

MEMORIES OF LIVING AT POINT PINOS LIGHTHOUSE

In the early 1940's my mother, Ruth Hagen Hane, moved my sister Sally and I to Pacific Grove from Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was World War II and my father, a Navy doctor, was serving in the South Pacific.

We came to Pacific Grove because my mother's sister, Viola Hagen Petersen and her husband George Petersen lived there. Uncle George was the assistant lighthouse keeper at Point Pinos.

Before I continue "my memories" I should introduce Aunty Vi and Uncle George. Aunty Vi and my mother were two of twelve children growing up on the Hagen farm in North Dakota. Viola was to be valedictorian of her high school class when she was stricken with polio and confined to a wheelchair. George Petersen worked as a farmhand on the Hagen farm and fell in love with Vi. Feeling unworthy of her attention, he made his way out west, joined the Coast Guard and put away enough money to return to the farm and ask for Viola's hand in marriage. Once married, George joined the Lighthouse Service so he could remain on land and take care of his bride. She was the brains and he the brawn. They served at a lighthouse off the Oregon coast and also at Point Sur before coming to Point Pinos.

When my mother, sister and I arrived in California we stayed in the lighthouse for some time prior to finding our own house in Pacific Grove.

Memories of those days I'll always treasure. My sister and I had great fun crawling through the entangled limbs of the cypress tree hedge that encircled the lighthouse. Certain cozy areas were much like having a tree-house. A white wooden fence, always clean and bright due to Uncle George's diligence with a paint brush, also encircled the lighthouse. The same fence surrounded two garden plots on either side of the sidewalk that led to the kitchen door. The fence was flat on top and served as a great spot for drying brightly colored abalone shells. The garden area was full of vegetables and flowers. I especially remember picking fragrant violets for the kitchen table. In the grassy area on the side of the house there was a birdbath with flowers and a circle of rocks beneath. In that area was also a tree from which Uncle George hung a swing for his nieces.

The Lighthouse Reservation was a military area and off-limits to the public. Barracks were located on the oceanside of what is now the front door. The area that is now the back nine of the Pacific Grove golf course was then all sand dunes dotted with fox holes. The rocks and tidepools were teeming with marine life. My mother and Uncle George would visit these tidepools often to bring back abalone for dinner.

Aunty Vi prepared wonderful meals on her wood stove. I remember fondly her Swedish pancakes and sensational pecan pie.

Uncle George took Sally and me with him when it was time to lift the tall shades and turn on the huge light at the top of the winding spiral stairs. Every time he climbed the stairs Uncle

George did a prescribed number of chin-ups, hanging his feet down and holding on to the top step. He needed to stay strong in order to carry Aunty Vi wherever she needed to go without a wheelchair.

Sally and I slept in the bedroom at the right as you climb the stairs to the second level. In the room was a fireplace with a big white bear rug, complete with head, in front of it. My mother slept in the other bedroom at that level. Uncle George and Aunty Vi's bedroom was on the first level near the only bathroom. In the living room my sister and I had great fun making paper dolls out of the ladies and the clothes in Sears Roebuck catalogs.

We often sat around the kitchen table in the evening playing Chinese Checkers. Aunty Vi was usually the winner. One special evening that is particularly memorable was that when we listened to the news on the radio and heard that the Second World War was over.

The memories are many and happy of those days we spent at the lighthouse. Point Pinos lighthouse remains a special place for me.

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