



The Three Little Ones

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This is the story of “The Three Little Ones”—the three youngest girls of a family of seven children who went with their parents to live in a one-room cabin on the top of a mountain in western North Carolina in June 1972-August 1973 when they were 13, 11 and 8. In our family, our one brother marked the mid-point of ages between the three youngest girls and the three oldest girls, with a 15-year span between the eldest and the youngest.

All had attended St. Theresa’s Catholic school in Coral Gables, Florida, an upscale township of metropolitan Miami, because our father was director of music at the school and at our Catholic church next door, Church of the Little Flower. We often walked to the church and the school from our West Miami home, which was located outside of the gilded Gables— “across the railroad tracks” of two major roads and behind a commercial strip with a 7-11, a tavern, a gas station, and an appliance repair shop.

Our family was a close one, bound by a deep sense of caring for one another, and buoyed by humor, but also beset by the constant anxiety of repeatedly straitened circumstances as we lurched from one financial and health crisis to another.

The decision to split the family in half seemed a good one in 1972: The older four siblings—23, 21, 19, 18—would use the Miami home as a base for continuing college and starting careers; the younger pre-adolescent three children would go along on the opportunity to embark with their parents on an adventure and a new beginning in North Carolina.

In the planning, it had all seemed reasonable—exciting even. Our father built a primitive cabin at Lake Falls with ingenious features, and our mother made it a home. The three children walked and took the bus to public schools. However, development of roads and home sites on the property proved much more expensive than had been projected and the family friend underwriting the venture sustained heavy losses on other investments in the 1972-1975 recession. In the end, the family engaged the holdfasts of the mountain, and the mountain won.

More poignantly, none of us counted on how wrenching the family separation would be. For the older siblings, there was also a constant sense of guilt that we were not doing enough to help our parents and younger siblings. We tried. We subleased just about every room in the Miami house that had a door on it and we lived on a strict budget in order to send them every dime we could.

Communications by phone and travel were costly, although trips were almost constantly attempted and sometimes actually possible. But above all there was the written word: Members of the family wrote hundreds of letters back and forth. It is only now that we appreciate the fact that if the family had stayed together in one location, we would have had the memories of always being together, but we would not know nearly so much about how each person felt at the time. That, in a sense, was a gift of the mountain.

Because the three youngest daughters wrote over 140 letters in a 14-month period to their older siblings—and our family somehow managed to keep those all these years—we have a remarkable record of their experiences high up on a rocky mountain top they called **Lake Falls —today part of the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy**. The letters are a treasure that we have because of that alluring, beloved, but unyielding mountain. Our family is very grateful to all who have made it possible for this land, a touchstone of our family’s lives, to be held in conservancy for future generations.

2. Three Little Ones

On Dec 2, 2016, at 3:37 PM, Rita Pepin Esterwood wrote:

*Ahhh, "the three little ones"—haven't heard that in a while.
Anytime that I start feeling old and worn out I remember that I am one of the "little ones" ...
"Rita, Roni, Rosie, whoever you are. Go help your mother!"
Of course, Roni was always the one to race off and work inside—the coveted assignment:
clean, warm, easy to hide.
Ha! Good times :)*

Roni (Veronica Mary) was, as she said herself in her letters, Suzy-Homemaker. Her favorite line was: *"Well, gotta go! Gotta clean my room, I can't stand it anymore!"* She loved to clean and tidy far more than any of the other girls in the family. Even when she'd break something she'd sweep it up into a neat pile and hide it away somewhere in a safe place. She could—still does—draw and color to beat the band, and always dove right into arts and crafts projects for both family and school. Without Roni's skill and perseverance, we would not have accurate depictions of the cabin at Lake Falls in 1972-1973. Notorious for sending twelve-page letters that were nearly books, she could preface it with: *"I don't care much care [sic] to write letters but just small letters are OK for me."* She could go on for ten pages describing a single spit-ball, water-bottle, rag/pillow fight blow by blow. Roni certainly earned the "worst cook" award in our family for the time she put a tablespoon, rather than a teaspoon, of salt in the pot of morning oatmeal she cooked on the stove at the cabin. Unfortunately, it was our father who ate the first big spoonful. To this day she does not cook much—she sort of artfully assembles food. A clothes maven, she was also noted for her lavender shoes—don't ask. Belying her fiery red hair, she's always had a soft heart and offered a big hug. Roni would often complain that Rose was getting her into trouble all the time.

Rosie (Rose Marie) was a pixie twig of a girl. She did not seem to be intimidated by anything—taking on all kinds of work, sports, musical instruments, sewing and even shop. Today she says she's not a writer, but some of the most hilarious and endearing statements in these letters are Rose's. *"I have a cold this week and probrolly [sic] all next week as well."* She could be very direct in what she said to and about other people, sometimes painfully so. She also ordered all her sisters about whenever she thought they were slacking off, even sending gift clothes back for us to exchange to the correct size when they were clothes we had owned, not bought. (We got the message: We'd make the alteration according to the detailed instructions in her letter and send them back to her.) Her first brother-in-law could never write her name to her satisfaction; possibly as a consequence, she never spelled his last name correctly—somewhat understandable since it was truly difficult to spell. Rose had many close friendships among her classmates, at least partly because no one wanted to take her on as a foe. Rose would often complain that Roni was getting her into trouble all the time.

Rita (Rita Margaret) was cute as a button. When she was a toddler we used to call her "Chocolate Eyes," which may have led to her first claim to fame. She could often seem exasperated with the older two "little ones"—*"why would you do that!"*—when she wasn't clearly trying to keep up with them. Like Rose, she had trouble spelling her first brother-in-law's last name; she solved that difficulty by just making his last name Pepin. Good in school, she took over correcting her older two sisters' writing and spelling when the older Miami girls couldn't keep up with that job. As the youngest, Rita easily and quickly adopted the local manner of speaking as her second language. The older girls in Miami remember offering her a quarter at a time to *"speak mountain."* We couldn't understand a word but it was adorable to listen to. She

was our father's favorite and we all figured that out pretty quickly. Rita's first words were not "Ma" or "Da" but a phrase we coached her to say from the back seat of the station wagon on the way back from the Sunday evening benediction at church: *"Daddy, could we get ice cream?"* Suddenly, the big old car would swerve into a drive-up window and we'd get our gallon of ice cream. It did not take her long to associate the plaintive phrase with the treat. Sadly, moving to the mountain top put an end to cruising by the Farm Stores for all of us.



3. Our Parents - Paul Emile and Marian Frances Dawson Pepin

This book is about three young girls, but there can be no doubt that our parents were the prime movers for how they came to be in Lake Falls in 1972. We have our parents' letters from that time, too.

Our good-natured mother was an only child of Irish descent, with no living relatives—a homemaker who genuinely enjoyed that role. Driven and mercurial, our father was French-Canadian from an immense extended family in Montreal. He could have been anything—with a limitless inventory of ambition, intellect, ingenuity, skills and talent—though none of them ever resulted in a reasonable or secure wage. We barely made it at all only because our father could work dozens of jobs simultaneously for an equally limitless number of hours. He had a charismatic, difficult personality that somehow also attracted many dedicated students and lifelong friends—along with one or two relentless foes. Decades later, his children still hear from the students he taught who remember the difference he made in their lives.

More than anything else, at their very core, our parents were born musicians at a time when even American culture celebrated excellence in classical music. But as that glorious period of music on the radio, in film, in churches, and in live productions achieved its popular peak in the post-World War II years, and then began a long downhill slide to the 1970s, our parents became increasingly dispirited and frustrated.

By the late 1960s, their music careers and aspirations were done. Our mother began to realize that she would no longer be able to bear and care for the babies she adored and in whom she took such pride. Much older than she, our father had serious health problems and was advancing on an age by which all of the elder males in his extended family were dead. We can only imagine his terror that he would leave a young family that could not be sustained without his constant hard work.

It isn't something you hear much anymore, but in their individual journals our parents as young people say over and over again how much they intend "to make something" of themselves. It can seem very sad to consider how they must have felt when they determined to leave behind disappointments in Florida and take on the challenge of a great adventure in North Carolina, but we misjudge them when we stop short at sadness. They—especially our father—genuinely loved a challenge. The mountain terrain in western North Carolina also likely reminded him of the many years he spent as a young man in the Canadian Laurentian mountains during the Depression in the 1930s. We all came to love Lake Falls—in good times and bad.

If our father was the tip of the spear in our family—leading the charge—our mother was certainly its heart and soul. A fine writer and story teller, true to her Irish legacy of word and song, she taught all of us to "turn a tale" and ultimately make humorous what might have seemed difficult at the time.

By the mid 1970s, when our parents came and failed on the Lake Falls mountain top, they likely felt most acutely their limitations—all these years later we see their spirit and determination. Perhaps they ultimately achieved in their lives little of what they had hoped, but there is no doubt that today their children are deeply grateful for their grit and courage.

Pictured below in April 1972, while attending the funeral of Uncle Ernest in Montreal:



Pictured below on their honeymoon in October 1948 at Ferme Neuve in Quebec:



Pictured below at their wedding in October 1948 in Miami, Florida:



4. Letters

The discovery in an attic of an old trunk of letters is a common device in countless narratives. It is ironic that in a family of readers and writers it actually happened.

I left our family home in Miami in early 1976 to interview for graduate school fellowships. I hoped to find a program not too far from the family home in western North Carolina. In one of my old battered suitcases I apparently packed up piles of family letters that we had received in Miami and had circulated among us older girls and brother since 1970, and then I promptly forgot all about them.

Later, when I wound up marrying in Hendersonville, NC, I must have jammed all of the wedding memorabilia into the same old suitcase, at which point it had to be closed shut with rope and duct tape because it was bursting at the seams. Since it could not be easily opened, it stayed as it was and moved half a dozen times over the course of 40-plus years.

I finally cut open the old suitcase in late 2016 when I was trying to make more space in my office for a research project that involved hundreds of old family documents from France.

I could hardly believe what I discovered: That in the middle of all the old French documents I was reviewing, I now had yet more family documents from a more recent era: 140 letters from our parents and “the three little ones” dating back to 1970-1975.

I sat down to read and could not stop for the flood of memories that they brought back. The letters were at turn funny, and heartbreaking, but most of all they felt vivid—as though we were all back at that time again.

As soon as I finished reading, I emailed the family to tell them what I had found. I pleaded with them to ponder and write, despite what I know to be their exceedingly busy lives:

“You have children. Don’t forego the chance to paint your own portrait in words for your children. Tell them tales. Tell them drivel. Let them know who you are.

No regrets. Tell them what you did that made you feel you’d made something of yourself—you’d made a difference. Tell them what you most enjoyed—on your own, and with them. Con’t miss your chance.”

It clearly helped our father, our mother and the “three little ones” in the mountains of North Carolina to write us—the older girls and brother left behind in Miami—at every opportunity. They often did so at the laundromat after church on Sunday. Those letters helped all of us understand what the family was dealing with in those trying and storied years.

The girls had an acronym they put on the backs of their letters’ envelopes—W.B.V.S.—that they repeated in all of their letters: Write Back Very Soon.

Our parents had a story to tell. We do, too. I implore you, their readers, to W.I.D.: Write It Down!

5. Falling in Love

We begin with a letter from 1970, when the younger three of our family of seven siblings traveled on a summer vacation with our parents to visit friends in North Carolina. That year our entire family fell in love with the highlands of the state—both those who were there, and those who received their correspondence.

*Monday
August 18th
1970*

Dear Theresa,

I think everybody is really enjoying themselves more this year. I wish you could see your father. He is having the time of his life. Just the opposite of last year. Been taking the sauce very lightly, plays with the kids, swims in the lake, even catches fish.

Love, Mama

Dear Melting Ones,

I don't think I have ever seen your mother enjoy so much for so long. . . wish we could stay here it is so nice. Our camping accommodations are 100% better than last year, from the very first day. The three R's are fine. Play, eat and sleep. The kids enjoy the horses—all of them have rides everyday. I might have to shoe one of them. Your mother and I like to go fishing, and, believe it or not, we catch them.

Your father, Paul

It was often the case that we would receive a bunch of letters—or even one long, continuous letter—written over the course of a couple of days by different family members in the same envelope. The letters above, in a packet from August 1970, clearly show our parents falling in love with the notion of moving up to North Carolina and making a new life in the cooler climate of the mountains.

Reading the letter in Miami, I doubt I appreciated at the time that they were also happier with each other than they had been for some time. When they came back from vacation that year, their whole attitude toward their future prospects seemed much improved. They seemed to want to leave some things behind and take on some new challenges elsewhere.

Like so many of the things that our family fell in love with—our parents with each other, and with music, especially—life “chewed them up good” as a consequence. Leaving their longtime home in Miami meant giving up the first small measure of financial security and basic comfort the family had ever known for an even more desperate time—losing much of their investment of time, effort and money, along with health and livelihood.

They couldn't seem to help themselves, but maybe diehard musicians have to be that way in a world where only a handful of musicians can make a living. Our parents could stare an easier life in the face and choose another path. Whatever else you want to say about their foolhardy ambition to always reach beyond their grasp, and look toward “making something of themselves”, it has made our lives richer for their trying. We are all better persons for having been tested early.

In these letters, we can see the different personalities of each little sister develop over several years. We had all lived together, of course, but putting thoughts on paper and keeping those missives means we can all see how each grew up to have their own unique combination of grit and spirit. Few families have that record.

What is most impressive is how—even in the worst of times—little bits of joy and humor shine from their writing and drawings. They don't pull punches when they tease—they say what they think and feel, but without guile. Their hearts and minds are always open and on the line and they take great pleasure in the smallest thing.

They would all need that good attitude in abundance because when they went back up to western North Carolina and took on the challenge of developing a friend's property at Lake Falls in 1972, they would not be fishing again for a very long time.

Note: Nearly all of our family photos are terrible, taken with what I am sure were the cheapest available cameras. (In contrast, our reel-to-reel tape deck and other audio equipment was first rate, even if often assembled on our kitchen table from components by our parents.) We don't get any decent photos of the family until good photographers finally marry into the family.

With apologies, then, we insert a few of the photos we do have from vacations:

[Hooper's Creek in 1969

Bernie and Paul were with them that year

Roni is with Daddy working on the infernal tripod cooking fire pit

Rose and Rita are with the Feeney girls on horses]

[Hooper's Creek vacation in 1970

"much better" camp setup, including cooking on a real stove

Lots of fishing and skiing that year on the lake

Appears to be only parents plus RRR]



6. Campsite and Cabin

In early June 1972, a caravan of vehicles left from Miami for the move to Lake Falls. Our brother Paul Andre went up with our parents and the three little ones to help get them established.

As he describes in a recent email:

December 8 at 5:33PM

I had just graduated from high school. Daddy and I fixed up that truck he bought from the Post Office and painted it yellow, built a box on the back part. Loaded it with whatever earthly valuables they had, and off we went. I drove the truck, whose steering box was not well affixed to the frame. There was about 60 degrees of play in the steering which made for a harrowing trip. When we arrived we set up the star wars camper for Mama, Daddy and the girls. I slept in the box of the truck . . .

In 1972 Daddy was 61, a year younger than I am now. I'm challenged by his enthusiasm for life and constant pursuit of vistas just past the horizon. I'm thinking how I might do likewise—taking on a new challenge.

Well, got to go for now. I'll be back to this . . .

Love, Paul

Our father built a makeshift blackboard cabin as quickly as he could for the family. Over the course of a few days it became more serviceable:

*1972
Saturday
November 18*

Dear Girls (and Rick),

I miss you very much.

We have a TV a sink a wood stove and bump beds and a little old fashion lamp a (kerosene) (lamp).

Write back. Later. By by.

Rita

*December 12 at 9:00PM
2016*

Wow . . . I saw in my mind every detail Paul mentioned [in his email].

Remember the compressor we had so we could watch that small little TV and run the washing machine? Our washing machine was outside!

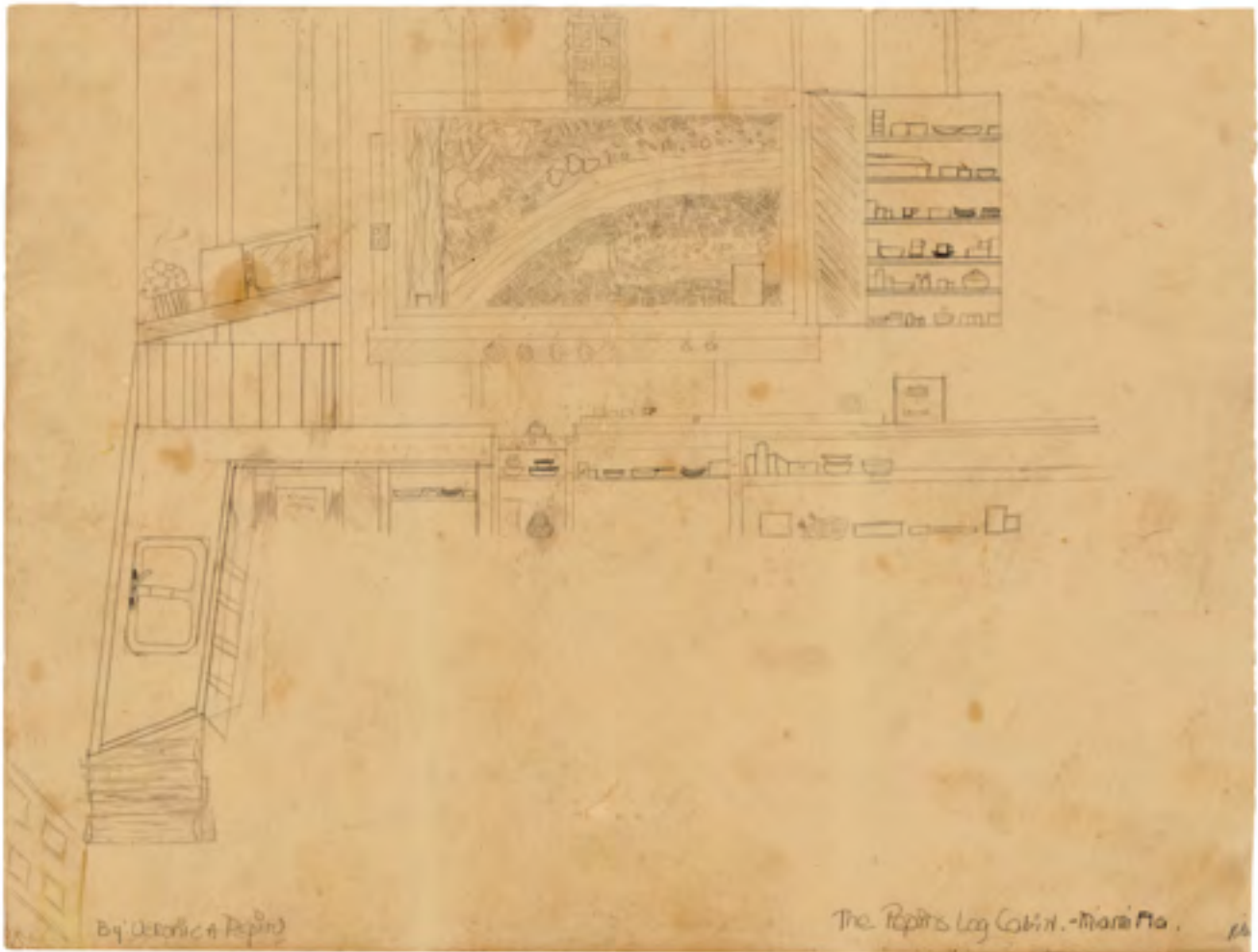
My favorite thing was when Daddy fixed up the water system. He took a trashcan and placed it at the top of the stream next to the cabin and ran a small black pipe into the kitchen sink. We could warm water on the potbelly stove to take baths in the small round tub.

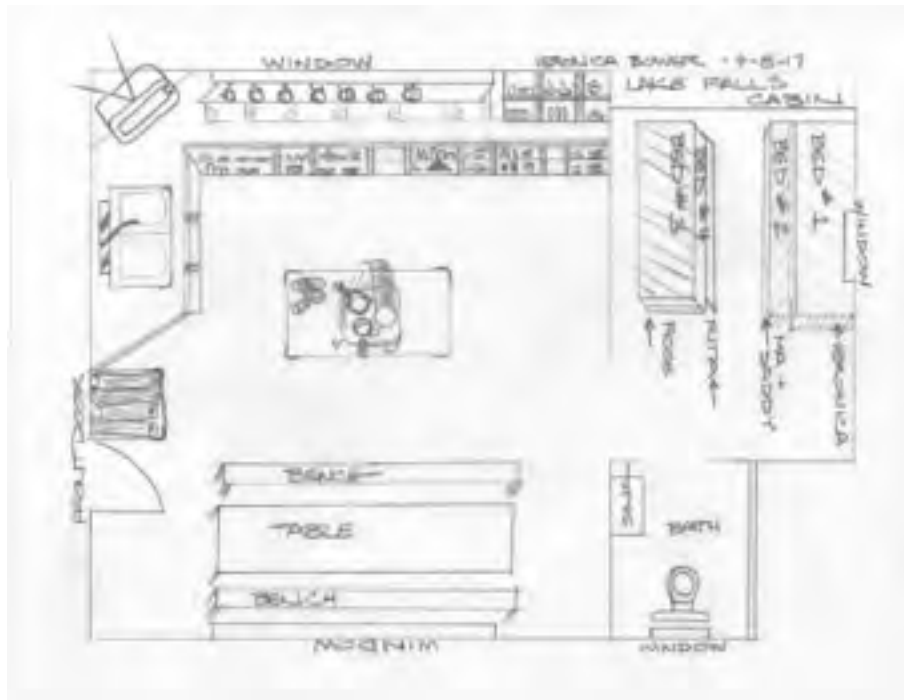
I remember Ma burning her eyebrows and top part of her hair once from opening the potbelly stove. The stove Daddy made that sat on top of the burners was a roadside junk pile pickup off Lake Falls Road.

So much fun reminiscing!

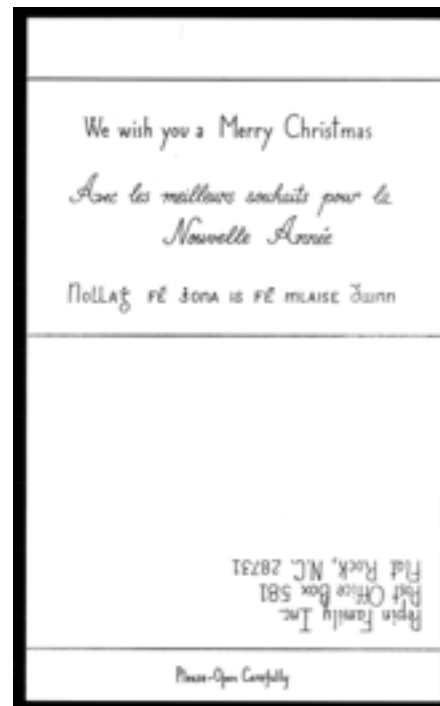
Rosie

To Roni's drawing skill and application, we owe some pretty precise drawings of the interior of the cabin. She drew one in 1973 and a couple more recently in 2017.





As for photos of the exterior, so far we have only found one photo of the outside of the cabin and the campsite. There may be more because a lot of people from Florida visited the campsite while they lived at Lake Falls. We also have a drawing I did on a visit in between Thanksgiving and Christmas of their first year there, 1972. It became our Christmas card for the year—sent from both the Family Ltd in Miami and the Family Inc in Lake Falls/Flat Rock:



Roni followed suit in 1973 and drew the first house over in Tuxedo but our father modified her drawing and she did not care for his changes. Both houses he and the girls built—with help from many people—still stand. We will encourage her to do a future family card.

What to say about a small cabin for 5 people? It was crowded and amazingly functional. Their first fall, winter and spring was very cold but the cabin was good and warm. The Lake Fall Pepins had the fashionable proclivity for tiny houses we see today beat by 45 years, and much cheaper to boot.

Just as helping with construction of the Miami houses helped the older half of the family understand what was involved in building and maintaining a home, erecting the cabin with our father gave our youngest sisters direct experience that would serve them in good stead later on. To this day, we can all mix concrete and cement, wield a mean hammer with true aim and choose the right screw bit or wrench for the job. Should we care to do so—one has to be careful not to show one's hand too early sometimes—we can ask good questions of a plumber or electrician and we can read blueprints.

At one point I expressed the concern to my mother that the construction work might be too much for the three little ones—just one of our many pangs of guilt at letting them go off without our help and so far away. Daddy could be a tough taskmaster—we'd all been there and done that. She told me he'd become a lot less intense, he didn't push quite so hard anymore, and that he had even begun to pay them small amounts for their work. (Years later, our father told my husband, Kenneth, that he'd put up any of his six girls as stronger and far better workers than boys—or men, for that matter—until the girls turned about 14.)

The Lake Falls girls were made of pretty stern stuff and even seemed to relish the strength that the construction work gave them for other activities at school and camp:

*March 26
1973*

After today's work, I think I have gained 2 muscles!

Rosie

*November
1973*

Sorry about hurrying off the phone the other day . . . I had to go help Daddy because he was just ready to put a truss on the roof.

Roni

In the family, we had code words/phrases for really awful construction experiences. The one that could make any one of us run for the hills was if something was said to be “like the downstairs bathroom tiling job.” I haven't even been able to bring myself to write about that one yet in our family history. Eventually, when I write the chapter on our life at 2231 in West Miami I will need to do so.

*Monday
February 11*

1974

Daddy and the house are fine. We finally finished the windows last Friday night. I will describe that job to you by saying that it was very similar to the tiling of the downstairs bathroom. Now, does that give you some idea?

Much love, Mama

There is a very amusing oral tale that has come down in the family—heavily embellished to make it as hilarious as possible—featuring one of the older girls, Bernie (Bernadette). (Bernie is always calling herself the family’s “black sheep” but I never think of her as that. Instead, she is the strikingly pretty young girl and starring character in many family construction stories—often because she could be very funny when she got really mad.)

At any rate . . . the first iteration of the tale is set in the 60s, when the Miami girls and our brother helped our father dig up our septic drain field in what was assuredly one of the nastiest jobs of all time. Similarly, our mother told in one of her letters the story of the Lake Falls girls digging one up at the Tuxedo property in the 70s.

*January 8
1974*

So - we all took turns digging (thought of you, Bernie) and discovered finally a pipe that had become un-cemented and slipped forward into the [septic] tank – blocking the entry. Repaired same – and dear God, hope it stays fixed. Rose suggested placing a flag over the spot – sort of as a memorial, or in case it goes bad again we don't have to dig up half of N.C to find it!

Add to our list of growing accomplishments that of ditch diggers!

Love, Mama

Ditch digging in that vein is not for the faint of heart. But someone has to do it when you can't afford to hire someone else to do it, and you do what you have to do.

By 1975, the family were mostly living and working on the second house down the mountain in Tuxedo. They went to check on the Lake Falls cabin as often as possible, but by the time school was out that year vandals had stolen the propane tanks and broken in:

*Summer
1975*

Dear Tede,

Up at the cabin some people stold our two gas tanks that were up there so Daddy and me and Roni are going up to the cabin and are going to knock it down. It's a shame that we have to knock it down but people are just stealing everything they pulled out the electrical switches and cut the wires they made a big hole in the door. There was a storm up there and lightning struck a tree and it fell on that old dead tree in front of the cabin. Daddy says he needs the lumber any way.

Well I better go you might get bored like they would say it up here I better git you'all might git board.

Bye. Love, Rita

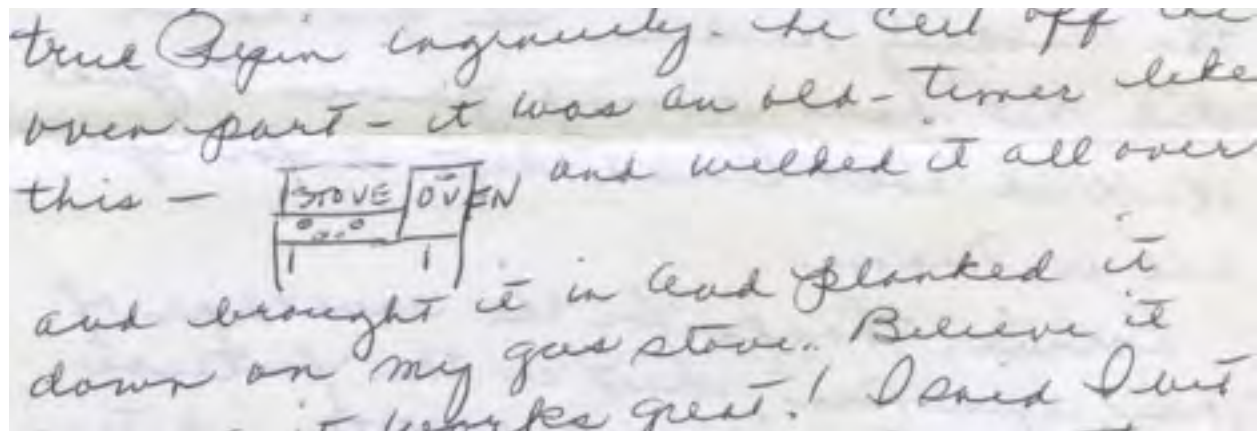
7. Thanksgiving and Christmas 1972

Neither part of the family could travel to join the other half that first Thanksgiving and Christmas in 1972. It was a painful separation. One or two of us were able to get up in early December for a couple of days apiece. Other than that, we had to make do with phone calls, packages and letters back and forth.

Our mother sent a long letter detailing the feast she cooked in the cabin. I think nearly all of us in Miami worked through those holidays, at one job or another, and so the feast as described was hardly a consolation for us. We drooled over it!

November 25
1972

We had a wonderful Thanksgiving and hope you all had the same. Daddy was determined we should have a roast Turkey so some time ago (when Rob was here) he went over on the road and pulled up an old stove from the ravine. (There's all sorts of things thrown down there – you name it). I'm sure Rob thought he was balmy – the thought occurred to me, too – but sure enough with true Pepin ingenuity – he cut off the oven part – it was an old-timer like this [small handdrawn figure] – and welded it all over and brought it in and plunked it down on my gas stove. Believe it or not – it works great! I said I bet the person who threw it down the mtn. could never imagine anyone using it again!



We had roast Turkey, gravy, stuffing, mashed potatoes, broccoli, cranberry sauce, olives and pickles and pumpkin and mince pies (frozen this time.) Everything came out beautifully – and we all enjoyed everything as well as could be expected without your absence.

To make us feel more like a family, we conceived the idea of a joint Christmas card, based upon a sketch done in early December. We made copies and sent a bunch of them from Miami. The Lake Falls contingent received a pile and sent out theirs, too. The return addresses were the Family Ltd in Miami and the Family Inc in Flat Rock/Lake Falls.

The cold would often figure as a major player in the girls' stories, especially since even the spring could be quite cool. After all, they had lived all of their prior years in Miami. When it rained in Miami, it often did so as a passing shower, or even a sun shower. In North Carolina it could rain for days at a time under heavy cloud cover and things could seem pretty dark and discouraging. Our father would be unable to make money with the loader to pay for its cost.

November
1972

The hardest thing to do is get up and get dressed for school cause it's so cold and you're so warm under the covers.

Roni

On the other hand, the cabin was small and quickly warmed up with their good wood stove, and their schools were comfortable and well-heated. Once they went out—and they were often working and playing outdoors—it was a different story.

November
1972

I bought all three winter coats, caps and mittens and hope to take a picture of them. Told them they look like Russian princesses getting ready for a sleigh ride. The coats are navy with white fake fur trim are hem and sleeves – maxi length with hoods. The caps are white and mittens navy.



The girls finally saw snow! The day before thanksgiving – (Wed.) we woke up to a beautiful clear cold morning – with tiny drifting flakes of snow falling. It had snowed during the night and everything looked as if a giant sieve had covered everything with confectioner's sugar. The pines and hemlocks looked so pretty. Had a terrible time getting the kids off to school. They had to taste it – (snow) and make snowballs. We put our orange juice and milk outside on the Coleman cooler and they both froze. O.J. was like 7-11's slusheys.

Love, Mama



The family had all visited our father's home in Canada only once—in 1967 for the World's Fair in Montreal. But that was summer and so its famous snow cover was nowhere to be seen. There were, however, a lot of houses up in the far north Laurentian mountains with a double front door entrance—one door on what was the ground floor in summer and a second door on the second story, where the level of snowfall could easily get up to. (In Montreal proper, there are also many older homes with exterior staircases for the same purpose.) A grounded Ski-Doo in summer is like a duck out of water:



You don't soon forget your first snow sighting and in a place as wild and wooly as Lake Falls the effect was enchanting. The girls' letters immediately sent out notice that we must come because there would certainly be snow for Christmas—*"It will snow when you come up!"* Some of our father's former choir boys and their families got wind of the snowfall that had occurred at Thanksgiving and made plans to come up to visit during the Christmas holidays.

Alas, as snow will do, it held off until after they'd all come and gone.

Nevertheless, the stampede of visitors added bustle and cheer. Our mother had cautioned all of them to bring lots of warm clothes and blankets. Daddy packed them willy-nilly into the camper-trailer and the box-bed of the old truck. Together with the girls, there were lots

of games and horseplay over several days. It is unlikely that Lake Falls has ever seen as many youth at one time in one place on its landfall—before or since.

Our mother wrote a long letter to describe the congestion and mayhem. This is only one small selection:

*December 31
1972*

We didn't have too many Christmas decorations for there just wasn't room. I think a piece of tinsel would have pushed someone out the door. Ronnie (you know how she likes to write) wrote Merry Christmas on one window and Happy New Year on the other – on the inside with snow - Of course on the outside it looks like some Chinese symbols to ward off evil spirits.

All in all, things went well – they spoke of sending Arthur up here in the summer so he could work with Daddy – and get rid of some of his energy. He really has a lot of that – generated by some over-active gland or something. We kept sending him outside to chop wood.

Enough said – they left Thursday morning and we immediately set to work – even finding a pile of clothes they had forgotten here. Really, though, they were all wonderful and took our rough environment with great good humor.



8. Watershed Years

February 21
1973

Tune in tomorrow for another thrilling episode of the Flat Rock Gang. – Will they conquer the wilderness or will the wilderness conquer them? Will the old Titanic sink in the mud again? Will atty. R get up off his swivel chair and do something? Until tomorrow then – goodbye and don't forget to take Aunt Matilda's iron tonic – 98 proof – it wont build up your blood but it sure will make it run around faster.

Love,
Mama

Will call you tomorrow night.

As painful as the separation of the family was, I think it also may have inclined us to a sense of empathy for others that we wouldn't have had otherwise. The early months of 1973—especially February and March—were a particularly anxious time for our parents, even as they looked forward to their daughter Cecilia's wedding in Miami, where they'd see friends and family once again.

The three little ones often did not speak directly to the difficulties. But the volume of letters peaked when their circumstances were compounded by multiple problems, written almost daily but only mailed when they could get down the mountain and to the post office.

When things were bleakest, their letters boiled down to: "We miss you. I can't think of anything to say. Please write back very soon."

Rose writes of the gloom but then takes a hard right turn to continue at length about school:

March 2
1973

Dear Girls,

How are you? It is raining here constantly and we are in a bad situation and plus our car is in the garage and with the rain and everything it is horable [sic]. Well, anyhow, in Homemeck me and my friend made a cake . . .

Love,
Wright Back,
Rose Pepin

As the oldest of the three younger girls, Roni conveyed some of what she observed at one of their lowest points:

March
1973

Dear People,

Well, nothing new up here except that we're short of money and Daddy keeps on asking us if we want to go back to Miami. We never know what to say but we honestly don't know if we're gonna have to go back or not. We've had a few problems up here . . . I could tell from Daddy's face that he knew everything was useless.

The family friend who was financing their venture came up for three days in March 1973. We don't know what they discussed. It should be noted that recession set in hard beginning in 1973 and lasting until 1975.

I remember asking my mother on the phone whether she didn't think that February really was "the cruelest month." It seemed that some of our darkest hours as a family came in late winter. The girls' letters mentioned cold, rain and sickness most frequently in those months. It was hard to tell from afar whether all of those conditions were concentrated in those months, or whether they were harder to ignore then, and pass on to more pleasant topics. At any rate, my mother judiciously answered: "Yes, but things usually get better by April."

Circling back to imagining the watershed years in the lives of our ancestors, I wonder about how they would have experienced separations far more visceral and for much longer periods—refugees fleeing poverty, oppression, war, plague. Others, like the 17th century explorers and "voyageurs" in our family set out purposefully in discovery. Some likely never returned.

The first French ancestor to come to New France in 1653 served his time in exchange for money paid partly to his father. Eight children and many years later, old Pierre Papin wanted to go back home to his family during what he thought would be his last years. There is a recorded contract with his son, Gilles, whereby he gives everything to the latter in exchange for a regular allowance to be sent to France until he would die and be buried there. We don't know whether Pierre ever made it to France, but if he did, he came back again, because he is buried where he died at 86 years of age, in Boucherville, across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal.

In an interesting twist, of all our many ancestors whom we know about in detail over the last 400 years, Pierre's son Gilles is the only one whose death date and burial site we do not know. He was a royal surveyor and may well have been one of the French explorers who came down from Montreal into the heartland of North America, possibly even up the river ways into what the French, like Native Americans, called the Appalache Mountains.

There were a lot of people who would have mourned Gilles when he was lost and did not return: He had 26 children from two marriages. Several of them went back to France for their education and then returned to Canada. Many of those children then left for the wilderness of the Mississippi valley after the British conquest of French Canada. We do not know whether their course may indicate that Gilles had traveled and died there in the early 18th century.

Indisputably, we suffered a sense of loss when the family was separated in 1972, but it was not nearly as bad as what our ancestors must have experienced—nor what our descendants may need to stand up to in their own years of trial. Like our parents, migrants and refugees continue to stream away from calamities, looking for a better life. We have boundless empathy for refugee families riven by loss and distance.

Our family is fortunate to have remained close over the decades since 1972-1975. We've never had enough time together, but we've tried to keep in touch and be supportive of each other as we could.

It is what it is. But, perhaps, it is also as it should be. To recall another Charles Dickens quote that Father Jim would use at Cecilia and Rick's wedding:

The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again.

Sometimes it can seem that we are leaving for a new place, when we are really returning to our roots.

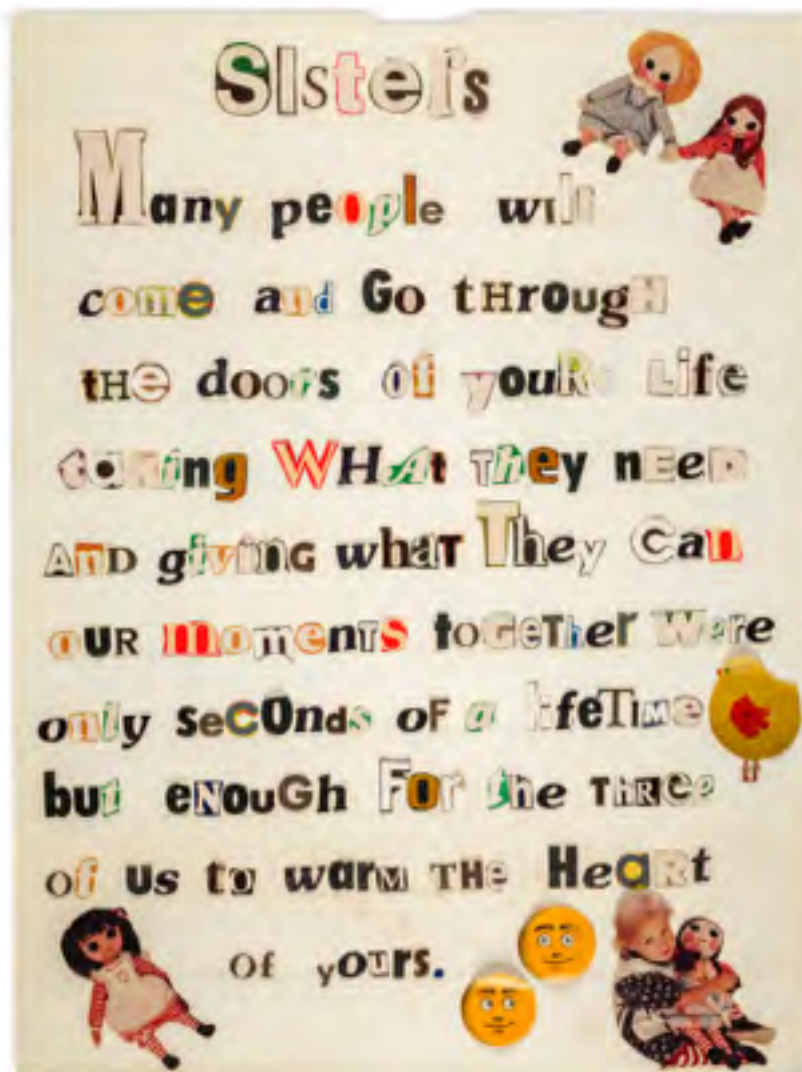
9. Sisters

February 11
1974

“Thank Heaven for little girls” – as the song from “Gigi” goes. The girls are a constant worry, wonder and blessing. They are maturing at a startling rate both physically and mentally, but then perhaps it is because I have slowed down that I notice it.

Mama

As much as it enchants me to recall our youngest three sisters as “the three little ones,” they grew up, of course, and became their own persons. All of us are now several decades older but we are still a family—a much larger family, in fact. Our parents are both gone but they’ve left us with their grandchildren and great grandchildren.



We know that the girls left some dear friends in Miami that they missed a great deal—Ava in our West Miami neighborhood was one we heard about the most and we know Rita wrote to her regularly. Gradually, they made many new friends at their schools and camp. There were so many, in fact, that we older girls and brother counted ourselves lucky to continue to get a stream of letters from the younger sisters.

Early in their time up at the cabin, the girls did an enormous poster-size collage of a poem for the older sisters. It was in the old blue suitcase, rolled up in a mailing tube for over 40 years, so it took a long time to get it to lay flat well enough to scan.

When I look at this poster and I think of all the time and meticulous cutting and pasting it took, I mainly hear in my mind's ear their chatter as they do the work together. We missed that chatter in Miami, possibly more than anything else. It was way too quiet—way too lonely without them.

Of course, they did not always cooperate. Their letters include a lot of information about the activities of each other along with the injunction: "Don't tell R that I told you about her breaking up with X"—"not suppose to be telling you this, sort of a secret." There are *sub rosa* power struggles and shifting alliances that are fascinating to follow and, of course, there are complaints:

January
1974

R hits me any time I eat anything I'm not suppose to and boy does it ever hurt. Because when she hits, she hits!

Above all, there was teasing. Upon spying a wood tick on a sister's head:

Ma, get out the flea collar for R!

And, most insistently:

*When are you all going to write us? It seems like you all are dead.
You never write back enough. No one has come up to visit all summer long!*

They loved to get the chance to correct their older sisters, partly because we constantly corrected the grammar and spelling on their letters:

1973
January 28

You always put on your letter.

Flat Rock P. O. Box 581 North Carolina

*27831 wrong
It's s^opose [sic] to be 28731 right*

Rita

Still, I marvel at how philosophical they could be:

January
1974

Sorry for the "unfansy" [sic] card but you know how much I can't draw. Roni gets mad when I ask her to do it because it's true that if "she" can sew I guess I can try to draw but it always doesn't work.

Rosie

February 25
1973

I can't wait to go to Miami. Before we were dieing [sic] to come up here. Now we are dieing to go down there.

Rosie

Summer 1975

Hi How's everything down in Miami? It's hot up here but I shouldn't complain it must be hotter down there.

Rita

*July 1
1975*

[Upon beating at straight sets in billiards an elderly neighbor across the street from the Tuxedo house, the girls were treated to a long discourse about the neighbor's accomplished grandson]: He's gotta be proud of something when he loses.

Roni

*November
1972*

Well, there's always something to say in a letter but by the time you reach the end the letter is saying nothing.

Roni

*March
1973*

You should come up here all together instead of one at a time.

Roni

10. School—Yes!

November 25
1972

The girls are all doing well in school and I was so pleased the other night – they were talking together and Rita said she liked school so much and up piped R. and R. saying they loved school. Can't blame them – they do so many interesting things. Next semester they get Home Ec. - cooking, and sewing.

Lots of love, Mama

We had worried about what the girls would find at their schools, after the pretty rigorous coursework at St. Theresa's School. English composition seemed a little weak, as evidenced by spelling in the girls' letters, but even that improved over time. We sent them dictionaries and a Highlights subscription. Returning the favor, they often sent us activities from their Highlights magazines to do—“*you can do these while you're on a coffee break or resting at night or sick*”—and then quizzed us on how we'd done.

Starting school in September 1972, they were startled to see most girls in slacks when St. Theresa's had required uniform jumpers for girls. They quickly learned the disadvantage of dresses and skirts as the fall set in and temperatures chilled. Later, they became fans of “maxi” coats.

It turned out that there were good teachers and good students at Tuxedo Elementary School, Flat Rock Junior High and, eventually, East Henderson High School. They seemed to enjoy learning just as much as, or more than, they had in Miami. It was wonderful to hear about the many friends they made in school.

In addition to the regular curriculum, they had the opportunity to try all kinds of activities—a list that grew even longer when they began to work summer jobs with our mother at Camp Green Cove. After their chores there, they were allowed to join in on a wide range of indoor and outdoor programs. The rest of us has had never gone to camp—summer had been prime time for our many house-construction projects with our father in Miami—so we were plenty envious on that score.

All during their time on the mountain, and later in their Tuxedo home at the foot of the mountain, they sent us drawings, collages and cards based on what they were reading. They sent maps with carefully noted landmarks to be sure we wouldn't get lost trying to find them when we came. They were masters of the decorated envelope, to the point where our Miami postman often hand-delivered our mail in person to ask about how they were doing. All in all, in addition to helping their parents, they certainly stayed very busy, even if they were in what we called a wilderness area.

Of course, there is nothing that will make a child love school as much as construction work at home. I dare say we all loved school on that basis alone. It was ever so much easier than the lessons taught—and activities required—at home!

11. In Sickness and in Health

*April
1974*

Today, I am going to do something for Daddy all I can, cause it's really been hurting him.

Roni

*May
1973*

Daddy got a job just now and is really good.

Roni

The girls and our mother had the occasional bouts with flu, strep throat and colds. A reasonably priced dentist was a concern but, fortunately, there was a school-subsidized dental program that helped with some of that treatment and cost.

On the other hand, our father's health could fail in numerous, major ways.

You knew it was really bad when two or more girls would mention he was ill but our mother wouldn't. Sometimes when she did communicate a worry about his health, the girls did not seem to know how serious it was. Naturally, she would not want to worry either them or us.

In late March 1974, the station wagon conked-out again and had to be put back into the garage to see what they could do. At the same time, our father was taken to St Joseph Hospital. We don't know what his illness was. It may have been flu because there was an influenza outbreak around that time in the local schools. Our mother did not drive—and there was no car anyway—so a local man who had helped Daddy with work, Bobby Camp, took our mother and the girls up to Asheville to check on Daddy. Bobby took the girls to the zoo while our mother visited because the hospital would not let them in to see him. As Rose described in her letter *"We are in a bad situation."* A few weeks later when our father recovered, he and Rita went to visit Bobby to try to pay him for his time and effort; he would not take any money. Our mother called the many people who helped them in the community *"the salt of the earth."*

Despite his many heart attacks, the worst could be his back, and then he could not work at all if it was very bad—and he would be very frustrated. Our mother wanted him to hire more workers to help—rather than trying to rely on her help and that of the girls—but money, pride and his perfectionism often meant he didn't want to ask someone else. Having a helper also meant he'd have to work faster to make a worker's time worthwhile—something that he simply could not do on a consistent basis.

A couple of our father's former choir boys, especially Greg Peters, did offer to go up and they were very helpful. Early on, our brother Paul Andre put in a big chunk of time at Lake Falls as well as occasionally at critical junctures. Later, Theresa's husband Kenneth, and Roni's husband David—both of them from Hendersonville—also pitched in to help when they married into the family.

Amazingly, our parents and the younger girls wound up excavating for three houses in little more than three years. One site never got beyond the excavation—Lake Falls—but the other two houses on the Tuxedo site were completed. The front house there on the long double lot eventually became two rental units and the larger back house was the family home, complete with a ground floor workshop that our father spent a great deal of time in during his last years.

Toward the end of 1974, our father asked for a copy from the province of Quebec of his birth certificate and we have it in the family papers, in addition to one from 1945 when he applied for his entry visa to the US. He had dual citizenship—Canadian by birth and US by naturalization—and he would have worked more than long enough to be covered by the Canadian health care system. We do not know, but he may have been worried enough about his health and its cost to the family that he may have considered taking the family back to his home in Montreal, or going back himself for treatment.

There was still a large family there who would have welcomed him with generous hearts. In fact, many of his family and friends from Canada visited us in Miami over the years and it is likely that several of them funded him at critical times on several occasions. In his turn, it is likely that he just about gave away his flourishing business up there in order to get several friends started in business when he decided to stay in the US and marry our mother. It was just the kind of thing our father would do—part of the reason he never had much money, but also the reason so many of his friends repeatedly came to his rescue.

Once our father left Miami, the Canadians did not come to gather in North Carolina—they could tell the weather there was too much like their homeland. Instead, they headed in winter straight for the balmy temps of South Florida where many of them rented parts of the Miami home.

12. Telling the Story

I was a daydreamer, big time, as a child. Friends who know me well now would be shocked to learn it, but I did not want to learn to read. I liked to make up stories in my head and daydream. It is my mother who taught me to love reading. She figured out that if she started to read me a book, then stopped reading it mid-way, and would not tell me the ending—I'd move heaven and earth to find out how the story ended. She was right.

There is a lot of pathos in our family stories. They never seem to have happy endings but they end well because we always want to know the whole story.

Nov 25th
1972

Dear Girls,

It is so strange here—we have a waterfall about 10-20 ft from our cabin and now that Daddy has installed my sink with indoor running water, he tells me to leave it run so the water in the pipes won't freeze . . .

I don't know how much information you can get from the girls' letters I mailed you recently. Some things are hard to understand and then some just sound like plain stories.

Lots of love,

Mama

Lake Falls Pepins

Nothing ever sounded like a plain story in our family telling, and they weren't entirely flat-out stories either. Almost every one was a pretty compelling tale, based on actual events, even if it sometimes colored outside the lines.

The older siblings in Miami—who had done a substantial amount of construction work on our homes in Miami—did not share any of those stories with our school friends because many of the feats could be difficult to believe: People thought we were entirely making them up. Little did they know, unless they happened to come by and see what we were doing with their own eyes. I hasten to add that our father always came up with ingenious work-arounds and safety rules that kept us out of harm's way but even with all of that it was frequently hard, exacting work. The younger girls learned the same lesson:

December 9, 2016 8:34AM

When Paul mentioned the dynamite [in his email], that brought back a ton of memories with Rose and I doing that. My friends at school didn't believe me when I told them I did dynamite with my father . . . so from that point on I never told them other things because no one would believe some of the things we did.

Roni

Still, there was plenty of room for embellishing the story for our own family listening to make it more enjoyable. An Irish priest who was a good friend of our family for many years, Father Ollie Kerr, once told our mother that she must have come from a line of Irish wits who had repeatedly kissed the blasted Blarney Stone to the point where their descendants just couldn't help themselves to tell anything but a grand story. Well-crafted stories that are shared in

a family have a higher purpose—they jettison the pain and celebrate, with a dollop of humor, the fact that you'd lived through the bad time.

The younger children often dismissed our mother's corny jokes when they reported them in their letters—you could see them roll their eyes between the lines. They could be brutal about it and, I suppose, they likely heard a lot more of them than we ever had.

Our mother would have had a lot of discomfort to transcend almost every day up at Lake Falls. In particular, February and March of 1973 were fraught with financial and health worries.

At the same time, she was the one who marveled most lyrically at how beautiful and peaceful it was on the mountain, even if she gradually came to realize that it would all come at too great a cost to the family.



March 4
1973

Last week Daddy started excavating the basement for the house. Should be through in a few more days. It is so beautiful and peaceful down there at the lot. I sat down on a big rock and looked around thinking how quiet it was. You could hear a dog bark away over on a far mountain but other than an occasional bird – absolute quiet. It almost seems unreal. There are so few spots in the world today where you can have such absolute tranquility.

The question now is – can we afford such a luxury

Our family also heard a tremendous number of sermons over the course of many years. We are connoisseurs. I remember especially Monsignor Comber at Little Flower Church in Coral Gables, Florida. He was Irish and had the voice of God. You could hear a pin drop in a congregation of 1,500 souls crowded into pews as he delivered a parable in his own way. The best sermons—very rare—are the memorable, compelling stories that make you think and leave you pondering them a long time.

I don't know how many more times our mother had to use her "no ending" trick with her children, but all of us became good readers and worked hard to be good writers. I know that the three oldest girls and brother were delighted to be told in their letters about the books the younger girls were reading. Telling a story comes from reading and writing comes from telling a story. There are writers in our family who are nearly as good as our mother.

Lest one think we worshiped our mother without reservation, I should say that it will come as no surprise to my siblings that I could be mightily annoyed with her. I have never ceased to honor her. She was never anything but a bottomless well of caring. But, in my view, she often met the rage of our father's demons with precisely the wrong tactic. Yes, I know, that veers towards "blaming the victim" but as a practical matter, I thought better approaches were worth a try. I may have been deluded on that score.

In a memoir years after our father died, our mother described his temper as "explosive," which I think is generous.

My husband Paul, was French-Canadian and had an explosive temper, but recovered very quickly and did not "hold a grudge." In a few minutes after "we would have words" – he would forget what the argument was about!

— *Grandmother's Memories, 2000*

She may be sincere in her recollection, or she may be disingenuous, but his furious state could seem to last entirely too long for his children.

Sometimes now when I read what I write about our mother it seems to me that she sounds too good to be true. And, then, in the next moment I realize that that was one of the things that could most irritate me about her: She was as pliant and as kind as possible. In an argument, she wouldn't give you a run for your money—unlike our father, who could give you more than you bargained for. Only in her story telling would she say what she really thought.

Our mother lived nearly thirty years after our father died. When she put herself back into a second marriage, I believe many of us could not understand why she would return to a state of dependency. Unlike her independent daughters, our mother was from another generation and she did not worry so much about having "a mind of her own."

She seemed genuinely happy in her second marriage although it was not long before there were signs that made us start to worry about her. Our mother's husband moved them every few years until we noticed that she had no idea where anything was in the kitchen. After a good deal of turmoil on our part, we tacitly honored where she seemed to want to be in her old age, so long as we could know she was safe and treated with dignity in assisted living, with her husband. Trust but verify.

As her life became more routine and predictable in the last years of her second marriage—a state I recognize she may have naturally acceded to after all the years of drama—her purview became much smaller, with the shrinkage accelerated even further by dementia. She never appeared anything other than good-natured, but she became the child in her own small world and, of course, we grieved the loss of the mother she had been. It was a long span of years when she wasn't fully present as the person we knew that made it easy to forget what she had been like when we lived together as family—and the extraordinary dimension of her good grace and endurance, time after time.

Her children knew we owed her every bit of joy we could give her in her last years, but it was difficult to know how best to do that. When you went to her second husband's house, the television was blaring because he was hard-of-hearing. There was no music and she did not sing. We did our best to do what we could without getting in the way of their relationship. She certainly needed him to be there, so we had no choice but to take that into account.

Until I went through the papers she left, after her death, I did not know that she had attended university and earned high marks in a script writing program. Radio was always the medium she favored—she liked to hear how the words sounded.

She did not pursue her studies for long. She met our father and fell in love. When she married she became a full-time housewife and mother. Her writing for many years was primarily daily correspondence.

In a way, the worst of times in 1972-1975—apart from her older children and anxious about her younger children and her husband—turned her back to writing and made it her finest hour as a writer. There was precedent in her own life for that: She wrote another memoir as a young woman at the time of her father's death and the desperation she and her mother went through afterward.

In between family weddings and reunion gatherings, she continued to write letters to all of us from wherever she lived, until she stopped. The last one I remember, sent from a gated senior community in central Florida, told me that “the thing she most looked forward to, all day long, was when the lawn sprinklers went off.” No trace of irony, where once there would have been a story, or at least a very broad crack.

Our parents had tilted their lances at a lot of windmills in their lifetimes. My impossible dream for what we might have done for our mother was that we should have whisked her back to Ireland where she and Mrs. Kerr and Mrs. Duffy—dear friends of our mother and our family—could have walked together to the pub every night to drink and sing to their heart's content. That mesmerizing Dublin wit, Paddy D himself, would have dropped in to tell a tale or two. There the Irish would have “made much” of her and her friends and their love of the sounds of music and words. Instead of withholding “the sauce” they would have served it up for them.

What I had never imagined—until I recently read her 1970s letters—is to what extent her own writing could bring her back without any of the weight of the intervening years. I cannot speak for all of my siblings, but all of that tangled period of her last years, for me, drops off a cliff somewhere when I read her letters. They revive the woman and mother she was in all her glory,

despite what she says about her “slowing down” by the time of Lake Falls. I can finally mourn her, not only as she was at the end of her life, but as she was in our family’s life.

It is simply and perfectly who she was to read her writing, and thereby be able to see her crocheting exquisite Irish roses in a blackboard-and-tarpaper shack for the wedding of her first daughter to marry in April 1973. She would have been singing while she was working the pattern and crochet needle. She would have been thinking about her own mother at her own wedding 25 years before. She talks about calling shops to check on bits of trim and seed pearls. She leaves out all of the perilous money and health worries of that time while she responds in detail to Cecilia’s wedding plans. She gently offers suggestions but also readily defers. She vividly paints a picture with her words that is completely without consciousness of herself—and thus is all the more heartbreaking.

She had always been a fine writer but the letters she wrote about the worst of times—and the best of times—at Lake Falls were her finest hour.

It is our mother—she, herself—who writes the words that bring her back to life.

Ah, yet another trick from beyond the grave, of storytelling for the family and the ages.

13. First Family Wedding

April
1973

Dear Tede,

I can't wait till we come down to Miami.

I have so much to do and so many people to see.

I'm counting the days the night before we leave I will be so excited I wount sleep.

Love, Rita

Perhaps because of all the worry and uncertainty associated with the Lake Falls development in winter 1973, the news that Cecilia would be the first girl to marry in spring was received with wholehearted jubilation in both halves of the family.

We had not been able to be together for Thanksgiving and Christmas in 1972, but we would certainly make up for that at the wedding in April 1973. Dozens of letters flew back and forth to arrange the minutiae of the planning.

In her letters to Cecilia, our mother leaves out all her money and health concerns—the two months prior to the wedding were the worst of times for the Lake Falls venture—and responds in detail to the wedding plans. She talks about calling shops to check on bits of fabric and yarn and seed pearls. She gets right to work on the Irish crochet roses for Cecilia's dress. She gently offers suggestions but also readily defers.

March 4
1973

Daddy told Theresa that we would bring the trailer when we come. Guess we're sorta like turtles – carry our house around with us – but sounds like your housing accommodations are kinda tight. So—if some night you hear a great deal of clanking and clanging and a lot of cussing and fussing you can be sure it will be the ol' hillbillies setting up camp on the front lawn. Hope we'll be able to get it put down - it has been sitting here opened out since our arrival. Oh well, we can't be much worse than the Ryan's!

Love,
Mama

The three little ones were ecstatic at the thought of going back to Miami for a visit after 10 months with no break in Lake Falls. Anticipation was a recurring motif of their letters following Cecilia's announcement: *"I can't wait."* *"Only 13 days to go."* *"Only 3 days to go."*

They wanted the Miami siblings to know that they were doing their part—learning music for the wedding, making gifts and saving money for the happy couple. Rosie made a ceramic lamp for them in a school activity, sending a detailed description, drawings and paint colors to them in advance.



Rita and Roni joined forces in saving money they made from “shoveling dirt, picking up rocks, cutting and piling wood.”

March
1973

Dear Cece and Rick,

Roni and I are saving money for you and so far we have \$3.92 ¢

By the time of April we should have around \$10.00.

Love,

Roni and Rita Pepin

See youse all in April!

The first thing they did when they arrived was to talk someone or more—variously identified as one or more of the Irish Kerrs, or another misguided soul—to take them to the beach at Crandon Park. They managed to get badly sunburned. Then they did nothing but

complain about their scratchy wedding dresses. Had they not overdone their solar exposure, the high-necked and long-sleeved dresses would have been perfectly comfy. (I made their dresses and did not appreciate all the griping.)



The wedding at Little Flower Church was a beautiful one with all the dresses handmade, our mother contributing her fine crochet needle work on a special Irish rose neck-surround for Cecilia's dress. We threw out the Vatican II penchant for unison hymn singing for one day and had a concert that many of those invited to the wedding still remember—brass instruments with the organ, our father and mother singing the duet *Ecce Panis Angelorum*, and all of us singing Bach's *Jesu Joy* in full part harmony. (It should be noted that what was considered a concert in 1973 is now *de rigueur* for most church weddings.)

Father Jim Kerr, Ollie Kerr's brother (and previously a priest also), was master of ceremonies and celebrant. Rick's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Pelaez, managed the reception in the St Theresa School cafeteria. Friends did

the photographs. Unfortunately, a friend who was supposed to record the wedding audio did not do so. *C'est la vie*. It was a terrific celebration on a very tiny budget.

I still remember the theme and a couple of quotations from Father Jim's sermon. He had just finished his doctorate in Rome and gave me a copy of his dissertation to read the day before the wedding. I was a philosophy major at the time so it wasn't too much of a stretch.

Meanwhile, he read our parents' and the girls' letters, which always sat opened on the bureau near our home's front door. When I finished his weighty tome and joked that I certainly hoped he would not be using his thesis in his wedding sermon, he just smiled. Father Jim could be a surreptitious saboteur—who knew what prank he might come up with?

I need not have worried. I was relieved when I heard him freely quote Dickens rather than Kierkegaard. His sermon was precisely on point for Cecilia and her husband Rick, as well as for all of our family:

Have a heart that never hardens, and a temper that never tires, and a touch that never hurts.

He talked about how life was a series of comings and goings and that the looking forward to the times together was the best part.

The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again.

When the girls and our parents left two days later in the family camper—they needed to get back to school, especially—the quiet they left in the old Miami house was deafening. We missed them all the more for their having been there such a short time.

Our mother was also anxious to get back to Lake Falls to get her garden in for the summer crops. Despite all the rock they were excavating, the soil—where there was enough—was fertile and produced well by summer's end. The corn was the best they'd ever had anywhere and our mother canned green beans and tomatoes aplenty. By the time they finished up harvesting and taking it all back in to the cabin, Rose remembers especially how glorious were the beautiful blue skies and crisp days of autumn up on the mountain. Since then, whenever a similarly fine fall day comes her way, our mother, their garden, and the cabin immediately springs to Rose's mind as though she were back at Lake Falls all over again.

The family came down for Christmas later that year in 1973 and also in 1974. In 1975, we flew the girls down in their first airplane rides for Easter break. As always, they sent thank you cards and letters afterwards to everyone who hosted and treated them. But they were also clearly glad to arrive back at the home they had helped build and the friends they had made “up there” as well. It was now home for them—Miami was vacationland.

As Roni wrote:

*April 11
1975*

It was really very hard to leave, but glad to be back.

I'll let Charles Dickens have the last word here, just like Father Jim did in 1973:

Life is made of ever so many partings welded together.

14. Skin the Squirrel

I make no bones about it: I don't like hunting and I don't like guns. I am a good bottle/can shot because I took lessons when we had a really scary neighbor at our first fixer-upper. Kenneth bought me a Winchester that I routinely took to the front door, loaded, when the neighbor came over—shades of spaghetti Westerns!

I am a vegetarian mostly because there is no way I could eat what I might kill—actually I have always felt healthier not eating meat, anyway—but I certainly think that one should eat what one hunts and kills. Waste is worse. The nickname Tede in Rose's report below is me.

I give the foregoing information as background for the story I relay:

November
1972

Dear Girls,

Last night when Paul caught a squerlle I had to hold his hind legs. So he could get the skin offa the meat. I was skared at first but not any more. I know that you Tede would probraly be skreeming all the way to Ashville. Well, have to sweep floor with the uncordinated vacum cleaner.

Love, Rose Pepin

I don't recall whether our father taught his son, Paul Andre, or any of the girls how to hunt, but he had certainly done a great deal of hunting in Canada during the Depression, when times were very hard there for nearly 10 years. We'd see some old photos that indicated some of that, but I did not know the substantial scale and frequency of his hunting for food until we recently found his journal, in French, about his college years.

His father, who owned a blacksmith/metalworking stable for horses/carriages that gradually mutated to an auto body shop, had provided him a vehicle in far-north Ferme Neuve specifically so he could transport venison back for the families to eat from hunting forays. From Ferme Neuve he would go deeper into the mountain hinterlands during winter to hunt by dog sled, transferring the meat to the vehicle that he then drove down to several of the Pepin families in Montreal. Often, cousins and friends from college or work would join him.

What is true is, as Rose reports in another letter, he gave Paul Andre a hard time about putting up his gun and shot gun shells before and after he took them out for hunting. In his turn, Daddy's father probably did the same with him.

What is likely also true is that our father gave Paul Andre a hard time about nearly everything up at Lake Falls—our father could be a real bear to be around. Reportedly, Daddy's father could be an extremely hard man for Paul Emile to work for, too. Like father, like son.

We give Paul Andre a lot of credit for breaking that chain. He relates to his own three sons in a completely different way.

So, we don't know whether Rose helped Paul to skin a squirrel for one of their meals, or not. I have a hard time imagining Ma cooking a squirrel. Perhaps Paul Andre took his skinned squirrel back out into the wilderness and cooked it himself, like the frontier-style cooking Daddy

taught us on family camping trips. If our father had ever handed out a survey after our camping trips, the back-to-the-land cooking tripod would have been at the top of the list to eliminate. It would have been followed closely by hand-washing laundry for nine people in the creeks we camped by.

Since I've mentioned Paul Andre in this story I want to acknowledge our entire family's indebtedness to him. He was just 17 and newly graduated from high school when he went up to Lake Falls to help his parents and sisters. He did not want to go up there—he would need to pay for his own schooling and career choice and he needed to get started on that. But he went up and worked to give them a start for over six months. It was tough for him to resolve to leave. However, given all the stalling that ensued with the survey and the lot deed—and the owner, investor, realtors, attorneys and surveyor—it was just as well that he left when he did, in December 1972.

On Dec, 2016, 12 at 9:00 PM, Paul Andre Pepin wrote:

The best of all [at home in Lake Falls] was my sense of being loved by my three sisters who looked up to me. For you I wish I had stayed and even now I fight back some real sense of guilt that I didn't do better by you. I tried to visit as often as I could, but I was more self consumed than I realized, wanting to launch into my education/career. Those things are hard to figure out, especially at 17.

It cost all of us who were older a lot in guilt, no matter how rational it was for us to stay in Miami to work, earn money, and go to school. Emotionally it was very hard. We all wonder whether we should have done something differently to help more.

15. Tough Tim

We've been talking about Tough Tim for many years, forgetting much of the time that most people don't have such a treasure in their lives. We only explain when people look confused.

Tough Tim began life as a Model T Ford. By the time our father brought it to the double-lot front yard of our last Miami home, its body had taken a beating but its frame was solid steel and it still ran like a champ. Importantly, he could set the gear so it would not go very fast and it would choke out pretty quickly if they tried to gun it.

He used to let the choir boys drive it in our yard to let off steam during the huge Sunday afternoon barbecues we held for them in our double-lot front yard. Typically, they ran into at least one tree. For most of them, the experience was completely different from their upper middle class suburban upbringing in Coral Gables.

While we had the house under re-construction—it was rebuilt from a small house into a large one—there were lots of used materials and tools for the boys to work with as well. Many of them learned how to use hammers, screw drivers and saws. Several came back years later to help our father with construction.

Our front yard in the 1960s was the original adventure-junkyard playground—now a trend-setting development in cities all over the world.

Our father also modified Tough Tim so it could run all kinds of equipment for various purposes. Along with tools, welding equipment, and an old truck from the U.S. Post Office, Tough Tim made the trek up to Lake Falls on a trailer and then over to Tuxedo after that.

In the less positive category of application, Tough Tim's exhaust could sometimes be used for animal control when litters of kittens and puppies would show up in our yards. Most of us only learned that much later—I only learned it from my youngest sister recently. I suppose our father did what he felt he had to but he also did a good job of keeping it from most of us.

16. Blue Boy

We had lots of pets growing up, some of whom disappeared when there were too many. We children spent so much time in church ourselves that we would hold memorial services for the departed. For our father, growing up in a much different time, animals were not really companion animals but utilitarian.

In our view, he could be harsh with them—but, then, we did not ride, shoe and drive horses, as well as tend other livestock, as he did as a young boy. He could be very strict with discipline of dogs. Only in 2016 did we discover a journal in French that he wrote as a young college student. We learned that, as one of his many jobs during the Depression years, he would have driven a dog team through the deep winter snows in the wilds of the Laurentian Mountains. Good, responsive dogs in top condition would have meant the difference between staying alive or not.

But Blue Boy was a different story, a dog who arrived fully formed and became part of the family's mythology of Lake Falls. I remember the first time I saw him up there, in late November 1972. When he looked at me, it was almost as though he was sizing me up to assess whether I was worth having around his family.

I don't ever remember any other dog off a leash or chain, except for very short periods. Of course, some of that had to do with the fact that Blue Boy had just shown up "out of the blue" and that there was no road traffic to worry about on his account. He stayed close to where our father was working, but he was careful not to get in the way. Every day he would listen for the school bus far off in the distance chugging up the Mount Olive Road and run down in time to meet them.

February 21
1973

Blue Boy goes along with us [on the lot excavation] – he loves to sniff around the freshly dug earth and then go up and lay on a big rock looking for all the world like the lions guarding the Pharaoh's tomb.

March 4
1973

Blue Boy will probably come with us [to the wedding in Miami in April]. He is a good traveler and would be so lost up here alone. He just loves us all so much. You should see how he stays around Daddy and I when we are down at the lot – and knows just when the girls will come home from the bus. He sits up on a rock and just stares down the road. Poor fellow. Traffic is so scarce here he barks at airplanes. I told him never to try to chase one!

Our mother must really have wanted Blue Boy to come down, or she came up with some magic cure, because there is abundant evidence in the girls' letters that Blue Boy was a "good traveler" who could easily become car sick. Like our father, he had a weak stomach. Poor Rose suffered the effects of his sickness in the car a couple of times—she couldn't understand why he picked on her.

In February 1973, when Daddy and Blue Boy took Rita from Tuxedo Elementary School to the hospital emergency room for what seemed like it might be something more serious than an upset stomach, the doctors gave her something and she was fine. Afterwards, she tried to

find them and their car. Looking through a window, a nurse called her attention to Daddy and Blue Boy—both of them ill on the lawn near the old station wagon.

The girls had several other pets—additional dogs, a turtle, and many foundling kittens. A neighbor had pigs but they could be aggressive so the girls gave them a wide berth when they walked by. The kittens could cause havoc in the midst of construction projects with hilarious consequences, punctuated by our father trying to catch and remove them. One unfortunate mother cat was the casualty of a falling ladder. Rita's letters often feature the antics of the kittens she found and cared for.

There are two striking scenes in the opening chapters of the family saga No Great Mischief by the great Canadian author Alistair MacLeod. I will not quote the scenes at length here, but together they comprise the most elegiac tribute to a working, family dog—“*a dog who cared too much and tried too hard*”—I have ever read. The passages are deeply affecting but too long to quote, so you'll have to read them for yourself. Suffice it to say that when I think of our parents, now dead and gone for many years, I imagine Blue Boy standing guard over their souls.



17. Escape to Skyland or The Creek Also Rises

One night in March 1973, Daddy was alarmed by a deluge of rain that filled the lake and started to break over the dam. Then the creek 20 feet away from the cabin started to rise. He and Ma bundled everyone up and took them to a hotel in Hendersonville.

They were in two rooms: Ma and Daddy in one; Rose, Rita and Blue Boy in another. (Roni had gone on a sleepover with a school friend.)

On the way, Blue Boy fidgeted and softly whined in the car. He looked at Rita and then Rosie, and seemed to choose Rosie as the better one to get sick all over. She was not pleased.

March 16
1973

*I guess I am good for dogs to vomit on. I have been vomited on by dogs 3 times.
[3 is underlined 3 times.]*

Rose

One would think that they would have taken advantage of the televisions in the old hotel to watch TV. But no—these were working girls. That evening they took baths. One gets the sense from their letters that the baths were long, luxurious baths. (Rose mentions that Rita was capable of baths lasting one and one-half hours, when she got the chance.) And then they slept very soundly with the books they were reading falling from their hands to the floor.

They took a rising creek in stride partly because they were no strangers to extreme weather. They were 6, 4 and 1 when Hurricane Betsy hit in Miami in 1965 while our father was away at a music conference in St. Louis, Missouri. Dramatically, the front door blew open when the winds were at their worst and we had to wrestle it shut and tie it to the heavy metal frame of our front room couch. (Old lawn furniture was the only kind we ever had in our living room, for some reason.) We also tied Paul Andre, man of the house just then at age 10, to the handle of the door, as well as to the couch, so he could let us know when the door might give way again.

Actually, Betsy wasn't nearly as bad as Hurricane Donna in 1960 when our original corrugated sheet metal roof flew off in every direction, leaving us to walk all over the neighborhood afterward trying to collect our roofing from the neighbors. Roni, the oldest of the three little ones, was only 18 months old. Reconstruction of the West Miami house started soon after.

Rose was born in January 1961 at a time when most of our house was in a shambles, with multiple re-building projects going on at the same time, including demolition and pouring of two-story concrete columns. We lived in the house through it all, as we had in all of our previous fixer-uppers. However, Rose gets the prize for worst baby homecoming.

One of our mother's dearest friends heard that Ma would be bringing Rose home from the hospital and that we were still re-building. She stopped by and pulled a vacuum cleaner out of her car, at which point we all became hysterical with laughter. The only thing that could have cleaned our home was a front-end loader and an industrial-size shop-vac. We pointed her toward the one room in the house that had been taped-shut for the duration.

This is a photo of the three little ones in about 1967 when they were 8, 6 and 3—in their pajamas, at Christmastime. The main West Miami house was fully re-constructed by that time, with the old lawn furniture still in place. When it was finished, our father started in on two more new spec/rental houses: one on the front part of our side yard double lot, and the other across from it on an adjoining lot.



Not long ago, Rose and I searched for the name of the hotel the family stayed at in March 1973 while the creek crested up at Lake Falls. It turned out to be the old Skyland Hotel on Main Street, a year before it was converted to condominiums. Constructed in 1929, it was a prominent hotel of the land speculation boon in the western North Carolina mountains. Having endured the long Depression years and other ups and downs of the market, the historic hotel has recently undergone a marvelous restoration and is much in demand for its condo units and commercial space.

18. All Shook Up

Looking back from 2017, we are not sure how many vehicles the steep hills of Lake Falls put a hurting on in 1972-1975, but it was a lot. Mufflers were the least of it—more serious was the beating that your transmission and suspension took.

At one point a newly installed transmission in the old family station wagon, a Plymouth Belvedere, failed completely. Recently Rita recalled that for quite a long time the station wagon was beached along the side of the road. The girls used it as a way station to catch their breath and warm up on the way home from where the school bus dropped them.

The wagon had a way of conking out just when they'd filled it to the gunwales with dirty clothes, towels and linens to take to the laundromat after church.

March 4
1973

We got all dressed up to go to church and our car wouldn't start! We had our laundry, and everything in the right place, then the car is conked out! We had so much laundry we had to (almost!) wash it by hand.

Love, Roni and Rita

Alternatively, the family car would time its dying for when they were taking someone to the airport—requiring the deployment of all sorts of emergency measures to make the flight.

Paul Andre had a starter-car, a 1961 Dodge Pioneer, with no heater—not a good vehicle in any respect for the mountain clime and terrain. Rita states without commentary:

1972
Saturday
November 18

Paul took us back from church. He tried to get up the steep hill but he did not make it.

Far more amply, Rose's letter of November 23, 1972, offers:

Let me tell you the story about THE Tall Sad Tale of Poor Paul Andre. Well, it was raining real badly last Sunday all day and when Paul was trying to get his car up the steep hill he slid and messed it up and then he went over to the van and saw that his coat has been chewed on by a rat had chewed a hole in it and in the neck [he had bought the coat the previous Saturday for \$29.00, a lot of money in 1972]. I will draw a picture on the next page of his coat and ours.



At Christmastime in 1972, a couple of friends stopped by the cabin in total darkness on the way back from graduate school at Georgetown in Washington D.C. with a U-Haul behind their car. We could never quite believe how they made it. They were a former priest and a former nun so, perhaps, someone was watching over them.

19. Fashionistas

September 18
1974

*Oh, no! Ma's in one of her crazy moods again! She can't stop laughing!
Well, must go! Miss you a lot!*

Love, Roni

P.S. HINT—running out of clothes & shoes. DESPERATE!

They may have been construction workers much of the time but they also knew their way around a sewing machine, a crochet hook and an embroidery hoop. Our mother had taught all of us handwork, needlework and sewing. Many of our clothes growing up were made by our mother or ourselves.

In fact, the younger girls picked up their skills much more quickly than had the older girls.

July 28
1975

Gang,

I've done a lot of sewing lately. Mostly all summer clothes. I've made 4 [underlined three times] pairs of shorts, with even a zipper, how about that! Also 3 smock tops.

Love, Rose

Their beautiful older sister, Bernie (Bernadette) was a genuine fashion plate—often working in retail clothing and shoe stores in Miami. Whether or not she actually used her name, it was usually Bernie that Roni had in mind as the perfect source for leftover clothing:

March
1973

Tell or ask Bernie if she has any clothes she doesn't want or anyone, to send them up as soon as possible.

Love, Ronnie

She could be pretty insistent:

May
1973

When you come up if you have any clothes you don't want bring them up!

OK? Roni

She could be less than subtle when speaking about her friends' steady bounty:

November
1972

My best friend's father sends her clothes almost every day and she wears the cutest clothes every day.

Miss you, Roni

One of the best clothes-related stories derives from the time the older girls arranged for flying "the three little ones" down to visit in Miami at Eastertide in 1975. We couldn't get them an Asheville flight so our parents drove them to Atlanta to catch a flight from there.

On the way there, the old station wagon conked out, naturally—its record for perfect timing the only thing unbroken about it. Quick-time walking to the nearest exit was necessary while our mother also had to hitch a ride with a truck driver to arrange for a fix.

The girls had dressed to the nines in order to properly impress the reception committee awaiting them at the Miami airport. During all the kerfuffle, the platform heel on one of Roni's favorite lavender shoes broke. I will let Roni and Rita finish the story, repeated recently on email:

I was stylin' and profilin'! I'd chosen the lavender shoes to wear with a purple elephant mini skirt dress that Bernie gave me. Yes, the heel on one shoe broke, and walking thru the airport was a challenge, but we were all so excited to fly for the first time that that didn't matter.

Roni

We were trying so hard to look nice for the plane ride to Miami that Tede's boyfriend had given to us so we could see the "three older ones." That may have been when I decided dressing up was not my thing!

Rita

Roni in the lavender shoes:

God only knows how hard it was for our parents to get back to Tuxedo—they never mentioned it. They were more thrilled to watch the girls look forward to their first plane ride than they would have been to come with them.

I always wished I could have been back in Asheville when they returned. We moved heaven and earth to get them a return connection through Atlanta to Asheville so that if the car broke down again, at least they'd be closer than Atlanta. I would have



loved to be there for the cacophony of reporting about their journey on the car trip home again to Thunderhead Mountain.

The younger three girls came by their fashion interest honestly—via their genes. Both of our parents liked to be well dressed. Our mother was an accomplished dressmaker. As children, the older girls used to plead with our parents to wear the glitzy theater clothing in their closets to church on Sunday. Sometimes they did!



20. Community

Before our parents married in 1948, their community in Miami was almost completely in music: the Miami Opera Guild, glee clubs, musical theater and the Gesu Church choir.

When children came along our father moved into teaching and directing large music programs at schools and churches, almost always several at one time. He continued to work many other jobs on the side—everything from plastering, painting, set design and construction, to auto body work. From the time of the birth of the first child, he was constantly renovating the houses we moved into—plus building two new ones.

Growing up, our lives revolved almost entirely around the schools and churches where our father worked. In the 15 years he led those large scale music programs—from about 1950 to 1965—he taught and directed hundreds of students and choir boys/girls. Several of their parents became lifelong supporters and family friends. Our mother worked alongside him, helping him with the considerable secretarial and administrative work necessary to prepare for several services each week and mount full scale musical productions—all for no additional pay. The only thing today that you could compare it to would be a comprehensive athletic department.

For years, we held Sunday afternoon barbecues that welcomed our father's students and choristers. I have no idea how we could afford all of the food and drink that we provided—perhaps they took up a collection from the parents. Additionally, there were trips by bus out of town and to the beach at the end of the school years.

Some of our closest family friends were the young priests who gravitated to our house. Many said the family home reminded them of their own in Ireland. Several remained lifelong friends—one is today the Archbishop of Miami.

Our mother was famous for her Saturday soups when she could miraculously convert any refrigerator leftovers into a savory concoction for the priests and family. To this day, many of us love to attempt to make soup, although our best efforts follow a recipe.

Considering that he stood out as one-of-a-kind even in the diverse city of Miami, I can only imagine how strange a fish Daddy must have seemed when he arrived in the community of Lake Falls, Tuxedo, Zirconia and Hendersonville, but he held his own. They reached out to neighbors and made new friends.

The family was likely the only Catholic family in the area south of Hendersonville and there were not many even in the town. Our father served as cantor on special occasions at the Catholic Church in Hendersonville, Immaculate Conception, and they both sang when a choir was occasionally put together. But for the most part he played instruments at home: mostly the trombone—heavens knows why, someone must have given him one—and the violin. He spent much of his last few years in his workshop repairing violins and crafting custom wood violin cases.

All of us in the family have at least one of his wooden violin cases. Although I've passed-on to our brother the case I was given, for his sons, I have kept our father's own old violin in its even older case. Daddy taught Kenneth how to play the violin on that instrument. I also lent it to



the son of a friend, an organ builder, a while back when the son wanted to take violin lessons. Perhaps the violin had some good karma remaining from our father in it. The son not only learned to play the violin well but he returned it in good repair. The young man is now a noted, full time luthier—the profession of making stringed instruments.

Our mother and the girls also sang in the community chorus and played recorders. They had wished to learn piano but lost too much time in between shuffling of houses. When there finally was a piano in the Tuxedo home, I used to accompany our father's violin playing when I'd visit.

They valued themselves as members of their communities and they tried to make a contribution:

Like so many newcomers to the United States, our father was more active in civil society than the native-born. Our youngest sister tells about our father getting up at a town meeting in April of 1975 to refer everyone to the American Constitution—a copy of which he holds in his hand. Insisting that the girls attend, too, they were just about the only youth there and they were hugely embarrassed that he spoke so passionately and for so long.

On another occasion, as a member of the Tuxedo Lions Club, he gave a club presentation on Gregorian chant and church music history. I wish I'd been there to see how that one went over.

He also got out there to work in community events. One of his contributions was that he hand painted a gold-leaf seal on the doors of the local, vintage fire truck—certainly the most exceptional seal anywhere, executed to the highest standard of the sign painter's art, making it a singular point of pride and distinction for the small town.

Later, he was a sponsor of the musical Brigadoon that Rita was involved in at her high school. It was the kind of production our parents knew well from their own careers in music. She still remembers how much she enjoyed working on all those costumes.

<p>COSTUMES Coordinator..... Mrs. Gwen Oechslein Student Coordinator..... Rita Pepin Becky Reiser, Mary Lynn Price, Beth Williams Mark Baluha, Kim Dalton</p> <p>SET AND ART DESIGN Coordinator..... Miss Vickie Jones Chuck Cantrell, Tim Gordon, Tim Lominac Charlie McMurray</p> <p>SET CONSTRUCTION Coordinator..... Mr. Dexter Thompson Dean Buckner, Barry Emory, Chuck Gibbs Larry Johnson, Richard King, David Kerr, Richard Johnson Robbie McCrain, Greg McCraw, Lee Medford Eric Pace, Tim Redmon, Mike Whitmire, Darin Hill, Chris Moody</p> <p>LIGHTING AND SOUND Coordinator..... Mr. Fritz McCall Thomas Baldwin, William Bowen, Larry Allman</p> <p>PROPERTIES..... Chantal Wittman</p> <p>PUBLICITY..... Christi Whitmire</p> <p>TICKETS AND PROGRAMS Coordinator..... Mrs. Carolyn Hawkins Todd Smith, Liz Hood, Ben DeRidder Lawrence Chapman, Wendy Redmon, Sam Stepp, Rita Jones Teresa Jackson, Jimmy Miller, Roger Ward Kim Morgan, Tony Cable, Sonya Coggins, Susan McClintock</p> <p>USHERS Coordinator..... Mrs. Barbara Tant Karla Johnson, Beth Cordray, Kim Coates, Rhonda King Lisa Metcalf, Kim Pace, Daphne Dotson Pam Saltz</p> <p>SENIOR RECEPTION Coordinators..... Mrs. Julia Lappin Mrs. Karen Peters</p> <p>**A special thank you to the following people whose assistance was invaluable. Mr. Ernie McLeod (lighting consultant), Mr. Guy Hembree (mgr, Roses) Mr. Arthur Dingee (former East High Band Director) Mr. James Jerzan (Fed. Paper Board), Mr. Homer Hunnicutt (mgr, A&P) Mr. Malvern West (Etowah Elementary), Marie Hazen (Merle Norman) Mr. Bill Barnwell (Assistant Superintendent County Schools) Mr. Jack Oechslein, Mr. Paul Pepin, Mr. Joe Bailey Mr. Paul Parce, WHKP-WHVL, Blossom Basket, EHHS Faculty Mr. and Mrs. Moultrie Smyth, Mrs. Kitty Whitmire, Mrs. Barbara Mathis Ms. Jacqueline Price, Andy Johnson (Key grip)</p>	<h1 style="font-size: 2em;">Brigadoon</h1> <p>Alan Jay Lerner Book & Lyrics</p> <p>Fredrick Loewe Music</p> <p>Produced by Arrangement Tams-Witmark Music Library, Inc.</p> <p><i>Thank you, Mr. Pepin, for both your donations and your wonderful daughter.</i></p> <p><i>Leo Ray Student Director</i></p> <p>Senior Production</p> <p>April 1, 3, 1982 8:00 p.m.</p> <p>East Henderson High Auditorium</p>
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From the perspective of people in Miami, they may have gone back to the land but they weren't disconnected. Even while in the kerosene lamp-lit cabin, they had two national papers delivered to their post office box weekly. The main reason they ran a generator from time to time at Lake Falls was so that they could watch the Watergate hearings on a small television.

And then there were cross-cultural experiences that the local community offered them:

The girls attended Easter services at their friends' Baptist churches, and their friends reciprocated by attending with the girls at their Catholic church—a fairly adventurous ecumenical gesture at the time.

When I first went up in 1976, I took the girls to a white Baptist revival—also my first experience. It was quite something.



In 1977, we all attended Queenie's funeral, the Bells' cook at Camp Green Cove. The African-American service was nearly as impressive as the towering figure of Queenie had been in life. She was an economic and cultural force in her family, church and community. The music that afternoon took over the hundreds of people there. I have never forgotten the power and all-encompassing spirit of that full-throated singing congregation.

As the years flew by, the "three little ones" went away for school, careers, and their own families. At the same time, an increasing number of people from our parents' community in Miami moved up to the mountains of North Carolina, joining them in what became a large circle of friends in the high country.

21. Last Call for a House!

Feeling the need, myself, to leave Miami—a story for another time—I moved up to live in their not-quite-finished rental house on the front part of the Tuxedo property in late 1975. I painstakingly painted all of the wooden kitchen cupboards. It took me four weeks, interrupted by trips to colleges to follow-up on applications I'd made for additional graduate school. In 1976 I met and married Kenneth Pace, a native of the nearby town of Hendersonville, NC, and I took on several part-time jobs.

Not long ago, one of my siblings—I think it was either Bernie or Paul—pointed out how unfortunate it was that Daddy did not live long enough to help all of us with constructing our own family houses.

He did, in fact, extensively remodel the West Miami house into separate quarters for his older children during the two years of holidays—1973 and 1974—when he brought the family down for Christmas each year.

When the comment was made by Bernie via Paul on email I realized that the older Miami contingent did not know that Daddy and the three little ones helped Kenneth and me with our first house in Hendersonville. I had never imagined that we would need to ask for their help because I had sworn I would never move into a house that needed work—after all the years of grinding construction work. So much for swearing.

A Vietnam veteran with a college degree in art and a musician with degrees in political science and philosophy could not afford much, especially in a retirement community like Hendersonville, where seniors were moving in with profits from their home sales up north. Choir members at the church where I became music director, and colleagues at the public library and Mother Earth News were sufficiently horrified by the old trailer we moved into when we were first married that they did their best to find us something affordable.

Then, following a very brief stint teaching, Kenneth decided he'd rather try to make a living in the carpentry and construction skills he'd learned growing up as the eldest of seven sons—they, too, had built their own homes. For years I had said I'd never marry anyone in construction of any kind. So much for that.

Lo and behold, a small old house came up for sale through a realtor in the parish—for \$10,000. Need I add that it needed a lot of work? But it was on nearly an acre with room for a garden and what would we a fine view of the city—and northern exposure for an art studio—if you added a second floor on the back half.

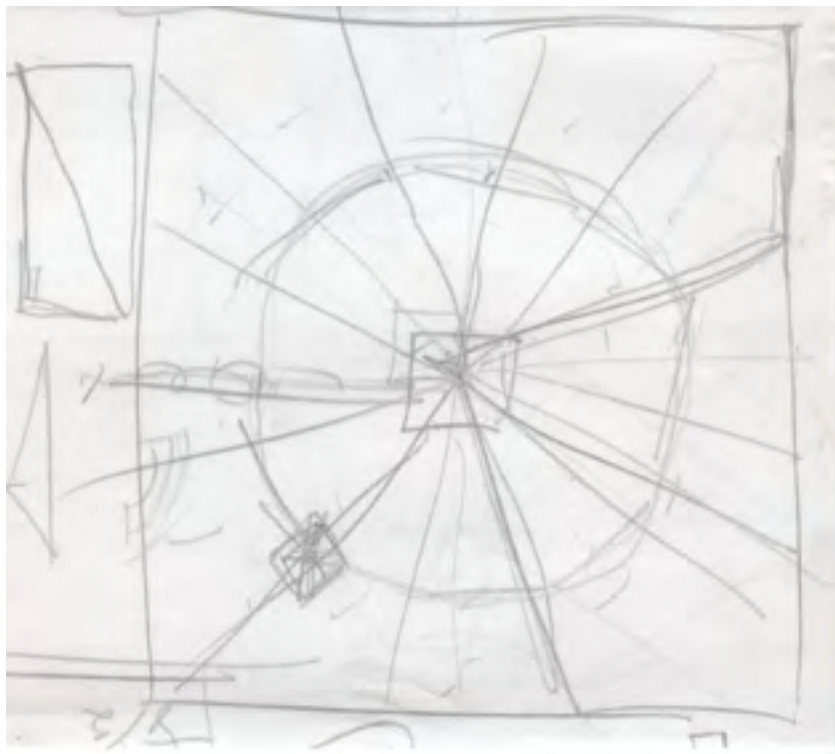
I think you can see where this quickly headed. At the time, I could not.

A recent email discussion among family members tells the tale:

From: Theresa Pepin December 7, 2016 at 9:14PM

Given the discussion about house-building, I should recognize, with appreciation, that Daddy and “the three R’s” (the name he often used for them) did help Kenneth and me with our first house on Armstrong Avenue in Hendersonville.

We all tore off the roof of the old house (set on a picturesque one acre lot overlooking the town) that we bought for \$10,000 so that we could add a second story on it. Then we tore down a wooden building that was going to be demolished anyway in an old camp a few blocks away and brought all of the wood over in the old station wagon, load by load. The three girls took all of the nails out of all of those boards so that Kenneth and Daddy and Kenneth’s father Buddy and his brother Andrew could reuse them on the new roof, walls, and subfloor. Daddy insisted on supervising the (over)building of a circular staircase in one back corner of the house to get up to the second story using, of course, poured concrete for the foundation and hurricane clips (!?) per South Florida building standards. We used to joke that if the entire Laurel Park mountainside should ever be hit by a hurricane or tornado, at least that one circular staircase would be left standing. (Little did we know then that climate change makes that a distinct possibility.) I still have our father’s plan for that stalwart staircase:



With me, the three girls also helped with the mortar mixing for the big front wall of the house, when Kenneth faced it completely with a beautiful stone wall. We kept telling Kenneth that he should only do a few feet at a time but, of course, Kenneth ignored the dubious looks of his girl-helpers and kept going full speed ahead. He had just placed the final stones on the top crown when we all watched in horror as the wall started to buckle and come down. Kenneth, of course, raced from one end to another trying to save the bulging wall but all of us girls were smart enough to stay well away. The entire thing wound up on the ground. I

have never seen Kenneth so angry, until he looked around at us and realized we were terrified by how upset he was—well trained by Daddy in such instances—and so he started to laugh, and then we all laughed hysterically with him. It was not so much fun to take all that mortar off all those stones and start all over again but I have to hand it to Kenneth: he did learn and the next day did a mere half wall at a time—which the rest of us still thought was far too much to build at one time.



I went by the old house last year and that big front wall still looks as solid as the year it was built, and as beautiful.

In between his other construction and loader jobs, Daddy helped us with the old house's plumbing and electrical. I can still see Rita hauling Daddy's electrical toolbox in to start work.

I look back and can hardly believe the amount of work and the scale of the accomplishment on the part of all of us—and a pretty good attitude, most of the time!

**From: Rita
Esterwood
December 8
6:36AM**

Ha! I remember those car rides with the old wood. Just reading that made me remember the feel of getting to sit for

a prolonged period of time and how nice that felt!
We tore down a couple other houses with Kenneth too didn't we?

Veronica Bower December 8, 2016 at 2:13 PM

I have wonderful memories of my time living with Tede and Kenneth at the Armstrong house....some highlights....buying Kenneth's brother Andrew's car . . . for \$200.00. Had a trunk held down with rope looking like it was hit by a pole. Later Ma called it "the blue bomb"! That car rode like a dream though. Then the time I cut the tube of caulk for Kenneth caulking the windows. The hole I cut at the end was supposed to be a "small bead size" and not the size of a dime! That patient look he gave me . . . and then the time I broke a pottery vase that was very important to both of you. I think I put something else in its place hoping you wouldn't know I made it fall by accident. I was probably cleaning!!! Well....you DID notice. Or, looking for O'Neill your dog and getting to know your "Magle-like" neighbors ! I have my fondest memories of living upstairs and always feeling like it was my own little space in the world!

Theresa Pepin December 8, 2016 at 8:32 PM

Well, Roni, I checked with Kenneth on the details at Armstrong Ave that you mention.

He says you did not cut the tube of caulk for a small bead OR a dime ... you cut the entire end off the tube. He thought maybe you thought he was going to put it on with a spoon?!

He also says that we could tell when you broke a vase or other collectible because the pieces were all in the trash; you should have buried them or taken them away if you didn't want us to notice. (Of course, I've always been into letting stuff go so I did not care as much as Kenneth.)

On another cleaning tsunami while we were out of town you piled up all of the gee-gaws throughout the house in one big pile in the bedroom and threw a sheet over all of them. We never could get over that one. Perhaps you forgot to put everything back after doing all of the cleaning? (I must say, however, that it felt wonderful to have a cleaning person in the house especially because by that time I was back to multiple jobs plus school over at Blue Ridge Tech.) Personally, I liked the minimalist look of the sheet but Kenneth didn't care for it.

Yes, the adolescent neighbor next door was a part of a very Magle-like family but both Daddy and I had been sued (for libel, if you could believe that) by Mrs. Magle when we tried to get Child Protective Services to do something about their living situation in Miami. That wound up being another Mr-Strahan-save of the Pepin family. Anyway, the Armstrong-Avenue-Magle-like-kid was pretty scary when I was outside working in the garden—the best garden site was right along the property line. Kenneth put up a high fence and bought me a Winchester rifle, which I still have; I took a course in how to use it. Once, the kid came over and knocked on the door over and over again when I was home alone. I called the police and then I answered the door with the rifle in hand—that seemed to take care of the harassment for the rest of the time we were there. When I went by last year it looked as though they all still lived there.

We are very glad you remember your stay with us fondly. The second floor was very high and had a great view—it was like being in an aerie. Kenneth did some of his best paintings up there in that studio.

Rose also stayed with us and I often tell a story about her stay. She complained over and over again about how cold the house was even though I thought it was hugely better with the

insulation and the wood Jotul than the freezing old trailer (where I had to run kerosene heaters in the bathroom for a couple of hours before I could take a bath in the tiny bathroom).

Anyway, Rose moves to her own apartment and she invites Kenneth and me to dinner. Well, we get there and we sit down at the kitchen table with other guests and it is so cold in her apartment that you could see your breath. So we ask Rose: Why so cold? And then she starts to complain at length about how high the utility bills are at the apartment, etc. What a difference being the one who pays the bills makes!

Good times! O'Neill was a sweetie.

Veronica Bower December 9, 2016 at 8:21 AM

You're right. I had forgotten the pile with the sheet, I was always about space and still am. But, I should have realized it was your home and not mine. My greatest joy was cleaning the wood floors....and even after David and I moved into our own home, I loved cleaning those floors. Ma always said she thought I was part Amish! But she always said I could make a box look like home.

Great memories!

Theresa Pepin December 8, 2016 at 1:29PM

To Cecilia, Bernadette, Paul Andre: I hope you realize that it would enlighten the family who were up in western North Carolina in the years from 1972-on to learn more about what your life was like in those years and later in Miami. Not to mention that it would help grandchildren and great grandchildren to read about the difficulties you passed-through as children and young adults. They may not read it right away—there are points in all of our lives where we almost have to be friggin' self absorbed—but they'll read it eventually. W.I.D.!

(Or, record your stories. I worked with an old couple, both in their mid 80s, at a writer's workshop last month who were both struggling to learn how to write so they could leave memories for their children. Imagine trying to learn to write in your mid-80s! At one point I couldn't stand to watch them agonize through the word- and grammar-selection process any longer and so I asked them to tell me some of their stories. In 15 minutes flat they had me totally enthralled with their lives—they were both born storytellers, with fascinating lives in a place and time I knew nothing about, and a lot of what they were trying to say in painstakingly considered words on paper was just pouring out of them in their voices and expressions—ininitely more expressive and meaningful. I told them to stop writing and start talking on video. I remembered I'd seen them drive up in a Lexus; knowing they could likely afford it, I put them in touch with a life videographer near their hometown in rural Georgia. They called me last week in near-tears on the phone about how much they had put on tape and how well they thought it had all gone. They had noticed my car was a banged-up old Subaru that looked worse than any of their farm vehicles: Would I accept a consulting fee from them? No, I said. They plan to do more oral taping. I hope they live long enough to get it all done. Whatever. It will be superb.)

Before 1972 none of us had the occasion to write each other letters—except that I have an exceptionally wonderful letter from you, Cecilia, when I was in Japan for several weeks—because we were all together in one family and in one location. We all assumed we knew

everything about each other when, in fact, one never does. While the departure of Ma and Daddy and the three little ones in 1972 was wrenching to all of us, and in different ways, it also meant that we have the irreplaceable record of 140 letters where at least “the little ones” had the chance to express in words what they would have left unsaid had they never left Miami. There is the added charm that you hear them growing up on the pages over those four years of 1972-1975.

I would love to know more about the lives of all of you as you grew up—whether in Miami or in the Carolinas. We have tons of photos of weddings and children. Should you have any journal writing, or want to write now, that would be a great gift.

* * * * *



At Armstrong Avenue, Daddy graded a garden space in the side yard and a badminton court on the lower terrace in back. Kenneth built a small garden house between the garden and the court. All four of us girls—the three little ones and myself—used to play on one side of the net against Kenneth on the other—his arm span is so great there wouldn’t have been any real play to the game otherwise.

I loved Hendersonville and Armstrong Avenue. Except for the one scary neighbor, the others were mostly retired people who had lived fascinating lives: One couple from New York City were jazz buffs who had known all the great players of Harlem and the Village; another wintered every year in Marbella; another had family visit from all over the world.

We adopted one of the family’s dogs, renaming Brownie to O’Neill because I’d recently gotten to know the senator’s

work well in a research and writing assignment. O’Neill lived long enough to get to finally rest from his sentry duty guarding family on a farm in his last year.

Rosie and Roni began jobs while going to school after they graduated high school. Both of them moved in with us, in succession, as a transition from the family home to their own apartments and homes. The families all came for big Sunday dinners. We made blackberry wine one year that became a particularly notable vintage—it blew up all over the wood cabinets in the kitchen. Very hard to clean. We joked that maybe the girls should have made wine and used it for dynamiting the rock at Lake Falls. Perhaps the wine would have done the trick better.

Time flew by. I doubt I was ever grateful enough for any of it in the Land of the Sky.



From: **Veronica Bower** bowerveronica43@gmail.com
 Subject: Re: Letters and stories
 Date: December 9, 2016 at 8:21 AM
 To: Tede Pepin pepintm@gmail.com

VB

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Good times! O'Neill was a sweetie.

Theresa Pepin
pepintm@gmail.com
 865-382-4226

On Dec 8, 2016, at 2:13 PM, Veronica Bower <bowerveronica43@gmail.com> wrote:

I have wonderful memories of my time living with Ted and Kenneth at the Armstrong house....some highlights....buying Kenneths brothers car Andrew...for 200.00 and a trunk held down with rope looking like it was hit by a pole. Later MA called it "the blue bomb"! That car rode like a dream though. Then the time I cut the tube of caulk for Kenneth caulking the windows. The hole I cut at the end was supposed to be a "small bead size" and not the size of a dime! That patient look he gave me..... and then the time I broke a pottery vase that was very important to both of you. I think I put something else in its place hoping you wouldn't know I made it fall by accident. I was probably cleaning!!! Well....you DID notice. Or looking for O'NEIL your dog and getting to know your "Magle-like" neighbors ! I have my fondest memories of living upstairs and always feeling like it was my own little space in the world!

From: **Veronica Bower** bowerveronica43@gmail.com
 Subject: **Re: Letters and stories**
 Date: **December 8, 2016 at 2:13 PM**
 To: **Tede Pepin** pepintm@gmail.com
 Cc: **Connor Esterwood Rita Esterwood** resterwood1928@gmail.com, **Bernadette Kiep** kiepbernadette@gmail.com, **Paul Pepin** pepin27@gmail.com, **Rose Miller & Tim** trmiller97@bellsouth.net, **Cece Pelaez** cecepelaez@gmail.com

VB

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On Dec 8, 2016 1:42 PM, "Theresa Pepin" <pepintm@gmail.com> wrote:

Yes, and now that some of us are beginning to have more time for reflection, as Paul has said, it would enlighten the family who were up in western North Carolina in the years from 1972-on to learn more about what your life was like in those years and later in Miami. Not to mention that it would help grandchildren and great grandchildren to read about the difficulties you passed-through as children and young adults. They may not read it right away—there are points in all of our lives where we almost have to be friggin' self absorbed—but they'll read it eventually. W.I.D.I.

I have to confess to have never bothered to read Ma's journals beyond a very fast speed-read even though Roni kindly copied them for all of us years ago. Currently, Emily is the family's best informed on the writings of Ma since she has transcribed all of her journals, her memories book and is now finishing up on her 1972-1975 letters. She says she has enjoyed reading them very much.

(Or, record your stories. I volunteered to work with an old couple, both in their mid 80s, at a writer's workshop last month who were both struggling to learn how to write so they could leave memories for their children. Imagine trying to learn to write in your mid-80s! At one point I couldn't stand to watch them agonize through the word- and grammar-selection process any longer and so I asked them to tell me some of their stories. In 15 minutes flat they had me totally enthralled with their lives—they were both born storytellers, had outlived five spouses between them, with fascinating lives in a place and time I knew nothing about, and a lot of what they were trying to say in painstakingly considered words on paper was just pouring out of them in their voices and expressions—ininitely more expressive and meaningful. I told them to stop writing and start talking on video. I remembered I'd seen them drive up in a Lexus; knowing they could likely afford it, I put them in touch with a life videographer near their hometown in rural Georgia. They called me last week in near-tears on the phone about how much they had put on tape and how well they thought it had all gone. *They had noticed my car was a banged-up old Subaru that looked worse than any of their farm vehicles: Would I accept a consulting fee from them? No, I said, but I would certainly accept a tape of that great story they tell about their cat Pinky, and I want a photo of Pinky, too!* They plan to do more oral taping. I hope they live long enough to get it all done. Whatever. It will be superb.)

Before 1972 none of us had the occasion to write each other letters—except that I have one exceptionally wonderful letter from you, Cecilia, when I was in Japan for several weeks—because we were all together in one family and in one location. We all assumed we knew everything about each other when, in fact, one never does. While the departure of Ma and Daddy and the three little ones in 1972 was wrenching to all of us, and in different ways, it also meant that we have the irreplaceable record of 140 letters where at least "the little ones" had the chance to express in words what they would have left unsaid had they never left Miami. There is the added charm that you hear them growing up on the pages over those four years of 1972-1975.

I would guess that we wrote well over 300 letters back and forth in those years of 1972-1975 but most of them are likely lost. I would love to know more about the lives of all of you as you grew up—whether in Miami or in the Carolinas. We have tons of photos of weddings and children. Should you have any journal writing, or want to write now, that would be a great gift.

All best, T

Theresa Pepin
 pepintm@gmail.com
 865-382-4226

On Dec 8, 2016, at 10:37 AM, Cece Pelaez <cecepelaez@gmail.com> wrote:

Theresa, what great stories! Most of which I had no idea, being in Miami. Poor Kenneth and his wall but how blessed you were that he knew construction and was so strong. Not easy times but we knew how to have fun! 😊

Cecilia Pelaez 🍌

From: **Theresa Pepin** pepintm@gmail.com
 Subject: **Re: Three little ones - Letters and stories**
 Date: **December 8, 2016 at 1:29 PM**
 To: **Cece Pelaez** cecepelaez@gmail.com
 Cc: **Paul Pepin** pppin27@gmail.com, **Rita Esterwood & Tony** resterwood1928@gmail.com, **Kiep Bernie & Chip** kiepbemadette@gmail.com, **Rose Miller & Tim** trmiller97@bellsouth.net, **Veronica Bower** bowerveronica43@gmail.com
 Bcc: **Theresa Pepin** pepintm@gmail.com

TP

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(Or, record your stories. I worked with an old couple, both in their mid 80s, at a writer's workshop last month who were both struggling to learn how to write so they could leave memories for their children. Imagine trying to learn to write in your mid-80s! At one point I couldn't stand to watch them agonize through the word- and grammar-selection process any longer and so I asked them to tell me some of their stories. In 15 minutes flat they had me totally enthralled with their lives—they were both born storytellers, with fascinating lives in a place and time I knew nothing about, and a lot of what they were trying to say in painstakingly considered words on paper was just pouring out of them in their voices and expressions—ininitely more expressive and meaningful. I told them to stop writing and start talking on video. I remembered I'd seen them drive up in a Lexus; knowing they could likely afford it, I put them in touch with a life videographer near their hometown in rural Georgia. They called me last week in near-tears on the phone about how much they had put on tape and how well they thought it had all gone. *They had noticed my car was a banged-up old Subaru that looked worse than any of their farm vehicles: Would I accept a consulting fee from them? No, I said. They plan to do more oral taping. I hope they live long enough to get it all done. Whatever. It will be superb.*)

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On Dec 7, 2016, at 9:52 PM, Theresa Pepin <pepintm@gmail.com> wrote:

Given the discussion about house-building, I should recognize, with deepest appreciation, that Daddy and "the three R's"—the title he often used for them—did help Kenneth and me with our first house on Armstrong Avenue in Hendersonville. It was a big step up from a pretty awful trailer.

We all tore off the roof of the old house—set on a picturesque one-acre lot overlooking the town—that we bought for \$10,000 so that we could add a second story on it. Then we tore down a wooden building that we were given at no cost because it was going to be demolished anyway in an old camp a few blocks away. We brought all of the wood over in the old wood-paneled station wagon, load by load. The three girls took all of the nails out of all of those boards so that Kenneth and Daddy and Kenneth's father Buddy and his brother Andrew could reuse them on the new roof, walls, and subfloor. Daddy insisted on supervising the (overboard)building of a circular staircase in one back corner of the house to get up to the second story using, of course, poured concrete for the foundation and hurricane clips (!?) per South Florida building standards. We used to joke that if the entire Laurel Park mountainside should ever be hit by a hurricane or tornado, at least that one circular staircase would be left standing. (Little did we know then that climate change makes that a distinct possibility.)

With me, the three girls also helped with the mortar mixing for the big front wall of the house, when Kenneth faced it completely with a beautiful stone wall. We kept telling Kenneth that he should only do a few feet at a time but, of course, Kenneth ignored the dubious looks of his girl-helpers and kept going full speed ahead. He had just placed the final stones on the top crown when we all watched in horror as the wall started to buckle and come down. Kenneth, of course, raced from one end to another trying to save the bulging wall but all of us girls were smart enough to stay well away. The entire thing wound up on the ground, many of the rocks on his feet. I have never seen Kenneth so angry, until he looked around at us

From: Rita Esterwood resterwood1928@gmail.com
 Subject: Re: Three little ones - Letters and stories
 Date: December 8, 2016 at 6:36 AM
 To: Theresa Pepin pepintm@gmail.com

RE

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On Wed, Dec 7, 2016 at 9:52 PM Theresa Pepin <pepintm@gmail.com> wrote:

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In between Kenneth's construction jobs and Daddy's loader jobs, they worked on the old house's plumbing and electrical. I can still see Rita hauling Daddy's electrical toolbox in to start work. I did all of the insulation work, recycling for a vapor barrier some old light-blue material that Kenneth's father had from one of the Berkley/Kimberly Clark textile mills he worked at. When the building inspector came by and saw my meticulous work on the walls—I was cold all the time when I first moved to North Carolina and so I wanted to make sure everything was tight before the final finish wall covered it—he said: "My Gawd, it looks as though a damn dressmaker did your insulation!" To which I said, of course: "Well, as a matter of fact . . ."

I look back and can hardly believe the amount of work and the scale of the accomplishment on the part of all of us—not to mention a pretty decent attitude and a good sense of humor, most of the time!

Much love, Theresa

Theresa Pepin
pepintm@gmail.com
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On Dec 7, 2016, at 3:32 PM, Paul Pepin <ppepin27@gmail.com> wrote:

One more thing I meant to include. Bernie one said daddy picked a terrible time to die! LOL just think how he could've helped us all build our homes

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TP

Given the discussion about house-building, I should recognize, with appreciation, that Daddy and "the three R's" (the name he often used for them) did help Kenneth and me with our first house on Armstrong Avenue in Hendersonville.

We all tore off the roof of the old house (set on a picturesque one acre lot overlooking the town) that we bought for \$10,000 so that we could add a second story on it. Then we tore down a wooden building that was going to be demolished anyway in an old camp a few blocks away and brought all of the wood over in the old station wagon, load by load. The three girls took all of the nails out of all of those boards so that Kenneth and Daddy and Kenneth's father Buddy and his brother Andrew could reuse them on the new roof, walls, and subfloor. Daddy insisted on supervising the (over)building of a circular staircase in one back corner of the house to get up to the second story using, of course, poured concrete for the foundation and hurricane clips (!?) per South Florida building standards. We used to joke that if the entire Laurel Park mountainside should ever be hit by a hurricane or tornado, at least that one circular staircase would be left standing. (Little did we know then that climate change makes that a distinct possibility.)

With me, the three girls also helped with the mortar mixing for the big front wall of the house, when Kenneth faced it completely with a beautiful stone wall. We kept telling Kenneth that he should only do a few feet at a time but, of course, Kenneth ignored the dubious looks of his girl-helpers and kept going full speed ahead. He had just placed the final stones on the top crown when we all watched in horror as the wall started to buckle and come down. Kenneth, of course, raced from one end to another trying to save the bulging wall but all of us girls were smart enough to stay well away. The entire thing wound up on the ground. I have never seen Kenneth so angry, until he looked around at us and realized we were terrified by how upset he was—well trained by Daddy in such instances—and so he started to laugh, and then we all laughed hysterically with him. It was not so much fun to take all that mortar off all those stones and start all over again but I have to hand it to Kenneth: he did learn and the next day did a mere half wall at a time—which the rest of us still thought was far too much to build at one time. I went by the old house last year and that big front wall still looks as solid as the year it was built, and as beautiful.

In between his other construction and loader jobs, Daddy helped us with the old house's plumbing and electrical. I can still see Rita hauling Daddy's electrical toolbox in to start work.

I look back and can hardly believe the amount of work and the scale of the accomplishment on the part of all of us—as pretty good attitude, most of the time!

Theresa Pepin
pepintm@gmail.com
 865-382-4226

On Dec 7, 2016, at 3:32 PM, Paul Pepin <ppepin27@gmail.com> wrote:

One more thing I meant to include. Bernie one said daddy picked a terrible time to die! LOL just think how he could've helped us all build our homes

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 7, 2016, at 3:09 PM, Cece Pelaez <cecepelaez@gmail.com> wrote:

Yes that was an awful time for the whole family. My sweet mother-in-law Odette secretly gave me some \$ for Daddy when she saw me upset I couldn't send more myself. They really couldn't spare it themselves so she gave me a few \$'s on the side. Especially since they covered all our wedding costs. Good people. I'm glad to know, in some small way, our wedding lifted some spirits. It did mine! Not sure I ever adequately thanked each of you for your efforts.

Cecilia Pelaez 🐛

On Dec 7, 2016, at 9:20 AM, Theresa Pepin <pepintm@gmail.com> wrote:

I think we all forgot them, which is why they seemed like such a miracle to find when I opened the suitcase. I had thought that the suitcase mostly had my travel stuff from the years before I married in 1976, and Daddy's old financial records/checks/bank statements for 2231 from that time, and it did, but also the letters, posters, drawings, and handmade cards from the girls. You have to remember that long distance phone calls were expensive and at much of the beginning of the period 1972-1975 they did not have a phone.

The mid-70s were a very busy time for the older four siblings, all of whom were starting work and/or school—and then there were the constant financial pressures of never enough money, made desperately worse when Daddy wound up with very little of the promised investment from Mr. Feeney. In addition to bank loans and second mortgages, he had to

22. Make Something of Yourself

I've mentioned before how struck I've been by the notion, often expressed in our parents' writings, that they must "make something" of themselves.

True, despite his high-minded intentions, our father wasn't without faults. He wouldn't have been the first person to tell you that only because he didn't say much anyway. He could indulge in "the sauce" as our mother termed it, far too much, with harrowing results. But he did not seek only personal oblivion and he did not die in front of a television. He, and our mother, never stopped trying and caring.

As late as 1972, when our father uproots the younger family to take them on an adventure in primitive mountain living, he says in a letter to me from Lake Falls: "You must know that I am not attached to the locality no matter where it is as long as I make something of myself." He goes on to worry that he had not adequately thanked all of the many people who helped him in Miami—and then he lists them in great detail, for me to thank for him.

Mind you, it is December 1972, he is 61 years old, they have almost no capital of their own, and he must support a wife and three young children in an entirely new place.

Our parents both left behind a lot about their lives—in photos and in writings—that speak to their claim upon meaningfulness and their aim for achieving purpose. I find their attitude—that the record of their lives would point to a life of purpose and meaning—truly remarkable and worth celebrating even if I don't completely understand it.

In contrast, none of us siblings wrote journals and we lost a lot of paper as we scrambled to move from one job or school to another. In our generation, I think we would have thought a journal to be a rather grand and presumptuous thing to do—not to mention the time it would have taken. I personally have thrown myself into projects from time to time that I hoped would serve a good purpose for a larger good, but I have never had an overarching goal in so many words. It's been hard enough to just keep up with paying the bills. I would have thought of anything grander as overreaching.

We have all worked hard to put ourselves through school, progress in our careers, and raise families. Our cogitation and writing has been for our jobs or professions. That hasn't left much time for contemplation, but now a couple of us are finally beginning to retire and take up the pen, to look back and reminisce.

I still do some mentoring of university students, especially those who are first generation in college. Recently, I had a conversation with a young man who seemed paralyzed by the possibility that he would choose the wrong course of study, or the wrong career path. He wanted to "be somebody" and not make a wrong turn on the way there.

I tried to suggest to him that the journey through imperfect choices was the point. We may not know which choice will make all the difference for a long time, if ever, but there can be integrity—that rare quality—in trying and caring all along the way. And then there are the times—our parents had experience with hundreds of these—when you simply do what you have to do. They taught all of their children that lesson by their example.

There is a difference, I think, between these two ways of looking forward to one's future: "Make something of oneself" vs "become someone special." I am not going to belabor their contrast, but there is much food for thought there.

* * * * *

I've done a lot of ghost writing and professional writing over the years. But, except for bits and pieces, here and there, I have resisted recollecting and writing personal and family history. In recent years, though, having all of the family on email has been a wonderful medium for reviewing memories and perspectives.

We are lucky that our family's watershed years—1972-1975—involved an adventure instead of other calamitous events that are visited upon families every day all over the world. We are doubly fortunate that so much of our history is recorded. That means that we have not only specific details but also context. It is often what you learn about the situation at the time that leads you to finding and understanding more.

Still, in a world that doesn't read very much it seems fool-headed to write it down. My parents would have disagreed. They would not have been so forthright to say it when we were growing up, but I can hear what they would say now: To remember and to reconcile is to your own benefit. Just do it.

Everyone has a story to tell. The telling helps us know how much more we need to do to "make something of oneself." That work has no end.

23. Denouement

Even with costly heavy equipment and enormous amounts of dynamite—much of the latter set carefully in place by “the three little ones”—Lake Falls turned out to be an expensive enterprise. While the dream turned out to be more of a nightmare, it certainly did provide the challenge of a big project that our father seemed to always need. Otherwise, frankly, he would have been impossible to live with. Despite his many health problems, the usual alternative in older middle age of sitting around and watching the grass grow probably would have killed him much earlier and left none of us to mourn what was left of him.



At Lake Falls, he met his match—and the mountain prevailed. On the other hand, he did not seem to mind all that much, although we know that our mother suffered considerably without a fully functional kitchen for nearly two years. The girls had school and each other. He just kept moving on to the next obstacle and finally—after more than two years, working all together—our mother and the girls did have a normal home once again, even if it wasn't at Lake Falls.

There is a copy of their Lake Falls deed in the family papers that they left us but it was not registered. The survey that they were told was being completed in early 1973 also was never registered. We do not know what arrangement may have been made for settling with our

family friend. He came for long discussions with our parents—according to the girls' letters—in March 1974 and May 1975. We assume any agreement was not in writing. All parties directly involved are now gone. The records that remain show that the realtors and lawyers—perhaps even the surveyor—were not the fine people our parents thought they were.

The family gradually left the mountain top for a property along US25 in Zirconia/Tuxedo, finally removing all remnants of their campsite when vandals broke into the cabin in January of 1975. At the Tuxedo property, there was enough work to keep our father engaged by one project after another, including building two houses. In addition, he kept up with playing several musical instruments, and also turned his hand to some very fine woodworking on violin cases. To



amortize the investment, he continued to take the earth-moving equipment out on jobs.

Our mother became the camp secretary at Camp Green Cove, working year-round with Calla Bell. The girls worked at the camp and were given the opportunity to learn all sorts of skills that we had never had a chance to even try in Miami—canoeing, tennis, swimming. The older girls and brother were often green with envy to listen to them tell about their activities at the camp and on hikes. In truth, it was much easier for them all to be involved in their communities without the daily trips up and down the Mount Olive and Lake Falls roads.

While we are sad that our father would not live long enough to see most of the family's marriages and grandchildren, he could see that the family was thriving and we hope he took some pride and satisfaction in that. He remained a devout Catholic, despite his disappointment—certainly a grievous one—that he had outlived the music that was so much a part of his upbringing in the church.

A few weeks before his death, he'd driven up with Ma to see Kenneth and me. The old Volkswagen bug was on its last wheels and had no heat at the time. It was very cold and I have no idea what possessed him to make that trip. I had just started a faculty position at the university library. We had completed much of the renovation work on the North Knoxville tenement we had purchased and the main parlor had a big brick fireplace in it with a couch in front of it. Daddy did not leave the couch or the fire he kept going in that fireplace the entire time he was with us. We took Ma to the World's Fair but he said he'd stay home and try to keep warm.

He had marveled that he ever got through his 50s alive—let alone now through his 60s—after a score of close calls with his heart and what he knew of other male members of his family. He surely knew he did not have a lot of time left—there was too much damage to his heart and the stress of chronic pain made that worse. He pretty much withdrew into himself, spoke even less than he ever had, and kept working hard. We know that his self-contained reticence was exceedingly hard on our mother. She said that the last words he said to her before going out the door the morning he died was "I love you, Marian." She'd resented his unwillingness to go with her to a Christmas-season event the night before, so she did not answer him—something that pained her for the rest of her life.

We all have to decide how to approach our inevitable ending, if we remain mentally competent, and he succeeded at going suddenly and unexpectedly while working. His death certificate says he died on 9 December 1982 at work in a field near Chimney Rock in Rutherford County—immediate cause a myocardial infarction as a consequence of arteriosclerosis. The friend and co-worker who found him said the loader engine was still running so he had not even had time to turn it off.

I remember feeling terribly sorry for Roni's husband, David, who got the task of contacting each of us to tell us the news of our father's death. Daddy had so many heart attacks all the years of our growing up that our first reaction was to ask which hospital was he in, to which David had to respond: "He did not make it to a hospital." As much as I felt badly for David I did not feel sorry about Daddy—he had suffered so long already and it would have been so much worse for him to go slowly in a hospital bed.

Passing suddenly, at the controls of a front end loader was not a bad end for a life of hard work. I remember with how much glee Daddy worked from the loader with Kenneth on the ground to move large rocks into position on terraces at our first home on Armstrong Avenue in Hendersonville—Goliath (6-ft 7-in and 265 lbs.) in the trenches and David (5 ft 4-in and 144 lbs.) at the mighty controls.

[A painfully sad personal note is that my husband of 41 years, Kenneth Aaron Pace—pictured above with my parents not long after we married in 1976—died unexpectedly at age 67 on 3 September 2017 while I was finishing the last chapter of this manuscript. Kenneth loved our family unreservedly and invariably charmed my often-difficult father into a better mood. From among all the sons-in-law, the two spent the most time together and shared much the same skill set for everything from artistic talent to construction, although their personalities were entirely different. Daddy even taught Kenneth to play the fiddle. Our loss of the family’s “gentle giant” to a massive heart attack—at four years younger than our father—has been profoundly wrenching. — TP, 3 March 2018]



Even though the original land-clearer in our New World family, Pierre Papin in Montreal, lived to the much older age of 86 years of age in 1715, I think he would have been proud to know how the life of his direct descendant came to an end at age 71 in 1982. Paul Emile Pepin is buried in a family plot of the cemetery of the church he grew up in, across from the college he attended, in St Laurent, Montreal, Quebec. Rose and Rita accompanied our mother up to Montreal for the family funeral and burial.

Rita had received a letter from him the August before his death, not long after she started her first semester at UNC Chapel Hill. It is one of only three we have from him—the others being from Hooper’s Creek in 1970 and Lake Falls in 1972. He knew he could not write well in English—our mother had done much of his professional writing over the years. As in what he tried to say, what he does try to write is idiomatically French and so it doesn’t ever quite mean what I think he was trying to say.

The August letter is characteristically full of overwrought—if entirely sincere—worries about his children. He saw life as a struggle between good and evil and so his words can sound downright alarming to modern ears. We should remember that his upbringing was in a deeply religious French Catholic family and he lived through the Influenza Pandemic, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II and many personal struggles.

In this last letter, he clearly misses his youngest daughter, in particular. Still, he realizes she is away at college so she can make her own future, and he includes the sentence: “Do not sacrifice your school work for an answer to this letter, the later you answer the sooner you will be somewhere, where you want to be.” He would have been mortified to know that because of his death she was called home just as she began her first semester’s final exams. She had to work very hard to make up her G.P.A. in subsequent semesters.

There was still a lot of life that went on in the Tuxedo house. Rita came home from college at breaks, Rose visited, and Roni brought her young son from nearby Hendersonville. We all gathered there for holidays. I sent students to board with her for short periods while they were at internships in the area. Our mother continued to work, she learned to drive (shakily but finally!), she attended book club meetings, she made an amazing number of friends in the area, and she sang in several choral groups in Hendersonville. Rose and Rita wound up in Greensboro, NC, after Rita graduated from UNC Chapel Hill with a nursing degree. Our mother joined the girls there after selling the Tuxedo house in 1988, and later married a second time.

Our mother lived 29 years longer than our father. After a long decline, she died peacefully in Greensboro near the home of our sister Rose, surrounded by her seven children, on Valentine’s Day in 2011, 65 years to the day after she met our father in a musical casting call in Miami, Florida. Near the end she sang right along with us on some of her favorite melodies, with the difference that she could still recall all the lyrics, and the rest of us could not! The same month, her 4th great-grandchild was born to the eldest of her 13 grandchildren.

* * * * *

In all these years, I don’t think any of us have stopped thinking about Lake Falls. It really was, for our family, one of those dreams in the distance that none of us could let go. We never forgot our walks with the “three little ones” and Blue Boy through the woods and up and down the crevices of what seemed to us to be the most remote, wondrous, beautiful land. Every once in a while one of us would drive up there and walk around on our own—it is all very much grown up from what it was when we clambered over it 45 years ago.

We still have friends who live nearby and we’ve kept asking them if they knew anything about what was happening to the property. Newcomers took over the old Kenmure estate down the mountain side and that up-scale development rapidly grew up around Lake Falls. Still, some of the older families stayed steadfast where they were and we are glad about that.

When I recently started on the family history—and we found our father’s, mother’s and sisters’ trove of letters—we checked on Lake Falls and were overjoyed to see that someone had been able to afford to provide for its protection. There could be no fitter end to the story of the land of Lake Falls.

We have grown a family whose treasure is not in coin but in the character of our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We look forward to volunteering in any way we can as a family in order to support the conservancy. It is a great day when we can become a part of something bigger than ourselves and for the public good.



The photo above is of all the Pepin siblings taken on the occasion of the memorial gathering for Kenneth at Blue Note Garden on Friday 24 November 2017.

The Pepin family hope to come with several generations in tow to Lake Falls for a family reunion in 2020, if not before. I expect that most of us will remain physically able to volunteer to work in those woods we all loved. Since I am the oldest, and I will be 70 in that year, I suppose it is incumbent on me to set the example on that. See you then!

The photo below includes all of the Pepin siblings, a number of our parents' grandchildren, and one of the great grandchildren at Thanksgiving 2017 in Blue Note Garden.



24. Afterword

In the late 1970s, while I was working at the Henderson County Public Library, I had the honor of working with Frank L. FitzSimons on his third and final volume of From the Banks of The Oklawaha: Facts and Legends of the North Carolina Mountains. The books were based on the storytelling of local history that had spellbound his radio listeners for over 25 years of broadcasts. At the public library, we had learned that the answer to a local reference query was likely lodged only in the stories of his books, or in his recollections.

While I indexed all three volumes, Mr. FitzSimons treated me to many more hours of stories and legends about his family's longtime home so that I would be sure to understand the genesis of his better stories. The books won the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award in 1977.

The leitmotif of Wolfe's Look Homeward Angel refers to a well-known statue in a Hendersonville cemetery. A native son of the mountains, Wolfe, is famous for telling us that we can't go home again. But maybe the truth—although we rarely realize it—is that we go home over and over again, all through our lives, and down through the ages.

Now, in 2017, I write about our little sisters in Lake Falls as a part of a much larger research project into family history that has so far reached back to the late 16th century. I do so in my home in Knoxville, Tennessee, set in a rock quarry that sent marble to the National Gallery of Art in the 1930s. Its picture windows look out on the Tennessee River which I learned, not long ago,

was the river course for the intrepid voyageurs and *coureurs de bois* in our Papin/Pepin French Canadian family. There is a fine landing spot that I can see today on the opposite shore from our home that would have well suited those explorers as a camp site enroute.



From the evidence of old maps, historians believe that the French Canadians could well have come down the St Lawrence, over to the Ohio River, up the Tennessee, and into the French Broad, arriving at a trader colony in what is today Rosman and Lake Toxaway at the headwaters of the French Broad River. See especially: *Route que les Francais tiennent pour se rendre a la Caroline*—Map of Guillaume DeLisle, 1703.

Along its way into the higher elevations of the mountains, the French Broad River

skirts a small vacation cottage we were fortunate to have in Hot (Warm) Springs, NC. Still higher on its course from the mountains, it is not far from Lake Falls and another sister's home in Franklin, NC, close to the Little River.

The French Broad figures in one of the most frequently-repeated of our mother's many pithy pronouncements—this one about the fact that our father would get lost almost any time our father had to cross the French Broad near Asheville: “He always did have trouble with those French broads!” (My sisters will be chagrined that I come close to ending this book with one of our mother's corny jokes, but she deserves the last word. I can see them roll their eyes.)

It would seem that our migratory family has been circling its chosen homeland—and searching for its roots—for a much longer time than a mere few years, over and over again.

Appendices - Lake Falls Timeline, Map and Deed

1972

June Arrival in Hooper's Creek and then over to Lake Falls
Thanksgiving and Christmas up there
Theresa visits in late November
Lake Falls Christmas card
Hard winter - cold and snow
Brodeurs visit after Christmas - no snow for them

1973

January Highlights subscription starts to arrive
1973-1975 recession begins
February Daddy's bad back
March Car problems
April Cecilia's wedding in Miami
August Purchase and move to old house on US25 in Tuxedo/Zirconia
December Christmas in Miami

1974

February Aunt Lucienne's gift of money
February 2 Ma & Daddy have a big fight - Rose, Rita
March 2 Daddy sick - in St Joseph hospital - Rose, Rita - flu epidemic
Car in garage - Bobby Camp helps them out with transportation
The girls mention that Mr Feeney and his wife visit in Tuxedo for a long discussion
Daddy and the girls bring rest of stuff and Tough Tim down from the mountain
April Daddy's bad back
June Ma and girls start to work at Green Cove Camp
October Trip up by Theresa and Hanly
December Christmas in Miami
Wenski drives the girls and Ma back up to NC and then flies back

1975

January Theresa drives with Daddy back up to NC and then flies back
(Ma asked Theresa to accompany Daddy up and then Theresa flew back)
Propane tanks up at Lake Falls stolen - Daddy and the girls demolish the shack
and bring the lumber down to Tuxedo
They finally learn that they have clear title to the Tuxedo property that they had
already built on (their lawyer's error in doing the title search to not catch
judgment - judgment found by loan company - judgment not renewed)
Easter Trip down by plane of the 3 R's to Miami and back
Adventures on the way to the Atlanta airport
May Visit to Biltmore with girls and Ma and Theresa
Mr. Feeney comes to the Tuxedo house for another long discussion
Theresa starts to explore options for graduate school in NC or SC
Summer The girls complain that no one visits all summer

HERE WE ARE

DAM

TREE AT SIGN ON CORNER "LAKE FALLS CONSTRUCTION"

THIS ROAD CONTINUES ON TO TUXEDO (IF REACH MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH, TOO FAR - TURN BACK)

LAKE

TURN HERE

STEEP

(BE CAREFUL HERE - NUTS ENGAGED IN TARGET PRACTICE)

FALLS HERE (can't be seen from road)

STEEP

DO NOT TURN HERE

KEEP GOING UP MOUNTAIN

CAMP LAKE TON-A-WON-DA

LAKE FALLS RD.

TURN HERE

ROAD SIGN WITH HORSE + RIDER

SMALL LAKE

SMALL ROAD (DO NOT TURN HERE)

ESTATES

CARL SANDBURG HOME

35

FLAT ROCK PLAYHOUSE

FLAT ROCK POST OFF.

FLAT ROCK PLAYHOUSE SIGN

WARRANTY
DEED

BERNARD J. FEENEY
and wife,
ADELINE K. FEENEY
TO

PAUL EMILE PEPIN
and wife,
MARIAN FRANCES PEPIN

NORTH CAROLINA, HENDERSON COUNTY

The foregoing certificate(s) of

Notary Public (Notaries Public) is/are certified to be correct. This instrument presented for registration and recorded in this office this _____ day of _____, 19____

at _____ M in Book _____ Page _____ and verified.

Register of Deeds
(Assistant) (Deputy)

PREPARED BY
REDDEN, REDDEN & REDDEN
Monroe, M. Redden, Jr.
Attorneys at Law
P. O. Box 587
Hendersonville, N. C. 28739

Printed and For Sale By
FLANAGAN PRINTING COMPANY
Hendersonville, N. C.

My commission expires _____ day of _____, A. D. 19____
WITNESS my hand and notarial seal, this _____ day of _____, 19____
personally appeared before me this day and acknowledged the due execution by _____ of the foregoing Deed of conveyance.

I, _____, a Notary Public, _____, in and for the above
STATE OF _____, COUNTY OF _____, do hereby certify that

I, _____, a Notary Public, _____, in and for the above
STATE OF FLORIDA, COUNTY OF DADE, _____, do hereby certify that
BERNARD J. FEENEY and wife, ADELINE K. FEENEY
personally appeared before me this day and acknowledged the due execution by _____ of the foregoing Deed of conveyance.
WITNESS my hand and notarial seal, this _____ day of _____, A. D. 1973.
My Commission Expires Sept. 29, 1973

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, The said part 1st of the first part ha. Ve herunto set their hand s and seal s the
day and year first above written.
SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED IN THE
PRESENCE OF:
Charles R. Morse
Robert B. Morse
(Bernard J. Feeney)
(Adeline K. Feeney)

holders, executors and administrators, will forever warrant and defend the title to the same against all lawful claims.
and assigns, shall quietly enjoy and possess the same, and that the said part 1st of the first part

Zero Copy

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF HENDERSON

This Deed, Made this 13 day of February, in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and Seventy-three, between

BERNARD J. FEENEY and wife, ADELINE K. FEENEY

of the County of Dade, and State of Florida, of the first part, and

PAUL EMILE PEPIN and wife, MARIAN FRANCES PEPIN

of the County of Henderson, and State of North Carolina, of the second part,

WITNESSETH:

WITNESSETH, That the said parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of (\$10.00)
- - - - - Ten Dollars And Other Valuable Considerations - - - - - DOLLARS
in hand paid by the said parties of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have Bargained and Sold, Conveyed and Confirmed, and by these presents do Bargain and Sell and Convey and Confirm, unto the said parties of the second part, their heirs and assigns forever, all the following described piece or parcel of land lying and being in the Township of Hendersonville, County of Henderson, and State of North Carolina, and known and designated as follows, viz:

BEGINNING on a stake in the center of Lake Falls Road said stake standing North 5 deg. 30 min. West 29.60 feet and North 20 deg. 02 min. East 301.17 feet and North 45 deg. 20 min. East 163.41 feet from the southern most corner of that tract conveyed by Vanjay Development Corporation to Bernard J. Feeney and wife, by deed dated 16 October, 1972, which has been duly recorded in the Henderson County Registry, and running; thence with the center of Lake Falls Road North 38 deg. 11 min. West 62.68 feet; thence North 73 deg. 33 min. West 172.92 feet; thence North 8 deg. 03 min. West 104.88 feet; thence North 45 deg. 46 min. West 89.24 feet; thence North 2 deg. 53 min. East 61.08 feet; thence leaving center of said road and running South 86 deg. East 81.24 feet to an iron pin; thence South 86 deg. East 190.88 feet to an iron pin in the margin of a new road whose right of way is 60 feet; thence to the center of said new road South 86 deg. East 30 feet; thence with the center of said new road South 4 deg. West 305 feet to the BEGINNING and containing one acre more or less.