

The Bells are Ringing-- First beginners home, 333 South Clay street, Mooresville, 1966-1967

The time lived in the home on South Clay Street measure a bit over two years, but the memories have ever left an afterglow of forever fondness. Never does a drive by the small cozy home on Clay Street pass without a pleasant recalling recollection. Clay Street was and is at that block, a little more than a paved alley and few houses. The year before our marriage it was the scene of my first adventure in living on my own. Following graduation from Indiana State University with a teaching degree in hand I had garnered a couple of job offers. I interviewed at Tuttle Junior High in Crawfordsville and Fulton Junior High in Wayne Township, in Marion County, in nearby Indianapolis. Being the forever homebody, I picked the Wayne Township offer. That same homebody gene also led to renting the home on Clay street about a block from my growing up home on South street where my parents were to live for four more decades. My fiancé Lynn and I were joyfully engaged in the Spring of '66. While she finished up her senior year ISU that fall in Terre Haute, I began my first year of teaching at Fulton Junior High. No dust settled on Highway 40 on weekends those next months. I had purchased a 1962 Ford Falcon in my junior year. And it panted its perky little red self to Terre Haute at every opportunity—always happy to see the many small towns and speed zones between Plainfield and Terre Haute as I joy journeyed to visit my intended.

The house was rented unfurnished. Fortunately, a man, Al Lawler, who was attended our family Church, Mooresville First Christian, was moving to a new town. He sold me his house full of furniture for \$200. That bargain even included a Maytag wringer washer including the tubs. And as you would imagine, with my mother less than a block away, the Maytag easily lived up to its reputation of longevity. I proudly built and added a set sassafras bookshelves and mantle over the fireplace to décor the front room. Those book shelves and mantle have followed us to where we live today. I gave the Maytag to a friend that thought living like they did in the 1940's was something she was born and bound to do.

The first school year, I took in a roommate... a classmate who had just graduated from IU and was beginning his first year of teaching Physical Education and Health at the Paul Hadley Junior High. My roomies name was Bill. His parents had a small grocery over on East Main, a few blocks away. We were both home bodies. He was a decent chap and paid his half—but had a rather annoying habit that has ever plagued me. Early on I have been on the short side of television viewing. In the '60's I had a couple of favorites.. mostly Star Trek, Gun Smoke and Red Skelton. Bill was not of the same cloth. As soon as he hit the place, he'd cross the room, turn on the TV and go put his books and papers to grade away—only to return and gaze at the one eyed monster. I never have become accustomed to the creature. Fifty years later, finds me in ever a very similar condition. I continue to engage in one sided diatribes conversations with the infernal intrusiveness .

In early June of 1967, Bill moved out and in a few weeks my new wife Lynn moved in. She had been offered her first teaching contract at Valley Mills Elementary only 15 minutes from our home. The numerous trips to Terre Haute had worn the Falcon to a frazzle. Bill, the mechanic at Wilcher Ford, had wisely and sadly announced after looking at some testing gages on the engine, "no use feeding corn to a dead rooster." So in May of '67, I had traded it in for a new 1967 Ford Fairlane. It was the car of our Honeymoon to Maine that June and then became Lynn's transportation to Valley Mills. Now that we were earning two incomes and working two locations, we purchased a 1963 GMC pick up for \$350 for me. We were living and enjoying the eye opening act one of married life.

Immediately behind our home was a very large garden area. I had purchased a Ford 8-N tractor with a plow and disk. I had a side job in the spring of plowing and disking gardens. I had a brisk business in the Spring as many folks around town in those days had small gardens to enjoy. I followed their and my dad's lead and made use of our garden space to stake out our own garden. When we got home from the honeymoon that June, I told Lynn I sure would like a mess of green beans. I admit to being a rather chauvinistic male at the time, and Lynn, the city girl, proceeded to go to the garden... lifting up leaves to see where the green beans might be found. I was wise enough to put a lid on complaining. A few weeks later, she when she fixed my favorite wilted lettuce using vegetable oil instead of vinegar. I wisely chomped right through it.

The landlords of our home were Hershel and Bernadine, aka Bernie, Gibbs. Hershel had built the place or had it built to his specks. It was a solid place...still is—a cement block affair—two bedrooms one bath, a basement and a carport. The bath between possessed the most unique shower I have ever witnessed. It was very large about five feet square the entry having about a 4 inch curb sort of affair to step over. It would not have been acceptable at a Holiday Inn, but for us it was just right. With our new dog Ginger, and the often badminton court in the front yard and a garden in the back we relished living in our first home.

Bernie was a feisty fun woman. She and Hershel lived in a very large old brick home just two houses away on the corner of Clay and High Street. Their pretty daughter Maralee was in my High School graduating class. Her younger brothers, John and Butch, still lived at home. That Halloween, I taught John how to make a "tick tac"-- a Halloween tricking affair. It was made using the largest empty .. or soon to be empty -- spool of thread from the sewing drawer. One only had to cut some notches on the edge of spool, wrap it with a piece of heavy twine, then hold it against a window with a stick or pencil as you yanked. The sound shocked the unsuspecting victim. The loud rattling sound was immediately followed by feet in motion-- both in and out of the house. John had to gall to make 333 South Clay as his testing ground a few hours later as Lynn and I peacefully awaited the arrival the trick or treaters. No treat was given John—unless he liked the scamper of escape.

Bernie's mother, Mrs. Johnson, lived in a small bungalow between our home and theirs. She worked at what we called the mouse factory. It was a small business a few miles up on highways 67 near where Lynn was teaching. The business raised white mice for laboratory testing. She kept my classroom.. and some of the students with willing parents supplied with ample amounts of white mice that had found no market and escaped the laboratories.

Across from the Gibb's was a cavernous white home where Ruth and Leonard Chase lived. Their son, Keith was a good friend and had been fellow Scout with me in good ole, "no flies on us guys," Troop 30. Keith and his wife Pam were the previous residents of 333 South Clay immediately before me. Leonard had a drapery business on Clay Street a Block north of his house. In our teen years, he had graciously permitted Keith and me along with several other troop members to have the run of the upper floor of that business. That was where we constructed our Indian Dance team paraphernalia. In our late teen-age years, that room was ever filled each Saturday morning as we boy talked and constructed our those costumes. Sadly, a few years after we had moved, Keith and his wife, Pam, along with their two young boys were tragically killed when Keith was piloting their plane home from a family visit in the East. Understandably, Leonard and Ruth never possessed a look nor notion of complete joy after that. I cannot imagine the sadness...the loss of promise. They weathered it but not without scars and loose shingles.

As much as we enjoyed our Clay street nest, we knew it was only our beginner home. We soon enjoyed the planning for our very own home. We considered building a log home and ventured several times that winter to Brown county where there was a valley of several model log homes with wood smoke fragrance on display. We also were tempted to purchase a 17 acre plot with a cabin behind the Link Observatory about 5 miles South. However, one memorable afternoon, my mother stopped by to inform us that she had heard that her friends, Ross and Doral Truax were selling their home and building a new one across from it on Bethel Road. We immediately called Ross and to express our interest. He said he would first have to check with George Record and his wife as George had requested that Ross call him if he ever was selling the home on Bethel. Lynn and I went to a movie that evening awaiting Ross's news. I have no idea what it was... my mind was not on anything except the possibility and promise of living on Bethel Road. We nervously awaited the call. When he called to report that George had just begun building a new home, we knew the stars had aligned. And great joy commenced.

Don Adams

On Bethel Pond, March, 2021

