

2021 08 21 Almalee Henderson Berkeley. California

In loving memory of Bert Raynes, a gentle curmudgeon

In the summer of 1954, I met Bert and Meg at a company picnic sponsored by Horizons, Inc. where both Bert and my husband, Neil were working. They had become friends after discovering their shared interest in bird-watching. This was the beginning of a long friendship in the Cleveland Ohio area.

At that time the Raynes' were living in Euclid, a suburb east of the city but after a long search found a lot with big trees in a less crowded area and built a house where they felt closer to nature.

During this time Bert continued his interests in bird-watching and environmental issues and his grumpiness accompanied with a great sense of humor became evident. He kept very aware of pollution issues in local creeks and management problems in the sewer system, not hesitating to confront those in charge when he felt the need. Grumpy he was but never hostile.

Bert regularly attended meetings of the Kirtland Bird Club where birders shared their sightings and other information of interest. He often expressed how very much he enjoyed these meetings. Also, in these years the Cleveland Audubon Society hosted almost monthly meetings including dinner and a program and the Raynes' usually attended, with Bert sharing his usual bonhomie.

After we moved farther out into the exurbs, Bert and Meg often came to visit us and we occasionally reciprocated. We really enjoyed seeing them as did our children. They remember them fondly, possibly because they donated their black and white TV to our household after upgrading to color.

Neil and I were stunned when the Raynes' moved to Jackson although we had been aware of their continuing interest in the area. We managed to see them there several times while travelling to the West Coast and kept in touch through letters and phone calls. As far as I know they never set foot in Ohio again!

I don't think Bert found much engineering work in Wyoming but bloomed as a writer. The newspaper column has been a delight and he has several books to his credit. My favorite is The Curmudgeon Chronicles.

After our respective spouses died I tried to keep in touch with Bert with occasional phone calls, mainly on his birthday. On one of those calls Bert asked his "adopted daughter" Jan Hayse to get my address and phone number since we live in adjoining cities in the Bay Area of California. Jan and I have become friends as a result, and I have greatly enjoyed her company in addition to keeping up with Bert through her occasional visits and forwarding of the bird reports.