VACATION HOUSING

While Nell adapted readily to the flat country of Illinois, both of us missed a body of water for swimming, canoeing, and sailing. Our first opportunity for a summer vacation came in 1949. We remembered the glowing eyes of Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Draper when they described their family summers in Dunewood, north of Manistee, about halfway up Lake Michigan’s eastern shore. The community of Dunewood had been bought from the U.S. Government by a group of University of Illinois professors after it had been timbered off by the lumber barons. In 1913, the decision was made by the professors to build cottages on the sand hills among the second-growth beeches, birches, and pines and to provide access for all members of the community to reach the beach, which was about three-quarters of a mile in length. We rented the “Forbes” Cottage from Ethel Forbes Scott for two weeks during the summer of 1949 when Kenneth was one year old. The Forbes Cottage was one of the original eight cottages, most of which, in true resort style, are still called by the names of their original owners.

The cottages were comfortable, if somewhat primitive, and the surroundings were beautiful and were quiet except for the sounds of nature. The 400-mile car trip from Urbana ended in seven miles of corduroy dirt road, the so-called Chippewa Trail, to reach Dunewood. Further north, the road continued around Portage Lake and through the village of Onekema. Shopping could be done in Manistee or Onekema, firewood was easily chopped from dead timber, and blueberries, blackberries, and apples could be picked nearby. The region was and is also known for its cherries and peaches at the beginning and end of the summer season. The woods, with only sparse undergrowth, were for tramping and exploring. The beach was broad and magnificent; the lake, cool and clear, was quiet in the morning and usually wavy by afternoon.

We felt we had found a paradise, but actually a near-paradise since that first year was not without anguish. Kenny, who took to the water as though he had been born in it, which—in a way—he had, developed a viral pneumonia for which there was no cure via sulfa drug or antibiotic. Luckily, he overcame the infection. I managed to chop into my leg instead of a
target log, but the deep hatchet cut was clean and the skin could be pulled
together satisfactorily. We did get to know some reliable doctors in the
area. To add to these events, we had a series of days of rain, spent in
reading innumerable books Nell and I had brought along “just in case.”

The good must have outweighed the bad experiences. We returned to
the Forbes Cottage again in 1951 when Marcia was close to two years
old; James celebrated his first birthday on the beach in 1953, and we
ventured to introduce David to Dunewood in 1954 when he was only six
weeks old. We stayed in the larger Scully Cottage in 1953, 1954, and
thereafter until we could purchase our own cottage. In those days, it was
wise to be away from the heat of central Illinois in late summer due to the
threat of polio; accordingly, there was an extra reason to feel relieved and
to relax upon arrival in Dunewood. We became more and more efficient
in travelling between Urbana and Dunewood. If we left very early in the
morning, the children would sleep during the first half of the journey and
the first stop (there was occasionally no second stop) would be for breakfast.
We developed favorite places along the way. The most enterprising
journey that I recall involved seven of us. Nell was in the front seat,
David as an infant was between us in a basket, Grammy (my mother) was
in the back seat with James, Marcia slept on the blanketed and pillowed
floor during the first half of the trip, and Kenneth slept behind the rear
seat in the reinforced receptacle for the convertible top. Our friends were
amazed at everyone’s tolerance of the close packing. After we acquired a
dog, her place was regularly behind the rear seat, and three of us, with
some rotation, occupied each seat, the front being of the bench type and
therefore roomy. The trips back and forth were not devoid of adventure—
flat tires, spilling of raspberry jam, stomach upsets, excessive “b.c.” (body
contact), fortuitous avoidance of accidents, etc.—but anticipation helped
to make the trips pleasant and, because of family habits, jokes, reading,
and games, they were actually fun.

The southernmost Dunewood cottage on the east side of the Chippewa
Trail was occupied by a widower, John Law, who had bought the cottage
from the original professor owner, Adam Strohm, who had become librarian
of the Detroit Public Library. Mr. Law was uncharacteristically concerned
about such territorial matters as his exact property lines (fencing was
installed), liens for granting Dunewooders the right of passage, the
common water supply (he was the only one to install a bathtub), tree-
trimming (on adjacent Scully beach property to improve his view), and
the question of participation in group assessments to make improvements
in common property. He never really accepted the idea that he was part
of a community, and the Dunewood community did not accept him because
of his lack of cooperative spirit. Matters came to a head in 1959 when rumors started circulating around Dunewood—rumors were always circulating around Dunewood—that Mr. Law might be interested in selling or sharing his house. Because Mr. Law was not on speaking or visiting terms with any of the cottage owners, it was difficult to ascertain his wishes. We, however, were merely renters and therefore neutral. Nell adopted her characteristic direct approach and suggested that we visit Mr. Law to talk with him about the property, which we did. We asked whether he was interested in selling the land and cottage. He responded by asking why we were interested. I told him that we were ideal buyers. We knew and loved Dunewood. We had four children who enjoyed the woods and beach. We had outgrown all the rental property, while his house, which he kindly showed us, had four bedrooms in addition to kitchen, living room, screened-in porch, half-bath, and tiny bathroom with tub (he now had his own well), along with a garage. It was ideal for us, the largest family who frequented Dunewood. Moreover, the fact that he had lost his right to cross the Scully land to get to the beach did not present a problem for us because, with our purchase of the northernmost lot in Dunewood from the Scott Estate in 1958, we had the right to cross both Scully and Wallis (which used to be Scott) land to reach the beach. Sensing that he actually might be willing to sell to us, Nell inquired as to his asking price. It was $12,000 cash. We countered with $10,000, a figure I thought we might be able to raise, with a little help from Holland, by October. We settled on $11,000, at which point Mr. Law asked my religion. I related that I was confirmed in the Episcopal Church but that I hadn’t attended that denominational church for some time. He said that was exactly his situation and that we could therefore confirm our agreement by a handshake, which we did. What else helped? Probably the fact that I admired the crazy quilt hanging over the balcony railing, made by his mother in 1890-something, and could claim that I had a similar admirable piece of handiwork that my grandmother had made in the same period. Who knows? He was inscrutable. Nell and I walked back to the Scully
Cottage in a daze, saying “Do you suppose that we have actually purchased the cottage?”

Mr. Law visited us the next day and asked whether we had perhaps been negotiating on behalf of Margaret Scully, with whom he was in a territorial war. We could assure him that we had not breathed a word about our agreement to Mrs. Scully and that we wanted the house for ourselves. Indeed, we were anxious to keep the negotiations secret until the sale was consummated. There were too many scatterbrained ideas loose in Dunewood. Mr. Law’s visit did energize me to call our friend, Wally Mullikan, of Champaign Loan and Building, in order to learn what paperwork could do to fortify the Episcopalian handshake. He dictated a letter of intent, which I typed and presented to Mr. Law, together with a check for $1,000 as earnest money. He must have felt the need for fortification as well, because he had prepared a similar letter of intent, but from the seller’s side. He was satisfied with my letter and earnest money, and there followed a less ecclesiastical handshake. Exchange of the property took place in October of 1959.

We crossed Lake Michigan on a ferry from Milwaukee to Ludington with Hans and Betty Frey for the celebration. We stayed in their cottage and immediately after the transfer of ownership, the four of us had a symbolic pushing down of the fence that Mr. Law had installed between their lot and his, now ours. We also regenerated the pathway that the Freys could use in traversing our property on their way to the beach. It was a very joyful occasion, dimmed only partially by the discoveries of invasion of powder post beetles in the flooring, invasion of termites in the stairway to the porch and in the roofing of the porch, and perviousness of the house to mice. The cottage at 6829 Lake Shore Road and the grounds have been improved each year and are continuing to be improved now that they are in the children’s hands. Mr. Law never returned to the house.

He did spend summers in Manistee, where he bought a small apartment, and the rest of the year in Covington, Kentucky, across the river from Cincinnati, where the state taxes were lower. As the years progressed, so did Mr. Law’s peculiarities increase. He finally checked himself into an asylum and had his demise announced so that friends would not know about his mental incapacity. It was an act of some courage, to my way of thinking.

The Harno Cottage was across the road from 6829 and was the southern-most Dunewood cottage on the lake side. Each year the erosion cut the high bank further and further back until finally the structure itself was threatened. In the early 1970s, we sent a warning to the Harnos while Jim and Toni were in Africa, where Jim worked for Texaco, but they made
procrastination a vocation. It was not until they made a biennial summer return to Dunewood that they recognized that a false step from their front porch might mean a drop or slide of 30 feet down the cliff. There was no reserve land on the west side of the road. We offered them, with some urgency, part of our large, northernmost lot on the east side of the road. They decided that they could not accept an outright gift and offered in exchange two small pieces of land on the west side of the road, the remainder of the original cottage site and a 90-foot long piece of land next to it. The former was actually offered to us at a later date because they maintained the sentimental notion that they would use the old cottage site for picnics, enjoying the Lake Michigan view they knew so well. No picnic ever occurred. The Leonard children now own the two pieces of land which continue to be taxed as though they had some value, which is certainly doubtful. Just in time, insofar as I can estimate, the Harno Cottage was moved intact to the portion of our lot on the erosion-safe side of the road and duly secured upon a new garage foundation. We requested and obtained the right of first refusal if they ever decided to sell.

The opportunity for us to buy came sooner than one might have imagined or desired. It resulted from a series of family tragedies. One of their daughters, an autistic child, had been removed earlier to a California care facility. The other daughter, Lindy Harno, a clever engineering graduate of the University of Michigan and an intrepid sky diver, was killed in a freak automobile accident. Jim developed a cancer of the sinus that was impossible to contain and proved fatal, and Toni soured on Dunewood, where she added to her complicated and now lonesome life by breaking a hip in a fall. We purchased the house at 6999 Lake Shore Road in 1981 at Toni’s asking price and found out immediately that it had many imperfections due either to Jim’s procrastination or to his constructive additions and “improvements.” Jim was a delightful friend and a highly competent engineer in the oil and gas industry, but it has to be remembered that he was also the only officer in the history of the U.S. Navy to take a submarine down with the hatches open! The unfinished second floor of the house had a central corridor and tiny box-like rooms. It was unsatisfactory in its 1981 condition.

I claimed that I was too busy in the early 1980s to become involved in a planning and construction project. It would be up to Nell to supervise. She decided very properly that if she were to supervise, she should also be in total charge of funding, which she managed by transferring necessary capital from our Dutch account that was controlled by her cousin, Hans Dinger. Nell engaged a building contractor who had experience in designing and building summer cottages around Manistee, she had
architectural guidance from Jim Carlson, Tom’s father, and she enlisted Marcia to help with the decorating and furnishing process. In due course, Jim Leonard was of special help in landscaping because of his avidity for cutting and timbering. For effective supervision of the reconstruction and new construction to proceed on schedule, Nell had to make several on-site visits in 1982. Her solo trips by car between Urbana and Manistee were very fast and cemented her reputation as a very “efficient” driver. In fact, she proved several times over that she deserved the approbative nickname “Parnelli Leonard,” a takeoff on the name of a famous race car driver. I merely gave my hearty approval of everything that was being done, although I did have some input as to the design of the new deck and the stairs leading up to it, namely, the simplest part of the exterior. The end result was attractive, both inside and out. The tower stairwell that was set to one side allowed the second floor to be rearranged so that the new upstairs corridor ran along the east side, which guaranteed that the bedrooms upstairs became of reasonable size: one single, two double, with a large double bedroom over the screened-in, glassed-in porch. Adjacent to the tower extension was another double bedroom on the first floor, and the first floor was also extended to the west to incorporate a new kitchen, with southern and westward exposures. There were (are) two bathrooms equipped with shower and an extra shower in the basement laundry room. The house has its own well. It is now a hospitable summer cottage with space for two Leonard families. We hope now that the two cottages will be referred to as the Upper (or North) Leonard Cottage and the Lower (or South) Leonard Cottage, but such name changes may take time for the other members of the Dunewood community to assimilate. The transfer of the two summer vacation homes and three lots, two of them tiny and one large that contains a possible building site, to the joint ownership of Kenneth, Marcia, James, and David was finalized during 1992 and 1993, according to Nell’s wishes expressed earlier. Do the children still love Dunewood? All of them return in summer when it is possible. Their four spouses were guests in Dunewood before they were married. Two marriages were celebrated in Dunewood, David’s and Marcia’s. To provide family continuity, the minister, Edward Meury, who was my friend from kindergarten in Mount Vernon, New York, presided at the wedding of Elena and David in 1978, as he did at the wedding of Nell and me in 1947. All of the grandchildren have experienced the re-attractive power of Dunewood and Lake Michigan.

What, specifically, were (are) the attractions? Kenneth and Marcia learned to swim in Dunewood. James and David learned to swim at Indian Day Camp in Champaign, Illinois, but they loved the long swims that
were possible in Lake Michigan. We all did body surfing when the big waves permitted. The long surfboard that I had purchased from Donald Cram of UCLA chemistry and surfing fame was used either in the super waves or for floating sun baths on calm days. While Marcia was not interested, the three boys did their first fishing under my unreliable but earnest direction in Portage Lake. I remember very clearly the last time I offered my services. They were to unhook the small perch that David kept reeling in. When he had caught 17 within a short space of time, he said, “This is boring,” to which I replied, “See how many all of the other kids in the rowboat have caught? None!” David had confirmed the basis of the biblical advice, “Cast your nets on the other side.” We canoed down the Little Manistee and the Pine Rivers. On one particular ride through mild rapids, all the canoes overturned in the group except the one Marcia and Kenneth were paddling, with James seated low in the center. I claimed their good luck was due to the fact that neither of them was wearing glasses, so no one could see the dangers that lay ahead. It was, in fact, in Michigan that we first learned that Marcia needed glasses. She could not follow the balls that she hit during her first golf lesson. The boys all received lessons from the pro at the Manistee Country Club, Edmund O’Connor. Nell was a good golfer, well coached in Holland. I enjoyed playing golf with her and occasionally with another couple. She played regularly with the women of the Club, which we joined on summer family membership. Jim remembers playing with Nell particularly during the summer of 1968.

The boys and I had our greatest satisfaction in cutting down trees and having them fall exactly where we desired, in chain-sawing them into fireplace lengths, and in splitting them the following year. Cleaning up the brush was not nearly as much fun. Occasionally there were disappearances from the team when it came time for brush clean-up. We required a professional tree service to cut two large cherry trees next to the driveway leading to the South Leonard House, and we followed these to the sawmill, where they were converted to planks and 4x4s, and, after drying, into a fine round table and two low beds. Kenneth mapped the woodland trails and, together with Chip Frey and John and Robby Sternfeld, constructed forts and secret hiding places. That group was aloof from Marcia, James, and David, but all were equally at home in the woods, especially if they remembered to take a compass with them. The highest premium was placed on freedom, as expressed in our two parental rules while the four were growing up: 1) do not go swimming unless there is an adult on the beach near you; 2) come home when you are hungry. We assumed they would have the good sense to look both ways before crossing
the Chippewa Trail, which became more of a hazard when it was asphalted and widened. Nell, too, valued her complete freedom in Dunewood. It became clear to me that she would find it unfriendly of me to ask where she was going or what she was planning to do next. Nell called it her “most favorite spot in all the world.” She could do anything she wanted. One thing she loved to do was read on the screened-in porch of the South House. Nell and Marcia shared a love of summer reading and were champion patrons of the Manistee Public Library.

There were summers of frequent beach fires when there was abundant driftwood, summers of racing Sailfish; summers of canoeing down the rivers; summers special for the number of Petoskey stones and “weather glass” that could be found; a summer of beefsteak red fungi that appeared on the trees; a summer when Jimmy Kiszell left a trash fire unattended in a wind that scattered the embers among the brush and trees, portending a disaster that the whole community turned out to avert; a summer when our first Norwegian Elkhound, Taina, perfumed herself by rolling in unspeakable material and another when our second one, Malu, unashamedly produced a litter of hybrids (she had produced earlier a full complement of thoroughbred Elkhounds under supervised mating); summers when either dog was the victim of porcupine curiosity; summers of painting houses; a summer when Nell’s sister Hilda Renardel de Lavalette was with us trying to recover from her husband Paul’s death; and Nell’s final summer in Dunewood (1986) when Jacqueline Vermey-Volk, her father’s widow, was visiting and the two women became very close friends. Each of the children had friends visiting at one time or another, and many of our friends came to know Dunewood. Only one couple, our dear friends Victor and Susan Stone, bought a lot and built a house in Michigan, just north of us and across the road. We are lucky to have them as neighbors.

There were expeditions to Sleeping Bear Dune, Tippy Dam, Caberfee, the Lookout Point on Michigan 22, the Lighthouses at Manistee, Portage Lake, and Frankfort, the Morton Salt Works in Manistee, the Ferry Boat docks in Frankfort and Ludington, the Rock Shop in Onekema, the Trading Post in Beulah, the forestry preserve and the fire tower (to climb), and—on rainy days—the Historical Museum or the bowling alley in Manistee. Favorite eating places were the Cherry Hut in Beulah and Sand and Ski in Cadillac. For entertainment, there was the County Fair in Onekema, great music at Interlochen, and thespian performances in the Ramsdell Theater. For “sport” shopping by the ladies, there was the factory outlet of Glen of Michigan; try-ons were encouraged but no dressing rooms were provided.

The children were not limited to the summer experience of Dunewood and Lake Michigan. Ken spent separate summers at Scout Camp (Drake)
in Illinois, Prairie Trek (in the Southwest), and Bay Nothing on the Current River in Missouri. Marcia was at Grassy Lakes Camp in Southern Illinois and Camp Kehonka on Lake Winnipesaukee, New Hampshire. James spent two weeks at Scout Camp one summer and two summer periods at Broken Arrow, a ranch near Gold Hill, Colorado. David had two summers at Red Arrow Camp in Wisconsin and while there became an expert in canoeing and portaging in the border lakes country.

What about winter vacations? First, I must describe an addiction to skiing that permeates the family, or, rather, the Leonard side of each family. The distaff side of each family provides a devotion to the sport as well. I began skiing in Austria in 1937-8, and Nell and I skied together in Switzerland in 1938-9. It was not until the end of January, 1945, that I could take a vacation from wartime research and the teaching of army, navy, and civilians at Illinois, to spend a week at the Beavers’ Lodge in Winter Park, Colorado. I fell in love with Colorado and with Colorado skiing. My first pair of wooden Northland skis had no metal edges, but technology improved slowly and allowed me to have metal edges attached for my second foray to Winter Park in January, 1947. My friend Stanley Cristol at the University of Colorado assisted in these adventures by inviting me to give a chemistry seminar talk in Boulder at the end of the ski week. The honorarium of $50 was very helpful because a week of lessons and ski tows in those days cost only $69 or $79 as I recall. I had two ski trips to Winter Park in 1950s, one for Kenny and me and a later one for Nell, Marcia, Kenny, and me. Then, we shifted allegiance to Aspen, Colorado, largely because of my colleague Kenneth Rinehart’s description of the skiing there and because of Stan Cristol’s description of reasonable family accommodations, namely, at the Hillside Lodge.

The accommodations were, indeed, reasonable. A double room in the converted old jail was $8.00 per night, and the children’s room across the hall was $24.00 per night. It had four beds and the necessary kitchen facilities, so that Nell was able to cook the suppers...
that the children liked. Continental breakfasts were supplied by Hillside Lodge, lunches were taken on the slopes, and we treated ourselves to an occasional dinner out. How did we get to Aspen? We drove to Galesberg, Illinois, left the car at one of the local garages, and waited for the California Zephyr. I say “waited for” rather than “caught” because the train was invariably late. Upon arrival in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, we changed to a bus—at least in our first year, 1960—that deposited us just one block away from Hillside Lodge. In subsequent years, our improved experience was to hire Little Percent Taxi for our transport between Glenwood Springs and Aspen. They had a stretched-out version of a Pontiac that had been converted to a seven-passenger vehicle. The whole travel process was made possible through the cooperation of the children, each of whom was limited to one suitcase that he or she could carry, although we did offer David, age 6, and James, age 8, help when they needed it. The anticipation of the train journey and the actuality of the sleeper berths, meals on the train, and viewing from the dome car made it a worthwhile adventure. In later years, our alternative routes were to fly to Denver and drive to Aspen in a rented car or to fly to Denver and to Grand Junction and then drive from there to Aspen in a rented car. The latter route had the advantage of not having any mountain passes for us to negotiate in the fickle winter weather.

Five of the Leonards took lessons and skied every day. Nell, who had injured her knee early in her skiing career, roamed the town, made friends, and, after Vance and Ellen Grenko had taken over the operation of Hillside Lodge, offered help and advice to these natives of Oklahoma who were neophytes to both lodge-owning and skiing. Friends showed up at Hillside Lodge, including the Frieds and the Djerassis. Dan and Natalie Alpert stayed at a B&B next door, Hans and Vreneli Frauenfelder stayed in town, and we looked forward to seeing the regulars of Hillside each year. Marcia had the company of her cousin Claire one year. However, we were fast outgrowing the accommodations.

As part of Nell’s excursions about Aspen in the beginning of 1966, she took a tour of the new ski area that was being developed in adjacent Snowmass-at-Aspen, as it was called originally. She could hardly contain her enthusiasm. She bubbled about the views from the lots in Melton Ranch I, and she urged me to buy a lot before the price went up. On a second visit to the Ranch area, she even decided which lot offered the best combination of view and convenient access. I was taken along on the next visit, I fully agreed with her selection of lot 32, but I did not have the necessary $9,000 initial asking price. Nell convinced me to borrow the money, because she sensed with accuracy that the opportunity would never
return. I paid a deposit of $1,800 and signed a promissory note for $7,200 to be paid off in five years at 7% interest. That was conservative. The promissory note was paid off ahead of schedule, on February 23, 1968, and it was time to think about building a house. If I did not have enough money to buy a lot, how would I finance a ski lodge? Once again, Nell gave me the encouragement at least to plan a house, which we started in 1968 with the architect George Heneghan, after seeing some of the work of the partnership Heneghan and Gale. George's first design was, however, conventional and uninteresting. I suggested that I was only going to build one house in my lifetime, a mountain house and not a city house, and that all the rooms should embrace the view. "Embracing" was possible if one envisaged a central portion as a hexagon and attached two wings on the "a" and "c" sides, one side for the parents and the larger side for the four children. George took it from there and "placed" the structure ideally on the hillside so that the main windows had sweeping views from northeast to south.

My Aunt Kate had died two years previously at age 91. As executor of her estate, I had been using the inheritance, as required, for the support of her unmarried sister, Florence Leonard, who was confined to a nursing home in Mount Vernon, N.Y., during 1967-1968. I visited her several times during that year to ascertain that she was appreciated and was treated well. She was generally at peace, even jolly, but she was hallucinating more and more, drifting off into a pleasant world of her own imagining. She even wondered aloud to her nurse, when I visited, whether it was proper to entertain a gentleman in her bedroom, but that she did! Aunt Flora died at 93 in 1968, and the residue of the original estate of George and Kate Macbeth came to their only surviving nephew, myself.

The total amount, in stocks and bonds and cash, was sufficient for us to build the Snowmass house, which we then contracted to do. George Heneghan, our architect, supervised the construction during 1969-1970. Because I was uncertain of the economic climate, I converted the estate's stocks to U.S. Treasury Bills that would mature quarterly during the construction period. George was very conscientious about obtaining lien waivers every time I paid the contractors and subcontractors. This enabled us to realize a cost that was within $3,000 of the original estimate. There were other headaches and crises, however, as in most construction enterprises, that kept me nervous for half a year. Marcia and Kenneth were observers of the final settlement at the end of January, 1970. At the dining table at the new house on Lot 32 of Melton Ranch I were the contractor and his accountant, the plumbing and electrical subcontractor, the replacement electrical subcontractor, George and myself.
contractor and first subcontractor were huge men. Every once in a while, they would both stand up for emphasis (one owed the other a large sum of money). The effect was daunting. I had to explain why we had shifted electrical subcontractors, which I could do with a list of how specifications were not met and how the major contractor had not checked at any stage. More standing up! I pacified the first subcontractor by praising the plumbing part of his work. George admonished all of them to stick to the monetary details of Dr. Leonard’s house instead of including other jobs and other debts. To balance all of the charges and counter-charges, I would have to have paid $6,000. I said that I would be willing to do this but I hoped that the contractor, as a Texas gentleman, would be willing to assume half of this because of his responsibility. My final check of $3,000 guaranteed the signing of all the documents. Once the building tribe had left, my loving children asked me whether I had been afraid. I explained that George had calmed everyone and that I was only afraid we would miss our plane if they squabbled too long. The total cost was $69,000. Marcia helped Nell decide on the furnishings, and the total cost of these was about $15,000.

By summer, we were ready for our first renter, Lubert Stryer. Lubert, an M.D., had received a Ph.D. in Biochemistry at Harvard from Elkan Blout. We arranged a low rental price for Lubert and his family with the agreement that they would help with the landscaping and watering, which they did. They are avid tennis players and hikers. Their successful summer rental brought us into a friendship that we have happily maintained. Lubert, who is now a Professor in the Medical School at Stanford University, has written an all-time best-seller textbook of Biochemistry. When I asked him why he had taken time away from his research, consulting, and teaching to write a textbook, he answered that the idea came to him in the summer of 1970(!) when he decided that he would like to buy a house in Aspen/Snowmass and that a textbook could supply the income necessary. The Stryers did buy a house in Starwood Ranch, Aspen, in the 1990s, and we see them each summer. Our friends, Dan and Natalie Alpert, were our guests in January of 1971 and again in 1979 when they planned a house that they would build in Snowmass. In 17 of the 27 rental years, the income exceeded the cost of renting, which had been our minimal goal.

Of course, the Snowmass house has provided fabulous family vacations in all the years of our ownership. Other members of the extended family have been welcome, e.g., Nell’s cousin Betty Vermey, Director of Admissions at Bryn Mawr, in January, 1979; Nell’s second cousin Hans Mijnlieff and his wife Nicole in June, 1978; Nell’s nephew Maarten Versteegh in July, 1970, and more members of her side of the family in
1983. In January, 1975, our first mini-reunion of Lehigh '37 classmates, Carl Becker and Joseph Walton, and their wives was so successful that it was repeated in 1976 and 1978 through 1981. In August, 1993, Marcia hosted a mini-reunion of her high school classmates. In January, 1978, Nell and I hosted a University of Illinois party for 19 people with Illinois connections who happened to be in Aspen/Snowmass at that time. The first among the children’s friends came to visit in 1971 and 1972. We entertained friends from England: Michael and Jillie Parsons in March, 1981, and Leslie and Kitty Strang in the summers of 1977 and 1982. In the first year, they helped with thistle removal and we toured around Colorado; the second visit was cut short unfortunately when Leslie was diagnosed in Aspen as having a possible lung cancer, which turned out to be true when they returned home abruptly. Visitors came regularly to the Aspenyl Chemistry and Biochemistry Meetings, which were initiated in 1975 and which are described in another section. The first in-law parents, Bill and Edith Wilson, were with us in January, 1982, and Fiammetta Barchiesi was with us in January, 1986. March 20-April 3, 1991, marked the first visit of Peggy Phelps, which ended in near disaster when I crashed into her (coming up the slope in a fast turn at the bottom of Roche Run on Ajax as she was coming down), giving her a concussion, diagnosed the next evening. The collision, witnessed and unappreciated by other members of her family, caused a most anxious point in our relationship. It was through the attention and help of Ann Watson, our neighbor and friend, that Peggy was able to return home as soon as sufficient recovery allowed her to travel. Peggy’s friend, Bobby Schwarzenbach, was introduced to the house in March, 1992, when he arranged for some necessary redecoration. Peggy and I did out first skiing together in Snowmass as a couple in March, 1993, and Peggy hosted her “Ladies’ Ski Week” at the house in March of 1996 and 1997.

In terms of monetary value, the house and land, Lot 32, were appraised at $320,000 at the time of Nell’s death in January 1987. The real property was conveyed in 1992 to the Nelson J. Leonard Trust dated October 13, 1992, Nelson J. Leonard, Trustee. In 1998, pursuant to transfer of ownership from the Trust to the four children, the property has been appraised at $625,000. From the start of our involvement in Snowmass Village, Nell always had her eye on Lot 33, just below the house. She felt it should be in our hands, primarily, in order to guarantee the view to the east and secondarily, as a safe place for recreation, i.e., sledding and “disking.” At the inauguration of the Snowmass-at-Aspen area, Lot 33 had been “sold” to a judge, one who ruled favorably on the development of the subdivision. He had used it as collateral in multiple financial
transactions, so read the Abstract of Title when we finally obtained possession, and the lot had indeed become encumbered by taxes and lawsuits. The lot finally reverted to the Snowmass-at-Aspen Joint Venture (or its successor) and Nell was right there to say that she would take it off their hands. It was a done deal for $15,000 cash on September 17, 1973. It was our joint wish to transfer the property to the children as a guarantee for the future. If another Leonard house were to be built, that was the land upon which it could be placed, with a shared drive entrance. The lot would appreciate in value, and, if all four ever agreed to a necessary sale of the lot, any construction on the lot would have to meet with their approval and also approval of the Melton Ranch I Homeowners Association. In other words, the four owners could preserve the view to some extent.

After Nell’s death, the intended transfer was initiated by me in 1989 and continued until 1993. The official appraisals ran as follows: 1989, $160,000; 1990, $178,000; 1991, $180,000; 1992, $180,000; 1993, $195,000. It took five years to transfer Lot 33 using the $10,000 single tax-free upper limit. Moreover, we were exempted from any real estate transfer tax. The property tax valuation of the property (not equivalent to the appraisal figure) keeps going up and up, and we hope we have not saddled the children with too great an annual tax burden. It is my intention to continue to alleviate that expense within the tax-free gift limits available to Peggy and me.