Chapter 21: A Northern Haven — Harbor Springs, Michigan

The wind off Little Traverse Bay was refreshing, bringing the possibility of new beginnings. After years spent building a reputation as “Mr. Tennis” in Livingston County, Tom was offered the chance to manage the Little Traverse Racquet Club in Northern Michigan. Leaving behind the familiar, we set our sights on Harbor Springs, clinging to the hope that a change of scenery could breathe new life into our family—and into our marriage.

In December 1979, we moved our family from Howell to Harbor Springs, a picturesque year-round resort town nestled along Little Traverse Bay. Known for its stunning natural beauty, Harbor Springs was more than just a tourist destination—it was a place of peaceful charm, strong community, and outdoor adventure. It was just what we needed as we tried to steady our family and redefine our path.

Our new home at 485 Linden Drive sat on a spacious, heavily wooded lot in Hathaway Springs, just off Pleasantview Road, the main route to the nearby ski resorts. The house felt like a retreat: serene, grounded in nature, and only a short drive or bike ride to the shores of Little Traverse Bay and Lake Michigan.

Barbara entered sixth grade, and John began first grade at Shay Elementary School. Each morning, neighborhood children gathered at the bus stop at the entrance to our neighborhood. Many rode their bicycles, which they left casually by the roadside—no locks, no worries. The bikes were always there when they returned. That simple trust reflected the kind of community we were fortunate to call home.

Bikes lined the entrance to Hathaway as
kids waited for the school bus

Harbor Springs quickly wrapped itself around our family. The town's slow pace, natural beauty, and wholesome atmosphere created a safe and enriching place for Barbara and John to grow. Summers were filled with boating, fishing, and days at the grassy beach, where icy cold springs trickled through the warm shallows of the shoreline. Just steps from the beach, the town's charming streets offered art galleries, boutiques, and restaurants like The Pier, The New York, and Juillerette's—all part of our new life.

Winters brought their own magic. Our house was just a mile from Nub's Nob and Boyne Highlands, two popular ski resorts. Nearly every winter day, Barbara and John took to the slopes, becoming skilled skiers with ease. Shay Elementary even included skiing in its physical education elementary curriculum, with classes held at the local Kiwanis ski hill.

We immersed ourselves in the winter spirit together. Outfitted in our newly acquired ski gear, I took ski lessons with the kids at Nub's Nob. It only took Barbara and John two visits to outpace me. While they bravely tackled black diamond runs like Scarface, I found my comfort on the wide, gentle trails of Dorie's Bowl. The ski lodge had its own signature scents: warm wax, damp winter gear, wood, and just a hint of hot chocolate from the café.

We were members of Holy Childhood Church
In Downtown Harbor Springs
~ A perfect winter picture ~

Within three months of relocating, I began a new position as a consultant for the Cheboygan–Otsego–Presque Isle Intermediate School District. I traveled across ten districts, leading seminars and training for K–12 teachers. The work was meaningful and gave me a sense of professional fulfillment at a time when I needed it most.

In 1983, as our family continued to set family roots in Harbor Springs, Tom and I made the decision to sell the Linden Drive home with plans to purchase a larger house in the area.

Because the buyers did not plan to retire immediately, they graciously allowed us to rent the home for a year. It seemed like a convenient arrangement, but life had other plans.

The following year marked a life-changing transition: after sixteen years of marriage, Tom and I divorced in 1984. Despite our efforts and the fresh start in Harbor Springs, the difficulties we faced as a couple remained. When Tom left, I was overwhelmed. I never expected to be a single parent. I had married for life, and suddenly, I found myself alone, with too much on my shoulders and two children depending on me.

Thankfully, I wasn't entirely alone due to the support of my siblings, Tom and Elaine, Mary and Bill, El and Larry, and little brother Jude. My brother Ted and his wife, Fran, became my anchors. Fran's gentle encouragement still rings in my heart: "Rose, you're a smart woman—you'll make good decisions." That support helped me stay grounded in familiar surroundings, giving Barbara and John stability and keeping them close to their father.

Our neighbors, Cheryl and Jim Bedells, were supportive and dear friends. Cheryl often stopped by for a quick chat and to split a wine spritzer. On one memorable evening, we lingered over our own spritzers, laughing and finding comfort in simple connection. Moments like those reminded me that healing doesn't always come in big, bold steps. Sometimes, it comes in small acts of kindness and shared times with a good friend.

Another friend, a Superintendent of a local school district, offered advice that stayed with me: "After a life-changing event, Rose, you should consider waiting at least a year before making big decisions." It was wise counsel. I decided not to uproot the kids, choosing instead to

remain in the community we had grown to love. Harbor Springs had become more than a place—it was our home.

Adjusting to life as a single parent and needing to vacate our sold home, I faced the daunting task of finding a suitable and affordable home for Barb, John, and me. Despite searching throughout the area, nothing seemed to fit our needs or budget. With a mixture of hope and hesitation, I reached out to Walter Borowy, the builder who had constructed our first home in Hathaway Springs. I didn't know what to expect, but Walter listed to me with kindness and understanding. Aware of my limited finances, he offered to sell me the last lot he owned in the neighborhood—a less-than-ideal parcel, but one that he could build on affordably.

Walter ran the numbers and assured me he could construct a modest home within my means. The home cost $52,000 and I had only $6,000 from the divorce settlement with Tom. After several thoughtful conversations, I accepted Walter's generous offer. Thanks to his compassion and skill, we had the opportunity to stay in Hathaway Springs, a neighborhood we loved.

In August 1984, we moved into our newly constructed home—a simple, twelve-hundred-square-foot, three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bath house nestled in the woods. Its vertical cedar siding gave it a rugged, natural look that suited our rustic Northern Michigan surroundings. The open-concept design, with a great room, dining nook, and L-shaped kitchen, felt cozy and manageable. Each bedroom had a peaceful view of the surrounding trees—a quiet comfort for all of us.

Over the next two years, we slowly made it our own. We finished the basement and added a fourth bedroom, adopted a playful puppy, and built a deck with a wrap-around bench. That deck quickly became our favorite spot for grilling, family dinners, and simply soaking in the quiet beauty of the natural lot. The house, though modest, became a place of peace and healing. We shared chores, created routines, and supported one another.

Natural woods hid our home on Winfield

John, Rose, Barb & Alex
Fall Season on Our Deck

Though my life's path hadn't unfolded as I had once imagined, it led me to the strength I didn't know I had. And in our northern haven, we found not only shelter but also healing.