

THE HILLTOP

December
2020

QUARTERLY

A publication written by and for the residents of North Hill

Volume 147



BOCCI BALL MON 10
GAME NIGHT MON &
WEN 630
SEWING TUE 10
CRAFTS WEN 10
CHRISTMAS DINNER 3
SHUFFLE BOARD FRI 10
DARTS FRI 630

From the Editor

Dear friends,

Each week Zoltan and I ask, "Is it Friday again?"

One day melts into the next and time evaporates as Covid endures.

Yet, we are so fortunate that our culture of kindness and caring continues to prevail. Team Members and Residents are all part of it. I am most grateful. I cannot imagine being in a better place.

I look forward to the day when we can hug each other.

*With affection,
Ronna*

The Hilltop

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NORTH HILL

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Santa Cover, Story

Driving down a dusty road outside Ocala, Florida which was bypassed by an Interstate years ago, I came upon this remnant of earlier times, but miraculously still in business. Typical of its day, the RV park was filled with Winnebagos and popup campers, most with Ohio and Michigan plates, snowbirds all. I was tempted to stay for a game of Bocci, Shuffle Board or Darts. Might even visit with some of the residents, share a cold one and talk about the weather back home and the fishing nearby, but my time was short. I was younger then and anxious to move on down the road to the bright lights and hi rise condos further south. Now I'm sorry I did.

— Al Woodcock

Tidbits

Animal Roars

As a professor in a nursing program, in the 1980's I took a Kenyan safari tour. Over three weeks we saw beautiful sights of native wildlife and geography, visited a Masai Mara encampment and went on a balloon ride over Serengeti wildebeest and zebra herds. The last evening before returning to Nairobi was at Governor's Camp, where the mess hall had the only electricity. Tents were set along a riverside cliff. Settled for the night in a tent, we awakened to loud animal roars, but saw nothing. Overnight personnel patrolled with

We Remember

JANE WELT

RACHEL JONES

SALLY LITTLEFIELD

ANTHONY LUCAS

MARILYN GARDNER

RICHARD CSAPLAR

ELIZABETH WOLF

JOAN WYNN

NIELS FISCHER

torches and rifles, but spoke only Swahili. The roars continued regularly for over an hour, then silence; we went back to sleep. At breakfast, we were informed that a hippopotamus had given birth in the river below. I and another nursing professor were embarrassed not to have recognized the rhythmic sound of labor pains.

— Barbara Madden

The Day I Didn't Meet RBG

In May 2015, Nancy Veeder and I attended a special event at the Radcliffe Institute to honor RBG who was to receive the prestigious Radcliffe Medal, awarded to women who had made a difference.

During the morning we heard a panel of distinguished speakers including RBG's Law Clerks, Judge Margaret Marshall and Linda

Greenhouse explaining the import of RBG's most famous judicial dissents. Then we trooped across Brattle Street for a tent lunch, the featured Medal Presentation and an interview session with RBG. What a stirring and inspirational day!



As Nancy and I got ready to leave, she decided she had to use the restroom in a nearby building. I offered to help her there, but she declined. She seemed to be taking a very long time. I was getting concerned when Nancy came out of the building. She was smiling and seemed to be levitating. "What's the matter; what happened" I asked. Nancy told me. When she went to use the handicapped bathroom, a large burly fellow in a dark suit intercepted her and put up his hand and stopped her flat. Nancy was startled. Who was this guy?

Then out of the bathroom door, a diminutive thin stooped woman appeared. The burly escort advanced to help her. RBG in the flesh! Nancy, never at a loss for words, stuttered: "Oh, Justice Ginsberg, I'm so honored to meet you, I want to thank you for all you done for women." Then,

Nancy told me, "RBG looked up at me, a sweet smile on her face and thanked me for saying that and for coming to the lecture and lunch program. Then the Secret Service man swept RBG out of Radcliffe Yard."

— Mary Costanza

Addis Ababa
July, 1967
Stanley Fisher

It was such a cold and rainy day

I wore a coat, for the first time

This year.

Down the hill they came

Umbrellas massed

Against the rain.

First, the clustered, sobbing women

In white; Behind,

The silent men,

Their knobby, mud-caked

Feet on the pavement.

The coffin, on six

Shoulders

Long, and draped

In a black

And yellow cloth.

Usually it's

Only a tiny box,

In the arms of a

Grieving father.

The cars ahead

Pull over.

Their drivers, bareheaded,

Get out, bowing

In a few years, I think,

They will just drive by,

As do I.

A Fisherman's Tale *John Fisher*

I caught my first fish in Rhode Island when I was 11 years old. It was a 36" pickerel, and boy was I hooked!

In the 70s, I was part of a group of guys who went on an annual fishing trip first to western Ontario and then to Grand Lake Stream, Maine. Little did I realize how much those adventures would play in my future.

I love fishing, a day of relaxation on the water, the silent surroundings and the challenge of the catch. I looked forward to sharing it with my sons, Tim, and Scott. Would they feel the same way?

Our first trip was to Sioux Lookout, Ontario where we caught northern pike, smallmouth bass, and walleye pike. The boys took the bait and thus began the annual Fisher-men's Master Angler Competition.

As time went on, we expanded the outing to include the next generation: Tim's son, Gavin, and Scott's son, Justin. Happy tales travel fast and other family members wanted in: my godson, a cousin and his son and grandson. Truly this became a three generational experience.

In 2010, Gavin, then 8, and my cousin's grandson, Griffin, age 11, fished together with a guide for the full morning period. The guide reported that he had never seen two lads so young able to totally focus on catching fish for straight four hours. Instead of competing with each other, they were concerned with how many fish they could catch together. They boated 42 in just half a day.

This year marked the 22nd Annual Competition for the Fisher-men. It was the year the mantle passed to the third generation. Justin, (now 11) caught the biggest fish and the most varieties. Gavin (18) caught the most fish by a lot – 80 over a two-and-a-half-day period.

For the past three years, we have gone back to Grand Lake Stream where I had fished thirty years ago with my business friends. We catch mostly smallmouth bass and, if the water temperature is cold enough, we might get lucky and nab a land-locked salmon on the surface.



A daily highlight is the shore lunch. Each morning we keep one fish per fisherman and meet in a designated place where

the guides fry up the fish along with hash-browned potatoes and potato skins. My personal treat is to make sure to keep one fish from the afternoon catch for my breakfast the following morning.

Evenings are spent with backgammon and cribbage challenges, curled up with a good book, or back to the dock for some more fishing.

No surprise, we're already booked for the 23rd Fisher-men's Master Angler Competition.

Charlie *Jack Romanow*

Recently, I overheard a Resident talking about her CharlieCard. I wondered if she knew the colorful history behind the naming of the card.

Candidates in the Boston mayoral election of 1949 were the incumbent mayor, James Michael Curley; John B. Hynes; and three lesser-known men; one was Walter A. O'Brien. O'Brien, who lacked funds for radio advertising, commissioned campaign songs from local folk artists. The subway fare on the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) was a dime, paid upon boarding a train. Just before the election, the fare was raised by a nickel, to be paid upon exiting the train on longer rides. O'Brien decided to protest the additional nickel exit fee and he commissioned the song "Charlie on the MTA," which he broadcast from his campaign truck as it roamed Boston neighborhoods. He was fined \$10 for disturbing the peace.

Receiving 1.2 percent of the vote, O'Brien lost, but the Charlie song became part of Boston's lore. In 1959, the Kingston Trio recorded a version that reached #15 on the Billboard charts. An abridged version of the lyrics follows:

[Charlie went to work one fateful day with only a dime in his pocket.]

Charley handed in his dime

At the Kendall Square Station

And he changed for Jamaica Plain.

When he got there the conductor told him,

"One more nickel."

Charley could't get off that train!

Chorus

Did he ever return,

No he never returned

And his fate is still unlearn'd.

He may ride forever

'neath the streets of Boston.

He's the man who never returned.

Charley's wife goes down

To the Scollay Square station

Every day at quarter past two.

And through the open window

She hands Charley a sandwich.

As the train comes rumblin' through.

Now you citizens of Boston,

Don't you think it's a scandal

That the people have to pay and pay.

Vote for Walter A. O'Brien

And fight the fare increase.

Get poor Charley off the MTA.

One day while Leah and I were driving our grandchildren, Joey and Rachel, ages 12 and 10 respectively, we heard the Charlie song on the radio. From the back seat, Rachel exclaimed, "Why didn't his wife just give him a

nickel so he could get off the train?"

Exit fares were eliminated in 2006, but the lore of Charlie's endless MTA journey lives on in the name of the MBTA's fare system—the CharlieCard

and CharlieTicket. In different form, hapless Charlie still rides "neath the streets of Boston."

PS: For those interested: On your computer search for "YouTube MTA by the Kingston Trio."



Frozen in Time by Jim Loehlin

Occasionally, it is nice to have an unusual surname.

I am the 4th of 5 children born in India of American missionary parents. All 5 went to school in India, but returned to the US for college and after. Our parents first went to India in 1923 and remained until they retired in 1968.

Weekly letters between my mother and her parents or children kept family connected. Early letters took about six weeks by sea, but after WW II, air mail reduced that to a week or so. But, one letter, written 29 October 1950 to my sister, Marian, took longer, and it is the subject of my story.

More than sixty years after that letter was written, my niece, Jen Loehlin, received a Facebook message from David Barratt, a graduate student at the University of Dundee in Scotland, asking if she knew a Marian Loehlin. In 2010, Barratt was with a group of students doing research in glaciology on the Miage Glacier on Mont Blanc, near where the Air India flight Malabar Princess had crashed into the mountain on November 3, 1950. Killing 48 persons, the crash had made headlines around the world.

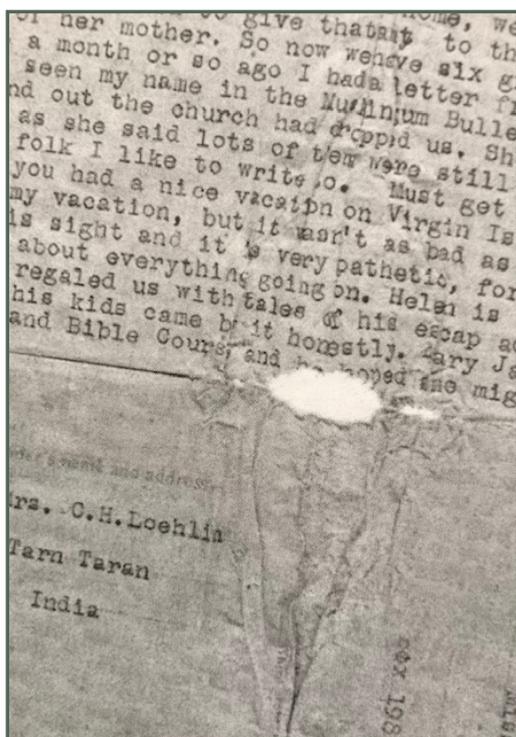
One student, a Miss Cowan, 22, while off trail for a toilet break, found a blue mailbag containing bundles of letters from the Malabar Princess. The bag and its contents had been

preserved in the glacial ice for 60 years, moving with the ice almost a mile and a half lower on the mountain. Inside she found four bundles of letters postmarked "Bombay, 1950", including the letter to Marian. "I thought it was a joke," Cowan said, "given that only moments before I had been talking about the crash." Jen gave Barratt her Aunt Marian's address and her grandmother's letter was finally delivered.

We first heard about the letter in January 2011 at my youngest sister's Golden anniversary with all five siblings plus spouses and assorted children present. We each got copies of the letter along with photos, etc. a few months later -- 35 years after mother's death, and a year before Marian's. The letter, after sixty years on ice plus the skill and expertise of the paper conservation department of the university, was preserved almost as if it had been written last week.

"[We] had fish most of the time and it surely was good. Ernie came out for two days and caught all the big ones which made your Pa sort of jealous for he had been the big man last year. Even I caught one, bigger than any Dad got. He said it weighed five pounds but wouldn't weigh it, as it would grow better without weighing."

When I read it I could hear my mother's voice and my dad's.



The Wrong Place at the Wrong Time

by Jenny Wilder

In 2003, my husband, Stan, taught law at the University of Asmara in Eritrea, a small country bordering the Red Sea in the Horn of Africa.

On a Sunday afternoon, we invited two University colleagues, Hezy and Anna, to join us for a walk. Hezy had read of Palestinian Jewish underground fighters imprisoned in the 1940's by the British. He wondered if they were held in the walled compound up the airport road. We decided to investigate .

We followed a narrow path by a stone wall, and heard horrible sounds from the other side.

We peeked over. In a military-like compound, a young man suspended from a pole by his arms was crying out and moaning, his arms stretched out by his body weight. Soldiers and women were going about their business seemingly indifferent. We knew we were not supposed to have seen him and hurried on. After a short walk, we returned to the road and found a van and five soldiers waiting for us. We had been seen looking over the wall, and I was suspected of having taken the victim's photo. The leader demanded the film in my camera not understanding that a digital camera has no film.

After a call to his superior, we were piled into a van to go to "police headquarters". Unafraid, we presumed security as foreigners and Americans. They weren't hostile, but ignorant of the camera and lacking authority. Instead of going to a police station, we drove across the city, up a hill and stopped under a stone arch labeled "Department of Prisons and Rehabilitation ". Eritrea's infamous Haz-Haz Prison!

It was getting cold and dark. Finally the supervising officer, Major Abraham, arrived. He spoke English and in a lighted doorway I showed him my photos, explaining that I had not taken one of the man behind the wall.

He was befuddled by the camera asking repeatedly for the film. After another call, he announced that they must take the camera. Hezy was irate, insisting that I would never see it again. After considerable debate, I agreed, but only if they would provide a proper receipt.

The prison had no receipt forms! Piling into cars we drove to a police station and a new set of characters. The anxious female officer behind the counter would have no part of the camera. The real problem emerged: they had no receipt book and no rubber stamp! Trained by Italian colonizers, Eritreans absolutely require a proper rubber stamp on all documents .



More phone calls to superiors. We became cold, testy and anxious to leave. Major Abraham conceded, "I will give you my own telephone number!" He composed a receipt on which I wrote the make, model, and serial number of the camera and we both signed and dated it. He promised to personally return the camera to me the next morning. We didn't believe him.

Eritrean friends later told us that anything confiscated by the authorities would never be seen again.

Over dinner that night we toasted our good fortune: to be able to come home to a warm room, a good meal and freedom.

The next afternoon, I was summoned by Dr. T., Director of Administration. Glowering at me, he opened his desk drawer and pulled out my camera. "What were you doing there?" he scolded. I recounted the story, feeling like a deviant in the Principal's office. He seemed to understand.

Eritrea is an autocracy with no rule of law. We were lucky to be white, foreign and affiliated with the university. A local friend said it was good we weren't Eritrean or we would be hanging next to the man on the pole.

Learning to Swim *Lynn Z. Bloom*

I am not now nor have I ever been a jock. In elementary school I was always the last chosen on any team, no matter what the sport—baseball, volleyball, basketball, girls-chase-the-boys. In high school I mostly evaded gym by scheduling orchestra practice at the same time, even though my violin playing was as uncoordinated as my athletic prowess. Years later, when my six year old son zipped past me in in the college pool with a wink and a wave, “Hi, Mom,” I was glad I could still read faster than he could. So the thrill of actually writing about swimming, however ineptly I meander up and down the lap lanes of life, cannot be underestimated. I love to swim.

The University Pool. In 1940, the summer before I began first grade I learned to swim in the University of New Hampshire outdoor pool, a handsome granite-lined rectangle the width of three Olympic-sized pools, with a shallow kiddie section near the changing rooms and a spillway dam at the other end. The clutch of skinny six-year-olds, tinged with sunburn because we didn’t use sunblock in those days, sandy footed from the gentle beachy approach to the pool’s rough stone bottom, followed our cheerful co-ed instructor in a time-honored sequence. In the rhythm of those sweet summer days we learned to put our faces in the water, blow bubbles, and breathe without swallowing water while turning our heads to one side. Learning to kick, we held onto the pool’s warm stone sides and practiced thrusting straight from the hips (no floppy bent knees) before we graduated to paddleboards that let us move our arms as well as our legs. When we advanced beyond the paddleboards and flattened our bodies on the water’s undulating surface in a dead man’s float—a concept that barely registered—I could feel the reassuring tension of the instructor’s grasp on my bathing suit straps.



Lynn, 1940

I cannot recall the intricacies of the climax, how it all came together, that exultant coordination of arms and legs and torso and breathing, propelling me forward, splashing, all by myself. If I could do it once, I realized with pure happiness, I could do it again. I did not know then that I would do it again and again and yet again, for a lifetime.

The Atlantic Ocean. My family had moved to New Hampshire a month before the now legendary 1938 hurricane, so in contrast to dust-bowl North Dakota’s drought, the Hokusai-high waves off

the nearby coast struck us as a blessed relief. Tiny though I was in facing the waves—and who isn’t small on that vast horizon?—ever moving, ever changing—and a worrier (Would I misspell a word in school? Would we run out of gas during backroad explorations? Would my mother leave home again—this time for good?), I was never afraid of the ocean. Throughout my life I never have been, even when prudence—or German submarines offshore during World War II—might dictate otherwise.

Without the security of a life preserver, which my sink-or-swim parents thought unnecessary, I quickly discovered how to evade the undertow, and how to jump in and out of the breakers, mostly without getting knocked over. Happily buoyant in the salt water, I swam in spurts, paddling frantically as the waves rushed in, floating on the way out to the satisfying sucking sound of the undertow. I was careful to stay no higher than thigh-deep in the ebbing water, aware that if the wall of water rushing in knocked me down I could drown. The ocean was alive, full of interesting sea creatures and rubbery tangles of kelp, incessantly in motion, every second, every minute, every hour of each vivid day different from the next, keeping my senses fully awake for the best time of my life.

Sit Back and Enjoy the Ride *Marianne Fisher*

They came to North Hill at different times for transportation and security positions: Kevin Johnson and Rich Grudin. Although their buses remained quiet during the initial phase of Covid-19, they continued to serve the community in their smiling, selfless manner wherever needed; delivering packages, flowers, clothing and, of course, security.

And now we are so happy to have them back in the driver's seat for our liberated sojourns into Needham. When you board their buses, you step up, belt up, and relax knowing you'll get there safely and on time with a helping hand.



A graduate of Cathedral High School. Kevin Johnson felt fortunate to be there when Boston was experiencing the dark days of public school desegregation in 1971. At nightly dinners, his family discussed the day's issues and thoughts were shared and formed. Kevin claims that that period helped him learn to treat people as individuals as opposed to stereotyping them on the narrow basis of race, color, or creed.

An ambitious guy with a curious mind and a solid work ethic, Kevin has succeeded in several positions. For 10 years he was a Corrections Officer at the Suffolk County House of Correction. As an elected union official, he worked hard to improve conditions for his fellow officers.

Then the financial services industry called and Kevin became a personal financial analyst with a Citigroup subsidiary. Helping families make sense of things like life insurance, mutual funds, and living within their means again appealed to that "I like to help people" core of his character. The unfortunate bust of 2008 led him to the Martignetti Companies in Brighton which closed twelve years later.

What next? "At age 60," quotes Kevin, "I decided it was time to ease off. I have always loved to drive, so I got my CDL (Commercial Drivers

License) and shortly found myself in heaven at North Hill.

"I love helping the residents," says Kevin. "Many have family and a good support group, but many do not. They are the ones most in need of courtesy and kindness to make their day a little brighter. Mostly, I treat all as I would my parents."

Kevin married his high school sweetheart 25 years ago. They have no children, but enjoy many nieces and nephews. Among Kevin's plethora of interests are golf, poker, food, lecturing at his church, the ocean, history, and driving for NH.

Rich Grudin (as handsome as he is, Rich chose not to have his picture taken). Rich has been at North Hill for five service-filled years. He came to us from the Needham Police Department where he proudly worked for 43 years. Rick loved "walking the beat" – getting to know the people who lived and worked there. "We relied on them as much as they relied on us," believes Rich.

A well-educated man, Rich holds a Bachelor of Science/Mathematics Degree from Boston State College, which led to his teaching math at the Mission Hill School in Boston. The criminal justice system beckoned and Rich secured a Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Northeastern University, a Masters in Public Administration from Suffolk University, and a Juris Doctorate Degree from the Massachusetts School of Law in 2001.

A man of many interests, Rich has his own apiary, owns and operates several small businesses with his son, and is a former captain of his college gymnastics team, Rich has judged high school gymnastics competitions. Those of us who may ride with Rich, are treated to strains of classical music, an interest that helped him concentrate when he was learning chess.

Rich has been married for 57 years, and has two daughters and a son.

Thank you, Gentlemen, for your much-appreciated service!

A Small Animal Kingdom

Alice Schwartz and Ted Harwood

Sitting inside during Covid-19 isolation, we discovered entertainment at our patio door.

There's a chipmunk that comes to the out-facing glass, stands up and peeks in on us. Maybe watching us reduces his boredom.

He might be the same little guy who leaps up 20 inches onto our patio chair and from there to the brick wall. Or the one playing peek-a-boo with a rabbit nibbling the grass several feet away.

The chipmunk wormed his way into the grass, then popped up to watch the bunny, then burrowed back into the lawn, only to pop up again.

We find the robins to be territorial. They want the field to themselves. How do they manage to spot the exact place where a worm is moving underfoot? Ground vibration, that they can sense through their feet? Sometimes they slam into our windows....k'thunk!

The female of one robin couple, regulars in our zoo, banged into our neighbor Janet's window, breaking her neck...(the robin's, not Janet's). Her companion was distressed. We watch him wandering around, saddened by his loss.

Watching the bunnies wolf down a meal of grass blades is, oddly, a fascinating sight. They snip an individual blade off at the base, then suck the blade into their cheeks, which puff out and twitch as they chew up the blade, before turning to the next lawn delicacy. It reminded us of the wood chipping machines that consume an entire bush or tree.

One day, we found a baby rabbit taking a nap in the leafy overhang of our potted petunia plant. Better there than on the lawn where he might have ended as a hawk's takeout dinner.

Squirrels are so ubiquitous that they often

escape notice. Beside their unmatched tree acrobatics, they are well skilled in locating the nuts they stored and buried in the lawn months before....and maybe even nut stashes that don't belong to them! Did you know that they also enjoy gorging on mushrooms?



We've seen wild turkeys do mating dance rituals.... but haven't figured out how they select their part-

ners. We watched a fox creep up to a neighbor's patio wall, walking off with the 15 eggs that a hen laid. The fox got them all.

As for doves, we watched a pair fluttering their wings at each other. Was this a mating dance (they were beak-to-beak in what looked like a kissing embrace) or was it a lover's quarrel? Maybe they were just horsing around.

The small animal kingdom fended off our boredom, in addition to games of free cell and wordscape, while we waited for our box dinner.

Hoping

A real asset of North Hill is the ability and eagerness of the residents to get along regardless of political, religious, and other differences. We respect each others diversity with a desire to be friends and neighbors. It is a standard easy to lose and hard to maintain, particularly at a time like this, but it is most important.

I hope management and residents can continue to keep our ability to communicate with each other as the most important goal.

— Dave Harmon

A Passion *Ken Wiberg*

A gift my best friend received shaped my future. We were in elementary school in Brooklyn, N.Y., when he was given a large chemistry set, complete with chemicals, a balance, a graduated cylinder, an alcohol lamp, flasks and test tubes. I was captured.

When choosing high schools, I chose Brooklyn Tech which had a three year chemistry program. It was a marvelous school. In addition to basic academics, it offered shop, (model making, foundry, forge, sheet metal and machine shop), as well as mechanical and free hand drawing. We were often at school until five p.m., because there were so many courses.

In my fourth year my friends and I realized if we were to become professional chemists, we needed a college degree. My father asked where they were applying. When I told him MIT, he said so should I. I was admitted with my best friend. The other two went elsewhere. All four of us became professors at major universities.

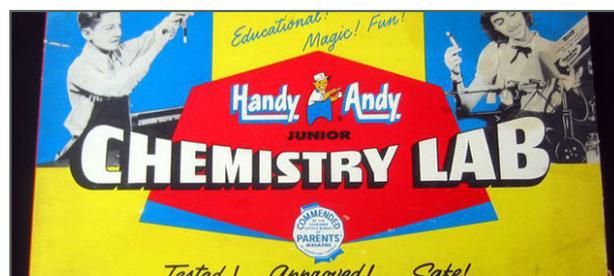
When I arrived in 1945, a new department head brought in some interesting assistant professors. With the professor's approval, undergraduates were able to take graduate courses. I took all the organic chemistry graduate courses while doing a senior research project. I became aware that graduate studies were required to progress.

Interested in the work of a Columbia University professor, I applied for a position. They were willing to take me mid-year and I joined a research group of a young, upcoming faculty member, Bill Doering. Two years later, Bill told me of an opening at the University of Washington, Seattle. I joined that faculty in 1950. Subsequently, I convinced two excellent new students to join my "research group".

We were "off to the races". Not long after I was promoted to Professor. Things were going very well.

In 1961, Harry Wasserman, Chairman of the Chemistry Department at Yale, recruited me. There were some nice inducements, including more lab space. At Yale I continued my research, teaching and publishing. In 1997, when I was 70, I negotiated a retirement agreement that allowed me to keep my office and lab as long as I wished. It was a productive period.

In 2012 we decided it would be best to move to a retirement community. Our daughter-in-law who lives in Wellesley, suggested North Hill. We visited and happily moved in on July 1, 2013.



I've maintained my interest in chemistry by being involved in computational chemistry. I have published 2-3 papers in major journals each year. After 80 years of studying chemistry, I continue to be fascinated.

Of great importance, in 1951 I married Marguerite Koch. We enjoyed 68 good years until she died in May 2019. Our three children are successful, nice people. We have five grandchildren, one is a graduate student at MIT and another is a graduate student at University of Virginia. Two are employed and one is still in school.

I feel very lucky.

In the Spirit of the Season

