

"Our Happiest Years" (Continued)



Just a sailor at heart, Mac treats one of his young neighbors to a spin over the waters of Florida's Gulf Coast. Left, Eleanor joins her new-found friends at a sewing bee.

Once the decision had been made and Labor Day set as a target date for moving, the McAdams' excitement gave way to concern about details of selling their Ohio home, winding up Mac's business—he had sold his own fuel-distributing firm a few years ago, but remained as manager—and hardest of all, saying good-bye. A friendly, outgoing man, Mac looked forward to the change, though he would miss friends and family. But Eleanor, who is far more retiring, was filled with apprehension at leaving behind the few close attachments she had made and moving to a new state where she knew almost no one. At their farewell party, the usually undemonstrative Eleanor broke into tears.

The actual trip south was made easier by the companionship of their four-year-old grandson, Scottie, who rode with Mac while he drove the boat trailer, and their daughter-in-law, Dorothy, who helped Eleanor drive the car.

Florida welcomed the McAdamses with the year's worst hurricane, which struck the day after they arrived. Mac and Eleanor spent their first full day in the Sunshine State holding glass doors shut and mopping up water. But little damage was done.

AFTER THE STORM cleared and Florida's normally balmy, healthful climate had its exhilarating effect on them, the McAdamses took a close look at themselves in their new surroundings. Mac and Eleanor found that they weren't a unique couple by any means, for thousands of Northern families have moved to Florida since the war. At first, they all miss their roots, their friends. But if they've settled in one of the state's newer communities, they're likely to find that their next-door neighbors are newcomers, too! And soon, Florida's abounding charms—sun, sand, sea, and scenery—win them over, and

they wouldn't move back "home" for anything.

Mac and Eleanor budget themselves on an income of \$240 a month, low to many Northerners but adequate in Florida, where fuel and winter-clothing costs are minimal and food prices low. In addition, Mac is lucky to have a part-time job in a local boat yard. His lifelong hobby has been boats—he has built three, including the one he brought from Ohio—and he feels lucky getting paid \$1.65 an hour to do work he enjoys. He makes his own hours, working when he feels like it, or else goes sailing, fishing, swimming, or gardening. He has built a dock and retaining wall outside their home, and in the evening he attends adult-education courses in boating and navigation.

ELEANOR'S LIFE has changed less, but it always remains a question how much a housewife can "retire," even when her husband does. She still looks after a house, and shops and cooks. She doesn't share Mac's enthusiasm for boating and fishing, but she enjoys working in the garden and takes a course in sewing. Most of all she misses her son and his family, and last Christmas she went back to Ohio before Mac did to spend more time with them.

The McAdamses are making new friends and sometimes join them for a barbecue on the beach. Occasionally, they drive to nearby Fort Myers or Punta Gorda for dinner in a restaurant; most evenings, they are content to stay home reading or watching television.

Gradually, the McAdamses are learning to fit into their new community. They find that retirement brings its special problems but that they can solve them. Friendly neighbors help. But most important is their own resolve to get the most they can from what could be their happiest years.



Mac is elected cook during recent surfside barbecue. The McAdamses enjoy dining with neighbors.

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