

Our Stories—Nancy Mooney

Rich and I moved to South Kingstown after 29 years in Toledo, Ohio, where he taught at the University of Toledo and I worked at the Department of Jobs and Family Services. We both grew up in New Jersey. I lived in Little Silver (near the Jersey shore-hence my desire to be near the ocean) and he lived in Madison. Long-time UU's, we looked for a nearby UU Congregation with an outstanding choir director and choir, which we found here. (We had read Michael Galib's warning about working hard.) We love the rural terrain and atmosphere (much like where we grew up). I once lived in Massachusetts and vacationed with my four children on Aucoot Cove in Marion and am glad to be back in New England. I have three grandchildren, two almost 20, the other now 12. and Rich has two daughters and a 3-year-old grandson.

I was adopted by a Public Health Nurse and we lived with my grandmother. Many years after I became a UU, I remembered hearing my grandmother call Unitarians "wicked". A fundamentalist Christian, she liked reading about other religions and passing judgement. I was young during the 1940's and events reported on the news usually had something to do with the war. In the Woodbridge train wreck, a full commuter train fell from a collapsed bridge over the Raritan River and the tragedy was assumed to be the result of enemy sabotage. My Mother took some of her nurses to help care for the injured. Since we lived near Fort Monmouth, she helped our army neighbors with health issues. From some of her stories, I knew that I could never be a nurse! When my cousin, Roy, came to live with us, my grandmother had two children to raise. He was a lot of fun for me, but must have been a trial for her, since he was often in trouble (sometimes at the Fort). We all went to church on Sunday, a special time to be with family and enjoy the music.

When I was six, since I was underfoot in the victory garden, my mother gave me my own plot to raise lettuce, carrots and radishes (no-fail crops!). And I still love gardening. After I retired, I took the Master Gardener course, volunteered at the Toledo Botanical Garden, and joined an aging neighborhood garden club. Living here, I am trying not to buy every plant I see for our new yard.

In New Jersey, I worked for the County Board of Social Services, as a social service case manager. In Ohio, I worked for the County Job and Family Services Department, when education and training for finding a job were first required for able-bodied clients' eligibility for services. Seeing young parents succeed through education was very satisfying. I had to admire the clients for their optimism and ability to get along with little in material benefits. With our Ohio church, I worked with agencies serving homeless families, one founded by area ministers, including our own. As part of an organization of 5 neighborhood churches we celebrated holidays with joint services (with choirs), had pulpit exchanges and an area food drive.

During this pandemic, we had construction completed and are landscaping our rocky yard. I have played the piano (and would like to find a partner for duets), have attended choir rehearsals on zoom, and listened to our Church services. But, there's nothing like being there. Like everyone else, I miss our families, even though I can see them on Zoom. It looks like, for our health and safety, we must be patient with social restrictions. It may be a long time before we have some means of protection and our lives go back to normal.

Nancy Mooney, July 2020