



All of our vacations were about getting home to see family for priceless times like these.

In the rowboat with me (clockwise):
Edward, Pk, Kimmy,
Karen, Pammy, and Melissa.



Back Row: Patricia, Ria, Theresa,
Donna, Rocco, Edward & me.

Front Row: Michael, Richard, Pammy,
Pk, Kimmy & Douglas

Down through Niagara Falls, the Catskills, and into Brooklyn, to the Lupo family manse on 58th Street, our home base!

For Pk and Edward it was a view into Ria's past. At one point or another, everyone in her family had lived there – through good times and bad. Ria's mother was raised there.

The current lords were Aunt Tess and Uncle John (on the right). Tess's brother, Jack (on the left) lived nearby. For "welcomes" and "farewells," a perennial and beloved scene.



The kindness and goodness in these people – in all of Ria's family – remains with me.

From 58th Street, we'd stop around to visit our dearest friends from the old days: The Vogels, the Grosses, the Moriateses, the Wus, and of course the Wadlers, Barbara and Stuart and their four daughters, Michele, Julie, Leslie & Ame (as ordered below).

Barbara (if you'll recall) had attended my basement parties with Ria, way back before we'd even started dating.

And Stuart coincidentally went to Andrew Jackson High with me! The first time he opened his front door for us he joked, "Not you again!"



All of our friends made the long trek north to see us too! Those I named and many more received our Royal Canadian treatment!

Ria worked very hard at maintaining our connections to home and past. I did also but she kept up the correspondence, the cards and gifts, and calls on everyone's birthday. As truly happy as we were, she hoped that someday we'd return home and she wanted to make certain that we'd have a 'home' to return to.



You see, Ria had lost her mother to cancer in 1970 which greatly heightened her pangs of separation and missing out. Ria never missed an opportunity to remember her mother. Frances was the gold standard by which Ria judged her own output in all things. So it was always important to me that Frances felt like an honored guest in our home and never a babysitter. She came out with us to all of our dinners and parties.

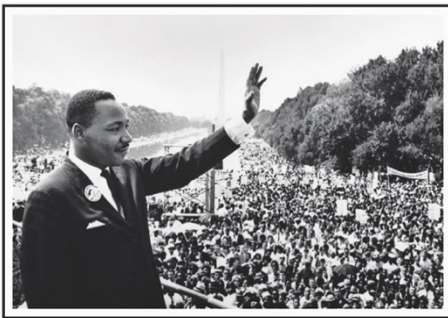
The loss of Frances signaled the end of an era. A generational changing of the guard was now complete. Having lost my Aunt Catherine just eighteen months earlier, in 1968, the great matriarchs of our family were gone, along with the innocence and simplicity of a prior age.

(Aunt Catherine and Uncle Al knelt by the side of their bed together, every night, and said the rosary.) Times had changed.



Ria and I had created a wholesome and protective upbringing for Pk and Edward – further shielded by our relative isolation in Canada – but with all of our ties to the United States, it was impossible to ignore the suffering and sacrifice of so many caught up in the political events of the times.

The struggle for Civil Rights which had started in the early '60s with the Freedom Riders, lunch counter sit-ins, and the March at Selma had brought about the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and '68, but all of that turmoil only brought the injustices of American society into sharper focus. And all of this was on our televisions.



The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, against the backdrop of widespread protest to the Vietnam War, sparked riots at the Democratic Convention in Chicago that summer. The period

of distrust in our leaders, values and institutions had begun.

To be honest, I had no time to be an activist, only an optimist. I was just trying to keep my corner clean. And Canada, as I said, had been an effective asylum from all the unrest.

Whereas, my sister Pat was still living in D.C., working on Capitol Hill (pregnant with Brett) and had a more than an intimate relationship with the issues and events of the day. Having previously worked for (civil rights legislator) Senator Irving Ives of New York as a constituent liaison, Pat had become a mentor for an inner-city Head Start program, giving her time and care to a young girl named Samina – just trying to give her a broader experience of what life could be like.

Pat recalls a hot summer day in 1968, standing with her office colleagues, watching the city burn after a riot. She could see the fires moving down 7th Street towards Samina's neighborhood.

Soon after, Brett was born, requiring Pat's full attention, but to this day she wrestles with the larger questions of where policy intersects with our social ills and personal responsibilities.



In the spring of 1971, Pat and Ed followed up with a girl, Pamela Ann. From the get-go, Pam was precocious, warm, and full of personality!





And later that year, the Hunts seized on a career opportunity for Ed, packed up the family, and decamped to Boise, Idaho!

This was
just one of the
year's big surprises
that would shape our lives

and many of my future travel plans!



Next surprise was Eaton's announcement that they'd be shutting down our New York buying office. For some reason, they told me before anybody else and swore me to secrecy, which was difficult since my best friend Nick was still working there.

Luckily Nick was chosen as one of the four people (out of 33) to stay on through a 6-month transition – after that, he'd be out of a job. But Nick had grown quite popular in our business circles and one of our tablecloth suppliers, the John C. Sleater Company, knew Nick, liked Nick, and hired Nick as a salesman, with one of his key territories being Canada.

Naturally, this started bringing Nick through Toronto on a regular basis and we even arranged to travel together. Within two years, Nick had tripled his income which made a huge impression on me. And, as you'll soon learn, all of this would be merely the beginning for the "New Adventures of Nick & Ed."

But the last and biggest surprise announcement of the year came from Ria's sister, Patricia. She was getting married!

Patrick Granowski was a young New York City Police Officer.



Like Pat, he'd been living as a single parent, raising his son Jeff, who was just a year older than Pammy.

As anyone can see, Jeff and Patrick provided the perfect symmetry, and the six of them were instantly bonded.

It was Aunt Tess who'd first brought them together. Patrick's sister Gloria was married to the son of Aunt Tess' neighbor.

"Pat & Pat! They need to meet!"

Patrick was affable and playful, just as Patricia was (as evidenced by them calling each other "Gerry & Sophie.")

On November 20, 1972, they tied the knot! Ria and I waited on the steps of Borough Hall with the rest of the family and friends to cheer, and to shower them with rice.

In no time, they began building a new home on Sinclair Avenue in Staten Island and obtaining the quintessential 1970s station wagon (with the wood paneling on the sides).

The newly minted Granowskis were off to hit the road—so often with Ria, myself, and the kids in tow!



And over the next forty years, Patrick and I would travel very happily together with our Renna sisters on myriad vacations!

Here, the Granowskis had driven up to Toronto to present their newest edition, Kenneth John. “Yours, Mine, and Ours” had been a big hit movie, starring Lucille Ball and Henry Fonda, where a new sibling forever cements a blended family together. And that’s just what happened here with the birth of “Kenny.”



Ria entertained all our guests on the home front, while I refined daytrip tours to all the local attractions.

To my surprise, Toronto had transformed – just from the time that our children were born – from a post-industrial dinosaur into an extremely modern, family-friendly city. Just another example of my incredible luck and fortunate timing!

When we’d first arrived, there was only Casa Loma. And how often could Pk, Edward, and I ride the swan at Centre Island?





But in 1965, Nathan Phillips Square and the New City Hall became a site of concerts, markets, public art, and festivals. In winter, we had light shows and ice skating.

The Ontario Science Centre opened in '69. Arguably the world's first, purpose-built hub of hands-on exhibits & interactive displays.



From a very young age, Pk and Edward could lead our guests through its great halls in time to see their favorite shows like the Van de Graaff electrostatic generator.

Then in the spring of 1971, Ontario Place opened on a manmade island in Lake Ontario with pavilions, concerts, playgrounds, and the Cinesphere – a geodesic dome with the largest IMAX screen in the world!



If the Ringling Brothers were in town, or the Harlem Globetrotters, we'd be there! It was the classic years of Curly Neal, Meadowlark Lemon, and Geese Ausbie!



I'd bought a little, yellow Datsun station wagon for our weekend outings! All of Pk and Edward's friends would pile in, giving Ria a well-earned, quiet, day off.

Our home was always open and serving snacks.

All the bikes stacked high in our driveway belonged to the kids in our yard, our basement, and our garage. And we liked it that way!



Ria went all out for gatherings of every kind and in particular Pk's birthday parties.

And every year, I would chaperone at least three small groups to the CNE!

The Canadian National Exhibition (or Ex) was an enormous fair which came alive for three weeks at the end of each summer.

For this midway of rides, games, concerts & pavilions, the kids in the neighborhood would save their nickels and dimes all year!



When Edward's friends became obsessed with building Go-Karts, I shifted gears. "The Nitty Gritty II" was the name of this one. We sourced all the wheels & axles from an old peddler's shop in "Cabbagetown." Today Edward is quite handy. Somehow, he credits our early, crude projects with showing him how to handle tools and make the finish line.



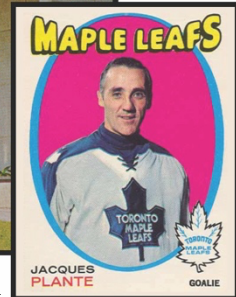
And when the tallest free-standing structure in the world was being built in Toronto, Edward and I would watch the progress from our prime viewing perch. The CN Tower reached record height on on April 2, 1975.

And once the tower was open, Pk, Edward and I were regulars at its observation deck & revolving restaurant, with its 360-degree panoramic views of our city (which we so loved showing off).

But no place did we visit more than The Hockey Hall of Fame!

Edward favorite exhibit:

The Evolution of
Jacque Plante's Mask.



Plante had won 6 Stanley Cups with Montreal and invented the goalie mask before coming to the Maple Leafs in 1970, just as Edward was becoming an insatiable fan.

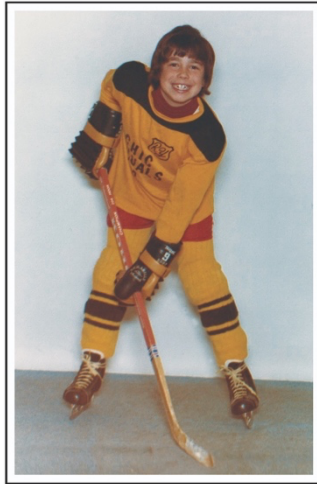


He kept his favorite hockey cards taped to his door. Edward explained to me about trading cards in the schoolyard. I could see that having excess 'doubles' early-on in the season would be of critical benefit, so we started buying a whole carton of packs on the first day of their release.

But best, by far, was seeing the games at Maple Leaf Gardens and collecting the autographs!

It was only a matter of time before he'd want to start playing.

As mentioned, I didn't really know that much about the game, but we pieced together his equipment – some bought, some borrowed – and pushed him out onto the ice.



Ria was too nervous to attend the games, but I took him, and any of his friends who needed a ride, over to the arena each weekend. I was sitting up in the stands as usual when one of the league organizers came up to a group of us dads and announced that Edward's division, and one other, did not have "Conveners," and unless two could be found – today – those divisions would be disbanded.

Keith Ivey and I volunteered immediately (because there was no other option). At least Keith knew the game. And I discovered that a "Convener" was more of a big picture planner and fundraising Czar. In other words, management, which I knew.



(Several years later, Keith and I with the All-Star Team.)

We stayed with those positions from the time that our sons were seven until they were fifteen. Somewhere in there they made me Vice President of this organization with well over 1,000 kids.

It was during these same years that both Pk and Edward were moving through catechism and Sunday school at St. Gregory's. Looking back now, I see weekends must have been pretty busy.



Father Clarkson had been the Pastor since 1957 but always



came to our annual Christmas Party, once he'd experienced Ria's cooking and hospitality. Same with Father Wallace and Cantor Greene!

We became active in the parish. I served as Chairman of the Finance Committee for a few years.



On Sunday nights, we'd borrow a projector from the library and watch silent films. The kids learned of The Depression through Keaton & Chaplin.

Or Ria would play old songs on the piano. Secondhand Rose, Yellow Bird, Spanish Eyes and Please Release Me, by Engelbert Humperdinck, were her favorites. But she also had this broad, barrelhouse style of playing that could get everyone up singing!

Songs like:
Paper Doll,
Side by Side,
and Tie a Yellow
Ribbon Round the
Ole Oak Tree.



But whatever we were doing as a family, and no matter what room we were in, there was one constant: Pk always had a craft project going (or a book open) on the floor. Pk was more than studious, she was patient, independent and could work through complex processes on her own. She liked delayed gratification.



Crochet, macrame, quilting, candle making, needlepoint, knitting, painting, and even baking bread for the neighbors, Pk could do it all.

When she was 7, she joined the Brownies, a junior division of The Girl Guides of Canada. It seemed to everyone like she'd earned all her badges at once!

She had nearly perfect marks at school. So even with all of her activities, we never had to worry about the fact that she'd also memorized the TV Guide!

I had my favorite shows too:



Laugh-In, Flip Wilson, Hogan's Heroes and Get Smart.

Send ups and satires of our culture. Goldie Hawn was a hippie, Agent 99 was a feminist, and Flip Wilson's character, Geraldine was outspoken, liberated, and fearless. "What you see is what you get, baby! The devil made me do it!"

The American networks came to us through Buffalo. The CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite at 7pm was a thirty-minute program. There was no slant or agenda. He just came out and read the news every night.

The slant came later in Johnny's monologue. Watergate, Vietnam, the vote on the ERA, high unemployment, Roe v. Wade; all these were the stories of the day, which Johnny somehow managed to provide a comedic perspective on.



Our leadership was incompetent – that was usually the joke. Good salve for what pained us in society. And the workplace.