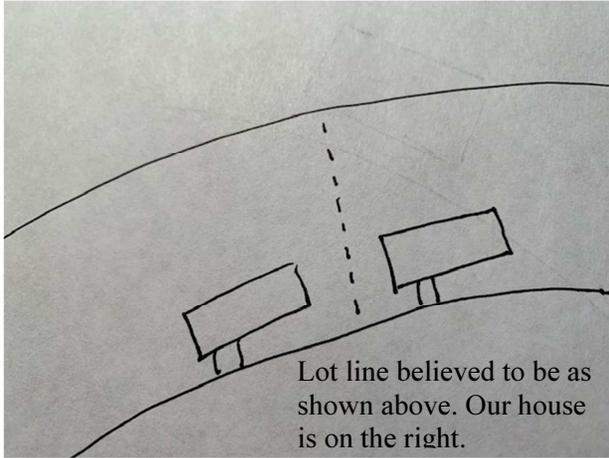


Not Everyone Likes Me

I'm a friendly guy and like people. I'm a certified extrovert and have lots of friends. So, when I find someone who doesn't like me, it comes as a surprise.

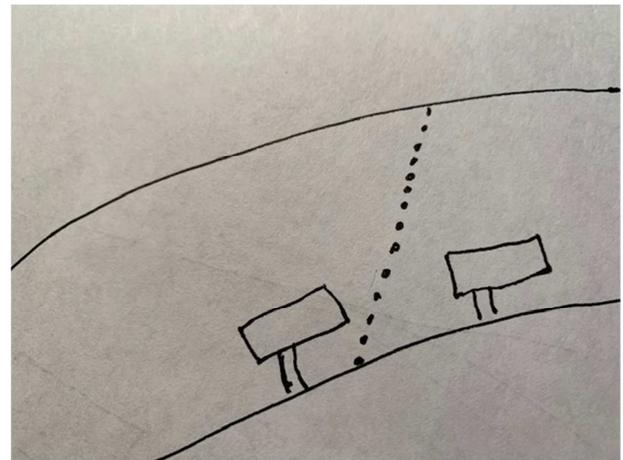
In 1968, Ruth and I built a new house, and shortly there after, another new house was built next door and purchased by Fay and Alfred Levin. They were New Yorkers, but had moved here from Oklahoma, where Alfred was a professor of Russian history, focusing on the Russian Revolution. They were older than us and had no children...or living relatives according to Alfred. Alfred was a kind, scholarly gentleman with a great smile and a twinkle in his eyes. Over the years, I had many discussions with him about history, lawn care and life. He was a charming man. Fay, with the given name Fanny, was quite different from Alfred. She talked a lot and had opinions on nearly every subject. Alfred usually just smiled while she expounded on a particular subject. Ruth still remembered the first time she met Fay. The day after they moved in, Ruth took her a cake as a house warming gift. Ruth remembers that the cake had a slight tilt to it but decided to present the gift any how...as it is the thought that counts. Fay welcomed Ruth into their home and gave Ruth a cookbook she had authored...included in the cookbook were suggestions how one might avoid "tilting cakes," according to Fay. We invited them to parties at our home and Fay always dressed in lovely outfits, including expensive jewelry with the price tags still affixed for all to see. We loved her eccentricities and even teased her on occasion about them. Good neighbors.

A few years after we both had moved in, Fay became very annoyed that a some neighbors living behind us were crossing the corner of her back yard on the way to the street where we lived. Fay's solution was to put up a fence ("Build That Wall" so to speak!).



When she explained what she planned to do and showed us the intended path of the fence, we were troubled. You see, the lot lines were not as the builder had described to us. We lived on a curve and for several years thought that our lot line started on the curve and went directly between our houses, as the builder had explained.

Although we had mowed our properties on the line above for several years, this was about to change...as the new lot lines (actual REAL lot lines) were like the ones at the right...from the middle of our back yard to the middle of the Levin front yard. I pleaded with Fay to have new, more appropriate lot lines drawn, for which I would pay, but she was adamant, and wanted the new three foot high chain link fence installed immediately. The new fence divided their front yard and ran right beside the patio we had constructed in our back yard. We surrendered. We decided the we would live with the new fence and realized that our inattention to detail when we believed the builder was, in large part, our fault. The fence caused many more problems in the next few years, as Fay would impound any ball or frisbee requiring us to retrieve the item, accompanied by a recalcitrant child. Our boys started to dislike Fay but Fay loved Jill and still invited her to come for cookies and milk.



The years passed...Alfred died...Fay became more dependent on us as neighbors. I shoveled her walk and driveway every time it snowed (“Here is several dollars.” “No Fay, it’s free.”; brought her flowers from service club sales (“Oh, did they have some left over?” “No, these are fresh.”) ; and, did errands for her (“I wanted the large size.” “ I’ll go back.” “No, you’ll just have to do this again a few weeks sooner.” And so it went, each favor accompanied by sarcasm or disdain...but I knew she liked me and this was “her way.” It was always a new challenge, a new way to deal with a fussy older woman. I couldn’t wait to hear what she had to say when I fixed her front door lock (“Ralph could have done that in half the time.”)

The years passed and Ruth, the most caring person I have ever known, didn’t spend as much time with Fay ...I guess because she was so mean to our boys.

Fay was admitted into the hospital for a heart condition that eventually took her life. She was admitted to the unit where Ruth worked as a nurse and inquired if Ruth was there. The staff said she would be there on the next shift and Fay said she wanted to see Ruth when she arrived.

When Ruth arrived for work and was being given the report of patients in the unit, the outgoing nurse mentioned that Fanny (official name in the record) was a patient and wanted to see Ruth as soon as she came to work. The nurse said that Fanny said that Ruth was a saint! After saying this, the nurse paused and smiled. Ruth asked what prompted her smile and the nurse said, “ Well she said that you were a saint but that your husband was a son-of-a-bitch!” Fay never mentioned my SOBness in her visits with Ruth. I have concluded that no matter what one does, not everyone likes them. But I will hold to the belief that Fay felt affection for me...or at least the things I did for her. She was a curmudgeon but I liked her.

November 2018