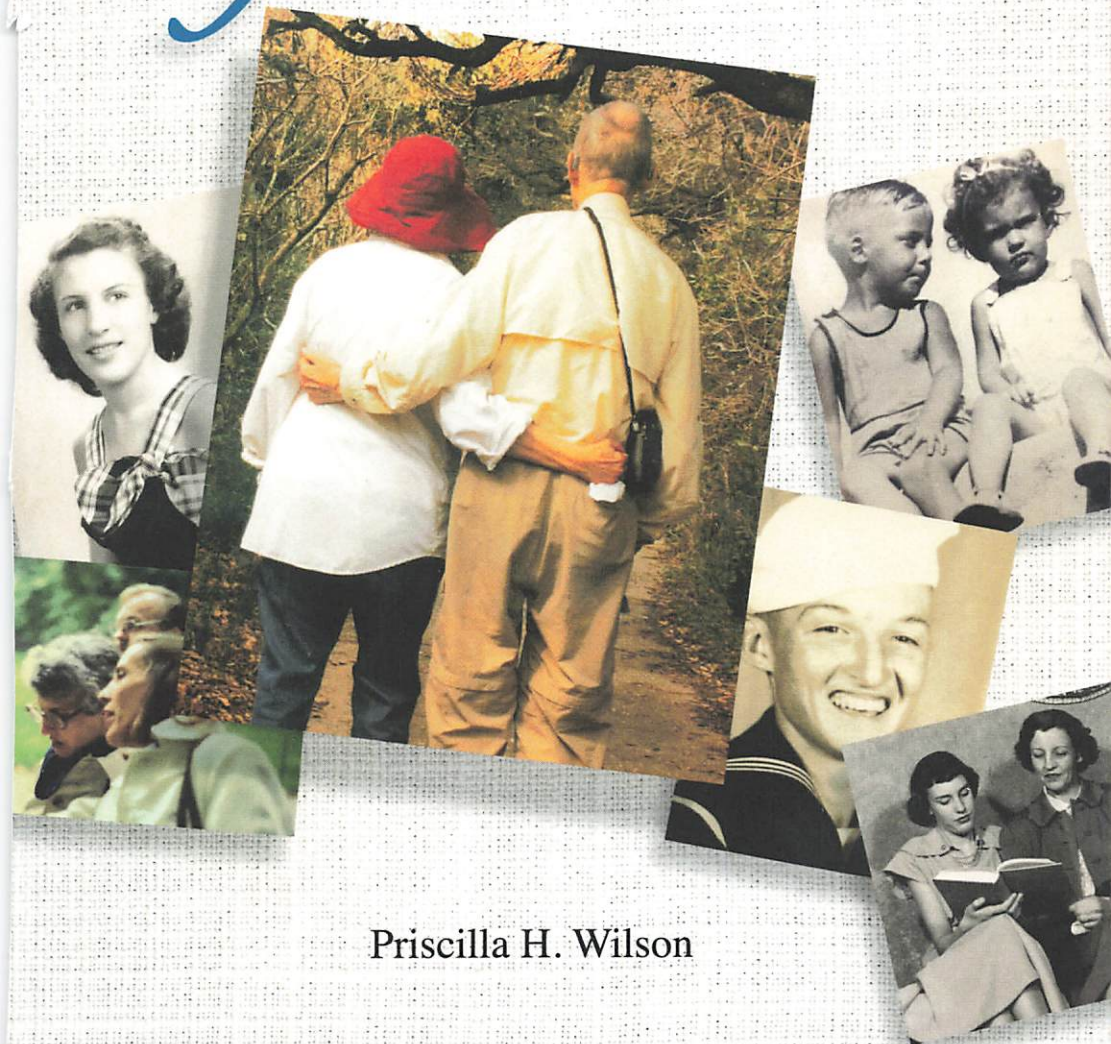


The Wonder of Memory



Priscilla H. Wilson

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*The
Wonder of
Memory*

by

Priscilla H. Wilson

Other books by Priscilla H Wilson

The Facilitative Way, Leadership That Makes the Difference assembles facilitative methods and stories from thirty-five years of experience.

A Pioneer Love Story, the Letters of Minnie Hobart captures Priscilla's grandmother's life as a pioneer in a very different era. It provides an intimate look at the history of the Texas Panhandle personalized through the eyes of her grandmother.

Everyday Wonder, from Kansas to Kenya from Ecuador to Ethiopia authored by Kaze Gadway and Priscilla H Wilson shares short stories about when the sacred intruded into their lives.

Zero Meridian, Five Degrees North captures Rodney's life, a book which he had collected material for but had not written when he died.

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The Wonder of Childhood

1 My Early Years

Memory is a funny thing. It is a way to participate in something larger than yourself.

My life journey started in Kansas. I never questioned whether the Church was right for me. Generations of my family had been “church” so I am also. Wonder caused a bump in the road for me when my parents donated a water cooler to the Arkansas City Presbyterian Sunday School Department. My father’s explanation, “to whom much is given, much is required.”

So I thought, “Maybe this church stuff is more than just Sunday attendance.” How do I talk about my religion or faith in my life? Now that I have lived a long time I want to pause and ponder that.

Thin places...where heaven and earth touch. We meet God in thin places, where God feels very close. My life began long ago, in March 1931.

“Life is amazing” resounds through my brain as I look back through the years. I can’t believe that our family didn’t suffer more. My parents met at Fairmount College (now Wichita State University) and moved to Arkansas City after Ranney-Davis Mercantile Company offered my Dad a job. This was a new type of industry. Wholesale groceries had not been an item long.

My birth in 1931 coincides with the global depression. A small red brick house on North 4th becomes my first home after my birth in Mercy Hospital.

I only realize many years later that the Ranney-Davis Mercantile Company employing my father during the depression kept us comfortable. By 1933 over a third of the families in our country had a member out of work. Millions of Americans experienced hunger. Employed as the buyer for the company, our Dad frequently brought

home samples to “taste”. Ninety percent of what we ate came from cans, because that was our father’s business. We were not wealthy, but never financially in real trouble that I knew about.

My sister, Pam arrives three days after my fourth birthday. Our Dad’s purchase of a house at 119 North B Street for \$5,000 becomes our home for the rest of my Ark City days. A tall, wide cupboard built into the basement wall provides storage for cases of canned goods.



“Toughy”



Priscilla

When our parents buy an 8mm camera they begin capturing their children's every move. Some of the earliest movies feature darling two-year-old Pamela bouncing in her jumpy swing hung in the open garage door. Of course, I try to get in the picture. A large box provides another jumping place for her. I squeeze into the picture wearing a feathered Indian headdress looking way too big for that box.

I assume we live like all families. However, over time a series of three maids, Betty, Opal and Mrs. Cooper live with us and work for our family from 1935 to 1941. Room and board plus \$5.00 a week hire these women to clean, cook and take care of us little girls. I suspect that was a luxury that few families enjoyed. But women available for this kind of a job ended with World War II. Much more lucrative jobs become available as the men go off to war.



Priscilla and Pamela

Does everyone in my generation remember where we were when we heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941? Pam and I are upstairs in our room playing with our dolls when Daddy comes in to tell us the news of the attack. Even though I had attained the mature age of ten years old, I am not sure that the significance of that announcement sunk into my brain. No one in our family served in the armed forces so food stamp books and shortages become the most obvious signs of war. Probably I learn my love of maps during this time. On the wall of our small breakfast room we hang a world

map and mark the progress of our troops as the tide turns in the Allies favor.

Our Mother's Mother, Nanaw comes to visit us in Arkansas City rather frequently. I'm not sure how she came...but we loved having her come.



Priscilla, Nanaw, Pam

Our Mother keeps a stack of LPs in the many drawers of a small record cabinet in a corner of our living room Mostly 33 1/3 plus a few 45 RPM fill each drawer, which displays a treble clef on the handles.

Our flat, small player sitting on top of the cabinet held one record at a time. You open a door on the front like an oven door and pop in the record. I still have Mother's RCA Victor Red Seal Record, A Treasury of Immortal Performances featuring Enrico Caruso. On this record he sings selections from Rigoletto, Aida, Pagliacci, La Gioconda and La Boheme. No wonder I grow up loving those operas, or at least selections from them.

Classical music pours from the corner of our living room. We'd pop in one of our favorite records, lie on the dark green living room carpet and relax. Gradually I'd float off into space, carried by gorgeous chords and melodies written by Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert or any one of the other classical composers residing in our music cabinet. My favorites to this day include Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini.

Like so many children, learning to play the piano is part of our everyday life. Then when I reach high school I take organ lessons from Dr. Druly, an elderly, amazing organist. Before the church is unlocked for the day I used to climb in the window before school to practice on the organ. I study organ for two years but stop when I leave for college. At the time someone told me that the First Presbyterian Church organ was the best organ in Kansas. I never knew if that was true, but that sounded great. Learning to play the organ seemed special because I didn't know anyone else doing that.

Fortunately the church was only a couple of blocks from the high school so it made it easy to get to school on time. I never become really good on the organ, but I enjoyed playing it, and I was always in awe of Mr. Druly.

Little did I realize, until many years later, how privileged I was to be born into such a loving, stable family. Thus began an 80 year journey—experimenting with worship, study, teaching and learning to love every corner of the globe.

Each summer our family loads the car with suitcases, a picnic lunch and a bucket of ice. We set off before dawn to beat the heat. The drive from Arkansas City to Pampa, Texas to see our grandmother, aunts and uncles, plus the Father and Hobart cousins is long and hard. Mother periodically points out the window and hollers, "There is a scissor-tail flycatcher" which starts me on my bird-watching journey. In those days the roads across Oklahoma aren't paved and almost every trip we can expect a stop in some small town to repair a punctured tire.

We always enjoy meals in Nanaw's spacious, formal dining room. The button on the floor at the head of the table fascinates me. A foot lowered onto this button rings the bell in the kitchen to summon the maid to come hear what we need next. Nanaw's meal-time admonition still remains with me, "When you are eating something you especially enjoy, eat very slowly. This will help you enjoy it longer."

Nanaw had poor health in her later years and although I loved her dearly, seeing her was not the most exciting part of our visits.

A trip to my Uncle Fred's ranch near Canadian, Texas promises some horse-back riding and fun adventures with Tiny, my cousin six months younger than me. One year I write a post-card home to Daddy, "I went to the ranch and rode Awkward. Love, Cilla." That triggers a deep laugh when we tell him, "Awkward is the name of the horse."



*Nanaw and Granpa, Marilyn Hobart and Warren Fatheree
Hobart Fatheree, Tiny Hobart and Priscilla Hutchinson*

One especially silly time Tiny and I collect every lotion, potion and cream we can find in her house. A time of experimentation takes place on top of a small, round cement washhouse in the yard. After hauling everything to the top of this building, we produce totally unidentifiable mixtures of goo and glob. No remembrance of what we do with that mess, but I do know that we filled the air with uncontrollable giggles

My favorite cousin, Hobie Fatheree and I always had great fun visiting the ranch. This picture is at the JA Ranch. Our Granpa managed that ranch and I am sure that our Mothers were there horse-back riding.



*Hobart Fatheree &
Priscilla Hutchinson*

I sing my way to faith,
Attendance at church,
meant Sunday school and
choir are the expected
process. Robed in short

white cassocks, Rebecca and I stop whispering and wiggling as Mary Reese gestures the choir to stand. We treasured choir in our Presbyterian Church, but we were never good at listening to all that preacher talk, even though we loved Dr. Maier, our pastor.

Mary Reese, our beloved choir director, asks our ten-year old Virginia Topleft Choir to join the Ralph Brown High School Choir in singing "Fairest Lord Jesus." Was it joining with those admired senior highs or hearing the solo verse sung by Jolen Selan that set in motion who I am? Who knows? Maybe it was adoration of Mary Reese. She was one of those rare adults who talked to kids like we were somebody. Much later I understood that what we were seeing was an adult who lived the love that she knew God had for each of us.

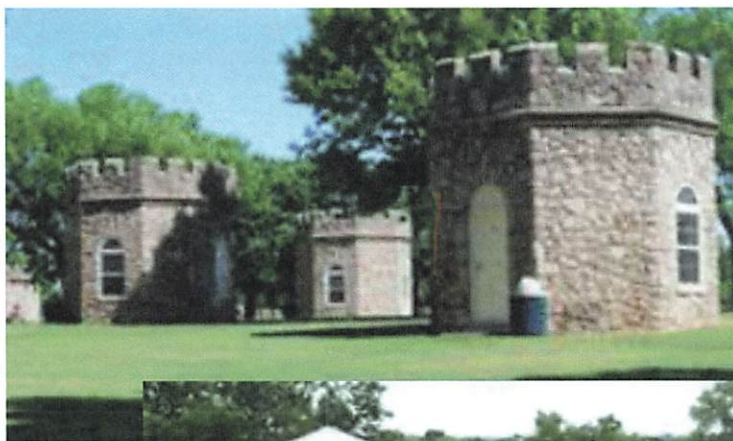
Every Sunday the church choirs from first graders through adults filled the U shaped balcony. All three children's choirs, the Virginia Topliff Choir, Ralph Brown Choir, and Rose Maier Choir sang prayer responses each Sunday. We show up, put on a choir robe, unearth the right piece of music and parade up the curved narrow stairway to the balcony with the other children for Sunday worship. The magic of those early choir moments set me on a path of sustaining faith. No matter our age, we are treated as important and special.

Patterns of relationships differ in different times, but the church and my friendship with Rebecca begins early and carries throughout my life. We are best of buddies from early choir days. We attend different schools but spend most weekends together. Church is the glue in our relationships.



Guy and Mary Hutchinson – coming in from playing golf.

Wentz Camp becomes a central factor during our growing up years. When we were little, six or seven, we could go to the camp for a couple of days in July. Later for many years we went for a whole week. Wentz Camp, just outside of Ponca, Oklahoma is one of the prettiest camps ever built. Small, stone cottages with twelve bunks in each housed the campers. But the swimming pool was a sight. Quite large, with brick and cement in several colors with five diving boards and wide beautiful steps leading down to the pool captures everyone's imagination.



Wentz Camp

My growing up years generally portray mid-western, middle-class values and activities. By Junior High (7th, 8th and 9th grade) sports, boys and slumber parties drive my energy. When my Social Studies teacher intercepts a note I write to Phyllis trouble erupts. His questions shake me, “Do you want me to show this note with a bunch of cuss words to your father? Do you think you can change your activity? And think about whether Phyllis is a girl whose friendship you want to pursue.”

My delinquency comes to an end.

2 Those Dating Years

In 8th grade my first date is with Joe. We go to Harold and Alice's café for a hamburger and coke with another couple. It remains a fun evening, but Joe and I are just friends for the rest of high school.

Slumber parties for our "gang" of girls usually happen at Jean's house. Her mother doesn't seem to mind how late we stay out. A walk to the park to swing and chatter provides our entertainment in the middle of the night.

A young girl's infatuation sneaks over me after the high school senior play my freshman year. Vincent Wilson, playing the lead in "Freckles" captures me and I pine from afar. I know the Wilson family from church. However, at that time, I don't know Vincent's older brother, Rodney who later becomes my husband.

Early in high school I start dating Dave, and I have a feeling that I have fallen in love with him. We start going steady and I even switch to the Methodist Church for the Sunday evening youth group activities for a while. I don't remember that lasting too long, but it was an indication of my



Priscilla and Dave

seriousness. Dave belongs in my class, plays sports and seems to like me also. What more can I want?

My Mother's sister, Laura is visiting us and is quite annoyed by the picture of Dave and the other three on his relay team on my bedroom wall. The other three are all Black guys.

My summer job during high school and college swirls around the Country Club swimming pool as their lifeguard for several years.

By spring of 1946 Rebecca and I start recruiting for our church's high school choir. We are both frustrated and feel like we need to scurry up some more choir folk. We both mail a stack of postcards to names on our lists. I pay no attention that Rodney Wilson receives one of my postcards.

My afternoons are taken up with life guarding and I teach swimming at the city pool in the mornings. The city pool is very big and has a large swimming program for the city and is a lot of fun.

Shifts in life come in strange ways. It all starts with that postcard.

The postcard sparks a bit of intrigue as Rodney has been told in school that he can't sing at all. He asks one of his friends to point out "Priscilla" where I am working in the swimming pool's refreshment stand. I am pointed to as the card writer. He mentions later that he fell in love with me immediately, but of course I never quite believed that.

The following year I begin to hear rumors that Rodney Wilson plans to ask me for a date. Slightly annoyed, I pay no attention to this; he is one of the "big boys." Several of my friends are dating "big boys" – a designation pronounced on the town's returned veterans, but I am not interested. That seems slightly crazy so I basically ignore that thought.

In the spring of 1947, I am a high school sophomore, and am walking home from school. I have to walk past a parked car filled with "big boys." Rodney is pushed out of the car and slowly approaches me. I gulp. He asks if I can go get a hamburger after operetta rehearsal on Wednesday evening. What a relief. I don't really have to deal with this thought although I wasn't sure what I thought at that moment. My parents have told me that going out during the week is a "no-no" so I don't have to worry about this invitation.

A few days later, Rodney asks me out on a weekend and I decide to go. I am intrigued by the thought of a date with him, but not really sure about it at all. By the time we've had a few dates, I begin to

wonder if this might be longer lasting than I first suspected. There seems to be something fascinating about him.

The first time Rodney kisses me it is raining. I am only seventeen and after vowing I wouldn't date one of the big boys here I am. On our second date, who knows where we have been, but we are parked in front of 119 North B. We talk for a while and in our nervousness, become fascinated with the raindrops running down the windshield. At some convenient moment he leans over and gives me a kiss. I realize this is a special moment.

We have a few bumps in the road during the rest of my high school years. In the fall of my senior year I am elected Football Queen. It is a thrill when Dave, my previous boyfriend, crowns me with a kiss on the football field. I remain a bit confused and wonder who I really like and why.



Football Queen Priscilla, flowers presented to Priscilla by Jo Ann



Brother Freddie and Rodney at Country Club pool talking with Lifeguard

One day Coy, one of Rodney's friends, corners me at the drug store where we all "hang out" after school. He basically says, "Shape up or decide to give Rodney up." I decide I don't really want to stop dating Rodney. It seems to me strange that I can't date more than one boy. I become a bit scared but decide I really want to keep dating Rodney.

My first formal happens in the spring of my senior year. Rodney has asked me to the Demolay Dance and I am excited. This seems like a very grown up situation. I even pick out a pink and black plaid fabric and ask our dress-maker to make a lovely dress.

Rodney graduates from Jr. College the same spring I graduate from high school. He attends Emporia State College for his last two years of college. My mother insists on a girl's school for my first year of college and she chooses Ward Belmont in Nashville so off I go to Tennessee.

Rodney asks to visit me in the fall and my parents say, "no". They want me to be meeting new people. By spring he doesn't ask but persuades his friend Ken Cannon to drive him south. What a fabulous weekend we have, mostly sitting by a lake, talking and watching the mallards fishing.



Priscilla in her pink and black plaid dress.

My time at Ward Belmont is filled full. I am elected manager of our basketball team that keeps me pretty busy. I also attend a church in Nashville with twins who live in my dorm. And for spring break I travel with a group from the school to go to Florida, Cuba and New Orleans. This is my first traveling experience without my parents and I discover that I love doing that.

By my sophomore year of college I am attending Oklahoma University. Rodney journeys down to Norman, Oklahoma for our fall homecoming. My creative juices flow when I conduct the Alpha Phi chorus and when I am in charge of our house display on the lawn for Homecoming, "The Little Engine That Could."



Priscilla and The Little Engine That Could

I have no remembrance of how either of those things came about. Did we sing as a chorus for more than Mother's weekend? I have no recall on that. Obviously people in the house see some creative and coordination skills in me since they invite me to lead in various programs.

During the weekend that Rodney is in Norman, I am not sure which one of us proposes, but we begin to talk about getting married.

Rodney has graduated and gone to Chicago to work for a short time with the Santa Fe Railway. The Korean War has started and he is still listed as Navy possibility. so he takes an offer from the Railway. He has looked for other jobs, but not found one, so the Santa Fe Railway hires him. He is also teaching a bunch of boys who are ages nine, ten and eleven in a Sunday School class. It is now much harder for him to travel so far to see me.

The next time I go home I tell my parents that I want to quit school and get married. My father briskly announces, "Oh no, you have to finish and receive your degree. You may have to support yourself at some point in time." I am greatly annoyed but know that I have to pay attention to them.

The year before we get married Mother and I spend some time on making sure I have the clothes I wish I had. One trip takes us to Chicago and I am not as interested in clothes as I am in seeing Rodney while we are in Chicago. One evening we go to a night club which is very special for us both.



Priscilla and Rodney at the nightclub

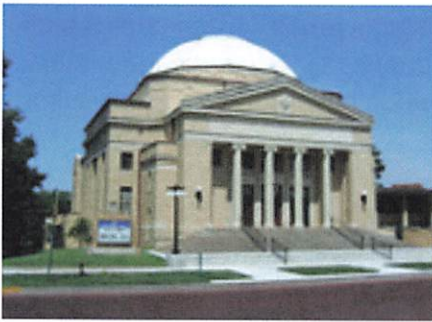
My schooling is not terribly important to me so to speed up that process, I enroll in one class of correspondence and two summers of classes. I manage to graduate by August 1952.

I then go back to Arkansas City to plan our wedding for the following October.

3

Beginning a New Life

In 1952, when Rodney Wilson and I say, “I do,” the late afternoon sun casts a soft glow through the First Presbyterian Church’s rose window. My maid of honor, sister Pam, and bridesmaids dressed in stunning coral move with the music toward the front of the sanctuary. Rodney and his best man, brother Fred stand with Dr. Swain near the altar. After an eternity the organ strains of *Here Comes the Bride* beckon me to move down the aisle on the arm of my father. I am thrilled that this day has finally arrived.



First Presbyterian Church

We repeat the traditional vows. A slight struggle with sliding the ring on my finger slows the process. Finally we hear the words we have waited months to hear, “I now pronounce you man and wife.”

All gather for the reception at the Arkansas City Country Club. Later, we realize the candles were never lit. These are the candles at the reception. Does that invalidate our marriage? Surely not, since the marriage lasted fifty-nine years.



October 26, 1952

We drive to Gatlinburg in Tennessee's Smoky Mountains which receives their name from the fog and mist that cover the mountains. Enough visibility during our honeymoon encourages our long hikes through the forest up and down hills.

A pale green Plymouth, a graduation/wedding gift from my parents, conveys us to Chicago after the honeymoon. As we approach Chicago's South Side Rodney says, "Remember, I warned you that Chicago apartments have been impossible to find. I spent months looking for this one so I hope it is ok."

My young, naive ears block out his words. Yet when he opens the door to our apartment at 72nd Street and South Shore Drive, I nearly turn and run.

Disbelief sweeps over me as I confront a scruffy, sagging faded tan sofa with springs hanging out the bottom. A tiny dining area, a small dirty kitchen and a minuscule bathroom complete the space. "Where do we sleep?" I ask.

Rodney opens the closet door and pulls out a Murphy bed that fills the living room. I have never seen such a contraption. "*What*



Honeymoon hike 1952 Plymouth

have I gotten myself into?" The bed bumps right up against that ghastly sofa, barely leaving room to walk to the bathroom.

After my first stunned reaction, I decide, "We can make this our home." Being newlywed and deeply in love soothes the way. I realize that marriage matters. I need to pay attention and take care of this new venture.

Daily I tackle the grime in our small apartment. I wipe off the sofa and try to figure out how to clean under it. I fear the springs will come clear out if I touch them. I push the shabby pillows around wrestling to make them look presentable. Futilely, I wage war on the black soot that drifts in around the windows from Chicago's aging coal-burning power plants.

I don't know another soul in Chicago at first. Rodney introduces me to two other couples and we join them for weekend bridge frequently. Thus our new life together begins and so far Rodney is working in the Chicago Santa Fe Railway office. We haven't experienced all his traveling yet.

The following spring the Santa Fe's Transportation Department reassigns Rodney to Amarillo as a Traveling Car Agent. Relieved to leave the dingy Chicago apartment, we pack up, ship the Plymouth as freight and catch a train southwest to Amarillo. A simple duplex on the dusty barren-looking northern edge of Amarillo welcomes us.

That fall the Amarillo Globe reports a need for more teachers in the public schools. Rodney's work has him traveling across the Midwest each week so I sign a contract to teach first grade in the neighborhood school. The children in my class have no kindergarten experience and few if any books are in their homes. This tough but rewarding job fulfills me as I watch them struggle to learn.

About the time school starts, I discover I am pregnant. We are both pleased but decide I can teach for several months.

I nearly lose the baby two months into my pregnancy. Doctor's orders: "Stay off your feet." Since no one can teach first grade sitting down, I quit my job. Quitting is frustrating, but also somewhat of a relief.

The duplex has no room for a baby so on weekends we search for another place to live. We soon move to a small rental house on Monroe Street mid-town. This house feels more like a real home. We are closer to the First Presbyterian Church and Rodney's shorter commute to the Santa Fe building.

Further doctor's orders: "No traveling for the rest of your pregnancy." Not to travel to see my parents for Christmas strikes me as impossible. I gulp and realize if we want this baby, I must obey my doctor's orders.

Rodney, ever the caring gentleman, organizes our Christmas. Two couples from the church come over one evening to indulge in an old-fashioned potluck supper by our Christmas tree. The scent of candles and glow of lights permeate the house with the feel of Christmas and I realize the comfort of friends and family is special.

Our pile of presents from our families climbs higher. Long distance calls with various family members fill the void. We live through Christmas Day in the tenderness of true love.

The first friendships vital to our marriage quickly develop when Arnold Leverenz, our church's choir director launches a Sunday school class for young adults. This young adult class begins to shift my thinking. My earlier life set the stage, but I didn't really start probing the whole question of change until that class. Then I start reading everything I can get on church renewal. It is funny, but I don't remember any of the content of things said in that class. For

the first time questioning our beliefs becomes the name of the game. Not questioning if they were real, but what did we understand, what did they mean? What a discovery, we could question our faith and God wouldn't strike us dead.

Breathtaking highlights occur during that Amarillo time. While I am pregnant with Ben, Arnold, our church choir director organizes the Braham's Requiem with the Amarillo Symphony Orchestra. To sing with a symphony orchestra in a major work marks a first for me. The awesomeness of that experience resonates with me even today.

By spring Rodney and his friend Ron are playing golf nearly every Saturday. One morning in June Rodney calls Ron to say, "I can't play golf this morning I have to take Priscilla to the hospital."

Ron asks in disgust, "What's wrong with her?" After Rodney laughs at this ridiculous question, his nervousness balloons when he thinks of the coming birth

The 1954 Father's Day edition of the Sunday Amarillo Globe News carries a picture of Rodney pointing to his new son Ben (named after Rodney's grandfather) in the hospital nursery. This makes us briefly famous.



Fathers' Day—usually called the nursery at Northwest Texas Hospital—is an especially busy place. All expectant dads anxiously await their babies to arrive on a busy day near Father's Day. Conversations in the waiting room indicate this is true. Wilson, left, 1931 Moore, became a father for the first time last Saturday, and receiving "congratulatory" notice from his C. Fawell, center, 4124 Jackson. Jerry Gaud III, North Lamar, shades his eyes to get the first look at his new daughter. A low-angle shot of this picture was taken. Wilson took off his wrist watch and dropped it his baby to see.

Another breathtaking highlight occurs during that Amarillo time.

We rehearse Verdi's Requiem and I fall in love with the melodic line, and the vastness of the score. By the time we sing Verdi's Requiem my second pregnancy has begun. But, the awesomeness of that experience and the beauty of the music resonates in my mind even today.

In the summer of 1956 Rodney comes home one evening smiling with dramatic news. "The Santa Fe has assigned me back to Chicago. I'll be in charge of all the Traveling Car Agents across the system. This is an amazing promotion, but it means leaving everything in Amarillo."

Sadness at leaving our new friends accompanies a burst of pride at this promotion. We feel so at home in Amarillo that it comes as a jolt to move, but it never occurs to either of us to argue with this assignment. This is a move that is too important to ignore.

My next-door neighbor, Jane has played the major role of my best friend while we have lived here. She carefully explains some of the mother-role as I am struggling to figure out what to do. I'll miss her and her three boys the most. She gave me so much confidence in mothering Ben plus shared the little boy clothes that her kids out-grew.

A swirl of summer activity grabs us. I hate the thought of leaving friends in Amarillo and family in Pampa. My Pampa aunts, uncles and cousins have been great connections. While I was growing up each summer we always spent time in Pampa and going over there recently has felt so much like being part of family.

Rodney's friend Bill Paton in the Chicago Transportation Office is assigned to Rodney's task in Amarillo. Rodney calls, "Bill, where are you and your wife living now? Can we just switch our rented house for where you are living?" The Northwestern Commuter trains are convenient to Bill's apartment in Jefferson Park (Chicago) and switching housing sight unseen saves us all time and energy. I know that the space will be tight when our second child arrives. My body already starts to bulge with this other child coming in the fall as we prep for the move.

However, packing, telling friends goodbye, and leaving Amarillo keeps me too busy to worry. The thought of riding the train as far as Kansas to visit both of our parents invigorates me.

Rodney's pass on the railroad provides free transportation. We relish the comfort of a bedroom in the Pullman car as we watch the Oklahoma golden fields whiz past us.

Sandy, our cocker spaniel, terrified of the train motion, never sits or lies down so he stays standing, shaking like a leaf all the way from Amarillo to Wellington.

My Dad meets us at the Wellington station to drive us to Arkansas City to see both our families. The rail line from Amarillo to Chicago doesn't go through Arkansas City. A week of visits with both our parents serves as an unwinding time. My parents have built a home on fifty-two acres three miles east of town surrounded by great hiking terrain. We can't have a dog in a Chicago apartment so my parents agree to keep our cocker spaniel, Sandy. I find it hard to leave this beloved pet, but he will have a great home in the country.

My water breaks a couple of months after our move while two-year-old Ben and I shop in the drug store on Milwaukee Avenue. I return to the apartment to telephone Rodney (no cell phones). His walk across the Loop and North Western train ride to Jefferson Park takes a little more than an hour. In Swedish Covenant Hospital on Foster Avenue a little after midnight, September 25, 1956 Tim arrives. Rodney has taken Ben to my folk's house during this process and Mother brings him back after I return from the hospital. After Tim's birth in September we start seriously searching for a house to buy.

Norwood Park, the next community northwest of Jefferson Park, beckons with its overarching trees, expansive lawns, curved streets and gracious homes. Finding a house to purchase is a must so we spend every weekend in Norwood Park hunting.

I lug my two little guys around looking at houses mostly in the Norwood Park area. Before long I discover a fabulous two-story house on North East Circle in Norwood Park. The Norwood Park Presbyterian Church has become our church community so it makes sense to live close by.

This is a two story gray frame house that interests us. The location is good and the price is manageable. But the house comes with a disturbing history. The wife, killed in a Chicago Theater fire, left behind a husband and grown son who dislike each other. The neglected house has badly deteriorated. Every inch requires repair, cleaning and paint. None of our family or friends approve of this house. But the full attic, large basement and location all intrigue us. The location is perfect and there is enough space to move around well. The four bedrooms on the second floor and large rooms on the first floor are much more space than we have had since we were married. A large back yard that will include great gardening space plus plenty of room for two little boys and their friends to play fasci-

nates me. The elongated lot on North East Circle puts us within a block of both the school and the Presbyterian Church. We decide that we want to buy it.

We ask a construction engineer to check out the house. Mr. Lies, a large gruff looking, soft-spoken gentleman surveys the interior, and then walks through the basement waving his cigar around to watch where the smoke drifts. He finally declares, "This house is structurally sound. You just have peeling paint, dirt, and disrepair in every part. If you can handle that I recommend you buy it."

Although it needs more work done than can be imagined, the price is decent so we purchase it. The location is perfect, the house needs tons of work, but we decide we can manage that. My Dad carries the mortgage; we can't ask for a better deal. We work on that house, day and night plus weekends for the next ten or eleven years.

We buy this house in 1957 on North East Circle in Chicago's Norwood Park for \$13,000. Though we face a daunting task with the vast amount of work that must be done, it is our first home and we are still young enough to believe we can do anything.

When we move to our new home the Presbyterian Church pastor and congregation welcome us to Norwood Park. We feel at home with the familiar music and style of worship in the church. Set back on a large triangular expanse of green grass the tall white steeple seems to invite our participation. I sing in the choir, join a Woman's Circle, and write curriculum for the summer Bible School.

I have no experience of "doing it myself" and Rodney has no experience of having money to hire someone. By trial and error we learn how to work together and how to tackle the repairs needed. Rodney had absorbed many carpentry skills while growing up as he watched and helped his Grandpa Baldwin. Things we don't know how to do, we learn as we figure it out.

The most urgent need is to connect the electricity in all the rooms upstairs. An extension cord running up the stairs has been the only connection for the bedrooms. I call an electrician and nearly flip when he mentions it will be \$25.00 a hole for each job. Fred, one of our new neighbors is an electrical engineer and comes to the rescue. He states that he will not do any of the work but is more than willing to teach Rodney how to do it all. Rodney sets forth and easily learns all Fred's teaching and discovers that he loves working with electricity. Soon we have lights and outlets in each of the four bedrooms and the bathroom.

We start the Mariners group at our church with Marian and Art Lies, a study group of young couples that creates a circle of real friends. We join together once a month for interesting meals, and also for serious and fun study. We spend time discussing parenting questions as well as political and social matters.

For the next thirteen years all our spare time is put into this house. Walls are scrubbed and painted, stairwell refinished, electricity worked on, outdoor window frames painted, and a new front porch built. Rodney and I both pour our time and energy into all of this re-doing of our living quarters.



Ben, Rodney, Tim and Priscilla wish all a Merry Christmas

We have become active in the Norwood Park Presbyterian Church. Over the next few years I find myself leading Vacation Bible School, writing curriculum, actively participating in a Woman's Circle, as well as singing in the choir and enjoying the Mariners group. We both become quite active.

Besides singing in the church choir I decide to join the Park Ridge Chorale, a woman's chorus that meets once a week. Then I discover that the Swedish Choral Club, which meets in the Loop, is going to sing Verdi's Requiem in the spring of 1958. I am excited to join them for that concert. When concert time arrives the men are to wear their tuxes and the women long white dresses. I decide to make a small jacket to go with my wedding dress. The problem is that by the time that the concert arrives I have completely lost my voice. This is my only chance to "sing" in Chicago's Orchestra Hall and to "sing" the Verdi Requiem again. So without singing a bit, I mouth the words and thoroughly enjoy Verdi's music again. Slightly crazy, I know.

Rodney scares me during the spring of 1959. I have read that mumps in a man has serious consequences. When he comes down with the mumps I spend my time walking through the back yard studying my flowerbeds and praying for his welfare. He recovers but remains quite weak for weeks.

That summer we have a fabulous trip with my parents driving around Lake Michigan. My Mother has purchased a new Oldsmobile and this trip is that car's first venturing forth. Minor details occur, as Rodney cannot lift any suitcases. My Dad and I carry everything out to the car. When we arrive at our first stop in Michigan I discover I have forgotten my suitcase. We make some calls and manage to get it flown to Michigan. Other than all of that, we have a super trip on that drive. Mother continues to be a little picky about the boys getting their feet clean before they climb into her new car.

Rodney and I both grew up Presbyterian and church matters to both of us. In 1959 we support a major Capitol Campaign. On Easter Sunday 1960 Rodney puts on a hard hat and digs deep with his shovel as part of the Groundbreaking Ceremony for our new church building. He remains active on a number of committees and serves two terms on the Session, the church's governing body. I sing in the choir and provide leadership for the youth program. This participation fulfills our need to be an active part of a worshipping community.



Norwood Park Presbyterian Church

By 1960 Ken Strand, our next-door neighbor and I are working with the high school Sunday School Class. The kid's questions blow me away – particularly Dave's questions of "why?" Questions pushing us and asking us why. My response keeps coming back, "You have to figure it out for yourself, but think about your questions."

I also continue meeting with them on Sunday evenings. The evening sessions are informal and fun but they keep asking questions about how they should be thinking about their lives. Their questions Sunday morning on the Bible and their faith plus the evening questions concerning everything else about life overwhelm me with their seriousness.

We also periodically hold weekend retreats at Druce Lake Camp north of the city. These are a real mix of study, fun, and recreation plus repairing and painting on the camp. I look back and wonder how we managed all of that with two young boys in our family. Rodney continues to help with our boys so much that I am amazed at his seriousness.

We start the 60s with a fun trip to Silver Lake Michigan. This all begins with a delightful boat trip across Lake Michigan from Milwaukee to Michigan. The lake is just as smooth as glass; very little motion at all so I feel fine. We eat supper on the boat and we arrive in Ludington about 7:00.

After driving south to Silver Lake we draw for our three cottages with the Nasts and another couple. We win the nicest cottage which is fun. Our cottage includes two small bedrooms, one with bunk beds and one with a single bed. It also includes a large room for kitchen, dining and living with a pull down double bed. We are circled with white pines and birches that look like they were planted for me.

One of our family's most fun times occurs in the summer of 1962. We drive north from Green Bay Wisconsin to the end of the peninsula that sticks out into Lake Michigan. We rent a cottage up on a cliff above the lake, Rodney ties a rope on one of the trees so he can go rescue one of our boys if they fall off the cliff. The country is fascinating, very un-touristy. Some of the towns south of us are full of tourists, but the end of the peninsula is much quieter with fewer people around.

One night a storm blows up with a hard north wind. It doesn't stop until late the next night. The water is fantastic to watch though impossible to go near. All is clear and smooth the next day and Duke, our dog and I drive over to a beach three or four miles away on Lake Michigan. We walk by ourselves that morning, such a contrast to city life – even peaceful Norwood Park.

Rodney is being a major cog in the Santa Fe's Transportation Department and I am struggling to fulfill my roles of mother, wife and "new woman." Being a wife and mother remain central for me. But for the next twenty years both Rodney and I struggle with what it means to serve the community as the church in our time.

Caring for the world and especially for youth begins to bug me as I look at what to do beyond the boundaries of the church. It doesn't seem quite enough, but I am writing curriculum and taking charge of the summer vacation Bible school.

But is that enough? I find myself wondering about what else I should be doing. I constantly ask myself that question.

4 Seeing the World Anew

“What are we seeing today?” The kids know it is a movie day when they see the bulky movie projector.

Rowdy, giggling, chattering pre-teens come streaming into fellowship hall. I meet with twenty-five junior high kids in our church basement every Wednesday afternoon. Their energy level is bursting at the seams after all day in school.

Time with juice and cookies or popcorn gives them a chance to chatter and release steam. The pent up energy explodes as the last bell of the school day dissipates. Sitting in a circle becomes possible only after fifteen or twenty minutes of constant movement.

Our church leadership decided to provide this age youth a week-day time to engage learning about the Christian life. I volunteered for the job. I assume I can find creative ways to affirm these kids while bringing vital ideas about life into our time together.

After refreshments, we engage in some serious conversation. When they feel safe, talk often revolves around their ideas of the future. If I ask thought provoking questions we stir the conversation as they share their ideas.

This is the late 50's and none of those swiftly available DVDs are heard of yet. Periodically I rent a 16mm film. It functions as a visual trigger for heated discussion. I search for diverse films that allow the youth to step outside their pre-teen self-consciousness.

“Red Balloon,” a film about a young boy's friendship is one of their favorites. With a balloon playing the role of the boy's best friend, being bullied is an issue we can examine safely. “Those boys are going to destroy Pascal's balloon,” one of our boys exclaims.

Films unlock exploration of sensitive issues without speaking directly of individual lives. We struggle to examine broader issues facing the community and world. Watching images from other parts of the world gives us distance to talk about things affecting their lives.

One afternoon, while we continue to munch popcorn, we view a film about life in the refugee camps in Palestine. We all cringe as we watch pictures of the dirt and poverty in their living conditions. Little children with dirty bodies, ragged clothes, runny noses and extended tummies seem to be the norm. Amazement fills the room. "How can they live like that?" protests Jim.

Our comfortable middle-class Chicago neighborhood doesn't allow us much firsthand knowledge of abject poverty. We are all naïve about the world, if we think about it at all.

I understand my job is to open windows to a broader vista. Seeds of care find a spot of fertile ground in young minds.

Even as we talk about the scenes we've watched I am not sure how much the kids understand the reality of a refugee camp. Young people that age have an extraordinary ability to hide emotion. I can see disbelief and skepticism on faces as they question, "Why is it like that?" "What have people done to have to live like that?"

Shaken to my roots, I know those images will never leave me.

Since the United Nations had declared Israel a nation in 1947, I had tried to stay tuned to what was happening in that part of the world...wars, struggles with nationhood, refugees. I realize that my comfortable life has shielded me from the nitty-gritty everyday life realities. A glimpse into appalling circumstances projects me into new territory. It is so much more than the question of nationhood.

Suffering appearing in films, magazines and newspapers bombard me in a different way ever since. Watching mothers caught in the crossfire of continuous war forces me to struggle, "What does it mean to live on a planet in our comfort with so much suffering in every corner of the world?"

Occasionally a new image assaults my brain and my understanding about life radically shifts. Left forever with pictures on my consciousness, I ask, "What can I do?"

Writing a check to one of the charitable organizations working to improve the lives of women and children strikes me as a drop in the bucket. I know that doing that is at least preferable to ignoring the call to respond at all.

My horizons broadened during those days in the basement of the church. I hoped the seeds of “the planet is our home” are planted firmly. That group of young people are now much older – an age when their greatest contribution to society is expected.

I pray that those sessions opened doors for them to discover how to live in a world with such need. It is not so much what I said as the fact that I raised questions and listened. Equally important, they had the opportunity to talk together without judgment.

No longer could I hide. I cracked open the door for these young people to channel their care only to discover that I too had stepped through that door.

I hoped to change some teen-agers and changed myself. Paying attention to relationships I realize that the Holy is working in my life. As is so often the case, I hoped to change the kids...and changed myself instead.

5 A Major Shift in My Faith Journey

The 60s trigger major shifts. We hardly see what looms in front of our faces. Looking back we begin to understand our relationship to the church differently. No longer do we see the church as just a community serving those who have joined that organization. We begin to understand ourselves as “church” all of the time. This applies to every situation we are in.

And we do discover that we continue to enjoy going to Arkansas City and seeing my family periodically. Rodney’s family has moved to Newton so we see them less often.



In the portrait...Laura Ann Cobleigh my great grandmother Pam, my Dad and Mother and Priscilla

Curious thoughts about the church begin to emerge. The Presbyterian Synod Camp in Monmouth, Illinois opens public doors to new and intriguing possibilities. The folks attending are all strang-

ers to me from other church communities, however I begin to think about what is happening. My faith picture gently begins to shift as I begin to wonder about our calling to serve the community. Thinking of the church reaching outside a brick building sets me puzzling. I realize later that the first crack in my faith reality has happened. I've been introduced to a more comprehensive picture. My faith does not seem so simplistic. I experience that I am somewhat shocked as I am beginning to think about my relationship to our community in new ways.

The boys experience interesting times at the Synod Camp as they participate in the organized child-care. But Ben's slight concussion from his fall off the side of a porch the last day gives me a minor scare. He seems ok as we drive home so I quit worrying.

I join the Swedish Choral Society because I hear that they are going to sing Verdi's Requiem. I love the rehearsals, but by the time we get to the concert I have a problem. I have developed acute laryngitis. Nevertheless, I go to the Concert Hall dressed in my long white dress and jacket and mouth the words through the whole Requiem.

By the summer of 1962 the four of us plus our dog Duke take off and drive north past Green Bay. We keep going onto the peninsula of land that is Door County Wisconsin that sticks up into Lake Michigan. We are delighted when we arrive in this very "untouristy" land. Some of the other towns had more people and were resorty but up where we are it is just old country quiet. We have great fun playing and eating boiled fish and potatoes.

That fall our church joins four other Norwood churches to open an Ecumenical Center in an empty storefront on Northwest Highway. We have imagined this as a place with folks coming to talk, read and relax. Rodney is elected President of the Board. I am intrigued as I begin to meet community folks we didn't know before who come in to find out what is going on. Several even stay awhile and pick up a book to read.

Then we discover that the staff of the Ecumenical Institute has moved from Texas to live in Chicago. The old Director in Chicago has left the Church Federation and they have hired Joe Mathews to come take that position. Rodney's name being associated with the words Ecumenical and Center puts him in contact with their staff. They are looking for church laymen around the area that can gather and work on church renewal – whatever that is. Rodney meets the staff at the Center one evening and they explain that they are bring-

ing the Ecumenical Institute to the Chicago area. Joe Slicker plus Fred Buss, Don Warren, and Frank Hilliard meet with him. They tell Rodney about their initial course called Religious Studies 1 (RS1).

Also their plan is to start a new board of directors for the Ecumenical Institute, and they are looking for Chicago area church laymen. Fred Buss arranges a lunch so Rodney can meet Joe Matthews who is the director of the Institute and has been the director of the Faith and Life Community in Austin. They meet at the Church Federation of Greater Chicago office on Michigan Avenue. Joe talks about what they are going to do in holding classes for laymen and a lot of church related activities. Joe wants to know if Rodney will be willing to serve on the Board of Directors.

Rodney explains, "I think you have the wrong person in our marriage because Priscilla's really the church one in the family, and probably would make a much better director than I would." Joe doesn't buy into that at all, he is interested in Rodney. Joe states that his interest is in having suburban men on the Institute board.

Rodney becomes an EI Board member and he lets them use our Norwood Park Ecumenical Center to hold their classes.

I am intrigued with the sound of this course, RS-1 - so for thirteen weeks I attend every Tuesday evening. We read 20th Century theologians:

Bultman, it is God who is always driving you...

Tillich, accept the fact you are accepted...

Bonhoeffer, freedom and obedience equal responsibility...

R Niebuhr, the church is the sensitive and responsive part of society...

The RS-1 leaders know how to work with people, what questions to ask, and how to hold conversations about the papers we are studying. They make it personal. The terms, "acceptance" & "responsibility" from the papers by Paul Tillich & Dietrich Bonhoeffer particularly blow open my relationships to people and my daily practices. I become much more conscious in my relationships.

I hear these leaders asking questions like: what am I finally up against in life, is there any word of possibility for life, how can I make decisions about what to do, and how can I contribute significantly to history?

Rodney is struggling each week to set up the Ecumenical Center for the course and finally sits down one evening to explain to Fred and Don the problems he is having. He comments, "I get home from work about 5:30. I have supper, and then have to go over to the church and haul tables to the Center. You have to have tables to meet around. You can't meet sitting around in a row of chairs or relaxing. You have to have tables in a square. There is nobody helping me with those tables. You just leave afterwards without doing any of the manual labor. I can't be expected to be hauling all these tables back and forth."

Their response, "We will have to rent them if we can't use your churches." Rodney, who wants to be helpful, continues to move the tables and chairs. But then they don't have a projector so I give them the money to buy a new projector so they can show movies and educational material.

Toward the end of RS-1 they talk about taking the course to Park Ridge and holding it with a group of high school kids. I stay to talk with them at the end of the evening and ask if I can bring some of my church's youth to their course. They say yes so I drive a carload of the kids to Park Ridge one evening a week.

Don and Fred's insights blow me away as they go through the course. The course deals with three major areas of selfhood: the self's image of its environment; the self's image of its potentiality; and the self's image of social response or lifestyle. Instead of the theological papers they use art, songs and paintings such as Picasso's painting "Guernica and the movie" "On the Waterfront." The final section of the curriculum had to do with lifestyle and they use a variety of popular folk songs and the film of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman." They cover the same stuff that the adults have covered.

A city gathering of Presbyterian youth takes place in the spring of 1963. Various youth groups do a variety of activities and our youth sing Holy, Holy, Holy to a popular tune. This catches the attention of Charles Livermore, one of the leaders of the Hyde Park Presbyterian youth. He is intrigued with what my youth have done and comes up afterward to talk with me. Charles is the city of Chicago's Youth Director and the leader of the Hyde Park Presbyterian Youth. This conversation leads to youth gatherings several times both in Hyde Park and Norwood Park. We even go to a lake up north one time. Rodney and the boys, Ben, nine and Tim, seven come for the day.

Rodney takes the Ecumenical Institute's class RS-1 in the spring of 1963. Thus begins a forty-year journey - experimenting with worship, study, teaching and learning to love every corner of the globe.

During that summer Rodney is chosen by the Santa Fe to go to the University of Southern California for their course on Economics. All four of us ride the train to California in a lovely bedroom. We anticipate an astounding adventure.

All of the children are divided into age groups and meet with college girls who are directors of their unit during the week. The boys excitedly tell us about some of their activities which they love.

All of the wives are offered the opportunity to audit USC classes. I study the curriculum and chose two classes that Dr. Robb teaches on theology: ethics and New Testament. I feel the urge to learn more about what it means to say faith has to be acted upon. Auditing two of his classes gives an establishment twist to everything I've been discovering and pushes the exploration urge down the road. What do my beliefs have to do with what I do daily?

I am surprised to discover that I am the only one of the wives who audits any classes. The others are too busy shopping and enjoying Los Angeles. I begin to see that faith, love and compassion are not just thoughts and ideas. Searching my activities for the way I act these out are now important for me.

During the time we are in California our friend Ellen from Norwood Park brings her children to Los Angeles to see her parents. Her two boys are our boy's best friends. We spend an exciting weekend going to the San Diego zoo and the beach with them.

But the real highlight of the summer classes becomes Rodney being chosen to give the closing address to all the men in the Santa Fe course. We are blown away by this assignment. I experience a deep sense of pride even though I do not get to hear his speech.

About this time Betty Friedan's book *Feminine Mystique* causes an uproar across the country. Her push for women to focus their lives beyond spending all their time and energy in raising children and doing housework sweeps the country. Her descriptions of the changing roles of women speak to me and I ponder the actions she is calling for in what I am learning in the classes.

That fall the woman leading our Woman's Organization in the church suggests that I go to the National Woman's Gathering in Purdue. She says she will keep our two boys while I am gone. I am

excited by this opportunity and take off with enthusiasm. Central to my learning is the series of talks given by Dr. McKay, the President of McCormick Theological Seminary. His series, *God's People in God's World* impacts my thinking by emphasizing that God does love everyone. I actually realize that "everyone" means any color, nationality, economic group etc. I had known that but did not actually believe it until I hear him say it.

In the fall of 1964 our high school group presents the play, *Cup of Trembling* on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life in our church sanctuary. All the youth work hard on the production and the audience is struck by this story. Bonhoeffer was killed in Flossenburg Camp only two weeks before the Allies arrived. His life continues to be a dramatic story.

We suddenly have another monumental shift in our family life. One evening while watching the news Rodney and I both suddenly say, "Why don't we adopt a little girl since we're having so much trouble getting pregnant again." This thought comes as we watch the news of Chinese men, women and children pouring into Hong Kong. We don't even question that thought but open our conversation with one of Chicago's social workers.

Adoption becomes a long process and we soon realize that going to Hong Kong to adopt a Chinese child has too many obstacles, not the least of which is financial. So we proceed to shift our thinking to the United States. We tell our social worker that our only stipulation remains that we must have a female child.

As we go through all of the process with our social worker we are floating on cloud nine rather like expectant grandparents in our eagerness. We have decided that our daughter's name will be Mary Helyn Wilson, after both of our mothers. However, we will call her Mary. Our social worker calls us about a baby in Reno Nevada. Since this baby was six days old she has been living with foster parents in their late 50s. These folks have a sixteen-year old daughter and another six-month old pre-adoptive baby girl in their home.

Surprisingly, the church youth group holds a baby shower for me at one of the girl's homes several weeks before Mary arrives. Everyone has a fun time, especially the boys. None of them have had anything to do with babies arriving before this. Their captivation bubbles over in laughter and giggling. Their excitement explodes with each gift that I open.

Mary was born September 10, 1963 so she will be about nine months old when she comes to us. A perfect age as far as we are concerned.

The family she was born into could not keep her as it had broken up and the mother has three other children. Mary's mother and father are both about a quarter Caucasian and three-fourths Shoshone and Paiute Indian. They are both high school graduates which our case-worker says is probably unusual for their location and circumstance.

Mary weighs seventeen pounds and is twenty-eight inches long. We can hardly wait now that it is so soon we will see her.

All four of us go to O'Hare Airport to welcome our nine-month old precious little girl. Before the arrival we each have a root-beer float to calm our nerves and help us be ready for this big event. Mary arrives via United Airline with a Nevada social worker. We sit and talk with both social workers for a while and then they decide not to go home with us. Both want us to have a restful time at home. But of course, we get home and a steady stream of neighbors, youth and friends pour through the house over the next few days.



Mary Helyn Wilson

Mary arrives in June and by August our family goes to Saugatuck Camp in Michigan for the Presbyterian Family Camp. We take one of the young girls to help care for Mary. Our precious dog, Duke, joins us to care for all of us.

One winter morning in 1965 my next door neighbor's car isn't parked on the street; I know immediately something awful has happened.

I call Ken's wife and learn he drove to Chicago's south side Friday evening to take a law case deposition. He got caught in a sudden ice storm on the Kennedy Expressway. His car slid off the pavement. He catapulted through the windshield and died instantly. One of our best friends is now gone.

Though Ken and I rarely agreed on anything, we were close. We taught the teen's Sunday school class together and often differed in our interpretation and approach, but always had respect for the others way of interpreting the material.

I am stunned by this sudden loss. Although I want to grieve, his family needs something besides tears. His wife, Roberta, is stunned in grief. I pitch in to help her with practical issues, notifying people, planning a service, cleaning up the house. I struggle to let my caring side take charge. Agony shatters my soul as I stumble into my self-assigned tasks.

I struggle to concentrate only on necessary details and refuse to let my mind go to what Ken experienced. The permanence of this death is so real. No more fun arguments about our beliefs. Roberta has lost a husband and the father of her three children. I understand this is harder than losing a friend.

I feel pushed to complete tasks. I don't know how I can put one foot in front of the other; all I want to do is hide in a closet.

Did God do this? It is one thing to think about a benevolent, loving God. But it is quite another to face the sudden senseless loss of a good friend. "Why? Why?" "Why is he gone?" "Why so young?"

I pray that I can embrace what life has dealt; that I can say "yes" and think of others and not myself. Some sustaining spirit keeps me going. As this sustaining spirit breaks into my life, I experience a freedom to accept this death as a gift from the infinite mystery.

Rodney and I both attend the NCC (National Community Church) Evangelism Conference in Wisconsin for a week in 1965. We are both really struck when we take Gayraud Wilmore (his death, April 18, 2020) out in a rowboat and he tells us that he can't swim... he never had the opportunity to learn when he was growing up. Even though he is Black it never occurred to me that life has been so very different for him. He is one of our seminar leaders, extremely intelligent and knowledgeable with important insights on the question of the churches and integration. Many aspects of the national and international scene fill our minds especially as we sing and read about the racial and urban issues becoming so widespread.

The next year the Norwood Park Presbyterian Church has a major happening. In those days to apply for a job you sent a resume and a couple of articles. No pictures or visits occurred. Peter Paris applies from Canada for the Assistant Pastor position with his wife and a little girl about Mary's age. When he arrives shocks swirl through the church...some appreciative and some against the whole process. Peter is black and his wife is white. Many in the congregation are immediately annoyed and leave. Many are pleased and work to make Peter's job enjoyable. He and his family become two of our best friends and we spend much time with them in our backyard. He stays with the church for several years.

During this time the Wilson household has a burning cross erected in our front yard. Rather annoyed, we take it down right away.

Since my formal education was in elementary education, I know that continuing to learn is necessary. Plus I still search for ways to serve the community. I go back to school at Northeastern University in Chicago for a couple of semesters in 1966. It was Chicago Teachers College then, but I have no memory of the classes I took.

During the 60s Rodney uses his carpentry skills to build both a garage on the back of our lot and a motorboat. He is continually using his skills to change and improve our lives.

Radical feminism fills the air in the 60's. As I organize my time and energy, I appreciate anew who I am and what I intend to do. I venture into roles that would be foreign to my mother and grandmother.

I serve on the Session, the Presbyterian Church's ruling body. I teach both the smaller kids during the summer and the high school kids during the school year. We have great fun having Peter Paris and his wife and little girl, Mary's age over to our house.

Over a period of time our family enjoys camping in four different modes. We start with a great big tent, then we graduate to a camper, next we rent an RV and then progress to a purchased RV. We do a lot of camping and the whole family, including Duke loves it all.

A lot of things in our lives have been changing. Rodney and I use these camping trips to spend time talking about all of the changes in our lives and in the life of the community around us. Our disappearing into a bare forest allows us all to step back and think about what it is we are doing with our lives. We sense that our lives are changing, but we are somewhat unclear what our new reality is shaping to be.

The Strength of Youth

6

Reorganizing My Life

In the fall of 1967 a momentous event happens. I decide that the route my educational services need to be with the Ecumenical Institute. As I think about the future I suspect that many avenues lie in my future with them. New concepts in terms of everyday life stretch my brain. The concept that catches me first is so simple...how to have a conversation with one person or a group. There is a definite flow to a conversation that enables the other person to know what questions to ask.

One day the telephone rings. My friend Addie is calling. "You are invited to join the enlightened women of Chicago for lunch at the Ecumenical Institute." I wonder about this invitation, but captivated, I drive to Chicago's west side. I hope to hear how to be involved in urban communities. Everything I read says, "The real need lies in the inner city."

I am intrigued when I see what a small number of women are at this event but I realize that I want to hear what the women have to share. I listen to how the Institute staff has been out talking to most of the folks across the community. I learn how they are concerned about the young children growing up with few models to follow.

After that event several suburban women, including me organize "A Trilogy." These three luncheon programs talk about many of the problems across the community. The staff of the Ecumenical Institute shares their vision and hopes for Fifth City, this community in the urban ghetto. During these programs both local women and Institute staff share concerns of the urban ghetto with one hundred women from the Chicago area. I am entranced by the things I don't

know about the lack of a grocery store or really any kind of store in the area. I experience the first hint of reimagining the world as it could be.

Following the Trilogy, thirty women, eager to address urban issues, gather once a week to discover how they can be a part of the Institute's mission. When I go to the Institute for any program I enroll Mary, my three year old daughter in Kaye Haye's preschool class. Joe Mathews, the Dean of the Institute, suggests the women put out a mailing. Stuffing envelopes and licking stamps doesn't really fit the women's idea of significant urban engagement.

By fall we have begun to articulate many ways that we want to be engaged. We finally are invited to help in the Fifth City program, the community where the Institute is located. A couple of us are helping in the preschool class, but other women are invited to help in the planning of community celebrations and other events working with community folks.

An intense period of studying, teaching and serving with other women consumes me. I hear over and over again about the lack of groups to involve folks in their own community. So many possibilities that need to be created for all ages. Children and youth are just the most obvious. Commuting to the inner city gives me a sense of doing something important.

Fifth City women, Charley Stewart, Lela Mosely and Ruth Carter volunteer to be the first women to change their neighborhood. These women set their sights on health and education for all and ways to have a caring and safe neighborhood. Everything that they say opens new doors for me. I realize that I had not thought about the lack of working together for community. Blacks were not experiencing health or education avenues for anyone in their community.

Explosive awakening among white, middle-class women prevails across the country. Nearly everything that I had read pointed to events that were happening. Middle class women were creating new avenues that made a difference. I envision that I can be useful in a broader context as women from across the Chicago Metropolitan Area practically inspire me. And while the Fifth City preschool is one small portion of the community I realize that it is making a difference far beyond the little children in the classroom.

My husband's job allows me to pursue new paths as a volunteer and a mom. I have been reading books urging the renewal of the church and pleading for the care of urban life. Earlier I begin to understand being the church involves beliefs and actions. My relationship to faith takes a dramatic turn. Being the church has become more to do with my relationships to people in my daily practice. Knowing just the folks I already know keeps my current community separated from the larger community. I realize I need to know folks beyond just the folks I know already.

Being a wife and a mother remain central for me, but I have added a new layer of participation in the community to my life.

But for the next twenty years both Rodney and I struggle with what it means for us to be more than just part of the brick building in our neighborhood. We both seek ways to relate to a broader picture of life.

In the spring of 1967 Rodney gives me the Institute's four Imaginal Education weekends for my birthday. I am stunned when they have us stand on the table and present a piece of poetry. The content of the course rests on the many images that we have floating in our heads.

The Institute staff is studying Kenneth Boulding's *The Meaning of the 20th Century*. We begin to raise the question, how do the images in our head shape our actions. Institute staff is creating a course that carries the understanding of images shaping our thinking and actions. I become spellbound with what I am learning. This book of Boulding's shapes what the transition we are living through might look like and human's response to our times. The broader images growing out of both study and everyday conversation begin to shape my response to everyday issues.

August is our family time and that year our family takes off with a camping trailer for Montreal, Canada for the Global Exposition '67. Our dog, Duke goes with us. Mary attends the Exposition childcare during the day. Rodney and I with the boys have a blast with all of the fun stuff of riding as many rides as we can plus going through each country's exhibitions.

That fall I continue to volunteer in the 5th City's pre-school twice a week. Our two boys spend their days in school and three-year old daughter Mary accompanies me to the pre-school class. Her face

stands out like a light patch on a dark blanket. Each week, after a day of wiping noses and ushering kids in and out of activities, I load broken tricycles into my station wagon. Rodney repairs and salvages parts so that two broken trikes become one workable vehicle. He remarks, "I think you are running a demolition derby instead of a preschool."

Time Magazine runs an article on the 5th City work of the Institute at this time. One of the pictures of the tables at the preschool includes Mary Wilson.

Several women volunteer in the 5th City preschool. After the children eat lunch and have settled down for their naps the volunteers go to another room. There we eat our lunch and go through training on curriculum which focuses on the needs of the urban community. It is an exciting time as those of us who created the curriculum probably learn more than the women who have come to teach in the preschool.

Life changes again in 1968. Martin Luther King, Jr. is killed and violence across the country shifts many things. The Institute staff has decided that the inner city could become more violent and they want their children safe. The Institute's children are taken out of the inner city to spend time in suburbia. David and Wayne Marshall come to our home for a couple of weeks. They are about Ben and Tim's ages and they all have a great time. I don't know if any of the kids realize that they were probably safer further out of the city than staying where the Institute was located in the inner city.

As riots explode on Chicago's west side the Institute staff requests that the suburban women find other ways to work with the 5th City community. They do not want to risk an incident with white suburban women during that time of racial strife. So, driving to the 5th City community stops for a while.

We vow to continue to meet and study together. We meet in the suburbs and hash over roles as women, parents, wives and servants in society. My marriage and family still come first, but I remain serious about a broader context of relating to the broader community.

This group of women begin to call ourselves the New Women's Forum. We continue to meet weekly in our homes. Concerns in women's lives are central as we dialogue and reflect. We become convinced that questions of self-esteem and self-confidence are key. Women's roles are shifting everywhere, they are moving into community roles beyond just the home and family. I hunger for the

courage to break through to new responsibilities, to gain practical skills and discover ways to fully participate in the community.

At the suggestion of the Institute staff we study Kazantzakis, *Saviors of God*. We are excited by Kazantzakis' writing and begin to have a deepening awareness of the journey of the spirit. We struggle with his call to service, "At every moment of crisis an array of men (people) risk their lives," What are we to do at this time? We are learning a lot but wonder how to support Fifth City. We sew several red aprons with the Fifth City symbol on a pocket for the preschool teachers. We strive to support Fifth City from the suburbs.

That summer Ben joins two other boys from our community to go to Norway to attend the International Scout Jamboree. He has a fantastic time at this event and we are pleased that he is exposed to this international event.

By the fall of 1968, the "new women" decide we should have a party so our husbands can meet. Nicki Dresslar says, "Okay, let's have a cocktail party at our home in Park Ridge."

Two couples come from the Institute, Joe Mathews and Charles Moore with their wives. "I had a fascinating evening meeting all those different people. They are a neat bunch," Rodney comments afterwards.

Early in January 1969 ten couples gather at the Dresslar's farm near Crystal Lake for a weekend of getting to know each other. Joe Mathews shares Fifth City plans and issues. Joe's energetic affirmation communicates a compelling invitation for the men to be supportive of Fifth City. He senses the need for the men to support the work of the Institute and really uses the women for this objective.

The weekend closes Sunday noon as we all prepare to go home to watch the Super Bowl. But before we close, Don Moffett stands up and asks each individual a question. "Do you want to continue to meet together each week to study and plan how we support Fifth City?" Only two couples decide they don't want to meet each week. Questions have been raised in my mind and I have been caused to wonder., but I find that I say "yes" first even though I might wonder later if that was smart.



Sixteen of us start meeting once a week at the Pesek's house on Waukegan Road in Lake Forest. Georgianna and George McBurney, Anne and David Wood, Priscilla and Rodney Wilson, LaVerne and Jim Phillips, Betty and Sheldon Hill, Betty and Martin Pesek, Mary Warren and Don Moffett, Nicki and Len Dresslar, Sarah (now Booher) and Bill Caufield. We name ourselves the North Shore Cadre.

All the men have successful jobs but join their wives in their yearning for additional ways to serve the community. Our group, the North Shore Cadre studies Kenneth Boulding's, *Meaning of the Twentieth Century* to push our thinking into new arenas. This is the second time the women have studied this book and so it really shoves at our thinking as we ponder the transition society is going through at this point in history.

Rodney and I both remain active in the Norwood Park Presbyterian Church. Even though I am serving on the church's Session and chairing the Christian Education Committee my study and deep involvement soon shifts more toward the Institute and the North Shore Cadre.

Then one evening in August the North Shore Cadre spends from 7:30 until about 2:30am discussing the fact that we all need to live in one community. Living in one community makes sense to us as we are thinking of working where we live. We didn't quite understand where our lives were going. The Dresslars and Phillips both

live in Park Ridge and we live in Norwood Park. All the others live in Wilmette or Lake Forest. The conversation swirls around Wilmette and Lake Forest and finally the decision is made that all need to live in Lake Forest. We have the strange idea that we will be part of a church in Lake Forest. Our vision is a reduced one of thinking we will work in one community.

The three couples, Dresslars, Phillips and Wilsons go to work almost immediately and hunt for houses. Finding a house in Lake Forest that we can afford is difficult. Plus, unfortunately, we don't ever really discuss this move with our three children. The kids become scared about the unknown at times, but then so do Rodney and I, nevertheless, we find a strange little house on Old Elm, the street that cuts between Lake Forest and Highland Park. We bargain with the lady who owns the house to stop her improvements-and we will pay her "x" amount. She agrees. We buy the house and move on Halloween Day. The Moffetts and McBurneys don't ever move from Wilmette.

During one of the North Shore Cadre meetings we take a break and Joe Mathews and I are walking through the Pesek's yard. Joe comments to me, "Remember you are married to a great man." I am blown away by this comment and spend much time thinking about what he has said. This phrase about Rodney from as distinguished a gentleman as Joe Mathews really gives me pause.

The North Shore Cadre and Ecumenical Institute become an integral part of our lives for the next twenty years. Much of what we learn shapes what we understand about others and how we act in most situations for the rest of our lives. When we are asked to go to a situation our brains go to our decisions that we have made.

Rodney and my journey become so intertwined we can't talk about one without the other. His love and passion for local people especially with villagers in underdeveloped locations guides much of what we do for the rest of our lives. Our "yes" to the suggestion that we go to x,y, or z hinges on our previous decision. I don't think we ever said "no" when the request came, even after we were no longer working with the Institute.

7 Working with the World

One day after we had moved to Lake Forest, Ben asks us if he can check with the Institute and move to the Institute's location in Los Angeles for the school year. After we say "yes" and the Institute gives its go-ahead he gets very busy. His long list of "things to do" even includes buying a present for Mary's birthday and going to the high school in Norwood Park to get his transcript.

Frank and Aimee Hilliard are in charge of the Los Angeles house and we've known them for a number of years. We have the deepest respect and admiration for both of them as people and as church people. We can't ask for Ben to be in better hands the first year he is away from home. However, the ache in my chest hurts me for several months after he leaves.

Tim enters seventh grade in Lake Forest and this fact soon becomes a disaster. He begins to run around with guys who have lousy reputations.

Right after our move to Lake Forest the North Shore Cadre decides to view the globe "up-close-and-personal." We divide into teams for each part of the globe to research and decide the around the world itinerary in the spring of 1970. The plan is to go to Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Hong Kong, Cambodia, Bangkok, Calcutta, Banaras, Agra, Cairo, Athens, Rome, Paris, London and home in twenty-one days. Neither Ben nor Tim want to participate in the study as several other of the teen-agers do to be involved in this trip. Tim hangs around in and out of our house and Ben goes to the Los Angeles Institute's Religious House and to school there.

Two women from the Institute come to our house to care for the younger kids. They follow our trip as well as they can with décor and meals. They use cultural objects and pictures, like camels or chop-

sticks or pictures of cultural dress to help the kids identify with the culture we are visiting.

After a sleepless night winging our way over the Pacific Ocean, Rodney stares out the plane window. “Look across that water. Those tall buildings have to be downtown Tokyo. The clouds almost make Mt. Fuji disappear.”



After Tokyo customs plunges us into chaos, we travel by bus to our hotel. Weaving through heavy traffic, the bus becomes stuck between two walls while rounding a sharp curve in the street. We watch the bus driver and a policeman calmly discussing what to do. Finally, we get off the bus and walk ten minutes through the narrow streets to our hotel.

Our cultural immersion begins with a visit to the Shinto Shrine of the Great Buddha of Kamakura, one of the icons of Japan. Crowds of pilgrims and tourists surround us in amazing politeness as we walk up the long flight of steps. Japan overwhelms our senses with unreadable language on every sign, and sharp smells of incense floating in the air.

The next day the chill of the March wind sweeps over us as Rodney and I walk through the Ueno Zoological Gardens. We love zoos and decide this adventure gives us a sociable way to observe young Japanese families. The children with pudgy red cheeks and polite behavior as they walk with their parents fascinate us.

Next we board Japan’s famous bullet train zipping southwest of Tokyo to Kyoto. What a way to spend my thirty-ninth birthday. As we enjoy a quiet lunch of undon noodles, tempura and sashimi we glance out the window. Mt Fuji comes into view as Rodney starts singing, “Happy Birthday.” What a stunning present.

An argument over nothing the first day in Kyoto sends us in separate ways for the day. Rodney, interested in Japanese business joins several others to visit the Sharp factory, a company manufacturing precision measuring instruments and medical equipment.

I join other colleagues to travel to the little village of Nara, an early Japanese capitol. Walking through ancient quiet temples, sublime gardens and colorful shrines reveals a deeper, quieter side of this ancient people.

At the end of the day Rodney and I trade stories and recognize the gift of sharing these experiences. We agree to give up petty fights.

Each morning the group reflects on our experiences during breakfast. One person guides the conversation by asking, “What is one thing you remember from yesterday? What excited you? What disturbed you? What did you learn about these people, about yourself?” The unfamiliarity of Oriental culture hits us with culture shock. We struggle with how exotic this unfamiliar culture seems.

The next day we fly to Hong Kong. The hills rise up beyond the tightly packed buildings. Splotches of green are scattered throughout and the shimmering blue of the bay holds it all together. The hotel personnel collect our passports to be “processed” when we check in which send shivers of uneasiness rippling through our group. None of us likes turning loose of our passports.

Our bus tour of the New Territories stops first at the Resettlement Estates where 35,000 of the poor and displaced live. These gray, drab high-rise dwellings house the thousands of refugees pouring in from China. Slight balcony railings serve as clotheslines for many of the occupants.



*Rodney and Priscilla walk through the
Resettlement Estates*

Near the water Rodney and I stroll down a small strip of sand and stop to watch our friend Len standing frozen at the end of the peninsula. A small beggar girl holds out her hand and looks up at him. Our sympathy goes out to Len who looks lost in indecision. "My stomach turns over at the sight of such small children begging," Rodney comments.

Next we drive to the border between China and Hong Kong, still a British territory. We walk up the hill to look out onto a wide stretch of fenced green farmland with several small villages on the horizon. Rodney asks, "Do you suppose they decided to process our documents this morning so we wouldn't have them with us now?"

Later, we meet Pastor Kwok, a colleague of the Hong Kong Ecumenical Institute staff. He joins us for dinner, after which we walk to his church in the resettlement area, dodging the heavy traffic as we go. The Maundy Thursday service is similar to ours, but we strain to keep track of the service in the Chinese liturgy.

Rodney and I take the ferry from Kowloon to Hong Kong Island and ride a tram to the peak. As we step from the tram, we walk a while in utter silence and then stand still feeling a rush of emotion at the beauty below us. Rodney mutters, "What a spectacular view of that harbor. All those boats going back and forth between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island look like wind-up toys. Such a contrast to what we saw yesterday."

Back in Kowloon, we hop on a streetcar and decide to ride to the end of the line and back. The huge crowds of people on the streetcar and walking the streets, strike us and we wonder, "Do the Asian people enjoy any private space as we understand it?" We gaze down into the sampans on the waterfront. We laugh and play a game we often play at home we make up stories about the families we see. Although, here we feel slightly guilty window peeping.

The trip plan lists Cambodia next. However, the day we are to fly there the Cambodian government closes its borders. We are all bitterly disappointed, we had wanted to visit the ancient ruins of the once great kingdom, Angkor Wat.

Rodney, looking at the positive side of the situation, says, "We'll have an extra day in both Hong Kong and Bangkok. This will give us some time to relax."

A day of lounging around the swimming pool at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Bangkok lifts our spirits. We watch the boat traffic on the Chao Phraya River, especially intrigued by an older woman in a wide-brimmed straw hat, serving as a taxi poling back and forth across the river.

Rodney and I wander through the city. The streets are congested with automobiles and bicycles, but it doesn't seem as frenetic as either Tokyo or Hong Kong. The graciousness and beauty in the smiles of the people heightens our sense of delight.

As we talk about our reactions, I recognize the wall of protection I construct to block out offending sounds, smells and sights. Intellectually I observe my surroundings but try to stay aloof and non-engaged. Rodney relates to people and situations much more personally and I struggle to emulate his carefree stance.

A group trip to Ayundhya, an ancient capital of Siam astounds us with its ageless spires of temples and rows of Buddha statues. A strange sense of quiet permeates the area. As we stroll through the ancient ruins Rodney says, "I feel like we are confronting sheer mystery." An uncanny sense of timelessness sweeps through us as we look at the reclining Buddha.

Next we fly to Calcutta (now Kolkata). On the bus from the airport I clutch Rodney's hand. I feel slammed into a brick wall by the heat, the crowds, the hawking, the begging, the hostility and the utter hopelessness of the situation.

I rush by the floor scrubbers and sanders at the Oberi Hotel, startled to see them digging a swimming pool by hand. I try frantically to shut out the sounds. The men staring frighten me and I walk behind Rodney for protection. Only later do I realize none of them would have thought of harming me.

That first afternoon we leave the hotel and walk down the street. So many humans lying on the sidewalk make it hard to move through the crowds. A bubble of fear explodes in my stomach as I step over an old man. One old woman who is a riot of wrinkles grabs Rodney's arm. He gently pulls away and moves on. The difficulty of turning away from a begging woman as she clutches you stops us for a moment. More chaos, noise, and begging almost hide the noisy demonstration. I try not to see the mass of yelling and flag bearing men parading down the street. None of the noise, sights, or smells make sense and all seems to blend together in a chaotic cacophony.

We return to the hotel and discover we were not supposed to go out on the street because of the demonstrations following an attempted assassination of one of the Communist leaders.

That evening I try to describe my unnerving torment to Rodney, "Driving in from the airport, the poverty jarred me. Then when we got to the hotel, there were all those guys doing construction by hand. Moving rocks and stuff. Digging that swimming pool by hand. They were even polishing the marble floors by hand. I couldn't look at them. My own reactions startled me. I keep thinking of that beggar woman who clutched your arm this afternoon. If we had handed her money we would have been swamped by people."

Rodney consoles me as he says, "Today on the street, I wanted to get out of there but became afraid that if we tried to move fast we'd have a riot on our hands. My claustrophobia nearly did me in."

As we share our experiences, I realize I am more judgmental than Rodney. My struggle with the whole scene shocked me, the noise, the smells of exhaust, fear, dirt and strange foods, and the sight of so much poverty all scared me.

The next day Rodney joins several others to visit Mother Theresa's Home for the Dying. Mother Theresa was not there, but other sisters led them through the rooms of sick and dying stretched out on pallets on the floor. I stay in the hotel resting and hiding from reality.

Later Brother Andrew, a partner with Mother Theresa in the work of the Home comes to the hotel and shares stories of the work they are doing.

“The population of Calcutta increases by 200,000 a year,” he tells us. “Many men leave their families in villages and pull carts in the city. Most sleep on the streets at night. They have no place to go when they get sick. Our brothers are constantly meeting emergency situations.”

The next day we fly to Banares (now Varanasi), the holiest city in India. We rise early to be present for the sunrise over the sacred river Ganges. The sunrise and air overflowing with spirituality and scented with incense transmits a sense of peace.

Bells clang as the sun breaks through. Throngs of pilgrims arrive early to bathe and meditate as the sun rises. A priest sitting on the bank blesses the pilgrims and they then go to a temple (every building has one) to worship.

As we look across the burning ghats, our guide explains, “Bodies of women brought to the burning ghats are wrapped in colored cloth, usually pink or red. Men’s bodies are in white. A family’s designated mourner brings the body on a wooden litter covered with garlands of flowers. They light wood stacked on top to burn the body. Three kinds of bodies are never burned: small children under five, holy men and persons dying from leprosy or smallpox. They just throw their bodies into the Ganges.” We are mystified by the scene of so many people slowly moving down the steps toward the water.

The early morning boat ride on the Ganges takes us out of the crush of humanity and surrounds us with tranquility. I can feel Rodney relax as he says, “What a relief to move away from the acrid smoke of the burning bodies. I expected the bodies at the burning ghats to repulse me but cremation in this manner didn’t offend me.”

Later as we wind through the ancient streets of old Varnasi the sharp smells of urine and dung nearly overcome us. Beggars and sacred cows wander freely everywhere. Several of us are sick and scared as cars, cycles, cows, ox carts and pedestrians fill every inch of the winding alleyway. Drivers repeatedly honk as they speed past.

Later in the day we fly in a small plane from Banares to Agra.

Sitting in front of our hotel in Agra early the next morning I marvel at the flowers like we have at home: snap dragons, petunias, phlox, nasturtiums, larkspur and pansies. Nostalgia sweeps over us with our morning coffee.

We go by bus to the Taj Mahal. The sunlight glistens on the marble, but I am bewildered because I am having a hard time enjoying that beauty after the sights in Calcutta and Banares. Many tourists pointing cameras and chattering fill the space. I find it impossible to stop and let a sense of quiet enter my space. As we leave, I turn to Rodney, "I have a sense of having missed the Taj Mahal."

The bus ride to Delhi feels more like home resembling our mid-west fields of crops, pastures, and scattered trees. A herd of camels walking along the side of the road remind us where we are. The hot, bumpy ride leaves several in the group feeling ill, including Rodney.

New Delhi, a cleaner, more modern city than Calcutta beckons Rodney and I out on the street. Walking through cities anywhere is our favorite way of getting a sense of where we are. The streets seem safer as we experience less traffic and more modern buildings. We watch a local barber with his shop set up under a tree on the sidewalk shave a gentleman with a pink towel wrapped around his head.

Later we go with the group to the Raj Ghat, a simple marble memorial to Mahatma Gandhi near the Yamuna River where he was cremated. The Memorial, beautifully graced with flowers on top sits in the center of a wide expanse of green lawn. Rodney voices what I am thinking, "I appreciate the energy wafting through me in the calm of the sacred."

The next morning we leave Delhi at 5:00 am with several in the group still feeling ill. Our schedule states we are to leave Delhi, sit down in Tehran, the capital of Iran for a few minutes and then have an hour layover in Beirut. Plane times have been changed so we now have five hours in Beirut.

Someone manages a bus for a tour. We soak in the sight of the rippling blue green waters of the Mediterranean as we ride down the coast. We briefly visit the National Museum of Beirut the principal museum of archaeology in Lebanon.

We arrive in Cairo to an excess of red tape that holds us up (feels like forever) in customs. Finally we arrive at our hotel grateful for a cup of bouillon to end our day.

We spend a typical tourist day in Cairo. The Middle East's brittle peace swirls through our minds when we see the glass cases in the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities taped to protect them in case of bombing. Sandbags piled in some of the halls reinforce our shock.

Our bus takes us to Memphis, the ancient capital of Egypt

then north to the Giza Pyramids and Great Sphinx of Giza. We see evidence of military with men carrying guns everywhere and signs warning us where it is forbidden to take pictures.

Touchy and short-tempered attitudes abound. The Egyptian hawkers have annoyed us all day. Rodney says, "I wish we had known how to handle men who kept wanting to steer us to places we didn't want to go."

Our Hungarian Air flight to Rome with a change of planes in Athens demands a 1:00 a.m. wake up call. Arriving at the airport we discover that Hungarian Air cannot land in Athens; they have not paid their landing fees. Are we stuck in Cairo? The airline offers to divert us to Budapest. That raises a furious protest, "We can't go to a communist country."

Rodney and Sheldon go off to negotiate. They discover that Hungarian Airlines can land but can't depart because of that unpaid tax.

Finally the men return to the group and announce, "We are going to fly to Athens. The airlines can land us there but not legally take off with us. While the airline negotiates for us to be flown to Rome they will furnish a bus to tour the city for a half day."

In Athens, we are taken to the Acropolis. This healing time of refreshment comes as an unexpected bonus. Rodney and I find a couple of large flat rocks, sit and gaze at the Parthenon as Rodney says, "This is a spirit healer, I can hardly take in such beauty."

We finally arrive at our hotel in Rome. After hot baths we collapse for a great refreshing nap.

Then Rodney and I go for a long walk in the rain. On our return to the hotel we discover that all are ready to celebrate. Whether we want to celebrate re-entry into the land of familiar people or leaving the third world, who can say?

The group goes up a narrow back alley to a catacomb looking building. Heavenly smells of cheeses, tomatoes, and fresh baked breads assault us as we enter a captivating restaurant. After a feast of unprecedented spaghetti, salads and wine, our singing and dancing begins. The party turns into a joyous celebration as Martin dances on one of the tables.

The next morning, we enter the cavernous, arched interior of St. Peters as a shaft of sunlight streams down through the center. We stand in awed silence in front of Michelangelo's La Pieta's stunning beauty.

Rodney buys a small box of medals blessed by the Pope. Most of the people in his office are Catholic and he knows each will be thrilled to receive one of these medals.

The experience in St. Peters makes us pause, “Think about all that humans have created to indicate that we stand before the mystery of life. Just imagine Kyoto and all the shrines and temples. The Lord moves in strange ways...it is a miracle that both Kyoto and Rome were declared off-limits to the bombing of World War II.”

After our tour of St. Peters, Rodney and I wander off alone again to enjoy the usual tourist sights. We pause by the Trevi Fountain and marvel at all the sculptured statuary spewing water into its round basin. “This fountain draws such a crowd,” I say. “The city has lots of fantastic fountains without such crowds. We should be standing in front of one of them.” However, the ancient glory of Rome, even with the crowds of tourists fills us with awe.

A neighborhood corner restaurant catches our attention. We choose a small outdoor table for a delicious pizza lunch. Then back to St. Peters to climb to the top. Looking across the breathtaking view of St. Peters Square we marvel at the thousands of people who gather there to hear the Pope.

The flight north from Rome takes us to Paris where we spend a couple of days as typical tourists, then on to London. This concludes our Odyssey. We sing “It’s a Small World” and “Lord of the Dance” on the bus going to London’s Heathrow Airport as if to grab a few more minutes of togetherness.

Tired as we are, we suddenly are sitting up straight, laughing and smiling at each other with an undercurrent of, “This has been a great time and we’ve made it to the end.”

Rodney and I left home rather arrogant. We assumed we were knowledgeable about the world. But our minds felt riddled after tasting poverty, chaos, and ancient beauty all at once. We’ve been through a time of intensive global education. We sense that our suburban minds have turned from just self-centered concerns to a broader empathy for those in need.

The 1972 iconic photo of the earth from space anchors our sense that we are one with the whole earth ...not only our corner of the United States. Our imagination reaches out to the small blue marble floating in space; it becomes our home, our neighborhood.

In a strange way, Rodney and I discover we are living in a new marriage – broadening our world deepens our relationship. An unusual tranquility underscores our everyday lives and makes engagement in activities more meaningful.

Staggering from culture shock, those twenty-one days shows us with overwhelming life changing experiences. The fact that ten percent of the world's population make up “the haves” leaving ninety percent as the “have not's” is not an abstract idea. (Today the numbers keep spreading wider and more frightening.)

As we look back over our global trip we try to say what had actually happened to us. We both definitely have a change of view. We both begin to imagine the world as it could be.

8 **Everyday Work**

Our study of the poetic images of Nikos Kazantzakis's *Savior's of God: Spiritual Exercises* raises questions for us all about our life's journey. "I do not hope for anything. I do not fear anything, I have freed myself from both the mind and the heart, I have mounted much higher, I am free." This quote and Kazantzakis's asking "Where do we come from? Where are we going? What is the meaning of life?" are swirled in one way or another throughout our whole life.

The New Women decide to design a one-day seminar to aid women to reflect on who they are and what they want to be. We call it the "Global Woman's Forum." All women seem to want to move out of current jobs, caring for children, or struggling in a current job. We write the curriculum and train other women to present this program on six continents. We have a lot of fun working on this course and are pleased that it is well received.

Full-time volunteering with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (the secular arm of the Ecumenical Institute) focuses my care for the next decade. Rodney spends a portion of his vacation time each year on research and training trips with the ICA. Ben is at the Los Angeles ICA House and Mary is in school in Lake Forest. After a great deal of struggle it is decided that Tim will go to the LA House also.

The evening before he goes he joins our North Shore Cadre meeting and the send-out is awesome. Whole families meet to very self-consciously send Tim out to go to Los Angeles, thirty-six of us. He is deeply addressed that all these people are taking him seriously to send him out. Each one shakes his hand and wishes him well. It is all very impressive and Tim is touched by it all. We aren't about to kid ourselves that his struggles are over. All his life his struggles are going to hit levels of depth that are painful. School is not going

to ever be his favorite occupation, but he has grown miles. In Santa Monica his ninth grade is still in the Junior High which is good.

That summer I am assigned to be the Print Shop. I alone am assigned to be the Print Shop. No one foresees what will happen during July - what work will be produced. I start the summer in a small room on the first floor with one Gestetner machine. Summer 1971 is long before the Xerox machine is invented for use in a small office. I am using that one Gestetner machine which is a duplicating machine. But as the days go by I am using two and then three machines before I finish my work. I am struggling each night to print the procedures that each group will need the next morning. No one has any idea how much changing of procedures and work the groups will produce.

For the final document of the summer we are printing all night using the sales floor of one of the printing companies in the Loop. John Cock calls me frequently to see how the printing is going and are we going to make it by the gathering the next morning. By the time the printing is finished we gather it all and take it to the college where our final meeting is held. It is placed on many tables all around that huge room and everyone comes in and collates their own copy.

Again I become rather afraid for my marriage. During that summer program Rodney has decided to spend his nights in our room at the Institute and go down to the Loop to work. The problem is, I never go to bed at night, I only manage to catch some sleep during the day. When I say, "Yes" to my being the print shop I didn't have any idea what I was doing. That summer is beyond my imagination. Strangely later I realize that this is the summer I grow up. I struggled to say "yes" to the assignment and struggled all the time I was doing the work. Only later did I realize that I had managed to do that job.

The Institute runs a camp for children during the 1971 summer just outside New Orleans. All three of our kids go to that Camp that summer. It is held in an old school building. Every one of the children in the entire camp gets really sick after drinking some lemonade. Ben and Kay Pesek had gone to town and were the only ones who didn't drink the lemonade and so didn't get sick. That is the only way they figured out that the lemonade had been made with water that came from a bad pipe.

In the fall Tim is sent to the New Orleans house, an Institute home with families who work with the local churches and have a

youth program. He and Tim McClelland leave the house in a few weeks and disappear. No one at the house knows where they have gone. And no one tells either Rodney or me that these two boys have vanished. They finally show up in Chicago...and we wonder what to do with Tim. My first thought is anger, but then I realize that anger isn't going to help at all.

As Rodney and I talk through all that is happening in our lives and we decide that we have a new marriage on our hands. We feel the urge to celebrate this discovery in some way. At Christmas we go out and purchase new wedding rings to demonstrate our amazing understanding of our working together to care for the globe.

The next summer, 1972 I am asked to go to the Institute's Geneva Wisconsin Summer Camp for Institute children to work with the staff and write curriculum. Lyn Mathews, the Dean's wife, asks me to go and I realize that I will be straining our marriage one more time. I worry about what the decision to go to the camp will mean but decide that I need to say "yes" to Lyn anyway. Lyn has a broader picture of what is going on than I do so I decide this is necessary.

Tim and Mary come to camp and Ben stays home to work and cook for Rodney. What I discover the next fall is that the Institute has had a major summer program and shifted much of their spirit work onto the Psalms and the Other World. I struggle to catch up on my understanding. I am really sorry to have missed this work, but just work to catch up on all the stuff I missed.

That fall Rodney goes to Europe on the Elders Trip with Joe Mathews. They divide into teams and go across the continent calling on people. Rodney and David Wood leave the team for a couple of days to drive up into the Alps. Then they get a message to get to Rome before tomorrow morning. They manage the swift drive to Rome and catch up with the rest of the team. The next morning they take off for Ethiopia. Rodney has to come home a bit early but stops for a day alone in Athens. He tells me that all he did in Athens was enjoy the Parthenon. I am sorry that I have missed all of the things he has just done, but terribly glad that he has had the privilege of going with Joe.

In the spring of 1973 a massive hemorrhage strikes Rodney during his commuter ride home. "Rodney Wilson had twenty minutes to live when he arrived at the hospital," the doctor explains to me.

I hear the doctor's pronouncement and my knees buckle. I collapse on a chair to let that thought swirl in my brain. When a

nurse hands me the bag with Rodney's bloody clothes my stomach heaves.

Rodney's weakness keeps him in the hospital for three weeks as they pump blood and fluids into him. No affirmative diagnosis is ever made, perhaps an ulcer or maybe a sliver of glass. But this isolated incident in his forty-seventh year furnishes us with a strange interlude of time to ponder our lives, how we want to live and ways we can be productive in the broadest sense.

After he recovers and my heart quits drumming in fear, he tells me, "I left the office quite early that day, I felt ill – thought it was the flu. I walked across downtown Chicago to the North Western Station and boarded a train, just as I have done hundreds of times. The next thing I know, I wake up in a pool of my own blood. The conductor on that commuter train saved my life. When he called 911 he asked for an ambulance to meet our train at the next stop. That time difference kept me alive. The ambulance rushed me to Evanston Hospital's Emergency Room."

As I picture Rodney spewing blood across the train aisle, I shudder and try to block that image from my brain. That red mess on him and the floor stays glued in my memory forever.

After he returns home, he shares his dreams with me. "That scare set me to thinking. What about no more postponing of important things? Let's promise ourselves that we won't wait until retirement to do all the things we want to do. I realize now that we might not be around by then."

He often fills his daydreams with questions, "I keep wondering, how do I relate religion to the rest of my life? I don't think I have to be a pious churchman. It seems to me that we're being "church" whenever we can deal with innocent suffering. After that death scare, I don't want to wait around until I'm old. What is my purpose now? It has something to do with service. I have to stay alert to possibilities. My new motto is, 'Do it now.'" This makes good sense to me.

By spring Tim is sent to the San Francisco House. I go there for my first Local Church Consult, a planning session with the four churches working with the Institute on the future of the local church. I go to San Francisco as the only consultant from Chicago and I am slightly terrified but surprised to discover I have done well with the consult and the four churches seem steady in their journey. I stay and spend a day with Tim before returning to Chicago.

After the Consult, George Walters, the leader of the San Francisco House, and I take Tim out to dinner. Then Tim and I sit up way too

late talking, but we neither one care. Sunday the two of us go to worship at one of the churches I worked with on Saturday. After worship we walk along the ocean at Seal Rock for a bit and buy Mary a present at a tourist shop.

We go back to the House and arrange for the use of a car all afternoon. We stop and buy hamburgers and cokes to take on our excursion. We drive across Golden Gate Bridge and to the top of the mountain just north of there. We have an incredible view of the whole San Francisco area and he has great fun pointing out all there is to see. Then we drive down and sit on Stinson Beach and talk for ages. First, we talk about the family and all that has happened in his fifteen years. Then we spend some time looking at the future, particularly the summer.

The following fall, Tim and I go to Vermont to enroll him in Rock Point School in Burlington. During the weekend, we take a fantastic trip through the parts of Vermont where my grandparents grew up. Tim is excited to be in Vermont and the school seems to be one where he can relate. However again he comes home in about three months. Somehow, he always decides he can't do the school and we are sorely disappointed.

In the fall of 1973 Rodney and I are asked to go on a LENS (Living Effectively in a New Society) teaching trip with the Loudermilks across NE Asia. We are both excited by this assignment and start immediately to prepare. Mary, who is now ten years old, will stay with Betty and Martin Pesek while we are gone.

We take off mid-October and set down briefly in Honolulu but then on to Majuro. I am surprised to discover Majuro is a long skinny semi-circular atoll. The Marshallese have a strange kind of obedience out of years of doing what their conquerors have told them and not expressing their own opinions. A reception is held and is a sheer genius plan to cement relations between the House, our team and the community. Reverend Jude Samson and his wife Dinah visit us at the Religious House Friday afternoon. They are obviously a missional team with plans for the church in Micronesia.

The experience of snorkeling in the lagoon on our free afternoon is full of mystery and delight. The beauty of the coral, blooming yellow and blue and the many colored fish, plus just the quiet aloneness and the subtle dread when the water gets too deep to see the bottom.

Next came the course in Guam with mostly professors from the American University. It is okay, but the excitement comes in flying

over to Saipan. The gentleman we were to call on is ill so we have a couple of days there on our own. Rodney had been on the island just after the worst fighting during World War II. We are impressed as we listen to his reflections as we drive to the north cliff of the island. This is where most of the Japanese came and jumped to their death rather than be taken by the allied troops. It is quite awesome to think about as we watch a storm cloud approach from the north.

Taipei was the next country and the most amazing time is when we leave to fly to Hong Kong. Basil Sharp gives Rodney a priest collar to wear through the airport. He suggests it will be helpful in moving our big bag of materials through check-in. At the airport we are standing in line to check-in. We see that the big gentleman in front of us is giving the clerk all kinds of trouble. He waves his arms and his feet and accidentally kicks over our big bag of materials. He turns and starts to yell at us, but when he sees Rodney's collar he becomes very quiet. He straightens our bag, apologizes to Rodney and talks quietly with the clerk.

Our next episode is during Rodney's lecture in the Hong Kong course. He faints while giving this lecture. This scares me to death. Bill Ragsdale carries him up to our room and he rests there for three days. Dr. Woo, a Chinese doctor, comes to see him and gives us some comfort. Dr Woo shakes both of his hands saying, "You come in here and go out here... what are you doing with your time in between?" I think Rodney is basically just exhausted. However his blood pressure registers quite low.

The last evening in Hong Kong the two of us go to the top of Victoria Peak on the tram. Dinner in the restaurant on top allows us to view the lights of Hong Kong as they come on. We are glad we had that evening to enjoy.

We decide he will fly home from Japan, our next stop. I offer to fly home with him, but he insists I stay for the rest of the training courses, two in Japan and one in Korea. I call Martin Pesek to make sure someone will meet him and take care of him. I journey on to Korea for the course there before I head for home.

Mary first goes to Red Pine Camp in Wisconsin in 1975 and continues that summer location every year until she gets married. Before she is finished at the camp she is a counselor and is teaching water skiing. Ben and I visit her camp one summer during a parent weekend. We are impressed with the care for the young girls and are most pleased with all of the camp.

Then by the mid 70's, in order to demonstrate that human life is possible in any situation, twenty-four pilot communities around the world become sites of possibility that the Institute calls Human Development Projects. These small communities are designed to be a sign of possibility to other communities that see what is happening.

The first two-week consult is in Majuro, the capitol of the Marshall Islands in 1974. Rodney and I both join that team. As we assist the Marshallese envisioning their community's future, we are testing our methods of education, health, finding businesses, growing crops. These are comprehensive communities. I spend most of my time on the phone working on the team's air flights home.



Priscilla's time during the Majuro Consult

In Australia, one tribe of Aboriginal people decides to move back to their lands. They invite the Institute to help them decide how to be a community in Oombulgurri. George Holcombe calls Rodney one Thursday evening and after some conversation about pipe smoke he asks if Rodney can go to Australia. Rodney is slightly stopped when George says they are leaving tomorrow afternoon. He will send someone out to get Rodney's passport to take it to San Francisco to get his visa. Rodney shrugs and says, "Yes, I will go."

Rodney's boss is startled when he realizes that Rodney is asking to leave that day. Then his boss says, "Priscilla will certainly enjoy that trip."

“No, Priscilla is not going,” Rodney responds. His boss shakes his head and says rather incredulously that he can go. It is a major event in his life and changes how he sees small communities. He had assumed that an educated, technical person is needed to guide small communities. He discovers that they can decide what they want for their future as the questions are raised for them.



Mr. Roberts in Oombulgurri

That year Mary and I go to Washington DC for a fun time of exploration. We stay at the Religious House where the Institute staff lives but wander the city by ourselves for several days. We visit many of the touristy places and have a ball.

“Rodney, have you thought about coming to the Philippines?” Hale Prather asks Rodney this surprising question during the Institute’s 1976 summer staff meeting in Chicago. “We could use some of your exuberance and energy for a few weeks.” Rodney and I talk about this astonishing invitation. Finally we decide he should go because of his passion for villages and his sense of adventure. Rodney observes his 50th birthday during his month in the village of Sudtonggan. A dinner with staff and villagers celebrates his life and the work that he has produced for the village – plus the children join in singing Happy Birthday.

Ben and Tim fly to Europe that summer with a deal from us. We tell them we will buy their plane tickets if they will spend one week in one of the ICA villages and do whatever work is needed. Off they go and have a great time. Tim comes home after a few weeks without doing much work. Ben goes to the neighborhood of Kreuzberg in Berlin and becomes so entranced with the work that he decides to stay there and take a year off from college.

Mary and I fly to Berlin for her 1977 spring break from school and she and I join Ben and journey across southern Germany. At one point we are sailing down the Rhine River and see a castle that Ben and Tim had stayed in during their journeying the previous summer. We grab our bags and get off hoping the castle has room for us. Fortunately they do and we have a fabulous time there.

When we return to Berlin I receive a call from Betty Pesek asking me to stay in Europe and lead a series of Woman's Forums. She tells me that Mary Warren Moffett was going to do this, but her Mother just had a stroke...so would I stay and do the job. I explain to her that Mary is with me, but she shrugs that thought off and says, "Send her home, we'll take care of her." I gulp and decide to do that even though Mary is only fourteen. Mary and I go to Amsterdam, have a great final day that includes a trip through the Anne Frank house and a canal ride. Our final European dinner is Mary's choice -- McDonalds. The next day I put her on a plane to fly home. Fortunately Susie Wood meets Mary in the Kennedy International Airport and helps her switch to the LaGuardia Airport to fly home to Chicago.

The next fall Mary and I go explore New York City and discover all of the fun possible. One highlight is an afternoon enjoying the musical, My Fair Lady. I had seen it before but loved seeing it again with her and watching her enjoyment. We explore Central Park, view the city from the top of the Empire State building, ride out to look at the Statue of Liberty and explore Rockefeller Center. All in all Mary says we explored everything of the city we could, including riding the subway.

9

Twenty-Fifth Wedding Anniversary

Sometime in 1977 Mother suggests that she would like to spend their fiftieth anniversary in a drive around England with a hired guide and driver. I object to the hiring of another person, but otherwise am eager for us to do the trip with me as guide and driver. We can also celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary on this trip. We ask my sister, Pam and her husband Karl to join us for their twentieth anniversary. In October we are all ready for a magnificent trip as a family of six.

Mother has two or three places where she wants to stay, but otherwise it is up to me. That fall, we hire a large car in London and take off.

Mary stays at Shirley Johnson's house with her friend, Trish.

We are ready to go ... Mother, Daddy, Rodney, Pam, Karl and myself. Seeing new things as God things is crucial for me especially the wonderful landscape. I need to remember that love of the heart is key.

One of the first things I remember is going to Holy Communion at the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity in Norwich, Norfolk England. I walk the Laybrinth at the Cathedral Church and find myself consumed in prayer for Joseph Matthew's health and for the Order Ecumenical. We know that Joe is moving toward his death, which may happen before we get home.

The highlight, for us so far has been the gardens at Chartwell, the vistas of contemplation where Churchill shaped the destiny of the globe during World War II. As we pause at the Royal Inn in Deal at the Straits of Dover I think about the incredible amount of history that has flowed across the English Channel. One of those spots is the town that overlooks the hill where William the Conqueror made

repeated forays against Harold thus merging the Norman and Saxon blood to birth the English people.

The wife of King Ethelbert built the church of St. Martins in Canterbury. She prayed for Christianity to come to England for thirty-five years before St. Augustine arrived. This Cathedral, the center of Christian worship for the British world, is one of all the cathedrals across Europe which was built in a two-century span of the break loose of spirit. This church, east of London, was a time of churches springing up across England.



Family on anniversary trip across England

We explore the village of Hingham, the village that our Hobart ancestors came from. Edmund Hobart gathered his whole family and sailed for the United States in 1633. His son, Peter identified himself with the Puritans, and after considerable persecution came to America in 1635 where he helped found Hingham Massachusetts. He established the Old Ship Church, the oldest church in continuous use in the United States today.

The Kings College Chapel in Cambridge, an organist was practicing and that beautiful music was overwhelming. Then a day spent exploring Blickling Hall north of Norwich was awesomely gorgeous. Mother was sure that Sir Henry Hobart who built it was a relative of ours, but I think not. It seems that he was another branch of the family.

A drive to Loddon, in Norwich, to see the church that Sir James built unfolded more vistas of fifteenth century Hobarts. From Norwich we go north to Ripon to the Unicorn Hotel, a quaint old hotel on the town square. At 9:00pm the “Wakeman” (a young college student) comes to the square and blows his horn four times, an ancient tradition of care for the village, as once the wakeman walked the village all night while the villagers slept to be sure all was cared for. The historical tradition of it was very moving.

Our day in York we go into the crypt of the Cathedral. There the history of the cathedral and the area includes a map of Europe showing the dates of cathedral construction. I had a great sense of the happening as a sweep across the continent in one period of time. The visible residue of that break-loose became these magnificent structures for perpetuating the Christian Word in history.

We stop in Warkworth Castle just before we get to Alnwick. We see a fascinating old ruin overlooking the North Sea and have a marvelous chat with a local man about the history of the castle, the home of the Percy’s for 600 years.

We arrive in Alnwick ten minutes too late to get in the castle, our whole point of driving so far north. It has closed until next spring. Mother is bitterly disappointed that we can’t get in, but we take a bunch of pictures from the outside.

We drive across to Scotland, an area where scenes of violence between the Scots and the English took place for so many years. The rest eat lunch in Hawick, Scotland, one of the wool centers of the country. I dash from store to store looking at wool fabric. The fabric isn’t soft, but I buy a gray cashmere pull over anyway.

We look for a piece of Hadrian’s Wall as we reenter England near Carlisle. Finally we find a piece of the Wall off in the middle of a cold, desolate, wind-swept plain. No wonder the Roman soldiers complained when they had duty that far north.

We spend the night in a little quaint inn in Askam on the north-east edge of the lake country. This is by far the most charming spot with the most delicious food. It is all old-style country charm.

In the morning as we wait for a 9:00am breakfast, Pam, Rodney and I cut through the woods and up the hill to a castle Pam had sighted. We can look over the wall at its pinkish-tone stone glory, but we can’t get in.

We drive across the northeast corner of Wales with a high, rough terrain as we cross the Horseshoe Pass. When we stop by the side of the road to take pictures the sheep literally eat from our hands.

Our only accommodation mistake is this night. We didn't check our notes carefully enough. We could have stayed at Rughin Castle and had a "Medieval" meal. We stay at an Inn in Chirk on the Welch border. Its great advantage is the shop across the street. This is where we did most of our Christmas shopping. I bought my sister, Pam a darling sweater when she wasn't paying any attention to me.

We drive to Bath next which is a disappointment. The Roman Baths are somewhat interesting, but so crowded and "touristy" that their charm is hidden in the crowds. We slip into the cathedral also and then sit down by the river Avon. We drive on over to the 15th Century village of Castle Comb. This turns out to be a delightful tiny village with the Manor House now a hotel set in wide spacious charming grounds.

We drive next to Salisbury. After checking into our inn on the Avon which is small and delightful we drive to the cathedral. With the tallest spire in England it is a breathtaking sight. We wander the streets of the town and then walk back through the Cathedral Close and across the river to our hotel.

Rodney and I return to town the next morning while the others enjoy the garden along the river. I order navy wool for a suit for me and a yard of the mohair for making shawls as presents.

We drive to Winchester and send the rest of the crowd off to the cathedral while Daddy and I go to the County Records office. We are looking for the baptism of Samuel Hutchinson (Daddy's grandfather) between 1795 and 1810 – in or near Newtown, Hampshire to discover the name of his great grandfather. We find no record of any Hutchinson. We decide later that maybe we should have looked in or near another Newtown that is located very near Bishop Waltham's. We are disappointed but go on with the others.

We meet the others at the Cathedral. Rodney and I tour the longest nave in England. Walking through that nave leaves us speechless as we are struck wordless. We grab lunch in a little corner take out shop and walk up the hill to the Castle that turns out to only be a Great Hall with the Round Table. I feel like I am immersed in the history of where our ancestors came from. Every corner of the country seems to hold my past.

We drive on down to Wickham to spend a couple of nights. Daddy and Pam drive around to two or three small neighboring villages looking for Hutchinson records. We are all concerned about Daddy's health as the pace and our failure to find any records seem to be causing him discomfort.

The next morning, we leave Daddy at the hotel to rest and drive over to Portsmouth to go through Nelson's ship the H.M.S. Victory and the Museum. It is fascinating to see the ship, but more so to read the revolutionary strategy that Nelson devised. He departed from the prevailing naval practice of the day. He used an unorthodox strategy arranging his ships into columns sailing perpendicularly into the enemy fleet's line. If there was ever an obvious use of the discretion, "win before ever firing a shot" Trafalgar was it. It was indeed the beginning of the end of the Napoleonic era and the beginning of our modern era.

We drive Daddy to the Richmond Gate Hotel and leave him to rest the next morning. The rest of us rush off to the Windsor Castle. Rodney and I go with Mother to visit all the English ancestors that she has become close to as she has read about them. Many are buried in the George Chapel.

We then drive to Hampton Court. Windsor is lovely in terms of the way it is furnished and ready to live in...the portraits of the past royalty are fascinating. But we decide that Hampton Court's grounds and gardens are the most interesting. Rodney and I take a rather hasty walk through the House but spend most of our time exploring the grounds. I feel like the folks who ever lived in this house spend time with us as we explore the grounds.

After considerable wandering we find the twelve-panel wrought iron screen made by Tijon and it is lovely. I've never been particularly interested in wrought iron work but I experience fascination with this screen since I just read about it in Leon Uris's book, *Trinity*.

We walk down by the Thames, with steps leading down to the river. I feel like Henry VIII's boat might pull up at any minute. I close my eyes and experience moving way back in time.

Daddy, Mother and I go to Kew Gardens the next morning. Rodney spends the day alone in London while Pam and Karl go off alone. We drive through Richmond Park and look at a couple hundred deer. We are startled by a small spotted deer with antlers that we later discover is a Red Deer.

We drive through the worst London traffic to Hatfield House. Mother is entranced as this is where Elizabeth I was when she heard she was queen. The house itself is filled with family touches and I nearly expect Elizabeth to walk out of a room to greet us. The woman who is our guide has bits and pieces of personal stories that add greatly to the tour.

We leave Daddy at the hotel that evening to rest and we catch a train into town to see Deborah Kerr in *Candida*. It is a most enjoyable visit to late 1800s England. A walk through the lit-up Trafalgar Square ends our evening.

The next day a boat to Greenwich is fascinating, but quite cold as the boat is open. It is amazing to see the sights along the Thames from the river, particularly as I recognize the section of London called the Isle of Dogs. The Institute worked for several years in that area. We soon approach the entrance to the West India Docks.

We return to downtown and Rodney and I go to Oxford Street to do some more shopping. It seems that we walk for ages. When the stores close we go to Piccadilly Circus to see *The London Experience* which is a film that gives us a broad look at London's history.

Just walking through Piccadilly Circus is an experience of "mod" youth, while the *London Experience* is a feel of present day and historical London. When we leave the film it is pouring, but we walk back through Trafalgar Square, down Whitehall and along the Embankment to the restaurant HMS *Hispanola*. The food is medium good, but the atmosphere is great, it is a cool, lovely place to sit and talk about our journey.

Our last day in London begins by searching for the old Richmond Palace, one of Elizabeth I's favorites. What remains is all private residence now so that leads to nothing.

About noon Mother, Rodney and I take the train to the Tower. We stand in line for a half hour and another twenty minutes to get in to see the jewels. It is remarkable how they are such a symbol of the monarchy. I felt like a queen or king would pop out and start explaining what we were looking at. Victoria's tiny crown and the coronation crown and scepter fascinate me by their size and historical significance.

After a walk along the outside of the Tower by the Thames and peering down into Traitor's Gate we take a taxi through the city to the Marble Arch.

We all enjoy our closing dinner celebration that evening. Cocktails are served in the bar and dinner in a private room. Rodney serves as host and leads a conversation on this trip. We each mention moments on the trip that we want to remember forever. Nearly everywhere we've been is mentioned. Pam helps by keeping the conversation moving and we all laugh at various moments. Karl

introduces the theme of “history moving on the back of the religious.” We all laugh when someone mentions the lambs eating out of our hands. Daddy drinks a toast to our family and I propose a toast to our family as a sign of the family to the future. It is a fine evening that closes a rather incredible trip.

We arrive home and I am exhausted, but Rodney goes on down to the Institute because the Guardians meeting is happening. This is a meeting of folks from across the country, but I stay home to sleep. Rodney calls me the next morning to ask me to come down, Joe Mathews is dying. I arrive about noon and the North Shore Cadre goes up to see Joe. He dies later that day. I experience moments of wondering what will happen to this group and pray that all will go forward as it should. A week of rituals that care for his body follows as staff and colleagues arrive from around the world.

Ben comes home from Germany at Christmas and announces that Tina, his German girlfriend, is pregnant. He has not made a firm decision yet about going back. He struggles for several days and finally decides that he wants to return and marry her. I press him that I want to come to the wedding and he says that he will send me a note to let me know when the wedding is to be held.

The whole legal mess takes a while for him to deal with. I’m not sure what all of it was, but suddenly they get married the last of January. Marcel is born February 6, 1978. Then in a few weeks they fly to Chicago. It is the old part of the airport and we can see them enter the security section. Ben has the baby and Tina is in the foreigner’s line. Rodney goes down and asks for the baby and Ben is glad to give him up. Tina can see all of this but is not close enough to say anything and has some panic as she thinks she is seeing the last of her child. I wasn’t smart enough to realize that we were scaring Tina terribly. I experience touching God as I touch the tender skin of my new grandson when I hold him close to my heart.

We finally all get together and drive out to Lake Forest. They stay with us a couple of weeks and then take off for St. Paul. Ben is returning to school. Tina knows very little English and is very shy around us. Fortunately, many years later...all has worked out well. Tina has become the daughter-in-law anyone might have wished for. I could not have wished for any one better.

The Steadiness of Middle Years

10 **Two Wilson Moves**

In 1979 Rodney and I are invited to join an Elders Trip, the Institute of Cultural Affairs leadership as they plan to go through Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya and Zambia. This is seen as a time to check up on what is going on as well as giving support to the teams in the villages.

The village of Bayad, south of Cairo in Egypt is one of the demonstration projects. Many stories from there are about water, or lack of it. The canals from the Nile, their only water source, contain snails that carry a parasite that enters through a person's skin causing the disease bilharzia. Bilharzia attacks the inner organs, eats them away, and eventually leads to death. This parasite is sapping the energy of many of the villagers east of the Nile.

Government sources assured the villagers there is no fresh water on the east side of the Nile. However, we have located a friend of a friend in New England who knows how to divine for water. He buys a ticket to Egypt to see what he can do. A miracle! He finds water. The villagers drill a well with rudimentary tools. They lay pipe throughout the village and supply all of the villagers with clean water.

When Rodney and I visit Bayad we hear the difference in the village stories. We watch prideful grins as villagers fill their water jugs at the faucet stations. Each person has a different story to tell. Desert reclamation for food production creates special bragging rights.

Nigeria is the next place we go. I drink some infected water in the village of Ijeda and by the time we get to Nairobi I am really sick. In the middle of the night Nancy Lanphear takes me to the hospital where I stay for several days. My Swiss doctor is fabulous and I am intrigued with her white skin next to the nurses who are as

dark skinned as they can be. Rodney stays with me for a couple of days and then goes on to Zambia without me. I push him to go to Zambia because neither one of us has been there.

I go to the Fairmont Hotel when I leave the hospital. The Fairmont is a colonial high reputation hotel. Rodney meets me there. We leave for Tree Tops for an overnight safari. This proves to be a time of seeing up-close elephants and other animals. This happens on my birthday. Surprisingly someone has even sent flowers to our room. This is an incredible time, although not exactly being on safari. I realize that I need to be thoughtfully engaged in every moment we are there. I engage in holy imagination as I think of driving across the plain and seeing all of these animals.

When we arrive home we discover that the price of gasoline is rising dramatically. We decide to move to Evanston to save on gas money and travel time driving to our work. A house a few blocks from Lake Michigan intrigues us and we buy it. It is a joy to discover it is near the lake so we spend time on weekends riding our bikes through Northwestern University and down to the Loop by the lake.

Our son, Tim moves to Seattle mostly to be nearer the mountains. He becomes a great climber and finally is serving as a climbing guide.

Mary attends Evanston High School briefly. But then she changes to Roycemore School which is a private school in Evanston. She is much more comfortable there with better teachers and smaller classes.

In 1981 daughter Mary and I embark on another volunteer adventure. Roycemore School has given all the students the month of January off to invent their own learning process. I talk with the school and we have permission to spend a month in Azpitia, a rural village just off the coast road several hours south of Lima Peru. No services that we take for granted exist, no electricity, water system, or health care within miles. The village women and ICA staff initiate a women's health care program. Basic nutrition, sanitation systems, basic first aid and monitoring babies' weight become skills they have at their fingertips. They travel to neighboring villages on a regular schedule to provide this care. This is one more example of how changing women's vision of the future releases possibility, hope and practical care. Mary enjoys working with them. Each evening I walk through the village, enjoying myself as I soak in the solitude and

beauty of the area. I am experiencing a month of learning another culture and learning more about my daughter.

We spend the last day in the village going to the beach and receiving the worst sunburn either of us ever had. We didn't think about hats or umbrellas. For two days in Lima we just care for our burns.

We finish the month by flying to Cusco and then going by train to Machu Picchu. We stay overnight and are astounded by the beauty of the place. Machu Picchu is an Incan citadel set high in the Andes Mountains in Peru, above the Urubamba River valley. Built in the 15th century and later abandoned, it's renowned for its sophisticated dry-stone walls that fuse huge blocks without the use of mortar. It is full of intriguing buildings that play on astronomical alignments and panoramic views. Its exact former use remains a mystery.



We wake early the morning we are there and are struck by the beauty of the stones and the wandering llamas. We see God in the spreading red glow of the sunrise climbing into the sky. We both thoroughly enjoy this trip as we end our time in Peru.

On March 23, 1981 Rodney tells me that we are going to the Institute's worship service and a small reception afterwards. When we arrive I am not too surprised to see the Moffetts and Phillips because we've worked so closely with them. However when I catch sight of George McBurney I begin to wonder.

We celebrate worship and communion and then we recognize and honor birthdays that week. There are four birthdays, a forty-three, a forty-two, a nineteen and mine...a fifty. Joe Crocker, the Methodist

clergyman who baptized our grandson Marcel asks the four of us to stand. Each state our names and the year we are celebrating and the event of the past year that is the most significant for us. I name two events, our family vacation in Evanston last August and my assignment last July to the task force that made the year's assignments for everyone. Joe Crocker addresses a word to each of us, commenting on our gifts and making a claim on our life for the future.

Following House Church, the Institute's worship service we all go to the lounge. I am amazed to see a beautiful table set with white linen cloth, yellow candles and silver candle sticks plus a gorgeous cake saying, "To a grand lady on her 50th birthday, Priscilla." I must confess that I am struck dumb by all of this.

Our family forms a receiving line and I hug and kiss at least 100 people. We all sit down and Justin Morrill leads the celebration. Justin asks people to name where they first met me and these range from: a Japanese bath in Kobe Japan to the 5th City Preschool in 1967 to a filet mignon on Waikiki Beach to a Local Church Consult in New Haven Connecticut. Then more champagne is poured and Justin asks for just five toasts to me. George McBurney is first and reads a hysterical story of my life that he has written. His reading starts with us all laughing and we continue to laugh all the way through.

Lyn Matthews speaks and then has us sing Amazing Grace. Finally, Justin has his turn. He has a few things to say about my working with him his first three years after returning from Japan to the United States.

We stand around and talk a while and then I realize I have lost Mary. Rodney tells me she has gone to the Moffett's apartment and we are to pick her up there.

We arrive at their apartment and there is another surprise. Bloody Mary's, Quiche Lorraine and salad are served to nine couples who totally surprise me by being there. There are several gifts from the group and a relaxing afternoon of sitting around talking.

Now that I am treated as a fairy princess it is time I return to the solid terra firma and the nitty gritty of everyday life. I plunged back into the task of writing. I did truly feel I had marked the beginning of a new half-century with a great deal of symbols and honoring of my past.

That summer Mary, Rodney and I journey across the west in our newly purchased RV to Seattle to see Tim. We have a great time

exploring some of Mary's background in the Shoshone and Paiute Native American area. Tim travels back with us as far as Flagstaff and we fly him home from there.

In January 1982 we travel to Arkansas City to celebrate a surprise 80th birthday party for my Mother. All our family shows up and we have a great time with her. Our grandson, Jeffrey is only one year old and he has a great time crawling on the floor and grabbing the balloons that are floating around. Tina's Mother has joined us from Germany and goes with us to Mother's party. However, the biggest surprise for Mother is when Tim walks in the room. He is from Oregon and totally unexpected.

My other moment of Evanston fun occurs because I have joined the Evanston Presbyterian choir so that I can sing Brahms' Requiem. As I pay attention to the melody I sink deeply into Brahm's world. That is a great gift for me.

Our house in Evanston really needs a new kitchen built for it and the electrical wires in the basement all needs to be rewired. We have hired someone to do that job and we are about three quarters done when Rodney comes home and announces another big surprise.

The Santa Fe Railway is moving its whole Transportation Department to Kansas City. We gulp and get ready to pack up again and move south.

Mary and I go to the Kansas side of Kansas City early spring 1982 to hunt for a house. Our relator has taken us to many houses, but we haven't seen anything that really suits us. Then I happen to talk with my friend, Dallas Ziegenhorn and he tells me of a house on Tomahawk Road that is on the market. It isn't listed and doesn't carry a sign in front, but we manage to go see it. We both love the large rooms and spacious back yard. I check with Rodney and then put a bid on the house.

The owners of the house ask us if we can postpone our move so that they can entertain symphony people one more time that spring. We say, "yes" and wait a while in Evanston. Rodney moves into an apartment in Kansas to begin his work with the Santa Fe.

After we move into our new home, I spend some time reinventing my own life. I am not sure what all I need to be doing, but I spend some time figuring that out. I have fun exploring my new neighborhood and sitting in my new lovely backyard thinking.

My journey started in Kansas. I was born there and lived all my life in one spot but moved to Chicago when we were married. Now that

I am back I never question whether the Church is right for me. It was part of the package at my birth. We are both pleased to discover that the Village Presbyterian Church is just a few blocks from our new house. I join the choir and become active in other parts of the church.

Living in Kansas and attending Village Presbyterian Church, I am asking myself, can I become a part of this community? My twenty years of working with the Institute of Cultural Affairs have kept me away from a local church so I feel very unsure of what I should do now. Many of our colleagues around the world have either dropped out of the church or are lukewarm. We are thrilled to realize that Village Presbyterian seems to be a community for today's world. What does the church have to offer me...or what do I have to offer?

Very soon after we move, Anne and David Wood, La Verne and Jim Phillips and Mary Warren and Don Moffett all come as a surprise visit to us. We all want to share as much as we can of what we have been doing. We are thrilled and enjoy sitting around just talking plus going out and visiting some of our city's highlights. We have an excellent time catching up with these friends of so many years.

My faith journey continues. It is all an awesome journey. I remember the things I did before we moved to Kansas and I am somewhat puzzled by my long journey. My participation as the church really occurred in the North Shore Cadre, New Woman's Forum and Global Women. These jobs continued to sustain me but I don't have those immediately available now.

I discover that I am continuing on a journey of serving in the local church now. I have joined the Village Church choir and I am serving on a couple of committees. It is the rest of the week that puzzles me. I need to figure that out. I am used to being assigned to various tasks. Now I need to figure that out myself. I will not be assigned to work in the community. That totally depends on me now.

11 More Traveling

The Institute begins a three-year global project in 1982 on *Sharing Approaches That Work*. This demands new confidence as I work to talk with strangers all over our area. We have an event in Kansas City, which brings together organizations from across the area that share the work they are doing. We hold a regional event in Des Moines talking with projects to discover who goes to the global conference in Delhi India to share their work.

The International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD) in Delhi is the global event in February 1984. 650 people from sixty nations open up opportunities for practitioners to share community approaches that work in their local projects.

This International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD) shines spotlights on breakthroughs rather than breakdowns. The IERD, organized by the ICA, is co-sponsored by several UN agencies. The delegates share insights from thousands of projects, make field visits to a variety of projects across India and identify factors that make projects successful. Excitement pops when Iowa organic farmers discover India's farmers applying the same techniques as they use.

My role in Delhi is to interview women participants from across the globe. Story after story of women's escalating confidence, skill and care for the welfare of their communities intrigues me. I became particularly caught in a story from a Kenyan village. Two women captured me when they told about putting the first money their project made into their families account. All the husbands spent the money on drink and smoking. After that the village women opened their joint account and kept their money separate to spend on their children's education.

At one point we are all divided into teams by the conference leadership and sent across India to visit a variety of projects. Our team's field trip was to Allalabad (the childhood home of Indira Ghandi) that meant an overnight train trip from New Delhi. It was an incredible experience because we saw so many different splinters of India. The contrasts between the beautiful Taj Palace Hotel where the conference was held and the rural villages was dramatic in terms of rich and poor.

One of the young men on our team is an American who lives in the south of India. I realize that I would hesitate to talk with him just from the way he looks – long hair and somewhat scraggly looking. As we talk, I discover what a fine human being he is. This warns me against making judgments. I need to go beyond my first impressions and insights.

Going back to Delhi on the train becomes a problem. We discover that there isn't any room for us. Rodney goes in the train office in Allalabad and shows the man in the office his business card for the Santa Fe Railway in the USA. That is enough...the next train through Allalabad several people are removed from the train and our team is put on the train. This is how we make it back to the conference in time to hear all the reports. I really didn't think about this until later and I must confess I felt a mixture of bad and good about it.

After the conference is over Rodney and I spend time traveling across the country by train...to Jaipur, Udaipur, Aurangabad, the village of Maliwada and the village of Chikhale and then Mumbai (Bombay).

Rajasthan's beautiful Pink City Jaipur delivers the most fun as we explore and ride an elephant up a tall hill to Fort Nahargarh.

We stop in Aurangabad and talk a taxi driver into taking us to the village of Maliwada. Maliwada was the first village in India to start development with the Institute and we are impressed with how much has changed there.

We go on to Mumbai and check into our hotel. We then take a taxi to the village of Chikhale. The hotel man tells the taxi driver the directions for getting to the village. We are both nervous...but finally make it to the village. It is a delight to see both our friends, Fred and Nancy Lanphear who are the leaders in the village.

Dust swirls around our feet as hot and sweaty we walk through the village of Chikhale south east of Mumbai (Bombay). Stopping

suddenly, Rodney stares at a hand-painted symbol tacked to a tree trunk. "Rotary International" is written in Hindi across the wheel, but he recognizes the symbol. A sense of awe creeps into his voice as he whispers, "What an incredible sign of service." The Lanphears explain, "Chikhale is the Rotary Club of Bombay's Service Project." While looking at the Rotary sign we hear the story of a weekend that the Bombay Rotarians performed so many eye surgeries in Chikhale from nearby villages. After several hours in Chikhale the Lanphears drive us into Bombay and stay at our hotel for a couple of days to rest, relax and to eat some good food.

The following month at his sister-in-law's dinner party, Rodney tells the story of being impressed by the sign of hope in the village. "While we stood there admiring the symbol on the tree, a respected elder of the village came out of his house to talk with us. He bragged how the Rotarians had performed sixty-three cataract operations in one weekend. After surgery, the patients were laid on mats under the trees for several hours of rest. Then by nightfall they all left to walk back to their own villages. The Rotarians are also constructing a school with the villagers. They even built a cement ramp at the edge of the pond to make it easier for the women when they do their laundry."

Listening to Rodney's story, Dick Bond, another dinner guest, responds, "How about coming to our Rotary Club next week – we meet on Tuesday for lunch and you can check us out."

When Rodney visits the club, he is given an application to fill out to indicate his interest in Rotary. In the next few days, the application is misplaced on Rodney's desk and Dick phones him. Dick comments, tongue-in-cheek, "My whole professional future depends on this."

Rodney takes the application with him to his next Rotary visit and thus he joins the Kansas City, Kansas Rotary Club in 1984.

Soon Rodney becomes a friend of Bill Mularkey, the Rotary Club President. The following year, by then District Governor Bill Mularkey asks Rodney to serve as Rotary District Chairman of World Community Service, explaining, "There hasn't been any activity on the global level lately and some in the District don't think we need World Community Service, but I think we do." Rodney has a history with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) in villages and communities in other countries that gives him confidence to take on this task.

Soon after Rodney joins Rotary, a request comes from Rotary Club 13 for hosts and greeters. Club 13, the downtown Kansas City, MO club, is hosting the 76th Rotary International Convention in Kansas City.

Home Hospitality traditionally means signing up to host one or two Rotarians in your home for dinner one night. Rodney realizes that this is a great way to get to know Rotarians from other countries. He contacts ICA offices in fifteen countries and requests names of Rotarians that ICA staff know are coming to the Convention. Hand-written invitations appear in the hotels from Rodney for each of the Rotarian names he receives.

Two white rented vans, an ICA staff couple from Chicago to assist in the hosting and a catered buffet ensure a congenial May evening on the patio. Tulips, daffodils, and flowering crabs spread fragrance across the chattering crowd of thirty-six Rotarians and their wives. A marvelous evening is spent by one and all.

In 1985 the UN Decade of Women Conference in Nairobi inspires a group of Kansas City women to host a National Conference of Women in Kansas City. I serve on the planning committee and meet many women who become important in my life.

I also invite eight of my long-time girlfriends from across the country to attend. We plan a three-day slumber party at my house. With some makeshift housing with rented beds added to our bedrooms we make it all work. Two or three women even sleep in our (unfinished) basement.

The Conference sessions are all we could have hoped for. At the time Maureen Reagan serves the nation as a representative to the United Nations so she seems a great choice for keynote speaker. Breakout groups provide plenty of time for sharing and discussion.

After a long day of inspirational speeches and breakout groups we return to our house tired but stimulated.

Rodney meets us at the door with a gracious greeting, resplendent in his tux. As we flop down on couch and chairs in front of the roaring fireplace Rodney returns with a towel over his arm and a tray of wine glasses in his hands. He circles the living room serving each woman with his most respectful bow. We love it.

An invitation to visit an old school friend in Egypt triggers our time with Rodney's friend, Coy Squyres and his family in Cairo in 1985. The highlight is a marvelous tent party in Coy's yard when we have the opportunity to tell folks about the village development work of the Institute in seven villages south of Cairo.

Coy suggests that we go to Israel...so off we go. We spend a marvelous four days in Israel with Coy and his wife Irene. None of the three of them want to or can drive...so I do the driving the whole time, which I love. Having the opportunity to visit with Sahir Dajani at the Palestinian Needlework Project in Jerusalem on March 8, International Women's Day is a special time.

Coy and the two of us also go to the Sinai Peninsula and drive to Mt. Catherine to visit the Monastery which is the oldest working Christian monastery in the world.

Saint Catherine's Monastery officially "Sacred Monastery of the God-Trodden Mount Sinai" lies on the Sinai Peninsula, at the mouth of a gorge at the foot of Mount Sinai, near the town of Saint Catherine, Egypt. The monastery is fascinating and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Built between 548 and 565, the monastery is one of the oldest working Christian monasteries in the world. The site contains the world's oldest continually operating library, possessing many unique books.

After returning to Cairo, Coy arranges for us to travel to Luxor by boat up the Nile River. All is an amazing three-week journey because of the ancientness of all that we see.

One of Kansas City's more global organizations, the Crescent Peace Society holds an event with dinner and speeches in 1986. I am most surprised when my name is called and I am awarded the Kansas City World Citizen of the Year 1986. Across the bottom of the award it says, "The Mayors Award to Priscilla Wilson." I am astonished.



During an ICA meeting in Chicago Rodney and Len Farr, an active Rotarian from Coos Bay, Oregon have a chance to talk. When Len learns that Rodney will be in Bilbao, Spain that summer (1986) for the ICA's International Conference he contacts Roz Benford in the Rotary office in Evanston. Len suggests, "Rodney could go to Portugal while in Spain, to evaluate the Lamego Rotary Club's request for a 3H (Health, Hunger & Humanity) Grant."

In Bilbao, Rodney connects with Cathy Bayer, the ICA Project Director in Mezio, Portugal and persuades her to drive to the project with him. Cathy wishes to stay at the conference but realizes this is the only opportunity for Rotary to evaluate the project's grant request. The next day off they go in a red rental car zooming across to the Montemuro Mountains in northern Portugal for three days of evaluation visits. Rotary's checklist of things to look for and advise for or against is in Rodney's pocket. Staying in the home of the local priest's mother in the village means little sleep as the chimes in the church next door ring every thirty minutes.

At the end of the ICA Conference in Bilbao Rodney and I drive to Madrid to spend time with Kaze Gadway. The three of us take the train northwest of Madrid to Avila, Saint Teresa's town. Its main monument is the imposing Walls of Ávila begun in 1090. About half of the walls are open to be walked and all three of us go up there, first by ourselves and then together. We feel deeply immersed in a sacred cloud. We all three experience seeing the Holy in that town.

Thus begins fifteen glorious "retirement" years of coordinating Rotary Work Projects in Portugal as well as in Jamaica, Mexico and Ghana. It comes as no surprise that projects and work teams don't always go smoothly. At such times Rodney reflects, "I need to work like I operated all those years at the Santa Fe,

- You can never have too many contacts
- Burning bridges should be avoided
- It's often easier to apologize than to get permission
- Be responsible for your own decisions and actions."

Another big shift occurs December 1, 1986 when Rodney retires. We do a lot of thinking about how this will look for both of us. We are excited to be able to spend time together now and we begin to

plan what we will do. We begin this retirement time with a camping weekend in a Missouri Retreat Woodland and then a trip to Arkansas City to visit our parents.

In February 1987 our daughter Mary marries Steve Van Ryzin in a Chicago hotel on the lake. Weary of the weather we all stay in the same hotel and discover that that weekend is the warmest, sunniest and loveliest weekend of the winter. Justin Morrill serves as the pastor and marries them.

1987 is the first year for a Rotarian work camp in the village of Mezio south of Lamego where the Rotary Club is located. We arrive in Porto and are met by Cathy Bayer. The drive along the Douro River with lunch overlooking the river is glorious. Driving up through the mountains, alive with broom blooming bright yellow and heather in shades of purple is awesome. The views of the Montemur-os coming closer with finally the rocky, jagged heights overlooking the hazy valleys makes us catch our breath. One by one the villages appear in clusters of red tiled roofs nestled into the side of the mountains.

We meet the ICA staff in the house in Mezio and at last settle in for sleep at the white house down the road. Amazingly alive and well with no experience of jet lag, I am convinced it is because of working with my diet for the last three days.

Rodney and I have so much to offer to any situation in humor, care, intentionality and spirit. We must remind ourselves of that as we face frustration and chaos as well as joy and satisfaction. After all the plans are in place, Rotarians begin to arrive.

Joyce and Len Farr had purchased a spinning wheel for the villagers to use. After lunch in Mezio one day the women's team take the spinning wheel to the knitting coop in the village of Relva. The women are ecstatic and Fernando shows them how it works. All the women kiss our team in overwhelming gratitude, straight from the heart.

The time with both coop groups so grounds the experience that we've talked so much about in theory. Women continue to struggle all over the world for economic sufficiency. It is a rewarding time as we work with the Rotarians of the Lamego club, the villagers and the ICA project staff, and local government officials. There are eleven international Rotarians and ten wives on the team from Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Portugal and the United States.

A barbecue for Rotarians and villagers at the ICA house closes the work camp. Sixty-five people come from the ICA, International Rotarians, Lamego Rotarians, and the Mezio construction crew and their wives. The party guests range in age from two years old to seventy-five years. It is an evening of great food, music and conversation. Everyone decides that it was the great month of "Diamantino" as a symbol of the villagers love and care of life in the Montemuro mountains. He is the boss of the team who built the irrigation basin and his name means the Diamond.

It is true that this month's project is not Rotary's, it is not the ICAs, it is the people who live their lives on the Montemuro. To know them and share life with them in their tradition has been a privilege. I think our being there pointed to new hope and possibility. Our presence said, "We are one people on this globe."

The late '80s are filled with Portugal excursions. '86 is Rodney's first trip to the Montemuro mountains. '87 and '89 are the two Rotary workcamps. Rodney goes back to Portugal in '88 to do some filming for Rotary International.

Before Rodney became a Rotarian, his father-in-law, a long-time Rotarian, once mentioned that he didn't think Rodney had the classification to be a Rotarian. But after Rodney became active in international projects, his father-in-law loved to brag about how he was the one who got him into Rotary.

Joel and Alice Wright left the Institute staff in the mid-80s. Their parents both lived in the Kansas City area. I figured that Joel could be a perfect partner with me in business. In 1988 I finally had a chance to ask him to come and work with me with a particular customer. He hesitantly came and it began to make sense for him to continue working with me. Finally they move to the Kansas City area and we form a partnership. Kathleen Harnish comes over to our office (in my second floor space) to request some help with one of her clients. Later we laugh about the fact that she stayed and became a part of our business.

Between working with Rotary with Rodney and our business with Joel and Kathleen I stay quite busy.

12

Traveling Across the Pacific

Throughout this journey, I have continually reinvented myself. When Rodney's job moves us to the Kansas City area, I search for new ways to act out my care.

In January 1983 Lyn Mathews, the wife of the Dean of the Institute asks me to go to the Kingdom of Tonga in the Pacific to participate in the Pacific Training School. I pause for a minute, ask her a couple of questions and then say, "Yes."

I missed the Tonga Air flight from the main island of Tongatapu to the northern island of Vava'u, so the turbulent ocean is my only alternative. One hundred fifty miles of open ocean exists between me and the island of Vava'u in the Kingdom of Tonga. Seasickness incapacitates me. The regular ferry that most Tongans travel is my only option.

My destination is the Pacific Training School, a community leadership school at Siu'lkutapa College on Vava'u. I am one of the non-Tongan staff who will work with the local staff to share methods of community development. We will teach the participants how to lead conversations and workshops so they can go lead islanders in Town Meetings. This will allow them to assume leadership with their village colleagues.

As we finally sail into the Port of Refuge Harbor, the coral reefs and crystal-clear waters astound me with their unsurpassed beauty. I draw a deep breath and go ashore. Excitement fills me as I realize I am there in time for the beginning of the school.

"The Pacific Way" is the theme for this human development school. The hosts of the school, Methodist District Superintendent and his wife, Kakala welcome all. The Governor of Vava'u praises the

participants who have come to plan for their villages. At one point in the evening singing breaks out and the Tongan singing electrifies the room. The close harmonies captivate me. Paying attention to all the relationships in the room is Holy work.

Three of the Tongan staff guide the thinking. Tito pronounces a warm welcome. Paula addresses the future of this community that is built on their pride of being the only island nation never conquered by a European power. Mali gets up to lead the workshop.

The participants have an opportunity to share their hopes and dreams in this workshop. All cluster in small groups and share their thoughts as Mali writes their input on a large black board. The group is awed as they see their shared common thoughts.

The men participants wear the traditional wrap-around tupenus, a skirt-like cloth that indicate this is a formal occasion. The village women wear colorful blouses and long tupenus that reach to their ankles. Their belts made of strands of pandanus leaves add a touch of gracious femininity.

Though they speak in Tongan I discern an under-current of tension. I notice a growing uncomfortableness in the participants. They seem to breathe tightly and glance back and forth. The older-rural participants frown at the western school clothes of the younger Tongan staff and seem somewhat hesitant as they respond in the workshop.

Later that evening as the staff debriefs in English, I pay attention as the Tongan college kids wrestle with how to honor the elders. They struggle with their Christian response of love and care in this situation. Several of them pace around the room as they talk about how they can make the elders more comfortable. Discussing theological and practical community development issues now filled the school sessions with images of possibility. Their concern is the participation in the work of the school.

The next morning to signify respect the Tongan staff wears traditional Tongan garb and they dress in traditional clothes throughout the school. I ponder this response to their rich heritage, "How might I have reacted in such a situation?"

Attending church on Sunday is fascinating. I could have spent all day watching the choir director and listening to the choir and congregation sing. But later, after church our staff attends a Tongan feast in a neighboring yard. This is a regular, every Sunday event with the

location changing each week. An amazing feast spread out on Tapa cloth in the yard consists of mounds of fish, vegetables and fruit.

Each day, we explore practical community development issues. After an opening presentation we meet in small groups that result in walls covered with sheets of butcher paper sharing the villager's dreams. Primarily we focus on methods for holding village meetings and stating educational, health and agricultural programs in their villages. Then we end the day with theological issues with RS-1, the course developed by the Ecumenical Institute talking about God, Christ and the Church.

Twenty Tongan staff creatively facilitate the school sessions by leading conversations and workshops on particular issues such as health and education. Non-Tongans working with the school are from the United States, Australia, Philippines, New Guinea, Indonesia, Japan and Taiwan. It is my first experience working with translation and I often feel inadequate and unsure. Questions about what I might have said bounce around in my head when I pause for translation. The non-Tongan staff always work with a translator.

As a whole body all participate in a conversation about the history and needs of education for the children. Then in smaller groups they each take one aspect of that work and articulate their vision for that area, the contradictions that will block progress and the many steps that need to be taken.

Training the participants how to lead their village meetings is a central task. I work with a small group to create a leadership methods manual. Encouraging input from the Tongan team members is part of the training process. We talk about why the different method steps are important and why soliciting the villager's ideas is crucial.

Paula, one of the Tongan staff men and I work as a team. He translates the words of the Methods Manual as it is written in both languages. The manual is a plan for conducting a village meeting with a conversation, a talk, and a participatory workshop.

Mid-point in the training school, we set up village meetings. Teams of three or four villagers with a couple of staff members will go to Vava'u's thirty-seven villages. Early on Friday, we hand out assignments for the meetings on Saturday. Fear strikes as the participants realize they are responsible for leading these meetings. They want to talk about transport issues rather than how to lead the meetings.

All is finally sorted out about who is going where and with whom. Preparation evolves in the slow, conversational Tongan way. Learning patience is key for me. Paula writes in my notebook, “Oua-te-ke-Tokanga-ki-ai“ (don’t worry!!).

The non-Tongan staff presence symbolizes to the local villagers that others outside of Tonga care for this corner of the globe. Most of the teams travel in small open boats to their villages. Kakala takes our team in her red pick-up truck to a village of three thousand not far from the school.

Our team meets with villagers in the headman’s living room. We sit on the floor around the periphery of the room on a large, finely woven mat; we discuss education, health, agriculture, transportation, and decision-making. Most of the villagers have never been asked what they hope for their future and their excitement is contagious. The headman’s eleven-year-old daughter whispers translation in my ear so I keep track of what is being said.

Many Tongans hoped the Pacific Training School would supply projects and extra money, but they soon realize that projects unfold through local efforts. As the villager’s experience being honored for their ideas, they start to imagine what can happen. Ideas catch fire as they see the world through a new prism. Within the next few weeks, village preschools pop up all over Vava’u. Only four preschools had been in session before the village meetings. With no bureaucracy slowing the process, villagers easily move ahead to set up the schools by finding a location and talking with the families who have preschool age children.

During the six weeks, relationships develop as I work with another of the Tongan staff. Kato and I lead a seminar on care and tell stories to make sense of what it means to care for others. Paulo and I work as a team on the methods manual and his maverick ways teach me patience. His mix of laughter and serious work fascinate me.

At the end of each day, I go for a walk and listen to the singing pouring from the truckloads of agricultural workers returning from the fields. Sacredness pervades the air as music floats down the street. I imagine that Tongan’s emerge from their mother’s womb singing lustily in harmony.

At the school’s completion, we celebrate with a traditional buffet dinner for participants and staff. The room is decorated beautifully with tapa cloths on all the tables, mats on the floor, and flowers everywhere. Singing and dancing ensure a great evening. Vegetables,

fruits and fish provide mountains of food. As the participants receive their school certificates, their wide smiles and erect postures express their pride.

A staff celebration the next day at one of the island's beaches provides a time of snorkeling, singing and reflection. Delicious food wrapped in pandan leaves prepared by the Tongan men simmers on a wood fire in the underground 'umu' pit in the sand. Relaxed beach walks and story-telling cap our time together.



I connect like a sister with the two older Tongan women on the staff, Tuifua and Kakala. When we talk our thoughts and ideas seem to walk down the same path. When we part my heart aches. They both live on Vava'u so don't travel with us to Nuku'olofa.

The next day the guys load the ferry, the Olavaha, with the supplies, furniture, bags and people for the return trip to Nukualofa, the capitol on the island of Tongatapu. With relief, I fly back on Air Tonga. I did not look forward to another sea voyage.

Back in Nuku'olofa, after worship on Sunday morning, the school staff and church leadership attend a Tongan feast. Families in the congregation entertain the clergy and the important folks in the congregation each Sunday. Speeches of appreciation for the future

of Tonga pour forth after an incredible consumption of food such as fish, vegetables and fruit always prepared in different ways.

For a sightseeing moment before leaving Tonga, Muli a rural development officer for the government drives several of us to witness the spectacular blowholes along the terraced coastline of southwest Tongatapu. The power of the sea saturates the air with an overwhelming sense of mystery. Hundreds of blowholes along a four-mile stretch of wild windswept coastline roar and whish as the water pounds the cliffs and rises through holes in the rock. I gasp in wonder as I watch and listen to the sights and sounds of seawater being thrown 100 feet into the air.

This month of grace-filled moments thunders through me like the blowholes. Awe spills over my being just as the seawater showers high above the rocks. I cry as the plane leaves that tiny island nation. The Pacific Training School has been a two-way street. Rural villagers and Tongan staff grasp new levels of confidence and possibility. I perceive a pristine power of care that I will carry with me the rest of my life.

How did Tonga, that tiny island nation, confront me so profoundly? The Tongans taking charge in their own traditional ways, the inter-generational dialogue of honor and respect, or local people having unbelievable wisdom? I don't know. But as I fly home across the Pacific Ocean, I know the holy has touched me.

The next year eight Tongans are traveling raising money for their trip on their way to the Institute's summer planning in Chicago. They visit us as they journey across the United States. I help them talk with several organizations enabling several engagements to raise money.

On Sunday morning they sing as a group at the Village Presbyterian morning church service, dressed in traditional Tongan clothes. But the most fun is an event at our house,. We all eat in the back yard, and they sing in our living room. They remove all the furniture except the piano from the room and take over the space.

13 **Losing My First Parent**

I persuade my friend and colleague, Joel Wright to come to Kansas City. We form a company, TeamTech Inc. to train people in both corporate and not-for-profit organizations. We help folks learn how to work together more effectively. Soon, Kathleen Harnish joins us as we work and I continue to dream of enabling women in whatever role I assume. I have the experience that tells me that I cannot take these relationships for granted.

Rodney and I celebrate my birthday in March 1988 when we visit longtime friends the Yosts in Vienna Austria. A special treat with the Yosts is an auto trip from Vienna to Budapest Hungary. This is a pleasant surprise as we find the people very hospitable by being helpful and cheerful. Rodney and I also are able to get to Munich, Salzburg, Innsbruck and Zurich during this trip.

Rodney and I have a great time just enjoying our time together. During the springtime of 1988 we enjoy a canoe trip on the Jacks Fork River in southern Missouri with my sister, Pam and her husband, Karl Hanson. Their daughter, Laura and husband, David also join us. We rent a couple of big houses on the edge of the river and Rodney only dumps me in the river once. The scenery along our journey is exquisite and birds of all species are everywhere.

In August we take our Winnebago, meet our oldest son Ben and family with their camper and proceed to the Pacific Northwest. Tim, our mountain climbing son, takes time off from building his new home in the mountains near Leavenworth, Washington and joins us for a few days. He is able to take our grandsons, Marcel, now ten and

Jeff, seven years old for a short first experience in mountain climbing in the Cascades. Their parents don't seem happy about that but they do fine.

Son Ben and his family borrow our Winnebago to visit relatives in the Texas Panhandle. I join them for part of their trip when they are exploring the Palo Duro Canyon. They are learning more about TD Hobart, my grandfather who settled that area. Ben is impressed as his own middle name is Hobart. I had a great time with them sharing the stories I had learned about happenings in the lives of the Hobarts.

We take off in the Winnebago ourselves in August. Marcel and Jeff join us as we journey to the north rim of the Grand Canyon. Kaze Gadway joins us for the Grand Canyon part of our trip which is helpful as she knows so much about that area. Marcel has some health problems but seems to manage ok.

We never seem to stay home for long but we really had a scare when we spent some time on the island of Culebra, which is a twenty-five minute flight in a small plane east from San Juan, Puerto Rico. We were busy having lots of fun until one day we borrowed two canoes to paddle across a small bay to a wildlife area to meet some friends. Half-way across Rodney falls out of his canoe and being afraid to try and climb back in he holds on to my boat and I paddle hard. After a bit we realize that the current is taking us out away from land and we are not doing well at all. Finally a boat stops and picks us up. We are deeply grateful and relieved. I was becoming scared since we seemed to be getting into deeper trouble as we tried to move toward land.

When 1990 begins we celebrate a major family event. Rodney and I drive to Minnesota to join Ben and Tina as they celebrate their twelfth anniversary and renewal of their wedding vows. Rodney and the two grandsons participate in the ceremony while I have great fun serving as the photographer of the event.

Then that summer we go camping with Ben and his family in Minnesota's beautiful Boundary Waters in the north of the state. We love the luxury of our recreational vehicle instead of sleeping on the ground as Rodney had done many years before when our boys were little.

Our family, twenty-four Wilsons, gather in Arkansas City in November to celebrate the completed life of Rodney's father Fred in 1990. He was eighty-eight years old and had lived a full and pleas-

ant life. He especially loved fishing and boating until he suffered a massive stroke a few days before his death. Rodney had managed to spend eight days with his parents in Pasadena, Texas before the stroke episode. We are both grateful that he had that opportunity.

We take a break from our usual Christmas celebration by renting a house and garden in St. John in the Virgin Islands in 1990. Unfortunately we learn of my Aunt Laura's death as we are boarding the airplane to fly to St. John. We decide not to go to Pampa for her service. We had assured Jeffrey and Marcel that the place we have rented is beautiful and they will love it. Unfortunately they arrive at night and Jeffrey is convinced that it is not beautiful. However, he expresses amazement the next morning when he discovers he is in a magical place. Our two weeks are very special with us swimming at a different beach almost every day.

"I don't want to miss any phase of life, but I'm finding change is hard. I only fear pain. So far, I've been lucky and haven't had any," Daddy sobbed into the phone one evening. I knew what he meant. He was struggling with his time in the Medical Unit of the Presbyterian Manor.

Pam, my sister, and I experienced the most difficult time of our lives with our parents that fall. I realized much later that we were stupid and unthinking in the way we took Mother's car away from her. We felt that she no longer had complete control with her handling of her car so should not be driving...and we just removed the car. Should have done this differently.

It was the only time that she was hateful with either one of us. I recognized the frustration and rage boiling in her when she pounded, not played her piano rendition of "The Eyes of Texas." From our parent's anniversary in October until Daddy goes to the Manor, Mother's vitriolic fury about her car drives us all crazy.

In mid-December Pam and I drive the four hours south to see the folks. In one of his more lucid moments, Daddy tells Pam, "Your Mother needs more help than I do." She shifted back to 'loving us' that weekend. Daddy's brush with death and his increasing confusion leaves her nowhere to turn but back to us. We just wished that we had handled the whole car situation a bit differently.

Pam plays cassette tapes of her singing while playing the organ or piano as she stands next to Daddy's bed. As she sings Ave Maria with the tape, Daddy sings along with her as best he can. As I listen, I experience that the first step of our goodbyes is being said. It is a

moving time filled with love. I hadn't been sure that was possible again.

The period of Mother's bitterness is hard on both my sister and me. It drains our psyches and we are dreading Christmas. We laugh about letting Pam's baby granddaughter, Vera Mary be center stage. Since she is the first great-grandchild, attention can easily be turned to her.

This Christmas time with both Mother and Daddy is so much better than anticipated. Daddy greets Vera Mary and her momma, Laura, from his bed in the Manor. My children say they cried when they saw the pictures of that scene. The man we knew is no longer there and they have a hard time understanding that.

My father enters the dying phase of life after his body goes into massive shock the weekend before Thanksgiving. The doctors at first say he had a heart attack. Then they decide he didn't. My personal assumption is that the combination of his fall at home and his realization that he no longer can be in control is too much. I feel the pain of losing a parent all through November and December. I know the more painful finality of death is coming soon.

Two days before the actual holiday we celebrate Christmas with Mother and Daddy. Daddy always loved family pictures, but his eyes have failed too much for him to see them. My Christmas present to



Priscilla, Mary, Pam and Guy Hutchinson

him is a poster size print of the last picture taken of the four Hutchin-sons in their home. Much love and care flows during this last family Christmas time together.

Laura, Pam's physician daughter specializing in end of life care, writes all her cousins and explains that Granddad doesn't have long. She asks all to send cards and letters.

The beginning of 1992 seems hard. A friend's report pierces my soul. She walked into Daddy's room at the Manor the day after Christmas. He had managed to get out of his bed. He is standing by the wall with the poster picture I had given him for Christmas. Dressed only in his nightshirt and diaper, he has laid his head against the poster and is sobbing his heart out. He connects with our family photo, but with such pain!

Characteristically he tries to get out of his wheelchair alone and go to the bathroom. He has fallen and is taken to the hospital for x-rays. They discover a lung filling rather rapidly. Pam happens to be on her way to Ark City that morning.

His breathing continues to be increasingly laborious, spasmodic and violently difficult. Pam sits with him until 2:00 am. She called me at 11 pm and said, "His blood pressure is way down and his fever has spiked." I told Rodney, "Daddy won't last the night." We got to Ark City by 10:30 the next morning.

Daddy dies January 17, 1992 at 4:30am of pneumonia.

Mother and Pam visit the funeral home just before we get there. I plan to go in as soon as I arrive so I can tell him goodbye. Mother says, "I won't see him again. I want to go back in with you." Understanding her pain, I don't say what I want to say, "But I want to go in by myself."

He looks more peaceful than I expected but seems somewhat like a stranger. I haven't had the experience before of a parent as a disembodied corpse. I'm sure the funeral people have done a little work on his face, even though they are waiting to take him to Wichita to be cremated. He is lying on a table with a white cloth covering his body to his chin.

The utter mystery of the coldness and hardness of his body fills me with awe. I whisper to him, "I am so like you. You won't have to endure the indignity of those shuffling no good legs. Goodbye."

I would have liked the quiet hour alone with him that Rodney experienced with his Dad, but I only had the few minutes.

On retrospect, I probably could have stayed in there a while longer as Ginny Cunningham took Mother back home, but at that point Pam needed me more than he did.

When I called the kids, all three answered on my first try. Mary, our youngest, burst into tears as I struggle with what to say.

The obituary comes out Friday evening in the Traveler and it is just as Pam and I wrote it in December. But we are astonished when we see the Saturday paper. Almost the whole front-page is an article on “Mr. Ark City” (our father) which dissolved me into tears.

I have felt surprisingly calm and matter of fact. I grieved mightily in November when I sobbed violently one evening for an hour. I still experience disbelief that he is gone completely. The term “completed life” makes more sense to me than it ever has before. It comes over me at odd moments that there is no Father somewhere to be visited. When it caved in on Mother at the time of the funeral, she started talking, “Daddy would love to be here to see the kids. It is such an honor for all six grandchildren to leave their busy lives and come here.”

When Rodney and I drive back to Ark City for the funeral, we listen to sacred music for four hours, Verdi, Allen Pote, Faure, Mozart, and Rutter. I re-read Joe Mathews essay, “The Day My Father Died” and Bob Meneilly’s sermon on death and his tape on death and resurrection. I find that input helpful as I talk to myself about total mystery. I understand why Memorial Services are important during the service. It is the self-conscious act of saying goodbye, but also the way to include other people who want to honor the dead person.

I experience a tremendous amount of pain and pressure in my chest and head during the service. The hymns are hard to sing, although by the end I can sing, “Come, Christians Join to Sing.”

Such an incredible support I have in the kids, both Mary and Tina offer to stay a few days with me since Rodney leaves for Jamaica this morning. I tell them I’ll be ok, but I know the exhaustion and loss is going to hit.

Amazingly the service at the Manor was one of the highlights yesterday. Greg led a very informal time with singing the two hymns Daddy asked for at sing-alongs, “I Need Thee Every Hour” and “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” He reads scripture, Judy reads the two newspaper articles and then they all talk about what Guy meant to them.

Daddy told Greg after his brush with death at Thanksgiving, “I wasn’t ready to die yet, but if that is what dying is like I don’t mind it at all, it isn’t bad.”

When he had his near death day, Dr. Smith had said to Mother, “We’ve done all we can do. I don’t think he can make it.” Daddy then kicks his leg quite violently as if to say, “Oh yeah?”

I gave Harold Lake a small plastic container to hold some of Daddy’s ashes when we left the funeral home the other day. I picked it up after the service at the Manor.

Pam and I, Ben and Tina, Mary and Steve, Tim, Marcel, Jeff and Laura walk out on the hill. I explain why we are doing this. Daddy has always joked (or was serious?), “Take my ashes out on the hill. Put them in your upturned palm and blow saying, ‘there goes ol’ Guy’.” I ask who wants to throw some ash. Jeff asks to and I hand him some. The reality of that ash...all that is left, really hits me. The journey from warm and alive...to cold and dead...to a little bundle of gray ash!

Then I scattered the rest on the ground while all say quietly, “There goes ol’ Guy.”

I had teased Daddy for several years that we are going to take his ashes out and throw them off the hill to the west of their house. Several of us take a few of his ashes and do just that, but most of them are placed in the cemetery west of town.

I wish I had run it all through my fingers instead of just from the container, but I didn’t. I felt very self-conscious with all of them standing there. Jeff, more than the others, deeply understands the symbolic.

I experience that I need to respond to each person that I encounter.

The Wonder of Sharing

14 A Plethora of Events

We make our first trip to Hatteras Island during the summer of 1993 when we drive across the southeast of the country to visit Mary and Steve who are vacationing in Avon, North Carolina. Nostalgic stops along the way nearly overcome us. First we stop in Nashville and visit the location of my first year of college. We roam around what had been Ward Belmont College. There are awesome moments that follow us in this roaming. Standing in the main hall by the original southern staircase makes us feel slightly like we are in the movie *Gone with the Wind*.

Then we stop in Gatlinburg and stay in the same cottage where we had stayed during our honeymoon forty-one years before. This evening is special as we reminisce about the many years we have been together. As we reflect on our conversation we see that the forty-five years we've known each other seem to be passing by quickly. The future is a gift, an expression of grace.

Our stops in Asheville to visit Bob and Joy Hickerson and then Durham to see my niece Dr. Laura and her family rounds out our time on our drive to Hatteras. We spend ten days on the Avon beach and surprise ourselves. We seem to fall madly in love with that beach as we stroll down it.

Rodney and I have always been fascinated with birding and we spend 1994 New Year's in Cape May, New Jersey birding with a group of people we don't know. Our time is interesting, but rather strange for us as it is a new place and interesting folks.

The following summer we lose the last of our older generation. We had been down to Arkansas City for the weekend and then gone home again because Joel and I had a date with a client. Joel mentions to our client that my Mother is dying and the woman we are meeting

with immediately pushes for me to drive back down there and stay with her. This makes great sense so we finish our conversation with our client, then I go home, pick up Rodney and drive back to Arkansas City. Mother lies in her bed and I spend all night singing to her and giving her permission to go ahead and die. She finally gives up her life about 7:00 the next morning. I am so grateful that I had been with her; I had not witnessed death. The oldest of our family is now gone and we realize we are now the two oldest.

I discover a picture on a closet shelf as we are emptying all the stuff from Mother and Daddy's house. It is a crumpled picture of Nanaw and her siblings from long ago which I had not seen before.



The Warren youngsters Lizzie, Fred, Ella, Belle, Alice, Ferrand, Minnie

The first of our grandchildren trips happens the next month. Marcel suggests we go to London to see *Phantom of the Opera*. So we take off with him and head to Holland first. I drive while teaching him navigational tricks. Rodney relaxes in the back seat of the car enjoying himself. Traveling with a grandson is a new and enchanting experience. We explore parts of Holland before going to London. Going to *Phantom of the Opera* at Her Majesty's Theatre is a hit with all of us. After exploring London we drive to Scotland where we stay

several days with Rodney's friend Rex Cook who lives northwest of Glasgow in Cove. This incredible trip allows Rodney and I to know our first grandchild, Marcel so much better.

1995 is a busy year. Pam and I sell our folks property in Arkansas City and are greatly relieved that the whole fifty-two acres sells and is kept as one piece. Mary births her first child, Nora. And I join the worship and music committee at Village Presbyterian Church.

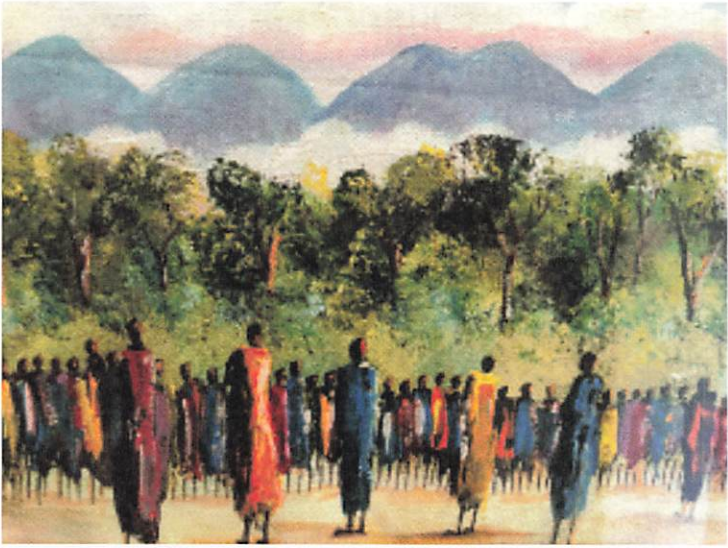
Rodney and I start 1996 with a VENT (Victor Emmanuel Nature Trip) birding trip to Belize. We are amazed at the number of Central American birds we see. We are intrigued when we see the Stripe-headed Tanager. He is tough to see, but we managed to catch sight of him one time.

Ben and his family have purchased a motel in Balsam Lake, Wisconsin so we go there to celebrate my 65th birthday in 1996. Marcel is playing the part of Mash in the Balsam Lake High School play. We have great fun going to see this play and exploring their life in Balsam Lake. When Marcel graduates from high school in Balsam Lake, Rodney, Mary and I join that event also.

My sister Pam calls one day in 1996 and suggests we join her to go birding in Kenya. The American Birding Association is sponsoring the trip to celebrate the publication of a new *East African Bird Book*. We immediately say, "yes" and are so glad that we did. The leaders suggest we change vehicles and guides each day and that sounds fine. But when we meet Dave Richards in Tsavo, our second stop we know immediately that we want to stay with him. At one point, I ask him if he ever takes small groups. Our next grandson's trip coming up in a year or two is on my mind. Dave comments, "I have taken just one person several times." This begins a series of birding trips in Africa and sets our minds to working on our next trip with him.

During the summer of 1998 seventeen-year-old Jeffrey joins us for a photographic safari in Kenya. On the flight to Nairobi I have an incredible experience. I come awake as we approach the Libyan coast. Solid desert, a few dusty settlements along the coast and then desert endlessly. It is rough sand terrain, then for a long time it is long undulating, parallel mounds of sand and then it looks like just flat sand. It is all the Sahara Desert and I can't quit looking at it.

In Nairobi we stay at the Ngong House and look out over the Ngong Hills. The name of these fascinating hills means "knuckles" in Masai and I love them for the way they look like a group of knuckles.



Ngong Hills

The first morning Dave picks us up and we go to the Nairobi Game Park. Joseph, a nineteen-year-old Masai is training to be a guide and is with us the whole trip. We see an ostrich couple eating from a bush near the car and we can see the lump in their long throats as they raise up their heads to let the food go down. Val, Dave's wife, meets us for lunch at the Carnivore Restaurant. I have tilapia filets and Jeff has zebra, hartebeest and ostrich.

We spend two and a half wonderful weeks logging 363 species of birds and 63 different mammals. Nature photographer and author Dave Richards gives great professional advice so our photographic work is great fun. One morning during breakfast Dave gets a phone call from his wife. She has given him a number for me to call. My surprise comes when I call and our daughter answers the phone in the Evanston Hospital. She has just birthed their son, Warren. I discover myself most intrigued because Warren's birth has happened on July 4th.

After exploring around Samburu we drive to Lake Baringo. There we go by boat to a lodge on an island in the middle of the lake. On one of the trips to the mainland we drive south to Lake Bogoria. This is Jeffrey's first view of flamingos and they are mating. He takes a fabulous shot of a single greater flamingo with his reflection in the water with Dave's 600mm lens.

Our last stopping place is in the Mara at the Mara Intrepids Camp. We spot a herd of ten to twelve elephants and one of the

mother elephants gets annoyed at us being there. She starts toward us, really angry but doesn't have her ears back. Dave says that is the worst. Dave tells us that the elephant charging us is "torn ear" – the one who put her tusk through the back of his car several years ago.

On the drive back to Nairobi Dave stops on a hilltop with a beautiful vista and suggests we just sit there and enjoy Africa. It is a magical moment. I sit on the top of the vehicle...then Dave climbs up and sits on the top also. Rodney takes a couple of shots of that ideal moment.

The following year we join singers and spouses of the Village Presbyterian Church for a concert tour of Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Italy. Two of the special places where we sing are Milan Cathedral where I have great fun wandering over the roof alone and St. Peters in Rome. This special quality time with a fantastic talented group is specially amazing as the singing with the group is awesome.

We have a year of rebuilding in our home on Tomahawk Road. First we redo the downstairs porch on the back of the house. We are simply going to redo the windows, but when we take them out we discover a corner of the floor is rotten so it involves a bit more work.

Then because one of the electricians makes a comment to me about how the upstairs would be excellent bedrooms, we go to work up there. Originally there is just one small bedroom and a bathroom. But we construct a larger bathroom and two large rooms...one a bedroom and one my office. We are excited about this addition to our home.

We rent houses in Avon on Hatteras Island for several years. Then in the spring of 1998 Debbie Martin calls and tells us that the house we have rented for next summer is for sale. We had walked through this house briefly and it is on the ocean so we know it is lovely. We call her back and say we don't have time to buy furniture, etc. and then she reassures us that it is all ready to move in. We have a brief struggle and then we decide, "yes, we will buy it." Rodney returns to Hatteras Island to sign the papers and in spite of years of saying we didn't want two houses Blue Heaven is now ours.

We manage to spend a couple of weeks on Hatteras Island every year for several years. Blue Heaven is located on the ocean and we become transfixed walking that beach. When we bought the house it was full of cat pictures but gradually I replace them with bird pictures. I spend a lot of time taking, printing and framing bird pictures.



Blue Heaven

One day I am sitting in Blue Heaven's upstairs living room and thinking how everything is blue... this is Blue Heaven. I sit on the chaise lounge and look across a blue tabletop, through the ice blue oil of an oil lamp to a very pale gray blue sky and darker gray blue ocean. The waving sea grass at the top of the dune is drawing my attention as I watch it blow back and forth over and over.

One early morning Rodney and I are on the beach all alone except for a few willets and sanderlings. The air is so much more refreshing at that hour of the day. After a nice walk and some experiments with photo shots in terms of waves and light, we go back to the house and breakfast on bacon, hardboiled eggs, donuts and cantaloupe. Such a "together" time for the two of us is dumbfounding. I love being with the family, but time just with Rodney becomes more than special as we have become more like one person. By late afternoon we sit on our deck and watch white thunderhead clouds move and become flat gray clouds across the sky.



The year 2000 is an amazing year. Rodney and I go to Malaysia to bird and visit Ann and John Epps. We stop for a day in Singapore on the way. Our taxi driver cannot believe we do not want to go shopping. That seems to be the reason everyone comes to that town. We just have him take us to several parks so we can hunt for birds. Then when we get to Malaysia I locate a bird guide who takes us off for several days to look for more birds. She is very good at finding the birds and naming them for us.

We spend several incredible days with the Epps before we go off birding some more. Then we fly over to Sabah on Malaysia's other island. We go to a wilderness camp and spend two days with a young guide. This guy knows the birds well but hasn't been a guide long enough to know how to help his clients find them. So I spend a lot of time talking with him about how to work with birders. It is a strange mixture of my time.

When I turn seventy in 2001 I retire from TeamTech Inc and my "active service" in facilitation and training. I have been spending less time facilitating processes with clients and I have decided that I want to capture in print what we've learned through the years. I begin to think about how to write what we've learned over the many years we've worked with clients. *The Facilitative Way, Leadership That Makes the Difference* assembles facilitative methods and stories from thirty-five years of experience. I do not have a publisher so I decide to self-publish. I find a man who lays the book out beautifully and then I send it to be printed. It serves as a tool for other trainers across the globe. When about 1,600 copies sold almost immediately it obviously provides something that people are using and finding helpful. I decide to incorporate myself as TeamTech Press.

15 Exploring Africa

In 2000 Rodney and I go with Pam and Dave Richards to Kenya and Tanzania. The most startling part of that trip is the day we spend in Ngorogoro Crater. That day is my Dad's birthday. He had raved about the Crater. We saw why. The road into the Crater descends through Montane forest where many of the trees are covered in lichens and moss. As we enter the Crater we realize that three cheetahs are asleep on the road ahead of us. We stop and just watch for a while. Finally they move and we explore the Crater. The hardest to see is one pond with several drowned hippos lying in it. That is tough. We spend the rest of our two weeks exploring several of Tanzania's camps.

In 2001 Rodney and I join a small group led by Kevin Sink for a photography week in Maine. It is so different from anything else we have done. We have a glorious time aiming our cameras at something different constantly. We are amazed at how we make a busted canoe look great and a stretch of rocks on a beach shine and sparkle.

We also travel to south Florida for a week of birding. We are astounded by our journey to the Dry Tortugas National Park that is on an island. The place is covered with warblers landing absolutely exhausted on the island. We would sit still and see warblers all over the place. On the boat returning to Miami a warbler even flew into the boat and crawled across my hand. We got back to Miami and the abundance of warblers are the front page news of their local newspaper.

In December Dave Richards is in the USA for a meeting in Chicago. We invite him to Kansas City for a few days and have a

wonderful time. For one birding trip, we go to see the Snow Geese landing in Squaw Creek, ninety miles north of Kansas City. They have been coming in by the hundreds. We drive up there with Dave, knowing it is our best birding view in December. We drive around the area and see no Snow Geese at all. We have looked and looked, finally we decide to give up and go home. About the time we start the car the geese flock in by the hundreds. We sit there for ages in astonishment watching the geese eat.

We invite a number of our friends over one evening to see Dave's slides and hear what he has to say about a safari in Africa. Our friends are astonished and several act like they might go with Dave on safari, but I don't think anyone ever did.

I drive my sister, Pam to the Texas Panhandle to see our cousin David who is quite ill. While there we go south to Canyon and drive through the Palo Duro Canyon. We talk about our Mother and her sister Laura riding horseback through the Canyon before their marriages and enjoying parties at the JA Ranch. No one is home at the Ranch so we just poke around outside. We laugh at the building that houses an outside post office.

Mary divorces Steve and moves to Prairie Village with her children. I struggle with this reality. I have to choose to let this marriage go even though it is all a bit mysterious to me. However I support her as best I can.

Rodney goes on one more trip with me to Africa. Rodney and I are awestruck exploring the dock area of Cape Town, the first city where we arrive. We have planned this trip for a year so in 2002 we meet Dave Richards, our guide for birding.

Dave came into the Cape Grace Hotel shortly after we did. This trip includes Pam and Karl and takes us into totally new places. We go around the bottom of the Cape of Good Hope to Boulders Beach to see the penguins and then spend a day driving north to Kirstenbosch National Botanic Garden. Hiking through Cape Town's Kirstenbosch famous botanical garden introduces us to indigenous plants of South Africa. Our cameras stay frantically busy as we walk through miles of greens, fuchsias, golds, oranges, reds and purples. The indescribable beauty of the flowers and birds, particularly the sunbirds, leaves us breathless. This garden nestles at the eastern foot of Table Mountain, a "must see" of Cape Town. Rodney says, "Why do repair tasks have to close the cableway today? How disappointing."



Dave Richards and South African children

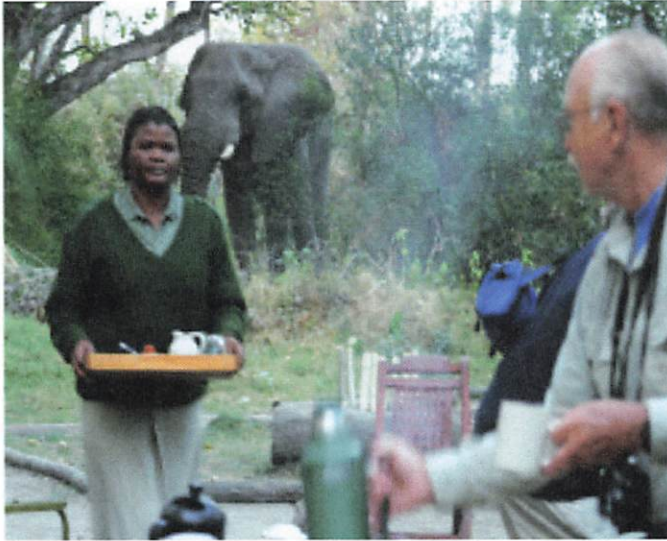
Next we fly north to Botswana and fly to Jacana Camp. All the travel in Botswana's Okavango Delta is by plane as each camp is surrounded by water and land with no roads between camps. The Okavango Delta supports many birds and animals we haven't seen before.

We first go out in a Mokora, which is like a dug-out canoe, only polled. It is unbelievably quiet and peaceful. We have great fun looking for birds and admiring wildflowers—(especially the wildflowers).



Priscilla and Rodney in a Mokora

The second morning we have great drama at breakfast time. We are eating out on the patio...and suddenly a large elephant comes walking through and knocking things over. We all scramble out of the way and no one is hurt.



In the morning we stop to have coffee under a baobab tree that Dave estimates is 1,000 years old. It is huge. That afternoon we go out in the Mokora again to find the Pel's Fishing Owl. Dave says he looks like a teddy bear. We all see that owl and agree with Dave that it resembles a teddy bear sitting in a tree.

Our next plane takes us to Kaporata Camp. Tony, an avid birder and photographer meets us at the airstrip. Driving back to camp we see a sable antelope, a simply beautiful endangered animal. I am stunned by the strength of that animal. The land is a hot dry deserty scrub that Tony says is part of the Kalahari Desert. Then we pass some wet marshy, forest areas and woodlands plus a few green areas. We spent a lot of our time while at the Kaporata Camp following two lions who wander all over the place.

Next we fly over the beautiful marshy area of the Okavango Delta to Pom Pom camp. The guides have all gone to the city for some training so Map Ivens joins us as our guide. He is the guru of the Okavanga and trainer of all the guides. Besides great birding Map steps out of the vehicle and describes the last million years of the Okavanga Delta. We are all stunned by his descriptions. Our

sundowner is in the camp that evening and we watch hundreds of birds fly into the swamp over the reeds in front of us. Our talk quiets and we stare stunned by the number of birds.



Linyati is our last Okavanga camp. On the way into the camp from the airstrip we stop and photograph a bunch of lady lions snoozing on a termite mound.

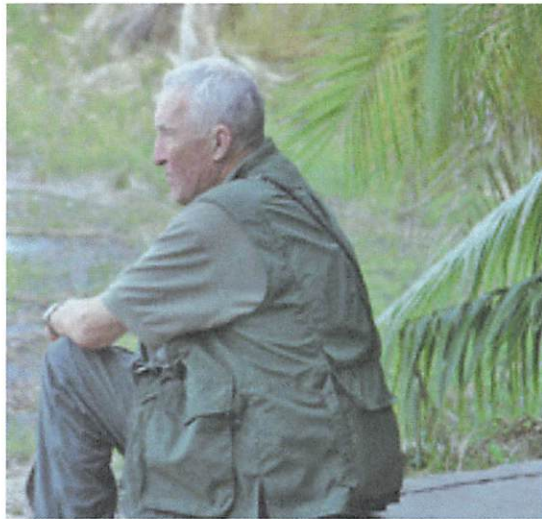


Linyati is a lovely spot for a camp and our tent is right on the edge of the river. The next morning, I am the first to see the Giant Eagle Owl and then we spot three of them. At one point we are practically surrounded by carmine bee-eaters.

That afternoon after our rest time Dave comes to get me because the barred owl is quite close in the camp. We shoot some great pictures of him. Rodney is suffering a tough headache so he sleeps all afternoon.

The next morning we travel most of a three-hour game drive in rain ponchos on our way to the airstrip to our next place.

Our flight to Kasane is uneventful and Duncan from Wilderness drives us to Victoria Falls. We are in Zimbabwe and the Victoria Falls Hotel is a quite lovely old British hotel. The next morning, we walk over to the Falls Park. I become very busy taking pictures of the falls. The water is at a lower level so we can actually see the water falling and spraying. Dave tells us that when the water is at a high level you really can't even see any of it.



Rodney at Victoria Falls

Rodney and I pause at one point to give each other a big hug and kiss. This is to celebrate our fifty years of marriage. We then walk on to the end of the path where we can see the bridge, cars, train, and people.

That afternoon Pam, Karl and I go for a fifteen minute helicopter ride over the falls. It is all too fast but is stunningly beautiful. When

we return I ask our driver if he knows where I might buy a wood-carved wildebeest. We stop and he talks to one of the shop guys who goes off and soon comes back with a lovely wildebeest. I pay fifty dollars for it and Rodney is absolutely thrilled. The wildebeest is Rodney's favorite animal.

Dave manages to locate a boat to take us on the river the next morning. It is a couple of good hours of birds, cool breeze and fun. We have a leisurely lunch before our flight back to Jo'burg.

The next morning Dave leaves very early for Nairobi. Rodney and I go down to see him off before we eat breakfast. Then one of the Wilderness drivers picks up Pam, Karl, Rodney and me for a tour of Soweto. He drives past Nelson Mandela's current house then out to Soweto. There was a current ruling that the original houses, four room brick houses, could not be improved or changed. The people did not own the houses, but then after Mandela became president the houses were given to the people. There are two areas in the area of squatter shacks with no water or electricity that look grim.

We also go through the Hector Museum that depicts the events around the school children marching to ask to learn English instead of Afrikaans. A couple hundred of the children were killed when the police opened fire on them. We see Nelson Mandela's house and Desmond Tutu's house. As our driver points out this may be the only street in the world that produced two Nobel Prize Winners.

We return to the hotel and I find out that the Apartheid Museum is open that afternoon. The others don't want to go so I quickly get a taxi to take me there. I ask the driver to wait to return me to the hotel. As I enter the building I draw a non-white card that the blacks used to carry with them. A fifteen-minute film starts with the first bushmen and goes through South Africa's history. The photos when Mandela first became president are awesome and I discover that tears fill my eyes.

Our driver to the airport tells us that the percent of the people now voting is only about 45%. I am grateful that I had my hurried trip through the Apartheid Museum.

This varied trip through southern Africa has allowed me to focus on birds and animals as well as having a sense of what the variety of people have experienced.

To live through three weeks of any trip leaves us weary by the time we return home. However, as a capstone for our fiftieth anniversary we agree, "This tops it all."

16

Exploring Vast Activities

Rodney and I drive from Kansas City to the Outer Banks in April 2002. What an amazing time we have visiting folks we've known forever. The second night out we stay with Mary Ann and Harry Wainwright in Asheville. Bill and Marianna Bailey join us at Wainwrights for dinner. They both live in Asheville. That was a fun time as we all chattered all evening. Then the next day we drive to Greensboro and eat lunch with Lynda and John Cock. John has just written another book which I buy. I love hearing what my colleagues have to say about life.

The next night we stay in Durham and go to dinner with my sister's daughter and son-in-law Laura and David Cecelski. It isn't a restaurant that is designed to serve kids so just the four of us go to dinner. Laura and David are two of my favorite people. We have a great time sharing stories of all we have been doing.

Rodney and I finally arrive at Blue Heaven Wednesday evening and I talk with my cousin Warren Fatheree. He lets me know that he is under hospice care. He is one of my favorite cousins so I figure I will need to fly to Amarillo soon but hope that will be after we arrive back home. Warren's brother David calls the next morning to tell me that Warren died later Wednesday evening and the funeral will be held Saturday. I gulp twice and arrange a flight for me on Friday through Dallas and then call my sister, Pam.

Friday Pam and I fly out of Dallas and the plane runs into fog. The pilot sets our plane down in Abilene. We struggle briefly with the question of going on to Amarillo or returning to Dallas. We decide to leave the plane, rent a car and drive to Amarillo. We make it to Amarillo by early morning the next day and the graveside

service is at 10:15. Wow! We barely make it in time for all of the activities. At the graveside service we find my cousins, Marilyn and Dwight plus Marilyn's oldest son, Robert.

After the graveside service we return for the Memorial Service at an Episcopal Church. Then we go back to Ann and Warren's house, all the family and a number of their closest friends are there. The evening is spent with drinks, hamburgers and conversation. Robert Campbell, Marilyn's oldest and I talk for quite a bit. Mostly we talk about Laura Ann House and Abel Warren, our great grandparents. Hobie Fatheree is my favorite cousin and I enjoy talking with he and his wife, Ann.

Sunday morning Pam and I drive the back roads to Pampa. Something surprising occurs at the side of the road. We get out of the car to check out the field to look for any birds that might be around. We are startled when about nine or ten black crowned herons fly up from the ditch. Herons are usually near water and we don't see any water there.

We finally arrive in Pampa and first drive past the White Deer Land Museum to see if it is open. It is open so we stop there for a while to check out various exhibits. Our mother's wedding dress is no longer displayed, but an exhibit of Nanaw and Papa's clothes they wore when they went to England are a delight to see. Then we drive past Aunt Laura's house on the way to the cemetery. We find baby TD Hobart's gravestone. Then we see Minnie Hobart's stone, son Warren's, Brother Ferrands, and T.D. Hobart who are all buried there.

We finally arrive back at Nanaw's house, Dwight's house now. Marilyn is there and takes us all over the house. It seems strange to wander through that house; it brings back a lot of memories of our playing there as a child. Mary Beth and David Fatheree join us for a delightful lunch. The Fatheree's take us to the office building to see their offices which are full of Pampa historical pictures.

Before returning to the Amarillo airport I manage to take Pam to the Palo Duro Canyon near Canyon. We entertain each other remembering stories from Mother's letters to her Mother. The best story is the one time she and her sister Laura removed their clothes and carried them over their heads. They are crossing a swollen creek and look up to see a cowboy on the bluff watching this whole process. They are slightly embarrassed, but then laugh at the whole situation. I love reliving our Mother's stories.

Late in the spring of 2002 thirteen of my New Woman Forum's friends arrive in Kansas City to spend several days at my house. We will have time to enjoy each other's company but also will try to think through what the future looks like for us. We have a great time chattering with each other plus doing some good work. However, we discover that thinking up what the future looks like is much harder than remembering the past. It remains rather abstract, but our time together is spent laughing together and thinking hard as we contemplate the future.



Marian Lies, La Verne Phillips, Georgianna McBurney, Sally Myers, Priscilla Wilson, Kitty Cole, Carol Kittermaster, Betty Hill, Anne Wood, Lynda Tideman, Sarah Booher, Carol Wiley, Mary Warren Moffett, Betty Pesek

We have another death in February 2003. Our friend, David Pangum Wood dies of lung cancer. David's wife, Anne asks me to say a few words during the funeral so Mary and I head to Miami Florida. I ponder what I will say as we fly. Besides Anne and her five kids (Susan, Emily, Priscilla, Davey and Jennifer) we will see Betty Pesek, Kay and Geoff and LaVerne and Jim Phillips. Rodney decides not to join us.

I am surprised that Raymond Spencer's and my reflections are the only talks in the service. Raymond's talk is very fine and more like a sermon. My talk is more a personal remembrance and stories. When I start to talk I nearly cry. But I pause, look away from Anne and manage to talk. The Tagore poem I had planned to read had been printed on the program so I don't read it. I am delighted that Mary

came with me, as company, a driver and a gift to the Wood family. They have all known each other from our Chicago days. She, Susan and Emily have fun talking about Red Pine Camp. All three girls went to Red Pine years ago at different times and loved it.

That fall I hear that some organization in New York City is requesting facilitators come from across the country to lead table conversations to examine the question of what needs to be built where the World Trade Centers were destroyed last year. I am intrigued, apply and am accepted to lead two days of table conversation. I talk with Sandra True to ask if I can stay in their apartment. She tells me she will be in Africa, but I can certainly come and stay there with her husband. It all becomes a fascinating time...and I do manage to go down to see the absolute mess where the World Trade Centers had stood. I am struck again by how anyone anywhere can create such an absolute dismal mess.

Pam has been anxious to go to Brazil to see the Hyacinth Macaw for ages and in 2003 I agree to go with her. We have met a Brazilian bird guide who came to the United States, so we hire him to take us. We have an amazing time spotting a lot of different kinds of birds. Plus we are shocked to discover a couple of trees that have a whole bunch of Hyacinth Macaws flying back and forth between them.

Then Pam and I leave our guide and fly down to Iguazu (Iguazú) Falls which is located on the Iguazu River on the border between Brazil and Argentina. There are two national parks, one in each country that protect the wildlife and the surrounding rainforest. We stay in a lovely hotel on the Brazil side of the falls and take a helicopter ride over the falls for a spectacular view. In some ways these falls are more fascinating to look at because they are spread out more than the Victoria Falls in Africa.

Tina comes south to our house in 2003. I am most surprised when she expresses a desire to hunt for a house so they can move to Kansas. When we phone Ben to come down and see what she has found he is slightly amazed. I am never real sure why they decide to move away from Minnesota. He comes and they buy a house a block west of our church. It is fun having them here in Prairie Village. But then Phaedra and Marcel birth Zander in a year so Ben and Tina decide to return to Minnesota.

At Village Church I am full of myself. I truly become a part of this community although I have had experiences that keep me feel-

ing a bit superior. I teach a class on Aging that is well attended. Then for some transforming reason I am asked in 2003 to join our pastor nominating committee. What an eye-opener. Seismic shifts have been taking place in my soul ever since.

Serving with the young people on the Pastor Nominating Committee turns me upside down. I enter that task thinking I know so much but find the learning curve is still very steep. My faith journey continues as I realize that these young people know as much or more than I do. We meet with a number of possible ministers. In teams of two we go visit three or four men. I even go on one of the visiting teams. There are hard choices. Finally we decide on our future pastor and invite him to come preach at Village. Tom Are is the pastor we call to come to Village Presbyterian Church in 2004 and we could not have chosen anyone better.

It is all an awesome journey. Anchoring me in the Word of God are the worship songs that I have been singing most of my life in choirs. What a gift and joy to serve on the Pastor Nominating Committee and to realize all of this when Reverend Tom Are is installed as our new pastor on Easter day.

I discovered myself rethinking my beliefs that have to do with the community of the church. By fall I find myself more involved with Village Presbyterian Church as a community. Continuing in the choir is a must for me, but I also serve on the Christian Nurture Committee and teach a Sunday morning class: Living the Question. I decide when that course is finished that I am not as quick and sharp as I used to be so I believe that is the last of my teaching. It seems strange to make that decision, but I do seem to be getting older. I've had a wonderful teaching life in all that I have done, but it is time to tell myself that I am finished with that piece of my life. Nothing particular happened, but I just experience myself not being as sharp as I have been in the past.

I thought I knew so much, but I discover that the learning curve is still steep. Juggling family with everything else takes effort. I keep discovering new ways of giving myself...including the whole question of how to be an author.

Easter weekend of 2003 I go a radical new direction. I travel to Holy Mountain Meditation Center in Brenham Texas for a weekend retreat in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Dr. Larry Ward is our guide in this weekend of practicing mindfulness with life's fresh-

ness, clarity and serenity. The weekend consists of sitting and walking meditation in silence. Then during the meals Larry shares Thich Nhat Hanh's understanding of mindfulness. It is an amazing time and I so enter our times of silence that I almost resent talking when the weekend closes. This is a time of honest reflection for me and I deeply appreciate it.

In the spring of 2004 we invite Bob and Sandy Rafos from Toronto plus Bob and Cynthia Vance from Miami to come to Kansas to bird with us. We hire a big van and drive up to Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivera Wildlife. We have a great time Cheyenne Bottoms can be wonderful birding most of the time. But sometimes it is slim on birds. This birding trip we had to work hard to find birds, but the six of us had a glorious time. "Kansas is a difficult place to go birding." Yes, harder than where either of them live but a super time while we are all here together.

Our first great grandchild is born in March 2004: Alexander Ryan Wilson to Marcel and Phaedra Wilson. It becomes a curious time for me to figure out just what a great grandmother is about. Seeing Zander is fun, but I am unsure how I am to behave at this point. I realize that I am one step back from grandparents, Ben and Tina, in terms of relating to great grandchildren.

Rodney and I return to Blue Heaven in April 2004. We are having much of the house reconstructed and push the construction guys. At Blue Heaven we are "camping out" upstairs and eating out every night. The space is awesomely different than it was before. One day about forty or fifty dolphins play around in the ocean in front of our house for a couple of hours. One highlight happens during a plane ride from Frisco up to Bodie Island Lighthouse. Dwight Burrus flies the small plane and we are awe struck looking at all of the land and sea below. We manage to get the kitchen put together before we leave. Our whole time is remarkably lovely.

At the end of our time in Hatteras we spend a fantastic two-day journey driving to the Raleigh-Durham airport. We take off from Avon about 7:15 in the morning. South Pond at Pea Island is covered with shore birds. Probably 90% of them are dunlins, but herons, willets, semipalmated plovers, Wilson plovers, and western sandpipers are all there. We stop just before the Bonner Bridge and watch a great egret begging fish bits from two fishermen sitting by the water.

After Manteo we drive down the East coast along the Alligator River Wildlife Area. We don't really see anything but pretty country

on a practically deserted two-lane highway. We drive to the end of the road at Stumpy Point and only see a Carolina wren and a road gang of inmates.

We stop at Lake Mattamuskeet and walk out on the dike road. Not a lot of birds, but I see a yellow-billed cuckoo which is new for the trip. We drive on to Greenville and spend the night. It turns into a ten-hour trip that should be made in about three and a half hours if you aren't having as much fun as we had.

We drive on to Durham and go to the Duke Gardens. They are beautiful gardens but we don't see a lot of birds. We have fun puzzling over a hooded merganser who doesn't have his hood up and is displaying. We fly home from Durham.

We miss the first part of our Alaska birding trip to stay in Prairie Village to celebrate Ben's 50th birthday party. But then we take off to join a group in Alaska for a fabulous birding time. Sunlight burns longer in Alaska than it does in Kansas so we want to forget going to bed and just bird longer.

The group goes to Nome and ventures out across the tundra looking for birds. Rodney stays with the car and I slowly follow a group going up a tundra-covered hill, but finally they are too far ahead of me and I realize that I am by myself. I can still see our cars down on the road, but much further and I could get lost. I sit down for a while to ponder my next move and decide to head back down the hill while I still know where I am. It becomes quite an adventure and walking the tundra is amazingly hard, but I do see a few birds.

I've been active in the church since we came back to Kansas. However a group of us beyond our church are working to put together a Festival of Faiths in the metropolitan area in the fall 2007. There is a lot of inner faith activity, and we're trying to broaden and expand it to shine a more spotlighted eye on it. Three of us meet together for several months. Then we begin to broaden our work and we talk through care, compassion, empathy, and creative human relationships in terms of expanding our understanding of faith. This becomes a significant occupation for several years. We are called to see as far as our holy imagination takes us and envision the world anew.

Two facets have been important to me. One in terms of what I do and the other is talking about things in terms of interior life. My interior life basically comes from the music in my church choir. When I've stopped and thought about it, that's been true since – for many years. But there's something about the incredible music and

the poetry – and I have to translate the ancient poetry in the hymns sometimes, but that’s all right – it is all extremely sustaining.

Even though grandmother and great grandmother roles have now joined my repertoire, I remain open to whatever is new. I take on the role of exploring Africa for a number of years. I suspect that I have said the same things for at least forty years. Threads of varying shades and textures have woven a fabric of possibilities to share. As a group of women in the 60s the “new women” began as volunteers who decided to “save the world.” We since scatter across many professions and geographies to share what we have learned.

Pioneering today involves women preserving patterns from the past to conserve life. Now women are called to forge dynamics that protect and nurture the human adventure for the future. We are called to see as far as our holy imagination takes us and envision the world anew.

17

More Exploration of the World

After our second parent's death in 1994, my sister discovers a stack of letters Nanaw (our grandmother) had written. Pam types a lot of them, and we are amazed to learn that we have twenty years' worth of letters that our grandmother had written in Texas and sent to her mother in Vermont after she got married. So from 1888 until 1908 she wrote weekly or every other week letters describing her life. She was a good writer. Then we have my mother's diaries from her college years, the '20's, which periodically talk about her mother. Plus we have the letters that our grandmother wrote our mother after she got married. I feel like I am almost antipatriotic if I don't compile all of this in a book. Plus the Hobart family had purchased cameras almost as soon as they were invented. So a lot of pictures can be included in this book.

I make several trips to gather information and data. I go to Texas to talk with my cousins Hobie Fatheree and Marilyn Hobart. They are helpful in filling out times and information that I don't have. I visit the Panhandle Plains Museum archive library in Canyon, Texas. Their archives have several interviews that L.F. Sheffy had with Minnie when he wrote his book on T. D. Hobart. Then in Canyon Rodney and I visit the Palo Duro Canyon State Park and have a wonderful time imaging my Mother and Aunt Laura riding horses through there in their youth.

We also go to Vermont to talk to folks in Montpelier and Berlin. We agree that we will return to Montpelier and do a presentation in the Public Library when I finish compiling this book.

I write the manuscript and send it out to several people to check it out for me. They are all most complimentary so I get the book *A Pioneer Love Story* published.

Our eight-year old grandson, Warren asks me one day, “How do you get to be an author?” He’s very impressed. In fact, the first time we meet his teacher at school last year, she says, “Oh, you’re the author.” He repeats, “How do you get to be an author?” I say, “Well, you sit down at a computer and you start typing or you can get a pen or pencil and paper, and you start writing.” He says, “No, no, no. I don’t mean that. I mean how do you sell it?” That is going straight to the heart of the matter.

In March 2006 I drop my writing for a while and Rodney and I take off to go birding in Hawaii with Bob and Sandy Rafos from Toronto. We all have a great time. Somewhere on one of the islands that seem strange because I had not thought of it before we celebrate my birthday. Bob is asked to comment about me on my birthday. He laughs and starts talking about all the ways I celebrate my life with writing, birding, exploring, etc.

Later that year Rodney has a series of TIAs (Transient Ischemic Attack is a temporary period of symptoms similar to those of a stroke) and spends several bouts in the hospital. In between these episodes he seems to do fine. This sets me to worrying about him.

One of our most dramatic times in 2006 is when we decide to change our finances. The bank in Arkansas City is purchased by folks we do not know who don’t seem to be running things quite right. We decide to follow Chuck Lyman from Arkansas City to the Manhattan Trust Company in Manhattan Kansas. This is a smart move and all goes well.

In 2006 our whole family goes to Costa Rica for Christmas. We rent several cabins in Parque Nacional Manuel Antonio. This venture is a celebration of several milestones across our family. Rodney’s 80th birthday, Tim’s 50th birthday, Phaedra’s 30th birthday, and Jeffrey’s exit from the Army are all major celebration moments. We love the diversity of tropical plants and wildlife, from three-toed sloths and endangered white-faced capuchin monkeys to hundreds of bird species. But swimming in several of the pools connected to the cabins excites us all the most. We all have an incredibly fun time in Costa Rica swimming, celebrating and enjoying each other. It is an amazingly good time with only a very little bit of tension arising one evening as we talk together. This makes for a bit of confusion, but we manage to move past this as a family.

In the spring of 2007 Pam and I spend time exploring St. Mark National Wildlife Refuge in the Panhandle of Florida. We see a lot of water birds but few of the smaller birds. The funniest happen-

ing is watching an Eastern Towhee hop up and down and across the windshield of a parked car in the parking lot. We are in the middle of the breeding season and he is all hopped up. At one point he even hopped into the car's grill.

Before we leave St. Mark we drive around to the boat launch side of the Lighthouse Pond. A whole tree full of cattle egrets in breeding plumage comes into view, plus a lot of shore birds and finally a reddish egret far out doing the dance he does as he searches for bugs. We see a lot of soras and have one glance at a black rail. We laugh and rejoice at all the fun we are having.

I get out of the car by the beach before we go on to the parking lot. Then when I arrive at the parking lot I can't find Pam. She had stayed at the beach because her diabetic blood sugar had crashed after I went away. She has been busy stuffing food into her mouth. Fortunately she doesn't get so low that her brain quits working. She is just to the fuzzy point.

The next day we drive back to Tallahassee and Pam returns to Kansas City. I fly to Orlando and spend several days with Jeffrey and Vickie (our grandson and his first wife),

A totally other vista is New York City. Pam and I go there in the fall with a group of twenty people from Kansas City in order to have the thrill of singing the Durufle Requiem. This is with over 200 voices in Carnegie Hall. The whole New York trip is special but singing in Carnegie Hall is the most special.

We also want to look for birds in Central Park, that magnificent expanse of green, water and paths. We see some good birds and enjoy the park. My ebb of physical energy is stronger than anticipated. However, only two half days in the park about did us in with everything else.

Laura (Pam's daughter), her husband David, and kids Vera and Guy come to the concert, eat with us one night and have us venturing on the subway twice. Long conversations with both Laura and David about life in general are wonderful moments of enjoyment.

After breakfast Pam and I take a taxi to the Ground Zero Memorial, The National September 11 Memorial & Museum. I expect it to look different but am surprised at how different it is.

I no longer see a desolate hole, but an active site of much rebuilding. It is hard to imagine the tragedy and desolation. Hatred is so foreign to my soul and I have a hard time realizing what happened here. When I think about the reality of that day and the subsequent actions of our government I fear for our children's children. But I

experience the site as hopeful and the ability to rebuild and recover as innate in the human soul.

The next summer, 2008, Rodney and I take off on a two week adventure through Texas and New Mexico. We safely arrive at the Hudsbeth House in Canyon, Texas. This is a comfortable bed and breakfast that was built in 1909 and is quite lovely. The first day we go to the Panhandle Plains Pioneer Museum to do some research on Minnie Hobart's life. We are intrigued with the JA Ranch exhibit and we also go upstairs to see the Santa Fe Railway's collection of material.

Then the next day we are off to the Palo Duro Canyon. The billowing white clouds, sharp blue sky and the multi-color Palo Duro Canyon fill me with awe. After gazing across the flatness of the green plains the rift in the earth of the canyon walls had to have been a surprise to those who first discovered it.

Rodney and I take three short walks but mostly miss the birds. However, a singing painted bunting presents himself to both of us. I love driving through the Canyon and I think of my Mother and all her horseback riding through this area. The last evening in the Canyon Rodney and I go to the Texas pageant and enjoy a meal and the history of that territory.



Rodney and Priscilla having dinner in the Canyon

We drive to Santa Fe and stay in the Hacienda at Hotel Santa Fe which is very expensive but quite lovely. I rise early and drive out Canyon Road and Upper Canyon Road to the Audubon Center. I join a birding group but we don't see many birds, but just viewing the countryside is fun.

The next morning, I take the shuttle into town to the Loretta Chapel. During the small open bus tour of the city I take a bunch of pictures of hollyhocks. Our tour guide then explains that the hollyhock is Santa Fe's symbol. We see blue doors on adobe houses and are told that these are left over from Native American beliefs. A blue door keeps the evil spirits away. Our guide is excellent, and takes us around the Plaza area, up Canyon Road full of galleries and around to the highest point in the city. Santa Fe became a community in this spot because the Indians knew that there was a large underground lake here. Water is always a crucial item out here on the desert.

The next day we drive north toward Ghost Ranch with a stop in Abiqui for an excellent lunch. We drive on to Ghost Ranch and are overcome by the red cliffs and high desert beauty. We check in and discover we are assigned to Coyote I, up on the Mesa. With our handicap card we can park next to our door. I worry about Rodney and the heat. After dinner Rodney isn't feeling too well and we take his blood pressure. Scares me when we see it is 202. However, the next morning his blood pressure is back to 125 so we relax.

Our class on mindful writing meets each morning and we spend time in the library in the evening. The land and its beauty portray a healing, calming influence for us both. Thousands of years ago a massive volcanic eruption spewed lava across the land, carving out canyons, cliffs and peaks. Around Ghost Ranch is particularly awesome. It is easy to understand why Georgia O'Keefe chose that territory for her painting environment for forty years.

At the end of our week at Ghost Ranch we return to Albuquerque and Kaze Gadway joins us at a lovely bed and breakfast. We work on both her writing and my writing. The three of us go for long walks and do a bit of shopping. Rodney stays feeling well and it turns into a super time for all three of us. I enjoy being around Kaze as I experience her as another sister. I didn't feel the need for healing when I left home, but I experienced a deep caring for my soul as I engage in our deep reflections and conversations.

When we return home I am startled looking out my office window one day to discover three quite young Cooper Hawks sitting in our oak tree. I stop doing any work and concentrate on these birds.

Mama Hawk arrives and begins the task of teaching these three young birds how to pull apart a piece of bird and eat plus how to go down and drink from my bird bath. I discover their nest is in a tree in the front yard across the street. For about a month I spend most of my time watching these birds and taking a lot of pictures. They are still around when we leave in the fall on vacation but gone by the time we come back.

In March another great grandchild misses Priscilla's birthday by a week. Isobel Josephine Wilson (Izzy is her everyday name) arrives March 17 to the joy of her dad, Marcel, our oldest grandson, her mom Phaedra and brother, Zander. We take Nora to Minnesota with us to welcome Izzy into the world and celebrate Zander's 4th birthday.

That fall, after several years of puzzling and pondering our multi-faith committee introduces the Festival of Faith to the community. A wide variety of folks attend the events we offer. All goes well and we are excited by this new venture. We believe that we have reached some people for whom a variety of faiths talking together is a new concept.

In 2008 Rodney and I join the group from Village Church choir tour to go to England. We fly first to Manchester to deliver a couple of boxes of *The Facilitative Way* to Martin Gilbrath, a colleague who will sell these books. This is the first book I wrote and I am pleased to sell so many books to be used in England. We enjoy our time with him just talking about the training events he is holding. We then take a train to Harlaxton Manor to meet the rest of our tour group. When the train arrives at Nottingham all are told to get off because of an emergency problem. I go to the ticket office immediately and am told they will furnish a bus, without charge to Grantham.

Our first concert is the next day in Lincoln. Our friend Ann Avery lives in a village near Lincoln so she comes for the concert. She finds Rodney and listens to our choir's rehearsal. She enjoys the concert and then rides the choir bus with us back to her village, Wellingore. The three of us get off the bus and spend a couple of days enjoying that village. We go to the village market, wander through the cemetery and just have fun talking with Ann.

After our concert in Harlaxton Manor Rodney and I catch the train to Norwich. After taxing to Maids Head Hotel we rent a "for hire" cab to take us to Hingham, the small town that my mother's ancestors came from. We enjoy walking through the church and its cemetery. Several pamphlets in the church are ones I had not seen

before. One pamphlet talks about Edmund Hobart sailing for the New World on the ship *Elizabeth Bonaventure*, leaving Yarmouth, Norfolk, the first week of May 1633 to go to America. The pamphlet also talks about the persecution in England against the Puritans.

On the way back into Norwich we stop at Mother Julian's church, light a candle and say a prayer. We return to the hotel and I go off to hunt some more about Edmund's family while Rodney takes a nap. I return to the hotel to get Rodney and we walk through the Cathedral. We see Edith Cavell's grave near the Cathedral, the first nurse to join the troops in Europe during the First World War. and then return to the hotel for dinner.

The next morning is a real surprise. At the hotel's breakfast we discover Mark Ball, Mathew Shepard and Stephen plus Mark's son Jonathan. They are all surprised when Rodney pays for their breakfast. The rest of the choir arrives and we rehearse. Then I walk the labyrinth at the cathedral. Our concert is awesome and we have a decent crowd there to hear us.

After our last breakfast at Harlaxton, I walk around the grounds for a while. We gather for a group picture and then take off for Fountain Abbey.

What a difference thirty years has made. When at Fountain Abbey with my folks in 1977 there was no Visitor Center, no tourist amenities and no tourists. Today is a special little kids' day so there are a lot of people everywhere. Then the bus takes us to Windemere and the Low Wood Hotel.

The next day a local man who I have contacted, Richard Wimpress picks Rodney and I up to go birding. We have a great day seeing quite a few birds and just enjoy the pleasure of wandering through the woods and along a stream. We saw the most birds down by the coast. Then our drive back to the hotel was along a narrow, fascinating back road. We had an amazingly relaxing day. The whole choir trip was special and the birding added an extraordinary time to it all.

18 **Birding and Other Adventures**

Such a strange sense of unreality as we taxi on the runway to prepare for a take-off to Atlanta. Rodney and I will meet Ben and Tina there to fly on to Lima Peru.

It has been such an emotional week. It is 2009 and watching the inauguration of Barack Obama was a mix of joy, relief and fear of what might happen. In a crowd of two million in DC there are no arrests so maybe that is a sign of a changing climate.

Lima's Jose Antonio Hotel is most welcoming even though it is already 2:15am by the time we arrive. So we are quite tired by the time we climb into bed. After that late arrival at the hotel we sleep until 9:00am the next morning. We discover the next morning that our hotel is only four blocks from the Pacific Ocean. We had met Jim and Maria Kennedy from Ohio in the airport. We run into the Kennedy's again at breakfast and arrange to go with them to eat dinner at the LaRosa that night.

The LaRosa restaurant is on a pier in the ocean. We have chosen it for dinner. We spend a delightful evening with the Kennedys enjoying conversation and a delicious dinner of fish of one kind or another. Also Ben and I enjoy watching the birds that fly by us catching bugs of all kinds.

The next morning, we take a bus to the airport for the one-and-a-half-hour flight to Iquitos. We spend our time in Iquitos walking along a wall above a shanty settlement on the edge of the river. Tina and I find a new bird, a chestnut bellied seedeater which is a highlight for me.

When we return to the bus, we go in a small boat that takes us out to the Amistad. After a safety-drill in case we have any kind of

trouble on the water, we are served lunch and I drink two pico sours. A short nap on the bigger boat and then we are off to the small boats to hunt for birds. The next day we leave at 6:00am to go birding. Rodney and Tina decide not to go with us to hunt for birds, they prefer to stay on the larger boat and enjoy their time there.

That birding trip takes us to a small creek where there are so many birds we aren't even sure where to look. Many tanagers, but I become frustrated because I can't look everywhere at once.

We go back out after an afternoon nap and see many more birds. The most exciting is after dark we spot a great potoo. Such a strange looking creature who hangs on a post and doesn't move at all.

The next day we go to visit San Francisco Village. We are interested in a couple of production spots, one where they are taking corn off of husks. A large group of many ages is working at that. Then off to the school where a large group of children sing for us.

After our week of birding we leave the boat and take a short flight to Lima. We are now on our own. The next morning Ben and I taxi to a marsh south of the city. Our taxi driver stays with us as we explore the fabulous area of lake, pond, reeds, walkways, and observation towers with many gulls, cormorants, stilts plus many other varieties of water birds. Having time to see all of the different birds takes my mind off of any other moments of my life. That night we return to La Rosa Nautica early so we can see and photo the Inca Terns who fly in and out of the girders under the restaurant. These are the strangest looking birds. Birding lets my whole mind go blank and I find myself not even thinking. But also strange, these birds don't really act tern-like.

The last of August we are excited when our friend Kaze Hayes Gadway visits our home for two weeks. Early conversations during that time turn on a spigot of writing that hasn't stopped. Stories of adventures throughout our lives begin to fill our computers. Writing, reading and editing become our innovative in-door sport. Soon we realize we are producing our book, *Everyday Wonder*.

Choir music throughout the year hits an all-time high for the spring with Sacred Music for our Lenten concert and December Tidings of Joy. We are privileged to sing some of the world's most outstanding sacred music. Rodney and I also enjoy the Kansas City Symphony concerts – particularly the one in the Flint Hills in the spring – and eagerly anticipate the opening of the Performing Arts Center that is under construction and due to open next fall.

Grandson, Jeff, beckons us for our next journey. In October he graduates from Full Sail Film University in Orlando with a BS and honors of second in his class. His wife, Christy, shares the news that we can expect our third great grandchild in late spring. Having enjoyed participating in Jeff's graduation I suddenly realize that our lives are full of loving a multiplicity of strange and wonder-filled moments. These are all unrelated but seem wonder-filled to both of us.

Church life is central on our calendar almost every week. We are fortunate to be called over and over again to give of ourselves generously. We both volunteer for a variety of things with the church and love the activities that sweep through our time.

The second annual Festival of Faiths designed to recognize and celebrate our religious and spiritual pluralism is one gift for our volunteer time. I've built relationships with new friends of other faiths who I never would have known otherwise. Many doors of understanding have been opened for me especially my knowing more about the Jewish and Muslim faiths. Each of the eight events during November touch many more people across the Kansas City area than we could have anticipated.

My major writing efforts appear on our doorstep. The life journey of Minnie Warren Hobart (Priscilla's maternal grandmother) is here. Spanning ninety years, 1859-1949, from Vermont to the Panhandle of Texas, *A Pioneer Love Story, The Letters of Minnie Hobart* includes fifty-six pictures, letters, interviews, and excerpts from both her daughter's diaries in the 1920s. My research and writing have become a joyous adventure. To hold that book in my hands and think through Minnie Hobart's life is a gift I never anticipated.

Several trips to Boerne Texas occur to see Rodney's brother, Vincent, who is ill with pulmonary thrombosis. Vince and Rosalie have a house on Fred (the younger brother) and Diane's ranch property a few miles from Boerne. The October visit celebrates Vincent's 80th birthday. I have made a scrapbook of Vincent's life and have fun presenting it to him as a birthday present.

While in Texas I head to Lost Maple State Park for a day of bird watching. I have arrived very early but it is frustrating because all of the bird songs are staying hidden behind leaves. Hikers stroll by enjoying the path, the woods and the solitude. I sit on a bench resting, loaded with camera, 400mm lens, bird book, binocs and a bag of nuts just in case I get hungry. Photography is one of my many passions and I am here because I am convinced that I can capture

some stunning pictures of birds. I listen to songs of at least ten different kinds of birds and see nary a feather. I should have learned the songs to identify the birds. But I stop admonishing myself as I realize that even if I could name the birds by sound I long to capture in my camera the flit of wings, the splash of yellow or blue, the bright beady black eyes hunting for an insect. By 11:00am this tired great grandma decides to return to the trailhead. The sound of crunching gravel echoes in the now eerily silent wood.

We manage a free weekend in November and take Warren to Wichita for a fun time with just him. A friend comments to us that he doesn't think of Wichita as a destination site...and we tell him he should. The run of the Arkansas River through the city...with parks and museums along its banks turns Wichita into a beauty spot. Plus both Exploration Place (the Science Museum) and the Zoo are superb places to visit for kids or adults. Returning home, we drive away from the major roads and cross the Flint Hills, always one of our special treats.

Jeffrey and Christy's first daughter is born in April, Aurora (Rory) Wilson. She is my third great grandchild. Amazing to even think of that. I haven't quite figured out how to relate to great grandchildren, I just know that I don't want to take them on and care for them. My life is too busy for all of that.

One highlight at Thanksgiving occurs around the turkey table as we each express the focus for our thanks. Our Oregon son Tim's question, "If you could have one person (living or not) join our conversation, who would you choose" causes deeper reflections. I immediately think of several people but I name Dietrich Bonhoffer as a person I would like to talk with.

Later, Tim shares his drive across the country as pictures of Death Valley, Brice Canyon and other portions of Utah are projected on a big screen for all to enjoy. It is marvelous the way today's technology allows us to journey where we might not otherwise find time to go.

I ventured forth in a new arena in the spring of 2009. I traveled to Oklahoma for the Oklahoma Writer's Federation Inc. Conference in Norman Oklahoma. First I go on a trip through the bombing in Oklahoma City and then on to Norman for the OWFI Conference. The startling moment at the conference occurs for me during the final banquet. I had entered *A Pioneer Love Story*, but never expected it to

win anything. They read my name for the Best Nonfiction Book and I nearly faint. I think it is a great book, but I am surprised that others seem to think so also.

But before the conference I visit the site of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995. Between the Museum and garden displays this is an awe inspiring journey. The Museum is divided into three different rooms; before the bombing, during the bombing and after the event was over. I walked through the day experiencing sadness for those who were present at that time.

The displays outside feature a tree planted for each death and a chair with the name of each person killed. Walking through this display was an awesome time for me. I kept thinking of all of those killed so suddenly and worrying about the family's they left behind.

This has been an amazing year full of many facets of my life. Did I sort of know that my life was about to change dramatically soon? Who knows...or did I just like a great variety of adventures and want to crowd as many things into my life as possible?

19 Trip to Kenya

Early in July 2009 Mary, Nora, Warren and I fly to Nairobi to celebrate Warren's graduation from Shawnee Mission East High School. It is one more African trip that Rodney decides he does not want to go with us.

Dave and Val Richards join us the first morning there as we all go to the David Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage. Many babies indicate the amount of poaching that is going on which is frightening. Dave takes me in to meet Dame Sheldrick who stays inside and doesn't come out to meet the tourists. It is a delight to at least say hello to her.

The next morning we are up early and take off to drive to Amboseli down on the Kenyan southern border. We go out for a game drive about 4:00pm and see many yellow baboons, elephants and then the wildebeests. These are Eastern Wildebeests and much lighter than the ones in the Mara. Warren elected to be in my cabin and we both take showers before a lovely dinner.

Amboseli has five green and water swamp areas between desert areas. We see wildebeests, elephants, zebra and giraffe primarily, but then egrets, plovers and herons in the swampy areas. Mt. Kilimanjaro pops out of the clouds and stands majestically across the country's line. Such a beautiful mountain but losing much of its snow from the top.

We decide to go visit a Maasai Village which turns out to be a great idea. It is quite different than the villages in the Mara. We talked with a couple of local men outside the village and then enter through the bramble surrounding the village. Each man in the village is allowed to have ten wives if he can afford ten cows for a dowry. It is all arranged by the fathers not love. After Stephen takes us into his home Warren and I buy \$300 of stuff. We are assured that the money goes to benefit the whole village.



Warren as we enter village

A twelve seat chartered plane takes us to Nakuru and it is such fun having the plane to ourselves. I take a lot of pictures from the plane, Maasi Villages, Lake Navisha, the Rift Valley and Lake Nakuru. We see fourteen giraffes on the way to Lion Hill Lodge. These are reticulated which means they have a different pattern than the Maasai ones.

After our rest we drive down to the lake and watch the drama of all the birds. In close are pelicans, stilts, yellow billed storks and maribou stork. Further out are the flamingos so we never see them close up. The pelicans use a strange process to wash their feathers, splashing and pulling at them with their bills. The funniest is one pelican who stands up on the bank and spreads out his wings to dry.

We then fly to the Mara and are met by Robert. Governor's Camp seems so much like "home". Warren chooses my tent again which is very flattering. At dinner that first night we celebrate Warren's birthday. The Masai dancing and singing is great and they invite Warren to join them, which he does, a little shyly.

Robert drives us to Little Governor's Camp for lunch. It has the strangest, most difficult entry to the camp. There are steep, stone steps down to the river. The boat man pulls us across on a string and pulley arrangement. Then steep steps up the other side. Lunch is outdoors by the swamp.

After our rest hour we drive to an area where a number of lions are. We discover two female lions and their cubs. We watch fantastic interactions between the cubs as they play and bounce around. Then we drive to the park boundary where we discover a cheetah who looks a bit lost.

That evening we call Ben who is most surprised when he picks up his phone and hears, "Hello, this is Priscilla." He and Rodney are in Wilmington Kansas looking in cemeteries for Wilsons. They have found several Wilsons...but none related to us.

Up early the next day for our last African game drive. We video the wildebeest herds. They sound like a deep bull frog calling. Two new arrivals this morning show up, a side striped jackal so we have seen all three jackals: the silver back and golden back plus this stripped one. I also video two lionesses with their three cubs walking toward us and drinking at a small pond.

We drive back to the camp for breakfast and packing. The breakfast is on the deck by the river and I must say it is tastier than breakfast eaten out on the grass.

Dave returns to Nairobi and the three of us fly to Mombasa. We are driven to the Serena Beach Resort and spend a couple of days lying out by the swimming pool. This is not exactly my idea of the best way to spend time, but Mary, Nora and Warren love it...and I can stand two days...so we enjoy ourselves.

When we return to Nairobi we discover that swamp areas have expanded and the entry into the airport is chaotic. All passengers for all airlines enter through one door and put stuff through a security check right there. Non-passengers can't enter so we have to bid Dave goodbye before we enter the airport. That is always painful.

We locate the Business/First Class Lounge and spend a couple of pleasant hours there. When we board the plane we discover that it is a 747 and we are seated in the upper level. Warren is delighted and I take a sleeping pill and disappear into sleep until we wake for breakfast over Holland.

The next year Ben and Tina have rented a house for a couple of months down on Dauphin Island off the coast of Alabama. In April Rodney and I decide to go visit them. We invite my sister Pam and her daughter Laura to go with us. We fly into Montgomery, rent a car and drive down to Dauphin Island. Their rented house is on the Gulf and is surrounded by trees and birds. It is a perfect on-the-water spot for birding, loafing and hiking. We have a fabulous time while there. Some of us bird while some of us sit and relax just enjoying the location.

Ben and I wander up and down the coast looking for all different kinds of birds. As we wander I am thinking about how different we each are from the other. I am overwhelmed by the fact that I realize we are each accepted just as we are.

Moving Toward the End

20 Final Days

In November 2009 Rodney receives a call from his younger brother Fred, “Vince has been diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis; a disease that suffocates a person by filling the lungs with fiber. This limits the oxygen to his lungs. The doctor’s best estimate gives Vince three months to live...maximum five months. A terrible way to die. There is no known cure at this time.”

I go with Rodney to Boerne, Texas to say our goodbyes. This was one month before Vincent’s 80th birthday. I had created an album of Vince’s life in pictures for his birthday present. He loves it and spends most of the afternoon looking and quietly exclaiming over each picture.

We all spend most of the day out on the large front porch enjoying all the memories that photos can elicit. Rosalie, Vince’s wife of sixty-one years, has cleaned and refilled their many birdfeeders. Vince occupies a hammock style swing and we settle in to enjoy the day as best we can.



Vincent

Time to leave. We have an early plane departure the next morning, Vince and Rodney walk to the car with their arms around each other's shoulders. Then hug, as only brothers know how.

I see the tears flowing from Vince's eyes as he sees tears running down Rodney's cheeks. Rodney's farewell, "You take care little brother."

Four times we come together for the last time. Vince beats the odds and survives sixteen long months, dying March 24, 2010.

A long plastic tube tethers Vincent to his oxygen tank when we return to Texas for our second visit. His communication skills are diminishing slowly.

Our daughter, Mary accompanies Rodney on this trip. We spend time on their porch – Vincent's favorite spot. Son, Ben and his wife, Tina join us in Boerne for a couple of days. Vince can still tease Mary, "Watch out, don't step on my oxygen tube."

It is Labor Day weekend Vincent enjoys the hubbub of this second "goodbye" and manages to cheer the rest of us with his stories as he struggles to breath. He voices some discomfort, 'I am chilly most of the time now.' When we return home, Rodney mails him a warm polartec jacket."



The Three Wilsons – Vincent, Rodney, Fred

The grieving person has to make sense of the journey. I puzzle some as I watch Rodney slow down for five or six years. He had moments when he couldn't remember something or he just questioned what was going on. However, he lived life totally until he died, but he began to slow down by his late 70's.

It all began in 2005 when he said, "I can't participate in village projects anymore. My hearing is too bad, I'm afraid I wouldn't understand what people are saying." Later in the fall of that year he displayed a strange period of mental confusion.

The first memorable moment of alarm occurred on a hot June day in 2006. Rodney went to work at the Village Church Food Pantry and helped unload a truck. Suddenly a couple of men noticed him wandering around aimlessly. They took him home after they watched him fumbling with his cell phone trying to get in touch with me.

When they asked him where he lives, he couldn't say. They phone the church to find his address.

His co-worker, Bill drives him home. I meet them at the door and alarm bells ring in my head, but gratitude follows as I remember son Ben happens to be at our house. We call Dr. Cohen who tries to talk with Rodney on the phone. Rodney's speech makes no sense.

Ben and I take him to the Emergency Room at Menorah Hospital where he receives a CT Scan, a lung x-ray, and blood tests. Nothing gives any indication of being wrong except some dehydration. He has lived a lifetime of low blood pressure so the erratic blood pressure readings push me into panic. Several hours of Rodney's total confusion crumbles my world uncontrollably. I am not sure what I need to do or what makes sense.

Several other episodes of confusion occur during the summer. Times of fuzzy speech, numbness in his leg, arm and jaw plus capricious blood pressure readings scare us both.

One day in early September he walks the four blocks to the church by himself and I meet him there. We stand in the sunny church parking lot for a half-hour waiting for our food at the church bar-b-que picnic. Before we get our plates he pauses, "I am tired. I need to sit down."

He returns about the time I have our two plates and he takes them back to the table while I go for dessert. About halfway through the meal he feels fuzzy-headed. We sit there a few more minutes, and then walk to my car. Total confusion hasn't hit, but he recognizes he needs to go to bed. During the next couple of hours his agitation increases. This spell lasts about three hours, and his blood pressure hits 193/104, the highest it has ever been.

Through the fall, he experiences other episodes of confusion, erratic blood pressure, disconnected speech, and the struggle to walk.

He often says, "This is crazy," as he recognizes something is wrong.

Dr. Cohen continues to monitor him and look for the cause of these episodes. The only assumption remains TIAs. This thinking that Rodney is having minor strokes gives me pause. Somehow that doesn't make much sense to me.

Later that fall we connect with Dr. Irene Bettinger, a neurologist at St. Luke's Hospital. Our absolute trust with her builds as we engage in conversations over our several visits. She sends a complete report to Dr. Cohen.

"This nearly 80-year-old man was seen regarding episodic confusion over the last 20 months, raising the question of TIA or stroke. I do not think he is having TIA or stroke problems, nor is he having seizures. He has a history of migraines with visual auras. Whether there is a question between the prior migraine history and the episodes of confusion in the last two years, I cannot say for certain. But it is a possibility.

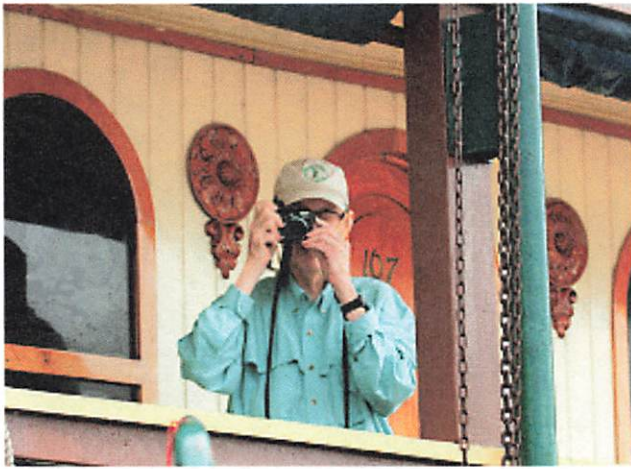
I am leaning toward a conclusion that leaves recurring spells of dysphasia, sometimes with true confusion, and the couple of spells with a migrating sensory disturbance are manifestations of migraine auras without the actual headache. There has been a progressive loss of function with regards to speech, or a progressive spread of sensory disturbance."

Then mysteriously over the next few years, Rodney generates enough energy to travel three times to South America. Flabbergasted and thankful, we accept this reality and help him be careful in conserving his energy (taking naps and such) on these adventures.

Ben and Tina accompany Rodney and me to the Amazon River in 2008, then to look for birds in Ecuador in 2009 and to Venezuela in February 2010. Rodney often stays at camp or on the ship instead of engaging in the more rigorous activities. But just going on a trip requires energy. His mode of operating slows down, but he travels with no complaints.

Our daughter, Mary, not a birding person, asks if she can go to Venezuela with us, "I want to take a trip with my Daddy." Who would have known? Venezuela becomes Rodney's last journey out of the country. Mary is so glad that she goes with us. Memory connects us to what really matters. It gives definition to what today is really about.

In April Rodney, Kaze and I go to Hatteras. That turns out to be his last trip there. We have a great time, but it is slower than usual.



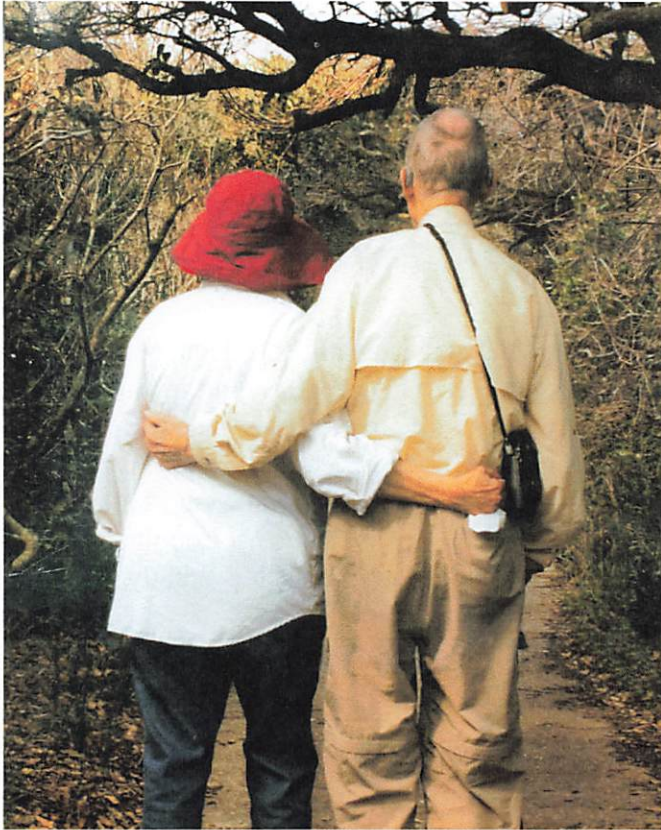
The last weekend before his death Ben, Tina, Mary, Nora and Warren accompany us to visit his brother, Fred in Boerne Texas. Ben and I spend a day bird watching on a Reserve near Boerne. Rodney and the others “hang out” in town.

The last evening before his death Rodney and I attend a play, the Rock Opera Tommy at Kansas City’s Metropolitan Ensemble Theater. We both enjoy the evening and surprisingly like the rock music in the play.



Rodney and Priscilla

Nevertheless, Rodney's death catches me off guard. He survived some difficulties during the first years of the century but then engaged in life with his usual passion. So I am not expecting the sudden collapse on June 4, 2001.



I often think of Rodney's favorite quote from the movie *Breaker Morant*,

“Live every day as if it is your last and one day you will be right.”

21 Rodney's Death

Fifty-eight years, eight months and twenty-one days from that first, "I do" Rodney drops to the floor with a "catastrophic brain hemorrhage."

Our daughter, Mary had purchased a suite at the Kauffman Stadium for the Royals June 4th baseball game with the Minnesota Braves.

At the last minute Rodney decides to stay home and watch the game on TV saying, "I don't want to walk that far in the parking lot." He kisses Mary and me goodbye and admonishes us with his usual advice, "Watch out driving home. Remember all those guys have been drinking beer all evening."

These are his last words. I only realize later that he was ensuring that Mary and I were going to be protected at the end of the game.

Mid-point in the game I try to call him. He loves to have me check in when I am out anywhere. No answer, but this isn't too odd. He may be on the phone, or just can't hear it. Later in the evening, I phone again. No answer. Worst-case scenarios creep into my mind and I ask Mary to come in with me when she takes me home.

We arrive home. The lights and TV are on in the den. The chair stands empty.

We find Rodney's body on the floor by his desk. Irrationality takes over my mind and body as scenes of him asleep rustle through the air. I scramble to the floor begging him to wake up. I refuse to see the odd angles his arms and hands are twisted. I call his name. Mary calls 911. I go into shock and stay disconnected from reality. I age twenty years in those few minutes.

Six or seven medics fill the room. They check all the signs their training requires. No response comes from Rodney. They place him on a gurney, strap him down and head for the door. I obey one of the medics and ride in the ambulance; Mary follows to KU Med Center, the closest trauma center.

ACT scan of Rodney's brain shows white blood has filled about 95% of his brain. I scramble for any excuse to disbelieve what I see. The night duty neuro-surgeon states, "Given Rodney's age and the extent of the bleeding, there isn't anything to be done."

They insert a breathing tube in an attempt to "keep him alive" until his sons arrive.

My irrational thinking pushes me to continue to move through my numbness.

About midnight Mary and I follow Rodney's gurney to the sixth floor to the TEVA Neuroscience wing of Intensive Care. Complete irony! The suite Mary purchased at the ballgame was for the TEVA Neuroscience auction.

Mary finally takes my car and goes home to her kids. I spend a wild, sleepless night in a lounge chair in Rodney's room.

Over and over I go to his bed and in a shaky, disbelieving voice tell him that I love him. I touch him and check the monitors. Never a flicker of response, only little involuntary twitches.

Morning finally comes. Son Ben races toward us from Minnesota. My sister arrives. I talk to folks at the church. The nurses tippy-toe around us. Their conversation remains cautious even after they get the idea that we know how to spell the word "death."

While I am in no way prepared for the reality of Rodney's death, several things are keeping me from total collapse. The previous summer the two of us and Kaze spent a week at Ghost Ranch New Mexico. *Death and Its Mysteries*, the theme for the week, triggered much conversation. The writing and talking about death are like an iron brace holding me upright.

Ben arrives about noon and I snort in dismissive laughter over the crazy story of the hospital's naming of trauma patients who come into ER. Trauma patients' assigned a country name makes them impossible to find. Rodney listed as "O.J. Taiwan" frustrates Ben when he arrives. A nurse finally hears the conversation at the desk and rescues him.

We spend the day talking to Rodney, never knowing if he can hear. No sign of "life" other than the involuntary twitches and the numbers shifting on his monitors.

The nurse tells us that about mid-afternoon she expects his heart rate and blood pressure to spike and then plummet. This doesn't register in my mind so I am shocked at how rapidly it happens. We ask for the removal of the breathing tube and monitors so my daughter's two kids can come and say a final good-bye.

Tom Are, our minister has been out of town for the weekend. As soon as he lands in Kansas City he stops to talk with us for a few minutes. My nephew, Mike, brings Nora and Warren to Rodney's room. They sob their quick, painful goodbyes.

When Rodney's heart stops, his flesh color oozes away. I check the clock, 8:33pm. The doctor arrives and declares the death at 8:45pm. I don't argue. I present a forcibly calm demeanor.

Protocol takes over. The hospital calls the Cremation Center, who takes Rodney away. I am in a numbed shock.

The story that Rodney wrote at a writing seminar in Ghost Ranch: "*Closure of the Day*" becomes a tribute to him. He ended his story, "When my time comes I'm going to ask my friend Wayne to play taps at the end of my Memorial Service." As grandson, Jeff walks to the pulpit and reads this story I scarcely breathe. No one has a dry eye while Wayne plays Taps.

Gratitude mixes with my denial. We lived a wonderful life with more adventures than most folks ever experience. Rodney didn't suffer a long protracted illness ... in the hospital less than twenty-four hours. I have unbelievable support from family, friends and church community.

Throughout his life Rodney trusted his intuitions time and again: intrigue with a postcard - saying "yes" to the Ecumenical Institute - participating in the Oombulgurri Consult - responding to that Rotary sign in India - defining the times over and over again - flying to Scotland to be with Rex Cook as he died.

If we hadn't talked about death, I couldn't imagine any of this. For a long time we planned for our ashes (cremation was always part of the equation) to be in the cemetery in Arkansas City with my parents. But all the plastic flowers in that cemetery bothered us. We decided we wanted our ashes in the Memorial Garden at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village with a simple stone stating names and dates. That seemed right when we made the decision and certainly seems right now.

Before his death, we made all the necessary arrangements... wills, conversation with the Cremation Center, told the kids where things are, planned to move to a retirement apartment, began to get rid of "stuff."

What we left out was a conversation about what we expect for ourselves if we are the one left. We did laugh and say Rodney shouldn't be the one left behind... he would starve to death. You can only live so long on peanut butter and mayonnaise sandwiches.



With him gone, so much has changed. I knew my identity. I was Mrs. Rodney Wilson, happily married, member of a team. That identity disappeared

Without my life-long partner I am shaping a new identity and a new name; I am now Priscilla H Wilson, mother, grandmother, great grandmother and I live alone. I am living proof that you can continue to live without your soul-mate, best friend, husband...hard as that is.

"Grief is like a roller coaster ride," says one of the many books I have piled on our bed. It is the most helpful line I have read as the holidays approach. The most unexpected things send the cart I'm riding tumbling in a downward swoop.

But I remember the Thornton Wilder quote, "The greatest tribute to the dead is not grief but gratitude."

22

First Year of Living Alone

Smooth roads, bumpy holes, rocks in the middle of the road and straight, unspectacular paths for nearly nine decades.

“You are starting a new life.” Ben’s text message wishes me on.

A month later I am sitting in first class of the plane in Kansas City getting ready to go to Atlanta and then Venice. The man next to me asks if I know the whole plane of people. This is a choir trip and choir member after choir member goes by and speaks to me. I experience a lot of support and concern. This grief feeling is strange. One minute it is like climbing that hill of tundra in Alaska. It is unsteady under foot and the top of the hill keeps receding in the distance.

I look out at the billowing white clouds and I remember sitting with Rodney at a table in our cottage in Culebra. I drew the globe on a large white placemat and we thought about all of the places on the globe where we had walked on the beach. I don’t remember what year that was, but what fun and what memories.

I wonder how many planes I have been on. It isn’t so strange to be on a plane without Rodney, even though I miss him. Not to be able to call him and report in when I get to Atlanta will seem strange and hard. I’ll have to figure out how to talk about this, but the experience with family and community this last few weeks is like being overwhelmed with love and comfort and resting in the arms of God.

An afternoon in the Sky Club in Atlanta reading, listening to music, and phone conversations with Nora and Mary, Ben and Jeff were good. I realize that I haven’t flown to another continent without Rodney since 1983 when I went to Tonga. My mistake, I have done a couple of other trips without him, but mostly it has been with him. I miss him terribly.

In Florence a bunch of us attend the opera, *La Traviata*, which was quite lovely. At the intermission Patty Zender comes to talk with me. She is much younger than I am and has just retired from leading the preschool at Village church. Her husband had died last September and she wanted the two of us to share stories. We decided we would join each other for dinner one evening in Rome.

I wandered through Florence and ate a wonderful omelet in the exact spot where Rodney, Stormy and I enjoyed a glass of wine so many years ago. When the cathedral (the Duomo) opened at 10:00 I wandered through it listening to the Dureffle Requiem playing in my ears...a soothing way to walk through ancient history. A stairway led down to many ruined columns, tiles, and floor. Such really old stuff made me wonder about who all the ancient believers were and what really kept this faith story alive for centuries. It is beyond mystery and has to be related to the Other World in the midst of this world.

We left Florence after breakfast and stopped first at an American Cemetery. I was surprised at how large it was and covered with stones of the men and women who were killed freeing Italy from the Nazi. It was very impressive with maps of both the European and Pacific theaters. I looked at the places Rodney was in the war like the Philippines and the places we were together later like Majuro.

We arrive in Assisi in time for dinner. I am surprised to have such a lovely view of the town from my window. Assisi is the main reason that I came on this trip. I have become entranced with St. Francis of Assisi.

The next day I call for a van and load it up with choir members for the Basilica Francesco. We sing during their 5:00pm Mass in the lower church in the Basilica. While we are singing I keep having images of those last few minutes when Rodney's heart was beating. Hard moments interspersed with beautiful moments and my heart full of gratitude for our life together.

The van picks me up the next afternoon and Mark, Lisa and Charlotte Ball go with me. We stop at San Damino for a bit. This is where St. Clare and her sisters lived for many years. Also where Francis discovered the wooden crucifix that seemed to call to him by God to save his church. This was the church he and several brothers rebuilt before he realized God was calling him to save the church across the world. Then we drove to the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels which is the large Basilica which surrounds the Porziuncola where Frances

and others stayed. The Porziuncola became the center for the early movement tiny as it was. It was awesome but we agreed that Francis probably wouldn't like all of the opulence surrounding it now.

We drive back to San Rufino where Francis preached for the first time. The font is where Francis and Clare were baptized. Statues of the two are in the yard outside. Inside are areas that are covered with glass and below you can see ruins of columns. I had read one copy of Francis' life and I was most intrigued by all that he had done.

We then walk down a funny little stairway near there until we find a precious little restaurant with only local folk in it. We all have a delicious dish of eggplant, cheese and tomato.

The next day I explore more of the areas around Assisi by myself and then go back to the same place I had eaten lunch the day before. This time I take a bunch of our choir group with me.

On to Rome and St. Peter's the next day. Our guide through St. Peter's stopped at one point and I was delighted to hear her as she quoted from Breaker Morant, "Live life every day is if it were your last and one day you will be right." I said the quote with her. I then explained to her it was a quote Rodney loved and we had it at his funeral. No one else in her groups had ever heard of the quote.

We had a private tour through the Sistine Chapel which was awesome and somewhat overwhelming as we heard the stories of so much art. The Sistine Chapel is amazing, the colors are so vibrant after their cleaning and restoration. We heard what Michelangelo was depicting with each panel and how much like sculpture his painted figures were.

The next day I walked to the St. Mary of the Victory Church which is near our hotel. It is famous for the Bernini statue of St. Teresa's ecstasy. It is a stunningly beautiful piece. The whole church is quite lovely and both Francis and St. John of the Cross are both in paintings there.

Patty Zender, one of the women on our trip had asked if the two of us could eat together and share our stories of our husband's deaths. So we went out that evening and found a lovely café with glass enclosed tables on the sidewalk. We agreed that it looked like a quiet, perfect spot to talk.

We ordered a bottle of wine and each had a gilthead (like a sea bass), crisp potatoes and spinach for dinner. For an hour she ate and I told the story of Rodney's death and then for an hour I ate and she

told the story of her husband's death. I experienced relief in sharing Rodney's story, but also I seemed to share a connection with her husband's death.

The next day I fly into Boston and take a train to Norfolk, Virginia. Mary and her children are in Hatteras at our house, Blue Heaven. I drive down there and stay for a week. While there we all, plus Debbie and Mike Martin gather together and remembrances are sparked of Rodney as we place part of his ashes in the ground.

By Sunday, July 1 I have returned home and our choir sings our celebration of this country. I choked up a bunch of times as we sing the Star Spangled Banner and seven songs of Robert Frost poems.

In September the Kauffman Performing Arts Center opens and I have purchased tickets way last spring. Ben, Tina and Mary go with me to the opening. Also seated with us are Pam and Karl as well as Bev and Don Freberg and Marvie and Larry Snegas. An amazingly beautiful evening of music, including Placido Domingo fill me with longing for Rodney and joy of the beautiful art center.

Then again in October Kaze and I go to Blue Heaven on Hatteras Island to write and write. We have started our book, *Everyday Wonder* and are having fun talking through all of the things that might go in it. One of the chapters is about Rodney's death. For *Everyday Wonder* it is my first time to write about that death and that is somewhat difficult. We are used to having Rodney come up the stairs and tease us. We commented on this as we work.

Thanksgiving just happens and Christmas approaches with race-track speed. How do I celebrate the holidays differently this year?

Our first year of marriage we obediently ate Christmas dinner twice. Rodney and my parents lived three blocks apart. Both households wanted us to be part of their festivities. To eat two Christmas dinners on the same day is painful. We changed course after that first year. Christmas day dinner became every other year event. One year with Wilsons, next year with Hutchinsons, etc.

That was fifty-nine years ago. Now Rodney isn't here for the holidays. Different meals. Different ways to participate with family. Everything is different. We will fly to Belize as a family to celebrate Christmas and New Years this year.

Decorating is a puzzlement. No tree this year except a tiny fake one I put on a table in the living room. Too many memories tied to trees. For years we took the children to Henry's Garden Shop

to choose as big a tree as possible. We chatted with Henry as we warmed our hands over the fire roaring in a large metal barrel. And we argued very year about the size of the tree. I wanted bigger... Rodney always pushed for smaller.

I began collecting Nativity Sets years ago. It is easy to get so busy during the holidays that Christmas comes and goes and we miss the Holy. A house full of Nativity sets reminds me that Christmas is a Holy time. People across the globe express that in many different ways.

What about the Nativity sets this year? I don't think I can put them all out. This year I'll chose the ones that are most connected to special memories with Rodney.

The large straw Nativity from Portugal caused a lot of conversation. Purchased when we were both dead tired after leading a three-week Rotary work camp in the villages of the Montemuro Mountains. Rodney worried out loud, "How will you get this thing home?" I've usually trusted the shipping processes so off it went to Kansas City.

Buying the pottery set in Mexico worried even me. I joined Rodney in concern for its safety. But it has graced the mantel in front of his great grandparents for many years now.

There are dozens of smaller sets. Many of these will probably stay in their summer home in the attic this year. Maybe next year they all can celebrate with us again.

We will gather as a family this year and spend Christmas in Belize as we shape new patterns. While acknowledging our grief, we will praise God for the gifts of love and memories of past years. Healing will slowly have its way.

I will invent fresh ways of praying, sharing what we have with others and honoring the sacred. New understandings of celebrating Christmas will emerge...at least for me. I will honor the past, modify the present and move toward the future as I learn to celebrate as a single person.

23

Travel with Family

The birth of Teegan in February gives me a fourth great-grandchild. She is Rory's little sister and Jeffrey and Christy's second child. The other two, Zander and Izzy are children of Marcel and Phaedra ... all are son, Ben and his wife, Tina's family. I am still not very sure how I respond to great grandchildren. I don't see these children often enough so I feel awkward around them.

In April I experience care and peace for me as I spend a week in Blue Heaven our house on Hatteras Island. Joining me for relaxation and friendship are Betty Hill, Mary Warren Moffett, La Verne Phillips and Anne Wood. These are the women left from our North Shore Cadre days...some of my best friends ever. Near the end of the week one of the strangest things happens. Anne comes up from our beach crying and tells me that she just saw Rodney who commented, "I am so glad that you came here." Such a very hard moment to understand but a mix of envy that it wasn't me that happened to. But also a bit of happiness for her, she and Rodney were always close.

Tim rides his motorcycle from Oregon to our house before I move to Claridge Court. We sort, throw and give away more stuff than I can imagine. We made piles in the garage...and ask anyone who comes to the house to take whatever they want. It was an interesting mix of friends and workmen who came by during that time. Some are eager to help themselves to take something but some were almost embarrassed to take something. Tim and I had a fun time as memories are uncovered in every corner.

Another Wilson family adventure takes place in July. Seven of us go to Botswana for two weeks: Ben and his sons, Marcel and Jeffrey - Mary and her daughter Nora and son Warren - and me.

Dave Richards, our guide and friend from Nairobi arranges the trip and accompanies us. Listening to the boys talk as they are searching for animals is the most fun I have. One of the highlights for all of us is seeing a pangolin two days in a row. They are small, private sort of animals and rarely want to be seen so it was a great treat to actually pick one of them up.



Jeff, Marcel, Ben, Dave, Priscilla, Mary, Warren, Nora

After thirty-one years in our home on Tomahawk Road I move to Claridge Court (retirement community) in August 2012. I have purchased two apartments and worked long and hard on how they are to be put together into one apartment. I have excellent sorting, packing and unpacking help from Senior Move Services. These wonderful women made sure all goes as smoothly as possible. And Mary has purchased our Tomahawk Road house which is a wonderful move from my perspective.

My new apartment quickly evolves into “home.” Ben and Tina come down from Minnesota a couple of weekends to help with pictures and furniture placement. I kept the desk and tables from Rodney’s office. And the furniture from my Mother’s house was a gift all over again.

Driving to this new location seems slightly weird at first but after several weeks it begins to be somewhat normal. Before his death Rodney and I had decided to move here ...so that makes it feel right. The hard part is not being able to share it with him.

Sheldon Hill dies so I fly to Chicago to attend his service. I stay at Kitty and Steve Coles place in Lake Forest. The whole event is a celebration of his life and I see so many of my colleagues who I have missed since moving to the Kansas City area. I leave Coles place early the day I fly home and drive down through Norwood Park to look at familiar places.

When I discover that Mary, Nora, and Warren are going to the Dominican Republic for spring break, I ask to go along. My reason – so I can visit the medical mission work in La Romana. Tina joins me and we go to the Hotel Frano, a small local hotel which reminds me of the small hotel where we stayed in Lamego Portugal.

We join the team led by Bev Chapman and her husband and spend the day with their medical teams in a Bateye (village). Driving to the village we stop along the way for me to take pictures of men loading the sugar cane on the train cars from the oxen drawn carts. It was great to watch all that was going on and think about Rodney's time with them. For nine years Rodney went with teams to the DR. It is fun to see the hospital in town. The first time he went he accompanied the church youth to work on the Good Samaritan Hospital in La Romana in 1993. They built the first floor of the hospital and now, many years later it is a functional hospital several stories high. It gave me delight to visit this work we have supported for so long.

An awesome happening occurs in April on the stage of the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts with its amazing acoustics. Members of our church choir join two other choirs...and orchestra to perform Bach's B Minor Mass. Singing that music in that space transports me to a different universe. My eyes shed a few tears as we sang in that space.

Seldom do we get to surprise someone we love. The Saturday after daughter Mary's 50th birthday she thought she was coming to my apartment for dinner with Warren, Amber and Clea (one year old). As she walked into my apartment, the whole family bombarded her with "surprise" and "happy birthday." All were here except her daughter, Nora who is a freshman at Mesa University in Grand Junction, Colorado. The two older grandsons, Marcel and Jeffrey had rigged up a Go Pro video camera and captured that delightful chaos. A grand evening of steak, wine, flowers, balloons, cake, laughter and stories filled the evening.

In July of 2013 ten of our family go to Kenya. Half of us visit the Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage in Nairobi, Nora meets her foster orphan, Barsalinga. He had been rescued at two weeks old next to

his dying mother who was killed by poachers. Nora gets to feed him and help put him to bed. Warren's orphan had graduated to the next "schooling" level and had been sent to Tsavo National Wildlife Area. While at Governors Camp in the Masai Mara we witness the wildebeest migration. Then a few days at Mdfangano Island Camp in Lake Victoria caps our time together. Traveling with this many family members provides me with some new images of my family. One of my grand daughters in law was scared of the small plane over to the island. Otherwise we did well.



Jeff and Christy, Phaedra and Marcel, Ben and Tina. Priscilla, Nora, Mary, Dave and Warren



Ben and Tina on Mdfangano Island Camp

Our anniversary in October becomes an amazing dinner party. I go to Café Provence with Pam, Karl, Mary, Nora and Warren. Cafe Provence was always Rodney's and my favorite place to eat. We share with our server, who loved Rodney, a story of the time of his death. She cries a bit and gives me a hug. However, we have a lovely time and raise a bunch of toasts for Rodney.

Later in the fall I am home again and decide one day to drive out to Shawnee Mission Park. I walk for a while and realize that I am not seeing any birds. I stand near some bushes and quiet myself. After standing quietly for a while I begin to see and hear quite a few birds. This is probably the same as listening for God's voice. I have to stop, quiet the inner chatter and outward noise and just listen in the quiet and stillness.

In October, I spend two weeks in France with twenty-nine women (ages ranging from twenty-nine to eighty-nine). Again, Tina goes with me and we have a lot of fun exploring. Some time is spent with the whole group...most are from our church. But some of the time we wander around, just the two of us. Time in Paris, Avignon and Nice fills me overflowing with wondrous adventures.

Our first four days in Paris intrigues us with as many famous sights as we can cover. A panoramic overview by bus helps us take note of where to return to absorb the beauty, history and wonder of the Louvre, Sainte Chappell, Notre Dame, Sacre Couvre, shops and food. It is impossible to miss another view of the Eiffel Tower every time we leave the hotel. But a view from the top of the Tower at night to see the breath-taking lights of Paris is the most awesome.

Before we leave Paris Tina and I go to dinner at Le Procope, the oldest café in Paris. The restaurant has been in operation since 1686 and we feel that historical reality. Our incredible evening starts with a glass of wine in a small waiting room which includes Napoleon's hat. We then move to our dining table and Tina has the Coq au Vin which her mother used to make. We talk a lot about her Mother and things she liked to cook. She was French and her Dad was German. We have the best evening of our whole trip.

Giverny intrigues me the most. I sense Claude Monet studying the shades of green as he applied his imagination to the canvas before him. When I clicked the camera one more time I captured scenes that have become world famous by now. The array of pinks, oranges, purples, greens, yellows focus my eyes first in one direction and then another. The paths circling the ponds leads us from

one spectacular sight to another. Even the two worn wooden canoes docked under a flowing willow are magical.

But of course, going to Hatteras is always magical and we go there for Thanksgiving week soon after I get home from that European trip.

Mary, Nora, Warren and I fly to Norfolk, Virginia and drive to Hatteras Island. We rent a four wheel-drive vehicle because the storm has torn out part of Highway 12 again. (A big chunk during Hurricane Irene last year.) A brief stretch of the highway this year is a sand road and they won't let anyone drive to the island without four wheel drive. We have a great Thanksgiving week with friends even though a nor'easter persists most of the week. Cold, gray skies and blowing sand never dampens our spirits too much. We walk the beach and drive up and down the island.



Path from our house

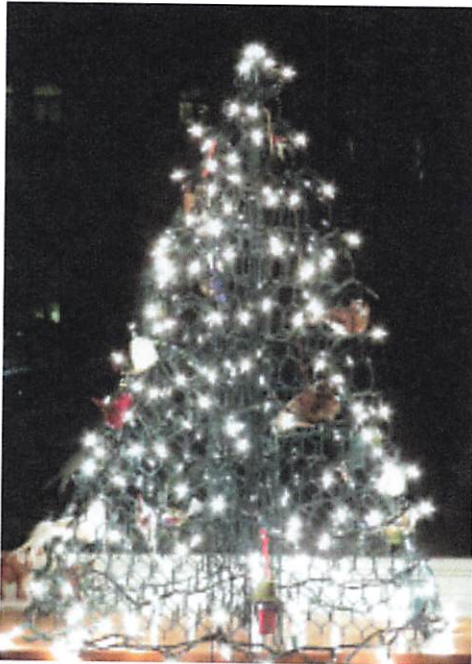
We are blessed...no damage from Hurricane Sandy to our house...but lots elsewhere. We are struck by the pieces of houses near ours that have been torn off during that storm. We were lucky that our house is shorter than the houses on either side of us. And I experience being lucky because it cares for my soul every time I go there.

Music also cares for my soul and the music the choir is preparing for our December 18, 2012 Tidings of Joy concert is different this year. Alleluia! The traditional and expected give me pause and I feel I am in the need for the different and unusual.

Thanksgiving and the first Sunday of Advent back to back seems to make Christmas come too swiftly. Mary and Warren helped me decorate my apartment so I'm in the mood. Claridge Court enjoys a resident Holiday Apartment Tour December 15 ... my apartment is one of eight open for touring. Sharing my nativity collection is a fun wonder. I have purchased them from every place we have been through the years.

When I tell someone my current Christmas tree (s) are made of crab pots, they look at me with a blank stare and seem to think that I have gone crazy. They are shaped as trees, but made of the wire mesh that form a crab pot. I bought two trees that are made of white wire covered with small white bulbs. These stand in my two French windows facing the courtyard and look truly beautiful. Those two trees and my many nativity scenes furnish all my decorations.

The last time that Rodney and I were on Hatteras Island we discovered these magical trees. We saw a glittering, beautifully lit Christmas tree as we walked into the Maritime Museum on the south end of the island. This unique creation constructed from green-coated crab trap mesh startled us, "We want this when we move to a retirement apartment."



Christmas Tree seen on Hatteras Island

Christmas trees are a special part of the holiday season and until now a live green tree has always been our only option. The question each year, "Do we want spruce, pine or fir?"

When my sister and I were young changing a tree from an ordinary evergreen into a vision of beauty had a strict routine. Somehow a tree appeared in the northeast corner of the living room. I remember the process of decorating the tree. First, the angel with her fluffy white wings graced the tree's top. Mother strung the lights. Pam and I put our four favorite bulbs in front. Remember – this is before today's popular tiny bulbs.

Two bulbs, a boy and a girl looked slightly like Hansel and Gretel with bright old-fashioned clothes. These were the most special and I still have them. They lost their ability to be lit years ago. The other two we loved – a Snow Man and Santa Claus, complete with round belly, red suit and black belt and flowing (if glass can be said to flow) beard.

The happening with the tree came after we had carefully placed every ornament. Then...came the icicles. No throwing on a bunch at a time. No, each icicle must be carefully placed forming a silvery, sheen over the whole tree.

Many years later, children are grown and gone. Rodney invents an elaborate tree stand on a wheeled platform with a rope to pull it out the door in case of fire. We never remind him that he also fastened it to the wall so it won't fall over.

The magic of the trees in those years became mirrored in our large picture window at the other end of the living room, making a delight of two trees for the price of one. We always stuffed as many lights and ornaments as we could on it – always the unbreakable stuff at the bottom in anticipation of small visitors.

Now – in the last round of Christmas trees – the most magical of all. Two crab pot trees reflect and shine through my third floor picture windows exuding magic. Catching sight of them from the Claridge Court courtyard is breathtaking.

I now have no husband to share the holiday magic of the moment but this bit of inanimate magic fills my heart with peace and cheer.

24 **Enjoying Friends and Family**

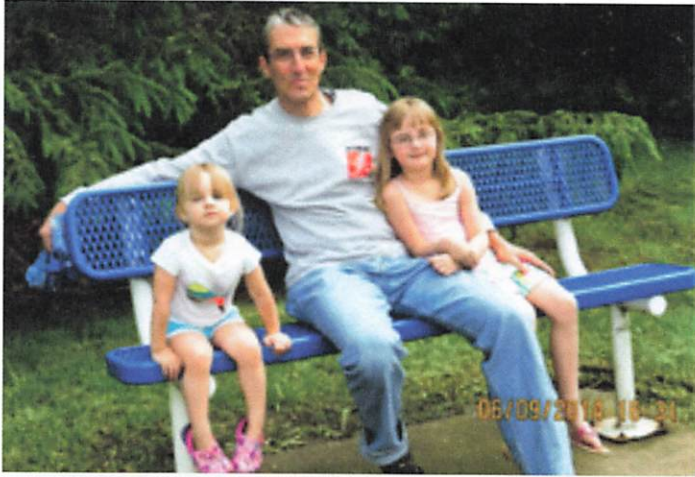
Everyday Wonder from Kansas to Kenya from Ecuador to Ethiopia ignites sparks throughout the year as Kaze and I laugh and cry in writing it. One review from *Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards* after it came out blew me away: "The world seems such a mess, I too wonder, where is the holiness?" The dust that we followed as we walked out of the canyon particularly hits me. Full of short stories, writing this book with Kaze Gadway pulled me in with different reactions and emotions with each story we wrote.

Celebrating birthdays throughout the year marks the wonder of my friends and family. A May week in Nantucket celebrating my friend, Mary Warren Moffett's 80th birthday rings with special overtones. Betty Hill, Mary Warren and I share stories of our many memories with Shel, Don and Rodney over twenty-five years of joy and love. I particularly remember my joy with those twenty-five years. I go for several walks on the island letting my mind wander through the years.

*Betty Hill, Priscilla and
Mary Warren Moffett*



A week in Vadnais Heights Minnesota at Ben and Tina's home in June over-flows with family laughter, bird sightings and joy. They all think I visit to have time with my five great grandchildren, and I do. But also, Ben and Tina's house backs onto woods and a lake so birds are everywhere. When you can look out the window and watch two pileated woodpeckers at the bird feeder you think you are in paradise.



Ben with Teegan and Rory

One of our joyous highlights includes a drive to Wisconsin to visit our long-time friend, Ellen Zielinski and drive with her down nearer Chicago to her son Grant's house. A fabulous day of memories of the past.



Ellen Zielinski, Priscilla

We celebrate our son, Ben entering the decade of the sixties. It is hard to believe I have a son that old, but it was fun celebrating with his whole family. His fifth grandchild, Jarvis arrives on the planet as part of that fun. Going to the dance recital and watching Ben's wife, Tina and two granddaughters, Izzy and Rory all dance adds to the festivities.



Priscilla with great grandchildren: Zander and Izzy Wilson, Jarvis, Rory and Teegan

Our choir singing Haydn's "Creation" in the wondrous Kauffman Performing Arts Center is one of my highlights during the spring. Singing in that building is more important than I ever expect. I am more conscious of sitting with the tenors singing there than I am in our church choir.

I go to Panama with my sister, Pam and her husband, Karl for a birding week. I ignore them part of the time and just go wandering and birding on my own. I had forgotten how much the heat bothers me. One day we take a boat down the river and get out to walk through a village birding. I come back by the river early and stand talking with two little boys. They know no English and I know no Spanish. They seem fascinated by my bird book. We have fun...me pointing to a bird and saying the last name only, ie wren. They work at pronouncing these. I loved that bit of time. During the week I see 78 new species.

I return to Africa in 2013. Our first stop in Kenya is to visit The David Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage. We watch all the young elephants come into the Orphanage for their supper and night sleep.

Our visit with our foster babies for an hour starts our trip with a moment that I won't forget. We watch our young elephants receive their liquid supper and then settle down to sleep.

Our guide and friend from Nairobi, Dave Richards plans our trip and is always a joy to be with. My daughter, Mary with her teenagers: Nora and Warren, plus our son Tim allows us to be a group that is fun to travel with as this is Tim's first trip to Africa. Safari travel to Zambia and Namibia to three different camps for two days each fills our two weeks.

We stop at Victoria Falls which is the world's largest curtain of falling water. I love falling water, but in many ways Victoria Falls, local name is "Mosi-oa-Tunya: which translates to "The Smoke That Thunders" is by far the most interesting. We go see the falls in the evening and enjoy getting wet from the mist. However, the next morning we return and feel like the falls are amazing. This is one of the most beloved natural wonders of the world.

A safari is always full of mystery...this one seems extra important because Tim is experiencing this trip. We drive to the Zambezi River and realize that four countries meet on an island in the river, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. We pass through Zambian immigration and cross the Zambezi River by boat. We cross the Chobe River into Namibia and stay two nights at Ichingo Lodge. However the last two days and nights on a houseboat, Ichobezi, on the Chombe River sparks every moment with joy. This was the highlight of the Safari. Most of the time the houseboat was tied up



on the riverbank, while we travelled along the river in our Photographic Boat. It slowly moved up the river while we eat lunch. After two wonderful nights on the Houseboat it was time to leave. None of us wanted to go home. We all could have spent more time on that houseboat sailing slowly up the Chombe River.

My travel hi-light during summer 2015 was our choir trip to Stockholm, Copenhagen (Roskilde Cathedral), Oslo (Gamie Aker Church), Gudvangen in Fiord country, and Bergen (Bergen Cathedral). Tina went with me and we had a glorious time. Traveling up north was a trip that I never expected to make. An incredible awe-inspiring venue, the Gamie Aker Church in Oslo, smacked us with history from its ancient stones. Built as a three-nave Roman-style basilica and constructed from limestone; it is believed to have been erected by King Olav Kyrre in 1080. The stained glass window over the entrance is a picture of Peter walking on water and losing his faith, "What made you lost your courage like that?" I was shocked when we were told that part of the story.



Gamie Aker Church in Oslo

The whole trip is incredibly important for me because it is not one I studied much about before we went. Therefore, it is all most unexpected and unique.

My last safari to Kenya in July 2016 with daughter, Mary and her two kids, Nora and Warren is important as we all realize that this is our last trip to Africa. I want to think of this trip as full of curiosity, creativity and courage. It not only is our last safari, but our last time with Dave Richards. Over the years Dave has become a true

We return to Governor's Camp for the rest of the safari. We have been there so many times by now that it really feels very home-like. We are comfortable with each and every moment while we are there. We know this is our final time and we appreciate the importance of the moments while we are there.

We return home and soon I head out across the beauty of Kansas. This engulfs us as we drive across the Flint Hills to Cheyenne Wildlife Area and the Quivera National Wildlife Refuge. My sister, Pam and I are privileged to laugh, chatter and spend time with her daughter, Laura as we enjoy the many birds gathered in both wildlife areas. I always enjoy the area of the Quivera National Wildlife Refuge when I travel to both these areas. Quivera National Wildlife Refuge seems to open more incredible spots than anywhere else that I go.

In the fall I go to my Ark City High School class's 65th Reunion. It is Halloween. Arkansas City and I have fun reconnecting with so many old friends. Plus on one afternoon I go over to the building next to the Burford Theatre and sell copies of *Everyday Wonder*. The weekend is indeed magical as I spend time selling books and having fun with friends from long ago.

Twice during 2016 Kaze and I go to Blue Heaven to our house on the beach of Hatteras Island to write & watch the waves. As I walk the beach and pay attention to the roll of waves and flocks of birds in the air my first two weeks of November fill me with much needed peace. Every morning as I point my camera at the sun appearing out of the Atlantic Ocean a calmness enters my soul as I pray for peace in our beautiful but broken world



Blue Heaven, Avon, North Carolina

I go with Ben and Tina for three days to New York City to see the magical lights, fun shows, and the awesome 9/11 Museum. We have quite a time taking in all that New York has decorated for Christmas. It seems like all of the city is joyful about the decorations.

We spend one evening with Cory and Drew Hill plus Scott Phillips sister, Nancy. We share a table off in a corner of a place the two Hill boys know about. It is fun for me to just sit back and listen as all of these “kids” catch up on what they have been doing.

Christmas eve and day I celebrate with daughter Mary, her daughter and son, Nora and Warren and their friends, Kent and Cam. Mary bought the house that Rodney and I lived in for thirty years. A Christmas eve “sleep over” becomes exceptional for me as I curl up in the upstairs guest bedroom.

New Year’s Eve is a quiet day at Ben and Tina’s up north. It has been an interesting week with family. I invited each family to go out to dinner with me separately. Each family is radically different and all three families chose where we will go. This made it a great fun evening with each of them. Cold with some snow has reduced most of my out-door time. I did go for one walk in the neighborhood. Ben and I went down the street to see the swans. The woods behind their house is way too icy for me to attempt this time.

All of my family is special and sustains me. The Minnesota crowd includes



Jarvis, Christy and Jeff. Marcel, Liz, Izzy and Zander, Tina, Rory, Ben and Teegan



*Four Wilson men – Jeff,
Zander, Marcel and Ben*



*In Hood River Oregon is where son Tim lives.
Tim and brother Ben*

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Unexpected Wonders

February 2012 my final payment on my apartment at Claridge Court is paid and leads to several months of rebuilding and painting. I didn't move until mid-August. I bought two apartments together (what a spark of good luck) and I have so many pictures across each room that the apartment feels very home-like. From January 2010 to August 2012 is quite a period of time to decide how I wanted it all to look. I have published four books and I am finishing this account as my last bit of writing for book publication.

I slowly become acquainted with folks at Claridge, continue all of my activities at the church and spend time with Kaze writing and talking. I miss Rodney but try to move ahead without him.

In a few years at Claridge Court I became head of the Successful Aging Committee which schedules most of the extra activities for the community. It was an effective group and I lead them for two years. And then the pandemic of the virus Covid 19 hits and we stop all getting together. But before that happens...

After Mary has moved to Colorado Springs I fly out there twice by myself. Colorado Springs is a bit harder to get to, but I am very impressed with the house that she and Ken have purchased. It is a tri-level home that is quite modern. Difficult for me to live in because there are many more steps to climb than I would want to climb all the time, but fun to visit.

Then during the summer I talk Mary, Ken, Ben and Tina into going with me on a choir trip to Spain and Portugal. Mostly I want to take them because after the choir trip I want to go up north in Portugal to the area where Rodney and his Rotarians did their work

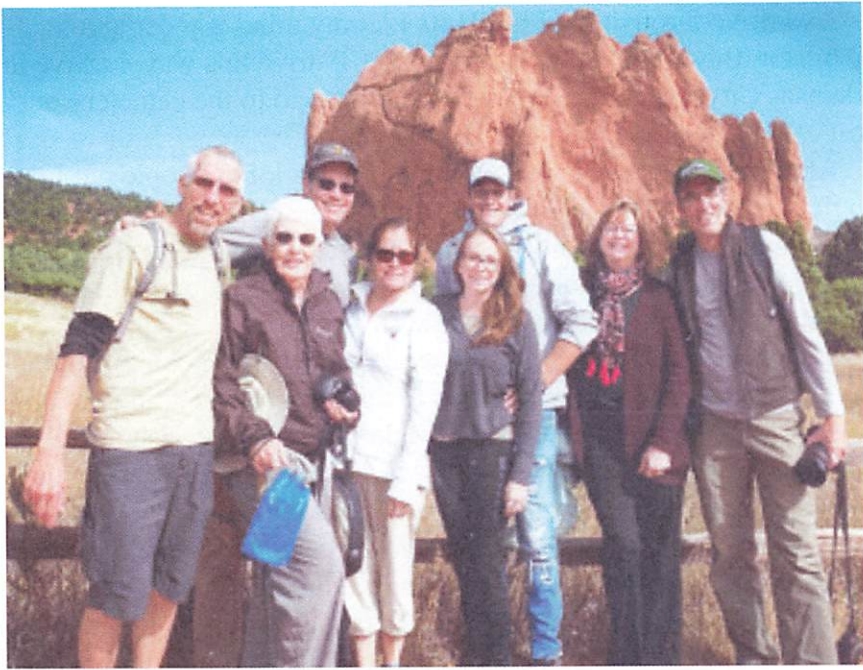
weeks. We stay in the town of Lamego and room in a strange hotel that is newish and rather odd. We are the only ones staying there. I have a very large room with windows out on the main street which I loved. Each of the couples had large rooms also, but for some reason I experienced mine as the best room. Breakfast was served to us in a room at the top with four sides of windows and looked out over the town.

As we drive back south we spend quite a bit of time wandering through Mezio and I experience that Rodney is with us during that time. The only thing I see that I actually recognize is the church and gravesites in the village. We all enjoy the trip...which I wasn't sure we would, but I am very glad that we spent time that way.



Priscilla, Mary, Kent and Tina in Lamego Portugal

But then early in the fall of 2019 Ben, Tina, and Tim all decide they will go out to Colorado Springs at the same time. They insist that we all need to meet out there. I fly to Minneapolis and join Ben and Tina on their flight to Denver. There we rent a car and drive to Colorado Springs. We have an amazing time all together for several days. Mostly we sit in the back yard and talk and talk. We did spend one day going to the Garden of the Gods and hiking for a while which turned out to be a lot of fun.



Tim, Priscilla, Kent, Mary, Nora, Jake, Tina and Ben at Garden of the Gods.

In October I drive to Arkansas City for my 70th high school reunion. Before I go south through the Flint Hills I drive west and go through Harveyville to see the bench marking Rodney's six ancestors in that cemetery. They had been buried there but not marked in anyway. Ben and Rodney had purchased the bench with all their names on it. I stay there for awhile and contemplate all that has gone on concerning our ancestors.



As I drive through the Flint Hills I let my mind wander across the hills as this is probably my last time I'll drive this way. I arrive in Arkansas City, check into the motel and then go to the cemetery out west of town.

After breakfast I go join the reunion. Not a lot of people but I am tickled to see Bobbie Hawkins Auperle and Donna Livingstone. They are gals that I not only knew from high school but first knew at church and choir from our earliest time there. The reunion is fun just listening to what folks are doing now.

Saturday afternoon we have several hours off so Bobbie, Donna and I go to the Presbyterian Church to find out what is going on there. All the doors are locked, but we knock on a door just north of the sanctuary and a secretary who is working comes down to let us in. We sit in the sanctuary and talk with her for a while.

What hits me the hardest is to discover that there are only forty members left. I realize it is only a matter of time before all is finished. The three of us visitors are most excited though when we go into the back room and find all the pictures and stuff. Most fun is finding the early choir pictures with Mary Reese as our choir director.

When we leave the church Donna goes off to see her daughter and Bobbie and I just drive around town. We go out through the cemetery past my folk's stone, then drive past the high school newly built long after we went there and just through the town. We have a great time sharing all the stuff we are doing.

The next morning I phone the woman who bought my folks house out east of town. She invites me out and I drive out there. It is awesome to go up that driveway and park. For a moment it feels like my mom will come out that front door. But the lady who owns the house now pops her head out and welcomes me.

I meander through the house and sit for quite a while in the living room talking with her. She shares the latest Native American news of the area. A whole new tribe has been discovered living in that area some time ago. They have been digging east of her house plus a number of other places. Later I realize that I am sorry that I didn't go out and look in that hole they had dug.

I finally leave Ark City and meander through the countryside and end up in Council Grove by evening. I find a Bed and Breakfast, check in and go walk through the town. After a lovely meal in the downtown area I walk back through town and go to my B&B for a good night's sleep.

Later that fall my friend Phil in Independence gives me a call. He tells me that he and his wife, Brenda are going to Australia in February 2020, did I want to go? My first thought was that sounds impossible and my second thought was...of course I want to go. And I will ask Tina if she wants to go with me.

We land in Melbourne and neither Tina's nor my suitcase arrives there. We go shop at Target in case we don't ever see our suitcases again. We don't see much of Melbourne, but we do have a crazy time shopping. Then we return to our hotel and go for a quiet walk across the street in a large park.

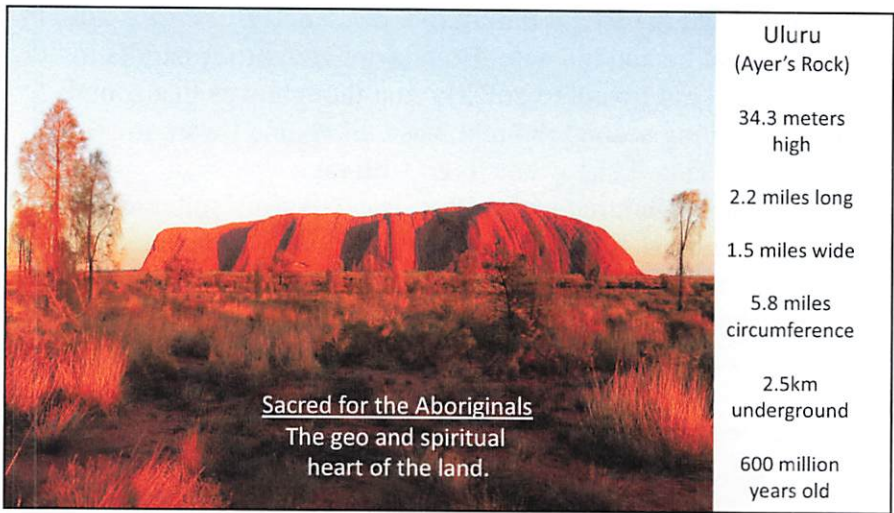


Priscilla and Tina have our picture taken with a Koala at a shop across the street from our hotel in Melbourne. We only hold the koala a couple of seconds, but they are very quiet and cuddly. The koala is an arboreal herbivorous marsupial native of Australia.

Next we fly to the center of the country. The most important place on this whole trip for me is Ayer's Rock – Uluru.

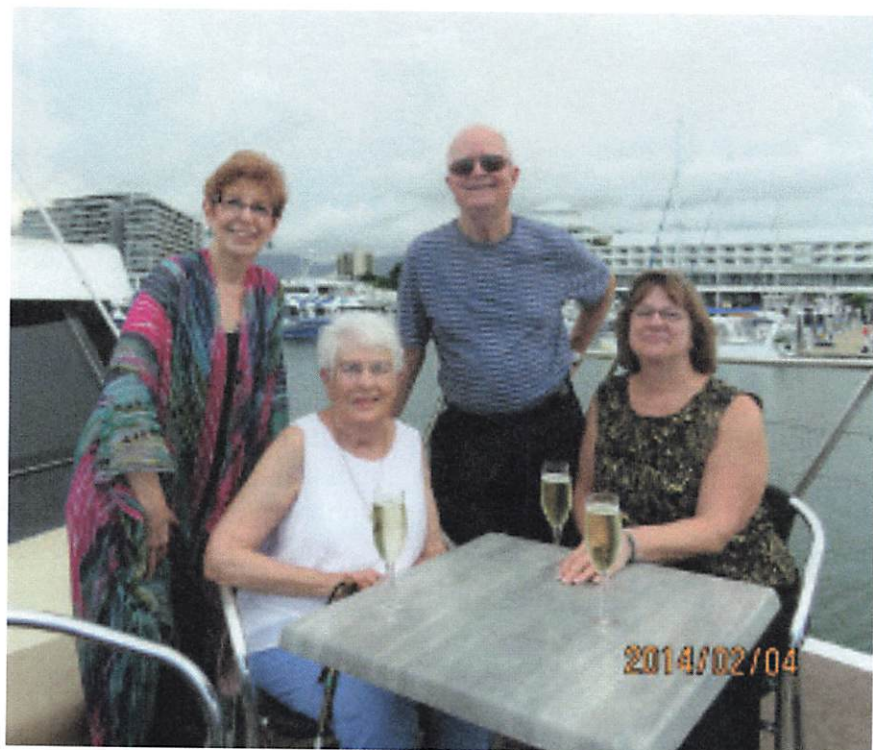
Uluru, or Ayers Rock, is a massive sandstone monolith in the heart of the Northern Territory's arid "Red Centre". Uluru is sacred to indigenous Australians and is thought to have started forming around 550 million years ago. Uluru (Ayers Rock) is a deeply sacred place to the Indigenous Anangu people. I am totally captured by the whole territory. It seems sacred to me and I experience that it is even hard for me to breath while I am looking at Uluru.

Our suitcases arrive there the afternoon before we leave so all is well.



We next go to Cairns and ride the Kuranda Scenic Railway. We return to the coast via the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway which is a fascinating way to see the rainforest...flying over it. I am captured by the rainforest as we look down on that awesome green territory.

A day is spent traveling out to the Great Barrier Reef. We go quite a distance to the Reef and then are amazed as we look at all the underwater fish and growth on the reef. I am excited by all that I see but realize that I can see the death of the reef beginning to happen. Parts of the area are turning gray.



Brenda and Phil Dunham– Priscilla and Tina

We fly next to Sydney and explore a good bit of the city. The next day after our exploration we drive west of Sydney and love the Featherdale Wildlife Park. As we walk around the park we have a slight shower most of the day. That adds a bit of fun as we feed the kangaroos, see the koalas and other animals. I experience the koala as the most fascinating animal...such a quiet arboreal herbivorous marsupial native of Australia. Our last night in Sydney we go down by the Opera House and enjoy a drink with Brenda and Phil Dunham. Then we have a lovely dinner as the sun sets over the city.



Our time in New Zealand is split in two. Half of our time is in Queenstown at the southern tip of the South Island and the other half is spent in Auckland. A day driving up to Milford Sound from Queenstown is an awesome adventure. It is quite a long drive and we exit the bus several times on the drive to marvel at lakes and enjoy



Tina and Priscilla looking out at Auckland

walking around large areas below mountains. There had been an accident earlier so at this time only buses are allowed to drive to the Sound.

In Auckland Tina and I go to the top of their tallest building to look out across the city. However, the highlight in Auckland is the Auckland War Memorial Museum where we enjoy looking at Maori architecture and attend a Maori Concert. The whole trip is incredible. All so much more than I anticipated.



Priscilla H Wilson

As we return from Australia and New Zealand I suddenly discover we had entered a new world...one that was basically shut-down across the globe. My mind began to wander over the eighty-nine years that I had lived. Memories surfaced that I had not thought of for a long time.

The pandemic had begun, but I was not as conscious of that at first. It became apparent rather soon that Covid 19 was spreading world-wide and we were under new “rules” to keep from having it invade our lives at Claridge Court.

Memory is a funny thing. As we examine the events in our lives, a new level of meaning flows forth. Memory connects us to what has gone before, also to that which really matters. Only in looking back over our decades can we understand the hinge points that dramatically shaped our life.

The surprises that shaped my life –

- A postcard invitation to Rodney to join the youth choir
- The dating and marriage to Rodney Eugene Wilson
- The word Ecumenical on a neighborhood center that our church sponsored which opened us to a continuing relationship with the Ecumenical Institute/ the Institute of Cultural Affairs
- A group of women who decide their husbands should meet.
- I am assigned as the only person to run a summer print shop and I realize that is the time that I grew up.
- Six weeks in Tonga that I had not anticipated.
- Rodney's death and my move alone to Claridge Court.

I am grateful for the years I enjoy community at Claridge Court. The only thing not as wonderful about it...Rodney would have loved being here if he had lived long enough. However, he is present for me all the time.

Each morning I walk alone, but the rest of the time I basically am not with anyone else. No Claridge dinners, we eat in our apartments alone during this pandemic. No church services, we watch each Sunday morning online – a new way to worship. I have attended three funerals online. It all seems strange.

In writing this account I discover that my mail number at Ward Belmont (my first year of college) was 321. My apartment number at Claridge is 321. Very strange.

We live in hope. Hope that we are moving toward God's future.

We live in hope as we experience community in our houses of faith (on-line at the moment), in families, in communities.

We live in hope that we will have new eyes for seeing, new hands for doing the deeds of God.

We pray that our lives can be the hands, the feet, and the actions that is God acting in the world.

We live in hope.

The letter I put in the beginning of Rodney's life book, *Zero Meridian, Five Degrees North, a Man of Service*:

April 20, 2003

Dearest Rodney,

As I think about Easter (today) and new life, I'm forever grateful that Cutch pushed you out of the car fifty-six springs ago. It is not possible that there is a life more filled with love and care than the one I've had with you.

Your humor, your care of people, your tool boxes full of good deeds have been – and continue to be – a great joy.

When I think of the experiences we've had together, I'm overwhelmed. The decision to buy that house on Circle that demanded so much of our time, energy and resources – wow! How did we manage all that? Even me being terrified when you went up the ladder to paint those high peaks.

I'm grateful for the years with Norwood Park Presbyterian Church – such learning experiences (Mariners) they were for us both.

How were we ever brave enough to have children? The boys came naturally. But then the process of adopting Mary. Little did we know what joy she would bring – even though I think our parents (my Mother in particular) thought we were slightly nuts.

Then the Ecumenical Institute entered our lives. Thank you for saying “yes” to buying that movie projector. From the struggle of deciding to go on the Global Odyssey to the pain of so many days and weekends with the “Ecy” types we weathered many a storm. Thank you for never deciding you'd had enough of those struggles.

I'm so grateful for the marriage we created over the years. Your love of villagers gave a depth to our relationship that has been priceless.

I don't think I ever showed appreciation enough, but I've been so proud of all the Rotary awards that have come your way.

I was proud of your decision to go to Scotland when Rex was dying. One more sign of the loyalty and love that is you.

Your patience and support – first with the business that Joel and I created – but more especially with the book writing during the last two years has been very life giving.

I know there are times that I get busy and don't seem to have enough time for you. I don't ever really mean to shut you out – and if I have – or seemed to have – I'm sorry.

I'd like one change in our weekly schedule. I've always loved dates with you – but we go weeks and “forget” to have a date. Let's work one night a week into our calendar to be “date night.” It will probably move around to different nights of the week, but when we put up the calendar in the kitchen each week we can just decide.

Thank you for being you – and for marrying me – and sticking it out.

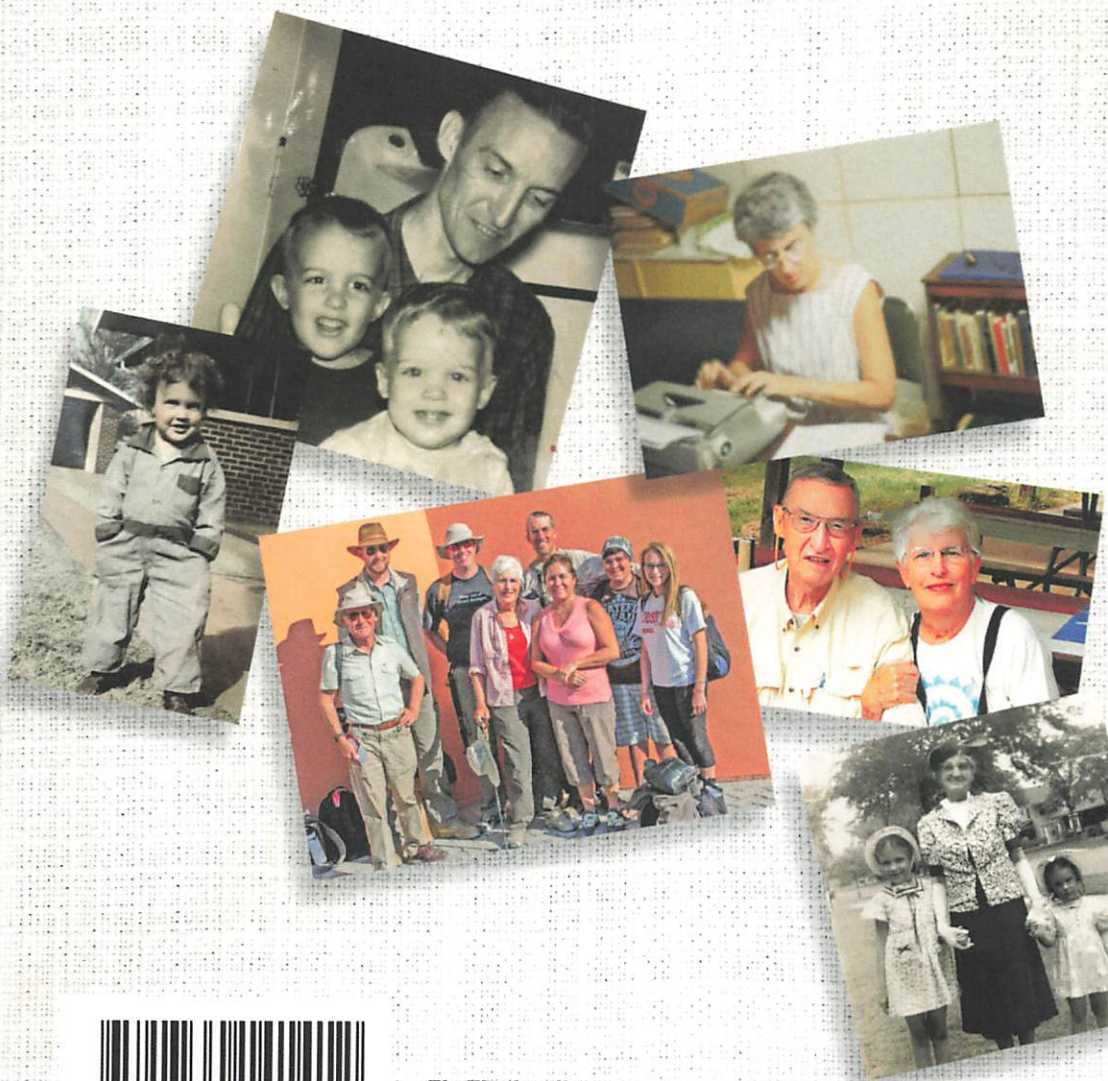
*All my love,
Priscilla*

Made in the USA
Monee, IL
22 February 2021



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*M*emory is a funny thing. As we examine the events in our lives, a new level of meaning flows forth. Memory connects us to what has gone before, also to that which really matters. Only in looking back over our decades can we understand the hinge points that dramatically shaped our life.



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The Wonder of Memory

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