

Ginger Bruce Brann



October 1991

In Wisconsin:

At Otto & Ethel's:

What a great place to be a kid!

I believe that there was over 500 acres of land right on a lake with an island!

Most of the time we were swimming or fishing or rowing a boat or making forts. Buddo and Mark and I just bummed around all day and night. Alys was there, too.

And, we played cards at night. It seemed like Charley and Eleanor and Hazel and Otto and Ethel knew how to play every card game in the book!

Every day there was a fresh pie or two and lots of ice cream. There was this freezer in the basement where we kids slept and it was filled with ice cream! We never had to sneak any because we just could have it whenever we wanted.

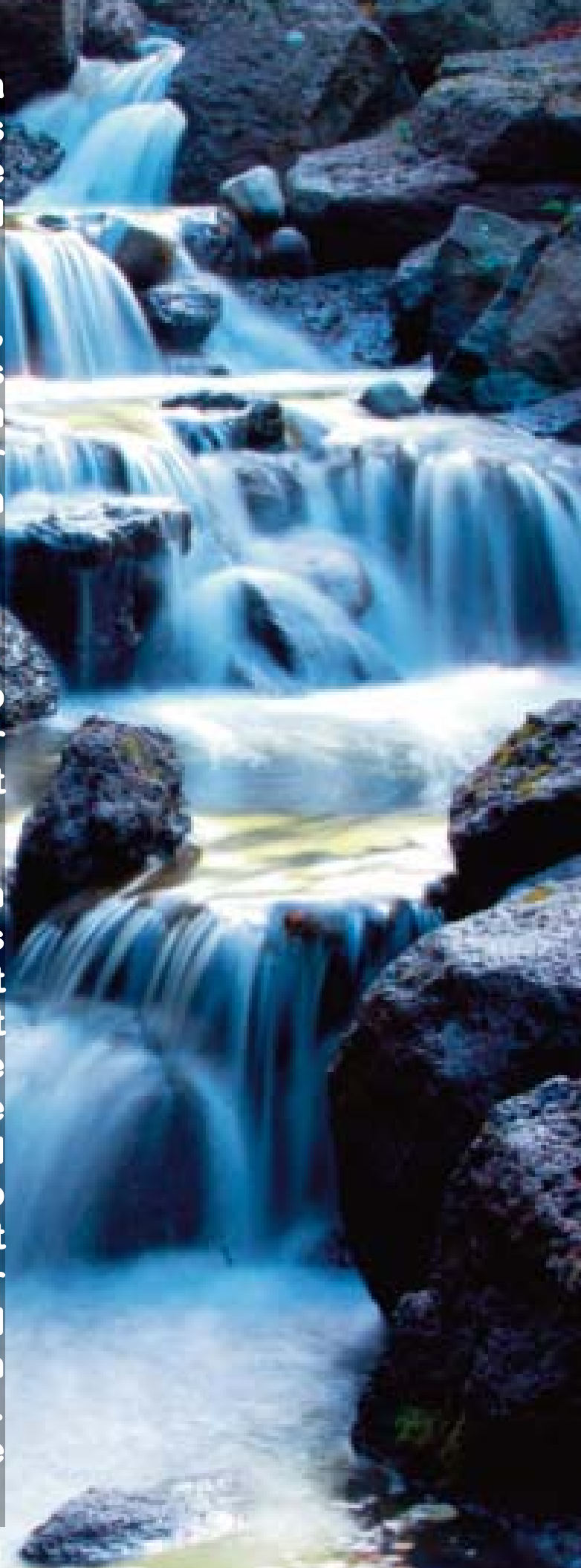
Here was the all-time fun thing: a nickel slot machine which we kids played all the time. And there were old-time phones that we could call upstairs on.

It must have been a wonderful view, but I just remember how many forts we made and playing like I was Tom Sawyer. I hardly remember their being any adults there (although I'm sure they were).

At Charley & Eleanor's:

The man-made island was a wonder to me. I think my great-grandfather made it. I could row the row-boat around that island!

And, I remember cleaning fish with Uncle Charley. I liked that. The guts of the fish would be all gooey, but it felt good to me! And, I guess it made me feel grown up. Uncle Charley, I think, was my favorite because he was kind of quiet and he treated me just like it was normal to have me around. No big deal but still I didn't feel ignored. I remember the shed or garage where he had all his fishing rods—there were a million of them! Or, it seemed like it to me. And, he would pick out just the right rod for me or Buddo.





Fishing and swimming and rowing around in a boat—a tough life...just the perfect place to go every summer as a kid. Better than a summer camp!

At the Kandel home in Elmhurst:

My best memory of this place was the basement! That might seem strange, but growing up in California, we didn't have basements out there.

Here, you got to the basement through a door off the kitchen and the stairs were kind of dark and steep. The washer and dryer were down there, but there was also a whole new play area.

There was this train set that Uncle Eddie and Mark had—it was like a little town all its own. I wore my engineer's cap and loved to watch that train go around and around.

We also went to the corner drugstore and bought baseball cards a lot—with bubblegum in them. Boy, I wish I had those now. Casey would really be impressed with those cards! I have no idea what we did with those!

At Tabacs:

Guess which part of the house I liked here? Yep, the basement! It was at their home where the basement was unfinished and, I think, there was a ping-pong table down there. I'm not positive about that, but I remember sleeping there. It was nice and cool. Chicago was not my favorite place to visit in the summer.

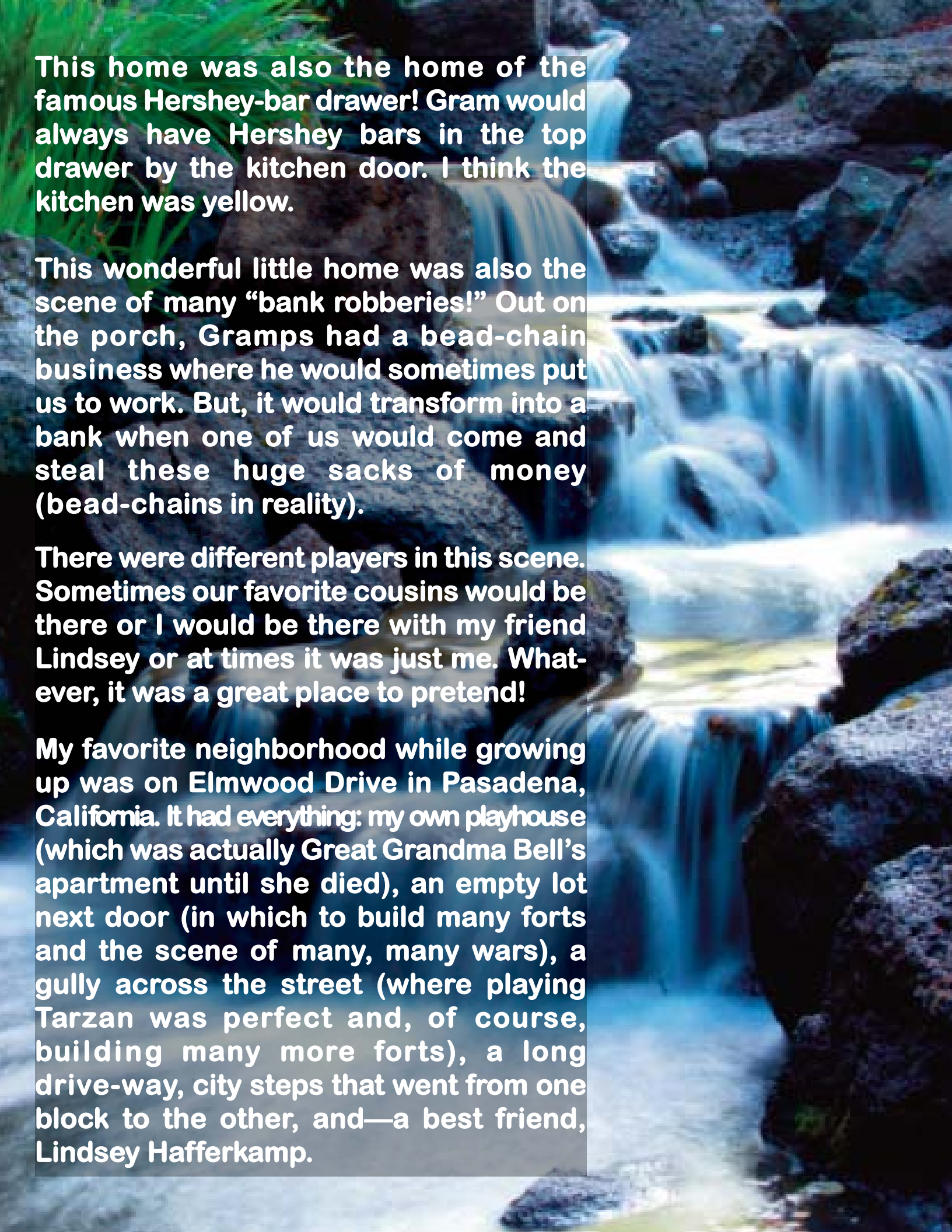
I liked the beach and anything to do with the beach. I still do!

Let's go back to California!

Grandpa & Gram's (Foss') places:

The one I have the most memory of as a kid was where they lived in a house by the "Wash" and owned two rows of little apartments in Glendale, Calif. One of the great things about this place was that we often got to go and empty the change at the laundry room where all the tenants did their laundry! And we got to KEEP THE CHANGE!!! Boy, was it fun separating all the dimes and nickels!



A vibrant photograph of a waterfall cascading over dark, jagged rocks. The water is bright blue and white with motion blur, creating a sense of movement. In the upper left corner, there are green plants and foliage. The overall scene is natural and scenic.

This home was also the home of the famous Hershey-bar drawer! Gram would always have Hershey bars in the top drawer by the kitchen door. I think the kitchen was yellow.

This wonderful little home was also the scene of many “bank robberies!” Out on the porch, Gramps had a bead-chain business where he would sometimes put us to work. But, it would transform into a bank when one of us would come and steal these huge sacks of money (bead-chains in reality).

There were different players in this scene. Sometimes our favorite cousins would be there or I would be there with my friend Lindsey or at times it was just me. Whatever, it was a great place to pretend!

My favorite neighborhood while growing up was on Elmwood Drive in Pasadena, California. It had everything: my own playhouse (which was actually Great Grandma Bell’s apartment until she died), an empty lot next door (in which to build many forts and the scene of many, many wars), a gully across the street (where playing Tarzan was perfect and, of course, building many more forts), a long drive-way, city steps that went from one block to the other, and—a best friend, Lindsey Hafferkamp.

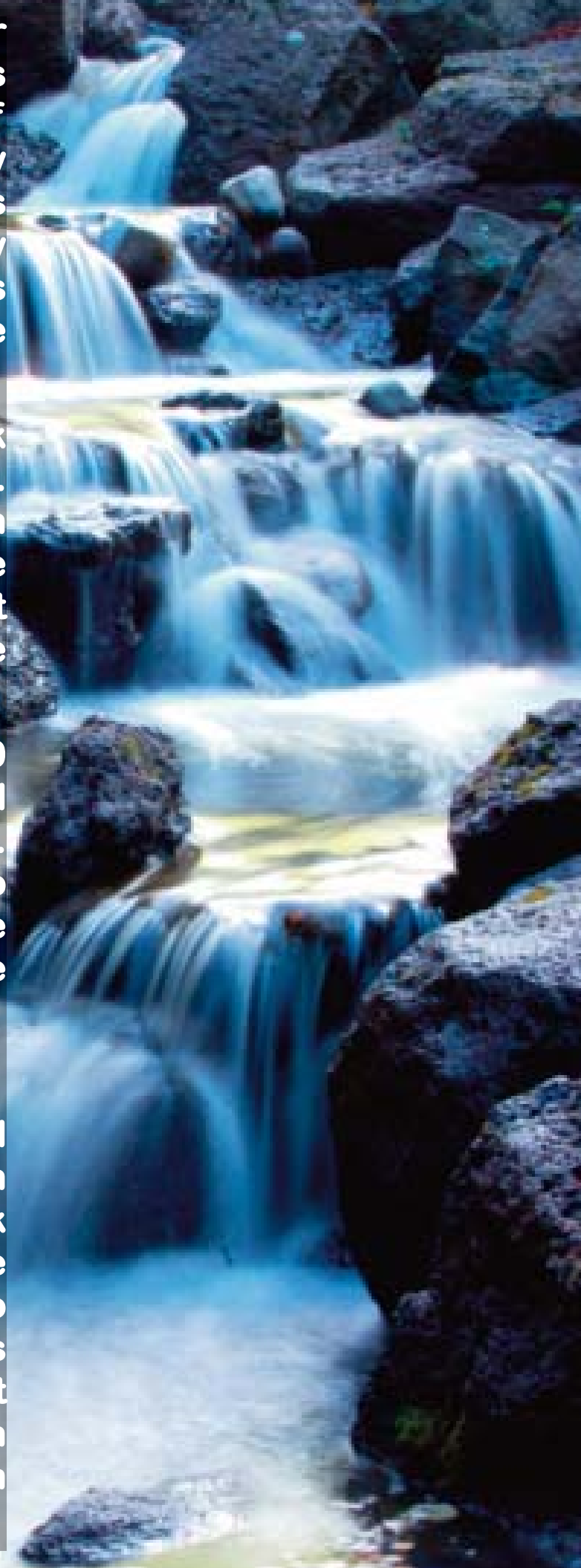
This neighborhood was perfect for kids. Around the winding street was an old castle home which we, of course, thought was haunted. My grandparents used to live on this street, too. And, my parents actually lived in another house on this street, also, but I was too little to remember this one.

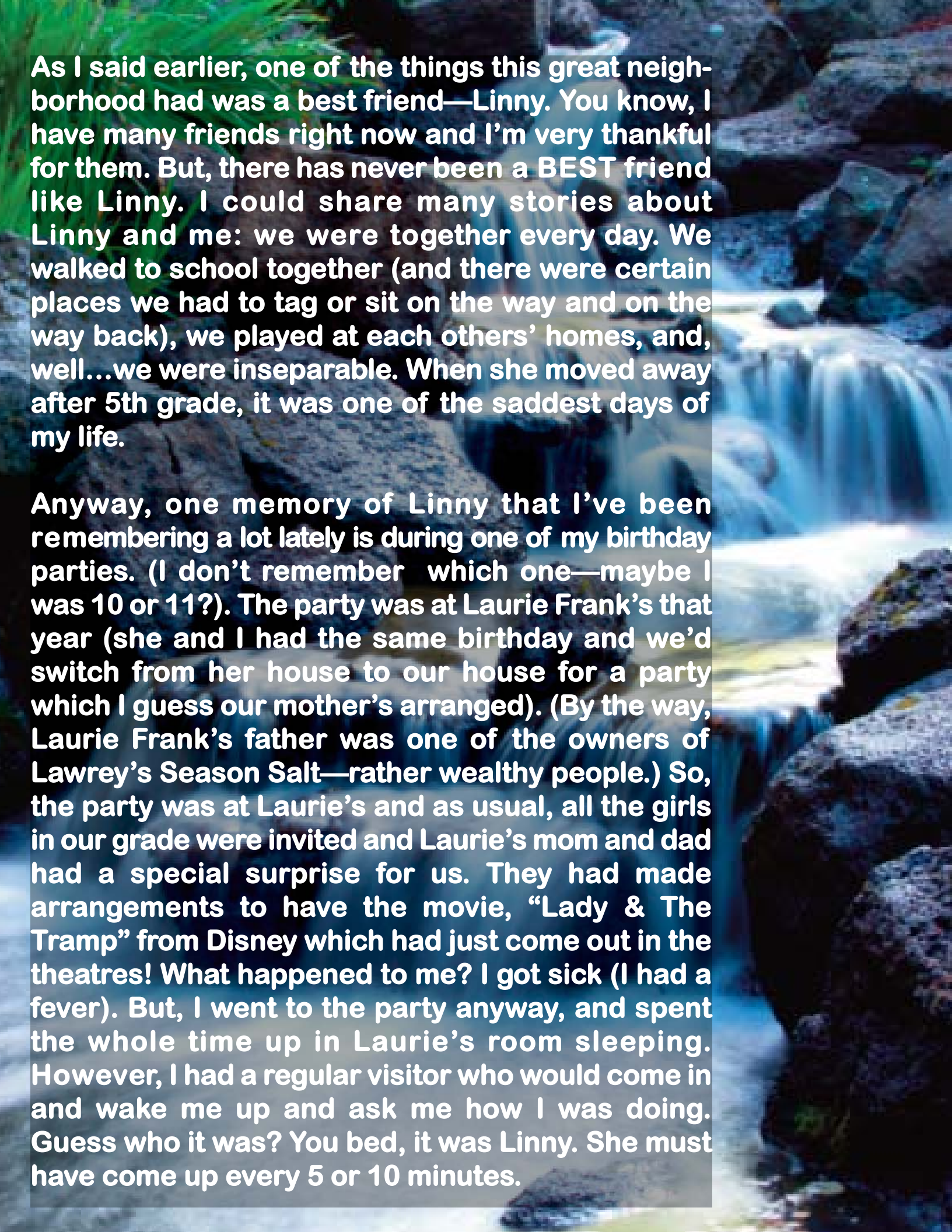
The house had a very tiny back yard. But, it was my favorite place. The front yard was bigger and even as a kid, I used to sit on the little fence that was there and look out over the hill and just watch the neighborhood.

I went back in November of 1990 and showed Michael (and dragged 3 other friends) to these old places. Of course, it's all built up and so much smaller than it was. But, the city steps were still there and the houses.

What a great place!

Even the mud-slide that happened there was intriguing as a kid (although I'm sure Mom and Pop didn't think that it was exactly "intriguing"). The hill behind this house just slid into our little back yard when there was one of these rains that wouldn't stop. I think Pop was more than knee-deep trying to keep it from coming into the house.





As I said earlier, one of the things this great neighborhood had was a best friend—Linny. You know, I have many friends right now and I'm very thankful for them. But, there has never been a BEST friend like Linny. I could share many stories about Linny and me: we were together every day. We walked to school together (and there were certain places we had to tag or sit on the way and on the way back), we played at each others' homes, and, well...we were inseparable. When she moved away after 5th grade, it was one of the saddest days of my life.

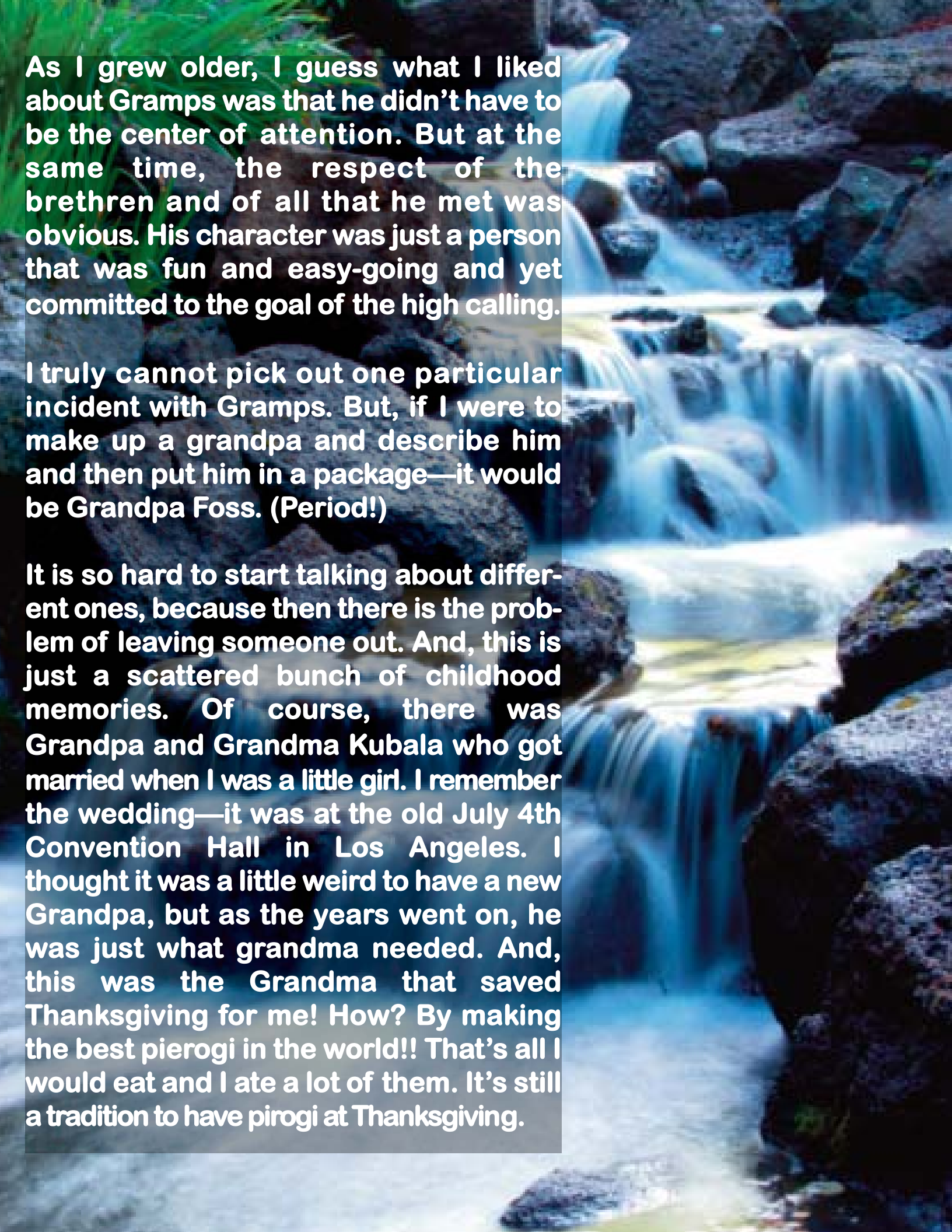
Anyway, one memory of Linny that I've been remembering a lot lately is during one of my birthday parties. (I don't remember which one—maybe I was 10 or 11?). The party was at Laurie Frank's that year (she and I had the same birthday and we'd switch from her house to our house for a party which I guess our mother's arranged). (By the way, Laurie Frank's father was one of the owners of Lawrey's Season Salt—rather wealthy people.) So, the party was at Laurie's and as usual, all the girls in our grade were invited and Laurie's mom and dad had a special surprise for us. They had made arrangements to have the movie, "Lady & The Tramp" from Disney which had just come out in the theatres! What happened to me? I got sick (I had a fever). But, I went to the party anyway, and spent the whole time up in Laurie's room sleeping. However, I had a regular visitor who would come in and wake me up and ask me how I was doing. Guess who it was? You bet, it was Linny. She must have come up every 5 or 10 minutes.



Anyway, this neighborhood will always be a wonderful memory to me!

You know, our family has some very talented piano players: Auntie Joy and Auntie Florence. And, then there was Gram (Grandma Foss). From my understanding, she played everything by ear! She couldn't read a note of music! Isn't that amazing! I can remember sitting and listening to her play (especially at the house by the "Wash") and guess what else she'd let me do? This was when I was very little..I played with her fat on her arm! It would be especially fun to do this when she was playing the piano and it make us both giggle a lot! But, she'd just go on playing!

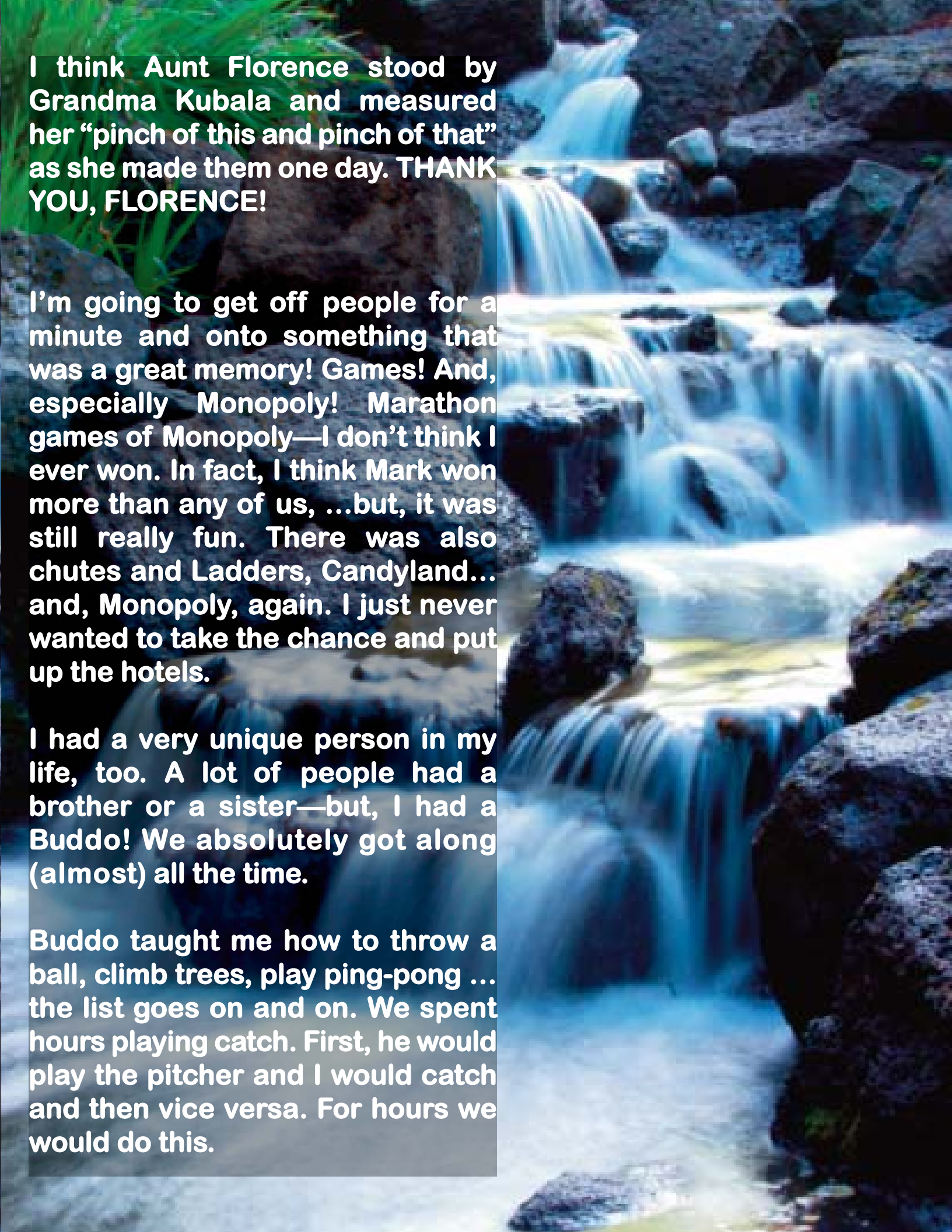
Gramps, of course, was always playing with us. He was just like one of the kids. On Sunday afternoon we would often go to a place called Coriganville (I'm not sure about the spelling). Also, we'd go to the place where there were all these trains and, again, I'd have on my Engineer's cap. At Corigan we would have on our cowboy hats.



As I grew older, I guess what I liked about Gramps was that he didn't have to be the center of attention. But at the same time, the respect of the brethren and of all that he met was obvious. His character was just a person that was fun and easy-going and yet committed to the goal of the high calling.

I truly cannot pick out one particular incident with Gramps. But, if I were to make up a grandpa and describe him and then put him in a package—it would be Grandpa Foss. (Period!)

It is so hard to start talking about different ones, because then there is the problem of leaving someone out. And, this is just a scattered bunch of childhood memories. Of course, there was Grandpa and Grandma Kubala who got married when I was a little girl. I remember the wedding—it was at the old July 4th Convention Hall in Los Angeles. I thought it was a little weird to have a new Grandpa, but as the years went on, he was just what grandma needed. And, this was the Grandma that saved Thanksgiving for me! How? By making the best pierogi in the world!! That's all I would eat and I ate a lot of them. It's still a tradition to have pirogi at Thanksgiving.

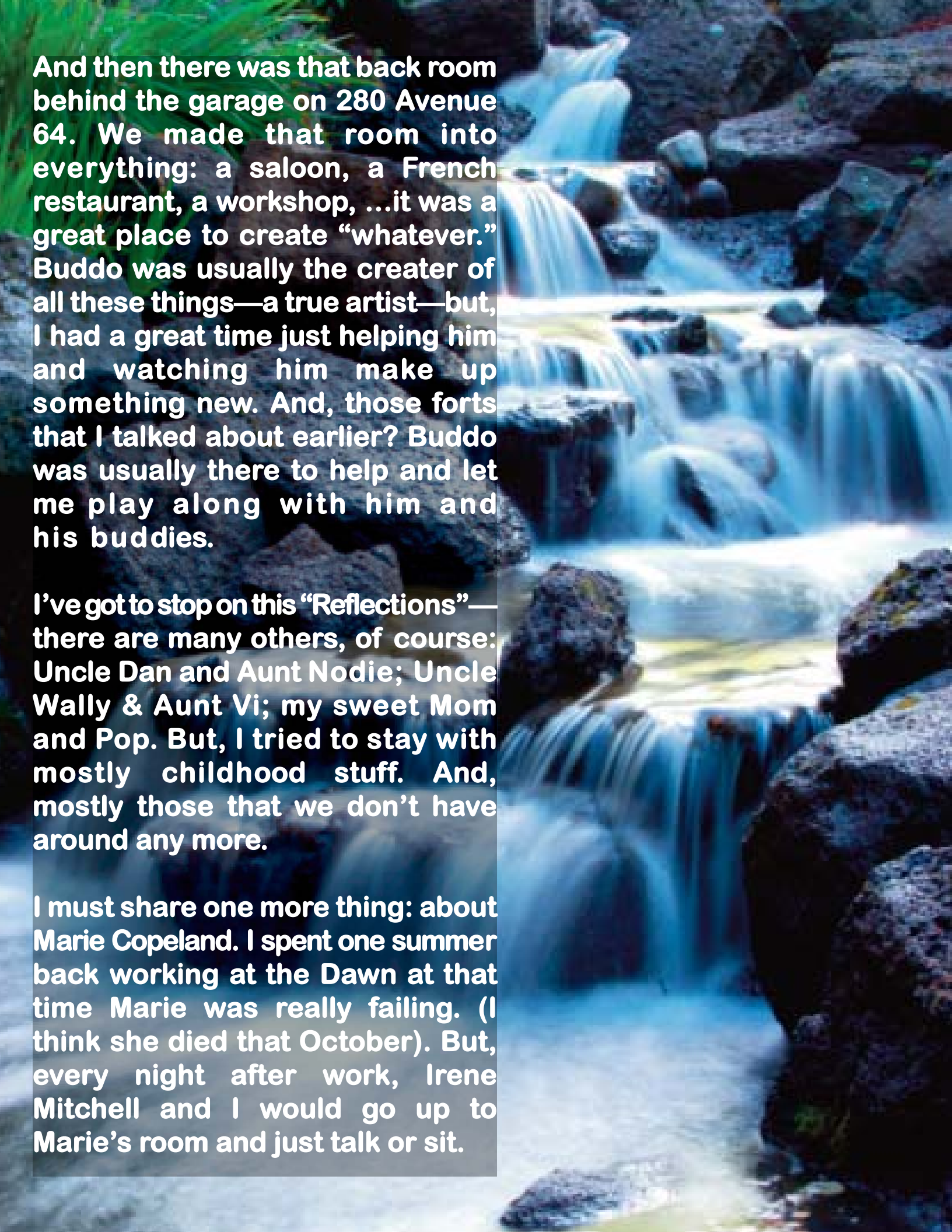


I think Aunt Florence stood by Grandma Kubala and measured her “pinch of this and pinch of that” as she made them one day. THANK YOU, FLORENCE!

I’m going to get off people for a minute and onto something that was a great memory! Games! And, especially Monopoly! Marathon games of Monopoly—I don’t think I ever won. In fact, I think Mark won more than any of us, ...but, it was still really fun. There was also chutes and Ladders, Candyland... and, Monopoly, again. I just never wanted to take the chance and put up the hotels.

I had a very unique person in my life, too. A lot of people had a brother or a sister—but, I had a Buddo! We absolutely got along (almost) all the time.

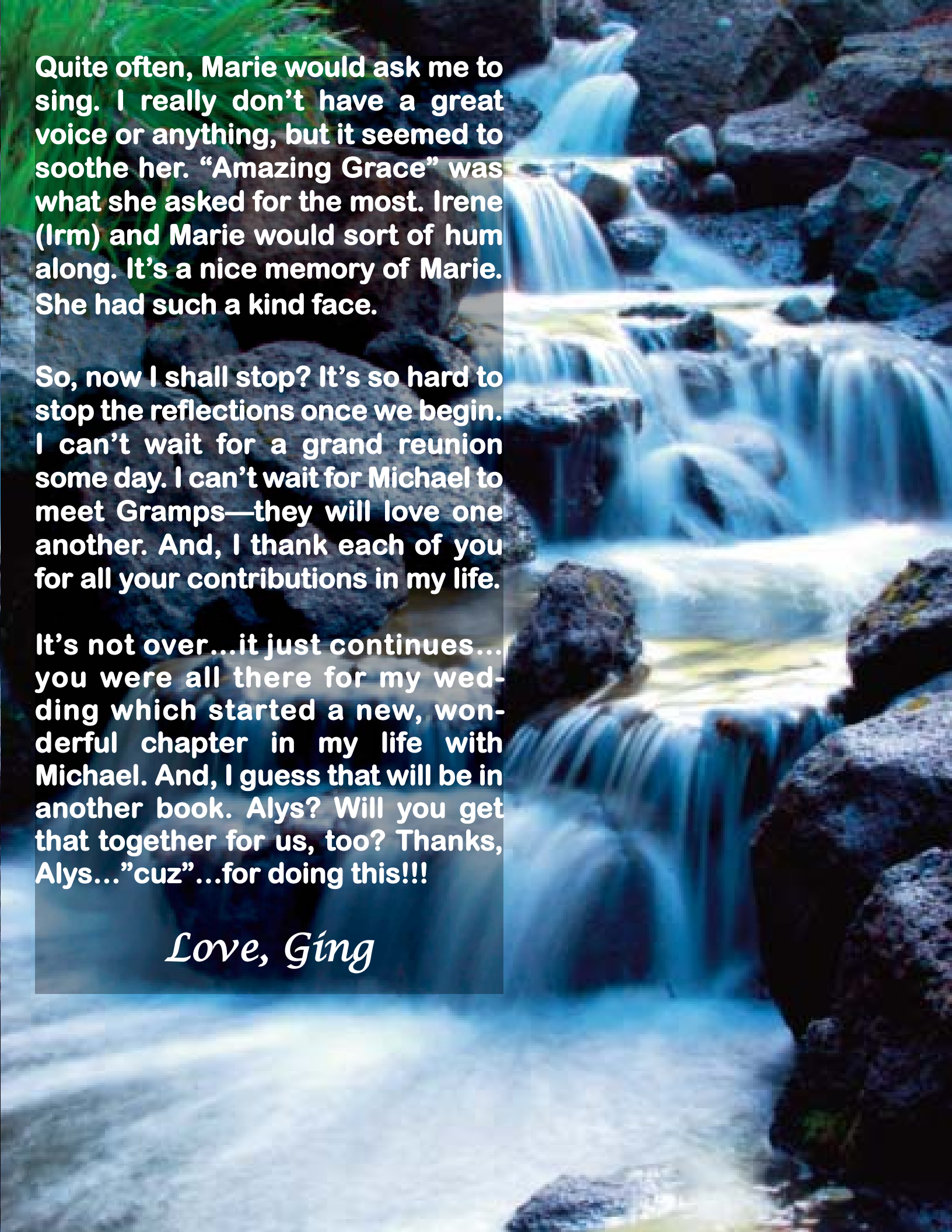
Buddo taught me how to throw a ball, climb trees, play ping-pong ... the list goes on and on. We spent hours playing catch. First, he would play the pitcher and I would catch and then vice versa. For hours we would do this.



And then there was that back room behind the garage on 280 Avenue 64. We made that room into everything: a saloon, a French restaurant, a workshop, ...it was a great place to create “whatever.” Buddo was usually the creator of all these things—a true artist—but, I had a great time just helping him and watching him make up something new. And, those forts that I talked about earlier? Buddo was usually there to help and let me play along with him and his buddies.

I’ve got to stop on this “Reflections”—there are many others, of course: Uncle Dan and Aunt Nodie; Uncle Wally & Aunt Vi; my sweet Mom and Pop. But, I tried to stay with mostly childhood stuff. And, mostly those that we don’t have around any more.

I must share one more thing: about Marie Copeland. I spent one summer back working at the Dawn at that time Marie was really failing. (I think she died that October). But, every night after work, Irene Mitchell and I would go up to Marie’s room and just talk or sit.



Quite often, Marie would ask me to sing. I really don't have a great voice or anything, but it seemed to soothe her. "Amazing Grace" was what she asked for the most. Irene (Irm) and Marie would sort of hum along. It's a nice memory of Marie. She had such a kind face.

So, now I shall stop? It's so hard to stop the reflections once we begin. I can't wait for a grand reunion some day. I can't wait for Michael to meet Gramps—they will love one another. And, I thank each of you for all your contributions in my life.

It's not over...it just continues... you were all there for my wedding which started a new, wonderful chapter in my life with Michael. And, I guess that will be in another book. Alys? Will you get that together for us, too? Thanks, Alys..."cuz"...for doing this!!!

Love, Ging