

HOW I CAME TO LIVE IN MORGAN HILL

Christine Hopwood, February 23, 2017

One very good reason not to move to Morgan Hill was the commute to work in Sunnyvale. On the other hand the housing prices were better than further up the peninsula so we couldn't rule it out entirely and kept looking at houses here.

In late 1988 the company my husband and I worked for in Florida lost its funding from the Japanese and my husband was let go. As his wife they laid me off too but I was hired back as a contractor and was able to work from wherever I happened to be. The gravitational pull of Silicon Valley to my husband, a computer scientist, was very strong. We had moved from Southern California to Florida in 1982, passing up the opportunities in Silicon Valley and it seemed an omen that it was time to try Northern California. On the other hand, I was not keen. I had worked a lot with folks in Silicon Valley and found them rather an arrogant lot. Pennsylvania is where I really wanted to go. But computer jobs were hard to come by in Pennsylvania so Silicon Valley was the choice.

In 1989 the housing market in Florida was moribund to say the least. Overbuilding was rife throughout southern Florida where we lived and little was selling. For 6 months we were able to rent our house but for the rest of that year and half of 1990 we just waited for a buyer. During that time we rented a house in Los Altos and I spent time looking at houses from Redwood City to Morgan Hill, realizing that what we were likely to get for our Florida home was far less than would buy us a comparable home anywhere in the Bay Area, at least within reasonable commute distance which seemed to get longer the more we looked. At some point we were introduced to people in Morgan Hill who had lived here since the mid-80's who enthusiastically extolled the virtues of living here and introduced us to a realtor friend. At that time Morgan Hill was much more rural than today and we both liked it. It seemed a slower pace of life and the

more we came down to visit our friends, the more we liked it. We began to rationalize the commute.

One day the realtor showed us a house on Holiday Drive in Holiday Lake Estates. He called it 'the flying nun' house because its roof line reminded him of a nun's coif. It was a 3-storey house built into the hillside with no yard to speak of, but when we went in the front door and passed into the



great room with its huge picture windows overlooking the dry lake and the hills beyond, we fell in love. The view was jaw-dropping and the owners had thoughtfully left photos on the kitchen counter showing how it would look when water eventually returned to the lake as everyone believed it would. We learned how the lake had been drained because of fears for a dam collapse in the event of an earthquake and the subsequent drought preventing the lake from filling again. Even without the water the view was magnificent, and we made a contingent offer on the house which was refused. We waited. I looked at more houses and then in 1990 we got an offer for our house in Florida. We took it and began looking at houses again. The search became more serious when our landlord, who was overseas, had to unexpectedly return to the US and wanted his house back. We spent more time in Morgan Hill looking at anything on the market. At one point I remember Greg saying to the realtor "I want a house that tells me I live in California. I don't want to wake up in a place that looks like anywhere". We looked at the "ski

jump” house where you couldn’t see the garage when you pulled into the driveway off the street because it was so steep. Every homecoming would have been a leap of faith especially in the dark. A nice house, also 3 stories with a swimming pool and I had visions of the trek back to the kitchen for cold drinks and snacks when hanging out down there. We looked at the “wine” house because of its huge wine collection which the owner was not selling along with house. Eventually we were shown a house that had no name but a flat lot and a view to rival the ‘flying nun’ (See above). I don’t think we really paid attention to much of the house we were so taken by the views from the living room and bedrooms which all faced the lake and the hills. A single story house on a flat lot with magnificent views - what more could we have asked for? We made an offer, it was accepted and in early 1991 we moved in and we have been living there ever since. No regrets, it is home.

And the commute? Well it was awful but we survived and now we’re retired!