



Neighbors – On Bethel Pond, 1968 -present (2021) part one

Our living adventures of five decades plus on Bethel Road began in August, 1968. That was the month when Ross and Doral Truax moved into their new home across the road from their old one. Lynn and I were delighted and excited to move into the home they left and had lived in for nearly 20 years. It was a decently sized frame house built in 1903. They were the same age as our parents—part of the “Greatest Generation” that survived the Great Depression then followed that accomplishment by defeating the scourges of Hitler, Mussolin and Tojo in World War II. Ross had done his part by piloting a B-17 bomber. Doral had worked as a secretary for Curtis-Wright, which produced airplane propellers were likely used on some of those those B-17s. In the years 27 years that followed the WWII, changes found the couple having raised two children, Peggy and David. Ross used his engineering degree from General Motors Institute and was employed at one of the huge Allison Plants in Indianapolis. Doral enjoyed her work as a school secretary at Newby elementary, my elementary alma mater.

Doral was a diminutive, pretty and gentle Quaker woman. When she was five days old she had received a cradle certificate from the Mooresville Friends Meeting. She was to be a life long member of that meeting. She lived her Quaker values daily. She taught Sunday School and was

invaluable on many committees at the meeting. We always looked forward to replenishing our supply of scrumptious apple butter that she and the ladies made for their annual fundraiser bazar. She also belonged to the Tri-Kappa sorority with my mother. Added to those works of love were the mothering the two children plus tending to her mother, Dolly and brother Tom, who lived next door. She was ever pleasantly present if you had a need.

Although Ross was not a birthright Quaker, he saw the wisdom in Doral's kindly Quaker living and became a member of that Mooresville Friends meeting with Doral. He was also a Gideon and active in the Weekday Religion Program with the county schools. He ever urged my membership in the Gideons unsuccessfully. I teased that it would require my cessation from 'tobbacy.' I was not ready for the healthy life style yet. He'd then just give a facewide knowing gentle grin. Ross was the mirror opposite of Doral in stature and his smile was fit his size.. I cannot recall Ross with a studious or serious look. He was always puppy dog lovingly lapping up all the joy of living.

He "neighbored" often. One of his favorite haunts after we added it was our back deck. He and Doral had taken advantage of the topography and built an acre pond the bordered the back yard of our home. We named it Bethel Pond since it was indeed on Bethel Road. Our first additions to the house was a deck overlooking the gentle peacefulness of it.

In the January freezes of my last years in high school in the early 1960's, it was not unusual for some of my buddies and me to drive out to Bethel Road, don our skates and then armed with our hockey sticks, enjoy rousing games on the pond. On one occasion in a more rowdy game, I had suffered a head-on collision with Buddy Swisher. Each of us thought the other would chicken out as we headed for the puck. The consequence was a pair of broken glasses- a bloodied face and ice. Interestingly, as an aside, I broke my glasses several times my Senior year – a consequence of teen over exuberance. When required to make a career plan for college that year, a major to be Optometry naturally seemed worthy.

When I recall those ice adventures on the pond, I do not recall anyone knocking on the Truax's door and asking if we could "borrow the pond." That rather presumptuous behavior speaks to the gentleness of the

Truax's as much as it does to the thoughtless brashness of eighteen year old boys. I am not as tolerant with any gang of students seeking a good hockey game... but their example of kindness has not been totally dismissed as we have hosted ice skating gatherings when the ice was safe.

Ross had a family reputation of being both generous as well as skilled in the practice of frugality. I am pretty sure he never subscribed to a newspaper. That plan worked--as long as he could read ours. Following his retirement, it was not unusual to arrive home to have Ross enjoying the pond and our paper on our back deck. When the weather prevented a pleasant outdoor sitting, he would simply come into the kitchen and read the paper at our kitchen table. He didn't barge in. Since we never locked the door, we would hear the door open and Ross loudly announcing, "Paper Boy!" If we were not home -no problem. It was not uncommon to come home and enter to find him wide grinning and reading the paper at our kitchen table. Once, the phone answering message registered a call from Doral, "Ross if you're over there, come on home...supper's ready." On another occasion a friend of Lynn arrived before she got home so they could go on some planned outing. When Lynn arrived, she astonishingly said, "A strange man just went into your house!" "Oh, that's just our neighbor Ross," Lynn informed her. She always said that if there was a sitcom about Bethel Road, Ross would surely be the leading character. He was also a gifted singer and a regular in the choir at Mooresville Friends. It was not uncommon to hear him break into "How Great Thou Are" as he greeted the birds and squirrels along with his morning from his own back deck—and the trees surely clapped their hands.

Over four decades of neighboring with the Truax's was a too little appreciated treasure at the time. Their kindness has gained compound interest in decade since their passing. Our kitchen table and back deck are too bare. Ross died in the fall of 2009 and Doral followed him months later in the spring of 2010. Those precious decades brim with small but treasured gems... and are leftover morsels of good living with good neighbors. We enjoy tasting the memories often.