

Chapter 12: Moving Away from Silicon Valley

After I completed my memoir in the spring of 2013, the curator of the HP Memories website agreed to post several abridged chapters of the second volume on their site. Both of my books may also be downloaded free of charge at <http://tinyurl.com/o33y2bl>. I am grateful to HP for their generous offer, and I appreciate that during the past four years, several thousand people have shown interest and accessed the books from their site.

Our family's life has changed significantly since I first published the books, and I decided to add this chapter to Volume 2 to cover the most significant events of the 2013-2017 period. Of course, I might do that again sometime in the future.

Susan the Author

For two years, Susan participated in a series of unique classes called Guided Autobiography (GAB) to complete her 150-page book, *Keeping the Faith*. Rather than telling her story chronologically, it is organized by various topics, such as "Daddy Dearest" (relationship with her father), "Little Miss Helpful" (her eagerness to help others), and "Trust and Betrayal" (first major disappointment), among others. She is an excellent writer, and everyone who read her book loved it. One part, however, required unexpected changes.



Left to right: Susan's book, with her beautiful smiling face on the cover; Reading a section in her GAB class; Susan's grandparents, Opa and Oma, married at Oakland in 1900.

Here is what she wrote about her German-born grandfather, Opa, who lived in Oakland during the early part of the twentieth century:

Opa loved music, especially opera. On Saturdays, he would dress up in his finest, put a boutonniere in his lapel, and take the ferry to San Francisco to enjoy music in the Opera House.

After her Cousin Dorothy in Washington D.C. read the book, she called us immediately. When Susan asked how she liked the book, Dorothy dropped a bombshell: "Susan, Opa never liked opera."

"Why else would he dress up fancy and go to San Francisco every Saturday?" Susan asked with disbelief in her voice.

"He visited the ladies of pleasure in a certain part of the city," Dorothy replied, laughing.

Well, Susan's book now includes both the original and the updated version.

Considering a New Lifestyle

A friend and former colleague, Zvanko Fazarinc, called me sometime after my retirement. "I've sold my Palo Alto home and moved into a retirement community near Stanford," he said. "Let's have lunch here one day and catch up with everything. Bring Susan, too," he added. We agreed to meet the next week.

I'd heard about the Hyatt Vi, a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC), where my friend lived. In fact, before my former brother-in-law (Dave Bogart) retired, he was the head of their Physiotherapy Department. Susan and I had often driven by the apartment complex, located across from the Stanford Shopping Center but had never been inside. Naturally, we were both eager to see how retired people lived there.

Zvanko greeted us in the reception lobby and gave us a thorough tour of the facility. The 600-plus residents live in upscale apartments—ranging from studios to three-bedroom penthouses. The complex has a wide range of recreational facilities, including a gym and swimming pools both inside and out. In addition, well-appointed meeting halls, a large movie theater, a computer room, and a beauty salon are just steps from the residences. Of special interest was a well-equipped library with a special section for books authored by residents—some of whom were Nobel Prize recipients. The Vi's activities calendar was loaded with interesting programs: presentations, lectures, and guided tours. Our delicious lunch was served in one of the spacious, elegant restaurants. The entire facility was clean and impressive.

I liked the idea of the residents participating in activities without having to drive to another location. Life without grocery shopping, backyard chores, and home maintenance also appealed to me. "I am ready to move here," I said to Susan on our way home.

"Oh no, we are not ready for an old-age home," she replied. "Didn't you see all the wheelchairs and walkers parked outside the restaurant?"

She was right; the average age of the residents we saw seemed to be in the high eighties. Some of them couldn't even walk unassisted. At that time, I was seventy and Susan was sixty-five—both of us fit and in good shape for our ages. I did not push the idea any further.

The notion of moving to a Continuing Care Community, however, became more appealing as we started exploring the options available to us for our "old age." Living in such a place would be a gift to our children; they would not be burdened with looking after us as we aged. Growing older in our large Los Altos home, like some of our neighbors had done, did not appeal to us.

Another consideration was the hot residential housing market in Silicon Valley. As the cost of homes in our area rose higher and higher, Susan and I began to talk about cashing in on the capital gains of our large home, downsizing, and moving closer to our grandchildren in the San Diego area, where housing prices were 60- to 70 percent lower.

Finally, the prediction of another major earthquake looming over our region bothered us. The San Andreas fault line runs fewer than two miles from our house. The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake served as an early warning, shaking us up both physically and emotionally.

In early 2012, we contacted realtors to find a home for us in the San Diego area. Our ideal home would be a single-level, low-maintenance type, recently constructed and located in a good neighborhood—and close to shopping and medical facilities. Finding a house like that, however, turned out to be far more difficult than we assumed. Newer developments generally spring up far away from established shopping areas and hospitals. Those homes are also large, with two stories. Even after renting a condominium in Rancho Bernardo for a month to see what was

available in the area, we still could not find the right place. The realtors kept us in their active files and, from time to time, called us with new leads; we occasionally flew down south to evaluate. Nothing really appealed to us, so we just waited and hoped for the right home.

A TESLA in Our Garage

During the summer of 2012, two of the original founders of Tesla, Martin Eberhard and Marc Tarpenning, gave an eye-opening presentation to our IEEE retired engineers' group about electric car technology. They compared the energy efficiencies of various automobile power sources: conventional combustion, biofuels, natural gas, hydrogen, plug-in electric, and hybrid—from power generation to actual driving—and convincingly demonstrated the advantage of electric car technology.

Someone in the packed auditorium argued that although electric cars do not produce harmful emissions, the power plants that produce electricity do. The speakers quickly countered by pointing out that the electric car maintains the advantage even when coal is used to generate the power. At the same time, they lobbied for replacing coal with renewable clean energy sources throughout the world.

The presentation left a deep impression on me, and when Susan and I were ready to retire our third Prius in 2013, we test-drove a Tesla Model S. The quiet ride, instant smooth acceleration, a 17-inch LCD control panel, and simplicity of the mechanical structure convinced us to order a Tesla. With our selected 60KW battery options, they promised a 200-mile driving range without recharge, which sounded reasonable. The company already had several free charging stations along the major highways, so we could visit our grandchildren in San Diego with only two stops. For its size, the car had generous luggage space; in addition to comfortable space for Missy in the rear of the cabin. The “frunk” as they call it—a front trunk under the hood—also had room for two standard suitcases.

After installing solar panels on our home's roof and an electric battery charging station in the garage, we eagerly awaited delivery news. When the call finally came, a friend took us to the factory at Fremont to pick up our fire-engine-red vehicle. Susan generously allowed me to drive first. Half-way through the 30-minute trip, she enthusiastically took over.

Driving the Tesla was a real joy. The low center of gravity created a safe feeling through cornering. When we released the accelerator pedal, regenerative action slowed the car and simultaneously charged the battery. As we passed other cars on the highway, people often turned their heads to stare, because in 2013 Tesla was still a rare specimen. We quickly became the envy of our neighbors as well. *The only mistake we made was not buying Tesla stock, because its price increased tenfold during the next four years!*



Picking up the car at the factory; Our custom license plate: Zero CO₂; Charging in our garage

Within a few days we adjusted to driving the Tesla and only used our Lexus SUV when the larger cargo space was required. Tesla's door handles are unique in that they are flush against the car. They only extend when they sense the fob is nearby. The smart sensors also automatically turn the car on upon entrance and turn off everything when the driver leaves with the fob. This clever feature, however, frequently led to problems for me when I drove the Lexus and forgot to switch off the engine before walking away. Fortunately, nobody took advantage of my absent-mindedness by stealing the car.

A Fast Decision to Move

In the spring of 2014, son-in-law Jim's father passed away, and we flew down to Carlsbad, California, for the memorial service. While driving on El Camino Boulevard later that day, I noticed a large sign outside a housing development: "La Costa Glen, A Retirement Community." Despite our previous frustrating housing search, I said to Susan, "Let's go in to look." To my surprise, she agreed.

An attractive and friendly marketing employee showed us around the facility. Instead of having only four-story apartment buildings like the Vi in Palo Alto, La Costa Glen (LCG) also offered various floorplans of two- and three-bedroom villas with attached garages. The community had about 850 residents; the restaurants, libraries, entertainment, and exercise facilities looked compatible to what we had seen at the Vi. The saleslady showed us different living units—both apartments and villas of various sizes. We appreciated seeing the units completely furnished and chatting at length with the residents. They all seemed to be happy and healthy, and they expressed their enjoyment of living at LCG. Susan and I were impressed with what we saw and heard.



Aerial view of the La Costa Glen Retirement Community, located in Carlsbad about three miles from the ocean. The red tile-roofed buildings form a unique cluster with distinct Southern-California style. A convenient large shopping center is within walking distance, just across the street. (Our future villa is just above the yellow dot, near the bottom of the picture.)



L to R: LCG facilities; One of the courtyards; One of the libraries; Fitness Center / indoor pool

Next, the saleslady took us through their large healthcare center, GlenBrook, that included Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing, and Memory Care. She explained that LCG residents may move freely to the GlenBrook when needs arise—without any fee increase. Recalling the problems some of our senior friends had faced as they pursued suitable and available care

facilities after a stroke or major fall, our interest perked up. We knew that in the future we each might require more care than the other could provide.

“Does La Costa Glen look like the right place for you to live?” the saleslady asked at the end of the tour.

“Please give us a few minutes to talk about it privately,” I replied, hoping that Susan would also consider moving there.

“It’s lunchtime. Let me take you to one of our restaurants and let you to discuss it there,” the saleslady suggested. We agreed.

I noticed Chicken Schnitzel on the menu; a meal we both like. After ordering it, Susan and I exchanged our impressions of the facility. By the end of lunch, we concluded that neither of us had seen anything that we did not like. Because we had been considering the relocation for some time, moving 600 miles from the area where we’d both lived for nearly a half century did not scare us as much as we expected.

“It’s modern, clean, and close to our grandchildren,” said Susan. “Let’s find out the costs and availability.”

“I would only be interested in a villa. The apartment section did not have a garage underneath, and parking our cars elsewhere doesn’t appeal to me,” I replied. In agreement, we proceeded back to Marketing. During the next hour we learned more about becoming residents of LCG. Their health and financial requirements did not pose a problem for us, but the villas had an 18- to 36-month wait list.

“We also have a brand-new retirement community in Pleasanton with available villas,” said the saleslady, sensing that our enthusiasm was fading. “Our Stoneridge Creek (SRC) facility is less than a year old. Living there temporarily would place you higher on the priority list.”

“That’d mean moving twice,” I objected.

“True,” she replied. “But the villas of both places are virtually the same. The second move would be very simple.”

She showed us the floor-plans of the villas, and we saw that she was right. Downsizing from our five-bedroom Los Altos home with its large backyard to a three-bedroom SRC villa with a small patio would require careful planning and much work. *That* we could not avoid. After living at SRC, once a villa opened at LCG, a specialized moving company could handle the relocation easily.

The saleslady’s reasoning made sense. In addition, our physician son, George, lived in Pleasanton. Living close to him for a while would certainly be nice. We completed the required paperwork, made a down payment that placed us on the wait list, and flew home with a strong sense of accomplishment.

Visiting LGC’s sister community in Pleasanton was also an agreeable experience. SRC opened in 2013 and had nearly 600 residents, with a handful of villas still unoccupied. Owned by the same company, the requirements and rules of the two developments were nearly identical. The facilities were even more impressive. For example, their state-of-the-art meeting hall could comfortably seat more than 300 people. Their sparkling clean wood-working shop was equipped with modern new machinery. PC and Apple equipped computer room was open 24/7 to residents. The large dog-park even featured a fake fire hydrant to please the male dogs.

The condominium where George lived was within a five-minute drive from SRC. He and his wife came over to look at SRC and liked it as much as we did. In view of their positive

assessment, it did not take too long for us to decide to move there.

We spent a day puzzling over the available three-bedroom villas and finally chose one that faced a beautifully maintained common backyard. The entire community used recycled water for irrigation, so even at the height of the California drought, all the lawns and plants looked magnificently healthy. Following our request, the owners agreed to fence in part of the backyard for Missy, but declined to cut an indoor/outdoor dog passage into the wall for her. (We had one in Los Altos that allowed her more freedom to go in and out when we were away from home.) They allowed us to choose appliances, floor and window coverings, and paint colors. They installed a charging station in the garage for the Tesla. Susan and I excitedly looked forward to moving into a sparkling clean, brand-new home.

Selling our home in Los Altos was easy. Even though prices had escalated sky-high, the shortage of available Silicon Valley housing created many eager buyers with cash in hand, who thought nothing of bidding above the asking price. Realtors would not even talk to prospective buyers unless they had cash or preapproved guaranteed loans. Our home was sold “as is” in one day above the listed price, without any contingencies.

Once we decided to move to SRC in Pleasanton, downsizing our large home in Los Altos was a top priority. What to keep and what to toss was a challenge. Our new three-bedroom villa offered half as much floor space with a somewhat smaller garage. We carefully measured the closet space and room sizes of our new villa; then set about discarding. Thirty years of accumulated “stuff” slowly found its way to family, friends, charitable organizations and recycle bins. Expecting a large capital gain on the house that year, those charitable deductions would come in handy for tax purposes.

At the beginning of June 2014, less than two months after deciding to relocate, we contracted a moving company that showed up with two large trucks to take us to Pleasanton! With amazing speed, they packed up the furniture and boxes, leaving Susan and me alone in the empty house. With teary eyes, we said farewells to neighbors and in our two cars, we followed the trucks to Pleasanton. In less than an hour, we all rolled into SRC. Some of the curious neighbors met us when we arrived, offering various forms of advice and directions. Our lives had certainly taken a new path, and we hoped to be ready for it.

A New Addition to our family



Finn sitting at six months; Playing with Cousin Matthew; Held by little-mommy Madeline

Our big move was only one of the huge family events of 2014. Just a little over ten years

after their daughter Madeline came into the world, son Kent and his wife Joan added a boy to their family. Baby Finn made his appearance on September 6. Adorable, super-active and impish, Finn's joy for life is highly contagious; he keeps all of us on our toes. His big sister, Madeline is pleased to no longer be an "only"; she now has a sibling. Madeline's babysitting skills have been sharpened with Finn in the family, and all breakable objects have been hidden safely in the attic. There is never a dull moment when Finn is nearby!

Parting with My Sister

My sister, Éva, lived closed to us. Her sixty years of heavy smoking led to a serious case of emphysema and eventually to COPD. The diseases slowed her lifestyle considerably and forced her to use oxygen. Living on the second floor of a condominium required climbing stairs, which became increasingly difficult. Gradually, her driving skills also deteriorated, and we noticed several dents and scratches on her car. One plane trip to North Carolina to visit her daughter and grandchildren almost required an emergency landing during the flight due to her breathing complications. We all had to face the sad fact—she could no longer maintain independent living.

Once we decided to move in 2014, Susan and I reviewed with Éva two possible options for her: either come with us to Pleasanton and eventually San Diego, or relocate to North Carolina where her daughter and grandchildren lived. Both alternatives had some negatives.

If she came with us, she would rarely be able to see her daughter and grandchildren because of the difficulty she had with flying. Moving to North Carolina would mean giving up the Bay Area climate as well as both the physical and emotional closeness to Susan and me. Since Éva came to California in 1985, we had lived near each other and even worked together for about 20 years. Losing the close sibling relationship with me would be difficult for all of us.

After weeks of agonizing, she decided to move to an assisted living facility located near her daughter in North Carolina. Although the choice hurt me, as a parent I understood that being close to her daughter and grandchildren had to come first. Susan and I helped her with all the relocation tasks and with teary eyes escorted her to her last flight out of California.



L to R: Éva's 81st birthday with granddaughter Evike, taken a few days after her move to North Carolina; Her health decline was obvious 18 months later; Éva's daughter Debbie's extended family photo, with all six teenage kids.

Éva's new home, Caroline House, is a three-story building in Durham, not far from her daughter Debbie's family. At first, seeing her grandchildren more often had perked up Éva, but eventually the

long-distance move and the related physical and emotional strain took a toll on her. Forced to give up driving was another blow. When I visited her a year later, the change in her condition was shocking—it seemed like she had aged 20 years. The orderly who took me to Éva asked me if she was my mother!

To make matters worse, she fell and broke her hip. Due to her poor health, the doctors declined to perform surgery on her. Unable to walk again, she remains bedridden indefinitely at a skilled-nursing facility, weighing only 75 pounds. All we can do now is pray to God to make the remaining days of her life comfortable and, without pain.

Life at a Retirement Community in Pleasanton

Thankfully Susan kept track of the contents of the nearly 200 moving boxes and meticulously grouped them by their intended locations, using different colored labels. We also prepared a detailed villa map to show the location of the furniture for the movers. These turned out to be extremely helpful later during unloading.

Darkness had set in by the time the movers unloaded everything. Son George and his wife Erica came over to assist and brought food for our refrigerator. They also helped us set up our bed before they went home. Exhausted after the long day, Susan and I went to sleep in our new bedroom, next to the stacks of boxes.

A welcoming committee greeted us the following bright sunny morning and took us to breakfast. We learned that all of them had lived at SRC for less than a year, and the moving experience was still fresh in their minds. They all wore small nametags, a practice that we quickly adopted; very helpful to memorizing names. Susan and I felt accepted and agreed that coming here was the right decision.



View of the SRC Clubhouse and the inner courtyard; The indoor swimming pool; Front view of our new home, showing the typical blue sky and newly planted trees.

Within a month we had emptied the boxes, mounted the pictures, learned the layout of SRC, become familiar with the neighborhood and settled into a new daily routine. Being an early riser, Susan took Missy for an hour walk at one of the nearby open fields in the Pleasanton-Dublin-Livermore tri-city region. When they returned, we all had breakfast at home. Susan would then go to swim class while I worked out in the spacious, well-equipped gym—all located within a few minutes' walk from our villa. Lunch at home would be followed by various activities; yoga, table tennis, sewing and computer work. I would then take Missy for another walk at a huge nearby sports complex, surrounded by large open fields, where she had a humiliating experience on the first day of our walk.

In the backyard of our Los Altos home or at one of the nearby parks, Missy frequently encountered squirrels that she loved to chase. Generally, the squirrels found refuge by climbing up a tree or fence, where she could not follow. Occasionally, however, they met in open fields, where the short-legged squirrels could not match Missy's blazing speed. Blood was never shed, but wildly shaking the poor little creatures quickly moved them into squirrel-heaven. Missy then proudly brought the victim to us to show off her prowess.

In the open fields in Pleasanton, large jack-rabbits replaced the squirrels. Not knowing the difference, Missy immediately sprang to chase the first one she saw. About a hundred yards later, she returned exhausted with a humiliated look on her face, admitting that these new kinds of "squirrels" were much faster than the ones in Los Altos. Of course, she did not give up hope but never succeeded in catching one. Those chases, however, kept her in extremely good shape.

During my daily workouts, I developed a close relationship with the fitness coordinator. After he nominated me to the Fitness Committee, I was elected to be the Co-Chair. Our committee came up with program recommendations to improve the general fitness of the residents.

Before coming to SRC, I rarely had the opportunity to play table tennis—a game that I learned in my childhood and always enjoyed. Occasionally at Los Altos block parties, someone set up a table, but the level of play was at the beginner level. Well, it was a different story at SRC!. The first person I played was a five-foot two-inch Chinese-American man who was a year older than I. Looking at him before we started, I assumed an easy victory, but after hitting the first few balls, I realized that he was a far more experienced and accomplished player. Fortunately, he did not mind the skill-level difference and agreed to play with me regularly. During the next two years, "Master Han" helped me to become a much better player, and I appreciated his expert coaching.



The top four SRC table-tennis players; My sleep presentation for the residents; Portrait in 2015

One of the many benefits of living in a CCRC was the meal plan. Each person received 30 meal credits a month; they could be used for breakfast, lunch, or dinner but couldn't be carried over to the next month. We chose to use the credits primarily for dinner in the elegant restaurant or casual lounge. Arranging to dine with other residents gave us opportunities to become acquainted with many very interesting people. Occasionally, our children also visited and shared meals with us.

Susan joined the Livermore Presbyterian Church with other new friends from SRC and soon started singing in the choir. She also joined a women's Community Bible Study group that met weekly in Pleasanton. After the first year of our residency, she became a Villa Representative and sang with a small group of residents to perform at various functions. Although she had downsized much of her fabric and sewing equipment, she continued to quilt and sew; soon joining the Quilting

Club. They worked on several projects, one of which was providing the SRC veterans with personalized quilts on Veterans Day.

Recognizing that many of our neighbors had various problems with sleep, I gave a presentation on that subject in the large ballroom/meeting hall, attended by 130 residents. That led to organizing a sleep club. We had regular monthly meetings to hear outside speakers and to share our experiences. I also made frequent “house calls” to help residents learn how to live with their CPAP machines.

Those house call activities gradually increased when residents learned about my familiarity with computers, audio equipment and remote controls. It all started during dinner with one of our neighbor couples, and they complained about the interface between their audio system and TV.

“We have a great set of speakers but can’t use them with the LCD TV,” the wife said.

“Les can probably help you with that,” offered Susan.

“Our son is handy with electronics, but even he couldn’t solve the problem after we moved here,” the husband said.

Of course, I could not turn down such a challenge and showed up the next morning at their place, hoping to find familiar equipment. As it turned out, their high-end Bose was new to me, and it took me several hours to get the entire system working.

The news of my volunteer technical activity spread fast around our small community. Within a few days a new resident who lived just two doors away from us asked if I could help with the use of their Comcast cable TV remote control. When I went to see them, the man proudly took me through their three-bedroom villa to show off their electronics.

I could hardly believe my eyes. Every bedroom had a TV, cable box, VCR, and a DVD player—sometimes made by different manufacturers. Each component had its own separate remote control. In addition, the living room boasted a sound system and a universal remote control.

During the next week and with the help of his wife, I managed to convince him to use only one remote control in each room. We wrote clear instructions for each one, along with the functions he most commonly used. She put the other controllers away in carefully labeled boxes. After that, he only called for help when he could not find the instructions.

SRC had strict policies for dog-owners. Prior to moving in, Missy had to pass tests to prove her friendliness with people and other pets. We also had to sign an agreement to walk her only with a short leash and to clean up and properly dispose of her waste. Being such a highly trained dog, we never had any problem keeping our agreement, although Susan told me about an odd experience shortly after we moved in.

After she returned to SRC from a morning walk with Missy on leash, Susan noticed another resident coming toward her on the sidewalk. As soon as the woman saw Missy, she immediately moved to the other side of the street.

“Don’t worry,” said Susan to the other resident as they were getting closer. “Our dog is very friendly.”

“But I am not,” replied the woman angrily, as she hurried away.

So we learned that not everyone is a dog lover. Also, we soon found out that not all dog owners honored their agreement to “pick up poop.” After several reminders in our weekly publication, management threatened to follow the procedure used at LCG in Carlsbad. Having faced similar problems in the past, LCG required all dogs to be DNA-tested. After that, when poop wasn’t picked up, the guilty pooch could quickly be identified, and the owner was fined \$300.

Apparently, their new policy quickly solved the problem.

I called a meeting of all dog owners to discuss the issue. Hearing that the majority wanted to prevent the DNA testing, I proposed the formation of a club that would help residents obey the rules specified by management. Being the one who proposed the meeting, the group elected me to be the president. In our following meetings, among other tasks, we identified fellow residents who had difficulties in walking their dogs and searched for ways to help them follow the rules.

In the spring, the Activity Committee arranged with some stores of the nearby shopping mall to have a fashion show. They asked a dozen residents, including Susan and me, to model. Susan readily accepted that invitation, but I had trouble seeing myself parading in front of a large group while wearing borrowed clothing. After some arm-twisting, I agreed and to my surprise enjoyed the experience. So far however, none of London's Burberry Street fashion show organizers have called me to participate at their events.

Near the end of our first year at SRC, their Resident Council president informed me that one of their members resigned and asked if I would consider taking his place. Although I knew the president well—we frequently worked out together in the gym—I wanted to hear first how others felt about the council's operation.

As I searched for advice among the residents, some of them did not sound encouraging.

"The owners make all the decisions," said one. "Why waste your time?"

"The council members constantly argue with each other. They don't accomplish much," said another.

Listening to such negative attitudes, I began to wonder whether it might be better to not be involved. Then a third resident spoke up. "You have quite a bit of business experience," he said. "Perhaps you could help to settle some of the disputes."

After discussing the apparent challenging task with Susan, I decided to go forward and apply for the post. Within a short time the council members voted, and I became one of them. During my first year of service, I participated in a Task Force to handle issues between the residents and management. In the second year, I became Treasurer, and Chair of their Employee Gift Fund. These tasks required a fair amount of time, but I enjoyed my participation.



Dress-up events at SRC: Fashion Show; Opera; Halloween with neighbors, being Jack Lalanne.

Health Care Concerns

The Los Altos area offered excellent medical facilities. The offices of all our dentists and all doctors were close; some located within walking distance. If needed, we could easily drive to the Palo Alto Medical Foundation Clinic, El Camino and Stanford Hospitals in less than 15

minutes. Naturally, finding new facilities for our coverage in Pleasanton was a major concern.

Discussing our worries with doctor son George helped to put our minds at ease. The Dublin PAMF Clinic where he worked was only one freeway stop from SRC; we could be there door-to-door in ten minutes.

“I’ll recommend a good team of physicians for you,” he assured us. “Because all your health records are already in our computer, viewing them from the Dublin Clinic will be simple.”

He was right. The GP to whom he introduced us at his clinic was as skilled and caring as our former doctors.

Whenever we visited his clinic, we made sure to wear our nametags. “Is Dr. Besser your son?” the receptionists would always ask.

“Yes, he is,” we would proudly reply, and the royal treatment always followed. During our two-year stay at SRC, all our medical needs were handled exceptionally well.

Life in Silicon Valley Compared to the East Bay Region

After living in Pleasanton for a while, we recalled how prejudiced many of the San Francisco Bay Peninsula residents had been about life in the East Bay region. Some of our former neighbors did not hide their feelings when they heard where we were moving.

“The East Bay is culturally backward,” said one with a snobbish expression on his face. “You’ll miss the theaters and opera companies we have around here.”

“They don’t have the wide variety of ethnic cuisines,” warned another.

“The climate is more extreme. You’ll hate the hot summers,” added a third at our moving-away party.

Others cited examples of friends who had moved to the East Bay and felt remorse later.

“Don’t sell your home here, because you won’t be able to afford to move back here later,” we heard repeatedly. They were certain that we would not last long in the East Bay.

Well, those statements had some truth. Compared to the Los Altos climate, the winter in Pleasanton was somewhat colder, and the summer was warmer. The price of our former home continued to appreciate rapidly, much faster than in the rest of California. It took a while to find truly high-grade restaurants. Until Tesla opened a nearby dealership in Dublin, our Tesla did not meet too many of his cousins. Back on the Peninsula, if we did not purchase tickets weeks ahead to the Live from the Met movie broadcasts, we could not get in. Being cautious, we purchased tickets early to the first opera broadcast we attended at the East Bay—only to see the movie theater about 25 percent full.

On the other hand, being close to the Lawrence Livermore Lab, we frequently met highly educated people, many of whom also lived at SRC. We purchased inexpensive Senior Clipper Cards and enjoyed taking BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) into San Francisco as well as to Oakland and SFO Airports when we traveled. Life in general was more relaxed than it was in Silicon Valley. We would not move back!

Back to Coaching

Following my retirement, I greatly enjoyed twelve years of volunteer coaching with the local high school track team. After contacting some of the schools in and near Pleasanton, I agreed to work with the hurdlers of Granada High School in Livermore during the spring of 2015.

Due to a previous improper relationship between a teacher and a student that had occurred

at the school (as well as other issues), I had to go through all the health and background testing again. In addition, the district required me to take and pass nine lengthy online programs: Coaching Fundamentals; Concussion in Sports; Conflict Management—Managing the Angry Parent; Sexual Harassment; Child Abuse—Identification and Intervention; Boundary Invasion; Mandatory Reporting; Bullying and Response; and Sport Supervision and Safety. Never in my life had I worked so hard to become eligible for a volunteer job!

Track season started at the end of January and ended in early June. My commitment required me to be at the school's track Monday through Friday afternoons and to travel with the team to occasional track meets at other schools. Granada was only a ten-minute drive from SRC, which usually allowed me to be home in time for dinner. Although we did not have too many star hurdlers that year, we had an enthusiastic group that appreciated my help. Eventually, we caught the attention of the local newspaper, The Livermore Independent, and they published an article (<http://tinyurl.com/pya2pld>), under the heading "Teaching Others to Conquer Hurdles." At end-of-season ceremonies that year, I received an honorary team uniform.



Headline picture in the Livermore Independent, taken while I was working with a beginning hurdler. I hope only a few of the readers realized that the young girl was supposed to reach out with her opposite arm while attacking the hurdle.

Honoring My Mother

In the first volume of my memoir, I described how my mother had saved the lives of several Jews in Budapest during the Fascist regime. Among those, Mimi Furst was able to snatch her young daughter from the ghetto, using my mother's christening documents. Mrs. Furst had passed away, but her daughter, Judit, lived in Stockholm, and the two of us have maintained contact for some time.

"Laci, I want to nominate your mother for recognition by Yad Vashem¹," she told me during one of our Skype conversions.

Her offer touched me deeply. "That would be wonderful. What do I need to do?" I asked.

Judit downloaded and forwarded me the requirements. After I provided her all the information, she completed the application and sent it to Israel. About six months later, Yad Vashem informed us by mail that my mother was accepted. The Israeli Consul General in San Francisco would present her award to me at a special ceremony on the 2015 Holocaust Remembrance Day. The local media would also be invited for the event.

¹ An official Israeli organization that recognizes non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust (see more on the back cover).

Upon hearing the news, SRC's Executive Director generously arranged for a bus to take Susan and me, along with thirty residents who wanted to witness the occasion. George and Nanci also came along, as well as some other close friends. At the ceremony, I gave a short talk about my mother. The entire memorial was wonderful, and I hoped that Mom's soul was watching it from heaven.



The Yad Vashem certificate; Accepting the award from the Consul; Posing with Nanci and George

A month later, we attended the International Microwave Symposium (IMS) at the San Francisco Convention Center. I was cited with the honor of **Microwave Legend** for my contribution to Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and continuing education.

Although the microwave industry has expanded significantly since my retirement, we still recognized many friends and former colleagues among the 14,000 participants. One of those, a Hungarian professor and longtime associate, received the Career Award, the highest recognition of the microwave engineers' professional society (IEEE). We also stopped by the booth of our former company, Besser Associates, to chat with their current management team.



International Microwave Symposium IMS2016
22-27 May 2016 San Francisco, California

Moving Again

Wanting to be closer to our grandchildren, Susan and I periodically contacted LCG about the status of the villa availability and received the same answer, “18 to 36 months.” Finally, during the spring of 2016 a villa became available. Susan happened to be visiting Kent’s family in Carlsbad at the time, so she rushed over to inspect it. Within a short time, she phoned me.

“Les, the whole interior of a three-bedroom villa is gutted, and they are ready to refurbish it,” she told me with excitement in her voice. “Fly down to see it.”

The next day I joined her. We liked the unit, located on the south end of the community, and agreed to take it.

Selecting appliances, countertops, window and floor coverings and paint colors took a few more days. Marketing informed us that the remodeling would only take about a month. We returned to Pleasanton with a feeling of accomplishment and began to plan our move south.

An Unexpected Pleasant Surprise

I met Nanci, who lived in Concord, located about 30 miles from Pleasanton, and during lunch told her about our planned move. Both she and George knew that eventually we’d relocate to Carlsbad but didn’t know when.

“I am sorry to move farther from you, but it is only a one-hour flight,” I told her, seeing how surprised she was. Then, she sprang a big one on me.

“Aaron and I also have news for you. I am pregnant,” she said with a sparkle in her eye.

I gasped with disbelief I fully enjoyed the four wonderful grandchildren from Susan’s side of our family, but I had resigned myself to the fact that neither Nanci nor George would have children. It had been a deep regret of mine.

“That.is wonderful,” I stammered when I finally regained my composure. Then I jumped up and hugged her. After sitting down again, we called Susan to share the good news. A few months later, we learned that the baby would be a girl.

Early morning of the brisk first day of November 2016, Holly, our fifth grandchild arrived. Nanci, Aaron, and the rest of our family welcomed the new addition with joyful hearts. Susan and I flew up to spend some time with the parents, helping them to adjust to their new lifestyle.

Holly is a sweet, intelligent little girl with a penchant for curiosity; I naturally assume she inherited my persistence and perseverance. We all enjoy watching her grow and develop into her own person. I cross my fingers and hope she will share my love of opera, soccer and Hungarian food as well.



Holly at the ages of two months and one year; With her parents and cousin Madeline.

Transition to Southern California

Although Susan and I had known that we'd move to LCG one day, we just didn't know when. Now we knew and had to act fast. Finding replacements for the various committee functions we held turned out to be a major task. Fortunately, with the help of some old-fashioned "arm-twisting," other residents agreed to take over our responsibilities.

The replacement Resident Council treasurer and his wife arranged a farewell party for us where some of our friends performed the following song; of course, we joined in. The next day the RC arranged another party. With tears in our eyes, Susan and I said our good-byes to the many new friends we made during our two-year stay at SRC.

Quiet little song to mourn the Bessers' departure. Sung to the tune of "Clementine"

Written by Maryanne and David Silber

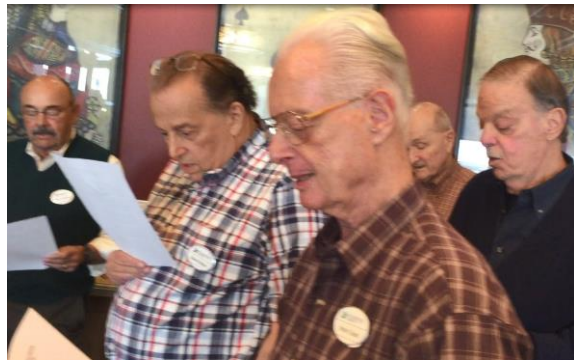
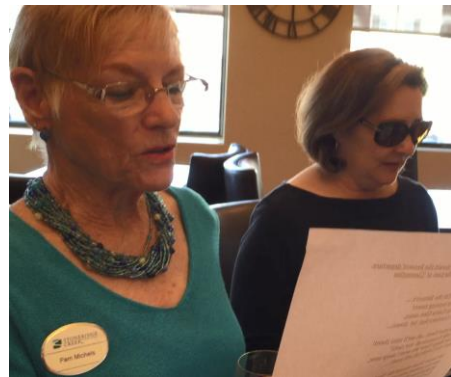
Oh the Bessers, Oh the Bessers....
Les and Sue are leaving town.
They are off to La Costa Glen soon,
Stoneridge Creekers feel let down...

We will miss them...oh we'll miss them!
Who will Treasure all our cash?
As for Sleep Club? We won't sleep now,
And our CPAPs all will crash....

We know Susan missed the "Singers"
But she quilted with her group,
Walked dear Missy, in the morning....
She'll leave friends here in the soup...

Yes, we hope you'll both be happy.
Little kids will bring you smiles,
But please know we'll always miss you,
Though you're distant many miles....

Oh, the Bessers, Oh the Bessers...
Les and Susan will leave town
They are off to La Costa Glen soon,
Stoneridge Creekers feel down!



Photos taken at the sing-along farewell party

La Costa Glen—Our Final Destination

As Marketing predicted, our second relocation was relatively simple. The current villa and the new one were nearly identical. Gentle Transitions, a company dedicated to moving seniors, assigned three teams for the task: packers, movers, and unpackers. The first team came to SRC, took pictures of the furniture layout, and packed our belongings for the movers. The next morning the movers showed up with two large trucks and loaded everything into their vehicles by early afternoon.

Before driving to Carlsbad at the beginning of June 2016, we decided to simplify our lives and part with our Lexus SUV, becoming a “one-car family.” The Tesla’s hatchback and generous room behind the rear seats provided a comfortable space for Missy. After the movers left, we loaded our computers into the car and took off with Missy for the 450-mile trip.

With fully charged batteries, our Tesla can cover 260 miles, so we could have made the trip using a free Supercharge station only once. However, to avoid any “range-anxiety,” we instead stopped several times for short rests at the Tesla recharging stations.

At LCG, the third Gentle Transition team directed the movers to unpack and place the furniture and furnishings where they had been in our previous villa. When finished, they folded the empty boxes and left. Susan and I watched with amazement at the ease and efficiency of the operation.

The two years we’d spent at LCG’s sister community proved to be very helpful for us in adjusting to life at La Costa Glen. Although LCG had opened in 2003, their customs and operations were very similar. Construction standards, however, seemed to have been higher up north, as we learned soon after moving in.

“Looks like we have heated tile floors in the kitchen and bathrooms,” Susan told me one morning when she walked around barefooted in the villa. After checking it, I agreed, but it did not make sense. Asking around the neighborhood, I found that nobody had the same experience. A few days later I learned the real reason: the hot water pipes, buried in the concrete slab foundation under the building, had developed leaks.

Our Plant Operation department followed up on our complaint and soon gave us the bad news. The underground hot water pipes would need to be terminated and rerouted through the attic. Then the pipes would be brought down to each water faucet by cutting holes in the walls. The messy repair would take an entire week!

The news hit us hard, particularly Susan, because we assumed the clutter associated with the move was already behind us. Our Persian rugs had been cleaned, pictures hung on the walls, and the entire home was sparkling clean. But there was no other option, so we had to face the construction. To ease our pain, management generously compensated us for our inconvenience.

Because at SRC both Susan and I jumped on board quickly and became involved with too many activities, we promised each other to go slower at LCG. In fact, we agreed not to take on any committee work during the first year. Instead, we’d become more heavily involved with our family, spending more time with them—particularly with the grandchildren. After that self-imposed limit passed, we gradually opened to participating in more activities. Susan became a co-villa-rep and a member of the Food and Beverage Committee. Not to be left behind, I applied and was selected to be a member of the Resident Council. As I write this chapter, I don’t know

what my additional role will be in the Council. Knowing that many in this community also have some form of sleep-related problem, however, I would like to assist our residents to have better rest at nights. Finding ways to improve the residents' "computer-literacy" is another goal for me.

After our third grandchild was born in 2005, we assumed that no more would be coming. In fact, I received a nice sweat jacket for my 75th birthday in 2011 with the lettering, "The World's Greatest Nagypapa," listing Matthew, Madeline and Grace around it. I treasured the jacket and only wore it for special occasions. After Finn was born in 2014, Susan added his name, and the same happened after Holly came along in 2016. Will there be any more surprises?



Left: Front view of our new villa at LCG, looking just like the one we had at Stoneridge Creek. By coincidence, the house number is 1987, which is the year Susan and I met. It must be a good omen. Center: Senior double tennis players, average age is 84! Right: Holly's first birthday.

Our latest Travel

Some people enjoy vacation travel to a single resort, packing and unpacking only once. Others prefer hopping through different cities or even countries during their trip, being exposed to variety of scenery and cultures. Susan and I have found that a good way to combine the benefits of both choices is by taking cruises—either on rivers or on the open seas. The former has the advantage of docking the small ships at the hearts of major cities, allowing convenient visits by simply walking off the vessels. For ocean cruising we prefer medium-size ships, carrying only 600 to 700 passengers, large enough to offer more amenities like swimming pools, gyms and a choice of restaurants, without the large crowds of the megaships. Our favorite cruise lines are Viking, Oceania and Regent Seven Seas.

In 2014 a wonderful South Pacific Cruise started in Auckland, New Zealand, and ended in Moorea, French Polynesia. The South Sea islands are indeed paradise in the Pacific. Halfway through the cruise, the Captain announced a major typhoon heading in our direction and asked if there would be any objection to changing our planned route. As one would expect, all passengers quickly agreed to alter course to avoid the storm. We gladly gave up one of the Bali ports to prevent a shaky experience.

In the spring of 2015 we flew to Paris to board a Viking river cruise and headed toward the Normandy Beaches, Giverny, Rouen, and Vernon. Based on our previous experiences, upon boarding, we jokingly asked, "Which union will be on strike this week?"

"None," came the reply. "All the union leaders are on vacation."

We visited Monet's former home and studio and witnessed some D-Day reenactments on Omaha Beach. Our beautiful trip was delayed only one day for several hours when one of the locks' crews was on strike. One can always depend on those French, ha-ha-ha.

In July of the same year, we sailed from Copenhagen to the coast of Norway, where at our first stop we realized that their summer is much colder than ours. Being thrifty shoppers, we quickly bought heavier clothing at the local Salvation Army Thrift store. Passing into the Arctic Circle and stopping at Longyearbyen where the World Seed Bank is located, we continued toward Russia's Murmansk, where we toured the first Russian nuclear submarine and spied the Russian military fleet as we entered the harbor. Next at Solovetsky Island, our tour guides took us through a former monastery that became one the most severe penitentiaries of the Soviet regime, where political prisoners had lived under inhumane conditions. Scary place!

On our return down the coast to Norway we took an RIB (Rapid Inflatable Boat, capable of moving at 50MPH.) to a crab safari. After a harrowing ride with the young hot-rod Norwegian crew, they pulled up the crab pots and allowed us to pose with their catch. Later we dined on fresh crab, steamed over an open fire in the icy Norwegian air— a memorable, delicious meal. Breathtaking fjords lay ahead as we continued down the coast, eventually returning to Copenhagen.

In April 2016, we flew to Miami and boarded a Regent SS cruise ship. With Erica and George joining us, we sailed through the Panama Canal and all the way to San Francisco. During one of the open-sea cruising days, I gave my sleep presentation to the passengers in the main theater. The cruise was fabulous, even though our scheduled stop at Acapulco was canceled due to safety considerations on shore. After coming home to LCG, we learned that our new neighbors, MaryJane and Jim Wiesler, had been on the same cruise at the same time, two floors directly below us. Small world!



Warming on a heated bench in Bergen; Holding one of the captured king crabs; Sunset at 11pm.

One of our most memorable trips took place in the spring of 2017. After flying to Singapore, where we stayed for a couple of days, we boarded the Oceania Insignia for a 17-day cruise to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), docking at Myanmar, Thailand and India on the way. While visiting one of the largest Muslim mosques of the world in Abu Dhabi, the "Moral Police" challenged Susan's full dress because her wrists were still visible.

At Dubai we rode a high-speed elevator nearly to the top (148th of 163 floors) of the highest building of the world, Burj Khalifa, as shown with the arrow in the photo). By the way, UAE

knows how to spend our oil money; most of their skyscrapers have unique architectural designs, their roads are clean and smooth, trains are modern and quiet, and most of their automobiles are new. We've never seen so many luxury cars in any city before: Bentleys, Maseratis and Rolls Royces swarm all over.



Impressive view of the former Soviet gulag; Burj Khalifa, 2,722 feet; Susan's "promiscuous" outfit.

Other Travel Activities

Repeating previous excursions, in 2013 we flew to Cancun to join Daphne, Jim, Matthew, and Grace for a week at Club Med. Swimming in warm turquoise water and lounging on white sandy beaches, playing various sports and games, and feasting at the delicious buffets kept us busy. Four years later, Susan and I returned to Club Med, but this time to their Ixtapa location where our friends, the Lahrs, joined us. We agreed to make it an annual visit, perhaps bringing some of our grandchildren with us next time.

Keeping with the tropical theme, we also spent time on the various Hawaiian Islands; meeting again with friends to share lazy days in the surf and sand. Susan and lady friends always signed up for Black Tiger Yoga to stretch and joined in the water aerobics, while I struggled with weights in a local gym. Somehow the ladies' workouts always look like more fun!

We flew to Washington, D.C., in September 2013 the same day as the famous Naval Yard shooting. Once again flags were lowered as a somber reminder. We stayed in Silver Springs, Maryland, using the Metro to go into the District. The highlight was a visit with Susan's cousin, Dorothy. Her son and family were visiting from Australia, so we also had a chance to meet them. They took us to Annapolis for a tour of the Naval Academy beautifully located on the Severn River in the Chesapeake Bay. We enjoyed watching parade of the trim, well-dressed cadets.

In June flew to Eugene, Oregon, in June to watch the US National Track & Field Championship with my former college classmates, the Lahr's. The meet took place in record high temperatures and provided opportunities to closely watch some of the world's top athletes. Even more thrilling, my long-term dream came true after talking with of the American national women team members—she allowed me to hold her Olympic gold medal in my hand!

Sunriver, Oregon, was colorful in October 2014 and VERY cold. The power was out when we arrived, so we drove back into town for pizza, candles, and matches! By the time we returned the power was back on. But from now on we carry matches!!



Pretending to be an Olympian; Different October years, one in Hawaii and another in Oregon

In July 2016, we traveled to Mt. Rushmore and the Badlands with our three older grandchildren, Matthew, Madeline, and Grace. Together we spent a week of exploration with the Road Scholar Intergenerational (programs especially designed for grandparents and grandchildren). Lots of spectacular scenery, history, horseback riding, panning for gold, s'mores around the campfire provided busy, fun-filled days. In 2017 we took them on another Road Scholar tour in San Francisco to visit Muir Woods, walk across the Golden Gate Bridge, and explore Chinatown, the Natural History Museum, and Fisherman's Wharf—all on public transportation!

September 2016, we flew on the huge Airbus A380 to Budapest and spent ten days at the fabulous Marriott Hotel on the shore of the Danube--enjoying great weather and good Hungarian food. We especially delighted in the companionship of friends and relatives, including Les' sister Kati, and grand-niece Emese who had been married that year. Needless to say, we did not lose any weight during that trip!

I escaped from Hungary in November 1956 to the West, without money or even spare clothing. Now, over 60 years later, even though I am an American and have a family here in California, I am still proud of my origin and will never forget speaking in my native language.



Budapest at night from the Marriott; Eating "Lángos" at a market; Celebrating Susan's 75th BD

Life in my eighties

In my youth, I considered people over the age of sixty as old. I don't recall anyone in our neighborhood who had lived to this or her eighties, and I could not imagine myself being that old. Now I am an octogenarian and living in a retirement community where the average age is 87.4 years, I don't feel so bad. My 90-year-old tennis partner calls me a kid. Medicare provides me complete health insurance coverage at a reasonable price. I don't have to remove my shoes at the airport TSA checkpoints, and in Europe, young-people offer me their seats on public transportation. Yes, I do have my pains and aches after extensive physical exercise, but Susan and I live at a luxurious place in a wonderful climate, within a short drive of two of our children and four grandchildren. We regularly visit our other two children's families in the San Francisco Bay area, where we recently celebrated Holly's first birthday.

At this point, Susan and I look forward to seeing our family's progress in life. May God give them happiness, good health, and prosperity. Amen.



Our Southern California family members: Finn, Kent, Madeline, Joan, Susan and I, Grace, Matthew and Daphne; Love of Hungarian food; Spiderman and Wonder Woman at the LCG Halloween party.



Nanci, Aaron and Holly; Daphne and Erica with George; Grace, the Irish Dance champion.

Epilogue: Special Tributes to People Who Have Played Major Roles in My Life

Life has placed many “hurdles” in my path! Thankfully, my guardian angel has provided people to guide me through those obstacles. Most of the helpers are no longer alive, but I want to recognize them for what they have done.

- **My Mother.** Finding suitable work with only a third-grade formal education and raising an illegitimate child alone had been extremely difficult for a single woman. When the Fascists took her employer, Mr. Braun, away, she had to find a new place for the two of us to live. By working as a laundress and a house cleaner, as well as doing any other work that became available, she found ways to feed, clothe, and take care of me. Her working day began early in the morning and stretched late into the night. Unselfishly devoting her life to my welfare, she was always there when I needed her. When my cousin Éva was orphaned, Mother adopted her and shared our meager resources with the young girl.
- **Mrs. Dancsa.** Right after my birth, my single mother could not find any domestic live-in work where I could be with her. This young mother with two young sons of her own agreed to provide a loving home for the first years of my life. During my stay, I cemented a life-long relationship with my “milk-brother” Pista and his grandmother, whom I also considered my own *Nagymama*.
- **Mr. Braun.** When my mother realized that I was closer to the Dancsa family than to her, she searched desperately for ways for us to live together under the same roof. After numerous failures to find suitable employment, she considered ending both our lives. Literally at the last minute, a kind man, Mr. Braun, saved us by hiring her as a housekeeper and accepting me in his home. He became my mentor and helped me to develop mathematical skills at an early age.
- **Elementary School Teachers.** Three teachers provided exceptional care and guidance during my early days of schooling. My Class Chief and Hungarian language teacher, Mr. Hered, encouraged me to read and saw that I always received free school lunches. Mr. Bordás, the math and science teacher, elevated my self-esteem by declaring me a “math-genius.” Our PE teacher and former Olympian sprinter, Mr. Vadas, directed me to track and field.
- **Coaches.** At the track club, three of the coaches, Messrs. Agócs, Sugár, and Kovács-Kléri, helped me to develop running skills and learn how to both win and lose graciously. They ingrained in me the importance of proper running form by following the basic laws of physics. The lessons they taught me became invaluable in my own coaching practice.
- **Pista.** My “milk-brother,” or, as I usually referred to him, Cousin Pista, was my early-life role model. When he began to build radios, joined a sports club, and chose technical high school instead of the conventional *gymnasium*, I immediately followed his example. I thank him for the involvement in electronics that influenced my entire adult life.
- **Mrs. Leflinger.** After the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, I feared the Communist retribution for my minor involvement and considered escaping to the West. The path, however, was narrow and dangerous. I don’t know if I would have tried to leave if it hadn’t been for the assistance of my sister’s colleague. A small group of her friends and I safely reached Austria in a stolen Army truck and received refugee status.
- **Canada.** When the restrictive US quota system did not allow me to immigrate into this country, Canada accepted me with open arms. Although I chose to stay in the US after college graduation, I will always be grateful to Canada for allowing me to live and work there.

- **Mr. Leahy.** Without sufficient language skills, finding work in my new country was not easy. I am thankful to the Irish-Canadian man who had faith in me. He hired me to work in his radio-TV repair shop though I had no Canadian experience—at the same wage as he paid to his other technicians.
- **Professor Wicks.** After learning that I was not eligible for a track scholarship at the University of Colorado, I found myself without enough money to pay for the out-of-state tuition. Professor Wicks, the head of the electronics laboratories, gave me a job as a half-time lab assistant, which reclassified me as a state resident. The lower tuition allowed me to stay in school. He was also my mentor throughout my three years at CU.
- **The Hewlett-Packard Company.** After working at HP’s Microwave Division for only eight months, I learned I had been infected with TB while visiting Hungary. Management was extremely helpful and subsidized my expenses during my three months of mandatory hospitalization. They also placed my project on hold until I was able to return to work. No wonder I loved the way HP treated their employees.
- **My Family.** When I was facing divorce, my two young children rallied to keep up my morale. They asked for a 50-50 shared custody arrangement that helped me stay in close contact with them. Being a single father for eight years taught me to appreciate the role of parenthood. In the absence of belonging to a church or social group, my in-laws and close friends provided me with much-needed emotional support. The lessons I learned at Lifespring also contributed to my acceptance of what could not be changed. Last but not least, my former in-laws have maintained close relationship with me throughout the years. I appreciate their friendship.
- **My wife.** After a lengthy search while being a single parent, I met Susan, who became my life partner. During the past 30 years, our relationship has taught me to appreciate true love. She has enjoyed many good things with me and stands with me when I need help. Her two children quickly integrated with mine and later enabled me to enjoy being a grandfather. I am extremely grateful for having this wonderful woman in my life.



Left and top right: Two photos showing our five grandchildren, their parents, and the two family dogs.



Bottom right: A former colleague, “The Giant,” (see page 127) visiting from Taiwan.

THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS AWARD

Presented by Consul General of Israel Dr. Andy David in honor of the late Anna (Besser) Valkar. Anna's son, Les Besser, will be accepting the award on her behalf.

Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to those who perished during the Holocaust, presents the Righteous Among the Nations award on behalf of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Persons recognized as a "Righteous Among the Nations" are awarded a specially minted medal and a certificate of honor both bearing their name. Their name is also added to the Wall of Honor in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.



Anna (Besser) Valkar Anna Besser, the eldest of five siblings, was born on June 14, 1911, in Szekesfehervar, Hungary. In 1939 she became the housekeeper of a Jewish man who allowed her to move into his residence with her young son. She worked there for three years until Fascist laws forbade Jews to employ Christians. Sympathetic to her former employer and other Jews, she helped them obtain "letters of protection" from the consulates of Switzerland and Sweden, neutral nations.

As World War II raged on, the German army occupied Hungary and the Hungarian Nazi Party took control of the government. Anna, now living in her own apartment, helped Jews to escape persecution by giving them her own identification papers and those of her deceased family members. During the war's final months, she hid two elderly Jewish men in her small apartment, putting herself and her son at grave risk.

Anna continued to work in domestic service after the war. She raised her son and adopted her 12-year-old orphaned niece. After the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, her children escaped to Austria and immigrated to Canada. Anna remained in Budapest and visited her children and four grandchildren in the United States, where they eventually settled. Anna passed away in Budapest in 1993 at age 82, her son at her bedside.

