

THE MUSEUM OF HAPPY GHOSTS OF AUTUMNS PAST

By: Lenore Davis

It seems to be that come autumn, the ghosts who have adorned our home, have come back to roost, or at least re-visit their past. What I mean is that to our sheer delight, those who have lived in our home, have such love and fond memories of it, that they feel the inextricable pull of returning to see what has happened to their home and who now has the pleasure of residing within its warm resounding walls.

I know that I seem to be waxing poetic on something mundane, but it is autumn and the dark cold days of winter are approaching, so allow me to share what it has been like to visit with the ghosts of our home.

Our home was built some time in the 1920's. The first set of ghosts to visit our home five years ago, were those who lived in the house until 1955, owners number 2. They said the house was made of brick, it is now stucco. The wood paneled living room walls seem to have been there since the home's creation. They were Zeckendorfs of the famous realtors in New York. One Autumn Sunday, I saw a grey haired woman running down my driveway, like a child chasing after a balloon. Startled, I went outside to meet this white-haired ghost.

She had been a child in our home, growing up as our children are in the vast backyard...at least vast for the suburbs. She now lives in New Hampshire. She wrote me a thank you note, stating "I was thrilled to be able to enter the home of my childhood and reminisce...It was great for me to know you and your sweet children are happy in 'my home'.

Last Autumn, we had a visit from owners number 4, who chatted about the wonderful neighbors they had. They owned the home briefly, but nevertheless had fond memories of it. These owners were truly ghosts. It was one Saturday night that I ran into my aunt and uncle at the bagel store, and they were there with old friends of theirs, who now live in Massachusetts. They asked where I live, and I told them. They responded that they lived there as well and on it went. They were in town for a funeral, but were so happy to see their old home and reminisce. They bought the home in 1970's and sold it in or about 1980.

Then yesterday, in celebration of a family wedding, owners number 3 were in town from Iowa. They told us that in their stay in our home, they celebrated three weddings in our home, in front of our hearth and under a tent in our yard. We brought them to every room. Where our deck is now, there was a screened in porch. The Dutch door between the den and the deck was there in their days as well. The shelves in our breakfast room were installed by these owners.

Off the master bedroom there were French doors that lead to a second floor patio. In their days, the patio had wooden balustrades, which were gone by the time we moved in. With four small children, we traded in the warped chewed up French doors for the safer

floor to ceiling plexiglass windows that look straight out to the tops of our decades old maple trees.

As they entered our front door and stood in our kitchen, they told the story of the creaky second step between the second and third floors...the one they had to jump over to avoid having their parents discover their late night arrivals home. This is the same step I have to jump over to avoid waking the children as I descend from my third floor office to my bedroom. The joy and laughter we shared, that there was some others out there who shared the knowledge of our creaky second step.

In the corner of the yard, where there is now a basketball court, they asked when we got rid of the garage. We told them that we did not get rid of the garage, that the prior owner had a hot tub there that had no permit, and it had to be removed so we could get marketable title to the home.

As they left, they told us that they sold the house in the late 1970's for \$72,000, and that three months later, they knew the value of the home had already risen to over \$100,000. That was our hint. They admitted to dying to know what we paid for the house. We told them...and also told them what the house was now worth, and they smiled and were happy for us.

That leaves owner number 5, the owners who sold to us. I was pregnant with our first child, when a big case I was working on was settled. With the legal fees, we were free to put a down payment on a home. We very nonchalantly started looking. I got a call from my present neighbor that the house was being placed on the market. After work, without a call, I dropped by the home. They showed me the home and the backyard on an unheard of 1/3 acre in the Five Towns of Long Island, and told me what they were asking for the home. I told them I felt the house was worth the asking price, but that it was \$100,000 over our budget, thank you very much. Six months later, I got a call from my friend, who said that although the sellers had gotten higher offers, they didn't like the prospective buyers, that they liked us, and thought we would appreciate the property. They wanted to sell to us. We would be the next link in the chain of joyous caretakers of this home. They came down \$90,000 on the asking price, and we were thrilled to take possession of this, our first new home.

The ghosts of our sellers are still very much in our home. They have visited it throughout the years to see what changes we have made. They moved out of this house to Georgia, where they were opening a horse farm as a rehab for handicapped children. They were fun loving, musical and had installed the hot tub and a thinking zen garden in the backyard.

I am not the decorating type. I mourn the loss of the Danskins matching clothing sets which help mix and max the tops with the bottoms. So it is with surprise that new people come to our home and feel its warmth. It certainly cannot be my decorating, it must be what my husband and I felt when we entered the house the first time. It is the history of all the happiness and love and warmth of generations and eras gone by. As I met each

ghost, with smiles on their faces and stories of love and happiness in our home, I am satisfied and warm knowing that there have been others who have enjoyed our home as much as we.

More importantly to me, I have a present understanding and awareness, which is more acute now. Each day that passes, is a day in the history of our home and our lives. Our predecessors ensured that there were subsequent caretakers of our home with the magnificent history. A history of happiness and laughter and glee and happy occasions. We hope that when we decide to move, it will be in happiness and for good things. That, maybe, one day, our children and we will re-visit this home and let the future caretakers know just how happy we had been, and the occasions we had celebrated in our home, The Museum of Happy Ghosts.