

The House We Loved

By Harry Zirkelbach 03-22-2010

Inanimate objects are an infrequent source of, or for, Love.

Now psychoanalyze me, for I loved every house I called home.
With that small exception.

And I recall them, vividly. Touch each in my mind as I type.
The six of childhood,
the four while a student at the University of Detroit,
the four following W.W.II,
the six of married life.

I made this exception; all the barracks, Quonset huts, ships, hotels,
all those head rests used the 33 months of Active Duty in, and after, W.W.II.

The Denver Square dominates as most interesting, thus loved.
It is anchored at 745 Steele, Denver, the Congress Park neighborhood.

I first knew it as the Foley Home, my wife's family home, from 1943.

It became our home in 1960.

Barbara's mother raised four children here, a modest help by relatives in the purchase, this house then 32 years old. The three levels each about 900 sq. ft., basement, first and second floors. Four bedroom second floor, perfect for mother and four children. There was a detached two car garage. The family had no auto.

Early in 1960 on an average day, I returned from work, was told by my wife we're moving. It seemed Barbara's mother decided the now childless house was too much, would be good for she and her daughter's family. That was the complete story. Details later were always favorable to our family, without my input. The only decision I made, to make a number of improvements immediately, take out a new loan for this, arrangement payments. Move when that work was complete.

This non-decision began a 37 year love affair between our family and 745 Steele St. The house liked us. No stupid thing done by any resident was punished. A muffled explosion destroyed the furnace, injured no one and nothing else. A generous leak of water onto the 2nd floor, ruined nothing, reminded us to replace the roof. The gentle settling of the back porch was the reminder to dig out the basement add a new room. Each reminder a few years apart, the correction economically feasible.

Four boys and five girls, friends to the house, raised here, might nick the woodwork, but they regularly repented, cleaned, oiled and polished that woodwork of their friend.

Following five years of friendship with her extended family in her home, Grace Foley died quietly. A lifetime of smoking hastened her last days.

The reception after her funeral Mass, began a series of celebrated moments but for all the family, we never garnered the friendships renewed that afternoon when her friends came to tell us of their affection for this Pioneer, born in South Park, moving to Denver as a young girl, and after graduating from East High School, living and working every subsequent day in central Denver.

745 Steele was the only house she owned. The house and she complemented one another. She passed on this friendship of the house to her daughter and grandchildren. We like to think that the house understood, respected her bequest. The children's laughter said it was so every day.



Artist views Granny Grace's house, 745 Steele, Denver Co,