

# Journey On



Muriel C. Griffin & Robert A. Griffin



# **Journey On**

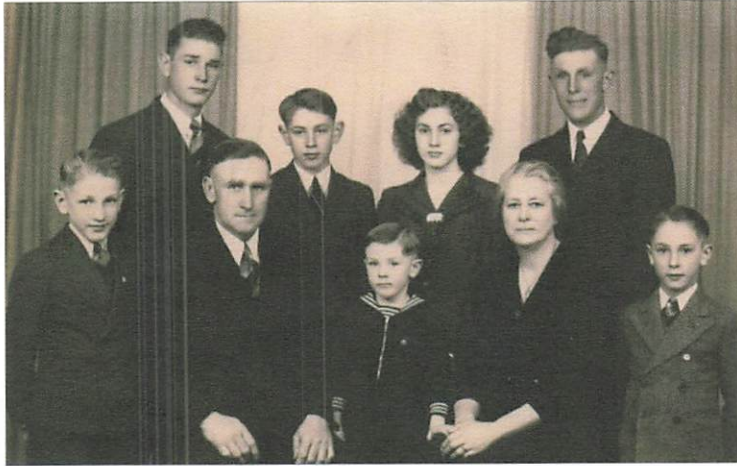
by  
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and  
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assembled, designed, and edited by  
**Debra A. Griffin**

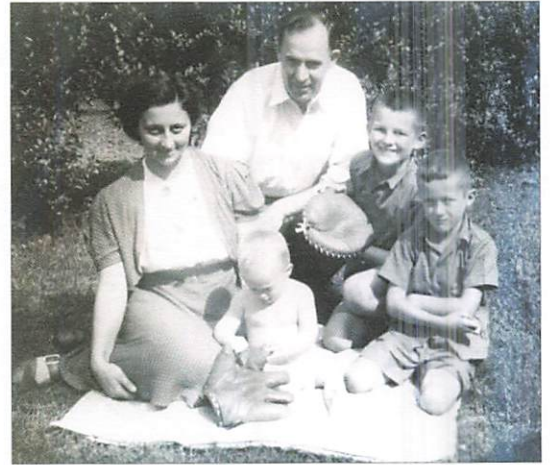
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• *Cliff, Ken, Muriel, Dennis, Truman, Dick, Vernon, Min, Irwin Raak*  
ca. 1945



• *Bernice, Chuck, R. Austin, Bob, Allan Griffin*  
ca. 1942



• *Debra, Laura, Muriel,*  
*Bob, Margaret,*  
*(front) Carol, Nancy Griffin*  
ca. 1971

*When your dreams began  
Reality laughed knowingly,  
Possibility smiled encouragement,  
Time watched quietly;  
Then as now,  
Wisdom guides,  
Faith sustains  
and Creativity nourishes;  
Your lives touch others  
And the journey goes on...*

*- Nancy Griffin  
for our 40th anniversary, 1998*



- *at our family gathering in the  
White Mountains of New  
Hampshire, August 2017*

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## Notes on Style

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These notes explain the unique styling of this book:

The author's names, *Muriel* and *Bob*, come before the sections that they wrote.

Picture notes follow **dots •**, either in the body of the text, or as a caption...both on the same page as the picture.

See the **Glossary** for explanation of unfamiliar terms, abbreviations, and where our daughters have lived.



• at home in Holyoke, 2017

## How This Book Came to Be

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### *Muriel*

I began this effort simply by writing a story each week for the "Writing for the Fun of It" group at the Holyoke Senior Center. With the opening of the new building in 2013, and being able to meet in a beautiful room with light from large windows, I was encouraged to write and share my stories.

Although I had written stories before of my experiences, the first being while in Liberia in 1956, now I wrote each week. Our daughter, Debra, encouraged and helped me start collecting my writings in three-ring notebooks with accompanying indexes by the year. Previous to 2013, all stories were combined in one notebook.

When I first started writing my memories, I wrote in long-hand, but I shifted to making a mind-map and from that, I typed out my story. I had much to learn about the computer; Bob, Debra, Phil, and others were called upon many times to get me out of trouble. Bob was always ready to read the first to the last draft and was kind to comment on spelling and odd sentences. He'd bring up additional details and question my memory. I also sent the stories to our daughters, and was really happy with their comments and appreciated their corrections.

Debra wanted to put together a book about the lives of Bob and me. Starting in 2015, she created a framework of topics, from birth stories to retirement, and began positioning the stories I had written. As it grew in size and refinement, she began calling it "The Book." Bob added some of his memories and experiences, and together we remembered more and more. It was as if the stories emerged from our

memories like the little chipmunks showing up in our garden. Also, our wish to have pictures with the stories caused us to search through our stacks of photo albums, and to have Debra's husband, Phil, take pictures of them so Debra could use them as illustrations for the book. We also took more pictures. Again, all the daughters joined in contributing their snapshots; and just like dandelions, "The Book" grew and grew.

This wonderful book of memories so lovingly assembled by Debra, needed a much better name. *Adventures*, *Ventures*, and *Journeys* kept surfacing until we chose ***Journey On*** as most appropriate as our moving on with life continues. The section titles became trip metaphors.

I very grateful to all of our daughters and Phil for proof reading the drafts and giving helpful suggestions.

We hope that this book not only records a history of our family, but also that it will be a source of joy and information, and we encourage those who read it to record their own.

I thank everyone who is named in my stories for bringing me joy and meaning. Without you, my stories would be less significant. I know there are many more details, stories, and experiences with friends and relatives that I have not named nor written about, but for now I am declaring this finished. I plan to continue remembering, and do more writing that may tell your untold story.



• Nancy, Bob, Margaret,  
Laura, Muriel, Debra, Carol in  
Des Moines, 1969

## Part 1: Setting Out

### Birth Details

*Muriel*

April 23, 1930, at 6:00 p.m.

Rural area of Sioux Center, IA

Address: Maurice, IA

This is • the farm home where I was born with the local doctor and nurse attending. The doctor guessed I weighed eight pounds as he had no scales to use. We had no electricity, indoor toilet, or running water, but we had a telephone. My uncles and aunts gave gifts of baby clothes, a baby book, small toys, and a rubber doll.



I had • two older brothers, Dennis and Clifford. My parents were pleased to have a daughter; my mother's twin also had a daughter a year older than I. My Aunt Jo helped my mother often. I slept in a pretty white crib from which I could look out the sides; it was able to be wheeled around. (It was used for all five of our daughters too.)

The bank crash had happened in 1929. This was the beginning of a time of years of drought along with massive poverty.

My mother was born 117 years ago on the day I wrote this:

*My Mama*

by Muriel, 2017

*I can hear her singing lullabies;  
I can feel her cuddling and her kisses.  
With a soft brush she brushes my hair  
And soothingly wipes away many a tear.*

*She places me in the little white crib;  
And while her hands do other work,  
She watches me through the spindles,  
And makes the wheels roll with her foot.*

*She wraps me in  
white and pink blankets  
With crocheted edges  
she has stitched.  
And as I fall asleep  
all snugly wrapped,  
She reads stories and holds  
my brother on her lap.*

*She takes us outside  
in the warm sunshine;  
She lays me on a blanket  
under a tree.  
While she hangs • diapers  
on the line close by,*

*She watches as my brothers play with me.*

*How blessed I am for a mother like her,  
To be so loved and thoughtfully raised.  
A woman who could sing in the hardest of times,  
And work with her hands as her mind creates rhymes.*



## Bob

**November 19, 1932**

I weighed 6 lb. 8 oz. I think.

Doctor came to mother after delivery to say: "Do not get attached to this one. He is likely NOT a keeper." Bled from all body openings + through the skin when touched or held by bare hands. (Spoiled from birth by being carried around on a pillow!)

Born in **Dubuque, IA.**

My dad was a professor at Dubuque University (head of the physics department, and the sole professor in the department.)

He coached defense for the University of Dubuque football team (they won NO games during the three seasons he coached but they lost by fewer and fewer points.)

Mother completed her BS degree (magna cum laude) but did NOT deliver the valedictory speech for fear she would *show* carrying me in about the fourth month!

- *me doing snow removal to make room for my tricycle*



- *me, when I won a baby contest*



- *me and my parents in Dubuque*



## Our Siblings

### *Muriel*

I belong to a large family as is quite common for farm families in Sioux County, Iowa where many had Dutch heritage. I enjoy and appreciate the continuing relationship I have with my brothers (and sisters-in-law) over the miles.

**Dennis**, six years older than me, was often my caregiver as a child. On a cold snowy day, I was riding behind him on a horse to school when my nose felt frozen. He jumped off to rub it with snow that brought the color back from white to red. He stayed home from high school to help on the farm. When he was 18 he was drafted into the Marines; fortunately, the war ended just before he was to leave for Japan. He earned a GED, the high school equivalency diploma, in the service.

Dennis returned to marry Eunice Menning; they lived nearby on a rental farm of our dad. Together they had five children. In early 1982, I visited with him as he drove me to the airport for my return to Korea. He talked about his life and having cancer lymphoma; we had a solemn and reflective conversation. I cherish these memories. He died on July 21 of that same year before my return from Korea.

**Clifford**, two years older than me, liked to tease me but he also took me with him and his friends on adventures such as trapping squirrels in the pasture.

Once, in a game of Cops and Robbers, he stopped to give me a ride behind him on a bike. As I jumped on, a bent chain guard cut open the back of my leg. He yelled to our dad, "Muriel has a hole in her leg!" Dad quickly took me to the hospital for several stitches.

Clifford stayed home after 8th grade and worked on the farm, and also as a carpenter. He married Grada Kooi, and they had seven children. They rented a farm from our dad. He farmed there until an injury necessitated other work in town. He bought a furniture store. After it closed, he hauled milk until he injured his back. He had surgery and couldn't work so he took classes and got his GED. When he was able, he became a meat inspector in Luverne, Minnesota where they moved. He died of a heart attack in 2011.

- *my six brothers*



**Kenneth**, two years younger, was my best buddy. He was willing to play house with me and my dolls. We also had fun making miniature farm places in our grove; he and Clifford would put together boxes to build the farm buildings and machinery. He was quiet and easy-going and not much into farm work. Although I was

a year ahead of him in school, we started high school together.

Kenneth went on to Hope College in Holland, MI. when I started teaching. After graduation, he served in the military, spending some time in Germany where he worked in the pharmaceutical part of a hospital. We wrote to each other and I occasionally corrected his spelling and returned his letter. It was a joke

between us. He came home to marry Arthea Hulstein and go on to get his pharmacy degree. They had two children. He worked in several drug stores in Iowa and Minnesota, and retired in Worthington, MN.

• *Dad and my first five brothers*



**Irwin**, seven years younger, had severe eczema and asthma as an infant. I often got to help take care of him. He was fascinating and amusing to me as he figured out ways to have fun. I recall he would climb

**Truman** was four years younger than me. He was born during the depression. It was a difficult time for my parents, and the crops did very poorly. He sometimes complained of being given a bum-deal in the family. He had a big collie-looking dog that he loved; I can remember him sitting on the steps of our home talking quietly to the dog. During high school and later, Truman worked for a carpenter and appreciated his boss so much that he became a special long-time friend of his.

Truman attended Hope College and Seminary and became a minister in the Reformed Church. He married Marcy Gearheart and they lived in Michigan, and other places, where he pastored. They had four children by birth and five by adoption. I recall him telling stories of our home life; that often made me feel we had not grown up in the same family. When he retired, they lived on a farm in Michigan where he raised chickens, geese, and a herd of goats at different times.

a ladder to get on his pony, and then he would ride away, letting the ladder fall behind. Dad needed him on the farm so he did not go to high school. Irwin befriended a homeless dog who would come and go. Irwin would put food in the corncrib for him if or when he returned. Years later, Irwin wrote a captivating book about his search for and care of that dog. He worked on the farm all the while as my dad became more impaired by Parkinson's disease.

Irwin married Trudy Haan and began farming on the home place when our dad retired. They had five children; the first one of them died as an infant. Irwin's asthma bothered him throughout the years, and later Parkinson's, but he never let these stop him from farm work. He rented the home farm and modernized it with an indoor bathroom before Trudy and he moved in to live there. Later when he had the opportunity, he bought a larger farm in southwest Minnesota and moved there. He now has many windmills on his farm producing energy. Our daughters enjoyed staying on their farm during vacations when they were children.





**Vernon**, eleven years younger, was a brother I often cared for; I remember I would take him out of church when he was fussy. I was not attending school the year when he was a toddler, and as he grew out of his baby bed he slept with me. Occasionally, it was nice to have another warm body to snuggle close to. Sometimes he would put his cold feet against me, and I would complain. Then my mother would heat bricks and wrap them with towels to keep our feet warm. He was about nine or ten when I got my first car to go to teach. One morning, he got in the car with me and pulled the throttle; the car revved forward. I screamed but he only laughed.

Vernon attended high school and helped on the farms of our dad and brothers; he also went to a business school. He married Lois Weg and they had three children. They rented the farm where Clifford had been living after he moved to town. In retirement, Vernon worked in refurbishing old wheel chairs to send to other countries for disabled people.

• *Cliff, Ken, Dennis, Dad, Truman, Vernon, Irwin with nephews: Art, David, Jerry, Wayne*

My six sisters-in-law, **Eunice, Grada, Arthea, Marcy, Trudy and Lois**, are loving sisters to me. I appreciate keeping in touch through visits, cards, and phone calls. They welcome us into their homes for hearty food, rest, and relaxation.

*They are soft and powerful, and also practical and spiritual. They stand as blossoming trees beside the tall Raak pillars.*

*- adapted from a Native American saying*



• *(back) Kenneth, Vernon, Bob, Clifford, Trudy, Irwin, Truman (front) Arthea, Lois, me, Grada, Eunice, Marcy (after Dennis' death)*



During my first 12 years, **Trellis Den Herder** • was my closest friend and the nearest to being a sister. She was born one year earlier than me and her mother, Jo, was my mother's twin sister. Trellis had no sisters and only one older brother, Glenn. I mostly recall playing with dolls together as well as table games.

When I was almost a teenager, Aunt Jo and Uncle Tuen, Trellis'

parents, included me in their trip to Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin to visit Uncle Ray and Aunt Lucy Lubbers. My Uncle Ray was a minister, deaf, and a very loving man; my Aunt Lucy was very soft-spoken and always showed special interest in children. Ruth, one of their three daughters, was my age.

We rode on a sight-seeing boat to view the amazing rock formations in the Wisconsin Dells. We also toured the Kohler plant that manufactured quality bathroom equipment. This trip was a new and special experience. As we didn't have a bathroom at home, I dreamed of having a bathroom like these.

Trellis's family lived about four miles from us and we passed their home on our way to Sioux Center to shop and go to church. We often stopped to visit in the afternoons after coming from town; Aunt Jo would make a lunch with juice, cookies or cake. I occasionally stayed overnight with Trellis. One time, Clifford and I

walked to their home but it was really too far to do again.

Our families always took turns hosting the Thanksgiving Day meal; that made for a very full table. The men and boys would go pheasant hunting after dinner and the rest of us would play games – cards, Checkers, Carom, or other table games.

Trellis went to high school immediately after country school and because I stayed home two years before high school, she graduated three years earlier than I. She took teacher training in high school and began teaching in a rural school after graduation. She married Garry Dokter, who was in the military, when she was 21. It was in the years when I went to Northwestern Jr. College that our ways and interests became more separated. Trellis got cancer in her 40's. We visited with her just before we left for Japan; she died while we were abroad. I have pleasant memories of sharing secrets and "girl talk" with her.



• *cousins, Ellen and Trellis, and me*



## Bob

- I went sledding with my two best friends, and my brother, **Allan**, near our school in Arlington, VA. Allan got hurt when (against my warning) he jumped on his sled and followed too closely behind me down the hill. The straight runner of my sled went into his mouth when my sled went over a bump just ahead of him.
- Allan and I built the BEST tree house in the community (two stories!) and all the neighbor kids wanted to climb up there. (Of course, *no girls were allowed!*) Dad was very generous with his nails...as long as we didn't use the straight ones! We had to straighten all the nails we used...I taught my daughters that skill years later.
- Converted our 'little red wagon' into a tank in preparation for invasion by Germany!
- Helped Dad start a fallout shelter in the backyard, made of brick, rock and concrete. It was never completed.
- Tied Allan to steel cot while playing Cowboys and Indians at Grandma Bender's farm home.
- **Chuck** was nine years younger than me so I didn't play with him much.

- *me and Allan at Bender farm (in both childhood pictures)*



## Muriel

**Allan**, two and a half years younger than Bob, went into the military after high school. He served in Japan after WWII. Back in the U.S., Allan married Mary McDowell and they had four daughters. He was a house painter and owned the Diamond Vogel Paint Store in Ames, IA and then Lincoln, NE. He later worked as a mechanic and restored top-of-the-line cars. Allan and Mary got divorced; he later married Mickey (Marilyn) Smith and lived in Lincoln, NE with her before getting a divorce. He died in 2011.

**Charles (Chuck)** was an entrepreneur from childhood, finding golf balls in ponds and selling the best of them. He graduated from Iowa State

University and became an architect. He married Kari Rorhus and they had two sons. He divorced Kari, and sometime later married Gillian (Gilly) Halkerston. They live in Newburyport, MA. He enjoys doing archeological research in Turkey, Greece, and Italy and building homes with that as inspiration.

- *Allan, Chuck, Bob, Mom Hanna*

## Childhood Stories

### Muriel

- I took my first steps at ten months and one week, and walked 16 steps the first time (according to my baby book).
- I could say Mama, Papa, and bye, bye at ten months.
- My mother made my clothes from hand-me-downs from my aunts and a neighbor. Warm clothes were made from dad's worn pants.
- My mother taught me my ABC's and numbers to 100 before 1st grade, there was no kindergarten.
- I began piano lessons at eight.
- I liked to ride my bicycle. One day I was taking a gallon of water to my father and brothers who were haying alfalfa. The water was in an old syrup can that dangled from the handlebars. As I was going down a long sloping hill to the alfalfa field, the bicycle gained too much speed and when I came to a corner, I went into the ditch and into a barbed wire fence. I have a scar on my arm from this.



• Dennis, me, and Cliff



I was seven weeks old when I was baptized in the First Reformed Church in Sioux Center, IA.

My mother was a wonderful teacher; she read and told us Bible stories and prepared us each Sunday for our Sunday School lesson. My parents were strict about us following the laws of the Ten Commandments: not stealing, telling lies, hurting another, saying dirty words, or swearing, but instead to obey them and be good.



• me when I was beginning to walk, one of the earliest picture of me

I began going to Sunday School at age four. I had Mrs. TePaske as my teacher. She always gave us pictures of Bible stories in color, and was very loving. I loved her too, and was eager to go every Sunday to her class. Mrs. TePaske taught us again when I was 12 and she called us her "Enter-teens." She prayed for us as she really cared about us and our futures.

• me in elementary school





## Carmel Store

---

Sometime in the late 1930's or early 40's, regularly on Wednesdays, the Carmel Store on wheels came to our house. I was always anticipating the store to arrive long before it did. I'd watch at the windows and try to be first to announce, "Here comes the Carmel Store!" This store was something like a *Good Times Ice Cream* truck moving about the county selling groceries at farm homes. It was a special diversion for us on summer days to have the Carmel Store come to our house. The driver Eddie would often have a story to tell about something he had seen on the road: a deer, a skunk, or an accident.

Eddie would jump out, and like Vanna White, open up wooden doors to display the spices and small items lined up on narrow shelves attached to them. There were big shelves deeper inside all filled with larger bags and boxes of food. The Carmel Store had almost anything a farmer's wife might need. There would be flour, sugar, yeast, baking powder, syrup, soap, shampoo, spools of white and black thread, work gloves, candy, gum, and lots more. The store had only a few choices, if any, of each product. If my mother called in her order ahead, she could get delivered crates of apricots, peaches, pears, or cherries that were in season for canning; of course, it depended on whether Eddie had space in the truck.

Unlike a grocery store now, there would be no fresh lettuce, beans or carrots as farmers would raise these in their gardens. Neither would there be milk or cream because there was no refrigeration. However, sometimes my mother sold Eddie eggs and I think he resold these if someone wanted them. My mother would put this money in a special place for her discretionary use.

The Carmel Store on wheels was memorable, providing a little excitement in the middle of the week. I didn't have an opportunity to go shopping in town very often and this gave me a chance to be a shopper. It was also training in budgeting; my mother had her list and wrote down what she paid for each item. I helped with this sometimes. My mother carefully considered the cost of each item as to whether she could afford it.

The home base of the Carmel Store on wheels was in the little town of Carmel northwest of our farm. My mother had taught the elementary grade children there before she was married. It was located about five miles from her childhood home in Sioux Center. She would walk there on Sunday evenings, or early Monday mornings, and would room with people in the community during the week. Later, when she was dating my dad-to-be, he would take her there with a horse and buggy, saving her the long walk and also to further their courtship.



• the Raak farm in the distance

## Thrashing Day

---

Our farm was in the good farm land of Sioux County in northwest Iowa. My dad loved working the land and bringing in the harvest. I remember July 1941's thrashing day. It was hot with no electricity and no fans but nevertheless, work needed to go on for the oat harvest.

Mom began by baking six loaves of bread; she was known for her good cooking and knew how much would be needed for mid-morning meals and mid-afternoon lunches also. She planned to have at least three apple pies from the apples in our own yard and cakes from scratch, of course, as well as cookies. She baked these ahead of time.

Fortunately my Aunt Jo, my mother's twin, called and said that she would make cookies. Other baking, including banana cream pies, would need to wait until the day the thrashers came as our only refrigeration was in an outside cave and the cellar, and that was not very cold.

When the thrashing day arrived, our parents had already been up before five as my dad and two older brothers had to finish the milking and feed the horses, cattle, pigs and chickens before the thrashing machine arrived. My mother made a hearty breakfast.

There were jobs for everyone. My two oldest brothers, Dennis at eighteen and Clifford at thirteen years old helped with getting the teams of horses and hayracks ready to go out to the fields as soon as the dew had dried. Kenneth, my brother just younger than

me at nine years old, was a good go-for to get water from our outside well, or go to the cave to get potatoes, carrots, or onions. Truman, at seven, needed to play with Irwin who just turned four; they both wanted to be outside where the real action was. I needed to help take care of my youngest brother, Vernon, who was three and a half months old.

It was exciting to see the team of four horses pull the big, truck-sized thrashing machine into our front pasture and then to see the horses with the hayracks piled high with the sheaves of oats coming into our yard from the fields.



• *the middle girl is me, to my right is cousin Trellis (my closest cousin and friend), the others are brothers or cousins (hiding on the left)*

My mother served sandwiches, oatmeal cookies and a large blue two-gallon pot of coffee for the 9:30 a.m. lunch break; Dennis with Kenneth's help carried it out to the thrashers. Mom kept working to prepare a big pot of beef stew with the meat Dad had gotten from the frozen food lockers in town the evening before. The kitchen really got warmed up from the cook stove. It was heated with corncobs we kids had gathered the

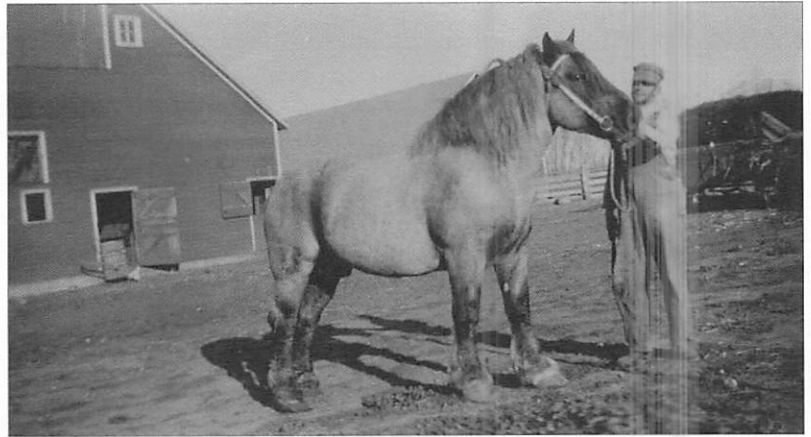


day before. The stove had a reservoir at the end that heated the water for dishes and it seemed to make the room hotter. She used rain water gathered in a cistern that dad had filled from the pump at the kitchen sink. Kenneth carried well water that was always cold and good tasting, making up for not having refrigeration.

As our farm had large fields of grain, the thrashing would go on a second day. So at the end of the day, preparation for the next began. Dennis caught three or four roosters. Mom was ready to dip them in hot water and we all helped to pluck the feathers. Mom cut up the birds and put them in cold water and stored them in the cave 'til the next day.

A week or so after all the harvesting was finished for all the farms in the thrashing ring, we had a big picnic at the town park. My dad brought watermelon and cantaloupe for everyone. The men still had strength to toss horse shoes and the women enjoyed visiting and watching the kids play on the swings and slides.

- Raak farm, standing woman is my mom. I am holding the doll



- Dad loved his horses, both work and riding.  
*This is a prize work horse.*



## Water in the Crick

by Muriel, 2017

*Water in the crick is muddy and slow.  
Long stemmed violets in the grasses grow.  
We gather by fistfuls, they are so small;  
My mother will treat them as orchids all.*

*Spring rains come in downpours,  
The crick fills and the banks overflow.  
We watch it creep closer to garden and home,  
Hoping the cattle to the high ground will roam.*

*When the water gets wild, it crosses the road,  
And we from the school feel stranded and cold;  
My papa with tall rubber boots or riding horseback,  
Rescues us warmly and closely we pack.*

*When winter comes, the crick water stops,  
We slide on the ice and often take flops.  
It won't be long and till springtime again  
We'll toss pebbles n' make ripples of water to spin.*

## Games

Before we had rural electrification and before television, when we finished supper and the dishes were washed, our family played games at the kitchen table. In the winter, playing cards was a favorite game; Rook, 42, Hearts, or Somerset became quite competitive as we teamed up against each other. I always hoped to team with my brother, Clifford, who dared to take risks and usually won. When we were short in forming teams, we played board games of Monopoly, Clue, and Steps and Ladders while the younger ones played with Tinker Toys and building blocks. We played games of strategy: checkers, Chinese checkers and chess. We played tic-tac-toe and Battleship. We played games of skill with marbles, Carom, Pick Up Sticks, and Tidily Winks.

During the day, we played games of make-believe. We built a farm in the grove. We held school under the trees. We played church in the garage. We made cookies from the soft mud in our ditch, baking them in the sun. We sold cereals, syrup, juices and raisins in empty containers. We created a circus between the drying sheets on the clothes line and found old clothes in which to dress and crates on which to perform tricks.



• (top) me (in hat) with parents and brothers: Dennis, Clifford, baby Kenneth



Before our country school was consolidated with the city school, instead of track, we had other kinds of running and racing games; we played tag games, Last Couple Out, Too Late for Supper, Catch-Me-If-You-Can, and Kick the Can. Before it was considered too dangerous, we played Duck on the Rock and Tug-of-War.



• *Ken and me, poor cat!*

We walked the country road to play on the school yard or neighbor kids would come to our house; games could go on late into the evening, and even after dark. We played volley ball, softball, badminton, and croquet. We even played cops and robbers after dark. For better or worse, there certainly have been major game changes since the 1930's and early 40's.

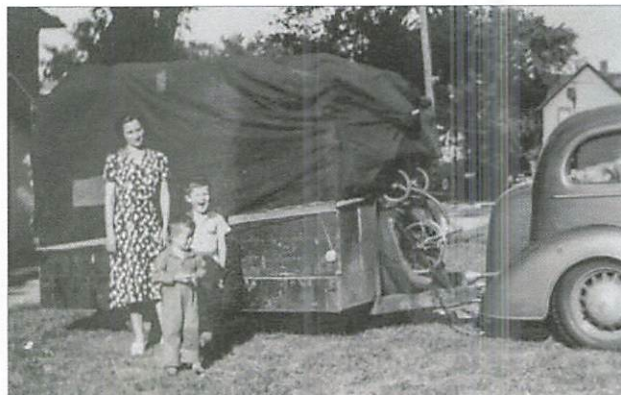


## Bob

Allan and I (still in Virginia, around 1st grade time) were walking in the woods with my jack knife open to cut through the "jungle" while I walked. There was a small stream I jumped over and my swinging arms struck the knife into my thigh. I don't remember it being a big cut, but it left a scar.

**Jan. 1936:** My dad was getting coal from the furnace from Boone where the trains were refueled. He picked up coal that was dropped during this process. The chimney got so hot from that soft coal that a calendar hanging on the chimney caught fire and dropped into the waste paper basket below it. The fire department came to put it out. Allan was ten months old then, so that was a frightening time in the house that day.

**1938:** During the move to DC, Mother was driving the car pulling the trailer • and was fearful driving down into Wheeling, WV with the weight of the trailer pushing the car from behind. She managed it anyway. On arriving to Washington DC, we moved there because Dad was going to work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we stayed on Haynes Point, in a small wooden motel-type cottage while searching for a home to buy. Soon, my parents found a home to rent in Arlington, VA.





Later during WWII, we drove around Haynes Point where we saw anti-aircraft cannon covered by netting camouflage.

1938-1942 our second home • in Clarendon was 3116 2nd Rd. North, Arlington, VA.



While we lived in Arlington, we did egg rolling with FDR & Eleanor Roosevelt. (Presidents, then and still, invited children to roll Easter eggs on the lawn of the White House.) The Roosevelts came out on the balcony and greeted us 500 children or so. Even though I lived near there for five years, I think we only did this once.

From **1942-44**, we were in Denver, CO.

Lived at 1050 S. Clayton Way. The windows faced the Rocky Mountain Range. We could see from Pikes Peak to Longs Peak out the front bay windows.

Once a week, I had to decide on the use of my allowance: a five cent donut or an ice cream cone at Dolly Madison Ice Cream...both available within the same block on the way home from 5th and 6th grade classes.



• *me, wearing knickers*

We left Denver because Dad decided to leave government employment because they wanted him to move to San Francisco. My parents decided not to do that (due to fear of a Japanese invasion) and instead moved back to Iowa. My grandfather Griffin died in the week that we were starting the trip. When we got to Iowa, we bought a number of things from his sale for our farm.



• *early scenes of me*

## Two Years on the Farm, 1944-46

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My parents bought this farm in Union County, Iowa six years earlier in 1938. (The farm had been rented since then). Dad had us • farm with horses at the beginning, so Allan and I would experience farming like he had as a child.

We went to a one-room school house where the teacher had students from six grades. In the two and a half years I was in that school, I read all the books in that library (a four-shelf cabinet with a glass front), including a Jack London book, *Call of the Wild*.

The 8th graders helped break us in by jumping us on the way to school...beating us up a couple of times. I was in 6th grade and Allan was in 3rd. When I was in 8th grade, there were only six children in the school and I was the only 8th grader. Allan, and the oldest boy from another family was in 5th, so I helped the teacher by reading to the only kindergarten child.

We farmed 160 acres (an average farm in those days that one could handle with horses) with mostly field corn but some oats and hay. Sweet corn we had in our garden.



When a flood in the bottom land washed out a corn crop, I replowed it (11 yrs. old then) by walking behind a one-bottom plow (one plow blade and no wheels; you controlled the depth by how you held the handles).

The tragedy with the horses was when Dad had hooked up the eight horses to disk the field. There was a runaway and the horses on the end got injured badly by the disk. Pronto, Grandpa's riding horse, had to be killed. Our neighbor shot him for us.

The second season we added a tractor and did the planting and cultivating with it. I learned to drive at 12 or 13 years old, starting with the tractor.

Mother took care of a lot of chickens so we had our own eggs and chickens, plus milk, beef, and pork.

I started 9th grade, going by bus 4.5 miles to Shannon City, IA. The family moved that fall to Ames because Dad got a job to teach math at Iowa State to the

veterans returning from WWII.





## Neighborhood Stories

### Muriel

The neighborhood boys would come over to play on the merry-go-round and swings that my dad had made.

I remember my father planted a small elm tree in the center of our farm yard; all of our buildings surrounded it. Our house was set inside a fenced-in smaller yard with a green lawn and it faced the country road. On the north side of the main yard were the driveway, the corncrib, and chicken coop in front of a grove of maple trees; on the west side were the barns for cattle and horses, and also the pig shed with the pigpen next to it. A green pasture was to the south that included a small crick. My mother thought a big spreading elm tree would improve the scenery for the whole yard. However, no matter how we tried to protect the six-to-eight foot tree, some misfortune would happen and we had to replace it.

Another time after a new young tree was started, I remember an accident happened. My father had equipped an old wagon with four wooden boards for seats. There were no horses attached and no tongue (wooden shaft) on the buggy but somehow my oldest brother could steer with his feet. We started at the top of the driveway with a push from someone who could quickly jump on the back and then away we would go. Once, Cliff missed a jump and fell under the wheel of the wagon. The yells were "Cliff got necked!"



But he soon was back up and ready to jump back on. The challenge was to miss the tree by swerving around it while going as fast as we could so we could use the momentum to get back to the top of the driveway. We hit the tree; we all managed to stay unharmed but the elm tree didn't and needed to be replaced by a faster growing, cheaper ash.

We loved to go sledding on the hills near our country school; we even used our sleds on the road beside the school, and competed to see who could go the fastest down one hill to end up the farthest up the next.

Paul and Gert Van Dongen • lived across the road from us. They had no children and always welcomed us with cookies or candy. Ed Dykshorns lived over a mile away; they often brought their little daughters to school with a horse and buggy when it was cold and they would stop and pick me up.

• *me pushing Kenneth; Clifford is pulling Truman...the Van Dongen home is in background*

All eight families in our rural area were on the same phone line. You would hear all the rings, and could listen in to all phone calls. The Hogans lived near us. The ring to

indicate phone calls for us was "a short and two longs," and theirs was "a short, two longs, and a short." Muriel Hogan was about six years older than me; sometimes when her boyfriend called, the ring sounded like ours so I would answer. He would say, "Hello Muriel. How are you today, honey?" and I would say, "Oh, no." Muriel Hogan would interrupt and say, "It's for me!"



## School Stories

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### Muriel

My only classmate in country school in grades five through eight was Geraldine. We matched each other well; we competed for the best grades and in the local spelling bee in 8th grade. I won that, but did not win the County Spelling Bee. Maybe she would have.

We often were put with two boys from the grade above because they were poor students and couldn't read well. We disliked this and them. One afternoon Johnny chased me home and eventually out-ran me; he pushed me down on the graveled road and said, "You think you're so smart."



• my country school: grades 1-8...  
boarded up years later when I visited

...

I turned 13 just before my 8th grade graduation from the one room country school in Sioux County, Iowa. That was the end of my attending school for two years. This made me very unhappy but it turned out for the good later.

Oh, I wanted to go to high school! I dreamed of being a teacher like my mother had been and like my favorite first and second grade teacher. My dad did not support my dream; he felt it takes a family to make the farm successful. My two older brothers had stayed at home to help him and my mother needed me to help her. Besides, as a person who had done quite well with only a 3rd or 4th grade education, my dad didn't think high school was necessary for a woman to be a good housewife. Strange that he would say that because he married a high school graduate and teacher. He also said, "All the girls go to high school just to flirt with the boys." He didn't want this for his only daughter!

My mother wanted to support my wishes but she also needed me to help with the housework. She encouraged me to continue my education with home schooling. I did my 9th grade year with *American School* (from Chicago) during the second of those two years. I was able to get credit only for English; I discontinued Algebra because the tests were not doable even by a college professor who tried to help me. I could not get credit for courses I took in Mathematics and American History as they were not offered in Iowa even though I got straight A's in them and found them interesting and helpful!

## Northwestern Academy, 1945-46

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My 10th year was in • Northwestern Academy. I was thrilled to go back to school after two years! An enlister from Northwestern Academy in Orange City had come to our house to raise money for this school of the Reformed Church. My dad agreed that both Kenneth and I could go there even though he wanted me to stay home.

The academy provided a school car driven by a college student that came each day to pick us up and bring us home. There were four of us and we all studied Latin and we spent time practicing our lessons; the driver was more advanced and could help us. On one of our return trips in the winter, we couldn't have imagined how bad the storm would become; we had been excused early because of blizzard warnings. When we saw two cars in the ditch, we decided to look for and stop at the first farm place. Fortunately, it was a big house with a very welcoming family. Not only did they take us in, but also three other people who were stranded. I think the hosts were a family of seven. We stayed overnight...they made homemade ice cream and popcorn before we went to bed.

I was considered a sophomore but I had to take two freshmen classes because I had not gotten enough credit from the American School correspondence classes. Therefore, I took both algebra and geometry at the same time. My teacher, Mrs. England, helped me catch up on the algebra needed for geometry. I did quite well in it and won the prize of a silver 50 cent piece for being the first and only winner in a contest; the contest was a word problem that required deductive thinking.

The other classes I had were English composition, Bible and Latin. We had no gym time but chapel every day. Some of the teachers took turns leading these; sometimes they were interesting and other times, very boring. I didn't like the writing class and asked the teacher if I could choose a topic, but he would only give assigned themes. (I'm glad I have the opportunity now to write freely in the Senior Center writing group.)

I enjoyed this year at Northwestern Academy with my 11 classmates but valued the shift to go to a larger high school for my last two years when a school bus became available.



## Sioux Center High School, 1946-48

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Sioux Center offered rides on public school buses in September 1946; it made sense for Kenneth and me to change schools for much less expense with easy transportation. I would be a junior but still needed to add a sophomore class in biology. (Interestingly, Arthea Holstein was in this class and she became my sister-in-law when she married Ken some years later.)

My class was much bigger now; 48 would graduate in two years. I would take chemistry in my senior year; not many high schools offered this and I found it most interesting and challenging. I must have had a reputation for being good at chemistry since in the booklet of Class Wills, I willed my ability to someone having the most difficulty in the class.

It was difficult to make close friends as a newcomer but there was one girl, also new, who became my scholastic competitor. She won the valedictory award by a hundredth of a percent over me. I think that we both probably benefitted from coming in from smaller schools with good grades.



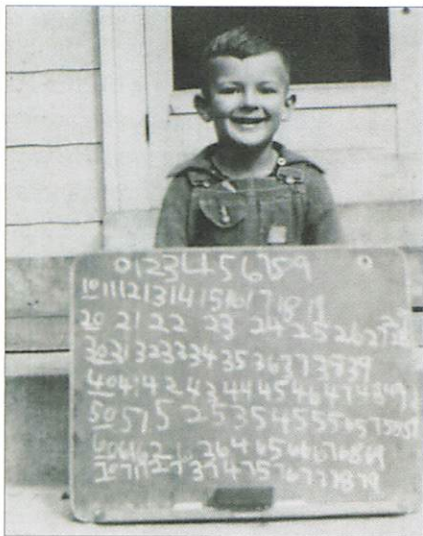
Besides winning basketball games, our big events of the year were the blended junior/senior prom. In our senior year, the theme was life on a southern plantation with the theme song, "Oh, I wish I were in the land of cotton." The stage was a beautiful white mansion with large pillars. The gym was decorated with magnolias, other flowers made of tissue paper, and lots of cotton balls. I enjoyed the evening with good southern cooking by our mothers; I did not have a date but I was not the only single and I had a good time. (I didn't know the theme was racist at the time and would not be proud of such a celebration today.)

For graduation, I needed to give the Salutatory Address, which was on looking to the future. I was really scared to think of going before a crowd. Dan, my chemistry teammate, encouraged me and volunteered his mother, a former speech teacher, to be my coach. I went to her home often and she was a valuable mentor both in creating the speech and teaching me how to deliver it.



## Bob

Before I started first grade, I was using a small chalk board and writing my numbers from one to ten. My mother was sitting at the mangle (roll) ironing. I asked her, "What comes after that?" She told me to just put the number one in front of that number and then keep on going. • I brought the board to her after I had filled the board to 79.



Going to country school after Allan and I had trapped two civet cats (a small, inferior skunk, but *not* inferior in the aroma it cast) on the same morning!

### Elementary School and Ames High School

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I was a naïve and cockeyed optimist as I was finishing eighth grade at Grant Center School. The only eighth grader in a school with only six students!

For 8th grade Mr. Hamlin, who farmed a mile away from our school, agreed to be our teacher: six students from K to 8th grade.

Allan, and the oldest of the other family, were in 5th grade. I helped read to the K grader in that family. As 8th grade tests approached, Mr. Hamlin said he knew nothing about the tests so sent me off to Creston High School with best wishes. He called our home later to tell Mom that I had graduated with the highest grade in the county. At the graduation ceremony, 9th graders made fun that in *their* year my grade would have been a "B."

About playing music during my time at Ames High School - the band director started me on the French Horn in 9th grade. Then he needed a 4th sousaphone (tuba) • player for the band while I was in 10th grade. I preferred it anyway. It was easier for my lips.

*Played center on high school football – dislocated shoulder.*

*- family memories about Dad/Bob, 11/15*

I was an even more deeply engrained optimist, and still naive, as I came out of "Ames Hi, Aims High!" in 1950.



• me,  
HS senior

## Part 2: Driver's Training

### Our Parents

#### *Muriel*

Dad had come up the hard way; three siblings had died at birth and his father died of tuberculosis when Dad was ten months old. Soon after that, his mother married a widower with four children; together they had more, giving Dad two half-brothers and a half-sister. Dad always had to give his step-father his earnings as a hired man until he was 18 or 21. And after his step-father died, his mother needed support and Dad took responsibility. Dad loved farming and he made it not only a way to make a living but to make a life. He carried out the principles of honesty and fairness as he understood them.

During WWII, My dad purchased calves from Wyoming and fattened them to be sold for the military. With this added income, he was able to buy a farm for Dennis, and later he purchased another farm for Clifford.

• my  
parents in  
the late  
1940's



I remember neighbors or relatives coming in the evening to celebrate Halloween. My dad was very good at "Blowing off the Hat." He used the bedroom dresser with its large attached mirror that he pulled away from the wall. He would stand at one end and instruct a player to stand at the other end and press the side of his/her face against the mirror and focus on him to see his reflection. My dad would stand with just one-half of his head and body visible but the player would see what appeared to be a whole body. The player needed to blow to remove the hat, and my dad would lift the hat with his hidden hand causing it to fly. My dad would then encourage the player to blow harder and this would cause both his hat and his arms to rise. Finally, with the player blowing very hard, the hat, arms and legs would all rise. It took time for most kids to figure out how that was possible. This was really fun.

• my parents in  
the late 1950's



*“My mother...she is beautiful, softened at the edges  
and tempered with a spine of steel.  
I want to grow old and be like her.”*

*- Jodi Picoult*

My mother wrote and recorded over 100 poems, from her early school days until a few years before her death. She managed to write poetry in between the daily home life on the farm as mother of seven children, a teacher of Bible, a leader of women’s groups, and a caregiver of elderly parents, neighbors, and finally her disabled husband.

As she went place to place in her home, and task to task (like darning socks), she tucked in an apron pocket odds and ends of paper and a pencil to write a poem. Many times she would ask one of us to help think of a rhyming word or a substitute word.

Relatives, friends, church and town folk called on her to write poems telling of their romance for a wedding party or an anniversary, or celebrating a special event or milestone. She would spend hours on the party line to gather information that would add an interesting or humorous tidbit. She included short poems in cards for birthdays, graduations and in sympathy.

*To Be a Twin (Jo and I)*

*by Min Raak, 1946*

*How very nice to be a twin  
When one is Jo and one is Min.  
And now upon this special date  
Our birthdays we now celebrate.  
For six and forty years we've been  
Together, both through thick and thin;  
We're glad for what we've had before  
And so I wish you many more.*

Two years before my mother died in 1994, Bob and I (with daughters’ help with typing and illustrations) made a book of all the poems we could find in her small notebooks, tablets and pieces of paper, and had it printed into over 100 copies for her many children, grandchildren and friends. She loved to hear the poems read to her as she lived in the nursing wing of the local hospital and at times she would remark, “I like that one; who wrote it?” When we told her that she did, she would laugh and say, “Can you read some more?”

I thank my mother for her love and practice of writing and the inspiration she gave me. She has given all in our family a memoir of herself as our beloved poet and also a heritage for many of us to become writers.



• *my mother: Min Vander Ploeg  
High School graduation, 1918  
Sioux Center, IA*



## My Father

by Muriel  
2016, edited 2018

My father was a farming man  
Planting and reaping on Iowa's soil  
He'd say "I have six sons and each one has a sister."  
"No not twelve," he'd add "you figure it out!"  
He raised each son growing animals and grains  
But he'd not make a man of his only one daughter.

My father was a loving man  
He cared for us with food, fun and discipline  
We worked with him • he played with us  
He put together a crazy cart and home-made teeter totter  
A merry-go round of buried wheels  
    under a huge bridge board  
And swings that hung from high tree limbs.

My father was a strong man  
Six foot two and 200 pounds  
He was all muscles and bone  
He could carry two kids through a rushing swollen creek  
Hold a horse who wanted to balk and run  
And lift bushels of corn to feed the stock.

My father was a neighborly man  
Working together as blizzards and tornadoes came  
When a teacher needed help at school  
He started the furnace and thawed the pump  
When a nearby farmer began a seizure  
The worried wife he rushed to aid.

My father was a principled man  
No Sunday work out in the fields  
Instead worship, rest, family fun, and evening visits  
He allowed no smoking and no drinking  
For him one gave an honest day's work for an honest dollar  
He gave to charities and tithed even when crops failed.

My father was a smart man  
Though he had only a few years of formal school  
He quickly added figures in his head  
He could read and write as well as any  
He read classics on winter evenings  
At each meal he read the Bible, long names and all.



• Dad giving a  
child a horsey-ride,  
like he used to do for me

My father was an opinioned man  
For farmers and housewives  
Eight grades was enough.  
With his first two sons it worked that way  
But I dreamed of going to Sioux Center High.  
At that time my wish wasn't granted.

My father was a thoughtful man  
When I secretly applied for a correspondence course  
Two reps arrived on a Sunday to recruit.  
My father was enraged,  
    my mother advised, "Wait a day!"  
By Monday, he had yielded to our persuasion  
Made a big concession paying \$200 in tuition.

Again before college he tried to make a deal  
Offering 500 chicks for staying home  
He loved farming and thought his kids should too  
But he yielded to what I wanted: no chickens  
And at college end he said  
"Stop working, I'll pay the rest for you!"

*My father was a hardworking man  
He often said, "I'd rather wear out than rust out."  
So it was a big frustration and handicap  
When in his forties he got Parkinson's  
The shaking got much worse as the years went by  
So to experimental brain surgery he bravely complied.*

*My father was a private and dependable man  
After my three years abroad he was waiting for me  
Though his motions became rigid and activities lessened  
His voice was slurred and his gait was slow  
He still had a strong heart and his love felt secure  
So he proudly walked me down the aisle.*

*My father was a man of great integrity  
He did what was right with honest humility  
The values he lived I carry in me  
I am the best daughter I can be  
He spoke not of love but lived it instead  
Our love not expressed is love none the less.*

*• my parents  
cutting their  
40th anniversary  
cake in 1963,  
a grandson  
stands by, ready  
for cake*

*My father died  
in 1967 at age  
67, just four  
years after this.*



*• my parents in Sioux Center at Aunt Jo's*

## Bob

My parents were both very active in the church throughout my life...except the year in Denver when Dad worked on Sunday so we didn't have the car available for church.



Dad taught at Iowa State the first five years of my life until we moved to Arlington.

My father, R. (Ruben) Austin Griffin, died in April of 1968. He had been doing small farm work on the acreage of their new home just outside of Ames. Recently retired from the Iowa Highway Commission, he was lifting bales of hay when he had a heart attack and was taken to the Ames hospital. He spent three weeks there with an additional heart attack each week; the final one caused his death. Muriel, our three oldest girls, and I attended the funeral. My mother continued to live alone until she married Bob Hanna in August a year later. I performed the marriage ceremony for them at Gatchel UMC (United Methodist Church) with all of my girls attending!



My mother worked part-time in a paint store, often advising customers on colors and ways to decorate the home. After Charles finished school, she became a 2nd grade teacher and was loved by children, parents, and the administration.

• my  
mom  
and  
dad



• my dad, R. Austin Griffin, when he was a professor at  
Dubuque University



• my  
step-  
father,  
Bob  
Hanna,  
and my  
mom  
(married  
in 1969)



## Activities with Parents

### Muriel

- Shelling peas, husking sweet corn, canning or freezing hundreds of quarts a year
- Going to get watermelons with my dad
- Cleaning my dad's workshop and getting a spanking since we moved some things around
- Cooking and sewing with my mom
- Being supported in 4-H projects and being taken to meetings

I was past eight years old when our landowner brought his daughter of 21 to see the farm since he was passing the farm on to her. My mother was too busy with canning so she asked me to visit with her. Miss Louise Shraeder requested that I play the piano, which I did. She said I was very good at entertaining and that it was serendipitous that my mother was busy. Later, I asked Mom what *serendipitous* meant.

Often on Sunday afternoons after church when it was a hot day, my dad would take us for a joy ride. With windows open, he would take us to see some fields of oats or corn, or ask where we wanted to go. We liked to go to the Oak Grove State Park. I remember the fun of climbing the hills around Rock River and then slipping or dashing down. There were no swings or slides, just lots of nice areas to run and play games. Dad also took us to the Sioux County Fair, especially for us to see the horses, and Mom wanted me to see the quilts.



## Redecorating My Room

After my 8th grade year, my mother helped me change my bedroom to the way I wanted it. We worked together to strip off the old wallpaper and went to a store to choose from the big wallpaper sample books. I chose something with a small pink flower. My older cousins, Tina and Carrie Van Roekel, came later to apply the new wallpaper for us.

Before the new papering, my dad changed the closet under the slanting roof to be more convenient, and Mom and I painted all the woodwork with a new coat of white. In 4-H, I made a vanity stand with two big wooden orange crates with a board attached across the top with a space between for my legs. I also painted those white. It needed a skirt; I used cloth from an assortment of printed, and matching, colored feed sacks that my dad had carefully picked out when he was buying the animal feed. My mother had already taught me how to sew on the peddle sewing machine, so I could do the sewing alone, but she helped me to attach the skirt to the crates.

I embroidered flowers on the pillow cases and she bought a new bedspread we chose from the Sears or Montgomery Ward catalog. We also bought

lightweight curtains and she made a variegated pink tatted edging to go around the center and bottom edges. I think she also made a colored crocheted rag rug.

• *remodeled Raak home, a new addition was built in front of the kitchen, left side of photo, early 1950's, my room is on the 2nd floor*

In earlier years, I had to share my double bed with a little brother. I was very proud of my new room all for myself.



• *me and Mom at her Sioux Center home years later*

## Bob

- needlepoint with mom
- much traveling – touched most of lower 48 states
- farming seasons of 1944, 1945, 1946 with horse power, milking cows, learning fence building and care of livestock through Midwest winters
- carpentry with Dad (added room and enclosed porch in Ames so I would have own bedroom and Allan and Charles could share the original 2<sup>nd</sup> bedroom)
- some fishing (as on Spirit Lake where sudden storm almost swamped us)



• *Allan and me on Pronto with Dad*



• *me and my dad in Arlington*



## Our Grandparents

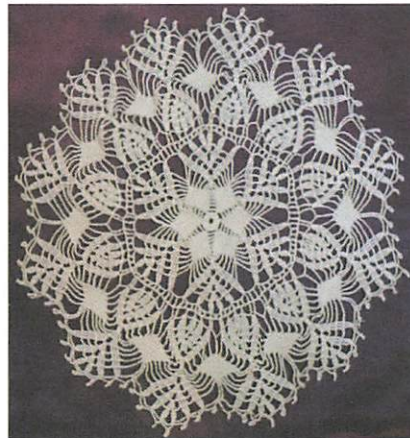
*Muriel*

### Paternal Grandparents

My grandmother • **Cynthia Wesselink**, who later became **Raak** and then **Mieras**, was born on May 5, 1874 in Sioux Center, Iowa, in a time of hardship and misfortune. Her parents, with her five siblings, were living in a sod house that burned shortly before she was born. They were given space in an old kitchen of a new house being built by a wealthy man; it was in that kitchen where she started her life. As summer came, her father was able to build another house on their farm land. However, five months later, disaster struck again. My grandmother's father and a neighbor took a team of oxen pulling a wagon to get a load of firewood from across the Rock River. As the oxen were returning and crossing the river, they stepped into a hole which overturned the wagon. Both her father and the neighbor were drowned. It wasn't long afterward that her mother, like Cynthia later, remarried a widower with four children.

...

No one could crochet doilies as beautifully as my Grandma Mieras. I will always remember her sitting crocheting doilies wearing a lavender dress with little white flowers and a big white collar edged with lace. When I came in, after racing there with my brothers to



see who could get to her little house first after Bible classes, she would be sitting in a captain's chair at her kitchen table near the window. Her crochet hook would be pulling the stitches in and out going around and around. Setting beside the thread in a basket on her oil-cloth covered table, was a worn Bible. She was always ready to lay aside her stitching to get out cookies and offer us milk or lemonade.

My grandma Mieras used the best quality DNC thread, which was very fine, to make her intricate doilies. Her specialty was not the more common pineapple design; instead she made one I call the Star Burst. I liked to sit beside her to watch as she connected the chains, single or double crochet stitches to create the

different designs around the star in the center, each ring different from the one before. I treasure • the one she gave me because it's so delicate and especially because it carries memories of her.

My grandmother managed to cope with misfortune and

suffering without giving up; she was a strong woman centered in the love of God and family. She journeyed through life by taking each step with trust and hope, maybe like she quietly and intentionally took the thousands of tiny stitches to make the delicate *Star Burst* doilies. I look at her gift frequently and am



reminded of the beauty of her life, lived fully with courage and fortitude to find a way to go through and beyond the disasters that got in the way. I am proud to have been given her name, Cynthia, as my middle name.

...

I recall when I was in elementary school, my grandmother invited my three girl cousins and me to stay with her for a week in the summer. Charlotte and Betty lived in the town of Struble. They had roller skates, and sidewalks on their street; we only had graveled roads. Irene and I had come from farms, and we were jealous of the skates they were using at Grandma's house. However, sometimes they each shared one skate, and I got a chance to skate with one foot. I found a way to do better than that by getting up quite early before they did and fastening on both skates onto my shoes and going out on my own. It wasn't long before I had fallen and skinned my knee. When my grandma put on a bandage, she said something in Dutch which I knew meant, "Dear girl, you are too *bethhaunt* (meaning: determined, stubborn, eager...this is how I remember it sounding; the spelling is incorrect)." Later I skinned the other knee, but I learned to roller skate!

As I think of Grandma Mieras now, I wonder what memories she had as she sat stitching alone later through the 28 years of her widowhood, and the years of raising two families. What were her thoughts of the first years of her marriage to **Geert Raak**, beginning when she was only seventeen years old? How could she cope with their first four children dying from tuberculosis before they got to be a year old? And then when my father was only ten-months-old, to have her husband die also from tuberculosis?

I wondered whether she ever questioned her decision, as a young widow of 27, and the mother of an infant son, to marry again after just one year to **Jake Mieras**, a widower with four children (one was almost the same age as my dad, a toddler then). As they lived together, she had four more children (one of whom died of typhoid fever at five years old). Hardship was the way of her life but it was not reflected in bitterness and self-pity; she was pleasant and showed a deep concern for others. Although she was poor, she was willing to help those who were less fortunate. She had many friends and relatives who liked to drop in and visit with her.

### Maternal Grandparents

*"Kom hier mijn klein meisje!"* (Come here my little girl!) This was my Grandma Vander Ploeg's Dutch welcome to me.

My mother's mother, **Takje Valk Vander Ploeg**, lived in a little two-story white house across from the church in Sioux Center, IA. When she and my grandfather, **Tjasse Vander Ploeg**, arrived in America from Uithuizen, Netherlands in 1881, this house, then only a shanty, had been moved for them from a nearby town. Through the years, it would be remodeled at least four times, most likely to accommodate their growing family.

The 28-day voyage by sea had been difficult and their two-month old baby boy, Nicholas, died within one month of arrival. Their 16 month old daughter, although very ill and dehydrated from the trip, recovered and survived. They would have ten more children in the States, the youngest were twins (one was my mother).

When I was born, my grandmother was 75 years old and she lived ten more years. My memories of • Grandma Vander Ploeg are seeing her in a bed in the front living room, propped up with pillows facing the window toward the church, being attended by a caregiver. (I wonder if she had arthritis and thought this was the way to reduce pain instead of walking or other exercising.) From the bed, she would try to rise up, reaching out with both arms, gesturing to me to come closer. She would give me a warm hug and say in Dutch, "Welcome my dear little girl." Then she would point to a glass dish of pink and white peppermints on the stand beside her. These always encouraged me to give her a hug and stay for a minute while she tried to say something more to me.

My grandfather, Tjasse, had been a carpenter and had built many houses in the town and area but he developed severe arthritis, especially in the hands, and could not continue this work. He bought a furniture store and worked until he was 75 when he died a few months before I was born.



My grandmother never learned to speak English in the 59 years she lived in America. I remember her trying to learn words; and she really tried to communicate with us, but they were usually mainly gestures. She would hold a cup and saucer and lift the

cup and say "cop" and then lift the saucer and say "soucer." After that she would clap her hand over her ear and say, "Remember dat now!"

I am sorry that my grandmother was never able to communicate well with me. I am also sorry that I did not try to learn her language. There were times when my mother tried to teach us, but mostly my parents only spoke Dutch when they wanted to talk about something we didn't need to know. I realize now how hard it is to learn a language. My grandmother got by speaking in Dutch all her life because she lived in a Dutch community, but she was only able to visit with my older cousins and my oldest brother of the next generation; and that was often through a few words in a mix of English-Dutch and gestures.

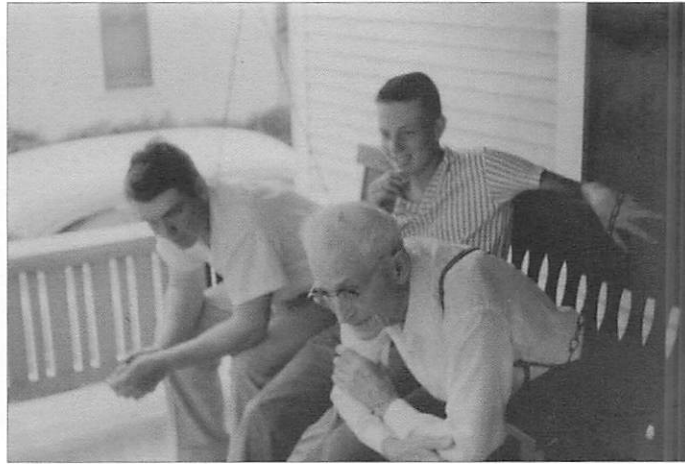
My grandmother had 60 grandchildren, plus my youngest brother who was born less than five months after her death.

**Bob**

## Maternal Grandparents

My grandfather, **Clyde Bender**, went to western South Dakota while he was still a teenager. He tried various jobs. He says that when he went to the lead mines for a job, the owner said "I don't think you want to work here but come back tomorrow. As the miners come up, you can see the miners and make your decision." Grandpa saw that job was not for him.

My Grandpa Bender was quite a story teller; • he would sit on the porch swing and tell of working in Rapid City, South Dakota after he didn't take the job in the mines. He became a cook after first being a dishwasher where he received compliments on the nice clean drinking glasses. When a night cook didn't come in, he was asked to cook a lobster for a regular customer who was unusually wealthy. He called his boss for help but was told to go ahead on his own. After the meal, Grandpa was told it was the best the customer had ever had.



Grandpa moved to a ranch farther on in South Dakota and got a job breaking horses. Here he met my grandma, **Etta Saunders**, who was a cook. She tells of the hundreds of pancakes she made for the workers. She had gone as a child out to Oregon. Later as a young woman, she rode a covered wagon back east where she met and married Clyde Bender. I knew them on their farm near Arispe in southern Iowa. He built a new home with many modern features including electricity and running water.



My grandparents told me about how Grandpa got up one day on the farm they were renting and said "we are moving today." Without any other notice, they packed up and moved to the next farm that very day...using horses and wagon.

• *Bender grandparents with my parents, me (on left) and Allan at farm in Arispe, Iowa*



## Paternal Grandparents

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My older second cousins remembered my grandmother, **Laura Cowles Griffin**, or Aunt Laura, better than I do. Before she was married, she taught children on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. She married **Charles Griffin** and lived on a farm in northern Missouri within walking distance of their farmland in Iowa. They had four sons and one daughter; Laura had ambitious plans for the boys. Her intention was for one to be a doctor, and the others - a minister, a teacher and a lawyer. In order for this to happen, they each would need to go to high school in a town away from the farm. She bought a house in Pleasanton, IA, and the boys took turns leaving the farm work to get an education. The boys all grew up to leave the farm for professions somewhat similar to her dreams; however, they didn't marry the girls she had picked out for them! Their sister, Juanita, stayed home to help, worked as a riveter in California during the war, and then took care of their widowed father until he died. She married late in life.

Dad's cousin Graydon Griffin, and his wife Katherine, were always at our family reunions. They lived on a farm in the area. Graydon had lost his right arm many years earlier and had become a very strong single-armed person. Also, in recent years, he had a tractor accident and seriously injured his internal organs. He and Katherine often came to Des Moines for his medical needs, and they would stop by to visit us. He liked to hold any baby we had, and play with the older girls.

Graydon, with his cousin Cecil, both in their 60's, came to reunions ready to entertain the children. They carried the little ones, pulled some in a coaster wagon, and led others for a walk in the woods. Nothing seemed to be impossible for Graydon to do.

## Honors

### Bob

- Topped Union County (Iowa) 8th grade tests. An older detractor (previous year student) in Creston said: "That would not even have been on an A honor roll other years." He was trying to humiliate me.
- Got the ISC (Iowa State College) Freshman math award for the year 1950-51 (a Math Tables Book).
- Won blue ribbons on Baby Beef showing at Union County Fair, IA.

*At age 13, in the 8th grade, Dad showed three black Angus calves at county 4H, two of which were selected to be shown as part of a "pen of four" at the open 4H competition in the big city of St Joseph, MO. He lived in rural southern Iowa at the time. He went with a 4H leader and the youth who showed the other calves. After the show, his calves were auctioned off, and earned him \$200. He went on his own to a bank in the area to cash his check. As he walked through a "rough area" of this unfamiliar town to return to the 4H leader, he was sure that everyone he encountered knew he had this significant amount of money in his pocket. Dad no longer recalls what he did with the money, which 72 years later would be worth \$2,600, but the memory of this experience has stayed with him, with its elements of pride, joy, fear, and living to tell about it.*

- by Margaret, 2018



### Muriel

- In 4H between 10 and 14 years old, I demonstrated Home Storage Options at Sioux County Fair; went on to compete at the Iowa State Fair and received a blue ribbon for this demonstration.
- In Sioux Center High School, I received the Science Award, the second highest grade, and the salutatorian award.
- At Northwestern Junior College, I was salutatorian again.



• after graduation from Northwestern Jr. College, 1950

## Early Jobs

### Muriel

- babysat, starting at ten years old: the twin boys of the neighbors
- weeded wild blackberries (25 cents for a whole patch) under the apple trees
- helped Mother with housework: cleaning, cooking, canning, gardening, child care
- house sat junior high school twins, my first year of college for room and board
- taught Sunday School while in high school and junior college
- worked in a dormitory dining hall for my room and board, two years and a summer, Iowa State
- set up pins in a bowling alley at Iowa State, for a short time until my back hurt (a couple of weeks)



• me with my second graders

## Teaching 2nd Grade, 1950-53

I like to remember my first real job, after my two years at junior college when I was 20. It was an enriching and pleasant experience in many ways. It began with an interview with Superintendent L.L. Thompson. He came to Northwestern Jr. College somewhat desperate to hire a teacher. Our education professor, Mr. Eddie Aalberts, begged us students to meet Mr. Thompson even if we weren't interested in teaching in his small community of Union Center, near Remsen, IA.



• my second graders build diorama at Union

I was one who volunteered and felt very relaxed about talking with him as I really wasn't interested; I had my eyes on another place and teachers were in demand. I was prepared with questions for any teaching position. I found Mr. Thompson had the most enthusiastic answers and showed that I would have lots of possibilities for teaching creatively. He sold me on coming to **Union Consolidated School** and offered me the best pay over others I had considered. He told someone, "I thought Miss Raak was interviewing me!"



I taught second grade there for three years from Sept. 1950 to May 1953 with 18 to 24 pupils a year. The children were all from farm families, some more financially well-off than others, and a few were parented by temporary farm workers.

I have many pleasant memories of class projects, math games, creative art work, social studies, and music with the music teacher. I received support from the parents in most cases, even when their children needed discipline.

Once I was very disappointed when a boy taller than the other kids, found it difficult to do his lessons. I had worked especially hard to encourage him, and after one time when he had done exceptionally well in math, I remember urging him to show his mother. The next day, I asked him, "What did your mother say about your work?" He murmured, "She didn't look at it; she said I had to change my clothes and go help my dad."

The school provided rooms in a teacherage; I lived with the kindergarten teacher, the music teacher, the coach with his wife who was our cook, and a substitute teacher. We had many pleasant evenings together. We also had invitations to participate



in square dances, games, and arts and crafts activities at an Art Barn, a beautiful barn full of life-sized horse paintings.

Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, with their little boy, lived next door and invited us for special events frequently. Tommy and Phyllis remained good friends long after I returned from Liberia, got married, and lived in Council Bluffs and Des Moines.

### Caravaning

One summer between teaching my 2nd and 3rd years at Union Consolidated School, I attended a young adult Sunday School. Our Sioux Center mayor, Maurie Te Paske, led worthwhile discussions. He encouraged and financially enabled me to become a caravaner to teach Vacation Bible School for six weeks in the summer of 1952. I took a bus and train to New Concord, Ohio, for training. There I met my two team members. We went to start Vacation Bible Schools in Pennsylvania, Amsterdam (New York), and Long Island, working in three churches for four weeks (plus training and evaluation for two weeks in Ohio).

- *the caravan team painting Sunday school rooms in Long Island*

In the training program, I was inspired by the missionary, E. Stanley Jones, who worked in India. He led morning devotions after he got up at 4:30 a.m. each day to pray and read the Bible. I loved working with other dedicated young adults.

- *caravaners relaxing while in training in Ohio*

Our team went to many interesting places such as amusement parks near Pittsburg, Coney Island, and Jones Beach in Long Island. Bob and Justy McConaughy, our host family on Long Island, were generous and fun-loving. They remained my friends.



## Bob

- when 13, chose to occasionally cut down scrub brush that was blocking the view of the intersection on our farm in Union County, IA
- carried *Des Moines Register* seven days a week, collected money door-to-door in the evenings
- worked at Montgomery Wards in Ames (1949-51) as a receiving clerk in a warehouse, a clerk in the men's clothing department, and a shoe salesman...during the Christmas shopping season, I was asked to help out when other employees went on break in the women's lingerie department...I remember women avoiding me but men appreciating having a man to talk to
- was a part time custodian at First Methodist Church in Ames, then as church secretary, prepared Sunday bulletins
- did highway construction during summers from HS junior through early college years: one year with Dad on the same crew, two years with George Robinson and his dad working for the four Calupa brothers
- set up pins in a bowling alley at Iowa State for a short time until I crushed my finger



## First Cars

### *Muriel*

In 1951, I really needed a car of my own to drive to Union School where I was teaching. My dad found a used car dealer who had a 1937 Chevrolet with low mileage for just \$75. It wasn't much to look at, a worn-looking mottled gray with purplish spots, probably from standing in the sun. It also smelled dusty and stale.

I thought it was really ugly; I named it Ichabod, which meant, "The glory has departed." (Its name was inspired by a young widow's name for her baby son in a Bible story: 1 Samuel 4.) I asked my dad about getting it repainted. He arranged for that; it was only another \$75 for a coat of new, lighter gray paint. It served me well for the two years I drove to teach and it only needed a flat tire repaired once.



• *me with David,  
my first nephew,  
and my car,  
Ichabod*

### *Bob*

Drove from home to Iowa State classes every day in my 1939 Ford (two door) since I lived at home during college. Four or five students rode with me...enabling me later to get a larger car, a 1948 Dodge (four doors).



• *me and my Ford*



• *a similar car to mine*



## Colleges

*Muriel*

### Northwestern Jr. College, 1948-50

My first college experience was at Northwestern Junior College in Orange City, IA. My favorite subjects were on teaching elementary children and I really appreciated the professor, Eddie Aalberts. He had been an elementary teacher too and he often emphasized that the most important thing to do was to love the children; he would add, "They will learn if they know you love them."

During my first year of college, I lived with a widow and took care of her twin sons who were in 7th and 8th grades; for this I received my room and board. In my second year, my brother Ken was in his first year; we lived at home and we rode to Northwestern together.

Everybody who was Dutch needed to take part in the Tulip Festival and learn to dance with wooden shoes.



• I am left of center (in white) in this picture of "I Remember Mama"

I received the Salutatorian Award and gave a speech at graduation. This was my second speech for this honor; it was easier this time.

Mr. Aalberts highly recommended me as a teacher which led to being a second grade teacher for three

years at Union Consolidated School. (see *Early Jobs*)



• me on the right side, sitting with friends on the Northwestern campus lawn

## Iowa State, 1953-55

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During my last year of teaching in the community of Union Center near Remsen, IA, I decided to return to college for a bachelor's degree. I wanted to major in Home Economics and Child Development. I strongly considered going to Central College in Pella which was also a Reformed Church school. However, L. L. Thompson, my most admired superintendent, urged me to go to Iowa State; he said, "I think you will travel in the world and you need to go to a world-recognized college."

Because I changed majors since junior college, I had to take almost a third year instead of two. Therefore, I started immediately in the summer school at Iowa State in 1953. Iowa State had a huge campus with buildings far apart. I got lost my first day and found myself near the pig pens of Veterinarian classes.

My room was in Oak Hall. I enjoyed my roommates, • Bev Zimmerman, a wealthier girl from Indiana, who left after a quarter to join a sorority, and later • Gwen Olney, who majored in textiles and clothing. Gwen was a good friend for a long time.

I worked for my room and board in the Elm Hall dining room, cutting grapefruit carefully into sections in the morning and folding napkins or making salads in the evening. The second year, I was a dining room hostess and earned an extra \$30 a month in order to buy hosiery which I was required to wear. As hostess, I mainly had to see that everything was served well by the waiters.

I had to take three courses in chemistry and I was fortunate to have had it in high school during my

junior and senior years. I often walked to classes with Margaret Hill and she invited me to go to Wesley Foundation (the college group at the Methodist Church). We became good friends and she urged me to get to know her former boyfriend, Bob Griffin. This was possible by the end of the summer when he

began preparation for a welcome party for new students to Wesley. (Margaret was my matron of honor when we later got married.)

Wesley became a very important part of my Iowa State experience.



• me and Bev

• Wesley  
Foundation friends,  
1955. I am in the  
light dress. Gwen is  
to my left.





When I began attending the Methodist Church in Ames, I found a very different interpretation of God: God was a loving caring God, and the emphasis was on the service we could do for others. It seemed to me that before, the focus was on being "good." I attended a study group with Dr. Chan from China; we often talked about what our mission was or could be. Bob was in this class. It was exciting to hear his beliefs and dialogue about them.

...

In my senior year at Iowa State, after Bob left for Liberia, I wondered what I most wanted to do with my life. Since I still had ties to my home church, the First Reformed in Sioux Center, I thought maybe I could do mission work with their sponsorship. My relationship with Bob was very uncertain but I had dreams that he and I might be together some day.

Then Bob wrote that The College of West Africa, where he was teaching, needed a teacher. I liked that option; I'm sure that I prayed about what I should do. Going to Liberia did not at all ensure that Bob's and my relationship would develop into a union.

I graduated in June of 1955 just before training began in Nashville to go to Liberia.



## Bob

Iowa State, 1950-54

I received a composite of degrees: science, sociology, psychology, and religion...after changing from engineering.



• me in 1952



I played tuba in the • Iowa State marching band for all four years of college.

• me and four other trainees for A3 (Africa for Three Years)



## Part 3: Sharing the Road

### When and How We Met

#### Bob

In reminiscing about our courtship and marriage, I would start in Ames, Iowa, August 1953, when we met in the Wesley Foundation building (part of Collegiate Methodist Church). Muriel was there at the end of her first summer quarter, and I returned from Chicago where I was doing Summer Evangelism.

The first year of our acquaintance centered around Wesley Foundation. I had been elected President of Wesley in the spring of 1953, so we had a very busy year.

The fall event to welcome new students on campus was a very big effort and Muriel fell right into getting out invitations to our first events. We may have had something of a Circus theme. I made a clown suit for it at home by myself.

• *me, still being a clown,  
with Muriel years later in OKC*

Weekly Sunday evening fellowship time was a great way to meet students. We all helped prepare a meal (none was served in the dorms, so both male and female students were always looking for a place to eat and fellowship).

What would be the event for the Senior Banquet? We had enjoyed the Spring 1953 event when the speaker had come from Minneapolis and challenged every university and college graduate in America to give a

year or two to service in nations which were still suffering from the loss of males to WWII, and the wrapping up of war in Korea. I started thinking of making such a decision and was corresponding with GBI (Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston) where I had already been accepted for graduate study following graduation in 1954.

Would we have a float for the Veisha Parade in April 1954? We did and the design and construction provided occasion for many students to get better acquainted as we pooled our creativity, sweat and, occasionally blood, as woven wire gave shape to our creation.

Having my car (now the 1948 Dodge, grey, four door) for my transport from Mom and Dad's home on Marston St. in Ames, also meant students would like

to make use of my trip east to get back home after Wesley events on Sunday evenings. The dorms for women were on the eastern side of the campus. The women were always waiting and hoping as the fellowship was wrapping up each evening. Who would get a ride?



Did I ask them or did they ask me? Maybe the question was something like, "Do you still have room?" There could be two in front (a bench type seat) with usually four (or maybe more) for the quick five minute ride down Lincoln Avenue (US30) to the women's dormitory complex. As the year went along,

there seemed to be great interest in the order in which I would circle the dorms to drop off those who were riding that evening. Getting to be in the car with me the longest was a bonus, apparently. Toward Spring I would often complete those 'drop offs' at Oak Hall. Oh yeah. You may not have known that Muriel was in Oak Hall her two years and two summers, at ISC.

From January on, I was completing my senior requirements while making preparations to go to Nashville, TN, for A3 training at Scarritt College. Those four weeks of study and practical visits to churches with black congregations led to the selection of Liberia as the country where I would serve in Africa (because I knew one Liberian student at ISC, Joseph Boayue, who was the product of the Methodist Mission at Ganta in Liberia and he was a very pleasant person). I returned to Ames to pack and get ready to sail, by freighter, to Monrovia. During those two months, I reconnected with Muriel and she came to my parents' home on Marston Avenue on at least one occasion.



• me, ca. 1953

## *Muriel*

Bob was a senior who lived in Ames and was to be the new president of the Wesley Foundation Fellowship. He had lots of ideas for activities for the New Year. My friend, Margaret Hill, who told me about him, gave me his picture that he had given her when they had dated. • My! He was handsome!

It was not long after that, while I was working as a receptionist in the dorm, when Bob called and asked for me. He invited me to join a group at Wesley to send out a big mailing to invite new students to come to a welcoming party. Of course, I wanted to go and help out; however, I found Bob to be all business-like to get the mailing out; all he said to me was, "Hi, I'm Bob; what's your name?" and then he gave me a pack of envelopes to address at a table with some other girls. That was somewhat of a disappointment!

...

We had a big, circus party for the new students and Bob was great in welcoming people, running the show (he was a clown) and seeing that everyone had a good time.

Over time, I found that Bob was "above average" in what he offered to the group and we often dialogued back and forth. I was quite impressed by then. I had my eyes on him, and so did many other girls; competition would be tough. I don't know why I thought that I had a chance.



## **Beginning of Courtship, Iowa** 1953-55

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### *Muriel*

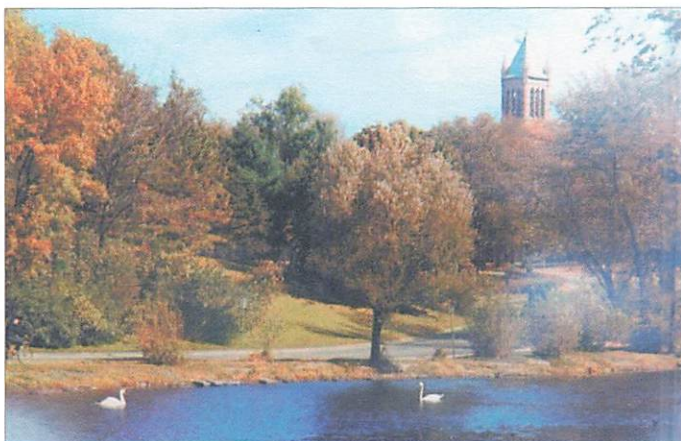
That one year in Iowa State was full of expectations. I dated a few other guys but they were disappointing, often seeming immature, maybe because I was a few years older. I had experience teaching and I was serious about college. Bob and I were just friends but I wanted more time together. I bravely invited him to the Sadie Hawkins dance, the one chance on Feb. 29th to ask a guy for a date! He accepted and we went to the dance at the Student Center.

The dancing didn't go well, we stepped on each other's feet and bumped into people; it was only my second dance. He was willing then to just sit on the sidelines, and listen to the band playing as we visited. He shared that he was considering going abroad as a short-term missionary after graduation. I was also interested in mission work.

Often the nature of our activities as friends was going to social get-togethers at church or college, and participating in work projects and study groups. We had a short date before he left for Nashville to be trained for going to Liberia and he took me to meet his parents. I liked them very much, especially his mother.

When he returned from Nashville, I saw Bob often as he planned for the three years abroad. We went out for ice cream as we got to know each other better. We had similar values: concerns for the world, being frugal with money, and the importance of family, faith, and our religion. We talked about the future and I helped him pack some things for his trip. We were more friends than lovers.

One time we had a very pleasant visit as we walked along the pond at ISU • and watched Lancelot and Elaine, the two swans, swimming gracefully. What a pair!





## Bob

- admiring Muriel from the moment she showed up on the stage at Wesley at ISC
- I paid attention to her during my senior year, recontacted her in Ames on my way to Boston before sailing for Liberia in the fall of 1954, for three years of service

- *picture of me taken at Griffin home before Bob left for Liberia*



## Muriel

When he was in Liberia, Bob wrote quite often but not often enough to suit me; I eagerly looked forward to receiving his blue aerograms. He told about the CWA, The College of West Africa, where he was teaching, about being with the YMCA boys, about the beauty of the flowers, the beach on the Atlantic Ocean, and also about the needs of the Liberian people for education. He said that they needed a home economics teacher and he encouraged me to apply for the position through The Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Methodist Church.

I did just that. I suppose I was taking a risk in assuming that this relationship was going "somewhere" because at that time I wasn't thinking of other options. Sioux Center High School had called me several times hoping I would consider teaching there; they even upped the salary offer! I guess you could say: I went for broke. It was somewhat true what Bob's mother said, I pursued him all the way to Africa.



- *early on during the long distance courtship, Bob (while in Liberia) asked his mother to buy and send me roses for Valentine's Day*

# Liberia

## Courtship & Engagement

Bob: 1954-57, Muriel: 1955-58

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### Bob

I went from ISC to the mission field in Liberia with the belief, the hope, that the word of Jesus Christ could really make a difference in the world...was I naive, optimistic, hoping beyond hope? Now, as Wesley alums, have we been ground down by "reality" to the point that we have little or no hope for the future of our land, the church, the world?

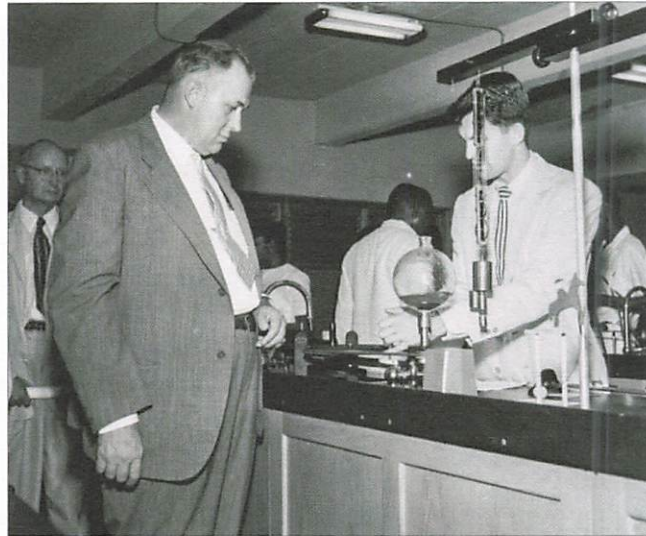
I taught algebra, geometry, • chemistry, and physics. I managed the CWA business office, introduced intervarsity sports in basketball, volleyball, and track and field (including women as well as men students) among the four high schools in Monrovia.

...

During that first year, Muriel wrote that she had been in contact with the Board of Foreign Mission of the Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church and they answered that they had no place where her training and experience would be needed except, possibly, in the USA. I replied to her that there were at least three places she was needed in Monrovia: at the Girl's Hostel as a House Parent, a teacher sharing her food/nutrition training and clothing design skills, or as a Home Economics teacher at CWA.

Muriel subsequently did apply with the Methodist Board of Global Ministries. During an interview at Iowa City, the representative of the Women's Division of the Mission Board advised her that her file indicated that she knew someone serving in Liberia and was asked if that was her reason for requesting service there. She answered that we were only friends from the year at ISC. Muriel was accepted, and in that

summer of 1955 also went to Nashville for orientation at Scarritt College.



• *this is me in a lab (right side) with visitors from the U.S.*

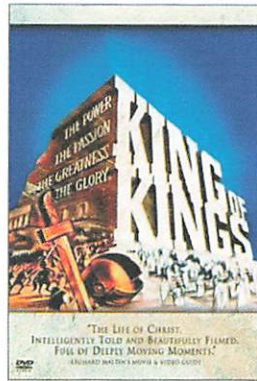
### Sharing Jesus' Story, 1954

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Ed Jager and I took the movie "King of Kings," a 16 mm black-and-white movie about the life of Jesus, down the Atlantic coast of Liberia from village to village. We were traveling along in a dugout canoe. We had to bring a Bell and Howell projector which weighed close to 100 pounds, the speaker (in its case was the same size but lighter), a six-by-six foot screen, and the electrical generator to provide 120 volt current. We observed that the nearly \$2000 of equipment we were carrying could be lost in one tipping of the canoe in the ocean waves.



We would arrive in a village and set up all this equipment and send out the word that we were going to show the movie that night. In many of these villages, for some, it was the first time there'd been electricity, the first time they'd seen a movie, and for some, first time they'd seen a white man.



The • movie was shown outside. The people would take the events in the movie very literally, so the crucifixion elicited screams of "No, no, no!" People were getting the story from their ministers but it is another thing to see it enacted.

We carried our sleeping bags and mosquito net for staying in the villages. Women there were very generous in providing both food and boiled water so we'd have safe water to drink. We did our nightly show for ten nights in ten villages. We survived the waves of the ocean and returned safely to Monrovia without an accident.

## Muriel

I arrived in Liberia in the fall of 1955. Bob met me at my ship, The African Queen, and gave me a friendly hug. I didn't notice then, but sometime later, I saw that his bright brown eyes had lost some of their luster. He had had hepatitis and had been bedridden for some weeks. During this time, students occasionally came to his room for their lessons.

I expected to teach Home Economics at the CWA. It was a junior and senior high school founded in the 1840's by the Methodist Church. I was beginning a three-year commitment to work as an educator in this fast developing country. When I began my work, it was not teaching as I had expected as a Ghanaian woman had been hired to be the Home Economics teacher. I was appointed to take Miss Russell's place in the Hostel instead. She was the business manager, dietician, and field treasurer. She needed to leave suddenly for medical care, and also to attend a meeting in New York. It was a disappointment to me, not being able to teach immediately.



• my mom and dad preparing my trunks for shipping

## Bob

It was so refreshing to have another person near my age in the Methodist Missionary group in the city. We had some dates during Muriel's first year at the Girls' Hostel, then we took a break most of the year 1956-57 because I felt that dating was interfering with the time I had for the mission. That year we saw each other at missionary gatherings and at worship at First Methodist Church in Monrovia which was across the street from the Stokes Building where Ed Jager and I shared an apartment.



*Muriel*

### Living at the Girls' Hostel

When I went to Liberia almost 60 years ago, it was a new world to me. I had never lived near the ocean before; palm oil trees grew tall and dense, and it had tropical weather with heat, humidity, and diseases that would become quite familiar. I would experience eating many new foods – cassava and collard greens served in rich palm butter with powerfully hot pepper, ocean fish as baked barracuda, or river fish served in soup with the fish-heads, rice, and cassava or starchy fufu, and fruits of almost every kind except apples. Papaya (paw paw) trees grew quickly from the seeds sown outside our windows.

My home was to be in • a three-bedroom bungalow reached by a path through the palm trees near the Hostel; I was warned to look out for green mamba snakes hanging in the palms or in the grass.

Miss Long and Barbara Patterson, another missionary and CWA teacher, also lived there. Our home was comfortable with windows with both bars and screens. The screens were to keep mosquitoes out



and the bars to keep out rogues or thieves. One time when I returned, I couldn't find my light-weight flowered bedspread that I had brought from home. There was a hole in the screen between the bars and my sheet was wrinkled from being twisted. Fortunately, it hadn't been taken too.

One of the boys who did yard work always walked with me to the bungalow which was about a half-block from the first

hostel building. He carried a machete in case he saw a snake; I never saw one hanging from a palm branch

but once he brought a six-foot-long dead snake on a stick that he had caught.



There were 24 girls in • the Hostel and some were eager to learn to sew. The sewing program in the hostel expanded when the girls needed to make new dresses for

graduation activities. We had long dining room tables, good light, and sewing machines that CWA lacked. I was very pleased that I had learned how to create patterns while in my dress-making class at Iowa State College. The girls had requests for different styles and were the most eager and capable students anyone could want.

It was the lives and activities of the hostel girls that were most important to me. They shared their dreams, their family concerns, and asked for help and advice. Our group of girls, all eager to learn, had come from both tribal areas and the city where their fathers or brothers worked for the government; some were daughters of American immigrants and knew English well, others spoke pigeon-English mixed with a tribal dialect. I have many pleasant memories and stories of living and working with the girls at the hostel.

The grounds, or campus of the Girls' Hostel, was beautiful with the driveway bordered with red hibiscus bushes and yellow frangipanis among the bright pink flowering trees. Palm trees were everywhere, some close together and others very tall, like the palm oil trees that the yard workers would shinny up to cut down clusters of palm oil nuts. After school, the girls would dance and sing in front of the hostel building and ask me to join them in a quick moving circle with a song: Take Time in Life, and other rhyming games. The large campus was surrounded by a 6 ft. security fence. The gate was left open during the day but firmly locked at night.

**Miss Carrie Long** was the hostel house mother. The girls helped with the cooking, meal activities, and cleaning up. Early on Saturday mornings, we went to the river as the boats came in; Miss Long, one or two girls, and I would select fish, vegetables, and fruit. Often additional food would be delivered to our door, occasionally including a live chicken or something

unusual like frogs. It was my job to work with Miss Long and the cook to choose and store these products, as well as decide whether or not the price was right. I was happy for advice as I was not trained in bargaining.

Miss Long had emigrated from Texas to Liberia probably in the early 1900's when she was a third grader. Once when she was a child, as she was walking with her small dog through the long grass and bush, she felt a tug on her leg. Frightened, she quickly looked down to see that a huge boa constrictor had swallowed her leg to the knee. She screamed for help while her dog barked and ran around as if crazy. Immediately, Carrie took both hands and tried to squeeze the snake off her leg. Fortunately, people in the village heard the commotion and came running to find the girl in great misery. One man had a machete and succeeded in killing the snake. He carried her home near the small mission station and they wrapped her leg in cloths soaked in kerosene to get rid of the poison. She was left with streaks of scar

tissue, very dry skin, and an ankle that often swelled.

- *This is an open market near the river where I went with Miss Long and Mr. Doh to shop for fresh vegetables and fruit. Once they were selling dried monkey meat too. It smelled unpleasant so we didn't buy it.*

One time, Miss Long couldn't find food from the kitchen and she was certain that one of the yard boys had taken it.



She told me that the only way to deal with the problem was to have a trial by ordeal. Miss Long insisted that she also be tried as only she or the boys could have taken the food. We went together early one morning to a secluded place somewhere in the bush outside the hostel compound. There we met a “witch doctor” who was prepared with a machete heating over a bed of charcoal. Each person was to sit and expose a bare leg on which the witch doctor would lay the red-hot knife. Vaseline was rubbed on the legs being tested first. Miss Long explained that an innocent person would not be burned and the guilty would be exposed. She was first to be tried and was not burned; the first boy was also not hurt. Then the second boy submitted to the test and immediately let out a fearsome cry as his skin sizzled and smelled of burnt hair. Miss Long announced that he would not return to work and that this was his punishment. I often wished that we had found a better way to deal with the theft, and also wondered if this was better than prison.

**Jeremiah Doh** drove the bus for the hostel girls. Mr. Doh was a young, intelligent man who lived with his wife and baby boy near us. We could trust him with the bus as well as driving our staff to conduct business in the city. He took me shopping to buy fanti cloth; he would taste the beautiful, bright African prints to see if they were salty. He’d tell me not to buy them as salty cloth was not color fast. He was careful with the money we paid him; he wanted to build a house for his family with concrete blocks. He told me that he could not save money because his extended family would beg it from him, so instead he bought a block at a time, put it aside, and in this way, he finally built his home. He drove Miss Long and me to the fish market at the Messaroda River once a week. This was always an early morning treat to see the boats come in with

fish and vegetables, except when it was raining, as it often was.

**Cora**, a woman who lived nearby, came to cook Liberian foods using lots of fish, rice, greens, palm oil, and fruit. She would sometimes come from her home with a pan of greens on her head. She was a faithful worker and seemed to cook the big meals easily.

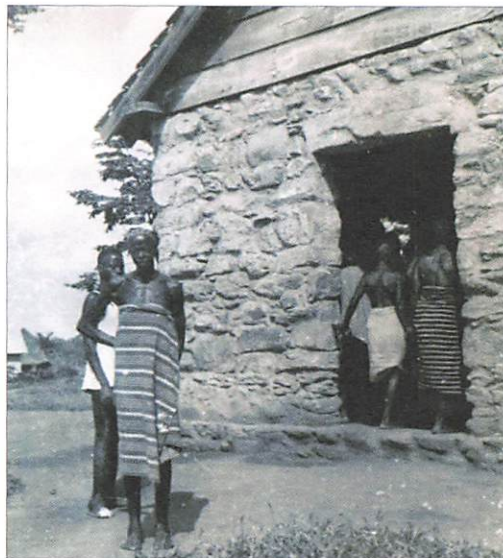
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Fairly soon after I arrived, we needed to go to the Monrovia Airport to meet guests from America. That was a time in the rainy season and the red laterite road was very slippery and soft. We got stuck and I had to get out of the car. I tried to walk or stand in a track that was over a foot deep; I watched as the men pushed and pushed until we could go on.

Bob wanted to introduce me to the Gbarnga and Ganta Missions up-country. In one trip to **Ganta**, Bob and I managed to travel by ourselves even though this was questioned by some missionaries. We came to a bridge that was washed out; Bob and another driver going the opposite way, lugged tree trunks from along the way to lay for us to make it across. Farther on, Bob started wiggling and squirming in the driver’s seat, and then stopped and jumped out to shake out the driver ants that had attacked him. It’s no wonder why anxious behavior is characterized as having “ants in the pants.”



The Ganta Mission was another beautiful place with orange trees bordering the road; unfortunately the orange trees yielded bitter fruit due to planting a wrong variety. I met the famous Dr. Harley and his wife who showed me her orchid garden in the jungle area. I watched another doctor, Dr. Hyla Waters, deliver a child that died because the mother had come too late to the hospital; she had had female circumcision which caused tough scar tissue. That delivery was difficult to watch. Seeing the mother struggle to deliver her baby, and then hear her cries of grief, was heart wrenching.



I got to know Uniola Adams, a nurse from Nebraska, who took me to visit the • leprosy camp where she gave out medicine; I was surprised that by then, the disease could be arrested and treated with medicine. I saw people with missing fingers and toes.

In **Gbarnga**, we met the Greys and their adopted Liberian • baby daughter, Margaret. Rev. U.S. Grey was doing agricultural work and his wife, Vivian, was a teacher. I met Walter Cason who was teaching in the seminary at Cuttington College. Walter and Maydele had a child who died in Liberia, as did the Harleys' child.



Before I began teaching at CWA, I saw several unschooled elementary children hang around the Hostel every day. I tried to find ways to engage them besides giving them something to eat.

We had benches for them to sit on and I taught them numbers using stones and things around the grounds of the Hostel. I also taught them to speak some English. Later, when one of the Hostel girls dropped out of school, she began teaching these children with my help. The girls entertained their friends, especially boyfriends, on Friday and Sunday afternoons and I was usually a chaperone; this was considered necessary by my peers as there were many bushy palm trees and other secluded places on the hostel grounds where couples could slip away. One big goal of the staff was to

see that the girls finish high school before they became pregnant, and this was sometimes a real challenge. Bob often brought a carload of boys and stayed to play volleyball with the group.

Our Hostel staff was concerned especially about Martha Sua who had come from the Ganta mission and was the first girl of her tribe

to attend high school; I think it was in her 3rd year that her mother died giving birth to twin boys. She was pressured by her father to come home. Ganta Mission staff made arrangements for her to finish her education. After graduation, she got married,

continued her education, and I think she became a nurse.

The Hostel girls would often return from CWA with math homework. They would tell me, "That Mr. Griffin is hard so! He makes us work hard, but Mr. Griffin is the best teacher!" Some even said he taught more difficult math than college teachers.

### **Mt. Bili Retreat**

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I took a trip with Uniola up to **Mt. Bili** on a retreat with eight girls. It was a very steep and difficult climb through heavy brush, over rocks and twisting turns. The carriers had all our food, bedding, clothes, and retreat materials for three days. We often had to stop to have them clear the way with machetes. It was hot and humid at first but cooler the higher we got. The cabin on Mt. Bili was built as a retreat for Dr. and Mrs. Harley, the wonderful team of doctor and nurse who started the Ganta Methodist Hospital.

The huge tarantula spider that came down the wall in our cabin, and warnings of a leopard at night, provided a frightening experience and reminded us to be cautious. Uniola killed the spider with a broom, and we carefully tucked the girls and ourselves under mosquito nets at night. We had Bible study discussions, did • crafts and games, and enjoyed learning about each other. Our views from the mountain were an important part of this experience.

...



Bob and I got together frequently with the other missionaries for meetings, social evenings often on the beach, and the times when the hostel girls could host their boyfriends. You can imagine that we were carefully watched too as were the youth!

We did go on some dates; we saw a couple of movies. I was quite impressed with Bob's sensitivity while watching Gunga Din, an Indian hero story; tears welled up in my eyes and I asked if he had a handkerchief. After I used it, he asked for it back as he was crying too.

One time, Bob and I came home late from a date, and couldn't get in the gate to our campus. We called to the watchman to let us in but he was so sound asleep he didn't hear us. Bob put his coat over the top of the tall chain link fence so I could climb over without getting hurt. Of course I had a dress on...no slacks for us ladies in those days!

What we did the most often was to walk on the beach, watch the sunset, and talk about the many things we were interested in. He was a talker and I enjoyed his stories and observations.

It was during my second year that I began to see less of Bob. I guessed that things were not as serious as I thought or wished they were. Bob had gone on an elephant hunt and I had heard nothing about it before he left. I had to learn about it from LaDonna and Bob Carey who lived in the same building as my Bob. Bob explained when he returned that when he got the offer to go with the hunter, he had to leave immediately.



## Elephant Hunt, 1956

### Bob

I heard that Paul Landrus was flying back to his parents' mission station and I asked if I could go along because he was invited by the paramount chief to help reduce the elephant population that was a strain on the small villages. I flew with him the next day in his small plane.

After an overnight at the mission station, he loaded two of his trackers and me into the plane. We flew into the area where we'd begin looking for elephants. He made a second trip to get two other favorite hunters. And with about ten carriers from the village, we started out on the hunt. The carriers were along to carry the food supply for the group, our sleeping hammocks with mosquito nets, and Paul's ammunition.

We tracked for three days. During this time, Paul told me tales of hunting with his father when he was young. His father would warn the men to climb a big tree, not a small one, when elephants come after them. Once when this happened, a villager climbed a small tree. The elephant broke it off, speared the young man with his tusk, and then ran off into the woods. This made me cautious about following the track.

One morning after we got up at 6 am, we learned the track found was just made that morning. I knew we were close then. Paul had one of his trackers stay back with the carriers so their voices wouldn't disturb the



elephant nearby. He told me to stay back a bit. He could see the elephant within range of a shot. I saw him pointing his rifle but I couldn't see the elephant. When the elephant was shot in the head, he reared up, and ran off into the jungle. Paul told me then that he usually kills an elephant with a single shot (as in the previous five times). This time he thought the elephant was spooked so it moved, and the first shot wasn't fatal. As the elephant ran, branches were pulled down by the vines catching on his tusks. When we heard the crashing stop, Paul worked his way down close to the clump of brush where the elephant was hiding, near water where wounded elephants go. The elephant turned to defend himself. Paul found a position to fire safely and accurately. I heard the crash as the elephant fell.

I wanted to get a picture of him laying there. The carriers cleared out the brush for me. I tried to lift one of the elephant's legs for a better picture but I couldn't even shift it. Paul sent the trunk and the bush of the tail with a village messenger that the elephant was there for them to cut up and smoke for food for over the winter.

Before we went on to hunt for more, I saw Paul dividing our rice up into six piles as he didn't know where we were (and how to ration the food for the days left) but we were at least two days walk back to the village once we got to the river. When we were on our way back, we came across the smoked elephant meat in baskets village men and women were carrying...it stunk so badly I had to run past quickly. (We didn't find any other elephants.)

After that I negotiated with Paul for a



tusk from that or another elephant. Paul said that was one of the largest, so he'd give me another smaller one, which he did. We have it still, carved into a row of elephants.

## *Muriel*

Tragically, on a following trip to deliver mail to another mission, Paul had one wing of his plane touch a tree as he circled around the small clearing; he was killed in the crash.

Today elephants are among an endangered species.

Since the 1980's, 95% of Liberian elephants have been killed for ivory to raise money to fight the wars, or by poachers, and now there remain only about 1000.

Today, our ivory souvenir is valuable, and is definitely valued by our family as it tells a story of a different time and a different place.



...

Later in my second year, I faced a big challenge: to take a leading staff member's place. Mary Lewis Brown had been working as the supervisor of the second hostel. However, the building did not get completed as scheduled and it was her turn to go on furlough to the States. I was assigned to take over the supervision: continuing to observe, inspect, and decide on many details. The lead contractor spoke

French and while Mary Lewis could talk with him, I didn't know French, but we managed to communicate with pointing.

I really needed help with this project. Bob was very knowledgeable about construction, and he offered support. The dormitory got built, and it strengthened our relationship too. Bob seemed to think of me differently then; we became sweethearts with extra time to be away from the girls. We found places in the midst of the construction to be alone, talk, and have moments of intimacy.

After two years of this usually casual, off and on friendship, it seemed time to get serious. Bob would be leaving soon to return to the USA and seminary. I feared that he was not ready to become committed to marriage.

### **Dedication of the New Hostel**

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The Liberian Board of the Hostel wanted us to invite President Tubman to be the dedication speaker and it was my job to invite him. (I had met him

previously with other new missionaries and I had gone with Bob and Miss Anna E. Hall, the President's childhood missionary teacher, to his inaugural ball.)

Preparations and expectations were high for the Dedication; • the Hostel girls would sing and we would serve a meal afterward. However, in the early morning of the event, one of the girls, whose brother worked for the president, learned that the president was leaving at about 10:00 a.m. for his farm up-country. Miss Long said to me, "You must hurry to the

president's mansion and tell him that we need him here." I certainly did not want to do this, nor think it appropriate, but I obeyed and Doh drove me into the city. I was allowed to see the president for a quick minute and restated the invitation and added that we were counting on him. He agreed that he would stop for a short time on his way.

President Tubman even came a bit early. When he stepped into our new kitchen, I was bending over, busily putting away things in a low cupboard. I hurriedly turned around and went to greet him.

In his speech, • President Tubman stated that this was to be the last time that missionaries would fund such Liberian projects. I made a short speech to thank the people involved.

• I am on the far left in the photo



## Bob

As I approached the summer of 1957, and the end of my three-year-term, I was considering a list of the 26 "women who have taught me what I know about women" asking myself the question: Did I already know the woman I would ask to be my wife and share the Methodist Church ministry I was anticipating in Iowa? When I shared with a fellow missionary and friend, Walter Cason, that I was considering that question he said, "If I were you, I would take another look at Muriel before leaving for the States and seminary."

I took his advice and Muriel responded enthusiastically to two months of what seemed like a rushed courtship. We walked on the sandy Atlantic

beach off Sinkor, had lots of visits in the CWA pickup, and tried tennis to see if we had any athletic compatibility. This resulted in engagement about two weeks before my shipping out in November 1957. I had a teacher at CWA make 'V' engagement rings for each of us with our initials inside the band. (The design was a Liberian national ring.)

## Muriel

One evening in July, I was thoroughly exhausted from caring for sick girls (almost 42 girls with Hong Kong Flu). I, and only one other staff member, didn't get it. So we, along with five girls, brought water, helped clean up, changed the bedding, and mopped up. Bob was so wonderfully caring; he took me in his arms and said the kindest things. He admired my strength, said I was special, and then I don't remember what he said but I must have gotten the message. To check, I shyly asked, "Are you asking me to marry you?" He answered, "Yes." I didn't hesitate to say, yes, too! I don't think that I acted as happy as I really felt because I was so very exhausted. We snuggled up; his kindness and support helped me feel better, and really loved.

Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life at last I found you!

We had just a few months before Bob was to leave the country. We saw each other more often and looked for ways to be alone to enjoy our romance and plan for our future together.

He hoped that I would be a tennis player with him but I wasn't close to being a candidate. One afternoon he tried to teach me how to follow-through with the racket and he hit the side of my head, my glasses flew off and the result was a very black eye. I wore this during the farewells for him.

- *bungalow, our place of engagement*



**Bob:** Muriel was aboard ship as I was writing notes, thank-yous, and other follow-ups still needed after my sailing.

**Muriel:** The disembarking took a long time so he had more opportunity to finish. While he worked, I got sleepy and fell asleep on his bunk.

**Bob:** Someone knocked on my cabin door to say the gang plank was being raised, did Muriel plan to ship as a stowaway or did she wish to disembark? She did so in a rush.

**Muriel:** There was no time but for a very hurried hug and a kiss!

**Bob:** The gang plank had to be lowered some for her 'lady like' descent. Did she have to blush?

...

So for the next twelve months we carried on our courtship at a distance with me at Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois, and Muriel staying in Liberia at the Girls' Hostel and then teaching Home Economics at CWA.



*Muriel*

## The Carving of the Elephant Tusk

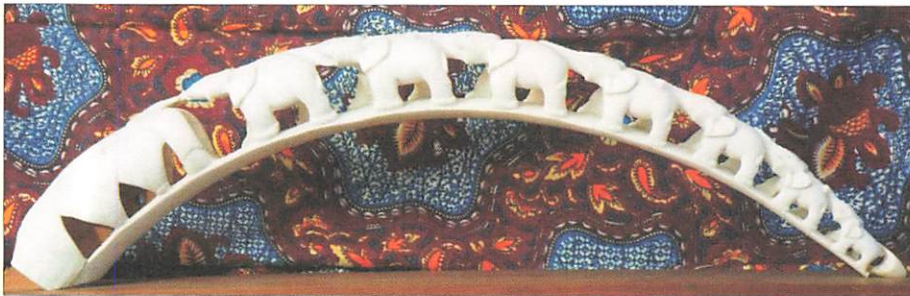
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There was no time for the ivory of the tusk Bob was given to age sufficiently for carving before he left for the States in August of 1957. Jeremiah Doh helped me to get the ivory carved. He took me to the best carver he knew, who had also carved for the President.

This “best carver” was located on the busy market street of Monrovia. In his shop were all sorts of carvings and I could see that he was a busy man. We haggled and bargained about how we wanted the carvings to be and he would state what was possible. I wanted as many elephants as possible and he explained that the hollowed end needed some shapes of leaves and the solid part near the tip was very difficult to carve.

We bargained and I begged to have more elephants than five to be cut into the ivory bridge. Doh was able to get seven and at a price I could pay. (This was quite fortuitous due to our future, seven member family!) Then Doh advised that we check the progress repeatedly to make sure the carver didn't find a better deal and sell the ivory. We had to offer a “dash” now and then to give an incentive and to keep him honest. We were not promised a quick job. Doh understood the nature of Liberian tradesmen; they could be offered more money for the carving than we had agreed to pay. They might be tempted to sell it, hoping to get another to replace ours. The carver had many other jobs waiting and he would work at his own pace.

After weeks of work, the carving was finished; it seemed to me this was almost a year long process. I was thrilled to be able to carry our treasure home in my luggage in 1958. The 30-inch elephant bridge • on our fireplace mantel has been a novelty, and the retelling of an African adventure. And it truly was that!



I continued living in the Hostel compound during my third year as it grew to be home to 54 girls and many new staff members. Finally, I began teaching at the CWA. (Bob had left already so if anyone had been concerned that I should not teach in the school while he was there, they no longer had a problem!) I was most happy to teach and I could not have had a better group of students, although the classroom was quite inadequate, especially for sewing. I also taught lessons focused on healthy diets, prevention of disease, child development, marriage, and the family. The girls took delight in discussing these things, and dating, sex, and faithfulness in marriage. They had many personal questions to ask of me as they had watched Bob's and my romance. The girls feared mostly that their husbands would have more than one wife, or be dishonest and unfaithful. They told of sisters who were surprised on the day after their wedding to be given an "outside" child from another relationship that their husband was in.

...



I was excited to help the girls prepare for their graduation; I had lived with these girls for three years and taught at CWA for their final year. Although I did not teach the senior class that year, I helped them make their dresses in the Hostel. • I used my pattern-making skills to help them make dresses that fit beautifully; soon everyone wanted to make a fitted dress, even a princess style. I was very proud of their ability to learn quickly and to see their delight in the outcome. Recently in phone calls from some of these students who moved

to America, they mention my helping them make their graduation dresses so many years before.

I didn't feel much like a missionary if I considered that one needed to be an evangelist. I was always conscious of being a witness to my faith and considered carefully the questions the girls asked me. Some were about death and heaven; a popular question was, "Can people die before their time?"

## Year of Our Engagement Separated by the Atlantic Ocean 1957-58

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### Bob

Reflection on growth of love at a distance: we both wrote frequently, about once a week. Many of those aerograms exist today and testify to the combination of what was taking place in Liberia, at CWA and the Hostel, as well as in Evanston and GBI (Garrett Biblical Institute, now called Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary). The other aspect of the correspondence was the expressions of love, and the struggle of the absence throughout the whole year of our separation. Living without the other was not the question, because we really had not been living with each other before. But we desired to be able to share easily the experiences of life, and the feelings we had for one another.

...

Early in 1958, I traveled with my dad on an Iowa Highway Commission trip which took him through Sioux Center. There I met Mom and Dad Raak, at least five of Muriel's brothers, their wives and about nine nieces and nephews. The Vander Ploeg aunts and uncles gathered for The Inspection as well. What did they ever reflect back to Muriel?

### Muriel

My mother wrote me a letter after meeting Bob. She wrote that she had enjoyed visiting with him and hearing about our work. She said that he had kissed her, and she added, "He is good at visiting and he's not bad to look at either."



• Vander Ploegs, ca. 1957

left to right: Mom (Min), Lucy, Jo (mom's twin), Cennie, Nic, Winnie, Allie...not in picture: Charles, John, Bill



## Bob

Muriel's flight home gave her time in New York City to buy a formal for the Winter Formal at Garrett on November 20. The arctic cold off Lake Michigan raised the question if I had long underwear to add under her formal (a joke...she borrowed mine to sleep in.)

Muriel hurried on the next day with only 29 days to make final preparations for our wedding. With me at Garrett, Muriel was in Sioux Center working out all the details (including getting the wedding license with her oldest brother, Dennis). Two days before the wedding, I drove up from Ames to Sioux Center using Mom's neighbor, Mrs. Larson's, almost new Plymouth, which we had borrowed for the Minneapolis honeymoon trip as well.

## Muriel

I got to take a plane home rather than a ship because I had worked longer than my three year assignment (to finish teaching the term). I arrived in New York just three weeks before our wedding. Justy McConaughy, my friend from caravanning, living in Long Island, met me at the plane. She took me shopping for a dress for the Winter Formal at Garrett. This was a quick stop before the flight to Chicago (Garrett is in Evanston, a suburb of Chicago).

After the Formal, I went to Iowa. I stopped to visit with Bob's parents in Ames. Bob's mother had invited her friends to give me a shower. Her best friend, Mrs. Pauline Wymore, had a wedding dress she wondered if I would like to use. It was a spring dress that her daughter wore for her June wedding; all I needed was some long lacey gloves to add warmth and style for winter. I was surprised that her dress fit me.

Finally back in Sioux Center, Eunice took me to Sioux City during the few weeks we had left. We shopped for my going-away outfits, bedtime lingerie, and other necessary items to replenish my wardrobe.

These were busy days and I looked forward to Bob returning from seminary the day before the wedding. It was so hard to wait to completely share our lives together; letters were not enough and neither was just hugging and kissing.

# Wedding & Honeymoon

12/20/58

## Bob

For our Wedding Day in the First Reformed Church, Sioux Center, Iowa, we decorated the front of the chancel with • evergreen branches forming about a 4' x 6' background sprinkled with blue Christmas tree lights. Muriel's five sisters-in-law and her high school friends were very helpful with preparations for the wedding and for the reception held downstairs. The small sandwiches, cakes and bars to go with coffee and tea, were delightfully decorated and arranged. Colors were white and blue for Muriel's flowers and other touches.

## Muriel

The day was beautiful with a new snowfall the day before, and the sun was shining brightly in the afternoon of our wedding.

Eunice helped me get dressed in the church basement before the ceremony. She had made blue velveteen jumpers for my nieces, Marlene and Lora Lea, who were candle lighters. My younger brothers, Ken and Irwin, were the ushers.

A couple who had had a wedding the previous night agreed to let the evergreen arrangement remain as well as the candelabra stands. • Our attendants were Bob's brother, Allan, and Margaret Hill Northey, my very good friend from ISC and Wesley Fellowship, the one who

suggested Bob as a guy I would like to know. She wore a blue dress that she had gotten for another wedding; it provided another way to save money.



Our college pastor, Dr. Sam Nickols, came the 200 miles from Ames. He was • our beloved minister and we were so happy that he would officiate. However, after he returned to Ames, and before mailing the marriage license to the state, he misplaced it. Somehow things got worked out and we became legally married.



My father was able to walk with me down the aisle even with Parkinson's disease. We had a taped song of a friend in Liberia singing "Praise to the Lord." He was a featured singer on a Christian radio

station. Charles, Bob's brother, ran the recorder. He had a cold and couldn't hear, so he messed up the timing a little. That didn't matter.

Bob and I wrote our wedding vows and memorized them. In our short service, we became husband and wife. This began a wonder-filled life together, full of mystery and adventure!

The Mission Band of the church of which I had been a member served the reception; my sisters-in-law provided a sumptuous meal of chicken and ham on buns and many sweets, with punch, coffee, and tea. With many wonderful loving wishes, we drove that wintry evening to Minneapolis for our honeymoon.

## Bob

The honeymoon get away was a little confused. Allan had thought he was driving us to our car, hidden in a garage. I suspected he might be in cahoots with Irv or Vernon to decorate the car so we asked Dennis to make that delivery for us. Allan was never happy about that slight.

Our drive to Minneapolis, about four hours, got us in late into the night. We were well cared for by Walter Cason's mother! It was a miracle arrangement, like so many in our still continuing journey. While Muriel was still in Liberia, Walter had raised the possibility of our using his parents' lakeside cottage for our honeymoon. That raised the frightening prospect of an outdoor toilet in Minnesota in December! By the time of the wedding, Muriel had learned that Walter's parents would leave the very morning after our wedding for a week in Florida and we could have their graciously provisioned home in Minneapolis for our first days, and nights, together. Walter's mother said, "Everything is here. You can just stay in the house. You

won't need to go out for anything." And then our wedding night, and yes, we finally had the joy of 'getting mushy.' There can only be one first time!

## Muriel

We longed to share a bed together and that came true the night of our honeymoon, a night made so special by being able to stay at the "honeymoon equipped" home of Walter Cason's mother. She had left a prepared roast, casseroles, fruit, and cookies. There were notices of events for us to attend, sites along the Mississippi to see, and a book on Marriage Fulfillment to enjoy. She also told her neighbors not to bother us.





# Our First Home: Evanston, IL

January 1959 - June 1960

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## Bob

I returned to school after our wedding for my 2nd year of seminary. I went there for three years on a full scholarship that included me working. They gave me a job washing dishes in the dining room and working in the library.

After the wedding and celebrating Christmas in Sioux Center, we went to Ames and bought our first car, a 1954 Chevy, for the drive to Evanston (the library job was waiting for me). We entered the city around midnight with the battery failing, driving for blocks with headlights out, turning them on in intersections to conserve what was left of the battery. We had called back to Ames about the battery issue and the used car dealer was glad we called for no one had put antifreeze in our car after the new engine block had been installed! We found a storage garage just one block from the Noyes Street Apartments where we could put the car for the night and deal with the two issues in the morning.

Our short term rental in the Noyes Street Apartments was an efficiency similar to the one which would be ours later on Maple Street. During our first night, our blue comforter cover kept sliding off of us throughout the night! But we happy because we were in Evanston, and Muriel had a teaching position she could drive to and use her Home Economics training.

## Muriel

The first night in the Noyes Street Apartments it was so very cold as the heat had not been turned on. In the morning, we turned on the oven, forgetting that we had stored a plastic dish pan in it. That was not our

last misfortune. It was hard to find places for our many gifts in this small apartment.

Our one-room • Maple Street apartment was at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. It was owned and managed by Garrett Theological Seminary where Bob was a student.

We were quite busy, Bob with his lessons, and I with beginning to teach at Skiles Junior High School in Scokie, Illinois. I got this mid-term position as the previous teacher had become pregnant and wanted to stop teaching.

This efficiency apartment had a Pullman kitchen, a large walk-in closet with a bathroom at one end, and one room that was to be our bedroom, dining room, and study space. We were provided a small desk, a drop-leaf table with two chairs, and a Murphy bed that was set on end and rolled into the closet when not in use.

Our first decision was to get rid of the Murphy bed. We bought a good, sturdy hide-a-bed instead. Then Bob created a desk with shelves above in the closet where the bed had been stored. That was a good-sized desk and provided a very workable space for study, and books. We still had a large area for clothes as well as wedding gifts we couldn't use yet. I made drapes to match the sofa.



The tiny kitchen had possibilities for remodeling. We studied several home furnishing magazines and used the best and most practical of the ideas. Above the sink between the counter-top refrigerator and the stove, we mounted a peg board. From it we could hang anything that could be hung: pots, pans, utensils, and even a picture.

Then we analyzed what could be done under the sink; it was just an open space with exposed pipes. I challenged Bob to make narrow cupboards on castors that could hold cans of food and other things. He built two of these, one on each side of the pipes. These held an amazing amount of food and could easily be reached. The remaining space on the floor was okay for cleaning supplies. When guests came, I could hide the entire kitchen by closing the folding doors.

This made for a pleasant, convenient and economical home for one-and-a-half years. The manager was so impressed by our apartment that he requested to use it as a model for new students applying for residence. I don't believe he decreased our rent for this privilege but the satisfaction was worth it.

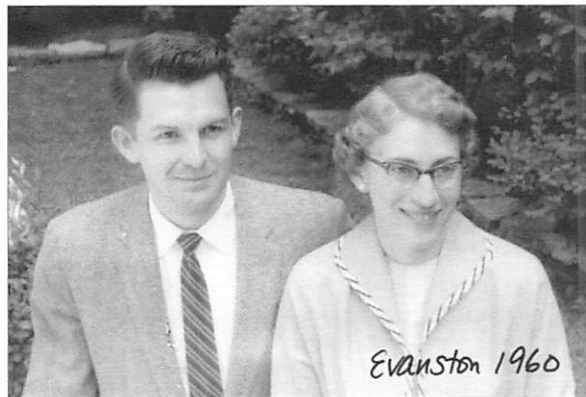
Fran and Lee Emerson were our best friends and our upstairs-neighbors. We played cards, other games, and went to events together. Lee was in seminary with Bob, and Fran was a teacher, like me, but who had to travel much farther to school. When we wanted to invite them to a meal, to visit, or play a game, we used a broom to tap on our ceiling; they replied with taps on their floor. I think we had a certain number of taps for each message. When we visited each other after we had

moved, Fran enjoyed caring for Margaret; they had been married longer than we, and had not been able to have children. In the years after graduation from seminary, we heard that they had adopted children.

...

Bob and I were invited to lead a mission program near Cedar Rapids, Iowa; we invited our friends, Ken and Reggie Fineran, to go with us. It was a very cold night and on our way back to Evanston, when the car started to lose power, we pulled up to a farm home to get help. We had no response there so Bob suggested we wait and try to start the car later. While sitting in the car with the warmth of blankets from Liberia, we played the Five Letter Word game. After perhaps an hour, Bob was able to start the car and we were off.

On another very cold night after another program, we heard a loud crack like a gun shot. We looked back to find the back window had cracked but not broken out; gradually pieces of glass fell and the cold air came in; once again we used our Liberian props that we had with us for show-and-tell, to keep us warm.



• me in my "going away" outfit in yard with Bob

# Changes during our Second Year of Marriage

Evanston & Humbolt Park, Chicago

January 1960 – July 1961

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## Bob

After living together in Evanston for a year and half, Garrett Seminary needed our near-campus apartment for new students arriving.

## Muriel

Before moving into Chicago, Bob began the summer working as chaplain-in-training at the Boys' Industrial School in Topeka, KS. I went with Bob. We stayed with a woman whom I helped with sewing and housework in exchange for room and board.

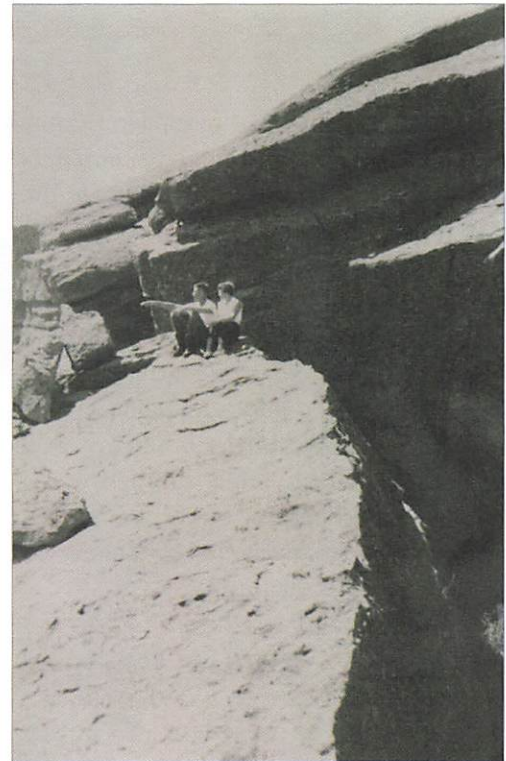
After Bob's training finished, we had some free time. We thought of taking a trip in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado so we invited • my brother Cliff and his wife Grada to go with us. Grada and I were both pregnant and feeling well. Neither of our families had much extra money. But we thought we could easily have a good time on \$75 from each couple. Bob and I bought traveler's checks for our portion.

We parked our car in a lot near Topeka where we met Cliff who would drive us all in his car for the trip. When we stopped for gas over an hour later, we began to discuss how we would divide the costs and it

was then that I remembered the checks; I had stored them in our silver chest that was in the trunk of our parked car. Cliff laughed and said that he hadn't believed that we could make it on the suggested amount so he had brought \$125. Bob had about \$12 in cash, I believe, so we decided not to go back for the checks... continuing on with fingers crossed.

While in the foothills, at the • first sight of the Rocky Mountains, Cliff said, "Let's get out and climb!" We enjoyed that climb, and later, the view of Pikes' Peak, Red Rock Amphitheater, and the scenes of Buffalo Bill's adventures.

Oh, how we scrimped and saved by making our own meals in our electric





frying pan, and sharing lodging in cabins! We had a great time anyway. On our last day, Cliff said, "We still have money; let's celebrate. I want a steak!" We ate at a nice restaurant and even made it home with a little extra money. Of course, our \$75 from our locked trunk reimbursed Cliff!

## Bob

The apartment we found to move to after the trip was in Chicago, north of North Street and west of Western Street in Humbolt Park. It was a third floor walk-up...we lived there with baby Margaret, her first home.

I was still going back and forth to Seminary in Evanston. From Chicago to Evanston was about a half hour drive.

## Muriel

Bob interned with Rev. Jim Reid in Humbolt Park Methodist Church, an inner city church. I had resigned from teaching in the spring, and spent time finding used furnishings for our home.

Bob and I had to live on a strict budget as neither one of us were employed. I carefully studied the Want Ads for used things for sale from the wealthy suburbs. I then took Bob to Evanston and shopped for used furnishings for our home, including a stove, refrigerator, table set, a bed, and baby furniture. On Saturday, Bob and a friend from the church moved the purchases in (carrying them up three floors). As I remember, we got everything we needed for just over \$500!

Early on at church, Bob showed me his style of greeting guests, or people we hadn't met before. He would whisper to me, "I'll go meet the people in the left section and you go to the people on the right." This was not in my comfort zone but I soon became at ease doing this.

...

Anticipating and preparing for Margaret's arrival also filled my time and Bob was helpful. Bob and I attended the natural childbirth classes together so he could work with me on breathing deeply and lifting my abdomen.

**Margaret** Beth was born on the morning of December 31, 1960. Her arrival was safely assisted by my doctor who agreed with my request to be completely alert and drug independent. Bob was with me in the labor room to help with abdominal lifts and support. I felt no need to moan, scream, or swear like we heard around us. Dads couldn't be present in the delivery room in those days because it was thought they might interfere if there was a problem. After Margaret's birth, as I was wheeled out holding her, • Bob was immediately ready to have his turn to hold her. I had

not needed any drugs so I was sitting up and feeling ecstatic!

After the delivery of our six lbs. and four and a half oz. first daughter, I proudly sat on the bed holding our dark-haired baby.



Margaret had arrived a couple of days earlier than expected; this was a financial concern because our insurance wasn't to be activated until January 1, 1961. However, our good doctor said that he would not charge us for the one day in 1960. To add to the good news, we learned that insurance would cover that one day in 1960 as well. In the end, our Iowa insurance plan covered more than the Illinois plan; therefore we ended up receiving more than we paid the doctor!

On the day Margaret and I were to be discharged from the hospital, Bob came to pick us up; my mother, from Iowa, was with him as she was to be with us the first few days at home. We were invited into a room where several nurses had gathered; they asked me to tell them about the preparation for, and experience of, having a child with natural childbirth. As I told my story, my mother commented, "It was never that easy for me!" Then came a surprise, the nurses presented us with a baby book: *Our Baby's First Seven Years*. It became an excellent place to keep records of milestones and the first of four more books like it.

To prepare for Margaret's homecoming, Lou Hlaverty, my co-teacher at Skiles Jr. High School, had mopped our kitchen floor! She had visited us at the hospital and offered to do anything to help me. I had mentioned mopping because my mother was coming to visit and I couldn't do it in the last weeks of my pregnancy. Actually it embarrassed me because she had never mopped a floor as she had a maid; she even came dressed as a maid to do the work!



Margaret was a precious dark-haired treasure we brought home to our 3rd floor apartment on a cold day in early January of 1961. We had the little white crib ready for her. • We adored her from the first day. It was a joy to care for Margaret, to show her to friends, and to listen to their comments. Doug Norris, a friend from Garrett, said, "She is too pretty to look like either one of you." My best friend in Evanston, Fran Emerson, was pleased to babysit when Bob and I had an event to attend.

Margaret was often fussy the first weeks and I worried that she wasn't getting adequate milk from me. As I had become a member of La Leche, I called for advice and was assured that as long as she was gaining weight, she was getting what she needed.

Our dear neighbor from Estonia, who lived across the hall from us, would knock on our door and offer to help. She loved to hold Margaret and comfort her in her native language. This woman was lonely as her husband was also gone all day working as a pharmacist and she didn't speak English.

Little Margaret was my sweet companion as I went about my work; whether cooking or cleaning, I had her close at hand. As I held and nursed her, she soon smiled and we began pleasantly communicating. She loved baths and to splash in her little tub. I took her down the three flights of stairs in a bassinet, to a public laundry where we stayed while doing the washing and drying of our clothes. Sometimes I visited with neighbor ladies. Most of the people were Polish immigrants from the USSR. Fortunately, we had been

given a year of free diaper service which saved many steps.

In those months following, I was occupied with caring for Margaret while Bob was busy with his seminary classes and working at the church. Many times he stayed late either visiting or playing basketball with the youth. Sometimes when he came home near midnight, I was crying with fatigue. I wondered if I hadn't been able to satisfy Margaret's needs. He was not always able to stop her crying but being with me was very helpful. Sometimes then, and in the years later, I resented his being away at night when the children were fussy.

Our Methodist church was a helpful source of outside activity for me. Rev. Reid baptized Margaret. I remember writing, "I think I understand God's love for us in the way I love our child."

We had friends among the members. Rev. Jim and Jane Reid often had us visit for meals. I enjoyed talking with Jim about thoughts or ideas occasioned by his sermons. He would sometimes jokingly respond, "You must have been ironing again." I had to admit, I mused about religion as I ironed.

In the spring, I took Margaret to Humboldt Park and she crawled on a blanket; she loved to watch the birds that landed near us. I wheeled her around in a baby buggy and we often visited with other mothers with children. In her sixth month, it was good to move to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where she would have many more opportunities to grow, meet people, and be out of doors.



## Our Home in Council Bluffs, IA 1961-1967

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### *Muriel*

We moved from Chicago to Council Bluffs in June of 1961. Bob was appointed to Trinity Methodist Church, an urban church near the Union Pacific Railroad terminal. Bob wanted to work in a city rather than in rural areas; he got his wish with this assignment. It was good to be back in Iowa with relatives, and friends we had known before. When Bob went to meetings with other clergy, the wives met together for coffee and sweets. I could always take Margaret, and later three more daughters, with me and the women all seemed to enjoy them.

Our house in Council Bluffs was quite a confined space, the way it was squeezed against the west side of the church, with the street in front and the alley only three-to-four feet from the side, and only the foundation of a garage at the back. However, we had adequate room and wonderful times together there with our growing family. Bob could crawl through the stair-landing window from the church into our home. The church provided a place of interest for the girls



when remodeling was going on, and Bob could easily come home for lunch and be with the girls if needed.

In the small strip of land beside the alley, Bob brought good dirt from a church member's farm to prepare for flowers I planted and which thrived very well every year. The front of the house had a large screened-in porch, making a safe place for the girls to play, and a double-seated swing on which I often read to them. Bob fenced in the foundation area of the unfinished garage; the girls rode their tricycles, and played with blocks and balls there. The Kohl family with seven children lived just outside the fence. The girls played with the younger children on their rusty swing set in their yard.

• *leading worship and song at Trinity Methodist Church*

When Bob had just begun his ministry at Trinity, as we arrived home from a meeting in Des Moines one

day, he learned of a tragic accident in our community. It was the deaths of four children and their father. (The older children had attended our Sunday school just the week before.) The father had strangled three of the children in the home and then had taken the youngest boy to ride with him as he crashed into a truck. As it was Bob's first funeral as a pastor, the funeral director asked Bob if he could be of any help. Bob requested that no photographers be allowed to take pictures; he added, "I do not want a picture taken of the five caskets lined up in the front of the church to be what the mother sees in the newspaper." The

mother was in the hospital at the time of the incident. Bob visited often with her as she recovered. She later remarried a man with children.

Over the six years that we lived there, the unfinished space between the church and parsonage was finished for classrooms and an office. The other building project was remodeling the sanctuary; this was done mainly by the men of the church with Bob doing a lot of the planning. This meant a lot of noise and activity for the curious girls and their mother; we made many visits as the men were working.

One of the joys of remodeling was working with Orin Abele on renewing the stained glass windows that had buckled or broken by the large trucks moving on the highway next door. Mr. Abele would discuss with us, including four-year-old Margaret, what colors we wanted in the windows. He would find scraps in a salvage store in Omaha and then cut the glass. He restored many of the windows of the church in beautiful colors, including reds and blues.

Bob's dad was pleased about the work that Bob and the church members had done themselves and thought of a way to celebrate. Austin liked to do things in a big way, a way to show off and maybe as a way to participate. He planned a pork roast and worked with the men of the church to buy a pig, to dig a pit out in a field, and to find the right wood for a slow cook. During the night a few men took turns: keeping the coals burning slowly, turning the pig at intervals, and deciding when the pork was cooked and

still tender. With Dad supervising, the pork came out perfectly sweet and juicy (I can still taste it!). I imagine they licked their fingers on the sly. Later in the day, the congregation had a great feast with the women adding their best dishes.



• *Bob and Margaret*

Margaret's early life was enriched with cousins. Within the twelve months of her birth in December of 1960, six cousins were also born. Three Raak cousins and one Griffin cousin preceded her: Rachel, Eugene, Dan, and Susan.

After Margaret's birth, two other cousins were added: Christine and Clifford.

In the winter when I was pregnant with Laura, I became unusually tired and went to see Dr. Hurst. He explained that I was just anxious about having another child. I disagreed with him but I accepted his suggestion that I should get more rest. Instead of feeling better, I began to feel very weak; I didn't even want to hold a book and I cried easily. I went back to the doctor and he referred me to an eye-nose-and-throat specialist. This doctor found that my adenoids had grown back (after a tonsillectomy as a child) and were infected; I had surgery to remove them and returned to good health in time to have another baby girl.



Laura Jean was born on Sunday January 20, 1963 at 3:24 a.m. at the Jennie Edmundson Hospital in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

At almost midnight, Bob had taken me to the hospital. My doctor permitted him to be with me in the delivery room because he had learned how to help during my successful natural childbirth experience with Margaret. Bob even got to hold Laura almost immediately; Dr. Donald Hurst was amazed at how easily I gave birth! Bob could not stay with us very long as he had to hurry to church to complete the day's bulletin and lead in worship. Announcing in the bulletin Laura's arrival surprised the people, they asked, "When did you do the bulletin?"

Laura was baptized a few weeks later by Dr. Al Mayberry, our District Superintendent.

In the month previous, Bob's parents had visited us and asked what we were going to name our new baby. We had not come up with a girl's name but had agreed on Ryan Allan as a boy's name. I don't think they gave us suggestions, but we soon gave it more serious



consideration and decided to call her Laura Jean. They learned of this after she was born and responded excitedly saying, "That was the name of Austin's mother!" (Laura Cowles Griffin). This gave meaning to the name.

Margaret was fascinated with her little sister and quickly accepted her. Margaret became very helpful in many loving ways and soon found it easier to call Laura: Lalla. Laura was the first baby born to the pastor's family in a long time; the members of the church celebrated with a huge shower for her. Gifts included 40 dress-and-panty sets along with other clothes, toys, and blankets. I exchanged many of the dress sets

for ordinary items that were needed every day.



• Margaret with baby Laura

Edna was our very good neighbor. She was often a baby sitter for the girls. One time Laura, while in Edna's home still learning to walk, fell down dazed but quickly got up to try again. Laura was walking by ten months, free to go where she wanted. She especially liked climbing the stairway from the living room.



We went to The Black Hills and slept in a tent. Laura insisted on carrying a bucket of water up a hill, and helping with the tent setup.

...

A cry for help came from four-year-old Margaret standing on the concrete slab just outside our kitchen where she and Laura had been playing. Laura was lying beside her tricycle in a faint. Margaret was afraid something terrible had happened. Laura, now in her twos, had been riding round and round when she tipped over and fainted. We picked her up. Her eyes opened and she wanted to be back on the tricycle. We thought better of this, and had our neighbor take a look; she was a semi-retired nurse and saw that Laura's eyes were not dilated, and decided that she was probably just a little stunned.

• Margaret and Laura, in front of home which was attached to the church

Laura and Margaret enjoyed playing house together with their dolls, hiding behind the long drapes, and chasing each other around the living and dining rooms. At one such time, Laura was running from Margaret, heading for the porch, and dashed into the glass in the lower part of the door. Her shoulder and arm were surrounded by hanging spears of glass; she pulled back through the window in seconds before I could get to her. I don't remember her even needing a Band-Aid.



One Monday morning, the girls were playing in the basement and Laura picked up some small white pellets and put them in her mouth. We were alarmed, thinking she had swallowed pills or other harmful objects. We took her to the hospital and had her stomach pumped. (This was a serious decision as pumping a stomach is aggressive.) We learned she had eaten little beans, probably some that came from a pea shooter of kids in the Sunday school class who had gathered in our basement.

• we made a slide in the house, Laura here having fun on it



**Debra** Anne's arrival was much less hurried; she waited till Monday morning at 10:13 on a beautiful autumn day, October 26, 1964. There was some difficulty with her birth because her umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck. Dr. Donald Hurst was very capable; I was able to cooperate with him using my natural childbirth skills during the delivery. Her two older sisters joined in bringing Debra home, asking questions and begging to hold her first. Even Laura, not even two, did very well holding her.

- *Bob baptizing Debra, the only daughter he baptized*



- *Margaret, Laura, and Debra attending worship from infancy (Trinity Church)*

When Debra was a baby, the church renovation was going full-swing and we would bring her in a baby seat to watch the work. Margaret and Laura loved to play in the sanctuary when all the pews were out for the laying of the new carpet. The men working often stopped to talk to them or pick one up to play or show them something. Bob was very engaged with helping in the renovations.

- *Margaret holding baby Debra*



Our home in Council Bluffs was located near the Union Pacific Railway. We frequently had transients who rode the rails show up at our door. In exchange for food, Bob always asked if they were willing to do a little work. One day, a lone man stopped in and Bob had him help to clean up some rubble in the alley. The three girls were playing in the living room when Dad invited the man to come in and take a seat to wait while I got some food. Debra, probably less than two, climbed on his lap, looked up at him, and then reached up to touch his whiskery face. The man gave a shocked look and jerked back; Debra quickly slid down and ran to her daddy's lap.



Fairmont Park was our special place to play outside, situated on the bluffs of the Missouri River high above our home. We liked to go to the edge of this park to look down and see our house far below. It was always ten degrees cooler up there so we frequently brought a picnic supper there

on hot days. (This place was where Abe Lincoln was believed to have met with representatives of the Union Pacific Railroad which was being built to the west coast, August of 1859.) It was a wonderful playground with swings of various sizes, a merry-go-round, and both low and high slides. The swings and tall slides provided thrilling experiences for all. Even when the metal slide was burning hot, everyone wanted to play on it, two-year-old Debra as well. No



one ever went over the sides; Dad watched closely...I tried not to watch when they acted too brave at the top or leaned over the side!

## Bob

I made a very special rocking boat/platform with steps for the girls to gather in to play, and turn over to stand on to perform songs and drama. I made it in Council Bluffs. The girls used it there, in Des Moines, and in Chicago where it became part of the preschool.

## Muriel

Bob made the girls very happy by making the rocking boat and steps/stage combination using one from *Creative Playthings* as a guide. He made the boat deeper than the designs so that it could roll higher and hold at least four people. Many a voyage was taken in that boat, and many a song was sung from the stage when turned over.

- *Debra singing as she pushed her rattling toy*

Church life was important to us and I enjoyed reading the little Arch Bible story books to the girls. Margaret at six once responded to an "alter-call." (She went to the front and knelt down during a prayer.) Church members were always in our family's thinking and activities, and Bob often surprised them with his



juggling of his time with work and family. For a summer vacation, a church member loaned us the use of their camping trailer for our trip to the Black Hills.

- *Laura, Margaret, and Debra playing in a park*



- *1967, friends with us on a swing set in their yard: Debra, a friend, Bob pushing a boy, Margaret...Laura is walking*

Before Margaret started Kindergarten, she began preschool at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, just across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs. The classes were on Saturday mornings and were led by artists and art educators. They included art activities



as well as visits to the galleries. She continued these classes for one year until we moved to Des Moines. We had decided that a Christmas tree was not a priority item in our budget; I'm quite sure that Margaret didn't agree but that didn't stop her from wanting one, or from figuring out how she could get one. Recycling wasn't in our vocabulary in the '60s but she was a forerunner in the field.

Margaret saw a possibility in her kindergarten classroom; there stood a four, or maybe five, foot Christmas tree; she reasoned that in a day or two Christmas vacation was to begin and it would be no longer needed. She lingered after school and went to the teacher and asked, "What are you going to do with the Christmas tree?" The teacher assumed it would be thrown away, just what Margaret had suspected. She asked, "May I take it home with me?" The teacher looked at her, and said, "How will you do that; will your father come and get it?" Margaret had her answer ready, "I can carry it." "Where do you live?" the teacher asked. "Oh, not far; I live at 341 Worth St. and I walk it every day." (Actually it was close to five blocks, partly uphill.) The teacher must have admired the grit of this girl and gave her consent. Margaret found that carrying was not doable but dragging it was a possibility. She and Laura, along with our help, made that tree quite beautiful with strings of popcorn, cranberries and chains of little red and green paper rings.

Bob's parents often visited us from Ames, and Grandma always entertained the girls with some art activity. In the spring before Easter, Grandma Griffin discovered the barren remains of Margaret's Christmas tree in the trash outside, and declared it was perfect for an Easter egg tree. She stripped it of dried pine needles and painted it white. Grandma encouraged the girls to help blow out the eggs, decorate them with painted designs, and then glue beads, lace, old jewelry, ribbons, and rickrack to the fragile eggs. Debra loved to watch her decorate eggs. Grandma gave each granddaughter a chance to take part in hanging the eggs on the tree. We never again had such an elegant Easter egg tree. We kept it long after Easter.



## Trip to Philadelphia, October 1965

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The Board of Evangelism of the Methodist Church held a conference for ministers who were in their first five years in the pastorate. Bob was eager to have me go with him. To make this possible, he made arrangements with his friend, the Baptist minister who lived nearby our home, to have • our three girls stay with their family. They even helped Debra celebrate her first birthday.

We had a wonderful time seeing the sights of historic Philadelphia and enjoyed visits with other couples. The museum displays and enactments helped me to imagine the writers of the U.S. Constitution making decisions for us today. We got close to the Liberty Bell, which I heard you can't do anymore.

We found a tasty deli called *Stanwiches*. I think we went there two or three times; we encouraged others to go there too. However, strange things can happen: we found a curled piece of metal in my tuna sandwich and a band aid in another. That ended our recommendations and continued trips there!



## Hospitality While Traveling

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Vacations away from home in the early years of our family were few because our budget didn't allow much more than visiting family in other parts of Iowa. One time we went to the Black Hills and slept in a tent (I didn't sleep well due to a rock being under the air mattress, which deflated it). We also took a trip to Michigan to visit my brother Truman's family and used a small borrowed camper which we pulled behind the car.

While returning from Illinois on such a trip in 1966, we stopped for supper in East Moline along the Mississippi River. We still had a long way to go as it is about 250 miles to Council Bluffs. With us at that time were our daughters, Margaret (about five and a half), Laura (three and a half), and Debra (about 20 months). It was

early evening and we weren't carrying enough food for supper so we stopped at a small family style restaurant.

Soon another family entered the cafe and took a table next to ours. They had three children also, two boys and a girl. Bob, who always liked to get to know people, started a conversation with the father. They talked about the children and soon Bob asked for their names. We learned that the boys' names were John and Paul; and before we were told of the girl's name Bob said, "Let me guess, her name is Mary." The children giggled and said, "No, that's not right." When Bob couldn't guess correctly, they told him it was

Rebekah. Bob quickly responded, “Oh, you used the Old Testament for her!”

To this the father replied, “Oh, you must know your Bible; you must be Christians.” Bob confirmed that he was, and a minister. We learned that the father was a student in the famous Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa, just across the river. Our families had experienced treatment from chiropractors, and had many things in common to talk about.

It wasn’t long until the couple conferred together and then invited us to their home. We were interested but felt that we still had a long way to go and should be on our way soon. “No, no,” they said, “we want you to stay for the night.” And to further convince us to stay, they added, “We have just gotten a new telescope and we have it on our roof; you can see the stars with us. Tonight is a perfect night, and the children can play together.”

With such a wonderfully warm invitation, and such a remarkable random act of kindness, we could not but accept the offer. Instead of over four more hours of driving that night with three tired children, we spent a delightful evening with our new found friends. We left the next morning fresh and eager to sing our way home.

...

**Nancy Ellen** was born on a Sunday afternoon at 3:15 on March 5, 1967. She was the first daughter to be born in the new Jennie Edmundson Hospital wing. I was able to wait at the hospital to deliver until Bob had finished preaching. Bob brought Nancy’s older sisters to the hospital to bring Nancy home on a beautiful spring day.

We were happy to have Nancy be the fourth of our “Little Women.” Nancy was baptized by Dr. Henry Teele, our district superintendent at the time.

Nancy had frequent colds. Our good Dr. Bean was always available to find a helpful treatment. She also got tonsillitis; the doctor decided against surgery. She recovered slowly. Margaret at six was a helpful caregiver, a real little nurse.

Nancy was only in this home in Council Bluffs for three months before we moved to Des Moines for Bob’s next appointment. It was wonderful to have my niece, Marlene Raak, come and help pack and care for the children.

...



• *play time with Daddy in Des Moines*



We looked forward to the monthly couples' fellowship when we met in a member's home after having gotten a babysitter for the girls. Once a year, most often at Christmas, we had a progressive dinner with different families hosting the various parts of a meal in their homes.

At our last gathering before we moved to our next assignment, Bob told the story of his getting a traffic ticket for speeding one early morning. That was followed by his getting a postcard notifying him that he had overpaid on the ticket and needed to go to the police station to get a refund. He added that he had gone to the police but they couldn't figure out how to handle it except to get another ticket to make it even. At this point of the telling of the story, Mary Brown, an employee at Offutt Airbase, started to laugh almost beyond control. When she looked at Bob, she said, "I thought you would never tell." She admitted that she had found the joking note card and knew it was suited for Bob. This, and many other times, helps us to recall and value the good times we had with those friends in Council Bluffs.

...



• Margaret having fun with her dad

As we prepared to leave Trinity Methodist church after six busy, educational, and loving years of ministry, and caring for our young family, the congregation planned and celebrated with a take-off of the current popular musical *Camelot*. Council Bluffs was likened to Camelot; "There simply never was a more congenial spot for happily-ever-aftering than here in Camelot, Camelot, Camelot."

Those six years were a blessing as our family grew, enjoying the love and kindness of the church members. Working in the church, getting to know the strong people of faith there, and caring for our children, heightened my appreciation of God for love, patience, courage, and endurance.

We were leaving so many good and caring friends but we looked forward to the challenge for Bob to work with a team of pastors in the inner city of Des Moines.

## Des Moines, IA 1967-71

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### Muriel

We lived in the three-bedroom ranch style parsonage at 3929 38th Street. This Des Moines home is one the girls fondly remember. They liked the big family room beside the kitchen where they played with the rocking boat and built roads, bridges and houses with K'NEX and colorful wooden blocks. They dressed up in lace curtains as brides, played house with their dolls and watched *Sesame Street* and shows of *Leave it to Beaver*, *Gilligan's Island*, and *My Three Sons*. They loved to color, draw and mold a dinner with play dough. Margaret liked to read and the others appreciated listening to the stories. I read to the girls at bedtime. Sometimes to get them to sleep, I walked my fingers on their backs, telling them the story of their day. It was something they liked so much, they laid awake for it.

Bob was the pastor of • **Gatchel UMC** and worked jointly in the Inner City Parish with Jim Shropshire at Burns, and Allan Moore at Trinity. Together, their congregations started the breakfast program for children of Moulton School at Trinity, after school programs, and English language classes. Gatchel members continued the practice of serving meals at a diner at the Iowa State Fair; the proceeds from our four years were able to pay off the mortgage on our church building.

The girls all attended church with me, being quite quiet, surprisingly enough, and often drew pictures, read or wrote during the sermon. As they got older, the girls went to Sunday School, potlucks, and community programs. Gloria Gilchrist, Debra's Sunday school teacher, often took care of the girls when we needed a sitter; I recall the time of Bob's father's funeral when Nancy stayed with her. While there,

Nancy took some of her first steps alone and fell against the coffee table, getting a little cut on her forehead.



### Carol's Arrival

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On December 20, 1968, we were observing our 10th anniversary, and Bob needed to officiate at a wedding in the evening. Plans were going as scheduled when I felt that our fifth, unborn child wanted to enter into the celebration. Bob thought it wise to have the older girls stay with a babysitter and for me to have a way to get to the hospital if needed. He arranged for me to stay with a doctor's family who were members of the church and asked the doctor to take me to Mercy Hospital in Des Moines if necessary. In a few hours, I was in the hospital and Bob managed to join me in time to see Carol Marie born approximately at midnight. As it was too close to call, we chose 11:59 p.m. so her birth date would match our anniversary. She was a beautiful, healthy baby girl.

Our family had hoped that she could come home on the 24th but when Carol appeared jaundiced, she was detained. This was not serious but the hospital needed to check whether Carol's blood type of A+ was



compatible with Bob's O negative. The report came back that all was fine. On Christmas day, we took her home in a very large red Christmas stocking; the hospital auxiliary had provided them for babies that went home on Christmas Eve. Carol's four sisters were ready to welcome her home.



They immediately gathered around her to offer their fingers for a little hand grip and to gently touch her soft brown hair. Each one took turns holding her. They watched for her first smile and talked to her and enjoyed her cooing responses.

• Carol in Margaret's arms,  
Laura, Nancy, Debra

Carol became part of the dramatic life of the Griffin Girls as they had prepared a manger scene; Bob lay Carol in it as Margaret, Laura, Debra, and Nancy gathered to be Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds.



Carol was baptized by Rev. Jim Shopshire, the parish minister from Burns UMC. The whole family was up front for the ceremony at the altar in Gatchel Church.

The older girls took Carol for rides outside in a baby buggy in the spring. Once going down the slope of the sidewalk in front of our neighbor's home, Laura or

Debra let go of the buggy and it rolled freely down the sidewalk and into the grass until it tipped over and spilled Carol out beside it. I was quickly called to pick her up; she was neither crying nor injured.

Carol took her first step in early November at about ten months and

was walking everywhere at twelve and a half months. She said her first word at seven months and proceeded slowly to talk after that. She had difficulty saying the "r" and "l" in her name and in other words...even in her early school years. We were

excited and happy to hear her speak her first four-word sentence at two years, "Me do that Mommy!"

Carol was often content to play beside me as I worked; she enjoyed looking at picture books and singing quietly. She was a quiet and an easily pleased child.

Neighborhood friends often came to play. A large galvanized wash tub became the wading pool that continued to hold water when the plastic one leaked. We had a sandbox but also played with cornmeal in large casserole pans...making roads and hills...and games of all kinds. Bob found a give-away swing set and child-sized picnic table that he added to the back



yard. The front porch made an indoor-outdoor space for playing house even on rainy days. Debra was bothered by the long hair that hung in her eyes. All by herself, she went to the bathroom with scissors and cut her bangs off • in a jagged line. I was pleased she hadn't hurt her eyes, and knew that her curly hair would grow back soon.

We got a dog named Jingles but unfortunately he was soon run over on the street. Later, the friends who had loaned us the camper needed to give away a cat; Debra claimed it as hers. Emmanuel was a beautiful black cat. He was a nuisance at times, especially when left to himself; he would push things off the shelves in the basement.

The girls used the driveway for roller skating on metal skates strapped to shoes. Margaret was willing to share our one bicycle. Starting on the grass, Laura quickly mastered riding a bicycle without training wheels. At four years old, Dad gave her a push and she was on her way! Laura later taught Debra. The younger girls rode tricycles on the driveway and in the basement.

A coaster wagon was used with their dad's help to create a 4th of July parade down our street. The girls made cornstalks of newspapers carefully cut and folded, with which they paraded down 38th Street.

• *Debra in front of friends and sisters in the cornstalk parade*



We lived near the new Westside Mall, a donut shop, and Woodlawn School where Margaret, Laura, and Debra enjoyed going to school. Our home, however, was not near the church and Bob felt it was too grand for his values of simple living, but we could not find another closer to the church and large enough for our family. During our last summer, the girls went to a nearby swimming pool but felt it was too cold to try to swim; they would later learn how to swim. South of our home was a park with a long hill where Bob would take the girls sledding. In our yard we built snowmen, played Fox and Geese, and made snow angels.

We had a large back yard with fruit trees the girls climbed and picked buckets of cherries for pies and sharing. In the front yard, a tall sycamore tree with its well-spaced branches invited climbing; Debra could get to the lowest branch but wouldn't venture further; Laura and Margaret could climb higher. They'd call down, "We can see Grandma Griffin's house!" (It was in Ames, a distance of over 30 miles!)



I enjoyed teaching the girls sewing, cooking, baking, and entertaining. The girls liked to design and decorate their own birthday cakes. Meals together were usually happy times and we tried to have the girls eat at least as many bites as they were old before

they left the table. Usually the girls were good eaters and all ate the same food (no special requirements). The girls liked to have their dad cut their warm biscuits and put butter inside to melt.

- *Debra showing Nancy how to make On Top of the Stove Cookies, a family favorite*



One Sunday morning, I accidentally left a burner turned on with a pot of boiling eggs on the stove when the electricity went off. Later while we were in church and the electricity came back on, the water on the eggs boiled off and its stench filled the neighborhood. Only a few pieces of eggshells were left in the burnt pan when we returned. The damage required professional cleaning of the whole house!



- *Nancy feeding Carol her first bites from a spoon*

I made many of their clothes. One time I started making a yellow dress with a fancy smocking-stitch; it was meant for Laura to go with her brown eyes but by the time it was finished, it fit Debra instead, and later Nancy wore it too. We also shopped at garage sales for used clothing which I improved by adding decorations and special stitching. I recall making the girls matching green jumpers that could be worn with warm long-sleeved shirts in cold weather. Margaret learned to use the sewing machine, and I think made doll clothes.

On a Sunday afternoon in the summer of 1969, we drove to Nine Pines State Park south of Leon to attend the extended Griffin family reunion. Nancy, at two, had not felt well the day before but seemed alright in the morning. However, at the park she became very listless and her fever rose dangerously high. We were alarmed and quickly returned home to call Dr. Corn. He urged us to come to his office immediately. He checked her and ordered us to take her to the hospital where he would meet us. There he diagnosed her tentatively as having spinal meningitis and acted accordingly. In the morning this was confirmed, and she stayed in the hospital at least ten days. To be sure that the intravenous tube did not become blocked, Bob or I stayed with her, alternating care as I was still nursing Carol. Dr. Corn would come to check her at 5:00 a.m. and again later. (We heard that he played his violin before coming to the hospital!) He was a wonderful doctor on many occasions for all of our daughters. Later when he was 100 years old, Margaret, who was living in Des Moines, arranged for us to meet him and thank him again.



Margaret started 1st grade in school just two blocks from our home and walked there with friends. Her teacher was beloved Mrs. Dowell. When Margaret entered the 2nd grade, she was surprised to find Mrs. Dowell “had advanced” with her another year; • she inspired Margaret to be an avid reader. Margaret kept this admiration into the second year, and even later when she had another teacher. She also went to visit Mrs. Dowell years later when Margaret lived again in Des Moines as an adult.



In Margaret’s 4th grade, her teacher required that she stay after school to practice handwriting. After that afternoon, her teacher said that Margaret’s

handwriting was much improved. Margaret liked to write and strived for perfect handwriting. Even at her 40th birthday celebration, people praised her for her beautiful handwriting. I have saved her letters through many years and they are special for their interesting content and history, as well as for their artistry.

For after school activities, Margaret participated in both tap and ballet, and performed in shows. She also took gymnastics. Margaret started piano lessons after Grandma Hanna gave us her piano. Margaret is

proud of a piano recital in which she played four songs. She loved learning and worked for excellence.

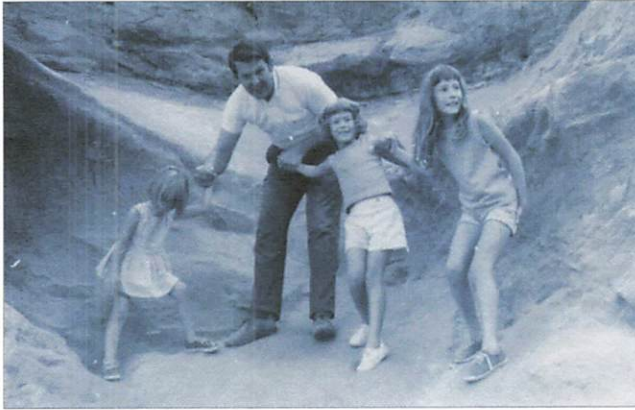
Laura took gymnastics lessons and felt she could do the bridge better than anyone else; however, the instructor’s daughter was judged to be better. Laura decided that if she wasn’t given a fair chance, she would not continue. She said that some exercises hurt her legs. She took dance lessons too but had to discontinue these when we moved to Chicago in 1971.



• *Grandma Griffin in her home with Margaret playing on her piano years before she gave it to us in Des Moines*

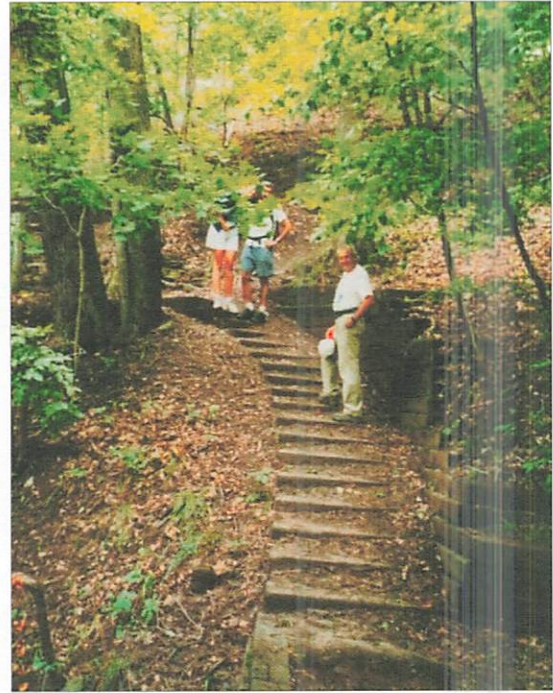


One of our favorite places to visit was the Ledges State Park in Boone. In the summer, we went to climb its steep hills with rocks, find paths to discover, and splash in the water that ran across the road in the lower park area. Even years later, we returned there.



• Nancy, Bob, Debra, and Laura climbing in the Ledges

• years later, revisiting Ledges State Park, Debra, Phil, and Bob >



We also took trips that included going to the Raaks to visit Grandma and my brothers on their farms.



• Debra, Laura, Nancy, Margaret, baby Carol

## Bob

- reaching out and being a presence in black churches in Des Moines
- taking Margaret and Laura to play tennis. Laura remembers having Gatorade for the first time.
- supporting the Black Panthers, 1969
- hiding helium balloons under pews on Easter – releasing them during the singing of the words "...up from the grave..." tying messages on the balloons and letting them go outside after worship

- family memories about Dad/Bob, 11/15



- clowning around in Des Moines

## Deciding Where to Care

by Debra A. Griffin, 2016  
excerpt

When I was a little girl  
my father  
worked with his friends  
Black Panthers  
supporting them in their work  
bringing food to hungry school children.

When the home of 30 Black Panthers  
was bombed with plastics  
available only to cops  
Dad joined a line with other pastors  
between his friends  
and the police  
who were not trusted.



- Bob with brothers, mother, and Bob Hanna

Bob performed the wedding of his mother and Bob Hanna during our last year in Des Moines.



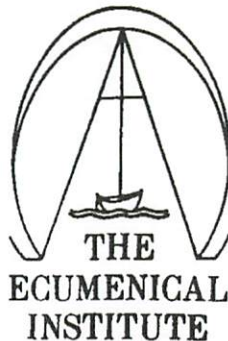
# Introduction to the Order Ecumenical from Des Moines, 1970-71

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*Muriel*

The year 1970 was when we made a radical change in direction. I had pretty much been a full-time mother, housekeeper, and pastor's wife, filling my time with family care and many happy activities with the children. I also enjoyed my friendship with our neighbor, Clara Sertich, the mother of Myra, Margaret's best friend. However, I sometimes longed for more adult intellectual challenges and social opportunities.

I also sensed that Bob needed something different for his work in the inner city. In early 1970, he found inspiration in going with Phil Kerber to visit the Fifth City community in Chicago.



This led to Bob attending an RS-1 course (Religious Studies #1) of the Ecumenical Institute (a.k.a. Order Ecumenical, Order, and Ecumenical Institute...later we would be known as the Institute of Cultural Affairs/ICA) in Clear Lake, IA. He wanted that experience also for me and urged me to attend an RS-1 later in Boone, IA on a long weekend. My first response was, "There is no way that I can leave our five girls from Thursday evening through Sunday afternoon." Bob contradicted this and said, "We will find a way." He insisted that we visit several couples who were friends to ask for their help. We found willing caregivers.

## RS-1

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Two days after I had celebrated my 40th birthday on a Sunday afternoon in April, I was driving back to Des Moines from the RS-1. Even though it was raining hard and the windshield wipers were not working well, I had a feeling of joy and giddy excitement. I kept thinking of the significance of Tillich's words for the Christ experience, "You are accepted."

We had studied the writings of Bultmann, Tillich, Bonhoeffer, and H. Richard Niebuhr, and had grounded their teachings in our own experiences. The old words of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, and even church, were demythologized into new ways of understanding our lives. My mind was on the words and stories of limits, acceptance, grace, responsibility, decisions, possibility, and much more about being The Church. I was changed; the fact that I was accepted by God and that sin is separation from God was a revelation and good news to me. I had always felt that I had to be "good" to win God's love. I had lived with "I should and I ought." Now I was free to be myself, a person with flaws, and still be loved and accepted. I saw new possibility in everything and was eager to learn more, and to live with these insights.

This RS-1 weekend changed my perspective on faith and life, and definitely changed our schedule for the summer...and our whole future!

### Our first Research Assembly

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It wasn't long after I went to the RS-1 that Bob and I decided to go to Chicago to participate in the July-long Order Research Assembly working to build a model for the renewal of the local church.

Again, colleagues helped provide care for our children. The girls seemed to do quite well. I remember when



we met them afterward, Margaret proudly reported, "Look, I stopped sucking my fingers!" The girls who had been with our friend Kay Kerber demonstrated how they had learned to swim.

The Research Assembly was an intensive time of working together to think through issues, write plans, pray, and sing with hundreds of concerned church members from around the country. We designed tactics to train church leaders, to revitalize congregations, and to impact communities around churches. The implementation would be the next challenge, and the next steps of our own family's planning. This would take a lot of consideration and adjusting.

### **Global Academy**

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I was asked by Order leaders to call and encourage other people to attend the eight-week Ecumenical Institute Global Academy, a training program for local church leaders. Consequently, Bob and I saw the possibility for us to go ourselves. I participated in the training for five weeks in the fall, and three weeks the following spring. Nancy at three and a half and toddler Carol went with me to Chicago; Bob, neighbors, and church friends in Des Moines cared for the older girls who were attending school. Bob was also able to go later for four weeks.

While I was at the Global Academy, Carol and Nancy attended the Fifth City Preschool during the day. Their classmates were mainly from the black community near us. On one of the first days, Nancy was expected to play with her age group in the open area in the center of a former Chapel; the games were often lively. It was all a new and frightening experience for her. She tried to cling to her teacher who instead sent her back to play. Nancy then went to hide in her cubby

behind her coat. The teacher didn't allow that either; she told Nancy, "You can decide to play with the children." The next day Nancy became sick. She complained to me at night about the bigger boys. They were pushing kids around in boxes as cars. We talked it over and gradually, she got the courage to ask if she could push a boy in a boxcar and he was willing. Nancy decided to be a team player.

Attending the Global Academy was a most valuable experience for me. The eight weeks of living, learning, and working together with about 45 people, taught me much about being a leader in the church and community. We studied the methods of RS-1 to be able to lead lectures and seminars. We also studied the writings of Kazantzakis, Herman Hesse, and others. We charted their work to find the three key points to discuss and understand their message for us. We used the Art Form Method which is designed to discern the objective data, relate it to our personal experiences, interpret the values for us, and ask the existential questions, such as "Who am I?," "What do I do?," and "How do we do this?"

We often worked in groups of about 12 to 15 participants. My experiences of leading were always a big stretch for me; I had to work hard to prepare and I didn't feel capable in leading, or pleased with the results. I guess most of the participants felt much the same. However, we worked together to become more effective leaders. We were evaluated by our co-participants to reveal our gifts, weaknesses, and how we could improve. I felt that others really cared for me, and I for them. The goal was effective leadership for the renewal of the local church and our care in our surrounding communities.

We also engaged together in worship, meditation, and prayer through singing. We discussed art and poetry,

and created our own. We participated in enabling meals, space upkeep, and childcare. We had creative celebrations at the completions of program units.

I value this experience as one of the most intensive, intentional, and disciplined kinds of training that I have ever taken part in. I still use the training every day in conversations, making plans and decisions, and especially in leading study groups. I wish the Academy were available today. I feel I still have a job to share the methods and this spirit of care with others.

### Marriage and the Family Course

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As a part of the Academy, Bob and I had the opportunity to attend the Marriage and the Family course. We were to create our family song and symbol after discussing and deciding on our economic, political, and social life together. Having enjoyed the story of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* together with the girls, as • our symbol, we chose a flying seagull inside a steering wheel of a ship with seven handles, one for each in our family. We wrote the words of a song to express our intentions and nature of our family; the children helped to make adaptations.



### Our Family Song

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tune: Somewhere Over the Rainbow

*We're on the journey to freedom,  
follow me.*

*Pick up the cross you are given  
to set your children free.*

*Dare to walk the journey to freedom,  
suffer the loss.*

*You know that freedom comes only  
when you embrace the cross.*

*There's nothing new in what I say,  
it's always been like this from the beginning;*

*If you embrace the life you have  
you'll have the freedom  
you have always longed for,  
longed for.*

*Follow the call to your freedom,  
suffer the loss.*

*You know that freedom comes only  
when you embrace the cross.*

We had no expectations of making decisions in our life as challenging as in the song, but we felt called to live out of a commitment to serve in freedom and responsibility with the Holy Spirit's leading. There were many times in our family's journey when we found these words and symbol quite fitting, and supportive.

I had been very impacted with the study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's paper on Freedom in which he wrote, "Responsibility is the freedom of men which is given only in the obligation to God and neighbor." He found freedom to act as he went through a soul-searching decision process of observing life, weighing up the possibilities, judging the cost, deciding the steps, and then acting. He is remembered today for his decision

to try to stop Hitler from continuing his campaign of death and destruction by choosing to assassinate him. His attempt to kill Hitler failed and ended in his own death by the Nazis hanging him. It was the cross he chose freely.

### **Decision to Intern**

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In our fourth year at Gatchel, we faced the decision whether Bob should take one year of sabbatical away from his pastorate. Bob wanted to learn more about how the Fifth City community worked together.

Around this time, two tragic events happened. In our neighborhood, a woman was stabbed as she was doing laundry with her small child beside her in full daylight. At a YMCA event, a twelve year old girl was kidnapped while out for a bathroom break. (This girl's grandmother attended our church.) We questioned what could be done to make communities safer, and how the Fifth City community model in Chicago might help us.

Coincidentally in early spring 1971, there was consideration by the Methodist Conference that Bob be appointed to a Waterloo church for inner city work. With much prayer and thought, we chose to intern with the Ecumenical Institute instead. It was a total commitment of time in which I would participate in the corporate responsibility of living together, grow in understanding, practice leadership roles, and learn methods to work intentionally and strategically to create communities of care.

I had to deal with deciding with Bob to leave a comfortable suburban home, loving friends, and schools rich with opportunity, to move to an unfamiliar city neighborhood where I felt less safe. We made our decision between Bob's work as a local

United Methodist minister, and a global movement of human development.

I considered how the changes would affect our family. I had already missed being with the girls but began to wonder if solitary family care was sufficient to raise children and match our values of service at the same time. I saw hope in urban communities working together, and a different purpose for my own life. It helped me to get a larger view of being a mother by joining a corporate community to prepare our children in becoming strong and caring adults.

Bob and I chose to join this journey of service with trust in God that it was necessary for our times and for the future.

### **Making Tough Decisions for Our Children**

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The on-going question for me lay in my love and responsibility for our five daughters. This pulled at my heartstrings but I felt that it was what we must do. I did this knowing that I was giving up many ways we enjoyed being a family. We also made this decision realizing that this would not be our daughters' choice.

I chose a hard path for our children that included separations from us, frequent moves, less-equipped inner-city schools, different structures of care, and limited financial resources. At the same time, we also wanted them to have the experience and training in being part of a community working for change, change that could make the world safer and better served.



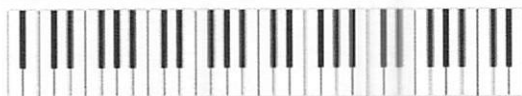
## Leaving Des Moines

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With little idea of what lay ahead for them, the girls helped us pack, made decisions about their most favorite things, and worked with us to do what we needed to do before leaving our beloved home.



- *our truck full of things we stored before going to Chicago*



Bob had learned to play piano at age six in Arlington, VA. His mother felt strongly that every one of our girls should learn the basics of playing the piano at an early age. She gave us a piano when we lived in Des Moines. She said that if they could learn how to read music, then, if they stopped lessons, they could more easily pick up the practice later.



- Margaret at eight had enjoyed taking piano lessons, and Laura had also begun. So after calculating that we had space in the U Haul trailer, we decided to take it with us to Chicago as we thought we might use it.

# Parenting

*Muriel*

## *Being a Mother*

by Muriel, 2014

inspired by speech of Sojourner Truth:

Ar'nt I a Woman

*Am I not a mother?*

*Have I not seen the birth of my five daughters  
through natural childbirth?*

*Do I not love them with all my heart  
and care for them  
through sickness and health?*

*Am I not a mother to speak  
of the joys in having children?*

*Am I not a mother to speak  
for quality time with children,  
for the balance of sacrifice and pleasure?*

*Am I not a mother to speak  
for the interplay of self-development  
with child development,  
for the costs and the rewards  
of being a mother?*

*Am I not a mother who understands  
the value of the father,  
but who also feels the weight of feeling  
where the buck stops?*

*Am I not a mother who wants  
to guide and train our children,  
but who also knows they need to,  
and will, grow away from me?*

*I know I must build  
a sense of responsibility,  
to let them make their own choices,  
to let them make their own mistakes.*

Bob and I dreamed of having children before we were married. Oh, the things we would do together and the places we would go! We wanted not only to do as well as our parents, but better! We thought we would love them more, educate them more broadly, and support them more generously!

Preparation for parenting had begun by watching my parents and others, and through my schooling. Raising children was part of the Education classes at Northwestern Junior College in Orange City. Our instructor gave us this advice, "If you love your children, they will learn from you." I think he went on to assure us that this would also be important when discipline was needed. I remember him saying, "Only use spanking to prevent children from danger." After one of our daughters crossed a street in Council Bluffs, I used this advice to have her learn how dangerous it was. Later, I chose reasoning with them on what is dangerous, and reminded the children that their safety was very important to us as we loved them dearly.



• Debra, Nancy, Laura, and Margaret around Carol, early 1969

I also remember our Anatomy class at Iowa State College. The instructor helped us to understand the construction of our bodies and taught us how best to use them. I don't recall whether the teacher was male or female but I listened closely as childbirth was explained. Natural childbirth would make the delivery less painful and much safer for mother and child. It was a process of lifting the abdomen, deep controlled breathing, allowing the father to help, and trusting the process. Fear would only tighten the muscles.

I remembered when I first became pregnant, I told my doctor of my plan to use natural childbirth with no medication. He agreed, but only if I took classes with a birth trainer whom he recommended. Bob and I took the course which was several lessons. I also had to blow up a balloon daily for as many times as my age. It was a very valuable exercise. This became harder as the number had increased by eight counts when I prepared for Carol's birth.

Bob and I limited our parenting advice as a way for the girls to care for themselves. We tried to be models in how we talked, worked, and related to them and others. We knew the children would always be learning. Even in meal times, they could observe how we related to each other and them. We talked about events taking place in the community and world. We hoped by taking part in conversations, they would begin to care about life beyond themselves and us. We told them stories of Jesus to learn about being

thoughtful, generous, kind, and helpful. We tried to model forgiveness and thankfulness as a way of living peacefully.

Bob was a good supporter as he worked in the early years as pastor of churches in Council Bluffs and Des Moines. He also helped to care for our children, to comfort a crying one, and to challenge and encourage a frightened girl. He helped and urged the girls to go higher on swings, to go all the way up on the big slides in parks, and to climb to the top of trees. Bob taught them to use tools and work with electrical wiring. He liked playing games with the girls of strategy like chess, checkers, and Chinese Go.

• *caroling, 1967*



Our parenting changed after ten years when we joined the Order and lived in the Fifth City community in Chicago. There we shared the care of our daughters with other people. Our time just with our family was less because we were all involved in various

programs learning with others to work for change in the larger community and world: in safety, housing, employment, education, and relationships. It all would take corporate effort. The children also needed to learn to live helpfully and peacefully with others.

When we were assigned abroad to live apart from the children, I felt this was impossible to do as a parent. I knew it hurt them too and I was very troubled as to whether this was the right thing to do. I made the decision that I would write to each of our girls one day of each week, from Margaret on Mondays to Carol on



Fridays, and to our parents on weekends. Writing and receiving letters became a ritual and a celebration. Even today, the letters I saved from the girls give me great joy and information for my stories.

I came to appreciate that the girls received skills and experiences from the legal guardians they lived with. We also benefitted from the generosity of my brothers' families who provided a happy time with cousins and an understanding of farm and extended family life. We missed important points in our daughters' lives and had to accept how others had enjoyed these times in our place. We were glad they shared some of their experiences with us.

"Are you the parents of the Griffin girls?" Whenever we were asked this question years later, we anticipated to hear something complimentary about our daughters. We were very proud parents as we heard from or about them, stories like these: Margaret is teaching Driver's Education in high school; Laura is leading community youth events in Maine and Indiana; Debra is an exceptional art teacher; Nancy is working in Appalachia to support community projects; Carol has good friends across racial and social lines in DC.

I consider it a great privilege to join the dedicated others throughout history, who worked to birth or foster, nurture, and equip the following generation, with a zeal for justice and compassion. These, our daughters and people like them, are the hope for peace and harmony in homes, communities, and nations. I am filled with gratitude for the journey of parenting with my husband, Bob, these many years so far and into the future.

Kahlil Gibran speaks these words well for us:

*Your children are not  
your children.  
They are the sons and daughters  
of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you  
but not from you,  
And though they are with you  
yet they belong not to you.*



• family in Indianola  
Dennis' daughter, Amy is on the far right

## Part 4: Cruising with the Spirit Movement

### West Side of Chicago, IL Internship in the Order, 1971-72

#### Muriel

Fifth City, a neighborhood of Chicago's west side that chose to be identified as an intentional black community, was to be our home and place of work while we were interns of the Ecumenical Institute. Fifth City had suffered from the damages of rioting that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and the continued racist climate of white domination. The people of Fifth City, working with members of the Ecumenical Institute as the catalyst, had created a vision and a plan of renewal and revitalization, not only for themselves but as a model to cities and communities everywhere. The Institute, with leaders from the community, had designed the workshops and forums. The children's programs were a part of the total program. Our training, workshops, and research this year were in preparation for replicating Human Development Projects (HDP). We had been impressed by the people of Fifth City with their song:

*People of Fifth City are  
black and that is great.  
Gonna give our blackness  
to the world, and the world  
will celebrate.*

• Iron Man, sculpture in Fifth City,  
a symbol of strength and endurance

We had told our children of the activities that they would



be engaged in with other children; we were joining families from various places in the U.S., as well as from abroad, to work on models for doing Human Development.

...

We arrived on a warm day in late June of 1971 from our suburban home in Des Moines. We had woven our way through the crowded, rushing traffic of the big city of Chicago as we pulled a U-Haul trailer with our basic needs (and a few treasures, i.e. the piano). It was rather frightening to be taking our five young children to this radically new inner city experience.

We stopped on the street outside the fenced-in campus of the former Bethany Seminary. We had seen the neighborhood of brick apartment buildings of three or four stories, some of them boarded up, some under repair. We parked our car and trailer on the street near the entrance and Bob went in to learn about where we would stay; we watched as other families were arriving. Before we unloaded and unpacked, the girls and I got to look around the campus.

We saw the large gymnasium where community meetings were held, the chapel that was now a preschool, and two large buildings, called Faculty East and Faculty West, housing offices and living spaces. There was a big center courtyard with playground equipment. One was in the shape of a large red rocket on which children were climbing and sliding. The rocket



allowed the children to play astronauts exploring the world. They'd sing, *"Zoom, zoom astronaut, are you having fun with the moon and the stars and a very large sun?"*

Most of the children were black. We met black and white preschool teachers wearing red shirts or dresses with the black logo of Fifth City.

We were given a large space in the former Union Building, a few blocks off-campus. Our room was on the second floor. We could tell it had not been used for a long time. It was empty, gloomy, and very dusty. The girls helped in different ways to sweep, dust, and unpack. I decided to mop the floor on my hands and knees to really clean it. Bob brought in the bunk beds, the dressers, our bed and clothes, the rocking boat, and more. We left the piano in another building.

We learned fairly soon that the four older girls would be going to the Order summer camp happening that year near New Orleans, LA, for a month. It was called New Jerusalem. Carol stayed with us and attended the Fifth City Preschool.

...

We heard from the camp where the children were...they had a sports competition inspired by the Olympics. This, and other activities, were planned to build teamwork skills, and for them to understand their ability to decide their relationship to life through planned activities. They worked on making decisions for themselves and others.

The time would have been much more desirable if the camp had not had so many health problems; one was serious enough that the camp was quarantined by Federal Health workers due to Shigella, an intestinal disease caused by bacteria in contaminated water

leading to serious diarrhea and dehydration. A word of praise needs to be said for the nurse, staff, and other children who help bring everyone through this using salt pills and more. Jelly fish stings and skin lesions were also a problem.

At the end of the month, the girls returned after dark. Bob happened to be out in the courtyard. Margaret excitedly called "Dad! Dad!" but he couldn't hear her for all the other "Dad" shouts. Laura and Nancy were on the bus too but Debra was not with them. Nancy was crying as she told me, "Debra is really sick and she couldn't come with us." Then we all started crying. Fortunately, Debra arrived a little later in a separate car. She had mostly recovered by then. They told stories of their return trip, being short on food, and a delay due to the school bus repairs. These experiences were a tough test of our decision to remain in the Order. We would have an opportunity to be part of changing how future camps were done.

...

While the girls were at camp, during the evenings and on weekends, Bob and I participated again in the Research Assembly with a more global focus on community development. Along with leadership training, 800-1000 participants built plans for Town Meetings with the goal of having one in every county throughout the U.S. and elsewhere.

Our mission was to empower local communities through human development methods in which people see their gifts and potential in order to improve their lives and their community.

It was a year of training and managing how to cope. We believed that if people could work together successfully in Fifth City, they could do it elsewhere in



the world. The happy times of singing, celebrating, and working corporately were enriching and exciting.

...

During the day, I was assigned to teach the three-year-old children and help build a model of a preschool curriculum that could be used any place in the world. Bob was to work with the Fifth City Jets, a youth program of community engagement, activities, and trips.

I taught with a teammate from the neighborhood. I had to learn to trust the wisdom of the local teachers from the black community who knew the reality of the children's daily lives of poverty and the limitations of years of white domination.

We were engaged from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. using four levels of curriculum: Basic Skills to read, listen, write, and count; Relational Skills to encourage thinking about one's own life and telling about it; Social Skills to inform about life beyond their own; and Existential Skills to decide and affirm their role in life. During the children's rest times, the preschool staff developed the curriculum for global use.

We sang and wrote songs relating to their lessons, and declared our relationship to the Fifth City community with this song:

*I love Fifth City; I love the planet Earth,  
I love this day and time, I love the universe,  
I'm always ready to see this world of ours;  
I tell you man I like it here, I tell you man I like it here. Yeah!*

We went on field trips in buses to parks and museums to give the children an experience of the world

outside Fifth City. One time we took them to the airport where we watched planes take off. Some friendly passengers greeted them and asked where they lived. One child answered with words from one of our songs, "We live in the Universe!"

We used the different Urs (racial groups) to broaden their view of world diversity along with oneness, and they chanted with hand movements: *Black man, Brown man, Red man, Yellow man, Tan man, White man, Universe Man!*

...

When the older girls were in camp, we moved into the dormitory building on campus called Faculty West. One evening after an event in another building, as I began to open the outside door, four youth from the outside grabbed me to take my watch. Fortunately a colleague appeared and asked what they wanted; they left quickly without taking anything.

After the summer, our family moved again and lived about a block off the campus in a long basement apartment; the girls' room was at the back separated from us by the furnace room and two bathrooms, one was not usable and was filled with piles of paper and folders. One late night during a heavy rainstorm, the furnace room started flooding; as the water rose, Bob found paint cans and used them for stepping stones to bring the girls to our room for safety.

Another very early morning in our apartment, Margaret came to us complaining that Laura had crawled in bed with her and wouldn't leave. Bob took her back and discovered that there was water coming from under the unused bathroom door. He checked to find a fire blazing! We quickly got the girls from their bedroom and Bob grabbed a fire extinguisher and buckets of water from a sink in the furnace room. I

called the fire department, but the fire was out before they came. What had happened was the thermostat had not been checked before this first cold night of fall. The furnace overheated and caused the toilet tank to crack. The water leaked onto the floor, and the fire ignited in the stored files in that room. I broke my toe as I rushed through the passageway carrying Carol. How grateful we were for the wake-up call from Margaret!

Our family had to learn to be less attached to material things and feelings of safety. One day our apartment was broken into through a back door, was messed up a bit, but luckily only a small radio, and pillow case to carry it, were missing. The door was soon secured again and we continued to make this our home. These incidences, I assume, were what the black residents of this community experienced also.

...

In the fall, the girls started school in the black community with other children of the Institute staff, making the classrooms more diverse, as our membership was predominately white. They walked to the school in a group, sometimes with an adult.

Nancy joined Carol in the Fifth City Preschool program. As I worked there during the year, I appreciated seeing my daughters engaged in their classes. They enjoyed playing in the yard and sliding down the rocket space ship.



• Nancy's graduation from preschool

### *Free To Decide*

Order song written for Fifth City  
tune: Hi, Ho Nobody Home  
(best sung as a round)

*Free, free, free to decide  
What this world is going to be;  
This imperative is ours, to be  
Free, free, free to decide.*



The children in the Order were called • the Emerging Generation (EG). One morning when I was assigned to be with them for breakfast, I was surprised and pleased by the depth of their dialogue; they were talking about the volcano eruption on Mt. St. Helens; the children were suggesting places where they could be safe in dangerous situations. The leader asked where they could go to be truly safe, and the children had all kinds of answers and responses about safety. When someone finally suggested the moon, everyone laughed. A child declared, "There is really no place that is always safe!"



I appreciated the evening team dinners with the other adults where we had discussions on books on a wide range of topics: from different cultures, sociology, and religion. I appreciated the leadership opportunities followed by evaluations and suggestions for changes. I enjoyed participating in celebrations with colleagues from India, Korea, and Kenya. I recall sitting on the floor and eating with my fingers sweet curried vegetables, and hearing the music of India, watching their dances, and learning their songs.

This year truly was a year of new and challenging experiences. Food



was not always the highest in quality or quantity and was frequently prepared by inexperienced colleagues. We walked, and worked, in this sometimes dangerous neighborhood without adequate resources. Through this, we learned the blessings of corporate care and celebrations.

...

In the spring of 1972, Bob and I had to decide whether to take a global assignment of the Order, or to return to Iowa where Bob would

pastor a UMC church. We went out for dinner at the top of the Hancock Building to consider our options and what we felt was our mission at this time. I remember going outside on the deck and looking down at the great city of Chicago. We asked ourselves, "What is the best way for us to work to make a difference anywhere in the world"? We had found the power and joy of working as a team and knew what could be accomplished with a dedicated group of

people. So we decided to join the Order. For us, this would be our way to participate in sharing the good news of transformation for individuals and communities.

...

Our family found that Chicago was a vibrant city with • museums, parks, restaurants, and a beach on Lake Michigan. It



was a good year of preparation to move on to our next assignment in Oklahoma City where we would use the methods we had learned with local churches, and in community forums.



• at Grandma Hanna's house in Iowa...the girls liked to show their height differences like stair steps...Grandma Hanna remembered how once, we arrived singing while sitting on the hood of the car



• at Grandma Hanna's house, Grandpa Hanna is pointing



During that year as we lived and worked in Fifth City, the piano had to be moved at least three times; first from one room on the second floor of the Program Center, then to the third floor of Faculty East, and finally to a basement room for meetings. Many who helped must have wondered, "Why are we moving this piano?" It was a good question; the piano did not get much use that year.

After that year, we again loaded it into a U-Haul to move to Oklahoma City.

# Life in the Order Ecumenical

## overview

### *Muriel*

The Order Ecumenical was a Spirit Movement (conscious of the spiritual dimension of life as a model for what it means to be human). We were trained in using both spirit methods (story, song, and symbols) and spiritual practices of meditation, contemplation, and prayer. Songs that inspired, scripture readings, studies of great religious and social leaders, and celebrations of various cultures showed us possibility and hope for civilization. There were so many experiences that I questioned, tested, and contributed to. These enriched my new understanding of faith as we worked the next 23 years with the Order.



In all of the places we lived, we worked with the community around us. Through the years, we had many experiences of being a part of a bigger mission than the small roles we played in it. Individuals and communities could become more responsible for one another, and change was happening to make life better for them.

The Order used many symbols we created to inspire and remind us of who we are, the values we have, and task that is ours. Our • wedge blade symbol stood for the movement of intentional people moving through the “no longer” and the “not yet” of the world to create the new.

## *The Song of a Man Who Has Come Through*

by D. H. Lawrence  
excerpt

Not I, not I,  
but the wind that blows through me!  
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.  
If only I let it bear me, carry me,  
if only it carry me!  
If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate,  
a winged gift!  
If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself  
and am borrowed  
By the fine, fine wind that takes its course  
through the chaos of the world  
Like a fine, an exquisite chisel,  
a wedge-blade inserted;  
If only I am keen and hard like the sheer  
tip of a wedge  
Driven by invisible blows,  
The rock will split,  
we shall come at the wonder...

Our family became part of a global community of caring, working, and witnessing in over 55 countries. We became freer of material goods and more trusting in God. I continually thank God for the experiences the children had in taking responsibility, in inclusive relationships, in travelling, and also becoming courageous leaders in working for change.

We needed to trust the corporate structures to live and work together. Our daily life began with all together at Daily Office worship. This was followed with breakfasts in smaller groups of adults; the children were in EG (Emerging Generation) structures for their breakfasts. During the breakfast time, we all had discussions with scripture/news

conversations. I always found these conversations made me think deeply about life's decisions.

After breakfast, we had a period of time to get the children ready and off to school, or for personal preparation. We then began our work for the day in our assigned groups.

I looked forward to the regular special events: House Church on Sundays, Family Night on Monday evenings, and Ecclesiola on Thursday evenings.

I was often assigned to some education or training work, and Bob to Development. Other assignments included preparing meals for everyone, cleaning, management duties, program planning, leadership in the community, and training.

I would learn and practice leading workshops, discussions, projects, and study groups. I tried to support leaders in following through, without doing the work for them or instead of them.

To help support the Houses we lived in, a few appointed folks did permeation, which was having a paid job to support our living expenses at the same time as being an agent of change, and using our methods where we worked. Corporate expenses, including housing and food, were covered by the Order. For personal needs, we each received a stipend of a fixed sum, e.g. \$90 for each adult, \$27 for each youth, per month, but this varied and could be less.

Order members dressed mainly in navy blue as a way to express unity and simplicity. We tried to limit our personal possessions, taking only two suitcases, when moving to our next assignments, especially when going overseas.

Living in the corporate structures and sharing our resources was a valuable experience in our family. It allowed us to be with other couples, children, and youth, to appreciate each other's contributions, and to venture out into untried activities and places. We learned about the value of the team and how to work together.

This is a song of affirmation that we often sang:

### *Men of the Spirit*

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Order song  
tune: Meadowlands

#### *Men of the Spirit*

*march on to build a new tomorrow.*

*Theirs is the will to will one thing and only.*

*Theirs is the joy, the godly sorrow.*

#### *Men of the Spirit*

*are men of flesh and blood and iron.*

*Theirs is the war that's never won, but winning.*

*Theirs is the mission never done.*

#### *Men of the Spirit*

*are black, tan, brown, white, red and yellow.*

*Theirs is the task to build the earth, the future.*

*Their lives are given for their fellow.*

#### *Men of the Spirit*

*fight on and hold the common vision.*

*Theirs is not wealth nor status nor vainglory,*

*Theirs is not discord or division.*

*Men of the Spirit march on to build a new tomorrow.*

*Theirs is the will to will one thing and only.*

*Theirs is the joy, the godly sorrow.*

("men" was inclusive of all people at this time)



## Bob

### Development as a Perpetual Assignment

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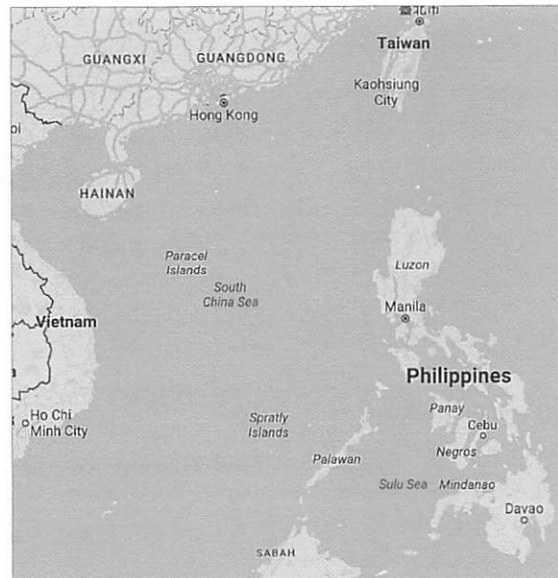
The first year we were in Fifth City, I was assigned to Development. Development was a group of 12 men and women who worked with Joe Thomas to raise the money for the work of the Institute. We would go to various regions of the country carrying files of those who had already given. My first assignment was to Cleveland. I stayed in the Cleveland House and made appointments during the day to visit those I wanted to see. One of my first visits was with the president of an air conditioning company who was going to take a year at one half his salary to go to Washington, DC, and work with other businessmen and people in government. His largest gift had been \$2,000 so far. When considering what he could do this time, he said, "It is virtually unlimited, how do I decide?" After some thought I suggested, "Would you be willing to match what others here in Cleveland give during this week?" He responded, "I guess I could do that up to \$10,000." I went back to the House and phoned Chicago who sent three more of our team. We raised \$10,000 for him to match that week!

Through our 23 years with the Institute, I found my assignments to take us to many places. When we were assigned to Hong Kong Centrum, I was to do Development to replace Joe Thomas who was ill and had to return to the States. Bob Rafos was responsible for

Korea and Japan. I was to cover Hong Kong and the Philippines. This ended with me in the Philippines "until I raised \$10,000" in air fares that we owed PAL (Philippines Airlines) for flights to the ITI (International Training Institute) some years earlier. (As my flight taxied for take-off in Hong Kong, all down the aisle passengers were holding the Manila newspaper headlining the PAL crash that happened the day before as it was taking off in Manila!) I became very familiar with the offices of international companies in the blocks of six-story office buildings. It took me almost four months to raise the \$10,000.

The next year we were assigned to Osaka. One of the decisions the House made was to in-kind the publication of the Oyubari Human Development document in Japanese. Everything from the translation, the typing (about \$14.00 an hour in those days), the paper, the printing of 100+ copies, was contributed. The manager of Marubeni said, "Japanese business does not 'give' their business away," but he helped greatly in getting his company, and others, to make it happen.

In the Washington DC House, Muriel and I called on Bishop James Mathews and his wife in their home. He was the brother of our leader, Joe Mathews. They were very supportive of the Order and had encouraged many Methodist pastors to participate and join us. It was often my job to call on people in positions of power and influence and get their support.



# Oklahoma City, OK

1972-74

## *Muriel*

From the crowded inner city of Chicago to the spacious, wealthy city in Oklahoma, we moved our basic belongings again. Our • home was to be in a vacated mansion of the first lieutenant governor of Oklahoma. We got to live here in a special arrangement with an insurance company who owned it.

We were unprepared for such a large and expensive looking place: the long circular driveway, the wrap-around porch, the tall pillars, the large windows in the grand hall on the left, the conservatory on the right, and the large doors with the beveled windows. We walked almost reverently into the massive foyer. In the center, was a grandiose stairway with a landing where the stairway separated to go in two directions. What really amazed us was the awesome • stained glass window above the landing that filled the entire space, waist high to the ceiling and as wide as the stairway and the two wings! (Perhaps 8 x 18 feet.) The sun in the west was beaming through the rich colors in the window. A more than life-sized peacock



dominated the right side with a colorful tail display. The scene was filled with the foliage of a royal garden – flowers, trees, and rocks under a pink-tinted blue

sky. What peace and beauty! Nancy asked quietly, “Mommy is this heaven?” To her it was awesome. She sat on the floor, with her drawing paper on the bottom step, and began quietly to color the scene to send to her Grandma Hanna in Ames.

...

We would be working with churches to form

Local Church Projects, recruiting for RS-1, and doing development to raise funds. We had some good colleagues here: Dr. Whitsett and Rev. Compton (the father of Conna, a colleague in Chicago). We learned that there was bigotry and racism in this oil-rich state

dominated by white people, having negative consequences for People of Color and Native People. One day, when Margaret was walking home from school with a girl who was black, some white girls yelled at them and

tried to beat up Margaret. I recall Margaret and her friend ran away, and Margaret lost a shoe. The church



we attended had all-white members; Margaret threatened not to go to Sunday School unless they changed their ways. (I doubt the membership changed much at that time anyway.) Carol went to preschool at the church; how different this was from Fifth City!

In the two years we lived here, the girls walked to and from schools nearby with local friends: Nancy to Kindergarten and 1st grade, Debra to 2nd-3rd, Laura to 4th-5th. We drove Carol to preschool.

Margaret went to 6th grade in OKC. In her sewing class in Home Economics, the teacher required that she buy a pattern to make a skirt. Margaret explained that she had a newspaper pattern at home; the teacher insisted that it was not possible to make a skirt in such a way. Margaret went home to make the skirt, then she wore it to school. The teacher was so amazed, she insisted Margaret show it to another teacher.

After the first year, Margaret went to live in the Student House in Chicago (for 7th-9th grade children of the Order). She attended her 7th grade in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. Margaret begged to stay with us, or go to live with her Grandma Hanna. We felt this experience was an opportunity for youth to be trained in taking responsibility for themselves and their community, and we decided

to be obedient to the structures. During one of her school vacations, she went to visit Truman and Marcy in Kalamazoo and enjoyed getting to know her four girl cousins there.



Girl Scouts, starting as a Brownie, was an early beginning to being of service to the community. Margaret valued the activities done in these groups in Iowa and OKC, and continued participation with special permission in Chicago as she was the only one from the Student House doing this. She treasured her badge-covered sash and kept it into her adult years.

When Nancy was in 1st grade, her class began painting a large mural. The next day Nancy needed to miss due to illness. Nancy hated missing school, but the teacher postponed the work on the mural because she said that Nancy did such nice work. I recall that she painted some ducks in the picture. I also recall a school program and cake walk to raise money where Debra proudly performed. She wore a turquoise dress that I had made for her. I remember attending programs to see the girls perform, or display their art work. Laura received an award for her excellence in math and was a leader in games. She often showed determination to get something done and surprised us with her independence, energy and passion for life.

House life, at times, was lively with three other couples, two small children, and four high school youth. The first year our family lived in the spacious 2nd floor with one large bedroom for the girls. The girls had a large once-formal dress closet in which to play house with their dolls and

dressing up. • Carol and her sisters had big spaces for playing both inside and outside. However, one day I discovered her just sitting on the floor not playing, just sitting; I wondered if she didn't feel well. When I asked her what was the matter, she answered, "I'm bored." I said, "You can't be bored. You have a failure



of imagination.” Carol has reminded me of this various times over the years since.

Besides our work, we had fun times in the large 1st floor hall: sharing meals, planning, studying, celebrating, singing, dancing, and even performing a drama, a take-off of *My Fair Lady*. We acted on the wide stairway. Our two accomplished pianists often entertained us with music at the end of the day. We put carved pumpkins on the railing of the wide front porch for Halloween, and at Christmas time, we lined the long driveway with luminaries, candles in white bags. Among the people we lived with were Bill and Marianna Bailey, Nancy Trask, Mary Johnson, Mark Shinn, and the Macomers.

Bob’s parents, the Hannas, visited us quite soon in the fall. One day, Grandma went along to take Carol to preschool. This was a ride in our old car that had seen better days and we hadn’t gotten it fixed; the door on the passenger’s side did not close well and had to be held shut. Bob’s mother was aghast that we dared to drive like this. She decided then that we could have her Buick Skylark right away; it was a great gift! Nevertheless, the old car was kept as a back-up and later was taken to Amarillo when the girls moved there. We stored the Buick with the Hannas in Ames when we moved overseas.



• Carol showing Dad her independence at Grandma and Grandpa Hanna’s house

We often went out into the community to make introductory calls relative to programs we were leading. One afternoon, an unpredicted tornado

threatened us but did not touch land. However, on another day, we experienced strong winds of a tornado on our way home from a mall shopping trip. We had gone in our two cars; two girls were with me on the way home. I stopped the car under an overhang of a closed gas station for shelter but the wind seemed to lift the car and shake it anyway. It was frightening! After the storm stopped, we rode home seeing the damage along the way of trees uprooted and debris scattered. Bob and the other girls who had stayed at the mall were unaware of the storm.

The windows of the girls’ room, now on the 3rd floor, had blown in leaving glass shards in the pillows, bed, and shoes. We had experienced being in the country’s epicenter for tornados!

Our family liked to go to special events in Oklahoma. Sometimes we went with others living in the House.

We traveled to Tahlequah to see the outdoor drama of *The Trail of Tears*. We also went to see the story of *Where the Red Fern Grows*, a favorite book of the girls. We were told of the unusual red rock “roses” that seemed to grow in the ground southeast of OKC. We went on an outing to pick up dozens of the roses from a newly plowed road. The girls sold some to make a little spending money of their own.

For a family vacation, we went to Dallas. Along the highway we saw rocks that looked like piles of tombstones in the bluegrass parkland of the Arbuckle Mountains. These outcroppings showed the crust of the Earth which had been forced upward. In Dallas, we

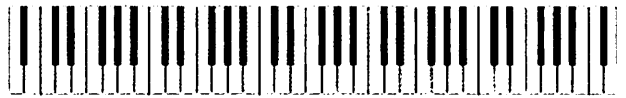
saw where President Kennedy was shot, and visited many museums and places of interest. In our second year, the financial situation of the House required that we find employment; I had been doing in-house assignments including meal planning and shopping. I got a job in the Christmas season, clerking in the kitchen appliance section of Montgomery Ward. This occasioned conversations with another part-time clerk about her work as a social worker. She said that they were hiring in the New Year and she encouraged me to apply. I got a job and worked there until we moved in the summer.

Bob also needed employment; he tried selling insurance, and later worked in packing and shipping for Kellar Williams Furniture Company.

*He beat new furniture with a chain to age it and give it character. He custom-built the crates to ship the expensive furniture, showing his skill in packing.*

*- family memories about Dad/Bob, 11/15*

For the summer before our next assignment, we drove to the southwest through Oklahoma. We observed the oil pumps with their rocking arms, and into Texas with seemingly endless spaces, and tumbleweeds. We sang songs from the movie *Oklahoma* as we traveled. We went near the Pala Dura Canyon (a second time since we moved to OKC), and were again surprised to look down and discover the deep and beautiful canyon. We took time to go into the canyon and saw the drama, *Texas*, showing the conflict between the ranchers and the farmers.



The piano found a perfect space in the former library on the first floor of our home in the grand mansion. Here Margaret and Laura were able to take lessons again. Debra took lessons for a little while too but didn't want to do her homework assignments so the teacher suggested she stop the lessons...which was fine with Debra!

After OKC, the piano went to Amarillo with Nancy and Laura. (It stayed there for about a year after the girls moved to Japan...until our niece Marlene got it and took it to Iowa for her own use).

# Tokyo & Hong Kong

## 1974-75

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### Muriel

As we gathered in the Great Hall of the Kemper Building in August of 1974, we heard our assignment, "Griffins to Medan in Indonesia." We were to join with Fred and Jann McGuire to start a new Human Development Project; an Indonesian team who had attended an ITI would be in charge. We would be working with the villagers using the Fifth City model to build a plan together. The villagers would decide how they could improve their lives; we would lead a planning process, motivate them, and support their efforts. Living and working in a country with different languages, cultures, and religion (Muslim) felt most overwhelming.

• in Chicago before  
Bob and I left



We would need to begin this work while leaving our daughters in the States. There was no existing ICA House in Medan and we would need to find adequate housing, self-support, and appropriate schools for the children before they could join us. All this definitely would not be simple. I believed leaving the girls behind was impossible to do. I refused to take this assignment.

Then Lyn Mathews, whom I saw as the mother of the Order, sat with me and encouraged me to see the big picture of world needs. She knew our daughters, and

said, "You will always be their mother and we, your colleagues, will take care of them. You will find ways to do this now too." She also had to leave her sons many times; she gave me courage and faith to trust.

Bill Bailey, one of our House leaders in OKC, counseled us as we wrestled with options on how we could leave the girls when we went abroad. (Bob at one time suggested that maybe I could stay behind.) Bill said, "The most important way to help the children is for you two to stay together." He reminded us that other people would provide care in our place. It was the hardest parenting decision I was to make.

Finally, we did take the assignment. It was not easy to work through the plans with the girls to leave them for an indefinite time.

### Bob

We found the families to take care of our daughters in three ICA Houses.

### Muriel

We said good-bye to Margaret in the Student House in Chicago; took Debra and Carol to the Hathaways in the Kansas City House, and Laura and Nancy to the Lanphears in the Amarillo House. (I can still see five-year-old Carol sitting on the steps in KC, holding her doll and sucking her fingers.)

We left Margaret with many responsibilities: bills to pay, vacations to manage, items to get for her sisters when the unexpected occurred, etc. She did a



wonderful job with these, cared for her sisters from a distance, faithfully wrote us, and kept in touch with our parents. We asked the younger girls to cooperate with their guardians and write us letters. We kept their many letters and treasure them to this day. (I referred to them for this book.)

Debra and Carol joined Nancy and Laura in the Amarillo House after two months since their guardians in Kansas City, the Hathaways, got separated and left the Order. Teenager Margaret joined them when they went to Mexico at Christmas. Once while they were riding on a boat there, Carol asked, "Is Christmas over?" When Margaret answered "Yes," Carol started to cry and said, "It can't be, because Santa hasn't brought us any toys yet!" Margaret later gave Carol a pair of slippers, and she gave all of her sisters things like candies and small presents in their shoes (a Dutch-like tradition we used before we made each of us a Christmas stocking).

• *us, around this time*

## Bob

Muriel and I flew JAL 001 to Tokyo with 300 Japanese teachers of High School English who had spent the summer in USA divided between two American home visits.

## Muriel

Bob and I flew out from San Francisco with the word from Joe Mathews, the ICA founder, to temporarily stay in Tokyo; there seemed to be concern about going on to Indonesia. On our JAL flight, Bob struck up a conversation with one of these men who wanted to practice his English. I remember this

teacher started the conversation by offering to teach us how to eat with chopsticks; he proceeded to invite us to his home near Mt. Fuji for a night.

We accepted the invitation and enjoyed our first taste of delicious Japanese food and real Japanese hospitality: we slept on a tatami mat with fluffy, flowered futon blankets. We believed they went out of their way to have an American breakfast with Canadian bacon, eggs, rolls, and fruit, perhaps like the New England breakfasts he had had in the States. He took us to the Nagoya market to see huge tuna fish, fresh off the fishing boats being laid out, and wedge-cut, to show their quality to the many eager buyers. Then we went to the base of Mt. Fuji; it was a surprising experience to look up at the steep slopes of gray ash, and feel the spray of melted snow. Our host told of his experience climbing the mountain as a student. He described the heat, the boredom of the climb, and the feeling of relief after making it to the top. This day, the mountain was cloud covered; later we had another opportunity to see the snow-covered top, and the red glow of sun on it, as it is often pictured.

Because Indonesian colleagues were not ready for us, we stayed in the Tokyo House for about three months while we waited for instructions to continue on. As the waiting time was taking so long, Ken Ellison, our prior, sent us to the Fukuoka House in Japan to help teach English. We were there less than a month when we were sent on to Hong Kong to fill in for Joe Thomas who had become sick. We wouldn't be going to Indonesia after all! I felt it was the grace and mercy of God the way things worked out.



...

In Hong Kong after staying in a leaky garage with other colleagues, we found, fixed up, and settled into a vacant maternity hospital located on the fourth floor of an apartment building in Kowloon. It was an interesting place with an acupuncturist down the hall who had a lot of business; we watched people limping in and then walking out. (I became interested in acupuncture at that time.) We had casement windows that we left open because the weather was hot and humid; these also let in stray undergarments that blew in from clothes lines outside, strung from one building to the next. That was not all that came in; one morning I encountered a rat on top of the refrigerator. And I had to deal with it!

I was able to get a teaching position as Home Science teacher in a nearby Catholic elementary and junior high school. I was to teach

Western cooking in the British way as a science, not as homemaking. I taught four classes of 7th grade girls, and three classes of 8th graders. I taught the same lesson in each grade. They all wore uniforms and had their hair cut short with straight bangs. They could speak English but spoke Chinese while they did their cooking projects. For me, it was the most difficult and frustrating job I had ever had. I had to fulfill certain requirements in which the students would be tested, and the results might determine their entrance into a good high school. Competition was tough as far more applications were received than the quality schools could accept and accommodate. Fortunately, in the



...

last six weeks, a very capable Chinese student-teacher was assigned to work with me. I was extremely grateful for her help.

We were happy to return to Chicago in July and to be reassigned to Osaka. We would be able to live with Debra, Nancy, and Carol again. Unfortunately, Margaret and Laura would need to stay in the Student House in Chicago.

During summer vacations throughout their childhood, the girls often spent time with their uncles Irwin and Vernon on their farms; they saw pigs, calves, and colts being born, and cows being milked by machines. They learned to drive a tractor, ride a horse, bottle-feed calves, clean the pig pen, and gather eggs.

• daughters with Irwin's kids during one summer visit:  
(top) Gene, Laura, Margaret, Philip  
(lower) Michal, Debra, Steven

The girls also stayed with their Uncle Ken and Aunt Arthea in their home in Worthington, MN; Nancy stayed one entire summer and worked in a grocery store. Bob and I really appreciated my brothers for their care and providing of Midwestern experiences.

## Bob

I did fundraising for the HDPs in the Philippines.  
(see *Development as a Perpetual Assignment*)



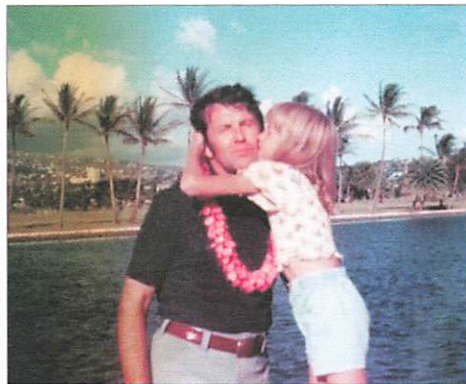
# Osaka, Japan

1975-78

## Muriel

When we were on our way to Japan in August of 1975 with Debra (ten), Nancy (eight), and Carol (six), the only scheduled stop between Osaka and San Francisco was Hawaii, and that refueling stop was for only one hour. Bob took the opportunity for us to visit Honolulu by adding a day.

- *Deb and Carol swimming in Hawaii at the Waikiki Beach where we stopped on the way to Japan (that water was cold and salty!)*



- *Nancy kissing Bob*

With our extra hours, we found many interests to fill the minutes. We arrived in the morning and a bus took us to the famous Waikiki Beach. Bob found affordable housing for the one night (\$14!) and we hurried to get our feet wet in the Pacific. We had time to play on the beach, to visit the Polynesian Cultural Center, and to enjoy visits with the local people while eating fruit and other Hawaiian favorites.

As we took a ferry to the Pearl Harbor Museum, we could see in the distance the large white marble memorial building that symbolized the long sweep of the side of a ship. Inside the museum, we viewed the

tip of the rusting remains of the sunken *USS Arizona* above the water. A guide told us the details of that “day that would live on in infamy.”

We were able to leave the next morning with fresh orchid leis around our necks, a little sunburn and somewhat of a readiness to face the longer part of the trip to Osaka, Japan, where we would live.

...

The Osaka House was in a former small bank that included the office, kitchen, meeting/dining space, as well as two bedrooms on the second floor. Our family slept in rooms above • the store of the Takemuras, about a ten minute



walk away. Walking to and from our Osaka House let us see the everyday life of the people. Women would sweep the street outside their home or business early



in the morning, and men who were looking for work would be standing around. In the evenings, we would join others on the narrow streets to go to the public baths of which there were many. Our House was near the Osaka zoo; our children would visit there on many occasions. We could occasionally hear the elephants trumpeting.



• *me in our small kitchen*

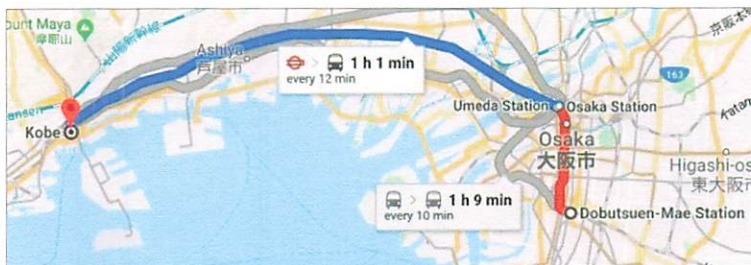
While walking along the streets, we could buy finger foods or small sandwiches made with eggs, fish, and red beans. The bread store would often give the girls leftover treats, or the crusts cut off of sandwiches. I liked to use these to make delicious bread pudding. Sometimes ice cream cones were for sale. We were encouraged not to eat while walking as it was the polite custom to eat only while others were eating too. It was on these walks that we met and made friends with the Tokudas (who had a saki shop), their three daughters, and Mrs. Imoto with her little song birds. Our landlord, Mr. Takemura, raised bonsai azaleas and shared the blooming plants with us to use as the center piece of our meeting room in our office. We have fond memories of living in Nishinari-ku, our neighborhood in Osaka.



• *our three youngest girls, and Ricky Jones (another ICA youth living in the Osaka House), with Japanese friends on Girls' Day (March 3rd, every year)*



• *picnicking with the Tokudas and Mrs. Imoto, our best friends and neighbors*



Carol, Nancy, and Debra attended St. Michael's School in Kobe, taking • two trains an hour each way. Getting to school this way without an adult wasn't without challenges. For example, one morning Carol fell asleep and remained on the train. When Debra and Nancy discovered this after they got off with the crowds, they reported it to the school and a hasty search began by the staff before Bob or I could do anything. Carol had discovered her mistake and had gotten off at the next station. An attendant, seeing her ID, helped her return to Kobe.

Debra practiced speaking Japanese with our neighbors and coworkers. Playing in our home, Debra and Nancy would imitate the calling of the subway stop names in Nihongo (Japanese) that the girls heard daily as they traveled to school. (Debra can still do this as an adult: Umeda, Umeda...)

• Nancy, in middle, with friends at St. Michael's School, in school uniforms



Nancy excelled in 3rd grade and competed with the strongest student. The principal requested that we allow Nancy to skip a grade to solve problems stemming from the competition. The principal felt this was very important to the girl and her family.

Bob and I were not in favor of this and asked instead that Nancy be challenged outside the regular classroom. The principal was willing to arrange for her to take typing with an adult class meeting in the same school, and piano lessons with a local teacher using the Suzuki method. Nancy practiced her piano lessons at the home of our neighbor, Mrs. Imoto, who spoke some English. Nancy enjoyed going there to practice piano and play with Mrs. Imoto's pet birds. We admired Nancy's determination to take on challenges and be ready for new experiences.



• Nancy, dear Mrs. Imoto, Carol, and me



Carol went to 1st grade at St. Michael's. She loved to draw pictures, and for an Open House, she had drawn a picture of me that the teacher had posted with other children's works. I noticed people looking at her drawing and laughing. Carol came and whispered to me, "Why are they laughing?" I looked at the large and brightly colored picture and read what she had written below, "My Mother is the most gigantic person." When I told her why, she explained almost tearfully. "I read that in a book and thought it meant 'beautiful.'" The book was about an elephant.

In a letter we sent to Bob's parents, Carol added a note and signed her name in Katakana, characters often used for the transliteration of foreign names. Bob thinks the children were taught this in school to be able to read street signs; he had also learned this skill and may have taught Carol. The native Japanese people found it almost impossible to say the ROL sound that was included in her name.

...

The girls were able to go with us to visit tourist spots in the area. We went to a famous potter in the Kyoto area and Debra was invited to make a small bowl.

We lived near the Osaka Castle. We could get there easily with only one stop on the subway. While Dad or I went to see inside the castle, Debra found a great place to play with Carol and Nancy in the large park around the castle. There was one tree with long, leafy branches that reached the ground and left an open space inside where they could easily hide. One day as they were playing under it, a group of policemen or firemen were doing training exercises near the tree. The girls came out of their hiding place to watch as the men practiced rescues from a rope across the • moat that surrounded the castle. When the men began marching in formation,

Debra saw one of the group point at her and say, "Gaijin, Gaijin!" (foreigner). Debra responded with "Nihonjin, Nihonjin," (which she thought meant "a Japanese person" but it is Japanese for "The People.")



• Debra with her friend, Tomoko, in Nara near Kyoto... feeding one of many deer that roam freely in this park that we enjoyed over a few visits





In May of 1976, very early one morning, Nancy awakened me as we lay sleeping in our home. She was moaning softly and saying that she hurt all over. I tried to comfort her but she just keep crying that she hurt; she didn't even want me to touch her. As soon as we could, Bob went to Mrs. Tokuda to help find a doctor. We took a taxi to a hospital but they were not taking new patients because it was the Emperor's birthday. We went to another hospital and they didn't take children. Finally the third one did. It was then noon. The doctor wanted to give her medicine and send her home. By this time Ruth Reams, our missionary friend living in Nishinomiya, had come to help us with translation. I pleaded with the doctor to check her further and see if she might have appendicitis. When he took the necessary tests, he found that she had a ruptured appendix; he immediately prepared to perform an operation. She was very, very sick and someone needed to stay with her at all times. There was a cot available in the same room. Mrs. Tokuda, Ruth, Bob, and I took turns being with her during the ten days before she could come home. This was the end of Nancy's childhood illnesses. Through all of them, she proved to have a strong and determined spirit.

• *Nancy with Debra's classmate in Japan*

During one of the summers, the children in the ICA Houses in Japan went for camp in Sendai, north of Tokyo. They rode the Shinkansen, the fast-moving bullet train. At the camp, they engaged in many activities that Carol really enjoyed. She made a large 10" x 16" drawing of the camp: one section for the



tent among the trees, another for the lake where one child was swimming and another was wading, the 3rd section had the sleeping space with two girls in sleeping bags and another two having a pillow fight, in the 4th section was a campfire with 16 stick-figure children sitting in a circle. She also drew pictures of her other experiences and sent them to Grandma and Grandpa Hanna.

...

Along with the work of the ICA, Bob, I, and others, taught conversational English to business men and women to raise money for self-support. We could do this before their work-day started, or afterward in the evening. They were eager and diligent students and were willing to go along with singing and role playing. They took us out for meals or excursions in order to practice and speak English more naturally and fluently.

One such student was Mr. Nakabe, a young executive whose father had been imprisoned in China during WWII and who died soon after returning home after the war. Mr. Nakabe did not want to take on the responsibility of his father's business, nor felt ready to do so, but he had no choice. He knew he needed to learn English to succeed internationally. He was able to tell me about his small son in English.

Mr. Nakabe owned a very fine vacation inn in the mountains and invited our family for a weekend in order for him to practice speaking English informally. Mr. Nakabe said the girls could help him learn English, and Debra was not afraid to do so. We remember the glass floor under which large goldfish were swimming; we enjoyed walking on it watching the large carp

below. He also had a large ofuro (Japanese bath) with an outdoor scenic setting. The Japanese food was wonderful, including our favorite sukiyaki, and it was served graciously as we sat on tatami mats. There was always some maid to assist us and to offer us yukatas (robes) for relaxing in after being in the ofuro.

I feel that one of the most important programs I worked with was the Women's Forum in Nishinomiya. Ruth Reams had introduced us to women who were learning English with her. She asked the Osaka House team to lead a program that would be an opportunity for them to talk about their dreams and how to realize them. Our Women's Forum program did just that. We trained some of the bilingual women in workshop roles: giving speeches, leading reflective discussions, and creating proposals for action. The women shared with emotion their experiences of being restrained by their mothers-in-law, husbands, and even sons from working outside the home, and freely expressing themselves.

Mrs. Taka was one of the leading women and we became friends with her. Bob and I were invited to her home for a series of English lessons, especially to improve her husband's English, but I think also to give him an experience with being friends with Americans. They had two sons. She longed to get a job outside the home but her husband and mother-in-law did not approve of this. I enjoyed her friendship and was sorry when they decided to move to Hokkaido. She gave me a navy and white kimono as a going away gift.



A young woman, Kaiko, whom I enjoyed teaching English, became engaged and was in preparation for her marriage. She needed to speak English. I understood that her fiancé was a business man and probably had expectations of doing business globally. Serving at a tea ceremony was also part of her preparation, and Kaiko invited me to be her guest. For the afternoon, she loaned me • a beautiful pink kimono for the occasion. I was very sorry when I heard that her engagement was called off. She indicated that the groom's family did not approve of her. Kaiko was very disheartened and discontinued English lessons.



• learning how to sit at a tea ceremony



## Oyubari

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There are many special stories connected with walking in Japan. Among the unusual walks was in Oyubari in Hokkaido. In Oyubari, a coal mine had been closed when the nearby larger city of Yubari had a deadly coal mine disaster that killed over a hundred people. Another explosion occurred as rescuers were bringing out the dead.

The ICA staff were in this most northern province of Japan to help facilitate a consultation in community development. We were taken on a walking tour of the community that included the homes, offices, and a clubhouse of the managers and supervisors of the mining company. What we observed was the abandoned remnants of a pleasant social life for the management. In gracious Japanese style, the walls of the rooms were decorated with beautiful scenes of nature with mountains and snow. The floors were • tatami mats, had lovely floor cushions, and small lacquered tables to dine at by sitting or lounging comfortably on the floor.



There were places where the mats had holes and other signs that rodents had been living there. On the tables were small plates, bowls, chopsticks, and even remaining food such as pickled radishes. On the walls were calendars, all with the month of April three years earlier. This was when the explosion in the mine happened and the mine was closed, and when the managers of the coal company left.

The residents of Oyubari considered the possibility of creating a ski resort at this location because it was an

ideal mountainous area. They dreamed that this could become an income-producer for the community. However, even though we enjoyed the walk around, and had been amazed at the facility and the views from this area, it certainly was not realistic for them to go forward with a major decision to create a ski resort at that time. They could see that they could not accommodate large numbers of skiers.

## Visiting Hiroshima Peace Park

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In 1976, our family took the train to visit the Hiroshima Peace Park. (This was the second time for Bob and me.) As we walked slowly around the large park, we recalled the event in WWII when Hiroshima was bombed. This area was preserved as a memorial for *no more wars* (after the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945 by the United States). The open spaces were gardened with beautiful flowers, shrubs and trees. White pigeons walked with us among Japanese people and tourists.

We remembered that day some thirty years earlier. My brother was stationed in the marine base in San Diego waiting to go to

Japan but the bombing and declaration of peace changed that assignment. We were very grateful that Dennis did not have to go into war in Japan, but were saddened and horrified by the great number of Japanese who died.

We saw remnants of stone walls and the charred frame of the domed building. Debra pointed to the dark shadow of a person forever burnt on a remaining wall. In the museum, we quietly read memories of



survivors, and saw pictures of those who had died during, and after, the atomic bomb was dropped. There were dreadful scenes of children and women almost naked with their clothing in rags and their skin dripping from their arms and fingers. One can hardly comprehend such destruction and suffering.

We stood a long time outside at the Children's Peace Memorial, looking at the thousands of colorful paper cranes hanging from a high center pole in the sculpture. Some believed that a terminally ill person would live if 1000 paper cranes could be folded. The age-long custom was appropriated in this Memorial, and used to create this on-going commemoration of the many children that had died. Folding paper cranes and praying for peace has become a practice of many children as well as adults. Our children learned this art and made wishes for a world of peace too.

We heard the story of a girl, Sadako Sasaki, who was two years old when the bomb fell. She was later diagnosed with leukemia and began folding paper cranes; she lived to be 12 years old.

- *Muriel in Hiroshima near the Children's Peace Memorial...a testament to the continued desire for health and peace in the nation*

We walked over the famous small arched walking bridge in a serene park with beautiful water and gardens; it is often pictured with Hiroshima scenes.



In Bob's and my first visit in 1974, we met and were escorted by Rev. Tanimoto, a survivor who was featured in John Hersey's book on Hiroshima. He showed us where he had helped victims be carried to the river and laid on the banks for safety, but how the contaminated water burned mouths and throats of all who drank the water, and unfortunately, as the tidal river rose during the night, many were swept away and drowned.

Rev. Tanimoto himself had been spared because he had been up a mountain to carry the church organ, pulpit, and altar to safety as he feared the coming of disaster and wanted to save them. He told how his wife and children were spared from death by the protection of straw floor mats they fastened to the walls. After the war, he was instrumental in helping the *Hiroshima Maidens* go to the United States for reconstructive and cosmetic surgery. He served us tea in his home; we felt awed and humbled by his

kindness to us. We hope that the U.S. will never again cause such horrendous loss of life and destruction of a country.

## Bob

We had three great years in the “bank” near • Dobutsuen-Mae, the subway stop by the Osaka zoo. While living here, Bill Schlesinger and I of the ICA staff worked with a number of Japanese



business men to complete the *Oyubari Consult Document* to a finished form in Japanese. These men were some whom I had gotten to know on development calls to support the work of the ICA. They met with us in a series of Sunday afternoons and we usually had a meal together. Muriel recalls hearing them say “muscashi” frequently, and because there was a deep throated and slow emphasis put on that word, she wondered what it meant. She learned that they would not say “impossible,” so used this word to indicate how very difficult it would be.

When the *Oyubari Consult Document* was considered finished, the Osaka House members were on our way to celebrate our work with the Oyubari community, and the completion of the document. On the elevator, I recognized a woman as a secretary of a business man who had worked with us. I was pleased to show her the credits at the back. She pointed out to me that one konji was incorrect in her boss’s name! Oops!

I had tried to learn to read konji (Japanese writing) and enjoyed applying my ability in reading names. I was able to read signs in Japanese, and I liked practicing writing and understanding what each line in Japanese characters meant. I had a book called *Noodle Words* that helped me, and I gave it to Margaret when

she went much later on a business trip to Hong Kong; she, too, found it both enjoyable and useful for reading some Chinese characters.

The summer of 1976 during the time of the USA bi-centennial celebration, Margaret and Laura were able to join us in Osaka (assisted by a generous gift from my mother) so the seven of us were together and shared the variety, joy, and beauty of Japan.



- the girls were given these ukatas, obis (belts) and geta (tall wooden sandals), they wore these to a summertime street festival



## Muriel

Margaret and Laura were very helpful in enabling the ITI; I remember them washing a lot of dishes. I am glad they were also able to see some of the sites we had been enjoying. Before leaving, they visited Hiroshima and then went by ferry to South Korea, visited colleagues there, and then flew to the States.



• all of us together for the summer in 1976

After Debra attended St. Michael's school for two years in Japan, she went to Chicago. As she walked to board the plane in Osaka, she paused to wave her hand as if she were a celebrity leaving. This was a big change for her, and a new adventure to live with 60 others her age. I'm sure this was a disappointment after her freedom and enjoyment of living in Japan.



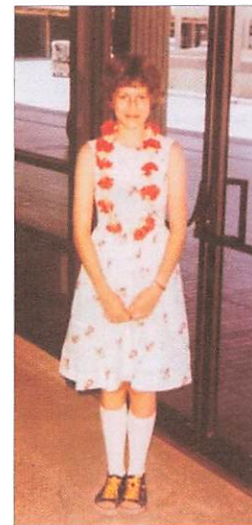
transporting some of our things stacked on a bicycle at night.

• House Church

## Bob

In 1977, • Debra flew alone to Seoul, joining Bob Rafos there on a flight back to Chicago, and entered 7th grade in the Student House. Her legal guardians there were Sandra and Bob True. She was glad Margaret and Laura were also in Chicago.

Near the end of our third year, the bank owners informed us that they needed the building and we would have to move. I was fortunate to have met a man connected with the YMCA who knew of a large empty house in the Tennoji area; it had been used by a YMCA executive until he died. There was an attached unit which might have been used for YMCA retreats or gatherings that we did not use. We could rent the house but would need to move if and when they wanted to sell it. We made the move, including





## Muriel

During the move to the Tennoji house, some of us went by taxi while Bob used a bicycle loaded in the style of a street vender to transport our clothes and other things.

Our former home in a bank was soon demolished. When passing by one day, we found a picture in the rubble of • Debra in a Santa Claus costume giving out gifts one year. This reminded me of the good times we had there.

The Japanese style house we now lived in was large with many tatami-floored rooms that were in need of repair from being empty after the occupant died. A garden, once beautiful with bushes, small trees, and rocks, was just outside our patio. Nancy and Carol, and other children in the Osaka House, loved to • play in this garden. It was a quiet, secluded place. We also were able to pay a smaller rent than at our previous home. This was an amazing gift for us, to have such a fine home at a low cost.



Carol and Nancy (and earlier, Debra) had received many Barbie Dolls from Japanese friends along with doll furnishings. There were too many to pack and take to the States as our assignment in Japan ended, so the girls had a small sidewalk sale before leaving. They kept their favorites, including a small baby grand piano.



## San Francisco 1978-79

### Bob

The four of us made the move from Osaka to our new assignment in San Francisco in August of 1978. Carol benefited from bi-lingual elementary school in the Mission District where we lived. Chinese and Spanish were both used as a medium of instruction in the school. Nancy attended a local middle school.

During that year, I spent a lot of time in Arizona. The ICA was trying to do 120 Town Meetings there. I did 20 in Tuscan and its vicinity.

### *New Community Bound*

ICA song  
tune: Won't You Play a Simple Melody

*I believe that life is mystery  
Filled with possibility.  
Toil and tears and creativity  
Building new community.*

*A new society's rising  
And it's not so surprising  
If you're looking around  
Just put your ear to the ground  
You'll hear a heavenly sound.*

*New human images spinning,  
And the villages winning:  
So believe what you see  
Why don't you listen to me?  
We're new community bound!*

### Muriel

We were welcomed by the San Francisco House and almost immediately were invited to a party on a touring boat. We saw a skyline view of the city, rode under the Bay Bridge, and had dinner on board. What a way to get acquainted with the wonders of San Francisco!

Our home for this year was in • a three-story white, wooden duplex on South Van Ness Street. Living with us were several colleagues, including Robert and Joan Knutson, David and Ellen Rebstock with their sons, Tshing Ping, his wife and two children from Taiwan, Judy Albers, Jan Barr, four youth (and other visitors from Asia from time to time). We had very thoughtful planning collegiums and Ecclesiola. Our conversations included the interests and values of the youth in the House. We needed to think of their education and their participation in House events.

Our room had a spectacular view of the city and a mountain which was often hidden by fog sweeping in.

To me, it looked like a ship on a stormy sea with the tall antennas of the buildings rising above the clouds.





Nancy liked her classes in school, especially social studies, art, and drama. When her school announced near the end of the school year that the arts would be eliminated for budget cuts, she became angry and adamantly urged that they find ways to keep them. One day she came home saying, "They could use newspapers and other things to save money in art classes!"

Our work was to visit the towns in the Fresno area to try to get Town Meetings scheduled and held. I was assigned to work with Tshing Ping. I think it was very hard for him to work equally with a woman, especially me, as I can be quite persistent at times. I soon felt it was too difficult for me to work with him; he had begun drinking, so much so that I had to do the driving too. This made him very angry. Fortunately, Linda Hamilton from Los Angeles was assigned to work with me instead. I think we helped several communities use our methods of planning just from our set-up visits with leaders. We had a few full length meetings.

We facilitated one meeting that I consider our most encouraging achievement. The citizens in this town were very concerned about the sulfur-like taste of their water. We learned at this evening Town Meeting that the contradiction was they could not agree on a solution, so they tried nothing. During the meeting, they decided to name a committee representing both sides of the issue, and go to the County Supervisor for a recommendation. The meeting ended at midnight with this agreement. Later we learned from the Supervisor that a solution was agreed and acted

upon, which enabled the town to have tasty water. He even was willing to pay \$50 for any other town to hold such a meeting.

When Bob went to Arizona to do Town Meetings, I was assigned to work for our House's sustenance in San Francisco. My job was a shipping clerk for a Korean business. I had to package and send out small machines to Korean companies in the U.S. and abroad. I got this job because I had lived in Korea. It was a new experience being with a company working for profit.

San Francisco was a fun-loving city and had many places for amusement. We enjoyed the Golden Gate Park, and the Embarcadero as a place to eat and listen to artists perform on the streets. Ellen Rebstock worked with the children and took them to parks, even to pan for gold in a stream! We had celebrations at the House and went to movies. I remember one called *Dream Time* about the aboriginals of Australia. (Some of our colleagues had worked with aboriginals; they helped us understand the movie and the people.) We went to see Muir Woods, a redwoods forest, and Yosemite. We were always amazed at the quantity of

vegetables and fruit being trucked out of the rich Fresno Valley.



• a special trip to Sequoia National Park to see the redwoods for the first time



At the end of August of 1979, Bob came back from the Order Council meeting with our four youngest daughters in a very small Pinto drive-away car with no air conditioning. Laura, using a learner's permit, shared driving on the long stretches of the highway as she did not need to do too much shifting there. Margaret flew in from Iowa.

After some sightseeing in the area, we packed up to move back to Chicago to be in the Student House on a new assignment. We would be taking the Buick Skylark that Bob's mother gave us. It had been used for many Town Meeting trips, and by our colleagues to go to work.

• *packing up  
for the move*



• *so long San Francisco!*



## *Believe*

ICA song  
tune: the Sloop John B

*Believe that the time has come  
This world's going to live as one  
And people are ready now  
To create a new way.  
New spirit alive  
New dream on the rise  
One world together  
Create the new day.*

## On the Way to Chicago

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The • “spacious” Buick accommodated all seven of us and Nancy's hamster. We also had belongings of four of us in the car; we sent the snow tires separately. We packed in our bedding on the seats under us. We arranged things so one daughter could sleep in the back window and one on the floor of the back seat.

Nancy promised to keep her hamster in its cage on her lap. Nancy was told she could only bring the hamster if she didn't complain and didn't ask anyone else to hold the cage. We would put it on the ground in the shade of the car when we stopped to sightsee. The hamster once escaped and hid under a seat. Nancy never once complained. She waited until we were on the Eisenhower Expressway in Chicago to ask if anyone else wanted to hold it.

It was on this trip that we stopped to see seven national parks: Yosemite, Zion, The Arches, Canyonlands, Bryce, the Grand Canyon, and the Rocky Mountain National Park.



We spent a night in Las Vegas after we divided into three search parties to look for the best deal for accommodations. Laura's team won as she found one with a • unique above-the-ground pool with windows in the side. The girls had fun swimming there while Bob and I watched them underwater. Laura demonstrated her water ballet learned at Hartford High School and taught her sisters some basic moves.

• *Debra plays in Las Vegas pool*

We also had time to visit both extended families of the Raaks, and the Hannas in Iowa, before our next assignment.



# Student House, Chicago

1979-80

## Muriel

Assignment to the Student House! This is the message Bob and I received while living in San Francisco. The Student House was the place on the 3rd floor of the Kemper Building where the early teenagers of Order members lived at that time, and had activities together, while attending local schools in the area. The activities in the Student House included school studies, playing together, information on the Order's vision for service, and work projects to earn money for their programs. In the first ten years of the Student House, at least one of the girls would live there each year.

• *the Kemper Building, a gift from Kemper Insurance, housed the ICA; the Student House was on the 3rd floor*

## Bob

The four of us lived on the 3rd floor: Nancy in a Student House dorm room, Carol shared two rooms with us as we helped staff the Student House. I

worked mostly with the youth while Muriel did more with the Emerging Generation (a.k.a. EG). Carol had Nancy's hamster in her room; it got lost several times, once going mysteriously from the 3rd to the 1st floor.

## Muriel

Feelings ranging from anticipation of adventure, to fear, anger, and disappointment were most likely present in all of us when we heard we'd be living in the Student House. I will try to speak for myself...from what I heard from our daughters about their experiences...I felt inadequate and challenged. We were somewhat encouraged by a visit from one person on the assignment committee who said, "You have raised such fine daughters; you are what we need." Well, five daughters is one thing, but 35 junior high students is another! Working with many youth required a lot of love with patience and creativity.

I had heard of activities there that sounded quite good and even enjoyable: they put on dramas, delivered advertisement papers in the suburbs, and cleaned up at dog shows to earn extra money for themselves.

They went on excursions to Chicago museums and other attractions. They had sports equipment to use. They went to a farm in Michigan to work and play on weekends. During the summers, they went to camps to help with the EG (Emerging Generation) or to Town Meetings.

I hoped that I could be a person who listened to what the teens wanted to do to make the Student House better, to support them in their school work, improve on the meals, and help with leadership roles. I also wanted to enable connecting them with their parents, and give leadership to projects like sewing. Bob looked





forward to working with them on building things that they wanted to improve in their space.

I appreciated the students' take on life in the morning collegiums when they discussed the Scripture and news. I recall a discussion which involved some troubling news with gun violence. One girl blurted out, "What kind of a world are you adults giving us?" I thought these kids could make a big difference in the world someday, with that kind of passion.

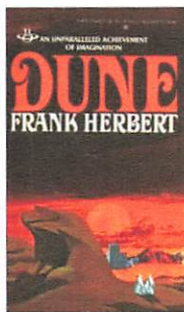
I found that I enjoyed being with the students. I read to them books including • *Dune*, in the girls' dorm as they were quieting down to sleep, and then later we discussed what the story meant to them and how they identified with it.

I went with the youth on outings. One was to the Indiana Dunes. (That is no longer permitted due to the danger of getting lost in the sand.) I liked being on the farm with the barn and loft where the kids could both work and play; here they pruned apple trees and helped get rid of poison ivy, and built a fence for the owner of the property.

## Bob

I helped the 8th grade class build the new risers (large wooden steps covered with carpet) for the T.V. lounge which stood like steel until it was demolished in the '80s when it was no longer needed.

I did more construction projects with the youth during the summer and weekends, like building fences at the Michigan farm.



Nancy had a role in the Spring drama: *The Man of La Mancha*. I helped build the set including the stairway to the dungeon.

## Muriel

The students put on that play. I worked with the costumes. They performed for a large audience during an Order Council meeting. It was very well done. The students were fine actors, singers, and stage workers.

Of great interest to the students was watching the movie *Roots* on TV. They watched this, and other TV shows, on the risers they had built with Bob. The youth found them to also be a comfortable place to chat and relax informally together or to read a book.

I think it was in January or February when the teachers in Chicago schools went on strike and the Student House staff had to think of what our kids could do for an unknown length of time. It was decided that they go in teams to the Human Development Projects closest by. I took my team to Kinney in the Iron Range of northern Minnesota. I was excited to go there with two boys and two girls. I thought it would be a great experience. I made chocolate chip cookies for the road trip and planned things to do as we travelled. At Kinney, they engaged with the community youth and attended an evening youth meeting and celebration. I stayed in the Kinney House with one of the girls who was sick.

I thought they had had a good time by the reports the next day. However, a short time after our return to the Student House, my team and I were called to a meeting with the Centrum leaders to hear a complaint from the priors in Kinney: one or more of our group had brought marijuana to the party. This was the first I heard about it and I felt I had failed in my not being

more aware...I didn't even know what marijuana smelled like.

This was a very serious problem for the community. We had to face the fact that our youth were not exempt from drug use. (One result was that a boy's father who lived in Kemper disciplined his son harshly in a place where no one would hear or see it.)

...

Discipline was the most difficult aspect of our work both for the students and the staff. I recall times at meals or in collegiums when the students were not interested in the program, the singing, the food, or the plan for the day. I must admit that having youth sing songs like: "All life is open, embrace the future with vision, die your death for the living, The Mystery has received all..." over and over, was not inspirational but more like punishment. I appreciated this song but I understood that it wasn't appropriate for them at this time in their lives. Their opposition was to waste the food, make noise, refuse to sing, make fun of the leader, and just strike. At times when I was in agreement with them, I felt helpless to change the situation. At one time, the consequence was to detain the students until they cooperated (which caused them to be late for school).

...

During the holiday break from schools, we all joined the St. John family in the Milwaukee House. We were happy to leave our responsibilities in Chicago and celebrate Christmas with them without having to go

far. Debra could not be with us as she was living on the Isle of Dogs at that HDP in London.

Nancy had come prepared with a play for us all to read and enact around the table with the St. John family. We got into the drama, and *The Long Christmas Dinner* made our Christmas dinner a special event. The play was a story of a Christmas dinner over a few years with the family changing each year (a baby was born, someone died, and a mate was added to the family). We could imagine our family changing too.



In the afternoon, we went to the • Milwaukee Poinsettia Show, a special Christmas treat. Later we watched the Rose Bowl in which the University of Iowa was playing; Margaret really wanted to see her college play and Bob enjoyed watching sports too.

...

I often worked with the Infant School and Emerging Generation children during the day or after school. I taught 9-12 year old girls to sew and they made clothes that they modeled in a Style Show planned by Thelma, an ICA colleague with drama experience. I remember one girl who needed a lot of help in sewing a skirt; she succeeded and showed it with pride. She told Carol years later: "Your mom taught me how to sew."

I also planned the weekend curriculum for the elementary children. It was usually a theme with Bible



stories and other stories accompanied with songs, crafts, and play activities. Our goal was to teach them team dynamics, personal responsibility, and care for others and themselves. We shared with them news of our local and global mission in which their parents were involved.

Older youth and adults living in the • Kemper Building were assigned to assist in the weekend programs and add their own creativity. Our aim was to train the youth to be responsible for the way they lived and to be leaders in their communities. We would give them tools for making decisions, such as the Art Form Method (a.k.a. Art of Focused Conversation), a process of reflecting on written or spoken information to come to making good and helpful decisions.

Morning Collegiums were often about planning for working together in the Student House. At one time, a small group of very responsible students asked to be on a kind of “student advisory team” but they were denied. I did not agree with that decision as it seemed hypocritical.

The students learned about the world from friends who had lived in various places in the U.S. and other countries: Japan, Korea, Kenya, India, and elsewhere. They met people from these countries and tried to learn from them. Every effort was made to provide a good foundation of moral and ethical values. They examined religious teachings and studied what it meant to be “spirit” people, people who cared.

They were being prepared for their years ahead, in particular, to spend their 9th grade year in Human Development Projects overseas, learning to be citizens of the world. The Student House was an experiment in youth living together in this family Order.



Reflecting back now, I am proud of the things they are doing in their chosen fields. I am also saddened to learn that some lives of the Second Generation included drug addiction and homelessness, and some ended in untimely death from suicide, disease, and accidents.

...

The Student House was an enriching experience for me. I enjoyed getting to know the youth, and the colleagues we worked with. I broadened my understanding of the gifts and wisdom that youth have to share. It also helped me to better understand our daughters’ experiences and feelings.



• Nancy handing out allowances: \$2 a week



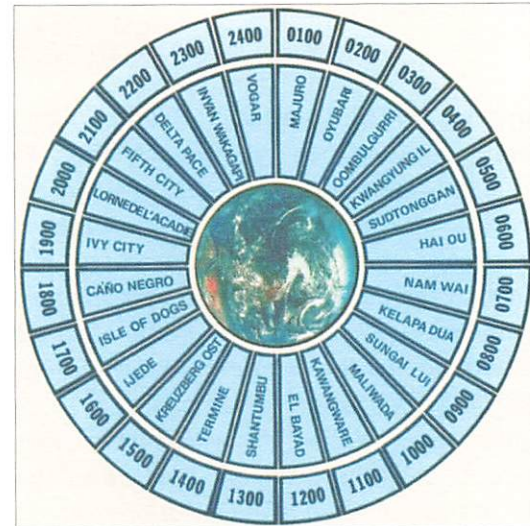
# Daughters in Human Development Projects

## *Muriel*

Teenage youth in the Order (often 9th graders) had opportunities to work in communities around the world with poverty, low education levels, and/or other challenges. Deployment to these Human Development Projects (HDPs) was planned to give the youth ways to develop leadership skills, team responsibility, awareness of privileges, independence, courage, and insights into their gifts for choices in their adult vocations.

They were placed in situations where they would become aware of human suffering and limited resources, to be able to work with local community members and ICA staff to bring hope and change. They could attend planning meetings and work with the various teams on economic ventures, educational programs, and social activities. They were also very helpful in doing enablement tasks like food shopping, preparing meals, and child care.

These experiences were adventures into new geography and ways of living. They learned travelling skills, use of money and other resources, gained abilities in speaking other languages, and made friends for life. Bob and I hoped that these experiences would also cause greater understanding and appreciation of our decision to engage in this global human development effort.



• the 24 original HDPs in 24 time zones

## Margaret in Conacoste, Guatemala Summer 1980

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Margaret volunteered to work with the ICA in the village HDP of Conacoste during the time she was attending the University of Iowa. She immediately recognized the situations that needed work to improve the health, education and welfare of the people of this community in Guatemala. She wrote:

*“Everyone has parasites – often caused by running around barefoot. And then – the pigs, chickens, dogs, and cows freely roam the streets. The dental problems are phenomenal. They not only do not brush their teeth, but they also chew a lot of sugar cane. Children start school when they are seven or eight and then only for half a day. The lucky ones are those who can write enough to sign their name. We have received a \$500,000 loan from Banco Interamerican Development for irrigation; this will be a big step in the growth of the project. We told the leaders about it but none of them have enough education to know how loans work, so they thought that we had the money. There were many obscure rumors. One was that 100 families were each going to get \$5000. We invited the community to a meeting to explain what the loan meant and how it would be distributed. The ICA, of course, will get none of it.”*

Margaret helped to prepare for the 2nd anniversary celebration. She made and put up decorations. The ICA found that celebrating any progress that was being made was important, as people easily got disappointed as positive change in a community is



very slow, especially where there is a lot of poverty, frequent violence, and limited education.

The celebration had been delayed by such things as raising funds. Margaret wrote: *“At the beginning, people were sitting kind of lackadaisically around the plaza, but as it*

*progressed they moved in closer and closer.”* They were encouraged by free tamales and soft drinks, and also free dancing, instead of a ten cent fee for each dance as was customary.

Margaret made friends easily, was fascinated by Guatemalan life, work, and the growth of plants and trees, coffee, almonds, and especially • cashews. She worked on learning Spanish (four years of high school Latin didn't really help) and received college credit in sociology.





## Laura in *Starks*, Maine 1978 -79

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Laura's experience in a Human Development Project was in the small community of Starks, Maine, with a population of about 400. She described the 24 square miles town as beautiful country with snow on the ground from December through March. The town had lost a corn canning business and their schools and stores were needing rejuvenation. There was no longer a local minister in the community. Laura and others lived temporarily in the minister's home which was empty.

The HDP included the appropriation of the • Corn Shed to become a community center; it still stored potatoes in part of it. Laura helped with cleaning and painting the building (from yellow to blue). In it, the community started cottage industries that included making Christmas wreathes (sold over 1000), gathering and selling fiddle heads, sewing projects, and collecting and selling used clothing.

Laura was in 10th grade and attended high school in Madison, nine miles away. She rode a school bus and made friends easily. She enjoyed her classes and helped plan and promote youth dances. These were part of an effort by the police and community to create activities for youth to combat drug use.



The community of Starks held a Snow Festival celebrating the town's 184th birthday. As part of the morning's carnival, Laura entered the Blindfolded Snowmobile contest. Susan, her partner, was blindfolded and Laura gave directions. Laura had never been on a snowmobile before. They ran into a fence and tipped over. However, in a Three-Legged Snow Shoe race they placed 3rd. The afternoon's program consisted of singing and dancing; Laura was one of the festival's snow princesses.

News about Starks HDP was often in the *Central Maine Morning Sentinel* newspaper including the report of a surprise birthday party for Laura. It told of the guests, treats, and going to a movie in Waterville. She was wished a Happy 16th.

While in Starks, Laura traveled with a team to Lorne de l'Acadie, an HDP in New Brunswick, Canada, to participate in three Community Youth Forums.





## Debra on the *Isle of Dogs*, London 1979 -80

During Debra's 9th grade year, she lived in the HDP in the economically depressed community of London called the Isle of Dogs. (It was named for the place where the dogs of the British royalty had been kept.) She insisted to attend a local school there rather than take the American School correspondence course and was a sociable, happy, and excellent student.

She learned to say "cheek" for you've got nerve, "chips" instead of fries, "crisps" instead of potato chips, and she even acquired quite a "Bri'ish" accent (cockney).

- Debra with her best friends at the George Green School, Debra is on the right side

She was able to go on a six-day geography trip to Wales in which they did a land study of Abergavenny, a river study where they walked in a stream to measure height, width, and other things (while it was pouring rain) and also walked seven miles along the river Caerfanell, on to Brecon Beacons National Park, and hiked along another river, over rocks, cliffs, and behind falls;

finally they visited a farm much like her Raak uncles' farms. She especially liked drawing and coloring the many charts and graphs required for her school work.



Debra participated in the HDP home life by planning menus, shopping, and food preparation; she cut hair for several other staff members, and painted a room for the children.

There was a tall stone wall surrounding the Bridge House where they lived. Debra often played on it. Once when swinging and making Tarzan calls on a branch (reached from the top of the wall), the branch broke; she hit the wall and fell on rocks and grass "straight on my face," she wrote. She went to the

hospital for x-rays. She had lots of pain in her back and stomach; her arm was bruised as well as her kidneys, and bones were broken in a foot. She couldn't go to school for a week. Thankfully, she recovered fully.

Debra attended an RS-1 with 15 kids her age; she described it as "not as hard and strong as normal" and Community Youth Forums. She found a job in a home decoration store where



she stacked boxes, watched to prevent theft, and learned to make daily tea for all employees to their specifications, but always with cream! They sold things like fancy fountains and inlaid nesting tables. I remember her saying that she had fun surprising customers with conversations in a Cockney accent. She shared her earnings with the House.

In addition to Wales, Debra was able to visit Brussels, Belgium, and drove through France.



• Debra with neighborhood friends



## Nancy in *Sudtonggan* on Mactan Island, Philippines 1981-82

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A letter of 24 pages told us the frightening story of Nancy's arrival in Manila with Wendy Scott, another ICA 9th grader, with no one to meet them. In her disturbing letter, Nancy tells of their waiting and waiting for at least four hours to be picked up from the airport. They tried to call the Manila House but didn't have the correct number. They decided to take a taxi to spend the night at the YMCA. When they found there was no vacancy, their very kind and dependable taxi driver suggested they go to a hotel. Rose, a woman at the hotel, tried to call the ICA Manila House but didn't succeed. So they stayed in that hotel where they could buy some food before sleeping.

In the morning, failing again to reach anyone, they went to the American Embassy and there an "angel" named Jane called Nancy Lanphear in Chicago to get the number of the Manila House. Danny, a man at the Consulate office, met with them and said he wouldn't leave them until he had handed them over to the ICA people. Jane made the connections and Linda Knutsen of the Manila House came to pick up Nancy and Wendy; it was then 12:00 noon, the day after their arrival. Nancy wrote, "*This taught me always to carry a telephone and address of the place I am going.*" (We got the letter about this sometime after they were safe in Manila; Bob and I were proud of how Nancy and Wendy had used their wits, courage, and trust in God in this stressful situation and were very grateful that they found "angels" who cared for them.)



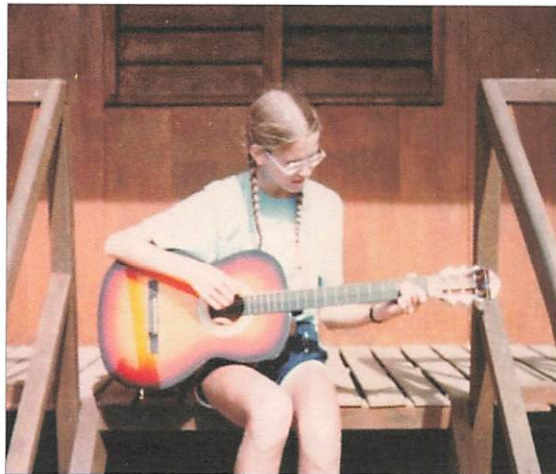
Nancy's letters from Sudtonggan during her nine months there told of singing and • playing her guitar, eating green leaves right from the garden, being hungry, weighing children in many of the 24 Mactan villages, enjoying her friends, and working with teachers concerned about early education and good health. She felt inadequate leading activities with small children that spoke another language but kept trying to learn.

Nancy looked forward to, and counted on, the letters she received and sent three times a week. Letters to and from family and friends were very important to her. She wrote of washing her clothes at a pump, pushing bugs off her pages as she wrote, and doing her American School lessons. Once she went to the city of Cebu for a show, American snacks, and ice cream, where she could be in air conditioned buildings.

She lived and worked with Wendy and the Filipino staff. She went with the staff on motorbike rides to the villages to meet with teachers and compute weights of the small children. This helped identify children who were malnourished. She wrote, *"My colleagues were my best friends."*

Nancy's guitar was also her friend and she wrote a song, "The Griffin Family," and sang it to the tune of *House of the Rising Sun*.

As she got ready to leave the Philippines, she wrote: *"Sudtonggan. I repeat it again – Sudtonggan. Or really I should say Mactan, for the whole island has captured me, urging me to stay. Stay? It's impossible! Dear, dear Mactan, it has captured me, heart and mind."*





**Carol in *El Bayad*, Egypt  
1983-84**

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Ninth grader Carol went to Egypt with classmate and close friend, Jessica Rettig, and lived in the village of El Bayad; on alternate weeks, they took turns going to the Cairo House to care for children of the ICA staff and do their American School correspondence course lessons. Village life was often boring for her because she couldn't speak Arabic; she helped with the cooking, wrote letters, played solitaire, and read. One of the books she read was *Fire from Heaven* by Mary Renault about Alexander the Great. On weekends, Carol and Jessica were glad to be together in the village.

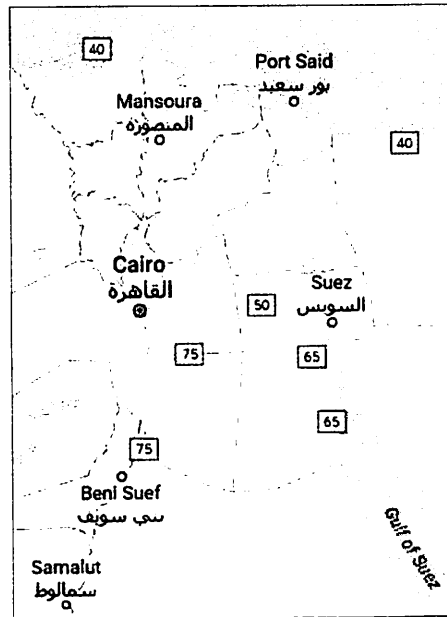
When in the village, Carol liked to spend time with Shauker, an old caretaker and handy man; although she didn't speak his language, he was interesting and had a great smile. About 15 women and men came from • Beni Suef, across the Nile from the village, to learn ICA methods and work together in development.

Carol sent a letter to us with this report of her time in El Bayad, Egypt:

*"None of the villages had a doctor or any other medically trained person and could not afford to go to a health care center. My job was to participate by going on the route, and create health care formats so eventually each village would have their own health caretaker for basic problems and preventative education.*

*"I was interested in this venture of health care because I had continually found myself wishing that I had the power to help a person in a way besides just*

*being there. My team's role was to visit the women who were health caretakers to catch up on what they had done the past week, and find out what supplies they needed.*



*"The project exposed me to various methods of caring for the sick and the preventative measures to be taken. It also brought me into close contact with the village people in their homes. I found myself constantly amazed at how thankful the villagers were and was reminded how much training was needed."*

*"Life is not a problem to be solved,  
but a reality to be experienced."*

from Camus in *The Wind at Djemilla*

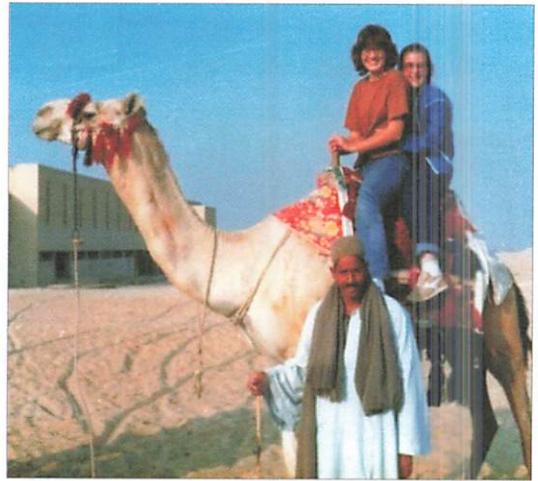
## Carol in Egypt

by Muriel  
1984, edited 2017

*Egypt may have its famous Cleopatra  
Its ancient pyramids and Alexandria;  
But Carol in her 9th grade year  
Found Egypt to be rather drear.*

*The problems there, in Carol's estimation,  
Were lack of clean water, sickness,  
    laziness and personal rejection;  
These could be solved with diligent work,  
    order and cooperation.  
Egyptian friends like Farrah, Amal and Nadia  
Helped her to cope, as did Charlene,  
    Rebecca and Jessica.*

*And through the years,  
    these values she still holds dear:  
Creating home with beauty and spaces clear,  
Diligent work, order and peaceful communication,  
Cleanliness, art and friends in loving relation.*



- Carol and Jessica riding a camel...this was a special, touristy thing to do, not general transportation...with guide

### Egypt

by Carol Griffin, 1985

*Dry. Empty. Nowhere to go.  
The Sun, like an ever present bully,  
Beating its rays on my head.  
Rain. Coming suddenly. Unexpected. Short.  
Bringing momentary relief.  
Seeing for miles the shivers of dust and heat.*

## South Korea 1980-82

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### Bob

Muriel said, "If we are going to work in the third world, it better be now before both of us move beyond 50 years old." First it looked like our next assignment would be to Zambia, then it turned out to be Korea for the 2nd year of Implementation in a village called Koh Du e Ri (e Ri means 2nd village) near the DMZ. (This was a better fit for us because the project in Zambia needed someone who could start a health care clinic.)

We expanded to working with five additional villages in order that they could visit and learn from the great work being done in Koh Du e Ri.



### Muriel

I remember the year when we moved to • Koh Du e Ri to live. Carol lived alone with us in Korea, without her sisters, during her sixth grade year.

This village in South Korea was about 30 miles south of the DMZ and near Camp Page, an American army base. We appreciated going to the base on Sunday for chapel, an American meal, and a visit to their library. The base sent a jeep to get us so Bob could sing in the choir.

The community had provided us with a room in the corner of their new center built of concrete blocks. The floor was laid over carefully layered flat rocks. It was heated by smoke passing through the rocks from burning yeontan just outside our room. (Yeontan was a coal briquette. Breathing in the smoke from it could be deadly.)

We slept on the floor on thick futon mattresses with fluffy quilts of bright satiny fabric. It was very cozy snuggling together; one never wanted to get up during the night, or even in the morning. To rise up much above one or two feet, you found the higher atmosphere had no heat!

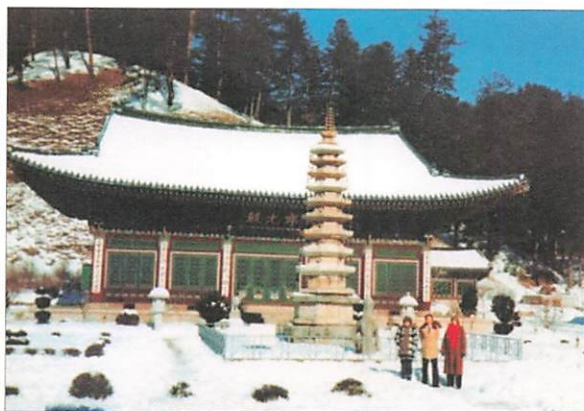
I am grateful for the experience of Koh Du e Ri; the villagers were resilient, hardworking people who shared hardships and worked together to make improvements all could appreciate. They did much to help us cope. They taught us the art of yeontan heating and shared their concern that we stay warm.



## Work in Chuncheon, Kang Won Do

While living in the village of Koh Du e Ri, I found self-support work in Chuncheon, the provincial capital of Kang Won Do. I was fortunate to teach English to a group of • government workers, many connected with the agricultural goals of Korea. I rode either the crowded bus for the 3.5 miles, sat behind Korean ICA staff member, Lee Kong Jin, on a small motorcycle while gripping his waist, walked, or took a really bumpy ride with a farmer in the back of a wagon. As I remember, there were around 20 men in the class with varying degrees of English-speaking ability.

Among those most fluent was Mr. Kim, one of many Kims. He invited our family to go with his wife and two young boys, to travel with them to his parents' home over the New Year's holidays. We traveled by bus as we always did for any distance. For the first night, we stopped at • Jim Bu which seemed to be the highest mountain around. It was beautiful but extremely cold and windy.



We slept in a simple inn where our only water supply was a faucet outside; it had to be kept running slowly during the night to keep the pipe from freezing. In the morning, we found a mini mountain of ice had formed from the faucet to the ground. We had to catch an icy drip to brush our teeth. We found women were out

early nearby setting up for market. They sat bundled near small charcoal burners while selling clothing, kimchi, and fish.

At the home of Mr. Kim's mother, we received wonderful hospitality and

were served the best Korean food. She gave me a decorative hanging that she had made by weaving many delicate threads of red and gold around a center symbol. We hang it up at Christmas and remember this special occasion.



## Carol's 6th Grade Year

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We were able to arrange Carol's lessons to be sent from the Sioux Center Public School. She found geography lessons in the book, *America's Neighbors of Mexico and Canada*, most interesting and I enjoyed them with her. She needed encouragement to do math as she found it too easy and repetitive; I tried to challenge her to more difficult work but diversions came easily in the village. She loved to read novels. She found them, including many Zane Grey novels, at the Camp Page library at the U.S. Military base nearby.

Carol received her school assignments often in two-week packets. She frequently finished all the work in one week. This left her time to get a village education. One lesson came from watching road building. Several men and women worked together to move huge rocks and lay out smaller rocks and stones for the roadbed. This was no easy job. The rocks were heavy and the soil was wet. They started at the end of the existing road near the village, and then continued over the mountain to connect to another road making a loop. This would enable the bus to continue on, instead of turning around in the village. Carol and I got our shoes covered and clogged with clay just while watching.

Once Carol, Bob, and I watched the villagers getting wood from the mountain. We could see one team far up on the side of Dai Rung San, the mountain that looked like a sleeping dragon; they were bundling together large cuttings of brush and tree branches. They tied these together and sent them down by a

cable to a place near to where we stood. As the wood came speeding down, a team managed to catch it and untie it from the cable. I think the wood provided kindling for cooking, or heating their homes if they didn't have yeontan or kerosene heaters as we did. Even though this seemed like a dangerous process, there was a lot of cheering and comradery as they worked.



The village chief let Carol • ride his bicycle (sometimes with his son) near the community center. She climbed on the roof of the center to watch people at work in the fields, and other children sometimes were there doing some mischief like throwing live frogs from the roof.

One of Carol's friends was Miss Hong, a teenager who worked in the village store. Carol spent long periods of time there when the store was not busy and she tried to teach English to Miss Hong. Another friend was Miss Han who also visited with Carol while she did bookkeeping for the village project; she spoke English very well and worked with the ICA (Institute of Cultural Affairs) staff. At one time the three friends climbed the Great Dragon Mountain that we could see from the village.

Carol preferred staying in the village when we would go to Seoul for meetings. She was helpful with chores, including sweeping the village hall. The hall was often very dusty from the farmers meeting there in their work boots.



At Christmas time in 1980, the weather was freezing when we shared Christmas presents. Carol was very excited and pleased that a package from Margaret was able to be delivered and contained • a new pair of pants and a figurine horse. We had decorated our room the day before with a small evergreen tree she had gotten from the mountain, and trimmed it with strings of popcorn. Later we walked the three kilometers to church at Camp Page where we also had an American dinner. We celebrated her 12th birthday along with Christmas.

While Bob and I worked, Carol always found ways with her imagination to use her time well. She liked to wander about to watch the hand-planting of rice, the pruning of grape vines and nashi trees (a combination of apple and pear), and observe the fish in the community pond. When the pond was drained for winter, she was given some of the small fish. She claimed them as her pets and found a jar to care for them.



Carol liked to roam on the mountainside above the community hall. Carol found open spaces between the rocks and shrubs to dream and write poetry. She sang to herself favorite songs and created others. She called these places “her secret spots.” Being home alone, while I was teaching and Bob was making village contacts, provided solitary time for Carol to be uninterrupted and to enjoy the beauty and quietness of the mountain village; it was not a time of fear, but a time of wonder and exploration!

Carol loved the village. She wrote to Margaret, “I feel joyous and thrilled. I will never love another village.”



## Chungcheongbuk Cluster

For our second year in South Korea, Bob and I lived in the village of **Ho Jeong il Ri** (il Ri means 1st village) by invitation of the villagers. (Carol was now in the Student House.) People working with us were six Koreans, either staff or interns, and two 9th graders: Sandy Lanphear and Sara Ennis. We all were housed in spare or storage rooms of the villagers. We shared a common kitchen and the office space in the village hall. For a short time, Bob and I slept in the office until we moved to share a family's small home nearby.



• the village hall where we cooked, ate, and had meetings

Ho Jeong il Ri, an HDP, was one of four small villages in the province of Chungcheong. It was located on the side of a mountain with access to only one road to the highway that led to Chongju, the nearest city. One of the partnering villages lay over the mountain. To get there, one had to walk on paths passing through fields of peppers, cabbages, spinach, soy beans, and other vegetables. I was familiar with these paths as I climbed them, with a village teenage boy, to teach ESL (English as a Second Language) after school in their village hall. To take another way meant to walk about three miles on the highway around the mountain, a longer trip and dangerous with speeding traffic.

In the fields seen from the paths we took, women were often bent over, planting rice shoots in the watery flat land, and washing their clothes in the rocky stream that ran through the village. I had • worked with village women on the ground, sorting tobacco leaves that others tied in bundles and hung in sheds to dry. One time, I sat with them on my haunches to lay out red peppers on mats to dry in the sun; that didn't last long as my eyes soon were filled with tears and my nose was running. To wipe a tear only meant many more tears.

...



The people were poor. They heated their homes with wood gathered from the mountainsides; their only cow shared a small space beside their houses. Their small houses had an open attached kitchen, one family room for eating and sleeping, and a storeroom for their rice and peppers. They did almost all their farm work manually; men, women and children hand-planted rice and other crops. Each village had a small store which had been a part of a previous Human Development action plan. No one had a car, a few had

bicycles, and very few had working telephones. Fortunately, they had electricity, and the village hall had a water system.

We saw ourselves as catalysts of change, helping the villagers carry out their plans in Ho Jeong il Ri, and also in the three neighboring villages. Each village consisted of 25 to 75 families. All were engaged in farming the land that surrounded the villages.

A turning point happened in one night meeting of eight leaders from each of the four villages. It was late in the fall; the weather was cold and the village hall needed to be heated. We arranged a circle of tables and chairs facing a large chalkboard. The leaders had walked from their villages after they had finished their farm work and chores. By then it was about 9 o'clock.

Our Korean staff had been trained by us to lead meetings. Park Yung Chul, a young Korean and the best-trained ICA member, listened and recorded the complaints the leaders brought to the meeting, about how the ICA hadn't brought the money for development that they had expected after hearing about Koh Du e Ri. Park Yung Chul turned the focus of the meeting, asking the leaders to list their possibilities, not what they wanted us, or others, to do for them. At first the answers were, "We have done all we can do; we have no other possibilities. We have no money."

My role at this time was to keep moving the two kerosene stoves around so the heat was shared; I also served hot tea. I could read their negative body language and could hear the despairing tone of their voices as they got quite loud.

Gradually, the chief of the Moon Pak village suggested that they could raise black goats together as a

community project rather than by each family, or only by families who could afford it. That started a series of questions...how to do what was needed. This leader offered that there was money in the village but it belonged to individuals or to several little clubs, such as the women's club, the young men's club, the agricultural club, or the education club. "If we would be willing to pool our treasuries, we could purchase the goats, raise them, and make money for the village."

I was sitting next to an ICA staff member, In Suk Park; she whispered a translation of each idea in English so I could take notes. The meeting ended after midnight with every leader going home with a practical plan for income generation in their particular village.



• Ri chief and family, Debra and I,  
in Moon Pak when Debra was visiting us later



But that was not all. After another day had passed, the chief of the Moon Pak village told us that on his own, he had invited all the adults of his village to do their own follow-up plan the next evening. They had packed together in the storeroom of their small store. At that meeting, they had come up with other ideas and had gotten consensus on their action plan.



What we heard the most about was their decision to build a • bridge across the river that separated one part of the village from the other. Having no bridge had been a serious handicap when the river was full and they had to go miles out of the way to get to the other part of their farm land. The government would give them free cement and the villagers would donate their labor.

At the end of the season, they celebrated their accomplishments with a program on the finished bridge, and a feast with singing and speeches. They were given the Golden Shovel Award and extra money by the county government since the village had made the most progress in a year.

This has stayed with me as a miracle; a miracle of moving from paralysis to movement, from

impossibility to possibility. I am thankful to the Korean village people for demonstrating hope that is present everywhere.

...

At the beginning, we lived in the office/storage room of the village hall. As

winter came, we moved to a larger room of a village family, half filled with rice and dried hot peppers. Towards spring, our clay and straw walls began to crumble and mice came into the room. We tried to repair the walls with clay and straw, but that only broke down because the wet clay made the dry wall collapse. Eventually we rebuilt the wall with concrete, and covered the entire room, ceiling and walls, with good wallpaper. Very soon after that, the mother of the home got cancer, and the family needed the room for her recovery.



• *second door to the right was our first home in Ho Jeong il Ri*

The village children took a bus to a school in the nearby city after walking a half mile to the main road. The people shared the dream that their children would be educated. All young men went into the military. Often after that, they went to work in factories in the city, and a few



went to college. The elders were concerned that their children would not stay around to carry on the farm work but they also wanted them to have a better life than they were having.

- *our first host family in Ho Jeong il Ri*

All the villages wanted their children to learn to speak English. I went with the teenage son of the Moon Pak chief to teach an ESL class in Gi Rae Ri, the third village that was over the mountain. The teenager wanted to practice his English as we walked. For me, it was a scary walk at night. I recall how he didn't want me to carry a flashlight even though we had to make our way on a narrow raised path between rows of cabbage and other greens growing on slender terraces. He encouraged me to place my hand on his shoulder. I soon learned to trust him and enjoy the walk in the natural light from the sky.

When Debra visited us in the last summer, she taught ESL in various villages of the cluster. She enjoyed this so very much. Perhaps this inspired her to teach ESOL (English for Students with Other Languages) to immigrants in Massachusetts as an adult.



The women of Ho Jeong e Ri wanted to have a project that would bring them money. They chose to raise baby chicks which they later could eat or sell. They

asked our staff for help to start the business. To do this, a young Korean staff member and I went to Chongju city. We researched the cost of a crate of baby chicks and the cost of grain to feed them. We were wondering about whether they needed a fence so we went back to the village to ask. To our surprise, they proudly showed us their chicks running in the yard with the mother hens (from whom they had saved eggs for germinating). They were

being fed by seeds in the grasses and weeds from around their homes. These women decided that they could do this project together to increase their income. The research we had done about getting needed supplies from the city would have been too costly for them, but they had found a workable way instead! This kind of village development, self-motivated, and completed by them, was what we hoped for. I loved these people; I was pleased and

proud to live among them.

After our first host mother had surgery, another villager offered us a small room that also needed repair; • we wallpapered it while Debra was with us.

- *me in front of our wardrobe after all of our possessions are back in the room*



The very narrow room was only a step away from a rice field. One early morning as I left the room to go to the outhouse, I saw a huge spider web, as big as one of the walls. It was sparkling with dew. I told Debra to take a picture, which she did, and she made a drawing. Later, back home in Boston, she made linoleum block prints in a high school art class, inspired by her drawing.

### Escorting Orphans; Joining Daughters for Christmas

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You never really know what is possible.

We were living in the village of Ho Jeong il Ri during the winter of 1981. Our daughters were gathering for the holidays in Boston as Debra was in high school there. Three of her sisters would be joining her from Chicago, Hartford, and Iowa City; Nancy was in the Philippines and would not be able to join them.

We wanted to go to Boston too, and searched for an affordable way to travel there. We learned that we could get free air flights if we would accompany orphans back to the States. Various agencies were trying to help many orphans get passports and visas. We quickly sent in our applications and waited for an answer of acceptance. We were informed that only one of us could go free. We readily declined this offer, and made other plans to celebrate Christmas in Seoul with friends of a colleague, Diane Greenwald. We made a disappointing call to our daughters that we wouldn't be coming.

While in Seoul, we received a phone call. The adoption agency had been trying for some time to track us

down to urge us to carry children to the U.S.; they had learned they needed to use their visas before the end of the year. With this good news, we rushed back to the village to get our passports and suitcases.

At the Seoul airport, the agency was waiting for us with five orphan children (ages six months to four years), bags of supplies, milk, diapers, and changes of clothing.

Bob carried a child and held the hand of another; I carried one and a bag. Assistants helped get the other two on the plane. On the flight, two babies were put in small beds in front of us, others on our laps, seats, or laps of other passengers. The stewardess announced: "We have a large number of orphans aboard and will you all please assist in any way you can." Not only were we bringing orphans to the States, but two other agencies had brought the number on this flight up to thirteen, as I remember.



One of the three children I was responsible for looked especially fragile. Soon a nurse coming from the Philippines offered to hold and care for her. She did this the entire way. Another child slept in a little bed attached to the bulkhead most of the time. I held • a child who was about nine months old; he reminded me of Joe Lewis, the boxer. Bob cared for the oldest child, a boy, who refused to stay in his seat. He was carrying a toy truck that he swang at Bob and screamed, "No way!" in Korean, giving Bob a black eye.

Time progressed fairly peacefully until a stop in Tokyo when we all disembarked on the tarmac in a cold, cutting wind. Managing to carry all of the children at once was impossible, so again, the stewardess came

to the rescue with a sharp command, “Everyone who can, must pick up and carry a child!” This was helpful but caused me concern as a young, rather unkempt man, took a little girl under his arm and held her in a begrudging manner and walked a short way away to relieve himself.

We had to wait quite a while in the crowded airport, and the children were fussy. We used the opportunity to feed and change their diapers. On the plane later, we would change their clothes so they would be presented to their new parents at least clean, and hopefully happy.

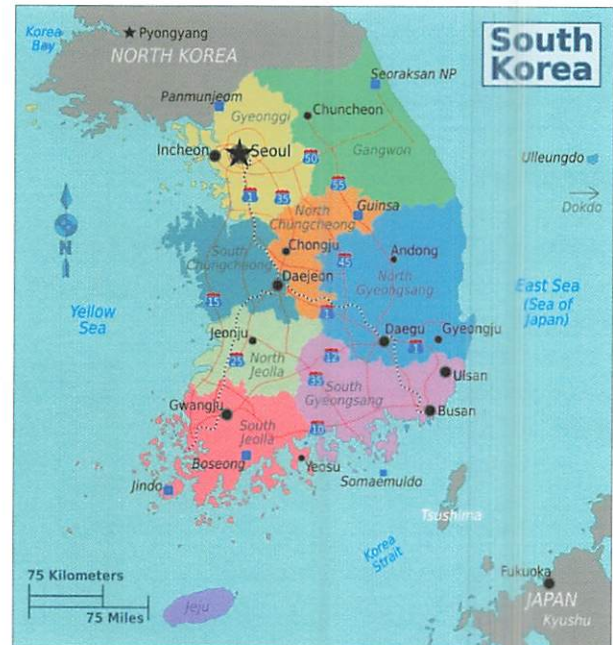
Arrival in Los Angeles was great! Before anyone was allowed to leave the plane, an army of social workers boarded, each to carry a child and their baggage out first. We were sorry we never saw the children again or got to meet their new parents. Instead we were given first class seats for the trip to Boston! One airline attendant said to us, “You deserve it.”

Celebrating Christmas with our four daughters in Boston was fantastic and restful.

On the return trip to Korea, Bob and I took separate planes so Bob could visit his parents in Florida, and I could visit my mother and brothers in Iowa. I was glad Dennis, my brother, drove me to the Sioux Falls’ airport on my way back to Korea. He died within six months before I would return.

## Bob

In the spring of ’81, I held Village Meetings in ten villages in • **Chungcheong**, the land locked central province in orange on the map.



• We lived in the green and orange provinces;  
map by Peter Fitzgerald, South Korea regions, wikimedia.org



Four villages decided to go on a journey similar to what they learned had taken place in Koh Du e Ri in Kang Won Do. I went with their • Ri chiefs to Chongju to buy goods for the new village stores.

Before the move to Ho Jeong Il Ri, Muriel and Carol went to the States. Carol into the Student House, Muriel went for a time to visit with Debra in Denver when Margaret was also visiting.



During that time, the 8th grade girls of Ho Jeong il Ri came up the lane from their school bus one day to find me washing my laundry in the village stream, and said, “Mr. Griffin, you cannot do that!”

“Why not?” I replied, thinking it might be to keep laundry soap out of the stream.

“Men do not do that work. We will do it for you,” they let me know. A lesson in a new way in Cheon Buk village: I did complete my own laundry.

By the time Muriel returned from the U.S., we had been given a washing machine by the women of the Presbyterian church in Chongju. Later they brought health supplies while dressed in their Sunday best, walking on the gravel roads.

Muriel and I, with Park Yung Chul and his wife In Suk, the Min family of four, Ms. Oh Hae Suk, and Miss Han became the staff resource for the Nang Sung Myeon HDP living in Ho Jeong il Ri and working also in Ho Jeong e Ri, Moon Pak Ri, and Gi Rae Ri.

I learned to write • the Korean alphabet from my colleagues.

Korean Alphabet													
Consonants													
ㄱ	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄹ	ㅁ	ㅂ	ㅅ	ㅇ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅋ	ㅌ	ㅍ	ㅎ
g,k	n	d,t	r,l	m	b,p	s	ng	j	ch	k	t	p	h
							↑						
silent in initial position													
ㄲ	ㄸ	ㅃ	ㅆ	ㅉ									
kk	tt	pp	ss	jj									
Vowels													
ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ	ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ	ㅜ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅣ				
a	ya	eo	yeo	o	yo	u	yu	eu	i				
father	saw	home	moon	put	meet								
ㅘ	ㅙ	ㅚ	ㅜ	ㅝ	ㅞ	ㅟ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅢ				
ae	yae	e	ye	wa	wae	oe	wo	we	wi	ui			
hand	set					wet							

## Edmonton, Alberta, Canada 1982-86

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### *Muriel*

In 1982, when all the girls were all in the States...going to high school or college...we moved to the • Edmonton House in Alberta, Canada. The ICA was hosting the International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD) in New Delhi, India, in 1984 and we needed to locate, document, and help send ten representatives from Canada. We had the responsibility and pleasant opportunity to travel around western Canada to find and document *Sharing Approaches That Work* in local communities and to choose those for the IERD. We lived and worked with Bill and Ilona Staples, a creative Canadian couple. Bill was a leader who saw possibility everywhere and found ways to engage people and communities in our mission. Our house life was lively with humor and drama.

• *Edmonton House (the tan version is when we lived there, the red one is later when we visited with the Pogues on our Alaska trip)*

The 80's were a time of struggle both financially and socially for small rural communities. We were often told that no community was being successful, but as we held Town Meetings throughout the four western provinces, we found outstanding stories of local people bringing about important changes. It was amazing to learn what



communities can do when they work together for the good of all. We enjoyed hearing their stories.

Kipotakah was a Cree village of 712 people north of Edmonton. We were referred to the education program there, and learned how it had transformed their school, businesses, town appearance, and home

life. We had been urged to visit Kipotakah to see whether they would let us document what they had done as a community. Adelle Arcand, one of the leaders there, invited us to sit in her office, and she began telling her story. Adelle said, "I had to come

back to my people. We had to do something, or we would no longer be a people."

The education program was holistic, including a nutrition program for children, training for native teachers and other leaders, incorporation of native awareness into school and community events, and supporting economic programs with accountability. Leaders were trained to meet physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

After we heard of their community struggles and saw their success, we wanted to have





them be a part of sharing their story with the world, especially indigenous communities at the IERD. Sometimes, it was not easy for villagers to trust us to tell their concerns, and agree to have a Town Meeting.

This was true in Kipotakah too. We sat with the elders at a long table. They said nothing in response to our proposal. Finally one said, "Are you religious?" My teammate and I thought about how to answer this question. We had religious values and believed in showing them by accepting and respecting the values of people; so I answered, "Yes." The leader quietly said, "I thought so" and indicated they would not do business if we were dishonest.

Later, as we worked with them to document their story, they decided on an amazing and bold form for their presentation. They had a crew come in to make a movie entitled: *To Call An Eagle*. A live • bald eagle (borrowed from a U.S. movie studio) played a part. The eagle symbolized their community soaring to new heights. Seven representatives from the First Nations took the movie to India, and then continued to show it in aboriginal communities in Australia and South America afterwards. They were sharing the good news of hope and possibility. Everywhere they went, they told their story of working together with consensus to find ways to make a difference. This was our mission too. We were happy to support their plans and affirm their creativity.

...

From our office in Edmonton, we found other signs of hope. One was a Cooperative Rural Radio program in Manitoba that provided radio communication to low

population areas without it. We also visited a program far north in Alberta where high school students got English credit to teach their parents to read and write. We were able to document far more success stories than the Canadian committee could send to India.

...

We frequently had leadership training events in Imaginal Education. In one session, the native people taught us this: to receive creative responses from the group, go counter-clockwise around the room, and to get consensus, go clockwise. I observed in leading a guided imagery exercise that some folks made peace with their past and gained courage for their future. One man tearfully told of his experience in an imaginary visit with his grandmother; he had felt that he had failed her with the way he had lived, but now he got to tell her of his new resolve to change.



In another situation, a business man from Manitoba who had attended the IERD in India, told us what he had learned. He had watched villagers demonstrating their irrigation system of dipping water from a new well with a large leather bucket. He had realized that there was no way that all the fields would get water with this system. He asked, "How do you decide which farmer will get the water?" He received the answer, "Of course, the one who needs it most!"

The most frightening experience came while traveling far north to Ft. Vermillion and riding through a mountainous region where a new road was being constructed. A thaw was beginning and the road had become very slippery. Ahead of us, a car began to



swerve from side to side, and then turned over into a ditch. This warning prepared us to slow down considerably and we stopped to help the passengers. We took three native women who spoke little English to a small hospital in the next community.

We enjoyed traveling the miles, seeing the greatness of Canada, meeting people in fishing communities and on college campuses, and seeing folks creatively changing life in their communities. We saw women canning every kind of vegetable that matured in the short growing season. In dusty fields, we saw a demonstration of irrigation from processed sewage water. The summer sun seemed never to set, giving us sometimes only about three hours of darkness, and the winter sun was only briefly seen.



## A Room with a View

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At home in Edmonton, high on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River, we could watch the frozen river activities of dog sled races and cross-country skiing. With snow on the slopes, the people came with saucers and toboggans to take wild rides down toward the river. Our girls did this too when visiting. We took part in the best Winter Festival on the capitol grounds with ice sculptures, ice fairies dancing, and games on the snow.

We had heard about how cold it could get in Alberta. In our fourth year, the pipes froze. Water from the sink on the third floor ran down the walls of our second floor bedroom and into the washing machine in the basement.

In very cold times, we had to plug in the car to keep the radiator from freezing. We would even plug in at public parking spaces. One time, we were caught in a blizzard in Saskatchewan. At another time, we were snowed-in at a motel where we were holding a training program. It was late April, on my birthday.

Our daughters visited us for one week at Christmas in 1982. They came from five states and provided a lot of discontinuity. Nancy created a scavenger hunt throughout our huge house using clues from the book *Cannery Row*. We walked in and around the capitol in Edmonton, caught up on sharing experiences and concerns, and watched TV hockey games with famous Wayne Gretsky who we heard lived not far from us.

We exchanged gifts from things we had found at the local Goodwill Store. A memorable gift was a puzzle hand labeled, "Complete" which we were glad to know because used puzzles often have missing pieces. This one had *many* missing pieces; it was a box of Christmas light bulbs! Of course, we found them useful in decorating our tree.

There was time for • a trip to the Canadian Ice Fields. The view of the Athabasca Glacier was delightful in winter, and at night as well! Previously, Bob and I had ridden on the glacier bus. We got out and walked through the melting icy water on the glacier. We could see the layout of the mountain in the diorama in the visitor center. On the last visit to the spectacular Athabasca Glacier, we were so disappointed to see how far the glacier had receded.



While in Edmonton, our family wrote this song together:

### *The Great Griffin Family*

tune: Something to Sing About

*Our roots are in Iowa, heartland of quality,  
Workers in farmlands, in churches and schools;  
But we moved on to wider scenes,  
taking our many dreams  
To places that need us, we heard the call.*

*Yes, the great Griffin family has got a history,  
Also a present and a future that's wide open.  
Oh, the times we gather are fun,  
And though we still are one,  
We keep on growing, in different ways.*

*Some-times we thought about things that create a lot  
Of hope and caring and things of that sort,  
But maybe I am just one of that great joyful group  
Who can start caring, for the new world.*

*As we grew so did our world, spreading from Iowa,  
Chicago became home base, but never quite home.  
We went south and to the Orient,  
and covered the Continent  
We saw the promise that exists for the globe.*

*We have charted a course 'cross the passions  
that move men's minds,  
Deciding to face the challenges there.  
We will stand and support each one,  
along the path they choose  
And remain united in the care of the globe.*

...



## Christmas in Florida, 1983

When Carol was in Egypt, the rest of our family flew from various locations to be with us at Bob's parents' house. It was a time of unusually cold weather; oranges and grapefruit froze on the trees. We went out with long sticks to knock down grapefruit and to pick up oranges from the ground.

We put on our winter coats we had worn from Edmonton, and changed plans from going to the beach and Disneyland. It turned out to be a fine opportunity for the four girls to • make a quilt for us. They had brought cloth pieces and carefully laid them out on the floor in a "Trip around the World" design before sewing and hand-tying it all together.



## Bob

While visiting my parents in Florida, we decided to exchange gifts which we made for one another. After eliminating woodworking and other possibilities, I ventured to make • a needlepoint storyboard of each girls' life. I had learned to do needlepoint with my mother in childhood.

The piece of needlepoint plastic I had for each was 52 holes across and about 2.5 times more in the height (6" by 14"). I planned it all out: five or six rows would make a year and I would change the color for each place they lived. Council Bluffs was red, Des Moines was green, red/white/black represented Fifth City, etc. Their names were worked into the top in various letter styles. Each girl had two major symbols (Margaret: a family group + the globe, Laura: swimming pose with her partner + scales of justice, Debra: a bicycle + artist's painting pallet, Nancy: a writer's quill pen + drama masks for comedy and tragedy, and Carol: a horse + red cross).



I soon realized I could not finish the five storyboards before this Christmas but I was determined to finish their name plus the two major symbols. I made plans for the smaller symbols to highlight each year, indicating that place or time in their life, like the birth of a younger sister, the Iron Man in Fifth City, a black sombrero in the yellow band of Amarillo, and graduation from high school.

I asked for the storyboards back after Christmas and worked on them for '84 and then '85...often during the plane rides to



our family's gatherings. They were called the "gifts that keep on giving." Little did I know when I started creating them, what a project this would be!

*Carol remembers helping with her needlepoint. Dad also created a needlepoint for Grandma Hanna that said, "Is this flush necessary?"*

*- family memories about Dad/Bob, 11/15*



• Bob's "gifts that kept on giving", completed



*Muriel*

- Bob and Mom Hanna came to visit us in Edmonton too. Together, we travelled to see Lake Louise, the Athabasca Glacier, and many other mountainous scenes.

...

We got to know many outstanding and generous people in our four years. Wayne and Jane Kines who lived in Brandon, Manitoba, gave us the keys to their house for us to stay at any time as we were doing Town Meeting calls or for IERD documentation. Gay Burns, a Winnipeg artist and architect, not only shared his home but prepared fabulous breakfasts of pork chops or baked fish with vegetables, and evening dinners of delightful salads.

David Pogue generously contributed to our work; he was an employee of the tar sands company in Ft. McMurray. We became friends with him and his wife, Adelle, as well. We often played games and socialized together. They visited us in DC, Milton, and in 2007 during the time we lived in Easthampton, they invited us to ride with them from Calgary to Alaska on a three-week excursion, which we did. They visited us in Holyoke before David died in 2017.

## Christmas in Boston, 1984

### *Muriel*

Debra had busily prepared her Allston, MA apartment and the rooms of her absent Boston University roommates for the gathering of the Griffin family. The ceiling-high Christmas tree was decorated and she had hung her stocking on the center of the fireplace mantel. She slipped a knitted stocking on her right foot, adding a bit of frivolity for airport pickups.

Bob and I arrived first from Toronto, having been there for a meeting. Soon Debra's sisters began flying in; Carol was the first from DC but her luggage was late. Debra and Carol went to meet Margaret who got in at midnight from Des Moines; it was too late to take the Boston T (public train) back home to Allston. They considered taking a taxi but just then a friend saw Debra and called, "Hi, Debbie, what are you doing here?" With quite a supply of brassiness, she asked for a ride. He hesitated, "For the three of you and luggage too?" Debra assured him that there wasn't much, but then she added, "Just one more thing, can you drive us to check if Carol's luggage has come?" Even though he didn't show much pleasure in this request, he obliged, and Carol was able to quickly capture her bag.

Laura drove in from Hartford with her Pontiac convertible full of packages. She was proud of them;

she had spent a year creating, stitching, and weaving. She soon took over the food arrangements, getting ideas for menus, making lists, and helping to do the shopping.

I found a place where I could be useful, or so I thought, as I looked at the hardwood floor that would look better with a coat of wax. I cautiously asked

Debra if she would be offended if I mopped and waxed the floor. I got an immediate hoot of laughter! "My roommate had a dream that my mother would want to clean our apartment! Go for it!"



With a clean polished floor and the groceries carried in, delicious goulash was cooked, and

more packages were wrapped. Dad added his packages: "the gifts that keep on giving" in sizes 6 by 14 inches; we could guess what they were!

Nancy's plane was delayed by three hours in Pittsburgh coming in from Memphis. She had warned Debra we might not recognize her; Dad and Debra joked that she might look like a balding middle-aged man. No one met that description but something made Debra guess that a tall, thin woman in a brown and orange striped Egyptian galabeya, wearing large-rimmed glasses, hair done up in a white-beaded scarf with tufts of green hair protruding out on her forehead, wearing lavish costume jewelry, with a haughty parading style might be Nancy. Debra exclaimed, "Oh, no!" but embraced the "stranger" and escorted her on a journey of public transportation to the apartment.



The pre-Christmas festivities included our 26th wedding anniversary; we were gifted with sheets and pillow cases, Laura's college picture, Debra's artistic deep carving in cherry wood of a family tree with five branches, a pair of grey sweatpants for both of us, and a school picture of Carol.

Our time together included Christmas shopping, a meal at the famous "no name" restaurant for only \$18.30 for all seven of us, and more wrapping, bickering, and fun on that 24th day of December. Of course, arguments were made that there were too many presents so "some just needed to be opened!"

I had prepared to entertain by going through many years of letters from the girls; portions I had collected were read and this caused laughter, especially for Laura's excuse, "I wrote letters but they blew out of the mailbox."

A mystery game of Laura's kept four daughters searching for clues until 2 a.m. on Christmas day.

The gifts of Christmas day showed the creativity and hours of love put in by each person, and were received with a corresponding tribute of appreciation wrapped up with humor. There were • many gifts of clothing, books, games, paintings, weavings, embroidered pictures, stationery lovingly crafted, jewelry, kitchen supplies, and more. Dad got carefully chosen CDs, a latch hook hanging of the earthrise seen from space made by Laura, a special calendar/diary, a



game-board for chess, and Carol's own poetry. I also received many thoughtful and home-made gifts. As anticipated, Dad presented his on-going annual project of the needlepoint storyboards of each girl's life (getting Carol's finished with her help).

The days that followed were filled with projects: adjusting hems and making shelves for Debra's desk area which included designing, shopping for materials, sawing wood, and assembling the six shelves. We were entertained with Nancy's reading of stories, working on puzzles, and playing games. We reflected on 1984, both for the family and the world that included news of Apartheid in South Africa, Carol's return from Egypt, and our gathering in the Tennessee mountains with Nancy's volunteer work.

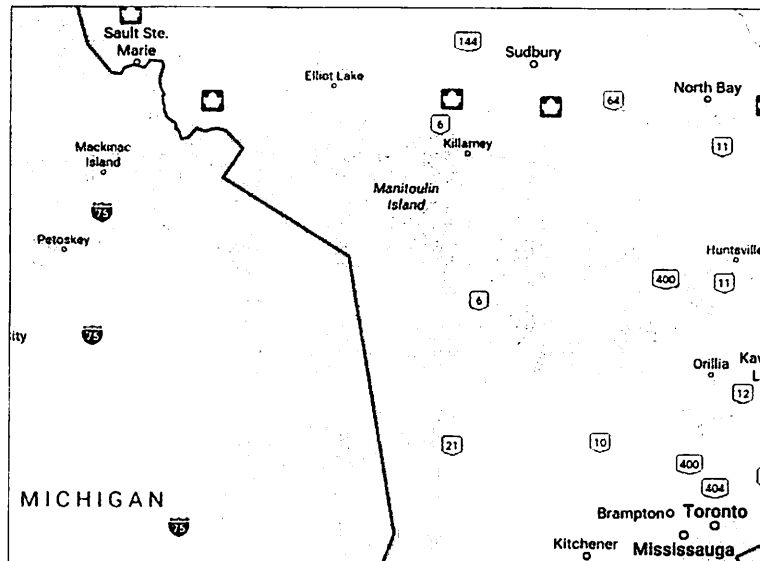
After Laura returned to work in Hartford, we went to see the movie, *Amadeus*, discussed it, and raved that it was a great movie. In the last afternoon, the girls got involved in their own drama. They began having whispered meetings and disappearing to the back bedrooms. At dinner, they requested "fifteen minutes" of our

undivided attention. It was then that their secretive behavior was revealed.

Their improvisational skit/game-show had Dad and me as "Longly-weds" of 26 years pitted against the Carters, an imaginative couple played by Carol and Nancy. The game was for us to match our mate's

answer to the questions Margaret quizzed us on, such as our mate's favorite foods and colors, and also serious questions like, "What didn't come off as expected at your wedding?" When any of our answers matched, we won a point. Bob and I ended up being the winners and were promised breakfast in bed. However, much better, we had a banquet style breakfast at the table.

Debra and Nancy escorted us to the airport by public transportation to return to Edmonton. It was a fantastic Christmas to remember.



## Vision Quest and a Broken Wrist

It was a cold, rather dreary, icy day when we started the new year of 1986. We traveled from Edmonton to join the members of the Toronto and Montreal Houses to go on a Vision Quest on • Manitoulin Island in Georgian Bay. (First Nations, indigenous to Canada, had a myth that this was where life began.) We stayed in a retreat house to see the New Year enter, and then walked to a sacred place where a representative of the First Nations was going to lead us in a Vision Quest meditation. We were seeking wisdom for the coming year as we anticipated changes from the completion of the research of *Sharing Approaches That Work* which led to the IERD in India.

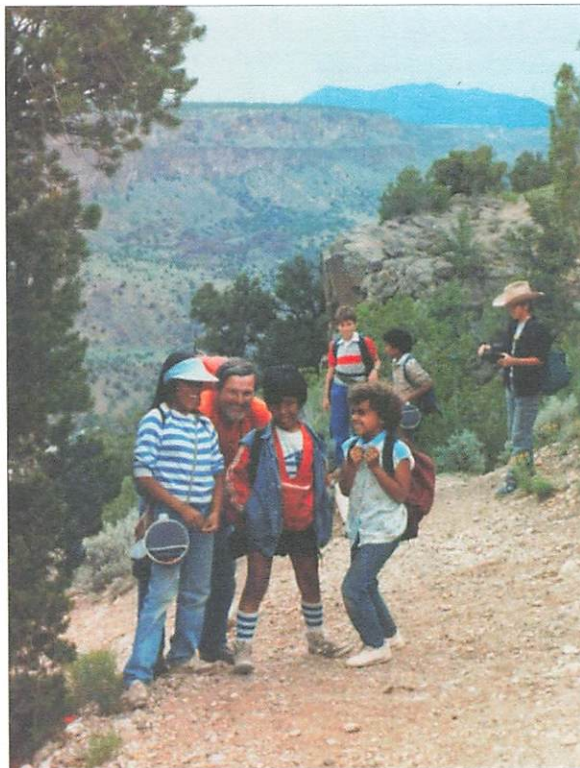
As we walked on the bumpy, icy, and unpaved road, I slipped and fell, breaking my right wrist. A nurse was walking beside me; she immediately folded a handy newspaper and made a splint for my whole arm. Also, fortunately, a park ranger was there to take me to a nearby clinic. It was open, not busy, and soon I had a cast applied. Nevertheless, that didn't stop the pain, and I missed the meditation and most of the discussions, planning, and celebration of the Vision Quest.

Back in Edmonton, the bone healed well and after about four to six weeks, I got a soft cast; I felt so pleased to become active again and joined in a celebratory square dance while in Toronto for a meeting. When a partner clapped my upraised hands in the dance steps, my wrist broke again! A doctor did not think it wise to reset the bone; this resulted in a lasting marble-sized bump protruding on my right wrist. Since it doesn't hurt, I live with it.



## Camping in New Mexico

In the summer of 1986, for a summer assignment, Bob and another ICA member drove a van with their team of ICA 5th graders from Chicago to the • Sangre de Cristo Youth Ranch at El Prado, NM. This was owned by a colleague, Dr. Bud Wilson, who had a passion for youth to live outside and experience nature. The camp was located on a high plateau above the Rio Grande. About 15 youth were to spend one month working together to care for one another and practice survival skills.



They were awakened each morning by Bud's son blowing his shrill Mexican whistle. They shared responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, gathering wood, and leading the program. Local teachers came to teach them about nature on the mountain, the history of the area, and how to survive. Sometimes youth from the nearby pueblo joined them; one 8th grader took part throughout the month. The people of the pueblo also invited the campers to participate in their annual Corn Dance.

Another experience was hiking down to the river as a preliminary step to much more hiking. The team learned how the ancient Mexican farmers built the irrigation system to hold water on the plateau. It was an open trench for bringing water from the mountain for their grain, vegetables, and grazing land. They

learned how the current farmers share the use of the water by taking turns receiving it from the trench.

On an overnight hike to the top of the mountain, the group leaders tried to have llamas carry packs of sleeping bags and supplies. The llamas rebelled and showed their displeasure by spitting. (The llamas belonged to a neighboring family.)

Bob wanted me to share the scenery and experience, so after Bob returned to Chicago, we went back there enroute to our home in Edmonton. Bud and his wife hosted us then in their

intriguing adobe home which they had built themselves on the plateau.

...



• Canada trip with Debra, we went from Expo '86 in Vancouver to Ottawa, right before we moved to DC

## Washington, DC 1986-94

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### *Muriel*

A phone call came from Carol while we were living in Edmonton; she said, "If you want to live with one of your daughters while in high school, this is your last chance. You could ask for an assignment to the DC House." Carol had been living there for her sophomore and junior years. As Order policies for assignments had become more flexible, we decided to ask...and our request was granted!

We, the • staff of the ICA, lived in a former Catholic convent in northeast DC. The first floor was for corporate life and offices, the second was for family living, and the third we rented to students and others needing a home.

The DC House's mission was to the initiate Training Inc. program which provided basic training in various office skills, and how to live a wholesome life in body, mind, and spirit. Adult students received a comprehensive education that included social effectiveness, financial planning, personal budgeting, dress appropriateness, and everything to help them be ready to maintain a job in society.

The DC House members needed to design the curriculum, hire teachers, get sponsors, find and equip the training center, do development to fund it, and recruit the students through references from Social Services.

Training Inc. was located in the heart of the city, within sight of the Capitol. The adult trainees had histories of prison life, homelessness, drug and alcohol addictions, and poverty.

Bob and I worked in development to fund Training Inc. as it was a non-profit program. We set up appointments and went on visits in a wide area around DC, including Pittsburgh, PA.

We had to keep our living costs in the House low, as our time and energy was needed for the work of starting Training Inc. We could get in-kind (free and available) food from the city wholesale market; here we found in the midst of crates and boxes of vegetables and fruits, some very good food that had been discarded because of damage or partial spoilage.



...



The DC House was almost a perfect place to be able to live, work, and have celebrations. In the large former chapel, we had special programs; there we had the celebration for Carol and Jane's graduation from The School Without Walls, and Daudi's from a Catholic high school. (Jane Sharp and Daudi Barnes were other ICA youth living in the DC House.) We decorated the room with a paper river running down the center, marking the flow of their HS lives with symbols of their school activities.



• Halloween party

The biggest event we hosted was in memory of Joseph Mathews, the Order's founder, who had died ten years previously. More than 75 guests squeezed around tables placed in our long hallway which ran the entire length of the first floor.

For another big event we were enabling, I was asked to keep 100 geranium plants alive and blooming for about six weeks into the summer when these plants might not be available. These were to be center-pieces/table decoration. They were placed outside and I watered them daily and removed the dead blossoms. They survived!

...

Bob helped to line up and train the facilitators of 14 workshops for the Soviet/American Summit in DC. During the conference, a surprise snowstorm occurred. At the end of the day, Bob was unable to get public transportation. Although not dressed for the cold stormy weather, he managed to walk several miles to get home.

In our second year, I needed to find a job to help support the DC House. Susan Craver, through her connections at Foundry UMC, recommended that I apply to be director of the Preschool...which I did and I got the job.



• ready for Sunday evening House Church with guests

...



• *Bob's 54th birthday party, Laura on the right, Debra is behind the camera*

While working multiple jobs in Boston, Debra herniated a disk in her back due to twisting while unloading heavy boxes. She had to take a semester away from Boston University to heal naturally because none of us wanted her to have to have surgery. She stayed with us for a semester, mostly in bed recuperating, reading, and working on organizing Bob's stamp collection. I was glad that I could drive Debra to a swimming pool for her exercises that were part of her recovery program. I think this was a wise decision as she got better in time and didn't need fusion of the vertebrae.



## Trips to Gettysburg

In 1988, Margaret, Dennis, and Dennis' teenage children, Amy and David, came to DC from Iowa. Together we went to Gettysburg. We stood in a theatre to watch the dioramas of the battle of Round Top move around us, rode through miles of statues of Civil War leaders, walked in the cemetery, and had a picnic in a park. David said: "It was the most positively outstanding experience of my life."

Previously in 1987, Susan Craver, a friend and ICA colleague who had grown up in Gettysburg, invited us (along with other members of the DC House) to her home in Gettysburg. While there, we joined the July 4th crowds along a parade route as groups of school children marched while carrying flowers from their gardens to decorate the graves, just as Susan had done as a child. We followed the parade to the Gettysburg National Cemetery. We watched in silence as the different classes dispersed to place flowers on each of the ground level gray granite markers with the name of a Union soldier who was buried there. At the

ceremony, we listened to the address of Abraham Lincoln recited by an able impersonator. We followed this by walking and driving among the statues of Union Civil War generals and monuments to the states that had participated in the war; at the Museum we sat in the huge circular theater to observe the diorama of real-life battle scenes. Remembering the horrors of the Civil War, and feeling the gratitude for the



outcome, was a fitting way to observe the holiday. (We are now more aware as white people, that many black and brown people are still not independent and free, due to racial injustices.)

## Eviction and Rescue

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The DC House was renting from Catholic University. In 1988, they wanted the building for their use and threatened us with an eviction. We contested that it was our home, and we had always paid the rent on time, but we lost the legal battle. We were unable to find another place to fit all of us, and thought we wouldn't be evicted until we could, but we were wrong. With no warning of the exact day, an eviction crew came early one September morning, and moved everything onto the street. We loaded in our cars as much as we could, but most of the possessions of the 30 residents ended up along the streets. Fortunately, our silverware chest (a wedding gift) and some good clothing were retrieved from over a block away just before dark. Our ward counselor found youth and other helpers to guard our stuff on the streets during the night.

It was dark when our dear colleague, Ault Nathanielz from Bethesda, MD, drove up to help load some of our belongings that we couldn't fit in our car, and invited us to spend the night in their home; he put our mattress on the top of his car. They invited us to stay with them for several days while we looked for a place

to live. Other members of the House also stayed with colleagues, or in a motel.

The next day, members of the House picked up our furniture, kitchen equipment, and other goods (which were scattered over a four-block-area), into a U-Haul and stored them on the second floor of an old warehouse.

This was a very depressing experience that I hope no one else has to go through.



After a few weeks, we learned of a house in **DuPont Circle** that would be available for a year until it would be sold. The two story white-stone, a one-time grand building, was in much need of repairs and paint. The rooms were adequate for our family that included Carol and Nancy, two women Order interns, and two House members, Leonard Sizer and Richard Funk. The Sharps, also members, found rooms across the street, and others also found homes.

- *our room on the 2nd floor, on the right*

Seven helpful colleagues, therefore called the Band of Seven, enabled much of this and also obtained the warehouse space where we had time to sort the belongings that we found. Everyone found that some of their valuables had been taken while out on the streets. Objects of all kinds from the basement that had belonged to past residents were mixed in with our current clothes, personal items, and office supplies.

Sorting the stuff was often laughable, but more realistically, unpleasant, frustrating, and time consuming. We discovered after some time that the contents of the freezer had not all been taken by scavengers. We located decayed meat by the stench that remained and the flies that had found it. We also noticed that some furniture provided a bed for homeless visitors and our sorted piles were often rearranged.

Our first activities in our new home were to make the place livable by cleaning everything, and putting buckets under the most serious leaks before making temporary ceiling repairs. Bob and I claimed two of the apartments; we slept in the most deteriorated back apartment and used the front with its • comfortable, bay window area for our living room. Carol and Nancy had a room in the basement.



The DuPont Circle area was a beehive of people going to the many ethnic restaurants. We could always find a different culture to learn about whenever and wherever we went. We had a view of the alley and activities behind a restaurant from our back room; we saw leftovers thrown into a dumpster and we watched as men stopped to pick up parts of chicken or leftover roasts for a meal.

Some members of our church, Foundry United Methodist Church, had heard of the eviction in the news and were sympathetic. The Board of the Foundry Preschool where I worked, allowed me to have some time off to get resettled. We felt that others had no idea of the upset that an eviction causes in life.

...

We were engaged in the life of our churches, along with Order life. Bob went to Foundry and the Asbury UMC. Hosted by both churches, we took part in the Partnership Way forums: Black/White and Male/Female Relationships (sharing resources we used in the ICA). We went on retreats with groups in the church that included meditation, great conversations, and planning for our work.

We found we could continue living a good life while living in temporary arrangements. DuPont Circle was a suitable home for seven or eight months.

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## Moving to the Whitecroft on Longfellow Street

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In the summer of 1989, we heard of the formation of the • Whitecroft Coop; 30 rental apartments at 1301 Longfellow St. NW were being sold and the staff of the DC House had the opportunity to buy several of the units. Bob and I decided to buy two small adjoining apartments on the second floor. Leonard bought one apartment on the first floor with the ICA buying that adjoining one for our collegium and House Church use.

Bob and I chose to rebuild our kitchen to make it more convenient for us, turning an L-shape into a U-shape design. Bob made this possible by reducing the depth of the workspace. He also built library cupboards in the hall connecting the two apartments, giving our home a 2nd large bedroom (or living room) with a 2nd bathroom. Carol and Nancy lived in this room from time to time until they moved to Davis, CA. We liked our new apartment with its many windows; we had a view of the courtyard and the city, and could see the Capitol in the winter when the trees were bare.



Our double-sized condo provided adequate space to have guests. There was an effort in our church for members to get to know one another. One evening we hosted a get-together in our home. Bob and I had been given a list to personally invite those living within our own zip code. The response was surprising, and our second large living space was comfortable with these 20 guests.

The formation of the Coop Association was not always pleasant; the former renting members seemed to find it hard to be homeowners and agree on how to make joint agreements concerning the whole building. The Association never sold all of the units which placed a burden on each of the members. Bob served on the board, and I interviewed new applicants, so we got to know everyone.

When we moved to Iowa, we rented out our condo until we were able to sell it. Finding and keeping responsible renters was largely a frustrating, unhappy, and unprofitable experience.

## Going Out for My 60th Birthday, 1990

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The girls had all come to visit us in the Whitecroft Coop for my birthday. We had gotten the many changes completed to the apartment and it was a pleasure to show it off. I had quality time with each daughter while the others found things to do together. I tried to learn where we would be going for dinner, but Bob kept that a secret. In leaving, it was strange for me that he wanted to go out a side door from the basement (something we never did).

*The basement!* That was the secret. While I had been visiting with one daughter after another, the others were preparing lots of party food in another apartment or cleaning up a large open space in the basement. And cleaning it needed! It had been unused, was filthy, and piled with junk. The whole space was cleaned, carefully partitioned off with new white sheets hanging from wires, and decorated with plants and pictures. Tables and chairs had been set up.

Bob had invited members of the Coop and ICA friends. The girls had planned the program with songs, poetry, and best wishes. I recall a long timeline being produced; Bob was good at this! There were 25 guests waiting for me; all joined in making this a spectacular birthday celebration.

## *If You Hadn't Made Your Choices*

by Nancy E. Griffin for Mom, 1990

tune: If

*If you hadn't made your choices  
and instead just stayed at home,  
raising lots of chickens,  
choosing not to roam.*

*Then I wouldn't have considered  
other things that I might do  
like becoming a pharmacist  
preventing the spread of flu.*

*So thanks so much for helping me to see  
a different way my life could be.*

*If you hadn't come to Hong Kong  
and rejected a roof with leaks  
or decided that our meals  
would not consist of chicken feet.*

*Then we wouldn't have had the better home  
that you went out and found  
or earned some extra money  
from selling chicken feet around.*

*So thanks so much for helping bring to be  
such improvement, we all agree.*

*If you hadn't shown by example  
how to take everything life brings  
and change what's not that pleasant  
to something awe-inspiring.*

*Then we wouldn't see the options  
We would settle for what is  
But instead we do consider  
What else to do with this.*

*So thanks so much for showing us so well  
The story can be different to tell.*





### Mom Hanna's Forest Picture Comes to DC

I had shown pleasure in • a picture that Mom Hanna had had in her home for a long time. It was an oil painting of a forest path. She had gotten it while she lived in Florida, and when we were living in the Whitecroft Coop, she decided to bring it as a gift. This had not been easy. On her way from Ames to the airport the taxi had car problems. She waited in the cold wind by the highway with the picture until a replacement for the taxi came. She was very concerned about checking it on her flight so she got permission to take it onboard. It arrived safely after all that.

We have taken it to six successive homes and now enjoy it where it hangs at the end of the hallway in our Holyoke home.



### My Job as the Director of Foundry Preschool

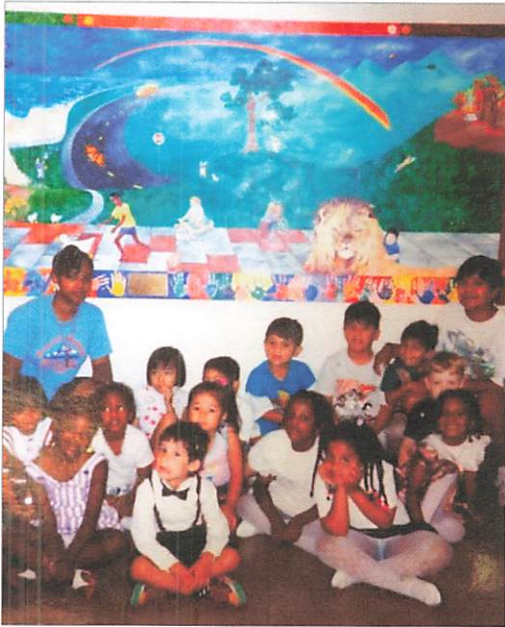
While I was the director, the preschool grew from 36 to 42 children (mainly newcomers from Caribbean countries who spoke Spanish, and others who came from West African countries). I took Spanish lessons and could communicate "un poco." I often had to hire new teachers, aiming to have a bilingual person in each classroom team. We were open 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. with classroom teaching from 9 to 3; the rest of the time was for supervised play in our gym or on the public playground next door.

All employees either had previous teacher training or obtained it on weekends, as training was necessary to become fully accredited. One teacher, Esther W, had been there for years but was never able to reach this accomplishment nor was she able to do her part as a co-teacher. The Foundry Preschool Board and I felt we needed to dismiss her. She filed an age and race discrimination lawsuit against Foundry UMC as she was in her 50s and black. The church, after some negotiations, decided to settle out of court. It was a messy situation. I was very sorry about this; I had wanted Esther to be able to accomplish the teaching

standard, understand the need for the requirements, and not lose her job. I also didn't want to be thought of as being racist.

• *me leading a staff meeting*

Despite this disappointment, I was very proud of the quality of our preschool, and the service to the new immigrant community nearby. I served as director for six years until we moved to Iowa in 1994.



- Debra painted a large 4x8 foot, four season mural in the preschool and helped the children print their hands across the bottom

## Invaluable Friends

Harriet Tyson • was on the Board of the Preschool. When Foundry Church was involved in the racial and age discrimination lawsuit, Harriet became a most helpful friend to me. She walked me through several steps in searching for, and organizing, required information for the lawyers.



We spent hours together in the evenings and Saturdays. She involved her husband, • Bill Willcox, who was also a retired lawyer, to give me advice. I recall and value a very supportive letter he wrote on my behalf.

After the lawsuit, we were often guests in their home and enjoyed her gourmet cooking which she delighted in doing. Their guest room on the lower floor always seemed available to us after we moved to Iowa, and when we had to return to DC for our business of renting, or trying to sell, our Coop apartment. They visited us in Indianola and joked about the empty streets that we had described as the busiest in the town. They both read a lot; we shared many book and newspaper discussions, and political opinions. She died from cancer in 2010 after suffering for over a year.





## Bob's 60th Birthday in Ottawa, Canada, 1992

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Bob wanted to celebrate his 60th birthday abroad and we chose Canada. Wayne Kines, an ICA colleague from Brandon, Manitoba, arranged for us to stay at the home of a friend in Ottawa. It had an outdoor hot tub, thermostats in every room, and a kitchen.

We all gathered by different means. Some flew, while Debra and Carol drove up from Massachusetts. They found French confounding while trying to navigate the back roads and highways in Ontario; they saw signs with Owest but read it as Quest; not knowing that Owest meant west, they looked on their maps to find the city of Quest. Unsuccessful with that, they finally found their way and arrived late at night.

We went to the amazing Native American Indian Museum, designed by famous Doug Cardinal whom Bob had met in Alberta. We also went to many scenic places, government buildings, and • had our pictures taken, often with Steve, Debra's boyfriend at the time, holding all of our winter coats.



## A Separation for Work, 1993-94

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When Training, Inc. was fully functioning, Bob volunteered to work with United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for nine months in Ottumwa, Iowa. This was in response to a need to rebuild after massive flooding there.

During these months, he tried to come home monthly as I stayed and worked in DC. One time when he was home, we went on a retreat with the DC House members. On a pleasant walk in the morning with Bob, I slipped on a small stone and cracked a bone in my left wrist. It needed a cast but it was not serious. Bob took our only car back to Iowa as I always took the bus to the Preschool; I felt I could manage getting about with public transportation on the 16th Street bus.

Fortunately, Alice Rose, a friend the age of our daughters, needed a place to live in DC and I was pleased to have her live with me. She helped with meals and was an enjoyable companion. I recall watching O. J. Simpson's long escape ride, and doing many other activities with her. Also during this

time, I joined the Disciple Bible Study group at Foundry, held on Monday nights. I was able to do this as Carolyn Wogaman, our pastor's wife, was willing to give me a ride.

## Trip to California

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As Christmas neared in 1993 we flew to meet in Dallas, Bob from Ottumwa, and I from DC. It was good to be together again. We continued on to California to be with Carol and Nancy in their home shared with Larkspur Morton in Davis.

We enjoyed Christmas and became better acquainted with their work which we visited during our stay. Carol assisted with managing the cheese department of the Davis Food Coop, and Nancy worked with boys in a group home. Nancy was very concerned about Justin, one of the youngest boys there (six years old). He had a particularly hard time of living peacefully and happily with others. Justin's parents never visited him so Nancy frequently had him stay with her during holidays.



Nancy continued to • visit Justin when he moved to other group residences. She even applied to be a foster parent in order to provide a home for him. This involved changing her career, moving to another city, getting a larger apartment and furnishing it, and getting a car. This never worked out. When Justin

became 18, he moved to Idaho but Nancy stayed involved in his life and sometimes visits him there.

Carol volunteered at times to care for birds of prey at the Raptor Center. It was interesting and informative to watch Carol take care of the raptors, many of whom could not return to the wild because of injuries. She • showed us how she was training a Swainsons Hawk to sit on her fist; this would enable him to be shown to educational groups.



...



## Bob

Did construction projects: hallway storage, kitchen redesign, bedroom closet in the condo.

Helped to furnish Training Inc. (1986-87)



- me working on Training Inc. plans

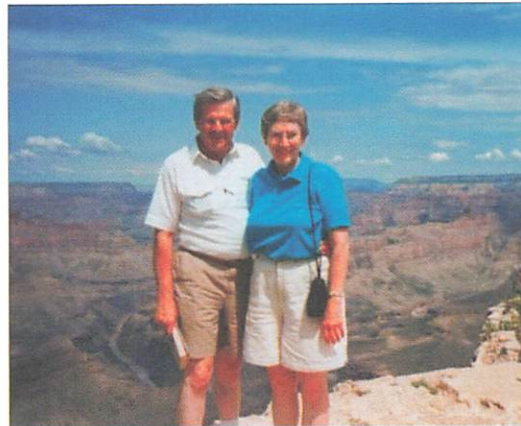
## About Dad

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- *his mother cut his pony tail; he had grown it for his 60th year (1992) as a sign of an elder, but she didn't like it so she cut it*
- *was a member of Asbury United Methodist Church, a historically black congregation*
- *worked on the Appalachian Trail with Nancy in Virginia for a weekend (between '89-'91); helped to repair a cabin, slept in it*

- family memories about Dad/Bob, 11/15

- Muriel and me at the Grand Canyon on a trip with Margaret, May 1992



## Ottumwa, IA 1993-94

### Bob

July 4, 1993, a third of Iowa was flooded with heavy rains and rivers overflowing. I phoned Don Carver in Ottumwa and asked if there were ways I could be helpful. He said if I had a month, or a year, he could see many ways I could help. I should contact the Volunteer in Mission section of the Board of Missions. After that call to them where I heard I could definitely be useful, I flew into Des Moines over miles of water-covered farm land.



The computer games Solitaire and Minesweeper are satisfying for me because they manifest the two dynamics of my life. Solitaire is like life in that you get the hand you are dealt. You play it out and either win or lose...but it is "in the cards" from the moment a hand is dealt. Minesweeper responds to the deductive nature of my thinking; there are only a few times when rationality cannot win, and then you must gamble on one or the other. At least, I leave all of those guesses until the very end of each time of playing.

For nine months I worked out of Ottumwa, positioning volunteers who came from Iowa and 11 other states, as far as New York, Mississippi, and Texas. We worked to re-enable some of the 1000 homes that were destroyed in the four counties above and below Ottumwa. I searched out the homes where the owners were ready for work. The volunteers stayed in Methodist churches and prepared their own food.

January of 1994 was below zero when 11 volunteers from Philadelphia arrived to work. They were the most professional team we had. The house we were working on • had to be completely gutted, even including the outside sheeting in a few places. At noon, the electrician said, "I cannot do this wiring if I cannot think and I cannot think at this temperature!" Over lunch, they went to town and rented a space heater, enabling electrical work, insulation, and sheet rock to proceed smoothly.

...

That was part of the reason Solitaire filled so much of my time in those night time hours when I lived alone...continually redealing to see if the NEXT hand would be a winning hand, and usually it was, at least in no more than three or four times of dealing!

...

Muriel and I got to see each other once each month as I flew, or drove, back to DC, plus the Christmas/New Year break when we flew to Sacramento, CA, by way of Dallas/Ft. Worth. Once, the drive was to take back the Saturn S1 to Muriel after I had bought the Saturn SW to help with hauling: i.e. 500 pounds of potatoes needed for the victims of the flood.

...

Co-working with the pastors of neighboring churches during my flood recovery work, and experiencing the relevance of the church for their communities, was a



big part of our sense of call to return to ministry in Iowa in July of 1994.

My Letter to Muriel, April 23, 1994:

*I love you, miss you, need you when:  
There are so many ideas, things about life, which would benefit from your in-depth, sensitive, loving reaction.*

*There is beauty in a sunrise, in the night sky, in the swoop of pelicans down the river...so many exclamations to be shared...but, behold, I am there alone.*

*There are miles to cross and they can only be crossed by myself, and there is a program, radio broadcast, performance, movie to be appreciated, absorbed, and reflected upon.*

*I am attempting to go to sleep without you beside me: my body craves for its 'Other Half', the 'missing piece.'*

*My mind, my thinking, needs the stimulus and challenge of your push, depth, and insightful input.*

*Something I am reading, a new book, a significant magazine article, a passage of scripture, would benefit from "talking it through"... sharing it ... checking if it is really that important.*

*I am lazy in not looking for new ideas, fresh possibilities, untried directions.*

*I forget to care for my spirit and am self-centered in not considering these needs for those around me and for the ones I love the most, my family members.*

*My anger boils up due to the stupidity of a driver near me on the road, the inadequacy of service provided in society, the thoughtlessness of some other stress-laden person.*

*I love you, I long to be with you...not just for short periods, but all the time on a daily and in a regular way. I love you, Bob*

## *Muriel*

I flew out to Ottumwa at Easter and had the opportunity to visit with Bob, and see his work with teams, among the carnage and recovery of the flood of the previous year. In the evening, we visited together with • Wesley and Eileen Chidester whom Bob had become friends with during this time.



They were looking dejectedly at the options for their summer cottage on the Des Moines River. They questioned whether it was worth the time and money, and even how it could be made livable again. Bob had a volunteer team coming, and needed to hear from Wesley what he wanted them to do.

As we sat together at their kitchen table, Bob kept them thinking about possibilities and sketching plans for what they hoped for. Bob saw how important this home was to their wellbeing as their house in the city got uncomfortably hot during the summer. At times, they could see the light. At other times, they wanted to give up. Bob knew how much they wanted to restore their cottage, but they seemed overwhelmed by the complexity of their life. At nearly midnight, they decided to take on the challenge to rebuild, and do it more simply, often with reused material.

My next visit with the Chidesters was in the summer a year later. I saw in-progress what they had dreamed of. We sat on the upper level of the cottage • that was almost restored. Eileen had carefully planted flowers amidst groupings of rocks and stones. Picnic chairs and tables were set around a fire pit. Birds flitted above in the remaining big trees or at one of the unique bird houses their daughter had made. At the edge of the river, Wesley had a line in the water waiting to catch a fish.

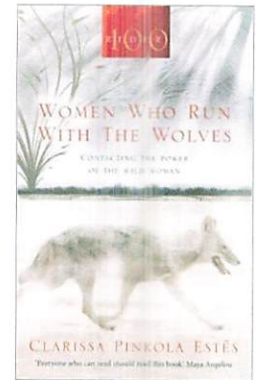
*“It is difficult to say what is impossible,  
For the dream of yesterday, is the hope of today,  
And the reality of tomorrow.”*

- Robert H. Goddard



Near a cleared area, there was a tangled mess of rubble waiting to be hauled away, and their cottage was still waiting for some repairs and installations. They were a happy couple and repeated their thanks for Bob’s help. Wesley would chuckle and say, “Oh, that Bob, he could always find a way to make it work.”

I returned alone to DC. I was now near my 64th birthday; I decided to have a • *Women Who Run with Wolves* party. All of the women guests were to bring some form of their creativity to share at the party. Louise brought her adaptation of the song: *There is nothing like a dame*. Others brought art work, poetry, stories, and food. We talked about the choices of women in the book by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, and our lives.



...



While Bob worked with flood recovery, he became interested in returning to the pastoral ministry and made a request for an appointment. He received a position to the church in Winthrop, Iowa.

...

One important place we wanted to see before leaving DC was Congress in action. We sat in on a session of the Senate; we were surprised and disappointed by not seeing any debate or action.

In the eight years we lived in DC, Bob and I had planned to visit one memorial or museum each month on Sunday afternoons. We also attended as many national events as possible. We went to Memorial Day and July 4th celebrations at the Capitol, and saw the inauguration of President Clinton.

We walked in the Peace March Against the Gulf War from the National Cathedral to The White House with thousands of others. I wish we could have made a difference but going to war continues.

...

Debra came from Boston to help pack our possessions with me for our move. Bob returned from working in Iowa just in time to finish loading the truck that we would drive there. Members of my • Disciple Bible Study group and friends came to help us load the Ryder and say goodbye. We had a picnic meal with pizza and watermelon outside as a farewell party. Debra went with us to Iowa, doing a share of the driving. We pulled the car behind the truck, making parking-lot-maneuvering challenging.

After we moved, we returned many times to DC as we had business with four different renters throughout the years; we finally sold our apartment in 2010.



## Part 5: Putting on the Brakes

### Winthrop, IA

1994-95

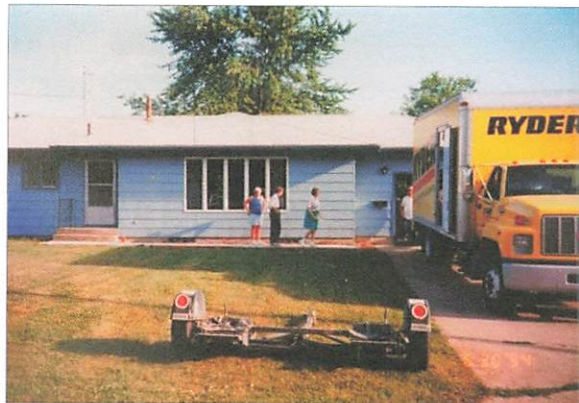
#### Muriel

In the spring of 1994, Bob was assigned to a church in Winthrop and • we moved into our new home there in July with the help of church members.

• *plantings Debra helped to install in front of our home after helping us move from DC*

We found a very active congregation in the United Church of Christ (combined UCC and UMC...Congregational and Methodist). We worshipped in the UCC sanctuary and held social events in the quite new UMC fellowship hall a short distance away. We found that people showed different loyalties to the two denominations.

Winthrop was a progressive farming community in an area of rich Iowa soil. Bob and I often visited the members' homes together: we enjoyed seeing their animals and crops. We participated in school events. We became acquainted with the members' special interests of woodworking, trophy making, and raising ducks. The teenage son of the Bares told of having



studied the behavior of ducks and added that the flock included homosexuals, a rather interesting fact!

I felt it would be helpful to start a Disciple Bible Study course, a year-long intensive reading and discussion of the Bible. We met with about 10-12 members in our home once a week in the evenings. This became a time also of getting to know each

other, including their experiences of work, families, joys, and concerns.

...

I sewed eyelet curtains for the many windows in our three bedrooms. This was finished before our daughters came to celebrate Christmas in Winthrop. Christmas was a lively time with all of our family except for Nancy who was visiting Justin in California.

Margaret recommended that we go see Backbone State Park as it is the highest point in northeast Iowa. There we found a steep and narrow ridge created from bedrock cut by a loop of the Maquoketa River thousands of years before. We had fun climbing the steep steps and rocky paths that the Civil Conservation Corp had built in the early 1900s. It is no wonder that the park was also called the Devil's Backbone.



We also went to *The Cedar Rock Home*, the house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Quasqueton, Iowa. It was fascinating how it nestled in the limestone bluff overlooking the Wapsipinicon River. The large, wide windows filled the walls providing a great view of the river and the landscape in the distance. We lounged in the living room and examined the uniquely designed kitchen utensils, cupboards, and closets, all created by the architect with artistic unity.

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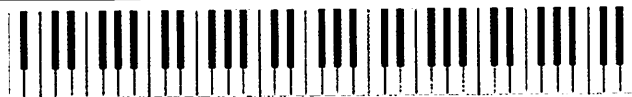
At home, I found that I still had time on my hands. I decided to take a counseling course at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) in Cedar Falls. I became friends in the class with a dairy farmer from near the Mississippi River who needed a better way, or an additional way, to provide for their family; she stayed at our home on Friday evenings rather than making the drive home and back again on Saturday. Our classes were held off-campus in Waterloo near a large hog-producing farm. There were times when the odor there was so potent that we had difficulty keeping our minds on the subject being presented.

...

After about six months of living in Winthrop, a couple of church members complained about Bob's communication style and asked him to resign. The church allowed us to continue to live in the parsonage until June when we would complete the Disciple Bible Study course, and I would finish my classes at UNI. I also had decided by then that being a formal counselor was not for me.

After leaving Winthrop, we spent a month living with Margaret and Dennis in Des Moines and travelling to friends and family before moving to Milton, our new assignment starting in July. We visited on weekends with Ken and Reggie Fineran, Wesley Foundation friends from ISU, and with Order colleagues: David and Lynda Zahrt in the Loess Hills of western Iowa, and Don and Marileen Johnson in Omaha. Bob also made a quick trip to see his brother, Allan, in Lincoln, Nebraska.

We continue to cherish our friendship with Winnie and Virgil Bateman in Winthrop; Virgil had made two book cases and small wall shelves for us, and a large advent wreath base, by repurposing oak furniture he had collected. These friends came to our 40th anniversary party in Indianola three years later.



While attending high school in Chicago (1975), Margaret heard that our niece who lived in northwest Iowa wanted a piano. Marlene was willing to arrange transportation to get it from Amarillo (where we had left it) to her home in Iowa. She found that the piano was out of tune, scratched, and had broken ivories as it had been abused and neglected. She got it tuned and completely refinished it. By the time we moved back to Iowa in 1994, she no longer had a use for it, and we hauled it to our home in Winthrop.

# Milton, IA 1995-98

## Fox River Parish

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### Muriel

We arrived in Milton in July 1995 to move into our new home, the parsonage for Fox River Parish. We were greeted warmly by church members who helped unload the large moving van. We found the kitchen stocked, and got a delivery of frozen food the first day. The three-bedroom ranch house was across from our church, Grace United Methodist, which was located in the center of the small town.

Esther Wells and Betty Vance were among the greeters and immediately promised that the worn carpet would be replaced. They were so eager to please us.

- *the Vances admiring our flowers with Bob in the front yard of our home*

Milton was the location of one of the three Fox River Parish churches Bob was assigned to, others were Mt. Sterling and Cantril. We had to leave early on Sunday mornings to go first to hold Mt. Sterling's service, and then to do Cantril's, before leading worship in Milton's church at 11:00 a.m. Church attendance in Milton was around 30 people, Mt. Sterling had 7-12, and Cantril had 40-50.

We started Disciple Bible Studies with members from both Milton and Cantril churches. At times, both Bob and I led the groups.



### Milton

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The town had only a few businesses, a small post office, a café, a Legion Hall, a bank, a small car repair shop, a library, and a park that we enjoyed. Bill and Madeline Boatman frequently welcomed us to their home. Bill walked around town whistling which we found entertaining and kept an ear out for.

We also started a Kid's Club after school and I wrote the Bible lessons. We chose or created songs from familiar tunes, and the children at our church sat on the floor around Bob to sing. Betty Vance worked with

some of the youngest kids while Bob took the older youth; I had the second and third graders. We often played games outside, trying to connect them to Bible stories.

Diane Bales worked at the Fox River Elementary

School in Milton. She had helped us find, and invite, the children who lived in Milton to Kid's Club. The Small family had three boys who were always there, although their parents did not attend church. The youngest son, Bubba, was quite a challenge and sometimes went up to the balcony and threatened to jump down. I think there were 15 children in Kid's Club until the new pastor of the Christian Church



would not allow their members to attend another church.

Diane played the piano and laymen assisted in reading or telling the children's story. Everyone made a special event of Christmas Eve with candles placed along the edge of the balcony. One Christmas, we celebrated with newborn Katie Wilson in the manger. Brian, her attentive father, held her tiny hand as she slept contentedly; Michelle, her mother, watched close by. For Lent, Brian Wilson helped Bob construct a huge cross. During the Easter service, it was carried into the church, decorated with flowers, and then set up outside.

One year, Milton was on the selected route for the bike ride called Ragbrai (Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa). This meant hundreds of thousands of bikers would be going through the town. Businesses had spent months preparing for this occasion. Stores were spruced up. Quite untimely, a couple of old buildings collapsed and cleanup was made a priority; many folks volunteered. Bob salvaged a key-stone from one of the collapsed buildings, the old Masonic Hall. We moved the stone with us; it now marks the edge of our driveway in Holyoke. A remaining wall was painted with a scene of bicycles riding through town. Margaret came to visit us and helped by escorting guests to the church's bathrooms.

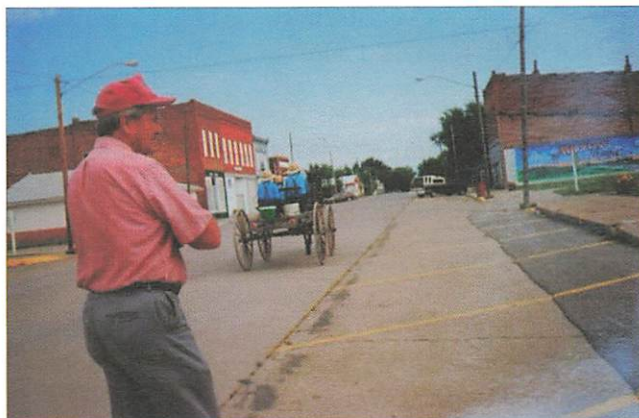
- *Bob on the main street of Milton as an Amish buggy goes by; the bike mural is on the right*

...

One autumn night with a full moon, Don and Esther Wells hosted a wiener-roast at their farm. Eric, their son, gave everyone a hayrack ride. At another time, Don brought a young cornstalk to church for a children's story to represent the importance of "just one kernel." Afterwards, Bob planted it in front of our house. It thrived and produced an ear of corn, yielding more than in some farm fields that year.

...

I continued to have arthritic pains, especially in my knees, and a chiropractor couldn't help me. I learned from a woman pastor nearby, that my arthritis might be helped by walking in water. Fairfield College had a swimming pool and I drove the 37 miles there frequently, and received much relief from this exercise. I still benefit from this suggestion. Meeting others at the pool was a pleasant diversion from staying in the small town of Milton.



## Mt. Sterling

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I remember well that • white church on the hill in Mt. Sterling with its bell. The gritty junk car repairman/salesman would ring it every Sunday morning. He brought with him to the service, his



wife, son, and a baby daughter. Bob and I enjoyed their family and the visits to their home for a simple meal. Debra painted a large beautiful scene of the church; it is now hanging in our church in Holyoke.

When an elderly pianist and her husband moved away to Keosauqua, I did my best to play the piano for the church after practicing throughout the week at home. Here you would notice people living in poverty. Some people had old mobile homes while many houses needed paint. From Mt. Sterling, you could see into the state of Missouri, just across the border.

In the little community of Mt. Sterling, there was a spunky group of youth who wanted to keep the church alive as they had fond memories of attending with their grandmothers. When it was announced that the church services would discontinue due both to the small congregation of 7-10 and the deteriorating foundation, a teenage girl offered to buy it for about \$25. Instead the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church gave it to the town.

## Cantril

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Cantril was the most successful of the three communities of the Fox River Parish in providing services to the area. They had a Dutchman's Store filled with everything a farming person might want at a good price. The town's café was filled with regulars every morning, many using their own designated cup. The lumber yard in town served the area with building materials. There also was a library, gas station, and restaurant in Cantril.

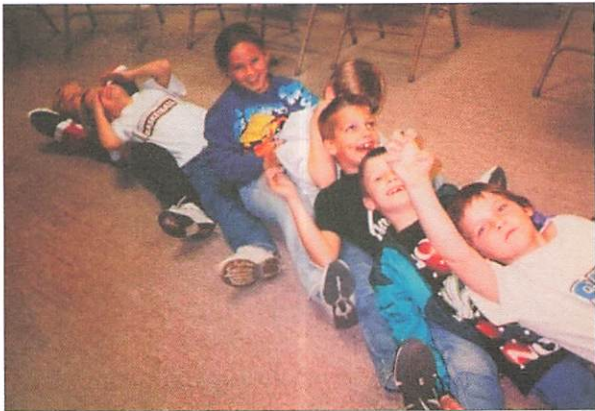
Cantril hosted the High School for Fox Valley. Milton hosted the Elementary School for the area after the attendance in schools declined. (Later, after we left, students of all ages would go to the Cantril School before it too would close.)

The community often invited us to celebrate with them in their park, and fish in their pond. Dennis caught fish there when he and Margaret visited us. We often visited folks in Cantril. Even before we moved in, the first friends we made were Gale and Ruth Hawhee; he was a retired Methodist minister. They were very gracious and their door was always open. We had many meals with them. Ruth served the best homemade donuts, fried chicken, and pies. Jack and Helen Hamburg had a large family of boys. We enjoyed going to their farm home. The Robinsons also were very hospitable; on one visit he showed us his huge collection of Native American arrow heads that he had found. I appreciated the input of all of these women in the Bible study groups and the UMW (United Methodist Women).

We still enjoy hearing from our friends in Fox River Valley every Christmas.



- Vacation Bible School for all three churches, held in Cantril



## Bob

- went rollerblading; bought • matching roller blades with Carol in Davis, 1995
- took long bike rides in Van Buren county; wasn't able to walk afterwards

- family memories about Dad/Bob, 11/15



## Muriel

### Lake Tahoe Fun, July 1997

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Bob and I drove from Milton to California and • joined the girls at the end of a 2nd Generation Reunion that they were attending for once Order youth. The reunion was held in the wine country. Carol and Nancy



had come from Davis where they lived. Margaret flew in from Des Moines, Laura from New Britain, CT and Debra from Ashland, MA. Following that event, our family went together to Lake Tahoe, CA and stayed in the luxurious hillside cottage, called Fawn Memories, for three days, a special treat for all of us.

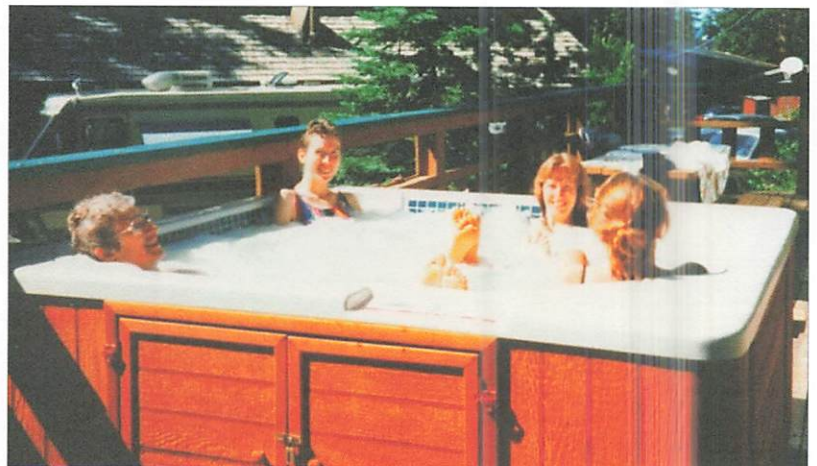
This spacious rented home had room to cook, relax, read, and play games. Just a short walk through the pines and down a steep hill, was famous Lake Tahoe. We could choose our activities from walking or hiking in pairs or alone, relaxing in the hot

tub, swimming and/or sunning on the beach, hiking up to Eagle Falls and Eagle Lake, playing games into the night, reading, and napping. Bob's cousin, Roger, and his wife, Glenda, had referred us to this place. They stopped by for an informative visit as they had just returned from visiting the Middle East.

On the way to Tahoe, Bob, Margaret, and Nancy went to pick up Justin, now 11, living near Nevada City. Upon arriving at his group home, they discovered that he wasn't permitted to leave after all. What a disappointment! The twisting mountain road that night was scary to travel especially since all were sleepy; in spite of that, Margaret recalls how beautiful it was to see the stars seemingly shining below them.

In appreciation for the delightful home provided for us, we each wrote a note in the guest book of Fawn Memories. Although we did not see any deer, we had a fond and lively time together.

• *relaxing in the hot tub: Muriel, Nancy, Margaret, Laura*





## Part 6: Powered by Essential Energy

### Indianola, IA 1998-2006

#### *Muriel*

When Bob turned 65, he was ready to retire. The house we found to buy was at 410 K Street in Indianola, a beautiful two-bedroom ranch style in a pleasant neighborhood. It was an immediate delight to us; it had a large family room with a Ben Franklin stove, and a sliding door opening to the backyard deck with a hot tub. The back yard had a large overhanging maple in the center and a mulberry tree at the corner. Bob enjoyed the fruit as did plenty of birds.

We soon added to the front lawn by planting a pear tree in the parking strip along the street, similar to ones Margaret had planted at their West Des Moines home. We added • a small redbud tree in the lower corner near the street, a white birch in front of our picture window, and an edging of red floribunda roses.

Bob removed the steep front steps and replaced them with a deck and wider, safer steps. We had a picture window installed in place of several casement windows at the front of the house. We also had

installed a huge bay window in the family room replacing four tall windows, and an egress window in the basement, creating a legal third bedroom. After a few years, we also engaged an excellent cabinet maker to redesign the entire kitchen to be a showpiece. He built new kitchen cabinets and a roll top desk for Bob, making a most convenient workplace for both of us. The kitchen became a selling point in 2006.

It was very pleasant to be near Margaret and Dennis who lived in West Des Moines, a half hour away. We often got together to visit over a meal and delighted in eating meat that Dennis cooked on the grill. We relaxed in or near their pool too. Margaret invited us to several programs and art shows. She welcomed me to her book club in Des Moines; we enjoyed reading the same books. I especially appreciated Margaret taking me shopping in Des Moines and helping to choose attractive clothes.



Our church, the First United Methodist Church, had an active UMW group with over 100 active members. We met once a month in afternoons or evenings with programs on countries with mission activities, social concerns, or spiritual issues. These were accompanied by fellowship times and

beautifully served refreshments. We also met more socially in smaller Circles once a month, in a member's home.

In the summer, we held Schools of Christian Mission to feature mission work of the Methodist Church in places around the world. These lasted three to five days and were held in retreat centers, colleges, and hotels. These included women from a larger geographic area in central Iowa.

Bob worked with me when I was a teacher at three of the Schools of Christian Mission with programs on Sudan, Mexico, and Refugees and Migrants. These UMW events were an important part of my educational, social, and spiritual life.

• *leading African Study in School of Christian Mission showing clothing and objects from our times in Liberia*

I was president for four years of our local UMW unit and introduced Advent by Candle Light, similar to one that Margaret had previously invited me to. Candles lined the windowsills around the large fellowship hall. Table hostesses uniquely decorated their tables with candles and served different fancy desserts. A guest speaker was invited to be a part of a program of music, poetry, and sacred storytelling. Many women, in addition to members, were invited. The UMW has continued this program since we moved.

In another program, Always in Mission, I volunteered to visit a "lifer" in prison in Mitchellville once a month. She told me of her father's death. Bob and I attended his funeral in Burlington and learned she was not permitted to go. Later, I was able to tell her about meeting her mother, her five children, and her brother

who cared for them. After about two years, I was sorry to have to discontinue my visits because my new friend suffered from depression and wasn't allowed visitors. I wrote to her from Massachusetts and was pleased to receive a few letters in return as her incarceration situation improved along with her health.

...

We engaged in many programs and classes; I led Bible studies on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Bob mentored teenagers for church membership. He took part in the Methodist Men's group and the Mission Committee.

...

We held a party for about 20 friends from the church on the eve of 2000 and made wishes for the next ten years. At other times, friends invited us to their homes and we invited them to ours,

including the Lanings, the Weatherbys, and the Nicholsons. (Dennis and Linda Nicholson hosted us during many weekends when we returned to visit Iowa years later.)

We went to movies with Doris and Norm Knight in Des Moines. They were active in Trinity Methodist Church, working in the Spanish speaking community. Doris was instrumental in a welcoming refugee program to provide services and English language classes. I worked with her for a short time.

We had good friends at the end of K Street with whom we had coffee, shared shop equipment, and went to community events, including movies. Our next door





neighbors were a young couple. Bob and Doug worked together on small jobs, and little Nat came over to play.



## Forty Years of Married Life! December 20, 1998

At our wedding, we would not have guessed we would be celebrating this anniversary with five daughters and many new friends from the church, and relatives from northwest Iowa and Minnesota (Eunice, Ken and Arthea, Vern and Lois). The girls had all managed to fly or drive in to join us.

We had just recently settled down to retire in our own home on K Street. We had found a new church which we loved right away. We chose to celebrate on a Saturday afternoon; we could use our • church's reception room and the chapel.

A big surprise came when our daughters • presented us with a large quilt showing the fabrics and details of our lives. Margaret had made several large log-cabin squares. Laura had stitched together smaller log-cabin squares along the outside. Debra had transferred family pictures onto cloth. Carol joined the squares, did the hand-quilting, and did chain stitching of the names of all the places we had lived, both cities and villages.

Each daughter designed one or two of the nine squares that illustrated something about us: Margaret appliquéd a series of our favorite book titles, and chain-stitched a scissors and a hammer for our hobbies. Laura appliquéd both a map of Africa and an ICA symbol (the Social Process Triangles). Debra created a yin-yang symbol for Japan and Korea, and an eagle for the USA. Carol made a cross held in hands and the family symbol. Nancy embroidered RAG + MCR and a poem that she wrote.

• Carol doing final stitching on the quilt

The quilt was hung and displayed at our party for all to comment on and ask questions about. Margaret led a conversation to allow the guests to learn about our married-life experiences.



Our daughters helped to create the program of songs, stories, and dance. Carol and John, our assistant minister, sang together. Dean led us in a Dance of Universal Peace. We had delightful refreshments with informal visiting, and ended the celebration with our guests claiming promises for our future together.

...



In our 2nd year in Indianola, we met the Hidri family, immigrants from Albania. The Chamber of Commerce asked us if we would sponsor them. We willingly helped them find a home, schools for their children Endri and Kosta, jobs for the adults Sami and Lijana, and basically welcomed them into the Indianola community. It was a pleasure working with this family whose courage and determination to create a home in the U.S. was definitely inspiring. We also enjoyed many Albanian meals, and entertained them at our house. Sami found his niche in buying dilapidated houses and rebuilding them to become suitable homes. Lijana got additional education and soon became employed as an accountant.



• Christmas dinner with Margaret and our dear friends, the Hidris  
(Dennis took the picture)

• Bob and the Hidri family  
playing with K'NEX



## Our Maritimes Trip, 1999

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With a hot July in the works that summer, Bob and I set out from home to see the wonders of mountains, oceans, rocks, wind, and water in the Maritimes Provinces of Canada. We picked up Carol and Debra from Ashland, MA on the way. On July 17, we headed for Acadia National Park after making a stop at Larkspur and Neal's home near Waterville, ME. In Acadia, we climbed down the large rocky, granite shoreline to see the amazing tidal pools at low tide that reflected the light and shadows of the sky above. What a beautiful beginning to an amazing two weeks!

Driving on into New Brunswick, we stopped at Hopewell Cape and walked on the ocean floor at • Hopewell Rocks on the shores of the Bay of Fundy. This area has the highest tides in the world (24 feet); the tides change so rapidly that no one can out-run them and it is wise to observe the warnings to keep your distance. Watching them come in and go out in the narrow neck of the bay was breathtaking; seeing how the force of the tidal water created sculpted rock "flower pots" was equally amazing.

One of the sites I especially wanted to visit was Grand Pre in northern Nova Scotia. This was the home of *Evangeline* as told in the poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In 1655, British soldiers came to this Acadian peaceful French village to invade. They took captive nearly all the residents which they transported to various communities and states, some as far as southern Louisiana. I wonder if this plaintive story is



part of the history of people we know who are French Canadians.

At one point in our travels, we saw the car in front of us hit a deer that was crossing the highway; at first it looked like it got killed, but it made its way into the woods. It truly was shocking to see such a graceful and peaceful animal be injured or killed. Deeply affected, Debra wrote a poem at the time, and made illustrated prints about the experience later. More pleasantly, we had a picnic at a Canadian KFC, and looked forward to stopping at Tim Horton's again to have a good and fast meal, Canadian style.

We rode on a huge, long bridge to Prince Edward Island. Carol remembers staring at jelly fish, and I remember fields of potatoes with large white flowers. We went to see the play of *Anne of Green Gables*. We all wanted to stay longer but our schedule to take the Wood Island Ferry back to Nova Scotia limited us. We looked forward to a view of the ocean and whales then, but saw only heavy fog.

Cape Breton Island provided a pleasant ride on the Cabot Trail, some 187 miles of mountain and sea views. We appreciated a stop to pick tiny, tasty blueberries on the hillsides. We also stopped at Baddock to hear the true story of Alexander Graham Bell as the Canadian inventor of the telephone. Then on to Louisbourg, an eastern coastal military post with a massive French fortress. We enjoyed the ongoing re-enactment of costumed actors and marches. Housing was scarce, and we had not been able to reserve ahead so the only lodging we could find was a dorm room in a college with three single beds. Bob slept in the TV lounge.

Peggy's Cove, near Halifax on the southern side of Nova Scotia, was fascinating with its lighthouse and craggy rock coastline. We saw picturesque villages with boats and houses painted in bright pastel colors. We viewed • the sea caves at Ovens Natural Park and learned of the 1861 gold rush there.



We drove on to Halifax, Lunenburg, and Hall's Harbor where we picked out our own • lobsters to eat. The beach made an appropriate setting for this meal.



On the way back to our various homes, we drove through the White Mountains of New Hampshire. We stopped at Lost River, a natural amusement park where only the most adventuresome, Bob included, climbed through the tight spots between the rock walls.

After parting with Carol and Debra near their homes, Bob and I now alone continued through the northern states and made a memorable stop at the African American Museum in Detroit. We saw a replica of a slave ship where the captives were bound together by shackles and chains. I was horrified when even imagining such cruelty; it disturbed me very much. How could any person do this to other human beings?

We ended our trip in Worthington, MN on July 31, a very hot day. We joined our extended family to celebrate the 100 Year Raak Reunion at Ken and Arthea's home. This commemorated the births of both Mom and Dad Raak 100 years before. We all wore t-shirts we had prepared. They had a graphic of tulips and a wooden shoe (drawn by Debra) and the question, "Wooden Shoe Like to Be DUTCH?" In the flowers and stems were the words: Dependable, Upright, Thrifty, Clean, and Hardworking.



...

I taught ESL most of the years while living in Indianola, with classes in a Des Moines church. The students had come from South Sudan, Vietnam, China, and India. Later, students also came from the Middle East.

I learned some of the • women from South Sudan had walked 400 miles to get to safety and later were brought to the U.S. as refugees. They had heartbreaking stories. One was blind in one eye from an injury, many had poor or few teeth; their clothes were minimal and one came with a bathrobe for a coat in the cold winter. (Some Des Moines churches were able to get some coats for them.) One day when I was hanging up my long green winter coat, a woman named Martha pointed to it and then to herself; I returned the gesture with pointing to myself. I went to Goodwill to get her a coat instead of giving her mine.

In one ESL class, many women had come from Afghanistan. Rahila, a Muslim woman from Kabul, told of how her husband, who had worked for the government, was killed by the Taliban and then thrown on her doorstep in a body bag. She came to Des Moines with six children which included two nieces. She worked diligently to learn English, and soon had a job in a dining room of a Des Moines dinner club.



• on the way to teach ESL

Once we entertained the class with a dinner on our deck at home. It included watermelon and corn-on-the-cob. Rahila, there with her daughter, asked to use a room for their evening prayers. Bob willingly removed a picture from the east wall to accommodate them. Later we all went to the Balloon Classic together.

• the first class I taught in Des Moines, ESL Level 1



## Bob

The Liberian Bishop requested I return to teach in Liberia; I went there for five months: end of January to June 2000. I visited different Methodist schools, bringing equipment and helping with curriculum. I met past student, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who became the President of Liberia in 2005. She asked me to come back again another time to help again. This I have not been able to do.

- me with my brother Chuck after returning from Liberia



On a visit to Debra in 2000, I helped Dean repair her rotten 2nd floor bathroom shower wall. This included an outside wall reconstruction which required scaffolding.

- scaffold holding us up three stories in the backyard

Did fundraising for Garrett Seminary, off and on for over two years.



## Muriel

While Bob was in Liberia, I was lonely. So I invited women to celebrate my 70th birthday with me in April. I chose the poem, "When I Am An Old Woman I Shall Wear Purple" by Jenny Joseph as the theme for the party. Twelve friends came; • many wore purple and brought poems or stories to share.





## ICA/Order Reunion in Denver and Vail, CO

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In the first weeks of August 2000, members of the ICA met at the University of Denver to learn about, and evaluate, the success of our work. We also visited projects that

demonstrated a comprehensive goal including local politics, business, health, and youth participation. My small group went to the Women's Bean Project in which soups were made from locally grown grains and vegetables, produced, and sold cooperatively. When the various groups re-gathered, the learnings were combined to inform the future work of local community projects.

At the closing, we enjoyed a celebration that included the drama *Between the Arrows*. It wove together songs and stories of experiences in being caught between the no-longer and the not-yet. Bob was one of the actors. This was fun, and filled with all kinds of memories, both happy and sad.

This was followed by a three-day retreat with Order members at a mountain resort in Vail. It was a time to consider the reports from the 2nd Generation of the Order who had been mistreated in various ways in the Student House and other Houses/CDPs. It was a serious time of accountability, reflections, and apologies, and discussing options for reconciliation. Bob and I had time to visit, reflect, and think of ways to learn more from our daughters about this.

There were opportunities for spiritual thought with personal evaluation. Larry Ward provided a quiet



space for meditation throughout much of the Retreat. Forrest Craver led a closing ceremony of dancing in a sacred circle with a smudge pot, inspired by and adapted from a Native ritual.

We also found time to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the mountains.

- *relaxing in Vail*

## Celebrating Bob's 70th Year, 2002

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We held Bob's birthday party at the Simpson chapel reception hall. (Simpson College was the center of events in Indianola. Bob got acquainted with his dad's fraternity on the campus and made several college-aged friends there.)

Coming for Bob's birthday were about 40 friends from the Indianola church; our ICA colleagues David Zahrt from Turin, IA, and Nancy Trask from Winterset, IA; Henry Bevel, a Methodist minister, from Des Moines; and to our great surprise, Bob's Liberian student, Willy Jones. Willy came from Muscatine, IA where he was working on a project for his engineering company. He was wearing a Liberian outfit and also gave one to Bob. He really added a lot of energy and fascinating stories about Bob. Margaret came also and helped the women from the church with the refreshments, which included freshly baked bread. Nancy Trask led a reflective conversation on Bob's life, and David led group singing.

Bob had invited his friends who represented the seven groups of which he was a part: the church, a Thursday breakfast men's discussion group, relatives, the Order/ICA, Liberia, fellow clergy, and family. We had a good time greeting and getting acquainted, telling

stories, and wishing Bob “an active, meaningful life with happiness.”

For this birthday, Nancy wrote:

*My dad, Bob Griffin,*

*I think that all of my recollections of you happened when you were older than I am now. Yet I have had the good fortune to know so many of your wonderful qualities:*

*Your concern for others and for the world: from your work with the ICA to your involvement with Liberia, you have helped to make positive change come about. On a less significant matter, we worked together to improve some things on the Appalachian Trail.*

*Your determination to make things happen: you have a “nothing’s impossible” attitude, as when you took extra steps to help me get a refrigerator for my new home.*

*Your great construction and repair abilities: one of my favorite memories is when you helped me build a table when we lived in San Francisco.*

*Your energy and conversation: I’ll always remember fondly the times when you walked with me through Rock Creek Park. We had great conversations on those walks, and I enjoy our continued conversations on the phone and in person.*

*Your attention to details: your tape measure is always close at hand, ensuring to see things fit just right! You recall dates and events precisely, and enjoy sharing records of the past. The carefully planned needlework you made for me (as for each of us) will always be a treasured possession. I appreciated your desire to get the right images to go with each time period.*

*Your playfulness and sense of humor keep things from getting too serious. I enjoyed playing with Blocks and*

*Marbles as well as many other games. The needlepoint sign, “Is this flush necessary?” was great!*

*Your helpfulness: of late, I have numerous examples – helping me move, to the point of washing blinds and windows; driving me to Minnesota and picking me up in Adams Morgan; and even filling ravioli with me!*

*Thank you for being a wonderful part of my life.*

*With love, (and many more memories than I’ve included here),*  
*Nancy*

#### Nancy’s • Dream Catcher for her Dad

Her gift of dreams:

- peace in the Middle East
- end of racism
- peace in Africa
- international engagement for all
- organizing his stuff
- reading more and more







• Margaret, Mom Hanna, and Nancy came to celebrate on Sunday, the day after Bob's birthday party



We had made our final move, we thought, when we retired in Indianola. I was now the one left to enjoy the piano. I worked to relearn and play some easy tunes I liked.

Then I discovered a surprising need for it. Opera singers had come to our community in the summer to prepare for a series of performances with the Des Moines Metro Opera held in Indianola. I was at the Simpson College swimming pool when I met Jennifer Davis Jones who was one of their lead sopranos. She told me that she was having difficulty getting the practice time she needed because of the limited number of pianos available for the many singers. She came to our home and used ours many times.

## Bob the Builder

Bob was very capable at making adjustments in our many homes with his carpentry and electrical skills. We all remember his building timelines with horizontal and vertical divisions for people, tasks, and time. He built the story of his family tree in a small book for the Griffin families.

In our first home in Evanston, Bob built shelves and compartments on wheels under the sink to store onions, potatoes, and bread. He hung a peg-board to store utensils and small pans. He also built shelves and a desk in the walk-in closet. Besides working with the youth in the Student House to make the graduated risers in the TV room, he also built fences with the students on the Michigan farm.

In our Des Moines home, we appreciated his skills in building the big playthings for our daughters. Besides the much-loved boat/steps, he built a hutch, added a used child-size kitchen sink, stove, and table to form a perfect kitchenette for children. The girls and their friends used these extensively throughout many hours and days.

• Bob repairing a "found" hexagonal picnic table in Indianola

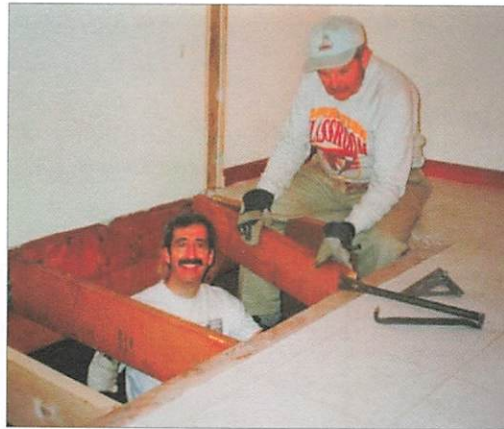


Bob had learned these skills from his dad; as a child he remembers living in Arlington and helping his dad remodel their home to have an entrance from the outside to stairs to the 2nd floor; this enabled an apartment for renting. He also worked with his dad in high school years to do a similar project, and also to design and build an additional room for himself at the back of the house.

Along with woodwork, he learned to do electrical work. These skills have been useful often in many places. He and Margaret went to West Virginia and volunteered for a week designing, purchasing, and installing electrical wiring for a new three-story medical building. He found it exhilarating, to say the least, to be working in the cold of winter for Patch Adams' Gesundheit Institute.

Bob also taught the girls to do handy work. He helped Debra pick out her first hand tools for college (hammer, manual drill, etc.) and taught her to use an electric table saw safely many years later...helping her face her fear and giving her a feeling of personal accomplishment. He taught Carol the use of an electric drill and how to do safe wiring; she was able to hang a ceiling lamp in their apartment on Truman Boulevard, among many other things.

Bob often told people that he pre-enrolled in college for a career in engineering but changed his major to general science; this developed into the ministry and building bridges between people.



• *Bob and Phil (with others not shown) moved the stairs from the kitchen to the hallway at Laura and Dean's house in Holyoke*





### Living Close to Bob's Mother

Mom Hanna lived at Northcrest Senior Living Retirement Community in Ames that was about 45 minutes from our home in Indianola. Bob made a practice of visiting her on Fridays and taking her out to

lunch at a Chinese restaurant. She was technically blind by this point and liked familiar and proven places to eat. She always wanted the same food, in small amounts which suited her digestive system. Occasionally, I would go with him but this was a special time for her with her oldest son. Our daughters would visit • her whenever they visited us; she was always interested in what was going on in their lives.

She always dressed very attractively. When she no longer was able to shop easily, an exclusive dress shop in Ames brought several dresses to her from which she could choose.

She died in 2003, living long enough to • meet Ananda, her great-granddaughter when her family visited Iowa.



• Nancy, Debra, and Mom Hanna on bench swing during one visit to Northcrest. She had gifted this outdoor furniture to her community.

• four generations together:  
Bob, Laura, Ananda, Mom Hanna, July 2003



## Trip to Volunteer in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

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On Feb. 1, 2003, we and others of the Iowa Volunteers in Mission (VIM) group from UMC Indianola, landed safely in El Paso, TX. As we arrived, we heard the shocking news that the Columbia Space Ship had just blown up while returning to Earth; debris was scattered between Dallas and Houston. The death of seven astronauts provided great concern for us.

We soon were able to leave by bus for Ciudad Juarez across the border. We were bringing a big supply of medicines to clinics in the city where we would also be working. We got settled in a newly constructed guest house with heavily barred windows and doors. It was still daylight and we became introduced to that part of the city by walking on some broken sidewalks, around piles of dog manure. We also saw some men working on house repairs. It was good to see other homes were new with bright walls of orange and green.

For our work, we went by bus to a church with an accompanying temporary shelter for men who had been deported from the U.S. It was in quite a mess and my job was to clean the stove while another volunteer sanitized the refrigerator. I talked to a deportee who had lived in Dallas with his American wife for 20 years. When they had gotten a divorce, he was deported and separated from his three children in the U.S. Another man had come from Louisiana after losing his job at a jeans factory which had moved to China; he got deported before he married his American girlfriend. This was our introduction to Ciudad Juarez on Monday.

Most of the rest of the week we worked at a clinic where we emptied many containers of outdated medicines that had been donated by churches years before. We disposed of the liquids into the toilet, which often failed to flush, and the pills we gathered in buckets. It was often hard to get the pills out of their plastic forms. We also had to keep our eyes on our work as there were always children and youth



with us on the steps and porch outside. (We were warned they might try to steal the drugs.)

Bob's team of men • worked on tarring the roof of the new adjacent building. One day it got so cold that the tar from the heater couldn't stay hot long enough to spread and some blew away in threads. During the dark of night, when the concrete floor was laid, the discarded pills were buried under it.

At the end of the week, the women and I went to Casa Hogar para Ancianos, a project of the UMW. We had various tasks of remaking beds, cleaning toilets, sweeping, and mopping floors. One volunteer shaved



a man's beard and I was invited to cut the hair of Pedro Rios. I had finished trimming about three-quarters of his thick curly hair when I had to stop to hear a presentation about a nursing home; it had been a dream of two Methodist women and only finished in 1999. When I returned, Pedro was gone. I cut another man's hair instead. Soon I saw Jose, whose hair I had also cut, pushing Pedro in his wheel chair; his haircut had been finished by someone else. When he saw himself in a mirror as he was passing me by, he admired his haircut and gave me a hug.

We also had the opportunity to see the maquiladoras – the neat, large, one-story U.S. factories surrounded with green, well-kept lawns; women worked there for \$40-45/week. The factory owners provided childcare and bus service to the poor area of Anapra, the community we had heard about in U.S. news while at home. Unfortunately the women often had to work 'til after dark when they were dropped off at the entrance of their neighborhood. Walking home in this desolate area left them vulnerable to robbery, rape, murder, and unsolved disappearances.

We had many rich cultural experiences in that week of interactions with the local people at work. As we left, we were surprised to see snow on the cars in Juarez, and to need heat on the bus. Crossing the border, we saw many young people walking on the bridge to go to work in El Paso; others on the bridge offered us sweets, giving us a delightful ending.

## Mission Trip to Nuevo Progreso, Mexico, 2004

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For our trip a year later, we had no plane ride, no staying at night in Mexico, no old VIM bus! We travelled by SUVs and a Dodge Dynasty, going first to Mercedes, TX. After getting settled in a hostel provided for volunteers, we drove across the border in the morning to the community of Nuevo Progreso, to the Methodist church where we joined in worship. The church building had been constructed two or three years previously and had room for about 60 worshippers. In the front was a huge red, green, and gold banner with the words, "Tus palabras esta lampara para mi pies." (Thy word is a lamp for my feet.) Young and old had gathered to greet us, and we all sang and clapped as the pastor played on the electric piano. A visiting evangelist preached; the service lasted two hours.

• *Bob working on a home with the homeowner and a volunteer*



During our first three days, we worked mainly with the women of three different families. The men built an addition to the one-room home of Margarita. Her home was 16' x 16'; the new kitchen addition was 8' x 16.' I rolled the paint and her daughter, Victoria, used a brush. All the while, we conversed in a combination of Spanish and English. Soon her cousin David showed up and we found another brush. The soft new rose color was looking good, and Margarita wanted to help too. No brushes were left so I gave her my roller and quickly, the whole house was finished.

The second day we worked at Javier and • Dominga's home. Dominga and I worked together. She called me Nora as she found it was too hard to pronounce Muriel. As we applied the light pink and white paint on her home outside, it drizzled or rained off and on. We had to work in the sticky mud that clumped on our shoes.



We went to Luz Maria to have grilled chicken one noon; her husband had a hot grill ready. But someone had forgotten to bring chicken so volunteers from the VIM team went to buy it. While we waited, we visited and had chips and salsa. The family had built their 14' x 10' home and the VIM team had finished it. The lunch with salad and fruit was most delicious.

On our third day, we thought we could help at a dental clinic. However, they only could use trained dental helpers. I spent my time visiting in Spanish with Judy, a ten year old, who was waiting for the dentist. Judy was a good teacher; she kept insisting I pronounce the words correctly. In the afternoon, we had time to shop before crossing the border back to our hostel for another night. On our last day, we painted Luz's house eucalyptus green. We had a treat of corn boiled in husks and served with mayonnaise, pepper, and goat cheese. I thoroughly enjoyed the time with the people of Nuevo Progreso. I felt free and proud to use the Spanish I knew.



## Filling Containers for Liberia

Bob met Rev. Anna Kpaan when he volunteered in assisting schools in Liberia in 2000. Now five years later, she had come to America to study how to best help and work with the many elderly people left destitute in Liberia because of the war. We invited her to talk at our church about the needs she had seen.

The church members decided to respond with generosity. Bob and I worked with many of the community, gathering and packing donations. Folks donated from personal homes and businesses. Children and youth responded by sharing their toys, basketballs, bicycles, and clothes. Other churches joined in the effort. Our church also financially supported the sending of two shipping containers filled with • food, medical equipment, clothing, bicycles, cars, computers, sewing machines, and much more.

## Bob

The community stocked and shipped two 40-foot containers for Liberia. We filled one in 2005 (included two vehicles), and one in 2006 (included one car and 44 bicycles).

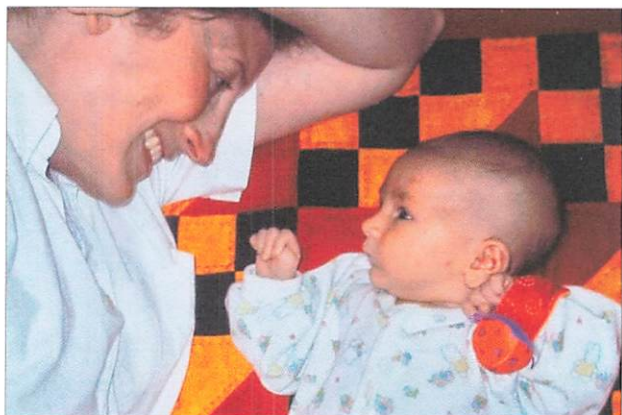
(See the booklet dedicated to this story for more information.)



## Moving to Massachusetts, 2006

### *Muriel*

We drove to Massachusetts from Iowa at least once a year since four of our daughters lived there. We attended Laura and Dean's wedding in 2000, and Debra and Phil's wedding in 2001, both in Massachusetts.



In April of 2003, • Ananda was born in Massachusetts. We were honored to be visiting there then, and at her third birthday party. We talked as a family over plans for the future and suggestions were made that we might like to move to be near our only granddaughter as she grew up. (See more about Ananda in Grandparenting section.)

On the drive home, Bob and I decided we would complete the work of the Liberian shipment, sell our house, and move to Massachusetts. In doing this move, we would also be near at least four of our daughters. (Margaret and Dennis were then in St. Louis where he was attending seminary. At this time we did not know where they would be in ministry.)

Leaving the UMC of Indianola was not an easy thing to do. We had participated in many meaningful and exciting activities with this active congregation. On our last Sunday of worship there, Pastor David Clark called us to the front of the church and wrapped each of us in a gift of a hand-knitted prayer shawl. His words of appreciation and best wishes touched my heart and brought tears to my eyes. During my daily meditation practice, I still wrap myself in this warm shawl.



• *I had made matching aprons for us. I baked cookies with Ananda during one of her family's visit to Indianola.*



• *Grandpa getting baby-time in Massachusetts at Starbucks*



## Easthampton, MA 2006-10

### *Muriel*

It was a balmy winter day when Bob and I arrived by car at Laura's home in Massachusetts. Laura had researched well how we should begin our search for a rental home and she directed us to Taylor Realty in Easthampton. We were referred to two vacancies: an upstairs apartment in a house that was being remodeled, and the first floor of an old farmhouse. We chose the second option with • its spaciousness and many windows; it was just four miles from Laura, Dean, and Ananda. We'd start renting the next day!

Brad Luhrs, our friend from Indianola, arrived the following morning driving the Penske truck and pulling our loaded station wagon. Our family from the Boston area also arrived to help unload, and our landlords joined in too. Within a few hours, we were settled in and ready to go to sleep.



When we were packing to leave from Indianola, we questioned again, "What shall we do with the piano?" Nancy had started taking piano lessons again so we offered her the piano. Nancy wanted it, so Bob squeezed it on the moving truck with our other furniture when we left Indianola.

After unloading our goods in the home we rented in Easthampton, Bob delivered it by night to her apartment that she shared with Carol on the second and third floors in Hyde Park. The piano stayed on the truck in Hyde Park until the following morning when professional movers carried it up the stairs.



• Nancy making music, years before in Des Moines

We rented the house from Leo and Pat Houle who lived next door to us. Pat was a very kind person. She was a beautician and cut my hair for half-price. Once she made the most delicious corned beef and cabbage for St. Patrick's Day and brought it to us.

Our home had a wrap-around sunroom with 14 windows from which we could see Mt. Tom to the east. I appreciated working at my computer in one corner of this room as Bob worked at his desk around the corner. Energetic three-year-old Ananda liked to run in loops through five rooms of the house, often meeting someone while she ran; so she called this "The Meeting Place House." She and I laughed and talked while sitting facing each other on the two wooden benches in the very special glider set outside.

• *Ananda playing outside, enjoying high banks of snow made by a snowplow*

Our elderly neighbor, Henri Mathieu, liked Ananda to visit. She enjoyed his massive azalea bushes. He gave her a small plant that we planted later at our home in Holyoke. He often gave Bob advice on pruning trees. Bob enjoyed riding with him in his car as he told about the many yards of the wealthy in Holyoke where he cared for the trees.

We joined Christ United Methodist Church located between Easthampton and Northampton. It was a small congregation and we became acquainted with everyone. I became very engaged in UMW again and enjoyed and appreciated the fellowship. Since there was no adult study in our church, I volunteered and started a study group, choosing the Gospels as the first topic.

We were instrumental in having Marilyn Crocker, an ICA colleague, come to facilitate in an all-day

workshop on renewal for our church. We felt that important plans were made for the life and ministry of the church that day. After this event, we continued to connect with Marilyn about books and studies; we also stayed in her and Joe's home in West Newfield, ME, on our way to attend the Methodist camp farther north both in 2008 and 2009.



...  
A stop at Whole Foods in Hadley on March 28, 2008 ended in a fall that cracked my pelvic bone. While I was getting some peanut butter from a bulk dispenser, the container was becoming too full and threatened to overflow. I thought we should get a couple of apples for dipping and use up a little. I guess I forgot the rule,

"Do not hurry." As I rushed through the produce area, I stumbled on a bulge in the industrial carpet. I found myself lying on the floor with the apples rolling around me!

Bob was paged and I was taken to Coolie Dickenson Hospital in Northampton; fortunately I had no need for surgery or a cast but instead, three weeks of rehab and recovery was needed. I had a lot of pain and I couldn't walk. While I spent three days in the hospital, Bob, Laura, and Ananda searched for a rehab center and looked at places in the area. Five year old Ananda said at one place, "This place doesn't smell good." Laura replied, "I'll not let my mother stay here."

I had excellent care at Ludlow Rehab; I did the strengthening exercises most of the day and Bob



visited me in between times. Whole Foods brought me a huge basket of fruit and goodies, and picked up the entire bill for the hospital and rehab. The family came to celebrate Ananda's 5th birthday in a dining area made available for us, and our daughters brought balloons, cake, and other refreshments. When I returned home, Pat Huele brought food and Little Miss Piggy, a loveable cloth doll with long legs that sits now in front of our fireplace.

- *women of our family in The Meeting Place House at Christmas time, 2006*



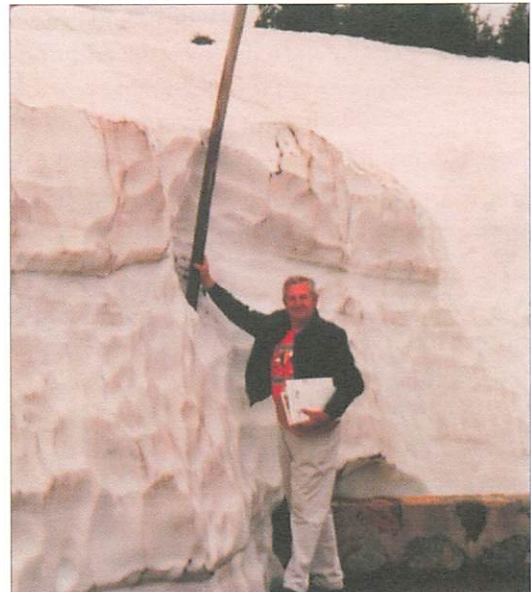
### **Alaska Trip, a Golden Opportunity, 2007**

Who would have thought that Bob and I would take a site-seeing trip to Alaska at ages 74 and 77?! David and Adelle Pogue from Calgary, Alberta, who were a bit older than us, called to invite us to travel with them. We could have answered that we couldn't afford it; however, they didn't let us say that. Instead, they asked how much we could spend, and they would arrange the trip to make it possible. We had gotten to know David and Adelle as colleagues in Edmonton,

and we would soon get to know them much better as generous and delightful friends.

David made use of a Canadian AAA guide. He arranged the itinerary and reservations for three weeks from June 27 through July 18; meanwhile Adelle made take-along luncheons and other food preparations. We would appreciate eating these lunches many times in both awesome scenic mountain and lake areas, and in places where mosquitoes and trash made for a brief stay and hasty departure.

From my seven pages of key daily events and other journal notes from this trip, I have chosen a few stand-outs. The ride on the Icefields Highway was very spectacular with views of mountain peaks, stops at Jasper and Banff Parks, waterfalls, shaggy-shedding mountain goats, the • Athabaska Glacier, and a climb of 100 ft. to Lake Peyto to see its clear deep turquoise water. We would find it hard to rate all of nature's wonders as one better than another.



Driving toward the coast through British Columbia, we stopped at museums of local crafters, the storied Two Rivers, sculptures of fly fishing, and Indian totems. In one village, we were taken into several longhouses by an Indian guide. He showed us their home life and explained ceremonial events. In Hazelton, we saw pioneer life along with statues of miners and lumbermen. In the extra time before going on the ferry, we visited Prince Rupert Island's Salmon Cannery which had employed hundreds of First Nation workers, and others from China, Japan, and Europe. Besides canning, they also made and repaired nets and other tools for various aspects of the business. Each group had their own housing; the Chinese workers lived in one large communal building.

Travelling on the ferry through the Narrow Passage was exciting as we came dangerously close to rocky areas; the tides affected how near or how far we were from the shore. Even in the drizzle or rain, we could see whale spouts and bald eagles. In the evening before Independence Day, we had a salmon dinner and the crew treated us to red, white, and blue cake. On the 4th of July, we were in the small community of Ketchikan. It had become famous because of an Alaskan senator's bill attempting to fund The Bridge to Nowhere. We walked the streets of the small town to see totems and to watch kids riding on red, white, and blue painted ponies or bicycles, with their faces decorated.

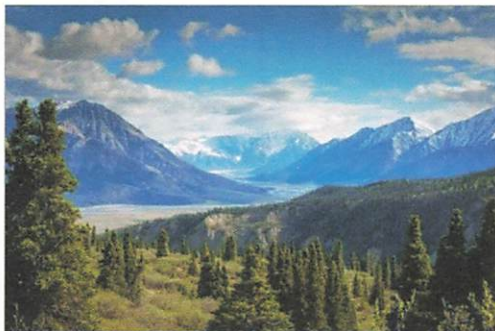
At another stop in Haines Junction, Yukon, we went to a First Nation village near • Kluane National Park. In a small store and gift shop, we met Marge Jackson, an elderly storyteller. She offered us hot bannock bread served with lots

of butter and Smuckers jam. She told us a story of two brothers from the Wolf and Crow clans. They had had a quarrel and one killed the other, later claiming his fishing rights. Adelle asked whether this had happened recently and Marge answered, "Oh, no, a long time ago, about 1000 or 2000 years." Adelle suggested it might be a version of the Cain and Abel story.

We walked on a boardwalk further on, and up steps to see the Million Dollar Falls. We had views of the mountains in the Park, the highest in North America with their large glacial fields. We learned also that the regions of the Arctic and the Temperate Northern Pacific create desert-like conditions in that area.

On our way to Tok, AK, we rode through an area where there had been extensive forest fires leaving many dead pines. The fires had allowed beautiful purple fireweed to flourish. We drove a stretch under construction with huge machines working the giant rocks above us. That felt dangerous. We came to Destruction Bay where a campsite had been destroyed by high winds. At Burwash Landing, a small Indian community, Mrs. Cox gave us a friendly and informative welcome to a small museum with displays of First Nation tools and clothing. It was hard to find toilets in the area so we were eager to stop early for the night at a group of cabins named the Cleft of the Rock Bed and Breakfast.

The stops in and around Anchorage started off with a night at a B&B that looked like a gorgeous castle. It had cramped quarters though; we had to share a one-bathroom suite with the Pogues. We even had to walk through their





bedroom to get to the bathroom. (Maybe that is the way castles were built...to keep warm.) From there we visited Earthquake Park with remnants of the 1965 quake.

At Denali Park, we got up early for a quick view of Mount Denali's white peak (a.k.a. Mount McKinley) before the clouds covered it again, and to go to the visitor's center. At the Science Center there, we saw many depictions of the people, animal life, and plants of the area.

Farther along, we had a comfortable night at the Grizzly Bear B&B. Nearby a sign advertised all-you-can-eat of the best salmon and halibut. As we stood waiting in a long line, we saw people with huge platefuls but when we saw the price of \$31 per person, we left to eat a salad at Wendy's. Later we stayed at one of the most delightful B&Bs; it was called Moose in the Garden. A school teacher was our hostess. She created very tasty meals, including large moose-shaped pancakes. On her porch, looking out at the garden, were the largest cabbages we had ever seen...but no moose showed up! This was one of the favorite places we stayed at.

While on the way to Fairbanks, we took the Riverboat Discovery for a three-and-a-half hour ride on the Skeena River. It was a ride to remember: piper cub plane demonstrations, and the surprising views of the clear Skeena River meeting the milky Tanana River. The boat stopped so we could watch a demonstration of sled dogs in training, including playing, eating, and giving them exercise by pulling a four-wheeler around a track at 20 miles per hour. Nearby were reindeer resting; we imagined they were getting ready for a trip with Santa!

We got off the boat to visit a Chena village. We watched Native girls on summer break from university show homes made of hides, branches, and sod roofs. They demonstrated cleaning, cutting, and curing of salmon for the dogs to eat, and displayed valuable leather coats which had been gorgeously beaded and embroidered. One that was made for the Smithsonian had taken six months to complete and was valued at \$16,000!

After the boat ride, we drove to the small town called North Pole and rode on Santa Claus Lane; things were very quiet there! By July 11th, we were going toward the Yukon again. Along the way was an insignificant but amusing stop in Chicken, AK, a chicken-sized town named by early pioneers who couldn't spell ptarmigan. In Dawson City, Yukon, our hostess had a beautiful, manicured garden, and served us graciously. From her accent, we think she brought customs and traditions from China, which we appreciated along with her telling us things to look for in the area. Because of her, we went to see a mountain dome overlooking the Yukon River where rows of piled rocks had accumulated while dredging for gold. We also saw saloons, colorful houses, and buildings standing crooked as they were built on unstable permafrost. We visited the homes of the authors Jack London and Robert Service.

In Whitehorse, YK, our hotel had no record of our reservation, but after many failed referrals, we found a newly built B&B owned by a French couple located 22 miles away. While there, I discovered in my address book the number of a friend from Kipotakah whom we had known while we lived in Edmonton. Allen Murray was pleased to hear from us and wished we had called earlier to stay there. It was a missed opportunity but a pleasure to talk with him.

Travelling on the famous Alcan Highway (mutually funded by Alaska and Canada), we stopped to see videos of its construction. We heard stories of the hardships endured during that time, including frozen lakes and rivers, trucks stuck in rivers as ice thawed, rocks tumbling down mountains, and lesser problems of mosquitoes, flies, cold, and muskeg (bog-like soil). Places with names like Whirlpool Canyon, Prophet River, and Buckingham River had stories I would have liked to learn more about. We crossed the long Peace River Bridge which had been rebuilt after collapsing in 1961. We were thankful that many workers through the years had made this fantastic trip possible.

The final lap out of Dawson Creek was in flat farm country. While driving into Alberta, we saw • fields of bright yellow canola. It was a treat to stop in Grande Prairie to see Regional College with its buildings of curved brick construction designed by architect Doug Cardinal who also designed the Canadian embassy in DC.

This trip allowed for many hours of visiting with Adelle in the back seat of their Toyota SUV; these conversations were almost as significant as the site-seeing experiences. We talked of family, health issues, politics, joys, religion, dreams, and almost everything else; it was the basis of our long-continued friendship. Georgia O'Keefe said, "To have a friend takes time..." and we had plenty of that!



Bob was sometimes preoccupied with trying to make some contacts with Alaskan native people; he wanted to find people who had been at the Alkali Lake gathering in 1984. Some had heard of the Kipotakah group who had been to IERD in India where they had told their stories of the changes they had made in their community.

In traveling these 17 days, we saw breathtaking views and had moments of rapture; we developed skills in playing Hearts, Scrabble, and the Five Letter Word game in the evenings. We ranked Tim Horton's quick meals over McDonalds.

We enjoyed David's humor with his limericks about us and the journey, his on-going travel guide information, and his safe driving for 4200 miles (with only two flat tires due to often very rough terrain). We cemented a friendship that continued these ten years through many letters, phone calls, and another trip across the miles between Canada and Massachusetts. This is a fond memory and a valuable part of our lives. We will miss David who died of cancer in 2017.



## **Fifty Years of Married Life!** December 20, 2008

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We decided we would celebrate our 50th anniversary on Sunday the 21st with family and friends we had made in the two years at Christ UMC. The day before was snowy and the forecast was not favorable for Sunday. We wondered if there would even be a worship service but we went ahead with our plans.

When Sunday came, we could see the snow swirling through the large clear windows of our church during worship. I was even more doubtful that we should go ahead with our party. I passed a note with my concerns to Virginia, a church leader. She wrote back, "Go for it; we're hearty people!"

We gathered in the fellowship hall on the lower level of our church; it was lovely outside with drifting snow in the wooded area seen through the floor-to-ceiling windows. Carol, Nancy, Debra, and Phil decided that the storm was too risky to drive from Boston that day, so they didn't make it. We missed having the food and decorations Carol and Debra were going to bring but we were glad that Laura, Dean, and Ananda lived close by and could come with refreshments and Margaret. (Margaret had flown from Remsen to Boston. Fortunately, Laura had picked her up from the airport and taken her to Holyoke the night before.)

Bob had brought • the 40th anniversary quilt and put it on display. Conversations about our family and other events of the last 50 years made for pleasant reminiscing and friendly conversation. One of the guests in the church that day had come with her son who played with Ananda; the mother asked several questions including, "Will you adopt my family?"



## My 80th Birthday Retreat, 2010

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The Pastures, a weekend retreat center in the Berkshires, was the place Laura had chosen for our family to celebrate my birthday this year. What a wonderful, quiet, spacious site to come together, reflect on my journey so far, and have fun together. It was nice to find Mill River near Sheffield at the end of a ride through curves and hills.

The Pastures, formerly a dairy barn, had been thoroughly rejuvenated into a yoga treatment retreat center for breast cancer clients.

It was large, spacious, and beautifully decorated with pictures, plants, and art objects. Large floor to ceiling windows gave a pastoral view of lawns, gardens, and pathways in the area. A large and sturdy swing hung from the high rafters tempting children and adults to take a flying ride "with a view." The children (Ananda and her distant cousins, Zoe and Sam Nordene) especially enjoyed this.



The Saturday afternoon of April 24, the day after my birthday, was a bit misty and wet but quite pleasant. Many of our friends from Christ UMC in Northampton came (Virginia and Dick Ahart, Jetty Wong, Kirk and Natalie Birrell) as well as ICA colleagues (Ken, Dorcas, Alice Rose, and her husband) and relatives (Melissa Raak Nordene and family). Laura, with help from her sisters, had prepared hors'dourvres and a lovely table with flowers; Bob brought a large golden tulip plant, marking my Dutchness. Debra had made me a special hand-crafted blue serving bowl with various descriptive words of me in the glaze. We missed Margaret and Dennis as they had to stay in Iowa for Dennis to baptize their grandson Jordan. Chuck, Bob's brother, had sent word that he would treat me to a trip to Turkey to fulfill a dream of mine. (Although a generous gesture, I never seriously considered going as my back often limited my activities.)

Carol • presented me with a huge scrapbook, carefully bound in a book covered with African fabric. She had collected letters, greetings, and photos from many friends and relatives which she had artfully displayed; these were wonderful memories of my activities, our family, and friends through the years.





In addition, Nancy read a poem she had written; Carol and Debra joined her in singing a song that she had adapted for me. In a conversation they led, guests listed gifts of age 80: reflection, endurance, courage, ability to see death as a part of the journey, seeing risk as an adventure in trusting God, opportunity to support what is good in government and society, and freedom to be honest.

Games such as Carcassonne and • Bananagrams were played while others visited or took walks when the drizzly weather permitted. Indoors, there were many rooms to browse in as they had art displays and musical instruments galore; it was fun to imagine how they were played and how they sounded. After other guests had left, the family had a pasta dinner with a birthday cake for the evening meal.

Our family stayed overnight and continued playing games and visiting into Sunday. It was a relaxing time.

I was grateful for all the well-wishes, and the time to reflect on the past and imagine the future. I experienced being richly supported to continue living an engaged and happy life.



• Nancy, Debra, and Carol singing  
shown with Natalie Birrell on the left, me and Bob on the right



- *at my birthday party:  
Bob, Sam, Kirk Birrell,  
Dick, Ananda, Zoe...  
Natalie Birrell is pictured  
on the previous page*



### **Friendship with the Birrells**

Natalie and Kirk Birrell became our best friends while attending Christ UMC. Kirk was an engineer and Natalie was an artist; they lived in the hilltown of Huntington, MA in a house he and his son had ecologically built, adding many solar panels later. He had a great singing voice and sang in the church choir and community choruses. She loved to sketch people and scenes that she observed while listening and visiting, and painted numerous gorgeous landscape pictures. (She made a small pencil drawing of Ananda at a Valentine's Day party.)

Natalie took a strong stand on political and environment issues. Kirk liked to read and talk about science fiction books. We enjoyed their companionship at church events and in visits at their home and ours. Natalie always had a bowl of mixed

fruit on a sideboard to choose from, and prepared fine meals with meat although she was a vegetarian. We exchanged stories of our five daughters, and they told about their five sons.

After we moved to Holyoke, we would suggest to them that we see a good movie. If they showed interest, Kirk would come and pick us up with his most recent hybrid car. After seeing the movie, we would go out for a meal, often with Kirk's suggestion and with some money-saving coupon. We even went as far as Pittsfield for a steak dinner, and to Hofbrauhaus in West Springfield for a Bavarian treat.

Kirk died in late 2013 and Natalie died recently in April 2017. We miss these remarkable friends.



# Holyoke, MA

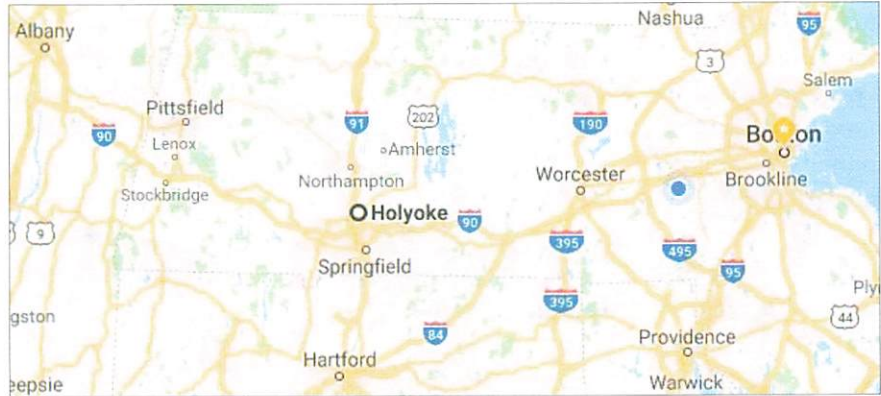
## 2010-present

### *Muriel*

To find a house you like is not easy. While we lived for four years in Easthampton, and even before moving to Massachusetts, Laura, Bob, and I had looked for a house to buy. Then on the 4th of July, Laura called that the house next door to theirs, separated only by two rows of tall trees, was for sale as the 99-year-old woman owner had recently died. Laura arranged with Deb, the neighboring realtor, to show us the house that day.

Bob and I were delighted to get the news as we had just recently closed on our apartment in DC and had money available. We liked the house immediately: the large living room with gleaming hardwood floors, the three bedrooms, and a pleasant view of trees and the mountain through the large front windows. The house had a back porch entrance, a brick exterior, a garage, a huge yard, and a coppice in the backyard of evergreen, oak, and maple. I had a vision of a garden with vegetables, flowers, and more trees that we would plant. It might require more work than Bob and I could handle, but Laura assured us she would help and Dean as well.

We made changes even before moving into the house; our builder repaired walls and insulated under the



roof, added a small bathroom with a shower for our bedroom, and installed the washer, dryer, and refrigerator. Dean built a double closet in our bedroom. Laura painted all the rooms except the main bathroom and kitchen. Later, Carol stripped old wallpaper and added new to the main bathroom. Laura, Debra, and Carol transplanted bushes and



flowers from their gardens; Margaret sent gifts for a lilac bush and a dogwood tree. Nancy was very helpful to get phone numbers of family and friends programmed into our phones; she often helped me to understand and use the computer.

As cooler weather occurred, the oil burning furnace failed, causing soot and smoke damage throughout the house. Our insurance covered getting everything commercially cleaned. We purchased a new money-saving gas furnace.

After a few years, we had a rock wall and stone walkway laid in front of the house. Bob and Laura filled the raised flower bed with roses, holly bushes,

and transplanted perennials. A hot tub was added behind the house; Dean appreciates it as well. We got a new electric stove and kitchen sink when we felt a need for an update. This update included wallpapering in the hallway and kitchen. Dean installed a chair rail in the kitchen for a modern look.

In late October of 2007, when an early snowstorm broke off a major branch of our ornamental apple tree, Henri from Easthampton came and recommended daubing mud in the wound. Bob and I did this together and it healed well; it still blooms beautifully each spring. Around Christmas, it sparkles with lights Laura hung in soaring lines on the wide-spreading branches. They remain on the tree the whole year for us to light up in the winter.

We joined the • United Congregational Church of Holyoke, wanting to worship in the community in which we live. The church is located in the center of a city that formerly thrived with industry and large mills. Unfortunately, now it suffers because jobs and manufacturing moved to the south, and the population dropped from 60,000 to 40,000. Many downtown stores closed when a large mall took their business. About one-half the population has come from Puerto Rico for work but many are without employment. Some folks go back and forth to Puerto Rico. Schools struggle to provide a quality education for all of the children.

We seek to find ways to relate to these neighbors. I am trying to learn to speak Spanish, and we attend Puerto Rican celebrations on occasion. Our church

serves the community around the church with monthly dinners and a clothes closet for infants and toddlers; and financially supports a community food bank. Bob and I are an active part of this worshipping fellowship where hospitality is stressed for the homeless, the disabled, and those with addictions.

### Participation in UCCH and the Seekers Class

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When we joined the church, the process to become Open and Affirming was already started. In the following year, we voted and opened the doors to welcome LGBTQ folks. This gave the pastor permission to perform marriages for them, and we made our decision public to the community.



As in past churches I have belonged to, I felt a study group was missing from the church program and offered to lead a discussion group. We started the Seekers group with seven participants, and have grown through the many years together. We have studied numerous books by progressive Christian writers who interpret the life and times in

the Bible in relationship to our times. In the fall of 2016, we studied the book *Teachings on Love* by Thich Nhat Hanh. In studying the Bible and other spiritual books, we seek to explore the meaning and purpose of our lives with the values of Jesus. These studies and lively discussions have challenged me to be more inclusive and understanding of others' faiths. I see God as being here and now as a spiritual presence. I believe other faiths are a part of the great living, present Kingdom of God. I believe that the heart of religion is to love God above all, and our neighbors as



we love ourselves. I desire to do this with compassion and generosity.

The exercise of meditation has become important to me after taking a ten week course with J. Vecchia, a yoga teacher in the Seekers group. I especially like the early morning time before dawn in the quiet of our living room. In the summer, I value sitting in our gazebo in the late afternoon; there I see sunlight shining through the tall green trees that border our lawn, and I feel the breath of wind that stirs the long, flowing branch of the white pine nearby. Often a small chipmunk explores the grass around me, black crows fly high in the sky above me, and small sparrows flit from roofs to trees. I find peace, meaning, and inspiration in these moments in nature.

We invited the Seekers to come to a brunch at our home on a Sunday in January 2018. The focus of our discussion was the story of Jonah in the Bible from the book: *The Great Spiritual Migrations* by Brian D. McLarin. The participants who came included a Jewish woman, three Muslims, a scientist, and other Christians. The Jonah story was interpreted both as historical truth, and as a parable or metaphor. Questions were raised regarding who were the God-fearing people in the story. Various opinions were expressed as to the meaning of the story, and several shared how they might act in similar ways of disobedience, failure, compassion, or having their lives transformed. This for me was an important multicultural and interfaith event that helped me build greater understanding toward peaceful relationships.



• *Seekers on a Sunday morning at church*



• *part of the Seekers who came to our home for a Sunday morning brunch*

## Ways I Strengthen My Mind, Body, and Spirit

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My day begins with this body prayer (*with actions*):

*I thank you, O Holy One, for the gift of another day of life (raise hands);*

*I reach out to all my brothers and sisters throughout the universe in compassion and friendship (slowly swing arms wide);*

*I offer you all I am and all I have (reach out hands);*

*I open my entire being to receive the gift that you have been waiting for me in this new day (cup hands);*

*I touch the planet Earth with awe, reverence and gratitude and promise to take care of her today (bend down, palms toward Earth);*

*May I be united with you throughout this day, aware of your love strengthening me and shining through me (hands on heart).*

-Joyce Rupp

I walk in the warm pool at the YMCA three times a week. I enjoy this time with other seniors who wish also to have better health. Anita, a 96-year-old companion there, advised that after sitting or lying down for a while, to repeatedly stand up and sit down ten times before walking. I have found this to strengthen my back and legs.

My orthopedic doctor, Wayne Schweitzer, has been most sensitive and responsive to the evidences of my arthritis, osteoporosis, and scoliosis. His advice on pain in my hands was to sleep with gloves, and in the morning, press my palms down in hot water for about a minute. I have shared this helpful advice with many others who have arthritis.



Dr. Schweitzer referred me to • Christine Sharkey, a therapist specializing in scoliosis. I met her in 2012. She impressed me by showing which little or large muscle needed to be engaged during each exercise to be more effective. Christine became a friend and has helped to fine-tune my posture and ways of walking. She recommended that as I take each step, I walk as if pressing my feet on a large ball in water. I find this, and also standing on one leg at a time, strengthens my legs and also reduces back pain. I wrote the following poem in appreciation of her:

### *Ten Wise Moves by My Therapist*

---

by Muriel, 2013

*If your backbone has a curve  
Avoid moves that pinch a nerve.*

*Find ways to decompress your spine  
This will result in feeling fine.*

*Stand with back pressed to a wall,  
You will make yourself more tall.*

*Squeeze and hold the buttocks tight,  
This will add an inch to your height.*

*Use your hips as a hinge  
They will spare the back a twinge.*

*Lengthen spine as you age,  
Notice how your glutes engage.*

*Erect walking by yourself  
Stops “pearl” dropping from the shelf.*

*Hold crown of head up high  
Bid pain a relieved “Good Bye.”*

*Exercising helps a lot  
But practiced to excess DOES NOT!*

*One more tip from my therapist:  
“Move oh so slowly, if you twist.”*





We were pleased that Nancy had used the piano in Hyde Park. In 2013 after eight years of her using it, it was not a surprise that the time had come when we would be asking the question again: "What to do with the piano?"

The last time a tuner had worked on it, he had written across the receipt, "Do not resuscitate." Now Nancy would be getting a Clavinova, a digital piano, from Debra. Since our piano was worn out, she wondered what to do with it. Fortunately, Debra learned of an artist who would like it; he came and dismantled it in order to salvage the parts that he could use.

## Bob's 80th Birthday, 2012

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Memories from *Eagle's Nest* in northern Massachusetts include:

- had two hot tubs
- delicious, nutritious, and abundant meals prepared for us
- Bob's carload of Show and Tell proudly displayed
- singing along with Dean on guitar
- cozy fire
- lots of game playing

• Carol, Phil, Debra, Muriel, Bob, Laura, Ananda, Dean, and Nancy  
(Margaret, in Iowa, with us by way of Skype)



## Celebrating My 87th Year

---

The morning of April 22, 2017 had somewhat of a dreary start; it was the day before my birthday but I wasn't going to let the weather upset my birthday plans! Nancy and Carol came to visit. We first thought of going to the Bridge of Flowers and Glacial Potholes in Shelburne Falls, MA. Instead, due to the weather, we chose the indoor Smith Botanical Gardens as an alternative.

Carol brought a large hanging flower pot with big red blooms of a geranium, small yellow petunias, and hanging bunches of purple flowers. She hung it out just under the cover of our back porch. Nancy filled our bowl on the table with bright orange clementines.

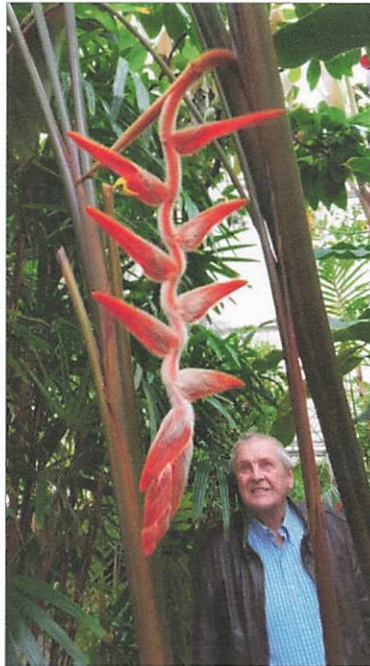
We had a hearty vegetarian lunch of family favorites. After the meal, Carol presented me with a 12-inch oblong gift. It was a creatively designed, cloth-bound address book with a typed-up list of everything she had found in an old address book of mine, with corrections made. This surprised and thrilled me to receive such a beautiful and useful address book. I had needed a new one and couldn't find anything I liked.

I received beautiful cards, and a big package from Von Maur in Des Moines with Margaret's carefully chosen gift of springtime pink pajamas.

Before Laura came to play games, we had a conversation about our work and interests. We played the Adverb Game, one of our favorites. We got a real kick out of the ways adverbs were dramatized as the "It" person worked to guess the adverb being

acted out in various scenarios of everyday activities. One adverb was "differently" and we got to see how *driving a car* and *waiting for a bus* could be done with great imagination and humor. Guessing correctly was sometimes very difficult and added to the creativity and fun.

Nancy introduced us to *Breaking It Down to E Pluribus Unum*, a new game with a focus on race amity (racial friendships). In it, we got cards of racial situations over which to dialogue and quotations cards to reflect upon. We struggled to understand the game, and to know how to talk about the situations named. I was very interested as I saw it could be used in our class on justice this summer.



At the Smith Botanical Gardens, I was able to walk along with the others due to the three-wheeled rollator from Roberta (Phil's mom). We took turns pointing out the amazing orchids, the unusual cacti, and the giant ferns and palms. A long, dangling orange colored • heliconia made me think of a skinny monkey doing tricks. We learned it was a Hanging Lobster Claw variety of perennial herb from tropical Western Pacific regions. I enjoyed seeing the preparations for the spring gardens outside.

After getting home, we all walked over to Laura's house next door for a Thai take-out meal. We remembered my 87th year and they made wishes for my next, especially to maintain good health. That too is my wish!



## *Coping When Aging*

---

by Muriel, 2015  
tune: My Favorite Things

On Sunday evening the 23rd, Bob and I entertained the members of the Justice Study group. Laura had helped out with preparing the food. The seven folks who came to our home were a mixed-race group which we valued. We were very pleased to have Tahirah join us with three of her children; the children played and helped with serving. It was a perfect spring evening. I was happy that our yellow tulips were in full bloom as was our service-berry tree. We visited together, shared our birthdates, and told about our immediate families. Even though we had been meeting together for nine weeks already, I felt we got to know and enjoy each other much better.

I really think it is important to observe and celebrate the life one has. Life and health are gifts and, for this long life, I am grateful to God, and to my parents who must have given me strong genes and a healthy beginning, as well as wholesome habits.

I anticipate continued abilities to see, hear, walk, think clearly, remember, and experience the things of good health. Most of all, I sincerely hope our family will continue to relate with love and support in the years to come. Bob is my dear companion in this and every effort, and makes each and every day, a day to be celebrated.



*When the back aches,  
When knees stiffen,  
When knuckles thicken...  
I simply remember to stretch and exercise;  
And then I don't feel so bad.*

*When height shortens,  
When hair thins,  
When eyes dim...  
I simply remember, now I am wiser;  
And then I don't feel so bad.*

*When memory fails,  
When sense blackmails,  
When thoughts jumble...  
I simply like to remember most anything;  
And then I don't feel so bad.*

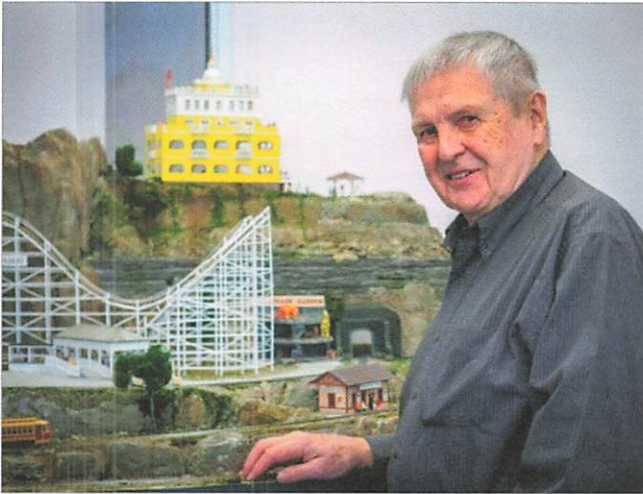
*When food choices reach limits,  
When digestion slows,  
When need for fiber and Miralax grows...  
I simply remember it's the time to go;  
And then I don't feel so bad.*

• *me at 87*

## Bob

- builder of • train set at the Senior Center, initiated by gift from the Bosinoff family
- making gift-giving special with presentations of velvet nesting boxes (bought these previously in a mall in Des Moines)

- family memories about Dad/Bob, 11/15



I delivered food for Meals on Wheels, 2011-14. This became a mutual giving/receiving relationship...I got chocolates, and made friends.

Starting in 2012, I was the sole tuba player in the Western Massachusetts Concert Band at the Senior Center until I got a partner in 2018. I joined the German Band in 2017. I go to practice every Monday for two and a half hours.



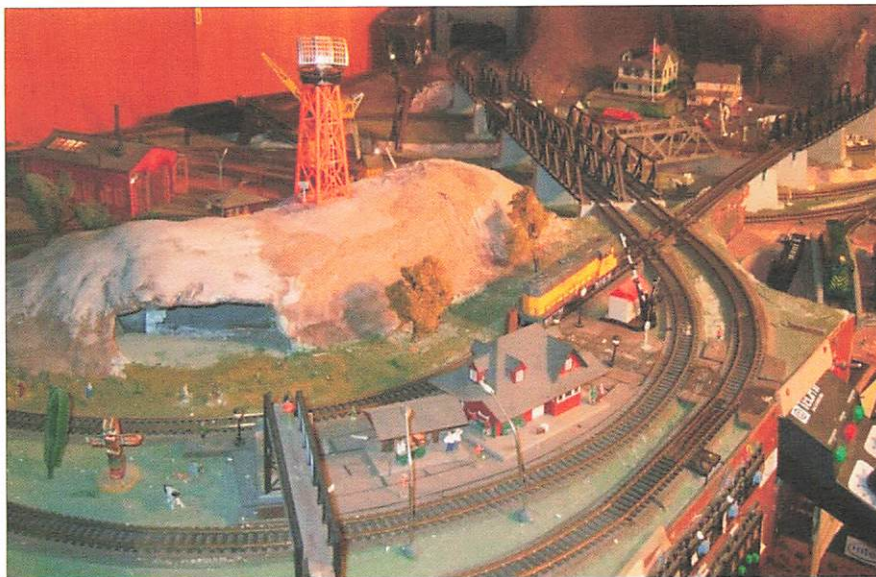
• family picture, 2012



## The Train Goes West

### *Muriel*

Irving Bosinoff (1922-2011) and Roberta (1925-2014) (with their son, Philip (our son-in-law), and daughter, Ellen) had lived in Lexington, MA since 1955. There, Irving had gradually developed • his HO gauge train system, adding engines, cars (both freight and passenger), scenery, buildings, a river, and mountain tunnels. Irving was an electrical engineer, inventor, patent holder, and also an amateur photographer; he was a man of many abilities.



Irving worked on the train with Phil (as a child) who later studied at MIT and developed his own skills with all things electronic. Through the decades, when Irving's interests grew...to include building emerging color TVs, collecting/using cameras of all kinds, making a semi-automated color darkroom, and connecting through ham radio...the little train did not move so often on those tracks. It no longer grew and dozens of cars rested on shelves. The neighborhoods of make-believe gathered dust, the colors faded.

Irving Bosinoff died in 2011 at the age of 88. By November of 2012, Roberta decided to move from their home to a space better suited to her needs. Phil and Debra were left with the challenge of deciding the future or fate of the train, and of its environment.

Potential buyers showed little interest in paying any more than \$150, and they wanted to select only certain things such as engines, not the whole train,

tracks, switches, electrical motors, and the amazing scenery with the plaster-of-Paris mountain.

Debra talked with Bob about Phil's anxiety and disappointment to lose such a piece of workmanship and accompanying memories. Bob had a childhood fascination with model trains and an unfulfilled dream of ownership. Bob and Debra consulted with each other over many phone calls asking "What if...?" "How to...?" and "What then?" Phil joined in to come up with suggestions, serious considerations, and a plan of action with lots of apprehension, determination, and hope.

Bob quickly researched the possibilities of a location in Holyoke where such a donation would make sense. Bob visited with Kathy Bowler, the director of the Council on Aging and the new Senior Center of Holyoke. "Available to come here?" she repeated after Bob, and added, "Of course, why not?" She was delighted to add the train to dozens of activities for,



and by, senior citizens. She agreed to find a place for it.

Bob then rented a large van and drove the 93 miles to Lexington. To remove the train set from their basement in one piece was impossible. Debra and Phil helped with the dismantling - bridge by bridge, rail by rail, wire by wire - along with diesel engines, dozens of train cars and the 5' by 9' landscape. All trains and supplies were carefully labeled, and packed into 11 boxes. Unfortunately, the landscape and base got mostly destroyed as it was removed from their basement bulkhead, so it was disposed of within months.

Model train enthusiasts, hobbyists, and operators are invited to design, install, and rebuild. Regular members and visitors play with, and admire the new train set started by the Bosinoff gift. It is hoped the new train set will be enjoyed as much as the old one was by the Bosinoff family of Lexington. Holyoke was a good city for this to happen as it looked forward to human-scale passenger rail service once again.

• *city hall, library, factories, and city streets in new train set...*  
*photos by Don Treeger from*  
*The Republican, a Springfield newspaper*

The Bosinoff gift catalyzed the Senior Center in starting a model train club that has continued ever since 2012. The new train set and landscape now contains a city hall, library, factories, city streets, and • a replica of the Holyoke Mountain Amusement Park.





## Our Friends, The Ballards

---

Louise and Jack Ballard are friends I am glad we found and kept. We got to know them in Chicago in the ICA at the Kemper building in the 1970's, lived with them in DC for four years in the 1980's and 90's, and have stayed friends ever since.

It was Louise who could in-kind surprisingly-good meals and other necessities, a job she seemed to find joy in doing. Louise knew the secret of seeing a prince in a frog. She cooked up big meals with speed, tastiness, and style. She also knew how to graciously hold people accountable for keeping things clean and orderly.

Jack would be in the background with bookkeeping so that the ship could stay afloat; he was always responsible...and creative with games and storytelling. When I was assigned to EG while in the ICA in Chicago, I took the children on a beach outing one day. I remember Peter, the Ballards' son with special needs, was very inquisitive, active, and often wandered away from the group. His parents' commitment to his loving care amazed me then, and through later years, as Peter has been able to get a job, play his trumpet, and excel in sports while continuing to live at home.

When we moved from Edmonton to the DC House, we lived across the hall from the Ballards who had recently returned from Hong Kong. I remember

leading an Imaginal Education course with Louise. She supported my creativity. We worked together on special events like the anniversary of the death of the Order Ecumenical's founder, J.W. Mathews.

I remember interesting and inspiring retreats in Pennsylvania and Maryland that Jack and Louise

arranged; they brought spirit to each occasion and knew how to make it affordable. I miss these times of play and getting new ideas very much.

Later, when the Ballards lived in Maryland and we lived in Iowa, we always appreciated the rest and hospitality they provided at their home as we were travelled between DC and Massachusetts.



Louise would serve meals by candlelight and Jack would assist. Louise would even insist on a special Sunday breakfast, not just a quick cereal. We would attend church with them, at which Louise would play the organ and Jack would help out with the service.

Since we moved to Massachusetts, they have visited us, and together we went sightseeing to the Bridge of Flowers and Glacial Potholes in Shelburne Falls, MA.

We were very happy to have Jack, Louise, and Peter attend the wedding of Carol and Wolf.

Two years later, in the spring of 2017, Carol, Nancy, Bob, and I drove to Maryland to attend • their 50th anniversary celebration. We continue to keep in touch as we deeply value this friendship.

## How I Met Tahirah

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In our Seekers Group, we were studying the book, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed Cross the Road?* by Brian D. McLaren. The author urged us to talk with, and become friends with, neighbors of all faiths. I thought I would like to get to know a Muslim woman here in our area. I had that opportunity when The Islamic Center of Western Massachusetts invited Christians, Jews, and Buddhists to come for an evening of getting to know each other. A local doctor who was Muslim greeted and hosted our table; she explained the end of Ramadan and eating customs.

Another event like this occurred again in 2015, when I met Tahirah Amatul Wadud. She was seated at a table near me. After the program, I turned to her and asked if we could visit together. I learned that she is an attorney in Chicopee, born in upstate New York, and the mother of seven, ages 4-16. She explained that her family, influenced by Malcolm X, converted to Islam when she was a child.

In the weeks following, we lunched together in a local restaurant, had a picnic in a nearby park (when Margaret was here and joined us), and gathered for a luncheon near Tahirah's office in Chicopee with my friend Edie.

Tahirah appreciates the ways I have introduced and included her in events in the church. She regularly attended our Seekers class during the study of

*Teachings on Love* by Thich Nhat Hanh. I value our times together in serious conversation about faith, and the difference it makes in our lives.

I arranged that our church invite her to speak on Feb. 18, 2016 about her community work involving anti-Muslim bigotry. She told of community and faith-based partnerships she learned of at the White House, presented by President Obama.



In January 2017, Bob and I were invited to • her birthday party/fundraiser where we met her family. We learned about CAIR, a group working together for justice for Muslim immigrants, to educate for understanding of Islam, and to reduce hatred and violence towards Muslims. We agreed to help support the important work that CAIR does.

I like Tahirah's warm greetings and joy. Tahirah and I are both interested in interfaith relationships and working on concerns regarding race, integration, immigration, gender, and peace. I like her courage to take on these challenges. She is a spokesperson for understanding racism and an advocate of justice for all. Tahirah works with many groups in this area, in our state, and neighboring states.

Tahirah shared with me her recent decision to run for the House of Representatives for our district. She told me why she feels she is needed in Washington. She knows, as an attorney, that there many poor working people in western Massachusetts whose voices are not heard. As a friend acquainted with her values and her integrity, I decided I would support her, and not vote for the current man in office.



### Milestones

#### *Muriel*

Through the years I have marked these special, life-changing experiences:

- getting an education, graduating from Sioux Center High School and Northwestern Junior College
- teaching 2nd grade at Union Consolidated in Remsen, IA
- Caravan training and leadership in Pennsylvania and New York
- attending and graduating from Iowa State College (a first class education), meeting Bob
- working in Liberia and becoming engaged to Bob
- getting married to Bob
- giving birth to five daughters, one every two years culminating on our 10th anniversary
- raising daughters, supporting their growth and development/being a mother
- attending RS-1 and Global Academy in the Ecumenical Institute, later joining it
- being under global assignments to Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, and Canada
- being director of Foundry Preschool in DC
- teaching English as a Second Language (getting to know immigrants while helping them)
- leading small group book studies in churches and seminars
- writing my memoirs

1946: excelling in my 8th grade examination; getting the highest score in county

1950: making the decision to study toward ministry

1954: deciding to go to Liberia

1958: marrying Muriel

1971: joining the Ecumenical Institute

1993: doing flood recovery in Iowa

2005-06: sending containers to Liberia

• January 2009, in Hyde Park, Massachusetts



*from top down: Margaret, Laura  
mid: Bob, Carol, Ananda, Dean  
lower: Muriel, Nancy, Debra, Phil, Dennis*

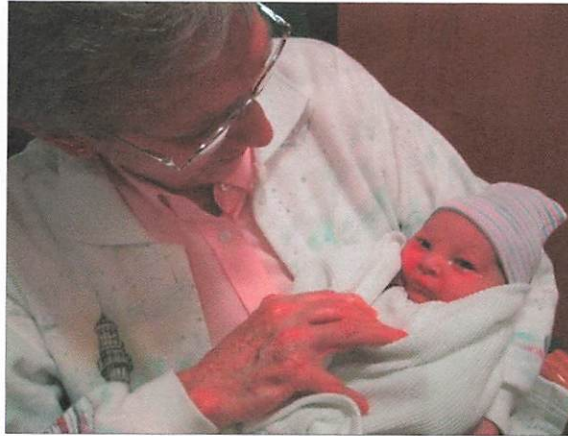
## Grandparenting

### Muriel

Laura had called us in Indianola with the news that she was pregnant. It was good, good news. • Ananda Marie Hudson was born on April 15, 2003 and we became grandparents (for the first time, as 70+ year olds). With careful planning, we were able to be in Massachusetts at that time. We were excited, happy, and wanted everyone to hear the news of Ananda's birth. We prepared a big sign for Laura and Dean's door with the announcement, "It's A Girl!" We loved to hold and to admire her during our short visit.

We got to see Ananda's growth and development during her family's visits to Iowa. I remember when they came and we went to the Iowa State Fair together. Dean took his infant daughter on several rides! We were proud new grandparents and liked to show her off to our friends. We took her to Mom Hanna so Ananda could get to meet her great grandma.

On Ananda's third birthday, we visited from Iowa again, and as we sat around celebrating, Ananda had us stand and join hands to sing: *We Are Family*. We wanted to be closer to the majority of our



family so we decided to move to Massachusetts. By the end of that year, we were living in Easthampton, MA. Ananda came to visit us to play, and other times, we babysat her and • comforted her while sick. Bob and Ananda made a snow house and they played together in it. While we lived there, Ananda grew old enough to ride her bike to our home, going with Laura on hers.

Four years later when we moved to Holyoke, we could be together often as we lived next door to her.

She would call on the phone and say "Hello, Grandma, this is A-nan'-da." Grandpa hung a board on a rope from a branch of the tall white pine in our backyard. Ananda loved to swing round and round, and invited her friends to come swing too. I loved to read with her. She often picked a book for me to read to her where she joined in the repetitive parts: *But Grandma, We Don't Have a Bed*.



Ananda started school in Westfield. Once when I picked her up from school, she wondered out loud how much longer we would have to drive to get to her auntie's homes in the Boston area. She would tell us about her classes and sing songs. We enjoyed



going to her school programs and Open Houses. She also took art lessons; I have several of her drawings and paintings, including a sketch of her and me together. She was in swimming and chorus; we always went to see her perform. Ananda often made elaborate creations for her science or social study classes which she proudly showed off...and earned high marks in all her work.



## Bob

We made the decision in 2006 to sell our “retirement home” in Indianola. We wanted to move to be with four daughters, and especially to be as close as possible to Ananda, to observe her precious growing years, and help when possible.

When Ananda cooked at home, she would often bring us a sample, or invite us for a meal. Sometimes when going by our house, she would call to us through the window to have us watch her riding a bike, skiing, or roller skating. When her family is away for a day or two, Bob will walk her dog named Rudy. She learned to knit in school, and tried to teach me to make a scarf, but when I put it aside, I forgot the stitches.



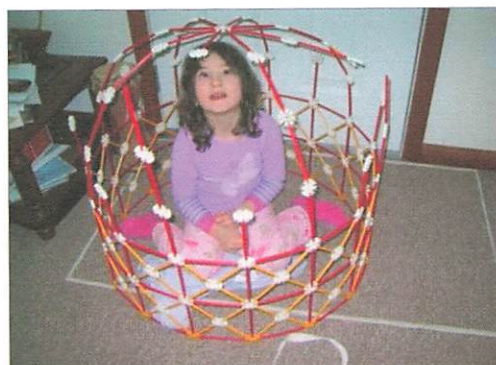
• *Ananda playing with me (she is less than two)*

Sometimes I was called on to take Ananda to Southampton Road School in Westfield, or to pick her up at the end of the school day and bring her home with me.

I am constantly learning more from Ananda than I can pass on to her, finding her working harder and longer than I can work, and coming up with new ideas which I have never dreamed of.

• *Ananda at 12, teaching me to knit*

It is a joy being Ananda’s grandparents, and to have her join us in playing cards, the Five Letter Word Game, Charades, and other activities. We are proud to have such a loveable, capable, and creative granddaughter.



• *Ananda at four inside K'NEX structure she made*

## Hobbies and Interests

### Muriel

- crocheting, tatting, and embroidery with my mother
- reading, esp. fiction and historical fiction
- photography
- writing (stories and letters)
- correspondence with friends and relatives
- learning Spanish
- leading discussions of current religious/spiritual books
- global studies
- gifting for world needs
- walking:

I have walked on open country roads in Iowa, on winding paths on a spacious campus, and through dripping rain under the palm branches where the fronds might hold green mamba snakes in Liberia. I pushed baby strollers on the streets and parks in Chicago, Council Bluffs, and Des Moines. I have also walked through the crowded shopping streets in Hong Kong, among the small homes in Osaka, over the mountains between rows of peppers in South Korea, on the dusty roads of the First Nation people in western Canada, and with a massive protest march in DC against going to war in Iraq. I found that someone would volunteer to show me the way whenever I needed help with languages I didn't know.

Now I enjoy walking on the quiet street in our

neighborhood in Holyoke. Here I occasionally see someone walking a dog, children coming home from school and getting off the bus, or someone who waves from a car or their front door. Usually I see chipmunks scurrying across Holly Meadow Circle, little finches darting in and out of the arborvitae bushes (even hopping just a few feet in front of me), beautiful flowers, and well-kept homes with robins and cardinals singing in the oak and evergreen trees nearby.



• *forming hand-built dishes with Debra in her pottery studio*

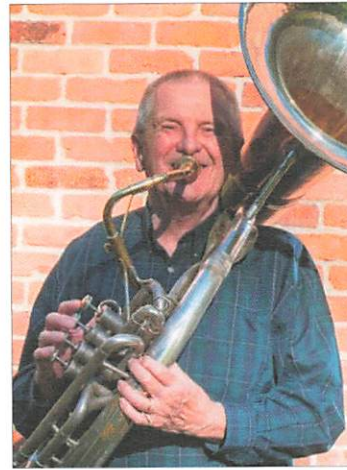
• *eating our homemade sushi after making it with Carol's guidance (Iowa)*



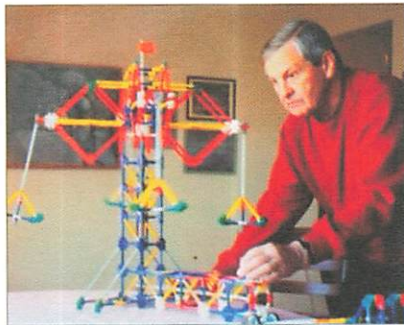


## Bob

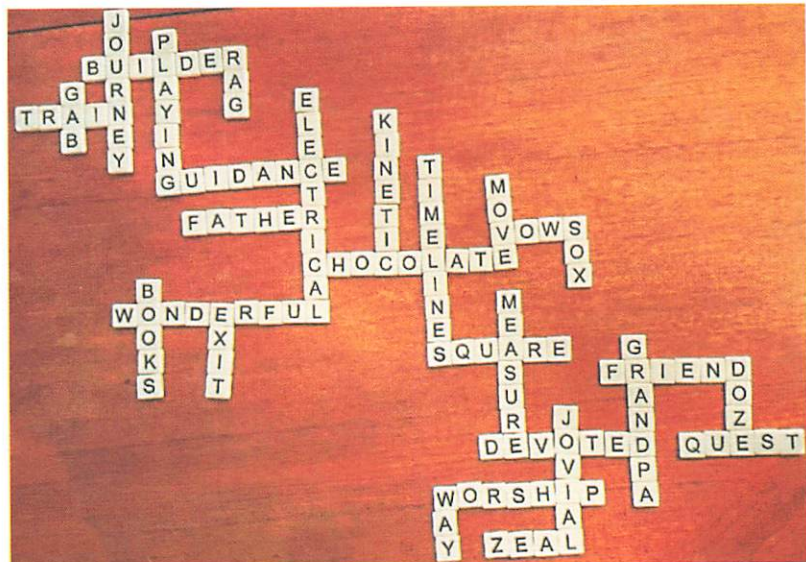
- woodworking and construction
- stamp collecting
- making music (both choral and band)
- recording the ancestry of Griffins, Benders, Raaks, and Vander Ploegs
- displaying art which tells a story in our church
- working with model trains
- maintaining connections with Liberia
- building toys
- teaching and using math
- calculating time and space
- talking to strangers
- stopping for historical markers and road signs
- playing Solitaire and chess
- writing letters
- reading and napping



• me with my tuba at home in Holyoke



• me building K'NEX structures



• a Father's Day tribute in Bananagrams, made June 16, 2018

## Social Concerns

---

*Muriel*

*Challenges Are Now Soul Size*

---

by Muriel, 2017  
the idea, *Soul Size*, is from  
*A Sleep of Prisoners* by Christopher Fry

*What is my responsibility for Climate Change?*

*Who says the climate is changing,  
a new national secretary denies it!*

*What is the future of affordable Health Care?*

*Do we trust our policy makers,  
and who do they represent?*

*What will bring about Global Peace?*

*Is the security of white Americans  
more important?*

*Am I willing to get involved in politics?*

*Am I able and willing to make any kind  
of difference?*

*Is human nature with its five senses able to deal with  
our new human experience?*

*From where do answers of the heart,  
the intuition, intentions, and trust emerge?*

*Do all human beings experience more to life than  
the physical?*

*Is the spiritual center, the soul,  
revealing to us light and wisdom?*

*Challenges swirl and beckon new depth, new  
humans, in space and time:*

*Events and challenges are now soul size!*

## Environmental Involvement

---

We had the opportunity to join the Neighbor To Neighbor group in Holyoke to work to close the local electricity-generating coal plant. In this group were families who had suffered through the years from asthma due to smoke in the atmosphere. Some of them had come from Puerto Rico. Other environmental groups were also active. We did what we could to influence the coal company, and the city of Holyoke, to change to solar energy. Our group encouraged others in the city to get involved. Some of us met with the City Council. Several groups had • representatives meet with the Energy Company to urge cleaning up the area and shifting to solar power.

Success! The plant was closed in 2016 and a large solar field has been built.

My interest and concern about coal mining and the environment started when we visited the Greenwalds in Nebraska (when we lived in Indianola). There we had heard trains loaded with coal thundering by during the night. I said to Bob, "I'd like to see where all



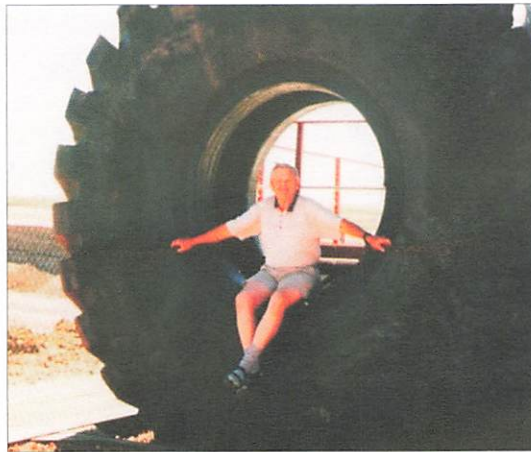


this coal comes from.” We had that opportunity in 1992 when we were driving home from visiting Nancy in Sacramento.

We returned home through Canada and some western states. In Wyoming, we located the place where surface coal mining was happening. We stopped to stand at the edge of a gigantic hole, much larger than a football field. We saw tractors and huge shovels digging out the coal, and trucks getting loaded; the vehicles looked like miniature toys. What an assault to the Earth to scrape away all signs of green life and fill the air with coal dust!

I couldn't help but take a picture of • Bob seated in a huge tractor tire in the parking lot.

Later on a trip from DC to Massachusetts, we visited the Pennsylvania Museum of Coal Mining. We took a mining car into a no-longer-functioning dark mine to learn of its history. Many families had depended on the income from this dangerous work, but it had also destroyed many lives. Seated beside us in the car was a man. He explained he was one of the orphans whose job in the mine had been to warn workers of dangers (some deaths happened anyway). I saw this as another evidence of a terrible industry!



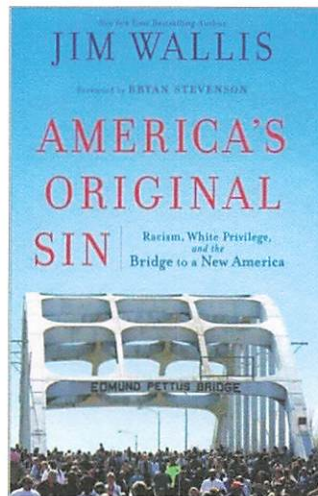
## Anti-racism Activities

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In 2014, the news started to reveal more stories of black men being shot and killed by white policemen. Nancy, Carol, and Debra joined protest marches to show their concerns that justice be done. (Before, and ever since, Nancy and Debra organize conversation groups to learn and work with others to undo racism.) We began to learn more and more about the movement called Black Lives Matter. Our church in Holyoke was asked to provide a meeting place for a BLM protest and I attended.

This created a desire to learn more about the lives of black people and the role of white people. I began to focus on books for understanding. I read *Dear White America* by Tim Wise, *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander, and *Waking Up White* by Debbie Irving. These were just some of over two dozen books on racism that I have read in the past few years; I found them informative and troubling.

I then decided to lead two 11-week study groups in our church using Jim Wallis' book, • *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America*, beginning in February of 2017. Present in the second group were two women who were black that I knew from the Senior Center and the YMCA. Others were white men and women from our church. The book explained what it was like to be black, especially when growing up in the southern U.S.



The white people acknowledged that we have had white privileges, or advantages, from the time we were born. For example, where and how we lived, our education, our financial opportunities, and even our religion had been affected by a system that supported us. We learned that police were more likely to stop and arrest People of Color as they go about their daily lives. This results in a disproportionate number of People of Color being incarcerated. This reveals much about injustice in our country now and throughout history.

We had many questions we wanted to know about Holyoke law enforcement, and invited our police chief to come to answer our questions. He and two officers accepted. They tried to reassure us that they were trained to avoid discrimination, and tried to practice community policing.

I am less naïve now about the situation, especially after reading *Dog Whistle Politics* by Ian Haney. He exposed the many powerful political, economic, and social controls that are practiced in our country.

I believe that we need to find ways to have more interracial face-to-face relationships, to be alert to discrimination, to seek groups to unite with, and to work for inclusion, equality, and community unity in our activities.

I am reminded of, and encouraged, through the wisdom and writings of change makers such as Margaret Mead:

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*



## Memories about Dad/Bob

Daughters and Muriel created this list about Bob on his birthday in 2015.

- drinking one glass of water before a meal, not during!
- being Santa on more than one occasion
- hiking/exploring in parks
- camping to save money
- bringing "Show & Tell", especially items from newspapers and magazines
- showing willingness to help others; stopping to help people having car trouble
- carefully, carefully unwrapping gifts, saving the paper! (but not the only one in the family to do this)
- running out of gas - in his challenge to see how much further he could go on that tank of gas
- enjoying to tour guide
- hat and crown wearing
- estimating how long something takes to do, and giving it exactly that amount of time to do, even if it actually needs longer
- savoring dark chocolate, and giving one away from his stash at a time
- stopping at rest areas/roadside signs on every trip (whether the rest of us wanted to stop or not)
- packing car trunks and suit cases, using exact measurements to maximize fit
- liking to create timelines for us (and himself)
- playing chess
- enjoying construction toys (i.e. Fisher Technic: searched to have it again for years, without success)
- preferring strategy games, i.e. chess, Blokus, Go
- drinking the water from cooking vegetables (both Dennis and Margaret think of him every time she does this now too!)
- being a pastor; caring for sick parishioners
- dressing as a clown

- family memories about Dad/Bob, 11/15



• our family camping while living in Des Moines

## A Family Tradition – Celebrating 40th Birthdays

*Muriel*

*“Forty is the old age of youth and fifty is the youth of old age.”*

- French Proverb

We celebrated each 40th birthday of our daughters with creativity and attention to their uniqueness. So a party occurred just about every two years from 2000-2008.

Remembering those celebrations of birthdays helped Bob and I to reconsider the events of the past and to ask questions. Where were we living? What were we doing? How are things different now? It caused me to telephone our daughters for help to recall details. They recovered messages sent and notes on songs and activities. Each daughter could remember different parts and their roles.

...



It was the last day of the year in 2000, when Margaret turned 40 in West Des Moines. She is a person who inspires many people with her thoughtful greeting cards, friendly letters, and telephone calls. Together with her husband, Dennis, they entertain in generous and unique ways. She loves to travel to little known sites with historic significance or natural wonder, which she carefully researched in advance. She invites and encourages others to go to these places also. We laugh about one of her recommendations: to visit the Highest Point in Iowa in an almost flat cornfield!

For her 40th birthday, we decided to honor Margaret by inviting her friends to send, or bring, a story or comment on how she had inspired them. Nearly 40 people responded and I put these together in an Inspiration booklet (Debra created the cover and illustrations). Many commented on Margaret’s handwritten correspondence; her writing is beautiful, almost flawless, with thoughtful content. She writes long letters and won’t type or email them. Some in the family suggested that she use email; but this was not one of her values.

• *Margaret and me with refreshments, including piano keys cake!*

To have fun with Margaret about her not wanting to adapt to modern technology, Nancy wrote a skit as a spoof using an adaptation of the first scene in *The Music Man* (a movie set in Mason City, Iowa). • All the family joined in a train scene (with chairs lined up in her living room) chanting or singing; we substituted “He doesn’t know the territory,” with “She doesn’t use the Internet” in the cadence of a moving train. Margaret listened with amusement and exclaimed, “I don’t *want* to use the Internet!”



**Laura** turned 40 in early 2003, in Holyoke. She was six months pregnant with Ananda. Of course, that was a big event in her life, as well as ours. • Nancy, our creative writer, put together the Karnac Show and led all of us to see and anticipate Laura's future. (That became real with the arrival of Ananda on April 15.) Dean's mom and aunts sang a song for Laura.



• *Dean's mother Claire, Laura, Dean's sister Barb and his Aunt Theresa, Debra, and Dean's Aunt Lorraine*



For fun, Laura's sisters • held her on their laps, quite a handful (or laps full)! She received many wishes and memories from friends that were put into a scrapbook.



On a delightful October day in 2004, we gathered for **Debra's** 40th in the UCC facility in Weston, MA (Carol's church at the time). We celebrated Debra's creativity and work as an artist and teacher.

- Bob laid out a 40-foot time line of her journey along with historical events; it displayed several of her pictures and creations (books and sculptures). I planned a scavenger hunt of her life. We hid clues in the church and surrounding garden.



In 2007, it was **Nancy's** turn to mark the completion of 40 years. She had moved to Massachusetts and shared an apartment with Carol in Hyde Park. Laura planned the activities around the theme of *Prairie Home Companion* and *The News From Lake Wobegon*. This fitted in with Nancy's concerns and involvements in the Boston community. Friends told stories of these activities and events that made up Nancy's world, including solving puzzles and playing games. Humor, ads, and songs were carried off in Garrison Keillor style. It was an evening "where all the women are strong, all the men good looking, and all of the children are above average."



Representations/symbols of Debra's soul were collected and assembled • by Carol into a large shadow box. The creative miniatures were made by friends and family. Back in Debra and Phil's house in Ashland, Nancy, acting as an archeologist, presented these items as a way to discern the soul of Debra. The artifacts all contributed to The Debra Legend. The song of the night was, "Come listen to a story of a girl named Deb" to the tune from *The Beverly Hillbillies*.



• Nancy holding Ananda at her 40th birthday celebration



Finally in late 2008, it was **Carol's** opportunity to join her sisters in becoming 40. Everyone helped to make it a celebration of *Some of Her Favorite Things*, a take-off from the song in *The Sound of Music*. Among Carol's favorite things are fabrics – fabrics for their colors, designs, weave, ethnicity, and use. With her collections of cloth she makes quilts, wall hangings, book covers, clothes, upholstery, and gifts of art.

Friends and relatives were invited to send Debra small pieces of cloth along with a story or comment telling the reason they had chosen it for Carol. From the amazing supply of contributions, Debra sewed the fabrics together in a colorful • quilt that was displayed that evening from the second floor balcony of Carol's home in Hyde Park. A cloth-covered matching box held all the messages that had been sent along with a sample of the accompanying cloth. Nancy led us in a *Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me* quiz game of Who Knows Carol Best.

- Carol sitting on the back side of her quilt

...



We want never to lose our spirit of enthusiasm in finding ways to honor lives with celebration. Although it takes time and effort, planning, and coordinating, I think it keeps us active as our daughters move to their "fifties...the youth of old age." It also requires being sensitive of those who give their talents to the event, as well as the honoree. It is an investment in the solidarity of family and the development of friendships. It is a way to show love in action. Our family's 40th birthday observances are treasures to remember.



- Carol in her Hyde Park kitchen

## Vignettes of Our Daughters' Weddings & Special Events

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*Muriel* ...to our daughters

Margaret to Dennis Martens

---

March 16, 1991

Your • church wedding in West Des Moines reminded me of ours, and pointed to your life together.

It was nice the way you included • Amy and David (Dennis' children) in the ceremony.

How did Arlet (Dennis' mother) and I come to be wearing matching outfits of plaid skirts and red jackets for the Rehearsal Dinner?



Laura to Dean Hudson

---

Sept. 1, 2000

I think it's great the way you bought your wedding dress and flowers at local stores! Quick and classy!

Stanley Park in Westfield made • a beautiful setting with ducks roaming around, a pond, and a gazebo for the vows. Everything was fresh after a quick rain shower minutes before guests arrived.



Bare feet and a hitched up dress made dancing fun and Bob enjoyed joining in. Laura, friends, and family prepared • the refreshments.



## Debra to Philip Bosinoff

July 8, 2001

Wow! Wasn't sewing your dress an accomplishment in creating together with challenging satin and lace? I also remember the challenge and efforts of Bob and me to learn to dance before the wedding!

Family and friends volunteered to bring food and flowers, and along with Laura's fantastic cakes, made for a delightful reception with dancing and music prepared with Carol.

The • huppah (Jewish wedding canopy) set in a park of natural beauty in Needham, was just right for you and Phil.



## Carol to Wolf Segal

May 15, 2015

The sun warmed the brisk day for this seaside wedding in Hull on the south shore of Boston. The gorgeous sunset seemed to bless your vows. The way you two were matched was told through my poetry of your courtship.



• *Phil's young-adult son, Jason, stands on the left side in a dark suit*



• *Carol and Wolf walking down the dock near where they were married*

## *Carol and Wolf are Matched*

by Muriel, 2015

*There are many men and many women  
one passes on the street;  
But there comes a time when one wants help,  
the special one to meet.  
So MatchDotCom on the internet,  
seemed just right for them,  
Their profiles were carefully writ  
and from the heart did stem.*

*Thus Wolf called Carol,  
they talked a bit and plans came into play.  
They set a date of May 15th to meet at MFA.  
A Samarii exhibit was just the show,  
for each other more to know;  
Their similar interests, first in art,  
caused their companionship to start.*

*By phoning, texting, dining  
and running near the beach,  
Their fascination intensified  
as love had made its reach.  
Matching romance with artistry,  
exploration with curiosity,  
They soon decided that marriage  
was a possibility.*

*Another May 15th they went to New Orleans  
Where to each other they shared their dreams;  
Then on Carol's finger, Wolf a diamond slipped  
This followed a year that really zipped.*

*Now they've promised to be faithful and true,  
Growth to challenge and creativity to imbue.  
From their center in love, they'll work with mirth  
For home, community and planet earth.*

*They'll find that love does not depend on money  
That things go better when they say "honey."  
With healthy appetite to delight the senses,  
They'll talk and work out any differences.*

*In marriage may you walk in harmony  
with body, heart and mind,  
Treating each other in every way most kind.  
And join the community in its care  
Finding ways for justice and equity to share.*



Storytelling of good times with your friends and family was led by Nancy. It caused laughter and comradery that lasted into the night with music and dancing.



## Nancy's 50th Birthday Celebration

March 4, 2017

Your warm and generous hospitality on a cold, windy day, welcomed some 40 friends and family to your apartment in Brighton. • Myrna, one of your best friends, helped to make the party fun.

Love and passion for racial justice was a common theme of conversations.

Other memories:

- 366 folded cranes made by Laura hung and reflected in a large mirror
- Margaret's expressed love and appreciation for you and your unique gifts
- Johnny, a colleague from SURJ Boston (Showing Up for Racial Justice), led a song sung in a round: We are the Ones We've Been Waiting For
- richness came from the diversity of ages, races, cultures, and experiences

I think you agree with this quote:

*“Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.”*

– Benjamin Franklin



• Nancy and Carol  
(at another time  
and location)



• Nancy finishing a puzzle on her  
birthday, March 5, a favorite  
activity

## Passions

### Muriel

These things have made me feel happy, satisfied, and significantly involved:

- making a life with Bob
- being a mother, raising and enjoying • our children
- working on projects with others
- participating in church activities
- supporting the hungry, and those who suffer from war and other forms of oppression; being generous
- developing my character and leadership skills
- striving to be a better friend and companion
- traveling and learning about the world
- keeping healthy and active
- working on social issues
- writing my memoirs
- teaching and reading

For as long as I can remember, I have loved to teach. My brothers and I played school in the house, and outside under the trees. I tried to copy the ways my mother taught us our letters and numbers, through repetition and memorization. In our garage, we found boxes of worksheets from my mother's school-teaching days, and used them in play.

- *Ananda and me writing letters to Margaret and others*



This was followed by my life-time of teaching: 2nd grade children the tools of learning, teenage girls the skills of home making, adults the ability to speak English, community leaders to build human development skills, and church members to grapple with issues of faith and responsibility for our

communities and the world. I love the people I have taught, and the places where I found them: the U.S., Liberia, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Canada. I embraced learning to teach, and teaching to learn.

I love to read and I love books. From my parents, I got an interest in the news...from local and state newspapers...about happenings in the world. My mother also received mission magazines with information about the world's needs. My dad read the Bible at every meal; Bob and I continue to read a selection every day. I loved it when my dad would read aloud from well-known novels during winter

evenings. My mother always had stories that she would read to us, or she would teach us to read ourselves. Our country school teacher read us chapter books every noon time and we would beg her to read another chapter when it was time for lessons. One time when my grandmother was caring for us, I hid from her to read a book, instead of helping with the housework.





Now I feel I still need to steal away from other things in order to have time to read. I almost always have more than one book with me that I am reading. I read and study a current book on spirituality to deepen my understanding of the Christian faith. I enjoy historical fiction, especially by or about women that tell of life in other countries and social situations. I choose books about Africa, the Middle East, Japan, Korea, and South America to learn more about those countries and how they are changing. I like to be informed about the social concerns here in the U.S., and read many books on racism and white privilege. I also read about politics, psychology, and sociology to enrich my awareness so I can participate in change. Reading is one of my favorite activities and a great love of my life.

My mother also gave me a love for flowers; she made our yard and home beautiful with tulips, daffodils, bachelor buttons, asters, irises, sweet peas, and roses. We had a yellow rose bush next to our water pump. Every time I went to get drinking water, I stopped to smell the roses; they had a scent I'd like to find again. We also had red floribunda roses in front of the house, a showpiece of our farm! In almost every home Bob and I have lived in, I have been able to introduce roses, begonias, and flowering trees outdoors, and to have African violets indoors. I like the daily care, the fragrance, and growth surprises that the plants bring. In the fall, I bring in a couple of begonias and geraniums, and care for them inside throughout the winter.



• *admiring our dogwood tree in 2017, planted during our first year in Holyoke*

My daughters are my passion. I value their insights, activities, and conversations. I prioritize their phone calls and visits. I am proud of their accomplishments and choices. As I listen to them, I learn from them.

I appreciate friends. I take the time and effort to make friends. They influence my thinking and activities. I remember friends after one of us has moved away and like to keep in contact with them. Friends are a blessing to my life and I cherish what they teach and share with me.

Health has had to be a passion, especially as an adult. For my scoliosis, I started getting chiropractic treatments, medicine, and acupuncture in Iowa. I work with therapists and do daily exercises. I take care with what I eat because of acid reflux. In concern for forgetfulness, I study, and challenge myself to be mindful.

I like to volunteer when able, to help make changes in society. I am eager to work with others to find what is possible while working together for a better world.

Writing has become an exercise of gratitude for all of life. Presently, at 88, I am passionately engaged in writing and editing these memoirs. It is a delight to recall my journey with Bob and our family. I'm sure someday I will say, "Did I *really* live this life?"

## Possibility

author unknown

shared by Nancy at my 70th birthday party, 2010

*It is easy to stay in the land of the Known.  
It is easy to get comfortable there.  
It is easy to forget there is anything else.  
It is easy to get stuck there.*

*But beyond the edge of that land  
Are the wild ranges of Possibility,  
A place where every step can take you  
Somewhere you only dreamed of, wondered about.*

*Possibility is the land where I love to venture,  
Where I can escape from the clutches of the Known.  
It is there where I find answers  
It is there where Creativity has a home.*

*In the land of Possibility, I can reach my potential  
And help others reach theirs.*

## Bob

- desiring peace among nations, races, members of the neighborhood, and members of the family
- meeting new people in unfamiliar communities, regarding the health and welfare of the places they live, the community we share together
- exploring ways we can make this world a better place for all
- caring for health in marital relationships
- building community associations
- dealing with the weak missional thrust of the church
- protecting the environment



• our wedding



## Dear Daughters, With Gratitude

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*Muriel* ...to daughters

You have strengthened our marriage with your presence, comments, other viewpoints, and advice. It would be hard to imagine what our marriage would be like without you.

We have thousands of memories of you girls; Laura might say, "There are millions and millions!" I think there were millions of rose rocks on a new road near Oklahoma City, but it was hard to find those that hadn't been rubbed smooth by travel. Our memories too are sometimes clear, but often they are dusty and indistinct.

Dad and I remember the times when you girls showed us the things that we had missed seeing due to our living apart: Margaret did the Irish dance she had performed in a group at Lane Tech in Chicago; Laura demonstrated synchronized swimming from a show at Hartford High; Debra took us to see her art and sculptures displayed; Nancy sent us her essay that won her a scholarship to Hamline University in St. Paul; Carol showed us her work with huge spiders, cockroaches, and other insects at the Smithsonian as she attended The School Without Walls in DC. These were very special to us and we were impressed by you all.



I recall these times we laughed a lot. Carol and I helped Nancy look for her tooth retainer among the trash in an Osaka park. Margaret's trunk, roped on top of the car, opened and released brown cassette tape "ribbons" down a road in Iowa. Our family in Japan played a game with Mrs. Imoto and other neighbors in Osaka to see the team that could put on a hat, coat, and gloves the fastest. And oh how much fun we had in skits that Nancy created...and on complicated scavenger hunts!

Our family has always enjoyed playing games of all sorts and we especially like those with creativity and actions, such as Charades and the adverb game. We can spend a lot of time doing puzzles. We like cooperative games to practice solving environmental, health, and other world problems. When we traveled together in the car when you were children, we sang songs of every kind; we could sing for miles by adding nursery rhymes to the phrase: "If you can't sing a rhyme, and sing it in time, we'll throw you out the window." You are creative and playful, and I love these times together.

• *airport pick-up fun, our tradition was to meet in a silly or creative way...this time we all wore hats to meet Nancy who happened to wear one too...a coincidence! Iowa, Dec. 26, 2000*

We celebrate birthdays and anniversaries through sharing key events, setting new goals, and naming promises for the future. We contact each other regularly, and when we get together,

our conversations include telling each other our joys and concerns. We have fun taking pictures with unique poses and clothes/ accessories.

We are grateful for the ways you girls handled serious concerns when neither Dad nor I were available. When we were in Edmonton, Laura, you cut off the end of your thumb in the New Britain, CT deli that you owned, and rushed to the hospital by yourself. Margaret, when you were coming home from a late school event, had car trouble on the Eisenhower Expressway in Chicago and was brought home safely by two “black angels.” Debra, when you herniated a disc in your back and needed to drop out of college for a semester, you could fortunately be with us in DC so we could help you. Later when you broke your leg, Margaret found long athletic pants and Dad sewed in a very long zipper before sending them to you; this made it easier for you to dress yourself.



• at Carol and Wolf's house, 2016:  
Carol, Margaret, Debra, Laura, Nancy

I regret that we missed your high school and college years as we didn't get to know your friends and take part in many high points of your lives. I am sorry that you often had to leave your friends and activities you enjoyed because of assignments to other places. I would have liked to have been with you when you felt abandoned and alone with too many adult decisions to make, when you cried and were lonely for us,

letters were slow, and there was no way to reach each other by telephone. I was troubled that you felt short of money when you wanted more food or needed better clothes. As you were still quite young, I wish we could have been able to have you with us, especially the year we were assigned to Indonesia.

Dad and I were not alone in caring for you; we learned to appreciate that “it takes a village.” You girls had some thoughtful, caring guardians in your journey through times of our being away. I learned from your letters of you going out together, enjoying visiting with and taking care of their children. We heard of the Baulknight twins, the Trumans' adopted daughter, the

baby of the Mathews, and many others who were like your little brothers and sisters. When the Religious House in Hartford closed, we were surprised and pleased that your friend and classmate invited you, Laura, to live with her Tagarone family through your senior year of high school.

When the Memphis House closed in your last year of high school, Nancy, your math teacher, Mrs. Gates, included you in her family, and you cared for their child like a little brother.

Dad and I had three experiences of having other “daughters” when we were guardians. We found it difficult at times to let them make their own decisions but also valued their ideas. We enjoyed their insights and appreciated the responsibilities they assumed.



Dad and I are pleased to include your long-time friends Larkspur Morton and Myrna Morales in some special events and gatherings. Your chosen sisters have become chosen daughters to us.

• Carol, Nancy, Debra, and Larkspur playing games at Debra's home (Macaroni, the cat, loved to sit where available)



• Myrna, Nancy, Laura, Debra, Ananda, Margaret, and Carol, 2017

Dad and I appreciated the ways you helped one another and let us know about your concerns. We remember Margaret calling us in Edmonton, "Do you know that Nancy is considering dropping out of college? She is protesting Hamline's investments in South Africa." We were able to reach Nancy by phone. You explained that if they would not divest, you would divest of your President's Scholarship and leave. You put up a real fight and were taken seriously by the Board. The president sent us a letter urging you to remain in the college as they were working things out.

Nancy, we were proud of you and your courage to stand up for values that are important.

### A Highway Action for Racial Justice

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In January of 2015, when you, Nancy, were protesting along with a group later known as the Somerville 18, you were arrested for blocking traffic on busy Highway 93 in Medford going into Boston. (This caused a four-hour traffic jam.) Your group, as allies in solidarity with **Black Lives Matter**, was trying to bring attention to police brutality and other injustices against black people. I think you all chose to do a highway action in part because of issues with racially-biased detention (interruption of lives), inconvenient transportation, and lack of affordable housing in Boston. You were jailed for part of a day, and had multiple

court dates for almost a year; Carol often provided transportation and went to many of them. Friends and family of the Somerville 18 were asked to write the District Attorney to drop the charges, and reduce the extreme penalty suggested if they were convicted. Our family responded passionately and with full support of the cause. You, and the rest of the group, finally accepted a deal that included community service and six months of probation. Again, we were proud of your risking safety and freedom, for justice to be done. Black lives do matter!

My appeal for the Somerville 18:

*To District Attorney Marian T. Ryan,*

*I appeal with a poem for the Somerville Eighteen  
to drop their charges so very extreme;  
They acted in their first Amendment right  
in civil action, anti-black racism to fight.  
They protested police brutality and racist profiling  
for justice and equality...no more denying!  
Their concern and courage have stirred us,  
in a way they have done a community service.  
Please consider how to make America better  
and demonstrate that black lives matter!*

• *Nancy in her Hyde Park apartment*

...

Dad and I were amazed at the kinds of jobs you all had while attending school to make some money for yourselves. I think of Laura working in a Hallmark store, in restaurants, and other jobs so that you had enough to buy a new car upon graduation. Margaret worked as statistician for athletic teams at Iowa University toward your scholarship. Debra scooped a lot of ice cream, and cut keys in a parking lot kiosk. Nancy worked as a nanny in Minnesota, and made lifelong friends with the Liebos as you cared for their children. Carol became a builder while helping an ICA colleague in DC, Nancy Eggert, with home improvement jobs including tuck-pointing bricks and replacing grout in the foundation of her home.

You all have had jobs in not-for-profit organizations: Margaret in counseling and working with Dennis at

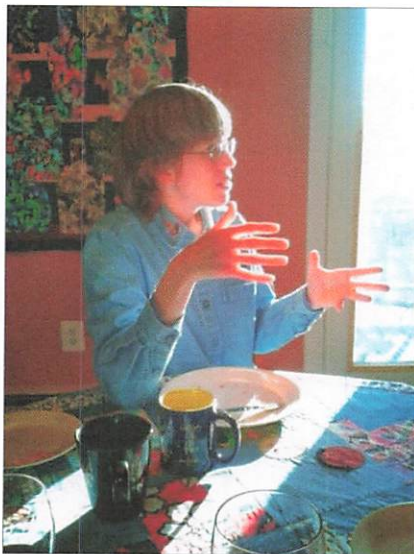
Christ Lutheran Church in Remsen; Laura in HIV/AIDS support and taking in foster children; Debra teaching ESOL; Nancy teaching children in schools, and working with Carol at Facing History and Ourselves. We hope the additional volunteer work you do for equality and justice will help to bring about that change.

Dad and I were generally pleased with the choices you made in your intimate relationships, and when you changed course because you found some not to be wise. (I remember being relieved that some experiments didn't work out.) We're happy with your decisions for lifetime mates. Laura...since you, Dean, and Ananda live so close by...you daily add to our joys, and help us when we need it.

While Dad and I are satisfied that we chose the ways of service that presented themselves to us in our years together, we are happy that you cooperated and learned how you could be a part of our commitment to service. You took leadership roles in Order House discussions, community forums, and Human Development Projects.

Our on-going hope for you, is that you have a community that supports you in your interests and concerns. We hope you continue

to care deeply for the needs and fulfillment of others. We hope you will continue to find and develop relationships, and do work that challenges and supports you. As we have found the Christian church to be our source of spiritual inspiration, guidance, and hope...we trust that you have spiritual strength for the challenges you face. May the Great Spirit, the Mystery of Life, bless and empower you.





## Musings on Our Marriage

*Muriel ...to Bob*

As we near our 60th anniversary, I celebrate that we have lived together these years and have been on this unbelievably adventurous journey together. You and I made many life-changing decisions for ourselves and our five daughters. Frequent traveling, working for change in communities, and health issues were manageable because we could share the journey.

Working together as a team in churches and Human Development Projects challenged us and gave fulfillment to our dreams and purpose for our lives.

• *at home in Holyoke, 2017*

We promised that we would love, honor, and respect each other throughout our lives. You show this when you express love and appreciation. I am pleased when you compliment how I look, and notice what I am wearing. I feel great when you show genuine appreciation for what I do, and enjoy my being with you. You often show gratitude for my cooking, my suggestions, creative ideas, and leadership in studies. I trust your interpretation of events happening and your advice. I like your humor and when you share a comic. We laugh together when amusing ideas or incidents occur. I like it when you take me places when you'd rather stay home. I



appreciate when you help do housework. I like your input to my writing and in making decisions. We find we can go our separate ways and still support each other.

“You are so different! How come you make such a great couple?” I like to hear this because I know we are different. You are an extrovert and I am an introvert. I seek closure on issues and you prefer keeping options open. We find these to have porous boundaries that are capable of being flexed. We play off of our differences, adjusting while making plans, sensing what is most needed, and then working with compromise or consensus.

Raising our five daughters together has deeply enriched our lives. They have created their own ways to live, and also fulfill our dreams for them.

We have been at the crossroads when we weren't relating well. I had resentments and couldn't get past them. We needed to talk to see things differently. While riding long distances together in Canada, we read together the book *The Road Less Traveled* by Scott Peck. He has insights and wisdom that we used. We often found support from our extended families, friends, colleagues, and the structures of the Order, and from attending church.

At times, we realized that we needed to make a choice: become separated, coexist but avoid each other, just put up with the situation, or get help from

a counselor. We had counseling several times. I especially recall our last therapist saying, "Look each other in the eyes and say what you feel, what you don't like, and what you want." I found these times of being open and vulnerable with a professional mediating, enabled me to become more realistic of expectations, and see my part in situations. We have differed, but most often have been united in our choices; we decided together on important issues and have courageously forged ahead and trusted in God. Facing our conflicts created a richer relationship with more satisfaction and happiness.

You and I basically share the most important values of religion, family, money, politics, and social concerns. Together we discuss the Bible daily for spiritual growth, participate in inter-racial and environmental activities, go to the gym to exercise, keep up with the news to understand our culture and world today, and watch sports on TV. We continue growing in understanding, patience, and appreciation of each other.



The beautiful poetry in • Debra's watercolor painting speaks for us:

### *On Marriage*

by Kahlil Gibran

*You were born together,  
and together you shall be forevermore.  
You shall be together  
when the white wings of death scatter your days.  
Ay, you shall be together  
even in the silent memory of God.  
But let there be spaces in your togetherness,  
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.*

*Love one another, but make not a bond of love:  
Let it rather be a moving sea  
between the shores of your souls.  
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread  
but eat not from the same loaf  
Sing and dance together and be joyous,  
but let each one of you be alone,  
Even as the strings of a lute are alone  
though they quiver with the same music.*

*Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.  
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.  
And stand together yet not too near together:  
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,  
And the oak tree and the cypress  
grow not in each other's shadow.*





• *me looking ahead to what's next  
during family gathering time  
in North Conway, NH, summer 2017*



*Journey on, Journey on, all humankind,  
Future is waiting for you.  
Struggling, stumbling, all the life through,  
Future is waiting for you.  
Opportunities, opportunities, all in your hand,  
Our minds are limited to foretell.  
All of your own, and nature of unseen,  
Future is waiting for you.  
Journey on, journey on, all humankind,  
Future is waiting for you.*

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Order song  
tune: Elcho Island

## Part 8: Surprise Endnotes!

*These are contributions from each of us, a surprise gift back to Mom and Dad for all the memories they shared in this book. Mom and Dad saw this for the first time after printing.*

from **Carol**

Mom and Dad both put effort into nurturing us. Teaching, showing, not doing for us. I remember being shown math formulas from Dad, working out how to best pack the trunk of a car, and building together. Mom taught me how to sew and to cook. Both were always questioning: "What did you think of that?, Do you know why you felt that way?, How can you approach it differently?, What will you do now?." I know this taught me to be responsible, to own what my role

is, and to understand there is another approach to every situation.

• *Wolf, Dad, me, and Mom, 2017*

I have very fond memories of the games we have played over the years, but

particularly the games we played on road trips: the rhyming song "The window, the window, I'll throw you out the window..." and the alphabet game with road signs/license plates. While we teased Dad about wanting to stop for every historical marker, I love it that we did, and that we went to national parks, state

parks, and scenic overlooks. It is a beautiful country and they helped us explore and appreciate it.

Our parents fostered strong bonds with the family with regular letters, calls, birthday celebrations, and finding ways to let each of us know we are special, none more than another. I believe they have fostered that in us, and we are closer because of it.

• *Mom and me, 2006*



from **Debra**

Mom, I remember you comforting me by rubbing my back at night when I was a child in Des Moines and couldn't go to sleep. I still like to have my back rubbed. I remember your patience when teaching us to crochet, sew, and tat. Working with you on this book project the past four years has brought us closer, and because of what you wrote, I now better understand your reasons for decisions that affected us. I appreciate your thoughtfulness, concern, and generosity.

• *Dad, me, and Mom, 2008*



Dad, I appreciate you teaching me electrical wiring, carpentry skills, and not to be intimidated by power tools,



including hand-held circular saws and chain saws. I have used that foundation a lot over the years. I have noticed lately, and appreciate, how you wait at the window to watch as we drive away after we have visited you.

I love having four sisters who are also my friends, who I can reach out to whenever I need clarification, companionship, and comfort. Later getting brothers through marriage, more sisters, and Ananda was an added bonus. I appreciate having you all in my life; I love you.



• Nancy, Laura, Carol, and Margaret holding me, wedding day 2001

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## from **Margaret**

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I greatly appreciate having the parents I do. They provided an important foundation in the way they raised us. I value their delight in and commitment to family. Our upbringing was unusual - and at the time often undesirable, but there are many things I appreciate about it now. For example, since we did not live together for so many years, I literally have thousands of handwritten letters from them (and my sisters), which I greatly treasure.

• Dennis, Mom, me, and Dad, 2017



This book reflects Mom and Dad's bravery, commitment to causes, their positive attitudes, and the importance of stories. Even though all of these are recorded here, we know this is still only a fraction of their life experiences.

Thank you Mom and Dad for being the amazing people you are and encouraging us to be the unique individuals we are. I love you very much.

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## from **Laura**

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Watching the two of you as you grow older and still remain very engaged with the world has brought back to me how in our childhood we were always going places and seeing different things. Dad's tour guide instinct meant that we often saw things whether we wanted to or not. I remember on trips stopping at endless roadside signs. When we were very young, we didn't do a lot of things that cost money but I can still remember delight at going to Ledges State Park. I remember visiting you in Iowa and going hiking at a state park where the Mormons had crossed a river on their trek to Utah. I, of course, remember the trip when you moved from San Francisco to Chicago and all seven of us (and hamster)

stopped at every national and state park between the two. I remember at the Grand Canyon saying "SO WHAT" from being overwhelmed. But I know that it made me want to share adventures like that with my daughter.



• *me and Dad dancing at my wedding, 2000*

I appreciate that when I asked you to move here so that Ananda could know you, you decided to do that. I did not know how difficult that would be for you. Giving up the community you had built and rebuilt in Iowa as you had

finally settled down there, and having to find new friendships and medical care and a spiritual home here. But I am so happy that we have had you right next door for the past eight years. It has made it possible for us to help you but also for you to step in to help us. Running to pick-up Ananda from school when she is sick or I can't get there, taking care of Rudy, watering the plants during summer vacations. Weekly dinners where you share your current worldly concerns have contributed to Ananda's compassion and world view. I hope you continue to have the health and energy to explore, learn, and grow over the next years.

• *Ananda, me, Dad, and Mom, 2007*



## from **Ananda**

To me, my grandparents, Robert and Muriel Griffin, have always lived in Massachusetts. Though I know the stories about all of their travels, all of my memories about them are here. They moved here from Iowa when I was three and lived in the "meeting place house" which I named after I discovered that if you ran around through the hallway you would meet the person walking in the other direction. Later they moved into the house next door to my family and me.



• *Dad, me, Grandma, and Margaret, 2003*

As their only grandchild, I often have their undivided attention. My grandpa built me forts and swings, taught me to build with LEGOs, and gave me rides home from school. My Grandma read me books and helped me bake cookies, and in return I taught HER to knit. I am extremely lucky to have gotten to spend so much time with my truly amazing grandparents.



- *Grandma, me (Ananda), and Grandpa, 2014*



from **Nancy**

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Once in Japan, we went on an excursion to a place called "48 Waterfalls" and hiked up and down a mountain to see the waterfalls. It was a beautiful place, and it was a good family trip, for the five of us who lived in Japan at the time. For some reason during that trip, I started thinking about what if something happened to my parents, that I wouldn't have them anymore. I was about nine years old, and it was a scary thought, at first. But I was able to think through what I would do, what we would do, and I was able to accept such a possibility. For many years that followed, I was not afraid of losing my parents because I had processed the thought.



- *Dad and me, 2007*

I'm so glad I haven't yet experienced that loss. I'm grateful for all the years we have had your love and care, whether we were together or apart. I remember Mom facing down another staff member who would have denied me dinner because I was late. I'm grateful that you made the choices you did - to become a family, to join the Order, to travel to all the places you went, to be with us when you could. I have always felt good about the story of my life that you

brought to be, especially the years I spent in Japan. It will always hold a fond place in my heart due to the school we attended and the many wonderful Japanese friends we had. I'm grateful for the ways you have helped me learn to stand on my own, even as you and my dear sisters also gave me much support. I'm grateful for how you have honored the choices I made, even when you may not have agreed with them. I remember a letter from Dad while I was part of a cross-country walk, letting me know he liked the way I was engaged. I'm grateful for all you have shared of yourselves, your choices, your thoughts, your passion, your pain, and your concerns. We don't know what the future will hold, but I know that you have built a foundation with this family that will help us manage whatever comes. I love you very much.

### Glossary

#### Definitions

- **2nd Generation:** the once EG (now adults) call themselves this...they were in the Order because their parents joined it
- **Centrum:** the base House for a larger geographic area, such as Chicago Centrum for the U.S.; staff met here, for development and personnel coordination
- **College of West Africa (CWA):** a junior and senior high school founded in the 1840's by the Methodist Church (it might have started as a college but didn't want to compete when the University of Liberia opened)
- **collegium:** meal with news/scripture conversation and planning for engagement...Order members participated in these at breakfast on weekdays
- **corporate:** a way of working together for common vision, goals, and shared tasks
- **Daily Office:** an early morning religious ritual done by Order members and their families...it included singing, scripture readings, a witness of the activities of God in life, and prayers
- **development:** fundraising for programs
- **discontinuity:** time off from structures, R&R
- **Ecclesiola:** a social evening with a meal and study of articles and books related to mission, for Order members and guests, usually held on Thursdays
- **Ecumenical Institute:** the organization for teaching and leading methods for church and community renewal
- **embrace the cross:** willingness to risk and sacrifice to help others (used by the Order, and us in our family song)
- **Emerging Generation (EG):** minor children of Order parents
- **guided imagery:** being guided through a mental exercise of imagining being in another place and time and visiting with a wise person to experience finding understanding, purpose, or direction...  
example: "I talked to my great-grandmother and she told me how she faced life on the Reservation and I can see my way better now."
- **House:** a communal living situation in the Order/ICA
- **House Church:** meal and religious celebration for Order members and guests, weekly on Sundays...it included reports of activities and observances of birthdays and anniversaries
- **Human Development Project (HDP):** a community of limited geographic area in small towns and villages, or part of a city, working together to bring about better living in the economic, political, and social aspects of life...Order members were catalysts
- **in-kind:** free and available
- **Institute:** short version for ICA and Ecumenical Institute
- **Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA):** the secular organization that emerged from the Ecumenical Institute for training and leading in HDPs
- **Imaginal Education:** a way of teaching that understands that people live out of images that we have of self and others; these influence the way we think and act and can be changed... example: "We are victims of the culture" becomes "We are an example of hope."
- **International Training Institute (ITI):** a program to train local people from many countries the methods to lead HDPs
- **International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD):** in 1984 in New Delhi, India, a gathering for *Sharing Approaches That Work* (stories of local community successes around the world)
- **Order:** short version for Order Ecumenical, used also for ICA and Ecumenical Institute by members
- **Order Council:** a large gathering of members from all Order/ICA Houses, from the U.S. and other countries
- **Order Ecumenical:** people of many religious affiliations joined together in a vow of service, often this included communal living...we joined this family order in 1972
- **prior:** a leader of an Order/ICA House
- **Project:** short version for Human Development Project (HDP)
- **Project Catalysts:** ICA leaders sharing methods to enable comprehensive human development



- **Religious Studies #1 (RS-1):** a basic Order Ecumenical weekend course on Christian religious understandings of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the church
- **Ri:** in Korean, this means village
- **spirit methods:** creation and use of story, song, and symbol to inspire and give courage and fortitude...example: 5th City HDP's stories, songs, and symbols
- **structures:** the forms by which daily routines and events were done by Order members
- **Student House:** the place in Chicago Centrum for Order children in junior high school...several adults were assigned to live with and lead the activities with the youth
- **Town Meetings:** community planning meetings led by the ICA staff
- **Wesley Foundation:** a campus Methodist church group

## Abbreviations & Acronyms

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- **A3** = Africa for Three Years
- **CWA** = College of West Africa
- **DC** = Washington, DC
- **EG** = Emerging Generation
- **ESL** = English as a Second Language
- **ESOL** = English for Students with Other Languages
- **HDP** = Human Development Project
- **ICA** = Institute of Cultural Affairs
- **IERD** = International Exposition of Rural Development
- **ISC** = Iowa State College (after our graduation, it became Iowa State University, ISU)
- **ITI** = International Training Institute
- **RS-1** = Religious Studies #1 course
- **UMC** = United Methodist Church
- **UMW** = United Methodist Women
- **VIM** = Volunteers in Mission



• family photo at Laura, Dean, and Ananda's house, 2012

## Where Our Daughters Have Lived

code:

- living with parents (black text)
  - not living with parents or spouse (purple text)
  - living with person we married (green text)
- HS = high school

## Margaret

- Chicago, IL
- Council Bluffs, IA •
- Des Moines, IA

in the Order from ten years old through HS

- Chicago, IL (west side)
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Chicago, IL (uptown and west side)

college and later

- Iowa City, IA
- Des Moines, IA
- West Des Moines, IA
- St. Louis, MO
- Remsen, IA
- Jefferson, IA • with Dennis



## Laura

- Council Bluffs, IA •
- Des Moines, IA

in the Order from eight years old through junior year of HS

- Chicago, IL (west side)
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Amarillo, TX

- Chicago, IL (uptown)
- Starks, ME
- Hartford, CT

college and later

- West Hartford, CT
- Elmwood, CT
- Farmington, CT
- New Britain, CT
- Newington, CT
- travelled across the U.S.
- West Stockbridge, MA
- Chicopee, MA
- Holyoke, MA

- with Ananda, Dean, and Rudy





## Debra

- Council Bluffs, IA
- Des Moines, IA •

in the Order from six years old through HS

- Chicago, IL (west side)
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Kansas City, MO
- Amarillo, TX
- Osaka, Japan
- Chicago, IL (uptown)
- London, England
- Denver, CO
- Boston, MA



college and later

- Allston, MA
- Jamaica Plain, MA
- Medfield, MA
- Natick, MA
- Ashland, MA • *with Phil*



## Nancy

- Council Bluffs, IA
- Des Moines, IA

in the Order from four years old through junior year of HS

- Chicago, IL (west side)
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Amarillo, TX
- Osaka, JAPAN
- San Francisco, CA
- Chicago, IL (uptown)
- Sudtonggan, Philippines •
- Memphis, TN

college and later

- St. Paul, MN
- Bogota, Colombia
- Takoma Park, MD
- Washington, DC
- Davis, CA
- Sacramento, CA
- Waltham, MA
- Hyde Park, MA
- Roxbury, MA
- Brighton, MA •



# Carol

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- Des Moines, IA

in the Order from two years old through college

- Chicago, IL (west side)
- Oklahoma City, OK •
- Kansas City, MO
- Amarillo, TX
- Osaka, Japan
- San Francisco, CA
- Chicago, IL (uptown)
- Kuh Du E Ri, Korea
- Cairo and El Bayad, Egypt
- Washington, DC
- Ithaca, NY
- London, England

after college

- Davis, CA
- Natick, MA
- Ashland, MA
- Waltham, MA
- Hyde Park, MA
- Quincy, MA
- Brockton, MA • *with Wolf, Ranger, and Ginny*







• family picture 2016  
at Carol and Wolf's house in Brockton



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Columbia, SC  
26 July 2018



When strong winds blow, seagulls lift their wings to fly to greater heights. When disruptive forces move with loss and fear, may we rise together to act with greater love and care.

When I became aware of troubling events in the world, I felt compelled to be more fully involved. Bob and I joined in movements to find solutions to make positive changes. These are stories of our journey, and how our five daughters were involved.

Excerpt: I have walked on open country roads in Iowa, on winding paths on a spacious campus, and through dripping rain under the palm branches where the fronds might hold green mamba snakes in Liberia. I pushed baby strollers on the streets and parks in Chicago, Council Bluffs, and Des Moines. I have also walked through the crowded shopping streets in Hong Kong, among the small homes in Osaka, over the mountains between rows of peppers in South Korea, on the dusty roads of the First Nation people in western Canada, and with a massive protest march in DC against going to war in Iraq. I found that someone would volunteer to show me the way whenever I needed help.

- Muriel C. Griffin

"My parents lived a full and unique life: from growing up on farms in Iowa to living overseas in communal situations for altruistic work. I'm glad I have their stories and pictures compiled here to share...and to treasure with my family."

- Debra A. Griffin (Journey On editor and cover photographer)

