

Chapter 26

The House at 11850 Upland Way

I have not gone over the transition of the Pressley family from Presidio Ave. in Cupertino to the house on Upland Way. It all started one Sunday afternoon when Anne suggested we take a drive to get some fresh air. We

came upon a sign for an open house off a private road on a hill near us. We, of course, went up and discovered a location with an incredible view, an older, large one-story house, a separate garage, and a nice deck.

11850 Upland Way, Cupertino
Spectacular View Home In The Cupertino Foothills

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- Adjacent to open space green belt
- Restored wall art in living room included
- Professionally decorated
- Swimming pool overlooking valley
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- Superior quality throughout
- Perfect for family living and entertaining
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C&C OPEN/REAL ESTATE

As you can see it was listed at \$551 thousand and neither one of us had been thinking about moving. The sales flyer we picked up is shown on the left. It sort of describes the place and it intrigued us. Therefore, the next

Wednesday, Anne and I, accompanied by Eileen Palmer again drove up to an open house. I'm sure we stayed over an hour. We did not need the six bedrooms at our existing house since the kids were gone, but had not been thinking of moving. The house was on a knoll at the end of a private road. It was adjacent to an old Orchard which was now Fremont Older open space.

We drove back home and found a note in our mailbox saying "If you are interested in selling, we would like to buy a house on this street." This helped our decision-making and we sold the house for \$390,000 and bought the house on Upland.

I seem to remember we moved there with the help of a lot of friends in a rented U-Haul.



I had added a large family room extension to our house on Presidio and

subconsciously looked forward to modifying and improving everything about this new house. Anne loved the view, the kitchen, and the interior rooms.

Our First Surprise
The Dangerous Deck

One of the features we really liked was a large deck projecting out over the hill. One of our first surprises was that the deck was supported by some very long 4 x 4 uprights and that it was not connected to the retaining wall structure. I remember Peter refused to go out on the deck once he discovered how flimsy the construction was. This led to our first project. We build a room under the deck; we hired a contractor to frame in the space. We turned this into a recreation room with a combination ping-pong-pool table & a small guest toilet. It was a very nice upgrade. We also enlarged the deck, making it a redwood structure along the complete back of the house with stairs going down to the pool and rec. room. It extended 80 feet long with a 40 foot extension above the rec. room. It was a great and glorious deck and extended the full length of the house resulting in a 1500 square-foot deck. It was somewhat of an unrealistic expense, but we massively enjoyed it. These next two pictures show that recreation room and the extent of the large redwood deck.

The Power Line That Obstructed Our view

The east side of the property is adjacent to the Fremont Older open space. This was an old Orchard West from our property down into a gully and this gave us both great privacy and a touch of the past when the area was apricot orchards. There was, however, a power line running from our road across the side of our property and down to the neighbor below us. You can see it in the aerial view of the property. We decided to get rid of this and pay to have it put underground. We hired the contractor that we named Bob the Bobcat man who dug the appropriate trench and inserted a 2 inch plastic pipe the



length of the property.

When the power company arrived to run the wires, they assumed that we had already installed a string to pull the wire

through the conduit. I had fun improvising a solution, consisting of a soft rubber ball a string and a shop vacuum



at one end of the tube. The pulling of the string took perhaps five minutes. I probably should've patented that idea. In any

event they pulled the wires and Bob the Bobcat man filled in the trench and we enjoyed the unobstructed view.

COPIES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DIVISION <input type="checkbox"/> APPLICANT <input type="checkbox"/> ACCT. OPERS. <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY AGREEMENT TO INSTALL FACILITIES OR PERFORM OTHER WORK	REFERENCE: 41E88153 W.O. 312884H
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ROBERT J. PRESSLEY AND ANNE L. PRESSLEY; INDIVIDUALS

hereinafter called Applicant, has requested Pacific Gas and Electric Company, hereinafter called PG&E, to perform the work described below at or near 11850 Upland Drive, Cupertino

County of Santa Clara, State of California.

PG&E will perform the work and furnish all necessary labor, appliances, materials and facilities required, subject to the following conditions:

1. The required work shall be as follows:
(Describe in detail the materials and facilities to be furnished and/or work to be done. For each facility installed, specifically indicate whether ownership shall vest in PG&E or Applicant upon completion of work. If more space is required use other side and attach any necessary drawings.)

Cost to underground approximately 270 feet of overhead electric line in accordance with Rule 20C:	\$4,864.00
CIAC Tax @ 28%:	1,361.92
Less substructures by Applicant:	-908.00
Less trenching by Applicant:	-940.00
TOTAL	\$4,377.92

This is an outright payment not subject to refund.

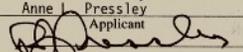
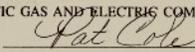
Ownership of facilities shall vest in PG&E.

It will be your obligation to see that no damage to our gas/and electric/ facilities occurs during the subsequent construction of your development. If our facilities are damaged by you or by your subcontractors, we will expect you to pay for the repair and/or replacement of the damaged facilities.

2. Whenever part or all of the required work is to be furnished or performed upon property other than that of Applicant, Applicant shall first procure from the owners thereof all rights of way and/or permits necessary in a form satisfactory to PG&E and without cost to it.

3. Applicant shall immediately, upon demand and prior to construction by PG&E, pay to PG&E as the complete contract price the sum of four thousand three hundred seventy-seven and 92/100 dollars (\$ 4,377.92).

Executed this 9th day of Nov, 19 89.

Robert J. Pressley and Anne L. Pressley Applicant BY:  Robert J. Pressley/Anne L. Pressley (print or type name) Mailing Address: <u>11850 Upland Drive</u> <u>Cupertino, CA 95014</u>	PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY BY:  Gregory M. Taylor (print or type name) FOR: Manager, <u>DeAnza</u> Division D&C <u>3554581</u> Paid <u>11-9-89</u>
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The Electric Gate and the Fence

Since the property was fairly isolated, we decided to fence in the yard and put an electric gate out near the road. We also thought this would deter the deer who enjoy munching our roses. We realized that they could jump over the 6 foot fence but it seemed to deter them. There was plenty of food on the outside. The fence

also looked nice.

The Terraces

Once we extended the deck, we determined the drop to the fence at the back of the house was fairly severe, we decided on terraces and planted blackberries and some dwarf fruit



trees. As time went on Joey became old enough to really enjoy picking the fruit. We planted rosemary plants for decoration and while they were pretty, they attracted an incredible number of wasps. We put a drainage system behind each of the terraces and constructed the drainage lines out to the open space. Bob the Bobcat helped us take a small rock pit low enough to take the water. We knew there was no one on the ground to see us doing this, but we were a little nervous every time an airplane flew over.

The Garage

The two-car garage was fairly disreputable, but it served the purpose of providing cover for a water tank. The city of Cupertino did not provide water for this property except at the very lowest location where we had a pump house with a small water pump that delivered the water up to the house.



This was basically an above ground water line, it was insulated against the cold, but we were advised to keep the water running

during a freeze to prevent the lines from breaking.

I have this ongoing desire to build and here was an opportunity. We designed a three car two-story garage. I sectioned off one third of the garage area as a workshop. The second floor, with a separate entrance was planned to be a large room for displaying and running our Lionel trains that Peter and I had been collecting. We also installed a small bathroom. The property sloped up behind the garage and there was space between the fence in the back corner of the garage to install a large water storage tank and pressure pump to provide good water pressure to the house. Bay water was pumped up from the pump house on the lower part of the property. One winter, the line froze in our side yard, split open, and we had an amazing display of frozen spray. But back to our new large two-story garage.



I wanted the water tank to be stable, so accordingly we had installed a large concrete foundation underneath it and also decided that the concrete foundation would make a

very stable base for a telescope. I put a trapdoor to get on the roof, I extended the concrete support through the roof and installed a ladder and trapdoor to enable access to a future telescope.



The upper floor was set up to enable me to have a Lionel train preparation. This is a photo of the back section of the layout. It was basically a loop of 4 x 8 sheets of plywood

occupying the majority of the room.



While I was applying for a permit for the garage, it was



initially rejected as the water storage

area because it was a couple feet too close to the fence separating us from the open space. There is nothing on the other side of the fence except apricot trees for a mile, but rules are rules. I finally convinced the inspector of the necessity of putting the water tank at the highest place on



the property which allowed him to issue a variance and let us go forward.

While I never installed a telescope on the roof, I did purchase an 8 inch reflecting telescope and enjoyed a fair number of nights looking into the black sky above the

Fremont Older open space. It was amazing to see various planets' rings and moons.

The two car section of the garage was large enough so that I had room to install a back-up generator. It was wired so that it could provide electricity to several rooms in the house as well as the pump station for water. It was set up so that when used, it disconnected us from the power lines. Other than occasional testing of the unit, I only had one opportunity to use it. This was during the Loma Prieta earthquake. I was at work when the earthquake happened. I drove home with no problem. I promptly went to the garage to turn on the generator. It was an interesting moment when I thought the only way to get in the garage was through the electric garage door. After a couple minutes of mild panic, I realized there is always an emergency door release and that the door can be opened by hand.

A New Front Hall and Bedroom

When we moved in, there was a room off the kitchen which was a combination laundry room, toilet and pantry. There were also two bedrooms at this end of the house that entered through the kitchen and were basically outdated. We decided to rebuild that part of the house with updated bedrooms, a laundry room, and the hallway from the front door to the new bedroom area. This also gave a great look to the front of the house. We had entry double doors put in and had the entire courtyard covered with pavers. There was a small dark interior office where I set up my desk and files. I thought it

was too dark so I purchased a large rectangular skylight and had it installed above the desk.

I then found out one of the perils of a flat roof. It took three tries at resealing the roof to make it stop leaking. It was however really nice when it was finished, an office with good light.

This completed the upgrades on the house itself.

The Pool

The pool had a diving board at the deep end and an elderly but adequate fence around the pool area. We decided it would be nice to have a hot tub. We had one added at the shallow end of the pool with a waterfall going into the pool. Joey & Jimi enjoyed much play time with Gran Annie here before they learned to swim. We figured we would use a pool more if it had a heater, so we had a fairly large heater installed alongside the pool. Incidentally this required replacing the gas meter in our front yard with one that was large enough to record the gas used by the heaters.

The hot water heater inside the house needed to be replaced when we realized it was totally full of sludge. Our friendly workers managed to delicately get it out of the house before it totally fell apart. I guess nothing lasts forever.

Party Time

Now that the house was basically rebuilt, it was time to enjoy it for some parties. I gave a couple of pool parties for the SVC crowd where I served hamburgers, beer, and watched the employees enjoy the pool. Our ceramics expert was convinced he could defeat both Ted and myself at ping pong. Sometimes he did. As I said, I wandered around and served hamburgers most of the time. If the young engineers and technicians attended, there was bound to be a water basketball game. We hosted several of these. They were enjoyed by all!

We also had a series of events for families and friends.



It is great party house.

It was a perfect place for celebrations and weddings.

Eileen's daughter Beth had her wedding there.



Mary & Jay's Wedding



Mary and Sheila had really wonderful weddings at the house. Mary's wedding was also on the deck with food stations down by the pool. Mary would have liked to have had Jay arrive riding a horse, but the logistics of getting a horse on the deck were a little too much. A true Indian wedding would've had some 500 guests, but we were space limited to about 100. Jay's parents threw a very large reception before

the wedding at an Indian restaurant in downtown San Francisco.



It was an eclectic crowd, Jay had friends from his high school and ultimate Frisbee team; his parents had many relatives and friends. There were also Mary's and our friends.



The Vyas' had some Scottish friends who celebrated with a traditional dance, luring Anne and me to join in.

We managed to not embarrass ourselves or trip over the fancy steps.

Jay and Mary celebrated by throwing inscribed Frisbees from the deck to the crowd around the pool.

It was a great party!

Sheila & Pete's Wedding

Sheila's wedding took advantage of beautiful weather. Pete's sister and family came from New Jersey for the wedding as did Jim and Pat Conaty.

The actual ceremony was held on the deck.



And as it grew dark we moved to the courtyard for dinner and music and dancing. Under a towering palm tree with lights all around - it all looked very much like an Italian festival. The weather was perfect. The party and dancing went on into late at night.

Everyone had a wonderful time - another great party!



No one was arrested in any of these affairs although we did have a few noise complaints to the police. Back to the Story of the House Itself

The Loma Prieta Earthquake!!

We enjoyed the house during all the years of enlargements and modifications.

I was at work when the 1989 earthquake hit. I was sitting in my office when the entire building started shaking. I am a somewhat slow reactor. I was still sitting in my chair when I realized everyone else in the company had run outside. After the first shaking there were a series of very slow seismic waves that seem to be the earth vibrating slowly. Nothing seem to be broken at the company, so I decided to get in my car see if I could make it home. It turned out that the roads were open. I cautiously drove up 11850 Upland.

At home, it was a much different story. The house is on a hill that is composed of expansive soil. It is not solid rock and appears to be fairly flexible. Anne and Sheila were at the house when the earthquake hit and there did not seem to be any immediately visible structural damage. They did have a fairly frightening ride. The house moved suddenly five or 6 feet in one direction and then back 4 feet in another direction and finally a few feet in the third direction. We determined this movement later from the markings on the deck where several large heavy planters on wheels stood still while the house moved underneath them. The chandelier in the front hall was swept all the way up to leave a dent in the painted ceiling.

Earthquakes do strange things; we had held a corporate party months before and stored all the extra liquor in the top cabinets in the kitchen. The earthquake opened the cabinet

doors flipping the bottles out and they lay broken on the counter. It opened the drawers underneath the counter so a good bit of the alcohol filled the drawers along with some broken glass. Then when the house moved back in the other direction the draws closed. When we opened the drawers later there was a couple inches of alcohol in them.

Luckily there was an unbroken bottle of scotch and Sheila and Anne went to the safety of Sheila's car out in the courtyard and gained strength with a drink or two. I arrived about an hour later.

I located the manual release for the garage door, opened it and switched on the generator system that we had built in years before. It worked like a charm. We had arranged the wiring so that the generator had enough capability to run the important items in the kitchen, the gas heater controls, and the water pump.

As it became dark, our's were the only lights that we could see. We could also see at the bottom of the hill one house on fire. Initial radio reports indicated that the Bay Bridge was down. There were major fires in the San Francisco.

The next day we took a little more detailed look at the house and discovered that the chimney above the fireplace had tipped out a few degrees away from the house. The other chimney on the roof in the center of the house was still in place but it had broken loose and rotated 90°. We were lucky. The water level of the swimming pool was a couple feet lower so it must been a wave that dumped the water down the hillside.

All in all, the damage was minimal, we repaired the chimneys, did some other minor repairs, and considered ourselves very very lucky.

But There Was More to Come,

The Spring Rains (el nino)

A few years later we had spring rains followed by more spring rains followed by still more spring rains. We noticed the old retaining wall was starting to tip out. This was not good. Eventually it moved out so far that the retaining vertical I-beams no longer held the wall together. They were also tipping out at an angle. We covered it with tarps to try and keep it from moving further, but to no avail. The bulk of the material had gone far enough downhill that it was threatening our neighbor's tree.

My cohort at Light Engineering, Ray Cammono, had previously been a construction guy who owned a Bobcat. He brought it up and we removed a truckload of dirt from the bottom of the hill (and we paid to dispose of it at the Cupertino dump site). We continued this for about 10 days as the earth continued to move, the retaining wall fell apart. We finally realized we had to build a new retaining wall or we were likely to lose the entire side of our house. We cut and disposed of the old metal I-beams. Our neighbor down the hill was a high school shop teacher; he brought his cutting torch up and helped us segment and remove the I-beams and the retaining wall along with the old lumber and proceeded to build a new wall. We had tarpaulins over the

sliding earth and a fair number of our friends came up to see if there was anything they could do. We tied the entire mess to a couple of trees at the top of the slide and the slide proceeded to take the trees with it.

I went to get a permit for retaining wall and was told that it would take a week or two to get the permit. I told him I had no time to wait and was going on with or without a permit. As far as I know, they never came up to observe or review the work. I purchased some significantly larger and longer 50 foot 18 inch wide I-beams and had them cut in two. (they were the only size immediately available) I hired a soils engineer and a drill rig and started the construction. We bored a series of holes for the new I-beams some 15 feet into the soil. The soils engineer actually rode the drill down after we had drilled the holes to check that we were through the mud and deep in the good solid ground.

About this time we had scheduled a trip to the Caribbean with the Phillips to watch the solar eclipse. While we were gone, work continued with Ray supervising the construction. The drainage pipe network included the entire hill and ran past the neighbor's driveway and past his house below us to a surface runoff along a public road. The post and beam construction of the wall was completed while we were away. When we came back, I decided that I really wanted a stronger and more aesthetically pleasing wall.

My son-in-law, Peter, was working with a large construction company in the area and helped us organize a complete shotcrete concrete covering for the wall. A team of construction workers welded a rebar grid to the post and



beam structure of the entire wall and applied an 8 inch thick layer of sprayed concrete. We also attached a 1 inch diameter metal rebar structure along the entire top of the wall and had the entire unit coated with shotcrete.

We then went back to the dump, paid them to take our dirt, and we refilled the space behind the wall. This made a small road down to the pool area. We then graded and planted the hillside.

This retaining wall structure will probably outlast the hill, the house, and the neighborhood. Someone in the future may well ask who put up this concrete monolith for what religion?

It was a major construction job and I loved it. I remember, State Farm covered \$80,000 of the cost under their insurance. Monica took the job of collecting and documenting all the expenses, including cash payments and was responsible for our success with State Farm.

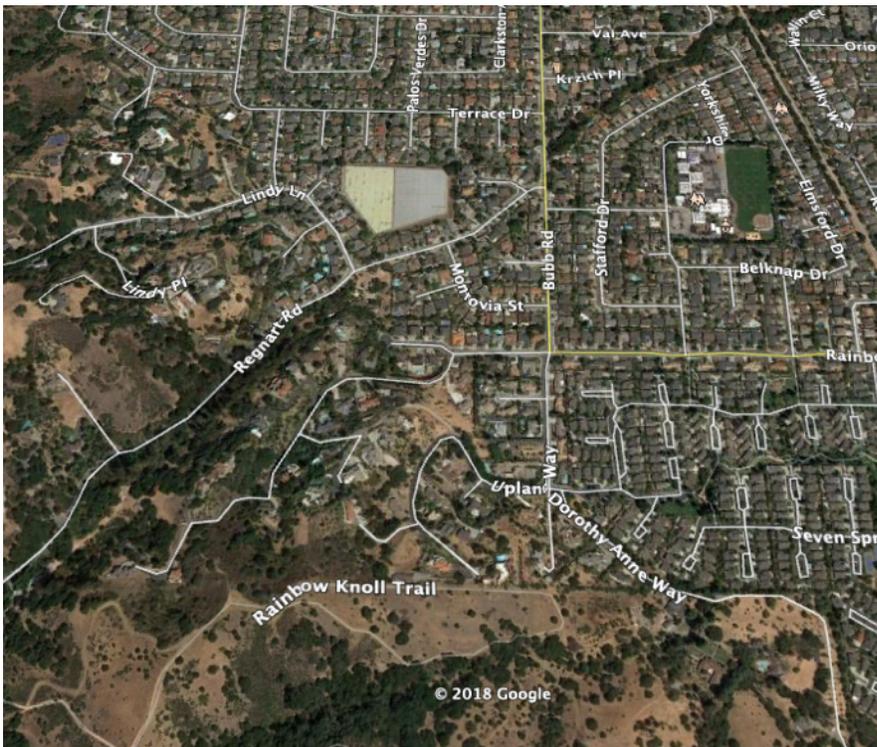
As you can see the retaining wall went from the driveway along side the house and around the corner of the swimming

pool. It was a fairly major project. We recoated the swimming pool, made a few other improvements on the house and



enjoyed it for a few more years.

Our house was at the top of a knoll and was quite isolated.



It shows on the map as the small white dot at the end of Bubb Road and next to the Rainbow Knoll Trail.

A map of the same area from the 1940s shows nothing

but orchards and orchards and orchards. Amazingly you can see the white roof of the original house on Upland Way. The subdivision lines in the orchard above it are an obscure artifact of Google maps. They were not there in the 1940s.

However

One



afternoon a couple years later, Anne and I were looking out at the swimming pool and saw that, once again, the supports holding the outside wall of the swimming pool had moved in an area where we had not rebuilt the wall. The fiberglass coating on the pool had torn as a result of this movement. We repaired it one more time. Our family had all moved away by this time and Anne and I looked at each other and said:

“We Are Out Of Here!”

We hired an agent, calculated how much money we paid for the house and what improvements we had made, increased the total number a few hundred thousand dollars and put the house on the market.

We actually had two bidders, one was a Chinese couple that were into Feng Shui and kept explaining to Anne how much better it would be if her double door faced in a different direction etc. They offered to pay us our asking price.

The other family, that actually bought the property, was an executive from a semiconductor company and his young wife. They had teenage sons and put up a basketball hoop in front of the house. The husband was fascinated by the house and lot, the wife not so much. They ended up paying slightly less than the Chinese couple that offered full price. Anne had no intention selling to anyone if her entrance door had to be changed.

While the house was being inspected, it turned out we did not have a permit for the full bathroom in the upstairs of the garage, better known as the train room. To make the space legal, we had to take out the shower, which stood in the the middle of the upstairs bathroom. As soon as the sale was approved and completed the new owners put the shower back in place. One of their sons moved in the apartment over the garage.

We stopped by a few years later and discovered the couple had divorced and the husband had married a Japanese lady. The house was very much the same.



The years we spent at Upland were fascinating. Our kids were all away. We had enough money to improve the house with new bedrooms, a new entryway, and a magically beautiful new deck. We also created a new garage with a workshop on the ground floor, a large room to display our Lionel trains on the second floor, a large water tank to supply the property from the second floor and a concrete support post going up through the roof for the telescope observatory, which we never built.

We had the interesting experience of pouring money into our swimming pool, purchasing a massive pool heater and a hot tub. I think it cost us approximately \$100 each swim. I would do it all again.

We have an amazing set of memories. A lot of them are unusual because the property was so unusual. One last photograph of the view from our deck over the valley in winter. We had an incredible panoramic view ranging from the Apple headquarters all the way to San Francisco. At the right time of year in the morning, we could see the sunlight reflected off the skyscrapers in downtown San Francisco. In the other direction at night we could see the constellations because there was no scattering artificial light.

We enjoyed Upland incredibly while we were there and we left when it was time to leave. We left behind memories of Bob the Bobcat man, our continuing construction guy, Dan McAuliffe and his crew, and all the other workmen who made this our continually evolving dream house, I am sure I enjoyed this evolution far more than Anne did. She had the job of generating stability out of my ever-changing construction projects.

Frank Lloyd Wright called his ideal house “Falling Water.” Our ideal house was the “Falling Hillside.” Life is a Series of Transitions.

On to San Francisco

A, 2021 update, the house is now valued at \$4 250000