

this is **home**



LISA NICOLAOU

Among the things Lisa Nicolaou loves about "the Rothermel house," where she now lives, are its original features from the late 1920s, such as the dining room's bay window, left, and built-in corner cabinet, below.

# Dream home once belonged to a favorite neighbor full of vivid memories and important lessons learned

I live in the Rothermel House and I am grateful every day for the opportunity.

Jean and Dan Rothermel were a part of that "greatest generation." They met during World War II and served in the South Pacific — she volunteered with the Red Cross and he served in the Navy. After the war, they married and embarked on careers in education. Through it all, they faced life's challenges with courage and humility.

When my girls were little and I lived across the path from them, I waited for the Rothermels to emerge in the afternoon to sit on the patio with their drinks and crudites. While my daughters played, I got to enjoy some real adult conversation. They filled my head with stories and gave me perspective about my own life.

The first time I walked into the Rothermels' house, I gasped. I had found my home, a dream house that I didn't know really existed. What struck me immediately was the scent in the air, a faint ash coming from the fireplace. The house reminded me of a cabin, warm and inviting. I turned the corner and there was the dining room, with a beautiful bay window and a corner cabinet, original to the house. The houses in Radburn, a planned community built in the

1920's, had some beautiful original features, but many of these precious cabinets had been replaced over the years.

I got to move into the house of my dreams and raise my family in it. I'll always treasure the day that Mrs. Rothermel told me she needed to talk to me. My heart pounded as she explained that they needed to move into a retirement community nearby and that they hoped that my husband and I would want to buy their house.

Before we moved, we asked the Rothermel children, who had grown children of their own, to carve their initials somewhere in their house. This had been their family home for more than 50 years, and in all respects would carry their name for many more.

We stay in touch with the family. And when I'm having a difficult day, I try to channel all the positive energy that Jean Rothermel left in the house for me. I try to model her attitude and follow her advice — always invite lots of guests and be a friend to all the neighbors.

I'll never have a Jacuzzi, but that's not what matters to me. What I do have is a house that was my home years before I moved into it.

— Lisa Nicolaou, Fair Lawn



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