

September 2014

Dad's Bench

By Anastasia Doherty

As summer slowly slips away into fall and the anniversary of my father's death (Sept. 28th) approaches, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on his life and his connection to this community he called home for 43 years.. Eugene Doherty was an interesting combination of personalities. First and foremost he was a devoted father who purposely chose a lifestyle that allowed him to participate in raising his children. This meant he was around more often and involved with our lives. His colorful career path included stints in the United Nations in both the Congo and the Middle East and eventually led to a job at KQED producing documentary films. His most notable assignment was in China after the Mao regime. He was also a self-taught carpenter endlessly tinkering on projects at home or helping someone else's projects.

One of my favorite stories is the day dad decided to bring light into our otherwise dark cabin. I was sitting at the kitchen table and suddenly heard the sound of a saw above my head. Soon a circle of light beamed down on me. Later during the rainy season big drops of water gathered in pots from this makeshift skylight. We endured the inconvenience silently. It was after all a well-meaning effort and part of my father's tenacious style of self-sufficiency.

Eugene was an avid walker and regularly traversed the hills around his home in Homestead Valley. He served on the original board of trustees who created the Homestead Valley Land Trust which encompasses over 80 acres of open space for public use. I vividly remember some the arduous hikes we took on Mt.Tam when I was growing up. Sometimes it felt like a form of torture plodding along a steep dusty rocky path to picnic under a pine tree but as my childhood would prove, I, along with the rest of my family, developed an abiding love for the art of hoofing. Worth noting however, was my dad covered his many miles in strap on Texas. Four times a year to mark the change of seasons he joined his friend Matthew Davis and others to circumambulate Mt.Tam. A difficult 17 mile walk he looked forward to like a kid waiting for Christmas.

Eugene's other true love was the home he and my mother Alix bought on Ridgewood Ave in the late 60's. This charming old redwood cabin would become his refuge for many years to come providing a quiet, peaceful sanctuary from the world and a wonderful proximity to the land he helped acquire. Four children, several pets and two parents occupied this one bedroom bungalow. Our survival depended on being able to walk outside and access the many winding trails of the land trust.

It is fitting that a memorial bench in honor of Eugene has been placed on a hill overlooking a part of the valley. I visit him regularly there comforted by the view of eucalyptus trees and patches of rattlesnake grass. It is wonderful to have this spot designated to his memory. Thank you Homestead Valley Land Trust, especially Maverick for the hard work of installing this monument. Eugene is happy. Love the Doherty Clan.

