

The American Dream: The Life of Nellie Nilsen Seale

(Continued from page 18)

The family lived on Bergen Place, a street in the Scandinavian section of Bay-ridge, Brooklyn, New York, where they struggled through the Great Depression. As a matter of attitude, the family came to improve their lot through hard work and to become Americans—and this they did.

Not long after coming to America, Ingeborg had twin boys, Walter and Roy. Eighteen years later, the boys joined the Coast Guard when WWII started. Roy's ship, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Escanaba*, was torpedoed off of Greenland in 1942. One hundred two of 104 men perished in the icy waters within minutes. Roy was not a survivor. Nellie recalled hearing the wail of her mother when she got the telegram. To these new Americans, Roy's loss was a crushing blow.

Winston Seale and Nellie were married in Brooklyn in 1939. Children Richard, Nancy and Carolyn were born in the 1940s. The family moved to Hartsdale, New York, in 1946. Though of very modest means, Otto and Ingeborg Nilsen, their children and several cousins managed to acquire land and build cottages in Mastic Beach, Long Island, New York. The extended family spent wonderful summers there. Nellie had the "joy" of an outhouse, a cold-water hand pump, an icebox and a kerosene stove. For his part, Winston had the "joy" of a two-hour commute, each way, on the Long Island Railroad, which still ran steam locomotives. The kids had great times! Mastic Beach was, and always will be, a very special spot to the Nilsen clan.

In 1958, Nellie and Winston moved to Babylon, Long Island, New York. It was from there, in 1976, that they found Pine Knoll Shores via an advertisement in *Antiques Magazine*. They built their house on Beechwood Drive in 1979 and moved south.

North Carolina was a compromise. Winston, who was born in Barbados, wanted to be able to swim most of the year. Norwegian Nellie wanted some winter! Pine Knoll Shores provided a perfect blend.

They carried to Pine Knoll Shores their tradition of playing couples bridge and soon had an active bridge group. Winston swam in the canal or ocean eight months a year and awarded an annual "First In-Last Out" t-shirt. Nellie played golf, chased antiques, worked on her gardens or their house and landscaping. Her yard of azaleas became known as "mini-Orton"—a reference to the beautiful gardens at Orton Plantation in Brunswick County. She did good work and to this day, spring is beautiful in her yard.

Her stated goal was to live independently in her own home all her life. Though suffering some major health issues since 2006, each time she fought her way back to a level of health that allowed her to go home. She was, however, very fortunate to have the steadfast help of children, neighbors and friends to support her "independence."

After breaking her hip the day of her 97th birthday, she again bounced back. In January and March 2013, she had successful cataract surgeries and could again see clearly. She then enjoyed a wonderful 2013. She reactivated her bridge playing, attended antiques club meetings and worked in her gardens. Once, she had to ask a neighbor to help her get back up after having done some weeding on her knees! She had a big 98th birthday party, joined in a big Thanksgiving celebration, had her hair done regularly, went shopping, cooked most meals and kept up her house. Her zest for life showed clearly through the sparkle of her wonderful blue eyes, which smiled on friends, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Though hard to believe, the photo accompanying this article was taken less than three months before her death, while she was playing bridge. She said she felt pretty tired at times, but she still generally cared for herself. We helped her continue her 30-year tradition of going to No Name Pizza for a Greek salad and pizza. She seemed to always have just baked a fresh batch of wonderful chocolate chip cookies, and she loved sharing them with many folks in her life. Her mind remained sharp as a tack and she kept up with world news, politics and the stock market.

With such a good year going, her family was shocked when daughter-in-law Linda found her in her home, having suffered a stroke. The date was Friday, the 13th of December. She again attempted to recover from that setback and was astounding the doctors with her progress. All of her children and several grandchildren and a few great grandchildren visited her, much to her delight.

A "flu bug" caught her on December 24, and on December 26, with Linda and I talking with her, she peacefully lay back into the pillows and died with her mind as clear as ever, a smile on her face, and in, literally, a split second.

In a quiet and competent way, Nellie earned the respect and love of all who came to know her. She was a generous, caring and loving Christian. Her love for America and her family was unbounded. To us all, she was the epitome of what a true American should be. She had trouble believing that a poor little girl from Norway could be so blessed as to enjoy the life she had with the family, friends and the incredible beauty that surrounded her in Pine Knoll Shores.

Her children asked that the traditional memorial service be recast as a celebration of life, which it was. On January 25, a full house of family, friends and neighbors celebrated Nellie's life at St. Francis by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Salter Path. Smiles and happy conversations recounted many good times past.

Nellie and husband Winston are now in the columbarium on the St. Francis grounds. The site is embraced by the branches of live oak trees, while the sounds of the Atlantic Ocean's breaking waves compete with the songs of mockingbirds. It is a very peaceful spot. Nellie's vivacity and love will be missed, but all were blessed to have her for so long in their lives.

PIKSCO Happenings

By Candace Moran

Spring is in the air!

It seems the legends are true. *The Old Farmer's Almanac* predicted this to be a frigid winter with bitter cold, and we have certainly seen crazy weather since Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow on Groundhog Day. As Phil's predicted six weeks of winter are hopefully drawing to a close, it is time to set our sights on spring and begin to think about all the wonderful warm weather activities we can enjoy in Pine Knoll Shores.

Start your summer planning with securing your spot on our kayak and canoe racks at Garner Park. We have open spaces available and storage at the park ensures easy access to the sound. In addition to convenience and easy water access, the racks are protected by the presence of high-intensity security lights. We also remind new and old renters alike to check their kayaks and canoes frequently and invest in stainless steel locks which resist corrosion against salt air. We also recommend using heavy duty cables to secure kayaks and canoes to the racks. You can never be too proactive about security!

Also, please remember to check out PIKSCO's new online community at <http://pikSCO.nextdoor.com>. We hope this will be a great resource this spring and summer to let friends and neighbors know about events in the area, items available for sale as you jump into spring cleaning and much more.

The PIKSCO board will keep you posted on a lot of upcoming projects, and we welcome input from our residents about things they would like to see the board address. Attend the next board meeting, scheduled for March 17 at 5:30 p.m. at town hall. Don't forget to contact your PIKSCO office, located at 128 Willow Road, directly or by phone at 247-4818 with any questions or concerns you may have. Please visit us at www.PIKSCO.com.



**Wilson's
Lawn
Care**
Maintenance & Lawn Care

Specializing in Residential /Commercial

**Lawn Mowing • Weed Eating
Shrub Trimming • Leaf Raking**

*One Time or Year Round Service
Experienced • Dependable*

726-4531

David Wilson
374 Hardesty Farm Rd. Newport, NC 28570