

NEIGHBORHOODS

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THE BIRTH OF OMAHA, NEBRASKA

In 1804, the Omaha and Ponca Native Americans were overwhelmed by Europeans. Their strength was having metal for weapons and immunity. Europe had become so dirty from the residue in the sewers that so many white skins died. Those who survived were immune to so many diseases. When they attacked the original Americans there was not much resistance. Many first people died from disease. Omaha as a city was captured by the Europeans (Spain)

Throughout the centuries, the greater Omaha statistical area is now 1.3 million people. No one needs to know the growth and suffering in the city. On the whole, it is a pretty city with a pretty downtown, old market, mid town, and the north and south areas. Omaha is on the march westerly to the Platte River.

1940's

I was born in a near north hospital in a non-air conditioned delivery room. My mother had a terrible delivery and was sad to have a third child (I don't blame her.) She was sterilized and a week later took me home to 58th and Lake Street. That year was the summer of 1943. When she found out that she was accidentally pregnant, she cried for 6 weeks and drank throughout the entire time of the pregnancy.

The following year (1944) my father's business improved to the point where they were able to purchase a four bedroom just off Country Club at 56th and Corby St. This was the family's house until 1994. So much happened there and this where the story begins. We will trace all the neighborhoods that I and later my wife lived. Please come go with me.

CORBY STREET AREA

Back then, our block had 3 houses on the south and 7 on the north. The corner on the south side was Rose Hill and on the north the Benson Presbyterian Church. In the summers, I could hear a man from the next block over play a trumpet. I could always hear it and I never knew the person who played the instrument. Most houses had screen windows so the sounds and smells of summer were apparent.

Following down to 56th street, there was Jim Dutcher, Eddie Babcock, the Kavanaugh sisters, Judy, Jay, Joe Snell, Chip and Cathy Warren as well as Jack and Bob Andresen and the Goodkind boys. At the corner of 56th and Corby is Benson Presbyterian Church and across the street is Rose Hill Elementary School. On the other side is a small brick home and on the following on the other side is the Rose Hill Apartments where Mama and Papa Ranz and Edna Snell lived. From 56th and Corby down to 56th and Blondo once was the Omaha Country Club. The land stretched up to 52nd and the Radial.

As you turned the corner on 56th street, Ron and Curt Armstrong lived in a brick duplex. Across from them was Wendell Heckerson. David and Dennis Brown lived on the corner. On the next block were Kathy and George Jean Gates. Their house was the field house for the country club and the first year the Gates moved in the house did not have much heat as it was a summer place. Mark Pence lived on the next block in a white rock two story. Across the street, Billy Kampfe lived with his many brothers and sisters.

Across from them were the Workovens with Nick and his famous father Merrill. As he said "My time is up, thank you for yours." Ron Macmaken lived next to them on the next block, were the Deers .The family included John, and Sister JoAnne and Carol. They had the newest house

with a great big picture window. At the corner and across the street lived Nick Nolte the famous movie star. Catty corner from Nick was a large estate with a huge mansion and fence. It was called 'Villa Acres' Before we arrive at Blondo, Joan Hill and Susie Falk lived there too. Susie became the Queen of Aksarben years later.

The neighborhood has remained vital. Prices are still high and the downtown Benson has been turned into an old market area. The Snell house is priced way above its value given the impact of the Benson Old Market.

My mother lived at 5647 Corby St from 1944 to 1994. The day she left, ironically was the day Harriet Nelson died of the "Ozzie and Harriet" show. Nearly all the cast and characters listed above have moved on or are now with the Ages.

5647 CORBY STREET

When my parents moved into a home that had been built in 1937, it was quite large and spacious for them. Then it was 3 bedrooms with a basement filled with coal on one side and a furnace on the other. My mother would put more coal in the furnace in the middle of the night. You can see the house today by going to Google and putting in the address and Omaha, Nebraska.

The last time that I was in the house was 1993. I drove my mother from Jay's house in Cedar Rapids where I also lived to my dad and mom's home on Corby St. I stayed overnight and then headed back home. I walked through the house and in my way said good bye. Dad had died in 1990 and my mother was preparing to leave the following year (1994) and head for an eldercare nearby.

Over the years, much of the house was carpeted. The living room was quite large and the dining room had a lovely candelabra. The dining room was had a dark mahogany setting. Kitchen was built with inside/outside carpet, red splash, and a break feast area. The basement was remodeled with knotty pine and co-ordinate tile. My grandfather moved in with us and a back room and bath was added. I had pictures taken all over the house. I spent my entire life there until graduate school.

The living room was Grand Central Station. So many customers came to our house and it always had to be straight. Often unannounced and hungry for free drinks both of my parents would entertain. Thus the first floor was always straight and clean. My mother also traveled with my father. That would be 35 thousand miles a year in a car that was replaced every 18 months. The house has been “flipped” a few times so the interior is considerably different today. I could spend days there alone and feel happy.

THE BABCOCKS

Although my father’s commissions increased, we could move down one block to Country Club. It had all brick homes and still is beautiful some 50 years later. However, we loved our house and had a special affinity to our neighbor’s to the east. They were the Babcock’s. On Sunday evening Grandma Babcock made sure that everyone of the children in the family attended. As a little child, the back of our neighbors’ house was a tool shed and then attached to the side of it was a barn with room cages for rabbits. Henry was an alpha male rooster and was mean. We would run from him. He spent most of his time in the barn. There was a cat that was tough and he too was one of those big ones

that are psychopathic. There was a little terrier that sat in a second floor window that was downright friendly. He stayed away from the other animals. The rabbits remained in their cages.

Bessie the grand matriarch was married to George. He lived in a small room on the first floor and no one talked to him. It was a failing marriage. However, to the Methodist church they were married. On the other side of our back yard were Bessie and Earl. They had one son named Eddie. As kids, we watched their house being built. Before that, the land was filled with garden vegetables and other related with a tree on the corner. Earl made the entire area absolutely beautiful. The side yard was a little pond and rows and rows boutique trees and wonderful flowers. Bessie usually stayed away from the gatherings for reason that I was not sure about. Eddie was always there and I would sneak over and sit with the group.

There were the twins Bob and Bill. They were track stars and belonged to a popular fraternity at Omaha University. Their room was just up the staircase and to the right. Years later, when they were gone, the room remained the same. Across the hall was Hazel's room. She was the last to leave the house and died in the mid 80's. Bob and Bill lost their parents when they were young and so Hazel took care of them. Bob had an estate sale and sold the house. Money was split between the twins. Carol, a cousin, moved to North Carolina and is near her daughter Allison. Eddie moved to Surprise, Arizona.

The first floor included the vestibule and had an upright piano. The living room was on the left and looked out on the pretty side yard with a mature and healthy weeping willow. From the living room was a small dining room followed by a kitchen. There were steps that lead to utility

basement. However, a pretty throw rug covered another entry floor door that had preserved vegetables located below.

When the house was built, it was meant as a farm house. No one lived there. It was all agriculture. However, the town of Benson prospered, had miniature golf course, a huge park called Gallagher Park. It had a palace like appearance and small cottages and a pool. You could ride a horse and carriage around the park. Best of all, it had a huge roller coaster. Unfortunately, the tracks were not maintained and a bolt or two got lost. As the passengers entered the second curve at a high speed, their passenger car flew into the trees. A number of people died and others still screaming were sent to the hospitable.

The entire park was uninsured and so there were so many losses. Across the street was the Omaha Country Club with a 9 hole course. By the late 50's the Gallaher park was weeds and a cement outline of a pool could still be seen. Folks had moved west, save the Country Club houses that were built on the golf course.

Today, that neighborhood on the east side of Corby remains stately. My parent's house is now a home with tan siding and a pretty red door. The Babcock's home is a beautiful blue covering and white trim. It was just one street over, there lived Hershel Babcock and his wife along with Barb their daughter. During the summer, Barb would come up the alley to visit my sister as she washed the dishes. She would sit on a high chair just next to the entry to the basement. The other Babcock's would come on Sunday and I did not know them as well. Carol was the daughter of one of the sisters of Hazel.

I last saw her at Hazel's funeral. I am able to now communicate with Eddie, but that was about it. Most of the family is now with the ages

and I went to many funerals. Most are buried on a hill in a cemetery in Omaha in a family plot.

8220 BLONDO St.

My uncle said that the apartment that I lived in would never last. My uncle is gone but the apartment is still there. At the time, we were living in Apt. # 109. "We" meant a friend, his friend, his girl friend and I. To add to my low income, I would cook every night. I made \$12.00 a week. I also locked up a church at night with another friend who shared some of the same duties.

The apartment was relatively new. The year was 1965. The super was a young lady who was one year younger. We were a match. She was just androgynous enough so that things worked well. I was trying to get a bit more feminine, because of the social androgyny movement. I started growing my hair longer. At any rate, she was very attractive. She lived in one of the apartments with her husband and baby.

One time, I could not get a date and my super had a sister. She was gorgeous, and hyper-feminine. I was speechless. I had a neat car and all the additions to look like I was important. The young lady who later I think was shy, hid behind really stereotyped hyper-feminine stereotype. The conversation was over in about ten minutes into the date. I struggled. I was used to dating folks who knew something about something and would kindly help me through the evening. When I got home after the date and into the next, I had long talks with her sister. I was undone. At any rate, the super helped and I started looking for girl friends that had some brains. And so it goes. There was another young lady who through a friend wanted me to celebrate her move to California. This time I had a drink and we went through patriarchal

moves except I continued to practice sexual intercourse. Now she was on the bottom as expected but she wanted more. Then it became a tug of war with my genital. Surely, I should have gone farther. However, I did not want to have a baby. Further, I almost completed my BA degree and I thought that I would have another 10 years to get a masters and doctorate. So all things turned out fairly well. I remember that looking at her pictures from her wallet, that she was a great person from my (our) grade school. It was sunny in the morning and she wanted me to drop her off at a certain place where she was going with a friend to pack and become a California girl.

The apartment which was nearly new when we made contract was really tacky. I spray painted a lamp table with black paint. The fine mist that comes from the spray can got all over the walls, carpet and ceiling. The owners would have to redecorate the entire place. In the mean time, the landlord rightfully did not return our deposit. The apartment needed complete rehabilitation. Years later, my wife and I walked around the apartment and looked at the door where I started the long trip with her of 15 to 20 moves after this place.

The contract was up and I spent the summer sleeping in my parent's basement. I dated a wonderful lady who when she got to know me, dumped me. I needed to work and I was a person who delivered newspapers early in the morning. I am really in bad shape in the mornings and I would miss a house so they would not get their newspaper. I was fired. By that time, it was time for school and I my professor said that he had a student that needed a place. So I picked him up from a motel and we drove around looking at dumps. After about six trips to hell holes, I suggested a new apartment that we

would share. Like the previous apartment, it was garden level. It had one big bedroom and everything was carpeted.

8004 BLONDO ST.

Now this was a good deal. The whole place smelled ‘new.’ This one was garden level and located in Benson Gardens. It had a green carpet. I kept it immaculate and my friend decided to live with me. Our pay from the university when combined could keep us living there. The super was married to another fraternity brother and so that worked out too. There was a gay couple who lived above us and night after night you could hear those making funny intimate sounds.

My roommate was a large bear from Dubuque, Iowa. He was a graduate of Loris College and was a second year grad student. He was really smart and I frequently went to him for information. In his sleep, he would give lectures on Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. By the end of the week, we would cross Blondo and got to the “apartment peoples’ bar.” It had an excellent bartender, both bar stools, and seats along with a small band stand.

Our other favorite spot on Friday afternoon was Walgreens restaurant. We would order the cheapest steak that tasted liked leather so we would clobber the meal with all kinds of sauces. Further, the rest of the meal was great. We would sit next to someone and started talking about all the famous people that allegedly we knew and their latest scandals. Some folks even bought the scam.

Both of us continually studied, but got drunk on Friday afternoon and evening. Finally, he went back to his parents place to work for the summer. He lived near down town Dubuque. His street was really

unusual. On the one side was 7 or 8 house along with a tiny synagogue. At the end of the street was a Ma & Pa grocery store. The entire street was Roman Catholic and my roommate had 6 or 7 brothers. Many years later, my wife and I found the street. What surprised us the most was the other side of the two lane.

It was called “the bluff” a cliff of all rock, hanging vines, bushes, side trees and dirt. It was taller than the houses across the street. On my cell phone, I called him. He lived outside Manhattan, New York by about 18 miles. So he had all the benefits of the Big Apple but could come home to the suburbs. He told me many stories about growing up near a huge cliff. Iowa is surrounded by two important rivers. The Missouri and the Mississippi . It is simple and sweet. Most of the state has a lake within 30 minutes from where one lives. Most of the state has rolling hills. It is a bit flat in the middle. Des Moines, the capitol is about where the state divides. On the western side including the huge Council Bluffs is conservative. East of Des Moines to the Mississippi River has two thirds of the population and is Progressive. Generally, we get along.

Some really pretty lakes are Lake MacBride, Lake Okoboji, Spirit Lake and Lake Rathbun . We really take the every 4 year presidential caucus VERY SERIOUSLY. There are discussions, phone calls, meetings and the like. Then came the “fall” of the caucus system, everything went wrong in 2020. However, Iowa goes beyond the election. You live there and also vacation there. It is a purple state in a sea of Red.

So don't imagine all corn fields. Actually, financial services is now our first money maker. Iowa is many things and rolling hills. Further, we are purple. Grant Wood lived in Stone City not far from Iowa City and Cedar Rapids. It was a socialist commune.

In our last caucus, the top two candidates in terms of votes were gay and the other was a democratic socialist.

1966 was almost unbelievable. On a blind date, I met a wonderful attractive lady. We experimented in social androgyny. Except for genital-genital hook-ups, there were wonderful things one could do for the other. All the details don't need explaining here, but they are in Wikipedia. She became my buddy. After my summer job, I would come back to the apartment, clean up, and go over to her house and then back to the apartment. Mainly, it was 2 way/affection/androgynous/outercourse. She never misled me.

It was not until 1970, that female orgasms became common knowledge. Further, just about every female magazine had advertisements for vibrators. That fall, I received a phone call from the head of the department. He indicated that I would be a teacher (teaching assistant) at the university. I went into complete shock. Further, I was trying to stop drinking. After, the summer fling our last date, was a sad one. It was that she and I were too much different. Over a half century, I still remember those days and nights.

I took her to a Beach Boys concert which she enjoyed, but the Beatles were better to her. I liked both groups, by the next year SMILEY SMILE came out. Compared to the Beatles SGT. PEPPER and the Rolling Stones, HIS SATANIC MAJESTY, the Beach Boys began to descend. Their death in America was not true in and around the world. They have become America's band. I spent 50 years redoing SMILEY SMILE. I think that it would be a winner, but as this is being written, you cannot go back in time. If I could go back I still could not change history. By 1974, they resurrected with their "All Summer Long" "that was attached to the

end of AMERICAN GRAFFITI movie track. From the late 60's to the early 70's it was the best of times and the worst of times, the assassinations and the impeachment left the decade in a slump. Then came a new Pope/Maggie Thatcher/ Ronald Reagan to triumph. The center-left flopped. We were starting the global information. Workers lost jobs, social change meant less, and the dreams and hopes of the rest of the century went up in smoke. One knew, that you did not want to trust a fake American CEO. The corporations triumphed headed by psychopaths in suits

The last date night with my summer love was dark and cold for September. I said "good bye" to my buddy and I never had a summer like that again. The university that I attended was very conservative and the "bootstrappers" were military master sergeants there to finish a degree. I did not agree with them much, but I sure wanted to study with them. They had moved up in rank to the point that a college degree meant that they had a strong chance to become an officer. Going to school was a very serious thing to them. It was also important to me.

During the Vietnam war, all the grad students were watched. During my time, you did your best to keep a low profile. The only thing that I remember was that two professors had a fist fight over the war. Further, women were getting high on "diet pills" which was speed. When they started to come down, they would hide in the library and sleep. Other drugs were not available. One of my fraternity brother got high on "LSD." He said it was like a trip. You know the rest. Females could not wear shorts or jeans. They kept their mouths shut in class .Most of the undergrads were the last part of the silent generation. All

we could say was that most everything in the culture appeared to us to be phony.

The greatest generation had a pretty fair job and a ranch house. They were experts in psychology and had experts who could tell us who we were. The Baby Boom followed and all hell broke loose. My room-mate left for a job on the east coast. I got married to my wife, the day RFK was buried in June of 1968.

Off 60th & AMES

Both of us had years and years of schooling needed for degrees and so we lived modestly in small apartment not far from 60th and Ames. It was all brick and for the first time had a swimming pool. I spent all day working on my master thesis, and my wife worked in a store in the old downtown. We were married in a very short mass in the highest church/ cathedral in the city. It was short mass and small and it included only members of her family and mine. The exception was a wonderful lady who helped raise me.

We did not know anyone, until a real fine girl and husband moved down stairs. Her husband was a fraternity brother. There was a court yard below us so I could talk to her from the 2nd floor down to her. The best thing was she had two children with this fraternity brother and then she married another fraternity brother who was a really good guy. He was president of his class both the freshman and sophomore years. They became an FBI family and I can still communicate with her. Just above us, a couple was divided by a Professor from the University of Omaha. This guy also hit on my wife.

All summer I worked on my thesis and a new professor got on my committee and destroyed the document. My mentor Dr. George Helling was out on a sabbatical. He hired this bastard to improve the Masters program and perhaps down the road even go for a higher degree something like an Ed.S. This guy looked good on paper, but was pure shit. His neighbors hated him and the faculty didn't see much value in him. He had a mistress, wife and two daughters. I got a job in a poverty program and my wife went back to school. The rent was 105 dollars a month. I rewrote my masters thesis again. Dr. Helling came back and bumped this creep off the committee. I successfully defended it. In fact, it was one of my best performance in my life. A new professor was added on my committee. He was asking a very comprehensive and complicated question to improve his standing with the other academics sitting there. The question got convoluted and I took it away from him and steered it in my direction and got the degree. Then my favorite teacher that I ever had after the masters defense, got on a plane and flew to southern Minnesota for a new position. Later In life, I would trade Holiday cards with his wife. He died in 2005. Under the supervision of my enemy, the school lost its masters program. And so it goes.

The interesting part of the 60's, I worked in a poverty program. I worked in the ghetto. Money was pouring in and things appeared to improve. My job among other things was to teach young Black folks how to interview for a job. Over and above the usual requirements, I taught them to wear certain clothes that whites wear and to talk "white talk" Further, I showed them how to introduce themselves and modify their name. So, Amos Lincoln Brown became A.L. Brown. Once they got the job, they were encouraged to spend the first month acting white

and slowly move back to their own presentation of self. In some ways, I was part of a “passing station”

Both at the apartment and at my job, bombs were exploding most days. Sometimes our building would shake and plaster would fall to the floor. At night, my wife and I would watch the sky as bombs blew up over city.

ROSE GARDEN APARTMENTS/BLAIR

I got my first teaching job in a wonderful little liberal arts college that overlooked the Missouri valley. The entire faculty met in one room. Money was tight, the pay was low and health insurance was a catastrophic plan which “kicked in” at 10,000 dollars. During this time, I did not finish my doctorate. I was commuting 500 miles a week. We were broke. On February 11, 1978, the Dean called and said I did not have much future even though I had already gotten tenure. So I was able to get a job at Kirkwood College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. It was about 250 miles from where my wife and I spent most of our lives.

The Dean got so much criticism for “firing me” that he came to my office and asked if I would change my mind. I said “no.” I really liked the students and those old buildings that make up the campus.

Tragically, Old Main burned down in 1988. By that time, I was gone. However, I was sure homesick for the old school. Further, it took me 20 years to grieve over not finishing my doctorate. I still stay in touch with some students from those days at the little liberal arts school. I was given an award from the school as the all time top 5 teacher of the school.

At this first apartment in Blair, we were invited to watch the landing on the moon. I can understand why some felt that this trip to the moon

was faked. To cut costs, a major network here in the states created all the features of the trip and was staged in a setting that appeared to look like the moon landing. The actors did what supposedly the real astronauts were doing many miles away. Further, the flag was frozen in place. One would think that the flag would swirl in the dusty wind on the moon.

KIMBERLY APARTMENTS

By this time, my wife had her master in school psychology , we could live in a little nicer place. With this apartment, we made all the rooms into living-bedrooms save the kitchen and bath. This way we had plenty of room. However, as I started a doctorate, we found that so much money would have to be saved to be able to be able to continue. There were not any accredited school in those days that did distant learning. My school was a 500 mile trip to both the apartment that I rented near the campus and back. By the end of the semester we were broke and I was emotionally drained. So, that was that. Previous to PhD work, we moved to the ghetto in Blair Nebraska.

BLAIR GHETTO

The apartment that we had was half of a house. The first month was great as no one lived in the other section. The living room in our side was a shag rug and decal wood walls. There was a small kitchen, bath, and back room. We could put a single hide-a-bed in the back where my wife slept and I slept on a bed- roll on the floor.

After a new couple came, we got fans and a humidifier to block the noise that came from their side. It went something like a bad record that kept repeating itself. They would argue and then it would increase.

Verbally, she was pretty good until he hit her. It was a strong thud. All became quiet until the next time. It was very sad.

The house that we lived in next to the other couple was thought to be haunted. One night a baby sitter knocked on our door because she heard something from the attic. We had some weird things happen to us like the toaster moving and related but tossed it off by thinking of natural reasons. At any rate, that is not why we moved. It was my wife's condition.

My wife was pregnant and was going to deliver in the summer. Our oldest son would get up every night for 22 months.

COTTONWOOD MARINA

We were able to buy a "wintered" cottage overlooking the Missouri River. There were about 10 cottages that formed a circle. We got to know the neighbors. There was a restaurant- marina near the river. If there was anytime that I liked where I lived it was here. During the winters, we would have to call a certain number to find out if the roads were open to get to town. The last night that we lived there, all kinds of people that I knew or were related to me waved good bye in my dreams.

During the spring and summer, my oldest son and I would walk around the circle. One morning, we were in the back part of the cottage and our oldest swallowed a nickel. It got caught in his throat. He started to wave his arms and turned blue. I was able to give him the Hemickler and out popped the nickel. I saved his life. I got down on my knees and prayed then took a Valium.

So I loved that little cottage, but the big Missouri flooded and clobbered the cottage. By then we were gone, but someone built a recreational area there for RVs. It also had a very large cafe with a band stand. Further, if it floods nearly all of the building had garage doors that it could be open and the water could not destroy the eatery.

So, it was “the cottage” that I would often think about. Years later, I bought a 30 by 10 recreational home that I would spend Saturday and portions of Sunday there. However, the cottage is still with me.

MELISSA DR. N.W

By now, we had two boys. The duplex was somewhat crowded, but there were woods in the back. This would be the place where we would live until we found a house. The cost of a doctorate was now not an issue although I emotionally felt it for decades. The duplex had a view of the city and was brand new. I still remember the feeling of sitting on the wood back porch and watching nature. There was room for a television and then there was a special movie that kept recurring in my mind. My teaching was different and it took me awhile to get the formula, but it finally came to be. What helped the most was a rather lengthy syllabus and 3 strikes talking and the student would go onto distance learning. They would write essays for every chapter that we covered. Much of the time was spent in groups doing activities that covered the material. I was continually in my office correcting and rewriting their material.

The college was sparse and privacy which I had at the little school was gone. We were crammed into areas or cubicles that had metal walls that surrounded us. If you heard a student in another area talking about something very interesting, the entire building became quiet so

that you could hear the conversation. So the facilities were old “temporary” buildings that in future years would be torn down. By 83’ we were moved into a new building. In this situation, my income had doubled and I had really decent health insurance.

But it would be years before everything “fell into place.” After the president of the school at the time died, he was replaced by a leader from hell. Everyone was afraid of him and we all had to endure. On week-ends about once a month save the bitter winter (January and February) we would drive Friday night into the Omaha area. It usually took 5 hours on I-80.

One of the things about Omaha was my in-laws home in an historic area of a neighborhood that was called Cathedral. Although the late 60’s and most of the 70’s we would spend week-ends there. My wife had a number of brothers and sisters that were close in age and you could hear the latest music and enjoy one’s self in a very large brick home. In the summers, we would sit on the back porch and could see much of the city lights at night. A number of the brothers and sisters smoked dope, so that was enjoyable. Dope for me meant vertigo or “bed spins.” So I drank.

Much of that came to an end. We left for Cedar Rapids. My wife’s mother died. A sister moved to Arizona and another to California. One got married and lived in another part of the city. Later, this new wife would commit suicide. My father-in-law said at another home after that era that we thought that things like that would last forever. Of course, they did not. Although my wife goes back to the city, I have not been back in many years. I usually go to Google and drive down 56th street along Country Club all the way to the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Before Skype was invented, one son who had moved to Montana would wave standing in a special spot and we would talk on the phone. The other lived in New York city during the time of Mayor Bloomberg's time in office. One time, he was standing before a white stretch limo and again would wave at us. By the way on Google when you go to New York City, there are various neighborhoods that you can see as well as the interiors of folk's apartment. In those days, we would use Earth.cam.

I spent years in the 80's grieving over what could have been in our country. I do not mean Maoism , hippidom, or the New Left. Rather, it would slowly become a social democracy like Canada, Europe, and Scandinavia. However, Reagan crushed that and privatized anything that could not move. The worst was Reaganomics. As this is being written the President is Donald Trump, a realtor and entertainer and now president. One could say that he is historic. Every day, he writes many tweets and that can be exhausting. We could become a fascist country. At any rate, we found a house and moved into it.

ALMA DRIVE, N.W.

I can still remember roughly one year earlier in which there was a place and an era that had come close to my life. My wife started working on a third advance degree called an Ed.S. I was teaching folks who had been fired and their job had been outsourced to a third world country. I really had some depression and a shrink loaded me up with all kinds of meds including the miracle drug called Lithium. The state of psychiatry was moving toward bio-psychiatry. The drug would correct one's blues. One did not need a psychotherapist.

I slowed down, became lethargic, and made a number of mistakes. I became fat. For about 5 years, this was my condition. Finally, my school said get a new shrink or you lose your job. I did. When I quit using Lithium, I had this incredible energy in just a few days after I quit. I remember getting in my car, driving out to one of the many lakes in the area and walking all around it. I also discovered that I had a blood sugar problem and was able to fix that.

Our house was in area that had a big green belt and creek with many trees along the water. We lived on a dead end (no outlet street) so boys had many places to play. Further, we decided to make our little house into a cottage like place. We tore out some non-loading walls and put wood paneling on one wall. Further we had two floor-to-ceiling mirrors placed at each end of the hall. With one wall, we ran a wood railing into the mirror. The house became much bigger. We also had two open skylights window plates put into the ceiling. The wall that covered the stairs was removed and wooden rails covered the steps.

It became pretty. We got to know one of the neighbors, and one put a sump pump into the basement because it flooded a number of times. Our street was probably in one of the lowest points of the city that was surrounded by water.

The neighborhood was blue collar. It was filled with Reagan Democrats, so we didn't have much to talk about. So now we were fully alone in another city. My wife wanted more kids so we were foster parents to two Vietnamese boys. That means, we had 4 boys, a dog, and two cats in a 30 by 20 tract home.. I did not like thinking about going home from work as I would be approaching another job. To put some order into my work, I would go out and rent a steam cleaner for carpeting and by

Saturday evening the place was immaculate. My real release from the hassle was to go to the numerous parks and lakes in the region.

Things were shit. I had my midlife crisis. Most folks were strangers and I kept them distant from me. Around the mid 80's, I was doing just about everything that I feared as a younger man. We were a blue collar family doing suburb stuff. Finally, I got off some very crappy medications save a few and by 86' was ready for something else. We moved and sold our house in one day. Incidentally, as the standard of living decreased, the neighborhood became lower middle class so it looked different.

Further, I learned how to live alone outside of family. There really is a better life without the kids. Further, now that I know them as adults they are just great.

5418 SKYLINE DR. NW

The foster sons left and both boys were going out more often. I finally had some peace. Raising children is a long hard struggle. It takes the wind out of life. The house was brown and had brick on the front. There was a very large tree. We had a small pond, windmill, and a back porch that had a "greater ceiling."

In the late 80's, a new era was being born and our school had a new president that was absolutely fantastic. After that, a new building was constructed every year. My publications picked up and we were off to a second chance. The whole family was happy with the house.

It had 4 bedrooms and much of the things that went on in those years were pretty good. The neighborhood was filled with trees and there was an entire area near us that had an overflow basin to fight the floods that would appear often.

My wife got a big promotion and therefore we started thinking about our last house. When we moved we crossed from the west to the east and it felt like we had moved to another city. We had Maxwell our really good dog, and after we moved he died on the stairwell.

The Skyline house was not quite complete. It did not have those boundaries that usually describe a neighborhood. When we moved on, all those things were no longer an issue.

3105 ALLEGHANY DR. NW

We hit pay dirt. Apple Wood Hills had only three entrances. It would be easy to pass by. It was filled with so many trees, deer, and other wild life. That includes mallards and wild turkey. In a few minutes, one could drive down to Mohawk Park and see the Cedar River and the house boats on the other side of the shore. There are two lakes there so it is really a pleasant to be alive.

After Maxwell died, we brought into our home a little “buzz bomb” that would chase after the cats. His name was Wilson and he was able to make friends with folks walking by (if they did not have a dog.) Visitors would stop by to give him a Christmas present. He spent all of his life with us and we went to the Vet’s with him. He first received a heavy tranquilizer and then a terminal chemical. I was right in front of his face his eyes lit up and then his eyes went straight up into his brain. We have his ashes. Both of us cried for weeks and then we were introduced to a throw-a-way dog, a Beagle mix. We named him Benson. He was found on the highway. When you petted him he urinated and he chased the cats. When he overcame them, he would sit on them.

Benson is a bi-polar dog and is on heavy tranquilizers. He has a special way of communicating and does not like any other dog or cat. He is not bothered by the Wild Turkey that come into the yard and is fond of the deer.

He loves to cuddle. So, we have him and we had the carpets removed so that we could more easily remove his refuse. He will go outside when my wife accompanies him. When I would take him out, he looks around and then wants back in. After we come back him, he then goes the bathroom.

Over the years, both of our sons left. One traveled all over the northwest and lived in flop houses. He now has neat middle management job. The other tolerated New York City until the bedbugs drove him back home. We had to chill everything that he had, before he came inside the house. He has traveled all across Europe and Scandinavia. His commercial name is Bombardier. He is a techno musician. He is also a computer engineer, painter, and musician.

We added a screened- in porch and we can hear a train go by in our wooded area at midnight. The entire world is sleeping, like baby blue. It may be time to say good bye. My immune system is compromised and I may die. We are living through the early stages of a worldwide pandemic.

When I was walking down the hall of our house, I felt like I was going home deep in a coma, I saw things and the world was bliss. There was a circle of folks and it was an ambience of agape. My father-in-law was on my right side (he died in 2002) and there was a large circle of others and a large moon. Then I had a tube stuffed down my nose and went through about 48 hours of choking and calling out for someone to help

me. My body rocked and cramped. My wife had already contacted a mortuary. And so.. I survived. Maybe someday, I will see my grandmother who passed in March of 1949. On and on, we travel hoping that there is mercy for our flawed souls.

Thank you for being a friend. I want to thank you for reading about our little trips to places of homes and apartments for over 50 decades.

Good night.

Joel Snell

Professor Emeritus

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