

Fifty Years of Madeira Memoirs

1970 - 2020

Chapter 1

The year 1970, was a mile stone in my life because for the first time my family of four would be moving into our first home. The house was located in Madeira Ohio on Buckeye Crescent Drive. Two years earlier my wife Ann and I had moved along with our two daughters from an apartment in Deer Park to Kennedy Heights. We moved in with Ann's mother and father. The house was located in Kennedy Heights, on Welton Avenue. It was decided that it would benefit both Ann's mother and our growing family. Ann's mother Helen Bosken needed help maintaining her home and help with her husband Robert. Robert suffered with a medical condition, and would never fully recuperate. Saving money to make a down payment on a home was the benefit for my family. By now I was working for Cincinnati Bell as a residential Telephone installer during the day, and doing plumbing and electrical work on weekends and evenings. The extra income from the plumbing and electrical work was a necessity, supplementing the \$79.00 that I was paid weekly at Cincinnati Bell. Each day I was up early packed my three baloney sandwiches with mustard and was off to work. There was only one automobile in our family meaning that Ann would also rise early, pack up our two little girls Kris and Jill and then drive me to work. Ann would always be a stay at home mom.

Amazingly my skills in plumbing and as a telephone technician progressed at the same pace. After climbing telephone poles all day I would then replace deteriorating cast iron and steel pipes in the evenings. Eventually I would have a large, blue Ford van to carry all of my plumbing equipment. I witnessed all of the major technological advancements in both telephony and plumbing. In the

beginning most plumbing products were made from metal, including cast iron and steel pipes. Steel pipes had to be threaded and cast iron pipes were larger, had hubs and required to have lead poured into the hubs. The lead was bought as solid chunks, required to be heated in a steel bowl on top of a tank of gas until molten. The lead could then be poured into the hub with a ladle on the end of a long handle. I was a witness to the beginning of most plumbing products converted to plastic or PVC materials. Solder and lead would be replaced with plastic and glue. Expensive Brass toilet valves were replaced by Fluid Master Brand plastic toilet valves. Most of the older plumbers fought the changes but the changes were inevitable.

My day job at Cincinnati Bell included every aspect of telephony. Each day was a different challenge. In 1966 I reported to work each weekday morning at the Crookshank Road garage located in Western Hills. From there I loaded my telephone truck with wire and telephones before heading out for the day. One thing that most of us did first each morning was stopping at a coffee shop for breakfast or just for coffee. Soon I learned that it was better to buy a coffee to go, rather than wasting time sitting in the coffee shop. Management also frowned on employees wasting company time.

The electric drill had been invented long before 1966 but was not a standard issue at the telephone company. If I needed to drill a hole I used a brace and the appropriate drill bit for larger holes or the push drill for smaller holes. At the beginning there were only black rotary telephones but soon the Western Electric Company began distributing telephones in various colors. Of course there was an extra charge for a color phone and the company retained ownership of the telephone. It was unlawful for a phone company customer to own their own telephone, and telephones were rented by the month from the telephone company. AT&T and all the other Bell telephone companies had a telecom monopoly. Advances in technology was slow due to the monopoly and because the telecom companies did not allow customer ownership of any of the telecom equipment. The next advancement in residential technology was the Princess Phone followed by the Trimline Phone. The last major development was Touch Tone service. Touch Tone service required the replacement of the rotary

telephones with the new phones equipped with push buttons referred to as Touch Tone telephones. Rotary phones soon became past tense. My career at the telephone company would last for fourteen years including many years as a business technician. The most important years employed at the phone company would prove to be the years that I served as a business technician, preparing me for ownership of my own Telephone Company.

There were many reasons leading up to our decision, making the community of Madeira our new home. My wife's sister, Mary Ellen Martin, and her family were already living in Madeira on Berwood Drive. Madeira had good public schools and more importantly had a wonderful Catholic Church and School. Sometime earlier I had agreed with my wife Ann, that our children would be enrolled in Catholic Schools. Four of our daughters would become St. Gertrude school graduates and our fifth daughter would graduate from All Saints School located in neighboring Kenwood.

Good Madeira Schools were important but living in a safe community was equally as important. Madeira offered excellent police and fire protection. The community had its own police department and shared fire protection with the Village of Indian Hill. The fire department had a firehouse located in each of the two communities, each firehouse manned with both full time and volunteer fire fighters. City hall and the Police Department were both located in downtown Madeira at the intersection of Miami and Euclid Avenue. City hall was located in what had earlier been, the Madeira Presbyterian Church. The police department was downstairs and the city offices and council chambers were upstairs. The old church building was more than adequate and would meet the needs of the city for many years to come. The same intersection included, on different corners, a Firehouse and the Madeira branch of the Hamilton County Library. Next door to City Hall was a Texaco full service, filling station. Downtown Madeira included a lumber yard, hardware store, a Bakery, 5 & Dime Store, a Men's Clothing Store, and a very small, Kroger Store. At Laurel and Miami Avenue, Dot and Mack Baldrige had a small grocery store that went by the name of Dot and Mack's. A Shell filling station was on Miami Avenue across the street from Dot and Mack's. There was a shoe repair store on Laurel that sat behind the Shell filling station.

The shoe repair store had once been Madeira city hall, the police department the Madeira library and had once been the Madeira Post Office. Politics had often played a roll, determining where the Post Office would be located. The Madeira Post Office has been located at different times in four different locations. In 1970 there were still many residences located thru out downtown Madeira of which most would succumb to the wrecking ball.

Downtown Madeira was pretty much defined as Miami Avenue between Camargo and Euclid Roads. The Kroger store and post office were located on Laurel Avenue making Laurel part of downtown. Camargo road in both directions from Miami Avenue was inhabited by industrial businesses and older houses, still used as residences. There would be a time when I would become the owner of a house located on Camargo Road. With my guidance the house would be converted from a residence to a business. The house that I bought was very old and dilapidated, meaning that it needed a lot of work. I bought the house for \$14,000 invested several thousand dollars for repairs and eventually sold the house for \$28,000. The repairs included patching a hole in the roof and repainting the entire outside and inside of the house. I hired one painting contractor for all of the repair work. It was winter time so the painter, Bill Haas was happy to have the work. In between the purchase and the subsequent sale I leased the house to a gentleman from Maysville Kentucky. He operated a gift shop with quite an extensive inventory. A few years after buying the property I had an opportunity to sell the house to a dentist. Undoubtedly, my conversion of the house on Camargo Road from a residential use to a business use opened the door for others to do the same. Today my former Camargo Road property has been increased in size and is home to a thriving dental practice. It is discouraging that forty years later Madeira has not yet been able to develop more of Camargo Road East of Miami Avenue. For my part investing in real-estate would continue with some success including the purchase of an acre of ground on Montgomery Road in Kenwood and several acres on Blue Ash Road in Sycamore Township. Later I would question my decision to pursue twenty Five years of my life as the founder and President of a Telecommunications company, rather than focusing on real estate. The telecom business would survive for twenty five years and be a challenge right up to a

disappointing finale, but in looking back I realize that the people that I employed had been able to marry, have and raise their children, educate their children watch their children marry, have grandchildren, and learn a trade along the way.

Next Chapter, 2, Early Years in Madeira, including photos.