

NODAWAY  
aka 804 LAZY LANE  
KERRVILLE, TEXAS

As I have been writing down memories of earlier times in my life, I have been struck at how many references have been made to Nodaway. I thought it would be appropriate to attempt to describe Nodaway and the role it has played in my family's history. This website seems to be a perfect place to share the story. Although, I began this project as a way to pass on a lot of family information to my children, grandchildren, and greatgrandchildren, I decided to include it here since it contains a lot of historical information that might be of interest to anyone who wants to know more about this special neighborhood.-----Submitted by: Franklin C. Redmond

Briefly Nodaway is the name my mother, Viola Kellum Redmond gave to the house at 804 Lazy Lane. Through the years it has been spelled Nodaway and Nod-a-way. For consistency, in this paper, I will spell it Nodaway.

Origin of the name for the house: When my grandfather, Franklin "Hub" Redmond's family moved from Lee County, Illinois to Crab Orchard, Johnson County, Nebraska, in 1869-70, they spent the winter in Nodaway County, Missouri. Hub's brother, John, wrote a memoir about the journey and the early years in Crab Orchard.

My mother thought the name would be a good name for the house here on Mt. Wesley. I always assumed it had some meaning like "sleeping in the treetops," or "nice place to nap."

It turns out it is not an English word at all but is a Native American name. It is the name given to a river. The Nodaway River is a 65.7-mile-long river in southwest Iowa and northwest Missouri. It flows into the Missouri River. Nodaway County, Missouri gets its name from the river.

The river's name (as "Nodawa") first appears in the journal of Lewis and Clark, who camped at the mouth of the river on July 8, 1804, but who provide no derivation of the name. The name is an Otoe-Missouria term meaning "jump over water". The term would be spelled today in full as Nyi At'awe (nyi (water) + a- (on) + t'awe (jump)) and would be contracted in regular speech as Nyat'awe or Nat'awe.

In whatever way my mother appropriated the name, Nodaway has fit for our family's use for 85 years.

Lazy Lane, the street in front of the house was originally Shady Lane. When the area was taken in by the City of Kerrville, there already was a Shady Lane. The Postal Service required a different name.

One of the central or main aspects of the neighborhood that tied so importantly to my family was the Methodist connection.

When my grandmother, Martha Nehring Kellum came from Prussia with her family in 1883-84, they came to an area between Bastrop County and Lee County called Grassyville. Martha's mother Christine Amalie Krueger Nehring's sisters and brother immigrated to the same area. Augusta Emilie Krueger Kunkel and her husband were already in the Grassyville area and had joined the German Methodist Church in Grassyville. My grandmother and her family joined with them in the mid 1880's. That is one of the reasons she was Methodist instead of Lutheran.

My grandfather, Charles Smith Kellum and his family came to an area in Bastrop County known as Paige in the mid 1870's. They had come from the south Georgia/north Florida area and were strong Baptists. My mother used to say her Aunt Mattie (Charles's sister) was a Primitive Baptist.

Paige and Grassyville were only about 6-7miles apart. Charles and Martha met at a County Fair. After they married, they lived in Smithville, Bastrop County for a couple of years before they moved to Austin. They lived close to UT and a few blocks from the University Methodist Church, where my mother and her siblings grew up.

My father's mother Vinnie Metcalfe Redmond's parents had strong Midwest Methodist roots. She was born in Tecumseh, Nebraska, and the Methodist church was already going strong there when she was born.

My grandfather, Hub's parents had both come from Ireland where most everyone was Catholic. The Midwest rural areas where they lived did not have much of a Catholic population.

Hub and Vinnie married after he finished medical school (Kansas) in 1905. He was on the staff at Osawatomie State Hospital (named Kansas Insane Asylum until 1901). My father was born there in 1909. In the early teens the family moved to San Antonio, Texas and bought a house on Elsie just off of South Flores. Soon thereafter they bought a larger house around the corner on South Flores, where Hub had his office and saw patients.

Farther south on Flores was Harlandale Methodist Church, which the Redmond family joined. Vinnie and Donald were regular attendees. Much of Hub's practice was house calls, which included more and more deliveries of babies, so his church attendance was irregular. The minister was Rev. Sloan Lafayette Batchelor (who later became known as, "Daddy Batch."). He and his family became one of the largest influences on our family and amplified the Methodist connection to Nodaway.

My father recounts in his memoir that he joined the Methodist Church at age 6. He said that even though as a general practice in his ministry he had often thought that 6 was too young, he felt there was no hesitancy on his part at the time. Hub and Daddy Batch became and remained good friends even after Rev. Batchelor moved on to other churches.

**EPWORTH LEAGUE.** For over half a century the Epworth League, the Methodist youth organization, was especially strong in Texas. The group was authorized in 1890 by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and local churches in Texas soon began organizing their youth in Epworth leagues. The purpose of the leagues was to develop young church members in their religious life and to provide training in churchmanship. It was parallel to the Sunday school and typically met on Sunday nights. The name Epworth came from the boyhood home in England of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement.

A Texas State Epworth League was organized in 1892, and meetings across the state were attracting 10,000 members by 1896. In the early years there was a state league newspaper. In 1905 state encampment grounds were secured near Corpus Christi Bay and called Epworth-by-the-Sea; there, more than a thousand persons gathered annually until some issues arose with the city of Corpus Christi in 1915 which led to the sale of the property. The operation moved to Port O'Connor until 1919, when a hurricane swept away the property, which was then abandoned.

Summer camps have played a huge role in the history and economy of Kerrville. The first summer camp here was said to have been the Westminster Presbyterian Encampment, which was along Quinlan Creek in what is now part of the Schreiner University campus. Westminster provided a place for rest, recreation, and spiritual training. It operated from 1906 to 1950, and today only two of its original buildings remain.

Summer camps for children started showing up in the early 1920s, when Rio Vista (1921), was opened by Herbert Crate between Ingram and Hunt. Camp Stewart (originally called "Camp Texas") started in 1925. Camp Waldemar came along in 1926. Soon many summer camps could be found above Ingram and Hunt, bringing hundreds (if not thousands) of children to the hill country each summer for fun and instruction. By the mid-1920s businesses in Kerrville noticed the positive cash flow these many summer camps were providing local establishments and hotels, and when a new group wanted to establish a camp here, community leaders made them quite an attractive offer.

The leaders of West Texas Methodists wanted to have a new place for spiritual and intellectual training, as well as for social and recreational facilities for children, youth, and adults. This vision came to a climax in the fall of 1923, at the West Texas Annual Conference, when the following resolution was presented and adopted: "Resolution for

the establishment of the West Texas Encampment Association under the direction and supervision of the West Texas Conference of the Methodist Church South."

The first task of this Board was to find a suitable location for such an Encampment. A number of locations were offered throughout the conference, but Kerrville was considered by the Board as the most logical. In 1926, it was written 'The trustees were fortunate beyond their fondest dreams in accepting this particular body of land. It fronts on the Guadalupe River, affording an ideal place for boating, swimming and fishing, and rises gradually to the back line more than a mile distant. ... The 200 acres with the improvements, private and public, are now conservatively valued at 100,000 dollars and could not be duplicated for that amount.'

The front page of the February 7, 1924, issue of the Kerrville Mountain Sun carried the bold headline "Kerrville Lands Methodist Encampment." The story details the gift of 200 acres "from the Bud Porter and Starkey places west of city." It was noted the site was within three miles of Kerrville and on the Old Spanish Trail highway. \$11,500 needed to be raised to purchase the land for the encampment, and the Chamber of Commerce met at the St. Charles Hotel to plan a subscription drive. These funds were quickly raised by the Kerrville community.

"The encampment will also mean much to the moral and religious development as well as to the commercial interests of the city," the article reported.

In the March 27, 1924, issue, a big "lot sale" and barbecue were announced in another front-page story in the Kerrville Mountain Sun. "About 150 choice lots, ranging in price from \$100 to \$1000 each were to be offered for sale the opening day." Between 500 and 600 people attended, and 91 of the 130 lots were sold for \$150 per lot. By then there were two roads from the Old Spanish Trail (Junction Highway) to the top of the mountain, a water system, electric lights, telephone, cafeteria, and a number of tents, all in preparation of the program beginning July 8 and lasting until August 3.

Those first lot sales were the beginning of the unique and iconic neighborhood on the hillside of what became known as "Mount Wesley. Many of the folks who purchased lots and built bungalows in the Methodist Encampment did so to have a place for their families to stay during the summer months of the camp. Though originally for summer use, today many are occupied year-round.

The next significant Batchelor connection was when my dad went to college. One of his classmates was Daddy Batch's oldest daughter, Juanita. She had gotten involved with the Wesley Foundation group (the Methodist college student organization) which my mother was also involved with. Juanita and my mother became good friends, in fact Juanita lived for a while with the Kellum family. My dad also was involved with the Wesley Foundation group. He didn't do much besides go to class, study, and do things with the Wesley Foundation. I don't know if Juanita actually introduced them, but she

played a role in my parents getting together. In my dad's senior year my mother was president of the group, and he was program chairman.

My dad had gone to UT as a premed. He had done well grade wise. He was one of the "Junior five" elected to Phi Beta Kappa his junior year. He recognized that he really liked the church related activities and enjoyed sharing them with my mother. I have always felt Juanita was probably another influence in that direction. My dad was having trouble with Physical Chemistry because he had not been exposed to calculus. (What I think that meant is that he thought he was going to make a B instead of an A.) He had already been accepted to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. He made the decision to switch directions, drop P-Chem and pursue a church career. He didn't think he wanted to be a preacher but liked the idea of Christian Education. The director of the Wesley Foundation suggested that Yale Divinity School had an excellent program and helped him apply there. He started at the Yale divinity school the fall of 1928. The stock market crashed October 1929. His father, Hub, died in November 1929.

He and my mother got married June 1931. They got married at University Methodist Church. One of the officiants was H. Bascom Watts who had been the minister during their UT years. The other was the then current minister, L.U. (Lou) Spellman (a name that will come up several times concerning Mount Wesley and Nodaway) After the wedding, Don and Viola drove to New Haven. They stopped by Niagara Falls as their honeymoon. My mother, Viola, went with him to Yale for his last two years there. Finances were tight and he worked several extra jobs. One of his jobs was as an associate minister at a church in Stamford, Connecticut on the weekends. At first, they rented a one room apartment to live in on the weekends. That became too expensive since the church had decreased his pay. His widowed mother, Vinnie, rented out her place in San Antonio and moved to Stamford and rented an apartment. He and my mother then stayed weekends with Vinnie.

His last semester, they were trying to figure out what to do next. During the depression, jobs were hard to find. He was worried that his Yale education might make him less attractive back in Texas where things were more conservative. They were considering staying in the northeast. About this time, he got a letter from Juanita Batchelor telling him Daddy Batch was now the San Angelo District Superintendent, and he was wondering why he hadn't heard from Don. When he did contact Daddy Batch, he was told that he had a spot for him, and he needed to come right away.

Don packed up his wife and his mother and they drove back to Texas. He didn't even wait for graduation. He liked to tell the story about when his diploma came later in the mail, it was written in Latin, and he couldn't read it. My mother was able to figure out what, "*magna cum laude*" meant. Daddy Batch came through, and they were assigned the Methodist Church in Miles, Texas. My dad later discovered that during four or five years of the depression only 2 or 3 new men were admitted to the conference.

My dad listed a group of ministers that Daddy Batch had been instrumental in getting into the conference. This group of peers and cohorts of my dad were people I knew growing up. They were really an outstanding group of men, with wives to match. At that time the ministers had a relationship almost like family. As a kid growing up, I often thought of them like aunts and uncles. Some included Gene Slater, Chess Lovern, (both became bishops) Andy Hemphill, Ennis Hill, Billy Morgan, Bob Tate, and Sterling Wheeler, all of whom became leaders in the church and had ties to Mount Wesley.

Also, during this time, the Methodist Assembly went through some hard times. Daddy Batch had been on the Board from the beginning, and the case could easily be made that he had the most influence of anyone on the survival and growth of the assembly. Another stalwart for the Assembly was the above mentioned L.U. Spellman, who also was on the Assembly Board for years. He and Daddy Batch had been good friends for years. In fact, one of the close Nodaway connections is right down Panorama. Daddy Batch picked a choice lot and built a house with a deck and view. Lou bought the lot next door and built a cottage with a walkway connecting to the Batchelor house. Daddy Batch and Lou both had a sense of humor and were good story tellers.

As I mentioned before, the economic times were tough, and the Assembly always seemed to be just a step ahead of disaster. In a 1978 presentation on the history of Mt Wesley. Lou Spellman wrote about an event in 1939 at a General Conference meeting in Kansas City where the six Assembly Board members were in attendance. He got an urgent message from Rev. A. R. Veters, the general manager in Kerrville, that one of the local merchants in Kerrville that had sold them goods on credit was threatening to file suit for payment. The camp manager thought if he did, others in the community would do the same and the whole roof would cave in. Lou wrote, "I called a meeting of the six members to discuss the matter. We owed the man \$300, and he wanted \$50 a month for six months. We agreed, the six of us that we would pay \$50 each until the debt was paid. I remember Bro. Batchelor, who was a member of that board, standing up to make a motion that, since Bro. Lou was the Chairman of the Board, he be honored by being permitted to pay the first \$50. The vote was unanimous. I sent Bro. Veters the \$50 and believe it or not, before he cashed that check he sold a lot for \$300 cash and paid the whole thing."

The Assembly still had major financial problems. Two things finally put them on a sound basis. Maggie E. Moore, a major benefactor had lent money initially at start up. She held a note of about \$15,000. She made a future contractual gift for %5 interest per year for the rest of her life in exchange for the cancelling of the debt at her death.

Finally, the board had to deal with the reality that there was no other choice than selling some of the land near the highway and the river.

When they got back to Texas, my parents right away got involved with the Youth Camp program at Mount Wesley. They were frequent camp leaders for the groups that the

various local churches in the conference sent to Mount Wesley. One of the minister couples they became good friends with was Gene Slater and his wife. In 1936 they came up with the idea to buy lots and plan to build adjacent cabins on the “mountain”. (The original plan of the Assembly was to preserve the top of the hill for camp activities, so no lots were platted above the original ones.)

In 1936 the Slaters and Redmonds purchased lots 1,2, and 3 which were at the intersection of Panorama and Shady Lane (later Lazy Lane). The agreement at the time was that the Slaters would own Lot 1, the Redmonds would own lot 3, and ownership of lot 2 would be shared. The result would be that both would have a larger lot. Before they had the financial resources to carry out the full plan, the Slaters moved to a different conference and Kerrville was no longer a suitable place for them to have a summer house. My dad had a very friendly negotiation with the Slaters, and they agreed to sell us their share of lot 2. (When I was the executor for my mother’s estate, I tidied up some possible ambiguities and recorded the clarifications.)

My grandmother, Vinnie, had given Don and Viola \$500 when they married to take a honeymoon trip to Europe. They chose to wait until Don finished school and they were more settled. They ultimately decided to put the money into building a house on Mount Wesley.

Don and Viola served at Miles for a few years, then a couple of years in San Antonio, where my brother Gene was born in 1939, then on to Seguin that fall, where I was born in 1943. During the period of the late 1930’s, the Encampment grew slowly. The depression lingered and money was hard to come by. Structures were built, a small project at a time. Daddy Batch was still very much involved.

My family was in Seguin, on Sunday December 7, 1941 (as FDR said, “a date that will live in infamy”), and the world drastically changed. My parents had already started a building project on the hillside lot. Although prices for materials were still low, they didn’t have much money. Most everything was done through mortgages and borrowed money. Even when there was money, there was often a shortage of materials, as the whole country began a tremendous build up for the War effort.

For example, standard factory-made windows were simply not available for regular civilian projects. Obviously, windows were crucial to the design and needs of Nodaway. The builder had to custom-make each window unit in the house. We loved the aesthetic result and the ability to “open up” the house. However, there were practical problems and inconveniences that we struggled with. (If all the windows were open, they took up a significant portion of the floor space and limited room for furniture placement.) We spent years looking into alternatives for the windows. It wasn’t until 2022 that we finally found a suitable alternative that solved many of the problems but kept the look and feel of Nodaway.

In 1941, my parents contracted with Temple Lumber Co. to start building Nodaway. Temple was one of the oldest East Texas lumbering companies, and they had an outlet in Kerrville. I don't know who the architect was, but the design was fairly simple, keeping in mind that the house was to be built on a steep grade. The ground consists of a shallow layer of black soil (inches) over a caliche base, which is basically calcium carbonate that is like concrete. It is difficult to dig through. The downhill side of the house is the front. It has a concrete and rock wall and stairway, with a second uphill concrete and rock wall, making a front porch that went across the whole front side. The second wall is the base containing the fireplace and chimney that extends up three stories from the base. The middle level of the house is the main living area with the uphill base at ground level and the downhill side, at the second story level.

My parents wanted to continue the exterior walls of the whole house with the rock wall style that was popular in the neighborhood. Since they did not have the money, they opted for the wooden frame style that exists today. The frame house is basically a simple 20 feet by 20 feet square cabin. The base is on a pier and beam construction with a pine floor. The second level of the frame cabin (or third story) continues the 20 x 20 square construction. The house is topped with a pitched roof that originally was covered with simple composition rolled roofing. (The least expensive). Most of the exterior walls of the second and third floors were windows. Again, to hold down costs, the interior of the house was left unfinished. The exterior siding boards were fastened directly to the studs, and there was nothing else—no insulation or inside material. This of course left the house more vulnerable to cold, dust, and bugs.

Electricity was 110 volts supplied to a simple fuse box. Wiring was early ungrounded Romex to a half dozen ungrounded outlets and to a total of eight or nine simple light sockets. Plumbing was standard galvanized pipe with the pipe and drainpipes visible between studs. There was a commode upstairs and one downstairs that both drained to a septic tank on lot 2 that was shared with the house on lot 1. There was a bathtub/shower and wash basin upstairs and a wash basin and kitchen sink downstairs. They all drained (as grey water) into a grease trap and drain field that ran perpendicular from the south side for about 5-10 yards. For years, water was supplied by the Encampment from a well and two concrete tanks on the top of the hill. The water was high in calcium carbonate and iron. The house had no natural gas connection. The only appliance was a refrigerator. There was no cookstove, no dish washer, no washer/dryer, and no hot water heater. The only heating for the house was the single wood burning fireplace. The original construction included nothing outside of the house. It was truly a cabin in the woods. Our family has spent most of my life improving, maintaining, and repairing Nodaway.

In the beginning, Methodist Encampment, The Assembly, Mt. Wesley (all names used to describe the property) was three miles from Kerrville in an unincorporated part of Kerr County. The original 200 acres stretched from the Guadalupe River to the hill, Mt. Wesley. Since the Encampment owned the property, they made the rules and were in



charge of much of the activity. Their goal was to provide a suitable location for retreat and renewal in a Christian community with facilities to accomplish primarily summer programs for members of the Methodist churches in the conference. To support the program, they envisioned a community of church related families, primarily Methodist ministers and active laypersons, who would buy lots and build summer cabins/houses. This would not be a “commune” but more of a connected neighborhood.

For our family as well as some others, Mt. Wesley became like our “hometown.” Almost all of the ministers moved every 3-5 years and lived in church parsonages. Few owned a home of their own. Nodaway became our “de facto” home place, and the people became our old hometown friends. Even though we might just see them in the summer, we have had relationships that have been life long and generational.

The next event that further defined and shaped the character of Nodaway was the death of my father’s mother, Vinnie Redmond in August 1941. She had been a widow for about 12 years. She still lived in the South Flores Street neighborhood where she had kept the property where she and Hub had started. There were two small, very modest houses on Elsie St., a building on the corner of S. Flores, and the very nice house at 3519 S. Flores, where she and Hub had lived, and he saw patients. Vinnie still had the household furniture she had accumulated in the 30 years of living in San Antonio. Primarily living in furnished parsonages my parents, Don and Viola, had little room for extra items. Since Nodaway was new and empty, they moved most of Vinnies “stuff” into Nodaway. For the next 20-25 years, the inside of Nodaway looked like a middle-class home of the first half of the twentieth century. The furniture included a four piece living room set, a dining table with matching chairs, a long buffet sideboard, a china cabinet, a long hall table, a wooden upright side chair with leather seat (Hub used it as his patient chair), a full bedroom suite with double bed with headboard and foot board, dresser with mirrors and bench, a chest of drawers, a pie safe, an etagere, Don’s childhood rocker, a foot stool, and some lost-to-memory miscellaneous pieces. There were also two large glass fronted stacking bookcases complete with books, including many medical textbooks and reference books. There was a pre 1900 Encyclopedia Britannica set and some other decorative sets of classic books. There were shelves and boxes of old family scrapbooks and pictures of relatives and places. There was table ware, cook ware, and china ware. Of particular interest to me was a collection of Fiesta pattern and a companion Harlequin pattern china. Even though I did not know either of my Redmond grandparents, I felt like I spent time with them in their house every summer.

My dad was very intelligent, very disciplined, and very frugal. He learned early that there were lots of things he wanted but couldn’t afford at the time. He learned that many of those things he could do for himself, or he could budget and save regularly over time and then be able to afford them. He was a morning person with a lot of energy. He had confidence in his ability to make or fix things. His basic tool chest was a hammer, pliers, screwdriver, saw, tape, and glue. If you couldn’t do the job with those tools, you were out of luck. Interestingly, as he got older, he was a sucker for over hyped “multi-function”

tools. ("This amazing tool can do the job of 21 different tools") Unfortunately they were usually of very poor quality and only worked on the TV ads. In spite of his limitations, he came up with occasional breakthroughs. Usually his work was satisfactory, but sometimes it may actually have been dangerous.

He started on what was to be a lengthy project. He taught himself masonry. (And later taught me.) His method was tried and true, but the least expensive. His short-term plan was to make a suitable entry from Panorama to the back door of the house. He started with a retaining wall whose bottom part was a bench that flowed into a terrace that came down to steps and walkway into the back door. He spent most of his summer vacation time for years working on Nodaway. They did not have much extra money for travel, and Mt. Wesley was a pleasant place to be in the summer.

His mason's schedule would start early in the day, He would get in his car and drive out to various county roads and creek beds and fill up his trunk with rocks lying along the road or creek bed. He would go back to the house and start the concrete process. When he had scheduled a work week, he would order a delivery of cement bags and a yard or two of sand from the lumber company. He built a wooden "street box" (2 ½ ft x 5 ft x 4 ½ in) that is still under the house. You determine your recipe for concrete. You put the proper ratio of sand and dry cement in the street box and mix them together using a hoe. Then you gradually add water mixing as you pour until you reach your ratio or have the consistency you want. That is now your concrete. You then place your rocks where you want them and fill in the gaps with concrete and smaller rocks and pebbles. Of course, there are other things you do to get your desired results. You repeat that process over and over and eventually you get a wall or terrace.

Don and Viola had many friends, mostly ministers and their family who took advantage of the Redmond's invitation to come for a few days or a week in the Hill Country in exchange for some masonry work. In this manner, a little at a time we did all the masonry at Nodaway -- hundreds of hours of energy and sweat invested.

We also had inside jobs. One of the biggest, which we did ourselves, was to take in half of the front porch. Once again, my dad was the architect, contractor, and crew foreman. The original front porch wall had a double window similar to the other sides. The plan was to swing it around to rest on the end wall of the porch. Then we built two posts to frame in windows on the other two sides. We made a matching wall dividing the porch to hold two windows. My dad found some casement windows someone was discarding to put in and framed them with fixed glass panes. The roof was a simple single slanted roof with rolled composition roofing. The final product looked pretty good, increased the floor space, and served us well.

Initially we had a double old style electric coil hot plate that was sufficient to heat up a water kettle for washing dishes. We had a single coil hot plate and a 3-gallon kettle in the upstairs bathroom for the bathtub use. In the early 50's we excavated dirt out of the

space under the house to make useful room. We dug into the caliche and poured a concrete pad for an electric hot water heater. We had to get an electrician to pull in another line in order to get 220 volts and replace the fuse box with a breaker box. It was nice to finally get running hot water.

The electric hot plates in the kitchen were powerful enough to heat a frying pan or saucepan. In the 60's we added an electric frying pan. In the 80's we added a small microwave oven. From the beginning, one of our favorite cooking appliances was Vinnie's vintage electric toaster (1920's). It made some of the best toast ever, one or two pieces at a time. It is still there, and we still use it. The outside bar-b-cue pit and kitchen counter were functional by the early 50's. Any substantial group cooking or social gatherings were outside on the terrace/patio. The outdoor counter tile was some that Don and Viola bought in Mexico on a trip in the 40's with Viola's sister Marguerite and her husband. Later some of that tile was incorporated into the inside kitchen counter splash back when we did some remodeling. And even later, some remaining tiles were put in the living room coffee table. In keeping with Don's frugality, one might notice that the tiles don't all match, so he was able to buy them at a discount.

My dad had a long-term project of putting in insulation and paneling the inside walls. He also closed up the rafters and made an attic space. These were jobs that could be done a little at a time.

The 50's were particularly a time of heavy use of Nodaway. During the first part, we lived in Harlingen, in the Rio Grande Valley. Summers were hot and we had no air-conditioning. It was a long, hot 320-mile drive to Nodaway. My mother, brother, and I spent much of the summers enjoying the cooler climate at Nodaway. In 1954 we moved to San Antonio (65 miles away) and Nodaway became an even larger part of our summer lives. The job my dad had taken was a conference-wide job rather than the minister of a single local church. For the next several years, he was responsible for all the programming of Mt. Wesley. For June, July, and August there were youth camps as well as adult camps from groups all around the Southwest Texas Conference. It was a strong and popular time for camps of all types. During a period of about 15 years, Daddy Batch had been the full-time superintendent of Mt. Wesley. He managed the business part, the facility maintenance, and the "hotel" services (like the kitchen, dining hall, cleaning, sanitation, etc.) For years, the kitchen was run by Daddy Batch's wife and daughters. She was known to the ministers as "Momma Batch," but to her grandchildren and my generation she was known as "Big Mother"

For the other staff necessary to run an operation of its size, Mt. Wesley, like other church related camps, had a semi-volunteer, church oriented group called "Work Camp." It consisted mostly of college kids who were leaders in their local church groups or had been campers at Mt. Wesley in the past. They applied for the summer program for room and board and a small stipend in return for doing the general staff work which included working the food service three meals a day with helping in preparation,

servicing, and dish washing. In addition, they managed the room cleaning, trash and garbage, restroom cleaning, etc. There was typically a young minister and his wife hired on for the summer, that functioned as the *locum parentis*, spiritual advisor, counselor, etc. They would have regular groups in the evenings for various discussions. It was not unusual for some Work Campers to do more than one summer. Many went on to become ministers and/or leaders in their church.

Being in the middle of the Hill Country, Nodaway became involved in many ways with the general camp activities. When we lived in Harlingen, my brother, Gene got involved with the Boy Scouts. It was a good experience for him, and when we moved to San Antonio, he got involved with a troop that was developing at Jefferson Methodist Church. He was in high school, and he jumped in with both feet. The Boy Scout Camp for our area at the time was Indian Creek, which was across and on the Guadalupe River at Ingram, only about 6 miles from Nodaway. He got on the Staff with a group that became regular staffers and leaders and a group of lifelong friends that he continues to keep up with and have reunions up to the present time. Of course, the group grew to include wives, children, and grandchildren. After Indian Creek he was one of the first rangers at a new Scout Camp at the Rickenbacker Ranch, close to Hunt Texas. (Later it became Bear Creek Scout Camp.) For ten years or so, his summers included much time with Scout Camps. Nodaway was a central resource.

I followed to some extent into the same Scout troop and was a camper several times at Indian Creek. In the summer before my senior year in high school, I was a counselor at the YMCA Camp, Flaming Arrow, with my friend Kenneth Farrimond. It is in Hunt, Texas about 13 miles from Nodaway.

Initially, the Encampment had a "swimming hole" where they had dammed up the Guadalupe river with an old wooden dam. Even after they had to sell some of the land, they still had some river access. As the facilities grew, the structures were exclusively close to the hill, which made river use more difficult. After WWII, they had an Army surplus troop truck and a troop trailer that they would load up with campers and drive to the river. Not a far drive, and little or no traffic, but what a nightmare that would be for liability insurance today. When they ended using the river swimming hole, they started work on alternatives. Even though the weather is nice in the Hill Country, in the middle of the summer you need a swim. During this period my mother would sometime take us to the Kerrville public pool which was on Water Street.

In the mid 50's the camp built a nice pool farther into the main grounds. Since there were usually multiple camp activities going on, there was a schedule for use by the different groups. As a perk for homeowners in the camp area, we were allowed to swim during any time the pool was open with a lifeguard. I think we paid a small fee for the summer.

For me, those were years like out of a kids' novel. The two out of the three daughters of Daddy Batch who ran the kitchen were both schoolteachers, so they had the summer off. They each had a son about my age who spent the summer at Mt. Wesley, too. Juanita Wilson's son Jim and Imogene Miles's son Eddy and I became BFF's. With their grandfather, Daddy Batch being superintendent of the camp and my dad, Don being in charge of the program, we behaved as though we had carte blanche to do pretty much what we wanted to do.

In the early 50's the encampment was still somewhat isolated. There was little or no residential development to the west or north. Interstate 10 had not been constructed. There were few fences or boundaries and the three of us pretty much had free rein during the day to rattle around in several hundred acres of raw Hill Country land. There were other ministers' kids who had houses at Mt Wesley and would sometimes be there. Ennis Hill, for one had a house which he still owns farther down Panorama from our house. (He is now retired as one of the chiefs of the Dallas Fire Department, and he and his wife live in a rural area near Winnsboro, very much like the woods of Mt. Wesley.)

We were often like a mixture of Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, with a little Spanky and Our Gang thrown in. We didn't have TV or electronic games. We spent a lot of time outdoors, exploring and messing around. Horny toads were still prevalent, and we spent time chasing, catching, and playing with them. You could put them on their back and rub their stomach and they would go to sleep or become immobile. Sometimes we would catch one and put him in the middle of a red ant bed and watch the action. It is said they can eat 200 or so in a day.

The main wildlife that we saw was squirrels, birds, horny toads, and deer. Most of the other animal wildlife was nocturnal and/or didn't want to be around people. There were some small caves on the property that we would explore, and there was evidence of other animals. There was a particular place that we called "rattlesnake draw". (In all the years I have spent at Mt. Wesley, I have never seen a rattlesnake there.) They do like a nice sunny spot in the winter, but in the hot summer, they are looking for shade. Their main prey are nocturnal, so they naturally are more on the move at night. Also, they don't like to be around people. Over the years I have seen other animals like skunks, foxes, and even an occasional porcupine.

Several tribes of Native Americans lived and hunted in the area. There was a lot of flint bearing rocks. In the early days of the encampment, stone age tools and projectile points could be found. (Arrowheads and spear heads.) Pyrites from meteor showers were also some of the "treasures" to be found.

We occasionally would get off somewhere and sample smoking cedar bark. (It never caught on.) Or someone would find a real cigarette to try. The swimming pool was available several times a day during the week. The recreation hall had ping-pong tables,

shuffleboard, volleyball net, and basketball hoop. These were available for us when not being used by official camp groups. Sometimes we would help out the staff during lunch.

In addition to the house they had near the top of the hill and down a few houses from Nodaway, Daddy Batch and Big Mother lived in the Superintendent's house which was down in the main camp area. Since his daughters and grandchildren were also at Mt. Wesley, they kind of spread out. They had a window AC unit in one of the rooms down the hill, and it was a popular place for the kids to hang out. Eddy had an older sister who was often there, and she had a friend (the daughter of the Maintenance Assistant) who also hung out. There also was an old record player, and Eddy's sister had some records that we would listen to. (Elvis Pressley was very popular.) Sometimes we would play cards. Poker for matchsticks was the usual game, and I guess I can say that's where I learned how to play poker. (At Nodaway, we played chess, 42, and dominoes. My mother thought even with matchsticks, poker was gambling.) Eddy's sister was kind of bossy and sometimes she would make us dance with her. So, I guess I can say that's where I learned to dance.

I spent the summer of 1956 at Nodaway. Two of Daddy Batch's grandsons, Jimmy Wilson (my old friend from Kingsville) and Eddie Miles, and I talked our way into running the camp canteen/store.

We opened it in the afternoon and evening at free time and sold sodas, candy, ice cream bars, etc. In the store we sold cold drinks from a couple of old ice boxes. We also kept three large soda bottle machines loaded and serviced that were outside of the store and available around the clock. Cokes out of the machine were a dime. We dealt directly with the drink distributors, ice company, candy distributor, etc. and took delivery of products. We paid the bills out of proceeds and at the end of the summer divided up the profits. We also would pay ourselves regular dividends of a soda or candy bar. It was a real learning experience about business and work responsibility.

After that, I started getting involved more with friends and activities in San Antonio. Since we could get a driver's license at 13, most of my friends in San Antonio were already driving, and that's where the action was.

During those post war years of the 40's and into the 50's Mt. Wesley had an insular culture and feeling. It was a community of shared spirit, values, and connectedness that transcended geography, time, and generations. The most visible connection was the Methodist connection. In the 50's most of the people at Mt. Wesley, whether summer or year-round residents had some significant relationship with the Methodist Church. As I look back, my perspective is that persons were treated as individuals and social equals. I could have a conversation with someone 10 to 60 years my senior and feel like they respected me and what I had to say. When I have told people half-jokingly that Floyd Curl was a friend of mine, I am also serious--- he was a friend of mine, even though he

was 46 years older than I. (Interestingly, his son Robert, who was several years older than me also spent time at Mt. Wesley since his family had a house on the hill and his father was one of the church leaders. In fact, Robert ran the camp bookstore one summer. Robert seemed to me at the time to be a “nerdy type” always interested in books. Robert went on to have a career as a chemistry professor at Rice University. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1996.)

The adults in the community, both minister and lay persons, also knew how to have a good time. Two activities that stand out in my mind are the terrace/patio bar-b-ques that were frequently held at Daddy Batch’s hilltop house where he had a large pit. One of his niece’s husband was a butcher in Kerrville, and he would bring these huge choice prime sirloin steaks to cook on the grill. The sides (like beans, potato salad, etc.) were good but were only in a supporting role to the meat. In the summer, the famous Fredericksburg peaches were ripe, and either were sliced to go on top or chopped up to go in hand-cranked homemade ice cream. What a feast! On some occasions, there would be a smaller group at Nodaway around our pit, where more often, it was grilled chicken. But still with homemade peach ice cream. While the cooking was going on, the men often told stories and amusing anecdotes accompanied by much laughter. After dinner was when the raucous fun really got going with the group that didn’t have to get home early to bed. Two sets of double-six dominos came out, and the eight lucky players and teams of four were determined to play a rousing game of 84. Hill country 42 was well known for its intense and fierce competition. Hill Country 84 was 42 cranked up exponentially. These were people, both men and women, who had played with and against each other for years. This was one of the few culturally acceptable venues to let their competitive natures run--- and they took no prisoners. The volume was one crescendo after another as someone made a daring and exceptionally clever play to win the hand, or alternatively failed and went down in defeat. In the end, a good time was had by all, and everyone went home for a good night’s sleep.

The 60’s saw many changes concerning Nodaway and its role in our family life. The first major change was with Don, my dad, and the Southwest Texas Methodist Conference (the owner of the Methodist Encampment properties). At the time, Don was in a senior leadership role as District Superintendent of the San Antonio District. He was offered a newly created position as the Executive Director of a new section of the General Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, with their national headquarters office in New York. Don went through his usual process of discernment before he concluded the new job was a “calling” that he was suited for and accepted the job.

Don and Viola moved to Manhattan in the fall of 1960 for the next five years. Don went from the senior leader in the local conference to a member of the national general board. That same year a newly elected bishop was named to be the presiding bishop and assigned to live in San Antonio. That new bishop was from another conference, and Don had only slightly known him. Don and Viola, of course, kept up with their many friends in the conference but had little personal contact. Don no longer had regular and

intimate interactions at the conference level which meant he did know much about the goings on at Mt. Wesley. Further, he had no official ties to Mt. Wesley. Don and Viola's physical visits to Texas and Nodaway were limited.

My brother, Gene, had already been at SMU for several years when I started my freshman year at SMU in the fall of 1960. My parents boxed up what few personal items we had left at home and deposited them at Nodaway. Neither my brother nor I ever moved back home with our parents. Nodaway was our only "home."

Over the next four or five years my visits to Nodaway were few and far between. Unfortunately, time and neglect took its toll on the house. Since the house had never been properly sealed, dust and bugs tended to accumulate. Since we didn't store food and the house was not heated in the winter nor cooled in the summer, we did not have a problem with other pests.

The 50's had been a strong period in the mainline protestant churches in the US. Membership percentage actually grew faster than the population growth.

The 60s were a time of dramatic religious change throughout the Western world. These years were religiously explosive because of the convergence of major social changes with new currents of thinking and the impact of specific events, notably the Civil Rights movement, Vietnam War and Vatican II.

Church attendance, membership, and personal involvement began to decline. The Methodists were no exception. As programs like the youth education and activities, young adult social and devotional groups, active Sunday School groups declined, there was less and less a need for facilities and programs at Mt. Wesley. As local membership and involvement declined, there was less and less moneys available for the "extras" like Mt. Wesley. Government regulations concerning facilities for minors became more and more difficult for church youth camps to survive financially. At the same time the older founders and sustainers of Mt. Wesley were retiring and/or dying, and fewer of the younger people had experienced the history. As the decline continued into the 70's and 80's there were even some in the conference who thought the property should be sold.

One of the problems was with the facility itself. It had become old and too rustic for the adults who might want to use them. The "hotel services" had not kept pace with the potential customer demographic. A plan evolved to not sell, put more money into new and remodeled facilities, develop and market new "customers." The plan was successful enough to keep Mt. Wesley in the Methodist conference.

In December 1965, I married Jeanne Martinak in Dallas, Texas. We spent our honeymoon at Nodaway. We returned to Dallas where I was in my second year at Southwestern Medical School, followed by two years of post-graduate training. Jeanne,



who had graduated from UT, enrolled at SMU and got her master's degree and was an instructor. We had few visits to Nodaway during that time.

By 1967, the City of Kerrville annexed the whole tract that was the original 200 acres of the Methodist Encampment. There were legal changes, and some physical changes. The city took over control of all the streets as drawn on the original plat, that included signage (like street signs), paving, and maintaining the right of way. One of the results was Shady Lane became Lazy Lane. Another major change was the city took over the water service. The old system needed general overhaul and much replacement. The old pump, shed and concrete tanks on the top of the hill were replaced by a new well and a new larger sky-blue metal cylindrical tank (which was later replaced by an even larger tank that can be seen when driving in from IH10.)

The other main responsibility a city has when annexing a new area is to provide a wastewater (sewer) system. By statute the city is supposed to provide this within three years. After much talking, delay, and promises, it wasn't until 1995-96 that Nodaway was able to hook up to the new city sewer line. The hook-up is down on Lazy Lane at the northeast corner of the property. The drain line runs out of the lower south wall, turns east downhill to about mid-way then turns north and east down to the corner. There are two white PVC cleanout caps on the line, because it is such a long line. It has a good gravitational drop. Originally the city proposed for us to hook up to a sewer line south on Panorama, which would have been uphill and would have required a grinder pump. Also, it would have required some kind of easement and physical pathway across the neighbor's property. (No way!)

The other city "service" is once a week garbage pickup, which we have to pay for and almost never use. Also, technically we have police and fire coverage. Interestingly, in the early 50's we had a grass fire on the south side moving toward the house. We called the fire department who said they were sending a truck. (We were not yet in the city limits.) We fought the fire with our one garden hose and were able to put it out. The firetruck never arrived. We found out that the truck broke its axle trying to come up Panorama. We now do have a fire plug on Vesper Dr, above our house and another one on Panorama just to the north. (You can always orient yourself to direction at Nodaway by remembering that the sun rises on the Lazy Lane side of the house—the east and sets over the cross---west)

One of the legacies of being outside of the city limits for the first 30 years is that home building was not governed by city restrictions and codes. The result was the eclectic nature of the neighborhood. After being annexed, building was governed by setback and height restrictions, but the neighborhood has kept its charm. Over time the residents improved the quality of the homes making Mt. Wesley a desirable neighborhood. (It is actually a registered historic neighborhood with an official marker on Methodist Encampment Road)

In 1966 there was a big change with my dad's church position. He was no longer a ministerial member of the Southwest Texas Conference by virtue of being in a General Board position in New York, so there was no automatic place for him to return to. In his memoir he wrote about the circumstances surrounding his return to Texas. I had not thought much about the details, and I am not sure I really knew them. I was struck by how much the people involved were intertwined with Nodaway. I quote from his narrative, "The fifth happening of the year was the invitation extended to me by our good friend (at this time now the Bishop living in San Antonio) Eugene Slater to return to active service in the Southwest Texas Conference. He was to have two District Superintendencies open and asked me to plan to come to one of them: Austin or Corpus Christi. One of the vacancies had been created by the death of one of our long-time friends, Ennis Hill, who had died with a brain tumor. The Bishop planned to send to Laurel Heights, where Ennis had been serving, Darrel Gray who was on the Corpus Christi District. It was not until near the end of the year that he decided that it was to Corpus that he wanted us to go. (For the record let me acknowledge that Floyd Curl also had a hand in encouraging the Bishop to bring us back.)"

To connect the Nodaway dots: Gene Slater was the good friend that bought the lots where Nodaway stands together with my dad. Ennis Hill built a house several houses north on Panorama which his son, our good friend Ennis Hill Jr. still owns. Darrel Gray owned the house across the street on Panorama and got the Encampment to sell him the tract across the street between Panorama and Vesper Drive that we ended up buying. Floyd Curl had a house down the hill on Panorama.

My dad wrote further, "While our stay in New York was exciting (our frequent travels accounted for a great deal of that), we had, nonetheless, felt that we were on a mission assignment to a foreign land, and we welcomed the opportunity to return and with honor to our Conference and to Texas."

Don and Viola had come home, and Nodaway was back in play. Corpus, where they lived for a few years was close enough for them to begin enjoying the house again. Don continued with maintenance, repairs, and upgrades. While in New York they had bought a couple of small AC window units which they moved to Texas with them. Don cut holes in the upstairs bedroom and mounted them through the walls. It did provide some welcome cooling in the hot summer afternoons. The evenings were still fairly comfortable at night with the windows open.

Don recounted a story of a hurricane coming into Corpus. They decided they would stay and "ride it out." At two AM the force had risen so much, they got up, dressed and drove to Nodaway.

In the late 1960's, Don and Viola made what would be their last move as an active minister in the Conference. He was asked to be the Associate Executive Secretary of the Texas Methodist Foundation with headquarters in Austin. He was appointed by the

bishops with the understanding that the current Exec. Sec. was planning on retiring soon, and Don would then take over. During their time in Corpus and Austin, they were close enough to enjoy significant time at Nodaway and even had thoughts that they might eventually retire there.

The ongoing changes in the camp facilities and leadership staff resulted in less and less involvement of our family with the camp program.

In 1970 Jeanne and I moved to San Antonio with our two boys, Jim and Don, for two more years of post-graduate training. In 1972 we moved to Wichita Falls for my Two-year Air Force commitment. During those years our ability to enjoy Nodaway was limited. During the summer of 1973, I had accumulated a number of leave days that had to be used or lost. We did not have much of a vacation budget, so we took the boys and spent a few weeks at Nodaway with Don and Viola. It was enough time for my dad and me to work on a big masonry project.

In the summer of 1974, we moved back to San Antonio with Jim, Don, and new baby Ann. Nodaway became a more frequent place for weekends and vacation days. Sometimes Don and Viola would meet us as well. One of the negatives of Nodaway was that it had continued to become more of a depository for stuff. For example, Don was a collector of books and they both tended to collect magazines. Don soon had a line of bookcases built above all the windows both downstairs and upstairs filled with books and magazines. One of his collections was Readers Digests. He had monthly Readers Digests going back 50 years. The Lawyers bookcases were also filled, mostly with old medical books, reference books, and ministerial books.

Viola collected bric-a-brac, the definition of which depends somewhat on one's point of view. One dictionary defines it, "miscellaneous objects and ornaments of little value." Another, ""objects having a certain interest from being old, pretty, or curious.".

However it is described, the net result was a decrease in the available cubic feet in a small house. Further, the books and stuff tended to become dusty and mildewed. A challenge for people prone to allergies. Brother Gene, who had moved out of the area to pursue training and career had little contact with Nodaway as time went on. He was particularly bothered by the dust and mildew.

The addition of a second and third generation magnified the space problem even further. When Jeanne and I moved back to San Antonio, Nodaway had two double beds. We were short three spots. Ann was still an infant and we found an old antique baby bed in the rafters. (Not sure how many generations had used it). We put a new mattress in it, set it up in one of the upstairs bedrooms, and Ann used it for several years. We bought a set of used youth sized bunk beds and stacked them up in the downstairs sitting area for the boys. That worked fine for several more years.

The boys liked hiking and exploring around the hill. The area around the original Encampment area began to have more and more residential neighborhoods and houses built. Initially, we were still able to use the camp pool. Things changed over time as fewer of the hill side residents had much church connection and the old camp structure was disappearing. Finally, the legal liability and insurance issues caused the camp to limit use of the pool to actual registered campers. We knew the area enough to know of alternatives. The kids were still young enough to enjoy the swimming hole in the Guadalupe River at Hunt.

The next fortuitous thing that became a big part of our Nodaway experience and enjoyment happened mid 70's. A group primarily led by the oil-wealthy Hunt family of Dallas, bought the old Schreiner home built in 1901 across town and across the river from Nodaway. They fixed up the house, now called the Riverhill Mansion, built a golf course designed by pro golfer Byron Nelson, and started a members only private country club. We heard about it and looked into it. We were not exactly the country club set and had no budget for a big initiation fee and monthly fees. The way many country clubs function is around the golfing facilities. Golf courses are expensive to build and maintain. A course can only provide a limited number of players at a time. Golfers are willing to pay big dues to have access, but they want access (so golf membership has to be limited). Other club amenities and facilities, like dining, pools, tennis, etc. are much easier to be on a pay as you go basis. To market the whole product requires some exclusivity and flexibility. One of the ways this is done is by making different categories of membership. A typical restricted type of membership is a social membership, without golf. Another type is a junior membership with a lower initiation fee and monthly dues until one reaches a certain age. When we looked into it, the club was still soliciting income generating memberships. They had a category they called non-resident members. It was restricted to people who were not property owners in Kerr County or any of the five bordering counties. There was a very reasonable annual fee, with no monthly dues. All the facilities were available on a pay as you go basis. We made application for membership. Since we did not know people in Kerrville who were members, we had to stretch a little. One of the members was Howard Butt Jr. who had been a long-time friend of my dad through church and civic work through the years. Howard, very graciously agreed to sponsor our membership and we began a very nice comfortable relationship with Riverhill for now, over 45 years.

Over the next 15 years or so Riverhill paired well with our use of Nodaway. The main activities were use of the nice swimming pool and the tennis courts. There was a convenient snack-bar/grill and spacious locker rooms. We could go for the day in comfort. A frequent activity, particularly when we met up with Don and Viola, would be the Sunday brunch buffet followed by swimming. Sometimes my dad and I would have a work project at the house and the others would spend the afternoon at Riverhill. Easter weekend often included an Easter egg hunt put on by the club and an Easter dinner buffet. Jim, Don, and Ann often won prizes at the hunt. Another special feature was a 4th of July fireworks show over the golf course.

One of the ongoing issues at Nodaway was the upkeep and maintenance of the house, both inside and out. Jeanne and I moved into our house in San Antonio in 1974, and we faced similar issues with setting up a new house. The furniture at Nodaway was basically my dad's mother Vinnie's household furnishings which were moved into Nodaway when she died in 1941. Much of the furniture had been purchased in the teens and was already 30 years old in 1941. The living room suite was showing its age. The cushions were showing considerable wear and stuffing was protruding in places. The wood and cane were showing wear and tear. Viola had even crocheted some patches to cover spots. We all loved the old furniture, but by the 1980's it reached a point that something needed to be done. None of us had the budget to redo furniture in a house with as little regular use as Nodaway. Further, the furniture was really not appropriate for a summer "cabin." Jeanne and I were still putting together our house in San Antonio. We offered to move the furniture to San Antonio, have it professionally refinished and recovered, and put it in our sizable living room where we all could enjoy it. (Don and Viola moved into our neighborhood in 1978.) As part of the deal, we would replace it with more suitable furniture. We replaced it primarily with a large couch with a queen size fold out bed.

Don and Viola had long had the notion that in Don's retirement they might move to Nodaway. Their decision to move to San Antonio was influenced by their conclusion that Nodaway was not really a suitable retirement home without major remodeling.

An inherent difficulty that exacerbated the fact that Nodaway was really a small house, was with the windows. Since they opened into the room, they took up considerable square footage that limited size and placement of furniture. We struggled for decades trying to come up with an acceptable solution. On the north wall there was a long black hall table (5' x 1 ½') that was between the windows and the couch. On the south wall the dining table with side chairs went almost all the way to the windows. The result was that in order to open the windows, furniture had to be moved, which was very inconvenient.

The hall table had been damaged by a water ring in the middle. As part of our original deal, we took the table to San Antonio where I planned to refinish it. Jeanne had become very good at refinishing furniture. We learned that refinishing a good quality piece of wooden furniture often resulted in a much better final product than a new piece. My fantasy was that stripping off the old black lacquer would reveal a great piece of wood to finish. What was revealed, however was a wide row of glued 1-inch slats of unmatched hard wood (magnolia?) not suitable for natural wood stain finish. So, I refinished it in a high gloss color process, and the table is now neon orange in our dining room.

One of the upstairs bedrooms had a similar problem with too much of Vinnie's old furniture in a small area. When Ann was big enough to be able to use a regular bed, Jeanne convinced Viola that Vinnie's bedroom furniture would be great refinished for a

little girl's bedroom. It did look great and matched the painting of a little girl that Viola later painted for Ann. (That furniture is now in Ann's little girl's bedroom.) My dad made a built-in linen closet with a full-length mirrored door to go with a double bed frame as a replacement. The other bedroom had an unfinished wooden double bed that Don and Viola had gotten in the beginning.

During this time period, Nodaway again participated in camp activities. The church youth camp activities at Mt. Wesley had mostly been discontinued. In junior high school, Jim was as a camper at the YO camp (out past Hunt) for several years, culminating with a summer as a junior counselor. Nodaway helped facilitate that. Ann embarked on the annual summer program at Camp Arrowhead, one of the older girl's camps near Hunt. (It was next door to Camp Flaming Arrow, the YMCA camp I worked at when I was in high school.) Nodaway served as the staging point for Ann to go to camp each summer and was the base of operations for the adults in the family to stay for the activities we were invited to attend, like Tribe Shows, Waterfront Show, Sunday Parents' Picnic, and Closing Ceremonies. My son, Don, who created his extensive camp experience, at Camp Country Lad in Tennessee, missed out on those wonderful Tribe Shows at Camp Arrowhead.

In the ensuing 10 years or so, my dad, Don, continued with projects to make the space at Nodaway more usable for our growing family. As mentioned before, Don was not afraid to tackle most jobs. Also as implied, he was truly a "function over form" kind of guy. From the beginning, the stair side wall of the kitchen was occupied by Vinnie's old Jacobean style sideboard serving cabinet. It had some drawers and a couple of cabinets and served as kitchen cabinet and counter space. It was very limited in its usefulness. Further, it was elevated on 18-inch legs leaving significant cubic feet of unusable space. Vinnie's china cabinet stood facing the front door, dividing the dining area from the kitchen. It too stood on legs, creating unusable cubic feet of space. It was an interesting piece of furniture and held the colorful Fiesta and Harlequin china just fine. You have probably already jumped to the "punch line" --- Don cut off the legs of both, stacked the china cabinet on top of the sideboard and moved them on the north stair wall. He then made a built-in cabinet for the kitchen stair wall. *Voila*, more storage space, less *feng shui*. (Follow up note: my son, Don was able to later reattach the legs of the china cabinet and refurbish it, where it now stands in his dining room. Ultimately, the sideboard was not salvageable and went to Goodwill.)

The 1990's brought some drastic changes to the family and to Nodaway. Don died in June 1991, the day after Jim graduated from Princeton. Oak wilt swept through Mt. Wesley about the same time. Don died just a month shy of 82, outliving his father by 20 years. He had enjoyed a very fortunate and full life. Not so with our beautiful Spanish Oaks that covered Mt. Wesley and Nodaway. They had seemingly always been there and were expected to be there forever. We lost almost all of the big stands downhill of the terrace level. Viola took over the property and responded with an arborist and treated the trees that seemed to still have some life. Only a scattered few survived for a

while. We had some hardier small oaks planted for replacements. Fortunately, we had a few scattered different species of trees that kept us from having the denuded look of the campgrounds at the bottom of the hill. Later that summer, Jim moved in with Viola, who had basically never lived alone (in 86 years). He became her driver and sometime helper. He helped her negotiate with the arborist at Nodaway and contract with someone to paint the outside of the house. He would also drive her to various restaurants where she would treat him and his girlfriend, Lucia. He also decided to take some premed courses he hadn't taken and apply to medical school.

That is about the time I assumed my role as "Johnny Laurel Seed." We have a wonderful mountain laurel tree in San Antonio whose seeds are very strong and appear to love the Mt. Wesley location. They seem to love the shallow soil on top of the nearly impenetrable caliche, and further, the deer will not eat the trees. We now have hundreds of mountain laurel plants, from small seedlings to sizeable trees covering Nodaway's grounds.

In January 1992, Viola died, initiating another round of major changes. Don and Viola had the typical "mom and pop will." When Don died, Viola inherited all of his estate, including Nodaway. She had written a new will leaving all of her estate to me and my brother Gene. So, Gene and I would have been co-owners of Nodaway. Gene had basically left the area and the state since 1970 and had little contact with Nodaway. When he did visit Texas, it was to wherever Don and Viola were living at the time. (later he stayed with us after they were gone) Further, the house at Nodaway had become so filled with old dust and mold containing stuff, that Gene could only be inside for minutes before he began having allergic reactions. Therefore, almost all of his fond memories of Nodaway were when he was a kid.

We knew that he would most likely give us permission to do what we wanted with most things concerning Nodaway, however, we did not think that it would be fair since that would leave him with financial responsibilities, like taxes and upkeep as well as liability exposure as a property owner, with little benefits of use of the property. Jeanne and I decided to make an offer to purchase the property from the estate so Gene could get his portion in cash, which he readily agreed to.

In 1994, Jeanne serendipitously walked into a store in downtown Kerrville on Water Street (across the street from where Jim has a Kerrville office). She learned about Howell Ridout, a local architect who had a construction team that specialized in custom redo's. He had worked for James Avery Jewelry, setting up new stores, before going into the business on his own. (He later went back to James Avery and moved up to vice president and helped Avery expand over the state.) Howell was eager to see Nodaway. He was one of those architects who didn't try to sell you on much of anything but rather attempted to get to know what you liked or wanted and show you options of how to accomplish that. We could see immediately that he liked the house and setting and understood that we were not looking for change as much as improving what we had.

We liked his suggestions and plans for basically an inside overhaul, and we contracted for his group to do the job.

We had several estate sales to move out lots of “stuff” from Nodaway as well as Don and Viola’s San Antonio house. Viola had told Jim that he could live with her until he graduated from medical school, so we were not too rushed in liquidating and shipping things to Gene in Connecticut. Our objectives with Nodaway were several-fold. We wanted to try to better seal the windows against dust and bugs, which we did with partial success. We refinished the nice pine floors we found hidden beneath the old rugs and carpet. We replaced the east casement window on the porch room with a bay window that enlarged the feel of the space. We took out the built-in kitchen cabinet that Don had made and replaced it with a more attractive cabinet. We replaced the original kitchen countertop and added a splash back using some of the old Mexican tiles Don and Viola brought back in the 40’s. We put in 5 ceiling fans. We made the tub/shower more usable. We enhanced the mantle over the fireplace and upgraded the hearthstone. We did a few minor things and some artistic touches.

Our plan of attack was first, to totally empty the house. We rented a storeroom down the hill on Methodist Encampment Road at Junction Highway. We made a pact, or rules, with ourselves that we would only put things back in the house that would be currently useful and/or desirable. We would minimize “dust catchers” like drapes, rugs, books, old and excess linens, towels, etc. We would try to avoid putting things at Nodaway just for storage.

We were so satisfied with the net result, that we later contracted with the same group to remodel the second floor at our San Antonio house. Nodaway became even more appealing for short trips. Riverhill continued to be a way for expanded activities and entertaining. We put in a hotel/motel style wall AC unit with heat pump in the living room, which was sufficient to cool, even in the hottest summer days. The heating capacity was sufficient to make even cold winter days bearable. (If it really got cold, there was little reason for us to be at Nodaway.) Eliminating most of the storage and extra items of furniture made it seem more spacious. Overall, it became a much more comfortable “get away cabin”.

The second half of the decade ushered in a serious family expansion phase, with the addition of Lucia, 1994, Diana, 1995, Paul, 1996, and grandson, Thomas, 1998. Nodaway and Riverhill were available and used as needed.

In 1996, Nodaway had a threat from the west. The neighbor, Michael Walker, down the hill and across Panorama put up a For Sale sign on the property between Panorama and Vesper Drive right across the street from us. We were shocked. We thought that strip was still owned by the Encampment as part of the top of Mt. Wesley. When we talked to him, we found out that the minister he bought his house from had persuaded the Encampment to sell that strip years before. Walker, who was an architect, said that



not only was he planning on selling it, but he was also convinced there was enough space to build a house on it. Our understanding from the beginning when the lots were first sold was that no lot would be sold between our lot and the top of the hill. We had discussions and researched the Conference Board minutes and got various legal opinions and convinced Mr. Walker that we would oppose any attempt to build any structure on that property. We also reluctantly came to the conclusion that under the circumstances there were no legal means to stop him from selling it. The only way we could control what happened to the property was to buy it ourselves. We made him what we considered a reasonable offer to buy it. He declined the offer but took down his For Sale sign.

We did not hear anything more from Mr. Walker until April 2002 when we got a certified letter from him saying he had a sure buyer and planned on selling the property. He said out of courtesy to our position he would give us five days to buy it at his asking price (which was about ten times what we offered him in 1996) or he was going to sell it. Based on our previous research and our desire to protect our space, we purchased the property. Since we had no plans other than keeping it as raw land, we have not attempted to address any of the legal issues which might be raised if one wanted to build on it. It was not included as a lot on the original plat of the Encampment property. It is identified by metes and bounds out of an original survey back in the 1920's. We have used it mainly to grow mountain laurel trees and maintain the native flora.

The new millennium saw the continuation of the expansion of the family with Rebekah, Ava, Laura, Katherine, Charlie, and Fox. Laura had a baptism and reception at the Mt. Wesley Chapel at the bottom of the hill. The "sprinkler" was family friend Bert Clayton, and the "holy water" was from a bottle of water from the River Jordan, that Laura's Great Grandmother, Viola had brought back from her trip to the Holy Land in 1961.

During the next fifteen years or so, Nodaway would again be involved in camp life. Camp Arrowhead, where Ann had been a camper for a number of summers, had a major change. The founding owners died, and the family could not agree on a plan, there were lawsuits, and a failed attempt to carry on a camp program by the "winning" heirs. The person who had a lease on the property and ran the camp program for years moved the camp to a new location. Along with a group of women who had been running the camp, they found a spot on Honey Creek and physically moved some of the facilities to the new location. However, they were unable to secure the Camp Arrowhead name, so they opened the old camp with the new name of Camp Honey Creek. They had the old camp records and rosters of former campers, and they kept the traditions, tribe names, programs, etc., and in a short time had created a bona fide successor to Camp Arrowhead. Rebekah and Laura were strong Kickapoo legacies (Ann) and enjoyed many summers of involvement. Charlie spent some summers at Camp La Junta, across the Guadalupe from Hunt. He was joined later by Fox.

Nodaway continued to be a useful venue for family gatherings. Labor Day became a popular time for a Hill Country weekend. There were several years we rented rooms at the YO Hotel in Kerrville, took advantage of their pool, and had Nodaway bar-b-que. We then learned about the catfish fry at Doss, Texas. It was put on every Labor Day to support their volunteer fire department. Doss is a very small community north of Harper in Gillespie County. (Think one-room schoolhouse.) For a few years we rented one of the cottages at Riverhill and had our bar-b-que there.

Of course, hill country memories wouldn't be complete without mention of Crider's. It is past Hunt, just a bit more past Camp Arrowhead and Camp Flaming Arrow. Forever, or at least since the 30's on Saturdays in the summer there would be a rodeo followed by dinner and a country dance. People would drive from miles around to take part. It was where many of our kids saw their first real rodeo (up close). After the rodeo, people would gather at long wooden tables and benches for hamburgers, hot dogs, and French fries. (There may have been other food choices, but who would know.) The dance floor was a large smooth concrete slab suitable for boot scootin' and a band stand at the end with a live country band. It was a family establishment, and the dancers were of all ages. It was Thomas' first time to be asked to dance by a lady. We found out he stretched it a bit when asked about his age. He said he was 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  when he was just 12  $\frac{1}{4}$ . It turned out she was 17. We asked him, if he was going to exaggerate, couldn't he at least have claimed to be 13?

Today, Nodaway is furnished with simple and practical things suitable for a weekend country cabin. Most of the items fit in with the family history and the history of the house and neighborhood. It continues to be the embodiment of our family home.

The next section describes the great leap forward. After over fifty years of working on it, we finally came up with a wonderful solution to the "window problem." In 2021 we started once again looking into replacing all are some of the windows. We had gone down that path before and never found a product that quite met our needs and desires. In addition to the windows there was also a problem of window dressings. The remodel of 1994 had helped a great deal, but many of those fixes were wearing out. With that earlier remodel we had Furr downs put in above most of the windows. We found some inexpensive pull-down shades that pulled down, covering the windows for extra security when we were gone, but could pull up completely out of sight when we were at Nodaway. Those shades were falling into disrepair, and there were no inexpensive replacements even if we could find something close. Most of the options were spring and gravity dependent, which we had tried before without success. At the same time the mitigation efforts for sealing from the dust and bugs had run its course. The windows and the screens had deteriorated with some being beyond repair. So, we were pushed to try anew.

We had several issues that needed attention, so we decided to commit to a real project. We contacted a Kerrville architect, Mark Eubank, who had helped us with a Brittany job a number of years ago. We were really hoping to find a contractor who could do the whole job. Mark met us at Nodaway, and we talked about things that needed to be done. He said he could not be the general contractor but agreed to be our special project manager to help us find a good contractor. It took several months before he could find anyone who would even look at the job. Mark finally found someone he liked who was willing to look at the job, Chris Ray. Mark knew his reputation and we liked him too.

We all agreed for several reasons that we should consider replacing windows. The main providers of what we wanted to look at were Pella Windows and Anderson. We stopped in at Pella where Mark had a contact and liked the people. Chris said he had worked with both, and Pella was good. The new products available today are superior to the older ones. The strongest and sturdiest material is a fiberglass containing material stronger than vinyl. It is made with the same heat reacting level as the glass that it holds, so the expanding and shrinking is the same. With the older products, that difference caused the failure of the seal with the normal changes in temperature. Not to get lost in the details, but one of the things we liked about the look of Nodaway was the appearance of all the windowpanes (Maintenance of multipaned windows can be a problem.) The new proposed windows were a single piece of glass with slats that make them appear to be separate panes. The new way for installation is by custom design, making each window at the factory, from actual measurement. Pella convinced us that they could do what we wanted done. They had their own installation crew that did installations exclusively. They also offered us a fair price and generous payment options.

Chris had a painter that he could get to do the outside painting and touch up where needed inside. There were also some exterior repairs and framing that Chris did.

Chris started with one of the most satisfying projects. We had gotten increasingly uncomfortable with the outside stairs with no handrail. In short order he had a rail installed on the upper and lower back steps.

The replacement of all the windows in the house turned out even better than we hoped. An irony is that it looks very much like the old windows, but that is precisely what we were aiming for.

The final touch was finding a local shade company that made window shades for all the downstairs windows, that tastefully cover all the windows when we are away and can easily be pulled up out of sight for when we are at Nodaway.

We see little dust and no bugs. We can get all the fresh air circulation we want without losing any floor space. There is still masonry work to do on the outside.

Our family's involvement with the Methodist Church's role with Mt. Wesley has continued to diminish through the years as changes have continued with the activities and mission. We drive past the main building each time we go to Nodaway and have noticed some of the changes. We had heard that a few years ago, some type of arrangement had been made with the local First Methodist Church for some new programs. We recently drove by the camp and noticed a new sign, "The Light on the Hill at Mt. Wesley."

They have a web page that tells who they are and some of their history. Below I include excerpts from their web page which demonstrate how deep is the connection of Mt. Wesley and Nodaway. When I clicked on their history, the first thing that popped up was a copy of my mother, Viola's map of Mt. Wesley, with Nodaway (Nod-a-way) beneath the lighted cross. Much of the history that is listed is almost word for word the history of Nodaway as recounted above.

"Thru the years, as the center grew, it became the main Conference and Retreat Center for the Southwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church and it was simply, but lovingly known as Mt Wesley. For years it served as the primary camp center for the conference youth w/both summer camps and winter retreats. Beginning in the early 1980's it became the primary retreat center for the conference "Walk to Emmaus" program, a strong, popular, and powerful 3 day weekend retreat for not just the Methodist Church but also a number of other denominations. Over the years, thousands of individuals have encountered Christ during their time at Mt Wesley. Life-changing experiences have happened while at events held there and it is considered by many to be "Holy Ground".

In recent years a lot of changes have occurred which have affected the profitable use of the center. Legal changes in adult supervision requirements for youth has limited the number of participants making for much smaller events and thus impacting the financial viability. Also, The Southwest Texas Conference merged with Rio Grande United Methodist Church Conference which changed priorities for both conferences. Monies for maintenance and upkeep had to be diverted from Mt. Wesley to other causes. Selling the center has not been an option because of the significant, awesome and powerful part it has played in the life of the Methodist Church of the Southwest Texas Conference.

The center is now under the supervision and vision of the local Methodist Church--First United Methodist of Kerrville. It is being re-purposed, and a wonderful renewal is taking place in the form of out-reach ministries. It has been re-named Light on the Hill at Mount Wesley. A food outreach ministry, with many branches of social services, Mustard Seed Ministries, is now

located at Light on the Hill. Methodist Health Care Ministry commissioned a Wesley Nurse to serve the uninsured and underinsured in the community and she offices at Light on the Hill. Emmaus Walks will continue to be held. Meeting spaces can be rented for smaller retreats, gatherings and meetings. Some of the classrooms have become home to local non-profits. Families and Literacy and Kar Konnect are two of those groups. A lovely, small intimate Chapel is available for groups as well as a modern dining hall that will accommodate 200-250. A large indoor worship center can hold 300 plus and a stunning outdoor worship area can seat 200 or more with standing room galore.

Part of the new vision --- the repurposing --- the new life --- is that Light on the Hill at Mount Wesley will become an important and viable part of the Kerrville community serving many people and having a positive impact for many years to come.”

We are pleased that there continues to be such strong support in the community to keep the spirit of Mt. Wesley alive and able to maintain its role with the everchanging environment.

Over the last twenty to thirty years or more there has been a shift to full time residents in the neighborhood. Some have ties to the older Methodist connections and others are relative newcomers who were attracted by the charm and eclectic nature. The single entry and the history of the property development have maintained the insular nature and encouraged the community atmosphere that seems to be declining in many of our cities today. Even though we are not full-time residents we applaud, appreciate, and support the efforts of the group of neighbors who have organized to collect and share the history of Mount Wesley.

Our hope is that Nodaway can continue to be a “light on the hill” for our family now and for generations to come. In making future decisions about Nodaway, always remember, the “light” is not in the house, but in the heart.

