

Chapter 11

Children

Much of the good fortune related in the previous chapter must honestly be attributed to luck. And to be honest, much of the good fortune we've had in raising our children is probably due to luck. As proud as we are of our children, I will try to resist the temptation to brag, but rather relate some of the interesting events we encountered in the process of raising our own children and relating to our grandchildren.

Both of our children were born into loving family environments, going back to three generations in Steve's case. Sadly, between Steve's birth September 5, 1965 and Susie's birth on November 3, 1967, all three of my grandparents died. Our association of Susie with Mom's parents, Will and Emma Hauger, arise from the fact that, with the inheritance my folks received from the Haugers, they bought our Island Lake property north of Spooner, Wisconsin. So our first trip to the



Grandma Firebaugh with baby Steve



Will and Emma Hauger with baby Steve

cabin on Island Lake was the year Susie was born

Steve was a congenitally happy child. Ninety percent of the photographs of him show him smiling. Here are several illustrating what I mean.

Steve was born the last year of my graduate school, and Susie was born the first year of my post-doc. We did not let his age interfere with our vacationing. I clearly re-



Businessman Steve

member the summer after he was born. We were camping in Rocky Mountain National Park with our friends, the Bluemels. As happens with babies, Steve needed a bath. Joyce heated some water over the camp stove and gave him the bath in a laundry tub sitting on a picnic table.

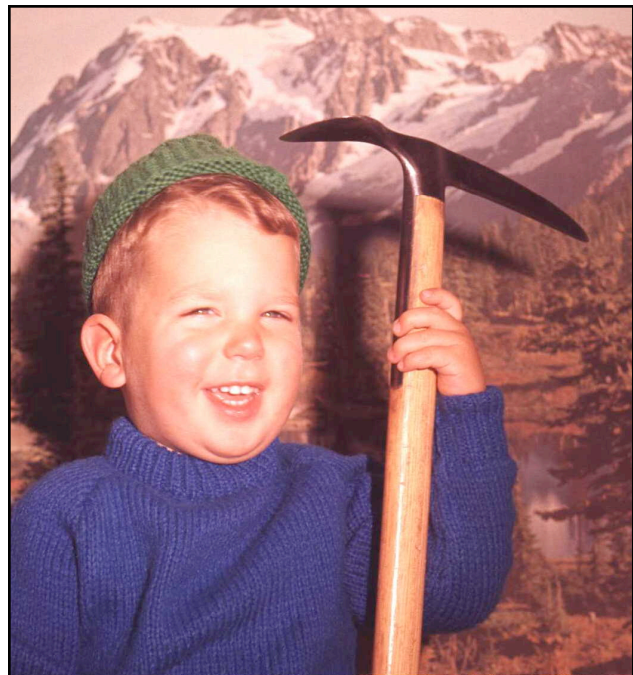
We continued hiking with the Bluemels with Steve riding in a Gerry Pack kiddie carrier. We never let the age of our children stop our vacations.

Susie was born shortly after we moved to Madison. She spent two years there and partial summers during my Visiting Professorship. When Joyce and I attended the UU church in Madison, we dropped off Stevie and Susie at the church's playground down the hill, usually with much complaining and crying. But no permanent damage was done, apparently, since she was married in this

very church twenty some years later.

Steve and Susie got along well, with only a few arguments during their teen years. Especially during our Oak Ridge sabbatical, when Steve was just entering high school and Susie was in junior high, they had not yet formed new friendships and had only each other to rely on.

Speaking of the sabbatical, we took the children's cat, Bootsie, along. However, cats are very territorial, and Bootsie did not recognize her new Oak Ridge home and wished to be home in Racine. So shortly after we moved, she disappeared.



Climber Steve

Susie, especially, was heartbroken. She went up and down our street, asking each resident, "Have you seen Bootsie?" in a plaintive wail. I still visualize Bootsie pacing up and down the Ohio River bank, looking for the bridge to Racine!

The children thrived in Oak Ridge. They quickly made a tight circle of friends and both got almost all A's in school. This came as a bit of a surprise since the Oak Ridge schools were touted to be excellent. Oak Ridge has more Ph.D.s per capita than any community in the U.S. except Los Alamos. The two



Easter Basket



Susie's New Dress

communities are approximately tied on this score, and the high schools compete to see which is awarded the most National Merit scholarships. Oak Ridge will have 49 one year and Los Alamos 47. The next year Los Alamos wins. Case high school, at the time, had only five or so National Merit awards. So we were pleased that our children did even better academically in Oak Ridge than they did in Racine.

Perhaps the main reason we chose UW-Madison instead of Los Alamos for my first job was the proximity to our original homes at which both parents still lived. Naturally the kids were the



Kids on the Farm

“apples of their eye” for both sets of grandparents.

Interestingly, this photo also shows the beer barrel stove which got installed as the heat source for the cabin at Island Lake.

The next photo shows the children at 554 So. Westmore in Lombard, Joyce’s original home. Our informal custom during these years was to spend Thanksgiving with my folks in Freeport, Easter at Joyce’s parents home in Lombard, and Christmas at both

places. This seemed to please everyone and resulted in tons of presents for the children.

While I don’t want to steal too much from next chapter’s exciting adventures, there are two events for which I am extremely proud of my children. The first occurred when Steve was six and Susie four. We took the smoky narrow gauge rail way that runs from Durango to Silverton, Colorado. About two thirds of the way between Durango and Silverton, the train stopped at the abandoned mining town of Needleton to let backpackers such as ourselves off the train. We followed a trail some six miles along Needle Creek to the Chicago Basin, a hanging valley, 11,000 feet high in the Needle mountains of the San Juan Range.

The remarkable event that we accomplished during the week that we were backpacking in Chicago Basin was that all four of us climbed 14,084 foot Windom Peak, the tallest of the Needle mountains, unaided. We assured Susie that she was probably the youngest climber of this formidable peak.

A few days later we all four climbed Sunshine Peak, the mountain in the background, also over 14,000 feet. Interestingly, as we got off the train in



Kids at Joyce’s Parents

Needleton, a young couple approached us asking about our backpacking experiences with the children. They were the publishers of a startup magazine, *American Hiker*, and asked if we would be interested in publishing an article in their magazine.

We indicated our interest, and it resulted in a six page article with five photographs, two of which are presented here. The article reminded me of the extensive backpacking adventures we had that summer, including visits to the Indian Peaks region just south of Rocky Mountain National Park in which we climbed Mt. Toll, and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in which we climbed 14,064 Humbolt Peak. We were certainly proud of our children for climbing three 14,000 footers in a single summer.

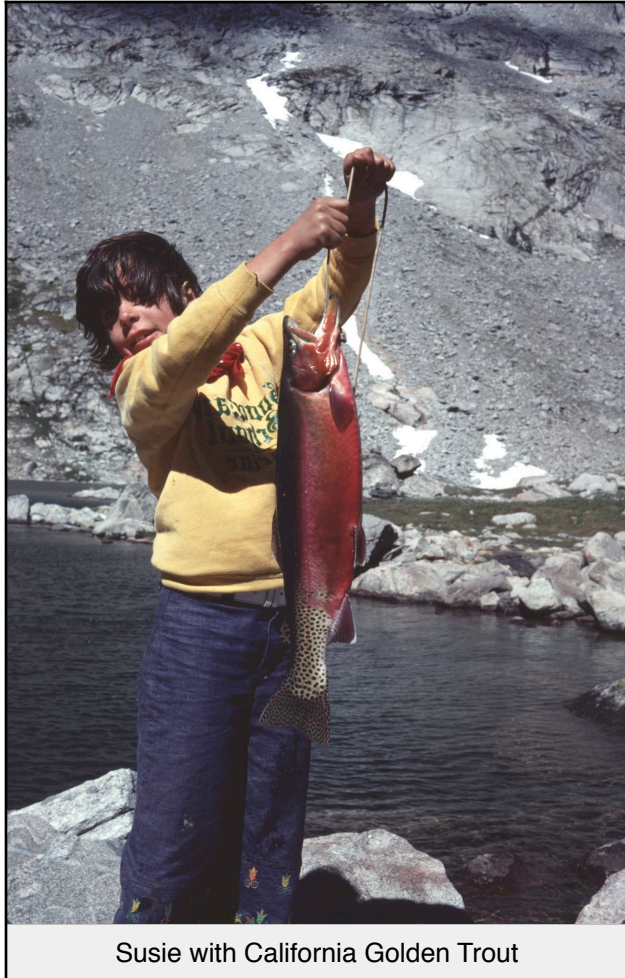
The second major event which sticks in my mind, primarily because of the fine photographs we took to capture the moment. We were on a week long backpacking trip into the Wind River Range with our friends, Jack and Vonnie Elmore and their two sons.



Family on the summit of Windom Peak



Joyce, Susie, and Steve on Humbolt Peak. Crestone Needle in background.



Susie with California Golden Trout

I had been here before, with my graduate school friends, and had caught rainbow trout from Island Lake, on which we camped, to feed the group.

Our group of eight did a lot of scampering on the lower peaks, often through snow and ice. The day these photographs were taken, we hiked well above Titcomb Lakes to Mistake Lake on the side of Fremont Peak. The trout in this lake, which normally feed on crustaceans in the bottom of the lake, were thrilled to see our offerings of worms, and the results are shown here.

The largest California Golden trout, which I measured at 22 inches on my ice ax, fed all eight of us that night at dinner. I steaked him out with two inch cutlets which fed everyone in the group. It was excellent!

The original mountain lakes of the Wind River range were sterile. The reason they are now teaming with trout is because the mountaineer, Finis

Mitchell and his wife stocked them with two and a half million trout fingerlings during the depression. They carried in the trout in milk cans on burros backs. To honor his contributions, Congress named Mitchell Peak, in the southern Wind Rivers, after him. We owe our good fishing luck to him!

During these “growing up” years, our family traveled to the mountains nearly every year. Our favorite spot was the Tetons, followed by the Wind Rivers, and the Indian Peaks Wilderness area of Colorado. These backpacking/camping/climbing experiences helped create a bond between us parents and our children, as well as between the children themselves.

These bonds have continued well into the second decade of the 21st century.



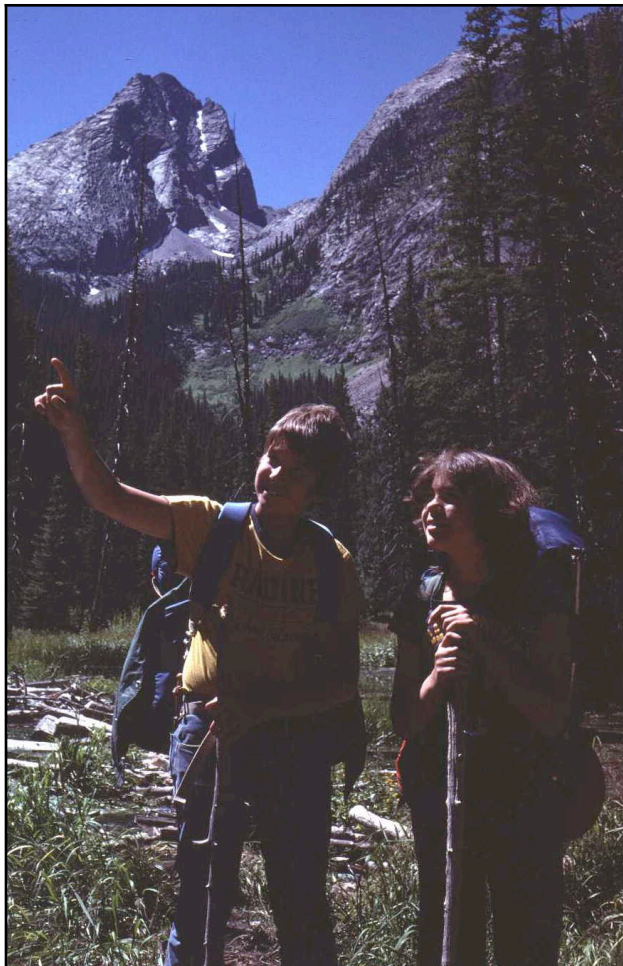
Kids with Catch of the Day

ry. Steve's family and Susie's family joined Joyce and me at Devil's Lake for our annual outing and climb of the east bluffs. These outings have taught our grandchildren climbing skills. Both children's families have continued the traditions by trips to Colorado, the Tetons, and the Wind Rivers. As recently as 2012 Steve, Ray, Max, and I drove to the Wind Rivers to climb Fremont Peak, the third highest mountain in Wyoming. It was my third climb of this mountain, Steve's second climb, and the first climb for his boys. Excellent fun! More later.

But, alas, children grow up,



Working Together



Hiking in the Grenadiers

and their interests change. One of the activities that consumed much of our summer time was sailing. Our boat, Joy of Racine, could sleep four with out too much discomfort, and we made frequent excursions along the west side of Lake Michigan. Some of the first major trips were the MORC (Midget Ocean Racing Club) races from Racine to Bailey's Harbor in Door County.

As races, these trips were often failures (due to lack of wind), but as social events they were hugely successful. We made many friends from the Racine Yacht Club, and our 9.8 H.P. Mercury outboard kept us up with the other (motoring) boats in the fleet.

We tied up in Bailey's Harbor and had dinner at their beautiful yacht club. Sadly, the club has gone defunct and is no longer open. But our dear friends, Dr. Mitch and Jean Leavitt live on the peninsula east of Bailey's Harbor,



Bailey's Harbor Yacht Club

and we have visited them many times. Mitch loves to surf-sail on Bailey's Harbor in the summer and on Tampa Bay in the winter.

Steve bought a surf board as a teenager and began by surfing Lake Michigan. He shifted his surfing to Island Lake after a few years on Lake Michigan, and when he was about the same age as Steve was when he bought his first board, Ray bought a wind surfer.

We now have two surf boards on Island Lake and our 19' Chrysler Buccaneer on the lake. Often our three sails are the only ones racing each other across the lake. Our Buccaneer (the Bucky Bee) was the replacement for Joy of Racine which we donated to the Sea Scouts. It is fiber glass and does not require the

month of May for sanding and painting as the wooden Joy did.

During our Lake Michigan sailing years we were members of the Racine Yacht Club. This provided many happy hours of socializing and dinner with our friends. The Yacht Club Commodore persuaded me to become Read Commodore and eventually Vice Commodore. We remained members until our 50th wedding anniversary party in 2010. The club provided members free accommodations for parties as long as we cleaned up afterwards. We had a wonderful party with about 75 of our closest friends. Our friend, Doug Clum and daughters, provided the instrumental music, and our cousin, Carol Jo sang. She had been the soloist at our wedding in 1960. So it was quite romantic.

Our kids continued to grow - oh, how fast they grew! They continued to love school, at least grade school. Junior high was a lot more stressful. But they really flourished in high school.

The boundary between Case and Park high schools shifted during the years Steve was at Case. So Susie went to Park and did not have to stand such comments as, "Oh, you're Steve's little sister. We expect great things from you!"



Susie at the Helm

While at Case, Steve got involved with the IB (International Baccalaureate) program. This program offers college level courses for which students get college credit. Among other courses, he studied *Gödel, Esher, Bach* by Douglas Hofstadter. During the semester, I invited Doug to meet our UW-Parkside students and for a party at our house where he could meet Steve.

With the 27 college credits under his belt, Steve was able to enter UW-Madison as a Sophomore. This enabled him to major in three subjects: Physics, Math, and Computer Science.

At Park, Susie soon fell under the influence of our good friends, Bob and Jane Holroyd, who taught there. Jane was tennis coach and faculty advisor to the campus newspaper. So Susie became first string doubles and second string singles in tennis. She also became reporter for the school newspaper, a job which was of great help in her Journalism major at UW-Madison. Her tennis team obligations kept her very busy, with matches both at home and on the road.

My first year at UW-Parkside I took the ski course. For \$25 we got a bus ride, ski passes, and ski instruction at the Wilmot Ski area. Soon we joined the UW-Parkside Ski Club which began skiing in Northern Wisconsin and then moved on to Colorado. At first with the club and eventually on our own we began regular ski trips to Colorado, Utah, and the Austrian Alps. Here is the family skiing in Colorado.



Skiing in Colorado



Kids at a Freeport Christmas

We only gave up skiing in 2015 when two of our friends were seriously injured in ski accidents, and our ski friends, Mike and Lily Lo reported that five skiers died at Breckenridge, Colorado that year.

In 1983 and 1985, respectively, Steve and Susie graduated from high school. I do not wish to give the impression that raising children up through high school was mistake or error free. One evening, when we were to have a party at a mathematic colleague's home, we got a frantic phone call from Susie to the effect that "Steve is drunk and in the prin-



Steve's High School Graduation

ciple's office." He and his new girl friend had had an unfortunate experiment with a bottle of Southern Comfort, and lost!

As a result he was suspended from school for a couple of days and kicked off the volley ball team. But all was not lost. Ironically, some of his classmates and teachers kidded him, saying "Wow! I hear you really tied one on!"

Susie's issues dealt with cars. Over a period of a couple years she had accidents with three of our cars. First she backed the Laser into a concrete light post base protruding from the pole. Understandable - it's easy to do. Second, she smashed the Toyota Corona into a telephone pole while tuning the radio with her friends in the car. Front fender wrecked. Beer may have been involved. Finally, while driving to Colorado to ski, she drove the Chrysler into the ditch in a

very treacherous ice storm in Iowa. We had to hole up two nights in a motel while they cleared the ice.

Both children entered UW-Madison right after graduating high school. For both kids it was a learning and growing experience. Steve was technically very competent. He had written programs for UW-Parkside for scoring wrestling meets. He had also worked at Unico, a local automation firm, to enable their new Macintosh computers to serve as oscilloscopes for electrical signals. However, he decided to join the "proletariat" and live the life of the common man rather than the technically elite. So he went to work as a hamburger flipper at a fast food joint.

He lasted less than a week. The reason he gave for quitting was some-



Susie's High School Graduation

thing to the effect, "They're so damn stupid", particularly his boss. We considered this an important part of his education. He went to work as an electronics technician in the Physics Department.

The most significant event in Susie's college education was the second semester of her Junior year which she spent as an exchange student in Aix en Provence, France. The university helped her arrange housing in the former dark room of a retired professional photographer. Both the photographer, who could speak no English, and this wife, who could speak a little, were wonderful people. We got to know them when they invited us four to have a Provincial Easter dinner with them in their big house. He and I struggled with my poor French, but Susie was always there to translate for us. By this time she had become quite good at French. The wife loved her new found "daughters" and became Susie's "godmother".

This was our first trip to Europe, and we made the most of it by camping through out France, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. Here we see the family on a bridge in Paris. While we were hiking from our campsite in Marseilles into town, Susie noticed a restaurant that advertised bouillabaisse. "Oh, Dad", she said, "When you're in Marseilles you have to try bouillabaisse!"

We did, and it was one of the most wonderful meals I've ever had. We had two elegantly dressed, male waiters who spoke excellent English. They had a huge, rolling cart with about a dozen kinds of fish which they sliced and mixed in a huge bowl and fed Steve and me. It was a beautiful experience!

Naturally, when it's spring, a young man's (and



Susie's Godmother in Aix



Family in Paris



Steve and Friend on the Hy-Fly at the Yacht Club

lady's) fancy turns to love. In Steve's case it started with the "Southern Comfort" lady, followed by the Yacht Club sailer, and later, a Hewlett-Packard programmer with whom he went camping. These are the only three I can recall. Eventually, of course, he met his future wife, Kaela, in their communal boarding house in Seattle.

Susie dated several of her classmates, and finally got serious with the druggist apprentice shown here. In college she got

quite serious with Torgear from Norway. They considered marriage, but since he intended to return to Norway and she wished to stay here, they broke off their romance.

Susie lived with us in Racine the summer after she graduated. She worked part time for Congressman Les Aspin as an intern. She patronized all the hot spots in which young people gather, but sadly announced to us that there were just no eligible men in Racine/Milwaukee. Then she met Jeff Falk at the Chancery restaurant in Milwaukee, and, as they say, the rest is history! They were married in the Madison UU church, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Everett Kuiper played the organ and Dianna Pavao sang. The reception was held at the UW-Madison Student Union. We had drinks on the balcony overlooking Lake Mendota and a hip-hop band. Sadly, since I don't hip-hop, I didn't get to dance with my daughter.

Time marches on! With both children married and starting families of their own it is probably a good time to conclude this chapter. Both children went on to get Master's degrees in their respective fields and teach courses at major graduate universities. Both eventually established their



Susie and Friend in Racine

own companies, Susie in public relations and Steve in farming and computer business. Each family has produced two wonderful children, Susie with a girl and a boy and Steve with two boys. All four grandchildren are actively involved in their studies and have brought us much happiness.

Over the past fifty some years we have celebrated Christmas at a variety of places. These include our home, Steve's home, Susie's home, Lake Lawn Lodge, and Christmas House in the Dells. Here is a photo of our Christmas celebration at Lake Lawn Lodge in 2002. Our whole family of ten is shown, along with brother Doug's family of five and my Dad. It was a very joyful occasion!



Family Portrait, Christmas 2002