primary aesthetic. Fortunately, I too like windows, so there's no conflict. Pete collected windows: small paned windows, French door windows, square paned windows, diamond shaped windows, and any other window that would fit into a collage. He built a collage that stretched across the entire front of our little house, and it brought inside visual wonders of the outdoors: blue, cloud- strewn sky, foothills near and distant, stars at night, faraway lightening storms, open space, and light, plenty of light, to our small dwelling. We loved our views, and we loved the light streaming through our windows!*

*We left most furniture behind in the city, but we brought our round dining table with us; it fit perfectly in our new home, next to the kitchen; we gathered there, around the table for all our meals. Our table was the family meeting place; here we shared news, solved problems, discussed local and world events and social issues, and we shared everything in our hearts including our esteem and love for each other. The table was also a popular place to do homework. We added extra "leaves" to the table when company came.*

*The first water piped into the house was for the kitchen;*

civilization was appearing, even though we did not yet have hot running water, but we still had our tall black kettle. Soon after water came to the kitchen, we piped water into the bathroom for bathing. Comforts were starting to materialize!

During the time Pete was employed as a carpenter and was also building our house, I was busy tending our first vegetable garden. Neither Pete nor I had much prior knowledge about growing plants, so we relied heavily on Rodale's How to Grow Vegetables and Fruits by the Organic Method. I marked pages I frequently used, particularly those that told how to plant vegetables and the nutrients they needed. We added lots of horse manure to the garden plot, acquired by cleaning out neighbors' barns, and added rock phosphate, which we purchased, to our thin topsoil; the vegetables that grew were extraordinary!

By midsummer the garden started to produce! One morning I opened the garden gate, took a few steps inside, and, as I looked down, I noticed something white. I looked again; deep inside a leafy vase of dark green and recognized a gorgeous, gigantic cauliflower! It was like the one Kinuthia brought me once in Kenya, except he had removed the green leaves. What a surprise! I felt elated! I walked a little farther, and glimpsed a spot of red; upon investigation, I discovered a red potato peeking above ground! We were actually going to have a harvest! This was only the beginning; our garden yielded great quantities of tomatoes, squashes, corn, cucumbers, cabbages, tomatillos, eggplants, garlic, onions, bok choy, green beans, sunflowers, zinnias, marigolds, and, of course, red potatoes and beautiful cauliflowers.

On the downside, we had gophers in our garlic patch. We were told by neighbors "Gophers will eat almost everything in your garden, but one thing gophers will not eat is garlic." Sunshine Mountain gophers are, without doubt, an exception, and I have proof. Our cats, as part of their job, caught and ate gophers they found in the garden, a big help to us. One day two of our shrewd cats marched through the house reeking of garlic breath. They, undoubtedly, had eaten the gophers that had

*eaten the garlic! Thanks to our cats, we still had an adequate garlic harvest.*

Shortly after the house was completed, another memorable character showed up at the Good Earth Homestead. George was from Berkeley and discovered our friends' ad about land for sale. He purchased a five acre parcel next to ours and started coming up on weekends to visit his land.

He had studied landscaping and architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, but he never got a degree. He had worked at several nurseries in the bay area, owned his house and apparently lived quite comfortably. A bachelor, he seemed to have no interest in women; he never spoke of a woman other than his mother, and we never saw him with a woman. He was destined to be a hermit.

On weekends, George would arrive in his new, shiny Chevy pickup—which we envied—loaded with building materials and assorted junk. He had sold his house and planned to move in as our neighbor. In the beginning, he appeared industrious and full of ideas; in fact he had plans to build a substantial house and put in a nursery; he even had a section of his land leveled for laying out plants and shrubs to sell. We were excited to have such an enthusiastic new neighbor, but we had already begun to pick up some indications of his idiosyncrasies. The first things we noticed were that he could talk your ear off about almost nothing at all, he had fanciful ideas, and toy trains seemed to be his big interest.

However, we were impressed by how quickly he constructed a small workshop, so we anticipated the impressive house he said that he planned to build. George moved into his little workshop where he would live for twenty-five years. Neither house nor nursery ever happened.

The shiny Chevy pickup broke down and was left sitting on his property. As years went by, he had a succession of old cars that had all broken down, one by one, and were left on his property alongside each other in order of demise. Eventually, no longer owning a car that worked, he resorted to hitching rides to town once a month to do his shopping.

He never invited us into his house, and come to think of it, I never even went close to it. However, when he left in 1997 and headed for a small town in the Midwest, I helped him pack his U-Haul truck. What I discovered inside his “house” was amazing. For nearly twenty-five years he had lived without any plumbing, had only a makeshift kitchen, and no outhouse. Cobwebs hung from everywhere and the musty smell was unbearable. The latter explained why George always smelled so rank. We thought it was because he didn’t bathe, but in fact he just smelled like the environment he lived in. This hermit neighbor had been living in a cocoon which appeared to be constructed of cobwebs and dust!

George did have redeeming qualities and, despite his idiosyncrasies, he was a good neighbor, and we were fond of him. He was always willing to lend a hand when we needed it. We invited him to gatherings, and you could always count on him to come dressed in a clean shirt and musty smell. He was knowledgeable about many subjects and could converse on most topics for hours. His knowledge of horticulture was especially valuable to us, and we were continuously asking for advice about a particular plant or pest. He also gave us our first lessons in how to prune our fruit trees.

One of our fondest memories of George was his bringing us our morning newspaper. Once Cindy and I had jobs, we subscribed to the local newspaper which was thrown at the bottom of our driveway, a quarter mile from the house. During rain, snow, or sun, George would go down the driveway early every morning to get our paper (and I am pretty sure read it front to back first) and bring it to our door.

We had our simple handmade house, a garden and a circle of interesting and unique friends. Life on Sunshine Mountain was good.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### THE COMFORTS OF HOME

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In the evening, as we watched the light of day slowly slipping behind the hills, we lit the kerosene lamps. Some lamps hung on the walls and others stood on tables. Their flickering wicks gave off a soft, calming glow that cast dancing shadows on the walls. It was enough light for reading. On winter nights, while nature raged outside, throwing sheets of wind-driven rain at our little house, we cuddled together around the wood stove (our only source of heat) and read by the light of the lanterns.



Our family circa 1972

During our first winter, we read all of *The Little House on the Prairie* series by Laura Ingalls Wilder. As we read about her life

as a child, homesteading on the prairie, we felt a kindred spirit. We, like Laura and her family, were living in a cabin built by our own hands far away (or so it seemed) from the modern world. Of course, in reality, Laura and her family lived on the prairie for only one year before being displaced by the government because it was Indian land; we, as it turned out, would be on Sunshine Mountain for many years and remain here to this day. Wilder's vivid descriptions of the joys and challenges of life in rural Kansas, one hundred years before our adventure, resonated with all five of us. We knew what it was like to live in a hand built, simple house, plant our first garden, find support and camaraderie with our not-so-nearby neighbors, and overcome innumerable challenges.

The Aladdin lamp stood out from all the others. It had been on the bus with us and was one of our prized utilitarian possessions. The Aladdin lamp was created by Victor S. Johnson on his Nebraska farm around the beginning of the twentieth century. The lamp's soft but intense light brought a welcome glow to much of rural America that had yet to experience the wonders of electricity.

Our Aladdin was tall and graceful and, with its special wick, could give off the light of a 150 watt bulb. We purchased it for the bus while we were in Colorado. It lit up the interior of the bus and even gave off enough heat to keep us pleasantly warm on cool evenings. It had a temperamental aspect though; the mantel would carbon-up easily, especially at high burn, requiring frequent cleaning. Eventually, I discovered that, by using a more refined and expensive oil, the carbon was nearly eliminated. This lamp provided light for many nights, and we kept it for years as a reminder of those nights in the house without electricity. Years later, when it developed a pinhole leak in the bottom, which would not respond to patching, it was sadly cast away.

On many nights we listened to the eerie wailing and yelping of coyotes. At first these sounds were scary, but over time, we learned to tell the difference between a lonely howl and a nearby pack excited over a kill. We tried to see these shadowy animals,

but they were too elusive. They became as much a part of our audible world as the crickets and frogs that created a cacophony of song on warm summer nights.

One evening, I was out by the garden and heard the yelping of a puppy. With lantern in hand, I cautiously followed the sounds and found a small coyote puppy that looked like a ball of fur struggling to move through the grass. The pup evidently had been abandoned by its mother, who might have been scared away by my presence. I did not want to taint it with human touch for fear of the mother then rejecting it, although it was tempting to reach down and pick up the furry pup and cuddle it in my arms. Instead, I guided it back into the brush, and I assume, since I did not see or hear it again, it found its mother. This is the closest that I have come to a coyote and yet, I felt that, unseen as they were, they were as much a part of my surroundings as the grey pines and ubiquitous buck brush.

*Cynthia's Reflections*  
*Coyotes*

*The coyotes brought a visceral reality to our place in the wild. We listened to their night songs—to the variations in pitch and cadence, and we judged, by our listening, their distance from us and the meanings of their songs: Had they made a kill? Were they calling a mate? Was there a missing pup? Were they calling a coyote meeting? Their presence held our attention most intensely during the month of May, mating season, which resonated the loudest.*

Life without electricity had advantages. We did not have the invasive background noise of a humming refrigerator or other electric appliances. Our background noise was the sounds of nature. There was no television to mindlessly fill our time or recorded music for passive listening. This non-electrical environment created a mesmerizing atmosphere and brought serenity to our life, a focus on communicating with each other, and time for recreational activities such as making music together. In Detroit,

recorded music of the sixties had been an integral part of our life, but in the early years on Sunshine Mountain we made our own music in the evenings, playing simple instruments and singing songs together. Friends from the Bay Area came to visit us once and were taken by our enjoyment of singing together. Soon after their visit, a package arrived—a thick book of traditional and popular songs that became a treasure in our little house.

In addition to music, reading aloud together, working around the lamp-lit table doing homework, and discussing important issues filled our evenings. Dinner table discussions had always been an important part of our family life, even when the kids were very young. Often, after dinner in our house in Detroit, we'd hold family meetings to discuss both family matters and the social issues of the day. However, this special time in our life without electricity brought even more focus to the evening meal and the discussions about things that were happening in our lives and in the world.

Most nights, as our little house became surrounded by what seemed like impenetrable darkness, we would gather around the secure warmth and glow of the hearth. I believe that we humans, when surrounded by darkness, have a primordial tendency to be drawn into a secure intimacy around a fire. In the cold of night, our early ancestors gathered around their primitive hearths. In front of them was the fire, with its immediate warmth and welcoming light that played off their faces and gave a glow to their bodies. It brought them a feeling of closeness, protection and frontal warmth, while at their backs, just a step away, was the dark coldness of night where danger lurked. In this darkness of night, the fire, for primitive people, as well as for us in modern times, pulled them together and cast a feeling that they were safe and the world was good. We were joined together by the comfort of the fire's light and heat. And, in this togetherness, we found closeness and intimacy as a family unlike anything we had experienced before.

We had previously lived in a house where we could move from room to room, switch on a light to see, be warmed by the flow of central heat, step into the outdoors lighted by floodlights

and street lamps, watch TV, and listen to recorded music. This, by its nature, created family separation and isolation rather than the intimacy we were now experiencing while living in our little house without the modern conveniences we had left behind.

Although we didn't have an electric refrigerator, we did have one powered by propane. Old propane refrigerators were hard to find, but I came across two in a junk yard. Neither one worked. By interchanging parts, I got one working. It served us well for several years until we replaced it with an electric one.

Combining two refrigerators to make one is another example of how we had to learn to do everything ourselves. I knew nothing about propane refrigeration and could not afford to pay an expert, even if I could have found one, to do the work for us. So, I plowed into it, and, as with so many jobs that needed doing, I learned as I went along. It is amazing, when I think back, how much we learned to do because of necessity. I agreed with what my mother used to say was true, "Necessity is the mother of invention."

Life was not all work and solving problems. There were times spent in contemplation. Sitting by the windows, enjoying the quiet while watching the patterned clouds move across the hills, was a special thing to do. Clouds bring to mind a time when we still lived in the bus; Chris and Cindy were watching clouds from the bus windows one day. As they sat watching their movement and making up stories about their shapes, Chris found one to point out, saying, "See that cloud over there? I'll make it move." And he did, or so it seemed!

The sky, by day or night, held a fascination for us. Peter Jr. was our resident astronomer. At his young age, he had developed a great deal of knowledge about the night sky. He sent off for a kit to build a ten-inch telescope. This was a big project, and he spent many hours grinding the lens to get it to the required specifications. In the end, however, our lack of space for him to work caused the project to be abandoned. I have regretted that I did not do more to help him complete the task. However, over the years his fascination with the universe has grown.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### PUMPING WATER

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Our life was like a coin: One side held a romantic quality: Evenings around the wood stove, watching the sky, long walks in the woods. The other side held harsh, challenging situations like the well problems: first, how to lift the water up from the bottom of the well without electricity and then how to transport it uphill to the house, again, without electricity. I described in the last chapter the drilling of the well and the small amount of water it yielded. Although it was a small amount of water, getting it out of the ground and up to the house and garden proved to be a formidable problem.

Since we did not have electricity to run a pump, we had to resort to an old-fashioned cylinder pump like those used by windmills. These pumps have a cast-iron pump station that sits on top of the well with a big handle that is pumped up and down to bring water out of the ground when the windmill is not operating. We had no idea where to find this type of old fashioned equipment, but thanks to *The Mother Earth News* we found a company in the Midwest that manufactured cylinder pumps and windmill parts.

For about five hundred dollars we were able to purchase the equipment we needed to get the water pumping. The equipment arrived in a large crate and had to be picked up at a shipping company in Marysville (in those days shipping deliveries were not made to our area). We pulled the old red truck up next to the well and unloaded the equipment, and wondered, "Now, what do we do?" There was no instruction manual for this project; therefore, as with so many things, we had to figure it out as we went along.

In order to connect the cylinder pump, which was to go from the bottom of the well to the surface, we needed 140 feet of pipe and sucker rod. The rod, which was inside the pipe, would raise

and lower the pump mechanism, which worked like a marine bilge pump, pushing the water up the pipe to the surface. This type of pump was not recommended for deep wells like ours, and I soon learned why. Each section of pipe, which we purchased in town, was 1¼ inches in diameter and 20 feet long and weighed about 80 pounds. Twenty-foot sections of sucker rod ran up through the pipe. I did not have the equipment, only a bit of ingenuity and the strength of my body to lower the massive weight of the pipe and rod into the well casing.

I built a crude A-frame over the top of the well, attached a come-a-long winch to it and fabricated a clamp out of old pieces of metal to prevent the pipe from slipping into the well while we threaded one section on top of another and lowered it into the well. Each section in the well added weight and made the next section more difficult. Once all the sections of pipe, fittings, and rods were in the well, the entire unit weighed over a thousand pounds.

It is hard to imagine, as I write, how we accomplished this, but, finally, all of the pump unit, seven sections of 1¼" galvanized pipe, 3/8" steel rod and all the fittings, were placed in the well. Triumphant, we attached the rod and pipe to the pump housing with the big red pumping handle on top of the well. Up and down we pumped, wondering where the water was, until a gurgling sound came from the spigot followed by a minute flow of water.

We had water, but our euphoria was short-lived. We realized that we could not transport enough water for the house and a garden by hand pumping it from the ground and hauling it up the hill. We needed a more efficient way to get the water up the hill to the house and garden, and this, we thought, would be a windmill. Jim, our neighbor who shared the well with us, and I went on a search for a windmill. We spent most of a day driving around the valley looking but could not find one. What I now know about windmills indicates that, even if we had found one, it would not have been effective because our winds are too unsteady.

We gave up on the windmill idea and found out that we could use what was called a pump jack and a gasoline engine. We ordered a pump jack from the company that had shipped us the original pumping apparatus. As with the other equipment, the jack arrived in Marysville in a crate and had to be picked up. I ordered a five-horsepower gasoline engine from another company. By this time, the pump costs had doubled, and we were feeling the pinch of our dwindling financial resources. If I had not had work that brought in a small income, we'd have had to pump water by hand.

It didn't take long to get the pump jack and engine hooked up and water flowing into a fifty-gallon holding tank that we had mounted on the side of the house. It looked like we had found the answer to our water needs; we were relieved. However, what was in store for us and, particularly for me (since I took care of the mechanical things), was just short of an ongoing nightmare.

The pump jack was set up to change the high speed rpm of the engine to a slow methodical thump-thump, thump-thump of the steel plunging rod that ran through the pipe down to the pump 140 feet into the ground. This change in rpm was accomplished by going from the engine's three inch pulley to a twelve inch pulley on the jack. The two pulleys were connected by a belt.

In the beginning this setup worked well. However, we were soon to discover that the movement of the rod up and down, while the engine was running, loosened the threaded rod connectors. Running out of water at the house was the signal that the pump needed to be run. I went down one day and pulled the starter rope on the engine a few times; once it got going there was no thump-thump of the rods going up and down, and no water came. I examined the situation for a time before discovering that one of the rods had either broken or had become disconnected.

I could not bear the thought of pulling the pipe out of the well, but that's what was necessary. Pipe and rod, a section at a time, would have to be lifted out of the well, reversing the process of installing it. Each section was unscrewed from its coupling and laid aside until the disconnected rod was found—a

back-breaking job even with the crude A-frame and small winch. The disconnection was about four sections down, so it could have been worse. The coupling which connected the rods had vibrated loose due to the motion of the rod. The rod was reattached as tightly as I could get it and, section by section, the pipe and rod were tightly reconnected and lowered into the well.

Fixing the well rod was extremely difficult, but an on-going theme. We were used to dealing with problems like this. Nothing seemed insurmountable to us. We accepted the challenges and worked through them using our brains and our backs. We did what was needed no matter how hard it was and moved on to the next task.

However, this was not the end of the rod problems; it happened at least three more times before I figured out that the only way to resolve the problem was to drill each connector where it attached to the rod above and below and insert a cotter pin. The pins, I surmised, would hold the connectors in place. This meant pulling everything out, not just down to the disconnected rod. So, for the third, or maybe fourth, time I pulled all 140 feet of pipe and rod, drilled the connectors, installed the pins, and put it back into the ground all in one day. This, much to my relief, resolved the problem.

After the first year of pumping, another problem reared up having to do with the gasoline engine. The engine and pump jack were protected from the weather by a box that was easily removed to get at the equipment. The motor had run a lot during the first year and was beginning to have starting problems. Diligently, I'd pull and pull on the starter cord and often give up without getting it started. We started pumping by hand again. This was a new challenge and required developing knowledge of small gasoline engines. I acquired a small motor manual and began to learn their intricacies. Over time and after much frustration, I learned enough to diagnose and repair most of the problems. I spent hours, sometimes in the rain, performing maintenance on the engine, while the family anxiously waited for water.



Trying to get the pump started – many hours were spent like this.

*Cynthia's Reflection  
Pumping Water*

*Access to water was a challenge during our first years in California. We started with a low producing well, and, prior to electricity, getting a scant amount of water from the well was difficult. Pete diligently explored possible methods to coax water from the well and, eventually, settled on a gasoline powered pump. We had a small holding tank in the beginning, positioned slightly uphill so that the well water pumped uphill would flow by gravity down to our house. When someone needed a bath, the gasoline pump was turned on for a half hour; the person who turned it on had to hang up the sign that said "pump on" and remember to turn it off again, or to ask another*

*one of us to turn it off and take the sign down. Some days the pump had to be turned on and off a few times, because the tank did not hold much water.*

*Once we got electricity, Pete wired the pump from the well to the house, so all we had to do was flip a switch outside the door to turn on the pump. Also, by then water from the well was pumped to a large holding tank, so we sometimes ran the pump for a few hours, giving ourselves a reserve of water. We still hung the sign, a reminder to turn off the pump; now, electricity made the operation much more relaxed.*

*We had no reason, having previously lived where water was abundant, to anticipate the challenge that lack of water presented for us. However, it worked out, and we learned how golden water is and how absolutely essential it is to all living things, including ourselves.*

It was a hard but good life, and we never thought of turning back. We learned to appreciate things that we had always taken for granted such as running water, light at night, fresh vegetables and dairy products (We now had goat milk). Water was precious and not to be wasted. We would never leave the water running while brushing teeth or run more into a bath than was absolutely necessary. Lanterns were kept low and their light shared to conserve fuel. We experienced the difficulties of growing and raising food, especially without the use of commercial fertilizers and other chemicals which we did not want poisoning our land. We were grateful for the little bit of water we had, for the light at night, and especially for the fresh, organic food.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

## THE FIRE

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For a time, the only work we could find to earn the below-the-poverty-line amount of money we needed for survival was menial and physically taxing. I dug trenches, poured concrete, carried and stacked building materials, and did basic carpentry. When I had time at home, it was usually spent doing more physical work. Cindy, intent on doing her share of earning, accepted an offer to paint a house. She worked in the heat for many days, and she'd come home exhausted and spattered with paint and start preparing dinner. We had developed a physical and mental toughness necessary for survival.

*Cynthia's Reflections**Our sons*

*Our sons readily adapted to our new home and got busy with their own activities.*

**Peter:** *Now eleven, Peter invested his savings in farm animals: ducks, chickens, and a bee hive. He also built a chicken coup with only a little assistance, and planted an herb garden. Later on, he had a horse, Lionel, that he rode English saddle all around Sunshine Mountain. He and Pete built a corral, and Peter managed all the hay and feeding. Lionel was loaned to Peter by a neighbor who was a horse broker, a winning arrangement for them both. Once Peter started high school, he had little time for Lionel, so he returned him to his owner. He had loved Lionel for many months and enjoyed riding and caring for him.*

**David:** *Now nine, David always pitched in to help with whatever needed to be done as we built our new life; he never*

*shirked responsibility. As much as he loved home and family, he was driven to explore and especially to discover new friends and new places; he seemed to have an engine inside him that consistently urged him outward. He enjoyed visiting other families and was frequently invited to their special events and even invited to go on trips with them.*

**Christopher:** *Now four, Chris had his little bike and his good friend, Micah. They could ride their bikes to each other's houses and were almost inseparable. Later on, after he started school, he got into the habit of going uphill to a big oak tree carrying his hammer and a pocket full of nails. He started by nailing footholds into the tree, and gradually he built a small tree house. He went to his tree every day it was not raining where, I think, he processed his day at school, released his frustrations, and renewed his spirit by enjoying the height of his perch and the vast sky overhead. He seemed to relish his solitude.*

*As time went by, Chris was like an only child after his brothers left home for college. One special thing we three did (Pete, Chris and I) during a summer was go on a backpacking hiking trip in the mountains. It was fun being a threesome, with Chris as our center of attention.*

The boys adapted well to our new life. Chris, now four, loved playing in the dirt with his trucks. He was especially proud of his "new" bicycle that he learned to ride over the bumpy paths. He'd take off with great determination, with his blond hair flying out from under a baseball cap, and zoom down the dirt driveway. The bike, purchased at the Salvation Army for a few dollars, was in need of repairs which his brother, Peter, was glad to do. Chris didn't seem to care that his bike was not new, and he had many hours of enjoyment riding around Sunshine Mountain.

Son Peter turned his attention, when not in school, to raising animals. He had a flock of chickens and was able to keep us supplied with fresh eggs. His rabbit hutch was full, and occasionally one of its residents appeared inside a dinner dish. He showed his braveness in working with bees; he kept several hives and produced enough honey for all our cooking needs.

Once, while moving a group of his hives to a new location, Peter got caught in the midst of angry bees. We had loaded his hives into the old red truck to move them to a new location where abundant wildflowers were in bloom. The resin that the bees produced kept the hive boxes, which were piled about three high, stuck together. Theoretically, with the hive entrance blocked and the hive boxes kept in place by the resin, the bees could not escape.

Peter was in the back of the truck holding the hives in place as we bounced down our rough driveway. By the time we reached the bottom some of the hives boxes had separated and angry bees were escaping and attacking Peter. I heard some noise and looked out the window to see Peter dancing a jig and wildly flailing at his clothing. He was covered with bee stings. We treated the stings with baking soda poultices to ease the pain; luckily, Peter was not allergic to the stings, so we did not seek emergency medical help. The next time we moved hives, we securely tied them down.

David's interest turned to Little League baseball. He took to the sport with a passion and had considerable talent which was recognized by his coach. The coach, who volunteered his time, was the fire captain of the local California Division of Forestry and responsible for fighting the forest fires that often started during the dry days of summer. David was tall, strong and intense on the field. He was cheered by players and parents for his ability to hit home runs and toss fast, accurate pitches at opposing batters, as well as the visible energy he brought to the game. His long blond hair cascaded from under his baseball cap and flew from his shoulders as he rounded the bases.

Fortunately, the coach took a liking to David, and he understood kids of Dave's age because he had three young sons himself. When David was in middle school, he and a friend nearly burned us out of Sunshine Mountain. He and his friend had watched the grounds men at school pour oil onto the grass to make lines on the fields for various games. One hot and dry spring Saturday, David and his friend decided to play badminton with old equipment we had lying around. They went down to a low, flat area to set up the tattered net. The spot they chose was covered with tall, dry grass,

and the grass was surrounded by the ubiquitous buck brush, a huge fire hazard.

After knocking down the grass, they decided to mark off the court with lines as they had seen done at school. So, up to the shop they ran but, the only oil they could find was kerosene which we used for lanterns in the house. They hauled a five gallon container of kerosene down to the "court". Carefully, and as straight as they could, they poured out lines of oil around the court. After completing the lines, they looked over their work. But the lines were hardly visible. Aha! The workers at school must have burned the oil to make the lines. (What the boys didn't know was that the oil laid down by the workers eventually killed the grass and made nice, neat lines.)

Having jumped to the conclusion to burn the line and, absorbed in their project, they ran up to the shop and picked up a small propane torch. David held the torch while his friend lit a match. "Poof," the torch was lit and soon they'd have a great court to play on. As David pushed the torch toward the dry grass lined with kerosene the "court" erupted in fire. Almost immediately the surrounding buck brush was exploding in flame.

David and his friend ran toward the house screaming "fire, fire!" Luckily we had a phone by then. Cindy called the California Division of Forestry, and I ran to try to beat the fire back. Cindy and Chris ran down the driveway to the main road to flag down the fire trucks and show them the way. The firemen could probably have found their way by just following the billowing smoke that filled the sky over Sunshine Mountain. Soon two big red CDF trucks were on our property, and neighbors who had seen the smoke arrived to help.

All I can remember is smoke and flames spreading everywhere (but, fortunately, not near the cabin and house), and grabbing a CDF backpack water tank and wading into the fire pumping water at the flames. It wasn't long before the loud drone of an air tanker, coming in low for a drop of borate to stem the advance of the fire, got my attention. (The tanker just happened to be returning from another fire and spotted ours.) We were lucky;

after about an hour, the fire had been contained to a few acres and was nearly out. A month or two later, when everything for miles would be tinder dry in the hot weather, the fire might have been much more serious, and we would have been held liable.

After the fire was over, there was still an issue of liability. The state could have charged us for the fire suppression work and treated David and his friend as juvenile criminals. This latter aspect worried us more but both were soon resolved. David's enthusiasm and success in baseball paid off in an unexpected way. Remember the coach who was a Captain of the CDF? He was in charge of the post fire investigation. He understood that the boys did not understand the danger in what they were doing, and he required both boys to write letters of apology and their explanation for starting the fire, and he dismissed our liability for financial responsibility.

*Cynthia's Reflections*

*The fire*

*After I phoned the fire department and before the huge red fire truck arrived (only a few minutes later), I watered the lawn – the only thing I could think to do that might be useful in protecting the house. The truck went to the back of the house toward the fire, stopping momentarily as Pete tossed his water backpack into our red pickup truck. The fire chief asked, "Which way?" and Pete called, "follow me!" as he jumped into our red truck and headed for the pond. This simple gesture and his directive made him my hero. His movement projected confidence, and his voice authority. That image gelled into a knowing that he was my protector and the protector of our family and that I could always rely on him no matter what the circumstance. As I watched my husband that day, I witnessed qualities in him I had not so clearly seen before. I witnessed leadership, strength, courage, and caring for family and home. The image is forever imprinted in my mind's eye like a snapshot, and I can easily see it whenever I remember that time.*

*Sometimes it is not possible to know a person so completely, even when you have lived with him for a long time. We had been married twelve years, yet we had not been in a situation before where these qualities could shine so visibly, so concretely.*

*Back to the fire: I kept watering the lawn; our neighbors arrived on foot willing to help. However, the firefighters were present and in charge. As I watered the lawn, I could see the fire as it headed east toward the corn patch, our house close by, but then, miraculously, it turned away from the house and went south toward the pond! Perhaps it was a plain miracle! However, as I reflect, I think the moist soil of the corn patch, coupled with a slight change of breeze, propelled the fire in that southerly direction, saving our newly built house.*

During the first few years on Sunshine Mountain we were able to produce much of the food we needed. Having an organic food source was an important part of our counterculture lifestyle. It was our belief that the additives to processed food and the chemicals used in fertilizers and sprays were toxic. Meat, unless we raised it ourselves, was loaded with hormones and chemical residues from feed sources. We ate an organic and mostly vegetarian diet, consumed only whole grains and substituted granular sugar with honey. Our goats provided all the milk we needed to drink, and enough to make yogurt, and cheese. Our staples were a variety of beans, brown rice, vegetables and wheat. This diet seemed to agree with our boys as they grew to be strong young men.

One of our great joys was the smell of whole wheat bread baking in the wood cook stove. When the bread was fresh out of the oven, we'd slice off a piece and smear it with golden honey. We hand ground our grains, purchased in bulk from a health food store in Berkeley, in a mill that attached to a counter top in the kitchen. The golden wheat kernels were poured from a burlap bag into the top of the grinder. By turning the crank, light brown flour with specks of deeper brown showing through was produced. Watching the grains of wheat turn into flour, the flour into dough, and, ultimately, to a loaf of bread was a rewarding journey to follow.

During our second winter there was a bread shortage in Northern California because the bakers went on strike. We saw this as an opportunity to make money, so we threw ourselves into making bread. The hand grinding of large amounts of wheat into flour wore us out. In the late afternoon, we took the results of our baking, usually about a dozen loaves, to the corner post office and spread them out on the hood of the old red truck. People would come to pick up their mail and then appreciatively buy our bread for \$1.50 per loaf. This was not a good financial return for all it took to produce a loaf; however, it was a satisfying effort.

Our two goats were named Sunshine and April Morning; April Morning was Sunshine's daughter. We purchased Sunshine from one of our old-timer neighbors. She was a large, white crossbreed and a great milk goat. She had horns that gently bent back over her head for about twelve inches; they looked natural and benign, but she did become angry and butted the boys a few times.

We watched in amazement the miracle of April's birth on a clear April morning. She resembled her black and white Alpine paternity and looked quite different from her mother. Both goats were excellent milkers and provided us with an abundance of milk. Usually, right after milking, we'd skim off the light cream that rose to the top of the milk (goats' milk has very little cream) and drain it through cheesecloth. After the cream was drained and a bit of rennet added, it began solidifying. We then wrapped it in cheesecloth and hung it until it formed a solid mass of delicious white goat cheese. At lunchtime we enjoyed sitting on a small carpet with fresh bread, vegetables, cheese and an entire gallon of goat's milk which we would easily consume.

I built a small goat barn across from Peter's chicken yard and fenced in a corral area. The barn had two stalls and a milking stand. Each goat needed to be milked in the morning and evening, and this became burdensome if we were visiting friends in the late afternoon and evening. One of us would have to leave, go home and milk and then return to resume our visit.



David with goats, Sunshine and April Morning

In order to have milk production, it was necessary to have the goats bred each fall. As the days became decidedly shorter in the fall, we would look for signs of them being in heat (bleating, excessive tail wagging). When we were quite sure that a goat was in heat, we'd transport her to visit a ram. There were a couple of rams within a few miles of us, but loading and transporting a goat was a formidable task. We'd drag her kicking and bleating into the bed of the truck and then tie her down; otherwise, she'd jump out while we went down the road. She would then be released, much to her happiness, into a pen with the ram and left for a week of romance.

We got quite good at predicting the goats' cycles and never had an unsuccessful trip to the ram. In the beginning, the milking and general caring for them was integral to the ambiance of our rural, back-to-the-land life style. But, the demand for morning and evening milkings, along with the fall mating, was too much to do when both Cindy and I started working more outside the homestead. After a few years with the goats, we decided to sell them to a neighbor who was building a large herd for commercial milk production. Under their care, our two goats won statewide awards for milk production.

With the goats gone we needed a supply of fresh milk, and that's how we came into contact with another cast of unforgettable characters. We found a source for cow's milk about two miles up the road at the preacher's farm. The preacher and his unusual entourage lived at the base of the big hill. His compound was made up of a solidly built, somewhat run-down, sprawling farm house, a decaying barn across the street, an assortment of cabins, and the church.

The church was a substantial log building with a rusting metal roof. The inside was lined with rows of assorted pews that looked like they'd been salvaged from several churches. To my knowledge, no one ever attended church there other than, perhaps, the odd assortment of characters that lived with the preacher and his wife. However, it stood as a monument to the preacher's fierce passion to spread The Word.

The preacher was a short and compact man with a complexion that suggested many years of working outdoors. I felt he tried to overwhelm me with his gruff and tough demeanor, but I always suspected that inside that gruff shell was a warm heart. His hands were huge and calloused and encased mine in a crushing, vise-like grip when shaking hands. His eyes were bright and piercing like he was trying to look into my soul. His resounding voice sounded as if it came from somewhere deep inside him. Years later, when I read the *Poisonwood Bible*, I thought the preacher in the book could have been based on the preacher up the road. He was a likeable and remarkable character.

The preacher's admirable mission of saving souls, along with generating a source of income, was tied to taking in boarders. Madeline lived in a basement room and helped out the preacher's sweet wife in the house. Getting to know Madeline was easy because she was always in the kitchen when I went to buy milk, and she liked to talk. We built a friendship and shared bits and pieces of our personal stories. She could not fathom the fact that I had been an ordained Presbyterian minister. She was a lifelong Presbyterian and had fond memories of her church pastor. When the preacher learned of my church background, like a bulldog pulling

on a rope, he wouldn't let it go. He, I think, thought that because of my background I should be embracing his ministry.

I mentioned to Madeline that we were making pottery, so she said she would have someone drive her over to our place to look at our wares. She wanted to look over the pieces we had on display and buy something. One day she arrived in an old gray car that was driven by a small, wiry, clean-shaven man. She introduced him to us, and they went to look at the pottery. After she made her purchase, we walked them back to the car. Standing by the open car door, I started a conversation with the man who drove her, and he told me that he too had made some pottery. I responded, "What sort of pottery have you made?" He pulled a coffee mug out of the car that obviously was handmade saying, "Here, here's something I did." I looked at the cup which was an example of very basic pottery, and said, "That looks great!" I said that as I was turning the cup over, because of my habit of looking at the potter's mark on the bottom. Clearly written on the bottom was, "San Quentin Prison" and a date. This gave me a shock, but what really got my attention was what I noticed in the pocket of the car's door next to his seat. Sticking out of the door panel pocket was a large machete! He started asking questions about the house and where we slept. I ignored his questions, and they soon left.

Cindy and I became concerned about Madeline bringing other people of questionable character like this one around our place. I approached her a few days later and asked her not to come by anymore. She seemed to understand. We even called the Sheriff who sent a deputy by to talk with us. I also asked to talk with the preacher. The preacher and I sat down in one of his odd assortment of pews inside his church, and I shared my concern about having ex-cons and other questionable people around and the potential for them to be violent. He listened and then, with his facade of gruffness and righteousness, made light of my concerns. I wondered if I was being too judgmental.

However, about a year later one of the questionable characters living in a remote cabin on the preacher's property was murdered.

It is my understanding that the sheriff's investigation found that the crime was committed by the man with the cup from San Quentin. He apparently had killed the man in order to steal a small amount of money. I wondered if the preacher remembered our conversation about my concerns while sitting in his church. This violent crime did bring, at least it appeared, an end to the preacher playing host to criminals.

By the time our second autumn on Sunshine Mountain approached, we had become well versed in what to expect from the seasons. Spring was long and delightful. The grass, green from winter rains, was resplendent, along with a variety of wildflowers. A symphony of sounds from frogs, crickets and other wildlife filled the pleasant evenings. Summer came on gradually as the hills transitioned from brilliant green to golden and dry. The heat of summer could be brutal with temperatures often rising above a hundred degrees. However, with the help of some water, the garden flourished.

Fall, much like spring, was extended and a welcome respite from the heat of summer. Frosts came early, and if we failed to cover the fragile plants in the garden, it would prematurely kill off our food supply. Winter, with the exception of a few bitterly cold days, was mild and brought up to sixty inches of rain which created a challenge for outhouse use. However, by now we had installed plumbing and had happily abandoned the outhouse! No more going out on rainy, winter nights!

We needed a better source of heat to keep our house warm, because the old wood heater that we had saved from the bus could not hold a fire overnight, and it devoured wood because of its inefficient design. We had been admiring the efficient, airtight Ashley stoves some of our friends had. These stoves were well designed and had a spring-like thermostat that automatically regulated the air and thus the intensity of the fire. They were not attractive like the cast-iron one we took out of the bus; in fact the Ashley looked like a big tin can. It was made of thin sheet metal with cast iron only on the top, and it was efficient! A few good-sized logs in the Ashley, and it could heat all day or

night. The problem for us was that a new Ashley cost almost five hundred dollars.

We were living outside the mainstream in nearly every aspect of our life, and this included how we “saved” our money. When we got a few dollars ahead, I’d go out to the garden and dig up our buried money jar, add the money to it and bury it back in the ground. We did not want to go through another winter without good heat—we needed an Ashley stove. Deciding to make this purchase was a big decision for us, and we knew we had enough cash in the ground to pay for it. We thought and thought about it, wondered whether we should spend so much money, and after a few cold nights decided to do it.

After digging up the jar in the garden and counting out \$500 in somewhat soggy and mildewed bills, I drove up to Ray’s Hardware in Brownsville and studied the shiny Ashleys they had on display. I said to John, the owner, “I’ll take one of these heaters.” He looked at me as if wondering, “Does this guy have any money?” John wrote up the ticket while I pulled a paper bag out of my pocket and counted out the money. He looked down at the damp, moldy money lying on the counter and said, “Looks like this money’s been buried in the ground.” Little did he know! We loaded the new heater in the old red truck; I brought it home and hooked it up. We were toasty warm that winter and for many afterward.

Our little house, although quite comfortable, would have seemed uncomfortably crowded if all five of us had permanent sleeping areas inside the house. However, this was not the case because the boys took over the original cabin as their sleeping quarters, the one we had built in the spring of 1972 as temporary shelter while we were building a house. This cabin was about seventy-five feet from the new house. It had a small wood stove, and I can remember going down to wake the boys on a frosty winter morning and finding the wood stove icy cold to the touch and the three boys sound asleep in sleeping bags under a pile of blankets. This was rough living, but they did not seem to mind. To each of us, what we were doing seemed natural.

The wood cook stove in the kitchen had pipes in the firebox that had been used to heat water, so I set out to build an on-demand hot water system by heating the water through these pipes. A galvanized tank mounted on a five foot high stand in the kitchen was connected with additional pipe to the pipes in the firebox. The theory was, as the pipes carried the water through the firebox of the stove, the heated water would rise up into the tank, create pressure in the tank and provide us with hot water when we needed it. The theory was sound, and I am sure had been applied many times by early settlers; however, I could not get the water to circulate through the pipes no matter how hot the fire was. After a number of tries, I gave up and took the tank out. We continued to heat our water on the stove for four years until we got electricity. The hot water system was one of my few failures at figuring out how to meet the unique challenges our lifestyle created. Luckily, however, we had our big kettle, and our bathwater heating strategy was still intact.

During our second winter on Sunshine Mountain we were visited by a member of the local water agency board that supplied irrigation water to properties in the area. He wanted to let us know how we could obtain irrigation water for our property. Since we had found it difficult to pump enough water for our garden and fruit trees, we were interested. He knew that it would be costly to get the water to us, so when he found that we knew other landowners in the area who would also be interested, he became even more enthusiastic about the possibilities of water for each parcel. Everyone in our loosely knit community got on board and shared the cost of the project. This man from the water board, like so many other locals, impressed us with his kindness and non-judgmental manner. He was a self-described redneck with a country western singing background and could have looked at us prejudicially because of our obvious differences, but he just saw us as hard working neighbors. We became good friends.

Sam's engineering background, again, provided the knowledge to get the irrigation job accomplished; a job that was not simple! The closest that the irrigation ditch came to our proper-

ties was a mile away, and we would have to pipe the water over this distance. We mapped out a potential route for the pipe to run across several large parcels of land before getting to ours. Therefore, we needed to secure easements; because of the friendliness of the people, this turned out to be simple. With the easements secured and recorded, we priced the four-inch PVC pipe needed for the line and got bids from heavy equipment operators to dig the four foot deep trench. The cost was over \$5,000; but, fortunately for us, it was divided about seven ways. In retrospect, this was one of the best investments we ever made, because it gave us the ability to grow crops and keep our land green during the dry summer months.

Laying the pipe, which meant lowering each twenty foot section into the trench and gluing it to the pipe already in the ground, was mainly done by Sam, Joyce, Cindy and, at times, a couple of others. I was off working so that we'd have money to pay for our share. Once laid, the pipe had to be hand "shaded" with dirt to prevent pipe breakage when the dozer started backfilling with rocky soil. All in all, this was a major construction project. What a thrill it was when the first water started to flow through the pipe and run out on our hill. We were able to use the water with the pressure created by gravity; therefore, we cut way back on running the pump (a real relief for me).

Irrigation water runs twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week from April to October. When it is not being used to water gardens, trees and fields, it must be contained. Our container would be a pond. We had the man who dug the pipe trench scoop out a natural low spot on our property. Filled with the overflow water, this became our pond. We had our own swimming "pool;" despite its muddy bottom, its cold, continuously flowing water provided us the joy of cooling off on scorching summer days.

*Cynthia's Reflections*  
*Irrigation water*

*Having grown up on the east coast where water was abundant, understanding water in California required some*

*learning. The first fact of contrast is that it rains in the summertime on the east coast, but it does not rain in California in the summertime. People on the east coast usually do not need elaborate irrigation systems. California crops are dependent upon irrigation water.*

*Not only did we experience challenges with our well, there were additional challenges getting irrigation water. One of the last aspects of getting the water to flow was to lay pipe that would carry water to its destination; we were nearing the end of a huge project! Our friends Sam and Joyce and I glued and joined the pipes together and placed them in the trenches. We were getting quite joyful because the task would soon be completed, so we worked hard and fast as we engaged in lots of joking and silliness making our work fun. Pete, during this time, was busy working on a construction job that paid money; otherwise, he would have been working along with us. If he had been there, it would have been even more fun because he can get very funny and silly under such circumstances, making hard work even more enjoyable.*

But there were other aspects to our life on Sunshine Mountain that were not as joyous as the pond. Rattlesnakes were a new experience for us. Late one summer afternoon, we heard a loud hissing coming from the big oak tree by the house. Coming out of the house I could see our little kitten jumping about three feet in the air like she was on springs. As I got closer, the hissing drew my eyes to a spot by the tree about four feet from the kitten. Coiled up by the tree was a snake which I assumed, from the sound, was a rattler; although I expected the sound to be more like a rattling sound. However, once you hear the sound of a rattlesnake you never forget it. I was feeling panic, and I did not know what to expect, but I thought we needed help. In a voice full of fear, I yelled, "Someone go get Sam." Sam had spent his boyhood living in the hills and knew all about rattlers. David, answering my command, hopped on his bike and, with his long blond hair flying out like a cape, rapidly rode over the hill about three-fourths of a mile to get

Sam. Meanwhile, I kept my eye on the rattler and told the others to get far away.

Soon Sam's truck came bouncing up the rock strewn back road that connected our two properties, with David beside him in the cab and his bike in the back of the truck. By this time, I was wrung out with nervousness. Sam casually got out of the truck, picked up a shovel from the back, and sauntered over to my location. He sized up the snake, walked toward it with the shovel raised for action and with one whack cut off the snake's head. This was our initiation to rattlesnakes. In subsequent snake situations, we, including the kids, killed several just as Sam had done. One day Cindy, young Chris, and I had been in town getting supplies; as we drove up, standing at the top of the driveway, were the two older boys, each sporting a big grin. Draped over a shovel held between them was a large, dead rattlesnake.

Although poor financially, our life on Sunshine Mountain enriched us with unique family times and countless opportunities to learn new skills. The boys were expanding their horizons in ways that would not have been possible in the city. The people who came into our lives were, by and large, warm and helpful. Learning to live below the poverty level taught us important life-shaping lessons. We would never be able to take for granted our possessions or the good fortune that came our way. We learned about the goodness of people like the doctor who agreed to treat an ailment that Cindy had even though we did not have insurance. She had been refused care at other doctors' offices for lack of insurance. The kind doctor who treated her, ultimately, invited us all into his care and never charged us for his service until we had jobs and insurance. We maintain a special bond with him even to this day.

We had no illusions about our poverty in that we knew it was voluntary and not like the situations of others who are hopelessly locked into a world of poverty because of their lack of education or skills, physical condition or skin color. We had the tickets—education and health—to enable us, whenever we were ready, to climb out of poverty. Nevertheless, our poverty was real, and it

taught us, among other things, that what is most important in life is not the material things but the joys and satisfaction that come, first of all, from being together as a family. We discovered the rewards of becoming part of a community, expanding our appreciation of nature, our spiritual growth, the value and rewards of hard work, and becoming self sufficient enough to clear the land, to grow food, and to build our shelter.

Our life was not static; it was constantly changing. After several years on Sunshine Mountain, these changes came more rapidly as the lives of all five of us evolved. We saw that life is full of possibilities, and, as I will share in the next chapter, we went out and embraced some of those possibilities.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### CHANGES

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The event on Sunshine Mountain that stands out as direction-altering was the coming of electricity. Our anticipation rose when we saw PG&E putting up power poles along Frenchtown Road, and, as the long awaited day neared, excitement grew. We had lived without electricity four years and had become accustomed to the electricity-free ambiance I described earlier. However, the approaching electricity was a big deal for the kids mainly because it meant TV, and it would definitely make all our lives easier having lights and being able to use appliances.

Soon after the switch was thrown on our breaker panel, the boys were down in their little sleeping cabin pooling their savings to come up with twenty-five dollars for a little black and white TV they had spotted for sale at Joe's Diner. They marched off to get the TV and returned triumphantly carrying their prize. They set it up in their cabin, spread out the rabbit ears, and became mesmerized by the pictures and the sound. This was the beginning of big changes on Sunshine Mountain. Our life, as always, was evolving.

Cindy and I had been working at an odd assortment of jobs to earn the money we needed to survive. However, the winters here are amazingly rainy, and this meant little or no work for us during the rainy season. Our boys were all now attending Yuba Feather School, a red school building tucked in among the tall pines of the National Forest. Since Cindy had time on her hands during the rainy season, she decided to focus her attention on the kids' school. She began by volunteering and ended up getting hired as a classroom assistant. I could not do much carpentry work during the winter rains, so I started volunteering at the school also. Like Cindy, I was eventually offered a three hour per day teacher's

aide position. Working with children and having a share in their learning was a rewarding experience for both of us; we also liked the other people who worked there, and our work kept us close to what was happening in our sons' lives. Eventually, Cindy's hours were increased, so she received medical benefits for us all. We had been living without any insurance – another example of our existing on the edge – and we were fortunate to have had good health.

Most of my time at the school was spent in the classroom of a teacher who was struggling to maintain control of her boisterous class. I soon realized that I was bringing more stability to this chaotic classroom than the teacher was. So, the thought emerged that I could be a teacher. Up to this point I had not considered teaching as a profession but I began to; people at the school encouraged me also.

By this time, one of our boys had transferred to a middle school in the lower foothills. The principal of this school was a new acquaintance; however, I decided to talk with him about a career in teaching; I thought he might have useful input. Unlike the staff at Yuba Feather where I worked, he, in his gruff way, was anything but encouraging. He bluntly told me that there were few teaching jobs available and advised me to look for some other type of work. Fortunately, my enthusiasm for working with children was not dampened by his advice.

It didn't take long for me to move into a path toward a teaching credential. Since I already had a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master's degree, all I needed was a credential. In the fall of 1974, I enrolled in the two semester teacher education program at Chico State University. My background as a professional, along with my experience in communicating and teaching others, was quickly recognized by the faculty and my master teachers. They made the decision, at the end of the first semester, that I was ready to teach and waived the second semester requirements. I was unaware, at the time, of the risks they were taking in doing this. They had me register and pay my fees for the second semester, and then they gave me credit for all the upcoming requirements. My credential work was completed. I later learned they got into hot water with

the dean of education for moving me on before I had completed all the requirements. I have always appreciated the risks that they took on my behalf, and, over the years as a teacher and administrator, I hope my behavior has affirmed their decision.

The actions of these university educators taught me this lesson: Great teachers do what is best for the individual student. I have tried to embody this lesson into my work as an educator. Through my teaching and school leadership, I developed a reputation as a risk taker and innovator when it came to helping students grow and learn.

Once during my second job as principal, the superintendent called me in for a talk. He said, "Pete, you always want to do something different from what **we** are doing." I felt that I was now in the company of my courageous university mentors who did something different to support the unique needs of a student and, as a result, received criticism from their superiors. Also, I took his criticism as a badge of honor, because by that time we had turned around a depressed and low-performing school that was poised to receive the highest award in the state. We had done this, in part, by introducing staff collaboration and new state-of-the-art programs which were different from what the rest of the district was doing. There is that theme, again, that is so present in my life—moving against the traditional flow.

Soon after my teaching credential was issued, I got a job teaching fifth through seventh grade science and math at Cordua School in the Marysville Joint Unified School District. My interview was with the assistant superintendent of personnel, and the hiring process was a bit unique. I arrived at the interview wearing my hippie clothes because that was all I had. The interview went well, and the assistant superintendent offered me the job on the spot, with one stipulation—that I shave my beard. My response was quick: "I have not come all this way to lose a job over my beard; it will be off tomorrow." To which he responded, "Then you can start tomorrow."

As I was settling into my new career as a teacher, Cindy and I became interested in ceramics and enrolled in classes at Yuba

Community College. The stimulation from these classes propelled us into making one of our front rooms, just off the kitchen, into a pottery studio. I obtained a set of plans for building a potter's wheel out of plywood and concrete and put together a working wheel so that we could throw pots. After much experimentation, we got a crude kiln to successfully fire the pots.

In the ceramics classes we learned about the intricate chemistry of glazes, and we applied this knowledge to making our own. The alchemy of glazes is not easy to master; however, after much trial and error we came up with glazes we liked. Each new glaze had to be mixed with varied portions of the main compounds, and then each of these mixtures was tested in a firing, a long and tedious process with many more failures than successes. Yet, the few successes made it all worthwhile. My favorite glaze was made of oak ash from our woodstove. When fired, this glaze covered a pot with a soft matte finish speckled with various shades of grey and milky rivers of white flowing on the edges.

We moved forward in the pottery with an intense focus typical of us. Soon we had a busy studio up and running. At Christmas time, we set up the downstairs of our house as a showroom and held a weekend sale. Many people came to buy pottery. At other times, we loaded up the station wagon and exhibited at shows. We had collapsible shelves I had built to set up a display of pots. In the beginning, attending craft fairs and shows was fun, but soon the novelty wore off; packing up, setting up, and taking down were too much work, and profits near non-existent.

One of the most memorable experiences with pottery was building and firing a large wood burning kiln. We got to know an art teacher at the community college who was a well known potter and worked with graduate ceramic students during the winter school break. He volunteered to come with the students and build a wood fire kiln for us. The prospect of a wood kiln was exciting. However, to build it we would need a lot of fire-brick. I scoured around trying to find used brick we could afford and, eventually, found enough in Chico for our project. A friend offered to pick up the brick in his flatbed truck. By Christmas

time, we had a large pile of brick stacked at the proposed kiln site.

On a beautiful, warm day in January, the art teacher and his cadre of students arrived at Sunshine Mountain. On a hillside above the garden, the group worked non-stop and within two days had the kiln built. The completed kiln was as large as a small shed and had a chimney that rose about twenty feet; it had a gracefully arching roof all made of brick with no other supports and was covered with a slurry of clay.

The teacher was a master of many crafts. He had brought his welder, which he used to fashion a pipe for the chimney out of discarded hot water tanks. He cut the tops and bottoms out of the tanks, and although difficult to do, he welded the galvanized tanks together in the form of a stovepipe.

The finished kiln was a beautiful structure. Because the brick was mortared with a clay substance that would soften when wet, it had to be covered. I built a crude roof over it using rusted metal roofing. This added to the unique beauty of the kiln which was a picturesque addition to our landscape, giving the appearance of a small cathedral built of red, yellow, and grey bricks with its chimney spire, its dome, and its perfect arch.

Firing the kiln was more than we had bargained for. Its chamber was large enough to hold several months of production. Once loaded, a door had to be erected out of mortared firebrick. Each firing required a cord (wood stacked four feet high, four feet wide and eight feet long) of split pine which we cut in the forest and loaded into the truck. The fire had to reach 2300 to 2500 degrees to fully vitrify the pots. Since the task was so labor intensive, we did green firing. This means that the pots had not been bisque fired



The wood kiln after a firing

(lightly hardened) in a lower heat firing. Green pots are more vulnerable to breakage in the heat of firing because of the moisture in the clay. If the kiln temperature rises too fast, the water explodes, rather than slowly evaporating, damaging the pot. We lost quite a few pots because it was difficult to keep the temperature in the wood kiln from climbing too fast.

Firing the kiln was an event. From start to finish it took about twelve hours and required constant attention. Firing pottery, especially with wood, has a primitive aspect; for thousands of years it was the only way it could be done. My most vivid memory of firing this huge kiln was feeling the energy and ferocity of the fire. The firebox of the kiln was two feet by four feet. During the first few hours a small fire burned to slowly warm the kiln and its contents and allow the moisture still in the pots to slowly evaporate. By three quarters of the way into the firing, we continuously fed wood into the firebox, and we watched flames shooting out ten feet above the chimney. In the dark of night, when the fire roared and the flame started emerging from the ten foot high chimney, it was a spectacular sight. Although this kind of firing was intense work, it created so much energy that we could not help feeling exhilarated.

Once maximum temperature was reached, it was held for a long “soaking” of the kiln and then the fire was left to go out. After letting the kiln cool for about twelve hours, came the exciting part—opening the kiln. Wood firings are not highly predictable, so there would be many surprises, some wonderful and some disappointments. Regardless of the results, the kiln opening was a special time and the culmination of a long creative experience.

Cindy was really the creative one, and she made exquisite pieces of functional pottery; people would call and arrange to come by and purchase pottery from her. She still meets people who fondly share a comment about one of her pieces which they still have.

However, making beautiful pottery was not enough for Cindy; she wanted to expand in another area. After much thought, she decided to finish her degree in psychology. For a year and a half, along with the responsibilities of running a household

and raising three very active boys, she commuted to California State University Chico which is about seventy miles from Sunshine Mountain. As is characteristic of her, she worked hard and excelled in her school work. She earned her degree in developmental psychology, and she found that her newly acquired understanding of how children develop, especially adolescents, had real life application at home; it was helpful in raising our boys as they finished growing up. Her foundation in psychology was also helpful when she later, after taking teacher training and earning her credential, became an elementary school teacher.

When she got her credential and a teaching job, we really broke out of poverty, and the timing could not have been better. We had kids to send to college and the need to put some money away for our eventual retirement. We continued to live simply, as we had learned to do earlier, and to enjoy our close connection with the land.

My teaching career began over two years before Cindy's. I remember how excited we all were about our newly anticipated wealth when I got a teaching job! Going out to dinner was an unusual experience for us, but this was a time for celebration. Dad had a real job! We headed out to the Gold Cup Restaurant, which was up the mountain nestled in the pine forest. It was a place known for good food, although expensive by our standards. We had quite a celebration. We each ordered one of the most expensive items on the menu. We topped off a delicious meal with grand desserts. The kids were excited, and I think we felt like it must feel to have a rich uncle give you a million dollars. We were no longer poor. Our life had taken another new direction.

Part of what lured me into teaching was a nagging desire to do more to make a positive contribution to the world. I wanted to move, at least part way, back into the mainstream to make this difference. The work with kids, experiencing their excitement for learning and seeing them growing in knowledge, brought much satisfaction to me, and I felt that teaching came naturally. My students and I, together, created a magical environment inside the classroom, and we even took the classroom out into the

community. For instance, at Dobbins, my combined fourth and fifth grade class did a full Shakespeare production each year and performed at the community center as well as at other schools. We named ourselves “The Turtle Room” after the steady plodding turtle in the fable, *The Tortoise and the Hare* and designed T-shirts with our name on them.

Back in the classroom, in a corner of the room, students had small motors to take apart and reassemble while writing about what they were doing. Math was learned through hands-on games. These approaches provided fun and memorable learning experiences for the students.

Much to my amazement, after two years of teaching, my career in education accelerated. My third year I was asked to become the teaching principal at Dobbins. The next year I was asked to be principal of Yuba Feather School where my educator journey had begun four years before as a teacher’s aide. Becoming a principal meant I would need a wardrobe change. I had to go back to the suit and tie I had left many years earlier in Detroit. At Dobbins, I was able to wear jeans, and I even carried my Swiss army knife on my belt. To dignify my image for a principal position, Cindy and I went to one of the discount stores and outfitted me with a couple of polyester sport coats, slacks, dress shirts and ties. I was ready to look like an executive.

Leading Yuba Feather School was an ultimate educational experience. When I first became principal, there was a lot of community dissatisfaction with the school; it was in need of revitalization. Working together with a great staff and supportive community, we became one of the first “Distinguished Schools” in California and were recognized for our innovative teaching methods.



Receiving the California Distinguished School award from State Superintendent of Schools, Bill Honig

Our writing program and teaching strategies created a draw for many educators who came from all over the state to learn about what we were doing. California State University, Chico produced a training film on our writing process. Students who left our little mountain school to go to high school and college were excelling. I memorialized this exciting experience in my book, *Cocoon to Butterfly*, which was published in 1988.

I could have happily spent the rest of my career at Yuba Feather School, but the school district had other plans for me. I was invited to take a position of leadership at the central office in Marysville. I accepted, although reluctantly, because I did not want to leave the comfort of Yuba Feather School. The day I left Yuba Feather to go down the mountain and to the central office in the valley was a difficult day. I had not sought out the position at the central office and actually thought that Yuba Feather would be my educational home and family for the rest of my career. It was with great emotion that I left Yuba Feather, and, as I drove, I kept asking myself if I had made the right decision.

No one in their wildest imagination could have predicted two or three years earlier that I would be taking on a key leadership role in the district. This, however, was not the end of the line for my career in the Marysville school district. Within two years I was asked to become superintendent of the entire district of eleven thousand students! I had risen from teacher's aide, to classroom teacher, to principal and, finally, to superintendent. This was not the usual progression of people in education. My rapid climb to the top, especially to those who were not aware of my earlier professional life, was amazing. They were unaware that much of my past experience, working in organizations with people from many cultures and varied perspectives, had prepared me for success in this leadership role.

I spent nine years, until 1998, as leader of the district—years filled with challenges and successes—years that I will cherish forever. A significant number of the students in the district came from impoverished communities where drugs, alcoholism, abuse, and teen pregnancy were rampant. However, despite the

challenges these problems presented, we became known around the state as an innovative and forward moving district.

We established, with support from the entire community, a shared vision for the district and learning outcomes for students. People from other districts came to learn about our successful reading and writing programs. Visitors to the district often remarked about the friendliness of our staff and the high level of excitement about teaching and learning that permeated the district.

However, there was one tumultuous and tragic event that cast a cloud of sadness and despair over the district. On May 1, 1992, at approximately 1:30 p.m., I had gathered with the executive team for a meeting when the phone in the conference room rang. When I answered, all I can remember is a panic stricken voice, "There is shooting at Lindhurst High School."

A lone gunman had entered the high school and opened fire, killing, almost instantly, three students and a teacher. A number of other students and staff were seriously injured. The gunman then proceeded to take hostages that he held for hours in an upstairs classroom.

A tragic event like this is never forgotten, and nearly every day I think about the promising lives that were senselessly extinguished, the families of those killed, and those injured both psychologically and physically. The community and the district responded to the tragedy with strength and grace, yet we all, to varying degrees, carry its scars.

Near the end of my tenure as superintendent a situation arose that, I believe, allowed me to draw on most of what I had learned during my personal journey. It was one of those defining moments in life where everything seems to flow together in harmony. These are not easy times; often they are times of great challenge that call on us to dig deeply into our spiritual base. This was, for me one of those times.

A parent with strong beliefs was offended by a book his child was assigned to read in a high school English class. The book was *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, considered an American

classic by many and, by others, a book that promotes inappropriate values. He registered his concern with the school and was, based on district policy, given the choice of having his student read a different book. In most cases, this is enough to satisfy the parent. But, not in this case; he was a parent with a mission based on his religious and social beliefs. For him, the book was smut and had no literary value at all. He did not want his child or any child reading "that book." Not satisfied with the school's offer, he came to the district office. According to our complaint policy, arrangements were made for him to meet with a committee of administrators who, after listening to him, upheld the decision made at the high school of an alternative option for his student.

By this time, the parent was incensed over what he felt was a lack of support from the school district for his position on this book. He went to the newspaper which was more than happy to spread his views and fan the flames of reaction. However, not all parents agreed with his position, and they were beginning to make their voices heard.

Local churches were weighing in on the controversy and the community was becoming increasingly divided and agitated. The teachers, especially, were highly vocal about their right to teach what they wanted. The school board was caught in the middle. They would either be forced to ban the book and thus become book burners or to support the use of the book and be seen by many as supporters of smut. We had two staunchly opposing views with passionate and articulate people lining up on both sides to do battle.

The community was headed, it seemed, for an irresolvable disaster. As superintendent, I saw my role as a community builder. I had witnessed how the city of Detroit was torn apart by conflict, and I could not allow this issue to fracture our community and set neighbor against neighbor, so I searched my soul for answers.

A vision unfolded of a community with diverse values, uniting and deciding together what they could agree upon for their

children's assigned reading. I believed that people with strong opinions could join together, learn to understand each other's feelings, and reach consensus.

My own understanding of this book, and its significance as well, was strong and well founded. While in seminary I had led a group of Princeton University students in a theological study of *Catcher in the Rye* under the auspices of the Presbyterian Westminster Foundation. The group was composed of bright, thoughtful Princeton University students; it included a freshman named Bill Bradley who later became a star NBA basketball player and senator from New Jersey. I chose *Catcher in the Rye* because I felt it spoke to much of the alienation young people felt, and because I believed that the story of the main character, Holden Caulfield, is a story about redemption and love. After all, what Holden most wanted was to be the one who caught the children as they came through the rye, keeping them from being hurt. The language and references to sex did not offend me.

Even though I had a studied and informed opinion about the book, I decided that my role was to be a servant and not an expert. I never revealed my experience with the book nor my ideas about its redemptive and loving themes. Had I taken sides—and it was tempting—I could not have fulfilled the vision that had emerged deeply inside my being. I needed to be a conduit for bringing people together and a guide to help them resolve their differences. So that is what I did, and the outcome stands as one of the great events in my professional life!

What I had learned years before about people demonizing each other, and therefore, dehumanizing the other and themselves, had become integrated into my beliefs about community. If our small community had drawn a line in the sand, as it was beginning to do, and forced people to make a choice between supporting the right of teachers to teach this book or the right of parents to have it banned from the curriculum, there would have been a plethora of name calling and demonizing of the other side. It was headed to a bitter clash of ways—two distinctly polar opposite ways to deal with this problem.

I was emboldened to act on my vision to help each side see the other as good, decent people and listen to the other side's position and then move to a way to resolve the conflict so that everyone could win. This, I knew, would be a delicate process, and I was ready to take it on.

My conflict resolution skills and my vision of community unity were challenged to the max. One of the administrators I worked with expressed to me that he had no understanding of what I was doing and wondered why I didn't just uphold the policy and let the board decide. Others thought I was a bit crazy to go so far out on a limb. The teachers were angry with me and said that I was infringing on their academic freedom. (I had to remind them that as public school teachers in California, they did not get to decide what they taught. That decision was up to the school board). One major newspaper called me a book burner.

Despite all the questioners and accusations, I felt at peace with what I was doing, and I knew that it was going to be a hard road to travel and that the destination a difficult one to achieve; I was driven by the belief that love can conquer all things.

The plan was to set up a community-wide committee to resolve the problem. I created an application form for people who wanted to be on the committee to determine what our children could read in common while in school. The stipulation was that the committee would be balanced and that it would include a member of the teacher's organization and the parent who registered a concern. Many felt that this overly vocal parent should not be on the committee; I felt strongly otherwise.

A charter for the committee was drawn up; it included: A case for Action, Purpose, Expected Outcomes, Committee Composition and Process, Issues and Questions to be Addressed and Timeline. Application forms were widely distributed and people were asked to express why they wanted to be on the committee and if they felt they could reach agreement with people with whom they currently disagreed. Based on the information in the applications, the committee was selected.

What happened next was an amazing example of people's willingness and ability to be understanding and loving. The norms agreed on by the diverse group that was chosen included:

- Listen to each other
- Work to understand others' viewpoints
- Work cooperatively rather than competitively
- Strive for mutual trust
- Have common ownership of ideas and decisions
- Value feelings
- Value conflict as a cooperative effort to bring out all perspectives
- Value the contributions of all members
- Equalize power within the group
- Remain courteous
- Strive to reach a recommendation

We agreed on a classic definition of consensus which meant that one dissenting vote meant that we did not have agreement to move forward. Thus, we were not looking for people to compromise their beliefs but to look for a solution that encompassed the needs of our community's pluralism. This proved to be a great test and caused me moments of doubt, but in the end the need for consensus forced the group to understand each other and move forward together.

After months of struggle and painful conversations and reading countless books, the group reached consensus. We had proven that a group of people with extremely different viewpoints was able to work together and come up with a plan to govern the required books that children in school would read. Not everyone got their way, especially not the original complainant, but they were all listened to and respected. We had a synergistic result. The committee reached its goals and had a plan with one hundred percent consensus of the committee to present to the board.

On the evening of the committee's report the boardroom was packed with community members, teachers and administrators. The magnitude of our accomplishment became apparent to me

when the member chosen by the group to report our recommendations to the board began his presentation. He explained that he needed to begin his presentation with some personal words. He said that the most important thing that took place with the committee was that everyone had learned to love everyone else, and that this power of love generated in the committee was overwhelming.

He also said that the committee afforded people a voice in what the school district did, and, in all his years with children in the district, this was the first time anyone had asked him what he thought.

I was emotionally touched by his statements and often think about what he said. The power of love had conquered a problem that could have created deep scars in our community. I was proud of what the committee accomplished. We demonstrated that people with extremely divergent viewpoints can come together and work for the good of the whole. We embraced the amazing power of love by refusing to allow ourselves to be divided and hateful toward each other. We experienced the power of listening to and understanding (not necessarily agreeing) with each other's viewpoints. In the end, we discovered that it did not need to be my way and not your way but our way! We could all win. This was a proud moment for our community.

I loved being in education and having the opportunity to serve so many students and adults and positively influence their lives.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### THE REST OF THE STORY

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Even though our lives were changing and becoming more mainstream, our commitment to healthy eating did not change. We ate mostly foods that we grew, or if we bought food, we preferred that it be organically grown. We were vegetarians, and our staples were rice and beans done up in a variety of concoctions, and there were always plenty of whole grain cereals, breads and fresh vegetables. The only sweetener we used was honey. When Cindy and I took our lunches to work at school, people in the teachers' room would inquire about what interesting food we were eating that day; it was usually some creative combination of rice and beans.

Our boys did well on this wholesome diet; however, whenever they got a little money they would head up to the corner



Our family 1979

diner on Sunday morning for a large stack of white-flour pancakes and sugary syrup. At home, however, they never turned up their noses at our natural diet. Today, the three boys are great cooks and do much of their family's cooking. I think this is due, in part, to the earlier focus we put on preparing healthy food for them as children. Food preparation was a major aspect of our life, and the quality of the ingredients was important. We believed that, in part, you are what you eat. We have observed the eating habits of our early days on Sunshine Mountain become validated and almost mainstream in today's culture with the focus on healthy living.

Our boys were growing up; Peter and David were in high school. Peter was moderately interested in his high school curriculum and kept his grades up for college. He had always been an avid reader and was thinking beyond much of the curriculum being taught during his high school experience. He did, however, find an outlet in music and participated in the high school music programs.

Peter worked during the summers and, with money he earned, purchased an old, well-used Chevy sedan. The car was able to make it up to Sunshine Mountain from the valley where he bought it; however, it obviously was not going to leave without a major overhaul. He parked it under a strong oak tree near the chicken coop he had built several years earlier. He had not worked on cars before; yet,



Peter working on his Chevy

in no time, working all by himself, he got the motor out by attaching a hoist to a limb of an oak tree. Learning as he went along, he rebuilt the motor and lowered it from the tree limb gently down

into the motor compartment. When all the parts were properly hooked up (how he knew what to do with all the wires is still a mystery to me), he turned the ignition key, the engine coughed a few times, started, and settled into a smooth idle. The old car served him well, even beyond college!

Peter's high SAT scores got him accepted into the University of California at Santa Cruz, its campus nestled on a hillside above the city of Santa Cruz. UC Santa Cruz was known for its non-competitive environment. It was a perfect place for Peter to excel academically. He graduated in four years, and, after a time, settled into work as a computer programmer for a small company in Santa Cruz. He married and had three children, a girl first and then two boys.

Peter experienced a great tragedy. His first born and only daughter, Kyra, was diagnosed at three years of age with inoperable brain cancer. With the unfaltering support of her parents, Kyra put up a heroic struggle; but after eighteen months, she died—two months before her fifth birthday. There is no greater loss to parents than the death of a child. Peter has lived gracefully and admirably with this tragedy always in his heart.

Our family continuously celebrates Kyra's life when watching a rainbow (a remembrance adopted by her cousins), at family gatherings, and at special events. A bench and a tree overlooking the ocean were placed in Kyra's memory at the corner of West Cliff Drive and Woodrow in Santa Cruz. The bench is engraved with a quote from Kyra, "from the bottom of my heart to the tips of the stars." This quote is one of many metaphors Kyra frequently used to express the magnitude of her love for you. Peter still lives with his family in the Santa Cruz area and enjoys sailing his boat in the Pacific Ocean.

When Kyra died, Peter wanted me to conduct her memorial service. I told him that it was too emotional for me and that I couldn't do it. He looked into my face (I will never forget this) and said firmly, "Dad, you have to do it; you are the only one who can do it." We put together a wonderful tribute to Kyra's life, and I led the service in honor of Kyra and her parents. During the

service, Kyra's mom stood before all the caring people who came out to celebrate Kyra's life and spoke eloquent and heartwarming words about the life of her daughter. Kyra, in her short life touched many, many people, and it was her life we celebrated that day in Santa Cruz.

Peter's brother, David, Kyra's uncle, was present when Kyra died; before she died, he made a commitment to Kyra and in her honor, to help children with terminal disease. He became one of the key leaders in the Jordan and Kyra Memorial Golf Tournament that has raised millions of dollars for Family House in San Francisco and for pediatric brain cancer research.

Earlier in his life, in high school, David blossomed as an athlete and a scholar. He was active in sports and debate and got excellent grades. In his senior year, he and his partner came in second at the state debate championships. He had success in all the major sports, but football was his love. David's vibrancy and determination caused him to shine as a winner.

Thanks to a coach who believed in his talent and drive, scouts from UC Berkeley came to see him. They liked what they saw and offered a full-ride scholarship to the best public university in the world, the University of California at Berkeley, and the opportunity to play Division I football. Life doesn't get much better than that for a seventeen year old—especially one from the boon-docks of the foothills. David went on to Cal and played under a few coaches, including the legendary Joe Kapp. He graduated in five years with honors. Subsequently, he earned an MBA at the University of Southern California. By this time he had started a family, which ultimately grew to five children. He is now an executive in a major sports organization and lives with his family by the ocean in Florida.

Christopher, after the other two boys went off to college, seemed like an only child. He had high school figured out from his first day as a freshman—work hard and keep a positive attitude; this was his key to success. He focused on academics and football. He graduated salutatorian of his class, and was offered a partial football scholarship to attend Columbia University in

New York City. After visiting the Columbia campus in the big Apple, he decided to stay closer to home, so he enrolled at the University of California at Davis. After graduating from Davis, Chris earned a graduate degree in physical therapy at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. He lives in Northern California with his family where he owns and operates five physical therapy clinics.

When Chris was nine years old, he got the notion to climb a mountain; he had fond memories of the idyllic summer we spent in Colorado, surrounded by majestic mountains, and he knew that some of his Colorado cousins were mountain climbers.

I had an acquaintance that did a yearly climb of Mount Shasta, so, with Chris's desire in mind, I talked with him about making the climb. I learned that Mount Shasta was not a hike, but a strenuous climb requiring the use of crampons and ice axes to reach the summit at 14,179 feet. He said that Chris and I could come along on the next ascent. When I reported back to the family, they all wanted to go! In early summer we loaded our Volkswagen van with camping gear, drove to Mount Shasta, and joined the friend who would act as our guide.

As we drove up Interstate 5, the majestic Mount Shasta that thrusts up from the valley, independent of any other peaks, overwhelmed us with its beauty. I learned later that the naturalist, John Muir, who hiked many of the mountains of California during the late 1800s, had said: "When I first caught sight of it over the braided folds of the Sacramento Valley, I was fifty miles away and afoot, alone and weary. Yet all my blood turned to wine, and I have not been weary since."

We parked our van at the base of the mountain in a spot called Bunny Flat. We each had a large backpack stuffed with gear including rented crampons and ice axes, to carry up to Horse Camp, a base camp at around eight thousand feet altitude, where we would spend the night before starting our ascent early the next morning. The path leading up to the camp was steep and long. It had, obviously, been well used by many climbers over the years; the grounds of the campsites appeared well worn by previous

hikers. A few climbers had already settled into their campsites when we arrived.

Up the hill from our campsite was a sturdy cabin with a high pitched metal roof. Along the inside walls of the cabin were crude bunks. Apparently, it was an emergency shelter for climbers and hikers who might get caught in one of the fierce and unpredictable snowstorms that often hit the mountain. However, climbing in early September meant that we did not have to worry about snow storms. In fact, the entire year had been extremely dry, leaving the mountain with very little snow below twelve thousand feet.

Nearly everyone at Horse Camp marveled at the fact that Chris, at nine years old, had carried all his gear up to the camp, and they took on astonished looks when he told them that he was going to climb the mountain that loomed majestically but menacingly six thousand feet above us. However, given the history of our family and our rugged, self-sufficient life style, we had no questions about Chris climbing the mountain.

We got up early and fortified ourselves with a high-carbohydrate breakfast. Long before the sun rose we were off on the trail leading up the mountain. Bundled in down parkas, carrying day packs filled with water and snacks, crampons and ice axes securely fastened to the packs, we trudged upward, slipping on scree (coarsely ground up rock) and climbing over rocks. Our destination for watching the sunrise was a beautiful spot called Lake Helen. In a normal weather year it would have been encased with snow and ice, but during this year of drought there was no snow and ice to frame the lakes.

By the time we arrived at Lake Helen, a sparkling emerald, the morning sun was illuminating the eastern side of the peak. We were exhausted. None of us had ever endured such a hike, and this was the easy part! After a brief rest, we were ready to claw our way up to Red Banks—a section on the south side of the mountain, below its peak, composed of high pillars—chimneys that nature had carved out of the iron-filled rock. In a wet year, we could have traversed the path to Red Banks wearing cram-

pons over a snow field, but, on our year to climb, we had a field of scree. It seemed like, with each step we took, we would slide back two steps. Regardless of whether you are climbing on snow or broken-up rock, every step you take is a challenge. The thin air causes shortage of breath and your head pounds and hurts with each step. Chris was keeping up and meeting every challenge that came along.

Reaching Red Banks was a major event! It was only halfway to the mountain top; it provided us with a spot to rest and to look out over the valley below and at the distant coastal mountains. Our climb would take us up through the pillars which were lined with ice, so we prepared by fastening on crampons and getting out the ice axes. By now the mountain seemed so steep that it felt like one false step would send you tumbling down thousands of feet to the base. As we became more experienced on the mountain, we learned that this feeling was more imaginary than real, because when we came down from the summit, then more relaxed, we slid down this steep side with little fear of falling.

Moving up the steep, ice-covered rocks, thanks to the crampons strapped to our rugged hiking boots and the ice axes digging in, was not as difficult as it appeared looking up through the formidable towers of ice. Once on top of these pillars, we were on a glacier called Misery Hill where the ice was almost level, which, at least, made the footing easier. On the glacier, we had to be watchful of fissures that descend hundreds of feet into it. Although walking was a little easier, the altitude was having various effects, the most noticeable effect being fatigue which was increasing exponentially, our thinking was becoming slightly fuzzy, and each step more labored; thus, the appropriate name, Misery Hill. We observed that the boys were tired, though they kept moving, each of us found a deeply hidden reserve of energy as we neared the summit.

Slowly and painfully, legs burning, heads pounding, breathing deeply to pull the thin air into our lungs, one small, plodding step after another, we inched our way up the glacier to the base of the summit. The area about five hundred feet below the summit

is magical and famous. The terrain in this area, between misery hill and the summit, is barren of snow because sulfur hot springs bubble up through the surface throwing acrid steam into the cold air from deep inside the mountain. This is one aspect that gives Mount Shasta a mystical, spiritual quality. There is a well known story about John Muir, who in 1877 got caught in a snowstorm near the summit and could not find his way off the mountain. He curled up between the hot springs on the pleasantly warm ground and slept until the storm moved off the mountain.

Chris had spent every last drop of energy to conquer Misery Hill and get to the base of the summit. Standing on the warm ground, surrounded by the overpowering smell of sulfur, you look up at the summit, an out-cropping of what appears to the tired climber an insurmountable pile of jagged rock, snow and ice. Getting up the side of it requires hand over hand climbing. However, with encouragement from all of us, and mostly from his two brothers, nine-year-old Chris dug deep down inside his four foot seven frame and summoned up the energy and courage to make it to the top. As I think back on this, I believe that that moment, standing on the warm, thermally heated ground, looking up at the summit, kindled within Chris a lifelong passion to succeed. He was too close to the prize to give up.

We all made it, deliriously, to the top. With freezing fingers, we each signed the climbers' log that sits inside a metal casing (placed there by The Sierra Club) for protection. With lightheadedness caused by the lack of oxygen at over fourteen thousand feet, and feeling quite giddy, we stretched out on the rocks and briefly enjoyed the amazing vista. The valley that runs through the center of California rolled out below us for miles. We could see as far as Mount Hood in Oregon, and to the south Mount Lassen looked like a little hill. We looked down and noticed a small airplane flying eastward a few thousand feet lower than the mountain's summit.

We were advised by our friend not to spend too much time on the summit, because our climb had taken longer than expected and the mountain is often covered by clouds and storms in the

afternoon. After what seemed too short a time, we, reluctantly, began our descent. And this was an experience all to itself. Climbers for nearly one hundred fifty years had literally slid (or in mountaineering terms, glissaded) down the mountain. Some of this sliding was like skiing on your feet while some of it was done on your backside. These descents were fun and exciting and had in some spots worn chutes into the mountainside which were just big enough to sit in. On the upper part of the mountain, you could ride the chutes sitting on a piece of plastic sheeting, and you'd shoot down in a rapid and bumpy ride. On the lower part, the chutes were worn into the scree; yet, they still provided a good ride. The entire climb took us about eight hours; only about one hour and forty-five minutes of this was the rapid descent to base camp.



**On the summit of Mt. Shasta  
with Chris**

You might think climbing Mt. Shasta once was enough, and for Cindy and son Peter it was, but the rest of us went back to do it again. David, Chris and I have climbed this mystical mountain four times. It seems like our connection with Mount Shasta was symbolic of our lives. We were continuously climbing challenging peaks which led to amazing experiences.

Besides sharing a wonderful life on Sunshine Mountain and climbing Mount Shasta together, all three boys had another major thing in common. Each of them rode a "real," yellow school bus to school. The trip down the mountain to Marysville for high school was quite long. The bus came by the bottom of our driveway before 7:00 a.m. Even in pouring rain or freezing snow, they had to trudge down the driveway and wait for the bus. They each treated the inconvenience as part of living on Sunshine Mountain and never complained even though many of

their friends lived in town and could roll out of bed around 7:30 a.m. with plenty of time to get to school. Coming home in the afternoon, they usually rode the activities bus, which dropped them off at our dirt road around 6:00 p.m., usually, after dark. We sometimes joked that this bus ride built character, and, as I think back on it, I believe it did.

When each boy was old enough to get a driver's license, he purchased a car with money earned working during summers and drove to school.

One of the difficult aspects of living so far from the high school was the separation it created for Cindy and me from the boys' lives, especially on the weekends. Each son, as he went through high school, had a circle of friends and a social life in town and would spend many weekends staying there with friends. We didn't worry about them, although we missed having a connection with their friends and their social life. But, most of all, we were saddened seeing their lives moving away from Sunshine Mountain much earlier than we had anticipated. One of the benefits, however, of this separation was that it promoted our boys' independence, and, actually, it was good preparation for the next big step. When it came time for them to go away to college, there was not much trauma about leaving home.

For a time, the only television on Sunshine Mountain was one the boys had purchased for twenty-five dollars; however, more television eventually invaded our little house and much of the reading and sharing time by the stove was replaced with TV watching on a used black and white console put together from random parts by a friend. I think, at the time, we saw this as a re-entry step into the mainstream. However, in retrospect, it seems more like a compromise of some of the precious family interaction we had prior to television.

When David started playing Pac-10 football, I wanted to be able to watch the televised games in color, and, by this time, the black and white console was not responding to the magic of its maker. My friend worked his sorcery over the carcass of a large color console which replaced the old black and white one. We

now watched TV in full color even though only two channels came through without a snowstorm obscuring much of the image. Both these revitalized TVs constantly needed special service and parts. My friend did the labor for free, but the parts were expensive.

Had we been living a little more in the mainstream, we would have purchased a new TV for much less than our investment in two used ones. This practice of buying used items and then spending a lot of money to keep them going also held true with cars.

During the early years on Sunshine Mountain, we purchased two used Volkswagens—a sleek fastback and a van. These vehicles were constantly in need of repair, and I think, at least in the case of the fastback, we could have purchased a new car with the amount invested in it over several years. But we never were able to accumulate, all at once, enough money to buy a new car until years later. This often happens to people who have only enough money for day to day needs. They get caught in an endless cycle of poverty, buying items that are cheaply made or worn out, and then they have to use what little money they have to repair these items.

Although we had invited TV into our life, we still found time to enjoy the beauty of our surroundings and the simple things of rural living. During the summer months Cindy and I slept under the big oak that hovered over the small balcony next to our bedroom. Lying there, immersed in summer sounds and focused on twinkling stars through the branches of the stately oak, we gently fell asleep under a canopy of gnarled branches.

My spiritual journey continued to evolve. I met a kind man in the community who was devoted to the East Indian spiritual speaker and writer, Krishnamurti; after he learned about my interests, he gave me one of Krishnamurti's books. I read this book and others by the same author as well as books by other spiritual thinkers. Even though I had been interested in Eastern religions for some time, this was my first in-depth journey into spiritual and philosophical thought outside Western Christianity. It was

a journey that I welcomed and one that helped me find spiritual direction.

This spiritual journey has helped me understand my initial choice of attending seminary. I now believe I was led into theological seminary and ministry not just as a career path but because I was seeking a purpose for my life—a way to positively impact the world. My search during that time had run into a wall of religious doctrine that did not have meaning for me, and a vindictive reaction to my social ministry in Detroit had left me confused. However, I continued to question and seek, and I always will.

My seeking has led me to the realization that I am a spirit traveling, temporarily in this body, through time and space. My body will fade but my spirit—my true self—will continue its journey for eternity. All that we see, touch and feel in life is transitory; only the spirit is eternal, and it is connected with other spirits. Life is a journey of discovering and manifesting the meaning of our spirit or true selves in the way that Christ, Buddha, and other enlightened spiritual travelers have shown us. I believe the core of this manifestation is love; love can be reached by many paths. The important thing in life is to embrace a path of discovering one's spiritual essence and to respect the paths chosen by others.

We not only survived the tumultuous years of the sixties and seventies; we flourished and grew. Our lives have been enriched by what we learned from our bold adventures in the school bus, the hard work of homesteading and the challenges of starting a new life. We are grateful for opportunities we have had through our work in education to give back to others and positively impact the world.

The story of Sunshine Mountain continues to unfold. Our annual cousins' camp, summer days for grandchildren to be with us at Sunshine Mountain, active for several years, is now history, but it engendered in the children a love for Sunshine Mountain which is also shared by their younger siblings, not then old enough for cousin's camp but who now love coming to Sunshine Mountain.

The original house has now become a family guest house since the construction of our newer house higher up the hill. When the

boys and their families come for visits, they stay in the old house. Our long term plan is to keep Sunshine Mountain and all its memories in the family for generations to enjoy.

The story of Cindy's and my life together, up to this point, is best summed up in the closing lines of my favorite poem by Robert Frost:

"I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference."



**The original house at Sunshine Mountain circa 1980**

For much of our life the paths we have taken have not been those most travelled; however, they have led to unique adventures, spiritual awakening, a connection with the land, simplicity, opportunities to help make the world better, and a wonderful family. This is the story we wanted to tell, and I hope you have enjoyed reading it. We have enjoyed living it!



## EPILOGUE

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Much of the aura of the social and cultural upheaval known as the sixties has dimmed. Many of its most radical or colorful figures have faded, like a ship on the far horizon, into obscurity or into the mainstream of American life. However, much of the sixties' legacy endures through the beat of rock and roll music, the changing roles of women, and in a greater openness and acceptance of human sexuality. The legacy also includes an emphasis on human potential and spirituality, the idea that, as citizens of the world, we are all one; that we should live in peace and, most of all, experience greater equality for all who call this great country home.

The sixties were like a two sided coin; there is another, perhaps, darker side to this legacy. Many believe that the sixties went too far by attacking key values that held us together in a civil union. Those who believe this would claim that the baby was thrown out with the bath water. They might sight the breakdown of moral boundaries and boundaries of civility. For instance, before the sixties one would seldom hear offensive language in public or on the movie screen. Post sixties language frequently was set free from any appropriate limits, and civility was often shattered by a vulgar word.

The loosening of our sexual mores has had a positive side, but it has also created an "anything goes" attitude. Some aspects of a sexual nature might best be left more private than is common. While watching TV, I often wonder how parents explain to their young children the ads depicting specific aspects of sex. The changes in sexual mores may have, at least in a small measure, given impetus to our burgeoning divorce rate. The drug culture of the sixties might have opened a door to drug abuse (both legal and illegal) that has become a major problem in our society.

As to our family, Cindy and I still live at Sunshine Mountain, now grown to thirty-five acres of our beloved rolling hills. The

hand-built first house still stands and is home to our spread out families when they come to visit. A new house (what Cindy calls a real house) with a panoramic view of the surrounding foothills, has been our home for the past ten years. We recently planted an olive orchard, and we trust they will provide olives and oil for years to come. Their green and silver leafed canopy gives the landscape a touch of unique beauty. We have already pressed our first Sunshine Mountain pungent and peppery olive oil.

We are blessed with our expanding family. We live on the land we love and have opportunities to continue building a positive future for coming generations.

We have given you our account of the years known as the sixties and seventies. We have shared experiences, feelings and judgments solely from our perspective. History will be the final judge of the impact these tumultuous years had on our society. If we had this time to live all over again, there is little we would change. What a great time in history to have lived, participated, grown and contributed!

Peter Pillsbury  
January, 2012  
Sunshine Mountain

[www.jouneytosunshinemountain.com](http://www.jouneytosunshinemountain.com)