

**EDGEMOOR AVENUE MEMOIRS:
An Original Owner Looks Back**

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**With Assistance From
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Our house at 729 Edgemoor in June 1930, finished except for a lawn and a driveway

The 700 block of Edgemoor Avenue has gone through many changes in the 69 years that we have lived there. It's hard to believe that in 1930, when Harold and I moved into our new home at 729 Edgemoor, we were the youngest couple on the block. Now, we are the only original owners still living there.

The dictionary defines the word "memoirs" as a narrative of experiences that the writer has lived through. So I will dig back into my storehouse of memories to the late 1920's and put together an original owner's view of the block we all share.

My first memories of Edgemoor Avenue go back to the days when Harold, my future husband, and I would drive in his Overland-Whippet sedan to the top of Westnedge Hill, looking for a lot to buy. Westnedge Hill was the highest of the four main hills overlooking Kalamazoo. The other three were East Main Street, Douglas Avenue and West Main Street.

Originally, Westnedge Avenue was known as West Street. Westnedge Hill used to be much steeper than it is now. The city graded it and straightened it in 1890, with workers shoveling off about 25 feet of earth by hand. Before the grading work was done, the road up the hill was a windy route that went through the present Crane Park and rejoined present-day South Westnedge at about Inkster Avenue.

After World War I, many local citizens wanted to honor Kalamazoo's war hero, Colonel Joseph Westnedge, by naming a street after him. West Street was chosen because of the coincidence that the word "West" comprised the first four letters of the name Westnedge.

There were two lots in the 700 block of Edgemoor Avenue, the second block west of Westnedge Avenue, that were for sale at the time we were looking--729 and 735. We decided to purchase the lot at 729, even though the price was \$200 higher, because the ground was more level on it than the ground on the lot at 735. After we bought the lot, we often parked in front of it for hours, trying to visualize in all its detail the house we hoped to build on it.

On May 4, 1929, Harold and I were married, promising to love, honor and obey each other until death would separate us. We had a very romantic honeymoon in New York City, which neither of us had visited before. Almost immediately after we returned to Kalamazoo, we started planning to build our home. We had a number of planning sessions with Ray Stapert, the architect at Vosler and DeLoof. Ray prepared the specifications and design of the house. We chose the Tudor-American plan, and Ray drew up the blueprints for it. Arriving at this decision was the first major project Harold and I accomplished together.

Six months later, on a very cold day in early January, 1930, construction started on our dream house. The first task, which took the better part of a week, was excavating the basement. The job was accomplished by a man and a team of horses. The man walked behind the team, holding the reins and "heeing" and "hawing" directions at the horses as they scooped load after load of dirt. Soon the dirt was piled high on the back end of the lot. This mountain of earth was later used to level off the back yard and also to fill in around the basement wall.

On the Builders and Home Owners page of the Kalamazoo Gazette, Saturday, February 15, 1930, the following news item about our house was printed:

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Hamilton, the former being an employee of the post office department, have awarded to Vosler and DeLoof the contract for the erection of a five-room bungalow on Edgemoor Avenue.

The type is an informal rambling design and well termed the Modern American. It will contain a living room, dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms on the main floor, with ample space on the second floor for two additional bedrooms. The interior trim will be in oak with a wooden mantel, favoring the Georgian in design. The exterior will be shingles, weathered siding, and stucco.

As the days passed and our house slowly began to take form, we made many trips to various furniture stores to select what we were sure would be the perfect furnishings for our new home. A month before we finished picking out our furniture and our house was completed, an important milestone in our lives occurred. On May 4th, Harold and I celebrated our first wedding anniversary.

Then, on June 4, 1930, five months after the team of horses had dug out the first scoop of dirt from what would be our basement, we moved into our new home. A few days before, we had gone to City Hall, where a city worker gave us a set of our official house numbers--729. When we tacked them up over the front door, we felt that the city and the neighborhood viewed our home as completed. To top off the thrill of taking ownership of our dream house, members of the office where I was employed gave us a wonderful surprise "housewarming" a few evenings later. They presented us with many lovely and useful gifts.

At the time we moved into our home, there were beautiful Elm trees lining both sides of the 700 block of Edgemoor Avenue. Later, in the 1950's, these trees were cut down, taken away and burned because of the Dutch Elm disease that had ravaged Elm trees from the east coast to the Mississippi River. Our Elm trees were replaced with Cleveland Maples that have since grown to become the large, stately shade trees we all enjoy today.

Getting Acquainted With Our New Neighbors

Soon after we moved into our home at 729 Edgemoor, we started to meet our new neighbors. One of the first families we met were the Enslens, who lived across the street from us at 2532 Law Avenue. Their house, completed in 1925, was the first residence to be built in the new subdivision known as Sunset Heights. The Enslens' son Dick, who became a playmate of our son Ronald, eventually went on to become a Federal District judge.

In 1935, The Enslens sold their home to the Miller's who, in turn, sold several years later to the Harper's. Around 1950, the Harper's moved into a home overlooking White's Lake and sold their home to the Stevenson family--Stevie, Agnes and their son Jim. The Stevensons also had a married daughter, Mary Lou Todd. Agnes died in 1979 and three years later Stevie moved to Friendship Village. Stevie sold the house to a couple who only lived there one year.

The next owners of 2532 Law Avenue lived there for two years. Ron and Mary Jane Baylor bought the house from these owners and while living there had two girls, Rebecca and Christina. In 1986, the Baylor's sold to Ethol Hotelling, the current owner, and moved to Oshtemo where shortly afterward their third daughter, Alicia, was born.

Ironically, Hilda Harper, a former owner of 2532 Law Avenue, had been one of Ethol's customers during the years that Ethol owned and ran a millinery shop in downtown Kalamazoo. In the early 1990's, Ethol wrote a book about her life, called Hats 'n Chats. Harold and I enjoyed reading it.

Our next door neighbors to the west at 731 Edgemoor were Earl and Hazel Weber, who had a son Bill, 13 years old, and a daughter June, 11 years old. Hazel was a nurse as well as a housewife, and Earl was an executive at the Kalamazoo Chamber of Commerce for many years.

In the 1950's, the Weber's sold their home to Betty and Russ Blosser. The Blosser's had four children--Becky, John, Tammy and Mary Kris--and later a number of grandchildren. In 1961, the Blosser's moved to Corvallis, Oregon and later to Norwalk, Connecticut. We received a very sad letter in 1988 from Betty, informing us that Russ had died earlier that year.

The Blosser's sold their home to Betty and Jim Tydeman. Both librarians by profession, Betty worked for many years as a cataloger at the Kalamazoo Public Library, while Jim was associated with the Western Michigan University library during the same period. Ann, their daughter, who graduated from Michigan State University, was married in 1985 and now lives in Philadelphia. She gave birth to a son on January 13, 1989, naming him James after her father. She has since given birth to another son.

Betty Tydeman suffered a stroke in 1985 and passed away in October 1987. In October 1988, Jim married Ruth Allen, who was Kalamazoo's City Clerk at the time. They decided to live in Ruth's home on the corner of Inkster and Outlook. So, Jim put the house at 731 Edgemoor up for sale.

In February 1989, Ed and Kate Handley bought the house. They came from the Chicago area in connection with Ed's new job at Eaton Corporation in Galesburg. Before moving to Kalamazoo, Kate had worked as a realtor. Their daughter, Megan, was four years old at the time they moved here. In 1990, their daughter Jillian was born. In March 1995, the family expanded to five with the birth of their son, Evon. In July 1995, the Handley's sold to Eileen and Eric Taylor and moved to Portage, where Meg and Jill are attending schools in the Portage school district. Last year, Ed earned an M.B.A. degree from Western Michigan University. He currently is Director of Engineering, Worldwide at Eaton.

The Taylor's, along with their seven month old son, Nicholas, moved to Edgemoor Avenue from Minneapolis, where Eric had been working for Nielsen as a marketing researcher and Eileen had been working for GTE as a sales representative. The Taylor's moved here so that Eric could take a job with Kellogg's in Battle Creek as a marketing research analyst. Six months later, in January 1996, they moved to Cleveland so that Eric could take a job with Nestle, Inc. They moved back to Kalamazoo in June 1996 so that Eric could return to Kellogg's, this time to assume a management position in marketing.

After the Taylor's moved to Cleveland, they sold to Holly and Paul Freestone, who are the current owners. Holly, who was born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina, graduated from Winthrop College in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1989. Paul, who grew up near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, graduated from Duke University in 1988. Currently, Paul is a manager at Stryker Instruments. Since moving to Kalamazoo, Holly has worked in retail management and has been active in several service organizations. Their daughter Camille was born in September 1997. In July, they are anticipating the birth of their second daughter, whom they plan to name Lily.

Our neighbors to the east at 723 Edgemoor were Don and Frederica Brownell, who had bought their home from the original owners, the Trowbridge's. The Brownell's had two daughters: Barbara, seven years old and Patricia, one year old. About 20 years ago, the Brownell's moved to Parkview Hills, selling their home to Steve and Sally Wheeler.

Twelve years ago, Cindy and Keith Overly bought the home from the Wheeler's. The Overly's had a daughter, Ann, who now is sixteen years old, and later a son, Brian, who now is nine and a half years old. Cindy is Reading Instructor and Special Accommodations Coordinator at Hackett High School, and Keith is Kalamazoo's Deputy City Manager.

In the summer of 1994, Cindy and Keith moved to a home on Lama Road off Bronson Boulevard, and sold the house at 723 Edgemoor to Dean and Carol Starfeldt. The Starfeldt's, who are the current owners, moved to Kalamazoo from Appleton, Wisconsin. Carol works part-time for Kyser Insurance Agency and Dean has a position at Biggs & Gilmore Communications, a Kalamazoo advertising agency. Dean also serves on the Board of the Westnedge Hill Association. Carol and Dean have a four year old daughter, Zaria.

The first residents of 735 Edgemoor whom I can remember were Gladys and Milton Orwin. They had two sons, Walter (Duke) and Jim. Later, the Tony Auer's bought the house and the Orwin's moved to 715 Edgemoor. The Auer's eventually sold to the Paulson's who, in turn, sold to a family named Cole. For the past 36 years, Terry Bullard has lived there, raising a family of two daughters and a son: Anna, Jocelyn and Geoff. For many years, Terry has been director of the Kalamazoo Ballet Company.

The Mygatt's were the first owners of the brick house on the southeast corner of Edgemoor and Bronson Boulevard--739 Edgemoor. Their son, Juddy, often played with our second son, Jack. Blanche and Isadore Friedman bought the house from the Mygatt's. The Friedman's had two sons, Lee and Marv. The Friedman's later sold to the Reverend David McShane, who was pastor for many years at the First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo. The McShane's had one son, Michael, and three daughters: Joy, Miriam (Mimi) and Cathy.

In 1987, after David retired, the McShane's moved to Marco Island, Florida. They sold the house to Alan Zagerall and his wife, Laura, who are the current owners. They have an eighteen year old daughter, Bianca, who recently graduated from Loy Norrix High School. Alan is an anthropologist and teaches at Western Michigan University. Laura works full-time as a nurse.

The lot on the northeast corner of Edgemoor at 2525 Bronson Boulevard remained vacant for many years. Around 1950, Dave and Clara Gearhart built the first home there. It has changed ownership two or three times since then. Among these owners were Bill and Mary Ayers, who lived there for about three years. Wanting to get away from our frigid Kalamazoo winters, they eventually moved to Missouri, selling to Michael and Sidney Mueller, the current owners.

Mike Mueller works for Arcadia Investment Company, and Sid teaches evening Lamaze classes to expectant parents. They have a sixteen year old son, Matthew, who attends Loy Norrix High School, and a fourteen year old daughter, Mikaela, who attends middle school. Her major hobby is ice skating.

The English Tudor house north of the Mueller's home was built by the Kelly family around 1930. While the Kelly's had a Bronson Boulevard address (2517 Bronson Boulevard) as do the Mueller's, the driveway access to both homes is from Edgemoor (directly across from 735 Edgemoor).

In the 1950's, the Kelly's sold to Bob Heinle and his wife, who had one daughter. Later, in 1979, the Heinle's sold to the Hannah's. The Hannah's had four children: Eleanor, Mary, John and Rachel. Dr. Michael Peikert and his wife, Fran, bought the house from the Hannah's in 1985. The Peikert's had a daughter, Stephanie, and a son, Chris. Ten years later, the Peikert's decided to build the home of their dreams at Gull Lake. After construction was completed in July 1997, they moved into their new home, selling their Bronson Boulevard home to David Huisjen, who is the current owner.

The Rosenbaum family were the original owners of the house at 2524 University Avenue, located on the northwest corner of Edgemoor. They had a daughter, Judy, and a son, Jim. In the late 1940's, the Rosenbaum's sold to the Handelsman's, who had a daughter, Whitney Jean, and a son, Billy. The Handelsman's in turn sold to the Bellingham's. Jody and Jim Bellingham had two children: a son, Ricky, and a daughter, Debbie.

The Bellingham's later sold to the Trout's. Judy Kirsh Trout was a daughter of the founder of the Kirsh Curtain Rod Company in Sturgis and had several children from a former marriage. Her husband had been married before, too, and had several children from that marriage. They built a four bedroom addition on the rear of the house to provide sleeping quarters for their blended family. From then on, the neighbors referred to the house as "the dormitory house."

After two or three years, the Trout's divorced and Judy married Bill Maize, who had served on the Kalamazoo City Commission at one time. The Maize's later sold the house to Terry and Marie Dorcy. Terry and Marie, and their five children, lived there until they divorced. Marie and Mark Lynn, her present husband, currently live there with her daughter, Colleen.

Around 1940, the White's built the house at 714 Edgemoor. They sold to Jack and Phyllis Mahoney about 10 years later. The Mahoney's had four children: Jack Jr. (Chip), Carrie, Mary and Brian. Phyllis' husband Jack was killed in an automobile accident in the late 1970's. In the early 1980's, Phyllis sold the house to Ross and Mary Parr, who had several grown children. The Parr's later sold to the Kemple's, who with their two girls lived there for nearly two years.

The Kemple's sold in 1992 to Wayne and Diane Schade, the current owners. Wayne is the director of the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center located at the old Kalamazoo Central High School building on South Westnedge Avenue, and Diane works part-time as a secretary in the pre-kindergarten office of the Kalamazoo Public Schools district office. Their children, Pam and David, are both in college.

In 1929, Clarence and Louise Boers built a home on the southwest corner of Edgemoor and University Avenues (705 Edgemoor). They lived there for 40 years. After Clarence and Louise died, the house was sold to a young couple. This couple then sold the house to Ron and Shelley Lake. The Lake's sold in 1988 to Judy Stone and Stanley Stamm. Judy teaches modern French history at Western Michigan University and Stanley is a family therapist, with an office in Battle Creek.

The next house to the west, 709 Edgemoor, was built several years earlier than the Boers' home by the Shaw's, who had one son. The Shaw's later sold to the Knowles', who had two daughters. When the Knowles' moved away, they sold the house to the Boers', who purchased it with the intention of maintaining it as a rental property. Over the years, our family had a close connection with many of the families that lived in this house.

Family Additions

After Harold and I had lived in our home at 729 Edgemoor for nearly two years, the Hamilton's became "three." Ronald, our son, was born on Wednesday, April 20, 1932, at 6:33 A.M. in Borgess Hospital. Ten days later, Harold and I brought him home. Life was rather hectic for quite some time after that as we adjusted to this new miracle in our lives.

One of the daily routines that kept me the busiest with our new baby was the never ceasing chore of diaper washing. Before Ronald was born, I had made a supply of diapers out of outing flannel material that I had cut into 30 inch square pieces and hemmed. After the diapers were used, I took them to the basement and soaked them in a pail of Clorox water to bleach out the stains. I then put them in a large, round galvanized tub of hot sudsy water.

To make the suds, I chipped flakes from a bar of Lennox soap. I set a scrub board in the tub and vigorously rubbed each diaper 12-15 times on the board. After the scrubbing, I placed the diapers in an oval shaped copper boiler that sat on a two-burner gas plate. The boiler was filled with boiling soapy water. I boiled the diapers for 45 minutes, stirring them occasionally with an old broom handle. Using the broom handle, I lifted the diapers out of the boiler and put them into a tub of rinse water.

After rinsing them, I wrung the diapers out and put them into a second tub of rinse water. I sprinkled some bluing in this second tub of rinse water to keep the diapers from yellowing. I wrung them out a second time, took them upstairs and hung them outside on the clothesline to dry. When they were dry, I took them down from the clothesline, brought them inside and folded them so that they would be ready for their next use. All in all, a very time-consuming process!

On May Day in the spring of 1933, Louise Boers (703 Edgemoor) gave birth to a baby girl, whom she and Clarence named Shirley. Many who read these memoirs can remember how children would hang May baskets full of early May flowers on the front door knobs of neighbors and friends on the first day of May. Few May Days have passed since then that I haven't thought of Shirley, who was a playmate of our two sons for many years.

By the time 1935 arrived, Ronald was expecting a brother or a sister within a month. In those days, I would rest on the living room sofa during the afternoons. Ronald would run his tiny toy autos up and down my stomach, where the baby was growing ever bigger. Now and then the baby would kick Ronald's autos to one side, which always brought a few giggles from him.

From early morning on Saturday, February 2, 1935, Harold and I knew that the Hamilton's would be a family of "four" before another day passed. About 3:30 PM, we dropped Ronald off at his Grandma's house on South Rose Street and drove out to Borgess Hospital. At 7:19 P.M., Sister Modesta patted my hand in the delivery room and congratulated me for giving birth to a perfect baby boy.

The first thing Sister Modesta asked me was, "What are you going to name your little son?" When I answered that his first name would be Jack, she replied, "Not John?" I said, "Not John, we've decided that he will be named Jack Arlen."

In 1937, Ronald started kindergarten at Parkwood Elementary School, which was located across Westnedge on Park Street between Inkster and Parkwood Avenues. Parkwood Elementary was built in 1921 to serve what was then called Sunrise Heights.

The same year that Ronald started school, the Boers' rented the house next door to them at 709 Edgemoor to Dr. Irmel Brown, his wife Bertha, and their two children, Bruce and Susan. Shirley Boers, Bruce and Susan Brown, and our two boys soon became good friends and regular playmates.

The Hamilton's became very good friends with the Brown family, often picnicking together at Milham Park. In addition, when Harold had a day off from the post office, we would occasionally take Bertha and the four children to Lake Michigan for the day. On our first joint outing there, Ronald, seeing the beach at Lake Michigan for the first time, called it "the big sandbox."

One nice summer day in the late 1930's, Dr. Brown took Bruce and Ronald to Detroit to see the Detroit Tigers play a baseball game. It was the first major league baseball game for both boys. They were very excited and talkative during the trip to Detroit, but afterwards Dr. Brown said that he had a quiet ride home. After leaving the stadium, both boys slept all the way home.

Transportation To And From Town

In the late 1930's, the mode of public transportation from the center of town out to Westnedge Hill went through some changes. For years we had had two-man street cars, with a motorman in the front and a conductor in the rear. The motorman did the driving, and the conductor collected the fares. The South Westnedge Avenue car line ended on Westnedge Hill at Creston Avenue.

Eventually, the two-man street cars were replaced throughout Kalamazoo by one-man street cars. Riders entered and exited these cars at the front end. But there was one problem! The little one-man street cars didn't have enough power to make it up the steep upward slope of Westnedge Hill. And so the two-man street cars were brought back on the South Westnedge Avenue line. By 1940, however, all the street cars had been replaced by busses. Gone were the street car tracks and the overhead electric power lines.

Childhood Illnesses

Beginning in September 1940, we had a number of worrisome years because our boys were ill so often. Shortly after starting third grade in 1940, Ronald contracted Polio. Dr. MacGregor rushed him to Borgess Hospital for a spinal puncture to determine whether Ronald had Polio or Spinal Meningitis. The tests showed that he definitely had Polio. My instant reaction to hearing these results was as though the doctor had hit me right in the pit of my stomach.

In those days, general hospitals did not take patients with contagious diseases. These patients were treated either at a special hospital or at home. Dr. MacGregor thought Ronald would be better off staying at home, provided that Jack could be protected from catching the disease by staying elsewhere. Fortunately, my mother agreed to take care of Jack at her home on South Rose Street until Ronald recovered. To be able to go to work and not threaten his co-workers, Harold had to stay out of Ronald's bedroom, too.

Throughout his ordeal with Polio, Ronald missed very little school work. His third grade teacher sent his lessons home daily with Shirley Boers. Each morning when he felt well enough, I sat down with him and helped him with his school work. That way, he was able to keep up with his classmates.

After two weeks of lying flat on his back in bed, Ronald was ready to try out his legs. What a wonderful relief it was when I was able to see him move his legs by himself and to take a few steps. Only then was I confident that he was not going to be paralyzed. Of the twenty cases of Polio in Kalamazoo in 1940, Ronald was one of four who were not paralyzed as a result of contracting the disease. Needless to say, we felt extremely grateful that he had recovered the use of his legs.

In January 1941, Ronald started back to school. One week later, Jack came home from school with a case of the measles. Ten days later, Ronald was in bed with the measles, too. It was the first of April before Ronald went back to school again. But even then, he often would be home for days at a time with a sore throat.

A week before school let out for summer vacation, Ronald came down with a severe case of whooping cough. He had not had the vaccine to prevent this disease because it had not yet been discovered when he was given his immunizations. Jack, who had been given the vaccine, also caught the disease. But he had a light case--just one week of coughing.

Over the summer of 1941, Ronald finally had time to recuperate fully from all his illnesses. When school began in September, he was able to rejoin his classmates in the fourth grade, despite having spent very little time with them in the third grade.

Jack entered first grade that fall, but within a few days he had caught a very bad cold that affected his ears. After Jack had suffered all one Sunday morning with a terrific ear ache, Dr. MacGregor came to the house to see him. In those years, doctors still made house calls. Realizing that the problem was quite serious, Dr. MacGregor later took Jack to the operating room at Borgess Hospital and lanced his left ear drum. This procedure relieved the pressure that had built up in Jack's ear canal.

Jack was in Borgess Hospital for nearly a week. During that time, Harold, Ronald and I visited him every day. Almost always, he was in his usual bouncy, smiley mood. He was on a first name basis with all his nurses--even singing songs with them. When we went to the hospital on the final day to bring him home with us, we walked into his room and found him and his nurses singing the hit tune of 1941, "Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree With Anyone Else But Me."

The War Years And After

The World War II years were stressful because there was a shortage of so many things. Many items such as gasoline, tires, sugar, coffee, meat, shortening, shoes, etc., were rationed. I volunteered with the rationing board and helped to dole out ration books to each member of a family. Even a one-day old infant was entitled to a ration book.

Each person received two books, one for food and the other for clothing. People were issued red and blue tokens with which to buy things. I can remember how difficult it was to buy a new pair of shoes. Our boys each wore out a pair of shoes a month, so Harold and I often had to use our shoe stamps to buy shoes for them.

Many times during the war years, Ronald and Jack invited their neighborhood playmates to go camping with them. These camping ideas were very spontaneous. The boys would rush into the house and shout, "Mommy, will you please pack us a lunch so we can go camping with our friends." They always added, "And we're in a hurry."

Immediately, I stopped whatever housework I was doing and prepared two sack lunches. The adventurers would then hop into their wagons and take off down the street. They typically ended up between two of the houses on Edgemoor, devouring their lunches with gusto.

In the early 1940's, the Brown's moved from 709 Edgemoor to Maryland so that Dr. Brown could study for a year at Johns Hopkins University. Following his year's study there, he and the family moved back to Kalamazoo and into a house on Edgemoor Avenue east of Westnedge. Later, they moved again to a home on Cambridge Road near Oakland Drive.

After the Brown's moved to Maryland, the Boers' sold the house at 709 Edgemoor to the First Congregational Church. The Church used it as its parsonage and for many years the Reverend William Keith and his family lived there. The Keith's had two daughters: Carol and Barbara. Our son Jack was just one year older than Barbara, so they were constant playmates. Following the Keith's, a number of other ministers and their families lived there.

In the early 1980's, Larry Ulmer, a doctor with a family medical practice, and his wife, Marti, bought the house at 709 Edgemoor. Over the years, the Ulmer family grew to include three daughters--Meredith, Corey and Lizzy. In September 1994, the Ulmer's sold the house and moved to a new home on Eagle Lake in Texas Township, where the girls enrolled in the Mattawan Public Schools. The family has since moved to Portage, where the girls are attending schools in the Portage school district.

The Ulmer's sold to the current owners, Bob and Mary "Mindy" Allwardt, who bought the home because they thought that Edgemoor Avenue was an especially nice neighborhood in which to raise a family. Bob is a sales manager at Kalamazoo Steel Processing Company, and Mindy is a CPA with Bishop, Gasperini and Flipse. Spike, their oldest son, has just finished the first grade, and Mark, their second son, is two and a half years old.

From the beginning, the home at 715 Edgemoor was special to the children on the block. There were several reasons for this. To get through to our neighboring block, Montrose Avenue, the children found that they could ride their bicycles down the driveway of 715 Edgemoor, through the backyard and out to Montrose Avenue via the back neighbor's driveway. The children used this "short-cut" for many years.

In addition to its value as a thoroughfare, the house at 715 Edgemoor had a backyard that was commonly used by the children on the block for kick-ball games. Most every evening, spring through fall, enough children would gather to form into two teams for a rousing game of kick-ball.

In the early 1940's, Gladys Orwin, who lived with her husband, Milt, and their two boys, Duke and Jim, at 715 Edgemoor, died. Later, Milt married Pauline Weil, whose first husband had died in World War II. Pauline's son John was our son Jack's age. Jack took John to school on his first day at Parkwood Elementary School and introduced him to his classmates. The two boys became good pals and remained so through their college years. John attended Yale, and Jack attended Harvard.

In the early 1950's, the Orwin's built a home across Bronson Boulevard on Wilshire Drive. They sold the house at 715 Edgemoor to the Tanner's, who had two teen-age girls: Billie Joe and Lucy. The Tanner's eventually sold to the Upjohn Company. Upjohn's bought the house because chemists from other countries, who had been hired to do research on drugs then under development at the company, needed a place to live. Over the years, a number of these chemists, who had brought their families with them, lived in the house.

Jim and Joyce Treece bought the house from Upjohn's 31 years ago. In that time, they raised a family of three daughters: Andrea, Penny and Leslie. Early on, the Treece's converted the kick-ball field in their backyard to an above-ground swimming pool and extended an open invitation to neighborhood children to stop by to join their daughters for a swim. Although time passed and the Treece's home eventually became an "empty nest," Joyce and Jim graciously continued to welcome the neighborhood children to their pool, summer after summer.

Both career teachers, Joyce taught kindergarten for many years at Northeastern Elementary School, which is located off East Main Street, and Jim continues to serve as a vocational educator at Michigan Career Technical Institute, which is located at Pine Lake. Joyce retired in June of this year and Jim plans to retire a year from now. In April, two months before Joyce retired, the two of them sold their house and moved to a home on Bunker Hill road in Oshtemo Township.

The current owners of 715 Edgemoor Avenue are Aaron and Elizabeth Lane-Davies. Aaron, a medical doctor, is a pediatric resident at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo, and Elizabeth is a social worker. They moved to Kalamazoo from Jackson, Michigan. They have five month old twins-- a girl, Hannah, and a boy, Hayden. They moved into the house at the end of April.

Law Avenue

In the late 1920's, several Edgemoor Avenue families went together and constructed a tennis court in an open field on the east side of Law Avenue--the dead end street that runs north and south directly across from 723 Edgemoor. In time, the court fell into disuse. Eventually, some sports-minded neighborhood boys removed the rusty wire netting surrounding the court and transformed it into a softball field. Meanwhile, the children used the steep hillside on the west side of Law Avenue as a place to build forts and to play make-believe war games.

Long before a spurt of home development began on Law Avenue in the 1950's, Charles and Laura Byce built a house at 2516 Law Avenue, next door to the original home in the Sunset subdivision at 2532 Law Avenue. The Byce's had a daughter, Dorothy, and a son, Dick. After the Byce's died, their daughter, Dorothy Byce Rothrock, a retired Kalamazoo Public Schools administrator, moved in. Sherry and Tom Morgan, Dorothy's daughter and son-in-law, who live with their four sons at 618 Montrose Avenue, frequently look in on Grandma. Sherry is a teacher with the Kalamazoo Public Schools.

Beginning in the early 1950's, seven homes were built on Law Avenue over a ten year period. The house north of the Byce home at 2502 Law Avenue was built by a construction company and was eventually sold to a Miller family. The Miller's lived there for several years, selling to the Vlochas family. The Vlochas' sold about seven years later to Art and Liz White.

The White's, who have lived there for the past 26 years, have two sons, Toby and Terry. Toby attended Kalamazoo College on a Heyl Foundation scholarship and is now working in Cleveland. Terry is currently studying at Kalamazoo College. A math professor at Western Michigan University, Art received the Distinguished Faculty Scholarship award in 1987. In 1988, he was honored as one of three faculty members to receive the Alumni Teaching Excellence award. Over the years, Art and Liz have spent several academic years in England while Art was on sabbatical. They will return in July from Art's most recent sabbatical in England.

The home north of the White's at 2424 Law Avenue was built by George Steers and his wife. The Steers eventually sold to the Farwell's. Two or three years later, the Farwell's moved to Florida and sold the home to Don Hall. Don later sold to Don and Betty Sickles, who lived there for several years until Don died. Betty then moved to a condominium in the Cherry Hill apartments.

Betty sold to her daughter, Pamela, and her son-in-law, Charles Daudert, a retired attorney, who are the present owners. Now an author, Charles chose Michigan as the setting for his first novel, a best-seller entitled In the Wake of the Northern Lights. He currently writes short stories and magazine articles.

The first house to go up on the east side of the street at 2513 Law Avenue, next door to 714 Edgemoor, was built by the Wilson family. The Wilson's had one daughter, Jill. The Wilson's later sold the house to a woman by the name of Stewart, who, in turn, sold to the Newman's. The Newman's eventually sold to Dr. Frank Sassaman and his wife. The Sassaman's had three children and lived there for some six or seven years. They eventually built a home further west on Edgemoor Avenue across Bronson Boulevard, and moved their family there.

The Sassaman's sold their home to Alan Enderley and his wife, Linda. The Enderley's later sold to Dale and Linda MacVicar, who had two young daughters, Leslie and Lauren. Mark and Karen Jackson purchased the home in 1990 from the MacVicar's. The Jackson's, who are the current owners, have a son and a daughter. Adam just finished the ninth grade at Loy Norrix High School, and Taylor recently completed the fifth grade at Lincoln International School.

Mark Jackson is one of the owners of a local insurance agency. Karen, a long time volunteer in the Kalamazoo Public School system, is currently an administrative assistant in facilities management at the district office of the Kalamazoo Public Schools. In the early 1950's, our son Jack played baseball with Mark's father, Ron, on teams at Kalamazoo Central High School and at Sutherland Paper Company.

We became very friendly with Mark's grandparents, Bill and Elinor Jackson, when the four of us attended Sutherland Paper Company baseball games in the summer of 1954. Both Ron and Jack played on Sutherland's team that year. Bill and Elinor moved to California a year or so later, in connection with Bill's new job with Container Corporation. The Army assigned Jack to Fort Ord on the Monterey Peninsula in California in 1959, and when we visited him and his new wife in 1960 and 1961, we took time to visit Bill and Elinor, too.

The house north of the Jackson's at 2501 Law Avenue was built by Harold and Grace Wall in the early 1950's. Grace died in May 1957. The following year, Harold married a woman from Chicago and the two of them continued living in the home for another three or four years. They eventually sold to Mrs. Russell (Peg) DeMay. Peg died in 1990 and the house was purchased by Lloyd Yenner, a local attorney. Lloyd passed away in 1997, and the current owner is Christine Byrd, a Biology professor at Western Michigan University.

Dr. Louis Gerstner and his wife, Sylva, built the next home north on the block at 2425 Law Avenue. Their home was completed just a year before the Wall's built their house. Doc Gerstner died on November 20, 1963. His widow, Sylva, who was one of our best friends, continued to live there for many years until she died on August 2, 1981.

Brian Caplan and his wife, Cory, bought the Gerstner home. They have since divorced and have joint custody of their three children: Dean, Rachel and Jacob. Brian continues to live at 2425 Law Avenue. In 1998 Brian left his law practice and purchased Bacchus Wines and Spirits in Oakwood. He has since become known for his gourmet cooking skills.

The house north of the Caplan's at 2415 Law Avenue was built by the Haywood's. Jim and Virginia Verdon later bought the house. The Verdon's had three children: one son, and two daughters. In the late 1970's, the Verdon's sold to the current owners, Dr. Steven Young and his wife, Linda. The Young's have two children, Jeremy and Amy, who live in the Washington, D.C. area.

Dealing With The Empty Nest Years

We had no idea when we moved into our house that one day our family would grow from two to four and that our sons would go on to earn college educations and even post graduate degrees. Ronald graduated from Western Michigan University in February 1955, with a major in Chemistry and a minor in pulp and paper technology. Jack received a degree in History from Harvard University in June 1957, and went on to earn masters degrees from Stanford University and the University of California, as well as a Ph.D. from Stanford. Their achievements have made us very proud of them.

When Ronald and Jack moved away from home following their college graduations, we were reminded that there is more to parenting than illnesses and crises. There is joy! We watched a family of children grow, each of them different from the other. We saw them echo little corners of our own lives and deal with the same problems that we had struggled with.

We wondered if they would ever grow up, then one day we realized that they had, without us noticing. No longer were they extensions of our hopes and dreams, if they ever had been. They were adult, independent people. And when the last of them went, our standing in life changed. We were still parents, of course, but not in the same way. No longer were we totally responsible for the life of another human being. The loss was both a relief and a sadness.

Enjoying The Retirement Years

On Saturday, May 2, 1959, Harold was working on our garage roof when he lost his footing and fell, badly injuring his back. He was taken to Bronson Hospital, where x-rays later showed such severely crushed vertebrae that he was put into a full-body cast. He remained in the hospital for three weeks and had to wear the body cast for several months. Following a six-month convalescence, he returned to work and continued working for five more years.

Harold retired from the Kalamazoo Post Office in December, 1964, after 38 years of service. He remembers taking a streetcar to Bryant Avenue his first year on the job, 1926, to begin his route as Milwood's first urban carrier. But most of his memories are associated with his long time route on East Michigan Avenue's south side from Burdick to Pitcher streets. It included what were then called the American National Bank and First National Bank buildings. It also included a block of Portage, Pitcher and Edwards streets.

A Kalamazoo Gazette reporter included a quote from Postmaster Robert L. Cooper in a news article the day Harold retired. "I don't think there's a more perfect letter carrier than Hamilton," he said. "In my over 20 years with the post office, I never heard a complaint against him." Needless to say, I felt very proud of Harold when I read the Postmaster's statement.

After Harold's retirement, we did quite a bit of traveling, visiting often with Ronald's family in Ohio and Jack's family in California. We have seen many other beautiful parts of the country, though we wouldn't choose any of them over Edgemoor Avenue.

During the 1980's, Harold had two hip replacements and a knee replacement that kept us busy going to and from Borgess Hospital. In June 1994, he had a malignant tumor removed from his colon. A week after his operation, he returned home. Not long afterward, he started back into his routine of walking through the neighborhood several times a day. In November 1996, I took my turn at Borgess Hospital and had a hip replacement, too.

Our home at 729 Edgemoor is still being cared for with love by the couple for whom it once was just a dream. It is filled with many meaningful memories. It also has suffered some scars, been painted and repainted, had new roofs put on, and had driveways replaced. More importantly, it has nourished us through 70 years of married life and, along the way, it has seen two sons grow into manhood.

The 700 block of Edgemoor Avenue has recycled its home owners many times over, nurturing in each instance the next generation of couples and their children. As we move through our lives, each home we create has linkages to past homes and the memories that are associated with them. Each new home may represent a phase in our development. The old becomes mixed with the new, resulting in a new acceptance of where we are in our lives.

As the last original owners on the block, we will soon turn our home over to a younger family. Life winds down for the elderly, life continues for the young and life begins for the newly born. This is God's plan and we feel grateful to be a part of it.