

MOVING

One day George went to get a haircut. In the course of conversation, Vincent mentioned that he had property for sale on his farm. It was forested, had a pond, and was next to the Mohonk escarpment, part of the Shawangunks. George was intrigued. At the first opportunity he went to take a look, taking along his fishing gear, and came back with a stringer full of five pound large-mouth bass. His smile was a yard wide. We decided, after I saw the place, to buy five acres for a possible house in the future. We had been living on Apple road for about 12 years, the boys were getting older, and we felt it was time for a change. It was so beautiful out there, and we wanted better studio space.

When Sarah and Morris came for a visit we all went to see the property we were buying, with a loan from them, unlike the time in Michigan when they refused to help us out in buying our home out there. Selma lent us the money then. The private road from the county road up above was long and ended at the pond. We had to climb over a stream to set foot on the rise of land where we were going to build. As part of the deal, Portuguese had agreed to extend the road past the pond just short of the proposed driveway. The scene was magical, the day was beautiful, the cliffs and forest highlighted by the sun.

We spent a year fiddling with the design of the house, ultimately deciding it would be our retirement home. To our youthful minds, we thought the aging process would require us to live on one level. So that's what we went with; a simple design. Living area facing south toward the pond, studios in the back, two steps down, with concrete floors, facing north. We had to build gradually, for lack of funds, so for the first year the living area, with its sliding doors, had no deck to step out on. Over the years we added the deck, a screened-in porch, a two-car garage with a storage attic, and a garden shed.

The year we moved in, Andy was off to college. He resented the fact that we had only built three bedrooms, refused to share, and slept in my studio when he was home. I was delighted to have a real studio for the first time. We settled in, started a garden, and ran up against the reality of living there. We had intruded upon and upended a self-sustaining ecology, totally unaware of how we were changing things. That first year we encountered an amazing variety of wildlife. George bought a bird book and put red dots next to every bird we saw. Lots of red dots. Raccoons, skunks, a badger, snakes, squirrels, chipmunks. We had yearly visits from great blue herons, who stayed all

summer and went back south in the fall with their young. Fish, turtles in the pond, etc.

We built a dock, acquired a rowboat. Vincent excavated land to the east of us and built another pond. He sold the land on the other side to our friends Marty and Sondra Sperber. With the De Rosas on the east of the big pond, we settled into being a small neighborhood.

Gardening was a problem. Did I mention the deer? We eventually designed electric fencing around the open portion of the property to keep them out. A lower fence was necessary around the vegetables to keep out the smaller critters. Challenging but worth it. Fortunately, flowers were able to survive on their own. Can't say the same for bulbs. They were too delicious.