



How I Came to Live in Morgan Hill by Elsa Walton



Once upon a time my husband and I lived in a small home in Los Altos. My husband commuted a short distance to his business in Mountain View.

In February 2006 we began to talk about making a major life style change. After participating in a one-year clinical trial, Dennis seemed to have escaped the dire predictions of stage 4 cancer from metastasized melanoma. We had a second chance.

Owners of a business rarely take vacations and at 65, Dennis had worked all his life. I wanted him to retire and get away from the stress of being a construction sub-contractor. We arranged to have employees manage the business, so that Dennis could semi-retire.

We wanted to travel so we bought a Tiffin Motorhomes “Allegro Bus”, a 42’ diesel pusher with tag-axle and four slides. Dennis planned to use cell phone and computer to monitor his business. In May of 2007, we put a few of our belongings in storage at the masonry, sold the rest and began to travel, returning periodically to check up on the business.

We had offices at 2485 Charleston Rd. in Mountain View. Walton & Sons Masonry was next to Michael’s and near OSH. It was opposite REI and near Costco. We had 2,000 sq. ft. of offices, a 13,000 sq. ft. warehouse and a 30,000 sq. ft. paved yard. In back of the warehouse we established a parking site for the Bus with all the required hookups. At first, we made short trips but in 2009 we explored the eastern seaboard from Florida to Maine and back. We were gone for more than a year.

As you might expect problems developed. Our 7-year contract at Charleston was to expire at the end of 2009 and we expected to renew. However, the owners had a buyer (Blockbuster) and they wanted us out. Our manager couldn’t find anything in the area that we could afford and negotiations for an extension weren’t going well. It was late November and we were in Florida visiting my brother when we decided we better hightail it for home. We pulled into the masonry yard on Saturday, December 5th. By then, the owners were intractable. We had to be out by January 4, 2010.

Since we do custom masonry homes all over the Bay Area, Dennis wanted to remain in a central location, but he and his realtor could find nothing suitable or affordable. On Friday, December 18th we still had not secured new offices. By then we had seventeen days to get out — and that included the non-work days of Christmas and New Year’s. Our Operations Manager, Steve Montez, lived in Morgan Hill and he told us about a property on Mon-

terey Road. The offices were very pretty and large with 3,200 sq. ft. However, it had no warehouse and at 15,000 sq. ft., the unpaved yard was much smaller. Dennis told Steve to strike a deal. Perry Ebadypour, a local contractor who lived next to the office and yard, accepted a deposit but wanted to meet Dennis, so we drove to Morgan Hill on Sunday, December 20th.

I'd never heard of Morgan Hill and I barely got to see it that day. We drove straight through the downtown and with that brief glimpse I was relieved to note that my future hometown looked cute and seemed to reveal a lot of civic pride. South of Tenant Ave., at 15135 Monterey Rd. we found an unfenced, un-compacted, dirt yard. Towards the back of the property was a long building. Half of these offices were renovated, and half were not finished. Nevertheless, Perry agreed that we could start moving in on the very next day.



Dec. 2009. Empty flatbed ready to be loaded for trip to Morgan Hill.

On Monday, December 21st, Dennis scheduled every man available to report to the masonry. He went into high gear and stayed that way until our last day. The yard and warehouse were crawling with more than two-dozen men, half a dozen trucks and several forklifts and bobcats. I've never seen anything like it. It was like a military operation with Sgt. Walton directing his men. He rented two 65' flatbeds from a father and son trucking firm. They took one or two loads a day to our new location 40 miles south. By New Year's Eve all but a few items were gone. Dennis accomplished the entire move in ten working days. We left the property "broom clean" as agreed.

This is how much equipment had to be moved: 11 semi-load trips were made with the rented flatbeds, plus about 110 loads in four masonry trucks of various sizes from a Ford 650 down to a Ford 350. Eleven loads were taken on a ten-wheeler to the dump. The yard all around our Bus was filled with covered pallets and equipment. It was chaos.

While Dennis directed the masonry move, I emptied our personal storage from a 510 sq. ft. area. There was no time to sort. I had to rent public storage near the masonry and I put my sale items in a 10 x 30 unit. These were things that never sold, including some large pieces of furniture. I didn't have time to sort boxes, so I threw stuff out and if it was questionable I sent it to be placed in a 15 x 15 office room in Morgan Hill. I put in nine solid days of work.

It was cold and dim in my warehouse storage space and I'm no worker bee. But our warehouse foreman kept me and everyone else on the move. Rudy was an outgoing Hispanic in his late fifties. A Sagittarian like me, he had a very positive and funny nature. At the beginning of the week he always yelled to me, "Happy Monday!" He loved my dog, Rudi, and called him "Junior".

During our move, Rudy always yelled encouragement to me and he told his men to help me lift heavy boxes and to keep my trash bin empty. Every morning when he saw me he'd strike a pose with arms raised like a muscle man and yell, "We can do it!"



I'd hit the same pose and yell back, "We can do it!". Coming from a no-muscle seventy-year old woman, this must have looked pretty funny.

Once Rudy came into my storage area and I think I looked pretty tired and discouraged. He said, "Elsa, I have to keep the guys working when they want to slack off." He raised one arm to show his bicep and said, "I tell them to 'Man Up'."

I laughed and laughed. I said, "Okay, Rudy, I better Man Up too".



On January 4, 2010, we left Mountain View. Since Dennis managed the packing in Mountain View and Steve managed the receiving in Morgan Hill, we hadn't seen the new offices since we rented them on December 20th. What a mess met our eyes on January fourth! Inside,

office materials were mashed into the finished side of the offices. Outside, materials and equipment and rain-covered pallets were everywhere. Because of rain, the yard was a soggy, muddy mess. It couldn't be compacted until it dried out. There was no pathway into the yard nor a place to park. You entered at your risk. Rudy was directing a boom forklift and bobcats. He had heavy equipment stacked on top of two huge carriers that the masonry bought to use as warehouse storage! It looked like a scene from Mad Max.

Over the next week they somehow managed to stash things off to the side and out of the way so that a driveway and parking area could emerge. The scene shifted to Sanford & Sons. We still didn't have a fence nor any way to guard our equipment and masonry materials.

Dennis and I moved into Coyote Valley RV Resort on the Monterey Highway. With a clubhouse, fitness room, pool, and dog-run available, it was luxurious but isolated in a rural setting. The railroad tracks were right by the highway and every time a train went by, it sounded like it was coming right through our Bus. The combined day and night noise from nearby US-101, Monterey Hwy., and the train tracks drove me crazy. I hated the place. After dropping Dennis ten miles south at the masonry, I spent most of my days driving 40 miles north to our Mountain View storage. There I sorted and threw out or used Craig's List to arrange appointments to sell our remaining goods.

In February, we moved our Bus to Maple Leaf RV Park, which was located near the masonry. This was a quieter location and much more convenient to town. Nevertheless, it took me a while to acclimate. I badly missed my hometown stomping grounds of Stanford, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Los Altos. And I missed my friends.

In December of 2010, we moved our Bus into our permanent site at the masonry. I began to nest — setting out pots and baskets of flowers. The following spring, Dennis put in a patio for me and I acquired a patio table and chairs. I took possession of the 15x15 masonry office located on the tool side of the building and began to sift and sort. This allowed me to establish a private area away from masonry staff and from our Bus.

It wasn't until I discovered AAUW that I began to find acquaintances and make friends. Then things became easier for me.

Nine years later we are old Morgan Hill residents and we brag about good restaurants and lack of congestion. We pretend to sneer if we have to wait for five cars to pass, on Monterey Road before we make a left turn out of our gate. "Rush hour!" we exclaim in mock disgust.



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