

7-15-94

Carolina Inn

Of our several homes in Chapel Hill, the most elegant location was at the Carolina Inn. It was also the most convenient. Its location across the street from the campus put Paul less than a block from Phillips Hall where most of his classes met and about two blocks from Saunders Hall where I had my office and many of my classes.

Our apartment in the Carolina Inn was located on the second floor of a large annex. Using its two rooms and bath as an apartment called for a bit of ingenuity on our part, and that was fun most of the time. Both rooms were quite large, with a spacious closet in the sitting room. It was furnished with a convertible sofa, a couple of tables and two comfortable chairs. Unfortunately, there was no kitchen. That's where the size of the bedroom and our ability to adapt came in. We arranged the twin beds in an ell under the window and against one interior wall. The other wall adjacent to the window wall had room for a chest of drawers and a dressing table/desk.



Paul had sanded and painted a large collection of wooden apple crates which we had used for storing clothes and books in our previous homes on Purefoy Road and later in our Victory Village apartment. (Those wooden apple crates are now historical artifacts, irreplaceable, and we still use them for storage in our basement in Richmond. They've moved with us all these years.) We stacked the crates down the middle of the room to serve as a shoulder-high divider to define the kitchen and the bedroom. The crates held dishes and food supplies. We put our two-burner hot plate and portable electric oven on a substantial table, and with a refrigerator we'd used in Victory Village, we were in business for meals and for entertaining. The biggest inconvenience was washing the dishes in the bathtub, but somehow even that didn't appear too formidable. The only other drawback was the electrical system which would not support simultaneously both our

record player and the kitchen appliances. There was a circuit breaker in the living room closet which we found very convenient to reset when we overloaded the circuit. There was one occasion when we had guests listening to records along with their pre-dinner drinks. The food wasn't getting cooked because the circuit breaker kept cutting off the hot plate. Paul held the switch by brute force to keep it from tripping, and we got the dinner cooked. This was obviously dangerous, and we never did it again, but at the time, it seemed to be a young person's lark and conversation piece for our guests.

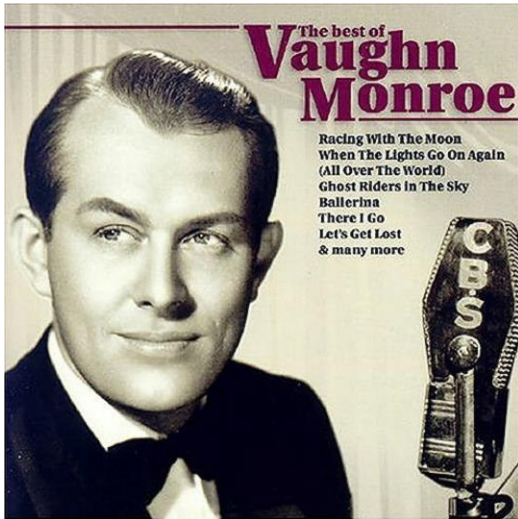
One of the greatest assets of our apartment was its central location. Social life in Chapel Hill was informal, and we encouraged and enjoyed the frequent drop-in visits from fellow students and faculty. It was not unusual to have company for dinner or for late evening snacks. We got lots of necessary studying done but also had a lively social life, too. One night, our friend Bert Drucker, who had just bought his first automobile, a little Nash, called about midnight because he wanted us to help him test his new prize. He was hungry after studying all evening for a test the next day. He wanted us to go to Durham with him for something to eat since everything in Chapel Hill was closed. All the way to Durham, Paul talked about how he was going to enjoy a piece of the famous Toddle House chocolate ice box pie. After Bert ordered a full meal, Paul happily ordered a piece of pie and was stunned to discover that there was no pie left. Nothing else would satisfy his sweet tooth, so he sat while I drank coffee, and we both watched Bert consume his steak, peas, and potatoes. Bert had no scintillating conversation from us that night.



Not all of our entertaining was spontaneous. We did plan meals for friends, although we generally limited our guests to the number who could sit around the coffee table. After the meal was on the table, we could turn on the record player and have music as we talked and dined, providing the cooking was all done, of course. We had a good collection of classical long-play records which made excellent background music. We solved all the world's problems over those meals, as only young graduate students can.

We were able to park in the lot adjacent to the Inn, a convenience especially when bringing in the weekly groceries through the back entrance into our part of the Inn. So, it wasn't often that we ventured into the lobby of the Inn. One of the few times I used the

lobby entrance resulted in an adventure for me. Not watching where I was going, I ran squarely into Vaughn Monroe who was crossing the lobby without looking, either. No damage was done and I had a story to tell about my brief conversation with the "Chasing the Moon" singer, one of the few celebrities with whom I ever had contact.



When my twin brother and sister graduated from high school, we invited them to visit us from Texas for two weeks. We had some great weekend excursions to the beach and to Washington, D.C. Roland proved to be an experimenter with new foods on our trips, but Ruth distressed us by ordering only fried shrimp. Today she is a marvelous, versatile cook, trying all sorts of new recipes. But, as a teenager, she knew what she wanted, and it wasn't variety.

After a bit over a year our "Bohemian" life at the Carolina Inn began to pall. We received a notice that the use of the guest suites for cooking purposes would have to stop. The fine dining room we and other faculty residents couldn't often afford to use wanted more patronage from residents; cooking in the guest suites was consequently banned. We were able to find a two-bedroom brick cottage on the back of the lot behind a Sociology professor's house. Another graduate student family occupied a similar backyard cottage next door. All that room, with a real kitchen, was great to get accustomed to. Another graduate student family occupied a similar backyard cottage next door. One night we had a great meal of pizza and salad for about twenty of our friends and were able to have music all evening.

That cottage completed our adventures in offbeat living in Chapel Hill - from an unfurnished pre-fabricated house on Purefoy Road, to a ground floor apartment in a recycled barracks in Victory Village, to the Carolina Inn adventure, to the University Boulevard house behind a larger dwelling, we had a wonderful four years of teaching and graduate study in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. We returned to living in the real world in Dallas.