

Irvine and Laguna Beach 1966-67.

In the spring of 1966, Mimi and I and two small children, aged 3 and a few months, drove down to Southern California from Palo Alto to look at the University of California, Irvine. In 1966 the Irvine Ranch was a beautiful place. This was the site of the newest campus of the University of California system, consisting at that time of a few white, modern buildings surrounded by acres of orange groves, hilly and green. One could not predict that in 20 years all these beautiful hills would be flattened and covered with track housing, chain hotels, shopping malls, and even an international airport: John Wayne International airport called after the “tough guy” of Western Movies. More appropriately it is also called Santa Ana airport, because of the proximity to Santa Ana, an older town. It also serves as the airport to Disney Land, Knott’s Berry farm, other amusement parks, the University and the myriad businesses in the area.

Santa Ana itself is an older city, founded in 1869. It is called after the Santa Ana River, and was originally part of old Spanish Mexico. Don Gaspár de Portolá, a Spanish explorer, discovered the picturesque valley and river, called it Santa Ana, in honor of Saint Anne, on July 26, 1769. José Antonio Yorba, and his nephew Juan Peralta, both soldiers were given a Spanish land grant for the area. They developed the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana for cattle grazing and productive farmland. 70 acres of it were purchased in 1869 to establish the city. Today it is really part of the great urban sprawl known as Los Angeles. The Irvine Ranch was developed from various segments of the Spanish ranch, purchased about the same time as the founding of Santa Ana by the Irvine family and partners. It was developed originally for agriculture, but in the 1950’s some land was put aside for the future campus, and massive development, housing, and business started in the early 70’s. Today the town of Irvine is full of high -rise apartments and swallowed by nearby Newport Beach. Balboa island nearby has somehow retained its laid back character.

I met with John Holland, my potential mentor as a post -doctoral fellow, viewed the lab, and discussed some interesting projects. John was a tall, skinny guy, very open and friendly. He was a good scientist, but had a very mercurial temper and could not stand “ bullshit” or interference from authority. His temper would often got him into trouble, and after a couple of years he left UCI for UC La Jolla. I do not know what precipitated the move, but he spent the rest of his academic career there. He finally retired to Taos, New Mexico, and later to Nevada,

where he died in October of 2013. He abandoned the projects we worked on at Irvine, concentrating instead on studying the mechanism of viral evolution. He never wanted to be an administrator and continued to work at the bench until his retirement.

This was the first year of UCI as a university. The campus was very small, only a few buildings and very few undergraduates. There was really no difference between post-docs and faculty, we all mixed quite freely. Everyone was young. The Holland lab consisted of three post docs (including myself) one graduate student and a few high school students. We all worked on John's ideas, which unfortunately changed quite often. Most of the time I worked on methods of purifying tRNA and analyzing tRNA profiles on chromatographic columns from different tissues. We were investigating whether these profiles were in any way related to cancers of various types. The other post-docs in the lab were Clayton Buck, and Morrie Granger. Clayton had an unfortunate life, his first wife, died of a brain tumor while still young, and his second wife I believe committed suicide. Despite this he had a very successful career in science. Morrie went on to become a professor at UCI. We met again a few years ago while visiting Laguna Beach. Morrie's fame lies in the discovery of Lymphotoxin while a graduate student, which later became known as TNF (tumor necrosis factor). As the name implies it was hoped it would be a general anti-cancer agent, but it has proven to be too toxic. Still it has been a great research tool in immunology and in cancer research. I notice that Morrie was honored by the arthritis society in April 2014 for his lifetime of work.

The atmosphere in the lab was not intellectually as stimulating as it had been at Stanford. I missed the journal clubs and seminars. Since we were such a small group there were not sufficient people for these discussions. The department was new, as was the faculty. There was one virologist (John), one yeast geneticist (Cal McLoughlin), one phage geneticist (Dan Wolf) etc. As stated elsewhere, drugs were rampant at that time, LSD was big at the time, and many of the high school students would routinely use drugs. We were afraid to drink our coffee in case it was laced. The story I heard was that two of the high school students jumped from the roof under the influence of LSD and one blinded himself by staring at the sun for too long a time. We personally were made aware of the drug problem when some friends, the Duncan's immigrated to Australia because they were afraid to raise their teen children in Laguna Beach (they eventually returned not particularly happy with Australia. Mrs Duncan could not stand the snakes and the primitive conditions that they encountered on that continent.) I was not very influenced

by this very hedonistic society and never took drugs, whereas Mimi was worried by this society and its excesses. We were just too “square” or was it “normal”. As Mimi has pointed out, the atmosphere was such that if you were not enjoying yourself or happy all the time then you had a problem. One had to be constantly happy. This was the America of the constant smile, and Southern California was the embodiment of this.

We decided to try and find a rental on the coast. There were two appealing small towns within 15 miles; these were Corona Del Mar and Laguna Beach. Laguna was at that time an “artists colony”, very hip and arty on the one hand and very conservative and wealthy at the same time. Today the hipness has gone but the wealth has remained. Corona Del Mar was an island of wealth, that we could not afford. Today most homes are in the 2-3 million dollar range. We had no difficulty in renting a house two blocks from the beach in Laguna. The house was owned by a couple of men who were only too happy to have a “doctor” living in the area. It enhanced, or so they thought, the value of the surrounding property. In fact at the beginning I was called a few times by neighbors asking for medical advice. I had to explain I was a Ph.D. doctor and not a physician, although I did give advice, usually just common sense. No one ever offered to pay for my consultations. The house had been completely remodeled, had a beautiful front yard, with the largest avocado trees overlooking the porch, and a couple of fig trees out front. It was more than anyone could desire. The avocados were the large kind, and every time one fell the house would shake. I learned to harvest avocados by taking a coffee can, cutting out a triangle so that it had a sharp edge, attaching it to a pole and with some manipulation cut the avocado stem. I felt I was living in the jungle, a very tame one, albeit on the beach and harvesting fruit in a primitive fashion. The children who were only 3 and 1 year old would sit under the fig trees and eat all the ripe fruit. I have a passion for ripe figs, ever since I lived in Israel, and I need to ask the children sometime whether they do! The scent of a fig tree would drive me crazy.

At that time Laguna Beach was predominantly villas with small gardens, climbing up the hills of the nearby canyons. We had a baby-sitting co-op so that we got to know various areas of the town when we baby-sat for other people. Almost all the small houses near the beach have now been transformed into apartment blocks. We had the option to buy our house, and often have thought if only we had, since property values sky rocketed soon after we left, and the property we were renting for \$250 a month would have been worth a few million dollars today even after the crash of 2008-10. We have visited Laguna Beach many times since the 1960's ,

the house and adjoining lot has been replaced with an apartment complex. Mimi's father at that time kept urging us to buy, but we had no thoughts of staying in California, and I suppose did not think of investing. We were too young and naïve.

Laguna Beach is famous for its festival of the arts: tableaux's of famous paintings would be presented by groups of actors. That is painting would be recreated with live actors and suitable backdrops. I don't know whether Goya's Nude Maja has ever been presented.! The whole pageant is rather kitschy although thousands flock to it.

The city hugs the Pacific Ocean, surrounded by hills and mountains. Today these hills are covered with small houses, and every few years there are landslides after the heavy winter rains, and some of the houses tumble down the hills and canyons. This occurs every 5 to 10 years, with lots of damage. Insurance must be very expensive ! There are beautiful beaches with small coves, and the promenade along the beach is astride gardens and flowerbeds. In our days the major landmark on the beach was a very elegant French Restaurant called the " Victor Hugo", too expensive for us to afford. We ate there once to celebrate a birthday or anniversary. Today it is less expensive, and is now Las Brisas, a Mexican restaurant, where one can sit outside on a wide veranda and look at the waves and surfers and drink Margarita's. The center of the town consists of three shopping streets with boutiques and banks, as well as stores selling tourist paraphernalia, ice cream salons and a few great bakeries. The town has the atmosphere of a resort, and we would not venture out at weekends since the beaches and roads through the town were packed. The last few years the town has suffered from fires and mudslides as it expanded up the hills and into the canyons. The town is surrounded by large housing tracks, mostly built as retirement communities, but these do not infringe on the town itself. These go by names such as Leisure World, and Laguna Hills. A new town has developed just South of Laguna, Dana Point, indicative of the fast growth of Southern California. I remember it as a single pier jutting out into the sea with one or two structures. Today it is large and busy, has a population of over 30,000 with areas of enclosed housing and very expensive homes and hotels.

In those days as one entered the Laguna Beach one met the town greeter. This was a figure with a long white beard and long white hair. He would wave to every car and greet the drivers and passengers. This was Eiler Larson, the official town greeter. He stood on the Pacific Coast Highway from the 1940's through the 1960s every weekend and waved to passersby. By

profession he was a gardener, and lived in a room at the Laguna Hotel, a small hotel, still standing, in the middle of the town. We thought of him as being rather “ crazy”. However after his death the city put up a statue of him near the pottery shack, another old landmark, which is no longer making pottery, but now an expensive restaurants, where one can sit on the deck and watch the traffic on the Pacific Coast Highway !

Mimi was very happy in Laguna Beach, she would take the kids to the beach, and we made quite a number of friends. Her parents, who lived in Los Angeles, would often come down for the day. I would drive 15 miles back and forth to Irvine. Sometimes, the fog was so dense, that I had to get out of the car to ascertain I was still on the road, and not slipping off a cliff into the sea. The Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1) hugged the coast -line and in many places there was a sheer drop of a 100 feet or more. At that time there was very little between the campus and Laguna Beach, not like today where there is Spanish style housing on one side of the highway with major roads to the University, as well as remnants of parks fought over between developers and environmentalists.

We had two sets of friends, one connected with the university world, the others from the town. The latter gave us a view of a society that to us at that time was strange, and I think influenced our decision not to remain in California. Perhaps a mistake, but we still thought of possibly retuning to Israel. Yuval had piano lessons near our house on Cypress Drive. and parents would wait for their children to finish. Mimi befriended one of the mothers, Greta, and since the children were the same age we decided to meet at their house one evening for dinner. Greta lived with her “ family “ on a house on the beach. In these days one could rent or buy very primitive and cheap houses, really shacks right on the water front. These shacks today have been converted into modern expensive homes. Greta was from Denmark, a striking blonde. Greta and Philip her husband, and another male friend lived together in the house with the children. Philip was an artist. To make a long confusing story short, Philip and Greta had been married and were now divorced, and the other man was Philip’s lover. I understand that Greta and Philip later remarried. This was in 1966 **before** the great sexual revolution. Perhaps we were too square and conservative, but we were not accustomed to these relationships, at that time although I really did not mind. They were very kind and friendly people and introduced us to the pre-hippy (intellectual) society of Laguna, including poets and other artists. Everyone was smoking marijuana, and some even into LSD. We felt a little out of it. I remember walking along the

beach with a poet, reciting his poetry and enjoying it. A pity I cannot remember his name, so that I don't know whether he ever published his stuff. It was not too bad.

We have returned to Laguna many times in the last few years and have never been able to find any of our "old" town friends other than those connected to the University. In searching the internet for information on Laguna beach of that period, I found that Timothy Leary had connection to the town, and that Laguna Canyon was well known locale for LSD production.

To quote from a 1985 newspaper article (Glendale news press) *"Laguna Beach was the LSD capital of the world starting in mid-1960s and was still home to droppers, dopers and dealers until 1981, according to an unpublished book, "The Jesus Dealers," written by Ted Taylor in collaboration with former Police Chief Neal Purcell. In its heyday, the Brotherhood of Eternal Love, founded by Timothy Francis Leary, was allegedly selling dope in Laguna at health food stores, juice bars, psychedelic shops, record stores, surf shops and even a used car lot. Woodland Drive was considered their base, known to local law enforcement as "Dodge City."*

As I mentioned in a previous chapter on our time at Stanford, we had befriended Cathy and John Pearse . John and Cathy had gone to Egypt to teach at the American University in Cairo for a few years. Cathy's mother Mrs. Reap opened a store in Laguna selling imported goods (as far as I know not drugs). I can picture the store, a small corner store at the corner of Thalia and Pacific Coast Highway, full of stuff from the Orient and Middle East. The store is still there but different owners and different knick-knacks. We saw a lot of John and Cathy at weekends. John was looking for a faculty position, which he later found at U California Santa Cruz. Interestingly we talked a lot about their sojourn in Egypt, and how primitive the Egyptian army was despite the bellicose statements from Nasser. This was just before the six-day war and their impression, proved correct, that the Egyptian army was no match for the Israeli Army. The Egyptian soldiers did not even have boots.

Cathy and John were having some problems, I am not sure of what nature, but they had decided on a divorce. Mimi might know the reasons, since Cathy had given birth while we were in Palo Alto to a stillborn child as the result of an E.coli infection and Mimi had helped Cathy during this period. Also Mrs. Reap had helped us when Mimi had a miscarriage, and we had become quite close. After leaving Laguna, we lost contact with Cathy until a few years ago when we called on her, after finding out that she was still in Laguna Beach, and was a successful artist,

now Cathy Jones. We even have one of her paintings in the dining room . She had remarried, had been at one time a vice-chancellor in charge of publicity at UCI and had a number of children. This last year we also have had contact with John, her ex husband, a well known marine biologist at UC Santa Cruz.

One might ask, why did we not try and stay on in Laguna and UCI in 1966? I know that Mimi, more than I was afraid of bringing up children in the hedonistic atmosphere of Laguna Beach. There was also a lack of culture at that time. No concerts or classical music performances, and Los Angeles was too far away.. The area was just developing, and UCI could hardly be called a campus. On the other hand we should have considered Mimi's parents living in LA who most certainly did not want us to leave, and would have helped financially in purchasing a house. I really had no idea where I wanted to live, Israel was still a definite possibility and I really did not know the USA other than New York and California. One day I received a letter from a Dr. Howard Gest, a friend of Charley Yanofsky, my advisor at Stanford, asking me whether I would be interested in interviewing for a position at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN. I knew nothing about Bloomington, nor for that matter Indiana but was told by members of my Ph.D. committee whom I contacted that it was a good place to perform science. I thus started looking at other possibilities for comparison. I was invited to give seminars at Oak Ridge, St Jude's Hospital in Memphis, and at the microbiology department at the U. Michigan at Ann Arbor. I met Howard Gest in La Jolla while he was visiting a friend, and was impressed by what he told me. Indiana University from his description was not as isolated (or backwards) as I imagined, and Howard certainly was a very cultured person. Memphis, I ruled out after seeing how segregated the city was, although Alan Granoff the director of the research wing of St Jude's a very personable person made me a very good offer. I brought home a local Memphis newspaper to look at housing costs, and both of us were shocked to see that housing was segregated. Oak Ridge was attractive, but was a cultural wasteland, and I was not the number one candidate at Michigan. My visit to Bloomington was enjoyable, and I was very impressed by the faculty, the physical set up (lots of lab space, probably double that of John's space at UCI) and I was blown over by attending a musical production in the Auditorium and could not believe the number of concerts performed in one week !. I also had dinner with some of the micro faculty at the home of Drew Schwartz during the job interview. Drew was in the plant sciences group, a very distinguished geneticists, and Pearl his wife was a gracious hostess. Drew later

became President of the American Genetics Society and had been involved in the discovery of transposons in corn. We also found that we had both been in Habonim, and that he had lived in Israel at one time. Interestingly he has retired to Israel, and currently lives in Jerusalem. I returned to California with a glowing report. Mimi did not want to stay in S. California, not the place to bring up kids. We talked about the Mid-West, a place we had never been to unless you consider driving across the country to California, and stopping o for a meal in Kansas as being in the Mid-West. None of the other places I interviewed compared with the attractions of Bloomington. Memphis was very segregated, and Oak Ridge too isolated from cultural events. It was not really a university but a research institute run by the US government. However it had been part of the Manhattan project, and had quite a number of very distinguished scientists.

A decision was made, the Mid-West for us and goodbye to California. Was it the correct decision?

One final note, despite not wishing to bring up our children in Southern California, Jonathan our younger son has returned to California, to Fullerton in the heart of Orange County. and our grandchildren are being brought up in this still very hedonistic, materialistic and crowded environment. Orange County has become more diverse, and has a different atmosphere from 50 years ago. When we lived in Orange County it was known as “ John Birch” country, ultra conservative.. It was totally “ WASPish” Today it is demographically Hispanic, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese , Arab and other ethnic groups, one shopping mall after the other, with the same chain stores and chain restaurants, and the car unfortunately is still king. Laguna Beach still remains unique, however no longer “ hip”.