Earning Our Wings — A New Life Chapter

In anticipation of our retirement, Randy and I researched the states of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Las Vegas. We intended to relocate to a community with an active lifestyle and warm climate, and there was little reason to stay in the cold Michigan weather. Our children, Barbara and John, had already moved following college graduation. They began their careers in different states, and it was time for us to explore new stages of life.

To achieve our goals, we visited Tom and Trish Rosenbergh, our friends in Tennessee, the bible-belt state famous for its country music. The rustic tree-lined roads reminded us of the desolate semi-rural terrain of Northern Michigan and did not begin to meet our desire for an active lifestyle. We eliminated Tennessee as our destination when we discovered snowfalls occurred almost every winter. Our research journey continued.

North Carolina was our next state to visit. We made several trips to Hickory, North Carolina, and considered a move there to be close to my sister, Mary Jane, her husband, Bill, and their extended family. We loved the southern hospitality, and encouragement to join the Ferguson clan appealed to us. It was challenging, but our desire to live close to future grandchildren eliminated North Carolina as our destination.

My daughter Barbara resided in California, offering attractive features like Silicon Valley, wine country, and Hollywood, but high tax rates and extreme liberalism did not

appeal to us. Her home was, however, a drivable distance from Summerlin, Nevada, a master-planned community where my brother, Ted, and his wife, Fran, lived.

We explored houses in Nevada, and a golf course home with a view of the mountains near my brother's won our vote. The Del Webb community offered numerous organized clubs, sports activities, golf courses, tennis courts, restaurants, and everything on our wish list. My brother and his wife were generous and helped immensely with our western transition when we left Michigan in 2001 for the cross-country move from Ann Arbor to our new home in Summerlin.

Upon our move, we discovered how well the entertainment capital of Las Vegas treated residents with numerous discounts and offers to entice players to indulge in slots, Bingo, or table games. With Ted and Fran, we attended shows and visited local casinos, where we enjoyed inexpensive meals, complimentary cocktails, and monthly gifts and prizes. Life in the west suited our desired lifestyle.

Randy and I had both retired from our Michigan positions, but I was not ready to discontinue my teaching career, which included training high school faculty in online learning. My experience with cutting-edge technology prepared me for a position to teach faculty at UNLV, the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Before leaving Michigan, I applied for the university's Instructional Technology Specialist position.

The call to schedule an all-day interview and performance evaluation brought forth a series of quick breaths and shaky conversation. I hoped my response did not

translate as nervousness to Dr. Roberson, Director of the Teaching and Learning Center at the university. Of course, I accepted the invitation, and within a couple of weeks, I began my post-retirement job.

The faculty were excellent students, eager to learn and attend my classes. I enjoyed the state-of-the-art technology in the new Teaching and Learning Center at UNLV, the beautiful campus with tree-lined walkways and pleasant temperatures.

My office and classrooms were in the newly constructed library, very different from the days of librarians shushing patrons to keep mum. The first-floor coffee shop and restaurant booths encouraged students and faculty to hang out, converse, and learn with a sense of community. Quiet study and small group meetings found space in upper floor private rooms.

The only drawback to my ideal life was the climate, and it took time for me to become acclimated to the arid atmosphere. I missed the rain of the Midwest, but on rare occasions, the rain came, and a deluge of water streamed onto campus from the foothills of the majestic mountains surrounding the city of "lost wages."

The campus east of the Las Vegas Strip had a view of the Summerlin Peaks, the Red Rock Mountain Range, the La Madre Range, and the Spring Mountain in the western distance. All the panoramic, God-created features were magnificent sights to behold. They warmed my heart and touched my soul.

I continued my career, and my "house-husband," Randy, kept our household operating smoothly. I looked forward to coming home after a tiring workday to a prepared plate of fresh veggies accompanied by a glass of Chardonnay. We caught up on our day's activities and often danced to Celine Dion music in the kitchen before dining.

Randy's artistic arrangement of his famous chopped salad was a colorful spectacle and often awaited my return home. He assembled a healthy combination of olives, apples, cranberries, walnuts, and hard-boiled eggs on a bed of chopped romaine. The concoction varied, and there were no cooking odors, but the crunchy mingling of vegetables with a little protein was more than satisfying, as were his warm smile and hugs. Life was good. No, it was great.