



Act Three Mobile Home Court Years 1961 - Present

In the beginning, the 8 by 35-foot and 10 by 50-foot homes were actually mobile. America was on the move. Families just starting out experienced many privileges in owning mobile homes. While servicemen were on duty, or stationed overseas, their wives and children often moved their homes to be near families. Once their husbands returned to the States, or were sent to another location, the homes were again moved.

These moves presented a variety of problems, as mobile homes manufactured in the South were built to different specifications. The southern-built mobile homes did not adapt well to Iowa's fluctuating temperature extremes. This was mainly due to inadequate insulation for both heating and cooling.

Young teachers sometimes moved several times before finding a mate or before settling down in a community. A mobile home was satisfactory for them during those years. It was better than carrying groceries and laundry up a narrow flight of steps to a dark, stuffy apartment or sleeping room. Making a move did not require buying and selling property, just choosing a new location to park their homes. Even family pets were alleviated from the trauma of new surroundings.

Many people enjoyed living on the ground level where they could go outside in the evening, mow their own yard and plant flowers. The small homes came equipped with appliances and even some furniture. It was a refreshing lifestyle compared to existing in a drab, furnished flat with layer after layer of dull, peeling paint. Mobile home owners were not burdened by tremendous expense. Though the living quarters were small, their homes were their own.

Malloy Mobile Homes from Oskaloosa had a sales lot at Shady Oaks for several years. There were usually four or five homes on display, and Mr. Malloy would show them by appointment. New Moon and Kirkwood were the main brands sold, but other brands could be ordered.

In the 1960s, owning your own mobile home was a solution to newlyweds of all ages.

In the Yellow Pages of the Marshalltown 1966 Northwestern Bell Telephone Directory, there were only two other listings besides Shady Oaks. They were South Street Trailer Court and Starlite Mobile Home Park and Sales. This added up to a total of four in the Marshalltown area, as Forest Park was still in existence.

Memories of the early-day trailer court era should be preserved with dignity. Let us view Shady Oaks Mobile Home Park in retrospect.

Act Three, Scene One The Aikins

Scene One, with Clyde Edwin ("Edd") and Diane (Severence) Aikins, began in 1961 during the John F. Kennedy administration. The Country was filled with great expectations. Kennedy was a vigorous, young man with poise and confidence. He broke new paths in civil rights, economic policy, the reorientation of military strategy, the exploration of space and encouragement of the arts.

The young Aikins' family further developed Shady Oaks Mobile Home Court. All that was left from the cabin camp days were the original five cabins on the front row, two of which they rented out by the day or the week. They added two new lots south of the central Log Cabin and more lots to the north, where the cabins had been. The Log Cabin which had been stained to preserve its native wood was painted tan and remains so today.

At this time, the former office/residence became rental property. The first renters were Jim and Sharon Melde, now of Marshalltown.

Homer and Lucille Adkins were living in their new pink and white Liberty mobile home on Lot #5. There were several other homes in the middle row. Ed Wignal lived on Lot #3. Both parties were still at Shady Oaks when we gained ownership, and both families now reside in LeGrand.

The Aikins' constructed a new home on the premises, and it was completed in 1962. When they moved to Shady Oaks, their oldest

son, Jeff, was three, and Mike was 18 months old. Doug was born two years later in April of 1964. Diane said, "The kids favorite thing was getting into the small stream by mistake, of course."

Two coin-operated automatic washers and dryers were added to the laundry room in the Log Cabin. It was a great place for a bulletin board. The facility also housed the post office where each lot had a box on the east wall. The permanent residents often gathered to sit and visit until the daily mail was distributed by the park owners. Imagine the residents sharing their disbelief and stunned reactions on November 22, 1963, the fateful day that President Kennedy was assassinated.

Diane (Aikins) Annis, who now resides in Burbank, California, said it is really hard for her to remember those busy years with her young family at Shady Oaks. Now, the Aikins boys (Jeff, Mike and Doug) all live in California.

Edd Aikens, who is in poor health, resides in a nursing home in Chicago. In August of 1994, I talked to Edd. He said, "Constant pain has blotted many memories."

Neil and Gay Curlee and their daughters, Patty and Susan, also lived at Shady Oaks during this time. A smile lit up Neil's face when he recalled helping to build the horseshoe pit. He was a bit surprised that it was gone. The fellows who built the pit thought it would last forever. His neighbor, Homer Adkins, and some other young fellows drove about 10 miles away to get the clay from along the river bank. They spent many evenings packing the clay for the pit. Pitching horseshoes was their favorite summer pastime. When I asked if it was lit, Neil's eyes twinkled; and he said, "Sure, we just parked our cars facing it and left the lights on."

These same fellows didn't lack for entertainment in the winter. I'm told they carried milk cartons of water to make a skating rink just east of their beloved pit. It's safe to guess that it was lit in the same way. According to Neil, they also skated on a wide place of the little stream.

Act Three, Scene Two The Gifts

Robert ("Bob") and I purchased Shady Oaks Mobile Home Court ("Mobile Home

Court") in the Fall of 1965, during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration. It seems fitting that Johnson was the last president whose roots and early experiences bridged the gap between the old America of local frontiers, crossroads and close neighbors and the new America of world power, bigger cities and unknown neighbors. He wanted to make people neighbors again.

In January of 1966, we moved into the newer home on the property with its wild-colored walls, big windows and walk-in basement. Movers unloaded everything that belonged upstairs in the lower level and visa versa. I was slightly envious of the homey feeling I experienced as I walked past the former office/residence to distribute the daily mail in the Log Cabin's post office.

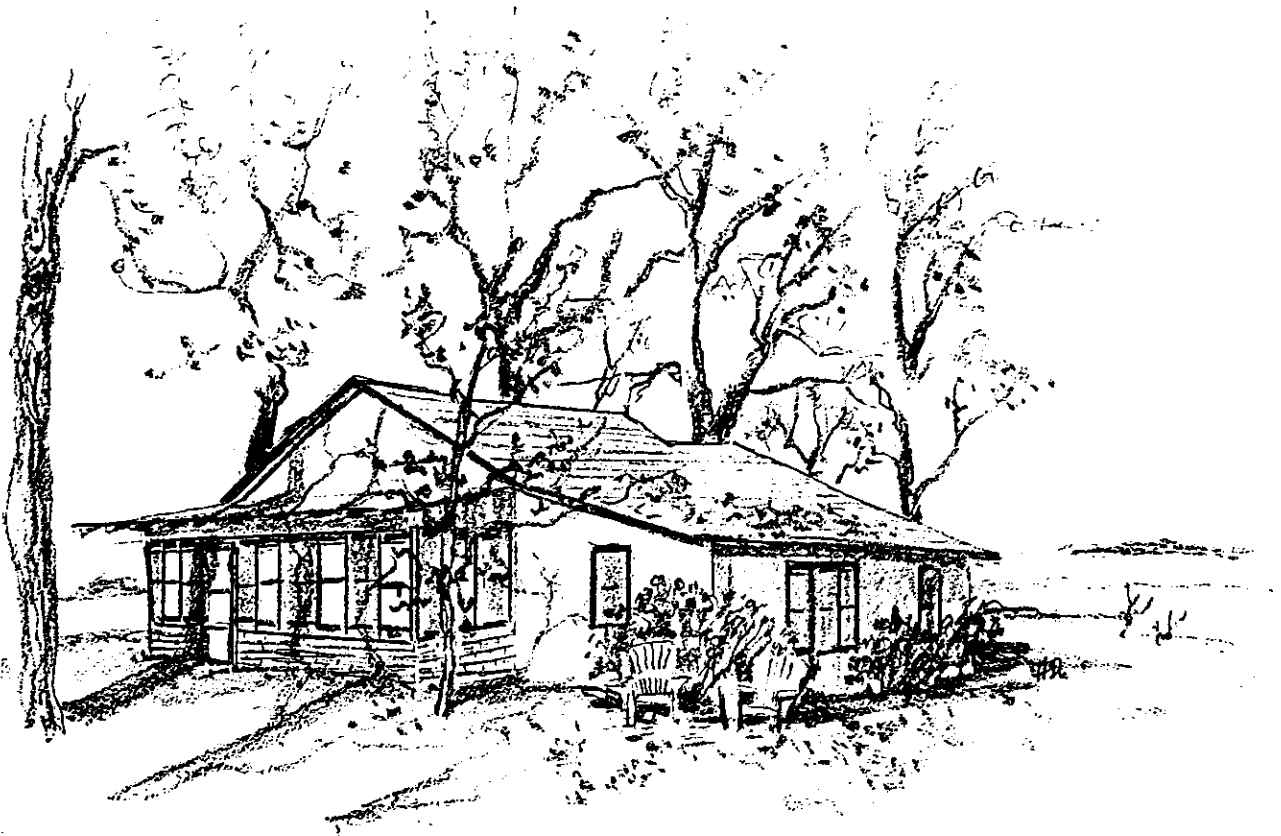
It's a bit sad to reflect on our lack of knowledge concerning the history of this simple, one-story home. However, I learned that realtors are not historians. Something about this property immediately aroused memories in the attic of my imagination.

The glassed-in porch was built to absorb the warmth of the sun and ward off the bitter cold. Its windows are characteristic of resort-type cottages built in the 1920s. Every other window can be raised and hooked to the ceiling allowing summer breezes to filter through the screens. In 1994, the porch was given some much needed TLC to maintain its original charm and authenticity. Its many windows (30 panes) were the eyes and ears of the world, much like the Pathe News Reels (black and white glimpses of world news from 1930-1970) shown at theaters.

Jack Frost continues to leave his signature primeval forests on the quaint porch windows when the temperature plunges below zero. This rare and delicate artistry glows with prismatic colors in the bright sunlight. The window salon retrieves my winter childhood memories. Gazing at the kaleidoscope of fragile and fanciful etchings captures a moment of innocence.

Our address was East Lincoln Highway. A few "X Marks the Spot" State Auto Insurance Association signs remained on the sharp, right-angle curves of the farm-to-market road from Marshalltown to Shady Oaks. These signs indicated where fatalities had occurred.

The Spring of 1966, our first at Shady Oaks, overflowed with surprises. The small



The Original Office, Lodge and Residence

cluster of homes and occupants were now in our care. The pastoral, rural setting of timber and meadow, as companions, presented a new and welcome sight. We paid little heed to the small stream that outlined two sides of the property. It added to the tranquil ambience and beauty of the landscape.

A minister came by to welcome us to the community. He sensed that our lives were in limbo with the change and offered a few kind words. Clasp my hand, he thoughtfully said, "The rains will come and wash your troubles away."

Two weeks later torrents of rain fell for several days. The small stream gurgled and escaped its banks. Spring floods were something we had only heard about in the news. The rainstorms finally ended, and overnight the wind swept away the soggy clouds. The gloomy, purple world was replaced with a dome of sparkling soft, blue

sky that arched over the meadow. Sadly to say, our troubles were not washed away.

During my first summer at Shady Oaks, the aura of resort-style living was still present. All of the residents mowed their lawns, planted flowers and took great pride in being home owners. Evenings were wonderful. While neighbors visited with one another, the happy sound of children playing filled the air. At dusk, families returned to their own homes, lights twinkled from within and family life flourished. We witnessed the pride that our residents displayed.

In July of 1966, newlyweds, Gary and Beverly (Zednichek) Waddell purchased a New Moon mobile home (10 by 55-foot) from Malloy's Sales at Shady Oaks and moved it onto a lot. They chose the location because it was close to town, but far enough away to be quiet. The lot rent was \$22.50 per month.

According to Bev, "Shady Oaks was a small community, and there were other young parents like us. Mike was born in November of 1968, and Bill in May of 1972. It was a great place to raise the boys. We planted flowers and hung a swing in a big shade tree. Mike still remembers building small towns with Micky down by the small stream."

The Waddells agree, "Our neighbors at Shady Oaks were great. Though we like living in Tennessee, we still miss our family and good friends in Marshalltown."

In August of 1966, Gary and Gloria Hanson moved their mobile home from Elvira (Clinton County) to Shady Oaks. They had accepted new teaching positions in Marshalltown. Their first daughter, Stacy, was born in March of 1969 while they still lived at Shady Oaks. Later that year, the young family moved into their new home in Marshalltown. Their second daughter, Stephanie, was born in 1972. Gloria is the vocal music instructor at Miller Middle School, and Gary's curriculum area is Modular Technology at the same school.

The Hansons paid \$75 to move their mobile home with tipout to Shady Oaks in 1966, compared to approximately \$1,700 for a 150-mile move in 1996.

I believe that the layout of the Cabin Camp contributed to the Mobile Home Court's success and popularity. The inner circular drive is similar to a wagon train encampment around a friendly campfire. No one lives at the end of the street, and the slender side of the mobile homes are directed into the prevailing winds. The most violent windstorm that we experienced only tossed one storage shed around like a trash can, because it wasn't properly anchored. Shady Oaks has weathered the Iowa seasons quite well.

In 1972, 75 per cent of all American families wanted to own their own homes, but only half of all families could afford it. This resulted in about six and one-half million Americans living in mobile homes which were becoming less mobile. The industry began producing more homes than there were decent places to install them. However, they began painting the homes in earth colors to give them a sense of permanence and depth of shade. "Shade," said Frank Lloyd Wright, "is charm added to character and style added to comfort. On no account, need modern mass production lack the quality of individuality."

Going along with tradition, several of our residents' wives waitressed at Shady Oaks Cafe on Friday and Saturday nights. These part-time jobs began in the 1950s and lasted through the 1970s. Shady Oaks Cafe was inspected annually by the Iowa Department of Agriculture, and the Mobile Home Park was inspected by the State Department of Health.

Everyday, I find it exciting to look out my kitchen window at the entrance to the lane which has carried a parade of cars bringing people from near and far, coast to coast and north to south for 70 years.

Our home at Shady Oaks is oriented to take advantage of passive solar gain in winter and shade from the many deciduous trees in summer. The topography of the lot our home sits on favors an easterly exposure, which is good for solar gain (although, southeast is better).

Shady Oaks is still our home. We have a deep respect for the supremacy of nature's turbulent and healing ways. The cooler temperature, provided by the trees in summer, is a real joy. Our ever-changing scene is a kaleidoscope of beauty. The small stream has grown wider and deeper and continues to do what it has to do.

Shady Oaks Chronicles

One of the first things I discovered was that on the first of each month we were expected to host an "open house." The children of the court were bathed, dressed up and on good behavior. They came with their mothers to pay the rent, visit and have refreshments. It is no longer that way.

When the phone rang, I learned to warmly answer, "Shady Oaks Court." This distinguished us from Shady Oaks Cafe. Often the caller would ask what time we opened. Sometimes they wanted to schedule a party. One deep-voiced caller asked if he had reached the Oaks. I am not sure how I responded, but the next question was, "Is Shady there?" I'm sure he enjoyed my silence.

After the first fall, midst the rustling of leaves, a tent city would spring up for a couple of weeks. Pheasant hunters from Illinois made it an annual trek. Four of the five fellows worked at a mental health facility. These happy guys hovered around their little

stove at night. Their visits continued for a number of years.

Family names of residents have added interest. At one time, the Whites lived on the north end of the court and the Blacks on the south. Later, two Wolfs were opposite three Lambs. Over the years, we had one Freeze and three Storms.

It was the second marriage for one gentleman who lived here and the fourth for his bride from Indiana. They had picked out their new mobile home at the Hillcrest factory in Indiana. Another new mobile home moved in one month and out the next, as the owner discovered he was only a lot away from his ex-wife and her new husband.

Twenty-six years ago, a renter fulfilled his dream. After his divorce, a petite, mail-order bride from Malaysia arrived on the scene. Indra was wrapped in her native garb and wore sandals. She was very happy to be in the United States and displayed her culture in many quiet ways during her stay at Shady Oaks.

A few days after Decoration Day I looked out my kitchen window to see a rather elaborate flower garden in front of a mobile home. Over night, bright clumps of pink, yellow and red artificial flowers had appeared. I didn't ask about the flowers. I really didn't want to know!

Summer has always been my favorite season. Air-conditioning isn't necessary at Shady Oaks. Umbrellas of huge oak leaves keep the temperature cooler. The woodland floor has its own damp, earthy smell. Open windows allow the soft, summer breezes to lull you to sleep.

One summer night, I awoke to the sound of loud music. It sounded as if a skating rink was nearby. The mystery was solved. The man that lived in the trailer nearest us was a conductor on the railroad, and sometimes his job kept him away overnight. When he was gone, his wife would play the electric organ all night.

The first Fourth of July was the most peaceful day of the year for us. All of the mobile home lots were full, and many children lived here. There were over 50 residents; but to us, it seemed like 150, or more. Previously, we lived on a farm, back a long lane and our neighbors were a quarter of a mile away. On that hot, July day, everyone left, as they had

places to go and things to do. We were all alone for the first time since our arrival. At last, we could relax and enjoy our brief reprieve. We were glad to watch the tired, happy families return home that evening. A few finished off the warm night with giant sparklers.

The first mobile home to move out was a sad experience and was only outweighed by the joy of the new one that took its place. It was rather exciting to have people come and go, as that was the original purpose of mobile homes. The fellows who drove the trailer totes were a breed all of their own. Some were quite skilled, and no challenge was too great. I never had to worry about skilled drivers backing over a waterline or hitting a tree. I'm not sure whether a driver's success was based on his own driving skills, his patience or the equipment he drove.

One resident attempted to keep a pet raccoon. We didn't approve, but the new wore off quickly. The raccoon chose to return to its timber home. The ugly pheasants I photographed one winter were really wild turkeys.

A young couple bought a small home that was already on a lot. They soon decided that they wanted a newer, larger home. Two boys, two dogs and two years later, they moved into a 14-foot wide home, their third on the same lot.

It's true! Traditionally, more little boys than girls have lived here. However, twin girls were born to a family in our rental home.

Our first autumn, the falling leaves opened our eyes. What a shock! The elm, hickory, ash, maple, and oak trees shed their leaves in abundance. In addition, it rained acorns for several weeks. Those who had lived here through several falls, raked leaves toward the drive and bonfires burned brightly each night. The grasses along the small stream were tall and very dry. Burning it off, lit the night sky with a rosy glow. It was frightening, as the flames sometimes shot up 20 feet in the air. The next year, Bob cut the tall prairie grasses with a scythe several times during the summer.

A drummer, who performed with a band at Ceasars (Lloyds) Restaurant, moved in one fall. Shortly thereafter, he called the Sheriff's Department to report that someone was throwing rocks at his mobile home. It was a windy night, and acorns were beating drum rolls on the metal roof. This annual

phenomena lasts only a short period of time. That year, however, there was a bumper crop of acorns, as the trees had been under stress due to several dry seasons. The same year a lady, who had always lived in town, carefully gathered bushels of acorns and then wondered what she could do with them.

One renter thought a house dog was one that stayed in a dog house. The large dog sat on top of his house and howled at the moon. For a short time, a Saint Bernard made his home with a fellow who was an ardent fisherman. For a week or two one summer, a resident brought a pony home each night in the back of his truck. The kids enjoyed the pony rides, but no one enjoyed cleaning up after it!

Our second renters on Lot #1 were Mike and Deb Fuller, a "just-married" couple who lived in a small mobile home. Deb stayed for a short time after Mike went to the service. Although they were from the Marshalltown area, I thought I would never see them again. However, I received a pleasant surprise several years later. During the holidays, Mike and Deb returned as starry eyed as ever. While some of our residents were complaining about the downy, white blanket of snow, Mike was elated to visit their first home once again. Over and over, he exclaimed that it was a beautiful sight and that it looked like the picture postcard he dreamed of so often.

That day I became acutely aware of the everyday beauty around me. I have never forgotten the wide-eyed wonder of Mike as he trudged around in the freshly-fallen snow and admired the trees etched in white against the cloudless blue sky. Happiness was returning home.

We knew nothing about trailer or mobile home living when we moved here. Since the Cabin Camp was transposed into a Mobile Home Court, many of our lots were small. That was fine in the beginning, because the homes were also small. However, our lots shrunk like an accordion as the size of mobile homes grew.

Bob thinks he is the oldest, living person maintaining a mobile home court. He does most of the mowing and road maintenance and some of the snow removal.

A mystical experience overtakes me when the fog rolls in across big Timber Creek Meadow ("Meadow") to the east. The

enshrouded oaks loom very tall. Sometimes spirits of the past surround me, and whispers are adrift. On dark and rainy nights, trains rumble loudly over the rails. Their whistles echo more shrilly, and they seem closer. It's a foreboding sound, as they sound a warning of fog or high water.

An older mobile home was once sold for a "Granny House" on a farm. The two grubby fellows that bought the home, also unblocked it. These hillbillies were good workers and spoke in their own tongue. Each understood the other's lingo; I certainly didn't.

Lunch was not a problem. Each fellow opened his own can of pork and beans with a large pocket, or fishing, knife. One pulled two loaves of unsliced home-made bread out of a brown, crumpled sack. Red bandannas that had been looped near the knees of their bib overalls were tucked into the neck opening of their grimy shirts. The rest of the scene was even more unbelievable, as they happily sat on the back of their old truck talking, laughing loudly and eating.

Their etiquette was really primitive. Skillfully avoiding the sharp edge of the can, each dipped several fingers into the contents. The beans they retrieved were spread onto a torn-off hunk of white bread. As they dipped further into the can, they swabbed out the beans with the bread until the can was shiny clean. They smacked their lips in approval.

This ritual was followed by shameless, resounding burps of approval. Both removed their red hanky bibs and wiped off their face and hands. I've seen few people who have enjoyed a meal with greater satisfaction. These brothers appeared to be from an unknown place and time, as I have never seen them again.

Every day the soap opera continues at Shady Oaks. It is like switching channels, as variety is never lacking.

One mobile home blaze was a nightmare. The LeGrand Volunteer Fire Department arrived promptly on the scene, and no one was injured. We took coffee and cookies to the firemen who waited and watched for several hours to make sure all was under control. The home was scrapped, and the plywood-encased skeleton was towed away to its Happy Haunting Ground.

On another occasion, a tree was struck by lightning. The most dangerous part was the

arcking of the power lines in the tree. There was concern that the fire might spread from tree to tree via the lines. As we watched the balls of fire light up the dark sky, the fire chief reminded us that you can't fight an electrical blaze with water.

One tenant was a little absent-minded. She was tidy person who always wanted to pay her rent on time. She would stop her car in the driveway in front of the house and leave it running while she came in to write her check. She left by the front door and scurried home leaving her car still running in the driveway. I could not reach her by phone, as the receiver was usually off the hook. As soon as I could walk down to her mobile home and remind her, she smiled and walked back with me to get her car. Sometimes she left it running beside her home as well. It was a grave concern at the time.

Bob has come to the rescue numerous times. In the late sixties, a couple that wintered in Florida were converting a furniture van into a Rolling Home (early-day motor home). A ladder had been standing by the van all week. The lady, who was very independent, often worked alone on the project. Bob was in his shop when he heard someone scream, "Bob! Bob!" Startled, he rushed to the door and saw her standing on the top of the van, frantically waving her arms and yelling. Her ladder had fallen to the ground.

Chuckling to himself and enjoying the scenario, Bob went to her rescue. After standing the ladder up against the van, he waited until she gained enough composure to climb down to safety. This rare situation was out of character for her. Though thanks were inaudible, they maintained a mutual understanding.

I was home alone. It was a sunny, early fall day; and I was cleaning house. The walk-in basement door was unlocked. I had just come inside and up the stairs to the main level. A rattling noise, like a door opening or closing, drew my attention. I went to the living room, which is mostly all windows to the east. Without hesitation, I peered down below. I froze in terror as my eyes met sooty, sunken eyes. I wasn't expecting to see the person standing less than six feet below me.

Fear gripped me, my ears rang loudly and I held my breath. His long, flowing hair hung below the banded, shawl-like drape on his

head. In the tattered clothing, he resembled a Bedouin, or a Biblical character. What looked like a small, iron skillet hung to his side. On the ground out by the apple trees were two carpet-type bags. The bags were bulging with clothing, bedding or other possessions. My mind was racing, my mouth was dry and I panicked. Could he be a gypsy? Was he alone, or were there more camped nearby?

What should I do? Finally, I came to my senses enough to lock the door to the garage and call the Sheriff's department. After describing him, I was told that someone quite similar had been seen in the Newton area several days before; he had disappeared without incident. After hanging up the phone, I peeked out a smaller bedroom window; and he was sitting under the trees eating apples.

When Bob returned home, the fellow met him in our front driveway. He asked for money or for a job. As he walked through the yard, there was a rhythmic, clanging of some utensil bouncing against the skillet. When I last saw the lithe vagabond, he was headed north toward Marshalltown. A penciled note indicated he had been here before and was looking for someone. Later I heard that he had traveled this territory with his parents and was searching for childhood memories. The mysterious, wild spirit of the Gypsies was evident in his eyes.

"Like the tent in the wind, the Gypsy does not openly oppose the principles and laws of the peoples he lives with. He bends this way and that. Yet when the wind has blown over, he stands as straight as before - while the wind blows elsewhere" (K. Bercovici). There are still about 20,000 Gypsies living in the United States.

A lovable, tiger Tom cat chose us for his adopted family. He was a good mouser and had a fetish for bobbing chipmunks' tales. For several years, we only saw this new breed of bob-tailed chipmunks. Many times, Reagan (he was named after the President) would go away for a couple of days and return home with cuts, scratches and matted fur. He wore his battle scars with pride.

However, he doted on the attention he received, such as a soft bed or lap to curl up on and warm milk. For bowls of fresh food and cool water, he always meowed, "Thank you." His purr was deep and contented.

Reagan was a Tom cat through and through. He climbed, fought and defended his territory.

One Christmas Eve, after he chowed down his cat food, he took a nap. About bedtime, he led us to the back door; and we let him out in the brisk night air. Around 11:30 p.m., we went to the door to let him in. Reagan wasn't there. We took turns calling his name and rattling the bag of "Happy Cat." I kept saying "Cookies, Cookies," as that is what we called the dry cat food. Reagan was gone. On Christmas morning, there was still no sign of our beloved Tom cat.

We drove down to Highway 30, checking the road as we went. I believe Mick and his mother checked every roadkill between LeGrand and Marshalltown. Sometimes we mentioned our loss to each other, and sometimes we kept our feelings to ourselves. The ending is better than you might think. Reagan did come home around midnight on Valentine's Day. We thought we saw our Tom cat run in the drive. We opened the door, and he limped inside. He fur was caked with blood, and one eye was swollen shut. We had never seen him look so awful. Mick was sure that Reagan's eye was gone.

We cleaned him up, tended to his wounds and gave him warm milk. Reagan snoozed until late the next afternoon when the setting sun got in his eyes. He kept living the good life when he chose.

One of the fun things that I miss the most is the large pop machine that was located in the Log Cabin. It was popular and convenient. The big Pepsi truck arrived every Wednesday, sometimes stopping here before going on to the Cafe. Lots of icy, cold pop was sold on hot summer days and evenings. I looked forward to ordering the best selling flavors. My favorites were strawberry and creme soda. To keep the machine, it meant selling a certain quota and having the bottles returned to their crate. All went well until broken glass and unreturned bottles littered the grounds. The bottled pop was so much colder than the pop chilled in the refrigerator, or over ice.

A 14-inch April 10, 1973 blizzard brought traffic to a standstill. Bob came to the rescue on his little Ford tractor and opened a single-lane path to Highway 30. Our residents were soon back in circulation. However, there are always some who like to call work to say they

are snowbound. One young fellow made a wind sail and ice skated up and down the highway. Taking the old road to town following a blizzard is a different story. The best advice is, "Wait until the County opens the road."

For three days in February of 1975, an ice storm left this entire area without electricity. Many chose to remain in their mobile homes until the utility was restored.

Since 1983, the "Big Treehouse" has added a new dimension to living on this island east of Marshalltown's mainland. It's truly a Golden Link to the past, present and future. Shady Oaks is a place to let your imagination soar. The sky is the limit!

The woodland setting allows you to be in harmony with nature. At times, the solitude is an energizing force. In 1993, Timber Creek tried desperately to become a river. The fast-moving onslaught of the great flood left devastation and despair along its path. Just a few years ago, the small stream which borders our property was so narrow that young fellows could jump across it. Sometimes, we walked a plank to the other side to fly kites from the Meadow. This waterway is now deeper and wider, as its banks have eroded. Now, small trees that once grew along its banks are standing in the canyon cut by the stream.

The water table was virtually at the surface for most of the year. Soggy, rain-soaked Iowa struggled to recover from the worst natural disaster in its 147-year history. Experts compared Iowa to a giant sponge. Climatologists were baffled.

At the corner of Shady Oaks Road and Highway 30, the timber silently succumbed to progress as man and trees competed for the same space. Pheasants used to roost in the trees, and deer lurked in the shadows waiting to gracefully streak across the roadway. This vanishing scene was attributed to the new Highway 30 Expressway ("Expressway") around Marshalltown.

The Expressway runs approximately one-fourth mile south and parallel to the former Highway 30 through Marshalltown. It will connect just west of Underwood Avenue (Ferguson Road) to a point west of the Union Pacific (formerly CNW) tracks. Intersections will be constructed east of the Expressway connection at Underwood, Shady Oaks Road

and Coppock Park Road. Cloverleaves will accommodate the three major intersections to Marshalltown.

The landmark house (Nels Peterson place) at the top of the hill on Highway 30 with the "Windows of Gold" (Helen Steiner Rice) was moved down the hill and around the corner. Since that gray November day in 1993, it sits out of my view atop Cooper Hill. The old, white house wasn't much to look at up close; but at sunrise, the east window panes ignited with gold for a few minutes and melted to a buttery yellow and finally the gray of obscurity.

During the Fall of 1994, plundering earth movers bounced and rolled across the roadway like a predator after its prey. Some machines did not have cabs. One fellow, sitting out in the open, appeared to be driving a wild team of horses who were pulling an ancient chariot. Cars, trucks and limousines patiently lined up on both sides of the stop-and-go lights. Luckily, there were no accidents of any consequence in this area.

The Expressway, scheduled for completion in the Fall of 1997, kept on target in 1994. Construction came to a complete, or abrupt, halt after Thanksgiving. This was fortunate, as the first snow of the season (12 inches) snarled traffic early in December. Crews building the cloverleaves and the bridge over Timber Creek were not hampered by winter weather conditions.

The traffic signals at the peak of the dwindling hill just west of Shady Oaks Road were dismantled for safety and snow removal. On the north side of Highway 30, the motor-driven terrestrial dinosaurs were silenced. It looked as if a little boy had carefully lined up his toys in a row. A year-around skeleton crew inventoried the equipment.

The crew working on the west-bound Timber Creek Bridge stayed on the job throughout the Winter of 1994 and 1995. During the following Spring and Summer, the grading moved along close to schedule. The paving was poured quickly once the contractor arrived on the scene. The new west-bound lane through our intersection opened to temporarily serve two-way traffic in November of 1995, and it will do so until the new east-bound lane is completed.

This road work, 50 years after the previous Highway 30 construction in the 1940s, is intended to accommodate the traffic of the 21st Century.

Trailer courts, or mobile home parks, present a different image now than they once did. Mobile home parks today are often mentioned after a hurricane, tornado, earthquake, fire or shooting.

Mobile homes have grown larger (16 by 70-foot or double-wide), more luxurious and less mobile. However, it's not the craze that it once was. The warmer states seem to have newer and larger parks. For some, it's a chosen way of life; for others, it is the only way of life.

Manufactured housing dealers no longer cater to secondary moves. It's a one time only move from the sales lot to a permanent location.

Our official telephone listing is now Shady Oaks Recreational Vehicle ("RV") and Mobile Home Park. RV's were viewed negatively in the late 1970s. Many people thought they were environmentally unfriendly "gas guzzlers" and appealed mainly to retirees. According to a study by Louis Harris in 1994, RVs travel image is now considered an environmentally friendly way to experience the great outdoors. Their popularity has grown beyond a leisure asset exclusively for seniors. At Shady Oaks, the small cabin lots of yesteryear are now perfect for the RVs of the 1990s.

Many RV folks avoid interstates or "Life in the fast lane," as they find them boring. One of the most frequent comments shared by both RV campers and Treehouse guests is, "It's so peaceful at Shady Oaks." The 1995 detour (due to the Expressway construction) caused a fellow from Mobile, Alabama, to compare locating our campground to that of a treasure hunt. Another camper said, "What a fitting and graceful transition from mobile homes to RVs." Historic Shady Oaks Campground has been given Woodall's seal of approval.

Operating Shady Oaks means dealing with families, people on the move to or from this area because of job gain or loss and retirees enjoying their leisure years. Like God's constantly changing scenes, so are the people in our lives. We are often oblivious as one day, or season, fades into the next much like the dissolve-slide presentations that were my passion for 10 years.

The magnitude of the Shady Oaks chain of events is breathtaking to comprehend. What would John Campbell think of the unbelievable number of people that continue to visit the claim he staked in 1848?

In April of 1995, our daughter, Judy Jurgensen, was included in the management and ownership of this family-owned business. It is hoped that her son, Mick, will be included soon. While working on the original office/residence, Judy often heard the sound of the front door opening and closing. Mick told her, "Don't worry, Mom; it's just the ghosts of former residents returning home." Sometimes the aromatic odor of sweet-smelling tobacco lingers in this smoke-free home. Ironically, Les Norton (the man who built the home and resided in it for approximately 20 years) was a pipe smoker.

The aura of Shady Oaks spreads elements of intrigue, and contentment still reigns. The simple, old-fashioned pleasures of country life, such as a quiet, majestic sunrise or the enchantment of a full moon over the Meadow often bring smiles.

After residing here for three decades, come drought or high water, I believe Shady Oaks will bravely go into the 21st Century. It is the desire of three generations of my family to preserve the historical integrity of the remaining structures on the property. It is a commitment that I hope can be realized. Thus, my story has no ending, just more and more discoveries.

*Shady Oaks is a bonafide
Marshall County historical landmark.
I will always feel the presence of
those who have been here before me.*

**Act Three, Scene Three
The Rainbow Journal**

My Journal reminds me of a childhood book that I read over and over about the little train (bridge) that said, "I think I can, I think I can!"

The Rainbow Journal spanned just three years (1987-1990), but the waiting and wondering seemed like an eternity. I clipped out two pictures that appeared in the Times-Republican ("TR") on November 21, 1984. Under one picture, it said, "The Rainbow Bridge east of town is scheduled to be torn down, but at this time is still standing." When this comment clouded my thoughts, I tried to dispel the outcome.

Rainbow Bridge was still standing; and I was driving over it, just like the school busses, delivery trucks and hundreds of commuters going to and from work every day. It looked much the same as it did when we moved here. The bridge was the entrance to a story of a different era. Driving north, it was the entrance; and heading south, it was the exit. I let my daily cares crowd out the possibility of losing the bridge. My journal begins when reality awoke the sleeping giant, the future of Rainbow Bridge was in jeopardy. It called for action.

The following information is taken from my journal regarding the future of the Rainbow Arch Bridge ("Rainbow Bridge"). Most of my records are documented by attending meetings of the Marshall County Board of Supervisors and the County Engineer, Royce Fichtner; collecting articles from the TR, including the "Local Comment" column by David Norris, editor; corresponding with Warren Dunham, Director of the Iowa Department of Transportation ("DOT"); Lowell Richardson, DOT Director of the Office of Local Systems; Dave Nagle, Member of Congress; and Chuck Grassley and Tom Harkin, U.S. Senators.

January 1987

Mild temperatures and little snow.

January 1st, Happy New Year!

I have a grave new concern. It's the fate of the Rainbow Bridge on Shady Oaks Road. It is a landmark, but it's also in deteriorating condition. I understand it is a long, tedious procedure to allow for a new bridge. It involves contacting all proper agencies, documenting, funding and waiting. First the bridge must be declared unfit.

*"If you believe in fate, believe in it -
at least - for your own good."*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

February 1987

Warm, dry, sunny and nice.

February 27th

Day-by-day, I scan the paper for news about Rainbow Bridge. At last, it was noted in the TR that the supervisors are planning to set a hearing date to consider a resolution to lower the load requirement on the Rainbow Bridge near Shady Oaks. Maybe this would save the bridge.

March 1987

*Warm, no flooding,
but a blizzard on the 29th.*

March 1st

March is blustery, and it's the time of year that the County Supervisors hold a special session for the road budget. Items on their agenda include a resolution to allow for necessary engineering and evaluations covering the Rainbow Bridge. Royce Fichtner said 600-700 vehicles a day use Shady Oaks Road and the bridge. This road serves the industrial area of Marshalltown and connects with 12th Avenue, 18th Avenue and Olive Street.

Fichtner explained, "The government would like us to leave the bridge and close the road. That would affect both school bus and mail routes. The cost to replace the bridge would be in excess of \$125,000. The road itself is in poor condition and requires a lot of work. If we replace the bridge, we will have to spend a lot of money on the road in the future."

March 26th

This morning, I received a call from LDF (East Marshall) School asking permission for the school bus to turn around in our driveway. This was my first knowledge of the limited use of Rainbow Bridge.

Later the same day, I learned that the firm of Calhoun-Burns and Associates, Inc., consulting engineers from West Des Moines,

reported to the County Engineer, "Severe deterioration and foundation movement dictate a load posting of three tons and one lane travel." The recommendation said, "If the bridge is not replaced by December 31, 1987, the road should be closed." This became public knowledge the next day.

March 27th

Today, the front page of the TR stated, "Bridge Use Restricted. The Rainbow Bridge on Shady Oaks Road east of Marshalltown was posted a three-ton weight limit."

Our Mobile Home Court is dependent on mobile homes being able to move in and out. Limiting the weight places a handicap on the continued operation of our business. In 1984, Shady Oaks Road was closed while the little bridge at the north end of the court was replaced. At that time, Maynard Johnson and I found many 1921 license plates in the broken-up cement from the bridge. I kept plate #250,518 IA, 21. It wasn't until 1929 that plates were issued by the County. Apparently, the bridge was built before the Lincoln Highway was paved.

When a bridge becomes unsafe for normal traffic, something must be done to protect the safety of the public, even though that bridge has a rich history. County Engineer Royce Fichtner said, "The Rainbow Bridge has been determined safe for one car at a time only; therefore, school busses and trucks will not be able to travel on it."

There are many kinds of trucks effected by this new restriction: LP gas, telephone, electric, mail, garbage, wreckers, fire, UPS, etc. Ambulances had always used this road to avoid Highway 30 traffic, as it expedited their route to the hospital.

April 1987

Warm, nice and sunny - Spring.

April 2nd

The Marshall County supervisors met and adopted a resolution approving engineering work involving the Rainbow Bridge at Shady Oaks. I was present at this meeting and expressed my concern about snow removal and emergency service as a result of the bridge closure by December. I felt a huge

responsibility for our residents, their jobs and livelihood. Many chose our location because of the proximity to their work. Our neighbor, Ron Settle, also attended. We were told that there were six alternatives to be studied. At the present time, the bridge is open to only one-lane traffic and restricted to a three-ton limit.

I had an alternative in mind. It was to eliminate a bridge entirely as shown in the 1875 atlas. I was told that it was highly unlikely, as grading a new road around Timber Creek, would be as costly as a new bridge.

April 10th

This "Local Comment" column by the TR editor, David Norris, appeared in the paper a few days later:

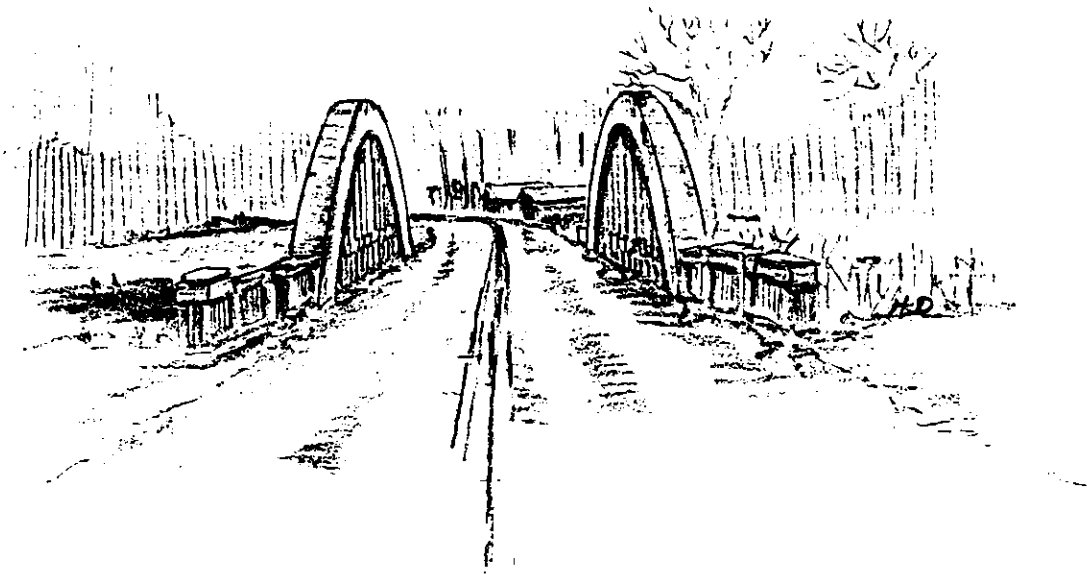
"Opponents of the plan to close the south end of Shady Oaks Road by the end of the year are understandably disturbed at the thought of losing an important stretch of highway. County officials, however, certainly do not dare risk serious injury while awaiting something to be done about the bridge. That is what makes the whole issue so tough, especially when considering the length of time

motorists will be forced to take alternative routing.

"Although Rainbow Bridge may have historical significance, the county is correct in first determining if it is feasible to repair it. As sad as it would be, it might be necessary to replace it (as was done with the historic bridge on Third Avenue). However, taking up to two or three years for that study seems too lengthy, although the number of alternatives to be studied probably are more extensive than the average person understands. Still, there are some remedies that can take the sting out of the closing.

"Currently, the bridge is closed to only one lane of traffic and has a three-ton load limit. If it is safe to continue this limited use throughout the summer when traffic is heavier, could it not be kept open longer by simply reducing the load limit? County Engineer Royce Fichtner doesn't think so, since he feels the bridge is too dangerous to risk continued use. If he is correct, he is wise to not risk a major liability suit if something should happen because the County was trying to be more accommodating than it should have been.

"Another possibility to ease the dislocation problem is being studied It includes the use of the short gravel road about one-half



The Rainbow Arch Bridge at Shady Oaks

mile west of the Highway 30/Shady Oaks turnoff. It goes north and connects with a spur road that ties back into Shady Oaks Road. No one lives on that road, so it has low priority for snow removal, a policy that would need changing. LeGrand area residents would prefer the more direct route that Shady Oaks Road provides County officials won't get unanimous approval on whatever decision they make regarding Rainbow Bridge and Shady Oaks Road, but at least there are some viable alternatives."

April 15th

The Board of Supervisors decided to either replace Rainbow Bridge and/or replace the bridge and grade on Underwood Avenue north of Highway 30. I was at the meeting and voiced my nightmare of concerns.

April 16th

The clipping in the TR today said, "The Rainbow Bridge brought considerable discussion when the Marshall County Board of Supervisors met. Mary Gift was concerned regarding the 19 homes on Shady Oaks Road, including the mobile home park. How will the 45 to 50 people affected by this closing get to Highway 30 in the winter. Another major concern is fire protection and ambulance service. This half-mile stretch is protected by the LeGrand volunteer fire department.

"The County Engineer said he had known the bridge had problems and that a new bridge was programmed five or six years ago. Things came to a halt when it was declared of historical significance. He estimated 40 state and federal agencies must give approval before a bridge of historical significance can be removed.

"County Engineer Royce Fichtner explained the procedure that must be followed, if Federal funds are involved, and a bridge is considered of historical significance, as Shady Oaks bridge is. The estimated cost is \$275,000 to replace it. If Federal approval is given for removal, then the final decision will be left to the board of supervisors."

This sums up the situation but not the answers. They are in limbo.

April 24th, My birthday

Things are beginning to show progress. I have been working for the cause. The new bridge is a mission of survival for our business. Many days and evenings I have stood at the corner of Highway 30 with my clipboard getting signatures from other concerned citizens. I accumulated most of the 600-plus names on the petition to keep the road open. I feel like a patriot and fully believe in what I am doing. Sometimes I wonder what happened to all those people and agencies who protect history?

May 1987

*Warm, dry, no flooding
and crops in early.*

May 4th

The TR today stated, "The board accepted petitions, with no action, to keep Rainbow Bridge open. The supervisors placed on file some 600 names on a petition to keep Shady Oaks Road open. Later a contract from Calhoun-Burns & Associates, Inc. of West Des Moines was approved to do preliminary work needed to solve the Shady Oaks bridge question. The contract, which must now go to the state for approval, will be paid from the Farm to Market fund. Fichtner could not estimate how long it will take to get the preliminary work done before final plans can be submitted. No fixed dollar amount is included in the contract."

I searched through old adages for problem-solving answers. One thing kept coming to mind. You must knock at the door to receive. I wrote letters, attended meetings and tried to follow this advice.

May 7th

I'm busy keeping in touch with my Senators and Representatives. I was pleased to receive a letter from United States Senator Charles (Chuck) Grassley. He answered my letter notifying him of the impending closing of our bridge. He told me he had written to Warren Dunham, the Director of the Iowa DOT. Chuck also expressed faith that our needs

would be given full attention. If we do not contact our Representatives and Congressmen, they cannot help us.

June - July 1987

*June - hot and dry,
crops look good, but need rain.
July - very hot and humid,
crops look good.*

July 1st

I received a letter from Dave Nagle, Member of Congress. He thanked me for taking the time to share my thoughts with him about the bridge closing. He believes that an engineering study is being conducted to examine the feasibility of repairing the bridge. Dave was very familiar with the bridge on Shady Oaks Road. He used the bridge countless times on his way to Marshalltown when he lived in Toledo. In closing, he again thanked me for writing to him.

Once in a while a runaway semitrailer came charging down our closed road. They applied their brakes in front of our house when they saw the barricades at the bridge. The driver had to practically jack-knife the truck to turn it around. It didn't look easy.

August 1987

Very wet, and fall seems early.

August 12th

I received a letter today from Warren B. Dunham, Director, Iowa DOT. It states, "At one time there were 15 arch bridges in the state. There is no special funding available for preservation of these bridges; the money has to come from the extremely limited amount available for the upkeep of more viable and heavily traveled bridges. Locally, no group has come forward offering to take over the Rainbow Arch bridge or preserve it.

"In addition, there are federal government requirements relating to road and bridge work where there is a known archaeological site. There is such a site near this bridge. In the early 1950s, Indian artifacts were found in the field southeast of the bridge. Marshall County has more than 130 deficient bridges, and it's not alone in having so many. Nearly

55 percent of Iowa's estimated 26,000 bridges are substandard, with more than 5,000 said to be in 'critical condition.' Some 3,800 bridges are under state jurisdiction.

"Marshall County, like all counties, receives an amount of federal bridge money about equal to its proportion of deficient bridges. After each new federal transportation act passes, our staff meets with city and county officials to tailor programs to meet their needs. The county supervisors, advised by the county engineer, set their own priorities to use the funds for deficient bridges."

August 17th

This comment written by Warren Dunham, Director of the Iowa DOT, has stayed in my mind. "Providing the amount of bracing the bridge would need to keep it functioning would clog up the creek. Certainly, it would also detract from the bridge's historic design." Would my aspirations for a new bridge ever become a reality? It is such a vital link to the future of our business.

We did grow suspicious of strange cars driving down the road. Especially after we had a heavy, white iron Florentine bench taken from in front of the house. It was easy for someone watching from the Underwood corner to know when we were gone.

September and November 1987

Early fall, dry and cloudy - early harvest

November 15th

The Des Moines Sunday Register ran a picture of the Rainbow Arch structure under the section "Images of Iowa." The eye-catching caption read, "End of the Rainbow." It showed the shadows from the setting sun reflecting through the columns of the arch onto the bridge. Touching!

Under the photo, it read, "Around the Marshalltown area the bridge just off of U.S. Highway 30 is known as 'Rainbow Bridge' for its distinctive concrete arch. Now Marshall County officials are preparing to tear the bridge down because of its poor condition. Officials say it was built in 1918. Steel was hard to come by during World War I. The

bridge will be replaced by a concrete culvert, and a road will be built to reroute the traffic."

This message is not very heartwarming nor do I understand it being replaced by a culvert. This means more sleepless nights and working harder for my cause. It's difficult to turn off at a seldom-used gravel road, as traffic on Highway 30 ignores my turn signal. To reach home from the east, it means going one-half mile further west, then north, back east and south to the Mobile Home Court. It's discouraging!

November 18th

After a conversation that County Engineer Royce Fichtner had with the Federal Highway Administration in Lincoln, Nebraska, on October 30th, he reported: "It appears historical people are concerned about the bridge which means there will be a lot of litigation. This means the structure can be moved or preserved in archives which would cost the County between \$20,000 to \$40,000 for a firm to do the historical preservation.

"The Federal Highway Administration is not in favor of rebuilding the bridge but to go one-half mile west which would be from the north end of the gravel to Highway 30. Rebuilding the bridge would be cheaper with the cost between \$50,000 and \$60,000."

Fichtner also said, "It appears the answer from the historical people will not be in time to commit the bridge replacement in the present fiscal year which ends in October 1988. The letting couldn't occur until November of 1988 with the construction to start in the Summer of 1989. No decision was made on what will be done about the bridge."

December 1987

Snow cover from the 15th on.

December 7th (D Day)

According to the TR, "Supervisors OK Closing Rainbow Arch Bridge. A resolution was adopted to permanently close Rainbow Bridge. County Engineer Royce Fichtner said signs will be erected indicating the bridge is closed. There will be no established detour. The County has yet to make a decision on whether the bridge will be replaced."

December 19th

The "Local Comment" column of the TR featured the "Closing of History:"

"The permanent closing of the Rainbow Bridge on Shady Oaks Road east of Marshalltown tugs at the heart of history buffs, no doubt, since it probably means this piece of history will go in the name of safety or progress. This story is being told all over the country.

"Historic bridges, once gleaming links in the quickly developing rural areas of the nation, were being built rapidly in the early 1900s when traffic volume and vehicle loads were increasing. They were much smaller by today's standards. Today, 80 percent of the roads and bridges in the United States are in rural areas. In Iowa, the rural road system covers 90,000 miles. Pressure is put on counties needing to keep up bridge repair and road work. Some bridges that are not vital links in the transportation picture often lose out when dollars are short. That loss of service is often also a loss of heritage as well."

December 21st

Just four days until Christmas, the supervisors met to accept the resignation of Marshall County Sheriff Derald Gonzales effective January 1. A one-ton limit has now been posted on Rainbow Bridge. My heart sank.

I attended this meeting and questioned the supervisors about the comments in Saturday's TR stating that Shady Oaks Road was not a vital link to the transportation system based on facts from the supervisors. I also asked if some kind of detour marker could be put up and how the County was going to compensate us for cutting off the lifeline to our business?

In our 22 years of operation, we have provided an area for over 90 mobile homes and 250 families. They have had good accessibility to work, an excellent school system (East Marshall, formerly LDF) and protection through the efforts of the LeGrand Volunteer Fire Department. We do care about our residents. It is difficult to accept lightly the closing of our vital link to Highway 30. Service vehicles call for directions, and we receive notices "Unable to Deliver."

December 24th

I received a letter from Lowell Richardson, Director of Local Systems, with the Iowa DOT. He didn't have answers for all of my questions, but I appreciated his acknowledgement. He told me that less than 15 percent of property taxes can be used for county roads and bridges. He wrote ". . . constructive input and suggestions from county residents is one of the factors that the county board considers."

In his letter, Richardson also explained that there are many demands for the limited funds that the County has to work with; they are only required to maintain one-directional access. Iowa counties are maintaining 21,000 bridges; and 55 percent are either in poor condition or too narrow for today's traffic. Around 8,600 county bridges have weight limitations and are posted. Almost 200 are closed to traffic.

Marshall County is not alone in its bridge problems. I certainly agree with Mr. Richardson that Marshall County's engineering staff is very conscientious and does excellent work. They are to be commended.

Did you ever wish for a bridge at Christmas? Well I did. It was a top priority wish. I have tried to imagine the end result if the Rainbow Bridge is left in place and designated as a park. Who would visit it? Would it encounter the same problems that Coppock County Park experienced before it closed? A dead-end road did not seem desirable for a historical park.

Christmas 1987

I sent this letter to the Marshall County Board of Supervisors:

I have become accustomed to our daily access to Highway 30 over the last 20 years. Cutting off our direct access is like suffering an injury. The hurt will not go away. Each time I go to town, I am constantly reminded that things are not the same. Reminders of all kinds meet my eyes: the flapping, garish, orange-red flags, a detour sign with the arrow pointing straight in the air, large yellow and black "Road Closed" signs (2.5 miles, 2 miles, 500 feet, 100 feet) and a "One-Lane Bridge" sign by the side of the road (although the

bridge is barricaded). Glaring white, flashing lights don't let you forget, even at night.

The Lincoln Highway and Shady Oaks were cohorts from the beginning of tourism. Weary travelers from Panama, Nova Scotia and all states, stayed at the first private travel accommodations west of the Mississippi. Now, we constantly receive calls asking how to reach Shady Oaks. Is this progress?

For 22 years, I have listened to the hum of passing traffic, always knowing which direction they were going. We do not have air-conditioning, so the sound of the traffic has grown familiar in the summer when the windows are open. I miss it! I feel isolated and cut off from the world.

Usually 25 cars a day come and go from here, plus three gas companies, UPS, Federal Express, light company, telephone, school bus, mail, cablevision, garbage service, sheriff, miscellaneous services, guests of our residents and paper routes for the Sunday Register, Times-Republican and Pennysaver.

I feel that I have gone back in time. It is not a comfortable feeling. My new theme song is, "Take the Long Way Home." Even though I know others have felt this way too, I know I will survive; but I wonder about the effect on our business.

It's Christmas time, and our lights are on for residents and neighbors to enjoy. Some people like having the road closed, so their children or dogs can play in the road. I am hoping that 1988 will have a remedy, or healing effect on my injury.

The Year 1987 was not a vintage year. Mikhail Gorbachev came to Washington, D.C., to sign a treaty, doing away with medium-range missiles. Mr. Reagan's third choice for Supreme Court Judge was William Kennedy; Maggie Thatcher was in the news; Sammy Kaye was 77; Maria von Trapp was 82; and former Kansas Governor, Alf Landon, was 100. President Reagan sent the U.S. Navy into the Persian Gulf as the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq got nastier.

January 1988

January 1st

A new year filled with old concerns, mainly the fate of Rainbow Bridge and the feasibility of a replacement. What will the ensuing, long months mean to our residents, school busses, emergency vehicles, mail carrier, UPS, newspapers, cable, LP gas, phone, electric, etc. How will they cope?

Spring and Summer 1988

Very hot, dry, crops poor to fair, no bugs!

Six months later, we are wondering and coping. The spring and summer months are always busy with the Big Treehouse and gardening. Even with sunshine, the fate of our road looms in the shadows. From the top level of the Treehouse, I have an aerial view of Rainbow Bridge. Looking through the leafy branches of the maple tree, I can see a river of sky.

August 1988

*Very hot until third week, dry,
harvest will be early.*

August 1st

Both sad and glad news in the TR, "End of Rainbow Will Open Road. The Marshall County Board of Supervisors set into motion Monday morning action that will remove the Rainbow Bridge on Shady Oaks Road and replace it with a new bridge so the road can be opened for traffic.

"The board approved a supplemental agreement with Calhoun-Burns Associates Inc., Des Moines, for additional engineering and design work to cost \$17,150. County Engineer Royce Fichtner explained that this firm was hired two or three years ago to do the preliminary work on a new bridge and alternate route with the contract to be negotiated at a later time. It will be paid for with Bridge Replacement funds, which counties receive from the state on 'a first come, first served basis.' So depending on how fast the bridge can be designed will determine whether the project starts in the Summer of 1989 or 1990.

"In addition, the supervisors approved an agreement with Fraser Design of Loveland, Colorado, to document the history of the Rainbow Bridge which is required by the State Historical Preservation Officer and Historical American Engineering Record. Cost will be \$4,554. The work is expected to be done sometime during the week of September 12."

September 1988

River low, haze from Yellowstone fire.

September 3rd

Once again, my favorite column, "Local Comment, History Served Too" quoted:

"The supervisors have approved removing the Rainbow Arch bridge and replacing it with a new one, utilizing Bridge Replacement funds - which, of course, are just scarce enough to put the completion date up in the air, making it either 1989 or 1990. Important, too, was what the Supervisors did to remember history. They will have the history of the bridge professionally documented, which at least preserves part of the heritage of this unusual bridge architecture

"Cost made it prohibitive to save the structure - because even rebuilt, it couldn't serve expanded traffic, and it just wasn't close to being cost-effective to save the bridge for full use. At least, we won't lose the history of the Shady Oaks bridge, too."

November and December 1988

*Received much needed rain.
River still low, frozen over,
snow for Christmas.*

December 18th

It's Christmas time once again. A second year of wondering seems very tedious. It is like a gnawing toothache that won't go away.

The supervisors bid Joe Armbrrecht farewell and are looking to the new year. In leaving, Joe said, "It's been a pleasure working with Matt Edel and Eldon Schneider. We worked for the County, not for individual political parties. It has been a privilege to work as a supervisor."

At the same meeting, the supervisors brought up to date the status of Rainbow Bridge. Royce Fichtner said he has the final plans on the Rainbow Bridge, and the next step is to purchase the right of way. If this is successful, then the letting for this project can be done in April. The supervisors approved the reappointment of Fichtner as county engineer for one year. He was first appointed in 1978.

Highlights from 1988 included the following news items: The Space Shuttle Discovery successfully blasted off easing the loss of the Challenger, U.S. Postal rates went up, 'a million acres of Yellowstone Park burned, a tragic earthquake shook Soviet Armenia, it was a bad year for TV evangelists and a U.S. Presidential election promised that the economy was on the rise. Two great superpowers came together to save two whales trapped in ice in Alaskan waters.

January 1989

*Very warm all month,
no snow, freezing rain.*

January 1st

Rainbow Bridge is in my thoughts. Each time we leave home to travel east, we first go north, then west and take a gravel road south to Highway 30. When I'm coming home from the west and turning left off of Highway 30 at Underwood, the gravel road is scary. The fast moving vehicles aren't used to so many cars turning left there. Drivers seem to think that I am just cruising along with my turn signal flashing. Giving directions to people trying to reach the Mobile Home Court is also confusing. No mobile homes can move in or out.

February 1989

Snow cover all month, few sub-zero days.

March - April 1989

Dry, cool, very warm Easter, river low.

April 15th

At last, an article in the TR, "Supervisors Set Special Session. The board must take action on the contract and bond for the replacement of the Rainbow Bridge on Shady Oaks Road. The letting for this project was done by the Iowa DOT. With the supervisors' action Monday, the project can start a week earlier."

April 17th

This announcement appeared in the TR: "The Shady Oaks Bridge Bid Approved. The

Marshall County Board of supervisors awarded a contract for Rainbow Bridge replacement. Welden Brothers, Inc., was awarded the contract for the replacement of Rainbow Bridge with a bid of \$361,551. The letting for the bridge project was done by the Iowa DOT."

Seven other bids were considered. The highest was \$433,705 and lowest not accepted was \$379,359. Four were over the \$400,000.

April 24th, Another birthday!

On the bright side, the bridge bid approval and awarding the contract was my best present. It's hard to imagine these months of barricades, flashing lights, bridge closed signs, yellow signs 500, 100 and 50 feet, will someday bring a new link.

One couple in our midst were thoroughly delighted with the quiet scene. With the Cafe closed by the U.S. Deputy Marshall and only one couple living south of the Mobile Home Court, the area just south became a wildlife sanctuary. More song birds and larger birds started nesting there. Early morning was a paradise for bird lovers. Ornithologists would have delighted in the mixture of robins, goldfinch and meadowlark. Later on, the night hawks and chimney swifts came back. Sometimes a crane or egret could be seen wading in the small stream.

Bob mowed the grass next door, but the foliage grew. We realized there was an increase in the population of the racoons, possums, deer and wood chucks. They flourished in their protected environment.

A few renters continually worried about fire protection or a raise in their insurance rates for being on a dead-end road. It aroused the sort of unrest that spreads like a contagious disease. All along, these same people found it was easier to complain than to write a letter to a congressman.

May 1989

Crops good, some much-needed rain.

It was a gray morning the day the arch succumbed to the hand of man. There was no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. As I photographed the procedure, I experienced bittersweet feelings. It was like a dentist

drilling the decay from a cavity. Perhaps I needed novocaine, or something to relieve the pain. I wondered what would fill the huge cavity.

The skeleton frame, which had been embedded in cement, was partially bared. Soon, the once handsome structure was a mass of rubble.

There were mangled beams, angle irons, braces, curbs, decks, guardrails, hangers, parapets, plates, ribs, rods, ties and webs. The arches and hangers were the last to go. What a wreck!

May 6th

Things are beginning to happen. The TR article today reads, "Replacing Noted Rainbow Arch — Construction has started . . ." Historical information has been gathered by the Department of the Interior to determine the historical significance of the bridge. The struggle was worth it.

A 1918 TR article reported: "The supervisors chose this type of bridge (Rainbow Bridge), which is of handsome design, because the price was only \$245 more than the lowest bid for the high steel truss bridge. The absence of cost of maintenance on the arch, compared with painting the steel truss and depreciation of the latter bridge together with the prettier design influenced the board to select the arch. It is much handsomer in design for so important a road as the Lincoln highway."

In 1919, the Marsh Engineering Company designed the 106-foot arch bridge for Marshalltown to carry South Third Avenue over Linn Creek. It was replaced along with the Third Avenue viaduct in 1984. The arch bridge on East Main Street was also torn down a few years earlier.

May 10th

The TR Plus carried this article: "Replacing Noted Rainbow Bridge:

"Construction has started on the replacement of the Rainbow Bridge on old Highway 30, 2.9 miles east of Marshalltown. Welden Bros., Inc., of Iowa Falls has the prime contract. The project is expected to take at least four months. It will include not only a new bridge but grading and paving."

The old concrete and steel bridge has been demolished to set the plans in action for a new structure. The remains lay by the side of the road. A robin made a nest in some of the twisted steel. Perhaps that's a sign of faith in the future.

June - July 1989

Received some rain, need more, still dry.

July 4th

The road is barricaded, and two big cranes are at the bridge site. Things look a mess, but a bridge is in the making. I can't wait. It seems like the road has been closed for an eternity.

October 1989

Good yields, most harvesting done by 31st, short on rain.

October 31

On the front page of the Saturday morning TR, there was a picture with the joyful caption, "Bridge Opening." Our vital link is once again in place. The total length of the new bridge is 205 feet. It consists of five spans. There are three interior 45-foot spans and two exterior 35-foot spans. It's a beautiful and impressive sight.

"Construction on the new bridge began May 2, at a total cost of \$361,551, with 80% federal funding and 20% county. Labor received from six to eight dollars an hour and was in the \$10.00 per hour range for a crane operator. The Rainbow Arch was replaced when it was deemed structurally inadequate." The TR photo shows the Marshall County Supervisors Matt Edel (deceased 1993), Eldon Schneider and Bill Minner looking over the newly completed bridge.

Alluding to the way things were in 1918, labor cost figures for the Rainbow Arch ranged from \$3.50 to \$4.50 a day for common labor, with probably an average of \$4.00.

November - December 1989

*Mostly dry, a white Christmas,
cold prevailed.*

January 1990

A Very, Very Happy New Year!

It's super to start 1990 with the new Shady Oaks Bridge. The "Missing Link" to Highway 30 is back. Hallelujah! I am grateful for the new bridge and will never forget having to go the long way home when the bridge was closed. The new bridge is a welcome relief to our dilemma as there was only inches between trucks and cars on the old, narrow bridge. Our business did experience a financial loss during the closure, as we can only bring mobile homes in from the south. The mailman, school bus, utility and emergency vehicles rejoiced with us when the road was reopened. We persevered and survived!

*"Gratitude is one of the least
articulate of the emotions,
Especially when it is deep."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

June 1990

June 11th, The Rainbow Connection

As I was driving home on Highway 30 following a thunder storm, my attention was drawn across the field toward the new bridge. Against a backdrop of a deep, navy blue sky, a rainbow was arched over the gleaming white structure. Thunder still rumbled as the rain ended, and the sun shown brightly over my shoulder. I pulled off the highway to gaze in disbelief at this fleeting display. I believe several cars honked, because they too saw the rainbow. I wished I had my camera along!

January 1994 Update

As the new year began, I realized that the new Shady Oaks Bridge has been serving our needs for about the same amount of time that our road was closed. The opening of the road was as joyful as the closing had been painful. I sorely missed the rhythms and cadence of

the traffic. The morning and evening rush hours have returned although not in the volume they once were.

The time tunnel has been replaced for several years. A vision of the old structure is instilled in my mind forever. It was my passage to the past just as the new Shady Oaks Bridge is my gateway to the future. The vital link remains intact. The Iowa DOT says the life span of many bridges is only 50 to 60 years. By the year 2039, history could repeat itself.

The timber is disappearing at Shady Oaks corner as man sees fit to impose order on the trees. The land has been readied for the new Expressway. This new, valued transportation corridor will rise to a new level as the community restores its roadside culture. Highway relocation will solve traffic problems. Our highways are an investment for future generations, the state and the nation.

The increase in traffic is due in part to the opening of the Mesquakie Casino. The new bridge has truly been a blessing. When there is an accident on the Highway 30 west of the Shady Oaks junction, the traffic can be rerouted on Shady Oaks Road.

From the beginning, I found it impossible to predict the final outcome of Rainbow Bridge. The variables were so numerous. Was a new bridge really in the tea leaves? I didn't throw dice, or go to a Gypsy fortune teller to find out. Meditation, concentration and believing in the need of many was relied on to achieve the positive and desired result.

I am much more appreciative of all the legalities and decision-making responsibilities of our Marshall County Engineer Royce Fichtner and the Marshall County Board of Supervisors. The "End of the Rainbow" legacy 71 years later produced a new Shady Oaks Bridge. My family lovingly call it the "Mary Gift Memorial Bridge."

Marshall County Engineers

Marshall County has had a series of illustrious engineers. Early county engineers in chronological order were W. W. Morehouse (prior to 1918), H. O. Hickock (1918 to 1920), D. C. Elder (1921 to 1935) and E. G. Henningsen (1936 to 1937).

J. F. (Hank) Arthurs, Jr., held the position a total of 33 years; he started in 1938.

Arthurs served in World War II from 1941 through 1944. During the interim, the post was held by the following engineers who were assisted by C. J. White: Furlong Wray (1941), E. G. Henningsen (1942), F. W. Sarvis (1943) and Floyd G. Ruby (1944). Arthurs returned from the War and reassumed his responsibilities as Engineer (1945-1973). Mike Moehrl served from 1974 to April of 1978.

Royce Fichtner, P.E., has been the Marshall County Engineer since 1978. Previously, he served as Grundy County Engineer from 1972 to 1978.

Royce is a graduate of Iowa State University and a licensed Professional Highway Engineer. He was the recipient of the "1984 Iowa County Engineer Outstanding Achievement Award" and the "Iowa County Special Service Award" in 1990. He served as President of the Iowa County Engineers Association, was a member of the Iowa Transportation 2020 Panel and was Chairman of the Legislative Interim Study of the Road Use Tax Fund in 1989. Fichtner has served on advisory committees regarding the studies of branch rail lines, local roads, agriculture, industry, and transportation practices and needs.

The Des Moines Register, February 16, 1994, stated, "Marshall County Engineer Royce Fichtner, legislative chairman for the Iowa County Engineers Association, said he's not surprised by the high number of seriously deteriorated bridges on Iowa's county road system, which accounts for more than 20,000 of Iowa's bridges. Most county bridges are the original structures from the time Iowa's road system was first built. 'It's a disaster waiting to happen,' Fichtner said."

In 1996, Fichtner was chosen to serve on the Speed Study Task Force to recommend the effects of a speed limit change. Royce is Iowa Representative on the Board of Directors of the National Association of County Engineers.

Marshall Countians are proud of their Engineering Department.

**Epitaph to Marshall County's
Rainbow Connection
1918 - 1990**

Industry in Marshalltown and agriculture in Marshall County could have fostered

diversity. It is fitting that the graceful arch of Rainbow Bridge, southeast of the City, was symbolic of unity between rural and urban areas. The Bridge was the south gate to many Marshall County fairs.

People crossing Rainbow Bridge were tourists, photographers, history buffs, mail carriers, farmers, salesmen, law enforcement officers, school children and ardent fishermen.

The absence of Rainbow Bridge speaks loudly to all who remember its glory days. The graceful arch did not fall in shame. Let its void be a symbol of Marshall County's agricultural and industrial development. May its memory be nobly preserved.

Rainbow Reminisces

Battle Scar

The first of three Rainbow Bridge reminisces took place in 1926. According to Eugene Peak (Peak Electric), water engulfed the Lincoln Highway at the north approach of Rainbow Bridge. Peak's father was hauling light poles to a site east of town when some were caught in the fast moving floodwater. The floating poles twisted, turned and gouged the cement arch of the bridge; and the bridge wore its battle scar to the end.

Hallowed Fishing Spot

Joseph ("Joe") Petrone often thinks of his boyhood in Marshall County during the Great Depression in the early 1930s. Joe said, "Shady Oaks was part of my youth." After high school, he graduated from West Point, became an Ambassador, served under General Patton in World War II and retired as a Colonel in 1970 after an army career of overseas assignments. In the late 1980s, Joe served as the American Ambassador to the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Ambassador and Mrs. Augusta Petrone now make their home in Dublin, New Hampshire, and Marshalltown.

On a recent sojourn in Iowa, the Petrones drove past Shady Oaks. It reminded Joe of the following story. "I remember my secret cove along Timber Creek where I was allowed to fish from 2 to 4 p.m. every other Sunday. It was just a football field's length east of the

arch bridge. Many summer hours were spent sitting there behind a bamboo pole, fishing (my fishworms never failed to bring a good catch) and enjoying the tranquility."

Telling this story, Joe became the child I had never known, running through the tall grass to the little cove. He didn't want to miss a moment of fishing, as his father would be parked on the arch bridge promptly at 4 p.m. Racing along, he accidentally stepped on two bullsnakes basking in the sun. Looking wide-eyed, as though the incident had just happened, Joe said, "Those snakes were, without a doubt, the two biggest bullsnakes in Marshall County and probably in the world! I leaped in surprise, surely setting a world's record." Joe landed in his little cove and was fishing a few seconds later. His parents expected to listen to Joe's fish stories all the way home; but on that Sunday, his story was limited to the two large bullsnakes.

In closing Petrone said, "Shady Oaks, I can never forget you and the Rainbow Bridge. It was a pleasure to grow up in Marshall County, one of the most wonderful places on earth."

A Farewell Party

In October of 1987, a group from LeGrand Friends Church decided to hold a "Good-bye" party for the widely-known Rainbow Bridge. The word spread quickly to bring card tables, lawn chairs, food and table service. A beautiful autumn day provided a gorgeous setting for the cordoned-off bridge and party goers. Young and old, big and small, set up card tables end to end for the food; and lawn chairs were placed here and there on the bridge. Eight years later, Shirley (Mrs. Neil) Hoover wrote that this party was a once-in-a-lifetime occasion.

The bridge full of people ate, studied the structure from every angle, talked to it and even sat on its cement floor. As it grew dark, a bonfire was started west of the bridge along the Creek. With the cement arches looming above and shadows lurking from the fire, the group sang songs. For this generation, the bridge stood as a sentinel over Timber Creek. In final tribute, each family took their last walk over the landmark; and a mixture of voices called "Good Bye."

Act Three, Scene Four High Water Mark of 1993

January

*Snow and blow! A new year
full of hopes and dreams.
I am a summer person. Time now
for my new Macintosh.*

This year we will be observing the 10th Anniversary of the Big Treehouse. Major construction is scheduled for this spring as the south walkway was demolished last fall. The gap is obvious! It's absence presents a strange and unfamiliar scene. All wiring and flower boxes were taken down, and the dirt was emptied.

Mick looks forward to creating and refurbishing his dream project each year. On the Treehouse, both "Stargazer Point" and "Treetop Walk" will be replaced. The changes over the past 10 years are mind-boggling.

February

*More of the same weather like
we had in January.
Clinton was inaugurated President.*

Some years a warm spell in February has allowed for renovation of the Treehouse. This year the weather is not cooperating. It snows every weekend. Even a sunny day might allow me to dream of an early spring. Perhaps, March will come in like a lamb.

March

*A very wet, cloudy and cold
spring with some flooding,
while the frost is still in the ground.
Faith keeps my spirits from being dampened.
It was the 23rd wettest and 29th
coldest March in 121 years.*

Michael has been home every chilly, windy and cloudy weekend. We all braved the elements with boots, gloves, hoods, anticipation, determination and hammers. Construction started this month when we replaced the popular, photographic spot

called "Stargazer Point." On the same level, work on the unique, aerial "Treetop Walk" or "Radical Road" began.

At last, the height (it's high) of the new south walkway has been determined; and the west end of the walk has been started. One blustery weekend, the post holes were dug; and the posts were set in the ground. A few weeks later, the walkway flooring was completed to the east end. "Travis Turn-around" will be recreated at a later date. Adding the railing, which consumes a large amount of lumber and time, is the last step in the process. I keep humming, "I've Been Working on the Walkway."

April

*Rain, rain, relentless rain!
A little window of sunshine
one day of each weekend.
Just enough to warm fingers and
toes and keep spirits up.
April was the 27th wettest and
19th coldest among all
Aprils on record.*

On April 1, the Iowa River north of Marshalltown and Timber Creek presented spring flooding conditions much the same as the great flood of 1849.

Our Treehouse health farm keeps us active and cheerful. The bridge to the Treehouse is again in place. Many pieces of lumber were cut to size for the walkway railing. Assembling the vertical and horizontal boards required a lot of measuring and leveling.

Hooray! We can again walk out to the Treehouse on the new elevated walkway. The flooring is made of 2 x 4s, and the railing is made of 1 x 6s. Previously, only the support posts were built with green-treated ("CCA") lumber. Now, the flooring and railings are also constructed with CCA. The new walkway looks longer, because it's a bit narrower and the wood is still light colored.

My birthday present was a really nice weekend. The sun had warmth, and the temperature was in the 60s. Mick completed the 50-foot long flower box. Later on, filled with cascading petunias, it will look like Disney World.

Early the morning of April 30th, I was greeted by the wrens' cheerful return. It makes me feel that I must hurry and accomplish something. The birds always have a pre-dawn ceremony; and again at dusk, they talk to one another and check on their brood. Yesterday, the white, fleecy clouds were like young lambs frolicking across the blue sky, and the willow green is like delicate lace.

The chilly March and April weekends spent redoing the south walkway now shows that we have made progress. The stepping stones to the Treehouse have sunken into the earth and need a lift. Stones that have escaped from the rock paths into the grass need to be raked. I haven't noticed any new mole tunnels. Clusters of hostas are popping up in new places, and the fern monsters will soon uncurl before my eyes. It is hard to believe they grow to such a tropical size in just one season.

May

*Mick's 31st birthday was on the 21st.
Good news for Marshalltown,
Lennox will stay.
The shocking Drake Diner
murder trial is in session.
Eighteen days produced
measurable rainfall.*

It is still wet underfoot! There is a sprinkling of sunshine now and then, with a whole day of the liquid gold on the Saturday before Mother's Day. The goldfinch, flitting here and there, against the spring green backdrop adds sparkle to my days. At last, delicate blades of new grass are piercing the black dirt.

With the scent of spring in the air, we filled the 50-foot long flower box with black dirt. This was done with buckets, rope and pulley. The Treehouse Cats were eager to help and watch. Kitt lay close by as we moved along the walk, and he squinted his eyes as he bathed and soaked in the warmth of the golden sun. That afternoon, time faded into oblivion; and dusk overtook us. It was only then that hunger became apparent.

On Mother's Day, eager with anticipation, we went from greenhouse to greenhouse selecting and buying plants. Judy and I planted vinca vines at frequent intervals in

the flowerbox on the long walkway. They will provide a backdrop to the coral and white cascading petunias. Mick installed a new type of black soaker hose the entire length of the flowerbox. Two flower boxes filled with impatiens were added to the main level of the Treehouse. The tender, young maple leaves were zapped by frost leaving an etching of brown.

Mick also planted a variety of tomatoes in his newly constructed tomato cage. He interspersed them with cucumbers, zucchini and gourds which grow vertically on colorful yarn. Liz planted the corner impatiens bed just as she did for the first time in 1992. Once again, Judy sewed green beans, marigolds and nasturtiums, plus planting the pepper patch. A row of alternating red verbenas and dusty Millers appeared in front of the pole bean trellis. Each year, the garden varies in color scheme and array of plants. We completed the spring planting just minutes before the dark clouds to the west brought sprinkles.

The south hill is blooming in bluebells, sweet William, periwinkle, Virginia waterleaf and lavender-blue and white violets amidst the tender fern and clumps of hostas. Lilies of the valley await their delicate flowering, and the fragrance of the apple trees' pink blossoms fills the air. Even the oak leaves are bursting forth. Soon the top of the Treehouse will be invisible to the passers-by, or "gawkers."

During the last weekend in May, the old north walkway was torn down. Lumber was once again arranged in readiness for building the new walkway.

I can hardly believe that this has all happened in my backyard. What a "treemendous" bouquet of joy! Each one of us dreams differently about this shrine or "Family Tree." It's unreal that five people can maintain this fantasy.

June

*It was the third wettest June
in Iowa record books
(8.09 inches average rainfall).*

In early June, the approach to the north walkway was the first section completed. This soon led to the new Hospitality Booth and

guest register. Mick's handiwork is everywhere. In due time, the walk was lengthened to the willow tree. Many visitors walked out to the barricaded end to experience the view. Construction lends excitement and a desire to return.

July

*A statewide rainfall average
of 10.50 inches.*

The month started out similar to other years. The north walkway to the Treehouse was completed on July 3rd. It follows the same contour as the original one, but without a drawbridge. It also offers a view of the Treehouse like the one in Midwest Living. Can you believe that there are 75 pounds of screws in the new walkways?

We celebrated the Fourth of July at home and watched the fireworks from the front yard. On July 5th, Mick and the Treehouse were featured on Channel 7. The following day National Geographic called to schedule a visit on the 14th, but this was not to be.

It wouldn't stop raining! It fell in endless torrents. On July 9th at 2:30 a.m., as lightening pierced the sky, we called the Disaster Service number. From her home, the director said that sandbags were available if we would go downtown after them. However, no sand would be available until 8:00 a.m. We knew then, by the rapidly rising water, that it would be too late for sandbagging.

Our lifestyle literally changed mid-stream. At approximately 8:30 a.m., water began seeping into the basement. The hours (or was it days) were filled with sump pumps, drain plugs and boots. In less than 24 hours, the water began receding and most of the water was pumped out of the basement.

The morning of July 10th dawned sunny and hot. Water extends from our backdoor clear across the Meadow to the railroad bridge. The Meadow is totally immersed by "Lake Wish-U-Were-Gone." The Treehouse is a marina, and humming birds and lightening bugs hovered near the top of it. The only vegetation visible is the trees. With more rain in the forecast, Mick and Judy went after sand bags. At Marshalltown, the Iowa River peaked at 20.55 feet; and flood stage is 13 feet.

As yet, none of us really knew what impact the weather would have on us. Numbness spared us from reality. Although the earth was like a giant sponge, it would take a while for our bodies and minds to reach the saturation point.

During an interview on Iowa Public Television, Governor Terry Branstad said, "We've been hit by the worst natural disaster in our State's history." We felt the impact at Shady Oaks.

August

*Thunderstorms, rivers out of their banks,
and people forced out of their homes.
Average state rainfall was 5.01 inches.*

I wished for a dry day and a little precious sunshine. Television smothered the public with flood scenes. I had only to look out the window. Could zombies arise from those gray vapors. The weather people are in a dither, thinking of new ways to describe the dismal forecasts. They say, "Let a smile be your umbrella." It's time to put this statement to use.

Again and again, repetitious peals of thunder awoke me and robbed me of sleep. Grandma used to tell me that Henry Hudson was rolling his nine pins up in the Catskill Mountains. I'm almost ready to join old Rip Van Winkle for a 20-year nap until the rains are over.

The weekend of August 7th and 8th was nice weatherwise, but hard to appreciate. Our backyard is laminated with silt and no-till corn stalks. Petunias aren't cascading. Green beans vines are stunted. Tomatoes are zilch! What a joke!

September

*The coldest Iowa September ever.
Temperature averaged 59.4 degrees.
Daily temperature above normal
only twice and normal just once.
A persistent cloud cover keeping
daytime temperatures low,
and a prevailing west to northwest
flow of cool Canadian air.*

The spring rains were only a preview of what was to come. July and August brought

record flooding (Biblical-quantity) to Iowa that will remain in the hearts and minds of almost everyone in the State of Iowa.

Between September 6th and 11th, the temperature ranged from 60 to 80 degrees and most every day was sunny. Any day, I expect to see Rip Van Winkle trudging across the swampy Meadow. Due to poor summer weather conditions, the Treehouse remained open on those sunny September days. The migrating Monarchs, katydid's song and haze over the Meadow are reminders that autumn's lustre is almost here.

My washer (front load) and dryer are now on stilts in the basement. Will they always be silent reminders of the wet and wild Summer of 1993? It looks slightly strange, but there are advantages.

Many interesting groups visited the Treehouse this year. Among them were the Mercedes Benz Club from the Kansas City and the Quad Cities' areas. Thirty some people arrived in 16 Mercedes Benz automobiles.

An Elder Hostel of photographers from California, New Jersey, West Virginia, Florida and Missouri was hosted in Marshalltown by Iowa Valley Continuing Education. The finale for the video session was editing and viewing the highlights of their week's stay. The class literally made the Treehouse, walkways and their classmates turn somersaults, using the new Video Toaster.

Other guests included a World Experience Group (representing Slovakia, Uruguay, Estonia, Russia and Panama), Tender Sprouts Day Care, Ames Adult Day Care and Talented and Gifted 6th graders on an Iowa tour. On one occasion, guests observed several blue herons swooping down nearby; and on another occasion, two magnificent bald eagles soared over the Meadow.

September 26th was the long awaited for Sunday when Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass rolled into Marshalltown in Danny's vintage Silver Eagle bus. Due to fog and detours, it was after 10 a.m. when they arrived; and it was shortly after eight when they left. The concert was super! It was a dream come true.

October

Half of the usual amount of rainfall.

Temperature below average. Summer floodwaters had receded, and life has some degree of normalcy once again. Mother Earth seems to heal faster than our dampened spirits. Where did the floodwaters go? A well-defined river of less-salty water in the Gulf Stream was discovered by scientists. It's the floodwaters dumped by the mighty Mississippi.

The days are shorter now, and frost has silvered the Meadow. Frogs, chipmunks and garden snakes are deep in hibernation; and the robins and monarchs have headed south. The weekend of October 23rd and 24th was our third nice weekend (and last) in 1993. The first white flurries were seen on October 29th.

November

November precipitation was 60 per cent lower than average.

November 1st dawned bright and crisp. The golden leaves bared the maple tree, and the Treehouse stands naked. My garden is on hiatus, and I am lonely with out it. I dialed several 800 numbers for some unusual garden catalogues which should arrive in late January.

A total lunar eclipse occurred early on Monday, November 29th. It was the most visible eclipse since 1982. As the moon eclipsed, a pale, ghostly image persisted as light from sunrises and sunsets skimmed around the edge of the Earth and was scattered by the atmosphere reflected off the moon. The visual impact is impressive. Long ago, people believed it was something catastrophic.

December

The weird weather pattern in 1993 was a hard topic to avoid.

The cold can be exhausting. It's the time to think warm, gaze out the window at the Big Treehouse and eulogize the joys of the summer past. Now, guests from 23 countries

and 48 states have visited the 10-level Marshall County attraction in our backyard.

In 1993, Iowa experienced 149 days of measurable precipitation, which is 42 days more than usual. There were three nice weekends and only 56 nice days when the temperature was between 65 and 85 degrees with a fair amount of sunshine. Out of those 56 days, nine were Mondays, 10 were Fridays, six Saturdays and seven Sundays. Perpetual cloudiness darkened the entire year. Little did we know that over 2,500 visitors would tour the Treehouse on the few, precious days without rain.

The sun-starved Summer brought "A World of Water" to Marshall County. Marshalltown's rainfall in established a new record of 53.97 inches which broke the 112-year record. The second highest year was in 1902, and the third highest was in 1990. The Iowa River set an all-time high level of 20.78 inches in mid-August.

Was it a "100-year flood?" Perhaps, but that doesn't mean that a flood of great magnitude is likely to occur only once in 100 years. It does mean that every year there is a one percent chance that it could happen.

The flood of 1993 was unique, because it happened in the midst of the growing season. Instead of the brief inundation during a spring runoff, many trees suffered by standing in water for weeks when their roots were trying to grow and breath. Some simply drowned. It could have been worse. An excellent growing season in 1994 would help the remaining trees recover. Walnut trees will not be replanted. Silver maples are more flood tolerant.

With all the rain, I never saw a rainbow in 1993. I guess that is because it takes both the sun and the rain to make a beautiful rainbow.

The great flood of 1993 was a bit painful to write about. Video tapes, photos and carpet were lost. I also lost books, which I thought were safe. Because the waves created as we sloshed around in the water, their place of safety was upset. My encyclopedias were victims of the flood, too. Now, I rely on friends and acquaintances for the information I seek; they are my living encyclopedias.

My values changed, and some of the hurt remains tucked away. Part of the time, I

beamed up and looked down on the situation as though it was happening to someone else. Now, I simply wish to flush those few gnawing months out of my life.

I dealt with the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") and the Small Business Administration ("SBA"). I first contacted a FEMA representative on the telephone. Each time I called the same number, I talked to a different person. Next, I talked to several representatives who were in a mobile unit on the south side of the Marshall County Courthouse. This conversation took place during a torrential downpour, and our words were drowned out by one thunder clap after another. The unit rocked in the wind, and rain pounded its roof and rattled the workers.

The FEMA people were brought in from California, Texas and Ohio. The staff was courteous, but each team member dealt with a limited part of the whole scene. For them, it was a routine job. Each one seemed anxious to go home, or on to the next disaster.

FEMA referred me to a SBA representative who called me from Davenport. It was difficult to hear the gentleman, as he was

calling from a small, closet-type office. The papers came, I filled them out and mailed them along with copies of 1991 and 1992 income taxes and proof that we owned our property. I discovered that flood insurance is available only where the County has declared your property in a Flood Plain A area. You cannot receive a SBA loan without carrying flood insurance. Since it was not available in Marshall County, we had to decline the 20-year loan package. Bob would have been 99 by the time the loan was completed.

The early morning hours of July 9th will not be forgotten. At Shady Oaks, it was the beginning of the great flood of 1993. Indeed, it was a cloudburst of detours, no-till farming cornstalks, sand bags and unthinkable disasters. It will be remembered as "Iowa's Lost Summer."

**Fadeout and Curtain
End of Act Three**



**A Modern Version
of the Old Standard**